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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Roosevelt visit sends message to China

By TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT — Defense Secretary Ash Carter, standing on the deck of the aircraft carrier as it sailed through the disputed South China Sea, said Thursday that American sea power is the “big stick” needed to bring stability to a region unnerved by Chinese territorial claims.

The Roosevelt, nicknamed “The Big Stick,” was accompanied by the USS Lassen — the Navy destroyer that angered China last month when it sailed within the 12-mile zone around one of the disputed Spratly Islands, cruising as close as 6 or 7 miles to the Chinese-claimed Subi Reef.

On Thursday, the Roosevelt and Lassen kept their distance, patrolling about 150-200 miles south of the Spratlys, but the

symbolism of being aboard the carrier was clear.

There is “great tension out here over the issue of the South China Sea,” Carter said while aboard the carrier. “But T.R.’s motto was ‘Speak softly and carry a big stick.’”

Carter spent the last few days at the Association of South East Asian Nations defense ministers’ summit in Malaysia, where he also met with Chinese officials. The defense ministers failed to reach a consensus on the territorial claims of each nation, deciding to scrap a joint statement that traditionally ends their annual meeting, despite behind-the-scenes maneuvering by the United States and China.

Carter said Thursday, from aboard the massive nuclear-powered carrier, he would continue to try to reach an understanding with China.

“This has been a region that has enjoyed stability for a long time,” he said. “It would be a shame if people here ruined

that. I don’t expect that to occur because the United States will continue to play the role it has.”

The United States and China do not belong to ASEAN but are invited to participate, given their influence in the region. The dispute over the contested waters hijacked the meeting’s agenda.

Prior to visiting the Roosevelt, Carter said the United States will continue to conduct freedom-of-navigation operations and “fly, sail and operate” in the South China Sea to guarantee international waters remain open to all.

The Lassen’s skipper, Cmdr. Robert C. Francis, was on board the Roosevelt during Carter’s visit and spoke about his ship’s patrol within the 12-mile territorial limit around Subi Reef.

During its Oct. 27 patrol near the reef, the Lassen was met by the Chinese destroyer Lanzhou, a ship similar in size and makeup to the U.S. destroyer. After several days of cordial exchanges over

the radio, the Lassen sailed within the 12-mile zone.

Then the Chinese queries began, repeated again and again, Francis said.

The Chinese radioed: “You are in Chinese waters. What is your intention?”

Francis said the Lassen responded over and over, that it was “operating in accordance with international law.”

As they sailed past the reef, Francis said he could see cranes and construction, but no people.

“It was just a normal day,” he said.

The Roosevelt is en route to its homeport in San Diego, after spending six months at sea supporting Operation Inherent Resolve.

The carrier’s appearance in the South China Sea would have had to happen anyway as it sailed home, said Rear Adm. Roy Kelley, commander of the Theodore Roosevelt Strike Group.

copp.tara@stripes.com

Report details attack on Doctors Without Borders hospital

By JOSH SMITH

Stars and Stripes

Coalition officials in Kabul and Washington sent reassuring messages to Doctors Without Borders, even as gunfire from a U.S. aircraft rained down on its hospital in northern Afghanistan last month, the medical charity said in a preliminary report released on Thursday.

As an American AC-130 gunship fired on the hospital, staff made a series of desperate calls and sent text messages to military officials. In reply, an unidentified official with the U.S.-led Resolute Support mission sent text messages saying, “I’m sorry to hear that, I still do not know what happened,” and “I’ll do my best, praying for you all.”

Separate investigations by the Pentagon and the NATO coalition are ongoing, and the Defense Department said on Thursday that the military was working closely with the medical group to determine the facts.

Pentagon spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis said in a statement that Gen. John Campbell, commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, had met with the group’s representatives on Wednesday.

The Oct. 3 attack sparked international outrage and calls for an independent probe into the incident, in which 30 medical staff and patients were killed and dozens more wounded. Doctors Without Borders, which goes by the French initials MSF, has called it a war crime.

Senior Afghan officials have claimed that the hospital compound was being used by Taliban fighters to fire on government forces trying to retake the area. NATO officers have said Afghan forces requested the strike to take out Taliban firing positions.

But MSF asserts in Thursday’s report that the hospital was not being used as a base by insurgents and that there was no heavy fighting in the area at the time.

“The view from inside the hospital is that this attack was conducted with a purpose to kill and destroy,” said Christopher Stokes, MSF’s general director, told reporters at a press conference in Kabul on Thursday. “A mistake is quite hard to understand and believe at this time.”

Based on interviews with staff and witnesses, the report does not include information from the American or Afghan militaries, which have yet to release detailed information on the attack.

MSF lays out in the report a chronology of the days leading to the deadly airstrike, which came amid heavy fighting in the city of Kunduz, the first major population center to be captured by the Taliban since it was ousted from power in 2001.

On Sept. 28, the day the Taliban captured the city, Afghan military officials pulled all but their most seriously wounded soldiers from the hospital. After that point, MSF says, it is unaware of any more security forces being brought to the hospital, as most new patients were either Taliban fighters or civilians.

On Sept. 29, MSF once again relayed the exact coordinates of the hospital to the U.S. Defense Department in Washington, to the Afghan Defense Ministry and to American military officials in Kabul.

“Confirmation of receipt was received from both U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Army representatives, both of whom assured us that the coordinates had been passed on to the appropriate parties,” the report said.

By Wednesday, Sept. 30, roughly half of the 130 patients at the hospital were Taliban, including two whom MSF staff believed to be of “higher rank.”

The next day, Oct. 1, an American military official in Washington contacted MSF to ask if any of the organization’s facilities had a large number of Taliban “holed up,” and inquired about the safety of the medical staff.

MSF officials replied that “staff were working at full capacity in Kunduz and that the hospital was full of patients, including wounded Taliban combatants,” according to the report.

In the day before the airstrikes, staff placed MSF flags on the roof, and employees were instructed to sleep in safe rooms in the basement to reduce a reported threat of kidnapping.

“Throughout the night before the airstrikes began, all MSF staff confirm that it was very calm in the hospital and its close surroundings,” the report said. “No fighting was taking place around the hospital, no planes were heard overhead, no gunshots were reported, nor explosions in the vicinity of the hospital.”

An MSF staff member conducted a routine survey of the compound between 12:20 a.m. and 1:10 a.m. on Oct. 3.

“The coordinator reported that the (Kunduz Trauma Center) was calm, with no armed combatants present, nor any fighting on the hospital grounds or within the audible vicinity. From all MSF accounts, there was no shooting from or around the Trauma Centre and the compound was in full MSF control with our rules and

procedures fully respected.”

Just after 2 a.m. a “series of multiple, precise and sustained airstrikes” began. Inside the hospital were 105 patients, including an estimated three or four government forces, 20 injured Taliban, and 149 Afghan and international staff, the report said.

Despite the pleas sent to Kabul and Washington, the strikes continued for more than an hour, MSF said. The first room to be hit was the intensive care unit, where several immobile patients, including children, were being cared for, the report said.

The strikes then continued to methodically destroy the rest of the main hospital building, including the operating rooms where two patients were killed as they lay on the operating tables, the report said.

In the report, witnesses describe some victims being gunned down as they tried to flee the building, which suggests that the aircraft was tracking the running targets. The hospital caught fire, with some patients burning to death in their beds, according to witnesses.

A few hours after the attack stopped, ambulances from the city’s public hospital arrived to evacuate the wounded. At the same time, Afghan special forces soldiers arrived and started searching the vehicles for Taliban patients, the report said. Clashes began outside the compound, and one ambulance was struck in the crossfire.

MSF says it is cooperating with the various investigations, but insists that an independent assessment is needed, by a party other than the U.S. or Afghan governments. So far, however, American and Afghan officials have not agreed to an independent investigation.

On Oct. 24, coalition investigators acknowledged that civilians were killed during the attack, and President Barack Obama has apologized to MSF.

In its statement, the Pentagon said it was working with MSF to identify the victims and determine the damage to the hospital “so that it can be repaired in full.”

Pentagon officials have indicated that their investigators are focusing on a series of communications and intelligence failures that may have caused the American forces to violate their own rules of engagement.

smith.josh@stripes.com

Twitter: @joshjonsmith

Man charged in attack on airman

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Police have arrested a 28-year-old man and charged him with attempted murder in the Oct. 8 attack on a U.S. airman who was hailed as a national hero for his role in thwarting a terrorist attack this past summer on a Paris-bound train.

James Tran was arrested Wednesday morning in Elk Grove, Calif., nearly a month after Air Force Staff Sgt. Spencer Stone was stabbed three times during an alcohol-related

altercation outside a popular bar district. Stone, 23, required emergency surgery and spent a week in a local hospital.

Sacramento police said detectives interviewed several witnesses and received information from the community that led to Tran being identified as a suspect. Police were seeking two suspects in the incident that was captured on grainy surveillance video and appeared to show Stone fighting off several attackers.

Sacramento police Chief Sam Somers Jr. described Tran as

“the instigator” in the brawl. He said the fight began as a verbal argument. Eventually the two groups separated, Somers said, but Tran later re-engaged with Stone, and the fight escalated.

In August, Stone, of Carmichael, Calif., and two of his childhood friends were vacationing in Europe when they took down a gunman with ties to Islamic extremism and thwarted a terrorist attack on a train.

With information from The Associated Press.
dickstein.corey@stripes.com
Twitter: @CDicksteinDC

Details of trade deal released

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Details of a sweeping Pacific Rim trade deal released Thursday set the stage for a raucous debate in Congress but also may provide reassurances to those who worried the agreement could gut protections for the environment, public health and labor.

The text of the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement between the U.S. and 11 other countries, including Japan and Mexico, runs to 30 chapters and hundreds of pages. It lays out plans for the handling of trade in everything from zinc dust to railway sleepers and live eels.

Governments of the 12 member countries released the complete text online Thursday, making public the specifics of an agreement that critics complain was forged in secrecy.

The documents show the pact reached Oct. 5 in Atlanta after several years of talks is chock full of good intentions. Negotiators agreed to promote environmental sustainability, respect the rights and needs of indigenous peoples, and temper protections for drug patents with safeguards for public health and access to medicines. It also emphasizes the intention of the trading bloc to abide by earlier commitments made under the World Trade Organization and other international treaties.

That’s no guarantee the pact won’t raise hackles with U.S. lawmakers who have questioned whether it will help U.S. exports and create jobs or just expose more American workers to low-wage competition, giving multinational corporations excessive power.

Under a trade law passed earlier this year, President Barack Obama must give the public time to review the text before he signs the agreement and turns it over to Congress for approval. Lawmakers must simply vote yes or no.

Town stunned by officer’s suicide

Associated Press

FOX LAKE, Ill. — Public works employees were pulling down the blue ribbons residents had tied to trees and poles as a tribute to their slain hero. Signs around the small town that had praised the cop known as “G.I. Joe” suddenly disappeared, replaced in one case by another that labeled him “G.I. Joke.”

The friends and neighbors of police Lt. Charles Joseph Gliniewicz reacted with disbelief and dismay to authorities’ announcement Wednesday that the popular Fox Lake, Ill., of-

ficer meticulously staged his own suicide to make it look like he died in the line of duty and had been stealing for years from a police club for youth that he oversaw.

Recovered text messages and other records now show Gliniewicz, 52, embezzled from the village’s Police Explorer program for seven years, Lake County Major Crimes Task Force Commander George Filenko said.

The revelations stunned people in Fox Lake, a village of 10,000 about 50 miles north

of Chicago where the married father of four had long been a role model.

An organization that assists survivors of officers killed in the line of duty, the 100 Club of Chicago, asked the Gliniewicz family to return a \$15,000 donation. Motorola Solutions, which announced in September it would put up a \$50,000 reward toward information leading to the arrest of Gliniewicz’s killer, said the money will be donated to the Explorer program to replace stolen funds, the Chicago Tribune reported.

Egypt says crash not caused by bomb

The Washington Post

LONDON — Russia and Egypt on Thursday dismissed as “speculation” British suggestions that a bomb caused a Russian jetliner to crash in the Sinai Peninsula, while the U.K. government forged ahead with plans to bring home thousands of British tourists amid concerns over airport security in the Egyptian resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh.

Egypt’s civil aviation ministry said in a statement Thurs-

day that the British theory of a bomb having been smuggled aboard the plane “is not based on facts,” and that all of the country’s airports apply international security standards.

“The investigation team does not have any evidence or data confirming this hypothesis,” Civil Aviation Minister Hosam Kamal said.

British Prime Minister David Cameron said Thursday that the crash was “more likely than not” caused by a bomb.

In a Wednesday night television appearance, British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond cited “a significant possibility that the crash was caused by an explosive device on board the aircraft.” He said that flights from Britain to Sharm el-Sheikh would be suspended indefinitely and that the thousands of Britons already in the city would return home under “emergency procedures for additional screening.”

RBs Fournette, Henry taking center stage

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — If indeed it takes one to know one, then LSU's Heisman Trophy front-runner, Leonard Fournette, should have no small measure of credibility when he describes Alabama's Derrick Henry as a supremely punishing power runner.

"If I played defense, I wouldn't want to tackle him," Fournette said. "But that's your job to tackle him, so you have to make a business decision every time you go against him."

The field inside Alabama's Bryant-Denny Stadium could become a rather busy marketplace for those trading in the currency of pain on Saturday night. In addition to the national title implications surrounding the No. 4 Tigers' clash with the seventh-ranked Crimson Tide, the game also will showcase two of the biggest, strongest and most productive running backs in college football.

The 6-foot-1, 230-pound Fournette has been the driving force of LSU's offense. His rushing average of 193.1 yards leads the nation. He has scored 15 touchdowns.

In the Southeastern Conference, only Fournette has been more productive than the 6-foot-3, 242-pound Henry, who

averages 130.5 yards per game and has scored 14 touchdowns.

And there appears to be mutual respect.

Henry said he "probably wouldn't" want to tackle Fournette, either.

"Whew. That's a big boy to bring down ... but he runs the ball the right way," Henry said. "Every week, he brings it."

Some comparisons are natural because both players are big, routinely run over would-be tacklers, gain a lot of yards and score often.

Alabama coach Nick Saban says direct comparisons may be unfair because their bodies are different, as are their running styles, but he speaks glowingly about both.

Saban called Fournette "as dominant as any player in the country in terms of the way he plays and what he's capable of doing as a running back."

"We thought he was a fabulous player in high school, the No. 1 running back in the country," continued Saban, who tried to recruit Fournette. "It's no surprise to me that the guy has developed into one of the premier players in the country and arguably the best running back."

Fournette called the choice between Alabama and LSU "one of the hardest de-

cisions I've made." Henry was a freshman with the Crimson Tide when Fournette chose LSU. He has said his main reasons for staying in Louisiana had to do with family, personal relationships and the desire to be different than players flocking to Tuscaloosa because of the Tide's recent collection of national titles and SEC dominance.

If Alabama emerges once again as the SEC's best, Henry will be a big reason why.

"I don't think you can say enough about the way he's played and how he's shown great competitive character and been very productive, not only in the way he's carried the ball but in pass protection, the things he's done without the ball," Saban said.

Defensive players on both teams are confident they have a good sense of what they'll be up against this week because of their experience practicing against their own battering backs.

"As a linebacker you've got to be ready for that matchup. It's nothing you shy away from," LSU linebacker Kendall Beckwith said. "It's the kind of thing you've got to look forward to and be ready to play. You've got to go out and show what you can do, be confident in

what you can do."

Fournette has garnered more attention this season, partly because of his handful of touchdown runs longer than 40 yards — one as long as 87.

A big game against Alabama would consolidate Fournette's position as a Heisman front-runner, while a poor performance could give other candidates an opening. There could be more pressure on Fournette, although he insists he doesn't see it that way.

"I'm not really worried about the Heisman. I'm not focused on me. I understand I'm in a position to win it or whatever, but my whole focus is on a championship right now," Fournette said. "Alabama is another team in the way, and not to mention they're a great team. So, we're focused on them."

Alabama quarterback Jake Coker said Henry deserves more credit that he's getting for the hard yards he's earned.

"He gets overshadowed for sure. The guy is a beast," Coker said. "When you see him run on the field, it's a lot different than seeing him run on TV. Some of those plays, I see him just punish people. I just sit back there and I'm just like, 'Gah, I feel bad for that guy.'"

Tired Blues come from behind against rival Blackhawks

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Exhausted from their travel woes, the St. Louis Blues found enough energy to rally from a three-goal deficit and beat a Central Division rival.

Vladimir Tarasenko scored at 3:54 of a whistle-free overtime to give the Blues a 6-5, come-from-behind win over the Chicago Blackhawks on Wednesday night.

Tarasenko, who also had an assist, beat Corey Crawford on the glove side from the slot for his seventh goal after taking a nifty behind-the-back centering pass from Alex Pietrangolo.

"This is the first goal I've seen scored where tired people score the goal," coach Ken Hitchcock said. "I mean, Vlady was exhausted."

After a 3-0 loss at home to Los Angeles on Tuesday, the Blues' chartered flight was diverted to Milwaukee because of fog and they continued by bus to their Chicago hotel — arriving at about 4 a.m.

The Blackhawks took a 5-2 lead after one period.

"Regardless of what happened in the 3 on 3, to take this game into overtime, our players deserve a lot of credit for what they did," Hitchcock said.

Ducks 3, Panthers 2 (SO): Chris Stewart scored in the second period and again in the fourth round of the shootout as host Anaheim claimed consecutive wins for the first time this season.

Corey Perry tied it on his first goal of the season with 5.1 seconds left in regulation for the Ducks. Frederik Andersen stopped 23 shots for Anaheim, denying Jonathan Huberdeau on the decisive shootout try.

Jakob Silfverberg also scored in the

Oilers' McDavid out indefinitely

EDMONTON, Alberta — Edmonton Oilers rookie Connor McDavid will be out indefinitely because of a broken left collarbone.

He was expected to undergo surgery with a recuperation period expected to stretch into months.

"We're talking about months," Oilers general manager Peter Chiarelli told a news conference. "We don't have a particular timeframe, but as I said, plural, months. There will be plates and screws involved (in the surgery)."

McDavid was injured Tuesday night in the Oilers' 4-2 win over the Philadelphia Flyers.

Racing down the left wing toward the Flyers goal late in the second period, with Flyers defenders Brandon Manning and Michael Del Zotto beside him, McDavid appeared to lose the edge on his skate.

The trio fell and plowed hard into the end boards.

McDavid struggled to his feet and skated slowly to the bench.

"He didn't have much to say (after the game)," Chiarelli said. "He was upset. He loves to play the game and he won't be playing it for a while."

He said McDavid has age and character on his side.

"The silver lining is that he's young, he's a strong kid mentally and physically, he's still developing so he'll

come back probably even stronger," Chiarelli said.

"In my experience with these significant injuries with younger players they come back stronger."

McDavid went down in the 13th game of his rookie season, but in that time he had already established himself as one of the key players and catalysts on the Oilers.

McDavid has five goals and 12 points in 12 games this season. He was the NHL's rookie of the month for October.

The Oilers are 5-8 and fighting to return to the playoffs for the first time in a decade.

"Injuries are a part of a hockey, but to be out that long this early in his career, I'm sure he's pretty heartbroken," said winger Taylor Hall, the Oilers' leading goal scorer.

"We're going to try and be there for him and make sure that he gets through it well."

It's the second major injury for McDavid in less than a year.

Last Nov. 11, while playing for the Erie Otters of the Ontario Hockey League, McDavid broke a bone in his right hand in a fight with Bryson Cianfrone of the Mississauga Steelheads.

From The Associated Press

shootout for the Ducks, who could be turning around their nightmare start with the NHL's lowest-scoring offense and worst power play.

Roberto Luongo made 36 saves in a strong performance for Florida. Erik Gudbranson and Orange County native Rocco Grimaldi scored as the Panthers opened a three-game California road trip with a heartbreaking loss.

Penguins 3, Canucks 2: Sidney Crosby scored his second goal of the season and Marc-Andre Fleury made 18 saves as Pittsburgh held off host Vancouver.

David Perron and Eric Fehr also scored, and Phil Kessel had two assists as the Penguins won their fifth straight.

Daniel Sedin and Jannik Hansen had goals for Vancouver, and Ryan Miller stopped 20 shots.

Crosby scored on a 4-on-3 power play after taking a nice feed from Kessel in front and beating Miller on a slick backhand to make it 2-0 at 7:17 of the third.

Fehr gave the Penguins a three-goal lead less than 3 minutes later on a wrist shot for his second of the season.

Sedin made it 3-1 with 6:01 left as he deflected Matt Bartkowski's point shot past Fleury. Hansen pulled the Canucks within one with 1:07 to go.

Jets 4, Maple Leafs 2: Alexander Burmistrov scored the tiebreaking goal late in the third period to lift visiting Winnipeg past Toronto.

Dustin Byfuglien and Mark Scheifele also scored and Bryan Little added an empty-netter in the final minute for the Jets, who bounced back nicely after a 5-1 loss at Montreal on Sunday.

Toby Enstrom, Mathieu Perrault and Blake Wheeler had two assists each, and Ondrej Pavelec finished with 24 saves.



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49ers change quarterbacks

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Three years after Colin Kaepernick led the San Francisco 49ers on a Super Bowl run, coach Jim Tomsula decided his struggling quarterback needed a break and his dormant offense needed a change.

Tomsula announced Wednesday that Blaine Gabbert will take over the starting role from Kaepernick this week as the Niners look for any kind of spark they can get after failing to score a touchdown three times in the past five games.

"In no way is 2-6 all on Colin Kaepernick," Tomsula said. "That's all of us, OK? That's all of us. Everybody here on the Niners. We all take a big chunk of that. That's a concerted effort that needs to change. This was just a decision that I wanted Colin to step back and breathe and look at things through a different lens."

Tomsula did not commit to a long-term change, saying only that Gabbert will start this week against the Falcons. The 49ers have a bye next week and then travel to Seattle on Nov. 22.

Gabbert, a former first-round pick by Jacksonville, has not started a game in more than two years and has thrown just seven passes the past two seasons as Kaepernick's backup. But he said he feels more prepared for the challenge than he did as the starter for the Jaguars.

"When I got in the league as a 21-year-old, you haven't seen really anything," he said. "Going into my fifth year, just the

experiences that I've had preparing for games, playing in games, starting games, being a backup quarterback. It's valuable over time to have those repetitions in practice and on the game field."

Tomsula hopes time away from playing can be beneficial to Kaepernick. After making a rapid rise from backup to Alex Smith to Super Bowl quarterback in his second season in 2012 under former coach Jim Harbaugh, Kaepernick has been on a decline the past two seasons. This year, he's bottomed out.

He took the 49ers back to the NFC title game following the 2013 season, but his performance dropped off last year and was abysmal for the first half of this season. He has completed 59.9 percent of his passes for just 6.6 yards per attempt, with six TDs, five interceptions and a career-low 78.8 passer rating.

"It's not all Kap's fault," receiver Torrey Smith said. "This doesn't fall 100 percent on Kap. Unfortunately at the quarterback position, when things aren't going well, you're going to be the person that's evaluated the most and the hardest. It's on us now to try and continue to grow and change and see if it adds a spark."

Once considered one of the up-and-coming quarterbacks in the NFL because of his mobility and strong arm, Kaepernick was often wildly off-target this season.

Much of the blame from outside the organization for the Niners' woes has been directed at Kaepernick.

"That pile just keeps getting bigger,"

Tomsula said. "I want him out of there. This is a guy I care about a lot. This is a guy I respect a lot. This is a guy who I think has talent. It's just me, what I'm watching, what I'm feeling, and I want him to just step back."

Kaepernick was not available to the media during the open locker room period Wednesday.

Gabbert was taken one round ahead of Kaepernick in the 2011 draft by Jacksonville, but quickly flamed out with the Jaguars despite being the 10th overall pick. Gabbert made 14 starts as a rookie and got the bulk of the starts his first two years in the league before losing his job early in Year 3.

Gabbert has been one of the least effective quarterbacks in the league when he has played, completing just 53.2 percent of his passes, averaging 5.6 yards per attempt with 23 touchdowns, 24 interceptions and a 66.8 passer rating.

Gabbert has lost his last 10 starts since beating Indianapolis on Sept. 23, 2012, and his teams are 5-22 in his career as a starter.

He completed 23 of 28 passes in the preseason for 203 yards, one touchdown and no interceptions and a 108.8 passer rating.

"He has done nothing but improve in the way he's throwing the football and the way he handles the offense," Tomsula said. "I just like what he's doing and I want to put him in there."

Appeals panel upholds Matt Kenseth penalty

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The National Motorsports Appeals Panel has rejected an appeal by Matt Kenseth, who has been suspended for the next two races after intentionally wrecking Joey Logano over the weekend during the race at Martinsville.

Kenseth has asked for a final decision from the National Motorsports final appeals officer. That ruling was expected later Thursday.

NASCAR said it punished Kenseth harshly because his decision to wreck Logano altered the outcome of a race and that is never supposed to happen. Kenseth maintains he was exacting retribution after Logano wrecked him three races earlier, damaging his chances to advance in NASCAR's playoffs.

Kenseth was suspended and put on six months of probation on Tuesday. Danica Patrick was fined \$50,000 for wrecking another driver in retaliation on Sunday.

Royals OF Gordon to test free agency

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — All-Star outfielder Alex Gordon of the Kansas City Royals declined his player option for next season Wednesday and will test free agency for the first time, though he could still return to the World Series champions.

The four-time Gold Glove winner has spent his entire nine-year career with the Royals, who drafted him second overall in 2005. But it has only been in the past few years that he has truly flourished, driving up his value while helping Kansas City to this year's title.

Gordon's option rose to \$13.75 million after he achieved a series of escalators. He will be 32 in February. Gordon hit .271 with 13 home runs and 48 RBIs in 104 games during the regular season.

Source: Lions fire team president and GM

ALLEN PARK, Mich. — A person familiar with the decision said the Detroit Lions fired president Tom Lewand and general manager Martin Mayhew.

The person spoke with The Associated Press on Thursday on the condition of anonymity because the team hadn't announced the moves. ESPN first reported the firings.

Lewand was in his 20th season with the Lions, and his sixth as president. Mayhew became the team's general manager early in the 2008 season when the team fired Matt Millen.

Both executives took the fall for a franchise that is struggling after having relative success in recent years.

Detroit is an NFC-worst 1-7 this season and has a bye this week.

No charges for 'Hawks Kane after investigation

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Prosecutors announced Thursday that they will not bring rape charges against Chicago Blackhawks star Patrick Kane, citing a lack of credible evidence in a case "rife with reasonable doubt" and the accuser's decision to no longer cooperate in the investigation.

Erie County District Attorney Frank Sedita said a three-month investigation found that physical and forensic evidence "tend to contradict" the accuser's claim that she was raped last Aug. 2 at Kane's offseason home outside Buffalo.

"The DNA results lend no corroboration whatsoever to the complainant's claim," said Sedita, who decided against presenting the case to a grand jury for possible charges. Sedita said the accuser, who is in her 20s, had recently signed an affidavit saying she did not want to press charges.

From The Associated Press

Last-second shot boosts Wiz

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Even the NBA's reigning defender of the year couldn't stop Bradley Beal on Wednesday night.

Beal made a three-pointer with 0.3 seconds remaining to punctuate his 25-point performance against Kawhi Leonard and lift the Washington Wizards to a 102-99 victory over the San Antonio Spurs.

"It's just me coming into my own I guess," said the 22-year-old Beal, who shot 11 of 22 on a night when Leonard was his primary defender.

John Wall scored 15 of his 17 points after halftime, including 13 in the fourth quarter, and added 13 assists for Washington. Wall and Beal, who entered Wednesday as the league's top-scoring guard duo, had the Wizards' last 15 points.

Leonard led San Antonio with 23 points and Tony Parker scored 11 of his 17 points in the fourth quarter. LaMarcus Aldridge had 10 points and 14 rebounds for the Spurs, who committed 21 turnovers and had their three-game win streak snapped.

Cavaliers 96, Knicks 86: LeBron James scored 23 points and Mo Williams added 22 as host Cleveland won its fourth straight.

James made a three-pointer and dunked off a nice pass from Williams while scoring 11 in the fourth quarter, when the Cavs outscored the Knicks 26-17.

During the first half, an irritated James performed an in-game altercation on Cleveland's new sleeved jerseys. The four-time MVP, who has complained in the past that the retro-looking tops are too tight for his arms and shoulders, tore the sleeves open midway through a 4-of-11 shooting performance in the opening 24 minutes.

The Cavs were wearing the black, body-

hugging uniforms for the first time.

Raptors 103, Thunder 98: DeMar DeRozan scored 10 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter as visiting Toronto overcame an eight-point deficit in the final 6 minutes to beat Oklahoma City and remain undefeated.

Jonas Valanciunas had 17 points and 12 rebounds and Kyle Lowry added 17 points for the Raptors (5-0), who beat Dallas the night before. Toronto shot 42 percent from the field, but benefited from 19 Oklahoma City turnovers.

Russell Westbrook scored 20 of his 22 points in the second half and finished with 16 assists. Kevin Durant had 27 points and Enes Kanter added 15 for the Thunder, who lost their second straight. It was the first time this season the Thunder scored fewer than 100 points.

Warriors 112, Clippers 108: At Oakland, Calif., Stephen Curry scored 31 points, including the go-ahead three-pointer with just over a minute to go that led defending champion Golden State to its fifth straight win to open the season.

Harrison Barnes added 17 points and sparked the big run that helped Golden State overcome a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter to knock off perhaps its most hated rival.

Chris Paul scored 24 points and Blake Griffin added 23 for the Clippers, who also had won their first four games of the season to give extra meaning to this early season matchup.

An offseason war of words that has been waged between Clippers coach Doc Rivers and several Warriors about what role luck played in their championship last season only added to the drama.

Bucks 91, 76ers 87: Khris Middleton scored 21 points as host Milwaukee welcomed back forward Jabari Parker from

a left knee injury with a victory over Philadelphia.

Philadelphia rookie Jahlil Okafor finished with 21 points and six rebounds.

Giannis Antetokounmpo added 17 points and shot 7 of 11 for the Bucks.

Hawks 101, Nets 87: Al Horford scored 21 points and Dennis Schroder added 20 as host Atlanta beat Brooklyn for its fifth straight win.

Joe Johnson went 1 for 10 and finished with five points against his former team.

Jeff Teague had 16 points and six assists, and Paul Millsap had 12 points and nine rebounds for the Hawks.

Rockets 119, Magic 114 (OT): James Harden scored 28 points, including seven in overtime, to help host Houston outlast Orlando.

It was a wild, back-and-forth game that was tied 18 times and featured 22 lead changes.

Pacers 100, Celtics 98: Paul George had 26 points and 10 rebounds, and Jordan Hill added 16 points and 10 rebounds to help Indiana beat visiting Boston.

Isaiah Thomas led Boston with 27 points on 9-of-19 shooting, and Avery Bradley added 21 points.

Suns 118, Kings 97: Eric Bledsoe scored 19 points and Brandon Knight added 17 as host Phoenix routed Sacramento.

Kosta Koufos led the Kings with 16 points off the bench. Sacramento played without All-Star center DeMarcus Cousins for the second consecutive game because of a strained right Achilles.

Trail Blazers 108, Jazz 92: Damian Lillard had 35 points and C.J. McCollum added 27 as visiting Portland defeated Utah.