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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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N. Korea fires more presumed missiles

BY KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired two short-range missiles on Thursday, less than a week after the communist state launched a missile into the sea off its east coast, South Korea said.

The move threatened to raise tensions as the main U.S. envoy for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, was visiting Seoul to get stalled nuclear talks with the North back on track.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, speaking hours later in a television interview, said his government and the United States believe that short-range missiles had been fired, based on their flight distance.

However, he said it was too early to determine whether they had violated U.N. Security Council resolutions, which prohibit the North from using bal-

listic technology.

“I want to tell North Korea once again that it’s not ideal to repeat actions that ... risk throwing cold water on the atmosphere of dialogue and negotiations,” Moon said in an interview with South Korean broadcaster KBS.

Thursday’s launch was especially bittersweet for Moon as it occurred on the eve of the second anniversary of his presidential inauguration.

Moon told KBS that the missile tests seemed aimed at protesting against the lack of agreement during the second U.S.-North Korean summit in Vietnam.

The latest launches broke an 18-month lull, although they technically didn’t violate the North’s self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests to facilitate talks.

“North Korea fired two unidentified projectiles presumed to be short-range missiles” in

an eastern direction from the northwestern area of Kusong, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said. The missiles flew more than 260 miles and 167 miles, respectively, for 20 minutes starting at 4:29 p.m., the statement said, revising an earlier assessment that said it was a single, unidentified projectile fired from Sino-ri.

The South Korean military has strengthened surveillance and security measures in case of more launches, it said, adding that Seoul and Washington were working closely together to maintain “full readiness.”

Kusong is near Sino-ri, about 50 miles northwest of Pyongyang, which is home to a missile base and was the launch site for the North’s first successful test of the Hwasong-12 intermediate-range missile in 2017.

On Saturday, North Korea fired several rockets and what experts said was likely a short-range ballistic missile that

could have the potential to target U.S. forces and other targets in the South.

That was the first missile launch since November 2017.

The resumption of testing poses a challenge to President Donald Trump, who has frequently cited the moratorium as a reason to remain optimistic about efforts to persuade the North to give up its nuclear weapons.

The adversaries have been unable to narrow the gap between Pyongyang’s desire for sanctions relief and other rewards for disarmament steps already taken. Trump’s administration insists punishing economic sanctions will remain in place until final, fully verified denuclearization is achieved.

North Korea said earlier Thursday that those salvos were part of a “routine and self-defensive military drill” and mocked the South for criticizing them.

Marine leader is 4th fired in recent weeks

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The 1st Marine Division’s commander fired the officer in charge of Camp Pendleton’s 1st Reconnaissance Battalion on Tuesday, marking at least the fourth removal of a Marine commander in recent weeks.

Lt. Col. Francisco Zavala was removed from his command after Maj. Gen. Robert Castellvi “lost trust and confidence in the commanding officer’s ability to lead,” according to a statement issued Wednesday from the California-based division.

A spokesman for 1st Marine Division declined to provide

any additional details about Zavala’s removal but indicated he was under some kind of investigation.

Zavala, who is from Texas, was commissioned into the Marine Corps in 2000 as an infantry officer and has served in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to his official biography. His former commands include leading a platoon with the 1st Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team Company, a company in 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines, and recently the Corps’ Special-Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force-Peru, according to the Marines.

Castellvi appointed Maj. Jeffrey Erb as 1st Reconnaissance

Battalion’s commander after removing Zavala, the Marine statement said.

Two other Marine commanders were removed from their duties in recent weeks following arrests on suspicion of drunken driving.

Col. Douglas Lemott Jr. was fired from his position as commander of the Marines’ Cyberspace Operations Group on May 3, just days after his arrest in Fauquier County, Va. On April 25, Col. John Atkinson was removed from his position as commander of Headquarters and Service Battalion at Marine Corps Base Quantico after his arrest earlier in April in Prince William County, Va.

Marine officials cited leaders’ “loss of trust and confidence” in both of those officers in announcing their relief from command.

Another recently fired Marine officer, Lt. Col. James Compton, was removed April 22 from his role commanding the All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242 at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Japan. His dismissal was also attributed to a “loss of trust and confidence” as an investigation continues into a fatal collision in December between one of Compton’s squadron’s F/A-18D Hornet fighters and a KC-130J air tanker.

Now-pardoned ex-GI didn't take 1st White House call

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — A former U.S. soldier from Oklahoma who was pardoned this week for his 2009 conviction for killing an Iraqi prisoner said Wednesday that he initially didn't answer the White House's phone call to tell him of the pardon.

Former Army 1st Lt. Michael Behenna said he was on the phone with his father, retired FBI agent Scott Behenna, when the call came about 2:30 p.m. Monday as he was driving. He didn't recognize the number and thought it might be a telemarketer, so he let it go to voicemail.

After checking his messages, he returned the call and was told President Donald Trump was granting him a pardon and would call him back. When Behenna's phone rang again, it was Trump's office putting the president on the line so he could tell Behenna personally.

"I had tears in my eyes, my heart's beating fast and I'm smiling from ear to ear. I had a feeling I knew what it was for,"

Behenna said.

Behenna, 35, was convicted in 2009 of unpremeditated murder in a combat zone in the 2008 killing of Ali Mansur Mohamed, an unarmed Iraqi prisoner.

Behenna said he acted in self-defense when the man reached for Behenna's handgun, but the Army said the argument didn't hold up because Behenna was pointing his weapon at the prisoner.

Behenna admitted during his trial that instead of taking the prisoner home as he was ordered, he took the man to a railroad culvert, stripped him, then questioned him at gunpoint about a roadside bombing that had killed two members of Behenna's platoon.

A military appeals court in 2012 found that jury instructions on self-defense were incorrect and that prosecutors failed to tell the defense of a crime scene expert who supported the claim of self-defense, but the court said the errors were harmless and did not affect the outcome of the trial.

Congressman vows to seek pardon for accused SEAL

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rep. Duncan Hunter says he will ask President Donald Trump to pardon a Navy SEAL if he is found guilty of murder in the stabbing of an Iraqi war prisoner.

Hunter, R-Calif., screened combat footage collected from a helmet camera to a group of lawmakers Wednesday, saying the footage exonerates Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher of one of the charges against him.

"I wanted to give them an opportunity firsthand to see there is no case," Hunter told a small group of reporters after the screening. He admonished the military justice system, calling it "absolutely broken" and

"rigged."

Gallagher is accused of killing a teenage Islamic State fighter under his care and then holding his reenlistment ceremony with the corpse. Navy prosecutors also accuse Gallagher of shooting two civilians in Iraq and opening fire on crowds. Gallagher has pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

His lawyers have said he did not murder anyone and that disgruntled SEALs made the accusations because they wanted to get rid of a demanding platoon leader. His trial is set for May 28 at Naval Base San Diego.

Hunter, an early Trump supporter in the 2016 presidential campaign, is himself facing federal corruption charges.

US, allies finish drills in South China Sea

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. on Wednesday finished a weeklong sail through the South China Sea with India, Japan and the Philippines, a region fraught with tension amid disputed territorial claims, according to a Navy statement Thursday.

The guided-missile destroyer USS William P. Lawrence joined the Indian navy destroyer INS Kolkata and tanker INS Shakti; Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force helicopter carrier JS Izumo and destroyer JS Murasame; and Philippine navy patrol ship BRP Andres Bonifacio in international waters May 2-8.

The six vessels gathered "to train together and promote maritime cooperation throughout a free and open Indo-Pacific," the Navy said in the statement.

The ships practiced "formation exercises, communication drills, passenger transfers and held a leadership exchange aboard JS Izumo" during the exercise, according to the statement.

The region is important to trade and rich in natural resources. Five nations — China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan — have overlapping claims to almost 70 reefs and islands in the South China Sea, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative.

The quadrilateral exercise follows a U.S. request in December that its Pacific allies boost their military presence in the South China Sea. China continues to claim and militarize reefs and islands in the region, contrary to a 2016 decision by a United Nations tribunal.

China has created 3,200 new acres of land in the sea's Spratly Islands since 2013, building artificial land masses for military outposts, according to the center.

Last year, China placed "anti-ship cruise missiles and long-range surface-to-air missiles on outposts in the Spratly Islands," according to a report on China's military power published last week by the U.S. Defense Department.

In response to the report, China Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a press briefing Monday that "China pursues peaceful development and a defense policy that is defensive in nature," according to a transcript.

Randy Schriver, assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific affairs, in an interview with The Australian newspaper in December, proposed bringing more pressure on the Chinese by having "other partners and allies joining in these activities" in the South China Sea.

"If not freedom-of-navigation operations ... just joint patrols, presence operations," he added, according to The Australian.

Freedom-of-navigation operations challenge territorial claims and are often conducted by sending ships within 12 nautical miles of a disputed land mass. Days before the four-nation exercise began, the USS William P. Lawrence sailed the Taiwan Strait with the guided-missile destroyer USS Stethem on April 28, irking China.

William P. Lawrence commanding officer Cmdr. Andrew Klug said working with Pacific allies strengthens international partnerships.

"Professional engagements with our allies, partners and friends in the region are opportunities to build upon our existing, strong relationships, as well as learn from each other," Klug said in the Navy statement.

JMSDF Rear Adm. Hiroshi Egawa, commander of Escort Flotilla 1, said the four-country exercise "built mutual understanding and trust" and "enhance[d] peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region," according to the Navy statement.

Taliban attack worries fellow US aid groups

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A brazen Taliban attack on a U.S.-based aid group in the Afghan capital raised concerns Thursday among other relief organizations they could be targeted even as the insurgents hold peace talks with a U.S. envoy.

Authorities say Wednesday's assault on the Kabul office of Counterpart International, a group that promotes gender equity, killed at least nine people.

The Taliban set off a huge explosion and battled security forces for more than six hours before they were repelled. Those killed included three

Afghan employees of the organization and two of its security guards.

On its website, Counterpart International said it was "devastated to have lost" members of its family in the "senseless attack."

Abdul Halim Halim, head of Afghan Relief, an aid agency that provides education and assistance to returning refugees, expressed his concerns for more than 200 of the group's employees across the country.

"The attack has us all worried for the future," he said.

Afghan Relief has partnered on projects with Counterpart International, and Halim said they "urged everyone to be

extra careful."

Kabul residents living near Counterpart International's offices described a deafening explosion that started Wednesday's attack and complained about deteriorating security in their homeland, more than 17 years since the U.S.-led coalition ousted the Taliban.

"I have no hope for the future," said Khan Barat, a money changer in the neighborhood. "Every day Afghans are dying."

Masiullah Malekazai, the manager of a nearby transportation company, said one of his employees was killed and another nine were wounded in the attack.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Thursday the insurgents had targeted Counterpart International because it promotes "Western culture," including encouraging the mixing of the genders — taboo to the Taliban.

The Taliban carry out daily attacks, even as they embarked on another round of talks with U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Qatar this week. On Wednesday, they attacked a police outpost in northern Balkh province, killing five policemen, according to provincial police spokesman Adil Adil.

DOD: Border mission to last at least a 'couple years'

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department is working on a plan now with the Department of Homeland Security that could keep troops at the U.S.-Mexico border for the "next couple years," a top Pentagon official told Senate lawmakers Wednesday.

Based on Homeland Security's ability to manage the increasing number of migrants crossing the southern border, Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Senate Appropriations Committee's defense subpanel that the two departments want to create "a comprehensive plan for the next couple years."

"Although the commitment to the border hasn't impacted preparedness for other missions at this point, what we want to do is get into a more predictable mode of the requirements the Department of Homeland Security has and do better at integrating across the government," Dunford said during the Senate hearing.

Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., the committee's chairman, opened his questioning during the hearing on the Pentagon's proposed budget for fiscal year 2020 by asking Dunford and acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan for an update on border operations and how much support the Defense Department could provide "without negatively affecting" other missions.

Shanahan outlined the two main areas

of DOD support at the border: the 4,364 servicemembers — made up of active-duty troops and National Guard members — providing support to U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the building of a border wall overseen by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Shanahan told lawmakers that there's enough Pentagon contracts and funding from their budgets and other agencies in place to build more than 250 miles of new border fencing. That represents the construction of about 63 miles of border barriers during the next six months at a rate of about half a mile daily.

Of the troops working along the border, Shanahan said the primary task is the monitor and detection mission.

House-Trump battle heats up with Barr's contempt vote

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House Judiciary Committee voted to hold Attorney General William Barr in contempt of Congress, escalating the Democrats' extraordinary legal battle with the Trump administration over access to special counsel Robert Mueller's Trump-Russia report.

The vote Wednesday capped a day of ever-deepening dispute between congressional

Democrats and President Donald Trump, who for the first time invoked the principle of executive privilege, claiming the right to block lawmakers from the full report on Mueller's probe of Russian interference to help Trump in the 2016 election.

Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., declared the action by Trump's Justice Department a clear new sign of the president's "blanket defi-

ance" of Congress' constitutional rights to conduct oversight.

"We did not relish doing this, but we have no choice," Nadler said after the vote.

The White House's blockade, he said, "is an attack on the ability of the American people to know what the executive branch is doing." He said, "This cannot be."

But Justice Department spokeswoman Kerri Kupec said it was disappointing that

members of Congress "have chosen to engage in such inappropriate political theatrics."

Barr made "extraordinary efforts" to provide Congress and the public with information about Mueller's work, she said.

White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said neither the White House nor Barr "will comply with Chairman Nadler's unlawful and reckless demands."

Trump questions US strategy on Venezuela

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is questioning his administration's aggressive strategy in Venezuela following the failure of a U.S.-backed effort to oust President Nicolas Maduro, complaining he was misled about how easy it would be to replace the socialist strongman with a young opposition figure, according to administration officials and White House advisers.

The president's dissatisfaction has crystallized around national security adviser John Bolton and what Trump has groused is an interventionist stance at odds with his view that the United States should stay out of foreign quagmires.

Trump has said in recent days that Bolton wants to get him "into a war" — a comment he has made in jest in the past but that now belies his more serious concerns, one senior administration official said.

The administration's policy is officially unchanged in the wake of a fizzled power play last week by U.S.-backed opposition leader Juan Guaido but U.S. officials have since been more cautious in their predic-

tions of Maduro's swift exit, while reassessing what one official described as the likelihood of a diplomatic "long haul."

U.S. officials point to the president's sustained commitment to the Venezuela issue, from the first weeks of his presidency as evidence that he holds a realistic view of challenges there, and does not think there is a quick fix.

But Trump has nonetheless complained over the last week that Bolton and others underestimated Maduro, according to three senior administration officials who like others interviewed for this story spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Trump has said Maduro is a "tough cookie," and that aides should not have led him to believe that the Venezuelan leader could be ousted last week, when Guaido led mass street protests that turned deadly.

Instead, Maduro rejected an offer to leave the country and two key figures in his government backed out of what Bolton called a plan to defect. Maduro publicly mocked Trump in response and said he wasn't going anywhere, saying the United States attempted a "foolish" coup.

Late Wednesday, masked Venezuelan intelligence police detained National Assembly Vice President Edgar Zambrano in a dramatic operation in Caracas, marking the first senior opposition official taken into custody by the socialist government in retaliation for the failed military uprising. Zambrano is one of 10 opposition officials charged with treason, conspiracy and rebellion by the pro-Maduro Supreme Court in connection to the plot.

Bolton publicly revealed the defection plan to apply pressure to Maduro, which U.S. officials said has worked. They claim Maduro is sleeping in a bunker, paranoid that close aides will turn on him.

Bolton's tweets egging on Maduro to begin an "early retirement" on a "nice beach" and urging for mass defections have been widely viewed as cavalier, raising unrealistic expectation for how quickly his ouster can be engineered, the U.S. official said.

Despite Trump's grumbling that Bolton had gotten him out on a limb on Venezuela, Bolton's job is safe, two senior administration officials said.

EU urges Iran to respect nuclear agreement

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — The European Union on Thursday urged Iran to respect the international agreement curbing the Islamic Republic's nuclear ambitions, and added that the bloc aims to continue trading with the country despite U.S. sanctions.

The EU and major European powers — Britain, France and Germany — also said that they "note with great concern the statement made by Iran concerning its commitments" to the nuclear deal, stressing that they "reject any ultimatums" coming from Tehran.

The joint statement came as the bloc struggles to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, a day after a new deadline from Tehran on finding a solution to make up for last year's unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the accord and re-imposed U.S. sanctions on Iran.

"We remain fully committed to the preservation and full implementation" of the deal, endorsed by the U.N. Se-

curity Council, said the EU statement.

The Trump administration pulled America out of the 2015 deal a year ago, saying it does nothing to stop Iran from developing missiles or destabilizing the Middle East. The Europeans insist that the pact is an important pillar of regional and global security and was never meant to address those other issues.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised address Wednesday that signatories to the deal now have 60 days to come up with a plan to shield his country — already laboring under economic hardship — from the sanctions imposed by President Donald Trump.

As the sanctions bite, domestic pressure is increasing on Rouhani to demonstrate that Iran can still benefit from an agreement based on providing it with economic opportunities in exchange for limiting nuclear development.

"Iran must remain in this

agreement and we must do everything we can to ensure that it stays in," French President Emmanuel Macron told reporters at an EU summit in Romania, where leaders were to discuss the standoff.

Amid the heated rhetoric from Tehran and Washington, Macron urged the agreement's signatories not to "get caught up in any escalation" and to "jointly watch over our collective security."

In their statement, the EU powers said they "regret the reimposition of sanctions" by the U.S. and remain "determined to continue pursuing efforts to enable the continuation of legitimate trade with Iran."

The Europeans have set up a complicated barter-type system to skirt direct financial transactions with Iran and so evade possible U.S. sanctions. The workaround, dubbed INSTEX, is not yet operational as Iran has not completed its part of the scheme.

The bloc said it plans to push ahead with "the operationaliza-

tion of the special purpose vehicle 'INSTEX'."

The EU has also introduced a so-called "blocking statute" protecting European companies from the effects of U.S. sanctions, but many international corporations do more business in the United States than in Iran and have already severed ties there rather than risk running afoul of Washington.

The crisis with Iran comes at a sensitive moment in the wider Middle East. On Sunday, the White House said it dispatched the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf over what it described as a new threat from Iran.

Israel, which has conducted pre-emptive bombings of nuclear facilities in Iraq and Syria, has vowed to never allow Iran to obtain an atomic weapon.

The USS Abraham Lincoln on Thursday passed through the Suez Canal on its way to the Persian Gulf, according to Mohab Mameesh, the canal's authority chief.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Caregiver of 12 kids accused of being drunk

MN COTTAGE GROVE — Authorities are seeking to shut down an unlicensed Cottage Grove home day care after allegations that a woman was drunk with 12 small children in her care.

Authorities allege that police who searched the home on Feb. 25 found three of the 12 children strapped in their car seats with blankets draped over them. Caregiver Megan Martin, 25, allegedly failed a blood-alcohol test.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune reported that Martin will appear in court June 3 on misdemeanor charges of child neglect and operating a home day care without a license.

She's to appear in court Friday in connection with a lawsuit filed by the Washington County Attorney's Office seeking to put her out of business.

Man jailed; refused to remove obscene sticker

FL LAKE CITY — Authorities said a Florida man was jailed after refusing to remove an obscene sticker from his vehicle's window.

A Columbia County Sheriff's Office report said Dillon Shane Webb, 23, was arrested and charged with misdemeanor counts of violating Florida's obscenity law and resisting an officer without violence.

It said a deputy stopped Webb in Lake City because of a sticker crudely describing a sexual appetite. The deputy initially cited Webb for obscenity with a notice to appear in court.

Officials said the deputy told Webb to alter the sticker to change the derogatory part but Webb refused, citing his First Amendment free speech rights.

Fines mulled for failure to clear snow off cars

ME AUGUSTA — Maine lawmakers are considering a bill that would require drivers to clear ice and snow off their cars before hitting the road.

The proposal would prohibit people from driving at 40 mph or faster on a public road with "solid precipitation" on the vehicle. The fine would be \$250 for a first offense.

Supporters say it's a public safety matter, as motorists need to be able to see through their windshields. They also say flying chunks of ice create a hazard.

Man, dog missing for 5 days found safe

AZ WILLIAMS — Authorities said a 29-year-old Minnesota man and his dog were found safe five days after getting lost in a sparsely populated area of Arizona.

Coconino County sheriff's spokesman Jon Paxton said Timothy Coen was found near Williams by a resident who recognized him from a missing person report. Coen was reported missing Thursday.

Coen was driving with his dog Harlow when his vehicle broke down in an unfamiliar area.

Both Coen and his dog are reported in good health.

Panel seeks daylight saving time all the time

SC COLUMBIA — South Carolina may soon join the states that are calling for Congress to authorize daylight saving time all the time.

The House Judiciary Committee approved a bill saying the General Assembly planned to adopt year-round daylight

saving time if the move is authorized by Congress in a federal law.

Around two dozen other states are considering or have passed similar legislation.

The bill has passed the state Senate and now goes to the House.

Village OKs smoking ban at beaches, parks

MI ELK RAPIDS — A northern Michigan village decided to ban smoking at its parks, beaches and trails following complaints about discarded cigarette butts.

The Traverse City Record-Eagle reported the Elk Rapids Village Council voted to approve the ban.

The ban includes smoking of any tobacco product or other plant, such as marijuana, whether using cigarettes, cigars, pipes, bongos, vaporizers or electronic cigarettes.

Prohibited areas would include all village-owned buildings, plus parks, beaches, public access sites, fishing piers, trails and pathways.

Firefighters rescue 8 ducklings from drain

CT STORRS — UConn firefighters rescued eight ducklings from a catch basin on campus.

The school said bystanders walking near the school's chemistry building called the fire department after noticing a mother duck and two ducklings crying at the storm drain Sunday evening.

The school said a firefighter attached to a safety rope used a ladder to enter the catch basin. He reached six of the eight ducklings and brought them out.

The other two had made their way down a drain pipe. Crews lured those two out using a cord

attached to a small dish filled with Rice Krispies.

Fireworks return to Mount Rushmore

SD KEYSTONE — Fireworks will return to Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota for the Fourth of July celebration in 2020.

Fireworks at Mount Rushmore were discontinued after 2009 due to concerns related to the pine beetle infestation that increased fire concerns in the Black Hills National Forest. The forest has since rebounded, and there have been advances in pyrotechnic safety.

Gov. Kristi Noem, federal Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and National Park Service Deputy Director P. Daniel Smith announced the resumption of fireworks.

Civil War exhibit opens in Philadelphia

PA PHILADELPHIA — The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia is unveiling the nation's first permanent exhibit exploring the constitutional debates of the Civil War. "Civil War and Reconstruction: The Battle for Freedom and Equality," opened to the public on Thursday.

The museum says visitors will "learn how the equality promised in the Declaration of Independence was finally inscribed in the Constitution by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments."

The exhibit includes original copies of those amendments, Dred Scott's signed petition for freedom, a pike bought by John Brown for an armed raid to free slaves and a fragment of the flag Abraham Lincoln raised at Independence Hall.

From wire reports

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Pence pinch-hit slam powers Rangers

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — In a game full of monster shots, Hunter Pence hit the biggest home run of all.

Pence connected for a pinch-hit grand slam and the Texas Rangers rallied late, beating the Pittsburgh Pirates 9-6 Wednesday.

The Rangers trailed 6-2 before three walks by reliever Michael Feliz loaded the bases for Pence. He sent the first pitch off the foul pole in left field to tie it.

Coming into this season, Pence didn't appear to be the longball threat that he once

was. The 36-year-old once hit 27 home runs in a season, but that was back in 2013. He hit just four in all of 2018, and was signed to a minor league contract by the Rangers in February.

But his power stroke might be returning to the form of his youth. Pence hit a home run and a pair of doubles in the first game of the series on Tuesday before equaling his 2018 total with his fourth homer of the season Wednesday.

"Trust my approach and hit it. That was all I was focused on," Pence said.

Rangers manager Chris Woodward was

focused on putting up Pence in the right spot.

"He's a remarkable human being, man," Woodward said. "He's waiting the whole time. He was champing at the bit behind me. I could hear him pacing back and forth. I let him know, 'Hey, I want to make sure when you hit, it's a situation where you're either going to tie it or plate a run.'"

Isiah Kiner-Falefa doubled off Tyler Lyons (1-1) and an offline relay throw allowed Nomar Mazara to score the go-ahead run in the ninth. Rougned Odor followed with a two-run homer.

MLB roundup

Diamondbacks end slump with 12-inning win

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Wilmer Flores snapped a 13th-inning tie with an RBI single, helping the Arizona Diamondbacks end a three-game losing streak with a 3-2 victory over the Tampa Bay Rays on Wednesday.

Eduardo Escobar made up for a crucial throwing error, leading off the 13th with a single off Adam Kolarek (2-1) — Arizona's first hit since the fifth inning. He moved to second on a double-play grounder before scoring on Flores' two-out broken-bat hit to right field off Chaz Roe.

Archie Bradley (2-3) pitched three scoreless innings to get the win. Zack Godley, the eighth Diamondbacks pitcher, worked a perfect 13th for his first career save.

Indians 5, White Sox 3: Jose Ramirez hit a two-run homer with two outs in the ninth inning as host Cleveland snapped a three-game losing streak.

Francisco Lindor singled with one out against Jace Fry (1-1) before Jason Kipnis struck out. Chicago manager Rick Renteria brought in right-hander Kelvin Herrera to face the switch-hitting Ramirez and Lindor stole second on a 2-1 pitch.

Ramirez crushed Herrera's

next pitch — a 96 mph fastball — through a stiff wind and into the seats in right for his third homer, setting off a much-needed celebration by the Indians.

Cubs 3, Marlins 2 (11): Jason Heyward homered leading off the 11th inning to lift surging host Chicago in Addison Russell's return to the majors following a 40-game ban for violating MLB's domestic violence policy.

Heyward lined a 1-2 pitch from Jose Quijada (0-1) into the basket in left field, helping the Cubs hang on after blowing a 2-1 lead in the ninth. Carl Edwards Jr. (1-1), recalled from the minors Monday, pitched a perfect 11th with two strikeouts to get the win.

Red Sox 2, Orioles 1 (12): Andrew Benintendi homered in the 12th inning, and Boston received a masterful pitching performance from Chris Sale and a game-saving catch from Jackie Bradley Jr. to win at Baltimore.

With their fifth win in six games, the Red Sox reached .500 (19-19) for the first time since they were 1-1.

Brewers 7, Nationals 3: Christian Yelich hit his major league-leading 16th home run and host Milwaukee won its sixth straight game, beating Washington.

The Nationals lost all three at Miller Park, marking the first time they've been swept this season, and have dropped four in a row overall.

Dodgers 9, Braves 4: Enrique Hernandez, Max Muncy and Justin Turner each homered, and Los Angeles earned its 10th straight win at home, where it earned a third consecutive sweep.

Phillies 5, Cardinals 0: Jerad Eickhoff allowed three hits in eight innings, Cesar Hernandez homered and drove in three runs and Philadelphia won at St. Louis.

Aided by a pair of double plays, Eickhoff (2-1) faced just two batters over the minimum through the first seven innings as the NL East-leading Phillies took two of three from the Cardinals.

Astros 9, Royals 0: Michael Brantley homered twice, Brad Peacock pitched seven innings and Josh James completed the three-hitter in host Houston's win.

Peacock (3-2) allowed three hits and set a career high with 12 strikeouts to help the Astros bounce back after a 12-2 loss on Tuesday night. Peacock also rebounded after allowing seven runs in just 3 2/3 innings in his previous start. James struck out five in the last two innings.

Padres 3, Mets 2: Hunter Renfroe hit a tiebreaking solo shot in the seventh inning, center fielder Manuel Margot robbed Pete Alonso of a homer and host San Diego beat New York.

Twins 9, Blue Jays 1: Jorge Polanco had his second career five-hit game, including a two-run home run, Kyle Gibson (3-1) struck out a career-high 11 and Minnesota won at Toronto, completing a three-game sweep.

Tigers 10, Angels 3: Ronny Rodriguez drove in a career-high four runs and Matthew Boyd pitched six strong innings, helping Detroit beat Los Angeles.

Athletics 5, Reds 4 (13): Stephen Piscotty homered leading off the bottom of the 13th, lifting host Oakland over Cincinnati.

One day after Mike Fiers pitched the 13th no-hitter in franchise history, the A's got a big lift out of their bullpen and then won it on Piscotty's winner off Robert Stephenson (2-1).

Mariners 10, Yankees 1: Seattle's Yusei Kikuchi was brilliant on the mound in his Yankee Stadium debut and Ryon Healy had four extra-base hits. Kikuchi, a rookie left-hander, allowed only three soft hits in 7 2/3 innings.

Briefly

Kerr: Durant will not play in Game 6

From wire reports

OAKLAND, Calif. — Kevin Durant, whose sterling play in recent weeks has vaulted him into pole position in the ongoing debate over who is the best player in basketball, brought Oracle Arena to a hush as he hobbled straight to the locker room with a right leg injury that jeopardizes his availability for Game 6 of the playoff series with the Houston Rockets.

Durant, who will have an MRI for what the team says is a right calf strain, is “not going to play Game 6” against the Houston Rockets, coach Steve Kerr said late Wednesday.

Durant, the NBA’s leading scorer in the postseason, departed with 22 points, five rebounds and four assists.

In other NBA news:

■ The Los Angeles Lakers are moving on from Tyronn Lue and will continue their search for a coach, according to a person familiar with the situation.

Lue had long been considered a front-runner for the job, because of his connection to LeBron James. He was the Cavaliers’ coach when the team, led by James, won Cleveland’s first professional sports championship in more than 50 years.

Seahawks add Ansah, bolster pass rush

RENTON, Wash. — The Seattle Seahawks are addressing one of their biggest offseason needs by signing veteran defensive end Ezekiel Ansah to a one-year deal with the team, according to a person with knowledge of the deal.

Ansah will join the Seahawks after six seasons with Detroit and may not be the final move made by Seattle in an attempt to bolster its pass rush with sacks leader Frank Clark traded to Kansas City before the draft last month.

Improbable gets Smith for Preakness run

BALTIMORE — Improbable will have Triple Crown-winning jockey Mike Smith aboard if the colt runs in the Preakness on May 18.

Trainer Bob Baffert said Wednesday that he was making the switch from Irad Ortiz Jr. because “Mike and I have a little luck together.”

Baffert and Smith teamed with Justify to win the Triple Crown last year.

Ortiz rode Improbable to a fifth-place finish in the Kentucky Derby on Saturday and the colt was moved up to fourth following Maximum Security’s disqualification for interference.

In other horse racing news:

■ Maryland’s horse racing authority has moved to dismiss a lawsuit filed by the city of Baltimore that seeks to condemn and confiscate the Preakness Stakes, Pimlico Race Course and other elements of the industry.

The Maryland Jockey Club, which runs the historic track, on Wednesday filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit, which says the Stronach Group, a Canada-based company that owns Pimlico and Laurel Park, is planning to move the Preakness against Maryland law.

Maryland Jockey Club attorney Alan Rifkin says state law prevents Baltimore from confiscating privately held assets, including the Woodlawn Vase given to the Preakness winner.

The Stronach Group believes the Preakness would be better suited to be held at Laurel if 149-year-old Pimlico cannot be overhauled. The dilapidated condition of Pimlico led to nearly 6,700 grandstand seats being closed for the May 18 Preakness because engineers determined they’re not safe.

Antetokounmpo propels Bucks into East finals

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Milwaukee Bucks found another gear after their first loss of the playoffs.

Kyrie Irving and the Boston Celtics just couldn’t keep up.

Antetokounmpo had 20 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, and the Bucks routed the Celtics 116-91 on Wednesday night to advance to the Eastern Conference finals.

After sweeping Detroit in the first round, top-seeded Milwaukee struggled in Game 1 against Boston and lost 112-90 in one of its worst offensive performances of the season. But Antetokounmpo led the way as the Bucks responded with four straight wins by a combined 65

points.

“I think our mindset changed,” Antetokounmpo said. “In the first game, we weren’t focused enough. We weren’t ourselves. The next four games, we came out with a different approach, a different mindset.”

The Bucks used a balanced attack to close out the Celtics in Game 5, placing seven players in double figures. Khris Middleton had 19 points and eight rebounds, and Eric Bledsoe finished with 18 points.

Next up for the Bucks is the winner of the Philadelphia-Toronto series. The Raptors are up 3-2 heading into Game 6 on Thursday night.

It’s the first Eastern Conference finals for Milwaukee since 2001.

Warriors bounce back, win Game 5

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Golden State Warriors have won plenty of games on the postseason stage without their biggest stars.

This time, Kevin Durant went down, and Klay Thompson and company found a way when the Warriors desperately needed it.

Thompson scored 27 points, including a key layup with 4.1 seconds left, and Golden State overcame Durant’s calf injury to beat the Houston Rockets 104-99 on Wednesday night for a 3-2 lead in the Western Conference semifinals.

“Honestly it was a little deflating for a second,” Stephen Curry said, “and then we rallied.”

Durant was scheduled for an

MRI exam Thursday after he strained his right calf late in the third quarter. He has been ruled out for Friday’s Game 6.

“We’ll have to claw our way to one more win,” Curry said.

Durant limped to the locker room after landing awkwardly following a baseline jumper. The two-time reigning NBA Finals MVP finished with 22 points, five rebounds and four assists.

“They’ve been here so many times, have been through these battles for the last five years,” Golden State coach Steve Kerr said. “They’ve got a lot of guts. They just pulled together and got it done. There’s no speech necessary. They knew what they had to do.”

James Harden scored 31 points for the Rockets.

2 convicted in college corruption trial

Associated Press

NEW YORK — An aspiring sports business manager and an amateur basketball coach were convicted of bribery conspiracy Wednesday at a trial that showed top college coaches were paid off to steer NBA-bound athletes to favored handlers.

The verdict capped the two-week trial of Christian Dawkins and youth basketball coach Merl Code in a case that forced the NCAA to confront corruption affecting basketball players at some of its elite programs.

Dawkins, 26, of Atlanta, and Code, 45, of Greer, S.C., were convicted on a conspiracy count, but acquitted of some other charges. Dawkins was also convicted of bribery.

Leaving court, Dawkins said he could have chosen to cooperate with prosecutors and identify coaches he knew were willing to funnel money to top athletes.

"I could have," he said. "Anybody who's paying players to me is a good guy. I think the whole case is B.S. so I wouldn't have cooperated."

The verdict came just days after Dawkins took the witness stand and denied bribing anyone. He testified that an informant and undercover FBI agents, posing as investors in his fledgling management company, had tried to get him to pay bribes, but he refused.

In closing arguments, a prosecutor said Dawkins lied to jurors.

Outside Manhattan federal court, Code said: "There was no evidence at any point in the trial that I bribed anybody."

The prosecution revealed how financial advisers and business managers allegedly paid tens of thousands of dollars to assistant college coaches and athletes' families to steer highly regarded high school players to big-program colleges, sometimes with the help

of apparel makers. The bribes also secured the allegiance of players to certain financial advisers, managers and even a tailor.

During the trial, universities were portrayed by prosecutors as victims of greedy financial advisers and coaches.

Steven Haney, a lawyer for Dawkins, said the acquittal of Dawkins and Code on some charges showed jurors "found that the universities were not victims."

"That spoke loudly from this verdict," Haney said.

He added: "The real crime is (unpaid) student athletes making universities millions of dollars."

Haney spoke with pride of Dawkins. "He could have brought the whole world of college athletics to its knees and he chose not to," the lawyer said. "He was asked repeatedly by the government to cooperate. He said, 'I'm not going to give you the names of 15 to 20

coaches.' Today he leaves this courthouse winning four of six (counts)."

Prosecutors say video and audio evidence was overwhelming that Dawkins and Code eagerly embraced the scheme in 2016 and 2017. Code was a Clemson point guard in the 1990s who later developed college basketball contacts working for Nike and Adidas.

Four former assistant basketball coaches pleaded guilty to bribery conspiracy without a trial and await sentencing.

They include Emanuel "Book" Richardson, who was an assistant at Arizona when he was arrested in 2017, Chuck Person, who was an assistant at Auburn University, USC assistant coach Tony Bland and assistant coach Lamont Evans at Oklahoma State. Previously, Evans had coached at South Carolina.

Also, additional schools emerged at the trial as possible targets of the conspiracy.

Sharks top Avs, advance to Western Conference finals

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Ever since Joe Pavelski went down with a gruesome head injury in the first round of the playoffs, the mantra for the San Jose Sharks has been to stay alive in the postseason long enough for their captain to come back to the ice.

What a return Pavelski made to send the Sharks into the Western Conference finals.

Pavelski scored one goal and assisted on another in the first period Wednesday night to lead San Jose to a 3-2 victory over the Colorado Avalanche and a date in the conference finals against St. Louis.

Joonas Donskoi ended a 39-game goal drought, Martin Jones made 14 of his 27 saves in the third period and the Sharks capitalized on a favorable replay review that negated a potential game-tying goal by Colorado in the second period.

Mikko Rantanen and Tyson Jost scored for the Avalanche, who were trying to make their first conference final since 2002. Philipp Grubauer made 24 saves.

"You know, you're almost speechless," coach Peter DeBoer said. "Many people in the building, a lot of them saw (Pavelski's) injury. I don't think you saw the recovery and what he went through and how questionable it was whether he would even be able to be out there tonight. It really was a coin toss, and he obviously made the ultimate decision. What an impact. What do you say? He's a special player, a special guy."

Pavelski went down in Game 7 of the first round against Vegas when his helmet slammed to the ice, causing a concussion and a cut to his head that needed eight staples to close.

The injury was severe enough that Pavelski's team-

mates doubted he'd be able to make it back this round. But he did everything he could to get back on the ice, then traveled with the team to Denver for Game 6 and knew he'd be back as soon as Gabriel Landeskog's overtime winner forced the seventh game.

"To be honest after they scored in Game 6, it was kind of like a switch went on," he said. "We've been working and feeling good. That's when I figured it was on. Came back and got some things checked out. Wake up this morning, feel good, skated a little bit, do a couple of morning skate drills we usually do and get ready."

Now after surviving what they did the first two rounds, the Sharks are positioned to deliver the long-awaited title that they have never been able to seize.

San Jose fell behind 3-1 in the first-round series to Vegas be-

fore rallying for three straight wins in the greatest comeback in franchise history. The Sharks needed a 58-save performance from Martin Jones and a short-handed goal from Tomas Hertl to win Game 6 in Las Vegas and then the improbable comeback in Game 7 after Pavelski got hurt.

His injury led to a major penalty that the NHL later acknowledged shouldn't have been called. But that allowed the Sharks to score four power-play goals to erase a 3-0 deficit in the third period. San Jose allowed the tying goal before winning it in OT on a goal by fourth-liner Barclay Goodrow.

The Sharks didn't face nearly that type of adversity in the second round against the Avalanche, when they won all the odd-numbered games. But they managed to do it without their captain and leading goal scorer in the first six games.