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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

US strike in Syria hit Iran-backed militants

The Washington Post

BEIRUT — The Pentagon said Friday that a rare U.S. airstrike against pro-government forces in Syria targeted a convoy of Iran-backed troops, appearing to mark an important shift in the country's war.

The attack Thursday struck militants fighting on behalf of Syrian President Bashar Assad as they advanced toward an air base manned by U.S. Special Forces and Washington-backed rebel groups close to the Jordanian border.

Speaking to reporters at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said the attack was necessitated "by offensive movement with offensive capability of what we believe were ... Iranian-directed forces inside an established and agreed-upon deconfliction zone."

If confirmed, it would be the first U.S. strike on Iranian

proxies during seven years of war in Syria, signaling a possible escalation against Assad's most important ally.

Under the Obama administration, U.S. forces steered clear of direct confrontations with Iran and its proxies across Syria, Iraq and Yemen, prioritizing the upholding of Washington's nuclear deal with Tehran above all else.

"If U.S. troops are now engaging directly with Iranian militias, escalation in the absence of a well-wrought plan could inflame the conflict in Syria and further afield," Thanassis Cambanis, a fellow at the Washington-based Century Foundation, wrote in a research note published Friday.

Rebel commanders said the convoy, made up of Syrian and Iraqi militiamen who now form the bulk of Assad's fighting force, retreated after the U.S. attack and had not attempted

to advance again by sunset Friday.

The airstrike comes at a time when the U.S. presence in Syria has become increasingly visible. Last month, the Trump administration launched the first direct U.S. attack on Assad targets, striking an air base in the central province of Homs in retaliation for a chemical attack that killed scores of civilians in the country's northwest. On the ground, the U.S. presence in Syria is also becoming more visible, as American troops back Kurdish-led forces fighting the Islamic State.

Aerial bombardments have ebbed across Syria since early May, after Russia, Iran and Turkey backed a deal to freeze fighting between government and rebel forces across four "de-escalation zones."

In areas outside of that pact, the cease-fires have freed up resources on all sides and trig-

gered a scramble for influence around the fringes of Islamic State-held territory in eastern Syria.

The area is home to lucrative energy and agricultural sites that will be vital to Assad's government if it is to win economic independence from its Russian and Iranian backers.

Control of eastern Syria also includes the power to block or link up Iranian supply routes from Tehran to its most important proxy, Hezbollah, in Lebanon.

"Regime-allied militias advanced from the west and got bombed when they tried to enter our area. They have been advancing in recent weeks, bombing us heavily as they came," said Col. Muhannad al-Talla, a commander of Maghawir al-Thawrah, a Pentagon-backed rebel group at the al-Tanf air base.

Mattis: Tactical changes speed up anti-ISIS campaign

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — When the United States ferried Syrian anti-Islamic State forces behind enemy lines in a daring darkness-covered air assault in March to open a vital new battle front just outside Raqqa, the operation did not require Pentagon approval, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Friday.

The helicopter insertion of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces fighters, which would pave their way to seizing the strategic town of Tabqa after seven weeks of intense fighting, was approved by American commanders operating on the ground alongside the militia. That operation illustrates one adjustment President Donald Trump approved to the ongoing anti-ISIS campaign as a result of the 30-day review that he demanded of the Pentagon shortly after taking office — delegating tactical decisions to ground commanders, Mattis told reporters

Friday at the Pentagon.

"No longer will we have slowed decision cycles because Washington, D.C., has to authorize tactical movements on the ground," Mattis said during a news conference alongside Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Brett McGurk, Trump's envoy to the anti-ISIS coalition. "I have absolute confidence, as does the president, our commander in chief, in the commanders on the ground ... and they've carried it out aggressively."

The change in the level of approval to authorize an operation against ISIS was designed to speed up the campaign, Mattis said.

Mattis signaled he expected the terrorist group to be defeated quicker due to the adjustments approved by Trump. Nonetheless, he declined to provide a timeline on future operations, calling the militants "a long-term threat."

Other changes that the president agreed

to include arming the Syrian Kurdish portion of the Syrian Democratic Forces and another tactical tweak designed to ensure ISIS' foreign fighters are killed on the battlefield to stop them from returning to their home nations.

That adjustment is to surround ISIS-controlled areas, trapping its fighters inside a ring of U.S.-backed ground forces where their options are limited to being killed or surrendering.

The new tactic to entirely encircle ISIS fighters is now being used in Mosul and will be used in Raqqa, which is about three-quarters surrounded now, according to Pentagon officials. The Syrian Democratic Forces effectively used the tactic in Tabqa, about 25 miles west of Raqqa, where McGurk said nearly all of the foreign fighters who had retained a heavy presence in the town for three years were killed in the fighting. McGurk just returned from a trip to Tabqa where he met with local officials.

Latest special ops gadgetry on display at conference

BY TAMARA LUSH
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — It's like a supermarket for Navy SEALs. A grocery store for Green Berets. A Costco for commandoes.

It's a conference for military special operations forces and their gadgets, weapons and tools. The Special Operations Forces Industry Conference is held yearly in Tampa. Here, the U.S. Special Operations Command — the Tampa-based unit that oversees all of the nation's elite military teams — shops for equipment.

Prototypes of new gadgets and gear are showcased. Robots, holograms, tanks, lethal weapons — it's all on display.

Here are some of the interesting gadgets that were on the trade show floor during the weeklong event, which wrapped up Friday.

■ Under the sea: Deep Trekker is a Canadian company that sells underwater drones. The small grey cylinders with cameras can be controlled by

remote on land or in the water, and Sam MacDonald, president, says the device can dive down 150 meters — it's great for hull inspection or contraband, checking out port security.

"We've also had it used in the Special Forces, for things they can't really tell us a lot about," she said.

■ Not your household robot: Joseph Smith of Massachusetts-based Endeavor Robotics smiled patiently when a reporter asked whether his company's robots were in any way like the ubiquitous Roomba vacuums. At more than \$100,000 each, the 510 Packbot overcomes stairs, obstacles and debris. It can reach speeds of 5.8 MPH; perform bomb disposal, surveillance and reconnaissance; and detect hazardous materials.

■ A simpler rifle: Gabriele de Plano of gunmaker Beretta showed off a new rifle — a soldier doesn't have to carry around a ton of batteries for the rifle's components.

"Overall, we're simplifying the system; we're adding ca-

pabilities with what the soldier can do with his assault rifle," de Plano said. The rifle's components run on six AA batteries.

■ Spidey Sense: Jeffery Pietersz of the Netherlands-based TAGS-Systems not only sells things that will help soldiers rappel up and down buildings but is also a little like Spider-man himself.

"When a special forces team wants to enter a ship, they use one of our compact launchers to shoot a grapnel and hook onto a ship with a rope attached," Pietersz explained, tugging on a device and a rope attached high into the convention center rafters. "And if they want to climb the ship, they can use one of our power ascenders to assault it. This is a battery-powered ascender — it has an exchangeable battery, and it has a lifting capacity of 150 kilograms. Optimized for a fully equipped operator. It will hoist yourself up 60 meters per minute."

With that, he zipped into the air.

Army: New commander to take reins in anti-ISIS fight

BY ALEX HORTON
Stars and Stripes

SAN ANTONIO — The Army announced Friday that a new commander will take the reins this summer in the fight against Islamic State, as the fall of Mosul in Iraq looms and focus increases on Raqqa in Syria.

About 250 soldiers from the III Corps Headquarters at Fort Hood will deploy this summer across Kuwait and Iraq to take on operational control of Operation Inherent Resolve, the U.S.-led coalition assembled to defeat ISIS, an Army news release stated.

It is the third scheduled rotational deployment of a Corps command to lead the operation since 2015, when Lt. Gen. Sean MacFarland, then the III commander, was tasked with leading the effort.

The ongoing operation will be led by III Corps and Fort Hood commander Lt. Gen. Paul Funk, who will assume duties from Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, now in command of Operation Inherent Resolve, said Christina Kretchman, an Army spokeswoman.

Townsend, who arrived in Iraq with the Fort Bragg-based XVIII Airborne Corps in August, oversaw the offensive in Mosul, which began in October and took back eastern and parts of the western portion of the city. Coalition forces are now grinding toward tight alleys and streets of the Old City section, one of few remaining ISIS strongholds.

On Friday, the Army also announced about 3,500 hundred soldiers also from Fort Hood are slated for a regular rotation deployment to South Korea.

Army: Alert issued before flood deaths

Associated Press

FORT HOOD, Texas — An alert declaring all low-water crossings off-limits to vehicles was issued at Fort Hood hours before a truck carrying 12 soldiers was knocked over by floodwaters last year, killing nine, according to a military report.

The report reviewed by The Dallas Morning News indicates that on June 2, 2016, a convoy of four Army vehicles attempted to navigate a crossing overrun by more than 7 feet of floodwaters.

The military transport truck leading the convoy at the Central Texas post toppled over

when it entered the water. Three aboard the truck were pulled to safety, but nine others died.

Army officials have not publicly released the report but a copy was provided to Ricky DeLeon of San Angelo, whose son, Isaac Lee DeLeon, 19, was among those killed. The family allowed the newspaper to review the report.

The investigation placed much of the blame for DeLeon's death on Staff Sgt. Miguel Angel Colonvazquez, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan and the patrol leader in the transport convoy. He was among the nine who drowned in what ranks among the worst training disasters in the 75-year history of the Cen-

tral Texas post.

Three other unit leaders who were not with the transport have also been recommended for reprimands.

The National Weather Service had issued a flash flood warning more than an hour before the convoy left. And Fort Hood had issued its own alert six hours before the convoy got underway, declaring all low-water crossings and creek-crossings off limits to all vehicles, according to the report DeLeon was given. The Fort Hood alert was emailed to the 1st Cavalry Division level, but it apparently wasn't forwarded down to the battalion level, the report said.

Trump begins 1st foreign trip

Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — President Donald Trump, in the first stop of his maiden trip abroad, received a regal welcome Saturday in Saudi Arabia, feted by the wealthy kingdom as he aims to forge strong alliances to combat terrorism while pushing past the multiple controversies threatening to engulf his young administration.

For one day, anyway, Trump appeared successful in keeping his domestic woes an ocean away, as he basked in the pageantry that began with an elaborate airport welcome ceremony punctuated by a military flyover and a handshake from Saudi King Salman.

He later was given a tour of one of Riyadh's most opulent palaces and sat through an elaborate signing ceremony in which, one by one, the Saudis

agreed to military deals with the U.S. government and private businesses. And he largely kept a distance from reporters who were unable to ask about the tumult at home.

The visit kicked off an ambitious international debut for Trump. After two days of meetings here, Trump will travel to Israel, have an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican and meet with allies at a NATO summit in Brussels and the Group of 7 nations in Sicily.

At a ceremony at the grand Saudi Royal Court, the king placed the Collar of Abdulaziz Al Saud, the nation's highest civilian honor, around Trump's neck. The medal, given to Trump for his efforts to strengthen ties in the region, has also been bestowed on Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister There-

sa May and Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama.

On Sunday, Trump will deliver a speech on Islam and hold meetings with more than 50 Arab and Muslim leaders, who are converging on Riyadh for a regional summit focused largely on combating the Islamic State and other extremist groups. White House aides view the address as a counter to Obama's 2009 speech to the Muslim world, which Trump criticized as too apologetic for U.S. actions in the region.

Trump will call for unity in the fight against radicalism in the Muslim world, casting the challenge as a "battle between good and evil" and urging Arab leaders to "drive out the terrorists from your places of worship," according to a draft of the speech obtained by The Associated Press.

Saudis block US on terrorist sanctions

The Washington Post

Saudi Arabia, the oil-rich kingdom touted by President Donald Trump as a key ally in the fight against the Islamic State, has helped block a Trump administration proposal to impose sanctions against a Saudi branch of the terrorist group, documents show.

The plan to add Islamic State's Saudi affiliate to a U.N. list of terrorist groups was killed two weeks ago in a bureaucratic maneuver at the U.N. Security Council, records show. U.S. officials familiar with the move said the Saudis objected to the public acknowledgment of the existence of a separate Saudi offshoot of the terrorist group inside the kingdom.

The news of the maneuver comes as Saudi Arabia hosts Trump in Riyadh in his first foreign visit since becoming president. U.S. and Saudi officials are expected to use the visit to underscore cooperation between the two countries in battling Islamist extremist groups. Riyadh has contributed money, arms and fighter jets to the international coalition fighting the Islamic State in Syria.

The terrorist group in 2014 declared the existence of a separate Saudi province, or wilayat, with its own cadre of Saudi operatives seeking to overthrow the monarchy. The group has since claimed responsibility for several attacks inside the country, including a suicide bombing at a mosque in 2015 that killed 15 people.

The Trump administration's proposal to add the "Islamic State in Saudi Arabia" to a list of U.N.-sanctioned terrorist groups was formally blocked on May 5 by Senegal and Egypt, two members of the U.N. Security Council. Egyptian diplomats explained to their U.S. counterparts that they acted at the behest of Saudi Arabia, according to U.S. officials and internal emails describing the exchange.

Report: Trump says firing Comey cut pressure

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump told Russian diplomats last week his firing of "nut job" James Comey had eased the pressure on him, even as the FBI's Trump-Russia investigation had moved into the White House, according to reports Friday that pursued the president as he began his maiden foreign trip.

White House hopes that Trump could leave scandalous allegations at home were crushed in a one-two punch of revelations that landed shortly after his departure. A Washington Post report, citing anonymous sources familiar with the matter, said a senior Trump adviser is now considered a "person of interest" in the law enforcement investigation into whether Trump's campaign associates coordinated with Russia in an effort to sway the 2016 election.

And The New York Times reported that the president had told Russian officials he felt the dismissal of his FBI director had relieved "great pressure" on him.

Late Friday, the Senate intelligence committee announced that Comey had agreed to testify at an open hearing after Memorial Day.

Comey certainly will be asked about encounters that precipitated his firing, including a January dinner in which, Comey has told associates, Trump asked for his loyalty. In the Oval Office weeks later, Comey told associates, the president asked him to shut down an investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

The White House repeated its assertion that a

"thorough investigation will confirm that there was no collusion between the campaign and any foreign entity."

It did not deny the Times report that Trump was critical of Comey to the Russians the day after he fired him.

The Times reported Trump noted the Russia investigation as he told Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak of his decision to fire Comey.

"I just fired the head of the FBI. He was crazy, a real nut job," the Times reported that Trump said during the May 10 meeting. "I faced great pressure because of Russia. That's taken off."

White House spokesman Sean Spicer called the president's rhetoric part of his deal-making.

As for the separate report of a "person of interest" under investigation, the Post said the senior White House adviser "under scrutiny" is someone close to the president but did not name the person.

Among Trump's senior White House advisers are several former campaign officials, including his son-in-law Jared Kushner, Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller and Kellyanne Conway. In March, Kushner volunteered to answer lawmakers' questions about meetings he had with Russian officials during the transition.

A spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul Ryan said he would not discuss information provided in classified briefings and said the House Oversight committee already had asked for documents related to Comey's firing.

Iran's Rouhani wins 2nd term

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's President Hassan Rouhani won re-election by a wide margin Saturday, giving the moderate cleric a second four-year term to see out his agenda pushing for greater freedoms and outreach to the wider world.

The incumbent secured a commanding lead of 57 percent in a race that drew more than seven out of every 10 voters to the polls. His nearest rival in the four-man race, hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi, secured 38 percent of the vote.

As Rouhani, 68, appeared close to victory, some female drivers held out the V for victory sign and flashed their car lights on highways in Tehran's affluent north.

Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli announced the vote tallies in a televised news conference, based on a count of more than 99 percent of the ballots. He said Rouhani garnered 23.5 million votes out of 41.2 million ballots cast.

Iran's president is the second-most-powerful figure within Iran's political system. He is subordinate to the supreme leader, who is chosen by a clerical panel and has the ultimate say over all matters of state.

Election officials repeatedly extended voting hours until midnight to accommodate long lines of voters, some of whom said they waited hours to cast their ballots.

Gen. Lee is last Confederate statue removed in New Orleans

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — They were among the city's oldest landmarks, as cemented to the landscape of New Orleans as the Superdome and St. Louis Cathedral: a stone obelisk heralding white supremacy and three statues of Confederate stalwarts.

But after decades standing sentinel over this Southern city, the Confederate monuments are gone, amid a controversy that at times harked back to the divisiveness of the Civil War they commemorated.

The last of the monuments — a statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee defiantly facing north with his arms crossed — was lifted by a crane from its pedestal late Friday. As air was seen between Lee's statue and the pedestal below it, a cheer went up from the crowd who recorded history with their phones and shook hands with one another in congratulations. Many in the crowd had waited since morning.

"I never thought I would see this day!" shouted Melanie Morel-Ensminger with joy. "But look! It's happening."

Lee's was the last of four monuments to Confederate-era figures to be removed under a 2015 City Council vote on a proposal by Mayor Mitch Landrieu. It caps a nearly two-yearlong process that has been railed against by those who feel the monuments are a part of Southern heritage and honor the dead. But removal of the monuments has

drawn praise from those who saw them as brutal reminders of slavery and symbols of the historic oppression of black people.

Landrieu called for the monuments' removal in the lingering emotional aftermath of the 2015 massacre of nine black parishioners at a South Carolina church. The killer, Dylann Roof, was an avowed racist who brandished Confederate battle flags in photos, recharging the debate about whether Confederate emblems represent racism or an honorable heritage.

While Roof's actions spurred a debate in many parts of the South about whether it was appropriate to fly the Confederate battle emblem — and many places have taken it down — the reaction in New Orleans seemed to go even further, knocking away at even weightier, heavier parts of history.

Landrieu drew blistering criticism from monument supporters and even some political allies. But in explaining his reasoning, the mayor has repeatedly said they do not represent the diversity and future of New Orleans.

Of the four monuments, Lee's was easily the most prominent: The bronze statue alone is close to 20 feet tall. It's a bronze sculpture of Lee looking toward the northern horizon from atop a roughly 60-foot-tall column.

A statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee was the last of four monuments to Confederate-era figures to be removed.

Fighters escort flight with unruly passenger

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Two U.S. fighter jets were summoned Friday to escort a flight from Los Angeles to Hawaii after an unruly man was subdued by passengers and flight attendants, who used a drink cart to block him from the front of the plane.

Passengers noticed the man, identified by law enforcement officials as Anil Uskanil, 25, of Turkey, before the plane even took off.

Mark and Donna Basden were among the first to board the plane Friday and found a laptop in the seat pocket of Mark Basden. The Albuquerque, N.M., couple assumed it was from the previous flight.

A flight attendant said it must belong to a man in the bathroom.

Then a "disheveled-looking fellow" walked out, Donna Basden said.

Mark Basden handed the man the laptop, telling him it had been in his seat. He

said the man scowled at him, took the laptop, opened it and closed it and then tried to sit in another seat in first class.

Donna Basden said the man "clearly looked out of place," but he didn't say anything. The flight attendant asked to see his boarding pass, then when she looked at it she told him he was in row 35 and sent him to the back of the plane.

The trouble with Uskanil actually began about eight hours before the flight departed. He was arrested before dawn at Los Angeles International Airport for opening a door that led onto an airfield ramp, according to Los Angeles Airport Police, who provided Uskanil's identity to The Associated Press.

Police said Uskanil had been drinking but didn't meet the criteria for public drunkenness. He was arrested on suspicion of misdemeanor trespassing, was given a date to appear in court and was allowed to take the flight to Honolulu.

Passenger Grant Arakelian said, "He was very quiet, moving very sluggish. He was trying to approach the cabin, like where the captain is."

Lee Lorenzen and his wife, Penny Lorenzen, of Orange County, Calif., were sitting in first class and saw a "really serious look" on the flight attendant's face.

The flight attendant ran down the aisle with her serving cart and blocked the doorway separating first class from the rest of the plane.

He said the man was pushing against the cart, trying to get through. At that point, passengers came up from behind and grabbed him. He was restrained in his seat with duct tape for the rest of the flight.

As Uskanil was subdued, the cockpit called for help. Federal agents were sent to wait for the flight's arrival and two F-22 Raptors from the Hawaii Air National Guard scrambled to escort the plane.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Snapping turtle walks into elementary school

VA NEWPORT NEWS — A snapping turtle arrived on the front steps of a Newport News elementary school just in time for class.

The Daily Press reported that a 25- to 30-pound turtle was discovered in mud on the ramp to Riverside Elementary School a little before 8 a.m. on Thursday.

School spokeswoman Michelle Price said staff members found the turtle and contacted police. She said students weren't on campus yet.

Andy Lunsford, park operations superintendent for the city, says park rangers see snapping turtles out in the wild, but it's been a while since a snapping turtle has made its way into a school or shopping mall.

Governor forgives boy for taking hazelnut, pen

OR SALEM — The governor of Oregon has pardoned a fourth-grade boy who swiped a hazelnut and a pen during a recent tour of the state Capitol.

Gov. Kate Brown on Thursday tweeted out a photo of the boy's apology letter along with the hashtag #cutestmailever and the caption, 'I think we can forgive Samuel, don't you think, Oregonians?' The tweet immediately got many likes and retweets.

In the pencil-written letter, Samuel explains that he visited the Capitol Building on a classroom tour on April 19 and took the items.

"These things were not mine and it was wrong for me to take them. I'm very sorry," he wrote. "I hope you and the people of Oregon can forgive me."

Included with the letter were

the pen and \$1 to cover the cost of the stolen hazelnut.

In a return letter, Brown said she accepted his apology and forgave him on behalf of all Oregonians.

Planet Hollywood sued for room mannequin

NV LAS VEGAS — A tourist is suing a Las Vegas Strip hotel, claiming a life-sized mannequin in his darkened room caused him to flee and suffer injuries.

Kent Jacobs Boutwell, of Southern California, filed the lawsuit Monday against the Planet Hollywood casino-hotel in Clark County District Court, seeking at least \$10,000 in damages.

Caesars Entertainment declined to comment on the lawsuit, citing pending litigation. On the use of mannequins in their nearly 2,500 hotel rooms, a spokeswoman said Planet Hollywood has traditionally been decorated with memorabilia, which is now being removed as part of a renovation that will wrap up this year.

Boutwell said he was shocked and surprised by a human figure when he entered his darkened hotel room in the heart of the Strip in May 2015. As he tried to escape the room thinking that there was a person inside who was there to hurt him, he said he suffered serious injuries.

It turned out that the human figure was a mannequin wearing a "Miller Lite" racing suit that was locked in a glass cabinet.

Squatter answers door naked; resists arrest

FL BIG PINE KEY — Authorities say a Louisiana woman living illegally in a vacant home in Florida an-

swered the door naked when a sheriff's deputy stopped by to investigate.

Monroe County Sheriff's spokeswoman Becky Herrin said a real estate agent called to report that someone was staying at the home on Big Pine Key without the owner's permission.

Deputy Richard Wang looked in the window and saw Felicia-mae Farrington, 36, naked. He knocked on the door and she answered, still naked. Farrington refused to get dressed and investigators said she fought with Wang as he tried to take her into custody. The struggle continued when other deputies arrived.

Farrington is from Harvey, La. She's been charged with trespassing, battery on a law enforcement officer and resisting arrest.

Costumed dinosaur spooks carriage horses

SC CHARLESTON — Someone wearing an orange dinosaur costume spooked two carriage horses in Charleston, and the driver was hurt when he fell as the horses backed away.

Charleston police spokesman Charles Francis said in a statement that someone wearing a Tyrannosaurus rex costume started growling Thursday when the carriage passed. Francis said the horses were startled, backing up and sending the carriage into a parked vehicle.

The carriage driver fell off and a wheel rolled over his leg. He went to a hospital with minor injuries.

Francis said no one on the carriage was hurt, nor were the horses. One horse fell briefly.

Phil Bailey with Palmetto Carriage Works said the person in the costume ran away.

Man charged in robbery on expressway

IL CHICAGO — A suburban Chicago man suspected of taking part in the robbery of a man by deliberately crashing into his car and then stealing \$120 from him at gunpoint has been arrested.

The Chicago Tribune reported that Peter Ely, 55, of Mount Prospect, appeared in court May 13. A judge ordered him held in lieu of \$2 million bail.

The robbery occurred on Jan. 6, 2016. Authorities said a man was driving on Interstate 90 near Bryn Mawr when a van struck his vehicle from behind. They allege that Ely climbed from the van, put a gun to the driver's head and took the money.

Prosecutors said the van's driver has already been arrested and convicted. They said the other person in the van has not been captured.

Prison visitation canceled due to flu

MT DEER LODGE — Visitation at the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge has been canceled until further notice to avoid spreading influenza from inmates to visitors.

Department of Corrections spokeswoman Adrienne Cotton said Thursday that nine inmates have confirmed cases of the flu. She said prison staff are restricting the movements of sick inmates and having inmates wear masks.

Influenza is spread from person to person through direct contact; contact with droplets made when people cough, sneeze or talk; or from contaminated surfaces.

Prison officials will advise the public when visitation will resume.

From wire reports

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NHL closes in on 1-goal game record

Associated Press

The NHL could be headed for a record-breaking number of one-goal games this postseason.

There have been 48 through Friday night, including 26 settled in overtime. Four more and the 2007 record of 51 one-goal games will fall.

"I think just throughout the league it's so tight now," Senators winger Clarke MacArthur told The Canadian Press. "Even the best team. You look at Pittsburgh — they've got All-Stars, but all the games are just (close)."

Twelve of the Senators' 16 playoff games have been decided by a goal with eight resulting in wins (8-4-0). It's not an accident either. Ottawa plays an extremely defensive brand of hockey designed by coach Guy Boucher, who arrived last May.

Boucher's group was just

above average with 40 games decided by a goal during the regular season. Detroit led the league with 45.

"There's so many good players nowadays that can score very easily or make plays with not much time and space — that's really what we try and focus on in here is to key in on their good guys and not give them odd-man rushes," Ottawa's Mike Hoffman said.

The 27-year-old Hoffman said he thinks teams are trying to limit mistakes against high-powered opponents with simple hockey. Playing careless, he said, means, "you're going to get pounded. You give teams odd-man rushes the whole game, they're going to score on a good amount of them."

Pittsburgh was the highest-scoring team during the regular season, but had mustered only three goals through the first three games against Ottawa. Sidney Crosby, who led the NHL with 44 goals, had one

in the series.

That changed Friday night, when the Penguins scored three goals and evened the best-of-seven series at two games apiece with a 3-2 victory. Crosby scored one of the goals and added an assist on another.

"You defend them well," MacArthur said. "It's not like the old days where — I don't want to say they didn't key on the top players — but you're keying on the top players now. You're literally building your shift around keeping them off the scoreboard. I'd hate to be one of the top guys."

MacArthur wondered if increased speed and fewer enforcers across the league made for more even competition.

"There's just no bad skaters really anymore," he said. "There used to be five, six guys on each team where you're like, 'That guy can't really move out here.' He's more of a shutdown guy or crash-and-bang (type).

Everyone can skate now. Every D pairing. Every guy can move."

Stellar goaltending might also be helping. The collective save percentage so far in these playoffs was .921 through Wednesday, ahead of the .917 mark last season.

Winning the game's top prize inevitably means winning close games and it's perhaps not surprising that the team with the most one-goal wins has taken the last four Cups, including Pittsburgh with eight in 2016. Ottawa is the current leader.

"It's so tight," Predators coach Peter Laviolette said after a one-goal win over Anaheim earlier this week. "The scores at this time of the year generally are fairly low. And you wonder if 1-0 is going to do it for the night."

The Ducks won 12 games by a goal when the current record of 51 was set, including three of four against the Senators in the Stanley Cup Final.

Penguins hold off Senators, tie best-of-seven series

Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario — Matt Murray was back — and so was Sidney Crosby.

Crosby had a goal and an assist, Murray made 22 saves in his first start of the playoffs and the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the Ottawa Senators 3-2 on Friday night to even the Eastern Conference finals at 2-2.

Crosby had only one point as the defending champion Penguins dropped two of the first three, leading to questions about his health following a jarring concussion in the second round.

"I think he leads by example and I thought he had one of his best games tonight," Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said. "But it doesn't just stop with Sid, it goes down the bench."

Murray started for the first time in more than six weeks.

"All I can really do is kind

of jump in and try not to think about it," Murray said. "Just try and play with the flow of the game and kind of let yourself get lost in the game a little bit. I thought I did a pretty good job of that tonight. There's a lot of ways I could have been a lot better, I thought, but all together felt good about the game."

Sullivan turned to Murray after Marc-Andre Fleury was chased in the first period Wednesday night in the Penguins' 5-1 loss in Game 3.

"I thought Matt was solid," Sullivan said. "He made some timely saves for us when we needed it. He has a calm demeanor about him. I thought he was tracking the puck extremely well. And certainly, he made a couple of key saves for us at key times."

Brian Dumoulin and Olli Maatta added goals to help Pittsburgh take a 3-0 lead mid-

way through the second period. Clarke MacArthur and Tom Pyatt scored for Ottawa.

"They were the better team tonight for two periods and they deserved the game," Senators coach Guy Boucher said.

Game 5 is Sunday in Pittsburgh.

Murray made a strong stop on Mike Hoffman less than two minutes into the game and denied Viktor Stalberg on a pair of follow-up opportunities. The goalie made maybe his best stop on Derick Brassard's backhand, kicking the shot away with his right pad.

"He made a really big save early on with his leg save when the guy kind of went around him after a rebound and I think right after that our team went into the offensive side and really played at the puck and gave us that momentum," teammate Chris Kunitz said. "I think

we did an all-around good job tonight."

Fleury started the first 15 games for Pittsburgh with Murray mostly sidelined by injury.

"I don't want to make this about myself," Fleury said after the game. "We scored some goals. That was nice. We won. It's good."

Pittsburgh opened the scoring with 46 seconds left in the first period when Maatta went down the left side and fired a short-side shot past goalie Craig Anderson. Crosby set up the play.

Pittsburgh's already battered defense took another blow late in the first when Bobby Ryan hit Chad Ruhwedel. Ian Cole immediately throttled Ryan, as Ruhwedel was down on the ice. Ryan somehow escaped a charging penalty on the play, and Cole drew the only call for roughing.

Cavaliers overwhelm Celtics, go up 2-0

Associated Press

BOSTON — An NBA playoff-record, 41-point halftime lead. A franchise record for total points. A 13th consecutive playoff win, tying another league record.

And LeBron James says the Cleveland Cavaliers can still do better.

"I believe we've got another level, as well," he said after Cleveland steamrolled the Boston Celtics 130-86 on Friday to take a 2-0 lead in the Eastern Conference finals. "As well as we played tonight, we've got a couple of things we can do better. There's no complacency for us now. But we like where we're headed."

Minutes after the NBA announced the three finalists for the MVP award — and James wasn't among them — the Cavaliers star scored 30 points before resting in the fourth quarter. Kevin Love had 21 points and 12 rebounds for Cleveland, which led by 14 points after one quarter, by 72-31 at the half and by 46 after three.

Even with all of the starters sitting out the fourth, the 130 points was the most ever scored by the Cavaliers in a playoff game.

Kyrie Irving had 23 points for the Cavaliers, who return home with a chance to finish off the Celtics in Cleveland. It would be the third straight sweep this postseason for the defending NBA champions, who also won the last three games of last year's finals.

Game 3 is Sunday.

"It's one game. I don't care if you win by 200 points," Cavaliers coach Tyronn Lue said. "We're going back home, we're not going to get comfortable. We understand that this is a good team. They're not No. 1 in the East for no reason."

The Celtics played the second half without Isaiah Thomas, who had a strained

right hip. Celtics coach Brad Stevens said the star point guard had a nagging injury that he aggravated a week ago during the second-round series against Washington.

Asked how much that hurt his team, Stevens said, "Not 44 points worth."

"I don't want to put that on any one guy," he said. "Ultimately, they were terrific. We were poor. You've got to be able to pick up the slack, certainly, when other guys aren't available."

With both teams going to their benches in the fourth, the only suspense was whether the Celtics could avoid the worst playoff loss in franchise history. The Orlando Magic beat them by 47 points in the first round of the 1995 postseason.

Still, it was the worst home playoff loss ever for the most-decorated franchise in NBA history.

"It is embarrassing," guard Avery Bradley said. "As a man, as a basketball team, it will say a lot about us how we respond."

Thomas finished with just a pair of free throws, missing all six shots from the field. Rookie Jaylen Brown scored a career playoff-high 19 points for Boston.

The game tipped off about 15 minutes after the NBA announced that James Harden, Russell Westbrook and Kawhi Leonard were the finalists for the MVP award — the first time since 2008 that James won't finish in the top three.

Lue chuckled when he found out after the game that James was not a finalist.

"You've got to give the award to different people every now and then," Lue said. "But to me, LeBron's the MVP."

James, a four-time MVP, said he did not see the list before the game.

"My only job is to try to be the MVP for this team every night," he said. "I know what I bring to the table. This league knows

what I bring to the table."

James still has a chance for a fourth NBA title — and second in a row. Maybe Golden State can figure out a way to slow him down, or San Antonio, if it can come back in the West. The Celtics haven't found a way, and they're running out of time.

James had 22 points in the first half, when he had six of his seven assists and all three of his blocked shots, including a chase-down rejection of Bradley that was reminiscent of the one against Andre Iguodala in Game 7 of the NBA Finals.

That one was critical to clinching Cleveland's first championship since the Browns won the NFL title in 1964.

After outsprinting the Cavaliers to the No. 1 seed in the East and home-court advantage in the final weeks of the season, the Celtics squandered it by losing both games in Boston — without ever having a lead.

"It's hard to take," Al Horford said. "We've worked really hard and put ourselves in this position to be here. It's been tough for our group. Tonight was real rough, there's no other way to put it. It's definitely a low point for our group."

Tip-ins

Cavaliers: James is the first player with at least 30 points in eight straight playoff games since Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in 1970. ... James played just 33 minutes — a low for this postseason and just the second time he played fewer than 40 in the 2017 playoffs.

Celtics: Stevens started Gerald Green in place of Amir Johnson. Green made his first two shots — both three-pointers — but finished with six points. ... There was a large contingent of New England Patriots sitting courtside, including tight end Rob Gronkowski, backup quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo and owner Robert Kraft.

Bucs sign Fitzpatrick as backup for QB Winston

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Buccaneers agreed to terms Friday on a one-year contract with quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick as a veteran backup to Jameis Winston.

Fitzpatrick spent the last two seasons with the New York Jets, who allowed the quarterback's contract to expire in February, making him a free agent.

The Buccaneers also announced that they waived quarterback Sean Renfree to

make room for Fitzpatrick.

Financial terms were not immediately available. ESPN and NFL Network reported that the one-year deal is worth \$3 million.

The 34-year-old Fitzpatrick set a Jets franchise record in 2015 with 31 touchdown passes and was re-signed by New York to a one-year, \$12 million deal. But he slumped badly as the Jets got off to a 1-5 start. He was benched twice and finished with just 12 TD passes and 17 interceptions.

Because his \$10 million bonus was actually prorated over two years to help with the salary cap last year, Fitzpatrick will cost the Jets \$5 million in "dead money" on the cap this year.

Fitzpatrick will be entering his 13th NFL season, but has never made the playoffs. He was within a win of reaching the postseason with the Jets in 2015, but threw interceptions in New York's final three drives in a season-ending loss to Buffalo.

He might have a chance at

fulfilling that goal this season, albeit as a backup, with the Buccaneers, who went 9-7 and just missed out on the playoffs last year.

Winston, the first overall pick in the 2015 draft, has started all 32 games in his NFL career and is one of the league's rising stars with 8,132 yards passing and 50 touchdowns in his first two seasons. But the Buccaneers were in the market for an experienced backup after Mike Glennon signed with Chicago in March.

Texas wins again, stretch streak to 10

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Texas Rangers are the hottest team in baseball.

That hasn't done much for them in the standings because they're in the same division as Houston, the best team in the majors so far this season.

Mike Napoli and Joey Gallo hit homers, giving Texas enough offense to help it hold on for a 5-3 win over the Detroit Tigers on Friday night and a 10th straight victory.

"We don't talk about a streak or anything," Napoli said.

Even though the second-place Rangers have baseball's longest winning streak since Boston won 11 straight late last year, they have made up just two games on the AL West-

leading Astros, who have a 6½ game cushion. Texas manager Jeff Banister insisted he doesn't pay much attention to the standings because it's too early in the season.

"It's still May, right?" he asked.

Nick Martinez (1-2) gave up one unearned run and four hits over five innings, ending an 11-start winless streak that dated to Aug. 5, 2015. Matt Bush earned his fifth save in six chances, but it didn't come easy. He struck out Alex Avila with runners on the corners and two outs after shortstop Elvis Andrus' throwing error allowed the Tigers to pull within two runs.

Daniel Norris (2-3) allowed five runs and seven hits while striking out eight over 5⅔ in-

nings. He has won only one of his last six starts.

Detroit, without Miguel Cabrera and Victor Martinez, struggled at the plate with only one run in the fourth, sixth and ninth innings. Martinez missed his first game on the paternity list and Cabrera sat out a third straight game with an oblique strain.

Paying the price

Norris had a rough night and Texas took advantage. He hit Shin-Soo Choo to load the bases in the third and walked Andrus to force a run home in the two-run inning.

Norris fell behind Napoli in the fourth and he sent a 2-0 pitch over the wall in left field for his ninth home run.

"It's taken him a little while

to get going," Banister said. "We feel confident that he's a guy that's in a good place now."

Norris also threw two balls without a strike against Gallo before he sent a line drive deep into the seats in right field for a two-run shot that put the Rangers up 5-2 in the sixth inning.

"We were going away, but (Gallo) covers the plate so well and he crushed it," Norris said.

Slugger's snack

Cabrera unveiled a new business venture, Miggy Foods. The first product is Bitbits, a small ball-shaped candy that comes in a variety of flavors, including strawberry cheesecake. A candy bar is expected to hit the market within the next six months.

Nunez helps Giants rally past Cardinals in 9th inning

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Eduardo Nunez doubled in two runs in the ninth inning and the San Francisco Giants rallied to defeat the St. Louis Cardinals 6-5 on Friday night.

The win improves the Giants to 7-15 away from San Francisco. They have won six of seven overall.

The Cardinals dropped their third straight and fourth of six. It's their fourth three-game skid of the season.

Bryan Morris (2-0) pitched a perfect eighth inning, striking out two, to pick up the victory. Mark Melancon earned his seventh save.

The Giants scored twice off Cardinals closer Seung Hwan Oh (0-2) in the ninth to take the lead. It was Oh's second blown save of the year.

Brandon Belt and Brandon Crawford singled ahead of Nunez, who hit his 10th double of the season to left center. It was a back and forth game with the Giants overcoming a 2-0 deficit with a three-run seventh. Dexter Fowler replied with a three-run home run in

the bottom of the inning but the Giants scored once in the eighth and won it in the ninth.

Giants starter Matt Moore entered with a 10.50 ERA in four road games, but went six innings and gave up two runs and five hits. He walked three and struck out five.

Michael Wacha got his first start in 11 days. He allowed four hits over six innings, struck out five and walked three.

Dodgers 7, Marlins 2: Alex Wood (5-0) pitched 7⅓ scoreless innings for his third straight start without allowing a run, and Cody Bellinger, Chris Taylor and Brett Eibner homered to lead host Los Angeles to a victory over Miami in a game that saw benches empty in the ninth.

Rays 5, Yankees 4: Evan Longoria got four hits, including a tiebreaking single off Tyler Clippard (0-2) in the eighth inning to lead host Tampa Bay past New York.

Brewers 6, Cubs 3: Jett Bandy and Domingo Santana hit two-run singles to lead visiting Milwaukee past Chicago.

Phillies 7, Pirates 2: Jeremy Hellickson (5-1) allowed

two runs — one earned — and two hits over six innings, then left after grabbing his right side while running out an RBI double in the seventh as visiting Philadelphia ended a four-game losing streak.

Mets 3, Angels 0: Jacob deGrom (3-1) dominated until dealing with a torn callous on the ring finger of his throwing hand in the seventh, then escaped a no-out, bases-loaded jam that inning to help host New York avoid what would have been its first eight-game skid since losing 11 straight in 2004.

Rockies 12, Reds 6: Alexi Amarista hit a three-run homer off Lisalberto Bonilla (0-2) and a run-scoring single during visiting Colorado's eight-run, sixth-inning rally in its victory over Cincinnati.

Braves 7, Nationals 4: Nick Markakis hit a go-ahead single off Enny Romero (2-2) in the eighth inning and Kurt Suzuki added a two-run homer during host Atlanta's victory over Washington.

Indians 5, Astros 3: Edwin Encarnacion hit a two-run homer and Jason Kipnis and

Lonnie Chisenhall had solo shots during visiting Cleveland's victory over Houston.

Orioles 5, Blue Jays 3 (10): Wellington Castillo hit a pair of homers, including a go-ahead two-run shot in the 10th inning, to lead host Baltimore over Toronto.

Twins 4, Royals 3 (10): Pinch hitter Kennys Vargas launched a tying, two-run homer in the ninth inning and Jorge Polanco hit a sacrifice fly in the 10th, lifting host Minnesota over Kansas City.

Athletics 3, Red Sox 2 (10): Mark Canha hit a leadoff homer in the 10th, one inning after Jackie Bradley Jr. robbed a potential game-winning homer and host Oakland beat Boston.

White Sox 2, Mariners 1 (10): Melky Cabrera doubled in the go-ahead run with two outs in the top of the 10th inning to lift visiting Chicago past Seattle.

Diamondbacks 10, Padres 1: Jake Lamb had two home runs and five RBIs as visiting Arizona coasted after an eight-run first inning to crush San Diego.