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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Army resumes 'zero notice' deployments

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The infantrymen of the 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment were in the middle of gunnery exercises in El Paso, Texas, on March 11 when the call came in from division headquarters: Deploy to Poland.

"We got zero notice," said Col. Chad Chalfont, commander of the 2nd Armored Brigade, 1st Armored Division, the battalion's higher headquarters located on Cold War Road at Fort Bliss.

A week later, 1,500 brigade soldiers were bound for training grounds in western Poland in a deployment reminiscent of the Cold War, when no-notice mobilizations were a main feature of the military's strategy for countering the old Soviet Union.

Now, the Army is relearning the art of snap deployments as it adapts to a new Pentagon strategy — known as Dynamic Force Employment — that calls upon the military as a whole to keep adversaries off balance with more unpredictable troop movements.

"We are going to see this on a regular basis," said Maj. Gen.

John Gronski, deputy commanding general for the Army National Guard at U.S. Army Europe. "For any of our adversaries anywhere, it is going to be unpredictable for them. And that is good for our national security. This is all about deterrence and readiness."

But for USAREUR, the arrival of Fort Bliss infantrymen also was something of a culminating event in what has been a five-year effort to rebuild a force that was largely defanged after a long post-Cold War drawdown.

The Ukraine factor

In Europe, the Army has been building up since Russia's 2014 military intervention in Ukraine set off alarms among allies and sparked a push to reinforce NATO's eastern flank. The Army has led most of those efforts, with U.S.-based armored brigades now on continuous rotational deployments.

"The last (U.S. Army) tank left Europe in 2013. The next rotational forces were back with tanks about a year later because of the way the security environment changed over here," Gronski said.

Prepositioned weapons

stocks have been set at strategic locations, which troops would pull from in a crisis.

Until now the various troop rotations into Europe were planned long in advance, which means the rapid deployment of Fort Bliss soldiers this month is testing the Army's ability to do everything faster.

"I think that just shows the realism of this exercise. No matter what they were doing and where they were at, they got this notice," Gronski said.

The bulk of the soldiers landed in Europe on March 19 and will be in Poland until about mid-April, conducting live-fire exercises with equipment pulled from one of the Army's prepositioned stocks in the Netherlands.

It's almost like we simply picked up where we left off," said Chalfont, whose soldiers were back on the range days after their arrival — this time at the Drawsko Pomorskie Training Area in Poland, rather than Fort Bliss.

Questions remain

While the exercise marks a step forward for USAREUR, questions remain about the Army's ability to respond en

masse to a major crisis in Europe.

"We are kind of in a crawl, walk, run process here. I see this as a first step. A baby step, to be honest," said U.S. Army War College professor John R. Deni. "The next step is to deploy a much larger force with equipment."

A deterrence strategy that depends on prepositioned equipment is a concern, Deni said. Prepositioned stocks played a large role for the Army during the Cold War, but that was before the advent of advanced precision-guided weapons that could easily eliminate such storage sites.

"We know the Russians have made significant advances," Deni said. "In the worst case scenario, one of the first things the Russian's would hit are these prepositioned munition sites."

Since the Army lacks sufficient missile defense capabilities to defend its garrisons in Europe, let alone its storage warehouses, the service needs to demonstrate the ability to move not only troops across the ocean on short notice but also up to a division's worth of gear, Deni said.

USFK receives potential threat, boosts security

By KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The U.S. military in South Korea increased security at bases across the divided peninsula Friday after receiving a potential threat.

Security measures were stepped up after American law enforcement officials noti-

fied U.S. Forces Korea of the potential threat by an individual against the installations, according to a USFK announcement posted on social media.

"Organizations from USFK, [South Korea] and law enforcement are cooperating to appropriately assess the credibility of the threat," it said. "During this time, you may see increased force protection measures."

The statement didn't elaborate. USFK officials declined to publicly specify the measures or elaborate on the potential threat due to the security concerns involved, but they urged people to be vigilant.

"USFK requests your patience and cooperation as we work collectively to ensure our service members, families and community remains safe and

secure," the statement said.

Some 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea, which remains technically at war with the North after their 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty.

Many servicemembers have families with them.

Civilian contractors and South Korean employees also have access to the bases.

Army issues Korea, Mideast deployments

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Army is tapping soldiers from Alaska, Texas and North Carolina for deployments this summer to Afghanistan, Iraq and South Korea.

About half of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, based at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, will head to Iraq, the Army said in a statement. It will replace the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division as part of a regular rotation of forces in

support of Operation Inherent Resolve, the Army said.

“We are privileged to be joining the international coalition that will defeat ISIS and set conditions for increased regional stability,” Col. Matthew W. Brown, commander of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, said in the statement.

The 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, based at Fort Bragg, N.C., will rotate to Afghanistan as part of a regular rotation of forces in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel.

It replaces the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

“Our great paratroopers are honored to answer our nation’s call to deploy overseas,” Col. Art Sellers, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, said in a statement.

The 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, will deploy to South Korea this summer.

“Greywolf (Brigade) is no stranger to the Republic of Korea, having sent the U.S.

Army’s first rotational battalion there in 2014,” Col. Kevin Capra, commander of the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, said in a statement. “We look forward to once again working with our Korean partners and strengthening our nation’s alliance.”

According to the Army, the group replaces the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division as part of a regular rotation of forces in support of South Korea.

‘48 Hours’ looks at quest for truth in colonel’s death

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

In the decade since her husband died of a fatal gunshot wound to the head in Iraq in 2008, Kim Stahlman has never believed Marine Corps Col. Michael Stahlman committed suicide as military investigators had declared.

She hired forensic expert Michael Maloney — a former investigator with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the very agency that handled the original case — and in 2012, he concluded that the shooting was a homicide.

For years she had pleaded with the military to reopen the investigation and review the cause of death.

On Saturday’s broadcast of CBS’ “48 Hours,” Stahlman learned that NCIS had actually years ago reviewed the case — including Maloney’s findings — and again found no scientific evidence supporting homicide.

NCIS never shared that information with the widow despite several Freedom of Information Act requests she had filed.

Stahlman, who was 45 when he died, was planning to retire after his deployment to Iraq.

On July 31, 2008, Stahlman was discovered in his room

lying on his back in bed with a gunshot wound that entered the left side of his head.

His widow was troubled by the fact that the wound was on the left side of his head, even though he was right-handed. “Mike did nothing with his left hand,” Stahlman said on the show.

Investigators gave special weight to an email Stahlman had sent his wife and two young daughters only hours before the shooting that could be interpreted as a suicide note.

It read: “Kim, sorry about what you’re about the [sic] find out. I love you and always will. You and the girls are the best thing that ever happened to me. Love, Mike.”

For his investigation, Maloney examined a trove of documents and photos taken at the scene of the shooting. According to his calculations, the trajectory of the bullet through Stahlman’s head, through a wall and into a locker in another room could not have come from a single bullet. He contends that there must have been two bullets fired, one of which would likely have lodged itself in the mattress.

“This was a homicide,” Maloney told “48 Hours.”

First Guard command staff entirely composed of women

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — It wasn’t until the Cold War, in the mid-1950s, that women were allowed to join the National Guard — as medical officers. It would take another four decades for a woman to rise to the level of a state adjutant general, the top commander of a state’s military forces.

Now, for the first time in the nation, a state National Guard — Maryland’s — is led by a command staff entirely composed of women.

As of fall 2018, the top four leaders in the state’s National Guard are all women — three of them black — and all mothers.

Since 2015, Maj. Gen. Linda L. Singh has served at the helm of Maryland’s military, the first black and first woman to hold the role of adjutant general for the Maryland National Guard.

In June, Brig. Gen. Janeen Birkhead took over as assistant adjutant general, Army, and in August, Brig. Gen. April Vogel began serving as assistant adjutant general, Air. Then, in December, Command Sgt. Maj. Perlisa Wilson became senior enlisted adviser for Maryland’s National Guard.

The all-female staffing was unintentional, Singh said. When

the positions opened, Singh wasn’t necessarily seeking an all-female leadership team — she simply wanted the most qualified candidates available, she said.

The elevation of women within Maryland’s National Guard comes as women across the country continue to rise in the ranks of the military, taking on roles that were previously filled only by men.

In 2015, women were granted the right to serve in combat posts in the U.S. military. Since then, the first women have graduated from the Army’s most physically challenging training, the Ranger School, and from the Marine Corps’ Infantry Officer Course.

For the first time, a woman is leading an infantry platoon in the Marines.

And in February, amid a long-running debate over whether women should be included in the draft, a federal judge ruled that a male-only draft is unconstitutional.

But the military continues to be a field overwhelmingly dominated by men. Before Birkhead was promoted to brigadier general, she was one of about 25 colonels in the Maryland Army National Guard — and she was the only woman.

Joe Biden denies acting inappropriately

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former Vice President Joe Biden said Sunday he doesn't believe he ever acted inappropriately toward women but will "listen respectfully" to suggestions he did.

Biden, who is deciding whether to join the 2020 presidential race, released a new statement in response to allegations from a Nevada politician that he kissed her on the back of the head in 2014 and made her uncomfortable.

"In my many years on the campaign trail and in public life, I have offered countless handshakes, hugs, expressions of affection, support and comfort. And not once — never

— did I believe I acted inappropriately," he said. "If it is suggested I did so, I will listen respectfully. But it was never my intention."

The allegation was made in a New York Magazine article written by Lucy Flores, a former Nevada state representative and the 2014 Democratic nominee for Nevada lieutenant governor.

Going on the attack against the prospective 2020 contender, White House counselor Kellyanne Conway said Flores was "quite bold" to "go up against the highest levels of her political party" with the allegations and suggested that Biden should consider apologizing to Flores.

"If anybody just types in

'Creepy Uncle Joe Videos,' you come up with a treasure trove," Conway told "Fox News Sunday."

"I think Joe Biden has a big problem here because he calls it affection and handshakes. His party calls it completely inappropriate," she said.

Some of the Democratic presidential candidates have expressed support for Flores, but they haven't said it disqualifies Biden from joining the race.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., a candidate for president, said she had "no reason not to believe" Flores' allegations.

"And I think we know from campaigns and from politics that people raise issues and they have to address them, and that's what he will have

to do with the voters if he gets into the race," Klobuchar told ABC's "This Week."

Speaking to reporters in Iowa over the weekend, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and former HUD Secretary Julian Castro said they believed Flores and indicated it's up to Biden to decide whether he should join the race.

In the New York Magazine article published Friday, Flores wrote that she and Biden were waiting to take the stage during a rally in Las Vegas before the 2014 election. "I felt two hands on my shoulders. I froze. 'Why is the vice president of the United States touching me?'" Flores wrote. "He proceeded to plant a big slow kiss on the back of my head."

Trump seeks to cut aid to 3 Central American nations

Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. — Taking drastic action over illegal immigration, President Donald Trump moved Saturday to cut direct aid to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, whose citizens are fleeing north and overwhelming U.S. resources at the southern border.

The State Department notified Congress that it would look to suspend 2017 and 2018 payments to the trio of nations, which have been home to some

of the migrant caravans that have marched through Mexico to the U.S. border.

Amplified by conservative media, Trump has turned the caravans into the symbol of what he says are the dangers of illegal immigration — a central theme of his midterm campaigning last fall. With the special counsel's Russia probe seemingly behind him, Trump has revived his warnings of the caravans' presence.

Trump also has returned to a previous threat he never car-

ried out — closing the border with Mexico. He brought up that possibility on Friday and revisited it in tweets Saturday, blaming Democrats and Mexico for problems at the border and beyond despite warnings that a closed border could create economic havoc on both sides.

"It would be so easy to fix our weak and very stupid Democrat inspired immigration laws," Trump tweeted Saturday. "In less than one hour, and then a vote, the problem would

be solved. But the Dems don't care about the crime, they don't want any victory for Trump and the Republicans, even if good for USA!"

As far as Mexico's role, he tweeted: "Mexico must use its very strong immigration laws to stop the many thousands of people trying to get into the USA. Our detention areas are maxed out & we will take no more illegals. Next step is to close the Border! This will also help us with stopping the Drug flow from Mexico!"

President takes his effort to kill 'Obamacare' to the courts

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After losing in Congress, President Donald Trump is counting on the courts to kill off "Obamacare." But some cases are going against him, and time is not on his side as he tries to score a big win for his re-election campaign.

Two federal judges in Washington last week blocked parts of Trump's health care agenda: work requirements for some

low-income people on Medicaid, and new small business health plans that don't have to provide full benefits required by the Affordable Care Act.

In the biggest case, a federal judge in Texas ruled in December that the ACA is unconstitutional and should be struck down in its entirety. That ruling is now on appeal. At the urging of the White House, the Justice Department said last week it will support the Texas

judge's position and argue that all of the Affordable Care Act must go.

A problem for Trump is that the litigation could take months to resolve — or longer — and there's no guarantee he'll get the outcomes he wants before the 2020 election.

"Was this a good week for the Trump administration? No," said economist Gail Wilensky, who headed up Medicare under former Republican President

George H.W. Bush.

It's early innings in the court cases, and "the clock is going to run out," said Timothy Jost, a retired law professor who has followed the Obama health law since its inception. "By the time these cases get through the courts, there simply isn't going to be time for the administration to straighten out any messes that get created, much less get a comprehensive plan through Congress," added Jost.

Judge rules president's push to open oceans to drilling not legal

The Washington Post

A federal judge in Alaska declared late Friday that President Donald Trump's order revoking a sweeping ban on oil and gas drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic oceans is illegal, putting 128 million acres of federal waters off-limits to energy exploration.

The decision by U.S. District Judge Sharon Gleason was the third legal setback last week to Trump's energy and environmental policies. The judge, who was appointed to the federal bench by President Barack Obama in 2012, also blocked on Friday a land swap the Interior Department arranged that would pave the way for constructing a road through wilderness in a major National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

Earlier last week, U.S. District Judge Lewis Babcock, who was appointed by President Ronald Reagan, ruled that Interior's Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service illegally approved two gas drilling plans in western Colorado. The judge said officials did not adequately analyze wildlife and climate impacts in their plans — which were challenged by a coalition of environmental groups — to drill 171 wells in North Fork Valley, which provides key habitat for elk and mule deer.

Trump's rollbacks of Obama-era conservation policies have suffered nearly two dozen setbacks in federal court, largely on procedural grounds. While the administration is appealing many of those decisions and holds an advantage if the cases

reach the Supreme Court, the rulings have slowed the president's drive to expand fossil fuel production in the United States.

Last month, for example, a federal judge halted drilling on more than 300,000 acres of oil and gas leases in Wyoming.

Friday's decision on offshore drilling could affect a five-year leasing plan the administration plans to issue in the summer as well as block the six offshore lease sales it proposed to schedule in the Arctic Ocean starting as early as this year.

Friday's decision applies to 98 percent of the Arctic Ocean, as well as undersea canyons in the Atlantic spanning a total of 3.8 million acres, stretching from the Chesapeake Bay to New England.

North Korea seeks probe into embassy raid in Spain

Associated Press

TOKYO — North Korea said Sunday it wants an investigation into a raid on its embassy in Spain last month, calling it a “grave terrorist attack” and an act of extortion that violates international law.

The incident occurred ahead of President Donald Trump's second summit with leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi on Feb. 27-28. A mysterious group calling for the overthrow of the North Korean regime has claimed responsibility.

The North's official media quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying that an illegal intrusion into and occupation of a diplomatic mission and an act of extortion are a grave breach of the state sovereignty and a flagrant violation of international law, “and this kind of act should never be tolerated.”

He claimed an armed group tortured the staff and suggested they stole communications gear.

The 10 people who allegedly raided the embassy in Madrid belong to a mysterious dissident organization that styles itself as a government in exile dedicated to toppling the ruling Kim family dynasty.

The leader of the alleged intruders appears to be a Yale-educated human rights activist who was once jailed in China while trying to rescue North Korean defectors living in hiding, according to activists and defectors.

Details have begun trickling out about the raid after a Spanish judge lifted a secrecy order and said an investigation of what happened on Feb. 22 uncovered evidence that “a criminal organization” shackled and gagged embassy staff before escaping with computers, hard drives and documents.

A U.S. official said the group is named Cheollima Civil Defense, a little-known organization that recently called for international solidarity in the fight against North Korea's government.

Summit showcases unity on US Israel policy

Associated Press

TUNIS, Tunisia — Leaders meeting in Tunisia for the annual Arab League summit on Sunday were united in their condemnation of Trump administration policies seen as unfairly biased toward Israel, but they were divided on a host of other issues, including whether to readmit founding member Syria.

This year's summit comes against a backdrop of ongoing wars in Syria and Yemen, rival authorities in Libya and a lingering boycott of Qatar by four fellow league members. Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir skipped the meeting as they contend with mass protests against their long reigns.

Representatives from the 22-member league — minus Syria — aim to jointly condemn President Donald Trump's recogni-

tion of Israeli control over the Golan Heights, which Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 war, and Trump's decision last year to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

At the opening of the summit, King Salman bin Abdulaziz said Saudi Arabia “absolutely rejects any measures undermining Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights” and supports the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with east Jerusalem as its capital. He added that Iran's meddling was to blame for instability in the region.

The Arab leaders meeting in Tunisia are expected to issue a statement condemning those moves but are unlikely to take further action.

That's in part because regional powerhouses Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have cultivated close ties with the Trump adminis-

tration, viewing it as a key ally against their main rival, Iran. Both face Western pressure over their devastating three-year war with Yemen's Houthi rebels, and Riyadh is still grappling with the fallout from the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents last year.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil said Saturday that Arab ministers had voiced support in a preparatory meeting for a declaration that Trump's Golan move violates the U.N. Charter, which prohibits acquiring territories by force.

The Arab League is expected to consider readmitting Syria, a founding member that was expelled in the early days of the 2011 uprising against President Bashar Assad. But officials speaking ahead of the meeting said it was unlikely Syria would be welcomed back anytime soon.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Truck driver shields man in wheelchair

MA BOSTON — Police commended a tow truck driver for shielding a man in a wheelchair who ended up inside Boston's Prudential Tunnel during rush hour.

Massachusetts State Police said they received multiple calls about a man in a wheelchair in the tunnel Tuesday morning. The event was recorded on surveillance video, showing the man along the right tunnel wall as traffic zoomed by him.

A tow truck driver traveling in the same direction as the unidentified man slowed his vehicle and put on hazard lights. Police said the driver used the vehicle to shield the person in the wheelchair from oncoming traffic.

Police said the man was taken to a hospital for evaluation.

Woman arrested in theft of trooper's dog

MS COLUMBUS — A 22-year-old Mississippi woman faces charges in connection with the theft of a 7-month-old pit bull puppy outside its owner's home.

The Commercial Dispatch reported Amber Keating was arrested after neighbors reported seeing a woman dragging a dog through the neighborhood.

Authorities said Derrick Beckom left the puppy outside for about 10 minutes March 20 and, when the puppy, Zeke, didn't respond to a call to come in, Beckom realized something was wrong.

Beckom, a Mississippi Highway Patrol trooper, said he called the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office to report the dognapping and, within about a day, Keating was in custody and Zeke was back.

Racetrack is up for sale for \$275,000

ME CARIBOU — A racetrack in northern Maine is for sale.

The Spud Speedway in Caribou is on the market for \$275,000, close to the median cost of a new home in Maine. That includes the one-third-mile oval, new bleachers and other structures on 48 acres.

Owner Troy Haney said he has his hands full with other businesses and family so he's giving someone else a chance.

Bee species makes a comeback at SF park

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A rare species of sand-loving bees is making a comeback in San Francisco's Presidio for the first time in about a century.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported ecologists spotted hundreds of silver digger bees in the park while surveying a dune restoration project.

Experts believe the removal of invasive plants and the restoration of dunes and grasses at the former military base helped bring back the bees. They said the bees were common in San Francisco as late as the 1920s.

Suspected drunken driver swipes bus

MI DETROIT — A Wayne State University shuttle bus was stolen in Detroit by a suspected drunken driver who was stopped an hour later and about 45 miles away.

The forest green bus was stolen about 6:15 a.m. Friday while the driver was inside a Detroit gas station.

A 59-year-old Detroit man was accused of vehicle theft and suspected drunken driving.

Cow hit by multiple vehicles on highway

MO MARSHFIELD — Authorities said a cow that wandered onto a southwest Missouri highway was hit by multiple vehicles, with one fiery impact sending a driver to the hospital.

The Springfield News-Leader reported that Hannah Maxwell, 21, said she didn't have time to swerve before her sport utility vehicle collided with the animal around 8:15 p.m. Thursday on Interstate 44 near Marshfield.

The Missouri State Highway Patrol said the crash propelled the cow into a tractor-trailer.

Then a van hit the cow, overturned and caught fire. The van's driver had moderate injuries.

Police: Man said gay slur led to stabbing

IN GARY — A 75-year-old man who described himself as a retired drag queen told authorities he fatally stabbed a 64-year-old man who used a gay slur during a dispute.

Police responded Tuesday night to an apartment building in Gary and found Carlos Johnson, who had multiple stab wounds. Police said he was taken to a hospital and died.

Officers followed a trail of blood from a hallway and found Edward Miller, who was arrested. An affidavit said Miller told police he and Johnson were drinking and arguing when Johnson used the slur and called him a "whore."

The affidavit said Miller told police both of the Gary men grabbed knives and Johnson was stabbed. Miller is charged with murder and voluntary manslaughter.

Skunk gets head stuck in beer can

MA BILLERICA — A skunk that somehow got its head stuck in a discarded can of Bud Light beer is being cared for by veterinarians.

Animal control officers in Billerica posted a picture of the unfortunate critter on Twitter, calling it "amazing" that its head could fit into such a small opening.

Police said the skunk was taken to Tufts Wildlife Clinic in North Grafton.

Police accuse 3 of crashing food display

AK ANCHORAGE — Police arrested three juveniles suspected of crashing a display of 1,800-food cans collected for an Alaska food bank.

The chest-high structure built by 17 engineering students at Anchorage's Dimond High School was displayed at the Dimond Center mall.

The display was the only student structure in an annual "Canstructure" competition, which raises food donations for the Food Bank of Alaska.

Public defender is punched in court

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A public defender was taken to the hospital after a defendant in court punched her in the head, knocking her to the ground during a bond hearing in Fort Lauderdale.

Assistant Public Defender Julie Chase was standing next to a female defendant at a podium Wednesday morning when a man waiting for his own bond hearing stood up, walked behind Chase and punched her with his left hand.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

UVA, Texas Tech give Final Four new feel

Associated Press

Texas Tech shut down the nation's most efficient offense to reach its first Final Four in 93 years as a program.

Virginia erased the bitter taste of last year's historic NCAA Tournament flop by surviving Carsen Edwards' offensive onslaught to earn a spot in the national semifinals for the first time since 1984.

No doubt, there's going to be a different feel next weekend in Minneapolis.

"Growing up my whole life watching these press conferences and the guy that always gets there and says 'undescrivable,'" Texas Tech coach Chris Beard said. "And I'm like, 'Oh, give us something better than that.' But I don't have anything better. It's undescrivable."

Virginia coach Tony Bennett knows the feeling. He also knows what it's like to be on the wrong side of history.

A year ago, Virginia became the first No. 1 seed to lose to a No. 16 when UMBC took down the Cavaliers in the first round.

The historic loss added a layer to arguments about whether Bennett can get it done under the brightest lights.

Bennett started building Virginia after being hired in 2009, gradually turning the program into one of the nation's best.

The Cavaliers have won at least 22 games every year since 2012 and reached the NCAA Tournament each of the past six years. Virginia had a shot at the Final Four in 2016, but was knocked off by Syracuse in the Elite Eight.

The Cavaliers reached the Sweet 16 one other time and had the epic fail last year.

Virginia appeared to be in trouble Saturday night, when Edwards couldn't seem to miss, hitting 10 three-pointers while scoring 42 points.

But the Cavaliers tied it in regulation on Mamadi Diakite's buzzer-beating jumper after Kyle Guy purposely missed a free throw. Virginia held off the Boilermakers in overtime for the 80-75 win.

Now, finally, they're headed to the Final Four.

"No one knows what this team has been through," Bennett said. "I do and it's good."

So is what Beard has done.

Pre-Chris Beard Texas Tech occasionally popped up on the relevancy radar before falling back to the middle of the pack.

Pre-Texas Tech Chris Beard made a steady rise through the coaching ranks before one monumental victory made him the hot-ticket coach everyone seemed to want.

Beard coached everywhere from junior college to the ABA to Division II McMurry University after serving as a student assistant under Tom Penders at Texas.

Beard's breakthrough moment came during the 2016 NCAA Tournament, when his 13th-seeded Arkansas-Little Rock Trojans rallied from a 14-point deficit in the final five minutes to beat fifth-seeded Purdue in double overtime.

Little Rock's Cinderella run had Beard's phone ringing. One call he took was to ac-

cept the head job at UNLV.

Less than a month later, he was in Lubbock after leaving the Runnin' Rebels to coach Texas Tech, where he spent seven seasons as an assistant coach. It worked out well for him and the Red Raiders.

After an 18-14 inaugural season, Texas Tech won 27 games and reached the Elite Eight for the first time last season.

The Red Raiders won a share of the Big 12 regular-season title to end Kansas' 14-year reign this season and shut down four straight NCAA Tournament opponents to reach the Final Four for the first time.

Not bad for a bunch of non-five-star players.

"It's like when I go to Grandy's," Beard said. "Do I want double mashed potatoes or mashed potatoes and corn? I want both. So we would love to have All-Americans and turn 'em into grinders."

By grinding, he means defense. Best-in-the-nation defense.

The quick-handed Red Raiders play defense like pickpockets on a crowded subway train, often snatching the ball before the dribbler knows it's gone.

They were the nation's most efficient offense this season and made the most efficient offense sputter like it was missing spark plugs in the Elite Eight, knocking off top-seeded Gonzaga for the program's first Final Four.

"It's real. That defense is real," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "And Chris has done a great job with it and it definitely impacted us tonight."

Red Raiders sink 'Zags Cavs edge Purdue in OT

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — One player came all the way from Italy. Another arrived from rural Illinois after a stop in South Dakota. Still another could've gone a lot of places but chose to stay home and see if he could help Texas Tech make the big time.

Coach Chris Beard and his group of unheralded grinders notched a victory for everyone with a chip on their shoulder Saturday, gutting out a 75-69 win over Gonzaga that's sending the Red Raiders to the Final Four.

Davide Moretti of Bologna, Italy, made the two most important three-pointers of his life to open a sliver of a cushion,

then defense sealed the deal — and wrapped up a trip to college basketball's biggest stage for the first time in the 94-year history of the program.

"Texas Tech is going to the Final Four," Beard said. "Some of you look surprised."

Anyone who has caught even a glimpse of this team's nation-leading defense wouldn't have been surprised.

It was typical of the Red Raiders (30-6), punctuated by Tariq Owens' rejection of Rui Hachimura with 56 seconds left — one of Texas Tech's seven blocked shots, to go with nine steals and 16 forced turnovers.

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — From embarrassment to exhilaration. From early exit to regional champ. From bracket busters to net cutters.

Virginia, the first No. 1 seed to lose to a 16 seed a year ago, survived overtime and Carsen Edwards' staggering three-point show Saturday night to make it to the Final Four for the first time since 1984.

The top-seeded Cavaliers needed a last-ditch buzzer-beater to send the game to overtime and finally contained Edwards in the extra period to hang on for an 80-75 victory over Purdue in the South Region final.

The Cavaliers (33-3) re-

deemed themselves from last year's loss to UMBC by relying on veterans, sound defense, poise, controlling the ball and a failure to be rattled even when the Boilermakers had the chance to ice the game in regulation at the foul line.

Their balance and experience allowed them to overcome a brilliant performance by Edwards, whose 10 three-pointers were one shy of the NCAA Tournament record. Edwards finished with 42 points for third-seeded Purdue (26-10).

Edwards was named the Most Outstanding Player of the South Region, becoming the first player to win the honor from a losing team since Stephen Curry in 2008.

MLB roundup

Harper's first Phillies hit a HR

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Bryce Harper homered deep into the second deck in right-center field for his first hit with Philadelphia and celebrated with an emphatic curtain call, highlighting the Phillies' 8-6 win over the Atlanta Braves on Saturday.

Hitless in five at-bats this season after signing a \$330 million, 13-year deal, Harper crushed Jesse Biddle's fastball 465 feet with two outs in the seventh. Fans gave Harper a standing ovation and chanted "MVP! MVP!"

After getting high fives in the dugout, Harper climbed out for a curtain call, throwing both fists in the air and shouting "Let's go!"

"It was a really cool moment," Harper said. "The fan base, the stadium, the electricity we have in this place, it all came together."

Maikel Franco and J.T. Realmuto also went deep for Philadelphia. The game was tied at 4 in the fifth when Realmuto lined a two-run drive off Wes Parsons (0-1).

Brewers 4, Cardinals 2: Christian Yelich became the first MVP to homer in the first three games of the following season, Josh Hader closed things out with an immaculate inning and Milwaukee beat St. Louis.

Travis Shaw and Mike Moustakas also homered off Cardinals starter Dakota Hudson, and Brandon Woodruff (1-0) struck out five while pitching five innings of two-run ball.

Mariners 6, Red Sox 5: Jay Bruce hit his first home run for host Seattle, a three-run shot to center field, and the heavy-hitting Mariners continued to dominate Boston's starting pitching.

Seattle has hit a home run in every game this season and continued to batter Red Sox starters, with Bruce helping to chase Eduardo Rodriguez (0-1) in the fifth inning. Eight Seattle batters have hit 13 combined

home runs, with nine coming against the defending World Series champions.

Rangers 8, Cubs 6: Joey Gallo hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning and host Texas rallied long after Chicago's Yu Darvish flopped in the former Rangers ace's return to his first home in the majors.

Gallo's homer to center field came off reliever Carl Edwards Jr. (0-1), who didn't retire any of the four batters he faced in the first win for new Rangers manager Chris Woodward.

Rays 3, Astros 1: Tampa Bay's Tyler Glasnow and four relievers shut down Houston after Alex Bregman's first-inning homer.

Bregman went deep on his 25th birthday, but Glasnow (1-0) was otherwise excellent, striking out four and allowing six hits over five innings. Ryne Stanek followed with two hitless innings, and Jose Alvarado pitched a perfect ninth for his second save.

Giants 3, Padres 2: Reyes Moronta struck out five in two innings of lights-out relief work, including Manny Machado and Fernando Tatis Jr., and San Francisco won at San Diego for the Giants' first victory this season.

San Francisco at risk of going 0-3 for the first time since 2012, when it won the second of three World Series in five seasons under manager Bruce Bochy, who is retiring after this season. The Padres were denied their first 3-0 start since 1984, the season they went to their first World Series, with Bochy as a backup catcher.

Athletics 4, Angels 2: Mark Canha hit a two-run homer in the fourth that held up for Brett Anderson, and host Oakland beat Los Angeles.

Stephen Piscotty added a two-run single in the third for the Athletics. Anderson (1-0) pitched six scoreless innings in his first start of the year after the lefty signed as a free agent for his third stint with the A's. Anderson, who also pitched

for Oakland last year and from 2009-2013, allowed three hits, struck out four and walked two.

Dodgers 18, Diamondbacks 5: Cody Bellinger hit two homers and drove in a career high-tying six runs, Justin Turner added five RBIs and host Los Angeles rebounded splendidly from a 13-inning loss.

Bellinger had four hits and Joc Pederson had three after leading off the game with his third homer for the Dodgers, who pounded out 19 hits to shake off their 5-4 loss early Saturday morning.

Orioles 5, Yankees 3: Brandon Hyde earned his first win as Baltimore's manager when slow-footed catcher Jesus Sucre was aggressive on the bases to score the go-ahead run, then added three late RBIs for the visiting Orioles.

Indians 2, Twins 1: Greg Allen hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the top of the ninth inning, then Cleveland reliever Brad Hand escaped a bases-loaded jam. It was 34 degrees for the start at Target Field in Minneapolis.

Blue Jays 3, Tigers 0: Aaron Sanchez and four relievers combined to pitch host Toronto's second straight shutout.

The Blue Jays threw just three shutouts all of last season, the second fewest in the majors. Detroit was last with two.

Mets 11, Nationals 8: J.D. Davis delivered a tiebreaking two-run single in the eighth inning and rookie Pete Alonso contributed three hits and two RBIs for the new-look Mets at Washington.

Royals 8, White Sox 6: Jorge Soler had three hits and three RBIs, Alex Gordon scored three runs despite not getting a hit and host Kansas City used its speed to win. Billy Hamilton got three hits and scored twice.

Marlins 7, Rockies 3: Miguel Rojas and Martin Prado each had three hits and host Miami won for the first time this season.

Woods is no match for Denmark's Bjerregaard

BY DOUG FERGUSON

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — The conditions were severe. The high stakes put a premium on every shot down the stretch. Tiger Woods was in his element.

Only this time, he was a spectator.

Woods finally met his match Saturday in the Dell Technologies Match Play, and it wasn't Rory McIlroy.

Lucas Bjerregaard delivered the clutch shots so often seen from Woods in their quarter-final match. He holed a 30-foot eagle putt to tie the match on the par-5 16th. He holed a 12-foot birdie putt that snapped hard to the right at the end on No. 17, knowing Woods was in tight for a certain birdie.

And on the final hole, Woods blinked first. His lob wedge from a fluffy lie in the rough came out soft, short and in a bunker. Given a chance to send the match to overtime, Woods missed a 4-foot putt.

"It's a shame it had to end the way it did," Bjerregaard said. "Our match didn't deserve that. But I'm happy to be on the winning side."

Bjerregaard used to take his book to the range in Denmark with hopes of copying his swing. He never could get it right, though the 27-year-old Dane showed plenty of Woods' mettle.

Equally surprising was how Woods won earlier Saturday against McIlroy. McIlroy was on the verge of squaring the match on the 16th hole when he had a short iron for his second shot into the par-5 16th. He made 7 and Woods closed him out on the next hole.

McIlroy was so angry he walked briskly away into a cart, and wouldn't make eye contact on his way to the car.

Woods knows the feeling.

"This is going to sting for a few days," Woods said in his last event before the Masters.

NBA roundup

Harden's triple-double lifts Rockets

Associated Press

HOUSTON — James Harden had 50 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists, scoring 10 straight Houston points down the stretch to help the Rockets beat the Sacramento Kings 119-108 on Saturday.

Harden had his 42nd career triple-double and third 50-point game in the past six. He made seven three-pointers to become the ninth player in NBA history to reach 2,000 career threes.

Clint Capela added 24 points and 15 rebounds, and Chris Paul had 22 points. Houston has won four of five.

Bogdan Bogdanovic had 24 points for the Kings. They have lost two straight and fell to 0-3 against Houston this season.

76ers 118, Timberwolves 109: Tobias Harris scored 25 points for Philadelphia in Jimmy Butler's jeer-filled return to Minnesota, helping the 76ers hang on and move

one step closer toward solidifying the No. 3 seed for the Eastern Conference playoffs.

Ben Simmons pitched in 20 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists for the Sixers (49-27), who stretched their lead over Boston and Indiana to 4½ games with eight games to go. They're still four games behind second-place Toronto.

Nets 110, Celtics 96: D'Angelo Russell scored 20 of his 29 points in another blistering third quarter against visiting Boston, leading Brooklyn over the short-handed Celtics.

Pistons 99, Trail Blazers 90: Reggie Jackson scored 28 points, Andre Drummond had 22 points and 19 rebounds, and host Detroit ended Portland's six-game winning streak.

Magic 121, Pacers 116: Aaron Gordon had 23 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists, and visiting Orlando racked up a season-high 37 assists in a win over Indi-

ana to keep pace in the Eastern Conference playoff race.

Heat 100, Knicks 92: Dion Waiters scored 28 points, Dwyane Wade added 16 in his last game at Madison Square Garden, and Miami beat New York.

Raptors 124, Bulls 101: Serge Ibaka had 23 points and 12 rebounds, Fred VanVleet also scored 23 and Toronto routed host Chicago despite playing without Kawhi Leonard and Pascal Siakam.

Grizzlies 120, Suns 115: Jonas Valanciunas scored a career-high 34 points and grabbed 20 rebounds, Mike Conley added 33 points and visiting Memphis overcame 48 from Devin Booker to beat Phoenix.

Clippers 132, Cavaliers 108: Montrezl Harrell scored 23 points, rookie Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 22 points and eight assists, and host Los Angeles beat Cleveland.

NHL roundup

Caps rout Lightning for fourth straight win

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Alex Ovechkin scored his 50th and 51st goals of the season, leading the Washington Capitals to a 6-3 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday night.

Nicklas Backstrom and T.J. Oshie also scored twice and Braden Holtby made 25 saves to help the defending champion Capitals win their fourth consecutive game. Backstrom became the seventh Washington player to reach 20 goals this season.

Ovechkin reached the 50-goal mark for the eighth time in his career. Only Mike Bossy and Wayne Gretzky, who each did it nine times, have scored 50 goals in more seasons in NHL history. Ovechkin has 657 goals to move past Brenden Shanahan for 13th in the NHL history.

Islanders 5, Sabres 1: Jordan Eberle continued his scoring surge with another goal, Anthony Beauvillier added two

of his own and host New York beat Buffalo to clinch a playoff berth for the first time since 2016.

Michael Dal Colle and Ryan Pullock also scored for the Islanders. They have 99 points in their first season under coach Barry Trotz and secured a postseason spot in March for the first time since 1990.

Sharks 4, Golden Knights 3 (OT): Brent Burns scored on a power play at 22 seconds of overtime and host San Jose beat Vegas to snap a seven-game losing streak.

The Sharks clinched second place in the Pacific Division and home ice in the first round of the playoffs, ending their longest skid of the season and sending the Golden Knights to their franchise-worst fifth straight loss.

Panthers 4, Bruins 1: Troy Brouwer scored a short-handed goal, Roberto Luongo stopped 30 shots and Florida beat Boston to end the Bruins' home

winning streak at 12.

Evgenii Dadonov scored twice and Riley Sheahan added a goal for the Panthers. Eliminated from playoff contention, Florida has won two straight.

Hurricanes 5, Flyers 2: Teuvo Teravainen and Dougie Hamilton scored 21 seconds apart in the first period, and host Carolina beat Philadelphia to boost its playoff hopes and eliminate the Flyers from contention.

Blues 3, Devils 2 (OT): Defenseman Vince Dunn scored in close with 2.8 seconds left in overtime and St. Louis beat host New Jersey for the 11th straight time.

Blue Jackets 5, Predators 2: Cam Atkinson scored twice and Artemi Panarin had four assists to lead Columbus at Nashville for its fourth straight victory.

David Savard, Oliver Bjorkstrand and Boone Jenner also had goals, and Sergei Bobrovsky made 23 saves for

Columbus.

Canadiens 3, Jets 1: Joel Armia, Jeff Petry and Jordan Weal scored and Montreal won at Winnipeg to improve its playoff hopes. The Canadiens are fighting Carolina and Columbus in the race for the final two playoff spots in the Eastern Conference.

Senators 4, Maple Leafs 2: Anthony Duclair scored twice and Craig Anderson made 42 saves to help last-place Ottawa beat visiting Toronto.

Kings 3, Blackhawks 2 (OT): Drew Doughty scored a power-play goal with 11.6 seconds remaining in overtime for the host Kings.

Canucks 3, Stars 2 (SO): Markus Granlund scored in the eighth round of the shootout, leading host Vancouver over Dallas.

Ducks 5, Oilers 1: Rickard Rakell scored three goals in the second period, powering Anaheim to a win at Edmonton.