

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Delay over, Reagan departs for patrol

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS Ronald Reagan is officially on patrol, nearly two weeks after the Navy announced its deployment would be delayed because of a “material issue.”

Sailors manned the rails Tuesday as the nation’s only forward-deployed aircraft carrier sailed out of its Yokosuka homeport. Still within eyeshot of the naval base, two servicemembers lowered an American flag to shift to underway colors before the Ronald Reagan sailed farther into Tokyo Bay.

The carrier and its strike group — which includes the guided-missile destroyer USS Mustin and guided-missile cruisers USS Antietam and USS Chancellorsville — will train in the 7th Fleet’s area of operations

while “supporting security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region,” a Navy statement said.

The routine deployment comes two days after a freedom-of-navigation exercise brought the Antietam, which left Yokosuka this month, and the San Diego-based USS Higgins within 12 nautical miles of South China Sea islets built up and militarized by China.

In a statement, China’s Ministry of National Defense called the act near the Paracel Islands a “serious infringement on China’s sovereignty.”

Last week, the U.S. disinvited China to the upcoming multinational Rim of the Pacific drills, citing evidence of Beijing’s continued militarization of disputed islands. China has long been chided for building artificial land masses in the

South China Sea and placing military assets there.

The Ronald Reagan’s departure caps off nearly a month of predeployment training, preparation and maintenance. On May 3, Carrier Air Wing 5 pilots began carrier-landing practice at Iwo Jima — known by the Japanese as Iwo To — and the aircraft carrier completed a two-day fast cruise and weeklong sea trials on May 17.

However, the patrol’s start date was delayed so that a “material issue” discovered during sea trials could be fixed, Lt. Cmdr. Matt Knight, a Task Force 70 spokesman, said earlier this month. He did not provide further details about the issue.

It is unclear how long the Ronald Reagan and its strike group will remain at sea.

## USAF tests new wing structure eliminating commanders

BY JAMES BOLINGER

*Stars and Stripes*

The Air Force is cutting a layer of bureaucracy in an experimental effort aimed at making its fighting forces more lethal.

This month, the 366th Fighter Wing at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, began testing a new wing structure that does away with aircraft maintenance squadron, group and vice wing commanders, an Air Combat Command statement said.

Squadron commanders are reporting directly to the wing commander, who has two deputies and a surgeon helping guide and evaluate operations and support squadron-level decisions.

Groups, usually led by colonels who liaise between wing leadership and squadron commanders, are eliminated under

**‘This experiment is aimed at revitalizing our squadrons by allowing them to focus on the mission while pushing administrative duties to a wing staff.’**

Col. Joseph Kunkel  
366th commander

the new structure, which places aircraft maintainers with aircraft squadrons, the statement said.

“This experiment is about our desire to improve lethality and create an environment where leaders are empowered to lead, and squadron personnel can focus on their core missions,” Gen. Mike Holmes, who leads Air Combat Command, said in the statement.

“This concept should flatten the decision-making structure within wings to encourage faster, decentralized decision-making and to remove some

duties from our front-line units,” he said.

The two-year test will compare the 366th with similar units organized under the old structure. The ranks and positions of personnel are changing, but the number of airmen assigned to Mountain Home stays the same, the statement said.

“This experiment is aimed at revitalizing our squadrons by allowing them to focus on the mission while pushing administrative duties to a wing staff,” 366th commander Col. Joseph Kunkel said in the statement.

“This puts decision-making authority and accountability for the mission at the squadron level. That’s where we need it to be to build the squadrons and leaders we need for tomorrow’s challenges.”

Tech. Sgt. Cameron Bagley, a member of the 374th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Yokota Air Base, Japan, said only time will tell if the experiment works.

“Wing commanders have so much to do already,” he said. “I don’t know if eliminating group commanders will help them make decisions. Group commanders have value because they’re specialists in the field they manage.”

Bagley doubted a reorganization would affect maintainers.

“Junior airmen will turn a wrench either way,” he said.

# Trump's trade agenda hits stumbling blocks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's hard-line views on trade, a staple of his message long before he entered politics, are beginning to collide with the cold realities of global geopolitics.

Trade talks on China and the North American Free Trade Agreement have hit stumbling blocks, posing a challenge for a president who vowed during his 2016 campaign to make trade deals more equitable for the U.S. and who famously tweeted that trade wars are "easy to win."

Trump's trade agenda — at least lately — has not been so easy. Trump's administration announced plans Tuesday to slap \$50 billion worth of tariffs on Chinese technology while taking steps to impose new investment restrictions and export controls aimed at pushing China to remove trade barriers that make it difficult for

U.S. companies to do business in China.

The new action came after the administration said earlier this month that it had suspended plans to impose \$150 billion in tariffs for now, and the president tweeted last week that a "different structure" would be needed in the trade talks involving the world's two largest economies.

The president has bemoaned the massive U.S. trade deficit with China — \$337 billion last year — as evidence that Beijing has been complicit in abusive trading practices and outsmarted his predecessors.

Pointing to a pause in the trade dispute, the administration had pointed to China's plans to "significantly increase" its purchases of U.S. goods and services and make "meaningful increases" in U.S. exports of agriculture and energy products. Financial markets, wary of a calamitous trade war, were relieved.

# Starbucks' anti-bias training will put focus on stereotypes

Associated Press

Starbucks, trying to put to rest an outcry over the arrest of two black men at one of its stores, is closing more than 8,000 stores for an afternoon of anti-bias training, a strategy some believe can keep racism at bay.

After the arrests in Philadelphia last month, the coffee chain's leaders apologized and met with the two men, but also reached out to activists and experts in bias training to put together a curriculum for its 175,000 workers. That has put a spotlight on the little-known world of "unconscious bias training," which is used by many corporations, police departments and other organizations to help address racism in the workplace. The training is typically designed to get people

to open up about implicit biases and stereotypes in encountering people of color, gender or other identities.

The Perception Institute, a consortium of researchers consulting with Starbucks, defines implicit bias as attitudes — positive or negative — or stereotypes someone has toward a person or group without being conscious of it. A common example, according to some of its studies, is a tendency for white people to associate black people with criminal behavior.

Many retailers including Walmart and Target said they already offer some racial bias training. Nordstrom has said it plans to enhance its training after issuing an apology to three black teenagers in Missouri who employees falsely accused of shoplifting.

# Senior N. Korean official heads to NY for prep talks

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — President Donald Trump confirmed Tuesday that a top North Korean official is headed to New York for talks on an upcoming summit between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as diplomatic efforts also accelerated in Asia.

Trump said in a tweet that Kim Yong Chol was traveling to New York as part of ongoing meetings between the two countries to arrange the summit on the future of North Korea's nuclear weapons. South Korean media earlier reported that Kim Yong Chol's name was on the passenger list for a flight Wednesday from Beijing to New York. Kim was seen in the Beijing airport on Tuesday by Associated Press Television.

Trump tweeted: "We have put a great team together for our talks with North Korea. Meetings are currently taking place concerning Summit, and more. Kim Young Chol, the Vice Chairman of North Korea, heading now to New York. Solid response to my letter, thank you!"

Kim Yong Chol is a former military intelligence chief and now a vice chairman of the North Korean ruling party's central committee. He would be the highest-level North Korean official to travel to the U.S. since 2000, when late National Defense Commission First Vice Chairman Jo Myong Rok visited Washington, South Korea's Unification Ministry said.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has traveled to North Korea twice in recent weeks for meetings with Kim Jong Un, after which he said there was a "shared understanding" between the two sides about

what they hope to achieve in the summit. It remained unclear whom Kim Yong Chol will meet with in the U.S.

Meanwhile, a team of American diplomats involved in preparatory discussions was seen leaving a Seoul hotel Tuesday, but it was unclear whether they went to Panmunjom, a village that straddles the border inside the Demilitarized Zone, to continue talks with their North Korean counterparts following their first meeting on Sunday. The U.S. officials are led by Sung Kim, the U.S. ambassador to Manila, who formerly was the U.S. ambassador to Seoul and a top negotiator with North Korea in past nuclear talks.

The U.S.-led United Nations Command canceled a press tour of Panmunjom scheduled for Wednesday, saying the decision was related to security preparations to accommodate the U.S.-North Korea talks there. There will be no similar media events at the village until after June 12, the possible date of the summit, according to the command.

South Korean media also reported that a North Korean delegation arrived in Singapore on Monday night for likely summit preparations with U.S. officials. Seoul did not confirm reports that the North Korean officials were headed by Kim Chang Son, Kim Jong Un's close associate, and that his American counterpart would likely be White House deputy chief of staff for operations Joe Hagin.

South Korea's foreign ministry said Washington and Pyongyang were engaging in "working-level" talks to arrange the possible summit, but said it couldn't confirm specifics.



## Manning's friend says she's safe after ledge tweet

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — A close friend and colleague of Chelsea Manning said Monday that the convicted leaker of government secrets and long-shot candidate for U.S. Senate is safe after a photo on her Twitter account apparently showed her standing on the edge of an upper-story window ledge.

The photo was posted to her Twitter account late Sunday with the words, "I'm sorry." It was sent shortly after a separate tweet that said: "im not really cut out for this world — i tried adapting to this world out here but i failed you — i couldn't do this anymore," among other things. The tweets did not make clear where the photo was taken, and Manning's friends declined to say.

The alarming tweets were deleted after about 10 minutes, followed by a message on her account saying Manning, 30, was OK and asking people to "please give her some space."

Kelly Wright, a friend of Manning who also is the communications director for her Senate bid, told The Associated Press on Monday that the transgender woman now needs the "space to heal." She did not reply when asked if Manning was seeking professional help.

When asked whether Manning had suspended her Senate campaign, Wright wrote, "Negative."

In her text message, Wright said Manning's adjustment to life outside prison has been "extremely difficult."

"I have seen firsthand and up close the violence inflicted on her by years of imprisonment, solitary confinement and torture," Wright said. "This is made worse by the impossibly high expectations our society sets for public figures, especially on social media."

Manning, who twice tried to kill herself while in a U.S. military lockup, recently told attendees at a Berlin tech conference that she felt a "kind of cult of personality" foisted upon her that she found "really intimidating" and "overwhelming."

# Alberto weakens after landfall

Associated Press

Alberto is a still-menacing depression after its Memorial Day landfall on the Gulf Coast, scattering heavy rains around the South and raising risks of flash floods.

As the first named storm of the 2018 Atlantic hurricane season, Subtropical Storm Alberto lumbered ashore Monday afternoon in the Florida Panhandle and then it weakened overnight to a depression centered over Alabama.

Now it's a vast, soggy system dumping the warm water it gathered over the Gulf of Mexico in bursts of rain across the southeast.

Forecasters said that rain could still kill people caught in flash floods in the coming hours or days in Alabama and large areas of Georgia, Tennessee

and the Carolinas.

In North Carolina, a television news anchor and a photojournalist were killed instantly Monday while covering the weather, when a tree became uprooted from rain-soaked ground and toppled onto their SUV, authorities said.

Between 2 and 8 inches of rain could soak Alabama and western Georgia on Tuesday, and isolated deluges of 12 inches also are possible as the system heads into the Tennessee Valley on its way to the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes region.

Alberto dumped between 2 and 5 inches of rain over parts of the Florida Panhandle, according to the National Weather Service. Double-red flags along the white sandy beaches kept most people out of the rough waters, and some low-lying areas

experienced minor flooding, officials said.

The pelting rain soaked the uniform and socks of Lt. Andy Husar, with the Bay County Sheriff's Office, who watched surf get kicked up along Panama City Beach on Monday.

As a subtropical storm, Alberto had a less defined and cooler center than a tropical storm, and its strongest winds were found farther from its center.

The large tree that crushed the TV news vehicle Monday afternoon near Tryon, N.C., killed news anchor Mike McCormick and photojournalist Aaron Smeltzer, of WYFF-TV of Greenville, S.C., the station said.

They had just interviewed Tryon Fire Chief Geoffrey Tennant as they covered storms in North Carolina.

## Police find body of National Guardsman who went missing in Maryland flooding

Associated Press

ELLICOTT CITY, Md. — Police confirmed Tuesday that a body found on the Patapsco River is the National Guard member and U.S. Air Force veteran who went missing during the flood in Ellicott City.

Howard County police tweeted that Eddison Hermond's body was found by searchers scouring the river just inside the Baltimore County line Tuesday.

Police say Hermond was last seen early Sunday evening trying to help a woman rescue her cat behind a restaurant while seething brown waters surged through the downtown.

The discovery comes as residents and business owners are again asking themselves whether they should rebuild after the second devastating flash flood in two years ripped apart their historic Maryland mill town.

Some business owners in picturesque Ellicott City — established in 1772 as a mill town along the Patapsco River sur-

round by hills — say they're determined to rebuild after Sunday's devastation. Their hope is to pull together as a community again after the second terrible flood deluged their downtown in less than two years.

Simon Cortes, owner of La Palapa Grill & Cantina, said Monday it's "a horrible time," and his business took on about a foot of water. But he emphasized that the old mill town has been through it all before and he's resolved to do his part to spur another revival.

"I feel like it's our duty to make sure that we rebuild and open back up," said Cortes, whose restaurant is right by the spot where the 39-year-old Hermond was swept away by Sunday's raging floodwaters.

But with floodwaters receded, revealing devastating damage across the downtown of quaint shops and historic 18th- and 19th-century buildings, others are stretched to the breaking point. Now they face yet another massive cleanup,

serious economic losses and a daunting comeback.

It's particularly trying for folks because Sunday's torrential rains came just as it seemed the town had come back stronger than ever from a dreadful July 2016 flash flood that killed two. Sunday's dramatic flooding tore up streets and swept away dozens of parked cars in the city, which sits in a ravine on the west bank of the Patapsco, about 13 miles west of Baltimore.

Getting flood insurance around old Ellicott City was a pricey proposition before. Now, those who are pondering the next comeback don't even want to think about how much it might cost. And many business owners are still paying off the debt they incurred after the last flood smashed their businesses and properties.

Howard County Police Chief Gary Gardner said Hermond had been with a group at the La Palapa when a woman approached, desperately trying to rescue her pet just outside.



# Man kills 3 in Belgium with guns of stabbed officers

Associated Press

LIEGE, Belgium — The police chief in the Belgian city of Liege said that a knife-wielding man stabbed two female police officers before taking their handguns and shooting them both dead.

Christian Beaupere said the attacker, whom he did not name, also wounded four other officers.

He said “the goal of the attacker was to target the police.”

He said the policewomen were aged 45 and 53, the latter a mother of twins.

The attacker, who was later killed by police, was an inmate who had been granted a few hours release Monday but failed to return to prison, officials said. It wasn’t immediately clear why he was imprisoned, but media reports say he’s a known drug offender.

Liege prosecutors’ spokes-

man Philippe Dulieu said the man approached two police officers from behind carrying a knife and stabbed them several times.

“He then took their weapons. He used the weapons on the officers, who died,” Dulieu told reporters.

Dulieu said the attacker then shot dead a 22-year-old man in a vehicle that was just leaving a parking place outside a nearby high school. The attacker then took a woman hostage inside the school.

“Liege police intervened. He came out firing at police, wounding a number of them, notably in the legs. He was shot dead,” Dulieu said.

A senior official at the federal prosecutor’s office told The Associated Press that “there are indications it could be a terror attack.” Despite that, Belgium’s crisis center said it saw no rea-

son to raise the country’s terrorism threat alert for now.

A spokeswoman for the city mayor’s office, Laurence Comminette, told the AP that the children at the school were all safe.

Yves Stevens, of Belgium’s federal crisis center, said that security in Liege is now under control, and that there was no reason yet to raise the national terrorism threat level.

“There is absolutely no confirmation yet that the incident is terror-related,” Stevens told the AP.

Video posted on Twitter by a person claiming to be a witness showed people running in the area. About six gunshots could be heard.

Belgian police and military have been on alert since suicide bombers killed 32 people at the Brussels airport and subway system in 2016.

## Israeli jets bomb Gaza Strip after shells fired

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israeli jets Tuesday bombed targets in the Gaza Strip hours after militants from the territory fired more than 25 mortar shells toward communities in southern Israel in what appeared to be the largest single barrage since the 2014 war.

The Israeli military said no one was hurt and that most of the shells were intercepted by the Iron Dome defense system, though one landed near a kindergarten shortly before it opened.

The high volume of projectiles came as tensions have been running high in recent weeks following the deaths of more than 100 Palestinians from Israeli fire during mass protests along the border. Israel says it holds Gaza’s Hamas rulers responsible for the bloodshed.

“Israel will exact a heavy price from those who seek to harm it, and we see Hamas as responsible for preventing such attacks,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said following the barrage.

Shortly after that warning, Israeli jets began dropping bombs on what security officials in Gaza said was an Islamic Jihad militant training site.

Smoke was seen rising near the town of Deir al-Balah in the coastal strip, and the Israeli military said the explosions there were related to its activity. No injuries were reported.

The Israeli military said it carried out more than 35 airstrikes on seven sites across Gaza.

Islamic Jihad was believed to be behind the mortar fire, which appeared to be retaliation for the deaths of three of its fighters in an Israeli airstrike earlier this week. But Israel believes Hamas, a larger Islamic militant group that controls Gaza, gave Islamic Jihad a green light to strike.

## Hunt for MH370 ends; no wreckage found

Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — The head of a U.S. technology company that scoured the Indian Ocean seabed for more than three months looking for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 said Tuesday he was disappointed the hunt failed to find any wreckage and hoped to take part in a future search.

Malaysia said last week the search by Texas-based Ocean Infinity would end Tuesday after two extensions of the original 90-day time limit.

Ocean Infinity chief executive Oliver Plunkett said the search would soon end after covering more than 43,000 square miles of remote ocean floor — an area more than four times larger than the zone targeted by experts as the most likely crash site.

“I would firstly like to extend the thoughts of everyone at

Ocean Infinity to the families of those who have lost loved ones on MH370. Part of our motivation for renewing the search was to try to provide some answers to those affected,” Plunkett said in a statement.

“It is therefore with a heavy heart that we end our current search without having achieved that aim,” he added.

Plunkett said he was pleased to hear the new Malaysian government had made finding the Boeing 777 that vanished with 239 people aboard a priority.

“We sincerely hope that we will be able to again offer our services in the search for MH370 in the future,” Plunkett said.

Malaysia signed a “no cure, no fee” deal with Ocean Infinity in January to resume the hunt for the plane, a year after the official search in the south-

ern Indian Ocean by Australia, Malaysia and China was called off. Ocean Infinity stood to be paid \$70 million if it had found the wreckage or black boxes. No other search is scheduled.

Australia, Malaysia and China agreed in 2016 that an official search would resume only if the three countries had credible evidence that identified a specific location for the wreckage.

Flight 370 vanished on March 8, 2014, while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. The original search focused on the South China Sea before an analysis revealed that the plane had made an unexpected turn west and then south.

Australia coordinated an official search on Malaysia’s behalf that scoured 46,000 square miles and cost \$150 million before it ended last year.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Robbery suspect shot by fast-food customer

**CA** SANTA ANA — Police in Southern California said a suspected robber at a fast-food restaurant was shot by a customer in the drive-thru lane who witnessed the holdup and fired through a window before speeding off.

Santa Ana Police Commander Michael Claborn said the robbery suspect was hospitalized with multiple gunshot wounds but was expected to survive.

Claborn said the customer fired several times at the robber, shattering the drive-thru window. Investigators said the armed customer is wanted on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon.

The Orange County Register reported the wounded man could face a robbery charge. He was not identified.

## Teacher not charged in raccoon drownings

**FL** OCALA — A Florida agricultural science teacher accused of drowning two raccoons and an opossum in front of students won't face criminal charges because investigators say the killings weren't cruel or inhumane.

The Ocala Star-Banner reported that Assistant State Attorney Toby Hunt determined Dewie Brewton didn't intend to torture or torment the "nuisance" animals.

Brewton was removed from the classroom and later retired after videos of the animals' drowning were posted on social media.

Investigators said he told them that he suspected the animals were killing chickens his class was raising. He said he couldn't shoot them because guns aren't allowed on school property and bludgeoning them would be cruel.

## Man charged after car with 2 kids is stolen

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — Authorities said a man is facing theft and kidnapping charges after a car with two young children inside was stolen from a Philadelphia home. The children later were found unharmed.

Police said a 28-year-old woman stopped at a friend's house at 10 p.m. Wednesday and ran to the door, then turned around to find the car with the 6-year-old and 1-year-old boys gone.

Police said the car was spotted about a mile away and later crashed. The children weren't inside but were found later.

Lakim McDonald, 23, is charged with theft, kidnapping, child endangerment and reckless endangerment.

## 1 dead, 8 injured in nitrogen incident

**ID** DIETRICH — Authorities in south-central Idaho said one person died and eight others, including emergency responders, had to be sent to hospitals after apparently encountering excess nitrogen gas.

The Twin Falls County Sheriff's Office said emergency crews responded Thursday to a report of an unresponsive man in a home in Dietrich. Police said they found the man dead and a canister later identified as containing nitrogen, which can dilute the amount of oxygen present.

Among the eight people taken to hospitals were three Lincoln County sheriff's deputies.

Dietrich Mayor Don Heiken said residents have been asked not to drink city water, but he wasn't sure why.

## Officials warn of TB exposure at facility

**DE** DOVER — State public health officials say hundreds of people may have been exposed to tuberculosis last year at a nursing home in northern Delaware.

Officials announced Friday that more than 600 individuals may have been exposed to active tuberculosis at the Manor-Care Health Services facility in Wilmington during a nine-month period starting in January 2017.

It was not immediately clear why the announcement was being made more than a year after some people may have been exposed.

Officials are sending letters to former residents and staff who may have been exposed to the infected individual and following up with phone calls regarding free testing and treatment.

## Bear visits towns, snacks on bird feeder

**NJ** WALDWICK — Police in New Jersey said they contained a bear that found its way into a Ridgewood resident's bird feeder for a snack.

The Ridgewood Police Department said the 160-pound bear was seen wandering through a resident's backyard and in several other towns in northern New Jersey.

The Record reported the bear was contained Thursday afternoon in Waldwick, where it was tranquilized after being found resting in a tree.

Authorities said the bear is under the care of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife.

## Home tied to deadly race riot for sale

**FL** ROSEWOOD — A home believed to have sheltered blacks hiding from a week of mob violence in 1923 is for sale.

Known as "The John Wright House" in Levy County, it's one of the few remaining original structures of Rosewood, the small town that was once a thriving community of black homeowners.

The community was the site of a deadly race riot that ended with homes being burned down and at least eight people killed, six of them black.

The Gainesville Sun reported the two-story home and 35-acre property are too large for the 84-year-old owner. Her daughter and son-in-law said they want to ensure the new owner appreciates its significance.

## Driver rescued after plunge in mountains

**CA** CRESTLINE — A Southern California motorist was rescued after her car plunged 700 feet off a road in the San Bernardino Mountains.

KCBS-TV in Los Angeles reported that the woman managed to call for help after the accident Thursday but could not say exactly where she was.

Authorities used the phone's ping to figure out approximately where she was and then found a patch of dirt along State Route 18 near Crestline that marked where the car went over the side.

San Bernardino County firefighters descended the mountain to rescue the woman, who was taken to a hospital.

From wire reports

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# Warriors rally to advance to Finals

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Golden State Warriors, so used to making things look easy, overcame one of their toughest tests to return to the NBA Finals.

They climbed out of huge holes in the last two games of the Western Conference finals to beat Houston, but may have to play in the first half the way they have after halftime if they hope to knock off LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers and repeat as champions.

"They played a great series, they made us work for everything ... I'm just proud of the way we battled," Klay Thompson said. "We've been through a lot with this team, and believe it or not, it's not all success with the Warriors."

"We've got our bumps throughout the season," he continued. "But to get to this point again, we earned it."

Without Andre Iguodala again, the Warriors shook off another terrible first half in Game 7 on Monday night to rally for a 101-92 victory that

made them the fifth team in NBA history to advance to the Finals in four straight seasons.

Golden State trailed by 11 at halftime after being behind at the break by 10 points in Game 6, becoming the first team to win multiple elimination games in the same series when trailing by double digits after two quarters.

Coach Steve Kerr lamented that Golden State's first half on Monday night was "one of the most bizarre first halves" his team has played since he's been with the Warriors and joked that he thought of resigning at halftime before getting serious.

"Our talent took over," Kerr said. "It's as simple as that. We've got three of the best shot-makers in the league ... we stayed with it."

The trio — Thompson, Stephen Curry and Kevin Durant — combined to score 47 points in the second half to pull away from a Rockets team that missed 27 straight three-pointers from the second quarter to the halfway mark of the fourth quarter.

James Harden had 32 points as the top-seeded Rockets' bid to return to the finals for the first time since 1995 fell short without Chris Paul, who was nursing a hamstring injury.

"We just didn't have that extra juice that we needed," Harden said.

The Rockets fell apart in the second half again after doing so in Game 6. The Warriors outscored Houston 122-63 in the second half of the final two games.

"I think it was just a level of experience and maturity from our group that helped us get to the finish line," Curry said.

The Warriors outlasted the Rockets despite missing Iguodala for the last four games with a bone bruise on his left leg. It's unclear if the 2015 NBA Finals MVP will return for Game 1 on Thursday, but if he does it will give Golden State a boost in trying to slow down James.

While Golden State certainly isn't happy the way it started the last two games, its ability to turn things around in the second half gives the Warriors

confidence heading into the next challenge.

Houston gave them a much bigger test than the Warriors have had in quite some time and this series was their first with three losses since the Cavaliers won the 2016 finals 4-3.

"Just keeping our composure was big for us the entire series," Curry said. "Whether we figured it out, win or lose, we showed a lot of fight, a lot of grit and resiliency to stay positive as we went through the series no matter what the situation was."

Thompson was clear that the mistakes he made before halftime on Monday night won't happen again. After scoring 35 points in Game 6, he collected three fouls in less than four minutes to force him to sit out most of the first quarter.

"I cannot do that next series, and that's a big no-no," he said. "Learned my lesson. Those guys are great at drawing fouls but I've got to be smarter than that. That really hurt. I hated not being out there when I was supposed to."

## Champion Gators get top baseball seeding

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Losses in six of its last seven games didn't diminish defending national champion Florida's overall body of work when it came to seeding the NCAA baseball tournament.

The Gators (42-17) are No. 1, and there never was much doubt, NCAA Division I Baseball Committee chairman Ray Tanner said Monday after the 64-team field was unveiled.

Kevin O'Sullivan's program is the first to earn the No. 1 overall seed three times since the tournament went to its current structure in 1999. The Gators also were top seeds in 2012 and 2016.

"They were incredible the majority of the season and didn't finish strong," said Tanner, athletic director at South Carolina. "As we were finishing up our data last week before coming to Indianapolis, I was curious to see if they were going to be a clear-cut [choice] once we got into the committee room, and they continued to be, despite not

finishing the way coach O'Sullivan would have wanted them to finish. They clearly were the No. 1 seed with all the metrics considered."

Play begins Friday in 16 regionals. Winners advance to eight best-of-three super regionals. Those winners move on to the College World Series in Omaha.

The NCAA seeded 16 teams for the first time. There had been eight seeds previously.

Stanford (44-10) is the No. 2 seed, followed by Oregon State (44-10-1), Mississippi (46-15), Arkansas (39-18), North Carolina (38-18), Florida State (43-17) and Georgia (37-19).

Seeds nine through 16 are Texas Tech (39-17), Clemson (45-14), Stetson (45-11), East Carolina (43-16), Texas (37-20), Minnesota (41-13), Coastal Carolina (42-17) and North Carolina State (40-16).

Florida, the regular-season champion in the Southeastern Conference, is the only team to earn a national seed in each of the

last five seasons.

"Obviously, we haven't played well lately, but coming home and having a full week of practice before the regional will certainly help," O'Sullivan said. "We'll try to get healthy ahead of the weekend and get some guys back on track before we play Columbia on Friday. At the end of the day, everybody has a clean slate now, and our guys will be as motivated as anyone to show everyone how good they are."

Florida State, at 41 appearances in a row, has the longest active streak, but no national championships to show for them.

"For me to say a national championship isn't important is as dumb a thing as anybody can say. Darn right it's important," said Seminoles coach Mike Martin, whose 1,987 career wins are an NCAA record. "Every coach that works is striving to be known as the top dog when it's all said and done. That is something our program is lacking and we're working very hard to achieve that."

# Knights outlast Capitals in Game 1

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — In a single nine-minute stretch of the third period, the Washington Capitals dramatically took the lead before the Vegas Golden Knights replied with two goals of their own. Washington's Tom Wilson also flattened Vegas forward Jonathan Marchessault with a blindside hit that could reverberate through the Stanley Cup Final.

After 10 goals and a Final-record four lead changes overall in a fantastically entertaining opener, it's tough to imagine what these unlikely opponents will do for an encore.

But the upstart Golden Knights have spent their entire inaugural season speeding past all expectations, and their first Final game didn't slow them down in the slightest.

Tomas Nosek scored the tie-breaking goal midway through the third period, and the expansion Golden Knights surged past the Capitals for a 6-4 victory on Monday night.

"We put fun ahead of everything, and you can tell," said Ryan Reaves, who scored the Knights' tying goal in the third period. "Guys are having fun and they're smiling."

With its sellout crowd of hometown fans at deafening volume all night, Vegas put its usual speed and relentlessness on full display while overcoming that third-period deficit to win the opener of a matchup between two franchises seeking their first Stanley Cup titles.

Marc-Andre Fleury made 24 saves in an occasionally shaky performance, but the three-time Stanley Cup winner's new teammates carried the goalie who has so often carried them with a relentless outburst of offense.

Braden Holtby stopped 28 shots for the Capitals, whose first Stanley Cup Final game in 20 years was a defensive nightmare. Washington still played a strong offensive game and had chances to win, but never slowed the Knights.

"I think next game is going

to be different, and all the nervousness, all the bad thing goes away in this game," said captain Alex Ovechkin, who had an assist. "We just have to forget about it and bounce back [in the] next one."

Wilson got credit for the goal that put the Caps up 4-3 early in the third period when Fleury back-heelled a loose puck into his own net, but Reaves evened it 91 seconds later for Vegas.

Nosek then put the Knights ahead after Shea Theodore kept the puck in Washington's zone, sidestepped a defender and fired a beautiful cross-ice pass to the Czech forward, who buried a one-timer for his second goal of the playoffs.

Colin Miller, William Karlsson and Reilly Smith scored early goals before Nosek added an empty-netter for the Knights, who are three wins away from one of the most improbable championships in recent North American team sports history. Just 342 days after the Knights selected the backbone of their first roster in the expansion

draft, Vegas had another party on the Strip with its remarkable collection of castoffs.

Brett Connolly, Nicklas Backstrom and John Carlson also scored for Washington, but its biggest stars didn't match the Knights' outburst. Along with Ovechkin's quiet night, Evgeny Kuznetsov — who scored a whopping 24 points in the first three rounds — also had just one assist.

After Miller scored the Knights' first goal on a power play and ended Holtby's scoreless streak at nearly 167 minutes, Washington calmly surged ahead later in the first period with goals 42 seconds apart.

The wild scoring continued in the third with an own-goal by Fleury, who lost track of a rebound and kicked it backward into his net.

T-Mobile Arena was only quiet for a few seconds before the tying goal from Reaves, who cross-checked Carlson to the ice an instant before the puck unexpectedly bounced to him for an uncontested shot.

## Serena wins first-round match in return to Slam

Associated Press

PARIS — For all that has changed in the 16 months since Serena Williams last played in a Grand Slam tournament — she is now married and a mother — so much was familiar about her at the French Open on Tuesday.

The fashion statement, this time in the form of a black bodysuit with a red waistband. The cries of "Come on!" The big serves that provided 13 aces. The return game that produced three consecutive breaks of serve.

And, yes, the victory. Competing as a mom for the first time at a major, and only about nine months since giving birth to her daughter, Williams beat 70th-ranked Kristyna Pliskova of the Czech Republic 7-6 (4), 6-4 at Roland Garros.

"I'm just happy to win a

match here," Williams told the crowd in Court Philippe Chatrier. "I'm just happy to take it a day at a time."

The 36-year-old American had not played in one of tennis's biggest tournaments since the Australian Open in January 2017, when she won her 23rd Grand Slam title. That broke a tie with Steffi Graf for the most in the Open era. The only player with more major singles championships was Margaret Court, with 24, but those were split between the amateur and professional eras.

Only later did Williams reveal that she was pregnant at the time. Her baby was born on Sept. 1, and Williams married Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian in November.

The first glimpse of Williams as she prepared for her comeback came in an exhibition in December against 2017 French

Open champion Jelena Ostapenko. Next came a doubles match with older sister Venus for the U.S. Fed Cup team in February. Then came singles matches that actually counted, with two wins at Indian Wells, Calif., before a loss to Venus, followed by a first-round loss at the Miami Open on March 21.

Williams then took another break to work on her game, and that absence of more than two months ended Tuesday. And what a striking return it was, right down to the outfit — which called to mind the "catsuit" Williams wore at the 2002 U.S. Open — and was paired with black high-top sneakers sprinkled with silver glitter.

On the men's side, 10-time champion Rafael Nadal fought off a strong challenge by Italian lucky loser Simone Bolelli in the first round, yet still advanced in straight sets.

Nadal improved his Paris record to 80-2 with a 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (9) rain-interrupted win completed over two days on Court Philippe Chatrier after saving four set points in the tiebreaker.

Third-seeded Marin Cilic also started his Paris campaign with a straight-set win over James Duckworth while up-and-coming Canadian teenager Denis Shapovalov got past John Millman 7-5, 6-4, 6-2.

Among others advancing were No. 6 seed Kevin Anderson and No. 9 John Isner.

In women's play, two-time Grand Slam winner Garbine Muguruza got back to winning ways in Paris by beating Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova, another former Roland Garros champion. Muguruza, who claimed the title in Paris two years ago, advanced with a 7-6 (0), 6-2 win.



# Mets split doubleheader with Braves

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Mets manager Mickey Callaway had a reason to smile at 1:40 a.m. after his team showed enough fortitude to avoid getting swept.

"They came out with some energy, which was huge in this game, and you've got to give them credit," he said. "This was a tough day, a long day, and they did the job."

Luis Guillorme broke a seventh-inning tie with a two-run single, Amed Rosario had three RBIs and New York beat the Atlanta Braves 8-5 early Tuesday to split a day-night doubleheader that was delayed more than 3½ hours by rain.

The victory snapped a four-game skid and moved the Mets to 26-25 after they fell to .500 for the first time this season. Jeurys Familia got the final out at about 1:30 a.m.

Atlanta won the opener 4-3 on pinch-hitter Charlie Culberson's two-run homer off Seth Lugo in the bottom of the ninth.

Rain delayed the start of the second game by 2 hours, 57 minutes.

Freddie Freeman and Kurt Suzuki each drove in two runs in the nightcap for the Braves, who are second-best in the NL at 31-22 but just a half-game ahead of Washington in the NL East.

Rosario's two-run single off Peter Moynlan in the sixth gave the Mets a 5-4 lead. Both runs were charged to Atlanta starter Brandon McCarthy, who gave up nine hits and five runs in 5⅓ innings.

New York's bullpen rebounded after Lugo's meltdown left Mets relievers with a 10.65 ERA in their last four games. Hansel Robles, Robert Gsellman, Jacob Rhame and Familia combined to allow five hits, one run and two walks with nine strikeouts in seven innings.

"It was huge how we came back because we were up and down in this second game, too," Guillorme said after going 4-for-9 with three RBIs in the twinbill. "I think

that gives us a little momentum going forward."

Despite the loss, Braves manager Brian Snitker liked what he saw from Minter, whose ERA rose from 2.57 to 3.74.

"It was one of them innings that wasn't meant to be," Snitker said. "Minter made good pitches. A groundball that was just out of reach, a bloop — it was all kind of seeing-eye stuff. It's not like they squared him up or anything."

Mets starter P.J. Conlon gave up Freeman's two-run single and Suzuki's sacrifice fly in the third. He allowed eight hits and four runs in two-plus innings.

Lugo (1-1) took the loss in the first game, giving up Nick Markakis' sacrifice fly in the eighth and walking Johan Camargo to begin the ninth before Culberson took him deep.

Throwing a season-high 115 pitches, deGrom gave up five hits, three walks and struck out eight, lowering his NL-leading ERA to 1.52.

## Roundup

# Astros ace Verlander shuts down Yankees

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Justin Verlander tamed the Yankees again, slowing down the highest-scoring team in the majors and pitching the Houston Astros past New York 5-1 Monday.

Verlander exited in the seventh inning with a major league-best 1.11 ERA. J.D. Davis hit an early three-run homer and Jose Altuve had a solo drive, helping Houston win for the sixth time in eight games.

Davis hit his first homer of the season, connecting in the second off Domingo German (0-3).

Closer Ken Giles, tagged Sunday as the Astros blew a five-run lead in the ninth at Cleveland, pitched the final inning and worked around a lead-off single.

Facing the only club in baseball that hasn't been shut out this season, Verlander (7-2) blanked the Yankees until Greg Bird hit a leadoff home run in the seventh.

As he left, Verlander took off his cap and waved it toward a solid contingent of Astros fans

wearing bright orange behind the dugout.

**Nationals 6, Orioles 0:** Anthony Rendon hit a three-run homer to back a sharp pitching performance by Gio Gonzalez, and surging Washington beat host Baltimore.

**Indians 9, White Sox 6:** Edwin Encarnacion homered and had four RBIs, and host Cleveland took advantage of Chicago's leaky defense to score five times in the fifth inning.

**Mariners 2, Rangers 1:** Marco Gonzales pitched into the seventh inning and did not allow an earned run for a third consecutive start, helping host Seattle top Texas.

**Brewers 8, Cardinals 3:** Jonathan Villar and Christian Yelich homered, while Ryan Braun had three hits to lead host Milwaukee.

**Cubs 7, Pirates 0:** Mike Montgomery pitched two-hit ball into the sixth inning, Anthony Rizzo had a home run and three RBIs, and sleep-deprived Chicago beat slumping Pittsburgh.

The Cubs arrived in Pittsburgh at 4 a.m. local time following a victory over San Francisco in Chicago on Sunday night. Manager Joe Maddon wondered openly before the game why the start time wasn't pushed until later in the day.

**Red Sox 8, Blue Jays 3:** Andrew Benintendi hit a three-run homer to cap a five-run fourth inning, J.D. Martinez added a solo homer and host Boston coasted.

**Diamondbacks 12, Reds 5:** Nick Ahmed, Chris Owings and John Ryan Murphy each homered as host Arizona's offense — slumbering for nearly all of May — came alive for a victory over Cincinnati, the Diamondbacks' third win in their past 18 games.

**Tigers 9, Angels 3:** James McCann hit a grand slam in the third inning and host Detroit routed Los Angeles.

**Rays 1, Athletics 0 (13):** Mallex Smith hit an RBI single with two outs in the 13th inning, Jonny Venters got his first save in seven years to cap a seven-

hit shutout and visiting Tampa Bay outlasted Oakland.

**Marlins 7, Padres 2:** Caleb Smith was brilliant in dominating a matchup of rookie left-handers, Yadiel Rivera's two-run single capped Miami's four-run first inning, and Cameron Maybin had three hits and two RBIs against his old team to lead visiting Florida to a victory against San Diego.

**Rockies 6, Giants 5 (10):** Chris Iannetta drove in the winning run with a single in the 10th inning and host Colorado beat San Francisco in a game delayed 55 minutes by rain.

**Dodgers 5, Phillies 4:** Yasmani Grandal singled home the go-ahead run and Los Angeles scored three times in the eighth inning to rally past Philadelphia, spoiling Phillies manager Gabe Kapler's return to Los Angeles.

**Twins 8, Royals 5:** Miguel Sano belted a two-run homer, Eddie Rosario hit a three-run double and visiting Minnesota snapped a four-game skid with a victory over Kansas City.