

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Military law experts critical of possible pardons

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Presidential pardons for American servicemembers convicted or accused of war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, including murdering unarmed enemy fighters, could undermine military leadership and might complicate the U.S. relationship with key allies, several military law experts said.

Retired top military officers and former judge advocates joined a growing chorus this week imploring the White House not to issue pardons in high-profile war crimes cases, including at least two special operators who face courts-martial on charges that they killed detained, unarmed combatants. The concerns have swelled since a report Saturday by The New York Times, which cited two unnamed senior U.S. officials, that President Donald Trump was working with the Pentagon and Justice Department to assemble pardon documents for Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher and Army Maj. Matthew Golsteyn, among others, whom could be pardoned by Memorial Day.

Those potential pardons — and others including Marine scout snipers convicted

of crimes related to urinating on dead Taliban fighters in 2011 and a Blackwater security contractor convicted of killing Iraqi civilians in 2007, the Times reported — would follow the recent pardon of former Army 1st Lt. Michael Behenna, who was convicted in 2009 of the “unpremeditated murder” of a prisoner in Iraq a year earlier.

Military law experts polled this week by Stars and Stripes agreed Trump had the constitutional right to pardon the servicemembers, but several of them warned that granting clemency to those convicted or accused of wrongdoing in war zones risked signaling to U.S. troops that they had the license to kill indiscriminately in combat.

“This would be a terrible decision,” said Eric Carpenter, a former Army prosecutor and defense attorney who teaches law at Florida International University. “He plays into our enemies’ narrative, which is that we don’t care about Muslim lives.”

While several lawmakers said they opposed such pardons, especially before evidence is considered at courts-martial, Trump had the backing of at least some on Capitol Hill, including from Republican Rep. Duncan Hunter, a Marine veteran from California, who is among the people

who has long lobbied the president to pardon Gallagher.

White House, Pentagon and Justice Department spokespersons declined to comment on the Times report. Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan said Tuesday that he would not “speculate on any of the pardons,” directing questions to the White House.

Pardoning servicemembers accused of committing war crimes before they face a judge could undermine the key military tenets of good order and discipline necessary for the military to function properly, said Rachel VanLandingham, an associate professor of law at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles and a former Air Force judge advocate.

Retired Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, took to Twitter on Tuesday to condemn pretrial pardons.

“Absent evidence of innocence or injustice the wholesale pardon of US servicemembers accused of war crimes signals our troops and allies that we don’t take the Law of Armed Conflict seriously,” wrote Dempsey, who retired in 2015. “Bad message. Bad precedent. Abdication of moral responsibility. Risk to us.”

## Goal with Iran is deterrence, Trump officials tell lawmakers

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Tamping down talk of war, top Trump administration officials told Congress on Tuesday that recent actions by the U.S. deterred attacks on American forces. But some lawmakers remained deeply skeptical of the White House approach in the Middle East.

After a day of closed-door briefings on Capitol Hill, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan said their objective over recent days has been to deter Iran. Now they want to prevent further escalation, Shanahan said.

“We’re not about going to

war,” Shanahan told reporters.

“Our biggest focus at this point is to prevent Iranian miscalculation,” said Shanahan, flanked by Pompeo, after back-to-back briefings for the House and Senate. “We do not want the situation to escalate.”

The officials arrived on Capitol Hill as questions mounted over President Donald Trump’s tough talk on Iran and sudden policy shifts in the region. Skeptical Democrats sought out a second opinion, holding their own briefing with former Obama administration officials, former CIA Director John Brennan and Wendy Sherman, an architect of the Iran nuclear deal.

The competing closed-door

sessions Tuesday came after weeks of escalating tensions that raised alarms over a possible military confrontation with Iran.

Trump, veering between bombast and conciliation in his quest to contain Iran, threatened Monday to meet provocations by Iran with “great force,” but he also said he’s willing to negotiate.

The results of the meetings Tuesday were mixed, with views settling largely along partisan lines.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said the action taken by the Trump administration “is totally appropriate” and sends a message that “if you attack our people, there will be a

response.”

Romney characterized it as defensive in nature and meant to deter Iran from “malign” actions.

Democratic Rep. Ruben Gallego, a veteran of the Iraq War, left the classified House briefing, saying: “What I heard in there makes it clear that this administration feels that they do not have to come back and talk to Congress in regards to any action they do in Iran.”

Democrats are particularly concerned the Trump administration may try to rely on nearly 20-year-old war authorizations rather than seek fresh approval from Congress for any action.

# Reagan leaves homeport for year's first patrol

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Sailors' families gathered on the pier Wednesday morning as the USS Ronald Reagan left its homeport to patrol the Indo-Pacific region, its first deployment of 2019.

Sailors in their dress whites lined the flight deck of the aircraft carrier as it sailed from Yokosuka.

Loved ones looked on and waved, some with tears in their eyes.

The Ronald Reagan is the nation's only carrier permanently deployed outside the United States, allowing the Navy to respond in the Indo-Pacific in a matter of days with a ship that would take weeks to arrive from the U.S., according to a state-

ment Wednesday from the Navy.

The carrier's air wing — based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in southwestern Japan — is expected to join the Ronald Reagan at sea. Typically, the ship deploys with a strike group of destroyers, cruisers and an unannounced submarine presence.

The Ronald Reagan starts its latest patrol as other ships of the 7th Fleet have stepped up the frequency of freedom-of-navigation operations and exercises with allies like the Philippines and Japan in contested areas of the East and South China seas and in the Taiwan Strait.

In the past week and a half, for example, a U.S. Coast Guard cutter and a U.S. destroyer on separate missions both sailed near Scarborough Shoal, a relatively small

feature west of the Philippines controlled by China but claimed by both countries and Taiwan.

The Navy does not typically respond to queries about the length of a carrier deployment or its destination, including port calls. Navy officials did not respond to requests for information Wednesday.

"Forward presence truly matters. For more than seventy years, our forces have been present and ready to respond immediately on behalf of our friends and allies," Task Force 70 commander Rear Adm. Karl Thomas said in the statement. Thomas, who took his post July 18 aboard the Ronald Reagan, has tactical control of carrier strike groups, cruisers and destroyers in the 7th Fleet area of operations, according to the Navy.

## 5 sailors charged in sexual assault in Texas

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — Five sailors were arrested Friday at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland in Texas on charges that the men sexually assaulted a woman last year, law enforcement officials said.

The sailors arrested are Mauricio Chaparro, 28; Kenneth Johnson, 20; Anthony Cooney, 21; Dominick Burns, 20; and Kyle Tuschmann, 19, said Adelina Simpson, a spokeswoman for the Bexar County Sheriff's Department. The sailors spent the weekend in a county detention center and

arrived Tuesday at a jail in Hays County, where the charges are filed. It is located just north of San Antonio, which is in Bexar County.

A Hays County grand jury indicted the men on April 24, each on four counts of aggravated sexual assault and with a bond of \$500,000, according to indictment records. Burns, Cooney and Tuschmann are accused of performing sexual acts on the same woman and the other two men are listed as "intentionally and knowingly" participating in the crime, according to the records.

Police were called to the scene of the in-

cident at about 10:13 p.m. on May 19, 2018, according to a San Marcos police report. A woman said she'd been sexually assaulted in the back of a truck at San Marcos' Rio Vista Park. The incident report states the woman initially did not want to pursue charges, but returned to a police station the next day and was cooperative.

Hays County District Attorney Wes Mau said Tuesday that he could not comment further on the case. Bexar County Sheriff's Department took the five men into custody Friday at Lackland Air Force Base to transfer them to Hays County, where they were indicted, Simpson said.

## Symposium highlights militaries' 'gray zone' response

*Stars and Stripes*

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Democratic nations must consider giving their militaries greater authority in intervening in "gray zone" conflicts with adversaries such as China and Russia, a top Army official said Tuesday.

Competitors have noted the American military's ability to overwhelm adversaries in head-to-head military conflict, and so they keep the threshold of clashes in the gray zone, or "left of conflict," said Lt. Gen. Eric Wesley, deputy commander of concepts at the U.S. Army Futures Command, during a panel at the annual Land Forces

Pacific Symposium in Honolulu.

"This is a challenging one for nations of Western democratic nature because we find it unattractive for military institutions to be actively involved 'left of conflict' without sufficient authorities," he said. "But because they have seen we're very good at conflicts, our peer adversaries have invested in ways that achieve their operational and strategic objectives in the competition space."

China's building of artificial islands is the most egregious example of how this plays out. The islands were built up and militarized over a number of years, with China providing little information about

their intent.

Chinese ships and aircraft also frequently challenge U.S. movements through the South China Sea, sometimes with dangerous maneuvering.

Much of this year's three-day symposium, sponsored by the Association of the U.S. Army, focuses on the role of land forces in multidomain operations, the aim of which is integrating air, sea, land, cyber and space under seamless command of the service branch best suited for particular tasks. The symposium's emphasis reflects the Pentagon's shift to a strategy focusing on great-power competition rather than counterterrorism.



# Trump demands Dems drop investigations

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump abruptly quit a meeting with congressional Democrats on Wednesday with a flat declaration he would no longer work with them unless they drop their investigations in the aftermath of the Trump-Russia report.

After the truncated meeting with the Democratic leaders, scheduled for a discussion of U.S. infrastructure problems, Trump lashed out at Speaker Nancy Pelosi for her comment earlier in the morning on Capitol Hill that she believed the president engaged in a “cover up” of the Russia probe. The president then strode to the Rose Garden where aides had gathered reporters and TV cameras for his demand that Congress drop its investigations that are increasingly leading to talk of what he called the “i-word” — impeachment.

“I walked into the room and I told Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi I want to do infrastructure,” he said, referring to the top Democratic senator, New York’s Chuck Schumer.

“But you know what we can’t do it under these circumstances,” Trump said. “So get these phony investigations over.”

Pelosi said Trump “just took a pass” on working on national infrastructure problems. She said she would be praying for him.

She told reporters after a private meeting of House Democrats that Trump is “engaged in a cover up,” even as she tried to tamp down some Democrats’ rush toward an impeachment inquiry in their showdown with the White House.

Pelosi and five of her top investigative committee leaders spoke with fellow Democrats after an increasing number called for the beginning of an impeachment inquiry following special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russia election meddling and contacts with the Trump campaign.

Those Democrats say the move would not necessarily be aimed at removing the president, but instead to bolster their position in court as Trump has broadly stonewalled their investigations. Some two dozen House Democrats have signed on.

With her leadership team, Pelosi, who has resisted pressure to impeach, pointed rank-and-file Democrats toward the legal battles that she said have already found success in forcing Trump to comply with investigations.

“We do believe it’s important to follow the facts,” Pelosi told reporters afterward. “We believe that no one is above the law, including the president of the United States, and we believe that the president of the United States is engaged in a cover-up — in a cover-up.”

A growing number of Democrats, in-

censed by former White House counsel Don McGahn’s defiance Tuesday of a House panel’s subpoena for testimony, have confronted Pelosi and pushed her and other leaders to act.

Pelosi has said she believes Trump is “goading” Democrats into impeachment. And Trump appeared to relish the Democratic division in a Wednesday tweet: “The Democrats are getting ZERO work done in Congress.”

Democrats leaving the meeting appeared to be taking Pelosi’s words into consideration. Tennessee Rep. Steve Cohen, who called for the impeachment inquiry on Tuesday, said he could see both sides.

Of leaders’ reluctance, Cohen said “it’s a political concern rather than an actual Constitutional one.”

Rep. Katie Hill, D-Calif., freshman from a swing district, wants to let court actions play out a bit, and is undecided on starting an impeachment inquiry.

“I think that we’re seeing the drumbeat moving in that direction,” Hill said. The more Trump “defies us, the more that it’s becoming an inevitability. But I don’t think that the caucus as a whole is there yet.”

Inside the room, others largely backed Pelosi’s approach, according to a person granted anonymity to discuss the private meeting. Another Democrat in the room said there were no fireworks.

## Parties make progress on debt, spending talks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Top leaders of both parties in Congress made progress Tuesday on two must-do items on the legislative agenda: averting automatic budget cuts and meeting a deadline later this year to increase the government’s borrowing limit.

But after a flurry of optimism at midday, a deal proved elusive after an initial look at the numbers, with Democrats demanding dollar-for-dollar increases for defense and non-defense accounts plus billions of dollars more for the Census and veterans health care.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who’s been a key force in getting bud-

get negotiations up and running, said both the debt limit increase and the outlines of a two-year spending agreement would likely be merged into one package if a deal can be worked out.

Driving the bipartisan talks is the desire to avoid automatic spending cuts that threaten to hit the Pentagon and other federal agencies with budget reductions averaging 10%. At the same time, increasing the debt limit is required to avert a first-ever, market-quaking default on government obligations like interest payments and Social Security benefits.

It would also minimize the chances of a repeat of the 35-day government shutdown of December and January.

## Trump picks ex-diplomat to be secretary of USAF

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Tuesday announced he would nominate Barbara Barrett, a former ambassador to Finland and certified astronaut, to be the next secretary of the Air Force, replacing Heather Wilson, who is slated to leave that post at the end of this month.

“I am pleased to announce my nomination of Barbara Barrett of Arizona, and former Chairman of the Aerospace Corporation, to be the next Secretary of the Air Force. She will be an outstanding Secretary!” Trump announced via Twitter late Tuesday afternoon.

Barrett, 68, is a business-

woman and pilot who has substantial government experience, according to a biography provided by Sen. Martha McSally’s office. The Arizona Republican championed Barrett’s nomination to Trump.

Last week, the Pentagon announced Matthew P. Donovan, the undersecretary of the Air Force, would become the service’s acting secretary on June 1, following Wilson’s departure.

Wilson announced in March that she would leave the job at the end of May to become the president of the University of Texas at El Paso. The service’s 24th secretary, she will have served for just more than two years when she leaves the Pentagon.

# Judge questions new Miss. abortion law

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — A federal judge indicated Tuesday that he is likely to block a Mississippi law that will ban most abortions once a fetal heartbeat can be detected.

The new law puts a cutoff point for abortion at about six weeks, when many women may not yet know they're pregnant.

U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves heard arguments about a request from the state's only abortion clinic, which wants him to block the law from taking effect July 1, as scheduled. Reeves is the same judge who ruled last year that Mississippi's 15-week ban is unconstitutional because it would prohibit access to abortion before a fetus could survive outside the pregnant woman's body. Viability is generally considered to be about 23 or 24 weeks.

In an indication of which way he is leaning on the request to block the new law, Reeves asked attorneys: "Doesn't it boil down to: Six is less than 15?"

Mississippi is one of several states enacting abortion restrictions this year in hopes that the U.S. Supreme Court, with new conservative justices, will reevaluate and maybe overturn its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

Reeves criticized lawmakers for passing an earlier ban after he struck down the one at 15 weeks.

"It sure smacks of defiance to this court," he said.

The state is appealing Reeves' ruling on the 15-week ban, and Republican Gov. Phil Bryant signed the new law in March. The state's only abortion clinic, Jackson Women's Health Organization, quickly sued the

state.

Reeves said he would decide soon on the request to block the law, but did not indicate when he would issue a ruling.

Governors in Kentucky, Ohio and Georgia have signed bans on abortion once a fetal heartbeat is detected. Alabama's governor signed a measure making abortion a felony in nearly all cases.

The Mississippi law says physicians who perform abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detected could face revocation of their state medical licenses. It also says abortions could be allowed after a fetal heartbeat is found if a pregnancy endangers a woman's life or one of her major bodily functions. Senators rejected an amendment that would have allowed exceptions for pregnancies caused by rape or incest.

## Another day of tornadoes in Midwest; St. Louis spared

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — A dangerous storm system in the Midwest produced dozens of tornadoes for the second consecutive day Tuesday, demolishing a race-track grandstand and damaging buildings in a wild animal park in Missouri but sparing St. Louis, the biggest city in its path.

Two deaths, both in Missouri, were blamed on the severe weather that started in

the Southern Plains on Monday night and moved to the northeast. Missouri and parts of Illinois and Arkansas were in the crosshairs Tuesday. By Wednesday, the storm was expected to move into the Great Lakes region, where it would weaken.

The skies grew dark over St. Louis before nightfall Tuesday and a tornado warning was issued for the city and surrounding suburbs, but the storm passed overhead without pro-

ducing the rotation that often spawns tornadoes and the city was mostly spared except for heavy rain.

The weather service Storm Prediction Center website listed 37 reports of tornadoes on Tuesday in Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.

Storms Monday evening flipped campers at Lucas Oil Speedway in Hickory County, Mo., injuring seven people, four of whom were taken to hospitals. The speedway's

grandstand also was destroyed, forcing cancellation of racing this weekend that was expected to draw about 3,000 campers.

Another twister Tuesday afternoon hit a drive-thru wild animal park in southern Missouri. Webster County Emergency Management Director Tom Simmons said buildings were damaged at the Wild Animal Safari near Strafford, but there were no reports that people or animals were injured.

## 900-pound Va. man pleads guilty from an ambulance

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — A Virginia man who weighs more than 900 pounds pleaded guilty in a federal cocaine conspiracy case Tuesday during a hearing that was held in a courthouse loading dock as the defendant lay on a stretcher inside an ambulance.

U.S. Magistrate Judge David Novak said the court engaged in "some extraordinary procedures" Tuesday to deal with Kenneth Hicks' health issues and to "protect his dignity."

Hicks, 48, stayed inside the

ambulance and wasn't visible to several of his family members and reporters who attended the hearing. He was visible to Novak and a prosecutor who sat at a table near the back of the ambulance.

The hearing was postponed last week when Hicks was brought to a hospital for an unspecified health issue after he was taken from his home.

Hicks, who lives in Emporia, was indicted along with 17 other people in a conspiracy to sell cocaine between 2013 and 2017.

He had his initial court appearance in March via video teleconference and was allowed to remain on bond in his home pending trial.

Because of various health issues, including his morbid obesity, Hicks — through his lawyer — asked for help in being brought to the courthouse for his plea hearing. Court documents in the case described Hicks as being confined to his bed and unable to dress himself or be dressed by others.

Novak approved a plan submitted by Hicks' defense law-

yer and prosecutors to allow the U.S. Marshals Service, the FBI and first responders to remove him from his home, either by placing him on a gurney and moving him through a doorway or by cutting open a large hole in a wall of his home in order to use a device capable of lifting his weight. Officials did not disclose how he was moved.

Hicks faces a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in prison and a maximum sentence of 40 years. Novak scheduled his sentencing hearing for Sept. 4.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Bear whose life was spared returns home

**NH** CONCORD — A bear whose life was spared two years ago by the governor of New Hampshire has returned to her home turf after traveling thousands of miles since being relocated.

The state's Fish and Game Department had decided to euthanize the black bear and three of her young offspring in 2017 after repeated problems culminated with two bears entering a home near Dartmouth College. But Republican Gov. Chris Sununu ordered the animals relocated instead.

Only the yearlings were moved that year, however, because the mother bear left town to mate. She was fitted with a tracking collar and moved north last June, but made it back to Hanover last week.

State officials said she's not causing any trouble and there are no plans to move her again.

## Graduate repays cost of prank 25 years later

**VT** MONTPELIER — A high school prankster who damaged school property in Vermont is finally paying the price — and then some — just in time for his 25th reunion.

As a Montpelier High School senior, Michael Burzycki created a 60-by-16-foot banner that read "LIVE LONG AND PROSPER CLASS OF 1994." He and a classmate hung it outside the auditorium. But water bottles they used to weigh down the corners ended up breaking a window.

Principal Peter Clarke didn't punish him. Instead he handed him a bill for \$1,994, due at Burzycki's 25th reunion.

Burzycki told WPTZ-TV that he has the money but wanted to do more, so he started a Go-

FundMe page for the school that has raised more than \$5,000.

## State beaches, parks to offer free sunscreen

**RI** PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island is doing its part to wipe out skin cancer caused by overexposure to the sun.

Gov. Gina Raimondo and U.S. Sen. Jack Reed announced that the state is teaming up with sunscreen company Raw Elements USA to offer free sunscreen dispenser stations at all state-run beaches and several parks for the 2019 summer season.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S.

## Students accused of tainting teachers' food

**OH** POWELL — Authorities are investigating accusations that students at an Ohio middle school put bodily fluids into food that was then served to teachers.

A Delaware County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman said that office is investigating reports of students putting urine and semen into crepes eaten by teachers at Hyatts Middle School in Powell.

Sheriff's spokeswoman Tracy Whited said any students found to have put fluids in the food could face felony assault charges.

## Man gets prison for smuggling immigrants

**TX** CORPUS CHRISTI — A Houston-area man must serve nearly two years in prison for trying to smuggle immigrants in furniture after three people were found in a plastic-wrapped dresser that was nailed shut.

Federal prosecutors said

Yabar Ayan Portes-Arevalo, 23, of Katy, was sentenced to 21 months. Investigators said Portes-Arevalo in December was driving a pickup truck and hauling a plastic-wrapped couch and dresser. He stopped at the Border Patrol checkpoint near Sarita.

Authorities said the driver appeared nervous so the load was examined. Agents removed the plastic and found three people hidden inside the couch and three more inside the dresser.

## Great white shark detected off coast

**CT** GREENWICH — An organization that electronically tracks ocean life detected a nearly 10-foot long great white shark in Long Island Sound.

OCEARCH said it got a ping from the shark they dubbed Cabot off the coast of Greenwich.

Chris Fischer, OCEARCH's founding chairman and expedition leader, said the 500-pound-plus shark was tagged last year off Nova Scotia and has traveled as far south as Florida.

Fischer said it's not unheard of for great whites to be in the sound, but "We were quite surprised to see this one so far to the west." He said the shark is probably after bait fish.

## Work underway on sunk WWII British tanker

**NY** SOUTHAMPTON — The U.S. Coast Guard said work is underway to extract oil from a British tanker sunk by a German U-boat off Long Island during World War II.

The Coast Guard said in a news release that a team has been at the site of the tanker, named Coimbra, since April 29 and has pumped more than 62,000 gallons of oil from its

tanks since May 11. Initial dive operations found the tanker was leaking small amounts of oil.

The Coimbra was torpedoed in January 1942, killing 36 officers and crew members about 30 miles off Long Island's south shore.

It's now about 180 feet deep.

## Man fleeing police hurt in roof jump

**PA** PITTSBURGH — Authorities said a man fleeing Pittsburgh police seriously injured himself when he jumped from the roof of a two-story home.

The officers were on patrol Sunday when they spotted a man they knew was wanted on warrants. They chased after him on foot, but he ran into a home and hid, even eluding a search by a police dog.

Officers eventually spotted him lying on the roof. After defying instructions to stay put, the man jumped onto one neighboring roof and then another before injuring himself when he jumped two stories to an alley below.

## African painted dog killed by gate at zoo

**FL** MIAMI — Officials at a Florida zoo said a young African painted dog was killed when a gate collapsed on her.

Zoo Miami posted on Facebook that the juvenile female died Monday. She was one of five puppies born at the zoo in January.

Zoo officials said the endangered canines were being moved between enclosures in a routine transfer when a cable that supported a solid metal guillotine door separated, allowing the door to fall on the animal.

From wire reports

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# Blues secure trip to Stanley Cup Final

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The St. Louis Blues are marching into the Stanley Cup Final for the first time in decades.

Pretty sweet moment for Vladimir Tarasenko and Co.

David Perron had a goal and an assist, Jordan Binnington picked up his franchise-record 12th playoff win and the Blues eliminated the San Jose Sharks with a 5-1 win in Game 6 of the Western Conference final Tuesday night.

Tarasenko, Brayden Schenn and Tyler Bozak also scored for St. Louis, which will face the Boston Bruins for the championship. Ivan Barbashev got an empty-netter with 2:15 left, Ryan O'Reilly had three assists and Binnington stopped 25 shots.

"We always believed we could do this," said Tarasenko, who had a point in every game of the series. "But it's still an unbelievable feeling."

St. Louis won three consecutive games to advance to the franchise's first Cup Final since 1970. That series also pitted the Blues against the Bruins.

Game 1 is Monday night in Boston.

Laura Branigan's "Gloria" blared over the speakers at the Blues' home arena after the latest victory on an improbable run from last in the NHL on Jan. 3 to one of the last two teams standing. The turnaround came after Craig Berube replaced Mike Yeo as coach in November and Binnington took over as the starting goaltender in January.

"We always had the talent," said Doug Armstrong, the general manager and president of hockey operations for the Blues. "But we were finding ways to lose games instead of winning them. They turned it around and just haven't stopping going."

Berube gave his team credit for working its way through a coaching change and several months of disappointing play.

"We were trying to get on the right track," Berube said. "Once we got going in January and February, I knew we had a good hockey team. Once you get into the playoffs anything can happen — and it did."

Blues defenseman Colton

Parayko said it was a matter of confidence.

"We all bought in and eventually we figured out just how good we can be," he said. "It's a tight-knit group. But that adversity, it made us work harder for each other."

San Jose played without injured forwards Joe Pavelski and Tomas Hertl and defenseman Erik Karlsson. Injury attrition played a role for the Sharks, who played seven games in each of the first two rounds.

Dylan Gambrell scored his first career goal for San Jose, which lost for the first time in five elimination games this postseason. Martin Jones made 14 stops.

St. Louis grabbed control with a fast start.

Perron tipped in Sammy Blais' shot just 92 seconds into the game. Tarasenko made it 2-0 with a well-placed wrist shot at 16:16.

Tarasenko got his eighth goal of the postseason just seven seconds after San Jose forward Barclay Goodrow was sent off for tripping.

Gambrell converted a break-

away along the right wing 6:40 into the second period. Joonas Donskoi set up the play with a long stretch pass.

Gambrell's goal came just seconds after Jones stopped Pat Maroon from close range. It also stopped the Sharks' scoring drought at 99 minutes, 32 seconds.

Schenn pushed the lead to 3-1 with a power-play goal 12:47 into the second. He pounced on the rebound of a shot by Alex Pietrangelo for his first goal in 14 games.

Bozak scored on a feed from Perron in the third period for a 4-1 lead.

Binnington improved to 12-7 with his second straight strong effort. He made 21 saves in a 5-0 win in Game 4 on Sunday.

The 25-year-old Binnington stopped Evander Kane on the doorstep midway through the third. He also denied Logan Couture on a breakaway later in the period.

"It's excitement and relief," Binnington said. "We put in all the work. It's pretty special. The final minutes, counting down and how loud it was in the rink, it was a special moment."

## With 10 days between games, Bruins try to stay sharp

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Boston Bruins think they've found a way to stay sharp for the Stanley Cup Final while waiting a total of 10 days between games.

The Eastern Conference champions will hold a public intrasquad scrimmage on Thursday night, and coach Bruce Cassidy said he'll try to maintain a regular game-day schedule so that the players will get back in the routine before the opener of the championship series on Monday.

"We've got some ideas we bandied around. We came up with this one," Cassidy said on Tuesday, the Bruins' fifth day off since sweeping the Carolina Hurricanes in the East finals. "We've had good prac-

tices, but this will be a little bit different."

The Bruins needed seven games to dispatch the Toronto Maple Leafs in the opening round, then had one day off before starting the second round against Columbus. They finished off the Blue Jackets in six games, and had two days to rest before Game 1 against the Hurricanes.

But that series ended Thursday, and the Bruins didn't even find out their opponent for the final until Tuesday night, when the St. Louis Blues eliminated the San Jose Sharks in six games.

Cassidy said last week he would reach out to other teams to get pointers on how to handle long layoffs. Among them: the New England Patriots, who

routinely have a first-round bye, in addition to a two-week break before the Super Bowl.

The Bruins coach said on Tuesday that he touched base with all of the teams in town, as well as some of the Boston players from the 2011 and '13 teams that went to the Final and other NHL coaches who have had long breaks. But he declined to share their advice.

"We'll take what we thought was relevant to us and go from there," Cassidy said, acknowledging that a seven-game series is different than preparing for a Super Bowl. "In the first game, we want to be good. We want to be sharp. We want to be on time. We want to win. But we have a bit more luxury than say a one-and-done."

The scrimmage will be two,

25-minute periods, with two officials on the ice. But some rules will be ignored in the interest of situational drills and keeping everyone healthy.

Cassidy said he may create a four-on-four situation as well as a six-on-five for a potential end-of-game, pulled-goalie scenario. The checking line will face off against the top line, and players might switch teams to get the matchups Cassidy wants to work on.

Individual players, including goalie Tuukka Rask, will decide how much they want to play.

The winning team will earn ... something.

"They will put something on the line," Cassidy said. "That's something I have to discuss with them."



# Raptors even Eastern Conference finals

Associated Press

TORONTO — With a weary Kawhi Leonard fighting through fatigue, the Toronto Raptors found enough energy to pull away from the Milwaukee Bucks.

Kyle Lowry led the way.

Lowry scored 25 points, Leonard had 19 and the Raptors beat the Bucks 120-102 on Tuesday night to even the Eastern Conference finals at two games apiece.

"This was one of the nights that we knew Kawhi was a little bit limited and we had to come out and be aggressive for him," Lowry said.

Leonard played 52 minutes in a double-overtime win in Game 3 on Sunday despite dealing with leg soreness. He limped away from the basket following a third-quarter dunk in Game 4, but still toughed it out for 34 minutes.

"I feel good," Leonard insisted. "I'm going to keep going and keep fighting. We have a chance to make history."

Raptors coach Nick Nurse

said he's not worried about Leonard's health.

"He's certainly tired, like a lot of guys in this series are," Nurse said. "He looks OK to me. There was one time I was trying to give him an extended rest and he didn't really want it so he must be OK."

Serge Ibaka had 17 points and 13 rebounds for the Raptors, who improved to 7-2 at home this postseason. Reserve Norm Powell scored 18 points, and Marc Gasol had 17 points and a team-high seven assists.

"The first two games, they really brought the intensity to us," Powell said. "They really came out and were more physical, more active. We wanted to change that narrative coming home."

The home team has won all four games in the series so far. Game 5 is Thursday night in Milwaukee.

"We need to take this challenge of playing in a hostile environment," Nurse said. "We're going into a tough, loud place to play. Let's see if those guys can bring that same pop and

focus and determination on the road."

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 25 points and 10 rebounds for the top-seeded Bucks. Khris Middleton scored 30 points, but no one else had more than 11.

Milwaukee lost its second straight following a six-game winning streak. It dropped consecutive games just once during the regular season, at Utah on March 2 and at Phoenix on March 4.

"This is probably the first night defensively where I don't feel like we were close to where you need to be," coach Mike Budenholzer said. "We got punched. They played really well."

Toronto's Fred VanVleet, who missed 16 of 20 shot attempts through the first three games of the series, went 5-for-6 from the field in Game 4. He made each of his three three-point tries and finished with 13 points.

"He needed one of those games," Lowry said. "He played well and made some great plays tonight."

Ahead 94-81 to start the fourth, the Raptors extended their lead with a 10-3 spurt, including seven points from VanVleet. Powell's fast-break layup with 8:35 left put Toronto up 104-84.

"We've got to guard better," Middleton said. "Everybody on their team, I feel like they got pretty much whatever they wanted. Everything was easy."

Antetokounmpo shot 5-for-8 in the opening frame, matching the number of made baskets he had during Game 3. However, the Bucks star went 4-for-9 the rest of the way.

Leonard and Pascal Siakam, who both played more than 50 minutes Sunday, looked sluggish in the opening half. Leonard missed the only shot he took in the second, while Siakam played fewer than three minutes in the second after picking up his third foul. Siakam had two points at halftime.

Leonard came up limping after dunking against Antetokounmpo early in the third, but remained in the game.

## Focus shifts to stacked field in Indianapolis 500

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The soap opera surrounding McLaren's failed bid to qualify Fernando Alonso for the Indianapolis 500 is over. The spotlight is there for the taking.

The McLaren debacle dominated the first week at Indianapolis Motor Speedway and dwarfed every other team and driver trying to make Sunday's race — including plenty of contenders ready to star in "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing."

Team Penske, Ed Carpenter Racing and engine-maker Chevrolet have shown the most consistency, while Honda and its flagship Andretti Autosport and Chip Ganassi Racing teams have work to do before the 500. Penske is on the pole for an 18th time with Simon Pagenaud and Chevrolet earned the

top four starting spots in qualifying as the ECR trio of team owner Ed Carpenter, Spencer Pigot and Ed Jones took spots two through four.

Only 1.804 seconds separated Pagenaud from Kyle Kaiser, the final qualifier, to set the closest field in Indy 500 history.

"I think all the cars are so close these days," Pagenaud said. "[You] can see that all the teams are raising the game, all the drivers are raising their game. It's honestly tremendous to be in this era of the sport because you get better and better every weekend and it never stops."

The fight to make the race was dramatic up and down pit lane. The Ganassi cars, with five-time series champion Scott Dixon and rookie Felix Rosenqvist, have been nothing special so far and Rosenqvist

needed a total rebuild of his confidence following a crash three days before qualifying.

Rosenqvist was coached by three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Dario Franchitti, who shadowed the Swedish driver and got him back up to speed and into the race.

Rosenqvist qualified the car 29th, narrowly avoiding Sunday's stressful "Last Row Shootout" that eliminated Alonso. Of all the drivers who crashed during last week's practice and went to backups, Rosenqvist was the only one to make it into the race on the first day of qualifying.

Sage Karam had similar struggles even as he attempted to qualify for his sixth Indy 500. The American didn't like his car and was clearly spooked; teammate JR Hildebrand had to shake the car down for

Karam and assure him it had no gremlins.

Karam rebounded Sunday and was the fastest qualifier among the six vying for the final three spots in the race. He edged James Hinchcliffe, who didn't make the race last year and crashed in Saturday qualifying to put him in a desperate hole on Sunday, while Kaiser of tiny Juncos Racing snagged the final spot in the field and sent Alonso and McLaren home.

Kaiser crashed Friday, a day before qualifying, and team owner Ricardo Juncos had every employee work through the night to prepare a car. The team lost both its primary sponsors right before opening day, practiced all week in a plain white car, and Kaiser turned four flawless laps to earn his second Indy 500 start.

# Verlander fans 12, flirts with no-hitter

Associated Press

HOUSTON — As Houston's Justin Verlander flirted with a no-hitter against the Chicago White Sox, he took a moment to scan the seats behind home plate to see whether childhood idol Nolan Ryan, who threw a record seven no-hitters, was watching from his usual seat behind the plate.

After throwing two no-hitters in his career, Verlander thought to himself that it would be "pretty cool" if Ryan was there to see it if he joined him in the exclusive group of players who have tossed at least three.

Ryan was at the game, but it wasn't to be.

"I screwed it up," Verlander said with a laugh.

Verlander took a no-hitter into the seventh inning and struck out a season-high 12 to lead the Astros to a 5-1 win over the White Sox.

Verlander (8-1), who said his slider was his best pitch Tuesday night, was in control from the first pitch, allowing one hit and walking one in eight innings for his fourth straight win and the seventh in eight starts. The only hit off him came when Jose Abreu sent the first pitch of his at-bat just over the wall and out of reach of a leaping Jake Marisnick in straightaway center field with one out in the seventh to cut the lead to 5-1.

"My thought was if Jake

catches this, it's over. I'm going to get it," Verlander said. "Sure enough it went over. He had a great effort at it [but] I was pretty confident that that ball was going to be a home run unless a miracle happened."

It was Abreu's sixth career home run off of Verlander.

"We all know the kind of pitcher that he is," Abreu said in Spanish through a translator. "He has all of my respect. He's one of the best. In that at-bat I just went in there trying to make hard contact if possible. I am happy that I was able to do it."

Yuli Gurriel hit a solo homer off Dylan Covey (0-3) in the fourth inning to give the Astros home runs in 18 straight games,

tying the second-longest streak in franchise history.

Verlander, who threw no-hitters in 2007 and 2011, retired his first five batters with three strikeouts before walking Yonder Alonso with two outs in the second. But he got right back on track, sitting down Tim Anderson to end the inning.

He needed just 11 pitches to strike out the side in the third inning and fanned two in the fourth. He struck out one in the fifth and one more in the sixth after a long layoff after the Astros sent eight hitters to the plate in the bottom of their four-run fifth.

Yoan Moncada struck out to start the seventh before Abreu's homer.

## MLB roundup

# Dodgers extend streak with Kershaw on the mound

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The Los Angeles Dodgers just keep winning when Clayton Kershaw is on the mound.

Kershaw took a shutout into the seventh inning in his first start at Tropicana Field and the Los Dodgers beat the Tampa Bay Rays 7-3 on Tuesday night. The three-time NL Cy Young Award winner (4-0) wound up allowing two runs, six hits, one walk and had eight strikeouts in 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings.

"I thought all night long, just mixing his pitches, changing locations, sequencing, everything was great," Los Angeles manager Dave Roberts said.

Los Angeles has won 15 consecutive regular-season games started by Kershaw. The left-hander is the only pitcher to have three separate streaks of 13 or more games (13 in 2014 and 16 in 2017) since 1920.

The Dodgers, with the National League's best record at 32-17, have won six of seven. Tampa Bay dropped two games behind the AL East-leading New York Yankees and are 13-

13 since April 19th when it led the division by 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> games.

The Rays were coming off a 13-5 loss Sunday to the Yankees.

"We did so many things really well early on in the year," Rays manager Kevin Cash said. "Unfortunately the last two days, just ugly losses."

Kershaw had scattered four hits through six but was replaced by Pedro Baez with two on and one out in the seventh and Los Angeles up 6-0.

"Until that last inning everything went pretty well, not a whole lot of hard contact," Kershaw said.

Baez departed after facing one batter when Willy Adames had an RBI infield single that bruised the reliever's right knee. Baez needed assistance as he gingerly walked off the field.

X-rays were negative but Roberts said Baez won't be available Wednesday.

**Yankees 11, Orioles 4:** Clint Frazier homered twice and had a career-high five RBIs, Gary Sanchez contributed a three-run drive and New York routed

host Baltimore.

**Blue Jays 10, Red Sox 3:** Rowdy Tellez had two homers and five RBIs and Randal Grichuk also homered in host Toronto's win over Boston.

**Marlins 5, Tigers 4 (11):** Chad Wallach hit a tiebreaking double in the 11th inning, and Miami beat host Detroit.

**Giants 4, Braves 3:** Joe Panik hit a game-ending two-run single off Atlanta closer Luke Jackson with two outs in the ninth to lift host San Francisco.

**Mets 6, Nationals 5:** Pete Alonso hit a long tying homer in the eighth inning, Amed Rosario had a winning infield single with two outs in the ninth and host New York rallied from deficits three times to beat Washington.

**Rockies 5, Pirates 0:** German Marquez struck out seven in eight dominant innings and Trevor Story hit his 11th home run as Colorado cooled off surging host Pittsburgh.

**Athletics 5, Indians 3:** Pinch-hitter Mark Canha's two-run homer off struggling Cleveland starter Trevor Bauer

in the third inning sent visiting Oakland to its fifth straight win.

**Reds 3, Brewers 0:** Sonny Gray and three Cincinnati relievers held down host Milwaukee, which was missing Christian Yelich because of back spasms.

**Rangers 5, Mariners 3:** Lance Lynn allowed two runs in seven innings and Shawn Kelley earned the save hours after learning that two lumps removed from his throat last week were benign as host Texas beat Seattle.

**Padres 3, Diamondbacks 2:** Eric Hosmer's two-run, opposite-field home run off Zack Greinke highlighted the three-run sixth inning that carried host San Diego past Arizona.

**Cubs 3, Phillies 2:** Pinch-hitter Javier Baez's single capped a two-run, ninth-inning rally and host Chicago stopped Philadelphia's four-game winning streak.

**Twins 8, Angels 3:** Marwin Gonzalez homered and drove in three runs as Minnesota rallied past host Los Angeles.