

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Dunford arrives with Kushner in Iraq

*Associated Press*

BAGHDAD—President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, flew to Iraq with U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford on Monday.

Kushner's travel plans initially were revealed late Sunday by a Trump administration official who said Kushner wanted to see the situation there for himself and show support for Baghdad's government.

The official said Kushner had already arrived. But when presented with information indicating that was not accurate, the official said the timing of his arrival was unclear but confirmed that Kushner was scheduled to be in Iraq on Monday. Such visits from high-ranking officials are typically kept secret out of security concerns.

The administration official who provided the information late Sunday wasn't authorized to speak about confidential meetings by name and demanded anonymity.

Kushner's arrival in mid-afternoon Monday, local time, with Dunford and Thomas P. Bossert, a presidential assistant for homeland security and counterterrorism, was announced by Capt. Greg Hicks, a spokesman for Dunford.

The trip begins against a backdrop of an ongoing investigation into civilian deaths in an area of Mosul near the site of an airstrike by U.S.-led coalition forces last month.

"Gen. Dunford invited Mr. Kushner and Mr. Bossert to meet with Iraqi leaders, se-

nior U.S. advisers, and visit with U.S. forces in the field to receive an update on the status of the counter-ISIS (Islamic State) campaign in Iraq and Syria," Hicks said.

The spokesman added that Kushner was "traveling on behalf of the president to express the president's support and commitment to the government of Iraq and U.S. personnel currently engaged in the campaign."

Kushner's West Wing portfolio is robust. He has been deeply involved with presidential staffing, recently launched a task force meant to modernize government using lessons drawn from the private sector, and has played the role of shadow diplomat, advising on relations with the Middle East, Canada and Mexico.

And though Kushner had no previous diplomatic or government experience, Trump also tasked him with trying to broker a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. "If you can't produce peace in the Middle East, nobody can," Trump told Kushner at a gala a few days before his inauguration.

Kushner was also the latest Trump associate to be swept up into the ongoing probe into contacts with Russian officials. The White House confirmed last week that he had volunteered to be interviewed by the Senate intelligence committee.

North Carolina Sen. Richard Burr, the committee's chairman, said Kushner would likely be under oath and would submit to a "private interview" about arranging meetings with the Russian ambassador and other officials.

Kushner is married to Trump's oldest daughter, Ivanka. He was expected to have a major role in meetings later this week between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

His visit marks an early foray for the Trump administration into the situation in Iraq and came just two weeks after Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said he was assured by the president the U.S. will accelerate its support for his country's struggle against ISIS.

Al-Abadi met with Trump and Kushner in Washington recently and said he had the impression that the United States would take a more aggressive approach, although he did not say what that might entail.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis recently presented Trump with the outlines of a comprehensive approach to defeating ISIS and other extremist groups on a global scale.

Officials have indicated that the approach is unlikely to depart radically from the Obama administration's strategy, at least with regard to ongoing efforts in Iraq and Syria.

Iraq was part of the Trump administration's original travel ban but was removed from the revised version after a request from the Pentagon and the State Department highlighting Iraq's key role in fighting the Islamic State. The second travel ban, which restricts immigration from six Muslim-majority countries, has been halted by a federal court. The U.S. Justice Department has announced an appeal.

## Trump welcomes Egyptian president

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump welcomed his Egyptian counterpart, President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, to the White House on Monday for talks ranging from ways to collaborate in the fight against Islamic extremism to efforts to bolster Egypt's flailing economy.

In an Oval Office meeting,

Trump said that el-Sissi has done a "fantastic job" and declared his support for Egypt and the Egyptian people. Trump noted that the U.S. plans to build its military to "possibly" its highest levels as it looks to fight the Islamic State and lend support to its allies.

The two leaders are also expected to discuss military and

economic aid for the country.

El-Sissi noted that he's had a deep appreciation for Trump's "unique personality" and vowed to work with the U.S. to eradicate the "evil ideology" that is "terrorizing communities."

Trump has repeatedly mentioned Egypt as a critical Muslim-majority ally in the fight against extremists like the Is-

lamic State group.

The White House welcome comes after a tense relationship between Egypt's leader and the previous administration.

Former President Barack Obama never invited el-Sissi to the White House and allowed his administration to repeatedly admonish his government over its human rights record.

## Explosion on Russian subway kills at least 10

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — An explosion Monday afternoon ripped through a subway train in the Russian city of St. Petersburg, killing at least 10 people and injuring 50 others, the spokesman for the city's governor told Russian television.

The blast came as Russian President Vladimir Putin was visiting the city, his hometown.

Putin said investigators were looking into whether the explosion was a terrorist attack or if there might have been another cause. He offered his condolences to the families of those killed.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Within two hours, Russia authorities found and deactivated another bomb at a separate St. Petersburg subway station, Vosstaniya Square, Russia's National Anti-Terrorist Committee said.

The unidentified explosive device went off at 2:20 p.m. on a train that was leaving the Technology Institute station and heading to the Sennaya Square station, Russia's National Anti-Terrorist Committee said.

The St. Petersburg subway immediately shut down all of its stations, and the national anti-terrorism body said security measures would be tightened at all key transport facilities across Russia.

Maxim Liksutov, Moscow's deputy mayor, told Interfax that Moscow authorities were tightening security on the subway in the Russian capital.

Social media users posted photos and video from the affected station, showing injured people on the floor outside a train with a mangled door.

Frantic commuters were reaching into doors and windows, trying to see if anyone was there and shouting "Call an ambulance!"

# US launches airstrikes in Yemen

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States conducted about 20 airstrikes against al-Qaida militants in Yemen in recent days, continuing its increased bombing campaign against the terrorist group that has taken advantage of a civil war to increase its influence.

The United States has now conducted more than 70 airstrikes against al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula since the end of February, Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis said Monday. He did not provide specific information about the latest round of air attacks in Yemen, such as precisely where or when they occurred or how many militants they killed.

The strikes were largely carried out by drones and targeted fighters, infrastructure, fighting positions and equipment, Davis said.

"We continue to target [al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula] in Yemen," he said. "This is done in the interest of disrupt-

ing this terror organization that presents a very significant threat to the United States."

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula is al-Qaida's second-largest affiliate and largely considered the most dangerous, according to U.S. defense officials who recently briefed reporters about the group on the condition of anonymity.

The organization rose to prominence in 2009 and has taken advantage of the 2-year-old civil war between Yemen's Saudi-backed government forces and Iranian-backed Houthi rebels to carve out territory to train its fighters.

It claimed responsibility for the 2009 Christmas Day attempted underwear bombing of a commercial airliner in Detroit and for the 2015 attack on French satirist newspaper Charlie Hebdo that killed 12 in Paris.

It boasts some 4,000 militants in Abyan, Bayda and Shabwah governances in the center of southern Yemen, according to the defense officials.

The majority of U.S. airstrikes in recent months

against the group have occurred in those provinces, and the Pentagon has said dozens of terrorists have been killed.

The uptick in airstrikes has come in the months following a controversial U.S. raid in January, which was blamed for civilian casualties and led to the death of a Navy SEAL. Six other American servicemembers were wounded in the Jan. 28 operations in Bayda, and a military aircraft was destroyed.

No U.S. troops have conducted ground combat operations in Yemen since that raid, Davis said Monday.

Some American servicemembers remain in the country, but they are there to support United Arab Emirates forces fighting the Houthis as part of the Saudi Arabian-led coalition, he said.

In recent weeks, the Pentagon has weighed providing more assistance to the fight against the Houthis, such as increasing its intelligence sharing with the coalition and conducting refueling operations. Davis said U.S. military operations in Yemen had not changed as of Monday.

## EU: It's not realistic to think of keeping Assad in power in Syria

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — The European Union's top diplomat says it is unrealistic to think President Bashar Assad could retain power in a postwar Syria.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said Monday "it seems completely unrealistic to believe that the future of Syria will be exactly the same as it used to be in the past."

She added, "It is for the Syrians to decide — but for all Syrians to decide."

Her remarks at an EU foreign ministers' meeting come as Washington appears to be softening its line against Assad.

In London on Friday, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis suggested Assad's status is not the most important question right now.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said "France cannot believe for one moment that Syria can be led by Bashar Assad given his re-

sponsibility for the current situation: more than 300,000 dead, prisoners, people tortured, a country destroyed. It's a question of responsibilities."

International donors gather in Brussels on Wednesday to drum up funds and support for a lasting solution to the six-year conflict.

In a statement, the foreign ministers said the EU is ready to help rebuild Syria but "only when a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition ... is underway."

They also called on the Syrian regime and its backers, notably Russia, "to undertake all efforts to ensure: a full cessation of hostilities; the lifting of sieges; and full unhindered sustainable country-wide humanitarian access."

They said the EU will work "to help ensure accountability for war crimes, human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including the confirmed use of chemical weapons."

# VA secretary says porn-viewing situation highlights firing issue

BY NIKKI WENTLING  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin is using a recent attempt to fire a porn-viewing employee to demonstrate why Congress should give him more disciplinary power.

An employee at the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston was caught watching pornography in the presence of a veteran patient, the VA wrote in a statement Friday. VA officials responded by prohibiting the employee from working with patients, but because of appeals processes, they can't yet fire the worker.

Shulkin is using the situation as an example of the department's lengthy process for firing, demoting or suspending employees — and why he thinks it should change.

"We're taking a hard stance we want this employee removed, and we do not believe the current laws allow us to do that quickly enough," Shulkin said Sunday on "Fox & Friends."

The law states that the VA

must give employees 30 days' notice of their removal, during which employees can build a defense to appeal disciplinary action against them. The employee in Houston was put on notice and continues to be paid, the VA statement says.

The House passed legislation March 16 that cuts the advance written notice to 10 days. The bill also would shorten the time employees have to appeal and require quicker determinations from those who hear the appeals.

In the statement, Shulkin pressed the Senate to quickly take up the issue. He said Sunday that President Donald Trump is "fully supportive" and "looking forward to being able to sign an accountability bill."

It's uncertain when senators will review the legislation, which has faced criticism from a federal union that says it does away with employees' due-process rights. A similar bill stalled last year after passing the House.

After the VA statement Friday, Sen. Johnny Isakson, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, said he agreed that

30 days' notice was too long and that there was need for a legislative fix. His office said Monday they weren't sure when the committee would take up any accountability legislation but that it was a top priority.

Dan Caldwell, policy director for conservative-leaning Concerned Veterans of America, said Shulkin's latest statement could help drive the bill forward. Since the legislation passed the House, CVA leaders have been meeting with senators and asking their members to call them.

The bill is backed by 13 veterans and military organizations, including CVA, that see it as a way to root out a perceived culture of corruption in the department.

"The VA secretary coming out and stating that he needs the ability to more quickly fire some of these employees is extremely helpful to the effort," Caldwell said. "The White House is also on board. I think those factors combined really give this bill a lot of momentum, and we hope the Senate will pick it up in the next several weeks."

# Trump: US is ready to act alone on North Korea

*Associated Press*

POTOMAC FALLS, Va. — President Donald Trump said that the United States is prepared to act alone if China does not take a tougher stand against North Korea's nuclear program.

Trump's comments in an interview with the Financial Times come just days before he is set to host Chinese President Xi Jinping at his Mar-a-Lago estate in South Florida. The two are expected to discuss a number of issues, including North Korea, trade and territorial disputes in the South China Sea during their meeting on Thursday and Friday.

"Yes, we will talk about North Korea," Trump told the newspaper for a story that appeared Sunday on its website. "And China has great influence over North Korea. And China will either decide to help us with North Korea, or they won't. And if they do that will be very good for China, and if they don't it won't be good for anyone."

Trump said trade was the incentive for China to work with the United States. Still, he said the United States could "totally" handle the situation in North Korea without China's help.

The relationship between the United States and China has been uncertain since Trump's election. During his campaign he accused China of unfair trade practices and threatened to raise import taxes on Chinese goods and declare Beijing a currency manipulator, though it is unclear whether Trump will follow through with either threat.

Trump told the newspaper that he doesn't "want to talk about tariffs yet, perhaps the next time we meet."

# Dems secure votes to block Gorsuch

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Senate Democrats secured the votes on Monday to block President Donald Trump's Supreme Court nominee, but it was virtually certain to be a short-lived political victory. Republicans have vowed to change Senate rules to put Neil Gorsuch on the court and score a much-needed win for their party.

Delaware Sen. Chris Coons said before a Judiciary Committee vote on Gorsuch that he would vote with his fellow Democrats to block the nomination later this week. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky, is likely to change

Senate rules so that Gorsuch can be confirmed with a simple majority in the 100-seat chamber instead of the 60 votes now required.

The starkly divided Senate panel weighed Gorsuch's nomination, with Republicans casting the Denver-based appeals court judge as fiercely independent and Democrats complaining that his testimony "diluted with ambiguity" makes him the wrong choice.

The Republican-led Judiciary panel was expected to back Gorsuch and send his nomination to the full Senate, most likely on a near-party line vote.

Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, strongly de-

fended Gorsuch as a fair and independent man. He said Democrats had worked to try and find fault with him, but "that fault will not stick."

However, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, of California, the top Democrat on the panel, said Gorsuch's answers during two days of questioning before the committee were "diluted with ambiguity." She announced her opposition to the nominee.

Democrats, led by Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, of New York, have vowed to block the nominee, infuriating Republicans, who argue the action is exceedingly rare for Supreme Court choices.

# Activists seek probe of Yongsan oil spills

BY KIM GAMEL  
AND YOO KYONG CHANG  
*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korean activists have released U.S. records showing 84 oil spills, including seven that were more than 1,000 gallons, over a 25-year period at Yongsan Garrison.

Three groups, which obtained documents detailing incident reports from 1990-2015 after filing a Freedom of Information Act request, said the number and scale of the spills were much greater than those made public by U.S. Forces Korea or the South Korean government.

Though the largest spills happened more than a decade ago, activists expressed concern about the lack of transparency and the possibility of continued water contamination as USFK plans to turn over much of the massive compound to South Korea in coming years.

“The critical question for negotiations is who will take responsibility for the environmental pollution at Yongsan garrison before it’s returned,” the groups said in a statement.

The seven largest spills — recorded between Oct. 2, 1997, and May 14, 2002 — ranged from 1,250 gallons of jet fuel known as JP-8 to 7,620 gallons of diesel, according to a table

provided by the groups. They said USFK had shared information about the two largest accidents with the South Korean government but apparently not the others.

The amounts in recent years have been smaller, but several spills also were reported with the amount listed as unknown, the groups said.

“The main sources of the oil spill incidents were aging oil storage tanks and piping,” the statement said, adding that it was often difficult to know when the leaks began with regard to underground tanks.

The groups Green Korea United, Lawyers for a Democratic Society and the Association of Residents to Recover U.S. Army Garrison Yongsan called on USFK to apologize and offer full transparency. They also demanded a joint U.S.-South Korean investigation that includes city government officials and experts recommended by civic groups.

“We cannot leave the Yongsan base return issue to be dealt with only by the irresponsible U.S. military and incompetent Korean government,” Kim Eun-hee, a member of the residents’ organization, said at a press conference to release the findings.

“Since the records confirm

that the oil spill incidents at Yongsan Garrison have occurred on a large scale, the suspicion of residents can only be resolved once a U.S.-Korean joint investigation team has been formed,” she added.

USFK’s public affairs office didn’t comment on the allegations but insisted it takes environmental, health and safety issues seriously.

“Our responsibilities are defined in [the status of forces agreement] and relevant agreements, and USFK and [the South Korean government] have a time-tested, reliable and effective agreed upon process for addressing health and environmental concerns,” it said in an email. “Our number one priority remains ensuring the continued health and safety of our service members, families, civilian workforce, and Korean neighbors.”

Activists and residents have long expressed concerns about possible water and soil contamination from oil spills on U.S. bases in South Korea. The issue has taken on new urgency as the repeatedly delayed plans for relocating the bulk of U.S. forces in South Korea to a base south of Seoul gain momentum. The city has said in the past that it plans to turn the base into a park after the land is

reclaimed.

Previously, South Korean media mostly referred to 14 reported cases since 1988 of environmental contamination involving U.S. bases.

In 2000, the 8th Army commander apologized after the military discharged untreated toxic waste into the Han River, a main source of drinking water for Seoul.

The Seoul city government said last year that tests had shown the levels of benzene and other contaminants were more than 500 times the standard in underground water. It has reportedly spent more than \$400,000 a year since 2004 in cleanup efforts.

South Korea’s Environmental Ministry reportedly commissioned three studies of contamination on Yongsan between May 2015 and August 2016 but has not released the results.

A ministry official said a decision to publicize the results must be made jointly with USFK via a joint subcommittee, according to the allies’ status of forces agreement.

“We can’t give a definite answer right now because the subcommittee needs to discuss it with USFK,” the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

## Grass fire contained near air base in S. Korea

AIR BASE, South Korea — A grass fire broke out Monday in a remote area and spread to Osan Air Base, sending plumes of gray smoke into the sky for nearly three hours.

The area near the base’s golf course was evacuated as helicopters dropped water on the flames and firefighters worked to extinguish the flames on the ground.

The 51st Fighter Wing said the blaze was contained within three separate spot fires shortly before 5 p.m., when the evacuation notice was lifted.

Helicopters used the golf course’s water hazards, just a few hundred yards from the fire, as fill stations for their

buckets.

Bulldozers and other heavy equipment were seen heading toward the fire after it was contained.

“All individuals with reactive airway disease and/or asthma are advised to stay indoors or avoid areas with thick smoke until further notice,” the 51st Fighter Wing said about 5 p.m. on its Facebook page.

The fire began around 2:10 p.m. in a field of reeds, although the cause was still under investigation, said a South Korean fire official in Osan, who spoke on condition of anonymity. He said there were no houses in the area and nobody was hurt.

From staff reports

## Okinawa officials blast US as 4 GIs arrested

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Four arrests — two on drunken-driving charges — mark the most over a single weekend for servicemembers on Okinawa since a string of alcohol-fueled incidents last year inspired protests and efforts to combat the problem.

A sailor and soldier each face charges in separate drunken-driving incidents from Saturday and Sunday. A Marine sergeant was arrested Saturday and charged with stealing a smartphone at a massage parlor. Also that day, a Marine major was detained at Naha Airport after leaving ammunition in his luggage.

The arrests caught the eye of

prefectural officials.

“It is deplorable that the spate of incidents involving [status of forces agreement] people occurred over the weekend,” said a spokesman for the Okinawa government’s Military Affairs Office. “We cannot help but question the effectiveness of measures taken by the military.”

U.S. Forces Japan told Stars and Stripes said it takes misconduct allegations seriously.

“Rates of criminal misbehavior across Japan are near historic lows and we constantly work to maintain the high level of discipline expected of us,” a statement said.

From staff reports

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Train hits unmanned car stuck on tracks

**WA** MONROE — No one was hurt Friday night when a train hit a car in Monroe.

The Everett Daily Herald reported that the driver was unfamiliar with the area and accidentally got stuck on the tracks.

Monroe police spokeswoman Debbie Willis said the woman left the car and called her husband.

Police were summoned at 11:41 p.m. Willis said the officer checked the vehicle to make sure no one was inside and then left the tracks as the train approached rapidly.

The train pushed the car for about 500 feet. The tracks were blocked until about 4 a.m.

### Seized lobsters given to homeless veterans

**MA** NEW BEDFORD — Environmental authorities in Massachusetts are donating lobsters seized from an illegal harvest to homeless veterans.

Massachusetts Environmental Police said they found the lobsters during an inspection of an offshore trawler in New Bedford on March 26. Police said they determined the vessel had exceeded the legal limit of 500 for lobsters caught outside state waters.

They weren't returned to the ocean because returning lobsters to different water conditions is potentially fatal. Instead, they were donated to the Veterans Transition House in New Bedford.

The facility serves homeless and at-risk veterans and their families in southeastern Massachusetts.

### Dozens of illegal shark fins discovered in boat

**FL** KEY WEST — Florida wildlife officers stopped a shrimp boat out of Key West and found dozens of illegal shark fins.

The Miami Herald reported the vessel was discovered Wednesday night with the fins, indicating they could have been taken in Florida waters. Shark finning has been banned in Florida for more than 16 years.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service is investigating the finning, but no charges have been filed.

### Bear cub picked up by hiker sent to rehab

**OR** PORTLAND — A black bear cub picked up by an Oregon hiker who said the cub was not moving and barely breathing has been moved to a wildlife center in Washington state.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported the 3-month-old bear dubbed Elkhorn was sent to PAWS Wildlife Center in Lynnwood, Wash., on Friday.

Corey Hancock, of Salem, found the bear alone March 27 and took the animal to a local wildlife rehab facility.

Wildlife officials said it's illegal to take wildlife out of their habitat, but Oregon State Police have said Hancock won't be cited.

The cub has been treated for mild pneumonia.

### Suspected drunken driver rams police car

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — Authorities said a suspected drunken driver rammed an unoccupied Minneapolis police cruiser head-

on before surrendering to authorities.

The Star Tribune reported there were no injuries in the incident, which happened after officers had responded to a report of a person with a gun. The officers were returning to their vehicle after the investigation when the accident happened.

Police said a 27-year-old Minneapolis woman was arrested on suspicion of drunken driving after refusing a breath test. Other charges are possible.

### Fisherman convicted of oily waste discharge

**WA** SEATTLE — The owner of a fishing vessel has been convicted in federal court of discharging oily waste into Washington state's coastal waters in violation of the Clean Water Act.

Bingham Fox, owner of the Native Sun, was convicted last week following a five-day trial. Sentencing is set for July 11.

According to court documents, Fox and others on the vessel repeatedly discharged oily waste into the ocean using unapproved submersible pumps and hoses.

Evidence showed that the vessel had long-term mechanical problems that put large amounts of oil into its bilges.

Fox faces up to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

### Mom held after crash critically injures son

**NE** OMAHA — A 22-year-old western Iowa woman was arrested following a crash in Omaha that left her young son critically injured.

The Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil reported that the crash happened late Thursday night on Interstate 80 in Omaha. Police said the woman

told officers she was driving when she and another woman in the car began arguing. She said the other woman grabbed the wheel, sending the car into a light pole.

When officers arrived, no one was there. Officers later found the women and the boy at an Omaha hospital, where the boy was being treated for critical head injuries.

Police said the women had been drinking, and that the boy's mother had a blood alcohol content of 0.198 percent — more than twice the legal limit to drive.

### GOP to clamp down on Dems' doughnut stand

**MN** ST. PAUL — Republicans say Democrats operating a doughnut stand at the Minnesota State Fair should disclose to patrons that their purchase is a political contribution.

The Pioneer Press reported the group has been registered since 1977 and contributes the profits to local Democratic-Farmer-Labor groups.

Republican Rep. Randy Jesup, of Shoreview, has proposed a bill that would require the doughnut booth's operators to tell each customer before the sale that proceeds could be used to make a contribution. The measure also would limit where the proceeds could go.

The group's chairman, Marc Asch, said the doughnut stand operates like any other booth and that there's nothing secret about it.

Campaign finance reports show the doughnut booth reported generating \$206,000 from sales and \$121,000 in expenses last year.

From wire reports

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# South Carolina women win NCAA title

Associated Press

DALLAS — Dawn Staley is going to savor her first NCAA championship. It took her a long time to finally be able to raise the trophy over her head.

A'ja Wilson scored 23 points to help coach Staley and South Carolina win their first national championship with a 67-55 victory over Mississippi State on Sunday night.

Staley made the Final Four three times as a player at Virginia but never won. She also led the Gamecocks to the national semifinals two years ago before losing to Notre Dame.

"It means that I can check off one of the things that had been a void in my career," said Staley wearing the championship net around her neck in the postgame press conference. "Something I wanted to do. It was one of two opportunities that I saw women play when I was younger — national cham-

pionship games and Olympics. Those were things that I held dear and near to me growing up. Those were the things I saw and were shooting for."

Wilson, a native South Carolina player who was Staley's biggest recruit ever, was the key. She was thrilled to help Staley get her first title.

"I can't put into words how much it meant to win the game for coach," Wilson said. "She's put in so much time and sweat into this. ... It really means something special to bring this back home for such a great person like coach Staley."

Once the final buzzer sounded, Staley had a long group hug with her coaching staff and then grabbed the trophy and paraded it around the court high over her head. She cut down the final piece of the net, waving it to the huge throng of Gamecocks fans while Wilson and Kaela Davis danced with the South Carolina band playing.

"You have to give tribute to the former players," Staley said. "Go back to my Temple days, they believed in our vision. We took that vision to South Carolina and that vision was we'll be national champions. If you stick with us and if you're disciplined, if you believe all these players believed in that. Happy our words came true to them."

Staley became just the second African-American coach to win a national championship. She joined Carolyn Peck, who won a title at Purdue.

Mississippi State had all the momentum on its side after a shocking win over UConn on Friday night that ended the Huskies' record 111-game winning streak. The Bulldogs couldn't muster the same effort against the Gamecocks. Morgan William, who had become the face of the tournament with the game-winner against the Huskies after a 41-point performance against Baylor, was held

to just 8 points.

South Carolina (33-4) turned a 10-point halftime lead into a 45-31 advantage midway through the third quarter before the Bulldogs rallied. Mississippi State (34-5) slowly cut into its deficit, getting with 54-50 on Jazzmun Holmes' jumper. That brought a huge cheer from the thousands of Mississippi State fans who made the 8-hour trip from Starkville, Miss.

But that's as close as the Bulldogs could get.

Wilson blocked a shot on one end of the court and then hit a short jumper in the lane that started a 12-2 run to put the game away. Staley emptied her bench with less than a minute left and Wilson left with tears of joy. The junior center sees a repeat in the future for the Gamecocks, who return most of their core players.

# Thompson penalty puts golf rules in spotlight

Associated Press

RANCHO MIRAGE, Calif. — Lexi Thompson heard fans chanting her name as she approached the 18th green, and it moved her to the brink of tears for the second time in an hour.

Although she had lost her big lead at the ANA Inspiration on a four-shot penalty for a day-old rules violation, Thompson had gained the unabashed support of a crowd desperately willing her to overcome this bizarre break.

Instead, So Yeon Ryu seized her opportunity to win the LPGA Tour's first major of the year when she birdied the only playoff hole Sunday.

Thompson had to settle for second place, a check worth roughly \$155,000 less — and widespread sympathy as the latest golfer to get blindsided in a major by the peccadillos of this fussy, fastidious sport.

"It's great to have the fan base that I do, and they really got me through the whole round," Thompson said. "It's unfortunate what happened. I did not mean that at all. I didn't realize I did that. I fought strong through the finish, and it was great to see the fans behind me."

The fans on the Dinah Shore Course largely shared the mixture of bewilderment and anger expressed by Thompson's fellow golfers and most viewers online.

The 22-year-old U.S. Olympian is the third major contender to be hit with a perplexing penalty for a violation of golf's stringent rules in the past year. The decision reignited the debate about this sport's baffling willingness to allow armchair refereeing — and renewed hope for common-sense rule changes that could be adopted as early as 2019.

"Viewers at home should not be officials wearing stripes," Tiger Woods tweeted. "Let's go @Lexi, win this thing anyway."

Thompson was penalized for marking and moving her ball less than an inch before a 1-foot putt on the 17th green during her third round at Mission Hills Country Club on Saturday. After putting down a marker and picking up the ball, Thompson swiftly put it back — but not precisely in the same place, video review showed.

The minor action went unnoticed live, but a television viewer spotted it and emailed tour officials while Thompson was playing the front nine on her final round with Suzann Pettersen on Sunday.

After nearly two hours of agonizing over video of the moment, LPGA Tour rules official Sue Witters got the unpleasant job of informing Thompson about her penalty after she left the 12th green.

"Is this a joke?" Thompson asked.

Even Witters understands the prevailing opinion about the ruling.

"Sure, but what's my choice?" she asked. "(Allow) a violation in the rules, and then it would be the opposite story: 'Oh, they knew. Why didn't they do anything about it?' I can't go to bed tonight knowing that I let a rule slide.

"It's a hard thing to do, and it made me sick, to be honest with you."

Instead of losing her composure after the ruling, Thompson incredibly birdied the next hole, burying a 25-foot putt. She made two more birdies and a bogey down the stretch, but missed a 15-foot eagle putt to win it on the last hole of regulation.

Ryu nearly put her playoff approach shot into the water, but got up and down with a 6-foot birdie putt to win. Her celebration was understandably muted, but she still took the traditional leap into Poppie's Pond.

## Federer tops Nadal in Miami

Associated Press

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla. — Weary from three months of winning, Roger Federer hit one last shot Sunday, whacking a celebratory forehand into the stands to punctuate his victory over Rafael Nadal in the Miami Open final.

Now comes a well-deserved two-month break.

“I’m not 24 anymore,” Federer said. “I need a rest.”

He’s not complaining. At 35, Federer is playing some of the best tennis of his career — so good he’s even dominating his longtime nemesis. Federer beat Nadal for the third time this year, 6-3, 6-4, to become the oldest men’s champion in the 33-year history of the tournament.

Federer also defeated Nadal in the Australian Open final in January, and two weeks ago en route to the Indian Wells title. He’s the first three-time champion this year on the men’s tour — and ready for a break.

The father of four has an exhibition scheduled next week, but plans to skip the bulk of the clay court season before returning for the French Open in late May.

“I want to stay healthy,” Federer said. “When I’m healthy and feeling good, I can produce tennis like this. If I’m not feeling this good, there’s no chance I’ll be in finals competing with Rafa.”

Federer said he arrived at Key Biscayne with low expectations, given his heavy workload of late, and felt tired in the final. Humid weather didn’t help.

He won anyway.

“On the big points I was just maybe a little bit better,” Federer said. “It was more of a fight mode I was in today trying to stay afloat. It has been a draining week.”

The victory turned back the clock, as Federer has done so often of late. He also won Key Biscayne in 2005 and 2006.

Nadal fell to 0-5 in Key Biscayne finals, including in 2005 against Federer. He was runner-up in 2008, 2011 and 2014.

## Cards rally past Cubs in opener

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Randal Grichuk hit a two-run homer in the eighth inning and a game-ending RBI single in the ninth, helping the St. Louis Cardinals top the Chicago Cubs 4-3 in a wild prime-time opener on Sunday night.

Jose Martinez sparked the winning rally with a pinch-hit double against Mike Montgomery, who closed out Chicago’s World Series championship in November. Yadier Molina then was awarded the first no-pitch intentional walk in major league history, part of baseball’s offseason rule changes designed to speed up the game.

With two outs and the bases loaded, Grichuk lined a 1-1 pitch into the gap in left-center for his second career game-ending hit. He was mobbed as he rounded first in the rain, and what was left of a sellout crowd of 47,566 cheered wildly.

The Cardinals appeared set for a tidy 3-0 win before the Cubs rallied in the ninth. Ben Zobrist was hit by a pitch from Seung-hwan Oh and Jason Heyward singled before Willson Contreras hit a drive to left for a tying homer.

**Diamondbacks 6, Giants 5:** Madison Bumgarner hit two homers but visiting Arizona scored twice with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning off new San Francisco closer Mark Melancon to beat the Giants in a wild season opener.

Derailed by a dreadful bullpen last year, the Giants started this season the same way — even after trying to solve the problem by bringing in Melancon on a \$62 million, four-year contract. They wasted a record-breaking performance by Bumgarner, who retired his first 16 batters and became the first major league pitcher to hit two

home runs on opening day.

Arizona got a double and three singles after Melancon (0-1) retired his first two hitters in the ninth. A.J. Pollock singled in the tying run and Chris Owings dumped a base hit into right field to end it.

New Diamondbacks closer Fernando Rodney (1-0) gave up a run in a shaky ninth but got the victory.

San Francisco took a 5-4 lead when Joe Panik led off the ninth with a triple and scored on pinch-hitter Conor Gillaspie’s sacrifice fly.

Bumgarner struck out 11 with no walks in seven innings. He gave up three runs and became the first Giants pitcher to go deep twice in one game since Jim Gott in 1985.

**Rays 7, Yankees 3:** Chris Archer pitched seven solid innings and host Tampa Bay won the first game of the major league season, roughing up New York ace Masahiro Tanaka.

Evan Longoria and Logan Morrison homered and drove in three runs apiece before a sellout crowd of 31,042 at Tropicana Field on opening day. Tanaka (0-1), who had baseball’s best ERA in spring training, was tagged for a career-worst seven earned runs in 2 2/3 innings.

A first-time All-Star in 2015 who lost an AL-leading 19 times last season, Archer (1-0) narrowly escaped a bases-loaded jam and turned a five-run lead over to a revamped bullpen.

Alex Colome replaced rookie Austin Pruitt with the bases loaded in the ninth, yielding a sacrifice fly to pinch-hitter Chris Carter before finishing for a save.

## Keselowski first with second win

Associated Press

MARTINSVILLE, Va. — Brad Keselowski had sampled success at Martinsville Speedway, but had never put everything together to get to Victory Lane.

He changed that on Sunday, passing Kyle Busch with 43 laps to go and pulling away to win for the 23rd time in his career.

“It felt like we were due, and if you ever can be, this is one of those tracks and today was one of those days where we persevered in a special way,” Keselowski said.

“The battle there with Kyle at the end was a lot of fun to be a part of. I hope it was a lot of fun to watch.”

The victory came in team owner Roger Penske’s 1,000th

start in NASCAR’s top series, and gave Ford its first victory on NASCAR’s oldest and smallest track since 2002. It also made Keselowski the first two-time winner this season, and was his fifth consecutive top-five finish.

“This is one I’m never going to forget,” said Keselowski, who had been the runner-up twice in the past four races here.

Keselowski or Busch led the last 160 laps and swapped the lead several times during a green flag run that began with 64 laps to go.

Keselowski had the lead coming out of the 14th and final caution, but Busch quickly slipped underneath him to go back in front. Keselowski stalked him for 14 laps, the nose of his Ford inches from

the rear bumper of Busch’s Toyota.

When he finally got around Busch again, he gradually pulled away, opening a lead of nearly two seconds as Busch’s car, dominant for much of the day, faded. The lead paid off at the end when Keselowski had to navigate around lapped traffic. He won by 1.8 seconds.

“All we did was put four tires on, and when we did, it went to junk,” Busch said of his car. “I hate it for our guys. They’ve deserved all year better finishes than what we’ve been able to produce, and here’s another one today. Just frustrating season so far.”

Busch led a race-high 274 laps and finished second, followed by Chase Elliott, Joey Logano and Austin Dillon.

## Pens hold off 'Canes

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Jake Guentzel and Conor Sheary scored power-play goals, Scott Wilson picked up his eighth goal of the season and the Pittsburgh Penguins held off the Carolina Hurricanes 3-2 on Sunday.

**Capitals 3, Blue Jackets 2:** Braden Holtby stopped 35 shots, Andre Burakovsky had a goal and an assist and visiting Washington held on to beat Columbus.

**Rangers 4, Flyers 3:** Oscar Lindberg and Chris Kreider scored 2:09 apart midway through the third period, and New York held on for its first home win in six weeks.

**Ducks 4, Flames 3:** Logan Shaw scored with 3:06 left in the third period to lift visiting Anaheim past Calgary.

**Blues 4, Predators 1:** Alexander Steen scored the tiebreaking goal early in the second period, David Perron had a goal and two assists, and host St. Louis delayed Nashville from clinching a playoff berth.

**Islanders 4, Sabres 2:** At Buffalo, N.Y., Anders Lee scored third-period goals a little more than five minutes apart, and New York overcame the absence of captain John Tavares to stay in the playoff hunt.

**Bruins 3, Blackhawks 2:** At Chicago, backup goalie Anton Khudobin made 41 saves and Boston got its fifth straight win.

**Lightning 6, Stars 3:** Adam Erne scored twice and Ondrej Palat added a power-play goal and two assists as host Tampa Bay beat Dallas.

**Wild 5, Avalanche 2:** Erik Haula had a goal and assist, Devan Dubnyk stopped 30 shots and host Minnesota beat Colorado.

**Sharks 3, Canucks 1:** Tomas Hertl scored twice in the first period and Martin Jones made 29 saves as visiting San Jose beat Vancouver after losing Joe Thornton to a left leg injury.

**Coyotes 2, Kings 1:** Anthony Duclair scored 3:09 into the second period, Mike Smith made 34 saves and visiting Arizona ended Los Angeles' slim playoff hopes.

## Bickering Cavaliers edge Pacers

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The playoffs are nearing. The Cavaliers are already feeling the pressure.

LeBron James made a big three-pointer in the final minute of the second overtime and scored 41 points to offset 43 by Indiana's Paul George, and Cleveland opened its April schedule with an emotional 135-130 win Sunday over the Pacers, who remain on the outside of the postseason in the Eastern Conference.

James added 15 rebounds and 11 assists in 52 exhausting minutes — his most in more than four years — for the defending NBA champions, whose win was overshadowed by an angry exchange between James and teammate Tristan Thompson during a timeout late in the second OT.

James accepted blame for the argument and

said he apologized to Thompson.

"I had good intentions but I was a little bit too demonstrative at that point in the game," he said. "I can't show up my teammates. Double T worked hard, he's a big-time player for our team. I had good intentions of what I wanted to happen, but the way it came out, it didn't look good on TV."

Thompson was reluctant to discuss the incident.

"We're family," Thompson said. "Little miscommunication in the huddle. Move forward. We're family. Got each other's back always. Move forward."

Kyrie Irving made four free throws in the final 16.5 seconds and Kevin Love had 20 points and 12 rebounds as Cleveland stayed within a half-game of Boston for the East's top spot. The Cavs visit the Celtics on Wednesday.

## Curry, Warriors win 11th straight

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Curry hit nine three-pointers and scored 42 points, also dished out eight assists, and the Golden State Warriors moved closer to locking up the Western Conference's top playoff seed by beating the Washington Wizards 139-115 on Sunday night.

Draymond Green had his 19th career triple-double and fifth this season with 11 points, 13 assists and 12 rebounds.

John Wall had 15 points and 11 assists for the Wizards, who couldn't make it two wins over the mighty Warriors in just more than a month's time. He set the season franchise assists record with No. 802 in the third quarter, topping Rod Strickland in 1997-98.

**Spurs 109, Jazz 103:** Kawhi Leonard had 25 points and seven assists, and host San Antonio held off Utah in a matchup of postseason-bound teams.

Utah (47-30) leads the Los Angeles Clippers (47-31) by a half-game for the Western Conference's No. 4 seed and home-court advantage in the opening round.

**Rockets 123, Suns 116:** Patrick Beverley scored a career-high 26 points and visiting Houston, despite not having James Harden in the lineup, sent Phoenix to its 12th straight loss.

Harden was ruled out with acute viral syndrome, the team announced before the game. He had not missed a game all season and entered Sunday tied for second in the league in scoring at 29.2 points per game.

**Celtics 110, Knicks 94:** Isaiah Thomas scored 19 points in just 24 minutes and visiting Boston remained atop the Eastern Conference with its 50th victory, beating New York.

Jaylen Brown added 16 for the Celtics, who will be no worse than tied with Cleveland for the best record in the East when they host the defending NBA champions on Wednesday.

**Hornets 113, Thunder 101:** Kemba Walker scored 29 points to help visiting Charlotte overcome Russell Westbrook's sixth straight triple-double and beat Oklahoma City.

Westbrook finished with 40 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists. It was Westbrook's 40th triple-double of the season, putting him one behind Oscar Robertson's NBA record of 41, set during the 1961-62 season.

**Nuggets 116, Heat 113:** Danilo Gallinari scored 29 points, Nikola Jokic and Wilson Chandler each added 19, and visiting Denver topped Miami.

Emmanuel Mudiay scored 17 for Denver (36-40), which got back within two games of Portland for the final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

**Bulls 117, Pelicans 110:** Jimmy Butler scored 39 points and visiting Chicago sustained its playoff push with a victory over recently resurgent New Orleans.

Butler made 14 of 26 shots to help the Bulls win for the fifth time in six games. Chicago won for the fifth time in six games after entering the day in a tie for seventh in the Eastern Conference with Miami and Indiana.

**Raptors 113, 76ers 105:** Serge Ibaka scored 24 points and DeMar DeRozan added 17 as Toronto registered its ninth straight home victory over Philadelphia.

**Mavericks 109, Bucks 105:** Harrison Barnes scored 15 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter to lift visiting Dallas over listless Milwaukee.

**Lakers 108, Grizzlies 103:** D'Angelo Russell scored 28 points and three Lakers had double-doubles in a home win over Memphis.

Memphis fell to 42-35, 1½ games back of Oklahoma City for the sixth spot in the Western Conference.

**Hawks 91, Nets 82:** Brook Lopez scored 29 points, Jeremy Lin had 15, and Brooklyn spoiled Paul Millsap's return to the lineup by beating visiting Atlanta.

The Hawks fell to 39-38, just a game ahead of seventh place in the Eastern Conference.