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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

US gives Afghans first Black Hawk helos

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The United States officially gave the Afghan air force its first Black Hawk helicopters on Saturday, as the country marked 16 years since a U.S.-led invasion ousted the Taliban from power and ignited America's longest war.

President Ashraf Ghani took delivery of the American-made aircraft at a ceremony in Kandahar attended by other high-ranking officials, including Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan.

The two Black Hawks arrived at Kandahar Air Field last month before the official handover. Afghan pilots began training on them on Oct. 2, NATO's Resolute Support mission said.

"If the Taliban think that they have defeated the Afghan security forces, they should take out these raw thoughts from their heads," Ghani said at Saturday's ceremony, adding that the arrival of the Black Hawks would strengthen local forces.

Under current plans, the Afghan air force should receive nearly 160 Black Hawks in

the coming years to replace its aging fleet of Russian-made Mi-17 helicopters. The aircraft are used to transport troops and supplies, to perform medical evacuations and to provide close air support.

The gift comes as U.S. defense officials refocus their strategy to include more aggressive rules of engagement and more U.S. troops to aid Afghan forces.

In the week leading up to the war's anniversary, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis provided more details about the Trump administration's plans.

He told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday that the "4R+S" strategy aimed to regionalize, realign, reinforce, reconcile and sustain — meaning it would include regional actors, advise Afghan forces at lower levels, send in additional troops and, hopefully, lead to reconciliation with the Taliban.

Mattis added that he had removed "proximity requirements" for strikes against the Taliban, which will likely mean more U.S. bombs dropped in Afghanistan. He also said the additional U.S. forces would be embedded with lower-level units, putting them closer to the front lines.

Last month, Mattis said the U.S. would send over 3,000 additional servicemembers to Afghanistan, adding to the roughly 11,000 already in the country.

The Taliban released a statement Saturday to coincide with the 16th anniversary of the war, saying they had fighters to match the increased U.S. presence.

"Thousands of our youth are still waiting in line for their turn at martyrdom and sacrifice," the statement said. "No matter how much you prolong the invasion, the end shall no doubt be your defeat and withdrawal."

The Taliban have made substantial gains since international combat operations ended, and are said to control more territory today than at any other time since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion removed them from power.

Afghan forces assumed responsibility for securing their country at the end of 2014, when U.S. and other international partners switched from a combat mission to one focused on training, advising and assisting.

The training mission continues today, although the U.S. also conducts a separate counterterrorism mission in Afghanistan.

Fourth US servicemember dead from attack in Niger

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A fourth U.S. servicemember was killed Wednesday in Niger when their patrol alongside local forces was ambushed by militants, the Pentagon said Friday.

Defense officials previously had said three Green Berets were killed in the attack in the southwestern region of Niger near its border with Mali. Two other U.S. soldiers were injured in the attack and a partner-force soldier also was killed.

"The body of another U.S. servicemember has been recovered from the area of the

attack, bringing the number of U.S. servicemembers killed in this attack to four," said Army Col. Rob Manning, a Pentagon spokesman.

The Pentagon did not identify the fourth deceased servicemember, pending next-of-kin notification.

The identities of the three Green Berets killed in the attack were released earlier Friday. They were Staff Sgt. Bryan C. Black, 35, of Puyallup, Wash., Staff Sgt. Jeremiah W. Johnson, 39, of Springboro, Ohio, and Staff Sgt. Dustin M. Wright, 29, of Lyons, Ga. All three soldiers were assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group

based at Fort Bragg, N.C.

It remained unclear Friday what group launched the attack on the Green Berets and their Nigerien partners. Marine Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the director of the Joint Staff, said Thursday that the attack was under investigation and officials would not speculate on its nature.

McKenzie said it appeared to be the first time American forces had come under fire in Niger, where some 800 U.S. troops are deployed, according to U.S. Africa Command. Their primary mission is to support local forces fighting extremist groups, including Boko Haram

and al-Qaida in the Maghreb, who operate in the region.

McKenzie acknowledged any time American forces are deployed overseas, they face dangers, even the potential to be attacked, but stressed the U.S. military mission in Niger is not a combat operation.

"We have a great opportunity there to do train, advise and assist [and] to do a variety of things with them to help them stand on their own two feet," McKenzie said. "... Certainly, to the soldiers in the fight [Wednesday], it was combat. So, I don't want to dance around that."

Officer's posts stirred alarm at academy

Watertown (N.Y.) Daily Times

A Fort Drum officer whose pro-communist and anti-Trump social media posts have spurred outrage and an Army investigation apparently raised concerns among his superiors in 2015 while studying at West Point.

In documents obtained by the Daily Caller, Lt. Col. Robert M. Heffington, a professor at West Point, said he found the social media posts by 2nd Lt. Spenser Rapone, then a cadet, "extremely disturbing." He noted at the time that one of Rapone's posts said "(Expletive) this country and its fake freedom," and others praised communism, Marxism and Karl Marx.

"I cannot reconcile the

image of a first class cadet at West Point with the things he has posted online for the world to see," Heffington said in a sworn statement. "To me, these are red flags that cannot be ignored, and I fail to see how this individual can possibly graduate and become a commissioned officer in six months."

Rapone is currently under investigation by post officials, and his social media posts, including those made while wearing his West Point uniform, were condemned by the academy.

Heffington's statement from November 2015 also said Rapone showed "extreme disrespect" to him when confronted about the volume of a conversation he had with a

professor and refused corrections on standards like getting a haircut.

"His utter contempt for my rank and position as an Army officer was blatantly obvious and, to me, it indicates that CDT Rapone has a serious problem with military authority figures."

He later said Rapone's social media posts at best "reveal the philosophical infatuations of a precocious adolescent," and at worst "a severe mental or psychological disorder" or values "at odds" with West Point and the Army.

"He may at some point grow out of this phase, but the Army does not have the luxury of allowing him the opportunity to sort out his beliefs while

charged with the sacred duty of leading American Soldiers," Heffington said.

Rapone, a member of the 10th Mountain Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, first drew attention when he tweeted an image from his Twitter account, @punkproletarian, with "Communism Will Win" written into his West Point cadet hat.

Other online statements by Rapone criticized President Donald Trump and members of his administration.

If taken to a court martial, Rapone could face confinement for violating multiple parts of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Last week, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., called for Rapone's dismissal.

Contractor sentenced to 3 years in Iraq fraud case

The Washington Post

A former government contractor who helped scam the State Department out of millions of dollars was sentenced Friday to three years in prison.

Jose Rivera, 57, of Potomac, Md., worked with two others to trick the contractor DynCorp into paying a grossly inflated rent for a training camp in Iraq, according to prosecutors.

The State Department ultimately footed the bill for the property, which came out to over \$5.3 million.

Judge Leonie Brinkema said a serious sentence was required to "make sure other people involved in government contracting know that if they commit fraud, even over there, there will be consequences."

Brinkema acknowledged that Rivera, who has cooperated extensively with authorities and is expected to testify against a co-conspirator next month, will probably have his sentence

reduced in the future.

Rivera was not the ring-leader in the conspiracy. That man was Wesley Struble, who is serving a four-year prison sentence. Struble was working for another contractor that was leasing property from an Iraqi company at Baghdad International Airport for \$124,000 a month. So Struble approached Rivera, according to court documents, about DynCorp's potential interest in the site. He recruited Rivera and associates at the Iraqi company to increase the rent to \$665,000, splitting the difference.

Emil Popescu, a Romanian man who was working for the Iraqi company, was extradited to the United States and faces trial in November.

While he was only a recruit to the plot, Rivera did take thousands of dollars for his role in the scheme.

He and Struble are now both liable for the \$3.4 million in excess charges paid by the government.

Calif. AG charges jeweler used loans to woo servicemembers

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — California's attorney general has charged the owner of a chain of jewelry stores with failing to inform military members about credit terms and wrongly assessing penalties.

The criminal complaint, filed last week in Los Angeles Superior Court, charges Ramil Abalkad, 54, the owner of Romano's Jewelers Services Inc. in Southern California, and Melina Abalkad, 43, the owner of MBNB Financial Inc., with conspiracy to engage in illegal financing and debt collection practices.

The attorney general's office said in a news release that the Abalkhads encouraged young Marines and sailors to buy jewelry using MBNB Financial for credit, including at stores near the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base. The couple failed to provide legally required disclosures about monthly payments, interest rates and other financing terms, and had debt

collectors harass customers who fell behind.

The defendants also are accused of threatening military members with courts-martial and other military discipline, according to the complaint.

"Our servicemembers and military families sacrifice immensely for our country; the last thing they should have to worry about is being fleeced by local merchants," Attorney General Xavier Becerra said Tuesday in San Diego, where he announced the charges.

Ramiro Salinas, 51, an employee of MBNB Financial, was charged with conspiracy to engage in unlawful debt collection.

A phone message for all three defendants left Tuesday at corporate offices for Romano's Jewelers and MBNB Financial was not immediately returned.

Bail was set at \$235,000 for Ramil Abalkad and at \$40,000 for Melina Abalkad following their arrests on Sept. 26. Bail for Salinas was set \$100,000 following his arrest Friday.

Feds reveal thwarted NYC bombing plot

The Washington Post

Federal authorities revealed Friday they had arrested and charged three men in connection with a 2016 plot to carry out bombings and shootings in crowded areas of New York City, then kept the court case under seal for more than a year as investigators worked the case.

The scheme was more nefarious than many: The group, which wanted to attack Times Square and the New York City subway system, claimed to have been in touch with an Islamic State affiliate to obtain official sanction of the terror group, prosecutors said.

One of them, a U.S. citizen living in Pakistan, traveled around that country to meet with explosives experts, and another purchased bomb-making materials and secured a cabin within driving distance of New York City, the prosecutors said.

By that time, though, the group was unknowingly communicating with an undercover FBI agent, who was posing as an ISIS supporter, authorities said.

Authorities arrested one in the group in

May 2016, after he traveled to the United States to prepare for the attacks, and took the others into custody in Pakistan and the Philippines in September 2016 and April 2017.

Charged in the case were Abdulrahman El Bahnasawy, a 19-year-old Canadian citizen; Talha Haroon, 19, a U.S. citizen living in Pakistan; and Russell Salic, 37, a Philippine citizen, authorities said.

Prosecutors announced the case against the men as investigators continue to explore what sparked a 64-year-old retired accountant to open fire on a crowd at an outdoor concert on the Las Vegas Strip, killing 58 and injuring hundreds more. ISIS has claimed that attack, though authorities have said repeatedly they have found no evidence to support the terror group's assertion.

Prosecutors alleged the men in New York plotted similar mass destruction during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. The men wanted to carry out bombings and shootings in Times Square and the New York City subway system and shoot people

at concert venues, and they referenced similar attacks in Brussels and Paris, authorities said.

El Bahnasawy told the undercover FBI agent he wanted to "create the next 9/11."

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, Haroon told the undercover FBI agent he planned to travel to the United States to join in the attacks and "cause great destruction," and that he had been in touch with a branch of the Islamic State active in Pakistan.

"NY Needs to fall," Haroon told the undercover agent. "It's a must."

When El Bahnasawy traveled from Canada to the New York City area on May 21, 2016, to begin preparing to execute the plan, Canadian and U.S. law enforcement were watching and took him into custody, authorities said. The case was initially sealed because prosecutors feared revealing it could compromise an ongoing investigation into an imminent terror threat.

All three men are charged with conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction, conspiring to commit terrorism and other related offenses, authorities said.

Trump's one-two punch hits birth control, LGBT rights

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a one-two punch elating religious conservatives, President Donald Trump's administration is allowing more employers to opt out of no-cost birth control for workers and issuing sweeping religious-freedom directions that could override many anti-discrimination protections for LGBT people and others.

The two directives — issued almost simultaneously on Friday — demonstrated the president's eagerness to retain the loyalty of social conservatives who make up a key part of his base.

Liberal advocacy groups, including those supporting LGBT and reproductive rights, were outraged.

"The Trump administration is saying to employers, 'If you want to discriminate, we have your back,'" said Fatima Goss Graves, president of National Women's Law Center.

Her organization is among several that are planning to

challenge the birth-control rollback in court. The American Civil Liberties Union filed such a lawsuit less than three hours after the rules were issued.

The new policy on contraception, issued by the Department of Health and Human Services, allows more categories of employers to opt out of providing no-cost birth control to women by claiming religious or moral objections.

The top Democrat in the House of Representatives, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, said the birth-control rollback was despicable.

"This administration's contempt for women reaches a new low with this appalling decision to enable employers and health plans to deny women basic coverage for contraception," she said.

On the Republican side, however, House Speaker Paul Ryan welcomed the decision, calling it "a landmark day for religious liberty."

Billboards to ask for tips on gunman's motive

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Tourists coming to gamble and party on the Strip will soon find something other than bright lights welcoming them to "Fabulous Las Vegas."

Billboards will serve as a stark reminder investigators are stumped about what drove a gunman to mow down concertgoers from a high-rise casino hotel on Oct. 1.

"We still do not have a clear motive or reason why," a frustrated Clark County Under-sheriff Kevin McMahon said Friday. "We have looked at literally everything."

Investigators have chased 1,000 leads and examined Stephen Paddock's politics, his finances, any possible radicalization and his social behavior — typical investigative avenues that have helped uncover the motive in past shootings.

The FBI announced that billboards would go up around the

city asking anyone with information to dial 800-CALL-FBI.

"If you know something, say something," said Aaron Rouse, agent in charge of the Las Vegas FBI office. "We will not stop until we have the truth."

Paddock, 64, a reclusive high-stakes gambler, rained bullets on the crowd at a country music festival from his 32nd-floor hotel suite, killing 58 and wounding hundreds before taking his own life.

McMahon said investigators had reviewed voluminous video from the casino and don't think Paddock had an accomplice in the shooting, but they want to know if anyone knew about his plot beforehand.

It is unusual to have so few clues a week after a mass shooting. McMahon noted that in past mass killings or terrorist attacks, killers left notes, social media postings and information on a computer.

Iran: 10 Trumps can't roll back nuke deal benefits

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's president defended the 2015 nuclear deal Saturday, saying not even 10 Donald Trumps can roll back its benefits, state TV reported.

Hassan Rouhani's comments came as President Donald Trump appears to be stepping back from his campaign pledge to tear up the deal, instead aiming to take other measures against Iran and its affiliates.

State TV broadcast Rouhani while he addressed students at Tehran University, marking the beginning of the educational year.

"We have achieved benefits that are irreversible. Nobody can roll them back, neither Trump, nor 10 other Trumps," he said.

Rouhani warned the U.S. not

to violate the deal.

"If the United States violates (the nuclear deal), the entire world will condemn America, not Iran," he said.

Iran accepted curbs on its nuclear program as part of the agreement. In return, Iran has benefited from the lifting of sanctions.

Trump is expected to take new action against Iran's Revolutionary Guard and the Iranian-backed Shiite militant group Hezbollah.

He is set to deliver a policy speech on Iran this week in which he is expected to decline to certify Iran's compliance in the landmark 2015 agreement that the U.S. and its partners signed with Tehran to rein in its nuclear program.

That would stop short of pulling out of the deal.

Police find severed head of Swedish journalist

Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Danish divers found the decapitated head, legs and clothes of a Swedish journalist who was killed after going on a trip with an inventor on his submarine, police said Saturday.

The body parts and clothing were found Friday in plastic bags with a knife and "heavy metal pieces" to make them sink near where Kim Wall's naked, headless torso was found in August, Copenhagen police investigator Jens Moeller Jensen said.

Moeller Jensen said there were no fractures to Wall's skull, and he declined to comment on the discovery of the knife.

Peter Madsen, 46, the Danish inventor who is in pretrial detention on preliminary manslaughter charges, has said Wall, 30, died after being accidentally hit by a 155-pound hatch on the UC3 Nautilus submarine, after which he "buried" her at sea. But police have said 15 stab wounds were

found on the torso found at sea off Copenhagen on Aug. 21.

Wall's cause of death hasn't yet been established.

A court will decide Oct. 31 if Madsen will remain in custody ahead of a possible trial. He also is held on preliminary charges of the indecent handling of a corpse.

Police believe the pair didn't know each other beforehand. Wall was working on a story about Madsen, who dreamed of launching a manned space mission. She was last seen alive Aug. 10 aboard the 40-ton, nearly 60-foot-long submarine as it left Copenhagen.

The following day, Madsen was rescued from the sinking submarine without Wall and was arrested. Police believe he deliberately scuttled the vessel.

During their investigation, police have found videos on Madsen's personal computer of women being tortured, decapitated and murdered. The videos were considered to be real, according to prosecutor Jakob Buch-Jepsen.

Hurricane Nate heads toward US Gulf Coast

Associated Press

Hurricane Nate gained force as it continued rapidly moving over the central Gulf of Mexico early Saturday after drenching Central America in rain that was blamed for at least 21 deaths. Forecasters said it was likely to reach the U.S. Gulf Coast over the weekend.

Louisiana and Mississippi officials declared states of emergency, and Louisiana ordered some people to evacuate coastal areas and barrier islands ahead of its expected landfall Saturday night or early Sunday. Evacuations began at some offshore oil platforms in the Gulf.

Mississippi's government said it would open 11 evacuation shelters in areas away from the immediate coast, with buses available for people who can't drive.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center warned that Nate could raise sea levels by 4 to 7 feet from Morgan City, La., to the Alabama-Florida border. It had already had caused deadly flooding in much of Central America.

The center added New Orleans and Lake Pontchartrain to its latest hurricane warning.

The storm had maximum sustained winds of 80 mph and was likely to strengthen over the Gulf of Mexico, reaching the U.S. Gulf coast near New Orleans late Saturday, according to the hurricane center's 4 a.m. CDT update.

The storm was located about 345 miles south-southeast of the mouth of the Mississippi River and was moving north-northwest at 22 mph.

Authorities canceled Friday afternoon classes in parts of Mexico's Caribbean coast state of Quintana Roo, where Cozumel and Cancun are located. But Gov. Carlos Joaquín said it appeared the storm would stay well offshore and not hit land, adding "that, I believe, is good news."

In Nicaragua, Nate's arrival followed two weeks of near-

constant rain that had left the ground saturated and rivers swollen. Authorities placed the whole country on alert and warned of flooding and landslides.

Nicaragua's vice president and spokeswoman, Rosario Murillo, said that at least 11 people had died in that country due to the storm. Earlier Thursday she said 15 people had died before later revising to say some of those were still counted as missing. She didn't give details on all the deaths, but said two women and a man who worked for the Health Ministry were swept away by a flooded canal in the central municipality of Juigalpa.

Costa Rica's Judicial Investigation Organism blamed seven deaths in that country on the storm and said 15 people were missing. Flooding drove 5,000 residents into emergency shelters.

In Honduras, there were three dead and three missing, according to Oscar Triminio, spokesman for the country's firefighters.

Damage caused by the storm prompted Costa Rican officials to postpone a World Cup qualifying soccer match between that country and Honduras, which had been scheduled for Friday night.

In the U.S., the National Hurricane Center issued a hurricane warning from Grand Isle, La., to the Alabama-Florida border.

Officials ordered the evacuation of part of coastal St. Bernard Parish east of New Orleans ahead of the storm. Earlier Thursday, a voluntary evacuation was called in the barrier island town of Grand Isle south of New Orleans.

New Orleans officials outlined steps to bolster the city's pump and drainage system. Weaknesses in that system were revealed during summer flash floods.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

University: Pay tickets with peanut butter

NM LAS CRUCES — New Mexico State University is allowing motorists to take a bite out of certain parking tickets by paying with peanut butter.

The Las Cruces Sun-News reported the school recently announced motorists who have received a “no current permit” parking citation can pay it with at least 80 ounces of peanut butter from Oct. 23 to Oct. 27.

All peanut butter donations will be sent to the Aggie Cupboard food pantry. The offer is limited to the first 100 customers.

Air freshener prompts evacuation of school

MD BALTIMORE — An unusual smell prompted an evacuation and a hazardous-materials response at a Baltimore high school. But after five people were taken to the hospital complaining of upset stomachs, fire officials discovered the source of the smell: a pumpkin spice air freshener.

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School was evacuated Thursday afternoon after students and teachers detected a strong smell on the third floor. Several people reported difficulty breathing.

Fire spokesman Roman Clark said two students and three adults were taken to the hospital for stomach ailments. Then, firefighters located a pumpkin spice air freshener plugged into an outlet in a classroom.

Vineyard's liquor license yanked over crowds

NY CUTCHOGUE — The New York state Liquor Authority has suspended the license of a Long Island winery

where officials say drunken patrons have engaged in public sex, brawls and other rowdy behavior.

NYSLA officials Thursday said Vineyard 48 in Cutchogue, on the island's North Fork, had a “disturbing record” of repeatedly serving extremely intoxicated customers.

The liquor license suspension comes after neighbors told police on Sept. 30 that two people were having sex on vineyard property in full view of the neighbor's backyard. NYSLA officials said police had to return to the vineyard later that day to break up a fight that broke out among a drunk and disorderly group of 400 people.

Driver clocked at 166 mph just before crash

NY RED HOOK — Police said both drivers escaped injury when a car slammed into the back of another vehicle just moments after the car was traveling at more than 160 mph.

Police in the Dutchess County town of Red Hook told the Kingston Daily Freeman that an officer was driving on Route 9G late Wednesday when he was passed by a 2004 Audi modified sports car traveling at 140 mph.

Police said the Audi driver then accelerated to 166 mph.

According to authorities, a short time later the car rear-ended a Jeep.

The 27-year-old man who was driving the Audi was ticketed for reckless driving, unlawfully fleeing a police officer and several traffic infractions, police said.

Police: Man hid weed in courthouse weeds

NC SANFORD — A North Carolina man was arrested and charged with trying to hide marijuana in the

bushes at a courthouse before a hearing on a possible probation violation.

Local media outlets reported Lee County Sheriff Tracy Carter said Teon Shamal La'Shane Douglas, 21, of Sanford, was arrested last Monday after deputies saw him putting marijuana, a cellphone and some other items in the bushes at the courthouse.

The sheriff said narcotics officers saw Douglas put about 15 grams of marijuana in the bushes at the courthouse in Sanford.

Man says he set up fake speed trap to slow cars

PA JONES MILLS — A Pennsylvania man acknowledges using flashing dashboard lights to mimic a police speed trap — but only so he could slow down vehicles speeding past his rural home and killing deer and endangering people.

Ricky McMillen, 57, told WPXI-TV he used the flashing lights on his car because he's been complaining about speeders for years and getting few results. What he has gotten is deer carcasses along the road in Donegal Township.

State police have charged McMillen with impersonating a public servant and displaying improper lights.

Century-old lectern stolen from church

DE WILMINGTON — A grand lectern that stood in the sanctuary of a Wilmington church for more than a century has been stolen.

The nearly 7-foot-tall bronze lectern went missing from the Cathedral Church of St. John sometime during the past two weeks.

The Ministry of Caring signed an agreement to pur-

chase the 3-acre church complex in 2015 to redevelop into apartments.

Development Director Priscilla Rakestraw said the piece is an important part of the church's history. It was installed in the church in 1911.

Beer, break dancers for gubernatorial forum

IA IOWA CITY — An eastern Iowa group is hosting a gubernatorial candidate forum with beer, break dancers, a live DJ and seven Democratic candidates who are seeking their party's nomination.

The Iowa City Press-Citizen reported that organizers wanted to do something different with its planned candidate forum. Misty Rebik, an organizer of the Political Party Live! Democratic gubernatorial forum, said they hope to get the candidates in front of younger audiences.

Cops: Man threatens school after misdial

PA WILLIAMSPORT — Police said a Pennsylvania man left a phone message threatening to blow up a school, though the man tells investigators he misdialled when he was trying to return a threatening call he'd received from another number.

Police said Lawrence Stabler, 81, left a message on the answering machine at the Donald E. Schick Elementary School threatening to “blow up” the building earlier in the day.

Police said Stabler acknowledged making the call but told them he was trying to call back another number from which he'd received threatening calls and had accidentally dialed the school.

Stabler was arrested Thursday night.

From wire reports

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Indians rally from 5 down to top Yanks

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — They've won this season in almost every way imaginable: comebacks, walk-offs, blowouts, nail-biters.

No. 104 for the Cleveland Indians topped them all.

Yan Gomes singled home Austin Jackson from second base with none out in the 13th inning as Cleveland rallied from five runs down to stun the New York Yankees 9-8 on Friday and snatch a 2-0 lead in the AL Division Series.

Despite an atrocious start by ace Corey Kluber and losing slugger Edwin Encarnacion with a severely sprained ankle in the first, the Indians, with some help from a call that went their way, continued a charmed season growing more and more special by the day.

"The tendency of this team is to never give up," Kluber said. "Even when we were down 8-3, we didn't believe the game was over. We never feel like we're out of a game."

Jackson drew a lead-off walk in the 13th from Dellin Betances and stole second. Gomes went to a full count before pulling his bouncer just inside the

third-base bag, easily scoring Jackson and touching off another one of those wild celebrations inside Progressive Field, where the Indians have been so good while running away with their division and winning 22 straight.

As Jackson sprinted home, Cleveland's players poured out of the dugout and mobbed Gomes at the conclusion of a wild, 5-hour, 8-minute thriller that featured 14 pitchers and a call that may haunt Yankees manager Joe Girardi for months.

"We just were supposed to win," said Indians outfielder Jay Bruce, who hit a game-tying homer in the eighth. "No words, honestly. I'm speechless."

Francisco Lindor hit a grand slam in the sixth to rally Cleveland, which will try for a sweep in Game 3 Sunday at Yankee Stadium. Carlos Carrasco will start for the Indians against Masahiro Tanaka, who will try to extend New York's season.

The Yankees had their chances late, but they stranded the go-ahead run at third in the ninth and 10th — and had pinch-runner Ronald Torreyes picked off second in the 11th

by Gomes from the behind the plate.

Josh Tomlin, who had been scheduled to start later in the series, pitched two perfect innings for the win as Francona ran out of relievers in a game started by his best pitcher.

Aaron Hicks hit a three-run homer off Kluber and Gary Sanchez and Greg Bird hit two-run shots for the Yankees, who may have caught a bad break before Lindor's homer.

New York's Aaron Judge went 0-for-3 and is hitless in seven at-bats in the series with five strikeouts.

The Yankees lost consecutive games for the first time since they were swept at home in a three-game series by the Indians from Aug. 28-30. Now, they need to sweep three in a row from Cleveland.

Down 8-3, facing New York's vaunted bullpen, the Indians came back.

New York starter CC Sabathia was lifted with one on and one out in the sixth for Chad Green, another one of the Yankees' flame-throwers who got an out before Gomes doubled. Green came inside and Lonnie Chisenhall was awarded first

by plate umpire Dan Iassogna on a hit by pitch.

TV replays showed the ball slightly change direction — it appeared to hit the knob of Chisenhall's bat.

Girardi said there wasn't enough evidence within 30 seconds to justify a challenge. He said the team later saw a slow-motion replay suggesting he should've contested the call, but it was too late.

"There was nothing that told us he was not hit by the pitch," Girardi said.

New York catcher Gary Sanchez said he heard something, but wasn't sure what. Sanchez caught the pitch on a fly — it would've been strike three if it had been ruled a foul tip — and immediately pointed to the Yankees dugout, indicating they should consider challenging the call.

Girardi nodded and held up a finger, asking for time to make a decision.

"I didn't think it hit him, because he never reacted," Sanchez said through a translator. "He stood there. But it's just stuff that happens in the game."

Correa, Altuve power Astros to rout of Red Sox

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Carlos Correa, Jose Altuve and the high-powered Astros led the majors in runs, hits and batting average in the regular season.

Now that it's playoff time, Houston is still hammering away.

Correa homered, doubled and drove in four runs, Altuve got two more hits and the Astros battered the Boston Red Sox 8-2 Friday to take a commanding 2-0 lead in Major League Baseball's AL Division Series.

George Springer also homered to back Dallas Keuchel in Houston's second straight romp by the same score.

"One through nine, everybody can do damage, every-

body can go deep," Correa said. "That's the good thing about our lineup, there's no holes in our lineup, and we feel very confident no matter if we went 0-for-4 the day before or if we went 4-for-4."

The Astros will go for a sweep in the best-of-five matchup Sunday at Fenway Park, a year after Boston was swept in the ALDS by Cleveland. Brad Peacock (13-2) starts for Houston against Doug Fister (5-9).

"We couldn't really script it any better," Keuchel said.

A day after Altuve hit three home runs in the playoff opener, he got things going with a two-out single in the first inning off Drew Pomeranz.

Correa, who went 0-for-4 on

Thursday, made it 2-0 when he launched a towering shot onto the train tracks atop the left field seats.

"For me, if he's not No. 1, he's No. 2 in the league," Altuve said of Correa, often referring to him as his little brother. "One of the best players, I'm really happy to have him on my team. Believe it or not I have learned from him."

Keuchel pitched into the sixth, allowing one run and three hits while striking out seven to improve to 3-0 with a 0.96 ERA in three career postseason starts.

After Jackie Bradley Jr. had an RBI single in the Boston second, the Astros started to break away.

Springer hit his first post-

season homer when he sent the second pitch of the third inning into the front row of the seats in right field.

So is Red Sox manager John Farrell surprised that the series has been this lopsided so far?

"They're very good, they're deep, and they have got a number of ways to beat you," he said. "So we fully respect and understood the opponent, and they're playing like that."

A double by Alex Bregman set up an RBI single by Altuve later in the third, making it 4-1 and ending Pomeranz's first career postseason start after two relief appearances. The lefty kept his head down as he trudged toward the dugout after being lifted.

Turner, Dodgers take Game 1 of NLDS

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Clayton Kershaw still hasn't figured out how to dominate in October. This time, he couldn't even keep the ball in the yard.

Justin Turner and the Los Angeles Dodgers made sure it hardly mattered in a strong postseason opener.

Turner homered and drove in five runs, Kershaw won despite giving up four long balls and the Dodgers roared to a 9-5 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Friday night in Game 1 of their NL Division Series.

Turner hit a three-run homer and Yasiel Puig added an RBI double before Los Angeles made its first out against starter Taijuan Walker, who lasted just one inning in his playoff debut. Turner, the red-bearded slugger with postseason poise, added an RBI single in the fourth and another in the eighth to tie the Dodgers record for most RBIs in a postseason game.

With his teammates providing such a generous cushion, Kershaw could afford to allow

a few big flies in the first victory of his checkered postseason career at Dodger Stadium. He improved to 5-7 in the playoffs.

"Yeah, he gave up four solo homers, but who cares?" asked Turner, batting .397 with 17 RBIs in his last 17 postseason games. "When you have a lead like that, it's about attacking guys, not giving up free bases and pounding the zone. So I thought he was spectacular for us tonight."

Kershaw yielded back-to-back homers into the short left-field porch by light-hitting Ketel Marte and Jeff Mathis on his final two pitches in the seventh, making him the first pitcher in team history and the eighth in baseball history to give up four home runs in a postseason game.

LA's big lead was down to 7-4 when the three-time Cy Young Award winner left, but the suspense didn't last: Turner and the 104-win Dodgers added two more runs in the eighth, capping a 12-hit performance.

"It just wasn't coming out as good as I would have liked it to that last inning," said Kershaw, who gave up five hits in

6¹/₃ innings. "So they hit some good pitches. Not really. I just didn't have much left. I don't know. Hopefully, when you give up hits, maybe one or two would stay in the ballpark, but tonight it didn't seem like that was going to happen. Obviously a frustrating way to end it, but thankfully we had a big lead."

Puig and Corey Seager both tripled and drove in two runs for the Dodgers, who finished 11 games ahead of Arizona to earn their fifth consecutive NL West crown.

A.J. Pollock and J.D. Martinez also homered off Kershaw, but Arizona's euphoria from its wild-card victory over Colorado was erased during a rough first inning in Chavez Ravine. Los Angeles' first five batters reached base, punctuated by Turner's shot and Puig's line-drive double that scored rookie Cody Bellinger.

Arizona ended a five-year playoff absence Wednesday with a rollicking 11-8 victory over the Rockies that was described by manager Torey Lovullo as "one of the most emotional days I've had in my career."

But that tough game bit the Diamondbacks in Los Angeles when Walker needed 48 pitches to get out of the first inning. Playing from behind all night, Arizona couldn't catch up.

"Well, we have been very resilient," Lovullo said. "We've had some tough losses, and this is playoff baseball. We know that we're built for moments like this. We've been battle-tested all year long. It's one game. It was a tough day for us."

Ray was supposed to start this series opener, but was pressed into relief against the Rockies when ace Zack Greinke faltered — and Walker couldn't come through in his place.

"I just felt like they had a really good game plan against me," Walker said. "They were sitting on the fastball most of the time."

Zack Godley pitched five innings of relief, but Turner, Puig and Seager added RBIs in the fourth for a 7-1 lead.

Kershaw struck out seven, but the ace left-hander's frequent inability to match his regular-season brilliance in October remains a constant presence.

Hendricks outduels Strasburg as Cubs shut out Nats

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Kyle Hendricks goes about things completely differently than Stephen Strasburg does on the mound.

The kid from Dartmouth relies on a fastball that on a good day reaches 88 mph — about 10 mph slower than Strasburg's — and a deceptive change-up. Instead of power, he gets by on precision, guile and smarts.

Hendricks outpitched Strasburg in Game 1 of the NL Division Series, giving up only two hits in seven innings to help the Chicago Cubs open defense of their first World Series title in 108 years by beating the Washington Nationals 3-0 on Friday night.

"That's why we call him Professor," Chicago second base-

man Javier Baez said about Hendricks. "He knows what he's doing."

Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo produced RBI singles with two outs in the sixth inning for the first two hits off an otherwise-dominant Strasburg. Rizzo added a run-scoring double in the eighth off Ryan Madson.

Carl Edwards Jr. threw a perfect inning and Wade Davis finished the two-hitter for a save.

Unlike No. 1 overall draft pick Strasburg, Hendricks went in the eighth round. Unlike Strasburg, Hendricks has never been an All-Star. Unlike Strasburg, who already has signed a \$175 million, seven-year deal that begins next

season, Hendricks earned less than \$800,000 in 2017.

But this was Hendricks' time to shine.

"He was tricking us tonight," Nationals manager Dusty Baker said, "and seems like those kind of guys give us more trouble than guys who throw hard."

The slender righty, who led the NL in ERA last season, gave up a single in the first and another in the second — and that was it for the Nationals.

He walked three batters and struck out six.

"He knows the scouting report," said Jon Lester, who starts Game 2 on Saturday for Chicago against fellow lefty Gio Gonzalez. "He knows where guys' weaknesses are."

Harper — wearing shoes with "Pray for Las Vegas" written on the side following the recent mass shooting in his hometown — was 1-for-4 as he tries to regain his timing after returning last week from a 42-game injury absence. Otherwise, Washington's elite hitters — Anthony Rendon, Ryan Zimmerman, Daniel Murphy, Trea Turner and Jayson Werth — were a combined 0-for-17 with three walks.

"Definitely, your confidence builds," Hendricks said, "when you start seeing those swings."

The fact that Hendricks approached 90 mph as often as he did was an aberration he and teammates attributed to adrenaline, but one that helped, of course.

Americans win key World Cup qualifier

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Christian Pulisic burst up the field, scoring with a brilliant touch to complete an 11-second, break-neck, field-length attack just eight minutes in.

Then his cross found Jozy Altidore's right foot like an arrow striking a bull's-eye, leading to a two-goal lead in the 19th minute.

Exhale, U.S. fans.

Altidore converted a penalty kick with a chip in the 43rd after Bobby Wood was fouled, Wood added a goal in the 63rd and the United States routed Panama 4-0 on Friday night to put the Americans back on track to reach next year's World Cup.

"We needed a win, but the job's not done," Pulisic said.

The U.S. ended a three-match winless streak in qualifying and with 12 points moved two ahead of Panama into third place — the last automatic berth — in the North and Central American and Caribbean region. Honduras has nine points going into its match Saturday at Costa Rica, which is second with 15.

Goal difference means the Americans put themselves in great shape to reach an eighth straight World Cup, almost certainly with a win Tuesday in their finale at already eliminated Trinidad and Tobago and likely with a draw against the Soca Warriors if Honduras failed to win Saturday. The U.S. is plus-five to minus-two for Panama and minus-seven for

Honduras.

"We're well positioned to hopefully qualify for Russia. The game in Trinidad is not going to be an easy one," said coach Bruce Arena, who led the U.S. at the 2002 and 2006 World Cups, then returned after the Americans opened the hexagonal last fall with two losses under Jurgen Klinsmann.

"This team went from 0-2 in November with a minus-five goal differential, we're now at plus-what, five, right?" Arena said. "I know everyone thought we were going to qualify in whatever, six games in 2017. It doesn't happen that way. So I think we're moving along well. We've advanced from sixth to third position with goal differential. Now we have to finish it

off on Tuesday in Trinidad."

Playing his first international match since he turned 19 last month, Pulisic was moved to central midfield from the flanks and sparked the attack from the opening whistle with pace and ball control seldom seen from an American.

"He was able to just disrupt them in so many ways, and you saw the difference he can make in the middle of the park, being able to go each way and just being so dynamic," Altidore said. "I hate to kind of pour too much praise on him. I know he's a young kid. He's got a lot of work to do. But you can't help not see the difference he makes when he's on the field, especially when he's in the middle of everything."

NHL roundup

Fleury stops 45 shots as Golden Knights win opener

Associated Press

DALLAS — James Neal simply wanted to give the people of Las Vegas a reason to smile.

Chances are he did.

Neal scored twice in the third period, rallying the Golden Knights to a 2-1 victory over the Dallas Stars on Friday night in the debut of the first major pro sports franchise in Las Vegas.

The expansion team was playing five days after the shooting that killed 58 people in Las Vegas, and the Dallas players honored the desert city by forming a line alongside their Vegas counterparts before the national anthem.

With the video board reading "Viva Las Vegas" above the players, the public address announcer said "Dallas stands with Vegas and those affected by the horrifying tragedy."

"Being a new team, we have a lot of new fans and a lot of people affected by what happened," Neal said. "Hopefully they tuned in tonight and we could put a smile on their face, because like you said

we're playing for our city and it's going to be a lot of fun this year."

Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 45 of 46 shots to help the Golden Knights become the first expansion team to open with a victory since the Ottawa Senators topped Montreal 5-3 on Oct. 8, 1992. Vegas is the first NHL expansion team since the Minnesota Wild and Columbus Blue Jackets in 2000.

"We can't undo what happened, and we'll do our best, we'll work as hard as we can to make the city proud of us," said Fleury, a three-time Stanley Cup winner in Pittsburgh who lost his job during the playoffs last season and was left unprotected for the expansion draft.

The Golden Knights also spoiled coach Ken Hitchcock's return to Dallas 18 years after he directed the franchise's only Stanley Cup title. He was fired during the 2001-02 season, the only one in a span of 11 that the Stars missed the playoffs.

Both of Neal's goals came against Kari Lehtonen after Ben Bishop left after taking a

puck to the mask. Bishop, who skated off holding a towel to his face, had stopped all 19 shots in his Dallas debut after coming over in a trade with Los Angeles and signing a long-term contract.

Blue Jackets 5, Islanders 0: Pierre-Luc Dubois scored in his NHL debut and Sergei Bobrovsky made 29 saves in host Columbus' victory over New York in the season opener for both teams.

Rookie Sonny Milano scored 1:07 into the game, and the 19-year-old Dubois made it 5-0 midway through the second period. Cam Atkinson, Ryan Murray and Zach Werenski also scored, newcomer Artemi Panarin had three assists, and Alexander Wennberg added two assists.

Islanders starter Thomas Greiss made 21 saves before being pulled after giving up Dubois' goal. Jaroslav Halak stopped all 11 shots he faced in relief.

With all of the offensive opportunities created by the Blue Jackets, it could have been

worse.

Columbus scored on its first shot of the season when Oliver Bjorkstrand shoveled the puck out from the back wall to Milano for a 10-footer that he snapped past Greiss.

Lightning 5, Panthers 3: Steven Stamkos set up the go-ahead goal in his return from a right knee injury as host Tampa Bay beat Florida in the opener for both teams.

Stamkos missed the final 65 games last season with a torn meniscus in the knee, an injury that required surgery. He sent a pass from the left circle through the slot to Vladislav Namestnikov, who put Tampa Bay up 3-2 from near the post 59 seconds into the final period during a power play.

Ondrej Palat had two goals, and Brayden Point and Nikita Kucherov also scored for the Lightning. Andrei Vasilevski made 33 saves.

Florida got goals from Connor Brickley, Mark Pysyk and Jonathan Huberdeau, and Roberto Luongo stopped 20 shots.