

STARS AND STRIPES®

Saturday, May 19, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Cops: Gunman wrote of plans in journals

Associated Press

SANTA FE, Texas — The Texas student charged in the shooting at Santa Fe High School described planning the attack in private journals, including a plan to kill himself, posted an image on Facebook of a “Born to Kill” shirt and used his father’s shotgun and pistol in the rampage that left 10 dead and 10 wounded, authorities said Friday.

A motive wasn’t immediately clear, but Gov. Greg Abbott said Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, wrote about planning the attack in journals on his computer and in his cellphone that police obtained. That was inconsistent with the portrait painted by his friends — a reserved young man, an athlete who had discussed wanting to own guns but didn’t talk of killing people.

It may have been what Pagourtzis hoped would happen,

as according to an affidavit filed Friday when he was charged with capital murder, he told investigators that he didn’t shoot students he liked “so he could have his story told.”

“Not only did he want to commit the shooting but he wanted to commit suicide after the shooting,” Abbott said, adding that Pagourtzis told authorities he “didn’t have the courage” to take his own life.

Pagourtzis was held without bond in the Galveston County jail on the capital murder charges, said the county sheriff, Henry Trocheset. Abbott said the two guns used in the attack were owned legally by his father. It was not clear whether the father knew his son had taken them.

The governor also said explosive devices including a Molotov cocktail had been found in the suspected shooter’s home

and a vehicle as well as around the school and nearby.

Abbott said at a news conference that “unlike Parkland, unlike Sutherland Springs, there were not those types of warning signs.” He was referring to the Feb. 14 school shooting in Florida and one in November inside a church in a town near San Antonio. Abbott said the early investigation showed no prior criminal history for Pagourtzis — no arrests and no confrontations with law enforcement.

That same Facebook profile that included pictures of the “Born to Kill” shirt — which one classmate told The New York Times that Pagourtzis was wearing Friday — described Pagourtzis as planning to enter the U.S. Marine Corps next year. But the Marine Corps told The Associated Press it has reviewed its records and found no one by that name as either a

recruit or a person in their delayed entry pool.

Classmates described Pagourtzis as quiet, an avid video game player who routinely wore a black trench coat and black boots to class. He had played football on the school’s junior varsity squad and danced as part of a church group. Those who know him expressed shock he might be involved in the killings.

Tristen Patterson, a 16-year-old junior at Santa Fe, considered Pagourtzis a friend. He said Pagourtzis was into video games that simulated war, and that he sometimes talked about firearms that he liked or wanted to get. “But he never talked about killing people or anything like that,” Patterson said.

He said Pagourtzis didn’t show signs of being bullied but also rarely talked about himself.

Helos rescue 4 cut off by lava in Hawaii

Associated Press

PAHOA, Hawaii — Fast-moving lava crossed a road and isolated about 40 homes Friday in a rural subdivision below Hawaii’s Kilauea volcano, forcing at least four people to be evacuated by county and National Guard helicopters.

Hawaii County Civil Defense said police, firefighters and National Guard troops were securing the area of the Big Island and stopping people from entering.

The homes were isolated in the area east of Leilani Estates and Lanipuna Gardens — two neighborhoods where lava has destroyed 40 structures, including 26 homes, over the past

two weeks.

Officials were assessing how many people were still in the newly threatened area. They were advising people to shelter in place and await further instructions.

County officials have been encouraging residents in the district to prepare for potential evacuations.

Edwin Montoya, who lives with his daughter on her farm near the site where lava crossed the road and cut off access, said he was at the property earlier in the day to get valuables.

“I think I’m lucky because we went there this morning and we got all the batteries out, and all the solar panels out, about \$4,000 worth of equipment,”

he said. “They have to evacuate the people that are trapped up there right now in the same place that we were taking pictures this morning.”

Montoya said the fissure that poured lava across the road opened and grew quickly.

“It was just a little crack in the ground, with a little lava coming out,” he said. “Now it’s a big crater that opened up where the small little crack in the ground was.”

Experts are uncertain about when the volcano will calm down.

The Big Island volcano released a small explosion at its summit just before midnight Saturday, sending an ash cloud 10,000 feet into the sky. The

U.S. Geological Survey’s Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said eruptions that create even minor amounts of ashfall could occur at any time.

This follows the more explosive eruption Thursday, which emitted ash and rocks thousands of feet into the sky. No one was injured and there were no reports of damaged property.

Scientists said the eruption was the most powerful in recent days, though it probably lasted only a few minutes.

It came two weeks after the volcano began sending lava flows into neighborhoods 25 miles to the east of the summit.

Army plans more complex battlefield robots

Bloomberg

From the spears hurled by Romans to the missiles launched by fighter pilots, the weapons humans use to kill each other have always been subject to improvement.

Militaries seek to make each one ever-more lethal and, in doing so, better protect the soldier who wields it. But in the next evolution of combat, the U.S. Army is heading down a path that may lead humans off the battlefield entirely.

Over the next few years, the Pentagon is poised to spend almost \$1 billion for a range of robots designed to complement combat troops. Beyond scouting and explosives disposal, these new machines will sniff out hazardous chemicals or other agents, perform complex reconnaissance and even carry a soldier's gear.

"Within five years, I have no doubt there will be robots in every Army formation," said Bryan McVeigh, the Army's project manager for force protection. He touted a record 800 robots fielded over the past 18 months.

"We're going from talking about robots to actually building and fielding programs," he said. "This is an exciting time to be working on robots with the Army."

But that's just the beginning.

The Pentagon has split its robot platforms into light, medium and heavy categories. In April, the Army awarded a \$429.1 million contract to two Massachusetts companies, Endeavor Robotics of Chelmsford and Waltham-based QinetiQ North America, for small bots weighing less than 25 pounds. This spring, Endeavor also landed two contracts worth \$34 million from the Marine Corps for small and midsized robots.

In October, the Army awarded Endeavor \$158.5 million for a class of more than 1,200 medium robots, called the Man-Transportable Robotic System, Increment II, weighing less than 165 pounds. The MTRS

robot, designed to detect explosives as well as chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear threats, is scheduled to enter service by late summer 2019. The Army plans to determine its needs for a larger, heavier class of robot later this year.

"It's a recognition that ground robots can do a lot more, and there's a lot of capabilities that can and should be exploited," said Sean Bielat, Endeavor's chief executive officer. Specifically, he points to "the dull, the dirty and the dangerous" infantry tasks as those best suited to robotics.

During combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Defense Department amassed an inventory of more than 7,000 robots, with much of the hardware designed to neutralize improvised explosive devices. Military brass were trying to quickly solve a vexing problem that was killing troops, but the acquisition strategy led to a motley assortment of devices that trade journal Defense News last year called "a petting zoo of various ground robots."

This approach also meant that each "pet" was essentially a one-off device used for a single task. The Army's current approach is to field more interoperable robots with a common chassis, allowing different sensors and payloads to be attached, along with standardized controllers for various platforms, said McVeigh, a retired Army colonel.

This strategy is also geared toward affordability. "If we want to change payloads, then we can spend our money on changing the payloads and not having to change the whole system," he said. While it ramps up to use its newer robots, the Army will retain about 2,500 of the medium and small robots from the older fleet.

Amid their many capacities, none of the current or planned U.S. infantry robots is armed. Armed robots are hardly new, of course, with South Korea deploying sentry gun-bots in the demilitarized zone fronting

North Korea and various countries flying drones equipped with a variety of weapons.

"Just strapping a conventional weapon onto a robot doesn't necessarily give you that much" for ground troops, said Bielat, the Endeavor Robotics CEO. "There is occasional interest in weaponizing robots, but it's not particularly strong interest. What is envisioned in these discussions is always man-in-the-loop, definitely not autonomous use of weapons."

Yet, depending on one's perspective, machines that kill autonomously are either a harbinger of a "Terminator"-style dystopia or a logical evolution of warfare. This new generation of weaponry would be armed and able to "see" and assess a battle zone faster and more thoroughly than a human and react far more quickly. What happens next is where the topic veers into a moral, perhaps existential, morass.

"It seems inevitable that technology is taking us to a point where countries will face the question of whether to delegate lethal decision-making to machines," said Paul Scharre, a senior fellow and director of the technology and national security program at the Center for a New American Security.

Last year, 116 founders of robotics and artificial intelligence, including Elon Musk, the billionaire founder of Tesla Inc. and SpaceX, sent a letter to the United Nations urging a ban on lethal autonomous weapons.

"Once developed, they will permit armed conflict to be fought at a scale greater than ever, and at timescales faster than humans can comprehend," the letter stated, warning of a "Pandora's box" being opened with such systems.

To date, 26 countries have joined calls for a ban on fully autonomous weapons, including 14 nations in Latin America, according to the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. Notably absent from this list are nations with robust defense industries that research AI and robotics-

countries such as the U.S., Russia, Israel, France, Germany, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

The campaign was launched five years ago by activists alarmed at the prospect of machines wielding "the power to decide who lives or dies on the battlefield."

"If you buy into the notion that it's a moral and humanitarian issue—that you have machines making life-and-death decisions on the battlefield—then it's a very simple issue," said Steve Goose, director of Human Rights Watch's arms division and a co-founder of the campaign. "People have a sense of revulsion over this."

Not long ago, such futuristic software seemed, if not quite impossible, at least 30 years away. Given the pace of research, however, that's no longer the case—a fact that has given the effort by Musk, Goose and others new urgency.

"It seems that each year, that estimate has come down," Goose said. Autonomous weapons systems are "years, not decades" hence, he said in an interview last month from Geneva, where a U.N. group convened its fifth annual conference on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems.

Much of the recent discussion has focused on defining the terms of debate and where human control for lethal decisions should lie. There are also questions as to how quickly such machines will proliferate and how to deal with such technology in the hands of rogue, non-state actors.

Over time, Goose said, the campaign will "convince these governments that every nation is going to be better off if no nation has these weapons." But Scharre said there's no chance the U.N. will agree to a legally binding treaty to ban autonomous weapons. He predicts that "a critical mass" of nations supporting some type of ban could pursue an agreement outside the U.N.

Navy fires amphibious warship leader

The San Diego Union-Tribune

The Navy fired the skipper of the USS Harpers Ferry on Thursday, the fourth senior San Diego-based amphibious warship leader to be relieved of duty over the past year.

Rear Adm. Cedric Pringle, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, relieved Cmdr. Tammy Sue Royal, 48, after superiors lost confidence in her ability to effectively lead sailors and carry out her duties, according to Naval Surface Warfare spokesman Doug Sayers.

Sayers said that “sustained poor performance” during an era when “readiness is a focal point for the Navy” were keys to Pringle’s decision.

On April 12, Pringle fired Capt. William Sherrod, skipper of the amphibious warship USS Somerset, following an investigation into concerns about his command climate.

Last May, the Navy removed both the captain and executive officer of the Somerset’s sister ship, the USS Anchorage, after commanders said they lost confidence in their ability to lead.

The Somerset and the Anchorage are San Antonio-class amphibious transport docks.

Commissioned in 1995, the aging Harpers Ferry was the first in a class of landing ship docks, but all three vessels are used to move Marines to shore during amphibious assaults.

A native of Georgia, Royal has been reassigned to the staff of Coronado-based Naval Surface Forces.

Cmdr. Gervy Alota, a top aide to Pringle at Expeditionary Strike Group Three, assumes temporary duty of commanding the Harpers Ferry until a permanent replacement can be named.

Royal’s warship recently returned from shipyard maintenance and her crew was be-

ginning the initial phase of basic training.

She did not return messages seeking comment on Friday.

Royal served nine years as an enlisted electronic technician before she entered the Navy’s commissioning program. She graduated from Norfolk State University in 2000.

Royal did tours aboard the amphibious warships Rushmore, Austin, Fort McHenry and Iwo Jima before becoming the executive officer of the Mount Whitney.

She also spent seven months in Baghdad as the operation officer for the Project Contracting Officer.

Royal took command of the Harpers Ferry on March 9, 2017. Royal’s decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, seven Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, the Joint Achievement Medal and five Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals.

USAF colonel relieved of command at Dyess base

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

An Air Force colonel was relieved of command from the 317th Airlift Wing at Dyess Air Force Base in Texas for creating a toxic environment, according to an Air Force announcement Thursday.

Col. David Owens was removed from command Wednesday by Lt. Gen. Giovanni Tuck, commander of the 18th Air Force at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, which oversees the 317th Airlift Wing, due to loss of trust and confidence in his ability to command, the release stated. A recent command-directed investigation substantiated allegations that Owens failed to establish and maintain a healthy command climate and created a toxic work environment.

Owens has been temporarily reassigned to the 7th Bomb Wing at Dyess while he awaits another assignment. Col. Rhett Boldenow, 317th Airlift Wing vice commander, will serve as the interim commander of that unit effective immediately.

“I am committed to ensuring we have the right leaders in

place,” Tuck said in the release. “Our focus is on taking care of our airmen and civilians as we rebuild the command climate in the 317th Airlift Wing.”

As commander of the 317th Airlift Wing, Owens, a 1996 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, was responsible for organizing, training, and equipping 1,200 personnel to operate, maintain, and sustain C-130J aircraft engaged in combat operations worldwide.

Owens’ biography on the Dyess website states he earned his pilot wings in 1998 and was assigned as a C-17 pilot and later a special operations evaluator pilot. He deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, and previously commanded at the squadron and operations group levels. Other assignments included time at the Air Mobility Command and The White House as a military aide to Vice President Joe Biden. He was promoted to his current rank in August 2015.

Dyess Air Force Base is home to roughly 3,100 active-duty airmen. Its two main units are the 7th Bomb Wing, which flies B-1 Lancers, and the 317th, which operates C-130s.

Fort Stewart may house new Army tank brigade

Associated Press

FORT STEWART, Ga. — Three years after military cutbacks forced Fort Stewart to shutter one of its three combat brigades, the sprawling Army post has a shot at luring a new tank brigade that would bring roughly 4,000 additional soldiers to southeast Georgia.

“We’d welcome the additional capability,” Maj. Gen. Lee Quintas, Fort Stewart’s commanding general, told reporters Friday when asked about the opportunity to expand the ranks of the 3rd Infantry Division.

The Army announced in March plans to convert a light infantry brigade based at Fort Carson, Colo., into an armored brigade. An Army report named five potential homes for the new brigade that included Fort Stewart, 35 miles southwest of Savannah.

Quintas cautioned that the final decision will be left to senior Army leaders. But he said his staff has sent the Pentagon information outlining the benefits Fort Stewart offers.

As the largest Army post east of the Mississippi River, Fort

Stewart has large outdoor ranges for firing tanks and other heavy weapons. Hunter Army Airfield in nearby Savannah and the city’s large seaport give Fort Stewart units and their heavy gear the ability to deploy rapidly by air and sea.

Fort Stewart leaders said they also have room to accommodate a new tank brigade.

In 2004, Fort Stewart added a third combat brigade barely a year after the Iraq war began. More than a decade later, the end of combat operations there and military budget cuts forced the 3rd Infantry to lose a brigade and roughly 1,900 total troops. That means a new brigade could move in without having to add new facilities, said Brig. Gen. Sean Bernabe, who led Fort Stewart for nine months until Quintas returned in April from a deployment to Afghanistan.

The Army has said the new tank brigade could remain based in Colorado, or be moved to another post. Other possible locations named in the Army’s report were Fort Riley, Kansas, and Texas posts Fort Bliss and Fort Hood.

Only 3 survive airliner crash in Cuba

Associated Press

HAVANA — The only three survivors of a plane crash in Cuba remained in grave condition Saturday as investigators tried to determine why an aging Boeing 737 carrying 110 people went down and erupted in flames shortly after takeoff in Havana.

It was Cuba's worst aviation disaster in three decades and its third major air accident since 2010. Skies were overcast and rainy at the airport at the time of Friday's disaster, and Cuban state television said the 39-year-old jet veered sharply to the

right after departing on a domestic flight to the eastern city of Holguin.

"The only thing we heard, when we were checking in, an explosion, the lights went out in the airport and we looked out and saw black smoke rising, and they told us a plane had crashed," Argentine tourist Brian Horanbuena told The Associated Press at the airport.

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said a special commission had been formed to find the cause of the crash. The plane had 104 mainly Cuban passengers and six crew members.

"Things have been organized,

the fire has been put out, and the remains are being identified," he said.

State airline Cubana, which operated the flight, has had a generally good safety record but is notorious for delays and cancellations, and has taken many of its planes out of service because of maintenance problems in recent months, prompting it to hire charter aircraft from other companies.

Mexican officials said the Boeing 737-201 was built in 1979 and rented by Cubana from Aerolineas Damojh, a small charter company that also goes by the name Global Air.

Cubana Flight 972 went down just after noon a short distance from the end of the runway at Jose Marti International Airport. Firefighters rushed to extinguish the flames that engulfed the debris left where the jet hit the ground in a cassava field.

Four crash survivors were taken to a Havana hospital, and three remained alive as of late Friday. State media reports stopped short of openly declaring that the rest on board were dead, but there was no word of other survivors by Friday night.

Millions watch as prince, American are married

Associated Press

WINDSOR, England — Prince Harry and Meghan Markle gazed into each other's eyes and pledged their eternal love Saturday as they married at St. George's Chapel in front of hundreds of celebrity guests and millions of viewers around the world.

The American actress arrived to a fanfare and walked down the aisle accompanied part of the way by Prince Charles and by 10 young page boys and bridesmaids. The children included 4-year-old Prince George and 3-year-old Princess Charlotte, children of Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge.

Markle's sleek white dress, designed by British designer Clare Waight Keller, had a boat neck and was made of silk. Her veil came to her waist in front and billowed out for many feet behind her long train.

Harry and best man Prince William wore dark formal military dress, with white gloves and the frock coat uniforms of the Blues and Royals, and Harry kept his full red beard intact.

Markle seemed poised and confident as she delivered her vows without so much as a

quiver in her voice. She smiled broadly as the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby declared them husband and wife. Harry seemed a bit nervous — but happy.

A host of celebrities and athletes — including Oprah Winfrey, Idris Elba, Elton John, George and Amal Clooney, Serena Williams, James Corden and David and Victoria Beckham — watched the ceremony in the gothic chapel at Windsor Castle.

Prior to the festivities, Queen Elizabeth II honored her 33-year-old grandson with a new title: the Duke of Sussex. That means that Markle is now the Duchess of Sussex.

The wedding was a global event, thanks to Harry's status as a senior British royal and Markle's celebrity after starring on the U.S. television series "Suits" for seven years. The wedding pomp and ceremony — complete with Anglican prayers and tradition, classical music, a gospel choir and a horse-drawn carriage ride through Windsor — was beamed live to tens of millions of TV viewers across the world.

Trump: DOJ planted spy in 2016 campaign

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump accused the Justice Department of trying to frame him by planting a spy in his 2016 campaign — an allegation his own lawyer said might not be true.

Promoting a theory that is circulating in conservative circles, Trump quoted Fox Business anchor David Asman and tweeted Friday: "Apparently the DOJ put a Spy in the Trump Campaign. This has never been done before and by any means necessary, they are out to frame Donald Trump for crimes he didn't commit."

But Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani cast some doubt on that.

On whether there was an "informant" in the 2016 presidential campaign, Giuliani told CNN, "I don't know for sure, nor does the president, if there really was one," though he said they have long been told there was "some kind of infiltration."

Earlier this month, the National Review raised the question of a possible FBI spy in Trump's campaign. The article cites work by Republican Rep. Devin Nunes, an ardent Trump supporter and head of the

House intelligence committee, who has demanded information on an FBI source in the Russia investigation.

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, objected Friday to such demands, emphasizing "the critical importance of protecting sources and methods."

"It would be at best irresponsible, and at worst potentially illegal, for members of Congress to use their positions to learn the identity of an FBI source for the purpose of undermining the ongoing investigation into Russian interference in our election," Warner wrote in a statement.

The New York Times reported separately this past week that at least one government informant met several times with Carter Page and George Papadopoulos, both former foreign policy advisers for Trump's Republican campaign. The Times reported Friday that the informant talked to Page and Papadopoulos because they had suspicious contacts linked to Russia. The newspaper attributed the information to current and former FBI officials.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Family: Vet's casket opened, clothes taken

FL BARTOW — A family is upset after someone dug up their veteran relative, pried open his casket and removed his clothes.

The Lakeland Ledger said the grave of Willie R. Graham was found open May 10 by a grounds-keeper at Palm Cemetery. Graham died in 1999 at 75 years old. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II.

A Bartow Police report said the cement slab had been moved, the casket was partially open and rotting clothes had been tossed beside the grave. The responding officer noted they were unable to find Graham's relatives, but one of the buried man's nieces later visited the site and told the family.

Woman climbs tree to escape coyotes

MA SAUGUS — A woman hiking on a Massachusetts reservation said coyotes surrounded her and her dog, forcing her to climb a tree to safety.

WHDH-TV reported the woman was with her Labrador at Breakheart Reservation in Saugus when they encountered coyotes and she fled up a tree.

The unidentified woman told a 911 dispatcher that at least one coyote was about 400 feet away staring at her and her dog, which remained on the ground.

The Saugus fire department assisted the woman, and she and the dog escaped uninjured.

Bee swarm injures 4 in desert community

CA PALM DESERT — One person was in critical condition and three others had minor injuries after

encountering a swarm of bees in Southern California.

Cal Fire/Riverside County said firefighters responded to the scene in Palm Desert. Two victims made their way to a paramedic unit, another victim had taken shelter in a residence, and firefighters found a fourth victim in an outdoor pool. Cal Fire said the latter victim was taken by ambulance to a hospital in critical condition.

Bartenders compete for best bloody mary

ME BANGOR — A number of cocktail makers in Bangor will be battling it out for the honor of the "best" bloody mary cocktail.

Proceeds from the inaugural competition will benefit the Hemophilia Alliance of Maine. WABI-TV reported Tito's Vodka donated all the vodka for the event and competitors will bring their own mix, spices, and garnishes for their unique cocktail.

The competition will be held Sunday in Bangor.

Man kidnaps boss for child support money

NJ HACKENSACK — Authorities said a New Jersey man kidnapped his boss at knifepoint and threatened to kill him because he needed money to pay child support.

The Record reported Luis Vasconez, 37, called his boss Thursday and pleaded for money to pay his child support. Authorities said the North Bergen man returned to work the next day brandishing a knife and forced the victim to drive to the bank to get money.

Authorities said the victim entered the bank and told a teller he had been kidnapped. Police were called and Vasconez was soon arrested at the scene

Baby cam video shows intruder as family sleeps

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A Utah family has video from a baby cam of an intruder who entered their home, exposed himself and masturbated in a bedroom where a mother and infant child were sleeping.

Spokesman Lt. Travis Lyman said nothing was stolen and nobody was hurt.

The family grew suspicious and checked baby cam footage after one member noticed some things out of place later that morning.

Police: Man tried to hide shotgun in pants

NY ALBANY — Police in upstate New York said a man now facing weapons charges attempted to hide a sawed-off shotgun in his pants.

Albany police said they stopped a vehicle recently on a traffic violation. The Times Union of Albany reported police noticed the 24-year-old driver had a gravity knife on his armrest.

Officials said they then noticed the 24-year-old passenger appeared to be hiding something in his pants. A search of the man produced a loaded 12-gauge shotgun.

3 arrested for abandoning Chihuahuas

AZ LAKE HAVASU CITY — Lake Havasu City police said three people were accused of animal cruelty in the abandonment of 31 Chihuahuas at multiple locations on four days last fall and this spring.

Police say 15 Chihuahuas were left at various locations Sept. 11 and 13 with notes say-

ing they could no longer be cared for and that 16 additional Chihuahuas were abandoned April 30 and May 1 at the Western Arizona Humane Society.

Police said Nathan M. Pulliam, 40, and Christina M. McMillan, 43, were arrested in the September and more recent abandonments and that Christy M. McMillan was arrested in the most recent ones.

Report: Exploding vape pen killed man

FL ST. PETERSBURG — An autopsy report said a 38-year-old Florida man was killed by an exploding vape pen.

The report released last week confirms the vape pen was responsible for the May 5 death of Tallmadge D'Elia in St. Petersburg.

The Pinellas-Pasco Medical Examiner's report said the explosion sent two pieces of the vape pen into the man's cranium. He also suffered burns on about 80 percent of his body.

Man gets prison for taking Ferrari on joyride

CA SANTA ANA — A man who took a stolen Ferrari on a two-week joyride in Southern California won't be going anywhere for a while.

KNBC-TV reported that Israel Rangel of Santa Ana was sentenced to nine years in prison last week after pleading guilty to the theft.

Authorities said Rangel stole a Ferrari 458 Spider from a service center in Costa Mesa last Oct. 18. He was arrested on Nov. 1 after Santa Ana police got a report of someone driving a Ferrari erratically.

Rangel was arrested after he was found hiding in some bushes.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

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

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Warriors shoot down worries on Curry

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Curry has absolutely no concerns about his three-point touch, so he's counting on the first one he takes going in.

"I have confidence in myself and my teammates have confidence in me to do what I need to do," the two-time MVP said Friday. "Never worry about it because I know how hard I work at it. It's not a false sense of confidence. I know how hard I work at what I do."

His teammates and coach also say enough with the panic about Curry already. Kevin Durant doesn't even want to hear about any shooting struggles: He considers Curry the best shooter on the planet, and so be it if he shows he's human, too, once in a while. This is after all the same sweet shooter who broke his own NBA record for threes in a single season by hitting 402 in 2015-16.

"When Steph misses a shot everybody gets up in arms about it. That's how great he is. So many people expect him to make every single shot. Sometimes it doesn't happen," Durant said. "I

knew the next couple days was going to be about Steph struggling to shoot the ball but that's the last thing I worry about with Steph. I've just got so much confidence in him on the offensive side of the basketball."

Still, Curry has just one three-pointer in each of the first two games of the Warriors' Western Conference finals series with the Rockets as the best-of-seven showdown shifts to Oracle Arena for Game 3 on Sunday night notched at 1 game apiece.

He is shooting 15-for-34 overall from the floor, missing 11 of his 13 three-point tries.

"I've gone 0-for-11 before shooting threes, 1-for-8. Whatever the case is, you're always shooting that next shot with the optimism and the confidence that it's going in," Curry said. "So you can work on stuff in between practices and games and get your rhythm, just seeing the ball go in, work on your mechanics, but never lose confidence in myself ever. And that'll never change."

During his extensive shooting work Friday, Curry yelled out "Ahhh!" in frustration a

few times. He hollered "Oh my goodness!" and "Crazier things have happened!"

Durant just shook his head and noted, "If you worry about missed threes with Steph Curry ..." then carried on about the Houston defense and how impressed he is that Curry has improvised and taken opportunities to drive to the rim when the Rockets switch out on him in an effort to protect the three-point line.

Curry referred to his personal shooting coach, Bruce Fraser, as "sensei," or teacher. They talk in depth about what kind of workout Curry needs on any given day to feel right with his shot.

Curry understands the scrutiny. Golden State took a 127-105 beating from Chris Paul, James Harden and the Rockets on Wednesday night in Houston.

"It's something to talk about and we obviously lost so you can try to pinpoint stuff or reasons," Curry said. "And obviously I didn't have to talk to any of y'all to wake up and know I didn't play well in Game 2. That doesn't change my outlook on

the series or what I need to do. If I don't shoot the ball well in Game 3 it won't change a thing about the way I approach the next one. You come to the game with the right intentions, the right approach and more times than not it will work out in your favor."

Curry feels great physically. He missed nearly six weeks with a sprained left knee he injured March 23 before he came back for Game 2 of the Western Conference semifinals against New Orleans. Coach Steve Kerr believes it's far tougher to return from an injury during the pressure-packed playoffs, with no time to ease in with games that don't matter or have near the same magnitude.

"I think Steph's healthy, he's moving fine," Kerr said. "But this is more rhythm than anything. You come back from six weeks in the regular season, chances are you're going to have a game where nobody's focused and the other team's playing their fourth in five nights and the defense isn't that tough and you make a bunch of threes and you just feel good."

Rockets carrying confidence into Game 3

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Rockets have reason to feel good, tied with Golden State after winning Game 2 in a rout in the Western Conference finals.

But a big challenge awaits Sunday at Oracle Arena, where the Warriors have won an NBA-record tying 15 straight playoff games.

Houston coach Mike D'Antoni knows all about Golden State's success in Oakland, but thinks it has less to do with being at home than the fact that the Warriors are a great team.

"The challenge is you're playing Golden State. That's why they've won 15 in a row. Not because of the building, but because they're good," he said. "All these players are used to playing in hostile environments ... it helps a little bit [but] sometimes you feed off the energy also from the other crowd. So you try to take them out as soon as you can and take out the crowd."

The Rockets aren't daunted by Golden

State's winning streak there and are looking forward to the challenge.

"It's definitely a great place to play," Trevor Ariza said. "Their fans are great. They bring a lot of energy to the game. At this point there's nothing like playing in that type of environment and trying to silence them."

Ariza was one of the keys to Houston's 127-105 win in Game 2 that helped erase the memory of Houston's tough home loss in the series opener. Ariza had 19 points as one of five Rockets who scored more than 16 points to rebound after an ineffective performance in Game 1 because of foul trouble.

While the Rockets know what happened in Game 2 won't matter if they don't take care of business on Sunday night, they do believe it gives them a bit of momentum.

"Yeah, just because we know we're more than capable of it," James Harden said. "We've just got to go out there and do it every possession."

Houston's 127 points were the most the team has scored this postseason. But

they're quick to point out that their success on offense was the product of solid defense. That, they say, is the reason it won't be difficult to recreate what they did in Game 2 on Sunday night.

"It wasn't anything special that we did," Harden said. "We just created more opportunities with our defense."

Sunday will be just Houston's second game at Golden State this season and first since the Rockets got a 122-121 win on Oct. 17 in the opener for both teams on the night the Warriors received their championship rings.

"A lot has been going on since then," Harden said. "But as long as we take those same principles and that mindset that we have, no matter where we play, we'll be pretty good."

The Warriors have much more experience at this level of the postseason with this being their franchise-record fourth straight trip to the conference finals. But Houston has plenty of veteran leadership led by nine-time All-Star Chris Paul.

Smith's third period goal lifts Knights past Jets

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The Vegas Golden Knights were a 500-to-1 long shot to win the Stanley Cup before the NHL season began in October. Their surprisingly successful inaugural season is still rolling along, and they're one win from a berth to the Stanley Cup final.

Reilly Smith scored on a breakaway late in the third period to lead Vegas to a 3-2 victory over the Winnipeg Jets in Game 4 of the Western Conference final Friday night.

Vegas can clinch the conference title and advance to the Stanley Cup final when the series resumes Sunday in Winnipeg.

"The last one is always the toughest to get," Golden Knights goalie Marc-Andre Fleury said.

William Karlsson and Tomas Nosek also scored for Vegas, and Fleury, ninth all-time in postseason wins, turned in another spectacular performance by making 36 saves to earn his 73rd career playoff victory. The 14-year veteran goalie, left exposed by the Pittsburgh Penguins for Vegas to select him in the expansion draft, continues to have a career-best postseason as he aims for a third straight Stanley Cup title.

"I think we've got to keep the same mindset," said Fleury, who has a 1.72 goals against average and .945 save percentage in the playoffs. "Just take it one game at time and not think too far ahead and be ready to play that next game, because they're going to be coming hard."

It's something the Jets have already been doing, even in their three losses in the series.

Asked how his team has been able to survive Winnipeg's tenacious attack, Smith replied: "He's sitting right next to me," referring to Fleury at the postgame news conference.

But with the game tied at 2, it was Smith who made the big play after racing down the left side of the rink and beating Winnipeg's Connor Hellebuyck above his blocker to put the Golden Knights ahead with 6:58 left.

Hellebuyck made 27 saves, but lost for the third consecutive game despite telling reporters after Game 3 that he liked his game better than Fleury's. Patrik Laine and Tyler Myers scored for Winnipeg, which is on the brink of elimination.

"I know we can win a game, we're a good enough team," Winnipeg coach Paul Maurice said. "We've battled. We've gone into

some pretty heavy environments and won a game that we needed to win. So it's just one game."

The Jets took over where they left off in the third period of Game 3 by outskating the Golden Knights in the first period of Game 4, but Karlsson's power-play goal was the difference. Off the draw, Smith found Jonathan Marchessault, who fed Karlsson for the one-timer that gave Vegas a 1-0 lead.

In a case of déjà vu from Game 3, when Vegas responded 12 seconds after giving up a 1-0 lead, Winnipeg and the Golden Knights traded goals 43 seconds apart midway through the second period.

First, it was Laine's one-timer on the power play that even Fleury wasn't catching up to and it tied the game at the 9:29 mark. Then, it was Hellebuyck failing to secure a shot by Pierre-Edouard Bellemare, who raced to the puck and fed Nosek, who punched in his first career playoff goal to put Vegas up 2-1.

"It's a good way to be, when they get one, the next guy's up and ready to go," said Golden Knights forward James Neal, who is looking to make it to the Stanley Cup final for a second consecutive year after getting there with Nashville last season. "It's always hard when you get one and the other team scores right away, it kind of takes the wind right back out of you. For us being at home, it just energizes the building. As soon as it sucks the wind out, boom, huge goal, and we're back."

"That was a great goal by Nose."

The Jets outshot the Golden Knights 12-2 by the midway point of the third period — including Myers' tying goal — keeping Fleury busy. But the three-time Cup champion was finished allowing anything in his net.

"We win that game nine times out of 10 — tonight was that one," Winnipeg's Blake Wheeler said. "Their goalie made some extraordinary saves, he's a good player. You've got to sometimes take your hat off to a good player."

Notes: The Golden Knights and Jets joined a record 18,697 in attendance in a moment of silence for those affected by the shootings at Santa Fe High School in Texas on Friday. ... Jets forward Mark Scheifele, who registered his 10th and 11th road goals in Game 3 to set a single-year NHL postseason record, had his six-game goal streak as a visitor end.

Briefly

QB Manziel heads to CFL

Associated Press

HAMILTON, Ontario — Johnny Manziel is heading to the Canadian Football League, the latest move for the Heisman Trophy winner whose NFL career was a bust with the Cleveland Browns.

The quarterback said on Twitter on Saturday he signed with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, ending months of speculation on a possible path back to pro football.

"Made the decision today to sign my contract with the CFL and further my football career after a long break," Manziel wrote. "Very grateful for everyone that's been supporting me along the way. I believe this is the best opportunity for me moving forward."

His last game came at the end of the 2015 season. He joins a team coached by June Jones, a former NFL and college coach.

Browns trade CB Taylor for pick

CLEVELAND — Jamar Taylor's trade to Arizona is official.

Cleveland traded another of their starting cornerbacks to the Cardinals on Saturday for a sixth-round draft pick in 2020. The teams agreed to the swap on Friday and had to work out final details before it was announced.

Taylor's departure seemed destined when the Browns signed several defensive backs in free agency and selected Ohio State cornerback Denzel Ward with the No. 4 overall pick in the draft.

Nadal beats Djokovic in Italian Open semifinal

ROME — Rafael Nadal was challenged in the first set by Novak Djokovic before pulling away for a 7-6 (4), 6-3 win to reach the Italian Open final on Saturday.

In their 51st meeting but first in more than a year, Nadal's court coverage eventually proved too much to handle for Djokovic, who is still regaining his form from a persistent right elbow injury.

Sweden routs US for spot in world title game

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Sweden strode into the final of the ice hockey world championship by crushing the United States 6-0 on Saturday.

The defending champion set up a gold medal game on Sunday against Canada or Switzerland.

Mets ace deGrom overpowers D-backs

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Healthy, fresh and on top of his game, Jacob deGrom simply overpowered an Arizona Diamondbacks lineup that's been scuffling all month.

The right-hander matched a career high with 13 strikeouts, Michael Conforto went 4-for-4 with two RBIs and the New York Mets beat the Diamondbacks 3-1 on Friday night.

"He had everything working and he was just lights out," Conforto said.

Wilmer Flores drove in one run and scored another to help the Mets win a series opener between struggling teams. Both bolted to fast starts this season before sputtering lately.

After an abbreviated outing last weekend in his return from the disabled list, deGrom (4-0) threw seven dominant innings this time. He's won his first four decisions for the first time in his career.

"He was awesome," catcher Devin Mesoraco said. "He's got so many weapons. They can't really look for one thing. He had them all going today."

DeGrom's career-best scoreless streak of 24¹/₃ innings was snapped when Jake Lamb, just back from a shoulder injury, hit an RBI double in the sixth. Lamb was thrown out stretching at third for the second out of the inning.

Slumping slugger Paul Goldschmidt fanned all four times up. Three came against deGrom, who permitted six hits and walked none while lowering his ERA to 1.75.

"His fastball was exploding out of his hand," Arizona's Daniel Descalso said.

The 2014 NL Rookie of the Year missed a turn with a hyperextended right elbow before returning Sunday in Philadelphia, only to be removed as a precaution after it took him 45 pitches to get through the first inning.

"I was a little worried that he would tire out, just because he's had such a crazy schedule," Mets manager Mickey Callaway said. "I was hesitant to put him back out there (in the seventh), but he really wanted it so we let him go back out and he did a great job."

Robert Gsellman worked a perfect eighth and Jeury's Familia struck out the side in the ninth for his 12th save in 15 tries.

Conforto, who had four singles to equal his career high for hits, raised his batting average 31 points to .231.

He had a two-out RBI single in the first inning and another in the fifth. Both came off starter Zack Godley (4-3), who allowed one earned run and four hits in six innings.

"I felt good. It's kind of been a process at the plate," Conforto said. "I was able to be in a situation where I could drive some guys in. Hopefully it gets us rolling."

Flores had an RBI groundout in the first after a costly error by Descalso at second base. Flores also doubled and scored in the fifth.

Arizona, which still leads the NL West, opened a three-city road trip with its eighth loss in nine games.

"I feel like we're a better offensive team than we've been showing," manager Torey Lovullo said. "At some point, it's going to turn."

MLB roundup

Astros top Indians for third straight win

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Charlie Morton pitched seven solid innings, Tony Kemp had a tiebreaking RBI double in the seventh and the Houston Astros beat the Cleveland Indians 4-1 on Friday night for their third straight win.

Morton (6-0) allowed one run and four hits with eight strikeouts in extending his career-high winning streak to nine straight dating to last September. Morton retired 19 of the first 21 batters.

After Cleveland starter Mike Clevinger (3-1) walked Marwin Gonzalez and Derek Fisher to lead off the seventh, Brian McCann popped out before Kemp hit his RBI ground-rule double down the right-field line to give Houston a 2-1 lead. George Springer followed with a grounder to Kipnis, but Fisher beat the throw home.

Ken Giles pitched the ninth for his seventh save.

Royals 5, Yankees 2: Whit Merrifield had three hits, stole three bases and scored twice off CC Sabathia in the first four innings, Jakob Junis held down the Yankees' potent offense and Kansas City beat visiting New York.

Salvador Perez homed and added three RBIs for the Royals, who had lost five straight and seven of eight.

Sabathia (2-1) lasted just five innings for the Yankees, struggling all night with his command.

Marlins 2, Braves 0: Dan Straily pitched seven scoreless innings, J.T. Realmuto had an RBI triple and Miami beat host Atlanta.

Orioles 7, Red Sox 4: Jonathan Schoop homered and Alex Cobb got his first win of the season as Baltimore ended its 13-game road losing streak.

Manny Machado went 3-for-5 with three RBIs and Adam Jones had two hits and drove in

two for the Orioles, who won on the road for the first time since April 8.

Cubs 8, Reds 1: Jon Lester pitched six dominant innings, Addison Russell tied his career high with four hits and visiting Chicago quickly took control with a three-run first inning against Cincinnati.

Rangers 12, White Sox 5: Shin-Soo Choo hit his first grand slam in eight years, leading Texas over host Chicago.

Choo made it 9-3 with his drive against reliever Chris Volstad in a five-run third inning. He also singled and scored in the fourth and walked twice.

Padres 3, Pirates 2: Eric Hosmer hit two doubles and scored the go-ahead run and Tyson Ross won for the first time in more than a month as visiting San Diego sent Pittsburgh to its second loss in 10 games.

Athletics 3, Blue Jays 1: Dustin Fowler hit his first ca-

reer home run and also had a tiebreaking RBI double in the seventh inning, Josh Phegley hit an RBI double in his season debut, and Oakland beat host Toronto.

Danny Coulombe (1-1) pitched 1¹/₃ innings for the victory as Oakland won for the fourth time in five games.

Brewers 8, Twins 3: Jesus Aguilar homered twice and Ji-Man Choi hit a solo home run in his return to the majors as visiting Milwaukee beat Minnesota.

Rays 8, Angels 3: At Anaheim, Calif., Wilson Ramos homered twice and drove in three runs to lead Tampa Bay to its fifth straight win.

Mariners 5, Tigers 4: Mitch Haniger's RBI double capped a five-run seventh inning as host Seattle rallied past Detroit.

Cardinals 12, Phillies 4: Jose Martinez drove in five runs and had four hits to help St. Louis rout visiting Philadelphia.