

STARS AND STRIPES®

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Gunmen pose as GIs in Kabul attack

BY CHAD GARLAND
AND ZUBAIR BABAKARKHAIL
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan—Gunmen dressed as U.S. soldiers and traveling in a captured Humvee set off a suicide bomb and then tried to shoot their way into the Afghan Interior Ministry before being killed by government forces Wednesday, security officials said.

It's not clear who carried out the attack — one of at least three that occurred in Afghanistan on Wednesday — which targeted the Interior Ministry's compound a few hundred yards from Kabul's airport and a coalition air base where Americans and their allies train Afghan forces.

Just after midday, a car bomb exploded at the entrance to the ministry compound, said Hashmat Stanekzai, spokesman for Kabul police.

"After that, several gunmen tried to get into the ministry, but they faced resistance by our

security forces," he said.

"The attackers were not able to enter the ministry," Stanekzai said.

The firefight ended a little more than two hours later, he said, and all the gunmen had been killed. He could not say how many other casualties there were besides the assailants.

At least one of the attackers was captured, Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in the country, told reporters at the Pentagon via video conference later in the day.

Nicholson disputed claims by Islamic State's Afghanistan affiliate that it was responsible for the attack. Both the Taliban and ISIS have carried out attacks that have left hundreds dead in recent months. The Taliban, however, had not claimed responsibility for the attack.

The tactics smacked more of the Taliban's Haqqani network, Nicholson said, referring to a brutal branch of the insurgent group

considered its most capable. For example, their use of American uniforms and their targeting of a government facility.

"We have seen [American] uniforms used in the past," the American general said. "It's been well over a year since we've seen that."

ISIS attacks tend to be person-borne, involving suicide vests, and indiscriminate, often targeting Shiite minorities in the country.

The use of military uniforms and a vehicle was a concern, Nicholson said, as it might cause a hesitation or delay in responding to an attack, but he said the Afghans responded as they should have.

"They did exactly what they were supposed to do," he said.

The guards at the gate recognized that the uniforms were dated versions of those worn by U.S. soldiers and demanded the attackers exit the vehicle. That's when the fighting started, Nich-

olson said, and one of the attackers detonated a suicide vest, killing himself and some of his fellow gunmen. The Crisis Response Unit 222, a special police unit, responded to the attack and quickly killed the remaining assailants, Nicholson said.

Seven gunmen had attempted to enter the compound, said Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish. One police officer was killed and five were wounded, he said.

Washington Post reporter Dan Lamothe said on Twitter that the nearby coalition base was locked down for about an hour after the attack. In a later tweet, he said there were concerns that an attacker in a U.S. military uniform was on the base and that head counts were underway.

There was no breach of the NATO compound, said Lt. Col. Martin O'Donnell, a spokesman for the coalition in Kabul. He said all coalition troops had been accounted for after the attack.

Mattis: US will continue to confront China over islands

Associated Press

HONOLULU — The U.S. will continue to confront China's militarization of manmade islands in the South China Sea, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Tuesday, arguing that Beijing hasn't kept its promise not to put weapons on the Spratly Islands.

Mattis said American ships are maintaining a "steady drumbeat" of naval operations around the disputed islands, adding that "only one country" seems to be bothered by the vessels' routine activities.

"We are going out of our way to cooperate with Pacific nations; that's the way we do business in the world," Mattis told

reporters traveling with him to a national security conference in Singapore. "But we are also going to confront what we believe is out of step with international law, out of step with international tribunals that have spoken on the issue."

The United States has long been critical of China's sweeping sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, disputed by several neighboring governments. On Sunday, two U.S. warships sailed close to the Paracel Islands, which lie north of the Spratlys, the latest freedom-of-navigation operation designed to challenge Beijing's claims. China protested the maneuver.

The latest spat comes amid unusual tension between the

U.S. and China on trade and as President Donald Trump eyes a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to discuss Pyongyang's nuclear program.

China is North Korea's traditional ally and is wary of any shift in the balance of power on the Korean Peninsula. After North Korea threatened to withdraw from the summit last week, Trump attributed the "change in attitude" to the influence of Chinese President Xi Jinping, who recently met with Kim.

According to the U.S., the freedom-of-navigation missions are meant to underscore the rights of the U.S. and others to operate in international waters and airspace and to block efforts by any nation to unlaw-

fully extend their boundaries or territorial rights.

Washington has signaled its displeasure in other ways, last week withdrawing an invitation for Beijing to participate in a large, multinational naval exercise in the Pacific later this summer. China had participated in the exercise known as Rim of the Pacific in 2014 and 2016.

The Pentagon said the decision to disinvite the Chinese Navy was triggered by what it called strong evidence that China has deployed anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missile systems and electronic jammers to contested areas in the Spratly Islands. It called on China to remove the systems.

New Ospreys back at Yokota, to train again

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Five U.S. CV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft are back in Tokyo for a short break before resuming training elsewhere in the region, the Air Force said.

The Ospreys, part of a Special Operations squadron of 10 aircraft, first arrived at Yokota in early April but departed soon after for training that officials said would last several months.

“The CV-22s will spend a short time at Yokota before departing for further training around the region,” Air Force spokeswoman Kaori Matsukasa said in an email Wednesday. “When they return from training, they will continue to operate from Yokota.”

The aircraft — which can take off like helicopters, then tilt their rotors to fly long distances as fixed-wing planes — have attracted intense interest in Japan.

Activists have focused on accidents, including an emergency landing by a Marine Corps MV-22B Osprey in waters off Okinawa in 2016. The service operates 24 MV-22Bs out of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma on the southern island prefecture.

Last week, Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera expressed concern about their safety after a report blamed heavy downwash for an MV-22 crash off Australia that killed three Marines last summer.

The Ospreys’ arrival at Yokota “addresses regional security concerns in line with the recently released 2018 National Defense Strategy and also provides a platform that can rapidly react to natural disasters or crises,” the Air Force said last month.

The Osprey squadron will initially bring only about 100 people to Yokota, but that number will grow to 450 as additional aircraft arrive, base officials have said.

United will fly pets home if they carried them overseas

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Some U.S. military families moving back to the States from the Pacific may be able to fly United Airlines with their pets, regardless of the carrier’s stricter pet travel rules that ban some 25 breeds of dogs and cats starting next month.

United has made an exception for military pets overseas needing a ride back home — as long as they used United to get overseas and it’s part of a PCS move. It’s not clear, however, whether the exception applies to all military families in other regions of the world.

U.S. Forces Japan said on Facebook on Saturday that servicemembers who traveled on military orders to Japan with their pets on United Airlines “will now be eligible to fly back to the United States using the United PetSafe program, regardless of new restrictions,” adding it was “effective today.”

USFJ officials said that there would be a three-week halt in new pet reservations from June 18 to July 8, but after that the carrier will start transporting pets eligible under United’s ex-

ception for military families.

Servicemembers who didn’t use United to bring their pets to Japan aren’t eligible, according to USFJ.

A woman named Julia Foster asked USFJ about eligibility for her family’s golden retriever, which flew in a “giant-sized crate” with United from Raleigh to Seattle, and then had a pet spot on an Air Mobility Command aircraft for the rest of the trip.

“Under the changes to United’s policy, you would unfortunately not be eligible since United didn’t transport your pet overseas,” USFJ responded on Facebook on Wednesday.

To get the exemption, servicemembers need to fill out an online United PetSafe military booking request form that can be downloaded from USFJ’s website. Servicemembers will have to provide proof that United originally moved their pets to Japan.

“The guiding principle — I don’t even want to call it a policy — is an approach we’re taking that if we flew your pet there, we’ll fly it back,” United spokesman Charles Hobart told Military.com earlier this week.

Hobart could not immediately be reached Wednesday.

USFJ said it was looking into whether Defense Department civilians based in Japan are also eligible for the exemption.

United earlier this month announced new rules banning certain short- or snub-nose breeds that are more prone to breathing difficulties at higher altitudes, such as bulldogs, pugs, boxers, pit bulls and Shih-Tzus, and Persian and Himalayan cats. Some large-breed dogs also won’t be able to fly in the cargo hold since the new policy limits an animal’s crate to 30 inches in height.

The new rules go into effect June 18. Until then, United had suspended new reservations for pets traveling in cargo but later added an exception for military families that are making a permanent change of station from Guam, where United is the only major U.S.-based carrier serving routes to the mainland.

USFJ officials said that U.S. Transportation Command was working to expand Patriot Express pet capacity in the near future. To access the USFJ military pet booking request, go to usfj.mil.

Some servicemembers in Kuwait quarantined for norovirus symptoms

The Army has identified 84 servicemembers in Kuwait who have shown symptoms of being infected by norovirus, U.S. Army Central Command said Wednesday.

The outbreak of the virus was first reported among soldiers from Camp Buehring and Camp Arifjan on Friday, when three flights to Fort Polk, La., were delayed after the Army recognized symptoms in some soldiers.

One soldier on those flights was positively identified as carrying the norovirus.

The flights were delayed until Army personnel could identify who had symptoms, but all flights were back on schedule as of Wednesday evening, Army officials said.

To limit the spread, soldiers who are showing signs of the virus are being quarantined at the two bases.

Norovirus is highly contagious and is commonly spread through contaminated food or water. Symptoms begin within 12 to 48 hours of exposure and include vomiting, nausea and diarrhea.

Although most people with norovirus recover in one to three days, it can lead to dangerous dehydration to vulnerable populations, such as the elderly.

“The 223rd Preventive Medicine Detachment and the 75th Combat Support Hospital worked quickly providing medical treatment and strive to not allow the virus to spread to the families of those Soldiers who are returning home,” CENTCOM said.

From staff reports

US, N. Korea prepare as if summit is on

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rapid-fire diplomacy played out on two continents in advance of an “expected” summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, the strengthening resolve coming after a series of high-risk, high-reward gambits by the two leaders.

Officials wouldn’t say that the June 12 Singapore summit was back on, but preparations on both sides of the Pacific proceeded as if it were. Two weeks of hard-nosed negotiating, including a communications blackout by the North and a public cancellation by the U.S., appeared to be paying off as the two sides engaged in their most substantive talks to date about the meeting.

Trump tweeted Tuesday that he had a “great team” working on the summit, confirming that top North Korean official Kim Yong Chol was headed to New York for talks with Secretary

of State Mike Pompeo. In addition, teams of U.S. officials have arrived at the Korean Demilitarized Zone and in Singapore to prepare for the meeting.

“Solid response to my letter, thank you!” tweeted Trump.

He announced he had decided to “terminate” the summit last week in an open letter to Kim that stressed American military might but also left the door cracked for future communication. White House officials characterized the letter as a negotiating tactic, designed to bring the North back to the table after a provocative statement, skipped planning talks and ignored phone calls.

Aides almost immediately suggested the meeting could still get back on track. After a suitably conciliatory statement from North Korea, Trump said the same.

Trump views the meeting as a legacy-defining opportunity to make the nuclear deal that has evaded others, but he pledged to walk away from the meeting if

he believed the North wasn’t serious about discussing dismantling its nuclear program.

The flurry of diplomatic activity intensified with Kim Yong Chol’s appearance at the Beijing airport Wednesday. South Korea-based Yonhap News cited diplomatic sources as saying Kim Yong Chol was on an Air China flight that departed in the afternoon, and U.S. officials familiar with planning have said he was scheduled to meet with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday.

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

Meanwhile, a team of American diplomats is holding prepa-

ratory discussions with North Korean officials at the DMZ. The group first met with its counterparts Sunday, and 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. The U.S. officials are led by Sung Kim, the U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, who formerly was the U.S. ambassador to Seoul and a top negotiator with North Korea in past nuclear talks. It includes senior officials with the National Security Council and the Pentagon.

The White House emphasized that it has remained in close contact with South Korean and Japanese officials as preparations for the talks continue.

The White House said Trump will host Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on June 7 to coordinate their thinking ahead of the summit. Trump hosted South Korean President Moon Jae-in last week.

Navy contractor to pay to settle fraud case

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A major defense contractor agreed to pay \$20 million to settle U.S. charges that it bilked the Navy in a ship-supply contracting scandal at ports around the world, the Justice Department announced.

The Navy in 2013 suspended business with Inchcape Shipping Services, and the U.S. government joined a whistleblower fraud suit in November 2015 after settlement talks broke down with the maritime trading firm that delivers port services in 66 countries.

The lawsuit in District of Columbia federal court alleged Inchcape knowingly overbilled the Navy from 2005 to 2014 at ports in southwest Asia, Africa and North and South America when it was providing services for food, telephone services, force protection and local transportation. The settlement included no acknowledgment of wrongdoing by the old-line, Britain-based and Dubai-owned company.

Inchcape at the time of suspension held Navy contracts valued at more than \$240 million, mostly for supplying ships in the

Middle East.

The company’s Britain-based spokeswoman did not respond to a request for comment on the Justice Department announcement, which was released after business hours in London.

The Inchcape settlement followed the high-profile termination of Navy business with one of its chief competitors in the Pacific, Glenn Defense Marine Asia. That company held similar contracts valued at more than \$200 million and its chief executive, Leonard Glenn Francis, known as Fat Leonard, and several current and former naval officers have since pleaded guilty in a conspiracy to bribe officials with cash, trips and prostitutes. Francis agreed to forfeit at least \$35 million.

The bribery scandals reached high into the officer corps and rocked the U.S. Navy, ensnaring naval captains and commanders, contracting personnel and Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents and exposing fraud by contractors that had served the Navy for decades.

Navy officials said the two cases are unrelated and the problems surfaced separately. “This settlement demonstrates that the

Department of the Navy will continue to hold contractors accountable for the agreements they make to supply our fleet,” Navy Secretary Richard Spencer said in a statement Tuesday with U.S. Attorney for the District Jessie Liu, NCIS Washington Field Office chief Jeremy Gauthier and Chad A. Readler, acting head of the Justice Department’s civil division.

“Fraud is an abuse of the system that siphons resources away from the American warfighter,” Gauthier said. “NCIS will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to hold responsible those who would put personal gain above corporate integrity.”

The qui tam lawsuit was brought in 2010 under the False Claims Act by three former high-ranking employees of Inchcape — Noah Rudolph, Andrea Ford and Lawrence Cosgriff — who alleged Inchcape conspired with subsidiaries and vendors to gouge the Navy whenever and wherever possible, triggering a management overhaul in 2015.

Under the law, whistleblowers may be joined by the U.S. government and earn a share of any recovery, in this case \$4.4 million, plus \$1.25 million in attorney fees.

Embattled Mo. governor resigning office

Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY — On a dreary overcast day, Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens stood in a light rain near the Governor's Mansion and recounted his grueling training as a Navy SEAL officer to suggest he would never quit fighting allegations of sexual misconduct and campaign finance violations.

Less than two weeks later, Greitens announced Tuesday that he is quitting with his mission incomplete.

"The time has come, though, to tend to those who have been wounded and to care for those who need us most," said the Republican governor, his voice cracking while his team members struggled to hold back tears. "So for the moment, let us walk off the battlefield with our heads held high."

Greitens' departure will become official at 5 p.m. Friday — marking a stunning political defeat for the 44-year-old, self-made warrior-philosopher who had aspirations of someday becoming president.

For those fellow Republicans who had strenuously urged his resignation, Greitens' exit provides the divided party a chance to reunify at the start of a summer campaign season in which it's seeking to unseat Democratic U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill.

Greitens' resignation also allows him to avoid the potentially dubious distinction of becoming the first Missouri governor ever impeached. A House investigatory committee had subpoenaed Greitens to testify next Monday during a special monthlong session focused solely on his potential discipline.

Fellow Republican Lt. Gov. Mike Parson — a former state lawmaker and sheriff — is to serve the remainder of Greitens' term, which runs until January 2021. Parson, 62, served two tours in the Military Police, in Germany and Hawaii, for the U.S. Army.

In addition to the legislative investigation, Greitens faced a felony charge in St. Louis of tampering with computer data for

disclosing a donor list of The Mission Continues to his political fundraiser in 2015 without the permission of the St. Louis-based veterans' charity he founded.

A special prosecutor from Kansas City also is weighing whether to refile a recently dismissed invasion-of-privacy charge in St. Louis alleging that Greitens took and transmitted a nonconsensual photo of a partially nude woman with whom he acknowledged having an affair in 2015.

The St. Louis prosecutor's office said it had reached a "fair and just resolution" on criminal charges against Greitens now that he's leaving office, and that more details would be made public Wednesday. But the special prosecutor from Kansas City said Tuesday that her investigation is ongoing.

Greitens could face other investigations. The chairman of the House investigatory committee and an attorney representing the woman's ex-husband both have said they have shared information with FBI agents looking into the governor.

Alberto triggers mudslides, threatens NC dam failure

Associated Press

MARION, N.C. — Mudslides triggered by the soggy remnants of Alberto forced evacuations below a dam early Wednesday and closed a highway in western North Carolina as the center of the storm lashed the nation's midsection hundreds of miles away.

About 2,000 people were evacuated after emergency managers said the Lake Tahoma dam was in danger of "imminent failure." Heavy rain triggered landslides at the dam and along Interstate 40, which was closed near Asheville.

Just before dawn, McDowell County Emergency Management deputy director Adrienne Jones told The Associated Press the dam hadn't failed, but an engineer was concerned enough after an inspection to order the evacuation until the dam could be examined in daylight. Several schools were closed in western North Carolina because of flooding.

The center of a depression that had been Alberto was about 400 miles west near Hopkinsville, Ky.

Radar showed rain extended as far south as the Gulf Coast, where the storm came ashore at the Florida Panhandle on Monday, to the Great Lakes region.

Forecasters warned the leftovers of the Atlantic hurricane season's first named storm were still capable of causing treacherous flooding as heavy precipitation spreads deeper into the nation's midsection. Flash flood watches and warnings were in effect for parts of several states from Alabama through Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, the Carolinas, Virginia and West Virginia.

In the mountains of western North Carolina, Jones said about 200 residents were in three shelters, set up in Marion, Old Fort and Glenwood. She said five minor injuries have been reported during water rescues as creeks and streams overflowed their banks and rock slides closed roads.

The storm caused more than 25,000 power outages in Alabama, many of which were caused by trees rooted in soggy soil falling across utility lines.

Despite Trump's take, Gowdy says the FBI acted properly

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — There is no evidence that the FBI planted a "spy" on President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, a senior House Republican said Wednesday, directly contradicting Trump's repeated insistence that the agency inserted a "spy for political reasons and to help Crooked Hillary win."

Rep. Trey Gowdy, chairman of the House Oversight Committee and a longtime Trump supporter, was briefed last week by the Justice Department and FBI following reports that investigators relied on a U.S. government informant in its investigation into Russian election meddling.

"I am even more convinced that the FBI did exactly what my fellow citizens would want them to do when they got the information they got and that it has nothing to do with Donald Trump," Gowdy, a South Carolina Republican, told Fox News on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, Gowdy said he had "never heard the term 'spy' used" and did not see evidence of that.

"Informants are used all day, every day by law enforcement," he told "CBS This Morning."

Gowdy's comments are particularly striking because of his role as a powerful GOP watchdog who took on Democrat Hillary Clinton in his committee's investigation into the 2012 attacks on Americans in Benghazi, Libya, while she was secretary of state. The probe unearthed the existence of Clinton's private email server, which triggered an FBI inquiry and crippled her 2016 presidential campaign against Trump.

Gowdy announced in January that he would retire from Congress at the end of the current term and return to work in the justice system.

Trump has zeroed in on, and at times embellished, reports on the informant, calling it "spygate" and tweeting that it was "starting to look like one of the biggest political scandals in U.S. history." Trump has also rejected assertions by the U.S. intelligence agencies that the Russian government was trying to help him beat Clinton.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man in wheelchair cuts 2 police officers

FL WINTER HAVEN — Authorities said two Florida police officers were injured by a knife-wielding man in a wheelchair.

WFLA reported that Emmanuel Ruiz Mejia, 29, is charged with cutting two Winter Haven police officers who responded to a disturbance at a bar Friday.

Police said they removed a swordlike knife strapped to the back of Mejia's wheelchair, but Mejia refused to show officers both of his hands. Police said Mejia produced a large knife when an officer pulled out a stun gun. One officer was cut when they tackled Mejia, trying to get the knife.

Police said the stun gun was used on Mejia, who then picked the knife up and threw it at the other officer. Neither officer was seriously injured.

Man climbs into, out of Dunkin' Donuts

MA METHUEN — A man was apprehended for climbing into the drive-thru window of a Massachusetts Dunkin' Donuts, then promptly climbing back out.

Police said they responded to a security alarm at a shop in Methuen on Sunday morning and saw video surveillance footage showing a man in a vest pushing the drive-thru window open and climbing into the business. He turned and left by way of the window immediately.

Officials arrested the man Sunday evening but did not identify him.

Woman pregnant with her daughter's twins

MO ST. LOUIS — A southern Illinois woman is set to give birth to

her own grandchildren because her daughter is unable to get pregnant.

Micaela Johnson was diagnosed with a rare form of cervical cancer in 2015. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that she and her husband froze their embryos before Johnson underwent treatment that left her infertile.

Johnson, 26, wanted to expand her family after being cancer-free for two years. She asked her mother, Sheila Gump, 43, to carry her children.

Gump is expected to give birth to her daughter's twins — one boy and one girl — in July.

Rabbits found dumped near train station

NY RONKONKOMA — Suffolk County officials are offering a \$3,500 reward for information leading to the person or people responsible for dumping 27 rabbits by a Long Island train station.

The Suffolk County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said it was notified Sunday that a number of domestic rabbits were in the vicinity of the Ronkonkoma train station.

The SPCA and other animal welfare groups captured the bunnies, which don't have the skills to live in the wild on their own.

Woman, 69, fights off would-be robber

NJ BAYONNE — Authorities said a 69-year-old woman fought off a man who tried to rob her in front of her home over the weekend.

NJ.com reported that Bayonne police said the woman was standing outside about 7 p.m. Sunday when the man crossed the street and demanded her purse.

Police said the woman refused, and the man tried to take

the purse "by forcibly pulling on the strap." The woman then kicked the would-be robber multiple times.

Police said the man fell to the ground, then ran off without the victim's purse. No arrests or injuries were reported.

Man on escalator in mall falls to his death

RI PROVIDENCE — A man who was apparently "fooling around" and riding an escalator rail lost his balance and fell to his death at a Rhode Island mall.

Providence police Chief Hugh Clements told WPRO-AM the victim fell one floor, from the escalator at the movie theater level to the food court, at the Providence Place Mall just before 11 p.m. Monday.

Clements said the man lost his balance, fell backward and hit his head on a table. He suffered "massive injuries" and was pronounced dead at the hospital.

The victim was a 45-year-old Pawtucket man. His name was not immediately released.

Bitter biter: Lemon shark nips fisherman

FL PONCE INLET — A good deed has not gone unpunished in Florida, where a man practicing catch-and-release fishing was nipped in the foot by a shark.

The lemon shark apparently still felt sour despite having been released back into the Atlantic Ocean. In a Daytona Beach News-Journal report, Volusia County Beach Safety and Ocean Rescue Capt. Tamara Malphurs said the shark was unharmed after being reeled in, but "was very unhappy about being caught."

The captain said the 52-year-old Mount Dora man was fishing in Ponce Inlet on Sunday when he caught the 3-foot shark. She

didn't identify the fisherman, who suffered minor injuries and was not hospitalized.

Monument honors service animals

CT MIDDLETOWN — A new monument in Connecticut honors service animals with a statue of one of the nation's most famous war dogs.

The sculpture, "Stubby Salutes," was unveiled Saturday in Veterans Memorial Park in Middletown.

Stubby was a Boston-terrier mix who traveled to Europe with a Connecticut unit during World War I. He became famous for warning soldiers of incoming gas attacks and locating wounded soldiers on the battlefield, staying with them until help arrived.

His story was the subject of a major animated movie last month, "Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero."

The bronze sculpture, created by artist Susan Bahary, is the culmination of a three-decade effort to create a memorial, spearheaded by the family of Robert Conroy, the army corporal who adopted Stubby during training.

Small bear roaming neighborhood is killed

OR GRESHAM — Police killed a small bear that was roaming near an apartment complex in Gresham.

Gresham police told KOIN-TV there were reports of a bear last week. Another report indicated the animal had moved further into town.

It was killed the next day.

Police said they had no choice because the bear was in a residential area.

The bear's body was transferred to Oregon State Police.

From wire reports

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Reporting
World, National
and Military News

It's Cavs-Warriors for 4th straight year

Associated Press

Here we go again.
And again.
And, well, again.

Round 4 — as many predicted, and others probably lamented — is happening. Cleveland and Golden State will meet for the fourth straight year in the NBA Finals, the Warriors looking for a third championship in that span and LeBron James and the Cavaliers trying to wrestle the crown away just as they did in the 2016 series.

On one side, the best team of this era.

On the other, the best player of this era and maybe any era.

Game 1 will be hosted by the Warriors at Oracle Arena on Thursday night.

"You've got to appreciate the moment," Warriors guard Stephen Curry said. "Somebody asked, 'Four years in a row getting to the Finals, do you appreciate it?' Yes."

Both teams are entering this title matchup with injury concerns. Cleveland's Kevin Love

is in the concussion protocol and will need to complete a series of tests before he's cleared to return, and Golden State's Andre Iguodala — a former NBA Finals MVP — wasn't able to finish the Warriors-Rockets series because of a bone bruise in his leg.

The Warriors hoped Iguodala would return to the Houston series, but his progress stalled.

"That's just not an easy injury to predict in terms of recovery," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

There wasn't a lot of similarity in Cleveland's and Golden State's seasons, but their last few days have been mirror images of one another — both teams had to win Game 6s at home to fend off elimination, then had to go on the road and prevail in Game 7s to win their respective conference finals.

"One of the most challenging seasons I've had," said James, who may be playing the best basketball of his life right now at the end of his 15th season.

Here's some of what the

Cavaliers have dealt with since Golden State-Cleveland III ended last June: Kyrie Irving got traded for Isaiah Thomas over the summer, coach Tyronn Lue had to miss time to deal with health issues, Love missed two months, they lost 11 games by 16 or more points, revamped their roster in February and spent much of the season unable to guard anybody.

They're in the Finals again anyway, led by someone who will play in the last series of the season for an absurd eighth consecutive year.

"It's been a roller coaster," said James, who is seeking a fourth ring in his ninth finals appearance overall. "It's been good, it's been bad. It's been roses. There have been thorns in the roses. There's been everything that you can ask for."

This wasn't all peaches for Golden State, either. The Warriors didn't get the No. 1 seed out West, lost Curry to a knee injury late in the regular season, lost 10 of their final 17 games and got pushed to the

brink.

"I'm glad we're going back," Warriors forward Kevin Durant said.

The Warriors swept the two regular-season meetings with the Cavaliers, winning by seven at home on Christmas Day (without Curry) and prevailing by 10 in Cleveland about three weeks later.

Film-wise, those two games are meaningless now. Of Cleveland's five leading scorers against Golden State this season, three no longer play for the Cavaliers. James and Love combined to score 100 points in the two games, but Dwyane Wade, Jae Crowder and Isaiah Thomas were all shipped elsewhere by the Cavs in a series of trade-deadline moves.

"We obviously know what LeBron's capable of," Curry said shortly after the Warriors' Game 7 win at Houston ended. "It's a new team over there, so the other guys, we've got to lock in on their tendencies. But we'll worry about that when we get home."

Golden State still waiting for word on injured Iguodala

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Klay Thompson sat on the floor in the middle of his teammates and pointed to his "2018 NBA FINALS" hat during a locker-room photo.

An important face was missing from the moment: Andre Iguodala.

In a postseason defined by uncertainty for the defending champions, Golden State could be without one of its top defenders as the Warriors chase a repeat title — taking on LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers in a fourth straight NBA Finals matchup.

Iguodala's status for Game 1 on Thursday night is a question as he recovers from a bone bruise in his left knee, which caused him to miss the final four games of the Western Conference finals against Houston. Cleveland's Kevin Love is

in concussion protocol, so he might not be ready, either.

Coach Steve Kerr has said Iguodala, the 2015 Finals MVP, will return when he can run without pain. The Warriors sure could use his presence against King James, who is making an eighth straight Finals appearance.

"We're still without Andre, which is a big blow for us," Kerr said before Monday's Game 7 at Houston. "In a different way. He's not a scorer for us as Chris (Paul) is for Houston, but a huge component. So you go through the playoffs and things happen, and you've got to be able to bounce back no matter what and keep going."

Last month, Kerr became concerned his team's defense wouldn't return to its top form after Golden State struggled late in the regular season and even endured a particu-

larly poor stretch in which the Warriors dropped seven of 10 games.

Yet here they are in a familiar spring spot as June approaches.

Once the buzzer sounded and the 101-92 Game 7 win over Houston was official, the Warriors could exhale. It hasn't been pretty for much of these playoffs, a far cry from that remarkable, record-breaking 16-1 romp through last year's postseason.

Stephen Curry kept the game ball tucked under his left arm long after Monday's game, toddler daughter Ryan held in his right arm.

Kevin Durant hugged general manager Bob Myers, while always-animated Nick Young beamed wearing his Finals hat and "Champions of the West" T-shirt, then enjoyed hoisting the shiny trophy.

Draymond Green smooched his 1-year-old son, Draymond Jr.

Back home, fireworks went off in the East Bay as everyone anticipates another battle with King James.

"There's a lot of just built-up anxiety, I guess, about this moment. When you walk off the court with a win and get this fancy hat, it's a good feeling," Curry said. "We had to work for it, and you've got to appreciate the moment. Somebody asked, 'It's four years in a row getting to The Finals, do you appreciate it?' Yes, because it's really hard. So all the smiles and embraces you have with your teammates, your coaches, it's well deserved."

James has willed his Cavs this far, saying, "I don't know how I can compare it to other seasons because I can only think about this one in the present."

Caps, Knights trying to keep their cool

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Gerard Gallant and the Vegas Golden Knights still think Tom Wilson's third-period hit on Jonathan Marchessault in the Stanley Cup Final opener was too late and probably a bit dirty.

The coach also believes it sparked his team's comeback victory in that Game 1 thriller.

So while he wasn't happy to hear Wilson will face no discipline from the NHL, Gallant was hoping his team would remember the hit — and more importantly, how they played right after it — when they attempted to take a 2-0 series lead on the Washington Capitals on Wednesday night on the Strip.

"The good thing about the hit is it really woke our team up," Gallant said after an optional practice at the Golden Knights' suburban training complex. "I think it was a 4-4 game?"

Indeed, two novice Stanley Cup finalists were deep into

an entertainingly ramshackle opener, but the Knights took charge after that fateful collision left Marchessault sprawled on the ice. Vegas quickly got Tomas Nosek's go-ahead goal, eventually won 6-4 and surged one game closer to an improbable championship.

The focused aggression necessary to be a successful postseason team is a delicate concoction. The Golden Knights and Caps both had it during the conference playoffs, but they both admit it got away from them in Game 1.

"I think both teams can be better," Washington coach Barry Trotz said. "It was a pretty sloppy game."

After one game to get used to the sky-high stakes of the last round of this tournament, both teams intend to channel their nervous energy more constructively in the future. Both coaches stressed the importance of discipline, completing assignments and not allowing the frenetic Vegas crowd to over-

whelm their emotions.

"There's obviously nerves," Washington's Jay Beagle said. "I'm not surprised at anything anymore, but in the Stanley Cup Final, usually it's 2-1 or 1-0, not (6-4). But you don't know what to expect from a team that you don't know that much. Now we've got to know them a little bit more."

The mistakes that worry coaches also lead to exciting hockey, and the opener was thoroughly entertaining even before Wilson lowered the boom on Marchessault. The teams combined for a Final-record four lead changes in the highest-scoring opener in eight years for this final round.

Wilson, who served a three-game suspension in the second round for breaking the jaw of Pittsburgh's Zach Aston-Reese, and the Capitals still insist the hard-charging forward did nothing wrong when he leveled the Golden Knights' top playoff scorer.

"It's within the rules," Wil-

son said after practice at T-Mobile Arena. "It's a clean hit. I don't know why it got so much media attention, to be honest. It's a hard hit, but that's the day and age we're in. ... I'm trying to play my game. There's a lot of those hits that are going on, but it's the Stanley Cup Final, and it's within the rules."

The NHL Department of Player Safety agreed when it decided not to discipline Wilson for the shoulder-to-shoulder hit, clearly deciding that Wilson's timing wasn't extraordinarily late.

Marchessault went to the dressing room and was examined for a possible concussion, but returned to the game. Gallant said the forward is feeling fine for Game 2.

The Capitals had their own complaint about Vegas forward David Perron, who jumped on the ice after the whistle and made contact with Washington captain Alex Ovechkin during the scuffles immediately after the hit.

Top-ranked Halep struggles in opener at French Open

Associated Press

PARIS — Top-ranked Simona Halep overcame some opening-match nerves to advance to the second round of the French Open on Wednesday, beating 83rd-ranked Alison Riske of the United States 2-6, 6-1, 6-1.

Halep took a bathroom break after Riske jumped out to a 5-0 lead and won the opening set, and looked like a new player when she came back on court. The Romanian unwrapped a new racket and attacked Riske's serve with renewed vigor and aggression, breaking her to love in the second set's first game.

After making 16 unforced errors and winning less than half the points on her serve in the first set, Halep completely reversed the momentum of the match, rediscovering her range and accuracy on the clay of Court Philippe-Chatrier.

Riske, meanwhile, wilted and won only 22 points in losing the second and third sets.

"It's always tough to start the tournament," said Halep, a finalist at Roland Garros last year and in 2014.

The match, the last in the first round of the women's draw, was postponed Tuesday before storms drenched Roland Garros.

Halep's next opponent, 72nd-ranked Taylor Townsend of the United States, played her first-round match on Tuesday.

Second-seeded Caroline Wozniacki had no such problems on Wednesday in her second-round match.

The Australian Open champion beat Georgina Garcia Perez 6-1, 6-0.

A day after Serena Williams played in Grand Slam singles for the first time in 16 months, she and Venus Williams won

their first Grand Slam doubles match in nearly two years.

The sisters moved into the second round of the French Open by coming back for a 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 victory over the 14th-seeded Japanese pairing of Shuko Aoyama and Miyu Kato in front of a Court 3 crowd that raucously supported the Americans.

Venus Williams lost in the first round of singles on Sunday.

In the men's field, former champion Novak Djokovic posted another straight-set win to reach the third round.

Facing Spanish qualifier Jaume Munar, the Serb delivered a solid display to prevail 7-6 (1), 6-4, 6-4 and move into the third round for the 13th time.

Djokovic, who underwent right elbow surgery earlier this year, is the 20th-seeded player in Paris, his lowest Grand Slam

seeding since the 2006 U.S. Open.

Second-seeded Alexander Zverev trailed by a set and a break — and was down a broken racket, too — before eventually collecting himself and coming back to beat 60th-ranked Dusan Lajovic of Serbia 2-6, 7-5, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 in the second round.

If the 21-year-old German is going to get to the round of 16, he'll need to do something he never has at a Grand Slam tournament: defeat a player ranked in the top 50. Zverev's next match comes against 26th-seeded Damir Dzumhur.

The French Open is Sam Querrey's least successful Grand Slam tournament and the American bowed out early again as this year's No. 12 seed.

He was beaten 1-6, 7-6 (3), 6-4, 6-1 by Gilles Simon of France in the second round.

Camargo's walk-off homer lifts Braves

Associated Press

ATLANTA — For both the Atlanta Braves and New York Mets, this felt so familiar.

Another stunning, walk-off win for the Braves.

Another excruciating day for a Mets team that seems downright cursed.

Johan Camargo homered with one out in the bottom of the ninth inning Tuesday night to give Atlanta a 7-6 win over the Mets, who squandered a pair of four-run leads and lost two more pitchers to injuries.

Camargo's liner off Gerson Bautista just cleared the right-field wall, the Braves' second walk-off homer in two days against their NL East rival.

"I knew who was pitching and how hard he throws," Camargo said through a translator. "As soon as I hit it, I thought it might have a chance."

Asdrubal Cabrera homered twice and Adrian Gonzalez also went deep for the

Mets. But it wasn't enough for an injury-plagued squad that keeps losing key players.

Before the game, the Mets placed Noah Syndergaard on the 10-day disabled list with a strained ligament in his right index finger. Then, in an almost surreal development, fellow starter Steven Matz had to leave with discomfort in his left middle finger after throwing three scoreless innings while New York built a 4-0 lead.

Matz said he hurt his finger in the top of the fourth, when the bat flew out of his hand on a swing. He wound up doubling in that at-bat, but began to feel some pain in his finger while standing on second base. It didn't improve when he went back to the mound.

"It's real unfortunate," Matz said. "I know the bullpen has really been working their tails off, throwing a lot of innings. I was feeling really crisp out there. It's just frustrating. It really is. But there's nothing you can do."

X-rays were negative, but it's not known

if the injury might affect Matz's next scheduled start.

The Mets were up 6-2 when the Braves rallied.

Nick Markakis had an RBI double in the seventh, and Atlanta put up three more runs in the eighth off Jacob Rhame. After pinch-hitter Preston Tucker hustled to beat out a potential double-play grounder with the bases loaded, bringing in a run, Ender Inciarte drove a two-run triple off the center-field fence to tie the game at 6.

Bautista (0-1) got the first out in the ninth. Camargo then brought the game to a sudden end.

Not that it was a surprise.

The first-place Braves have won eight games in their final at-bat — five in walk-off fashion. Their last three wins at SunTrust Park have all come on the final swing.

"A different guy again," Tyler Flowers said. "It was a tough game, but we just kept grinding. We gave ourselves a chance at the end of the game."

Roundup

Harper helps Nats stretch road streak to 9

The Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The season is barely two months old, and the Washington Nationals have already been asked to adjust to a new manager, overcome a rash of injuries and jump into bounce-back mode following a poor start.

With Bryce Harper leading the way, they've handled every obstacle while becoming the hottest team in the big leagues.

Harper hit his NL-leading 17th home run, Mark Reynolds added a solo shot and Washington beat the Baltimore Orioles 3-2 Tuesday night to extend its road winning streak to nine games.

The Nationals have lost veteran Howie Kendrick for the season, are without sluggers Adam Eaton and Ryan Zimmerman and are still waiting for three-time All-Star Daniel Murphy to make his season debut.

No matter.

Washington has won 20 of its past 26 games, including five in a row, since starting 11-

16. The Nationals own the best road mark in the majors, and the nine-game run matches the team's longest since the move from Montreal in 2005.

"We've played some pretty good ballgames as well at home as well," rookie manager Dave Martinez said.

Yankees 6, Astros 5: Brett Gardner tied it with his second homer of the game, a one-out, two-run drive in the ninth inning, Gleyber Torres hit a winning single in the 10th and host New York rallied to beat Houston.

Red Sox 8, Blue Jays 3: Sandy Leon hit a home run and two doubles, Xander Bogaerts also homered and Rick Porcello took a three-hitter into the seventh inning, helping host Boston beat Toronto to match the second-best start in franchise history.

Cardinals 6, Brewers 1: Michael Wacha pitched two-hit ball for 6²/₃ innings and St. Louis connected for three home runs.

Cubs 8, Pirates 6: Anthony Rizzo shook off the boos and sparked a late rally with his ninth home run as Chicago beat reeling host Pittsburgh.

Indians 7, White Sox 3: Michael Brantley, Jose Ramirez and Jason Kipnis each hit a solo home run to lift host Cleveland.

Rockies 11, Giants 4: Kyle Freeland pitched effectively into the sixth inning and doubled in Colorado's three-run fourth, leading the Rockies over a San Francisco team that lost two pitchers to injury — including starter Jeff Samardzija.

Diamondbacks 5, Reds 2: Daniel Descalso hit a two-run homer, Zack Godley pitched six effective innings and host Arizona defeated Cincinnati.

Angels 9, Tigers 2: Ian Kinsler hit a three-run homer, Luis Valbuena went deep twice and Los Angeles routed host Detroit.

Phillies 6, Dodgers 1: Jake Arrieta delivered his third scoreless outing this month and

Nick Williams hit a home run as Philadelphia defeated host Los Angeles.

Rays 4, Athletics 3: C.J. Cron, Joey Wendle and Wilson Ramos hit consecutive home runs in the third inning of Tampa Bay's victory over host Oakland.

Royals 2, Twins 1 (14): Alcides Escobar homered with two outs in the 14th inning to lift host Kansas City over Minnesota.

Escobar connected off Taylor Rogers (1-2), ending a game that took 4 hours, 12 minutes. Rain also delayed the start by 24 minutes.

Rangers 9, Mariners 5: Rougned Odor broke a ninth-inning tie with a three-run double and Texas stopped host Seattle's four-game winning streak.

Padres 9, Marlins 5: Frammil Reyes hit a two-run homer that put host San Diego ahead and the Padres got a fine effort from their bullpen against Miami.