

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Marines changing ground-combat forces

*Stars and Stripes*

The Marine Corps is making sweeping changes to the structure and equipment of its ground-combat forces aimed at improving lethality and agility on the battlefield.

Officially announced last week, the modifications are the result of nearly two years of study and experimentation known as Marine Corps Force 2025 and Sea Dragon 2025. Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller spoke about them earlier this month at a gala for the service's top officers and enlisted ground-combat leaders in Arlington, Va.

Changes will be felt at almost every level of Marine Corps life.

The number of Marines in a rifle squad will be decreased from 13 to 12. The service will also add more automatic weapons, drones and all-terrain vehicles, while improving night optics, grenade launchers and shoulder-fired rockets.

The Marines are fast-tracking some of the changes, but others will be phased in over

the next three to five years.

"The surest way to prevent war is to be prepared to dominate one," Neller said in a Marine Corps statement. "And that is what we are going to do."

The Marines sent an experimental unit to Okinawa in May 2017 to test various unit sizes, concepts and technologies as the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit's ground-combat element. The systems were on full display during last summer's Talisman Saber drills in Australia.

Some of the changes are being made to the fundamental makeup of the Marines' smallest ground units.

A rifle squad — whose mission is to "locate, close with, and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver, or repel the enemy's assault by fire and close combat," a Marine Corps instruction said — has typically consisted of 13 Marines.

Each squad includes three fire teams of four Marines each, built around a single automatic weapon and led by a sergeant serving as squad leader.

Fire teams include a corporal fire-team leader or grenadier, two lance corporals — one with an automatic rifle and another assisting — and a private or private first class serving as rifleman.

Under Neller's changes, fire teams will now feature three Marines, Capt. Ryan Alvis wrote in a statement. All will be armed with an M27 Infantry Automatic Rifle with suppressors and improved optics.

Though fire teams are losing a Marine, they are gaining two automatic weapons, giving each squad a total of 12.

Two new positions — assistant squad leader and squad systems operator — are also being created for each squad, Alvis' statement said. Rifle squads will keep an additional slot open for one rifleman per fire team should they need to add depth, but the positions will remain unmanned.

Late last month, the Marines awarded a contract to Heckler & Koch for up to 15,000 M27s that will partially replace M4 carbine semiautomatic rifles,

a Marine Corps statement said. The rifles cost about \$1,300 each.

The new makeup of the squad will see a squad leader — who will remain a sergeant with five to seven years of experience and formal squad leader training — backed up by a corporal as an assistant, the statement said. The new squad-systems operator will be a lance corporal formally trained in a variety of technologies.

Fire teams will consist of corporals in the leadership role, backed by lance corporal grenadiers and automatic riflemen.

The changes will be implemented across all Marine infantry battalions over the next three to five years, the statement said. Neller said this will ensure Marine Corps infantry formations remain the most "lethal, agile, and adaptable in the world."

"We are going to change," he said in the statement. "Not that we aren't good; we are. But we must continually strive to get better."

## Fitzgerald commander waives hearing

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Cmdr. Bryce Benson, who commanded the USS Fitzgerald at the time of a deadly collision last year, has waived his right to a preliminary hearing to determine whether he should face criminal charges in the incident, according to a Navy official.

The Article 32 hearing, which was slated at the Navy Yard in Washington on May 21, is canceled, and it will be up to

a panel of naval officials, known as the Consolidated Disposition Authority, to decide whether there's enough evidence to proceed with a criminal trial. A decision could be handed down in the coming few months.

The criminal charges include negligent homicide.

Seven sailors died June 17 after the Fitzgerald crashed into a civilian merchant ship about 60 miles southwest of Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan.

Last week, a preliminary

hearing for two junior officers charged in the Fitzgerald crash highlighted a series of errors by the ship's crew, readiness challenges and other concerns that contributed to the deadly incident.

The ongoing trial at the Navy Yard ties into another Navy destroyer's deadly crash just two months later, when 10 sailors were killed when the USS John S. McCain collided with an oil tanker near Singapore.

Chief Petty Officer Jeffery

D. Butler will face a summary court-martial May 24. Former McCain commanding officer Cmdr. Alfredo J. Sanchez is scheduled for arraignment at a special court-martial May 25.

Navy investigations found that both collisions were "avoidable" and caused by failures in planning, training, procedures and operations. Part of that, the Navy found, was caused by the intense operational pace the fleet has been maintaining in recent years.

# Changes seen at N. Korea nuke test site

*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — Satellite images show that North Korea has begun dismantling its nuclear-test site, razing several key buildings and removing rails weeks ahead of its summit with the United States, according to a monitoring website.

South Korea, meanwhile, said it will hold a high-level meeting with the North on Wednesday to discuss measures focusing on reducing border tensions and resuming reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 war.

They will be the first such talks since the leaders of the two Koreas agreed to work toward peace and the “complete denuclearization” of the divided peninsula during their landmark April 27 summit, which was held in the border truce village of Panmunjom.

North Korean leader Kim

Jong Un announced his country would dismantle its northeastern Punggye-ri nuclear-test facilities “to transparently guarantee the discontinuance of the nuclear test.”

The North said it will hold a ceremony at the site next week to allow local and international journalists to witness the efforts.

The commercial satellite images from May 7 “provided the first definitive evidence that dismantlement of the test site was already well underway,” according to 38 North, a website that tracks North Korean activity.

Several key operational support buildings outside the north, west and south portals were razed and some rails for mining carts have apparently been removed, 38 North said.

It also said some carts seem

to have tipped over or been disassembled and several small sheds have been removed since its last analysis in late April.

The ventilation system for the tunnel system under Mount Mantap, which covers the testing facilities, also was apparently being broken down, the report added.

The report said plenty of work remains, presumably left for the journalists to observe at the ceremony, which the North has said will be between May 23 and 25, depending on weather.

The two largest buildings at the command center and the main administrative support area remained intact, and no tunnel entrances appear to have been permanently closed, 38 North said.

The North’s state-run Korean Central News Agency issued a rare press release last week an-

nouncing plans to use explosions to collapse all of its tunnels, block entrances and remove all observation facilities, research buildings and security posts.

The dismantling of the mountainous complex, which has been the site of all six nuclear tests conducted by North Korea since 2006, is part of its promise to stop nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests ahead of the first-ever U.S.-North Korean summit.

Some experts have said the site had already been rendered unusable after reports that the mountain was on the verge of collapse after the sixth and most powerful underground blast took place in September.

The North also is widely believed to have as many as 60 nuclear weapons and production facilities that were not affected.

## Upgraded Milius moves into 7th Fleet’s waters

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS Milius crossed into 7th Fleet waters Monday as it continued its journey from San Diego to its new homeport in Yokosuka, Japan.

The guided-missile destroyer, which was updated this past year with the Aegis Baseline 9 combat system, is bringing enhanced missile-defense abilities to the region. The changes “upgrad[ed] its air defense, ballistic missile defense, surface warfare and undersea warfare capabilities,” according to a Navy statement.

“I could not be prouder of this crew and their hard work and dedication leading up to this deployment,” Cmdr. Jennifer Pontius, the ship’s commanding officer, said in the statement. “The crew has trained extremely hard to get the ship fully certified and ready for tasking, and we are excited to operate forward and bring new

capabilities to the [forward-deployed naval forces] team.”

The Aegis Ballistic-Missile Defense platform enables the Milius to intercept short-range ballistic missiles within the atmosphere, and short- to intermediate-range missiles above the atmosphere. The ship was supposed to arrive in Yokosuka last year, but the Navy postponed its move so it could be outfitted with the system.

“I am very excited that Milius is coming to DESRON 15,” Capt. Jonathan Duffy, Destroyer Squadron 15 commander, said in the statement. “The ship’s advanced capabilities will be vital in support of our missions in the Indo-Pacific region.”

The Milius is also equipped with offensive tools, including a vertical launching system, Tomahawk cruise missiles, torpedoes, guns and Phalanx close-in weapons systems.

## Fuel issue leads Growlers to land at Japanese base

*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Two Navy EA-18G Growlers made an unscheduled landing at a Japanese military base Monday, according to Japan’s Defense Ministry.

Three of the aircraft were flying from Guam to Misawa Air Base in northeastern Japan when a cockpit indicator showed that one was running low on fuel, a spokesman for the ministry’s North Kanto Defense Bureau said Tuesday.

Two of the Growlers landed at the Japan Air Self-Defense Force’s Hyakuri Air Base shortly before noon.

An Air Force C-17 Globemaster III transport plane arrived at Hyakuri later in the afternoon to provide support, the spokesman said.

The landings didn’t cause damage or injuries or affect base operations.

One of the Growlers left

Hyakuri just before 4 p.m., and the other took off with the C-17 after 6 p.m., he said.

The incident is the latest in a string of unscheduled landings by U.S. military aircraft in Japan this year.

Late last month, an MV-22 Osprey made a precautionary landing in Kagoshima prefecture after a cockpit warning light came on.

That same week, there were emergency landings made by an F-35B Lightning II stealth fighter and a UH-1Y Venom.

On Jan. 23, an AH-1Z Viper helicopter made an emergency landing at a municipal helipad on Okinawa’s Tonaki Island.

Similar incidents happened on the southern island prefecture on Jan. 6 and Jan. 8.



# USAF to adopt Army camo as of October

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Air Force will adopt the Army's Operation Camouflage Pattern combat uniform already worn by some airmen overseas as its official utility uniform for the entire service beginning in October, Air Force officials announced Monday.

The switch to the uniforms developed by the Army initially for use in Afghanistan means the Air Force will ditch its Airman Battle Uniform with its camouflage pattern of gray, blue and green tiger stripes. Airmen can begin wearing the OCP uniform on Oct. 1, and ABUs are to be fully retired by April 1, 2021, the service said in a statement.

The change is expected to be embraced by airmen, said Gen. David Goldfein, the Air Force chief of staff, who acknowledged the popularity of the Army's green, brown and tan uniform that airmen already wear in Afghanistan and the Middle East. Personnel assigned to Air Force Special Operations Command and security forces airmen as-

signed to Air Force Global Strike Command also wear the OCP uniform, including in the United States.

"We spoke to and listened to airmen on this, and the OCP was the clear choice," Goldfein said in a statement. "The uniform works in all climates — from Minot [in North Dakota] to Manbij [in Syria] — and across the spectrum of missions we perform. It's suitable for our airmen working on a flight line in the Northern Tier states and for those conducting patrols in the Middle East."

The Army adopted the Operational Camouflage Pattern for its everyday utility uniforms in 2015, about five years after it began wearing the similar MultiCam pattern in Afghanistan.

The Air Force version of the Operation Camouflage Pattern uniform will include some minor changes to differentiate the services. The Air Force version will include name tape and Air Force lettering in "spice-brown" instead of the Army's black. The Air Force uniform will also include a unique squadron sleeve patch to identify an airman's

unit, the service said.

The Air Force indicated airmen who have worn the OCP uniform found it more comfortable and better for everyday use than the ABUs. In addition to the standard unisex uniform, it will be available in female-specific sizes that the Army recently began issuing, officials said.

Because the new uniform is slightly more expensive than the ABUs, about \$20 more per uniform, the Air Force will boost the annual clothing allowance in October for enlisted personnel, according to the Air Force statement.

Those airmen who already have OCP uniforms from past deployment will be allowed to begin wearing them on Oct. 1. The new uniforms will go on sale on that date at Army and Air Force Exchange Services locations at Aviano Air Base in Italy, Charleston Air Force Base and Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina, and MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. They will be on sale at other Air Force locations in the following months, officials said.

## Counterpiracy exercise wraps in Gulf of Aden

BY JASON BEHNKE

*Stars and Stripes*

MANAMA, Bahrain — Operation Three Arrows, a counterpiracy exercise that brought together warships and patrol aircraft from the United States and six other nations, has concluded in the Gulf of Aden after 12 days of naval drills.

The U.S.-led Combined Maritime Forces, based in Bahrain, worked with the European Union Naval Force to coordinate the event, which began May 1.

Warships from Japan, Spain and Italy and maritime aircraft from Germany, Spain, Japan and the United Kingdom practiced interacting with fishing vessels and dhows in the region. The small Djiboutian navy also assisted by informing local vessels of the warships in the region and collecting information on suspicious activity.

The CMF forces handed out water and first-aid kits to the fishermen. This engagement is designed to build communication with the community and help CMF "gain valuable knowledge about local maritime activity (and) identify suspicious activity early," Rear Adm. Daisuke Kajimoto, commander of Combined Task Force 151, said in a statement.

## US airpower helps Afghan forces repel Taliban after Farah attack

BY CHAD GARLAND

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban retreated from the capital of western Farah province Tuesday after launching a pre-dawn assault on the city that killed and wounded several Afghan troops, with U.S. airpower supporting government forces.

Afghan special operations forces, army and police had started clearance operations on the city's outskirts, U.S. and Afghan officials said. They were aided by Afghan Mi-17 helicopter gunships, which the Afghan Defense Ministry said had killed at least 10 fighters. Some attackers were fleeing and others were hiding in civilian homes, the Defense Ministry said.

Army Lt. Col. Martin O'Donnell, a spokesman for the NATO mission in Kabul, said U.S. Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt II ground attack planes, which deployed to Kandahar Air Field in January, and MQ-9 Reaper drones were supporting Afghan ground forces and American and multinational advisers were assisting Afghan leaders directing the operation.

"We're in a constant state of advising," he said.

The militants had begun a multipronged assault into several areas of the city a few hours after midnight, Abdul Shakoor, a

resident of the Bagh-e-Pul area, told Stars and Stripes earlier in the day by phone. His home is on the outskirts of the city of about 50,000.

"We are stuck at our homes, we cannot go out and everyone is in great fear," Shakoor said. "I can see the Taliban from my house. They are roaming in the intersections."

The Defense Ministry had quickly deployed reinforcements and vowed to repel the attack. Hours later, Shakoor said he could still hear gunfire as security forces fought back.

A lucrative drug route crosses the embattled province, connecting largely Taliban-held Helmand province to the south with Iran in the west.

Officials have warned of a deteriorating security situation for months, as insurgents have entered the capital on several occasions and threatened outlying districts.

It's unclear how far the militants advanced into the capital. On social media, the Taliban claimed to have overrun a police station and an intelligence outpost. Afghanistan's Tolo News broadcast footage of a burning Humvee. But O'Donnell said military surveillance feeds and Afghan reporting from the ground indicated the fighters hadn't advanced beyond checkpoints on the city's northern and western edges, and that the city remained under government control.

# Israel faces backlash after dozens killed in Gaza protests

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israel faced a growing backlash Tuesday and new charges of using excessive force, a day after Israeli troops firing from across a border fence killed 59 Palestinians and wounded more than 2,700 at a mass protest in Gaza.

Turkey expelled Israel's ambassador, while Ireland and Belgium summoned Israeli envoys. Leading European countries and the U.N. human rights office called for an investigation of the bloodshed.

Israel says it has the right to defend its border against a possible mass breach and accuses Gaza's Hamas rulers of trying to carry out attacks under the cover of the protests. A military spokesman said Tuesday that 14 of those killed a day earlier were involved in attacks.

Monday marked the deadliest day in Gaza since a 2014 cross-border war with Israel, and was part of a high-stakes campaign by the Islamic militant Hamas to break a decadelong border blockade.

In jarring contrast to the Gaza bloodshed, the U.S. held a festive inauguration ceremony for a new U.S. Embassy in contested Jerusalem at

the same time Monday, just several dozen miles away. The juxtaposition of violence on the Gaza border and festivities attended by a Trump administration delegation — captured on split screens in TV broadcasts around the world — briefly drew attention to the plight of Gaza and its 2 million people.

The relocation of the embassy from Tel Aviv, condemned by Palestinians as blatantly pro-Israel, further dimmed prospects of what President Donald Trump had once touted as plans to negotiate the "deal of the century." The Palestinians seek Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem as a capital.

The high casualty toll revived international criticism of Israel's open-fire policies. Rights groups have said the use of potentially lethal force against protesters who pose no immediate threat to soldiers' lives is unlawful. The military has said presumably less lethal rubber-coated steel pellets are not effective in keeping demonstrators from the fence.

Germany, Belgium and Ireland called for an investigation of the violence.

The U.N. Security Council planned to meet Tuesday to discuss the violence, though it was not clear what might come out of the session.

## 10 Calif. kids removed; parents deny any torture

Associated Press

FAIRFIELD, Calif. — A Northern California woman denied that she or her husband abused their 10 children after authorities said the kids suffered puncture wounds, burns, bruising and injuries consistent with being shot with a pellet gun.

The children, ages 4 months to 12 years, were removed from their home March 31 after Ina Rogers contacted authorities to report that her oldest child was missing, police said Monday.

Officers went to the home in Fairfield 46 miles northeast of San Francisco and found filthy conditions, Lt. Greg Hurlbut said.

"Officers located unsafe and unsanitary living conditions including garbage and spoiled food on the floor, animal and human feces and a large amount of debris making areas of the house unpassable," he said.

Authorities said some of the injuries to the children appeared to have been caused by someone shooting a pellet gun.

The father, Jonathan Allen, 29, was arrested Friday after the children were interviewed. He has pleaded not guilty to seven counts of torture and nine counts of felony child abuse and was being held on \$5.2 million bail.

The children did not require medical attention when they were removed. Stories about the alleged abuse came out gradually over the past six weeks and eight of the children told professionals about incidents dating back several years, authorities said.

Sharon Henry, chief deputy district attorney for Solano County, said she was "horried" by the children's statements and that torture was carried out in the house "for sadistic purposes." She declined to elaborate.

Rogers, 30, was arrested on suspicion of neglect last month and released after posting \$10,000 bail.

## Experts: Pilot purposely crashed flight

The Washington Post

All but one of the 239 people on the doomed Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 had probably been unconscious — incapacitated by the sudden depressurization of the Boeing 777 — and had no way of knowing that they were on an hourslong, meandering path to their deaths.

Along that path, a panel of aviation experts said Sunday, was a brief but telling detour near Penang, Malaysia, the hometown of Capt. Zaharie Ahmad Shah.

On two occasions, whoever was in control of the plane — and was probably the only one awake — tipped the craft to the left.

The experts believe Zaharie, the plane's pilot, was taking a final look.

That is the chilling theory that the team of analysts as-

sembled by Australia's "60 Minutes" have posited about the final hours of MH370.

They suspect that the plane's 2014 disappearance and apparent crash was a suicide by Zaharie, 53, and a premeditated act of mass murder.

But first, the experts said, they believe Zaharie depressurized the plane, knocking out anyone aboard who wasn't wearing an oxygen mask. That would explain the silence from the plane as it veered wildly off course.

That would also explain how whoever was in control had time to maneuver the plane to its final location.

The wreckage has not been found, though hundreds of millions of dollars have gone into the four-year search. The secret of what happened in the final moments of the ill-fated flight — and the motive behind it all

— probably died with its passengers and pilot.

But the "60 Minutes" team — which included aviation specialists, the former Australian Transport Safety Bureau chief in charge of investigating MH370's crash and an oceanographer — put forth what they believe is the most likely theory.

Zaharie's suspected suicide might explain an oddity about the plane's final flight path: that unexpected turn to the left.

"Captain Zaharie dipped his wing to see Penang, his home town," Simon Hardy, a Boeing 777 senior pilot and instructor, said on "60 Minutes."

Flight 370 disappeared March 8, 2014, shortly after leaving Kuala Lumpur, with 239 people aboard who believed they were bound for Beijing.

The craft is thought to have crashed in the far southern Indian Ocean.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Live tiger causes controversy at prom

**FL** MIAMI — A Florida high school decided to take the jungle theme for prom a bit too seriously for some students.

Students, parents and teachers from Christopher Columbus High School took to social media to say that a wild tiger at last Friday's prom was animal abuse. The Miami Herald reported that footage shows the tiger pacing inside a small enclosure as bright lights flashed around him.

Mari-Chris Castellanos, whose brother attends the all-boys private school, posted on Facebook and said the tiger "was used as an exotic amusement for the mindless teenagers who were present."

The dance also featured a lemur, two macaws, and an African fennec fox.

School administrators said in a statement that the venue approved it and that the animals were provided by facilities licensed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

## Lawyer who handles DUI cases faces own charge

**NV** LAS VEGAS — A Las Vegas attorney who often defends drunken driving suspects is facing a bench trial after being arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported John Leo Duffy, 56, was arrested March 3 and a bench trial for him is scheduled for July 9.

According to a criminal complaint, Duffy was booked into the Clark County Detention Center and later was charged with DUI and failure to maintain a lane.

Duffy was released on his own recognizance.

Because Duffy works closely with the vehicular crimes unit of the county district attorney's office, the Nevada Attorney General's Office has been asked to handle the prosecution of the case.

## Callers to hotline can report offensive odors

**SC** WEST COLUMBIA — A South Carolina city trying to get a handle on smells related to a chicken plant owned by a North Carolina-based company has set up a hotline so people can file complaints about odors.

Callers to the code enforcement hotline in West Columbia are asked to include details such as the date and time they smelled the offensive odor; where they were; a description; how long they smelled it; and what they think is the source.

It was in October that the city council first discussed fines for odors, such as those emanating from the House of Raeford chicken plant. Earlier this year, the council amended an ordinance to address odors.

House of Raeford told WIS-TV that it's "continually working on ways to decrease any potential problems with odors."

## Wind blows bounce house, child onto road

**CA** ADELANTO — Authorities say a child suffered minor injuries as strong winds blew a bounce house from a California neighborhood onto a nearby highway.

The San Bernardino Sun reported a statement from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department said winds Saturday afternoon blew the

bounce house with a 9-year-old child inside of it from an Adelanto home onto Highway 395.

The sheriff's department said the bounce house rolled onto the highway and struck a vehicle, at which point the child fell out of it.

The child was taken to a hospital. The driver of the vehicle was not injured.

## Warrant: Teen recorded sex act at school

**GA** KENNESAW — An Atlanta-area high school student is accused of recording a sex act between two students in a school bathroom.

News outlets cite an arrest warrant that says the 17-year-old boy reached over a closed bathroom stall at Harrison High School and recorded a 15-year-old girl with a 16-year-old boy. That video spread via social media, air drop and group chats.

An assistant principal notified police after discovering the video May 2. According to the warrant, the 17-year-old told administrators he took the video because he didn't understand how the school could let the act happen.

Cobb County police said the sex act was consensual and the students were recorded without their knowledge.

The teen is charged with eavesdropping-surveillance, a felony.

Cobb County School District official John Stafford said the district had taken "appropriate action."

## Litter leads wildlife agents to drug arrest

**LA** LAFAYETTE — Litter heaped on state land led wildlife agents to a drug arrest.

The Department of Wildlife

and Fisheries said in a news release May 7 that the pile held information leading agents to Sean Covington, 43.

Enforcement spokesman Adam Einck said that when agents stopped Covington's vehicle Friday, he had two kinds of prescription painkillers in one bottle. They also learned Lafayette Parish had warrants accusing him and a passenger of theft.

He said Covington was arrested on charges of drug possession and gross littering, as well as three warrants, two for suspected theft and one for traffic violations. He said Amanda Bergeron, 31, was arrested on one theft warrant.

## Man guilty of venomous snake possession

**MD** CASCADE — Police say a Maryland man who used the name "Venom-Man20" on YouTube has pleaded guilty to two counts of illegal possession of venomous snakes after a search of his home turned up six rattlesnakes and other snakes.

Maryland Natural Resources Police said Brandon Joseph Boyles, 29, of Cascade, Md., was prohibited from owning dangerous animals in Maryland and was required to perform 20 hours of community service.

News outlets reported Boyles had worked at Catocin Wildlife Preserve and Zoo. He took five venomous snakes, three alligators and a crocodile, which he owned, when he left in September 2017. However, Boyles didn't have a permit to keep them in his house.

Police said the crocodile, alligators and a rattlesnake were transferred to the Maryland Reptile Conservation in Dickerson.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Durant leads Warriors to Game 1 win

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Kevin Durant continues to deliver in the postseason for the Golden State Warriors.

He scored 37 points on Monday night to lead the Warriors to a 119-106 win in the long-awaited showdown with the Houston Rockets in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals.

But if it were up to him, he would have done even more.

Durant wasn't happy with coach Steve Kerr when he took him out in late in the third quarter and loudly asked his coach why he was putting him on the bench. Durant, who played just more than 40 minutes, was asked if he'd prefer to play the entire 48 minutes.

"Probably so," Durant said.

Kerr acknowledged that he should have left him in at that point and raved about his performance after his fourth 30-point game this postseason.

"This is why anybody would want him on their team ... I don't know what you do to guard him," Kerr said. "He can get any shot he wants."

Starting a playoff series on the road for the first time since 2014, the Warriors trailed by as many as 9 early, but had evened

it up by halftime and used a big run at the beginning of the fourth quarter to pull away.

"We're in the Western Conference finals, they are going to come out with a lot of energy," Durant said. "We're going to take that first punch and keep punching."

Game 2 is Wednesday night in Houston.

Eric Gordon opened the final period with a three-pointer to get the top-seeded Rockets within 4, but Thompson scored the first eight points of a 13-4 run to make it 100-87 with about eight minutes left.

Houston used a 9-3 spurt, where James Harden scored five, to cut the lead to 103-96 with less than five minutes to go. But Thompson struck again, hitting a wide open three to leave the Warriors ahead by 10 with four minutes left.

Harden scored 41 to lead the Rockets, who lost at home for the second time this postseason.

"You're not going to come in and just knock them out," Houston coach Mike D'Antoni said. "There were too many times where we had mental lapses. We didn't switch properly, [we] turned the ball over and missed too many layups. We need to do a better job of

staying up mentally."

Now the Rockets are left to regroup after losing their leg up in the homecourt advantage they worked all season for.

"It's nice to have home court," D'Antoni said. "[But] we don't have it. Now we've got to go get it."

Steph Curry added 18 for the Warriors, who are in the conference finals for a franchise-record fourth straight time. It's Houston's first trip since 2015 when Golden State won the series in five games.

"I think he's going to get even better as the series goes on, which is good for us," Kerr said of Curry.

The Warriors, who are the second seed in the West, opened a playoff series away from Oracle Arena for the first time since 2014 when they lost to the Los Angeles Clippers 4-3 in the opening round.

Houston struggled to slow down Durant all night, and things got even worse when Trevor Ariza picked up his fifth foul with about 10 minutes left in the third with Golden State up by 3. Durant made two baskets for the Warriors around one by Chris Paul that left the Warriors up 73-68 a couple of minutes later.

"He's one of the best scorers ever," D'Antoni said of Durant. "I thought he was extremely good. But we can withstand that. We can't withstand turning the ball over and giving up so many wide open threes."

Gordon added a layup for Houston after that, but Golden State scored the next six points, with a three-pointer from Thompson, to make it 79-70 with about 4½ minutes in the third.

Houston ended a scoring drought of more than two minutes with a dunk by Harden seconds later and the Warriors followed with another run, scoring six straight points to extend it to 85-72 with just more than two minutes left in the third.

The Rockets rediscovered their offense after that, scoring the next eight points, powered by threes from Gordon and Gerald Green, to get within 85-80 with about a minute left in the quarter.

Durant added two free throws to close out the quarter and leave the Warriors up 87-80 entering the fourth.

"Houston, they never stop," Durant said. "They are always in the game with three-point shots. We try to get good shots every time down and defend on the other end."

## Teams eye future through lottery, combine

Associated Press

Even with the conference finals going on, the NBA's eyes turn to the future this week.

A future that, perhaps, will have less tanking.

The draft lottery — the last before changes come next year to dissuade tanking — is Tuesday night, and then about 70 players will partake in the draft combine that starts on Wednesday. Those events are both happening in Chicago, as are some various league meetings such as a gathering of NBA general managers and other front-office executives.

But the biggest news will be made by 14 pingpong balls that will decide who drafts No. 1 next month.

"We've got to see what happens in the lottery first and see where our position is," Memphis executive vice president of basketball operations John Hollinger said.

"That's going to dictate a lot of the decisions that come after that and how we use our time after that."

Phoenix has a 25 percent chance of winning the No. 1 pick, followed by Memphis (19.9 percent), Dallas (13.8 percent) and Atlanta (13.7 percent). The rest of the candidates for No. 1 are Orlando (8.8 percent), Chicago (5.3), Sacramento (5.3), Cleveland (2.8), New York (1.7), Philadelphia (1.1), Charlotte (0.8), Detroit (0.7), the Los Angeles Clippers (0.6) and Denver (0.5).

Many of those teams were at the center of tanking questions this season.

"We did this year what we felt was in the long-term best interest of the Bulls," Chicago vice president of basketball operations John Paxson said. "It's not a situation that any of us want to ever be in again. And it goes against everything as a competitive person that you believe in. But it's the way the system's set up."

The NBA is changing the system.

Starting in 2019, with the NBA hoping that teams have less incentive to strive for the worst record and therefore the best chance of winning the lottery, the odds will be changing. The three teams with the worst regular-season record will each have a 14 percent chance of winning the No. 1 pick, the fourth-worst team will have a 12.5 percent chance and the fifth-worst 10.5 percent.

"My sense is we're still going to have some work to do," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said.

Tanking got plenty of attention this season, and a few minutes on Jan. 29 might have decided the race.

Phoenix and Memphis played that night. The Grizzlies scored 42 points in the second quarter on the way to a 120-109 win.

The Suns finished one game worse than the Grizzlies.



# Knights get even with Jets in the West

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Jonathan Marchessault scored twice and said the expansion Vegas Golden Knights sent a message, bouncing back with a 3-1 series-evening win over the Winnipeg Jets on Monday night in Game 2 of the Western Conference final.

“Every time we need a big game as a group, we show up,” Marchessault said. “We showed the hockey world we earned the right to be here.”

Tomas Tatar scored 6:37 into the game for the Golden Knights and Marc-Andre Fleury finished with 30 saves.

Kyle Connor scored midway through the third period to pull Winnipeg within a goal. Marchessault restored the two-goal lead 1:28 later.

Connor Hellebuyck had 25 saves for the Jets.

After losing the series opener, Marchessault told reporters the team faced a must-win game.

“If you’re going to talk out there in the media that you have to be better, I think you need to lead by example,” he

said. “I tried to do that.”

Game 3 is Wednesday night in Las Vegas.

“I don’t think anybody is panicking,” Jets defenseman Jacob Trouba said. “We like our road game. We like where it was in the Nashville series.”

Winnipeg won three times on the top-seeded Predators’ home ice, including Game 7 last week.

The expansion Golden Knights appeared to be rusty in the series opener and the Jets scored three goals early in a 4-2 win about 48 hours after advancing out of the second round.

It looked like they were going to pick up where they left off.

“They came out flying again with a lot of speed,” Fleury said.

Fleury, who helped the Pittsburgh Penguins win three Stanley Cups, made key stops early and got help from teammates and a post in the opening minutes to keep the puck out of his net.

“Fleury had to make three or four really good saves in the first seven minutes,” Vegas

coach Gerard Gallant said. “We rebounded after that. We got that 2-0 lead and it was a different game for us. When teams are chasing the lead, it’s tough for teams to battle back.”

Winnipeg’s Mark Scheifele, who has postseason-high 12 goals, got the puck past Fleury in the opening moments of the game and Vegas defenseman Nate Schmidt cleared it from the crease.

Vegas generated offense by making plays without the puck, forcing turnovers to set up goals.

“We were on them,” Golden Knights forward Erik Haula said. “That’s our game. We’re a fast team. I think we showed that.”

Indeed.

After the Jets failed to control the puck out of a corner in their end, Tatar ended up stuffing the puck in the net after hitting the side of the net with a shot.

Connor was pressured into turning over the puck near center ice late in the opening period and Reilly Smith set up Marchessault, his former

Florida Panthers teammate, at the blue line and he scored on a breakaway backhand.

“There was about 57 minutes of that game that was pretty good for us,” Jets captain Blake Wheeler said. “Three minutes of it got away from us.”

The Jets closed the scoreless second period and started the third on the power play and still couldn’t get the puck past Fleury.

Yet.

Winnipeg kept up the pressure on by relentlessly forechecking and drew another penalty early in the third. Connor took advantage, squeezing a shot between Fleury and the post from the bottom of the left circle 7:17 into the third.

That whipped the white-clad fans into a frenzy — triggering jeers of “Fleu-ry! Fleu-ry!” — and were quickly quieted by another Marchessault backhand that beat Hellebuyck.

The Jets pulled their goaltender to add another skater over the last couple minutes of the game, but Fleury didn’t let the puck get past him again.

## Vegas feeling lucky for getting Marchessault

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Jonathan Marchessault was left unprotected in the expansion draft by the Florida Panthers, who seemed to determine his breakout season was a fluke.

Oops.

The Vegas Golden Knights selected Marchessault, and he averaged nearly a point a game in the regular season. He leads the team with six goals and 15 points in the playoffs.

Marchessault scored twice against the Winnipeg Jets in the series-tying 3-1 win in Game 2 of the Western Conference final Monday night.

“Yeah, I’m satisfied with my game,” he said.

Florida was not satisfied, apparently, even though he scored 30 goals in his first full season and had one year left on his contract for a relative bargain of \$750,000.

“I was surprised at the decision,” he ac-

knowledgeed. “I had a great season. I think I was one of the top four players at the forward position there, but they did the best decision for their organization. It’s been like that my whole career. It was a reality check. Just when you think you can be a little bit comfortable, you can’t.”

“After I heard I was unprotected, I moved on and hoped that Vegas would pick me and they did.”

When the Golden Knights saw up close how good Marchessault was as their leading scorer in early January, they signed him to a \$30 million, six-year contract extension. He could have gambled on his future and cashed in even more on free agency this summer, but chose to stay with a team that finally believed in him.

“It was not a tough decision,” said Marchessault, who finished the regular season with 27 goals and a career-high 75 points. “When I saw they wanted to keep me long term, I was happy because I wanted stability in my life. It’s been a roller-

coaster career. I was just happy to be able to buy a home and stay there.”

The 5-foot-9, 174-pound Marchessault, married with three young children, bounced around earlier in his career after being undrafted.

“First time I saw Marchy, he was a skilled guy who stayed on the outside. Didn’t really battle,” said Golden Knights coach Gerard Gallant, who had Marchessault on his team in Florida before being fired. “The reason why he’s a 30- to 40-goal scorer now is because he’s more competitive. He’ll go to those hard areas to score some goals. He plays a good, strong game. Small guy, but very competitive.”

Before his 51-point season with the Panthers last season, he had a total of 19 points in parts of the three previous seasons with the Columbus Blue Jackets and Tampa Bay Lightning.

“I was always the underdog because of my size,” he said.

Game 3 is Wednesday in Las Vegas.

## MLB roundup

## Angels' Heaney, Calhoun shut down Astros

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — After Andrew Heaney induced a long flyout with his 100th and final pitch, he left the mound with the fervent hope that the Los Angeles Angels were on their way to a victory that would deliver a statement to the mighty Houston Astros.

With late help from Kole Calhoun's arm in right field, the Angels made it.

Heaney struck out 10 during a career-high eight innings of four-hit ball, and the Angels pulled percentage points ahead of Houston atop the AL West with a 2-1 victory over the Astros on Monday night.

"It's good to get a win to start a series against a divisional team, and a team that we think we're going to be fighting tooth and nail with to the end," said Heaney, who also matched his career best in strikeouts.

Justin Upton singled home the tiebreaking run in the sixth inning for the Angels (25-16), who beat the defending World Series champions (26-17) for the third time in four meetings this season.

Luis Valbuena drove in an early run for the Angels in the opener of a three-game series.

Heaney (2-2) led the way, limiting Houston to five bas-

erunners in eight innings while outpitching Lance McCullers Jr., who took his first loss in seven starts since April 6.

"I think we want to establish that it's not a [surprise] we just won that game," Heaney said. "It's [saying] we can beat those guys. We're just as good, if not better than these guys."

Houston native Justin Anderson allowed three baserunners in the ninth, but the Angels rookie still earned his first career save with help from Calhoun, whose struggles at the plate haven't affected his superb defense.

After the right fielder caught Alex Bregman's long fly in foul territory, he pivoted and threw out speedy George Springer, who tagged up and attempted to take second.

"It helped us win the game, so that's why I liked it," Calhoun said.

Calhoun's throw and Andrelton Simmons' clever tag on Springer completed a double play with Calhoun's major league-leading sixth outfield assist.

"That's a hard throw to make, but he's one of the best," Springer said of Calhoun. "He made a great throw, and you move on to tomorrow."

Anderson then allowed Jose

Altuve's single and walked Carlos Correa in the ninth, but survived when Yuli Gurriel grounded out.

Max Stassi drove in an early run for the Astros, who lost for only the second time in seven games.

"That's a big win for us, playing one of the hottest teams in baseball," Anderson said. "Took a little longer, made it a little more interesting for everybody, but it was fun."

**Athletics 6, Red Sox 5:** At Boston, Sean Manaea beat the Red Sox again in his first outing against them since pitching a no-hitter, and Khris Davis hit one of three solo homers for Oakland.

Matt Joyce and Matt Olson also went deep for the A's.

**Brewers 7, Diamondbacks 2:** Arizona center fielder A.J. Pollock was injured trying to make a play on pinch-hitter Tyler Saladino's inside-the-park home run, and the host Diamondbacks lost their sixth straight game.

**Braves 6, Cubs 5:** Ozzie Albies hit a leadoff drive for his 13th homer, Jose Bautista belted a three-run shot and visiting Atlanta held off Chicago.

**Giants 10, Reds 7:** Andrew McCutchen doubled in his first two at-bats to reach 1,500 ca-

reer hits, and host San Francisco snapped Cincinnati's six-game winning streak.

**Mariners 1, Twins 0:** First baseman Logan Morrison's throwing error in the eighth inning accounted for the only run as visiting Seattle defeated Minnesota after a long rain delay.

**Rays 2, Royals 1:** Tampa Bay's Adeiny Hechavarria danced around catcher Salvador Perez with an inventive slide at home plate to score the winning run against host Kansas City.

**Tigers 6, Indians 3:** Niko Goodrum homered twice and drove in five runs as injury-plagued Detroit beat Carlos Carrasco and visiting Cleveland.

Jose Ramirez hit his 13th homer for the Indians, but the AL Central leaders fell back to .500 and are only two games ahead of Detroit.

**Rockies 6, Padres 4:** Gerardo Parra hit a go-ahead, three-run homer off Kazuhisa Makita (0-1) in the sixth inning and rookie Noel Cuevas went deep for the first time for visiting Colorado. Daniel Castro also homered for the Rockies, who won for the second time in six games.

## Zobrist defies MLB again with black spikes

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Ben Zobrist was joined by Chicago Cubs teammates Kyle Schwarber and Steve Cishek in wearing black spikes on Monday despite a warning from Major League Baseball that he was in violation of the sport's uniform regulations.

Zobrist posted a letter from MLB on Instagram on Saturday that cited him for violating regulations requiring at least 51 percent of the exterior of a player's shoes be the club's designated primary shoe color. For the Cubs, that color is blue.

The letter said Zobrist will be subject to discipline, including a fine, if he continued to wear non-compliant shoes.

Zobrist said he planned to contact Joe

Torre, MLB's chief baseball officer.

"I plan on calling Joe Torre today and seeing if we can talk about it," Zobrist said following the Cubs' 6-5 loss to Atlanta. "We'll see. Maybe have an update tomorrow. My question is going to be why. We'll see what kind of answer I get. Why now? I think all players are kind of wondering that. Hopefully I get an answer and we can move forward."

In his Instagram post, Zobrist wrote he has worn black cleats for day games at Wrigley Field the past two years to honor the game's past. He said he was inspired by watching highlights of greats such as Ernie Banks and Stan Musial in the 1950s and 1960s.

Players were issued black Jackie Robinson socks for Monday's game because it was a makeup of a rainout on April 15 — which was Jackie Robinson Day throughout the major leagues.

"I was going to wear them back then, too," Cishek said. "I just decided I'm going to stick with it. They gave us those cool Jackie Robinson socks; I wanted to wear the throwback spikes with them too."

"The thing with Zo that happened the other day, it's like where did all this come from? Before, my understanding was MLB was telling the companies like New Balance and Nike they can do whatever they want. I think there is confusion among the players."