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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Senate panel backs 2.6% pay raise

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A key Senate committee on Tuesday endorsed a growing movement to enact a 2.6 percent military pay raise, the highest in nearly a decade, as part of an overall proposal to boost troop levels, military programs and benefits.

The move by the Senate Armed Services Committee subpanel on personnel issues follows the passage of a bill this month by a key House committee to authorize the new pay raises through the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, which directs policy and spending plans for the Defense Department.

The Senate subcommittee also said its proposal, known as its “mark,” would authorize troop increases, reforms to several military health programs and new efforts to combat sexual misconduct, domestic violence and child abuse within the services. The panel said it

will release more specifics on the plan after the full Senate Armed Services Committee issues its NDAA proposal as early as this week.

The proposal “is a good starting point for a debate and discussion about how we best serve our men and women in uniform,” said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, of New York, ranking Democrat for the personnel subpanel. “In particular, I am pleased that the mark includes provisions that begin to address the issue of intimate partner violence and child abuse in the ranks.”

The comments come in the midst of a rash of legislative activity this week focused on the NDAA. By Tuesday, the House Rules Committee was sorting through more than 500 proposed amendments to that chamber’s version of the NDAA. The committee was slated to send the bill, H.R. 5515, to the House floor as early as this week.

The action came as the full Senate Armed Services Committee began debating its ver-

sion of the NDAA behind closed doors Tuesday. The committee’s subpanels were also combing through their proposals behind closed doors with the exception of the personnel committee, which held its hearing in public.

So far, the Senate panel seems to take a more aggressive stance than the House NDAA proposal on issues such as reforming the “up or out” military promotion system, addressing opioid addictions among military servicemembers and veterans, and tackling the sexual misconduct, abuse and domestic violence concerns. For example, the proposal would make domestic violence a crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, a complaint raised in several Senate committee hearings this past year.

The panel’s proposal also addresses complaints brought to the committee earlier this year on claims that the promotion system known as the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act is woefully outdated. In January, a panel of military experts

and leaders urged lawmakers to revamp the one-size-fits-all program that standardized military promotions because it has plagued recruiting and retention efforts.

“It introduces the most comprehensive reform of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act since its inception in 1980, which includes key provisions to better align officer management with the objectives included the National Defense Strategy,” said Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., chairman of the personnel subpanel.

Tillis said the plan would also launch several health care-related reforms, such as expanding authorities for the director of the Defense Health Agency to better manage medical treatment facilities. It would also establish a three-year pilot program to minimize servicemembers’ abuse of opioids and require the Tricare pharmacy program to share information with state prescription drug-monitoring programs, Tillis said.

US disinvites China from RIMPAC exercise

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States rescinded an invitation to China to participate in a massive naval exercise in the Pacific in the summer, citing evidence of Beijing’s continued militarization of disputed islands in the South China Sea, Pentagon officials announced Wednesday.

Marine Lt. Col. Christopher Logan, a Defense Department spokesman, described disinviting China’s navy from participating in the biennial Rim of the Pacific exercise as a first step in

protesting China’s actions in the Spratly Islands. China has long been accused of building artificial land masses in that region, which is also claimed by the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam and Malaysia, and placing military assets there.

“China’s behavior is inconsistent with the principles and purposes of the RIMPAC exercise,” Logan said in a statement. “We have strong evidence that China has deployed anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missile systems and electronic jammers to contested features in the Spratly Islands region of the South China

Sea.”

Most recently, China announced it had landed long-range bombers on Woody Island in the Paracel Islands, which the Chinese claim as their own but Vietnam and Taiwan also claim. Logan said that deployment “raised tensions” in the region. Chinese officials said the bombers were participating in regular training and were not a threat.

China has participated in the last two iterations of RIMPAC in 2014 and 2016, Logan said. The exercise, which has been conducted traditionally near

Hawaii, is designed to develop interoperability among nations whose navies operate in and around the Indo-Pacific region, officials said. This year’s exercise is slated to run from June 27 through Aug. 2.

In 2016, navies from 26 nations participated in the exercise. It included some 25,000 troops, 45 ships, five submarines and more than 200 aircraft, according to Navy information published at the time. It is expected to have a similar scope in 2018.

The United States has not taken sides in the disputes in the region.

Merchant Marine's decline causes concern

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The once-mighty U.S. Merchant Marine fleet has nearly collapsed under the weight of high labor costs, zigzagging federal policies and intense competition from abroad, damaging America's position as the only country in the world able to supply and sustain a long-distance war.

The U.S. Merchant Marine has declined from 1,288 international trading vessels in 1951 to 81 today.

"It's a matter of national security," said Maritime Administration chief Mark H. Buzby, a retired Navy rear admiral.

The Merchant Marine is a fleet of U.S. ships that carries cargo during peacetime and becomes an auxiliary of the Defense Department during wartime to deliver troops and supplies to conflict zones. The Navy does not have enough ships to handle a large-scale supply mission on its own and has relied in almost every conflict on the Merchant Marine.

"I tell people we're kind of on the ragged edge here of our ability to conduct a large-scale sealift operation to move our combat forces overseas. Even in an uncontested environment, we would be challenged," Buzby told McClatchy. An Air Force general warned Congress last month that the Pentagon might have to turn to foreign vessels to mobilize equipment, just as it did in the 1991 Gulf War mobilization. In that war, the crews of 13 of the 192 foreign-flagged vessels carrying cargo rebelled and forced their ships away from the war zone.

"If the fleet continues to lose ships, a lengthy, mass deployment on the scale of Desert Shield/Desert Storm could eventually require U.S. forces to rely on foreign-flagged ships for sustainment," Air Force Gen. Darren W. McDew, head of the U.S. Transportation Command, told a Senate panel April 10.

McDew said the dwindling Merchant Marine fleet, along with an aging Navy transport

fleet, "threatens our ability to meet national security requirements."

U.S. troops stationed in the Middle East and Afghanistan receive much of their supplies via U.S. flag vessels. Despite the usage of heavy lift aircraft, large oceangoing vessels remain crucial to military mobility in the 21st century.

Vessels flying the flags of places like Liberia, Panama and the Marshall Islands usually have smaller multinational crews that stay at sea for longer periods, even as the value of the cargo aboard their ships — sometimes surpassing 20,000 containers — grows ever higher. U.S. flag ships have more robust crews — a minimum of 22 — and all mariners take an oath of allegiance to the United States.

Foreign crews shouldn't be allowed near armaments and supplies the Pentagon uses in fighting wars, Buzby said.

"They could sabotage equipment or have access to classified equipment and systems," Buzby said. Or "just be slow or nonexistent about delivering it."

One member of Congress described the shortfall in merchant ships as a weak flank in the nation's defense posture, and referred to one of the epic battles from World War II, saying it would have been a lost cause in today's conditions.

"It's debatable whether the Marines, if they were to land on the shores of Guadalcanal, would they be able to have supplies for the second month? The answer is, probably not," said Rep. John Garamendi, a California Democrat and the ranking member of a House Transportation subcommittee that deals with maritime issues.

Crises over the U.S. Merchant Marine date as far back as the Civil War when the North rushed to charter vessels to help blockade Southern ports. Decades later, chaotic scenes unfolded at the port of Tampa in the run-up to the 1898 Spanish-American War as authori-

ties tried feverishly to charter vessels to transport Col. Theodore Roosevelt and his 25,000 Rough Riders to Cuba. In the end, only 16,000 men would fit aboard the limited vessels.

Less than two decades later, the U.S. government found itself with little means to transport an expeditionary force to Europe in World War I, and "had to requisition, scavenge and steal to get the vessels," said Salvatore Mercogliano, a maritime historian at Campbell University in North Carolina.

The ships also often face grave danger without the armaments to protect themselves or their cargo. By the end of World War II, 1,554 U.S. vessels lay at the bottom of the ocean, many of them sunk by German U-boats. Some 9,500 mariners died, a rate of casualty that rivaled that of U.S. Marines for the early part of the war. After the wartime buildup, the U.S. boasted the largest Navy and Merchant Marine fleet in the world.

Yet in the intervening years, U.S. shipping companies fell behind as global oceangoing trade grew a staggering twentyfold. U.S. flag vessels today carry only 2 percent of the \$1.8 trillion in goods and material that transit U.S. ports each year.

U.S. shipping companies say they cannot meet the ever lower costs of foreign shipping companies from nations that subsidize shipbuilding, allow skeleton crews aboard vessels and offer rock-bottom salaries. Some 50,000 oceangoing trading vessels ply the seas today. The United States is not even among the top 20 maritime nations of the world in terms of gross tonnage.

"They utilize Filipino, Indian, Chinese (crews from) low cost countries where the standard of living is far below that of the United States. They'll go aboard a ship for six months straight," said Thomas B. Crowley Jr., chairman and chief executive of a namesake shipping company that has headquarters in Jacksonville, Fla.

"Companies would love to be able to fly the American flag. They know it's better protection for them," Mercogliano said. He pointed to a piracy attack on the U.S.-flagged MV Maersk Alabama off the coast of Somalia in 2009, made famous in the 2013 movie "Captain Phillips." U.S. Navy snipers killed three Somali pirates as they sought to escape aboard the cargo ship's lifeboat with the ship's American captain, who was uninjured.

U.S. flag vessels since that incident often sail with .50-caliber miniguns and security teams, especially when traveling in dangerous waters.

U.S. shippers cite the hyper-competitive global market as one factor in their decline. But they also say they've been hurt by fluctuating government policies, drastically reduced shipments of U.S. food aid abroad and the sharp drawdown of U.S. military forces abroad after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1989.

"It's been an 80 percent reduction in the overall global (U.S. military) footprint since circa 1990," said Eric P. Ebeling, chief executive of American Roll-on Roll-off Carrier Group out of Woodcliff Lake, N.J., the third-largest U.S. flag carrier in international trade. "When cargo goes down, that's less cargo on U.S. flag ships."

Experts say the problem is not only about a dwindling number of ships. As the U.S. maritime industry shrinks, so does the number of mariners, who find fewer jobs and stay in them for fewer years, allowing mandatory periodic licensing to lapse once they leave. This makes emergency call-ups problematic.

"We'll run out of people before we run out of ships," Buzby said. He noted that a report to Congress submitted last year by a Maritime Administration working group found that the nation would face a shortfall of 1,800 mariners once a major war dragged toward six months.

'Fat Leonard' ill; feds are keeping his location secret

The Washington Post

Where's Fat Leonard?

Leonard Glenn Francis, the central player in the worst corruption scandal in Navy history, was scheduled to testify for the first time next week about his crooked dealings with dozens of Navy officers. The Navy subpoenaed the 350-pound defense contractor as the star witness at a military trial in Norfolk, Va., for a commander accused of graft.

In a twist that has caught the Navy officials by surprise, it now appears Francis will not come to Norfolk after all. Federal authorities who have kept him locked up — and effectively silent — since his arrest five years ago in San Diego have told the Navy Francis does not have clearance to attend. Publicly, they will not say why, or even reveal where he is.

A spokeswoman for the U.S.

Marshals Service, which had been in charge of Francis' detention, said he is no longer in the agency's custody but declined to elaborate. The U.S. attorney's office in San Diego, which prosecuted Francis and persuaded him to turn state's evidence, also declined to comment.

Two people familiar with the case, however, told *The Washington Post* Francis' health has deteriorated since last year and that he was secretly released from federal detention in December so he could receive urgent medical care at a San Diego hospital.

They said the 53-year-old maritime tycoon was discharged from the hospital in March and since then has been allowed to live in a private apartment in San Diego while he continues to receive medical care. He is confined there and under round-the-clock surveillance. In an unusual arrange-

ment, he is footing the bill for his own security expenses, the two people said.

Francis pleaded guilty in 2015 to bribery and defrauding the Navy of \$35 million. Since then, he has been helping investigators in hopes of getting a lighter sentence.

Besides Francis, 22 defendants have pleaded guilty in federal and military courts. Eleven cases are pending.

The only case that has come close to trial so far is that of Navy Cmdr. David A. Morales, a former contracting official whose court-martial is scheduled to begin May 29 in Norfolk. He is charged with conspiracy, bribery, graft and other crimes.

The Navy has scheduled a hearing for Thursday to figure out how to proceed in the Morales case. Among the options are to move the court-martial to San Diego or allow Francis to testify via videolink.

Osprey crash report concerns Japanese minister

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

Japan's defense minister has expressed concerns about the safety of Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft after a report blamed downwash for a crash off Australia that killed three last summer.

In a report dated March 21, investigators said the Aug. 5, 2017, incident was caused by a heavy downwash of air as the Osprey from Okinawa's Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 265 attempted to land on the USS Green Bay.

"There will be a need to deal with the matter after obtaining the relevant information from the United States," Itsunori Onodera told reporters Tuesday, according to the *Asahi* newspaper.

The downwash was so heavy that the Osprey didn't have enough thrust to hold its hover and collided with the ship before falling into the sea, killing three and injuring 23, according to the report.

"The mission was complex, challenging, and included flying into and out of a highly congested operational area," Maj. Gen. Thomas Weidley, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing commanding general, wrote in an endorsement of the report. "Executing this mission required a detailed plan and superior technical performance."

"The Marines manning the mishap aircraft were mission capable, fully-trained, and qualified. The mishap aircraft was mechanically sound," he said.

Naval Air Systems Command engineers have looked at the effects of downwash and the amount of power an Osprey needs to land safely. They have made adjustments to the amount of weight an Osprey can carry when it's approaching a ship at sea to make sure it has enough power to land, the U.S. Naval Institute reported Monday.

Report: Nukes central to N. Korean strategy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Pentagon report to Congress says North Korea sees nuclear weapons as central to its security, an assessment that would seem to complicate President Donald Trump's effort to persuade North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to give them up.

The report was delivered to Congress in April, a month after Trump agreed to meet Kim to discuss the North's denuclearization. It was based on the Pentagon's analysis of North Korea's military capabilities and strategies through 2017, when it was widely believed in the U.S. government that Kim had no intention of surrendering his nuclear weapons.

Hope for defusing a long-standing nuclear crisis on the

Korean Peninsula was raised in March when South Korean officials said Kim was open to negotiations over his nuclear weapons and Trump agreed to meet Kim.

The outlook has grown cloudier in recent days, and Trump told reporters during an Oval Office appearance Tuesday with South Korean President Moon Jae-in that his planned meeting with Kim on June 12 in Singapore could be delayed.

Trump was asked by a reporter whether the U.S. would "guarantee the safety" of the Kim regime if it were to relinquish its nuclear weapons.

A copy of the Pentagon report was posted Tuesday by Steven Aftergood on his Secrecy News blog. Later in the day the Pentagon made it available on its website.

It was first reported by Bloomberg News.

The report offers little suggestion that the Pentagon anticipated a circumstance in which the North would consider giving up its nuclear weapons.

"Pyongyang portrays nuclear weapons as its most effective way to deter the threat from the United States," it says. "However, regime propaganda began emphasizing 'final victory' over the United States and Republic of Korea in 2017, suggesting Kim Jong Un has larger ambitions, including use of nuclear weapons to deter interference if it attempts to reunify the Korean Peninsula."

The Republic of Korea is the official name of U.S.-allied South Korea.

Ga. Democrat has historic primary win

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Georgia Democrats gave Atlanta lawyer Stacey Abrams a chance to become the first black female governor in American history on a primary night that ended well for several women seeking office.

Abrams set new historical marks with a primary victory Tuesday that made her the first black nominee and first female nominee for governor of either majority party in Georgia.

Voters also picked nominees in Kentucky, Arkansas and Texas ahead of the November midterms. Here's a closer look at key story lines:

■ **Georgia governor's race.** Democrats were set to nominate a woman for governor either way, with Stacey Abrams and Stacey Evans battling it out in a pitched primary fight.

But Abrams, 44, stood out in her bid to be the nation's first black woman to lead a state. The former state General Assembly leader was insistent that the way to dent Republican domination in Georgia wasn't by cautiously pursuing the older white voters who had abandoned Democrats in recent decades. She wanted to widen the electorate by attract-

ing young people and nonwhites who hadn't been voting.

She will test her theory as the underdog against either Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle or Secretary of State Brian Kemp, who will meet in a Republican runoff in July. Cagle led a five-man Republican field, with Kemp qualifying for the second spot after a campaign that was a sprint to the right on everything from immigration to support for President Donald Trump.

■ **Texas Congressional run-offs.** Texas had three House run-offs that will be key to whether Democrats can flip the minimum 24 GOP-held seats they would need for a majority in next year's Congress. All three were among 25 districts nationally where Trump ran behind Hillary Clinton in 2016. Democrats nominated women in two of the districts and a black man in the third.

Attorney Lizzie Fletcher far outpaced activist Laura Moser in a metro Houston congressional contest that became a proxy for Democrats' fight between liberals and moderates. National Democrats' campaign committee never endorsed Fletcher but released opposition research against Moser amid fears that

she was too liberal to knock off vulnerable Republican Rep. John Culberson in the fall.

In a San Antonio-Mexican border district, Gina Ortiz Jones, an Air Force veteran and former intelligence officer, got Democrats' nod to face Republican Rep. Will Hurd in November. Jones would be the first openly lesbian congresswoman from her state.

Former NFL player Colin Allred won a battle of two attorneys and former Obama administration officials in a metro Dallas House district. Allred, who is black, topped Lillian Salerno and will face Republican Rep. Pete Sessions in November.

Among Republicans, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz's former chief of staff, Chip Roy, won a competitive runoff for the San Antonio-area congressional seat of retiring of Rep. Lamar Smith.

In the governor's race, Democrats tapped former Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez to take on Republican incumbent Greg Abbott in November. Valdez is Texas' first openly gay and first Latina nominee for governor.

■ **Dems battle in Kentucky.** Voters in a central Kentucky congressional district opted

for retired Marine officer and fighter pilot Amy McGrath over Lexington Mayor Jim Gray to advance to a fall race against Republican Rep. Andy Barr.

National Democrats once touted Gray as one of their best recruits in their efforts for a House majority. They said in recent weeks they'd be happy with McGrath, but the race still shaped up as a battle between rank-and-file activists and the party establishment.

McGrath was making her first bid for public office, among a handful of female Naval Academy graduates running for Congress this year.

■ **Arkansas' health care preview.** Arkansas state Rep. Clarke Tucker captured Democrats' congressional nomination in a Little Rock-based district by telling his story as a cancer survivor. Though he faced a crowded primary field, his real target all along has been Republican Rep. French Hill, who voted many times to repeal the 2010 Affordable Care Act.

The state's Republican governor, Asa Hutchinson, dispatched primary opposition as he sought another term. Democrats nominated former Teach for America executive Jared Henderson.

Energy plant plugs wells as Kilauea lava nears

Associated Press

PAHOA, Hawaii — Production wells at a geothermal plant under threat by lava flowing from Hawaii's Kilauea volcano have been plugged to prevent toxic gases from seeping out.

Lava from a nearby, new volcanic vent entered, then stalled, on the 815-acre property where the Puna Geothermal Venture wells occupy around 40 acres. Residents have been concerned about hazards if the lava flowed over the plant's facilities, or if heat generated would interact with various chemicals used on-site.

Ten wells were "quenched," which cools them with enough cold water to counter the pressure of volcanic steam coming

from below, said Hawaii Gov. David Ige. The last well was plugged with mud, because it had remained hot despite the infusion of water. Metal plugs in the wells, which run as deep as 8,000 feet underground, are an additional stopgap measure.

"All wells are stable at this point," said Ige. County officials are also monitoring various gases that may leak into the atmosphere.

A spike in gas levels could prompt a mass evacuation, said Hawaii County Civil Defense Administrator Talmadge Magno. Officials, however, have not discussed specific scenarios that would lead to such an emergency.

Puna Geothermal, owned by Nevada's Ormat Technologies,

was shut down shortly after Kilauea began spewing lava May 3. The plant harnesses heat and steam from the earth's core to spin turbines to generate power. A flammable gas called pentane is used as part of the process, though officials earlier this month removed 50,000 gallons of the gas from the plant to reduce the chance of explosions.

The plant has capacity to produce 38 megawatts of electricity, providing roughly one-quarter of the Big Island's daily energy demand.

Lava destroyed a building near the plant late Monday, bringing the total number of structures overtaken in the past several weeks to nearly 50, including dozens of homes. The latest was a warehouse adjacent

to the Puna plant, Hawaii County spokeswoman Janet Snyder told the Honolulu Star-Advertiser. The building was owned by the state and was used in geothermal research projects in the early days of the site.

Native Hawaiians have long expressed frustration with the plant since it came online in 1989; they say it is built on sacred land. Pele, the goddess of fire, is believed to live on Kilauea volcano, and the plant itself is thought to desecrate her name.

Ormat said in a May 15 statement that there was a low risk of surface lava making its way to the facility. The company also said there was no damage to the facilities above-ground and that it was continuing to assess the impact.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man trying to get away climbs tree, falls

VT RUTLAND — Police in Vermont said a man seriously injured himself by falling out of a tree in a failed attempt to evade arrest.

The Rutland Herald reported that John Ryea, 35, was on crutches when he pleaded not guilty to two misdemeanor assault charges Friday. Police in Brandon allege that he assaulted two women.

The women told police Ryea fled when he learned officers were on their way. Police said they later found him seriously injured in a fall from a tree he had climbed while trying to get away.

Ryea was released and ordered not to have contact with the women.

Son's graduation cake inscription censored

SC CHARLESTON — A South Carolina woman isn't happy a grocery store censored her honor graduate son's cake, which was supposed to include the Latin phrase "Summa Cum Laude."

Cara Koscinski told The Post and Courier, of Charleston, that she ordered a cake online from Publix that was supposed to say "Congrats Jacob! Summa Cum Laude class of 2018."

She said the online message box did not like the word "cum," the Latin word for "with." The computer marked it as a naughty word and substituted three hyphens.

Koscinski said she then filled in a box for special instructions, explaining the Latin word and placed the \$70 order. Another family member picked up the cake, not knowing what it was supposed to say. It came with the hyphens.

School official resigns over bombing claim

NY ALBANY — A high-ranking New York university official resigned Monday after a newspaper challenged his story about surviving a deadly bombing in Afghanistan.

The State University of New York Upstate Medical University announced that senior vice president Sergio Garcia resigned his \$340,000-a-year job effective immediately after a request by the school's president.

The resignation came after the Times Union of Albany reported that in a videotaped speech last fall, Garcia claimed he was part of a convoy delivering books to an all-girls school in Afghanistan in 2011 when a blast killed many of his colleagues.

The bombing Garcia described happened in 2013, after he had left the country.

Man used dating app to set up 7 robberies

NE OMAHA — An Omaha man has been given 24 to 40 years in prison for setting up the armed robberies of seven men who thought they were going to meet women they'd messaged on a dating app.

Court records say Jordan Kellogg, 20, was sentenced Monday in Douglas County District Court. He'd pleaded no contest to four counts of robbery. Prosecutors dropped three more counts and one of attempted robbery in exchange for Kellogg's pleas.

Police said each robbery last fall involved two or three assailants. The robbers posed as women online and arranged dates with the victims.

Police said Kellogg had an accomplice, Janonta Liggins. He's

awaiting trial after pleading not guilty to two counts of robbery and three weapons counts.

Airplane passenger urinates, exposes self

SC CHARLESTON — Authorities said a drunken passenger urinated on an airplane after flight attendants moved him for touching a woman's leg and making crude comments.

A federal complaint accuses Michael A. Haag of one count each of interfering with flight attendants and exposing himself on the flight May 17 from Denver to Charleston, S.C.

An FBI agent wrote that Haag ordered vodka drinks and made one woman uncomfortable with crude comments. The agent wrote that another woman began yelling when Haag touched her leg repeatedly.

The complaint says Haag was moved to another seat, where a third passenger saw him take off his seat belt and urinate on the seat in front of him.

Baboon escapes crate at airport, is cornered

TX SAN ANTONIO — A baboon on his way to a South Texas wildlife sanctuary escaped his crate and kept officers busy for two hours at San Antonio International Airport.

Officers shot the baboon, named Dawkins, with a tranquilizer dart. The ape got loose Monday afternoon shortly after arriving on an American Airlines flight from Chicago. The flight had originated in Boston.

Airport spokesman Rich Stinson said officers managed to corner Dawkins in a baggage-handling area outside the terminal. Stinson said the baboon never came close to travelers and was confined to a secure baggage area.

City doesn't know who issued 'zombie alert'

FL LAKE WORTH — Officials say they still don't know who sent a "zombie alert" to residents of a Florida city following a power outage.

Lake Worth spokesman Ben Kerr said an independent investigation is underway to determine who was behind the message sent to some 7,880 customers during a 27-minute power outage Sunday.

During the city's own investigation, Kerr said, officials determined that no current or former employees edited the pre-prepared message to include the warning of a zombie invasion. He told the Palm Beach Post that "no one was fired for it."

Police say reported abduction was hoax

VA MIDLOTHIAN — Authorities said the reported abduction of a woman outside a Virginia Walmart was a hoax.

Chesterfield County police were called Sunday after witnesses reported seeing a woman flee from a car trunk, chased by two men who caught and forced her back in the car.

Authorities said the woman saw herself in local news coverage and came to a police station with one of the men Monday night.

After interviewing the woman and the four men involved, police said Tuesday that the incident was a hoax planned by the group.

Authorities said the group planned to film the staged abduction and the reaction of onlookers and post the video online.

From wire reports

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Reporting
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and Military News

Rockets rally, get even with Warriors

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Chris Paul pounded the ball down demonstratively on Stephen Curry's home court in sheer delight.

And maybe he sent a little message: These Rockets are for real and very much remain in the championship chase.

Houston handled the defending champions in their hostile, imposing home arena and sustained the latest second-half flurry by Curry, getting 30 points from James Harden and another 27 from Paul to even the Western Conference finals at two games apiece with a 95-92 victory Tuesday night.

Curry scored 28 points and Kevin Durant added 27 points and 12 rebounds but the Warriors missed their final five shots from the floor and their NBA-record postseason winning streak at home ended at 16 games.

The Rockets shook off a 41-point embarrassment in Game 3, a 12-0 deficit to start Tuesday and another big run by the Warriors in the third, then won it with defense down the stretch.

"We're a team. We're really good as a team," Harden said.

Paul rebounded Klay Thompson's miss just before the final

buzzer sounded for the first time and celebrated in front of a stunned, yellow-clad home crowd. A replay review ensued and it was determined Shaun Livingston fouled Paul before the game ended, so Paul made a free throw with 0.5 seconds left.

And he did it all playing on a tender foot.

"A whole lot of treatment," Paul said. "It's as good as it's going to be right now."

Curry couldn't get off a final attempt before the buzzer.

Game 5 is Thursday night in Houston.

Golden State, which went a record 16-1 on the way to last year's title, will play its longest playoff round after closing out its first two series in five games.

"Now we've got to fight and really understand that this is a true playoff-type experience," Curry said.

Golden State got the ball with 1:27 to play down 94-91 and Thompson and Curry each missed contested three-pointers.

The Warriors got another chance with 42.5 seconds left following Houston's shot-clock violation. Curry missed a driving layup and Draymond Green pulled down the offensive re-

bound and was fouled by Paul, but Green converted only one free throw.

"I thought this is the highest level we've ever played defensively, without a doubt," Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni said, "because we're talking about the best offensive team ever."

The Rockets went ahead 85-84 with 6:03 remaining on Trevor Ariza's three-pointer from the baseline after a beautiful bounce pass from the opposite corner by Paul.

Golden State trailed 91-86 with 3:30 left following a pair of free throws by Eric Gordon, then Curry converted a three-point play moments later.

Green wound up with 11 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists while going at it with Paul all night in Game 4 — the first nail-biter so far in a series that had featured only lopsided results of 13 points or more.

"I'm sure we'll look at the film and kick ourselves," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "Look, this is a great team we're playing. They won 65 games for a reason."

Curry knocked down three straight three-pointers during a key third-quarter sequence in which he scored 11 consecutive points before Thompson's three.

Down 53-46 at halftime two days after a franchise playoff-record 41-point victory in Sunday's 126-85 win, Curry shined in the second half once more. He scored 17 in all during the third-quarter spurt.

Curry came out and hit a three from the top and seemed on his way to another spectacular finish until the late misses on a night both Western Conference powers shot just 39 percent.

His three-pointer from 29 feet out at the 5:43 mark of the third got Golden State back within 62-60 then he knocked down another moments later on the Warriors' next possession for the lead. Then, another from the baseline before a driving layup to the left.

Much-improved Warriors big man Kevon Looney, who shed 30 pounds last offseason, earned his first career postseason start in place of injured Andre Iguodala and had four points and six rebounds.

The Rockets missed their first eight field-goal tries and committed two turnovers before Harden's layup with 6:42 left in the first. D'Antoni called timeout at the 7:06 mark of the first with his team trailing 12-0.

"We just kept playing," Paul said.

Driver Newgarden following Penske's plan

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Josef Newgarden brought Team Penske's prestigious No. 1 car to Indianapolis. Since then, the defending series champion has mostly been out of the spotlight.

He watched one teammate, Will Power, dominate opening weekend to give the team its 200th series win. He's seen another, Helio Castroneves, become a focal point this week as he pursues a record-tying fourth Indianapolis 500 victory.

Newgarden, meanwhile, is content to go back to work.

"It doesn't feel that different," the 27-year-old Tennessean said. "The month of May is always a pressure cooker. You just can't allow yourself to get turned around."

Distractions have never been a problem for Newgarden.

He's methodically progressed at every step of his journey. Long before joining Roger Penske's powerhouse team, the jovial Newgarden embraced throngs of adoring fans following him around the track and the pressure of being dubbed IndyCar's next big star. He's even willing to sell the sport wherever and whenever he's asked.

Yet despite all those obligations, Newgarden's performance improved each year.

"He was a strong contender in Indy Lights and we had a chance to talk with him at that point," Penske recalled on Thursday. "But after going with Sarah Fisher and the performance he had with Ed Carpenter, he really showed us his strengths and then he really beat us like a drum at

Iowa (in 2016)."

Rather than trying to beat Newgarden, Penske hired him and it's become a perfect match.

Last year, Newgarden won a career-best four races and claimed his first series title. What Penske liked most, though, was seeing how Newgarden fit on a star-studded team.

"He's a great team player and I think he found a way to get along with the guys," Penske said. "The most important thing is that the four guys all get along."

Newgarden's consistency hasn't followed him to Indianapolis yet.

He's made 10 career starts at the speedway, three on the road course, and only has two top-10 finishes. His career best, third, came two years ago in the 500.

NFL owners adopt new anthem rules

Associated Press

ATLANTA — NFL owners approved a new policy Thursday aimed at addressing the firestorm over national anthem protests, permitting players to stay in the locker room during the “The Star-Spangled Banner” but requiring them to stand if they come to the field.

Commissioner Roger Goodell said the change was approved unanimously by the owners at their spring meeting in Atlanta, but it was met with immediate skepticism by the players’ union.

“We want people to be respectful of the national anthem. We want people to stand,” Goodell said. “That’s all personnel, and to make sure they treat this moment in a respectful fashion. That’s something that we think we owe.

“We’ve been very sensitive on making sure that we give players choices, but we do believe that moment is an important moment and one that we are going to focus on.”

In a sign that players were not part of the discussions, any violations of the policy would result in fines against the team — not the players.

The NFL Players Association said it will challenge any part of the new policy that violates the collective bargaining agreement.

The owners spent several hours addressing the contentious issue — which has reached all the way to the White House.

Former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick began kneeling during the national anthem in 2016, a quiet but powerful protest against

police brutality and racial inequities in the justice system.

Other players took up the cause, and the gesture carried on during the 2017 season even after Kaepernick left the 49ers and failed to land a job with another team.

President Donald Trump turned the anthem protests into a political issue, saying the NFL should fire any player who takes a knee during “The Star-Spangled Banner.” The NFL hasn’t gone that far, but Kaepernick has yet to land another job, and one of his former teammates and fellow protesters, safety Eric Reid, is also out of work. Both have filed collusion grievances against the NFL.

While the owners touted the change as a compromise and noted it was approved unanimously, the players’ union

made it clear it was not part of the discussions.

“The NFL chose to not consult the union in the development of this new ‘policy,’” the NFLPA said in a statement. “NFL players have shown their patriotism through their social activism, their community service, in support of our military and law enforcement and, yes, through their protests to raise awareness about the issues they care about.”

The statement added, “The vote by NFL club CEOs today contradicts the statements made to our player leadership by Commissioner Roger Goodell and the Chairman of the NFL’s Management Council John Mara (co-owner of the New York Giants) about the principles, values and patriotism of our League.”

Source: Sharks near 7-year deal with forward Kane

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — The San Jose Sharks are closing in on a seven-year contract with Evander Kane that will keep the high-scoring forward off the free-agent market.

A person familiar with the negotiations says the contract is expected to be finalized on Wednesday. The person spoke to The Associated Press on Tuesday night on condition of anonymity because the deal hasn’t been completed. Sportsnet first reported the two sides were close to an agreement.

Kane, who turns 27 in August, was acquired from Buffalo at the trade deadline. Under the terms of that trade, the Sabres will now get a first-round pick in 2019 instead of a second-rounder because Kane signed with San Jose. The selection is lottery-protected, so it could be moved to 2020.

Kane’s status was one of the biggest questions heading into this offseason for the Sharks, who were knocked out of the playoffs in six games in the

second round against eventual Western Conference champion Vegas.

Kane had issues off the ice and with teammates at times during his stints with Winnipeg and Buffalo, but melded well with a veteran Sharks team and got the opportunity to go to the postseason for the first time in his career.

“He’s fit in well,” teammate Logan Couture said after the season ended. “You don’t listen to what people say about him before. Getting to know him over these last few months he’s a great teammate. He cares and he wants to win. He was fun to play with.”

Kane made an immediate impact in San Jose, stepping right onto the top line with captain Joe Pavelski and helping ease the loss of Joe Thornton, who went down with a season-ending knee injury in January. Kane used his speed and physical play to deliver nine goals and five assists in 17 games and spark an eight-game winning streak that sent San Jose to the playoffs.

Kane shined in the first round with three goals and an assist during a sweep against Anaheim. But he struggled a bit against the Golden Knights, slowed by injuries to his knee and shoulder that lingered from the end of the regular season.

He had one goal and a minus-5 rating in five games against Vegas. He missed Game 2 of that series when he was suspended for cross-checking Pierre-Edouard Bellemare.

Kane finished last season with 29 goals and 25 assists, his second-most productive season to his 30-goal, 27-assist campaign for the Jets in 2011-12. Kane has 186 goals and 168 assists in 574 career games since entering the NHL as the fourth overall pick by Atlanta in 2009.

In other NHL news:

■ The New York Rangers have hired Boston University’s David Quinn as their new head coach.

General manager Jeff Gorton announced the move Wednesday. Quinn is the second college coach hired by an NHL team this month and third in the past

four years. He replaces Alain Vigneault, who was fired hours after the Rangers missed the playoffs for the first time since 2010.

The 51-year-old Quinn coached Boston University to four NCAA Tournament appearances in five seasons, including a trip to the national title game in 2015. He spent the lockout-shortened 2013 NHL season as an assistant on Joe Sacco’s staff with the Colorado Avalanche.

The Rangers made the playoffs in four of Vigneault’s five seasons as coach, including a 2014 trip to the Stanley Cup Final. They went 226-147-37 in the regular season under Vigneault, who is third in regular-season and playoff wins in franchise history.

The retooling Rangers are the latest team to dip into the college ranks for a coach after the Philadelphia Flyers hired Dave Hakstol from North Dakota in 2015 and the Dallas Stars hired Jim Montgomery from the University of Denver in early May.

Indians whip Cubs in return to Wrigley

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Jose Ramirez turned on a knee-high pitch and launched the Indians toward a lopsided victory.

Ramirez hit his 14th homer and Cleveland routed the Chicago Cubs 10-1 on Tuesday night in their first meeting at Wrigley Field since the 2016 World Series.

The AL Central leaders moved back to .500 with an easy victory against the team that beat them two years ago to end a 108-year championship drought.

Ramirez got Cleveland going with his three-run drive in the third. The Indians scored four times in the inning while chasing a wild Tyler Chatwood (3-4) and simply poured it on after that.

“He’s one of the better hitters in the game,” Cleveland manager Terry Francona said. “You look at him (5-foot-9, 165 pounds) and I don’t know if you necessarily think you see a guy who can drive the ball out of the ballpark like that. And now as he’s accumulating some experience, he knows the pitchers, he knows how they’re attacking him. It makes him even better.”

Trevor Bauer (4-3) went six innings in his second straight scoreless start. The right-hander gave up seven hits and struck out six while walking two after shutting down Detroit over eight innings in a win last week.

Yonder Alonso had three of Cleveland’s 11 hits, including a three-run double in the fifth to make it 10-0.

Michael Brantley extended his hitting streak to 11 games with a pair of singles and scored two runs. Francisco Lindor added two hits and two runs, and the Indians started the two-game series on a winning note after the teams split two games in Cleveland last month.

Chatwood walked six while allowing four runs and four hits in 2²/₃ innings.

Chicago manager Joe Maddon said Chatwood has a “busy delivery” that the Cubs need to “harness.”

“If you watch his delivery closely, there’s a lot going on,” Maddon said. “That tends to lead to lack of command of the fastball, and he’s not the only guy. There are other pitchers that are like that, too.”

Walking away: Three of Chat-

wood’s walks came in the third, bringing his major league-leading total to 40, and the crowd of 37,168 let him hear it.

Ramirez delivered the big blow with his three-run shot to the right-field basket. Roberto Perez added a sacrifice fly, and the Indians sent nine batters to the plate in the inning.

Maddon lifted Chatwood with runners on first and third after he threw four balls to Greg Allen. Mike Montgomery struck out Bauer to end the rally, but got tagged for six runs in 2¹/₃ innings.

Runners on: Chicago was 0-for-10 with runners in scoring position and left 11 on base. The Cubs didn’t score until Ian Happ led off the ninth with a pinch-hit homer against Josh Tomlin.

MLB roundup

Sale strikes out 9 as Red Sox shut down Rays

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Mookie Betts hit his major league-leading 16th homer, Chris Sale struck out nine in 7²/₃ innings and the Boston Red Sox beat the Tampa Bay Rays 4-2 on Tuesday night.

Willy Adames made his big league debut and hit a solo home run off Sale in his second at-bat. The 22-year-old shortstop went 1-for-4 with three strikeouts. He was acquired from Detroit as part of a three-team trade that sent Rays ace — and current Sale teammate — David Price to the Tigers on July 31, 2014.

Sale (5-1) gave up four hits and walked two. He has allowed three runs or fewer in his first 11 starts, the longest stretch by a Boston pitcher to open a season since Pedro Martinez’s 12 in 2001.

Joe Kelly finished the eighth, and Craig Kimbrel got into a bases-loaded jam before get-

ting his 14th save in 16 chances when Mallex Smith grounded into a game-ending forceout on his 32nd pitch of the ninth. Jesus Sucre led off with a single, pinch-hitter Brad Miller doubled with two outs and Rob Refsnyder walked.

Betts hit a go-ahead, three-run drive in the third off Jake Faria (3-3), who left two batters later because of a strained left oblique.

Braves 3, Phillies 1: Ozzie Albies hit his 14th homer and Brandon McCarthy (5-2) tossed 5²/₃ sharp innings, leading Atlanta past Philadelphia.

Astros 11, Giants 2: Gerrit Cole (5-1) struck out eight in six innings, leading host Houston to a rout of San Francisco.

Rangers 6, Yankees 4: Ace Cole Hamels (3-4) limited slugging New York to four hits over seven innings, and Jurickson Profar and Ronald Guzman homered for Texas.

Reds 7, Pirates 2: Matt Harvey (1-2) pitched six innings of

one-run ball for his first victory with host Cincinnati, and Scooter Gennett hit his fifth grand slam over the last two seasons.

Nationals 2, Padres 1: Bryce Harper hit his NL-leading 15th homer for host Washington, and Michael Taylor’s one-out double in the ninth scored the game-winning run.

Brewers 1, Diamondbacks 0: Jhoulys Chacin and three relievers combined on a three-hitter, sending host Milwaukee past Arizona.

Twins 6, Tigers 0: Host Minnesota’s Lance Lynn gave up five hits over 6²/₃ innings in his most efficient outing of the season, and Brian Dozier drove in three runs with a pair of doubles against Detroit.

Royals 5, Cardinals 1: Alex Gordon and Salvador Perez homered for visiting Kansas City, helping Jason Hammel (1-5) to his first victory of the season.

Blue Jays 5, Angels 3: Ken-

drys Morales hit a two-run homer, J.A. Happ (5-2) won his second straight start and host Toronto stopped a four-game losing streak.

Marlins 5, Mets 1: Visiting Miami’s Caleb Smith (3-5) pitched neatly into the seventh inning against New York lineup that included newcomer Jose Bautista.

White Sox 3, Orioles 2: Yolmer Sanchez capped host Chicago’s three-run eighth with a tiebreaking RBI single, lifting his team over Baltimore.

Dodgers 5, Rockies 3: Chris Taylor hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the sixth inning and Yasiel Puig followed with a solo shot, rallying host Los Angeles past NL West-leading Colorado.

Mariners 3, Athletics 2 (10): Mike Zunino hit a two-run homer in the seventh inning and Guillermo Heredia doubled home the go-ahead run in the 10th to lift visiting Seattle over Oakland.