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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump seeks calm as Iran tensions rise

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump says he hopes the U.S. is not on a path to war with Iran amid fears that his two most hawkish advisers could be angling for such a conflict with the Islamic Republic.

Asked Thursday if the U.S. was going to war with Iran, the president replied, “I hope not” — a day after he repeated a desire for dialogue, tweeting, “I’m sure that Iran will want to talk soon.”

The tone contrasted with a series of moves by the U.S. and Iran that have sharply escalated tensions in the Middle East in recent days. For the past year, national security adviser John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have been the public face of the administration’s “maximum pressure”

campaign against Tehran.

On Friday, an official with Iran’s powerful Revolutionary Guard warned that Iranian missiles can “easily reach warships” in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere in the Middle East. The semi-official Fars news agency quoted Mohammad Saleh Jokar as saying that Iran’s missiles have a range of 2,000 kilometers — about 1,250 miles — and can attack any target in the region.

The escalating rhetoric has rattled lawmakers who are demanding more information on the White House’s claims of rising Iranian aggression. Top leaders in Congress received a classified briefing on Iran on Thursday, but many other lawmakers from both parties have criticized the White House for not keeping them informed.

Iran poses a particular challenge for Trump. While he talks tough against foreign adversaries to the delight of his supporters, a military confrontation with Iran could make him appear to be backtracking on a campaign pledge to keep America out of foreign entanglements.

Lawmakers and allies, however, worry that any erratic or miscalculated response from Trump could send the U.S. careening into conflict.

Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal last year and reinstated sanctions on Tehran that are crippling its economy.

Tensions rose dramatically May 5, when Bolton announced that the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group would be rushed from the Mediterra-

nean to the Persian Gulf ahead of schedule in response to “a number of troubling and escalatory indications and warnings,” without going into details.

Since then, four oil tankers, including two belonging to Saudi Arabia, were targeted in an apparent act of sabotage off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, according to officials in the region, and a Saudi pipeline was attacked by Iranian-backed Houthi rebels from Yemen. The U.S. also ordered non-essential staff out of Iraq and has dispatched additional military assets to the region.

The Senate will receive a classified briefing on Iran on Tuesday, according to Jim Risch, of Idaho, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. The House has requested a classified briefing as well.

US airstrike mistakenly kills Afghan police fighting Taliban

By J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. air support killed as many as 17 Afghan policemen and wounded 14 more after a police attempt to tear down a Taliban flag in southern Helmand province prompted a counterattack from the insurgents, Afghan officials said.

A statement from the U.S.-led NATO Resolute Support mission said an Afghan unit on the ground had told coalition forces that the area was clear of friendly forces.

“Unfortunately, they were not and a tragic accident resulted,” the statement read. “Afghan Security Forces as well as Taliban fighters were killed in the strikes. We’re examining the miscommunication to ensure it is not repeated. We

regret this tragic loss of life of our partners and are committed to improvement every day with every mission.”

The Afghan Defense Ministry confirmed in a statement Friday that U.S. aircraft conducted attacks during the fight Thursday. Afghan Interior Ministry preliminary estimates said that at least eight had died and 11 were injured.

A local army commander, a Helmand provincial councilman and a hospital official in the provincial capital all said Friday that 17 had died and 14 were hurt.

The incident took place just outside of Lashkar Gah, the capital of the embattled southern province. Much of Helmand remains a Taliban stronghold.

Among those killed was a police battalion commander charged with securing a key

highway, said Attaullah Afghan, head of the provincial council.

The police officer, Haji Gran Habib, was a former Taliban fighter who had joined the government side 17 years ago, said Maj. Hedayat Rasoly, an army battalion commander.

Another local security official, who asked to remain anonymous, said Habib and two of his men decided to take down a Taliban flag from a nearby water tower on Thursday night. The white insurgent banners are often displayed along the roads from Lashkar Gah, sometimes in view of Afghan military bases.

Although the water tower was within walking distance of a police training center, covert local support for the Taliban ensured anyone who tried to take down the flag received

immediate sniper fire, local residents told Stars and Stripes via phone.

Habib decided to remove the flag but did not inform his chain of command before proceeding, Rasoly said. After they arrived, the police tripped a mine, which exploded and alerted the Taliban to their presence, Rasoly said. The guerrillas began firing on them. Police at the training center arrived to assist the first three officers but were unable to drive the Taliban back, he said.

The police unit then requested air support. Residents of Lashkar Gah heard a very loud explosion at about 8:30 p.m. Thursday, they said.

Calling the airstrike a “tragedy,” Helmand province’s governor, Mohammad Yasin, said an investigation has been launched.

SEAL sentenced to year for role in death

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

NAVAL STATION NORFOLK, Va. — A Navy SEAL will spend the next year in a military prison after pleading guilty Thursday for his actions in the 2017 strangulation death of a Green Beret in Mali.

In admitting his guilt, Chief Petty Officer Adam Matthews described a botched attempt to haze Army Staff Sgt. Logan Melgar alongside three other special operators serving in the Malian capital of Bamako in the early morning of June 4, 2017.

Following an all-day hearing, the judge overseeing his court-martial, Navy Capt. Michael J. Luken, determined Matthews — who has served with the

Navy's Special Warfare Development Group, better known as SEAL Team 6, since 2005 — would spend a year in prison for his involvement in the death of Melgar.

With the shoulders of his service dress blue uniform slumping, Matthews stared straight forward as the judge announced his sentence to the courtroom. Luken also sentenced Matthews to a two-grade reduction in rank to petty officer 2nd class and a bad conduct discharge. The yearlong prison sentence was the maximum confinement time that Matthews faced as part of his plea deal with prosecutors.

Matthews is the first of four special operators who will face a judge in Melgar's death. As part of his plea agreement, Mat-

thews agreed to testify in the cases against the other accused servicemembers in Melgar's death — Chief Special Warfare Officer Tony DeDolph, Marine Raiders Gunnery Sgt. Mario Madera-Rodriguez and Staff Sgt. Kevin Maxwell Jr.

Matthews described the plan hatched at a local restaurant over late-night drinks and food as "juvenile," as he and the others conspired to break into Melgar's private room with a sledgehammer, restrain him with duct tape and film him in order to "embarrass him." Melgar's death was the result of a chokehold by DeDolph, according to prosecutors.

Matthews, 33, told Luken that Melgar's death was "tragic but completely unintended." He accepted a deal from prosecutors

to avoid murder charges during a court-martial at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., agreeing to plead guilty to charges that he conspired to commit an assault and battery, unlawful entry and obstructed justice by lying to investigators about who was involved in Melgar's death.

Matthews told Luken that the group had not intended to kill Melgar, but they wanted to "remediate" him for perceived performance issues and a "slight" from the previous night, accusing him of abandoning two Marines in an area of Bamako with which they were unfamiliar.

Those cases have yet to go to trial, and they face charges similar to Matthews.

Chiefs: Recruitment, retention concerns remain

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Despite retention and some recruitment gains, plenty of challenges remain for the military branches to adapt to an evolving economy and growing worker needs, the service chiefs said Thursday. They told a House Armed Services Committee subpanel examining the issue that they've installed a series of programs to entice new enlistments and retain servicemembers.

Despite those initiatives and some positive trends in recruitment, there's much work ahead to meet the needs of a modern military.

"We have challenges that remain and we still have a great deal of work to get to where we need to be if we are going to be truly competitive," Vice Adm. Robert Burke, chief of naval personnel, testified. "But we're on a good path."

The service chiefs told the House panel that efforts to improve child-care options,

streamlined processes for military spouses to obtain professional licenses after moves, boosted career flexibility and increased perks have helped with retention.

James Stewart, acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, told House lawmakers that the military services are expected to meet goals this year to keep servicemembers from leaving.

Much of that is happening by recognizing an adage that the military recruits the member but retains the family, Stewart said. That entails offering perks such as increasing basic allowance for housing and offering new technology portals to find child care.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., a chairwoman of the panel who recently visited several installations, said servicemembers have four key areas of concern: assignment location; child care; spouse professional employment; and help resources for sexual misconduct and domestic violence.

Mississippi Rep. Trent Kelly, the ranking Republican on the subpanel, said he's especially concerned about waits for child care that go beyond six months. Service chiefs told lawmakers that many of the child care delays arise in Hawaii and Alaska, as well as large installations such as Langley Air Force Base and Quantico in Virginia and Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in California.

Kelly said he's also concerned the Defense Department isn't using data to its full potential to meet retention demands.

"We need to clearly understand why servicemembers are electing to get out of the military and to understand what would have kept them in the service," he said. "The Defense Department already has much of the data necessary to answer these questions, but I remain concerned that the department is not maximizing their use of this information in order to make informed policy decisions."

With the demographics of

servicemembers changing, the branches must adapt with the times, Speier said.

"A small number of Americans serve in our armed forces and they have growing expectations," she said.

Lt. Gen. Thomas Seamands, Army deputy chief of staff, said to help grow its ranks, the service is reimbursing spouses for professional license and credentialing costs, improving the officer promotion system and modernizing its personnel model.

The Navy, meanwhile, is focusing on its "Sailor 2025" initiative, relying on using technology, smartphones and social media to spread the word on opportunities, Burke said. It's slated to grow by 7,500 members this year and another 5,100 next year.

Burke said the service is also focusing on how to retain its large share of married members. In its officer ranks, 67% are married, while that figure is more than 50% for enlisted sailors, he said.

F-16 crashes into warehouse in California

From wire reports

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — A warehouse worker said he heard the deafening roar of an F-16 jet moments before it smashed through the roof of his workplace.

“Next thing I know I just hear this explosion and turn around to the back of the building, and I just seen a burst of flames and just [as] the ceiling started falling through every part of the building,” Daniel Gallegos told KABC-TV. “I turned around and my co-worker just told me to get out, so I just made a run for it.”

The pilot ejected and parachuted to safety before the Air National Guard fighter plane hit the warehouse in an industrial area across the freeway from March Reserve Air Base

on Thursday.

A person who was in the building when the plane crashed recorded the immediate aftermath on camera and published it on Facebook.

“Holy [expletive] dude. That’s a [expletive] airplane; that’s a military airplane in our building,” he said. Water is seen cascading from the roof.

The pilot was taken to a hospital for evaluation. In total, a dozen people were hosed off for exposure to debris before being taken to hospitals for evaluation and treatment of minor injuries, state fire Capt. Fernando Herrera said.

Captured on a dashboard camera by a commuter on the freeway, the jet appeared to be leaning to one side as it dropped to the ground outside the base, the Los Angeles

Times reported.

Ty Stanonis was on the freeway when the crash occurred ahead of him, he told FOX11. His vehicle’s dashboard camera recorded the moment the jet crashed, showing the plane dropping into the building.

“Everybody was slowing down, just trying to figure out what just happened,” Stanonis said.

The pilot’s parachute deployed after he ejected, and he landed in a field inside the base. Stanonis said the pilot was still for a few moments but finally rose to his feet.

When the plane crashed, it shook all the windows in the building, Stanonis said.

“It looked like a bomb had gone off in the building,” he said.

Television news showed

a large hole in the roof and sprinklers on inside the building about 65 miles east of Los Angeles.

Cellphone photos and video from inside showed what appeared to be the tail of the plane buried in twisted metal and piles of cardboard boxes.

A large area around the warehouse was evacuated, and nearby Interstate 215, which runs between the base and warehouse, was shut down until crews could render the jet’s weaponry and ordnance safe.

The crash happened during a training mission, March Air Reserve Base Deputy Fire Chief Timothy Holliday said.

“The pilot was having hydraulic problems,” he said. “He started losing control of the aircraft.”

Warren unveils abortion rights platform following new laws

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Elizabeth Warren is calling for a series of targeted measures designed to safeguard abortion rights following a flurry of new state laws that dramatically restrict women’s ability to terminate pregnancies, a move Democrats have decried as a planned effort to chip away at the landmark Roe v. Wade decision.

Warren’s abortion rights platform, released Friday by her Democratic presidential campaign, centers on the establishment of “affirmative, statutory rights” that would “block states from interfering in the ability of a health care provider to provide medical care, including abortion services,” and set similar restrictions on states’ power to block patients from getting medical care, including abortions.

Her proposals come as Missouri joins Alabama, Georgia and other states in advancing laws that limit abortion access — with Alabama’s law drawing skepticism from some anti-

abortion Republicans as too draconian, given its lack of an exception for cases of rape or incest.

The senator from Massachusetts also urged passage of legislation that would stop states from passing constraints on abortion providers that are built to avoid violating the 1973 Roe decision, in which the Supreme Court recognized the constitutional right to an abortion. Backers of the Alabama law have described it as a conscious attempt to get the Supreme Court to revisit and potentially overturn Roe.

Another element of Warren’s abortion-rights proposal urges passage of legislation that would prevent private health insurers from constraining abortion access. The presidential hopeful also joined several of her Democratic primary rivals in urging the rollback of a 1976 restriction on the use of federal funds to pay for abortions, except for cases of rape, incest or pregnancies that imperil the life of a mother.

Missouri House OKs ban on abortion after 8 weeks

Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Missouri’s Republican-led Legislature on Friday approved a sweeping bill to ban abortions at eight weeks of pregnancy, joining Alabama and other states that have moved to severely restrict the procedure.

Republican Gov. Mike Parson is expected to sign the bill.

The ban would be among the most restrictive in the U.S.

It would include exceptions for medical emergencies, but not for pregnancies caused by rape or incest.

Doctors would face five to 15 years in prison for violating the eight-week cutoff. Women who receive abortions wouldn’t be prosecuted.

“Until the day that we no longer have abortions in this country, I will never waver in the fight for life,” Parson said during a Wednesday rally with supporters of the legislation.

Planned Parenthood Action Fund President Leana Wen said in a statement Thursday that enacting the measure

would be “disastrous.”

“Missouri Gov. Parson should be ashamed of riding the disgraceful coattails of 25 white men in Alabama who just voted to ban safe, legal abortion,” Wen said.

The Missouri legislation comes after Alabama’s governor signed a bill Wednesday making performing an abortion a felony in nearly all cases.

Supporters say the Alabama bill is meant to conflict with the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion nationally in hopes of sparking a court case that might prompt the current panel of more conservative justices to revisit abortion rights.

Kentucky, Mississippi, Ohio and Georgia also have approved bans on abortion once fetal cardiac activity can be detected, which can occur in about the sixth week of pregnancy.

Missouri’s bill also includes an outright ban on abortions except in cases of medical emergencies. But unlike Alabama’s, it would kick in only if Roe v. Wade is overturned.

Trump immigration plan puts focus on 'merit'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Unveiling a new immigration plan, President Donald Trump said he wanted to provide a sharp contrast with Democrats, and he did — aiming to upend decades of family based immigration policy with a new approach that favors younger, “totally brilliant,” high-skilled workers he says won’t compete for American jobs.

Trump’s sweeping immigration plan is more a campaign document than anything else. It’s a White House attempt to stretch beyond the “build-the-wall” rhetoric that swept the president to office but may not be enough to deliver him a second term. As Trump heads into reelection season, his campaign sees the plan as a way to help him look more reasonable on a signature

issue than he often seems — and to cast Democrats as blocking him.

“Will the Democrats give our Country a badly needed immigration win before the election? Good chance!” Trump said in a tweet Friday.

In a Rose Garden speech attended by Republican lawmakers and members of his Cabinet, Trump insisted Thursday that his administration wants immigrants to come to the United States. “We cherish the open door,” he said.

Trump said his new system, with points given for those with advanced degrees, job offers and other attributes, will make it exactly “clear what standards we ask you to achieve.”

Nowadays, “we discriminate against genius,” he said, using a softer tone than his usual fiery campaign rallies. “We discrim-

inate against brilliance. We won’t anymore once we get this passed.”

Even before the speech, Democrats, whose votes would be needed for any bill to be approved by the divided Congress, panned the effort and questioned the Republican Party’s commitment to families.

“Are they saying family is without merit?” asked House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. “Are they saying most of the people who’ve come to the United States in the history of our country are without merit because they don’t have an engineering degree?”

Trump’s new plan has been months in the making, a project of his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who has been meeting privately with business groups, religious leaders and conservatives to find common ground among Republicans on an issue that has long divided the party.

Courts weigh plan to tap Pentagon for border wall

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — President Donald Trump is moving fast to spend billions of dollars to build a wall on the Mexican border with money secured under his declaration of a national emergency, but he first must get past the courts.

On Friday, a federal judge in Oakland, Calif., considered arguments in two cases that seek to block the White House from spending Pentagon and Treasury Department money for wall construction.

California and 19 other states brought one lawsuit; the Sierra Club and Southern Border Communities Coalition, represent-

ed by the American Civil Liberties Union, brought the other.

On Thursday, a federal judge in the nation’s capital will consider a bid by the U.S. House of Representatives to prevent Trump from spending any Defense Department money for a border wall.

At stake are billions of dollars that would allow Trump to make major progress on a signature campaign promise heading into his campaign for a second term.

The president’s adversaries say the emergency declaration was an illegal attempt to ignore Congress, which authorized far less wall spending than Trump wanted.

Trump grudgingly accepted congressio-

nal approval of \$1.375 billion to end a 35-day government shutdown on Feb. 15, but he declared an emergency in almost the same breath.

The White House says it has identified up to \$8.1 billion that it could spend.

Trump’s actions “amount to a usurpation of Congress’ legislative powers in violation of bedrock separation of powers principles embedded in the Constitution,” the state attorneys general wrote.

The administration argues that the president is protecting national security interests as unprecedented numbers of Central American asylum-seeking families arrive at the U.S. border with Mexico.

Prosecutors: Flynn discussed interference attempts

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former White House national security adviser Michael Flynn told the special counsel’s office that people connected to the Trump administration and Congress sought to influence his cooperation with the Russia investigation, and he provided a voicemail recording of one such communication, prosecutors said in a court filing made public Thursday.

Meanwhile, the judge in the case ordered that portions of special counsel Robert Mueller’s report that relate to Flynn be unredacted and made public by the end of the month.

Thursday’s order from U.S. District

Judge Emmet Sullivan is the first time a judge is known to have directed the Justice Department to make public any portion of the report that the agency had kept secret. It could set up a conflict with Attorney General William Barr, whose team spent weeks blacking out from the report grand jury information, details of ongoing investigations and other sensitive information.

Prosecutors revealed details about Flynn’s communications in a court filing aimed at showing the extent of his cooperation with Mueller’s investigation into ties between the Trump campaign and Russia. Flynn, a vital witness in the probe, is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts dur-

ing the presidential transition period in 2016 with the then-Russian ambassador to the United States.

Prosecutors did not identify the people with whom Flynn was in touch, nor did they describe the exact conversations.

But they said Flynn recounted multiple instances in which “he or his attorneys received communications from persons connected to the administration or Congress that could have affected both his willingness to cooperate and the completeness of that cooperation.”

Prosecutors say they were unaware of some of those instances — which took place before and after his guilty plea — until Flynn told them.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Grenade found in Goodwill donation bin

FL PORT ST. LUCIE — A Goodwill store got a donation it didn't need or expect — a grenade.

The St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office said workers found the grenade in a donation bin Wednesday afternoon and called 911.

TCPalm reported that the bomb squad arrived and the Port St. Lucie store was evacuated. The grenade was found to be inoperable.

Sheriff: Bus driver made lewd request for money

KY GLASGOW — A school bus driver is accused of offering money to a female student to bare her breasts.

News outlets report the Barren County Sheriff's Department said Randall J. Hastedt, 34, was arrested Tuesday and is charged with attempted use of a minor in a sexual performance.

An arrest warrant said the juvenile reported the incident to a school resource officer at Barren County High School, who alerted a detective. The warrant said the driver offered the girl \$20 to expose herself Monday afternoon while the bus was traveling to the juvenile's home.

Officer faces charges in shooting of stray cats

SD NORTH SIOUX CITY — A North Sioux City police officer accused of shooting stray cats is facing criminal charges.

A criminal complaint filed in Union County charges Derek McIntosh with a misdemeanor. Police began investigating McIntosh on May 9 after other

officers reported that he had picked up stray cats and shot them in the cemetery instead of taking them to the humane society.

North Sioux City administrator Ted Cherry tells the Argus Leader that McIntosh is no longer employed by the city, but he didn't say whether he resigned or was fired. Cherry said McIntosh has admitted to shooting a cat.

Scout jamboree preps for potential of measles

WV CHARLESTON — State health officials and Boy Scout leaders said they're preparing for the possibility that some children may bring measles to the Word Scout Jamboree this summer.

The Charleston Gazette-Mail reported officials are encouraging measles vaccinations for the 45,000 Scouts and leaders expected to travel across the world and country to attend.

The state hasn't had a confirmed measles case since 2009. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 23 states had 839 total confirmed measles cases as of May 10.

Scout leaders said seemingly sick individuals will be examined before admittance and an outbreak would lead to a quarantine.

Police seek guitars stolen from band

AZ PHOENIX — Police are turning to the public for help in locating two guitars stolen from a heavy metal band when they were in Phoenix earlier this month.

Authorities said Wednesday that three men have been arrested in connection with the burglary of Lamb of God's guitars.

Sgt. Vince Lewis said Wil-

liam Widener, 62, Michael Blakeslee, 51, and Justin Petersen, 34, face charges of theft and trafficking in stolen property.

The guitars were taken from a trailer at Ak-Chin Pavilion between midnight and 4:30 a.m. on May 2.

Lewis said one suspect tried to pawn a guitar but was declined. A guitar was also spotted for sale on an online app.

Guitarist Will Adler posted on Instagram after the theft that a one-of-a-kind bass and his "beloved Warbird" guitar had been taken.

Truck crash kills thousands of chickens

IA WEST UNION — Thousands of chickens were killed when a truck crashed in northeast Iowa.

KCRG-TV reported the crash happened early Tuesday when a truck hauling about 5,000 chickens crashed on Highway 18, about a mile west of West Union.

The Fayette County Sheriff's Office said the 44-year-old driver was heading west when he crashed into a ditch. He and a child passenger were treated for minor injuries.

About half the chickens were killed. The others were loaded onto another truck.

The driver was cited for failure to maintain control of his vehicle.

186 alcohol sellers charged in crackdown

NY ALBANY — More than 180 establishments holding New York state liquor licenses have been charged with serving minors during last month's statewide crackdown on underage drinking.

That's according to state offi-

cials who said April's monthlong enforcement effort resulted in charges being filed against 186 out of the 851 bars, restaurants, liquor stores and grocery stores in 46 counties that were visited by underage decoys working with investigators.

Semi-trailer crash turns into sticky situation

IN HAMMOND — A semi-trailer hauling honey overturned on a northwestern Indiana highway, spilling some of the sticky substance and restricting travel for hours.

State police said the semi was hauling about 41,000 pounds of amber honey along Interstate 80/94 through Hammond when the driver lost control and the truck overturned about 6 a.m. Wednesday after its front axle apparently failed. At least four large containers of honey began leaking, and the semi was also leaking diesel fuel.

2 rescued from scaffold near top of skyscraper

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — Two window washers have been rescued from a dangling scaffold above the roof of a nearly 850-foot skyscraper in downtown Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma City Fire Capt. David Macy said the two were stranded shortly before 7:45 a.m. Wednesday outside the 50-floor Devon Tower and were pulled to safety about 8:30 a.m.

Macy said firefighters secured the scaffold with ropes as it hung from a crane 20-30 feet above the roof. Video from the scene showed the scaffold banging against the building, breaking windows and dropping shattered glass on sidewalks and streets below. Macy said paramedics evaluated both men, who refused treatment.

From wire reports

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Bruins sweep into Stanley Cup Final

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Boston Bruins have earned a break before their biggest series in a few years.

Their sweep of the Carolina Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference finals affords them a few extra days to rest before their third Stanley Cup Final appearance in nine years.

So they can sit back, let their bumps and bruises heal — especially the ones that kept captain Zdeno Chara out of the series-clincher — and watch the San Jose Sharks and St. Louis Blues beat each other up a few more times.

“I think as you get older, you appreciate it even more, and you realize how hard it is to get to this point and advance and be thankful and stay in the moment,” forward Patrice Bergeron said. “But then it’s back to work, and there’s a lot of work in front of us.”

They won’t spend the break worrying about losing the momentum of their longest post-season winning streak in nearly

half a century. No team that has swept its opponent from these playoffs has won its next series — a list that includes Columbus, the New York Islanders and these very Hurricanes.

The Bruins polished off their sweep on Thursday night, beating Carolina 4-0 in Game 4 for their seventh straight post-season victory — their longest streak in the playoffs since they reeled off nine straight wins in 1972.

Goalie Tuukka Rask posted his seventh career playoff shutout, making 24 saves in his second straight series-clinching shutout. Patrice Bergeron scored two goals, David Pastrnak had a goal and two assists and Marchand added an empty-netter. Both Bergeron and Pastrnak scored on second-period power plays.

“It’s so difficult to advance in the playoffs, let alone make it to the final,” said Rask. “We need to really enjoy this but realize we have a lot of work to do.”

The Bruins won this one without Chara, who was scratched with an unspecified injury and

is day to day, ending a run of 98 consecutive playoff games for the hulking 42-year-old veteran that dated to 2011.

Chara joined his teammates on the ice for the post-series handshake line with Carolina, and while coach Bruce Cassidy declined to elaborate on the nature of Chara’s injury, he did say he’s expected back for the start of the Cup Final.

Curtis McElhinney made 19 saves for the Hurricanes, whose first playoff appearance since 2009 ended precisely the same way their previous post-season trip did — by being swept in the East finals.

“Listen, the tank’s been low for a long time,” Carolina captain Justin Williams said. “It’s been running on adrenaline and sheer will. It’s always tough to swallow when the season ends, just abruptly like that. It’s like you’re cut real quick. And you’ve got to go home.”

Carolina got this far by sweeping the New York Islanders in Round 2.

After outscoring the Hurricanes 17-5 in four games, and

after seven wins in 15 nights, the Bruins have the luxury of taking a deep breath before they play for the Cup yet again.

A handful of veterans in this group — including Chara, Bergeron, Rask and forward Brad Marchand — won it in 2011 and lost to Chicago at this stage two years later.

“We’ve basically kind of grew up together,” Bergeron said. “It’s been a fun ride to be a part with these guys as the core group.”

The Bruins found a way to sidestep the run of first-round upsets that knocked both division winners, Tampa Bay and Washington, out early, though they needed seven games to get past Toronto.

They found their stride in their second-round series with Columbus, advancing in six games after winning the final three.

And once they got rolling, Carolina was powerless to stop them.

Several jockeys switch horses after Kentucky Derby

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The jockey shuffle heading into the Preakness has a “musical chairs” feel to it.

Of the 13 jockeys in Saturday’s race, nine who rode in the Kentucky Derby are aboard a different horse in the Preakness. Most notably, Hall of Famer Mike Smith is now riding favored Improbable with familiar trainer Bob Baffert, bumping Irad Ortiz to Bourbon War.

“It seems to be a little bit more than maybe most of the time, but this isn’t uncommon,” Smith said. “Especially during this Triple Crown stuff, there’s a lot of musical chairs. A lot of people picked up horses at the last minute and won the Derby, won the Preakness and won the Belmont, for that matter.”

An unusual chain of events has contributed to all the movement this year.

The top four horses that crossed the finish line in Kentucky won’t run in the Preakness. Improbable is the morning line favorite partially because he has finished first or second in five of six races, the lone exception when he came in fifth at the Derby and was bumped up to fourth after Maximum Security was disqualified.

Smith chose to ride Omaha Beach in the Derby, but after the race favorite was scratched, Baffert opted to stick with Ortiz. That didn’t work well for anyone — Improbable never really got a sniff of the lead under Ortiz and Smith finished 10th with Cutting Humor.

The team of Baffert and Smith produced a Triple Crown

last year with Justify and four years ago with American Pharoah, and now trainer and jockey are together again trying to re-create the magic.

“It’s nothing against Irad. He rode him great in the Derby,” said Elliot Walden, co-owner of Improbable. “It came down to a simple thing: Bob Baffert’s had good luck with Mike Smith. Bob’s kind of a karma guy.”

That’s only one of many switches for this race. Hall of Fame jockey John Velazquez replaces Chris Landeros aboard Bodexpress; Joel Rosario goes from Game Winner to Everfast; Jon Court from Long Range Toddy to Market Express and Jose Ortiz from Tacitus to Anothertwistafate.

Also, Ricardo Santana moves from Plus Que Parfait to Laughing Fox, and Javier Castel-

lano from Vekoma to Warrior’s Charge, which caused Florent Geroux to get in the saddle aboard Owendale.

Smith has been through similar situations before, and would love to pull off another win on Saturday.

“Sometimes the first time you ride is the best time. I have a knack with that sometimes,” he said.

There are times when trainer and jockey match up through pure luck. Velazquez needed a mount and the Bodexpress camp was looking for a jockey, so now they’re teamed on a 20-1 horse in the Preakness.

Only two jockeys get to pick up where they left off in the Derby — Tyler Gaffalione on War of Will and Julian Pimentel on Win Win Win.

Koepka off to a record start at PGA

Associated Press

FARMINGDALE, N.Y. — Three majors in two years, and Brooks Koepka can still feel as though he has something to prove.

He delivered again on golf's biggest stage.

And this time, Tiger Woods was along for the ride.

Koepka beat up on brawny Bethpage Black for a record-setting start to his title defense in the PGA Championship. With a 40-foot birdie to start his round and a birdie putt from just inside 35 feet at the end, he shot a 7-under 63 to break the course record and become the first player to shoot 63 in the same major twice.

"That was one of the best rounds I've played probably as a professional," Koepka said. "This golf course is brutal."

He was 10 shots better than the average score in the opening round, but only one better than Danny Lee on a day when only 16 players broke par, the fewest for the first round of the PGA Championship since 2008

at Oakland Hills.

It was only one round, but enough to make the Masters that Woods won last month feel more nostalgic than a sign of more to come.

"I felt like I won this last year. I'm playing good," Koepka said. "It was great that Tiger won Augusta, but I mean, we're at a new week now. ... Obviously, everyone is going to be cheering for him, and it's going to be loud, especially if he makes a putt. You've just got to keep battling."

Thousands of fans who trudged across muddied paths to the far end of Bethpage Black on Thursday morning were drawn to Woods, a Masters champion again, announced on the 10th tee as the PGA champion from 1999, 2000, 2006 and 2007.

The introduction took long enough to remind everyone what Woods has done in the game.

Koepka then showed what he has done lately — back-to-back U.S. Open titles, a PGA Championship and an ideal

start in his bid to join Woods as the only back-to-back winners of the PGA Championship in stroke play.

"I wasn't surprised," Lee said. "I mean, have you seen him playing U.S. Opens and PGA Championships in the last three years?"

Woods looked rusty early, inspired in the middle and sloppy late in his first competition since his emotionally draining victory at the Masters.

He opened with a pair of double bogeys on the back nine and ruined a torrid start to the front nine — two birdies and a 30-foot eagle in a four-hole stretch — with a pair of three-putt bogeys. That gave him a 72, leaving him nine shots behind and ending 12 consecutive rounds at par or better in the majors dating to the U.S. Open last summer.

"It wasn't as clean as I'd like to have it, for sure," Woods said.

Tommy Fleetwood had a 67, while the group at 68 included Pat Perez, who played a practice round with Koepka on Tuesday. Jordan Spieth overcame a

double bogey on the 10th hole for a 69 and was in a group that included Dustin Johnson, Phil Mickelson, Rickie Fowler and Jason Day.

"The course is not easy, but Brooks obviously made it look real easy," Perez said. "I saw that on Tuesday when I played with him. I actually congratulated him on his win."

But it's far from over, even before Lee made his afternoon move to cut into the lead. Fowler was bemused when asked how close he would have to be to Koepka heading into the final round Sunday.

"What makes you think he's going to be leading?" Fowler said. "I would say there's no lead really safe here."

Koepka failed to birdie the two par 5s, missing a 10-foot birdie putt on No. 13 and scrambling for par on the easier fourth hole. He also missed a 7-foot birdie putt on the 11th and an 8-foot birdie putt on No. 2. Yes, this could have been special. Then again, he also made four birdie putts of 15 feet or longer, including the long ones at the start and end of his round.

Warriors rally from 15 down to go up 2-0 on Blazers

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — These Golden State Warriors have long been able to score in fabulous, jaw-dropping flurries. Down by eight to the Portland Trail Blazers at home with 4½ minutes to go, they needed every last burst, perfect pass, driving layup and dunk.

"Our experience really paid off for us tonight having a bunch of guys who just won't quit," said Draymond Green, who was right smack in the middle of it all.

Stephen Curry scored 37 points, and the Warriors rallied from a 15-point halftime deficit before holding off Portland on the final possession for a 114-111 win Thursday night and a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference finals.

Golden State coach Steve Kerr insisted his team stole this game with a sensational final few minutes and another, familiar third-quarter outburst.

Counterpart Terry Stotts of the Trail Blazers considered it a "lost opportunity" on the road.

CJ McCollum missed a driving jumper with 32 seconds left and Green scored on the other end for the Warriors, giving Portland one final chance with 12.3 seconds to go. Andre Iguodala then blocked a three-point attempt by Damian Lillard on the left wing.

"They stole it, but they earned it down the stretch," McCollum said.

Seth Curry, Steph's little brother, scored 16 points and put Portland ahead on a three-pointer with 1:03 left before

Kevon Looney's dunk on the other end put Golden State back on top at 112-111. Seth tried to "distract" his brother at the free-throw line late, or so the story went from Steph, who called Seth a "pest" on defense.

"This was like the coolest experience I think I've ever had playing against him. You talk about the stage, he was amazing tonight," Stephen Curry said. "For my parents, I know we've talked about it the whole series, these last two games it's probably nerve-wracking as heck for them. It worked out perfectly tonight. He played well and we won."

Stephen Curry shot 11-for-22 and made all 11 of his free throws — three with 2:01 left — to post his third straight 30-point performance while Splash

Brother Klay Thompson needed a half to heat up, scoring 13 of his 24 points in the Warriors' 39-point third period. It was reminiscent of those old third-quarter runs that have defined this group.

McCollum scored 22 points for Portland and Lillard overcame a slow start to add 23 points and 10 assists as the Blazers looked far more in sync than in a 116-94 defeat two days earlier.

Game 3 in the best-of-seven series is Saturday night at Portland.

"We did play a much better game at both ends of the floor tonight. We've got to take that into Game 3," Stotts said. "It is a lost opportunity, no question. We had a chance to get one here on the road."

Braves top Cardinals

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Austin Riley's major league career is just getting started, and Braves manager Brian Snitker likes where it's headed.

"I love everything about what he's doing," Snitker said. "He's in a good place offensively. He's confident and rightly so from where he came from and what he's doing. He's just carrying it over."

Riley went 3-for-4 and drove in a run, Julio Teheran pitched five-plus scoreless innings, and the Atlanta Braves won for the fifth time in six games with a 10-2 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals on Thursday night.

Riley, who homered in his second major league at-bat Wednesday, doubled off the top of the wall in the second inning and singled in a run in the third. He scored twice.

He's hitting .407 with 32 RBIs over his last 20 games between Atlanta and Triple-A Gwinnett.

"Coming into this, I told myself, 'Same game, got to have the same approach, go up there with a plan, not just free swinging,'" Riley said. "I think I stuck to that pretty well."

Teheran (3-4) allowed two hits — a bloop single by Yadier Molina to begin the fifth and a single by Paul Goldschmidt to begin the sixth — and drove in two runs with a sacrifice bunt in the second and a single in the third. Teheran, who has a 0.53 ERA over his last three starts, walked four and struck out four.

"I feel like the way I believe I've been pitching lately — I guess it's been five starts — I've really been feeling the way I like to feel," Teheran said. "I feel like I can throw my pitches in any counts and my command — I walk guys, but that's part of the game. I really like the way I've been feeling."

Nick Markakis had an RBI double in the three-run third as Atlanta took a 5-0 lead.

The Braves led 2-0 in the second. Markakis walked, advanced to third on Riley's

double and crossed the plate on Brian McCann's sacrifice fly. Riley scored from third on Teheran's bunt.

Cardinals starter Adam Wainwright (3-4) gave up five runs, five hits and five walks with two strikeouts in four innings.

"It's the worst fastball command I've had all year," Wainwright said. "I actually had a good fastball, but I just didn't locate it worth a darn, and worst breaking ball I've had all year. Bad combo."

Marcel Ozuna's 13th homer cut the lead to 5-1 in the sixth off Jacob Webb. Matt Carpenter homered off Touki Toussaint to make it 9-2 in the eighth.

Atlanta went up 8-1 in the bottom of the sixth on RBI singles by Freddie Freeman, Josh Donaldson and Markakis. Ronald Acuna Jr.'s RBI single in the seventh made it 9-1, and Freeman hit his eighth homer in the eighth.

Trainer's room: RHP Carlos Martinez will rejoin the Cardinals' bullpen this weekend at Texas after missing 44 games a right shoulder cuff strain. "You're talking about a legitimate weapon, a two-time All-Star who proved he could do the job out of the bullpen last year," St. Louis manager Mike Shildt said. "You always want to be able to shorten games."

Still in the rotation: Snitker said RHP Mike Foltynewicz will make his next start against Milwaukee on Sunday even though he's 0-3 with an 8.02 ERA in four starts. Foltynewicz, a first-time All-Star last year, threw a bullpen session Thursday as pitching coach Rick Kranitz and bullpen coach Marty Reed began adjusting his mechanics. "They identified some things on tape and saw some things that maybe can help him," Snitker said.

Foltynewicz, whose season started late because of a right elbow bone spur, will face Milwaukee on Sunday.

MLB roundup

Brewers' Yelich hits 2 HRs in rout of Phillies

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Christian Yelich hit his major league-leading 17th and 18th homers to help Zach Davies and the Milwaukee Brewers beat the Philadelphia Phillies 11-3 Thursday.

Yasmani Grandal and Mike Moustakas also went deep as the Brewers won their third in a row.

Davies (5-0) allowed three runs — one earned — and four hits in six innings.

Yelich homered in the first for a 1-0 lead off Zach Eflin (5-4) and added a solo drive off Edgar Garcia in the eighth to make it 8-3.

Athletics 17, Tigers 3: Jurickson Profar hit his first career grand slam, and Oakland won its 13th straight over Detroit and its eighth in a row at Comerica Park.

Josh Phegley had four hits, including one of Oakland's five home runs. Matt Olson and Marcus Semien also homered for Oakland.

Detroit has been outscored 41-9 while losing the first four games of a 10-game homestand.

Nationals 7, Mets 6: At Washington, Gerardo Parra hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer in the fifth and Sean Doolittle stopped visiting New York's ninth-inning rally by striking out Keon Broxton with the bases loaded for his seventh save.

The Nationals won two of three against the Mets for their first series win since April 16-18 against San Francisco.

Rangers 16, Royals 1: At Kansas City, Mo., Rougned Odor homered twice and Willie Calhoun went deep for the second straight day as Texas hit five homers in all and piled up 21 hits to win the rubber game of the three-game series.

Joey Gallo went deep among his four hits, and Hunter Pence also homered.

Reds 4, Cubs 2: Eugenio

Suarez singled home the go-ahead run during a fifth-inning downpour and added another RBI single as Cincinnati pulled away from visiting Chicago.

The Cubs came into the series on the best surge in the majors, having won or split 10 straight series. The NL Central leaders let a late lead get away Wednesday night for a 6-5, 10-inning loss. This one slipped away as the rain intensified in the bottom of the fifth.

Indians 14, Orioles 7: Jason Kipnis homered twice and drove in a career-high six runs as host Cleveland hammered Baltimore in the opener of a four-game series.

Kipnis hit a solo shot in the first inning, a three-run homer in the fourth off reliever Gabriel Ynoa (0-1) and was credited with two RBIs on an unusual fielder's choice in the seventh.

White Sox 4, Blue Jays 2: Yolmer Sanchez scored the tie-breaking run on Ryan Cordell's suicide squeeze in the eighth inning, and Chicago topped visiting Toronto for its fourth win in five games.

Freddy Galvis hit a solo homer, but the Blue Jays lost for the fourth time in five games.

Twins 11, Mariners 6: Viral video star C.J. Cron and Byron Buxton fueled a seven-run fourth inning with homers, and Michael Pineda pitched Minnesota past host Seattle.

Padres 4, Pirates 3: Ian Kinsler hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the sixth inning for host San Diego, which set the major league record by going 8,020 games without a no-hitter since its inception.

The Padres remain the only major league team without a no-hitter. The previous longest streak of 8,019 games without a no-hitter from a franchise's inception was by the New York Mets, who got their first no-hitter, by Johan Santana, on June 1, 2012.