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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Esper on mission to modernize the Army

The Washington Post

WARREN, Mich. — Army Secretary Mark Esper climbed into the back of an experimental Bradley Fighting Vehicle on a recent afternoon, donning a helmet with plans to observe the armored behemoth from the inside. An operator put the 28-ton vehicle in autonomous mode for a demonstration, but it halted with a lurch. The computer had “dropped” the planned route from its memory.

The visit to the Army’s automotive research center is illustrative of the service’s efforts to modernize after nearly 17 years of war. The Army, after a string of fits and starts and multibillion-dollar failures, is pressing to field a variety of replacements in its aging fleet of combat vehicles. Esper says it is urgent that the Army begin modernizing now to outmatch potential adversaries such as Russia and China.

“I think that we are at an inflection right now in history,” Esper said in an interview. “I think we have been for the last year or

so, and I think it’s a time to come in and make a difference. If I can leave here after three years and have made a difference, I’ll feel good about the experience.”

Esper became President Donald Trump’s top political appointee in the Army after a tumultuous period in which two other nominees changed their minds about taking the job.

Vincent Viola, a billionaire Wall Street trader and owner of the National Hockey League’s Florida Panthers, withdrew in February 2017 after struggling to untangle his financial conflicts of interest. Trump then nominated Tennessee state Sen. Mark E. Green, who stepped aside in May under pressure for past comments about Muslims, transgender people and Hispanics.

Trump nominated Esper in July, and the Senate confirmed him in November with an 89-6 vote. Like some of Trump’s other Pentagon nominees, he joined the administration after working in the defense industry, a trend that some government watchdogs consider troubling.

Esper, a native of Uniontown, Pa., attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., graduating in 1986. He embarked on a 25-year military career that included time in the active-duty Army and the Virginia National Guard and a deployment during the Persian Gulf War.

As Army secretary, Esper is the senior civilian official in the service, overseeing such matters as weapons acquisition, personnel issues and the approval of awards for valor.

The secretary has been on the road repeatedly since taking office, visiting soldiers from South Korea to Germany. In recent days, he has advocated for a six-point list of modernization priorities that his service adopted in October before he took office. It includes investing in futuristic long-range ground fires such as hypersonic weapons, new combat vehicles, Army aircraft, communications equipment that can withstand cyberattacks, missile defense and boosting individual soldiers’ combat abilities with better equipment.

Medics start using new early detection scanner for TBI

By J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

AP LIGHTNING, Afghanistan — Soldiers are trying out a high-tech brain scanner that tests for mild traumatic brain injuries.

The 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade is the first unit to use the smartphone-sized BrainScope device in the field.

Capt. Nicholas Koreerat, a physical therapist in the 1st SFAB, trained newly arrived medics from the 2nd Squadron (Armored), 1st Cavalry, 4th Infantry Division, on the device Saturday at Advising Post Lightning near Gardez.

“It looks like a smartphone and kinda acts like one,” Koreerat told the soldiers.

Medics often rely on injured soldiers to tell them what happened. But those with traumatic brain injuries often lose consciousness or suffer memory loss. Additionally, symptoms such as headache, dizziness, anxiety aren’t visible and can be hidden or misinterpreted.

“Should we let them go back on mission?

It tends to be subjective,” Koreerat said. “But the really neat thing about this is that it gives you objective data.”

Electrical currents course through the brain, and when someone has TBI, these currents will look different when analyzed by a scanner. The device can read these brain currents. It shows on a smartphone-like display whether a brain scan looks like those of people with TBIs.

“Instead of us saying, ‘Hey, they might have one,’” Koreerat said, “this says in an objective manner, ‘They have a brain bleed, so let’s take care of them and get them out of here.’”

Researchers estimate 15 to 23 percent of servicemembers returning from combat have suffered a mild traumatic brain injury. Most of these combat TBIs came from explosive blasts. Moderate to severe TBI is linked to increased risk of Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

For mild TBI, most symptoms resolve over a period of a few weeks, although an estimated 10 to 20 percent of people devel-

op prolonged symptoms.

The Department of Defense has called for a device such as the BrainScope since at least 2012. DOD, the NFL and private investors funded development of the device, which received FDA approval in 2016.

Lt. Col. Tony Serrano, the 2-1 Cav doctor in charge of the aid station, said he watched the training as the medics followed the step-by-step instructions on the screen. He said he wanted to see if the device was easy to handle.

“This new technology, it’s good to have it here to do faster and accurate screening,” Serrano said.

When the scan is done by a trained medic, the whole process takes about 20 minutes, Koreerat said.

Before, a soldier who could have a TBI might have to be taken for a CT scan, which could require a trip far away to a place such as Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, Koreerat said.

That soldier and an escort could have to leave their unit for a long time for an injury that might or might not exist.

Poland wants permanent US presence

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's defense minister said Monday that he has held talks with U.S. officials about having thousands of American troops permanently stationed as a deterrent in Poland.

Poland is concerned for its own and the region's security following Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine and other steps

seen as hostile.

Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said he recently held talks in Washington about having a permanent presence of U.S. troops in Poland, where they are currently on a rotational, temporary, though open-ended, mission.

"The result of our efforts is that the U.S. Senate has contacted the Pentagon about an assessment of ... (the) permanent presence of U.S. troops in Poland," Blaszczak said on

state Radio 1. "Such presence is of great importance because it deters the adversary."

In Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that an increase in the West's military presence near Russia's borders "certainly does not contribute to security and stability on the continent in any way."

"On the contrary, these expansionist steps, certainly, result in counteractions of the

Russian side to balance the parity which is violated every time this way," Peskov said, according to Russian news agency Tass.

The Onet.pl news portal says Poland is seeking the permanent deployment of a U.S. armored division and is offering up to \$2 billion to help build the infrastructure. It says the defense ministry has written to U.S. politicians and the U.S. Congress with details of the proposal.

Memorial Day at Bagram brings poignant reflections

By CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — A field of lights and a display of names and photos projected on a blast wall here Monday night paid tribute to more than 8,000 Americans and their allies who've died as part of U.S. wars since 2001.

Earlier in the day, Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in the country, gave a moving speech before a gathering of U.S. troops and diplomats and their allies at the NATO mission's headquarters in Kabul.

"We remember all of the American soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines killed in Afghanistan. I specifically want to highlight 22-year-old Spc. Gabriel Conde who was the latest American servicemember killed in action on 30 April," Nicholson said. "Our duty ... is to remember them, say their names, tell their stories, ensure that we never, never forget them."

Nicholson shared the names and stories of three men who died under his command in the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division in 2006: Lt. Col. Joseph Fenty, for whom eastern Afghanistan's FOB Fenty is named, Pfc. Justin Davis and Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. 1st Class Jared Monti.

His voice broke several times during his speech, and he had to pause to compose himself while telling their stories, such as his memory of meeting Davis' mother at her son's grave in Arlington Cemetery's Section 60.

"I said to her, 'I was your son's commander, and I'm so sorry I didn't bring him home to you,'" he said before pausing for several seconds and clearing his throat. "She reached out and hugged me, and she comforted me when of course it should have been me comforting her." Nicholson also discussed the "survivor's guilt" that sometimes plagues troops when their comrades are killed, suggesting that the way to deal with those feelings is in part to respect the servicemembers' choice to serve and to keep their memories alive.

As night fell on Bagram, dozens of troops stood alongside concrete barriers, holding miniature American flags and watching the display, which projected the names and images of the 7,000 U.S. troops killed in the country's recent wars, as well as details about the 1,300 coalition troops also killed. Short video clips played of families talking about their fallen loved ones, while organizers quietly voiced hopes that rebels would not fire rockets on the base, as frequently happens at night here.

Ex-presidential aide charged in fraud case

The (Baton Rouge, La.) Advocate

An ex-military aide to three U.S. presidents and his business partner made a simple pitch to foreign investors: Pump money into post-Katrina New Orleans rebuilding efforts and get an easy path to a green card.

Only rather than using the money to build a promised Algiers hotel complex, retired Air Force Col. Timothy Milbrath and William B. "Bart" Hungerford Jr. spent it buying things like half-million-dollar homes for themselves, federal prosecutors say.

A grand jury in New Orleans handed up a raft of fraud charges Friday against Milbrath, 62, and Hungerford, 57, and they could face years in prison and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines if convicted.

At the center of the case is the so-called EB-5 visa program, which allows immigrants to obtain permanent residency if they invest at least \$500,000 in a U.S. company that within two years creates jobs for 10 Americans in an area with a high unemployment rate.

New Orleans was one such area following its devastation by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In October 2006, then-Mayor Ray Nagin's administration

signed a contract giving a company founded by Milbrath and Hungerford the exclusive right to link EB-5 visa hopefuls with projects in which to invest.

The company, NobleOut-Reach, collected \$15.5 million from 31 immigrants from countries such as China, Turkey, Jamaica, Iraq, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.

Milbrath and Hungerford, of Maryland, bought into several coffee shops and bars that brought jobs to some of the areas in New Orleans that Katrina least affected, so none of that helped the investors' quest for green cards, according to reports from WWL-TV.

Plans to build a hotel, a conference center and a WOW Café & Wingery on an empty lot in the 3000 block of Gen. DeGaulle Drive in Algiers were supposed to help the investors' status in the EB-5 program.

Yet the site never materialized despite a ground-breaking ceremony that featured live music, dancing, and speeches from city and state politicians.

Among other things, federal authorities said Milbrath and Hungerford instead used the money to pay their and their wives' salaries — one year, roughly \$210,000 each.

Alberto storms toward Fla. Panhandle

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Subtropical Storm Alberto gained an early jump on the 2018 hurricane season as it headed toward anticipated landfall sometime Monday on the northern Gulf Coast, where white sandy beaches emptied of their usual Memorial Day crowds.

Though the Atlantic hurricane season doesn't officially start until Friday, Alberto has become the first named storm this year, throwing disarray into long holiday weekend plans up and down Florida's Gulf Coast. Just as Memorial Day marked summer's unofficial start in the U.S., Alberto gave it the unofficial start of what forecasters recently predicted would be an active hurricane season.

The National Hurricane Center in Miami said at 5 a.m. EDT Monday that Alberto was

maintaining its strength as it approached the Florida Panhandle and was centered about 125 miles south of Destin. The storm, expected to make landfall later Monday, had maximum sustained winds of 65 mph.

"On the forecast track, the center of Alberto will move over the northern Gulf of Mexico overnight and cross the northern Gulf Coast in the warning area on Monday," the National Hurricane Center said Sunday. It warned of life-threatening surf conditions and the possibility of a few brief tornadoes in much of Florida and parts of Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama. It said heavy rains are expected in many areas.

Lifeguards posted red flags along the white sands of Pensacola Beach, where swimming and wading were banned amid high surf and dangerous conditions. Gusty showers began lashing parts of Florida on Sunday, and authorities warned of the pos-

sibility of flash flooding. The hurricane center said a tropical storm warning was in effect from the Suwannee River in Florida to the Mississippi-Alabama state line.

The storm's approach also triggered mandatory evacuations of some small, sparsely populated Gulf Coast barrier islands in one Florida county. The Florida Division of Emergency Management said in a statement Sunday that a mandatory evacuation had been issued in Franklin County for all barrier islands there and those in the county living directly on the coast in mobile homes or in recreation vehicle parks.

A subtropical storm like Alberto has a less defined and cooler center than a tropical storm, and its strongest winds are found farther from its center. Subtropical storms can develop into tropical storms, which in turn can strengthen into hurricanes.

1st President Bush in a Maine hospital

Associated Press

BIDDEFORD, Maine — Former President George H.W. Bush was hospitalized Sunday in Maine after he experienced low blood pressure and fatigue, a spokesman said.

Just after 2 p.m., Jim McGrath, a spokesman for Bush, 93, said he was awake, alert and not in any discomfort. He said Bush would spend at least a few days in the hospital for observation.

Bush was taken to Southern Maine Health Care in Biddeford.

Bush arrived in Maine for the summer on May 20. With the hospitalization coming about a month after the death of his wife of 73 years, Barbara, the family said the 41st president was eager to return to the family compound on Walker's Point. He has visited every summer since childhood, the only exception being the years of his World War II service.

On Saturday, Bush attended a pancake breakfast at an American Legion post in Kennebunkport. He had been scheduled to attend a Memorial Day parade in the town Monday.

Bush, who has a form of Parkinson's disease and a history of pneumonia and other infections, was hospitalized in Houston on April 22, the day after his wife's funeral, for an infection. He remained hospitalized for 13 days.

Bush uses a wheelchair and an electric scooter for mobility. He has been hospitalized several times in recent years for respiratory problems.

Md. town devastated by flood again

Associated Press

ELLICOTT CITY, Md. — One man remained missing after flash flooding tore down historic Main Street in Ellicott City and left a community heartbroken at seeing severe damage less than two years after another devastating flood.

Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman said Monday morning that his priorities are finding the missing man and assessing the condition of buildings that house shops, restaurants and families.

"We're certainly making every effort to locate that individual," he said.

Howard County police identified him Monday as Severn resident Eddison Hermond, 39, an active member of the Army National Guard. Hermond was reported missing to police about 12:30 a.m. Monday, but has not been seen since about 5:20 p.m. at the height of the flooding, when raging, brown waters ripped through the town.

The area remained blocked off Monday, even to residents and business owners, as Kittleman surveyed the debris.

"If you look at the devastation and the damage, I would certainly say it's worse than 2016," he said. "We've had areas that were not even damaged at all two years ago terribly damaged this time."

At a news conference Sunday night, Kittleman and Gov. Larry Hogan vowed to help people rebuild their lives again.

"We will be there for them as we were in 2016," Kittleman said.

Hogan promised "every bit of assistance we possibly can."

"They say this is a once every 1,000-year

flood, and we've had two of them in two years," Hogan said.

Sunday's flooding swept away parked cars in the city, which sits along the west bank of the Patapsco River, about 13 miles west of Baltimore. Jessica Ur, a server at Pure Wine Cafe on the city's Main Street, told The Baltimore Sun that she watched as gushing waters swept three or four parked cars down the street.

"It's significantly higher than it was before," she told the newspaper, comparing the floodwaters with those of 2016.

Mike Muccilli, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Sterling, Va., said Sunday it was too early to make comparisons between the two floods. But he said both were devastating.

In the July 2016 storm, Ellicott City received 6.6 inches of rain over a two- to three-hour period. On Sunday, the community received nearly 8 inches of rain over a six-hour period, but most of it fell during an intense, three-hour period, Muccilli said.

"In a normal heavy rain event, you wouldn't see this amount of flooding, where you see cars floating down the road," Muccilli said. "This was a true flash flood."

Some people reported hearing a blaring alarm during the flooding. Others said they gathered in the second story of a building and anxiously watched the seething waters.

One sight during the flood: A handmade, white flag hung from an upper story of a Main Street building bearing the letters SOS.

"If you are trapped, we are coming," the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services tweeted at one point.

Syria vows to fight rebels despite warning from US

Associated Press

BEIRUT — A Syrian state-run newspaper said Monday that the government will keep fighting “terrorists” despite U.S. warnings against a new offensive against rebels in southern Daraa province, while Russia said Syrian troops should deploy in the country’s southwest, near Israel.

Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Syrian troops should be positioned on the border with the Golan Heights, which have been occupied by Israel since the 1967 Mideast war. The area between Daraa and the Golan Heights has emerged as a flash point in a wider standoff between Israel and Iran, and the U.S. has warned it will take action to protect a cease-fire there.

The Al-Baath daily said in an editorial published Monday that the U.S. threat underscores the “dirty American role in the terrorist war” against Syria. It stressed that the Syrian army was determined to retake all parts of Syria.

The U.S., Russia, and Jordan agreed last year to include Daraa in a “de-escalation zone” and freeze the lines of conflict there. But the area has been tense following a series of recent Israeli strikes on Syrian and Iranian forces. Iran is a close ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, and its advisers are embedded with his troops.

Israel has warned it will not tolerate a permanent Iranian military presence in Syria. Earlier this month, it carried out a wave of airstrikes in response to what it said was an Iranian rocket attack on its positions in the Golan. It was the most serious confrontation between the regional archrivals to date.

Lava covers capped well at Hawaii geothermal plant

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Lava from the Kilauea volcano covered at least one well Sunday at a geothermal power plant on the Big Island, according to a Hawaii County Civil Defense report.

The well was successfully plugged in anticipation of the lava flow, and a second well 100 feet away also has been secured, according to the report. The plugs protect against the release of gas that could turn toxic when mixed with lava.

The lava breached the property overnight. David Mace, a spokesman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said the flow started about 200 yards away from the nearest well. But he said safety precautions went into effect before the breach.

“I think it’s safe to say authorities have been concerned about the flow of lava onto the plant property since the eruption started,” he said.

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. They also capped the 11 wells at the property to try to prevent a breach.

Before the lava reached the well, plant spokesman Mike Kaleikini told the news agency Hawaii News Now that there was no indication of the release of the poisonous gas hydrogen sulfide — the greatest fear should lava hit the wells.

“As long as conditions are safe, we will have personnel on site,” Kaleikini said. “Primary concern is sulfur dioxide from the eruption and lava coming on site. We monitor for hydrogen sulfide and sulfur dioxide on a continuous basis.”

Steve Brantley, of the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, said the flow seemed to have halted Sunday morning before it picked back up and covered the well at the plant, which lies on the southeastern flank of the volcano, nestled between residential neighborhoods.

Lava-filled fissures have torn apart chunks of the southeastern side of the Big Island during the past three weeks as Kilauea has become more active.

French president rewards migrant who saved child

Associated Press

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron met Monday with a migrant from Mali lauded as a hero for scaling an apartment building to save a young child dangling from a balcony. Macron said Mamoudou Gassama, 22, would be rewarded for his “exceptional act” with papers to legalize his stay, citizenship if he wants and a job as a firefighter.

“Bravo,” Macron said to Gassama during a meeting in a gilded room of the presidential Elysee Palace that ended with the awarding of a medal from the prefecture for “courage and devotion.” Gassama’s feat went viral on social media, where he

has been dubbed “Spiderman” for climbing up five floors, from balcony to balcony, and whisking a 4-year-old boy to safety Saturday as a crowd screamed from the sidewalk in Paris’ northern 18th district.

The young man said he has papers to legally stay in Italy, where he arrived in Europe after crossing the Mediterranean after a long, rough stay in Libya. But he wants to join his older brother, who has lived in France for decades.

Gassama, dressed in blue jeans and a white shirt, recounted his experience, which took place around 8 p.m. Saturday when he and friends saw a child hanging from a fifth-floor balcony.

“I ran. I crossed the street to save him,” he told Macron during a filmed portion of the meeting. He said he didn’t think twice. “When I started to climb, it gave me courage to keep climbing.”

God “helped me,” too, he said. “Thank God I saved him.”

Gassama felt fear when he took the child into the apartment. “I was trembling,” he told Macron.

“Because this is an exceptional act ... we are obviously, today, going to regularize all your papers,” Macron told him, “and if you wish we will start nationalization procedures so you can become French.”

Gassama told Macron he arrived in Italy in 2014 after more

than a year in Libya, where he was arrested and beaten, “but I wasn’t discouraged.”

The French president is toughening the nation’s approach to immigration, and stressed that not all who make the journey to Europe can be welcomed but that Gassama’s actions were admirable.

Working as a firefighter corresponds with his skills, Macron said, and opened the door for him to join.

“You have become an example because millions have seen you” on social media, Macron said.

The French media reported the father of the child was detained for alleged parental neglect.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Vintage game to be played at Homestead

CT COVENTRY — Two periods of American history will come together next month during an unusual baseball doubleheader in Connecticut.

The Nathan Hale Homestead is hosting the vintage baseball exhibition June 30.

The Bouckville Summits and the Providence Grays, two teams from the Mid-Atlantic Vintage Base Ball League, will play in a field at the birthplace of the Revolutionary War spy.

The rules and equipment will be authentic to those used in 1864.

Sponsors say it will be a “gentlemen’s game,” with cursing resulting in a 25-cent fine and an apology to the spectators.

Defaced gravestones have been cleaned

IL GLEN CARBON — A manager at a southwestern Illinois cemetery said most of the gravestones spray-painted with swastikas have been cleaned as families visited on Memorial Day.

Sunset Hill Cemetery family services manager Jeanne Brunette said Sunday that cleaners had scrubbed the paint off most of the more than 150 markers vandalized. The damage was discovered Saturday morning.

Police in nearby Edwardsville announced Saturday that a 34-year-old man was apprehended as the suspected vandal.

Residents get creative with road signs

ME AUGUSTA — Motorists traveling around Maine over the holiday weekend saw residents’ creativity on

display.

Message boards warned motorists that “A Cold Suppah Is Bettah Thana Hot Ticket.” Another one said, “Spend Money on Lobstahs — Not Speeding Tickets.” Yet another said, “Put Down UR Cell — Or You May End Up In One.”

They were part of a contest run by the Maine Department of Transportation.

People were asked to come up with clever messages, and six winners were selected out of nearly 2,000 entries. They’ll be displayed for the next few weeks.

Department seeks owners of medals

PA HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania Treasury Department hopes rightful owners will come forward to claim more than 500 military medals that have ended up in its possession.

Democratic Treasurer Joe Torsella said some were reported to his agency as unclaimed property.

Seven of the medals, including three Purple Hearts, were recently turned over to the proper veterans or their families.

At least 12 of the medals the department currently has are Purple Hearts. The rest are various honors related to military service.

Man barges onto bus, holds knife to driver

CA SAN DIEGO — Authorities said a Southern California man barged onto a school bus carrying about a dozen children and held a knife to the driver’s head before witnesses dragged him away.

The San Diego Union-Tribune reported Saturday that

parents and others in the community of Campo helped the children escape out the rear emergency exit.

Sheriff’s Sgt. William Uelen said the driver opened the door for the man, thinking he was a parent trying to hold the bus for a child who was late.

A parent flagged down a passing driver who jumped on the bus and helped pry the knife from the man’s hands.

Authorities arrested Matthew Barker, 37. Uelen said Barker was previously known to authorities and had drug issues.

Charges mulled after 80 cats found in home

NE WATERLOO — Officials in eastern Nebraska are considering bringing felony charges against a woman after the Nebraska Humane Society found nearly 80 cats — about 30 of them dead — in a Waterloo home.

Mark Langan, with the Nebraska Humane Society, told Omaha television station KETV that his office was talking to the Douglas County Attorney’s Office about possible felony charges.

Officials said the cats were found in the house earlier this month after neighbors called to report starving and meowing cats.

The 53-year-old woman was previously cited for housing animals in deplorable conditions in 2015, when 21 cats and three dogs were removed from her home.

6-foot catch breaks sturgeon record

MN STILLWATER — An eastern Minnesota man set a state catch-and-release record by hooking a more

than 6-foot-long sturgeon on the Rainy River.

The state Department of Natural Resources announced that Jack Burke’s May 4 catch set a new state record, Minnesota Public Radio reported.

Burke had been fishing with his friend Michael Orgas. The duo had caught 20 fish over three days before the record-breaking catch.

The previous record was set in April 2017 by two anglers who caught 70-inch sturgeons on the same day.

The state keeps records based on length for the catch and release of muskellunge, northern pike, lake sturgeon or flathead catfish.

Records for fish that are caught and kept are based on weight.

Man is accused of digging up grave

WA BREMERTON — A man who police say was found digging up a grave was arrested.

KING5-TV reported that Bremerton police were called to the Miller Woodlawn cemetery last week after an employee spotted the man digging up the grave of Hector Apodac.

The TV station reported that the 27-year-old man was Apodac’s brother.

The station reported that officers told the man he couldn’t dig up the grave, but they weren’t sure yet what law he had broken so they told him in the meantime to leave the cemetery.

He later returned to the cemetery and was charged with third-degree malicious mischief and second-degree criminal trespass.

From wire reports

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James, Cavaliers heading back to Finals

Associated Press

BOSTON — LeBron James will get a couple days to catch his breath, then make his annual June journey to Golden State or down to Houston to face a team far better than his.

His eighth straight NBA Finals sets up as one of his most difficult, flanked by a largely unheralded set of teammates who force him to do much more at 33 than most other players are ever asked.

But James keeps showing he can do it, and he can't wait for his chance to win another ring.

Dare count him out?

"At the end of the day, the game is won in between the lines, and we have an opportunity to play for a championship," he said after Sunday's 87-79 victory over Boston. "That's all that matters."

James dragged an injured and inconsistent Cavaliers team out of the Eastern Conference and back to the NBA Finals, where they will be an underdog against whichever team wins Game 7 in the West on Monday.

But after playing all 48 minutes in his 100th game of the season, punctuating one of the greatest series a player has ever had with 35 points, 15 rebounds

and nine assists, he sure looks capable of more.

And the Cavaliers will need every bit of it. They had to play seven games just to get out of the first round, and seven more to finish a climb out of 2-0 deficit against a younger, more athletic Celtics team. They have to be tired, and that's no way to go into a series against Kevin Durant, Stephen Curry and the Warriors, who blew Cleveland away in five games last year, or James Harden and a Rockets team that can be every bit as potent on one end and lock teams down on the other.

The only way it would appear Cleveland would have a chance would be if James can summon his highest level, the kind that perhaps no other player can reach — and then do it three more times.

The Celtics have seen him do it, after he averaged 33.6 points, 9.0 rebounds and 8.4 assists to eliminate them in the East finals for the second straight year.

"I think we've played now until May 25th and May 27th the last two years, and we started on Sept. 25th," Celtics coach Brad Stevens said. "That's every day. Every day that you're total-

ly focused on this, and he's gone past that eight straight times. It's ridiculous, and he does it at this level and with the pressure, with the scrutiny. Doesn't matter. It's just unbelievable."

This was the year James' finals streak looked over. Kyrie Irving had been traded to Boston in the offseason, Isaiah Thomas, Dwyane Wade and Derrick Rose weren't the answers as his replacement, and Kevin Love missed significant time with injuries.

And even after the Cavaliers remade their team at the February trade deadline, it didn't look good enough. Cleveland had finished just fourth in the East, never developing the necessary cohesiveness required to be even a mediocre defensive team, let alone a championship-caliber one. They still can surrender open shots everywhere, a flaw that seems fatal against the three-point-happy Rockets or Warriors.

The only obvious advantage the Cavaliers have is James, the kind of player who can win a Game 7 in Boston with a team that was without its other All-Star, Love, because of a concussion and couldn't shoot straight deep into the first half, with

Cavaliers other than James missing their first 10 threes until J.R. Smith hit one with 2:54 remaining until halftime.

"I mean, the bigger the stage, the bigger the player, and he's been doing it for us since we've been here," Cavs coach Tyronn Lue said. "The great quote from the great Doc Rivers is you always want to go into the Game 7 with the best player, and we have the best player on our team going into a Game 7. I like our chances."

And he'll like them again starting Thursday even if the oddsmakers don't. The Cavaliers were probably far better last year and could only get a game from the Warriors.

But two years ago, they also weren't given much of a shot against the Warriors, especially after falling behind 3-1 in the finals. Nobody had ever overcome that deficit in the championship round, and Cleveland had to do it against a team that had won an NBA-record 73 games.

James led that comeback to Cleveland's first title, and now he's got a shot for another unlikely one.

"I'll be available for at least four more games," James said, "and we'll see what happens."

Former champ Wawrinka ousted early in Paris

Associated Press

PARIS — Still reeling from knee surgeries, former champion Stan Wawrinka lost a five-set battle to Guillermo Garcia-Lopez in the first round of the French Open on Monday.

Last year's finalist lasted three-and-a-half hours before bowing out with a 6-2, 3-6, 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-3 loss to the 67th-ranked Spaniard.

Returning to the place where he claimed the second of his three Grand Slam titles did not help Wawrinka shake off his poor form. The Swiss player, No. 30 in the world, looked a shadow of the player who won in Paris three years ago, struggling

with his serve and hitting 72 unforced errors.

Wawrinka did not go down easily, though, in a match that produced some spectacular baseline rallies. But he was ultimately made to pay for his inconsistent play.

"There is no frustration, it's just tough," Wawrinka said. "But I'm on the right way. It was very close today."

Wawrinka has struggled with his fitness after undergoing knee surgeries in August. This was only his 11th match of the year.

Garcia-Lopez was joined in the second round by former champion Novak Djokovic, who advanced with a 6-3, 6-4,

6-4 win over qualifier Rogerio Dutra Silva of Brazil.

"Every day it's very special to play here, it feels a bit like home," said Djokovic, who has not won a Grand Slam event since the 2016 French Open. "It was important to win in straight sets."

Djokovic, who underwent right elbow surgery earlier this year, is the No. 20 seed in Paris, his lowest Grand Slam seeding since the 2006 U.S. Open.

In women's play, Australian Open champion Caroline Wozniacki is into the second round after a 7-6 (2), 6-1 win over Roland Garros debutant Danielle Collins.

The second-seeded Woz-

niacki delivered a solid display punctuated by only a few mistakes.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova made it to the second round after defeating Veronica Cepede Royg of Paraguay 3-6, 6-1, 7-5, while former top-ranked player Victoria Azarenka lost 7-5, 7-5 to Katerina Siniakova.

The No. 8-seeded Kvitova needed 2 hours, 7 minutes to overcome her 87th-ranked opponent. Kvitova's best run in Paris was to the semifinals in 2012.

Also advancing were Americans Coco Vandeweghe and Madison Keys.

Power captures first Indy 500 victory

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Will Power lost three consecutive championships before he decided a change was in order.

He knew he must improve on oval tracks to be considered among the best in racing.

If there was any doubt how serious Power was about his turnaround, he settled it Sunday by winning on the biggest oval of them all.

Power won the Indianapolis 500 to check off one of the few empty boxes on his résumé. When he stopped hating ovals, he won the 2014 IndyCar championship. When he started to appreciate Indianapolis Motor Speedway and made it a priority, he finally figured out how to win “The Greatest Spectacle in Racing.”

“You work hard at something, it comes to you. It eventually comes to you, and [Indy] was the last box to tick to be considered as a very successful driver,” Power said.

Power gave team owner Roger Penske a 17th Indy 500 victory in a sweep of the “month of May” at Indianapolis. Power also won on the road course — he’s considered a specialist on road and street courses — two weeks ago and Sunday’s win was his 34th, tying him with Al Unser Jr. for eighth on

IndyCar’s all-time list.

Power also became the winningest IndyCar driver in Penske history (31). He is the first Australian victor in 102 editions of the race and was able to celebrate only a few hours after countryman Daniel Ricciardo won Formula One’s Monaco Grand Prix, an extraordinary showing for drivers from Down Under on the biggest day of the year in motorsports.

Power is an emotional and expressive driver, and he’s most known for getting caught on television flashing both his middle fingers at IndyCar race control. The moment made him an internet sensation. The Indy 500 victory he hopes makes him an international star.

“To be the first Australian to win the Indy 500, that’s very special,” he said. “Maybe they might recognize me down there now. I don’t think many people know who I am down there.”

And his winner’s circle celebration is one that won’t soon be forgotten because the wide-eyed Power could not stop screaming.

He screamed to wife, Liz, took a sip of the traditional milk, then dumped the rest over his head and around his crew. Liz Power reached for the empty milk bottle, then pointed out to her husband that he’d sprayed

milk all over Indianapolis festival princess Natalie Murdock. He apologized, then started screaming again.

It was his only wrong move of the race.

As Power held off pole winner Ed Carpenter, the 81-year-old Penske pumped his fist in the air and clapped. Penske was elected to the NASCAR Hall of Fame earlier this month, but the Power victory kept him in Indianapolis and he was unable to travel to North Carolina to watch his three NASCAR drivers race in the Coca-Cola 600.

“To be able to race on Memorial Day in the biggest sporting event in the world, have America the way it is, that’s what I’m going to take away from this race,” Penske said. “I’m just so thrilled, 17 wins. Now I have to worry about 18. I’m not going to look back, I’ll look forward. We have to be back next year.”

This year’s race was a strange one in that no clear favorite ever emerged and a new Indy car that has less downforce made it difficult to predict a winner. Penske’s four Chrevolets were fast and so was Danica Patrick in the final race of her career. That was all that was known headed into Sunday.

Come race day, it was 91 degrees, just short of the Indy 500 race-day record of 92 set in

1937. The conditions created a slick, 2½-mile track, and new cars proved to be a handful for even the most experienced of drivers. Helio Castroneves, Tony Kanaan, Sebastien Bourdais and Patrick were among those who crashed in single-car spins. Defending race winner Takuma Sato was also knocked out when he ran into the back of a slower car.

Power led 59 laps but his final pit stop dropped him to fourth, behind three cars that were trying to win on fuel mileage. Kanaan’s crash with 12 laps remaining set up a final restart with Oriol Servia out front. Servia didn’t get a great restart and was passed by Stefan Wilson and Jack Harvey. But all three were gambling they had enough gas to get to the finish line, and it was Power who was frantically chasing them down.

Wilson and Harvey both ducked onto pit lane for gas, giving Power the lead with four laps remaining. He knew he had it won when he took the white flag all alone, and spent the final lap yelling to himself in joy as he drove away from the field.

Scott Dixon stretched his fuel to finish third and was followed by Alexander Rossi, who drove from 32nd to fourth and made some of the most spectacular moves in the race.

Busch gets first points-race win at Charlotte

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.C. — Joe Gibbs has coached Super Bowl champions.

He’s learned that to reach that level, it takes a group of guys who are “special” on game day — just like Kyle Busch, the top driver in the NASCAR team owner’s stable and winner of 188 races across the top three circuits.

“I have had some football players who are real easy during the week and when they put their helmet on, they are big time and going for it. Those are the guys you want — and I think Kyle has that,” Gibbs said. “I don’t know that I have ever seen him back off on race day.”

Busch continued his assault on the NASCAR record book Sunday night by winning the Coca-Cola 600 and becoming the

first driver in modern history to win a Cup points race at every track on the circuit.

Gibbs said Busch is always after it, always aggressive, and carries that emotion with him.

“Some people are just special when it comes to game day — and I think Kyle is one of those,” Gibbs said.

Busch described himself as “bipolar” on race day.

He said he was a little extra rough around the edges Sunday, something that wasn’t lost on his wife, Samantha. At one point before the race she asked him, “What’s the matter with you?”

“I guess it’s just race day,” Busch responded.

Crew chief Adam Stevens said Busch has 100 percent focus and commitment to

winning.

“Nothing makes him happy unless he is in Victory Lane,” Stevens said. “He doesn’t settle for less from himself and doesn’t settle less from the people around him. I take comfort for that, personally. You know what you are going to get. He’s hard to beat.”

It was a record-setting night for Busch, who became only the 10th driver in NASCAR history to lead more than 15,000 career Cup Series laps. He led 377 of 400 laps to earn his fourth win of the season.

Kevin Harvick had won the previous three Cup races, including the All-Starrace, but Sunday proved he’s not invincible.

Harvick, who has been Busch’s top competition this year, crashed on lap 83 and finished in last place after a tire went down and he hit the wall.

Indians rally for a wild win over Astros

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Greg Allen had one thought as he saw his teammates waiting for him at home plate.

“Just don’t get too roughed up in there,” he said. “It’s something I’ll remember forever. It’s all still sinking in. It’s pretty special.”

Allen homered on Brad Peacock’s first pitch in the 14th inning, and the Cleveland Indians stunned the Houston Astros 10-9 on Sunday.

Allen’s first homer of the season landed in the seats in right and triggered a wild celebration for the Indians, who rallied twice to overcome another impressive performance from Jose Altuve.

Cleveland scored five runs in the ninth. Michael Brantley’s two-out RBI single off Hector Rondon tied it at 8.

Evan Gattis’ two-out homer off Dan Otero (1-1) gave Houston a 9-8 lead in the 13th, but Yonder Alonso responded with a leadoff drive against Collin McHugh in the bottom half.

Peacock (1-2) got the loss on the only pitch he threw.

Houston wasted a stellar day for Altuve, who had four hits and drove in two runs. The reigning AL MVP had a streak of 10 consecutive hits, breaking his own club record, before he lined out to center in the ninth.

“You don’t count hits when you’re playing because you’re trying to win games,” Altuve said. “My teammates were like,

‘You’ve got 10 straight hits,’ but I really wasn’t thinking about it at all.”

The Astros trailed 3-2 before Altuve’s tying RBI single in the eighth. Carlos Correa and Yuli Gurriel followed with run-scoring singles before Gattis made it 8-3 with a three-run shot to center.

The late offensive eruption upstaged the anticipated pitching matchup of former UCLA teammates Gerrit Cole and Trevor Bauer.

Jose Ramirez sparked Cleveland’s big ninth with a leadoff double against Ken Giles, capping a 17-pitch battle. Singles for Edwin Encarnacion, Alonso, Jason Kipnis and pinch-hitter Erik Gonzalez then trimmed Houston’s lead to 8-6.

Rondon replaced Will Harris and retired Allen on a liner to left for the second out. But Lindor and Brantley delivered consecutive singles, tying the game.

First baseman Gurriel finally robbed Ramirez of a game-winning hit with a diving catch of his line drive near the line, ending the inning.

Cleveland manager Terry Francona thought Ramirez’s lengthy at-bat against Giles was a turning point.

“It changed the whole inning because they ended up having to go to the bullpen just because of the pitch count,” he said. “There was a lot of things that happened that were incredible, or we don’t win.”

MLB roundup

Tanaka fans countryman Ohtani twice to top Angels

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Masahiro Tanaka pitched six sharp innings and struck out Japanese countryman Shohei Ohtani twice as the New York Yankees defeated the Los Angeles Angels 3-1 Sunday.

Brett Gardner had three hits for New York, which won five of six against the Angels this season.

Although Ohtani was pushed back from Sunday’s scheduled start due to what the Angels called “workload management,” Tanaka (6-2) held up his end up of the highly anticipated pitchers’ duel that never materialized. Tanaka struck out eight and allowed just Andrelton Simmons’ sixth-inning home run in his longest outing in nearly a month.

Pitching on his 30th birthday, Angels right-hander Garrett Richards (4-4) allowed three runs over 2¹/₃ innings and matched a season high with five walks.

Aroldis Chapman walked Ohtani to begin the ninth, but struck out a pair to earn his 10th save in 11 chances.

Braves 7, Red Sox 1: At Boston, prized rookie Ronald Acuna Jr. took a high-flying tumble while beating out an infield hit, exiting Atlanta’s win with knee and lower back pain.

Acuna waved his arms “safe” as he crossed first base before his left foot gave out in the seventh inning, and he went

sprawling. He walked off the field slowly, passing on a wheelchair that was rolled out for him.

Mike Foltyniewicz (4-3) took a no-hit bid into the sixth and went seven innings. Tyler Flowers hit a three-run homer off Red Sox ace Chris Sale (5-2), salvaging the finale of a three-game interleague series.

Nationals 5, Marlins 2: Bryce Harper hit his NL-leading 16th homer, and Washington completed a three-game sweep by beating host Miami for the 11th time in a row.

The Nationals matched the longest winning streak in franchise history against one team. It’s the Marlins’ longest losing streak against an opponent since 1999.

Mariners 3, Twins 1: Ryon Healy doubled home two runs in the eighth inning and Alex Colome earned a save in his first outing for host Seattle, which swept the three-game series and has won eight of its last nine.

Colome pitched a perfect inning for his 12th save of the season. He arrived in Seattle on Saturday night, a day after the Mariners got him and outfielder Denard Span in a trade with Tampa Bay. Colome will pitch the eighth inning most of the time for Seattle, but closer Edwin Diaz had the day off after working in four of the previous five games.

Cardinals 6, Pirates 4: Harrison Bader’s pinch-hit bloop single off Pittsburgh

closer Felipe Vazquez keyed a late rally for visiting St. Louis.

Brewers 8, Mets 7: Domingo Santana’s two-run double highlighted a four-run seventh inning for surging host Milwaukee.

Dodgers 6, Padres 1: Rookie Walker Buehler tied a career high with eight strikeouts, Max Muncy and Cody Bellinger homered, and host Los Angeles earned its eighth victory in 10 games.

Blue Jays 5, Phillies 3: Devon Travis and Dwight Smith Jr. each hit a two-run double for visiting Toronto, and J.A. Happ pitched neatly into the seventh inning.

Rays 8, Orioles 3: Relievers Vidal Nuno and Austin Pruitt combined to throw 8²/₃ scoreless innings, leading host Tampa Bay to the win.

Athletics 2, Diamondbacks 1: Matt Chapman hit a tiebreaking RBI single off Zack Greinke with two out in the sixth inning, lifting host Oakland to the win.

Royals 5, Rangers 3: Jason Hammel struck out 10, Drew Butera and Salvador Perez homered, and visiting Kansas City held on for the win.

Rockies 8, Reds 2: Carlos Gonzalez had a season-high four hits for host Colorado, including a third-deck homer off Matt Harvey.

Tigers 3, White Sox 2: Blaine Hardy pitched seven strong innings to help host Detroit get the win.