

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Navy offers expedited transfers to victims

BY SCOTT WYLAND

*Stars and Stripes*

Sailors who are victims of sexual harassment, stalking or humiliations such as having lewd images posted publicly can request a special transfer away from those accused of the crimes, according to a recent change in Navy policy.

The previous policy generally allowed only sexual assault survivors to request what's known as an expedited transfer that reassigned them temporarily to a different team or unit or granted them an early permanent change of station.

Now, the Navy has expanded the qualifying list for expedited transfers, according to an administrative memo issued Tuesday. These include stalking, other sexual misconduct and wrongful broadcast or distribution of intimate images, which typically means posting the images on social media without the person's consent.

This expanded list goes beyond the practice of other services, whose expedited leave policies are still focused on sexual

assault cases.

The transfers are intended to move victims who have filed formal complaints away from settings where they are experiencing ostracism, retaliation or intimidation, or where they are in close contact with the accused.

The revised policy coincides with a recent Defense Department report on the number of sexual assaults increasing across all services, but Navy officials insist those findings did not prompt the changes.

"While the policy expansion for expedited transfers ties into [the] Navy's overall efforts ... these policy changes are not a direct response to recent sexual assault reports," said Lt. j.g. Stuart Phillips, spokesman for the Navy's chief of personnel. "These changes have been planned and staffed for some time."

Some military leaders have expressed outrage at the rise in the numbers of sexual assaults and said the services must do more to tackle it.

"This increase is absolutely unaccept-

able," said Rear Adm. Ann Burkhardt, director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, when the report was released.

In 2018, 323 sailors requested expedited transfers, up from 305 in 2017, according to data compiled by the Navy.

The policy changes will offer victims and their commanding officers better guidance on these transfers, Phillips said.

The Navy is clarifying procedures, revising forms that applicants fill out and giving commanders a comprehensive checklist to help them assess the requests, he said.

Sailors can request safety transfers if they feel they or their families are in danger after witnessing or suffering a violent crime or being threatened.

Other services have their own versions of expedited transfers that follow similar procedures as the Navy's in sexual assault cases, such as a victim having to file a formal complaint that opens an investigation, and the unit commander deciding on whether to grant the transfer.

## US, allies testing missile defense in sea battle drills

BY JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. and allied warships began live-fire drills off the coast of Scotland on Friday as part of an exercise designed to test NATO's ability to coordinate missile defense during a fight at sea.

NATO's Formidable Shield 2019 exercise is underway with more than 3,000 troops taking part in the drills that are focused on showcasing allied power.

The exercise "demonstrates the United States and our allied maritime partners' high-end warfighting capability in integrated air and missile defense," said Vice Adm. Lisa M. Franchetti, commander of the U.S. Navy's 6th Fleet and

Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO. "This significant investment of resources, time and personnel ensures we are ready to deploy and operate anywhere, anytime to defend the alliance and deter aggression."

The drills, which run until May 19, come at a time of angst in Europe in connection with concerns that Russia's development of a new missile system — the SSC-8 — poses a new kind of threat.

"It reduces warning times to minutes, lowering the threshold for nuclear conflict, and it can reach European capitals," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg recently said.

The U.S. and NATO say the Russian system violates the Cold War-era Intermediate-

Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which the Trump administration warned it will be forced to abandon later this summer if Moscow doesn't come back into compliance.

Meanwhile, Formidable Shield is focused on improving allied defenses against a range of missile threats as well as conducting drone intercepts.

Thirteen ships and more than 10 aircraft are taking part, with contributions from Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom and the U.S. The U.S. destroyers USS Carney and USS Roosevelt are taking part along with the cargo vessel USNS Medgar Evers.

The launch of Formidable Shield comes as allies begin a

series of major military exercises across Europe.

On Friday, U.S. Army Europe launched Immediate Response, which takes place in Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia and involves about 6,500 troops from 15 countries. The exercise is focused on ground forces coordination efforts to deter aggression in the Balkan region, which is an area of growing concern for U.S. commanders.

Meanwhile, NATO on Thursday kicked off its Crisis Management Exercise, which has been conducted 22 times since 1992. The drill tests decision-making procedures in the event of a major crisis that triggers NATO's Article 5 provision, in which allies respond to an attack on a member state.

# GAO: F-35's first crash caused by defect

Bloomberg News

The crash of a U.S. Marine Corps F-35 that temporarily grounded the entire fleet of next-generation jets in 2018 was caused by a manufacturing defect in a fuel tube made by a United Technologies subcontractor, according to congressional investigators.

The defect "caused an engine fuel tube to rupture during flight, resulting in a loss of power to the engine," the Government Accountability Office said last week in a report on major weapons systems that referred to the September crash

in South Carolina. The Pentagon told the watchdog that it identified 117 aircraft — about 40% of the worldwide F-35 fleet at the time — with the same type of fuel tubes that had to be replaced.

The disclosure was the first official information about the crash since the Pentagon program office in late October issued a status statement while the Marine Corps was still conducting its investigation. United Technologies Corp.'s Pratt & Whitney unit "is fully responsible" for "the propulsion system and has the lead in working" the failure analyses,

according to the statement at the time.

Marine Corps spokesman Capt. Chris Harrison said in a statement that the crash probe is continuing and that the results will be released once complete. The Corps has replaced all of the relevant fuel supply tubes and "we continue to strive each and every day to ensure the safety and readiness of our aircraft," he added.

The Sept. 28 crash of the F-35B near Beaufort, S.C., was the first in the 2-decade-old program's often rocky history of delays, cost increases and technical glitches. Although the

pilot safely ejected, the incident prompted concerns about the aircraft, which is being built by and sold to an international consortium of U.S. allies, including the U.K., Italy, Australia and Turkey.

The Pentagon program office last year said "more than 1,500 suppliers are on the F-35 program and this is an isolated incident which is quickly being addressed and fixed. Safety is our primary goal."

The defective part identified in the report provides operating pressure to the engine and fuel to the engine combustor.

## Soldier Nicholas Eslinger's medal for valor in Iraq upgraded

BY CHAD GARLAND

*Stars and Stripes*

Nicholas Eslinger was moving toward the grenade before it even hit the ground and rolled toward his dismounted patrol, which was waiting outside an Iraqi house in Samarra province.

The then-second lieutenant jumped onto the explosive device and braced for the blast. But it didn't blow up, so he tossed it back.

No sooner had he shouted, "Grenade!" than it went off, but no one was hurt.

His quick action that night in October

2008 saved six soldiers from potential injury or death, and he received a Silver Star Medal in 2009. This month, he received an upgraded award — a Distinguished Service Cross, the Army's second-highest award for combat valor.

Gen. Stephen Townsend, commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, presented the medal to Eslinger, now a major, at a ceremony last week at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

Gen. Mark Milley, chief of staff of the Army, had signed orders officially upgrading it in February.

Eslinger has long felt that even the Sil-

ver Star was more recognition than his actions deserved, telling Stars and Stripes in 2009 that he was just doing what any other leader would do when faced with the same situation.

He saw a hand come up over a garden wall with a projectile in it and he knew it was a grenade so he acted without any forethought, he said at the time.

"It was complete adrenaline and focus on covering that thing so that if it went off, it wasn't going to hit my [radio telephone operator] or my medic or my [squad automatic weapon] gunner," he said.

## Army officer receives 2nd Distinguished Service Cross

*The Fayetteville (N.C.) Observer*

In March 2010, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jason W. Myers rushed into enemy fire to rescue two Afghan police officers.

A little more than a year later, in November of 2011, Myers repeatedly went into a building under enemy attack, surrounded by grenade blasts, to help rescue 15 hostages in Afghanistan.

About 3:15 p.m. on Nov. 10, 2011, Myers' unit noticed insurgent weapon fire in a civilian

compound distribution center, a Special Forces major said at a ceremony Wednesday at which Myers was presented with his second Distinguished Service Cross in the John F. Kennedy auditorium at Fort Bragg, N.C.

The Distinguished Service Cross is the nation's second-highest military award for valor.

In an interview after Wednesday's ceremony, Myers said his team initially wasn't sure if the enemy fire was a baited ambush to draw the troops out.

After realizing the attack was focused on the district center, Myers' team notified partner forces — the Afghan uniformed police, a special tactics team and the Afghan National Army Commando Corps, the major said.

Several grenade explosions later and after entering buildings at the compound, Myers' commanders learned about the hostages from a wounded Afghan district chief of police, who said a couple of insurgents were wearing suicide vests, the

major said.

After nine hostages were rescued and Myers received medical attention, he returned to the district center compound to provide a ladder to help rescue the remaining government officials, the major said.

Myers received his first Distinguished Service Cross in 2012 for his role in rescuing the two Afghan police officers while under enemy fire on March 27, 2010.

# The trauma of DOD-chartered plane crash

*The (Jacksonville) Florida Times-Union*

The last time Katherine Helms flew home, she had gone into premature labor. She was having contractions. She had to be medevaced off Cuba.

That trip had a happy ending. Her pregnancy went to full term. Her first child, Wyatt, was born healthy in her hometown of Dublin, Ga. The Helms family returned to Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, where she's an assistant to the base commander and her husband does security work.

Three months later, on May 3, they are flying back home to visit family, this time on a Boeing 737-800. This time with the 27-year-old mother sitting in a window seat near the back of the plane, their baby on her lap, her husband, Donald, next to them.

For the passengers, Miami Air Flight 293 had been trouble from the start. Chartered by the U.S. Department of Defense, a plane flies each Friday from Cuba to Jacksonville. A mix of military members and civilians are on this Friday flight, a flight delayed by more than four hours, a flight without air conditioning, a flight dodging storms.

Farther up the plane, excessive heat lulls Tyler Hall, 31, to sleep in Row 10. Sweat pools on his forehead and is dripping down his face. He wakes; his clothes are damp.

Riding in a plane with no air conditioning is worse than Hall expected when he and 135 other passengers, along with the seven crew members, boarded the Boeing 737 in Guantanamo Bay for a flight to Naval Air Station Jacksonville, the first of many legs to get Hall and his father, Randy, home to Amarillo, Texas. The Halls were in Cuba preparing to bid to renovate a playground on the base.

Over in an exit row, Randy Hall, 61, sits by the window, cajoling the two strangers next to him into a game of pretend fishing. What's the point of complaining, he tells them. "If we were on a boat fishing and

it's 90 degrees, this wouldn't be a problem."

Chris La Rue, 32, sits in the aisle seat of Hall's row. He's a civilian employee who spent a week in Guantanamo meeting with the public works department. For him, Jacksonville is the final destination.

It's past 9 p.m. when the plane finally begins its descent to the Westside of Jacksonville.

In the cockpit, the pilots of Flight 293 talk to air traffic control about the weather — lightning and heavy rain to the east and west of the airfield — and raise the possibility of switching runways.

## Runway switch

The air traffic controller says: "Biscayne 2-9-3, just talked to Navy Jax Tower. He said both runways look pretty bad."

He later suggests to the pilots switching to Runway 10.

A strong tail wind pushes the jet to a speed of about 200 mph. It touches down on the east-west runway, bouncing hard, tilting, swerving, zipping past buildings way too fast.

Tyler Hall braces himself.

Katherine Helms folds herself around her baby as best she can.

The Boeing hits a seawall made of loose rocks. One passenger said it sounded like an explosion. Passengers fly forward, some hitting the seats in front of them. They slam back.

Overhead bins open. Belongings fly through the air. Oxygen masks drop. Tyler Hall feels water — like a bucket full — has been dumped on him.

Helms looks out the window and turns to her husband. "Baby, we're in the water."

It's dark and wet.

Wyatt, the plane's youngest passenger, cries in a way his parents have never heard. Is he scared? Is he in pain? Katherine Helms sees a knot forming on the left side of his head.

Someone shouts, "Jet fuel!"

There's a smell in the air and momentary panic. People worry if the wetness they feel is jet fuel. It's water.

"Get your life vests," Tyler

Hall hears. People ask if a medic is on board.

Tyler Hall's dad is unconscious.

"Clear the aisle. Coming through," someone shouts.

A physician's assistant hunches over Randy Hall, urging him to sit still as he wakes so pressure can be applied to the slice down his face. No time for that, Randy Hall thinks.

"I've got to open this door," he says. He's a passenger in an exit row. He has a job to do. And so he opens the door. Adrenaline, he says, is an amazing thing. He crawls through the opening and steps out onto the right wing of the plane.

Outside is a rush of wind, lightning and driving rain. Blood pools at Randy Hall's feet as he balances on the wing, reaching through the small door, helping others out.

One by one, they line the plane's wing. Randy Hall doesn't know if they are in 100 feet of water or 4 feet. He doesn't know if the plane is stable or if it's going to sink.

Tyler Hall looks across the water and sees about a half-dozen emergency vehicles near the runway.

## Rescuers respond

A rescue worker swims toward the wing. The scent of jet fuel is in the air.

Remarkably, there is no rush of madness to get on board the life rafts. Perhaps that is because so many of those on the plane are military or former military. Many opt to stay on the wing, illuminated by flashes of lightning.

Katherine Helms boards a raft with Wyatt. The paddles are tucked on the outside. Hands fumble trying to find them. They can't. So the escaping passengers reach into the water and use their hands.

They aren't making progress, so Helms hands Wyatt to someone she knows and hops overboard, tugging the life raft toward the shore now lined with firemen. Some grab the raft.

Dozens of first responders from the Navy, the city's fire

and sheriff's offices and state agencies are quickly on the scene. Some jump in the river, fighting the current as they swim toward the passengers.

The 136 passengers are taken to a hangar at the base. Names are called out. Injuries assessed. A stranger asks Randy Hall if he has contacted family back home.

He hasn't. The stranger hands him his phone. Go ahead, he says.

Tyler Hall sees the pilot. He appears rattled.

Hall sees him grab a phone and hears him say he can retire in peace. Nobody was severely injured. Nobody died.

Tyler Hall catches a ride in an ambulance with his father and another man. They head to St. Vincent's Medical Center, where rooms have been cleared.

The hospital is prepared for the worst. Staff responds quickly.

Randy Hall needs nine stitches. He and his son leave wearing St. Vincent's scrubs to replace their wet clothes.

All told, 22 people are sent to seven Jacksonville-area hospitals for treatment.

Baby Wyatt goes to two of them. At Orange Park Medical Center, a CT scan shows bleeding on his brain. Wyatt is transferred to Wolfson Children's Hospital in downtown Jacksonville, where he is kept overnight for observation.

By 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, he is OK to leave. Doctors tell his parents to watch for signs of swelling, seizures or abnormal behavior.

La Rue returns home to Jacksonville's Southside.

Tyler and Randy Hall hop in a rental car and head to Jacksonville International Airport for an early morning flight to Dallas.

About an hour into the flight to Dallas-Fort Worth, the sky is a brilliant pallet of orange and pink.

Tears rush over Randy Hall's eyes.

"The sunrise Saturday morning was the most beautiful one I have ever seen," Hall says.

# Seized N. Korean cargo ship arrives in American Samoa

Associated Press

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa — A North Korean cargo ship seized by the U.S. because of suspicion it was used to violate international sanctions arrived Saturday at the capital of this American territory, where it will undergo inspections.

The Wise Honest was slowly towed to the port of Pago Pago and docked at the main docking section of the port.

The trip from Indonesia took about three weeks. American Samoa in the South Pacific was chosen because of “its central strategic location,” U.S. Coast Guard public affairs officer Amanda Wyrick said.

“We also have a good strong relationship and partnership with the American Samoan government,” Wyrick said.

“With that being said, we also already have the resources that are able to ensure the security of the vessel but most importantly the Port of Pago Pago.”

The ship was detained in April 2018 as it traveled toward Indonesia. Justice Department officials announced Thursday that the U.S. had seized the ship.

Asked how long the ship will be in the territory, Wyrick said the U.S. Department of Justice is “leading the investigation so they will be conducting that. Upon the conclusion of the investigation, the ship will be moved.”

The next destination is unknown, she said.

Officials are also making sure the port is protected, she said.

“We, especially in the Coast

Guard, understand the importance of the port. It’s a lifeline in getting goods to the islands,” Wyrick said.

“So we want to make sure that we’re doing everything we can to make sure that there’s absolutely no disruption to the flow of commerce coming in and out.”

The U.S. government dispatched an inspection team to the ship before it docked in Pago Pago, she said.

Wyrick noted there was an inspection conducted before leaving Indonesia and, because the ship has been at sea for three weeks, “it’s subject to the elements.”

“The inspection of the ship before entering the harbor is to make sure the structure integrity of the boat is still intact.

## US awaits China’s retaliation over trade tariffs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is awaiting retaliation from China over increased tariffs after talks in Washington ended without a deal on trade, the president’s chief economic adviser said Sunday.

“The expected countermeasures have not yet materialized. We may know more today or even this evening or tomorrow,” Larry Kudlow told “Fox News Sunday.”

Kudlow also said President Donald Trump’s plan to raise U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods across the board could take months to take effect.

“Call it a couple of months. Call it three months. I don’t know. That will take some time and then, of course, the president’s going to have to make the final decision on that,” Kudlow said.

The United States began raising tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese imports from 10% to 25% on Friday after American officials accused Beijing of backtracking on commitments made in earlier rounds of negotiations.

Talks in Washington broke off on Friday without a deal on trade, but both sides have indicated that future talks are likely.

“I think that China felt they were being beaten so badly in the recent negotiation that they may as well wait around for the next election, 2020, to see if they could get lucky & have a Democrat win,” Trump tweeted Saturday.

Beijing retaliated for previous tariff increases by raising duties on \$110 billion of American imports. And officials have targeted American companies operating in China by slowing customs clearance and stepping up regulatory scrutiny.

## Group raised over \$20M to ‘build the wall’. Now the donors want answers.

The Washington Post

A December fundraising campaign brought in more than \$20 million over the course of a few weeks, its thousands of donors united by a common goal: the construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, oft-promised by President Donald Trump.

Some four months later, a contingent of those supporters is ready to see what their money has built.

The now-famous border wall GoFundMe was conceived by Purple Heart recipient Brian Kolfage, who wrote at the time he was upset by “too many illegals ... taking advantage of the United States taxpayers,” and the “political games from both parties” when it came to border security. Kolfage, a triple amputee, pressed onward despite falling short of his \$1 billion goal — launching a nonprofit to build portions of the wall on

private land for a “fraction of what it costs the government.”

While the majority of donors continue to believe in Kolfage’s efforts, the nonprofit’s clandestine operations and assurances of progress are insufficient for others. Some have taken to social media, seeking photos, videos — anything — for evidence they aren’t being misled.

“I am very disappointed in you Brian Kolfage, where are the progress photographs?” one woman posted to the We Build The Wall Facebook page.

“Quit talking about it and do it,” another commented.

“I’ve been away for FIVE months,” one person tweeted in April. “When’s the groundbreaking?”

While the nonprofit has floated various groundbreaking dates in the past, it’s not exactly clear when, or if, construction will begin.

“We should be turning dirt

on this thing by May 1, June 1 at the latest, according to our experts,” Kolfage told Politico in February. In a March 21 interview with American Family Radio, however, the veteran asserted they were going to “start breaking ground” in April.

In the interview, Kolfage said his nonprofit had identified eight locations to build along the border but failed to name them, stating that his efforts could be thwarted by liberals if they were revealed.

Some critics noted Kolfage was accused of shady behavior in the past, including allegations of misusing funds he raised.

As of Friday night, the group said they’ll be breaking ground “shortly.”

In a separate comment, one woman indicated she’d heard enough.

“Saying it doesn’t get it done,” she wrote late Friday. “Do it.”

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Streptomyces griseus named state microbe

**NJ** TRENTON — A microorganism that played a role in treating tuberculosis is now officially recognized as the state microbe.

Gov. Phil Murphy signed a bill Friday giving the distinction to *Streptomyces griseus*.

The microbe was discovered in New Jersey soil in 1916.

In 1943, researchers from Rutgers University used the microbe to create the antibiotic streptomycin, and tuberculosis death rates in the U.S. plummeted.

Rutgers researcher Selman Waksman was awarded the 1952 Nobel Prize for Medicine for discovering the microbe and creating the antibiotic.

## Authorities record 70 stolen cars in 2 days

**WA** SEATTLE — Authorities said 70 cars were stolen over two days in three counties in northwestern Washington state.

KOMO-TV reported Thursday that thieves stole 44 cars in King County, 16 in Pierce County and 10 in Snohomish County during the two-day period.

## Reporter, 12, speaks at commencement

**WV** MORGANTOWN — A 12-year-old reporter who runs a newspaper in Pennsylvania delivered the commencement address at West Virginia University's Reed College of Media.

Hilde Kate Lysiak has run the Orange Street News since 2014 in Selinsgrove, 150 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

She first drew national attention in 2016 when she wrote

about a suspected murder in Selinsgrove and ended up having to defend herself after some locals lashed out about a young girl covering violent crimes.

On Friday, Hilde joked that she was sure some in the crowd were wondering why the university couldn't "afford a full grown human" to give the speech. She went on to share lessons she's learned and told graduates to "stay laser focused on the truth."

## Neil Armstrong-owned items sell at auction

**TX** DALLAS — Pieces from the Wright brothers' 1903 Flyer that Neil Armstrong took with him to the moon have sold for about \$890,000 at an auction of memorabilia that belonged to the astronaut.

They were among items Heritage Auctions offered Thursday that were owned by Armstrong, the first human to set foot on the moon. The largest American flag flown on the Apollo 11 lunar module sold for \$93,750.

Heritage is holding a series of auctions featuring items belonging to Armstrong, who died in 2012. Thursday's auction brought in more than \$2.3 million. The next auction will be in July.

## Museum adding gun to WWII-era ship

**MI** MUSKEGON — A museum housed on a World War II-era warship in western Michigan is bringing a massive anti-aircraft gun aboard.

The USS LST 393 Veterans Museum in Muskegon is adding an 18,000-pound anti-aircraft cannon to its landing ship tank this summer.

The Bofors twin-barreled

cannon that was built to take down airplanes is currently being restored, the Muskegon Chronicle reported. The museum aims to have the gun lifted onto the ship ahead of its celebration of the 75th anniversary of D-Day on June 1-2.

The museum received the gun as a donation from a park district in Oak Forest, Ill., in 2018.

The warship was part of the Allied Forces' D-Day invasion in Normandy, France.

## Sheriff: Stray voltage may have killed cows

**WI** ALMENA — Authorities in western Wisconsin are investigating whether stray electrical voltage contributed to the deaths of about two dozen cows on a farm near Almena.

Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald said in a news release that the cows died over the winter. He said all other animals on the farm were in good health and were moved to another location until the stray voltage issue "can be looked into and corrected."

Fitzgerald cited brutal winter conditions and illness as other factors in the deaths. The sheriff said there appear to be no violations and the owners of the cows are cooperating with authorities.

## Glacier park officials to capture 10 grizzlies

**MT** KALISPELL — Glacier National Park officials plan to capture and mark 10 female grizzly bears as part of an ongoing effort to monitor the population in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem.

The Daily Inter Lake reported park officials announced Wednesday that the trapping

efforts will continue through October at various spots in the Montana park.

The park estimates that 300 grizzly bears live in the park.

The park said visitors are prohibited from entering the closed bait stations and trap sites, which will be marked by warning signs.

Yellowstone National Park on May 5 announced similar plans to bait and trap grizzly bears through July.

## Police: Pot cookies seized from student

**MI** CARO — Cookies containing marijuana were seized from a 16-year-old boy at Tuscola Technology Center.

The Tuscola County Sheriff's Office said Friday that one of the cookies was given Thursday by the boy to a female student who didn't know the cookie was infused with marijuana.

Staff from the school took the cookies from the boy.

## Dog runs away to visit day care pals

**MO** ST. ANN — Sometimes, a guy just wants to hang out with his buddies.

Such was apparently the case with Hugo, a dog who ran away from home earlier this month in north St. Louis County and went straight to his doggy day care.

KTVI-TV reported that Hugo is often boarded at Happy Tails Pet Hotel and Playland in St. Ann. Surveillance video provided to KTVI shows Hugo sprinting through the front door into the business and nosing up to another dog after making the trek from home, which was more than a mile.

From wire reports

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# Durant uncertain for conference finals

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Golden State Warriors still have plenty of work to do if they hope to win their third straight championship.

But after fending off the Houston Rockets on Friday night without leading play-off scorer Kevin Durant to advance to the Western Conference finals, they did take a moment to celebrate the accomplishment.

"It shows you how much respect we have for Houston," coach Steve Kerr said. "We just finished the conference semifinals series. We're only halfway home to where we want to be. And yet the celebration in there felt like a much bigger occasion and that's because of the challenge that this team put before us."

Stephen Curry scored all of his 33 points in the second half to lead the Warriors to a 118-113 win.

Klay Thompson added 27 points to help two-time defending champion Golden State reach the conference finals for a franchise-record fifth straight year and eliminate Houston for the fourth time in five seasons. The Warriors did it with Durant sidelined by a calf injury sustained in the second half of their Game 5 victory.

"We're all very happy, but now we've got to get home and get some rest and prepare for the next round," Kerr said.

There won't be a lot of time to recuper-

ate with the conference finals starting on Tuesday night in Oakland against the winner of the Denver-Portland series. Kerr said he'd give his team the weekend off after most of his key players logged heavy minutes in this series in which each game was decided by six points or fewer.

Though this team has had plenty of big victories as it won the NBA title in three of the last four seasons, Kerr and many of his players acknowledged that this win was pretty special.

"It's one of the most satisfying victories we've had during this run," Kerr said.

Draymond Green said that downing the Rockets again also meant a bit more since Houston has said since losing to the Warriors in last year's conference finals that its main focus was beating them this season.

"This one feels good ... just because it was a team that said for years: 'We're built to beat them,'" Green said. "Then Kevin goes down and no one gives us a chance. You take all those things into account, this one feels amazing. If I said otherwise, I'd be sitting here lying to you."

Curry struggled early, failing to score in the first half for the first time in 102 career playoff games, and had just 10 points through three periods. But he got going in the fourth, scoring 23 points.

There were questions entering the game about how the Warriors would weather

the loss of Durant — and his more than 34 points a game. But they didn't seem to miss a beat, getting 21 from Thompson in the first half before Curry closed it in the fourth.

The team said on Thursday that Durant would be re-evaluated next week and Kerr said after the game that it was too early to know if he could return at some point in the next series.

Though the Warriors were able to get past the Rockets behind big nights from Curry and Thompson, they know that their chances for defending the title are much better with Durant on the floor.

"I'm happy we won so we can get some rest and get him healthy," Thompson said. "Because if we want to get this three-peat, we desperately need him back. He's our best player, so we dearly miss him. We'll hold it down while he's out but it's not the same."

Curry finished out the series strongly, but faced criticism for most of it as he struggled with his shot. He discussed the "noise" surrounding him lately and how he never let it get to him.

"I know what I'm capable of and it's bigger than me," he said. "I don't get caught up in that. I don't need any extra motivation. I don't need to hear who I am as a player. I know that. My confidence never wavers."

## Source: Lakers hire Vogel, assistant Kidd

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A person familiar with the search says the Los Angeles Lakers have hired Frank Vogel as coach and Jason Kidd as an assistant.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Saturday because Vogel's three-year contract has not been finalized. Vogel flew to Los Angeles on Thursday and met with a group that included owner Jeanie Buss and general manager Rob Pelinka.

The 45-year-old Vogel worked for the organization before as an advance scout during the 2005-06 season. He did not coach last season following two years with the Orlando Magic. Vogel went to Orlando following five-plus seasons leading the Indiana Pacers, including trips to the Eastern Conference

finals in 2013 and '14. He has a career record of 304-291.

Kidd interviewed with the Lakers last month. The former star player who was a head coach in Brooklyn and Milwaukee was fired by the Bucks during the 2017-18 season. He has a 183-190 record.

The Lakers have missed the playoffs six consecutive seasons. The drought was expected to end this season but injuries to LeBron James, Lonzo Ball and Brandon Ingram, as well as internal discord, resulted in a 37-45 record.

It's an interesting pairing in many ways, including how Vogel was fired by Indiana in 2016 and Orlando in 2018 — and how he simply could never get past James in the playoffs.

The Pacers thought they had a title-contender in 2012, 2013 and 2014, and James and the

Miami Heat eliminated them in all three of those postseasons. Vogel won 58 percent of his games in parts of six seasons with Indiana, but the lasting image of his tenure there is the fact that those clubs were always ousted by Miami.

Now, Vogel and James will be on the same side, both looking for a resurgence. This season was James' first without a playoff appearance since 2005 and ended his streak of eight consecutive trips to the NBA Finals. Vogel is coming off a 54-110 tenure in two seasons with Orlando, while the Magic were rebuilding.

Vogel's hiring is the first step in what will be — and has already been — an eventful and critical offseason for the Lakers.

The firing of Luke Walton as coach April 12 was not unex-

pected, and came three days after Magic Johnson stunned the team and just about everybody else by giving up his role running the club. Johnson, the former Lakers star, dropped that news in an impromptu news conference held roughly 90 minutes before the regular-season finale.

The Lakers pursued several other candidates, and appeared to be closing in on a deal with Tyronn Lue that would have looked to make sense in many ways. Lue played for the Lakers, was part of two teams that won championships there, and coached James to the 2016 NBA title in Cleveland. But that deal never got to the finish line, and the Lakers' search quickly moved toward Vogel.

The Lakers also considered Monty Williams, who was hired by the Phoenix Suns.

# Timo time: Meier lifts Sharks past Blues

BY JOSH DUBOW

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — On a San Jose Sharks team filled with established stars, 22-year-old Timo Meier can get overlooked at times even though he scored 30 goals in the regular season.

Meier showed in Game 1 of the Western Conference final that he can be a force in his own right, scoring twice and setting up one of Logan Couture's two goals with a hard hit to send the Sharks to a 6-3 victory over the St. Louis Blues on Saturday night.

"He was a bull," Couture said. "When he skates and his strength, he's tough to defend. We're fortunate enough to play with him on our line, and I thought he was really, really good. Good stick, strong on pucks, you saw the talent on the one where he was able to walk around the D-man and finish. He's a really good player and he's coming into his own right now."

Meier's hit on Alex Pietrangelo led to Couture's goal that opened the scoring in the first period and he then scored twice in the second to give the Sharks a comfortable lead and their third straight Game 1 win this postseason.

Couture added an empty-net goal to give him an NHL-leading 11 in the postseason. Joe Pavelski and Kevin Labanc also scored for San Jose and Martin Jones made 28 saves.

"We have so many great guys on this team, so many players that are just unbelievable hockey players," Meier said. "It's fun to be able to play at this time of the year, and obviously have success, that's what I'm playing for. To win a Stanley Cup."

Game 2 is Monday night at the Shark Tank.

Joel Edmundson, Ryan O'Reilly and Tyler Bozak scored for the Blues, but the team gave little help to rookie goalie Jordan Binnington to get off to a rough start in

the conference final. Binnington made 19 saves but was left exposed by his defense on numerous occasions.

"There were a few too many mistakes out there," Edmundson said. "Whenever there was, they capitalized on them. They really capitalized on every chance they got. That was the biggest difference of tonight's game."

This is a matchup between two franchises seeking their first championships after years of playoff disappointments. They endured tough roads to get here with the Sharks needing to win a pair of seven-game series and the Blues needing a double-overtime win in Game 7 against Dallas.

The teams traded goals midway through the second period with Labanc converting after a turnover by Edmundson and O'Reilly answering 1:17 later with a nifty move to get around Jones and tuck a rebound into the open net.

## Keselowski dedicates win in Kansas to late mentor

BY DAVE SKRETTA

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Brad Keselowski had planned to head to St. Louis after the NASCAR Cup Series race at Kansas Speedway to visit Mike Mittler, a longtime Truck Series owner who helped him early in his career and had been battling cancer the past couple years.

But after Mittler died Friday night at the age of 67, Keselowski headed to Victory Lane instead, capturing the checkered flag Saturday night and dedicating the win to his friend and mentor.

"He helped a lot of guys in their career. Just a huge loss for the NASCAR community," said Keselowski, who held off Alex Bowman and a charging field in overtime for his third win this season.

"One of those unsung heroes," Keselowski added. "Gave his whole life to this sport."

Mittler would have liked the hardscrabble way Keselowski won at Kansas.

He dealt with balance problems early in the race, never re-

ally contended with the faster cars of Kevin Harvick and Kyle Busch through the first couple of stages, yet managed to get everything sorted out in time to give Team Penske a satisfying Saturday sweep.

Simon Pagenaud won a wet and wild IndyCar Grand Prix in Indianapolis earlier in the day.

Bowman finished second for the third straight week, while Erik Jones triggered some bad blood with Kansas native Clint Bowyer by making an aggressive move that allowed him to hold onto third.

"I think it was just racing," Jones said with a shrug. "We were racing hard. This pack really leads to a lot of protecting your position. I'm not going to give up three or four spots."

Elliott dominated long stretches of the race before losing the lead to Ricky Stenhouse Jr. with 22 laps to go. But after his car failed inspection twice and Elliott had to start at the back, he still managed to work his way to the front for his third consecutive top-five finish.

## Pagenaud claims his third Indianapolis Grand Prix

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Simon Pagenaud ended his victory drought Saturday with a splashy move — and a rooster tail celebration.

He completed a daring three-turn pass on the second-to-last lap and sped away from Scott Dixon for his third IndyCar Grand Prix victory and first series win since the 2017 season finale at Sonoma. Pagenaud beat five-time series champion Scott Dixon by 2.0469 seconds.

"I always look for rain because it's fun driving in the rain," he said. "It's a fun exercise. On a dry track, it's very much repetitive. The wet is what I used to grow up on racing. It's just a lot of fun in the rain."

While other drivers struggled with tire wear on the wet road course, Pagenaud got even more aggressive — a trick he learned driving in France.

Pagenaud said he experimented with the braking, threw in some fakes and took advantage of other drivers' second thoughts.

The result: He erased a six-plus second differential with Dixon in the final five laps and there was nothing the five-time series champion could do to stop the hard-charging Pagenaud.

"I knew, with about 10 laps to go, we're going to get hosed here," Dixon said after finishing second for the 43rd time in his IndyCar career. "The front tires, we just didn't have — I don't know if we changed the front wing, or whatever we did, but we just had no front grip."

As easy as Pagenaud made it look in the closing laps, that wasn't the case earlier in the race. He qualified eighth, barely avoided a loose tire from teammate Josef Newgarden following a pit stop and ran out of push-to-pass time while getting by Jack Harvey for second.

Yet somehow, he still managed to give Team Penske its fifth consecutive win on Indianapolis Motor Speedway's 2.439-mile, 14-turn course. Pagenaud and teammate Will Power are the only drivers to win this race, each three times.

## Pujols hits two HRs in Angels' win

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Now in his 19th major league season, Albert Pujols still has the power and bat speed to hit a baseball a very long way.

Pujols homered twice to increase his total to 641, had three RBIs and scored three runs to help the Los Angeles Angels beat the Baltimore Orioles 7-2 Saturday.

Even at age 39, Pujols can carry an offense pretty much by himself.

"Others contributed, but Albert was the key contributor tonight," manager Brad Ausmus said.

Pujols hit a two-run drive in the first inning and a solo shot in the fourth. He also singled and scored in a three-run sixth that made it 6-2.

"One of the best right-handed hitters of all time, right?" Orioles manager Brandon Hyde said. "He is who he is because of what he did today."

Both home runs came against Dylan Bundy (1-5), who has yielded 11 long balls this season after serving up a major league-high 41 last year. Baltimore has allowed 83 homers, 19 more than any other big league team.

"Yeah, he got me twice today. You can't make a mistake to him and I missed my spot on both pitches," Bundy lamented. "Just a little bit on the first one. But the second one, I just lost command there and missed my spot by about a foot-and-a-half."

Pujols has played in 35 games this year and has eight homers and 21 RBIs batting in the middle of the order.

It was the 59th multihomer game of Pujols' career, the first since last July 12 against Seattle.

The slugger is 19 home runs short of matching Willie Mays for fifth on the career list. His 2,003 RBIs rank third behind Alex Rodriguez (2,086) and Hank Aaron (2,297), and his three hits gave him 3,110—tied for 21st with Dave Winfield.

## Roundup

# Contreras blast lifts Cubs in 15th

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Willson Contreras homered in the 15th inning to give the Chicago Cubs a 2-1 victory over the Milwaukee Brewers on Saturday.

Contreras turned on a 1-2 pitch from Burch Smith (0-1), sending a long shot to left field that gave Chicago its 11th win in 13 games. He spun and flipped his bat toward the Cubs' dugout as the ball sailed toward the bleachers, and he was mobbed by teammates when he crossed the plate.

Chicago moved back ahead of the Brewers for the NL Central lead after falling into a virtual tie with Friday's 7-0 loss. Milwaukee had its season-high seven-game win streak snapped.

Tyler Chatwood (2-0) struck out seven in four innings to cap a strong effort by the bullpen after Cole Hamels worked seven solid innings.

Hamels gave up a run and three hits in his fourth straight no-decision. Seven relievers combined to give up one hit the rest of the way.

**Rays 7, Yankees 2:** Willy Adames and Ji-Man Choi hit run-scoring infield singles in the sixth after tempers flared during the top of the inning when reliever Yonny Chirinos hit Luke Voit near the left shoulder.

Yandy Diaz homered twice and drove in four runs for host Tampa Bay, which reopened a 1½-game lead in the AL East over New York.

Voit was hit by Chirinos (5-1) one batter after DJ LeMahieu's tying solo homer. Although there was no on-field incidents after Voit was hit, Yankees starter CC Sabathia went to the top of the Yankees dugout and yelled toward Tampa Bay players.

In his final start last season, Sabathia was ejected at Tropicana Field and given a five-game suspension for hitting Jesus Sucre with a pitch after Rays pitcher Andrew Kittredge threw a pitch behind Austin Romine.

**Red Sox 9, Mariners 5:** Sandy Leon fouled off a bunt attempt, then hit a three-run homer to cap an eight-run third inning that carried surging Boston over visiting Seattle.

Mitch Moreland started the Red Sox comeback from a 4-0 deficit against Felix Hernandez (1-4) with a solo homer. The World Series champions won for the 15th time in 21 games following a 6-13 start.

**Athletics 3, Indians 2:** Matt Olson scored from third base when right fielder Jordan Luplow slipped trying to field Ramon Laureano's short fly in the ninth inning, lifting host Oakland over Cleveland in a wacky, sloppy game.

Olson walked leading off against A.J. Cole (0-1) and scored when Laureano lofted an 0-1 pitch over the head of second baseman Jason Kipnis, who was running toward right field. Luplow appeared in position to make the catch but slipped on the grass and fell as the ball dropped in for a single, allowing Olson to score easily.

**Nationals 5, Dodgers 2:** Gerardo Parra's grand slam in the eighth inning helped Washington rally to a win in Los Angeles.

Parra — signed by the Nationals on Thursday after being designated for assignment by San Francisco last week — hit a fastball from Dylan Floro into the seats in right-center for his second home run of the season. It is the second grand slam of his career, with the other coming on April 22, 2012, against Atlanta.

**Mets 4, Marlins 1:** Jacob deGrom ended a five-start winless streak, allowing a run over seven innings to win for the first time since April 3 and lead host New York over Miami.

Pete Alonso and Michael Conforto hit back-to-back homers in a three-run sixth that included an RBI single by deGrom, his second hit of the night. DeGrom (3-4) allowed five hits and one walk while striking out eight.

**Phillies 7, Royals 0:** Zach Eflin became the majors' first pitcher with two complete games this season, lifting Philadelphia to a win in Kansas City.

Eflin (5-3) finished his second career shutout, the other coming July 22, 2016 in his eighth major league start. He allowed four hits, struck out seven and walked none while throwing 110 pitches.

**Braves 6, Diamondbacks 4:** Brian McCann homered over the swimming pool behind the right-field wall and Johan Camargo also went deep, helping Atlanta win at Arizona.

**Astros 11, Rangers 4:** Gerrit Cole struck out a season-high 12, Aledmys Diaz hit a grand slam while starting in place of injured star Jose Altuve and host Houston beat Texas.

**Padres 4, Rockies 3:** Greg Garcia drove in the winning run with a bases-loaded fielder's choice in the ninth inning and closer Kirby Yates struck out the side for his 16th save as San Diego won at Colorado.

**Tigers 5-3, Twins 3-8:** C.J. Cron broke open the game with a three-run homer, and host Minnesota beat Detroit in the nightcap to earn a doubleheader split.

Cron's line drive to left field in the fifth inning off rookie Gregory Soto (0-1) was his second of the day — he also went deep in the opener.

**Pirates 2, Cardinals 1:** Jordan Lyles overcame a 30-pitch first inning to combine with four relievers on a two-hitter, and Pittsburgh won at St. Louis for its seventh win in 10 games following an eight-game skid.

**Reds 5, Giants 4:** Derek Dietrich singled in the tiebreaking run in the seventh inning, Eugenio Suarez and Yasiel Puig homered, and Cincinnati won at San Francisco.

**White Sox 7, Blue Jays 2:** Marcus Stroman was angry when removed from yet another start when he received little run support, and host Toronto lost to Chicago and Ivan Nova (2-3).