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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Reservists sue over housing benefits

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Army reservists deployed to

Europe were wrongly denied housing allowance payments, subjected to humiliating criminal investigations and forced into debt by the service after the Army “willfully disregarded” its own policies to refuse benefits owed, according to a federal court complaint.

The complaint, filed last month in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, accuses the Army of “gross negligence,” saying it caused financial and professional damage by intentionally denying benefits it should have paid.

The lawsuit also says the soldiers faced threats that “jeopardized their careers and security clearances by flagging them as subjects to fraud or larceny investigations.”

The dispute began in 2016 after reservist soldiers deployed to Europe and received

benefits authorized by the Army, which included basic housing allowance (BAH) for their stateside homes.

Full-time servicemembers normally receive either BAH or overseas housing allowance; however, when reservists mobilize overseas, they receive BAH because they cannot work the civilian jobs that pay their mortgages and rent. They also receive OHA when ordered by the Army to live off post, as the plaintiffs were in Germany because of a lack of available housing.

The benefit is spelled out in the Joint Federal Travel Regulations, which govern how allowances are paid: “A Service member called/ordered to active duty in support of a contingency operation is authorized primary residence-based BAH/OHA beginning on the first active duty day. ... This rate continues for the duration of the tour.” Army regulations reiterate the policy.

Months into their respective deployments, the finance office at U.S. Army Europe decided the benefits no longer should

be paid, said Patrick Hughes, the Washington attorney representing the seven soldiers who filed the lawsuit.

Army spokeswoman Lt. Col. Nina Hill declined to comment on the case, citing “ongoing litigation.”

The Army Reserve and National Guard officers, who were dispatched to Europe for contingency operations, are seeking to restore their benefits and to abolish Army-imposed debts that have been levied.

During the past two years, Hughes said, soldiers have seen entire paychecks wiped out through wage garnishments as the Army seeks to collect on debts that range from \$13,000 to \$94,000.

Hundreds of reservists could have been affected by the Army’s actions, Hughes said.

The court is expected to respond to the complaint within 30 days. If it’s accepted as the proper venue, the soldiers will move to certify the case as a class-action lawsuit that other reservists could join.

Dozens killed in protests as US Embassy opens in Jerusalem

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israeli soldiers shot and killed at least 52 Palestinians during mass protests along the Gaza border on Monday. It was the deadliest day there since a devastating 2014 cross-border war and cast a shadow over Israel’s festive inauguration of the new U.S. Embassy in contested Jerusalem.

In a show of anger fueled by the embassy move, protesters set tires on fire, sending plumes of black smoke into the air, and hurled firebombs and stones toward Israeli troops across the border. Later on Monday, Israeli forces fired from tanks, sending protesters fleeing to take cover.

The military said its troops came under fire in some areas, and said protesters tried to break through the border fence. It said troops shot and killed

three Palestinians trying to plant a bomb.

U.S. President Donald Trump said in a video message played at the embassy inauguration — which took place just 40 miles from the bloodshed on the Gaza border — that he remains committed to “facilitating a lasting peace agreement” between Israelis and Palestinians.

“A great day for Israel!” Trump tweeted earlier Monday.

However, Monday’s steadily climbing death toll and wall-to-wall condemnation of the embassy move by the Arab world raised new doubts about Trump’s ambitions to broker what he once said would be the Mideast “deal of the century.”

By late afternoon, at least 52 Palestinians, including five minors, were killed, the Gaza Health Ministry said. One of the minors was identified as a girl.

The ministry said 1,204 Palestinians were shot and wounded, including 116 who were in serious or critical condition.

The statement said about 1,200 others suffered other types of injuries, including from tear gas.

At the embassy ceremony in Jerusalem, Trump son-in-law and chief Mideast adviser Jared Kushner placed the blame on the Gaza protesters.

“As we have seen from the protests of the last month and even today those provoking violence are part of the problem and not part of the solution,” he said.

The new embassy will temporarily operate from an existing U.S. consulate, until a decision has been made on a permanent location.

Moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem — a key

Trump campaign promise — infuriated the Palestinians, who seek east Jerusalem as a future capital.

Monday marked the biggest showdown in years between Israel’s military and Gaza’s Hamas rulers along the volatile border. The sides have largely observed a cease-fire since the 2014 war — their third in a decade.

The timing of Monday’s events was deeply symbolic to Israel and the Palestinians.

The U.S. said it chose the date to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Israel’s establishment.

But it also marks the anniversary of what Palestinians call their “nakba,” or catastrophe, a reference to the uprooting of hundreds of thousands who fled or were expelled during the 1948 war surrounding Israel’s creation.

My Lai company commander dies

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY

Stars and Stripes

Capt. Ernest L. Medina, the company commander accused and acquitted of responsibility for killing hundreds of Vietnamese civilians in the My Lai Massacre, has died.

Medina, 81, died May 8, according to an obituary by Thielen Funeral Home of Marinette, Wis. Cause of death was not listed.

As commander of Company C of the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Infantry Brigade (Light) of the 23rd (Americal) Division, Medina was one of some 30 soldiers the Army accused of participating in or covering up the murders.

On March 18, 1968, Medina and the three platoons of his infantry company entered My Lai village in South Vietnam's south central coastal region. They had suffered losses in the previous few weeks while never having engaged with the enemy and were urged to be aggressive in the village they'd been told would contain only enemy fighters.

The village in fact contained only unarmed old men, women, children and babies. But over the next few hours, soldiers went on a rampage of murder, rape and torture, in which at least 347 civilians died, according to Army investigation records.

The mission was halted after helicopter pilot Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson and his two gunners confronted the troops, rescued a dozen villagers and reported the massacre. But Americal Division officers reported the mission as a success against enemy fighters and buried Thompson's report. The truth came out more than a year later after Ron Ridenhour, an enlisted soldier who'd heard from friends about the massacre, sent letters to Congress.

The public learned of it after journalist Seymour Hersh got wind of the court-martial of platoon leader Lt. William Calley and interviewed him and other participants. Calley, who claimed he was following orders, was the sole soldier convicted at court-martial — of premeditated mass murder — and subsequently served a little over three years under house arrest after initially receiving a life sentence. Calley lives in Atlanta.

Thompson and gunner Larry Colburn testified at Medina's court-martial that they watched him shoot to death an unarmed, injured woman. Medina testified that he'd been unaware of the killings. The court-martial panel of officers acquitted him after deliberating for an hour.

In an interview with The Associated Press in 1988, Medina called the My Lai killings a "horrendous thing."

"I have regrets for it, but I have no guilt over it because I didn't cause it," he said.

Reagan sets sail for sea trials ahead of patrol

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier is conducting sea trials this week in preparation for its upcoming deployment.

The USS Ronald Reagan set sail Friday after finishing a two-day "fast cruise" at its homeport in Yokosuka. The simulated underway period tested the ship's "equipment and systems, as well as the crew's ability to perform operations," the Navy said.

The Ronald Reagan had been at Yokosuka undergoing maintenance since January. Teams from the carrier, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, the U.S. Naval Ship Repair Facility and Japan Regional Maintenance Center worked on the aircraft carrier for the past four months to make necessary improvements, according to the Navy.

The maintenance period focused on repairs and changes to two aircraft elevators, the pilothouse, parts of the flight deck and the propulsion plant system, the Navy said in January. The projects included more than 99,000 man hours of work from the

ship's crew.

This week's sea trials will include "the execution of high-speed turns, sea and anchor evolutions, precision anchoring trials" and "testing of the ship's self-defense weapons system," a Navy statement said. On Monday, the Ronald Reagan conducted a replenishment at sea with Military Sealift Command's civilian-crewed USNS Cesar Chavez. The ship "provides fuel, food, ordnance, spare parts and other supplies to Navy throughout the world," the Navy said.

On Sunday, sailors tested the carrier's fire-suppressing "countermeasure wash-down system," which spews a special firefighting foam from nozzles during emergencies. The Navy released photos of crews scrubbing the white foam across the Ronald Reagan's hangar bay.

"This is all about doing what we've been trained to do," Quartermaster 3rd Class Miguel Medrano, one of three qualified master helmsmen aboard the Ronald Reagan, said in the statement.

The sea trials are scheduled to end Friday. The Navy has not announced when the carrier will officially begin its next patrol.

Reagan sailor accused of drug smuggling

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Japanese police have accused a 24-year-old USS Ronald Reagan sailor of smuggling drugs into the country.

Police submitted documents to prosecutors Monday saying the unnamed sailor violated Japan's Narcotics and Psychotropics Control Law, according to a Kanagawa Prefectural Police spokesman who declined to provide further details.

The Navy and Naval Criminal Investigative Service are cooperating with Japanese authorities in an investigation regarding "a U.S. servicemember's alleged involvement in drug distribution," Yokosuka Naval Base spokesman Jim O'Donnell told Stars and Stripes on Monday.

"The Navy takes any and all illegal drug use very seriously and has a zero-tolerance policy for illegal drug use, possession or distribution," said O'Donnell, who would not give further details because of the ongoing investigation.

The incident is connected to an investigation that began in February regarding a possible drug ring involving at least 12 Yokosuka-based sailors suspected of buying, selling and using drugs such as LSD and ecstasy. Investigators are looking into whether they bought and sold the drugs over the internet and if they distributed them to Japanese citizens off base, according to a February Wall Street Journal report.

The Ronald Reagan sailor is accused of sending about 18 grams of illegal drugs through international mail from Canada, Japan's Kyodo News and Asahi newspaper reported Monday. Yokohama Customs discovered that a suspicious package addressed to the sailor's off-base apartment contained synthetic drugs.

The servicemember's home was searched, and officials discovered more suspected synthetic drugs, the Asahi report said.

The sailor remained silent throughout voluntary police questioning, Asahi reported. Kyodo wrote that he is denying involvement.

US foe has early lead in Iraq vote

From staff and wire reports

A coalition led by a firebrand Shiite cleric whose militia killed hundreds of Americans in the Iraq War emerged as the early front-runner Monday with half the vote counted in Iraq's national election.

Partial returns from Saturday's balloting — the first since Iraq declared victory over the Islamic State militant group — were announced by the country's electoral commission and put Muqtada al-Sadr's political alliance in the lead in four provinces, including Baghdad.

Remembered for leading an insurgency against U.S. forces and inciting sectarian bloodshed against the Sunni population, al-Sadr has in recent years sought to recast himself as a populist, railing against corruption and failing services and striking a political alliance with Iraq's secularists and Communist Party.

None of the competing blocs appears on track to win a majority in parliament and name a prime minister. As the results stand, al-Sadr's bloc will be able to take a leading role in the political horse-trading to find a compromise candidate. Because al-Sadr did not run for a seat, he cannot become prime minister, but his deputies in parliament are expected to follow his directives.

The election came as Iraq is struggling to bring down soaring unemployment and reintegrate its disenfranchised Sunni minority. More than 2 million people are displaced by war, most of them Sunnis.

Also at issue is how to integrate the country's vast and predominantly Shiite militia structure into the security forces. The militias, known collectively as the Hashd Shaabi, are key conduit of influence for Iran into Iraq and Syria, where Tehran has sent many of them

to fight.

An electoral alliance of Hashd-linked candidates, headed by militia commander Hadi al-Amiri, is currently in second place in the election returns.

Al-Amiri maintains close ties to Iran. He also has said he is open to U.S. training of Iraq's military and regularly meets with U.S. diplomats in Baghdad.

Al-Sadr commands his own militia that fought against ISIS militants, but he has disavowed any Iranian and U.S. influence in Iraq, and he has called for the full withdrawal of U.S. troops. His former Mahdi Army fought American forces for years. In 2014, he reorganized his fighters under the name the Peace Brigades — Saraya Salam.

So far, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi is performing poorly in early returns, coming in third and fourth places in most provinces, and fifth in Baghdad.

New fissure prompts more Hawaii evacuations

Associated Press

PAHOA, Hawaii — A new volcanic fissure on Hawaii's Big Island sent gases and lava exploding into the air, prompting officials to issue calls for more evacuations as residents awaited a possible major eruption at Kilauea volcano's summit.

Hawaii County Civil Defense issued an emergency cellphone alert after the fissure was discovered early Sunday morning. The agency said one "unidentified structure" was destroyed by the new vent, bringing the total number of homes and other buildings lost to lava to nearly 40.

Residents living near the fissure were told to evacuate, and two nearby community centers were serving as shelters for people and pets.

Lava spread across hundreds of yards of private land, and loud explosions rocked the neighborhood not far from the Leilani Estates subdivision, where more than a dozen other active vents opened over the past week.

The new opening still showed signs of activity Sunday afternoon and was about 1,000 feet long, officials said.

Few fissures, ground deformation and abundant volcanic gases indicate eruptions on the eastern flank of Kilauea are likely to continue, the U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said.

"The appearance of the fissures in the past couple of days does not change the overall picture or concern," USGS scientist Steve Brantley said.

Most of the lava outbreaks have occurred in and around Leilani Estates, where molten rock has burst through the ground, destroying more than two dozen homes and resulting in evacuation orders for nearly 2,000 people.

The U.S. Geological Survey has reported nearly 20 active fissures. One that opened Saturday night was spattering, but no flow had formed.

Ex-death row inmate accused of sex trafficking

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Isaiah McCoy walked out of a Delaware prison a free man in January 2017, five years after being convicted of murder and sentenced to death.

A judge found him not guilty at a retrial, and McCoy soon began enjoying the limelight that came with his exoneration. He reveled in speaking engagements before lawyers' associations and anti-death-penalty groups.

But in less than a year, he went from death row in Delaware to giving speeches about wrongful convictions to back behind bars.

Now, he's in a detention center in Hawaii, where he is charged with seven counts of sex trafficking.

He told The Associated Press from the Honolulu Federal Detention Center he's again accused of a crime he didn't commit, and he'll use his knowledge of the law — learned during years of incarceration — to represent himself at his upcoming trial.

Prosecutors say McCoy became a pimp after moving to Hawaii and that he threatened and coerced young women into prostitution. They call his arguments for dropping the charges, including vindictive prosecution, "conclusory and baseless."

A Tuesday hearing is scheduled on McCoy's motion to dismiss the case.

McCoy's exoneration thrust him into a spotlight he always craved, and he moved to Los Angeles to pursue an acting career.

While McCoy was in L.A., a University of Hawaii law student contacted him about speaking at a criminal justice reform rally she organized at the state Capitol. McCoy thought it would be a good opportunity to visit his mother and siblings, who had moved to Hawaii.

McCoy decided to stay in Hawaii after spending time with his four nieces.

While working as a security guard for a Waikiki hotel in an area of the tourist mecca known for prostitution, McCoy started dating a woman who he said worked as a stripper and prostitute. He could relate to her, and she wasn't judgmental about his time behind bars.

He said the woman is one of the seven reputed victims in the indictment against him.

McCoy said he and the woman had a falling out, and she went to Honolulu's Susannah Wesley Community Center — a nonprofit human services association that helps trafficking victims — and lied about being afraid of McCoy in exchange for a plane ticket out of Hawaii. The other reputed victims did the same, he said.

"All of these females were prostitutes before I met them," McCoy said. "Why would I have to force someone to do what they're already doing?"

US offers Kim security vows with nuke pact

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States is offering assurances to North Korea's Kim Jong Un as it seeks to put in motion the potential for a sweeping nuclear deal ahead of President Donald Trump's upcoming summit with the North Korean leader.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the U.S. will need to "provide security assurances" to Kim if they're able to forge an agreement. Pompeo met with Kim last week in North Korea, helping set the stage for Trump's historic meeting with Kim in Singapore on June 12.

Trump has set an ambitious goal for North Korea to get rid of its nuclear weapons in a permanent and verifiable way. In return, the U.S. is willing to help the impoverished nation strengthen its economy.

Pompeo was asked on "Fox News Sunday" whether the U.S. was in effect telling Kim he could stay in power if he met the U.S. demands. Pompeo said: "We will have to provide security assurances, to be sure."

The top U.S. diplomat did not elaborate, but his comment could refer to the type of assurances North Korea has sought in the past. A statement issued during international negotiations with North Korea in

2005 over its nuclear weapons development said the "United States affirmed that it has no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula and has no intention to attack or invade (North Korea) with nuclear or conventional weapons."

The North has said it needs nuclear weapons to counter what it believes is a U.S. effort to strangle its economy and overthrow the Kim government.

"Make no mistake about it, America's interest here is preventing the risk that North Korea will launch a nuclear weapon into L.A. or Denver or to the very place we're sitting here this morning," Pompeo said from Washington. "That's our objective, that's the end state the president has laid out and that's the mission that he sent me on this past week, to put us on the trajectory to go achieve that."

Pressed in a separate interview on whether the U.S. would seek regime change, Pompeo said "only time will tell how these negotiations will proceed."

"The president uses language that says 'we'll see,'" Pompeo told CBS' "Face the Nation." "The American leadership under President Trump has its eyes wide open."

North Korea said Saturday that all of

the tunnels at the country's northeastern nuclear test site will be destroyed by explosion in less than two weeks, ahead of Kim's summit with Trump.

John Bolton, Trump's national security adviser, described the types of steps that North Korea would need to take as part of a denuclearization process, including the potential involvement of a processing center in Tennessee.

"The implementation of the decision means getting rid of all the nuclear weapons, dismantling them, taking them to Oak Ridge, Tennessee," Bolton said in an interview with ABC's "This Week." "It means getting rid of the uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing capabilities," adding the process would also need to address North Korea's ballistic missiles.

Pompeo said private-sector Americans could help rebuild North Korea's energy grid and develop the country's infrastructure.

South Korea has said Kim has shown an interest in dealing away his nuclear weapons in return for economic benefits. But it remains unclear if Kim would ever fully relinquish the weapons he probably views as his only guarantee of survival.

Police question parents, friend of Paris attacker

Associated Press

PARIS — As French police on Monday were questioning the parents and a friend of a 20-year-old man who attacked passers-by with a knife in Paris, questions rose about how France's radical watch list is used.

Khamzat Azimov, a French citizen born in the Russian republic of Chechnya, killed one person and wounded four others in Saturday's attack before police fatally shot him. Islamic State claimed responsibility.

Azimov's parents and a friend from the eastern city of Strasbourg were being detained by police. Under French law, people questioned in an investigation relating to suspected terrorism can be taken into custody for up to four days.

A judicial official said Monday the suspect was living in the northern 18th district of Paris with his family, who previously

had lived in Strasbourg.

The official wasn't authorized to speak publicly on the ongoing investigation.

Counterterrorism investigators want to know if the assailant had help or co-conspirators.

French authorities said the suspect was on a police watch list for radicalism, but he had a clean criminal record.

French authorities explained previously that the register, designed as a tool for intelligence services, contains the names of thousands of individuals suspected of being radicalized but who have yet to perform acts of terrorism.

Azimov obtained French nationality in 2010. He was born in the largely Muslim Russian republic of Chechnya, where extremism has long simmered. Chechens have been among the numerous foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, some joining the ISIS cause early in the fighting.

Trump offers aid to penalized Chinese firm

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a surprising overture to China, President Donald Trump said he would help a Chinese telecommunications company get "back into business," saying too many jobs in China are at stake after the U.S. government cut off access to its American suppliers.

At issue is the Commerce Department's move last month to block the ZTE Corp., a major supplier of telecommunications networks and smartphones based in southern China, from importing American components for seven years. The U.S. accused ZTE of misleading American regulators after it settled charges of violating sanctions against North Korea and Iran.

The case dates to before Trump took office, but the Commerce Department's decision came amid worsening trade tensions between the U.S. and China centered on technology-related

intellectual property.

Trump's unexpected announcement Sunday came as the two countries prepared to continue trade talks in Washington this week. Given his past vows to stop the flow of U.S. jobs to China and to crack down on what he says are unfair trade practices, Trump's tweet of concern about Chinese jobs was something of a backflip.

ZTE, which has more than 70,000 employees and has supplied networks or equipment to some of the world's biggest telecoms companies, said in early May that it had halted its main operations as a result of the department's "denial order."

Trump tweeted that he and Chinese leader Xi Jinping "are working together to give massive Chinese phone company, ZTE, a way to get back into business, fast. Too many jobs in China lost. Commerce Department has been instructed to get it done!"

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Student has perfect attendance for 13 years

MS MOOREVILLE — A student who's about to graduate from a Mississippi high school is celebrating 13 years of perfect attendance.

The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal reported that Austin Owen of Mooreville never missed a day of class, from kindergarten through senior year. He is graduating May 19 from Mooreville High School.

Owen says he prides himself on never being tardy.

Float dragon catches fire during parade

FL LAKE BUENA VISTA — Dragons and fire — not unusual.

A dragon on fire? That's really something special.

A float depicting Maleficent the dragon from the "Sleeping Beauty" movie and a follow up film named after the fire-breathing creature caught fire during a parade at Walt Disney World on Friday.

ABC News reported that the fire was quickly extinguished and no one was injured.

Church for sale with cottage, parking lot

NY HUNTINGTON — A Long Island church is for sale along with its caretaker's cottage and a parking lot — all for \$2.2 million.

Newsday reported that the First Church of Christ Scientist in the town of Huntington is now on the market.

Built in 1950, the house of worship is closing and merging with its affiliate in another part of town.

For the \$2.2 million, a buyer also gets a 1.8-acre parcel consisting of two lots.

'Selfie' of dogs at daycare goes viral

OH LOVELAND — An Ohio dog daycare photo went viral for capturing what looks like a group of four-legged friends taking a selfie.

The Cincinnati Enquirer reported Go Fetch Dog Daycare and Boarding in Loveland originally posted the photo of the group March 30.

Rouge, a black Labrador mix, appears front and center in the photo with several dogs howling in the background.

The photo was later shared by another Facebook user who commented that it looked like Rouge was taking a selfie.

The photo has since received more than 1,800 reactions on Facebook.

7 accused of stealing homes worth \$12M

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — Investigators in Florida arrested seven people who they say fraudulently took ownership of 44 homes, including some from people who had died.

Broward Sheriff's officials said in a news release that six people were arrested May 8 following an investigation dubbed Operation Tomb Raider. A seventh was previously arrested.

Officials said those arrested face more than 600 felony charges, including identity theft and grand theft. The homes were valued at more than \$12 million.

The news release said the group operated under various company names during a seven-year period. They used those companies to steal the distressed homes from the estates of 18 dead people.

In some cases, they sold the same home to more than

one person and collected payments.

Workers rescued after scaffold breaks windows

NY NEW YORK — Authorities said two workers were rescued after a scaffold platform started swinging in the wind and shattered windows on a luxury high-rise more than 40 stories above lower Manhattan.

A passer-by was hit with falling glass but declined medical treatment after the mishap Friday. It happened at a building under construction about 10 blocks from the World Trade Center.

Police say the workers were installing windows when the wind spun the scaffold around, smashing several windows. It ended up sticking straight out of one broken window.

Fire Department Lt. Cris DiBenedetto says firefighters helped the workers off the scaffold and through a 45th-floor window.

Festival: Pinata display sets world record

VA RICHMOND — Hundreds of brightly colored tissue-and-papier-mache creations strung along a fence helped festival organizers in Virginia claim the world record for the largest display of pinatas.

"Que Pasa" Festival of Virginia organizer Lisa Zajur told the Richmond Times-Dispatch that the 1,013 pinatas lining the city's Canal Walk more than doubled the previous record of 504. That record was set in 2008 in an event organized by the Union de Locatarios del Mercado Municipal in Mexico.

Guinness World Records still has to certify the record.

The pinata display at the an-

nual celebration of Virginia's Latino community was part of an effort to raise money for a mentoring and leadership program for Hispanic youth.

Iconic circus-themed diner demolished

NJ WALL — It's no longer a circus in one New Jersey town.

The Circus Drive-In had been a fixture for generations of families heading to the Jersey Shore and nearby residents since 1954. Its signature neon sign featuring a huge, smiling clown's face was a roadside landmark.

The metal white-and-red striped roof, made to look like an old-fashioned circus tent, survived some of the worst storms to blow ashore. But it only took 20 minutes Wednesday for an excavator to demolish the diner in Wall Township.

It was put up for sale by the most recent owners in 2016, and was bought by a shopping center developer.

Vehicle driven into lake on a bet gets stuck

AZ LAKE HAVASU CITY — Authorities say two people who made a bet now know how far their car can go into the water and still drive at a Lake Havasu beach in western Arizona.

The answer is until not very far.

The Mohave County Sheriff's Office said the water disabled the vehicle as it entered the lake, causing it to become stuck while it was approximately halfway submerged.

Sheriff's spokeswoman Anita Mortensen said sheriff's personnel arranged for the vehicle to be towed from the lake.

From wire reports

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Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Caps top Lightning for 2-0 series lead

By FRED GOODALL

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals overcame a major hurdle by reaching the Eastern Conference final.

Just like that, they're in a full-on sprint toward the finish.

The Capitals scored in the opening minute of the game and twice in the last 1:02 of the second period Sunday night to pull away to a 6-2 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning and a 2-0 lead in the East final.

"It's huge but it's not over yet," Ovechkin said. "We played hard and played smart. You can see all four lines doing their job."

Evgeny Kuznetsov and Lars Eller each had a goal and two assists. Ovechkin and Tom Wilson had a goal and an assist apiece for the Caps, who took the first two games of the best-of-seven matchup on the road. Since 1974-75, teams that take a 2-0 lead in the conference final or semifinal have a series record of 39-2 (95.1 percent).

"We didn't panic. Just stayed to the system and played the right way," Ovechkin said. "We stayed calm and waited for our opportunities."

Devante Smith-Pelly and Brett Connolly also scored, helping Washington improve to 7-1 on the road this postseason. It's their first visit to the conference final during Ovechkin's 13-season career.

"You're on the road and it's us against them, and this group has really bonded," coach Barry Trotz said. "They've got a lot of resiliency, and they're having fun."

Game 3 is Tuesday night in Washington.

The Lightning had the best record in the Eastern Conference this season and breezed through the first rounds of the playoffs against New Jersey and Boston.

Little has gone right against the Capitals.

"For a team that's been used to being able to make some plays, we sure haven't made them in these two games. It's very uncharacteristic of us. That's the difference. They've made plays, we haven't. And it's cost us," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said.

"We've just played tentative and a little bit slow. We didn't get 113 points by playing that way. We didn't win the first two rounds by playing that way,"

Cooper added. "For some reason for two games, that's the way we've played."

Brayden Point and Steven Stamkos had early power-play goals for Tampa Bay, which rebounded after falling behind on Wilson's goal 28 seconds into the game.

Smith-Pelly's one-timer finished an odd-man rush and made it 2-2 at 2:30 of the second period. The Caps took control when Eller scored with 1:02 remaining and Kuznetsov — with assists from Ovechkin and Eller — delivered on a power play less than a minute later.

Tampa Bay goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy was called for tripping Andre Burakovsky with 10 seconds left in the period. Kuznetsov scored seven seconds later to make it 4-2, the second time in the series the Caps stunned the Lightning with a power-play goal in the closing seconds of a period.

Ovechkin and Connolly finished the rout with third-period goals. Braden Holtby stopped 33 of 35 shots to improve to 10-3 this postseason.

"We've defended this entire playoffs up until these last couple of games, and that's why we've had success," Stamkos

said. "We haven't defended with the same urgency. We're leaving our goalie out to dry."

Ovechkin also had a goal and an assist in Washington's 4-2 victory in Game 1.

Vasilevskiy was pulled from the opener after facing 25 shots in two periods, but the Lightning didn't pin the loss on him. Instead, they vowed to play harder in front of the young goaltender, who finished with 31 saves in Game 2.

Tampa Bay benefited early from a couple of questionable penalties — Wilson for goaltender interference and T.J. Oshie for high-sticking Victor Hedman, when the Tampa Bay defenseman actually was struck by the puck — to score twice in just over three minutes on the power play for a 2-1 lead.

Stamkos and Hedman assisted on Point's goal at 7:08 of the first. Stamkos' fourth goal in five games gave Tampa Bay its first lead of the series.

The Lightning will have to turn the series around on the road to return to the Stanley Cup Final for the first time since 2015.

"We'll prepare for the toughest game that we've played all season," Stamkos said.

Celtics cruise to Game 1 win in East finals

By JIMMY GOLEN

Associated Press

BOSTON — The assignment for Boston Celtics forward Marcus Morris in his first start this postseason was easy to explain but nearly impossible to execute.

His job: Guard LeBron James, and keep the four-time NBA MVP from running the Celtics out of their own gym in the Eastern Conference finals for the second year in a row.

"He's obviously the best player in the game," said Morris, who during the week boasted that he was up to the challenge and on Sunday explained why he wanted it.

"Because I'm a competitor. He's the best player, and I'm

going to be able to tell my kids this one day."

Morris scored 21 points and added 10 rebounds while pestering James into a playoff-high seven turnovers — and a playoff-low 15 points — and the Celtics opened a 21-point, first-quarter lead to scorch Cleveland 108-83 in Game 1.

Jaylen Brown scored 23 points and Al Horford had 20 for Boston, which ran off 17 points in a row in the first and never allowed the Cavaliers within single digits again. The Celtics led by 28 when Cleveland coach Tyronn Lue pulled James for good with 7:09 left.

Game 2 is Tuesday night.

"I have zero level of concern at this stage," said James, who

was 5 for 16 from the floor and missed all five three-point attempts.

Kevin Love had 17 points and eight rebounds, and James added nine assists and seven boards. The Cavaliers missed their first 14 three-point attempts of the game and shot just 32 percent in the first half.

By that time, Boston led 61-35 — the biggest halftime playoff deficit in James' career.

"I think we're very alert to the fact that we'll get a heavy-weight punch on Tuesday night," Celtics coach Brad Stevens said. "It's another great challenge, another great opportunity to experience something for this team."

With injured stars Gordon

Hayward and Kyrie Irving on the bench in street clothes, the Celtics continued their stunning run this season with what may have been the most surprising turn of events yet. A year after dropping the first two games at home against Cleveland in a five-game East final, the Celtics pounced on James, and the favored Cavaliers were never really in it.

"The last couple of playoffs, and our meeting at the end of year, they blew us out of the water," Boston guard Marcus Smart said. "We've got a different team, just like they do, and a lot of younger guys. So for them to see that, and have that feeling like we did tonight, is huge."

Court strikes down sports betting law

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday struck down a federal law that bars gambling on football, basketball, baseball and other sports in most states, giving states the go-ahead to legalize betting on sports.

The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 to strike down the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act. The 1992 law barred state-authorized sports gambling with some exceptions. It made Nevada the only state where a person could wager on the results of a single game.

"The legalization of sports gambling requires an important policy choice, but the choice is not ours to make. Congress can regulate sports gambling directly, but if it elects not to do so, each state is free to act on its own. Our job is to interpret the law Congress has enacted and decide whether it is consistent with the Constitution. PASPA is not," Justice Samuel Alito wrote for the court.

The court's decision came in a case from New Jersey, which has fought for years to legalize gambling on sports at casinos and racetracks in the state. Then-New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie said after arguments in the case in December that if justices sided with the state, bets could be taken "within two weeks" of a decision.

On Monday, after the ruling was announced, Christie tweeted that it was a "great day for the rights of states and their people to make their own decisions." The state's current governor, Democrat Phil Murphy, also cheered the ruling, saying he was "thrilled" to see the high court strike down the "arbitrary ban." He said he looks forward to working with the legislature to "enact a law authorizing and regulating sports betting in the very near future."

It's possible that the first to market with sports betting in New Jersey will be a racetrack at the Jersey shore. Monmouth Park has already set up a sports

book operation and has previously estimated it could take bets within two weeks of a favorable Supreme Court ruling.

Tony Rodio, president of Tropicana Entertainment, said his Atlantic City casino will "absolutely" offer sports betting once it can get it up and running. "It's been a long time coming," he said.

More than a dozen states had supported New Jersey, which argued that Congress exceeded its authority when it passed the law barring states from authorizing sports betting. New Jersey said the Constitution allows Congress to pass laws barring wagering on sports, but Congress can't require states to keep sports gambling prohibitions in place.

All four major U.S. professional sports leagues, the NCAA and the federal government had urged the court to uphold the federal law. In court, the NBA, NFL, NHL and Major League Baseball had argued that New Jersey's gambling expansion would hurt the in-

tegrity of their games. Outside court, however, leaders of all but the NFL have shown varying degrees of openness to legalized sports gambling.

Major League Baseball issued a statement saying the Supreme Court ruling will have "profound effects" on the league. It said "our most important priority is protecting the integrity of our games."

MLB said it would continue supporting legislation "that creates air-tight coordination and partnerships between the state, the casino operators and the governing bodies in sports toward that goal."

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver says the league remains a favorite "of a federal framework that would provide a uniform approach to sports gambling in states that choose to permit it."

Silver said the league would "remain active" in ongoing discussions with state legislatures in the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling.

Simpson cruises to big win at Players Championship

Associated Press

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. — Starting with the largest Sunday lead ever at The Players Championship was harder than Webb Simpson imagined. Hearing one big roar after another from Tiger Woods playing four groups ahead of him didn't help. Through it all, Simpson managed his game and his nerves.

Only when he had the crystal trophy did he start to crack.

He looked out at his wife, Dowd, a big supporter during the past few years of frustration as Simpson coped with the ban on the anchored putting stroke he used to make two Ryder Cup teams and win the U.S. Open.

And he thought about his mother at home in North Carolina, her first Mother's Day since Simpson's father died in November.

"It's been a tough few months for my mom, my brothers and sisters," Simpson said as his voice began to crack. "This is a little beacon of light for my mom, to get this done on Mother's Day."

There was never any doubt.

Simpson navigated his way through a few mistakes, but not too much stress in his four-shot victory Sunday at the TPC Sawgrass. Staked to a seven-shot lead, no one got closer than four shots, even after Simpson made double bogey on the 18th hole when his only remaining task was to finish the hole. He closed with a 1-over 73 to end more than four years without winning.

Woods made another big run that revved up the crowd and revived hopes that he was close to winning. So did Jason Dufner, Jimmy Walker and Danny Lee. None could do enough to catch Simpson during a week of low scoring at the final Players Championship in May.

"It was harder than I thought," Simpson said. "There's so much noise in front of us with Tiger, and you wonder what everybody is doing."

The key moment for Simpson was hitting just short of the green on the par-5 11th to set up a two-putt birdie, and then finding the island green on the 17th when he had a six-shot lead.

"Once I got to 17 and the ball was on the green," he said, "internally I was

celebrating."

Justin Thomas left the TPC Sawgrass as the No. 1 player in the world. He closed with a 66 to tie for 11th, more than enough to end Dustin Johnson's 15-month reign at the top of the ranking. Thomas is the 21st player to reach No. 1 since the ranking began in 1986, and the seventh American.

Jimmy Walker closed with a bogey-free 67 and tied for second with Charl Schwartzel and Xander Schauffele, who also shot 67s. Walker, who struggled all of last year with Lyme disease, had his best finish since he won the 2016 PGA Championship.

Woods made the cut on the number — helped by Thomas and Jordan Spieth making bogey on the 18th hole Friday — got back to the first page of the leaderboard with a 65 on Saturday and ran off six birdies through 12 holes in the final round. He was tied for second at one point, still four shots behind, but that was as close he got. Woods made a soft bogey on the 14th hole when he missed the green with a sand wedge, and was well short of the island green in making double bogey on No. 17.

He shot 69 and tied for 11th.

Stanton goes 4-for-4, powers Yanks past A's

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Once the rain subsided, Giancarlo Stanton provided plenty of thunder.

Stanton went 4-for-4 with a home run and three RBIs, sending Luis Severino and the New York Yankees to a 6-2 victory over the Oakland Athletics after a long weather delay Sunday.

Severino (6-1) struck out seven in six gritty innings, and New York won for the 19th time in 22 games to remain tied with rival Boston for the best record in the majors at 28-12.

"Up and down the lineup, we can hurt you a lot of different ways," leadoff hitter Brett Gardner said as the Yankees packed their bags for a train ride to Washington. "It seems like a different guy every day. Today it was big G coming through."

Aaron Hicks drove in two runs, Aaron Judge extended

his RBI streak to seven games and New York took two of three from Oakland to win its seventh consecutive series.

After a 7-2 homestand, the Yankees play 19 of their next 25 on the road.

"I'm really excited where we're at, but it's a long, long way to go," rookie manager Aaron Boone said.

Jed Lowrie had an RBI single and Mark Canha homered late for the A's, who lost five of six during a difficult stretch against the Astros and Yankees — last year's AL Championship Series participants. Things don't get much easier, with three games in Boston and four at Toronto to follow.

The start was delayed for 2 hours, 45 minutes, leaving most Yankee Stadium seats empty in a Mother's Day crowd announced at 40,538. Both teams wore pink caps and other gear to support Major League Baseball's breast cancer awareness

initiative.

Gardner's infield single, Judge's pop-fly double and a walk to slumping Didi Gregorius loaded the bases against Brett Anderson (0-2) with nobody out in the first. Stanton smacked a two-run single up the middle, and Hicks added an RBI single two outs later.

In the fifth, Stanton launched an opposite-field shot into the Yankees' bullpen in right-center. He joined Judge, Gregorius and Gary Sanchez to give New York four players with at least 10 home runs just 40 games into a season for the first time in franchise history.

Before this year, not even three Yankees hitters had ever done it. The previous big league team to accomplish the feat was the 2003 Texas Rangers (Juan Gonzalez, Carl Everett, Alex Rodriguez and Rafael Palmeiro).

"If I make some pitches to Stanton, it's a different ball-

game," Anderson said. "I just made some horrendous pitches to him. Fastballs out over the plate, what he's looking for, and fed right into his game."

Stanton raised his batting average 20 points to .252 and has hit eight of his home runs in five games started by Severino. The slugger also singled in the third and doubled in the seventh to leave him with 999 hits — including 499 for extra bases.

"I didn't know that. I'll have to get that ball," said Stanton, wearing a pink Yankees workout shirt when informed of his upcoming milestone. "Hopefully in Washington."

Judge singled home a run in the eighth for his 14th RBI in the last seven games.

Severino had a few close calls but allowed only one run and five hits. He lowered his ERA to 2.14 and tied Cleveland ace Corey Kluber for the AL lead with six wins.

Roundup

Reynolds hits 2 home runs in debut with Nats

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Mark Reynolds needed one game — and two big swings — to make his presence felt with the Washington Nationals.

After failing to find a job in the offseason, Reynolds homered twice in his first game as a National on Sunday night, lifting his new team over the Arizona Diamondbacks 6-4 to complete a four-game sweep.

The Diamondbacks hadn't lost a series all season until the Nationals took four straight.

Bryce Harper and Trea Turner also homered for Washington, winners of 13 of 15.

Tigers 5, Mariners 4: Robinson Cano broke his right hand when hit by a pitch from left-hander Blaine Hardy in the third inning of visiting Seattle's loss to Detroit on Sunday.

The Mariners star — who has played in at least 150 games in 11 straight years — may need surgery.

Angels 2, Twins 1: Shohei Ohtani struck out 11 while pitching three-hit ball into the seventh inning, and Zack Cozart got a walk-off RBI single.

Reds 5, Dodgers 3: Eugenio Suarez and

Joey Votto homered, and last-place Cincinnati swept a four-game series from host Los Angeles for the first time since the Big Red Machine did it in August 1976.

The defending NL champion Dodgers finished a 1-5 homestand and have lost seven of eight. At 16-23 they are fourth in the NL West, one game ahead of San Diego.

White Sox 5, Cubs 3: Matt Davidson hit a solo homer and a tiebreaking sacrifice fly off Kyle Hendricks (3-3) to help the White Sox avoid being swept at Wrigley Field.

Red Sox 5, Blue Jays 3: At Toronto, J.D. Martinez hit his 10th homer, a two-run drive in the first off Joe Biagini (0-2), and a run-scoring single against John Axford in the fifth.

Phillies 4, Mets 2: Visiting New York's Jacob deGrom was removed after a 45-pitch scoreless and hitless first inning as a precaution in his first start after a stint on the disabled list caused by a hyperextended right elbow.

Orioles 17, Rays 1: Joey Rickard had his first big league multihomer game and drove in four runs following his recall from the minor leagues, and host Baltimore scored its most runs since an 18-2 win over

Oakland on Aug. 16, 2015.

Indians 11, Royals 2: At Cleveland, Corey Kluber (6-2) gave up two unearned runs in seven innings, scattering eight hits.

Braves 4, Marlins 3: At Miami, Sean Newcomb (4-1) allowed one hit in six innings and stretched his scoreless streak to 20 innings. Brian Anderson's double in the second was the lone hit off the left-hander.

Giants 5, Pirates 0: Gorkys Hernandez homered off Ivan Nova (2-3) to spark a five-run sixth inning, Nick Hundley added a three-run drive against Richard Rodriguez and visiting San Francisco stopped a season-high six game-losing streak.

Astros 6, Rangers 1: At Houston, Dallas Keuchel (3-5) allowed three hits in seven shutout innings, struck out eight and walked one.

Brewers 7, Rockies 3: Freddy Peralta (1-0) took a no-hit bid into the sixth inning of his major league debut and set a Milwaukee rookie record with 13 strikeouts for the visiting Brewers.

Padres 5, Cardinals 3: At San Diego, Clayton Richard (2-5) matched his career high with 10 strikeouts in eight innings for his first win since April 9.