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How Navy went off course on basic skills

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — An exasperated Sen. Angus King recently grilled the Navy's top uniformed officer for reasons why two high-tech destroyers had collided with commercial ships since June.

"How in the world could a billion-dollar destroyer not know that there's a freighter closing in on it?" King asked during a Senate committee hearing on Sept. 19. "This is just unacceptable from just a modern seamanship point of view, it seems to me."

Adm. John Richardson, chief of naval operations, didn't disagree. He promised King that all would be made known when investigations are completed into the June collision of the USS Fitzgerald and the August collision of the USS John S. McCain, along with a sweeping Navy-wide review of systemic flaws. The investigations would particularly focus on "proper operation of your equipment, fundamentals of watch standing," Richardson said, using the nautical term for the continuous oversight of essential ship operations, most importantly bridge navigation.

The collisions, which left 17 sailors dead, have raised questions about how the Navy mans, certifies, maintains and operates its surface ships, particularly those operating in the Pacific's crowded sea lanes.

But as Richardson implied, the disasters raise doubts about the state of seamanship in the Navy — just how competent the average officer is at the basics of charting, steering, watching and veering.

Some former Navy officers contend that mastering complex warfighting operations and technology aboard warships comes at the expense of honing seamanship skills.

"The seamanship part, I think, is really treated as an assumed baseline, even though that's the part that we do for real every day," said Steven Stashwick, a lieutenant commander in the Navy Reserve. Before leaving active duty in 2015, he spent a decade as a surface warfare officer. His duties included teaching navigation.

While every captain knows the fastest way to get fired is to have your ship involved in a "mishap" — the Navy's term for minor and major collisions and running aground — a crew's generic seamanship proficiency does not play a significant role in command promotion, Stashwick said.

"It's really things like warfare qualifi-

cations or administrative and managerial acumen that would be the career discriminators," he said.

'A rude awakening'

Navy veteran Mitch McGuffie has been arguing for more stringent training and specialization for Navy surface officers after spending two years as a bridge watch keeper aboard the British Royal Navy's HMS Cornwall during an exchange program from 2005 to 2007.

"I called it a rude awakening," said McGuffie, who at the time regarded himself a "competent mariner" with a fair amount of bridge time on a destroyer.

"But once I got to the Royal Navy, it was a completely different environment where officers were given a lot more responsibilities with fewer officers on the bridge of a ship," he said. For the first few months he said he was embarrassed by his lack of maritime knowledge.

McGuffie came away from the experience, which he later recounted in an article for *Proceedings Magazine* in 2009, convinced that Navy surface warfare officers should specialize to give themselves greater depth of experience in bridge watch standing.

"Most navies in the world divide their officers into warfare officers — those who drive ships, who fight ships and go on to command ships — and engineers, who become very proficient at operating engineering plants and often have engineering degrees," he said.

"We try to make everyone a jack-of-all-trades," he said of the Navy. "So one tour you might be on the bridge of a ship. The next tour you might be in engineering and never go on the bridge of a ship. Then you get sent to shore for four years, where you're not even on the bridge of a ship. Being great at anything is about repetition and experience."

Complacency issues

Complacency, however, can bedevil even the most skilled mariner, even when operations tempo is as high as it is for forward-deployed ships of the 7th Fleet in the Pacific, said Peter Haynes, a former Navy captain who retired in 2016 and is a fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a Washington-based think tank.

"Even when your op tempo is high like that, you tend to get complacent and — not necessarily take risks — but you don't necessarily prepare yourself mentally for what's out there," he said.

"In these cases, I think complacency could be an issue that needs to be addressed systemically. What are we doing wrong with the watch teams? Are their jobs elsewhere taking up so much of their time and effort that when actually on watch they don't have the energy needed?"

Jan van Tol, who retired as a captain from the Navy in 2007 after a career that included command of three warships, witnessed high-tech navigational devices supplant the old-fashioned maneuvering board, a paper and pencil system for plotting the relative motion of two ships to predict possible collision points.

In 2005, the Navy announced it would begin phasing out paper charts with the Electronic Chart Display and Information System, and ships certified with the system no longer were required to have charts.

But van Tol, a senior fellow at CSBA, laments the passing of the low-tech maneuvering boards because they "helped internalize your feeling for relative motion, which is absolutely key to avoiding collisions."

Richardson told the Senate committee that for the electronic-aided system to be reliable, the operators had to understand the underlying principles of the display and be ready "to question the validity of that display when things don't look right."

"It's extremely important that we've got that in place," he said.

Busy junior officers, however, have a lot on their plate besides navigation, Stashwick said.

"It's very easy to see your time on the bridge as almost a distraction from everything else you're doing," he said. Putting together a training plan for your division, creating a PowerPoint presentation for an operation, routine reports — it all needs to get done.

"Even though [bridge watch standing] should be the single most important thing you're doing in that moment, it's very understandable for officers to be very tired and very distracted. You're being pulled in so many different directions. I've been there."

Navy IDs pilots killed in Tennessee crash

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Lt. Patrick L. Ruth and Lt. j.g. Wallace E. Burch were the Navy pilots killed Sunday when the T-45C training jet that they were flying crashed into the Cherokee National Forest in eastern Tennessee, the Navy announced Tuesday.

Both pilots were assigned to the “Eagles” of Training Squadron 7, Training Air Wing 1 and stationed at Naval Air Station Meridian in Mississippi, said Navy Lt. Elizabeth Feaster, a spokeswoman for Naval Air Training. An investigation into the crash near the town of Tellico Plains was ongoing Tuesday and it remained unclear what caused the incident, she said.

Training Squadron 7 grounded its aircraft Monday for 24 hours but returned to flying the two-seat jets Tuesday, Feaster said.

Ruth, 31, was from Metairie, La. He had served nine years in the Navy and joined Training Squadron 7 in 2015, according to the service.

Burch, 25, was from Horn Lake, Miss. He had served nearly three years in the Navy and joined Training Squadron 7 in 2016, according to the service.

In a Facebook post, Tennessee state Rep. Ron Gant wrote he was saddened by Burch’s death and felt for his family, which lives near Memphis, Tenn.

“He died serving our country, a sacrifice none should take for granted,” Gant wrote in the public post. “Burch, a West Tennes-

sean that excelled in a field that many only dream of ... has the designation of American hero.”

The Sunday crash was the latest in a string of incidents that led the Navy to ground its T-45 fleet for four months earlier this year. The service only returned the trainer jets to flight status in August following a series of physiological episodes, caused at least in part by problems with the jets’ oxygen-delivery system, according to a Navy investigation released in July.

The Navy blamed the deaths of at least four F/A-18 Hornet fighter jet pilots on a similar issue with that plane.

It was not clear Tuesday whether the fatal crash Sunday was related to that issue.

Lawmaker set to sue for Osprey crash documents

BY STEPHEN CARLSON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Congressman Walter Jones on Tuesday lambasted Department of Defense officials for withholding communications about a 2000 crash of a V-22 Osprey that killed 19 Marines and announced he will file a lawsuit to obtain the documents.

During a news conference at the U.S. Capitol Building, Jones, R-N.C., and two Marine widows said they will file a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit for military documents related to the crash. An initial FOIA request was filed in June 2016 for the materials.

“Gruber, Brow and the 17 Marines in the back paid a high price for this program,” Jones said, referring to the two Osprey pilots Maj. Brooks Gruber and Lt. Col. John Brow and their passengers who were killed during an April 8, 2000, test flight outside of Marana, Arizona.

The crash was blamed on pilot error, but a later investigation by the Department of Defense concluded in 2016 that the accident was attributable to a variety of factors with the pilots bearing only small part of the

responsibility.

Connie Gruber and Trisha Brow, widows of the two pilots, thanked Jones and spoke Tuesday about how long it took to clear their husbands’ names. They said they still want to know more details of what happened leading up to the crash.

“I would like not to be here,” Brow said. “The Marine Corps should be held accountable to someone.”

“For [my husband] to be blamed for the deaths of 18 other people is horrendous, for them to knock at the door at 5 a.m. is horrendous, but to have to fight this battle many years later is ridiculous,” she said.

Jones said military leadership was guilty of pushing forward the program despite doubts over the Osprey’s safety. He criticized the lack of documentation provided to him of communications between then-Brig. Gen. James Amos and Lt. Gen. Fred McCorkle, deputy commandant of Marine aviation, from before and after the crash. He referenced an email obtained by the TV news show “60 Minutes” from Amos to McCorkle discussing low readiness rates of Osprey aircraft and how the information needed to be “close-held.”

Yokosuka honors McCain sailors killed in collision

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The 7th Fleet’s new commander said “words are inadequate to express the grief we feel in losing 10 of our own,” during a ceremony Wednesday honoring USS John S. McCain sailors killed in an Aug. 21 collision near Singapore.

“We owe it to the families of the fallen sailors to find out why this happened and to make changes so that this doesn’t happen again,” Vice Adm. Phil Sawyer told those packed inside the 650-seat Fleet Theater for the service, a Navy statement said.

Before the ceremony, more than 2,000 servicemembers, civilians and Japanese base workers saluted and waved U.S. flags as a procession of McCain sailors, friends and family members were bused from Yokosuka’s chapel to the theater for the service, which was closed to media.

The ceremony was also attended by new U.S. Ambassador to Japan William Hagerty, Pacific Fleet commander Adm. Scott Swift, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Chief of Staff Adm. Yutaka Murakawa and Yokosuka Mayor Katsuaki Kamiji, the statement said.

Swift praised the McCain crew’s response in the aftermath of the collision.

“I have no doubt that your damage control efforts not only saved the ship but also saved the lives of many of your shipmates, enabling them to join us here today,” he said, according to the statement. “Know that your Navy family is committed to ensuring that you, the families and crew of John S. McCain, have the resources you need to continue your healing.”

Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer ordered the fleet to fly U.S. ensigns at half-mast from sunrise to sunset Wednesday to mourn the lost sailors.

Most McCain sailors have returned to Yokosuka after being grounded at Changi Naval Base, Singapore, after the collision between the guided-missile destroyer and an oil tanker. A few are still in Singapore helping prepare the McCain for transport back to Yokosuka by mid-to-late October, Navy officials said.

Yokosuka’s Fleet Theater was the site of a June ceremony that paid respects to the seven USS Fitzgerald sailors who died after the destroyer collided with a cargo ship off the coast of Japan.

FBI meets with Las Vegas gunman's girlfriend

The Washington Post

Authorities investigating the Las Vegas massacre turned Wednesday to the shooter's girlfriend, hoping for more answers about the gunman and what may have sparked the mass shooting.

Investigators have spent the days since Sunday's attack — which killed 59 people and injured more than 500 others — struggling to explain why 64-year-old Stephen Paddock holed up in a high-rise hotel overlooking the Las Vegas Strip and opened fire on concertgoers at a country music festival far below.

What they have found so far has been chilling evidence of extensive preparations, as Paddock turned his two-room suite in the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino into an armed fortress.

He brought in 23 guns along with bump stocks that can allow them to more quickly fire bullets, police said.

The gunman also placed cameras so that he could monitor the arrival of police officers, who eventually breached his room and found that he killed himself before they arrived.

But a motive has remained elusive. Police hoped they could learn more from Paddock's girlfriend, Marilou Danley, who was in the Philippines when the shooting occurred.

Danley arrived late Tuesday night at Los Angeles International Airport and was met by FBI agents, according to a person familiar with the investigation.

She is considered a critical witness in trying to decipher

Paddock's motive.

While investigators have described her as a "person of interest," they have not suggested that she is considered an accomplice or involved in any way.

FBI agents speaking to Danley have essentially two critical questions: Did she have any idea what motivated him, and did she have any knowledge of what was about to take place and not alert authorities? Such was the case for Noor Salman, the wife of the Orlando gunman who killed 49 people last year. Salman was later arrested and charged with aiding and abetting terrorism and obstructing justice.

There were no immediate, obvious indications that Danley would fit the same bill, a person familiar with the case said, though they stressed that the investigation was still early.

Given how little has emerged in Paddock's past that could foreshadow the attack, the "best lead is through this girlfriend," said Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev.

FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe said Wednesday morning that he is surprised they have not found evidence pointing to the gunman's motive yet.

McCabe said agents have been reconstructing "the life, the behavior, the pattern of activity of this individual and anyone and everyone who may have crossed his path in the days and the weeks leading up to this horrific event."

President Donald Trump on Wednesday met privately with survivors of Sunday's

massacre.

"We're going to pay our respects and see the police who really have done a fantastic job," Trump said to reporters before he left Washington for Nevada. "It's a very, very sad day for me, personally."

Piece by piece, investigators have put together a profile of Paddock — a retired accountant — making meticulous preparations for the moment when he smashed a plate-glass window in the 32nd floor of his hotel room and opened fire with a weapon, apparently modified to spew bullets with the split-second speed of an automatic rifle.

As he fired round after round during an 11-minute stretch from a suite at the Mandalay Bay, Paddock used multiple video cameras to keep an eye out for police storming his hotel room, according to Clark County Sheriff Joe Lombardo.

"It was preplanned, extensively, and I'm pretty sure that he evaluated everything that he did in his actions, which is troublesome," Lombardo said Tuesday.

Paddock hid one camera in the peephole of his suite and two more in the hall, at least one of them disguised on a service cart, authorities said. At one point, he shot numerous rounds through the door, wounding a security guard.

Paddock eventually put a gun in his own mouth and pulled the trigger as SWAT officers closed in. They found him with blood pooling behind his head and around the empty shell casings that littered the carpet, a handgun near his body.

Once police entered the suite, they found that Paddock had brought 23 guns inside since he checked into the hotel on Thursday. Police also found another 26 guns at two other properties in Nevada and a large collection of ammunition and a chemical that can be used to make bombs.

Many of Paddock's guns were purchased in recent years. Between October 2016 and Sept. 28, the day Paddock checked into the Mandalay Bay, Paddock bought 33 guns, the "majority of them rifles," Jill A. Snyder, the special agent in charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in San Francisco, said Wednesday in an interview with "CBS This Morning."

Paddock also had substantial ammunition in the room, with clips containing between 60 and 100 rounds, Snyder said. During a news briefing a day earlier, Snyder said Paddock had purchased shotguns, handguns and rifles in Nevada, Utah, California and Texas. She also said that inside Paddock's suite, authorities found a dozen bump stocks that can enable guns to fire bullets at a more rapid clip.

Included in the cache of guns found in his room were an AR-15-type rifle with a high-capacity magazine and another AR-15-type rifle with a magnification scope commonly used for hunting and a bipod stand to help steady it, according to law enforcement officials and experts who reviewed images of the weapons posted online.

Eligible AF captains to be automatically promoted to major

BY MARCUS FICHTL

Stars and Stripes

Most Air Force captains can count on automatic promotion to major after Dec. 1, the service has announced.

"Beginning December 2017, the pool of line officers considered for promotion to major will have a 100 percent promotion

opportunity," said a statement issued last month.

The move addresses a shortage of 1,555 pilots and manning shortages in other jobs usually filled by majors that have ballooned in recent years as officers opt for commercial aviation jobs, Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson said earlier this year.

Just under 1 in 10 Air Force jobs for field-grade line officers, whose main job involves commanding troops, are vacant while about 1 in 4 nonrated field-grade officer jobs are unfilled, the statement said.

"With this change, captains whose conduct has been exemplary can expect to be promoted to major," Wilson said. "We've

been letting capable people leave the service and we need them."

Only a few officers will not be eligible for the automatic promotion — those with a record of disciplinary action and those with rare "do not promote" records, the Air Force statement said.

White House seeks \$29B aid package

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is finalizing a \$29 billion disaster aid package that combines \$16 billion to shore up the government-backed flood insurance program with almost \$13 billion in new relief for hurricane victims, according to a senior administration official and top congressional aides.

The huge request was expected to be officially sent to Congress on Wednesday, but its outlines were characterized by officials who demanded anonymity because the \$29 billion measure is not yet public.

The request would address two urgent needs. The first is to pump money into the flood insurance program, which is rapidly running out of cash to pay an influx of claims from victims of hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. At the same time, the Federal Emergency

Management Agency continues to spend money for disaster relief operations at a high rate and requires more money.

The government-guaranteed flood insurance program is maxing out on a \$30 billion line of credit from Treasury; the upcoming proposal would wipe \$16 billion of that debt off the books to permit the program to pay claims from hurricane victims.

Almost \$13 billion is being requested for FEMA, and federal firefighting accounts would receive \$577 million as well to replenish them after a disastrous season of Western wildfires.

“This is going to be extraordinarily expensive and I think we need to get some money out there,” said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen, R-N.J.

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.,

said he had met with lawmakers from Texas and Florida on Tuesday to brief them on the White House request.

“Remember, this is emergency money. You’ve got to deal with the problem,” McCarthy told reporters. “So I think we’ll be able to get this done.”

The request could prove controversial, especially the huge infusion into the flood insurance program. Conservatives are likely to liken it to a taxpayer bailout, but the program is enormously important to homeowners in hurricane-ravaged Texas and Florida, as well as other coastal states.

Congress is in the midst of an effort to reauthorize the troubled flood insurance program, which critics say makes taxpayers subsidize properties that have repeatedly flooded. A bipartisan effort to reform the program was enacted in 2012 but was significantly watered

down just two years later after widespread complaints of huge premium increases and resulting disruptions in coastal real estate markets.

Congress last month approved a \$15.3 billion aid package that nearly doubled President Donald Trump’s request. Senate Republicans added \$7.4 billion in community development block grant rebuilding funds to Trump’s request for immediate cleanup, repair and housing costs.

Later this year, the White House is expected to require tens of billions of dollars more in long-term funds that would rebuild infrastructure, help people without insurance restore their homes and, perhaps, help Puerto Rico reconstitute its shattered electrical grid.

Trump surveyed Hurricane damage in Puerto Rico on Tuesday.

Catalan officials are deciding on date to secede from Spain

Associated Press

MADRID — Catalonia’s regional government is mulling when to declare the region’s independence from Spain in the wake of a disputed referendum that has triggered Spain’s most serious national crisis in decades. Some lawmakers say that will happen Monday.

The region’s pro-independence president, Carles Puigdemont, who has said an independence declaration will come in a few days, was to deliver a speech later Wednesday. He’s also addressing the regional parliament on Monday to review the vote — a session that his parliamentary supporters in the radical, anti-capitalist CUP group say will consider the independence declaration.

Spain, which has declared Sunday’s referendum illegal and invalid, is bitterly opposed to any independence move.

Spain’s conservative govern-

ment has said it will respond with “all necessary measures” to counter Catalan defiance, and is holding talks with opposition leaders in Madrid to forge a consensus over what to do in response.

In a nationally televised address Tuesday night, Spanish King Felipe VI came out strongly against the actions of Catalan authorities, saying they had deliberately bent the law with “irresponsible conduct.”

Catalonia says some 2.3 million people — less than half the region’s electorate — voted in the referendum Sunday.

Many of those opposed to independence are thought to have stayed at home after the referendum was ordered suspended by a Spanish court. Of those who voted, some 90 percent backed independence, according to Catalan officials.

Top military leaders back Iran nuke deal

The Washington Post

The nation’s top military leaders stated unequivocally Tuesday they believe the United States should stay in the Iran nuclear deal, staking out a position at odds with President Donald Trump’s only days before he decides whether to certify that Tehran is in compliance with the deal.

When asked by Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, if he believed “it’s in our national security interest at the present time to remain” in the nuclear pact, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said, “Yes, senator, I do.”

Mattis and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr. spoke during hearings before the Senate and House Armed Services Committees that were primarily focused on the war in Afghanistan. But at each hearing, the top Pentagon officials faced questions about the Iran nuclear pact, which is

hitting critical deadline.

Trump must decide by Oct. 15 if he will certify that Tehran is in compliance with the terms of the multilateral pact under which Iran agreed to give up its nuclear ambitions in exchange for a withdrawal of sanctions. Since his presidential campaign, Trump has spared no kind words for Iran or the nuclear pact, which he called “an embarrassment” during a speech to the U.N. General Assembly last month.

Should the president decline to certify the deal, the decision of whether to adhere to or rupture the pact would belong to Congress, as lawmakers would have to decide whether to reimpose sanctions. Even the Republicans are divided over what they think is the most prudent course of action.

But Mattis and Dunford were unanimous in their support for the deal.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man hits airport fence, arrested in underwear

LA SLIDELL — Authorities believe a Mississippi man who rammed through a Louisiana airport and stripped down to his underwear because he thought “snakes were crawling up his pants” had been under the influence of a narcotic.

News outlets reported Kevin Bolton, 43, of Hattiesburg, Miss., crashed through the Slidell Municipal Airport fence and collided with a utility pole Monday. Authorities say Bolton then ran into a patch of woods and was found in a subdivision wearing nothing but his underwear.

Bolton told authorities he'd been running from the police. However, authorities say police weren't pursuing him at the time of the crash.

Woman gets illegal pills instead of yoga mat

SC ROCK HILL — A South Carolina woman expecting the delivery of a yoga mat instead received nearly 20,000 illegal narcotic pills.

The Rock Hill Herald reported the woman told Rock Hill police she was handed a package by the mailman Saturday and found the pills. An incident report said she did not know who had used her name and address.

The commander of the York County Multijurisdictional Drug Enforcement Unit, Marvin Brown, said they found two bags of around 10,000 pills each. He said the street value for each oxycodone-type pill is around \$20, estimating the street value of the seized narcotics at \$400,000.

Bird likely blown off course by storm dies

MA EASTHAM — A tropical bird believed to be the first of its type seen in Massachusetts died after it was likely blown off course by Hurricane Jose.

Wild Care Cape Cod, a wildlife rehabilitation facility in Eastham, said Monday that the masked booby died overnight. It was found last week at a Cape Cod beach.

They said the bird's condition was “grim” from the beginning and it became worse on Sunday.

A necropsy will be performed by Tufts University.

Cops say fight started over a stolen sandwich

NJ HACKETTSTOWN — A New Jersey man is facing charges after police say he punched another man several times over a stolen pork roll sandwich.

Hackettstown police said they were called to an apartment on reports of a fight over a stolen pork roll. Police said they found the victim with swelling on his face.

Police said the fight may have additionally started over beer and that the suspect and victim know each other.

4 hurt when makeshift fire pit explodes

MD MONKTON — Police near Baltimore said four members of a family, including a toddler, were hurt when a fire pit made out of a washing machine drum exploded.

Baltimore County police said in a news release that officials were called Sunday night to the home of a 65-year-old man

in Monkton. Investigators said the man, his son, and the son's wife and 2-year-old daughter were sitting around a bonfire made from the drum of a washing machine.

Fire officials said an accelerant was used to light the fire and exploded.

Authorities said the two men were flown to Shock Trauma, where they are in serious condition. The wife and toddler had non-life-threatening injuries.

Piglet found after crash adapts to new home

WV PRINCETON — A piglet that was rescued following a tractor-trailer accident along Interstate 77 in West Virginia has adapted well to her new home.

The Bluefield Daily Telegraph reported the piglet weighed about 10 pounds when Tammy Tyree found her along the side of the road June 29. Fearing the piglet would get hit by a car or eaten by coyotes, Tyree took it to her Princeton home, and the name Piggles caught on.

Tyree said that when Piggles isn't muddy, she still comes in the house to visit but would rather be outside.

University student dies after fall from window

VA FAIRFAX — Officials said a student at George Mason University in Virginia died after he possibly took a hallucinogenic drug and then crashed through a fifth-floor dormitory window.

GMU spokesman Michael Sandler said witnesses told police the 19-year-old sophomore was on a hallucinogenic substance when he ran through the Potomac Heights residence hall window and fell to the ground Saturday. Sandler said that when police arrived the student

was alive but unresponsive.

News outlets reported Campus Police Chief Carl Rowan Jr. said in an email that no foul play was suspected, but other students may have the hallucinogenic drug and could be at risk.

Cops: Boy threatened 2 students with machete

FL ZEPHYRHILLS — Authorities said a 14-year-old boy made threats on Snapchat to bring a machete to his Florida high school and kill two students.

Pasco County Sheriff's officials said in a news release that the boy was arrested Sunday. He had threatened to bring the machete to Zephyrhills High School on Monday.

The student told investigators the message was meant as a joke.

Son says Rabbi, family upset by traffic stop

VT MONTPELIER — The son of a New York City rabbi said his father and other relatives were traumatized when the rabbi was pulled over on a remote Vermont interstate for suspected speeding, ordered at gunpoint to lie on the ground, then handcuffed along with his wife and another son.

Yehuda Fink said Monday that his parents and teenage brother and sister thought they were targets of a terrorist attack during the Aug. 8 stop.

An investigation reviewed by Vermont's Police Advisory Commission found the trooper acted according to policy and there was no evidence of bias.

Rabbi Berl Fink was cited for attempting to elude police after traveling more than 4 miles before pulling over. He said he was trying to find a safe spot after realizing he was being pulled over.

From wire reports

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Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Yankees power past Twins in wild win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Minutes into the playoff debut for these young New York Yankees, they trailed Minnesota by three runs. Their starting pitcher lasted just one out. A sellout crowd was stunned.

Could their postseason be over almost before it began?

Nope. A strange AL wild-card game was only just beginning.

“We’ve had a quite a few games where we’ve gotten down early,” Aaron Judge said. “Just keep battling. Just stay calm. Just play your game, and good things will happen.”

Judge, Didi Gregorius and a brilliant bullpen rescued New York and lifted the Yankees to their first postseason victory in five years.

Gregorius’ three-run homer tied the score in the first inning after Minnesota knocked out Luis Severino, a pumped-up Judge showed his most emotion this season when he hit a two-run shot in his playoff debut and the Yankees beat the Twins 8-4 Tuesday night. New York plays the Indians in a best-of-five Division Series starting Thursday.

“We’re not done yet,” Judge said. “We’ve just got to keep it rolling in Cleveland.”

Brett Gardner also homered for the Yankees, who chased Ervin Santana after two innings and once again eliminated Minnesota from the playoffs.

Chad Green, David Robertson, Tommy Kahnle and Arldis Chapman combined for 8²/₃ innings of one-run, five-hit relief, striking out 13 to tie the postseason record for a bullpen.

“It was just remarkable,” Yankees manager Joe Girardi said.

Twins manager Paul Molitor marveled at the Yankees relievers and Girardi’s use of them over 142 pitches.

“He extended some guys probably past their comfort zone,” the Hall of Famer said. “They still performed.”

Brian Dozier led off the game with a home run and Eddie Rosario hit a two-run drive as the Twins burst to a quick lead.

But Santana went to full counts on eight of 11 batters, and he was removed after six outs and 64 pitches with the Twins trailing 4-3.

“It’s the exhilaration of jump-

ing out,” Molitor said, “and then the deflation of giving it back so quickly.”

Minnesota, the first team to follow a 100-loss season with a playoff appearance, lost its 13th consecutive postseason game, tying the record set by Boston from 1986 to 1995. The Twins have been eliminated by the Yankees in five of their last six postseason appearances and have not won a playoff series since 2002.

“Nobody expected us to be here,” Byron Buxton said. “That’s an amazing achievement.”

New York won nine regular-season games after trailing by three runs, according to the Elias Sports Bureau — including when Severino fell behind against the Twins on Sept. 20 as New York rebounded to complete a series sweep. Gregorius erased the deficit in this one four batters into the bottom of the first.

“I was hyped, and I tried to get the game going, tried to get the guys going,” he said.

Judge, the 6-foot-7 sensation who set a rookie record with 52 home runs, was given a Ruthian ovation, with several sections of

fans holding signs in his honor spelling out “All Rise!” He scored three runs, hitting a single to help ignite the first-inning rally, smoking a 108 mph home run off loser Jose Berrios in the fourth and walking in the seventh before coming home when Alan Busenitz walked Aaron Hicks with the bases loaded.

Judge shouted in excitement as he rounded first base after the homer, his face flush with emotion.

“This place was rocking. It was incredible,” he said.

New York had made only one postseason appearance since 2012, losing the 2015 wild-card game to Houston 3-0. Just three Yankees who started that game were in the starting lineup, part of a Baby Bombers movement that purged the roster of veterans.

At 23, Severino was the youngest Yankees postseason starter since Andy Pettitte in 1995. The right-hander lasted only 29 pitches on a crisp autumn night and matched the Yankees’ shortest postseason start, by Bob Turley in Game 2 of the 1958 World Series and Art Ditmar in the 1960 World Series opener.

Verlander up first for Astros against BoSox

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Houston Astros will start Justin Verlander in Game 1 of the AL Division Series against Chris Sale and the Boston Red Sox on Thursday.

Manager A.J. Hinch announced the decision Tuesday, adding that left-hander Dallas Keuchel, who won the AL Cy Young Award in 2015, will start Game 2 on Friday against Drew Pomeranz.

“It’s really deciding between two really deserving, really good guys,” Hinch said. “So I didn’t have a lot of stress about it other than we had to pick an order.”

Verlander has been at his best since being acquired from the Detroit Tigers in a trade on Aug. 31. He’s 5-0 with a 1.06 ERA in five starts since the deal and 15-8 with a 3.36 ERA in 33 starts overall this season.

“Verlander has pitched extraordinarily well since he got here,” Hinch said. “The five starts we’ve seen have been exception-

al. Dallas has pitched very well recently as well and obviously has a long history here. So for us, matching up we decided to go 1 Verlander, 2 Keuchel, which leaves open the option at the back end to do whatever we want if it ends up being a Game 5.”

Verlander is a six-time All Star who has appeared in the playoffs five times. He is 7-5 with a 3.39 ERA and 112 strikeouts in 16 career postseason starts. He faced Boston twice this season while with Detroit but did not get a decision either time.

Verlander didn’t speak with reporters on Tuesday, but his teammates raved about him after going through an afternoon workout that lasted about 90 minutes.

“He’s meant a lot to this team,” All-Star shortstop Carlos Correa said. “He’s a game-changer not only when he’s on the mound but when he’s outside talking to the pitchers and talking about the hitters they’ve got to face and how to approach them. It’s just fantastic to watch. He’s an

unbelievable pitcher ... and he’s helping our rotation in a big way.”

Keuchel has bounced back from a tough 2016 with a solid season, going 14-5 with a 2.90 ERA. He was limited to 23 starts because of a neck injury that landed him on the disabled list twice. But he has looked good recently, posting a 2.87 ERA in five September starts after compiling a 5.05 mark in six starts during August.

Hinch didn’t reveal his entire roster for the best-of-five ALDS, but did say the Astros sent reliever Reymin Guduan, outfielder Colin Moran and third baseman J.D. Davis home because they won’t be used in the postseason. Additionally, the club sent reliever Francis Martes, outfielder Tony Kemp and catcher Max Stassi to the instructional league in Florida to stay sharp. They won’t be used in this series but could be needed down the road if the Astros advance.

Cubs' Schwarber surges into playoffs

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Even at his worst moments this season, Kyle Schwarber did his best to stay upbeat for the Chicago Cubs.

He didn't want to be the guy who sulked, who hung his head, even when he got sent to the minors.

"I could either be Mr. Pouty Pants, or I could go out there and do something about it," he said. "I wanted to do something about it. That's why I never hung my head."

Schwarber has been doing quite a bit lately, once again knocking home runs, and sending signals that another big postseason might be in store for him.

He comes surging into the playoffs after struggling for most of the year and could be a major factor with the Cubs eyeing another big run following last year's World Series victory. It starts with the NL Division Series against the Washington Nationals.

"I still call him the legend," Ben Zobrist said. "I mean, he's

a legend. And he knows it."

Schwarber has supplied some of the most memorable playoff moments for the Cubs the past two years.

Who can forget his drives to the Allegheny River and the top of the right-field scoreboard at Wrigley Field against Pittsburgh and St. Louis in 2015? He set a club postseason record with five homers that year, just a few months removed from his major league debut.

His performance in last year's playoffs was every bit as epic, considering he suffered what was supposed to be a season-ending knee injury in early April. Schwarber tore two ligaments in his left knee in an outfield collision at Arizona. Doctors told him he could forget about playing again in 2016.

Not only did Schwarber return in the World Series against Cleveland after months of rehab, he went 7-for-17 to help the Cubs finish off their historic run.

But this season hardly went the way he or the Cubs anticipated. With soaring expecta-

tions, manager Joe Maddon penciled Schwarber into the lead-off spot thinking he could supply some pop and a high on-base percentage at the top of the order with Dexter Fowler gone.

Instead, Schwarber struggled in a huge way, got sent to Triple-A and only recently started to come around.

"It obviously stinks," he said. "You don't want it to ever happen. I came to the field every day wanting to work and get better. I never once was content with where I was at. Even when I'm going good, I'm not content with how everything's going."

He called this "another year of perseverance," though the circumstances weren't the same. He said his struggles were "no one else's fault."

The No. 4 overall pick in the 2014 draft, Schwarber hit .211 with 30 homers and 59 RBIs. But he came on strong down the stretch, with a .311 average and six homers in his final 16 games.

"You talk about a guy who is a fighter," Maddon said. "Give the guy real high marks for

perseverance."

He also said sending Schwarber to Triple-A in late June was "absolutely necessary."

At the time, the 24-year-old Schwarber was batting .171. The Cubs saw the move as a chance to catch his breath, to reboot.

"Everybody has to learn how to respond to failure," said Zobrist, a three-time All-Star and 2016 World Series MVP who shuttled between the majors and minors early in his career with Tampa Bay. "We all need to know how to take adversity and use it for our benefit and grow from it as opposed to letting it tear you down."

Schwarber tightened his swing. He kept his head up, too.

"I love this game of baseball," he said. "I want to be in it for as long as I can, and I feel like that is only one thing that's gonna help. That's why I never wanted to hang my head. I didn't want to be a negative guy. I'm always gonna come in here with a positive outlook and keep grinding at it."

Dodgers weigh roster, await first opponent

Associated Press

The Dodgers' work in getting to the post-season is done. They racked up their fifth consecutive NL West title and were baseball's best team with 104 victories. Now, they must wait to find out their opponent.

Whoever it is — either Arizona or Colorado — both had winning records against the Dodgers this season. Those teams play Wednesday night in the NL wild-card game in Phoenix, with the Dodgers watching closely.

Manager Dave Roberts said Tuesday night that his team is "a very confident group" heading into Friday's playoff opener at Dodger Stadium.

The Dodgers clinched home-field advantage throughout the postseason, having gone 57-24 at Chavez Ravine during the regular season.

Roberts said his team has done everything possible to put itself in position to win it all and "now it's up to us to finish it."

While they wait, the Dodgers will have workouts on Wednesday and Thursday as the front office mulls the 25-man playoff roster.

Roberts said separate rosters are being worked up depending on whether the Rockies or Diamondbacks are the opponent in the NL Division Series. Neither is drastically different.

"It's the quandary or the challenge when you have a lot of good players," Roberts said on a teleconference. "Ultimately, it comes down to matchups."

Besides the active roster, the Dodgers will have a smaller taxi squad that will travel. A group at camp in Arizona will participate in simulated games, throw and take at-bats so they're ready at any time. First baseman Adrian Gonzalez, shut down for the season with a bad back, will be part of the taxi squad.

"With his history and experience, he's only going to help with the team," Roberts said.

Among those up in the air for a spot on the active roster are outfielders Andre Ethier and Joc Pederson and reliever Pedro Baez, who struggled through a tough stretch late in the season.

Roberts is also considering Alex Wood or Hyun-Jin Ryu as the third left-handed starter behind ace Clayton Kershaw (who starts Friday) and Rich Hill (who starts Game 2 on Saturday).

"I don't know if Ryu is going to be in the pen," Roberts said. "He's obviously uncomfortable in that role, having only done it once. Ryu is either going to be a starter or not on the roster. Wood has obviously done both roles. He's earned the opportunity to get a long look as a starter."

Since the wild card began in 1995, the team with the best record has won the World Series just five times.

"Right now we've got a good feeling in our clubhouse," Roberts said. "There's a good positive energy and focus."

Wolfpack brace for Jackson, Louisville

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — It took North Carolina State just one clunker of an opening-game performance to lose some of the hype as a dark horse in the Atlantic Coast Conference title chase.

That's a lesson that stays with the No. 24 Wolfpack now that Dave Doeren's team has its first national ranking in seven years entering Thursday night's visit from No. 17 Louisville.

"If we lose, we'll be right out of it," senior Jaylen Samuels said of N.C. State's return to this week's AP Top 25.

N.C. State (4-1, 2-0 ACC) has shaken off that season-opening loss to South Carolina, a game that saw the Wolfpack post more than double the number of yards and plays of the Gamecocks but lost 35-28.

There have been four straight wins since, including a get-over-the-hump win at Florida State for possibly the biggest win of Doeren's five-season tenure.

The Wolfpack started the season with more outside expectations than usual thanks to a veteran roster and depth

built over years under Doeren. Now N.C. State — ranked for the first time since the final poll of 2010 — gets a shot at another Atlantic Division power in the Cardinals (4-1, 1-1), led by reigning Heisman Trophy winner Lamar Jackson.

"Really we're just keeping everything inside the football facility," junior running back Nyheim Hines said. "We're not trying to listen to what outside people say because after South Carolina, people were falling off the bandwagon. Now they're maybe back on it."

The Cardinals are already in a hole in the division after a home loss to reigning national champion Clemson. A loss at N.C. State would all but end the Cardinals' hopes of making up ground on the Tigers and earning a trip to the ACC title game.

"They all run to the ball," Jackson said, "they're all-out competing and they've been good so far this year."

Louisville has spent the past two games since the Clemson loss earning lopsided wins against Kent State and Murray State by a combined margin of

97-13.

Some other things to know about Thursday night's Louisville-N.C. State game:

Light-duty Lamar. Louisville QB Lamar Jackson has played just five quarters over the past two weeks but has made the most of them. The junior has passed for 548 yards, rushed for 134 on 15 carries and combined for seven touchdowns. He threw a couple of interceptions against Kent State but feels like he corrected flaws while giving his body a chance to recharge. Asked about the benefits, he said, "Just keeping my body fresh and keeping me focused with a big game coming up this week."

Containing Jackson. N.C. State's stout defensive line, led by preseason AP all-American Bradley Chubb on the end, will have to keep Jackson from getting loose to make plays with his feet. "We can't let him out of the pocket," Chubb said. "All four of us have to do our job and collapse the pocket."

Stepping up. Cardinals receiving leader Jaylen Smith will miss a third straight game with a wrist injury, creating

another opportunity for others to fill the void. Five receivers have at least 100 yards, led by redshirt freshman Dez Fitzpatrick (280 yards, 6 TDs) and Seth Dawkins.

Last year's romp. N.C. State nearly upset eventual national champion Clemson on the road last year, but Kyle Bamard missed a 33-yard field goal for the win at the end of regulation in an overtime loss. That game threw the Wolfpack in a midseason tailspin, which included a 54-13 loss at Louisville last year for a team that played close in nearly all its losses. "We've tried to wipe it out, but it's been circled on a lot of people's calendars probably in the locker room," N.C. State's Nyheim Hines said. "It was really embarrassing."

Both ranked. Louisville's visit to N.C. State will mark the first game between two ranked teams in the Wolfpack's Carter-Finley Stadium since 2000. In that game, Florida State won 58-14 when longtime Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers was an N.C. State freshman starter.

A few things to watch for as hockey season begins

Associated Press

The 101st NHL season opened Wednesday night and there are endless story lines to follow. The Associated Press asked a handful of its writers to suggest some of the top things to watch as play gets under way:

Toronto Maple Leafs. Adding Patrick Marleau gives a much-needed veteran presence to a youth-laden team that has designs on not simply making the playoffs, but winning several rounds.

Jack Eichel. Having put contract talks behind him after agreeing to an eight-year, \$80 million contract extension on Tuesday, it's now on the Buffalo Sabres' franchise player to begin performing to expectations — the team's and his

own. Eichel acknowledged his first two NHL seasons were "mediocre."

Montreal Canadiens. While much of the NHL is trending toward youth and speed, can the Habs continue winning with an aging, plodding lineup that relies on size and the performance of goalie Carey Price?

Chicago Blackhawks. After hoisting the Stanley Cup in 2015 for the third time in a six-year stretch of success, was last year's first-round exit an aberration? How will Jonathan Toews respond after an off year?

Connor McDavid. Will the 20-year-old reigning MVP put together a second straight 100-point season and help the Edmonton Oilers qualify for the

playoffs in consecutive years for the first time since 1997-2001? Or will he cool off?

Hot seats. Florida was the first of many NHL teams to fire coaches during last season, letting Gerard Gallant go after just 21 games. Will Detroit stick with Jeff Blashill behind the bench all season if the team's new arena loses its luster with too many losses?

Washington Capitals. Will Alex Ovechkin and the big guns score enough and Braden Holtby stop enough to keep them a solid playoff team and a Stanley Cup contender?

Steven Stamkos. The Tampa Bay Lightning captain was a point-a-game player before his horrific knee injury last season. If he returns to form they'll be scary.

New goalies. Carolina has Scott Darling, Dallas has Ben Bishop, Calgary has Mike Smith and all should be better for it, while it remains to be seen with Antti Raanta in Arizona.

Golden era. The expansion Vegas Golden Knights open their inaugural season and it will be interesting to see how Las Vegas embraces its first major professional sports franchise.

By the book. No timeouts after icing and no line changes for teams that commit the infraction. Closer attention from the officials on slashing. But the biggest rule change might be the crackdown on face-off violations, which has already led to some preseason grumbling.