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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Ospreys to land at Yokota 2 years early

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The Air Force has accelerated a plan to base CV-22 Ospreys in western Tokyo by announcing that the tilt-rotor aircraft would arrive this week at the home of U.S. Forces Japan.

A Special Operations squadron of 10 Ospreys was due at Yokota in 2020; however, that schedule has been adjusted and five aircraft will be there later this week, the Air Force said in a statement Tuesday.

The arrival of the Ospreys — capable of taking off like helicopters, then tilting their rotors to fly long distances as fixed-wing aircraft — “addresses regional security concerns in line with the recently released 2018 National Defense Strategy and also provides a platform that can rapidly react to natural disasters or crises,” the statement said.

The Ospreys will remain at Yokota for a short time before leaving to train around the region over the next few months, the Air Force said.

“When they return from the training, they will continue to operate from Yoko-

ta,” the statement added.

More personnel will arrive at the base over the next several months to support aircraft training operations in the region, the statement said.

The original plan for basing the Ospreys at Yokota would have added about 1,100 people to a population of 11,500.

However, the squadron will initially bring only about 100 people, with that number growing as additional aircraft are deployed, said Kaori Matsukasa, a spokeswoman for Yokota’s 374th Airlift Wing.

“Some additional personnel will be assigned to the 374th Airlift Wing to support

the unit,” she said. “The total number of personnel added to Yokota Air Base over the next few years is expected to be around 450.”

Interim facilities to support the Ospreys were completed at the end of fiscal year 2017, and construction of other facilities for the aircraft should start on time, she said.

Some people living in communities near Yokota oppose basing the Ospreys there and have held a number of protests to make their concerns known.

The Air Force statement described the Osprey as “a highly advanced aircraft with unique capabilities and an excellent operational safety record.”

“It brings unparalleled special operations capabilities to the region as part of the United States’ commitment to Japan’s defense,” the statement added.

The Air Force’s variant of the Osprey is among several platforms the U.S. has recently sent to Japan, including Yokota’s new C-130J Super Hercules transport planes, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni’s F-35B stealth fighters and Sasebo Naval Base’s USS Wasp amphibious ship.

‘It brings unparalleled special operations capabilities to the region as part of the United States’ commitment to Japan’s defense.’

U.S. Air Force

Little Rock underway after being ice-bound

BY LEON COOK

Stars and Stripes

The littoral combat ship USS Little Rock is back underway after being stuck in Montreal for three months because of ice.

The Navy’s newest warship left Saturday morning bound for its homeport of Mayport Naval Station, Fla., Lt. Cmdr. Courtney Hillson told the U.S. Naval Institute.

“The ship was moored at the Port of Montreal until weather conditions improved and the St. Lawrence Seaway melted enough for the safe passage of the ship,” Hillson said.

“Keeping the ship in Mon-

treau until weather conditions improved ensured the safety of the ship and crew.”

The Little Rock was commissioned Dec. 16 next to its namesake, the decommissioned guided-missile cruiser USS Little Rock, in Buffalo, N.Y. It was late leaving Buffalo due to wintry weather and stopped in Montreal a few days after Christmas for a port visit and minor repairs.

“The ship was ready to depart Montreal, but the extreme cold, subsequent condition of the St. Lawrence Seaway and availability of icebreakers and support ships caused the delay,” Hillson said in January.

The Little Rock was escorted

down the St. Lawrence by the Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker Des Groseilliers during its Saturday departure.

“We greatly appreciate the support and hospitality of the city of Montreal, the Montreal Port Authority and the Canadian Coast Guard,” said Cmdr. Todd Peters, the ship’s commander. “We are grateful for the opportunity to further enhance our strong partnerships.”

While laid up, two dozen members of the Little Rock’s crew helped sort donated goods at the Welcome Hall mission in Saint Henri near the Little Rock’s temporary mooring, according to a February report

by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The ship’s crew could explore the city in their off-hours, and their stay was mostly uneventful.

However, residents of a condo near the ship’s mooring reportedly complained about noise from shore-side power generators.

“It’s like the motor of a large truck that’s driving at high speed,” Montreal resident Alain Stanke told The Canadian Press in March. “Those two generators are detestable.”

The Little Rock is expected to arrive in Florida by the end of the month after making several port calls.

Navy to deploy F-35Cs to Japan after 2021

By TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL Base, Japan — The Navy expects to deploy its version of America's most advanced joint strike fighter to Japan sometime after 2021.

The plan — confirmed this week by Naval Forces Japan spokeswoman Cmdr. Reann Mommsen — involves sending an unspecified number of F-35C Lightning IIs to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

"The U.S. Navy places its most advanced and combat-capable units in the forward deployed naval force," she told Stars and Stripes in an email. "This future upgrade will enhance the capabilities of the air wing and its mission to defend Japan and contribute to regional peace and security."

The F-35Cs will be assigned to Carrier Air Wing 5 of the USS Ronald Reagan strike group. Last week, CVW-5 finished relocating its fixed-wing aircraft from Naval Air

Facility Atsugi to Iwakuni, which is hundreds of miles away near the southern end of Japan's main island of Honshu.

The F-35 comes in three variants that cater to the needs of each service branch. The Air Force's F-35As — designed for traditional takeoffs and landings — are lighter and can carry more fuel, while the Marine Corps' F-35Bs are capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings that make them compatible with amphibious assault ships such as the USS Wasp.

Manufacturer Lockheed Martin says the F-35C is the "only" fighter designed and built explicitly for carrier operations.

"The F-35C variant has larger wings and more robust landing gear than the other variants, making it suitable for catapult launches and fly-in arrestments aboard naval aircraft carriers," the company says on its website. "It's wingtips also fold to allow for more room on the carrier's deck

while deployed."

The Navy says those foldable wings are "critical" for their use on aircraft carriers that can hold more than 70 aircraft, including 18C Hornets, 18G Growlers and 18E/F Super Hornets, E-2D Hawkeyes and C-2A Greyhounds.

Last month, pilots from Strike Fighter Squadrons 125 and 101 flew F-35Cs on day and night qualifications, with 140 arrested landings aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln in the Atlantic Ocean. The carrier qualifications bring the Navy's variant of the joint strike fighter one step closer to operational status.

MCAS Iwakuni already hosts a squadron of Marine Corps F-35Bs flown by Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121. The stealth fighters, which transferred from MCAS Yuma last year, are conducting their first regional patrol with the USS Wasp strike group.

Divers hope to solve old Hercules crash mystery

By WILLIAM HOWARD
Stars and Stripes

RAF MILDENHALL, England — Almost 50 years ago, Sgt. Paul Adams Meyer, a U.S. Air Force assistant crew chief, got drunk, impersonated an officer and stole a C-130 Hercules from RAF Mildenhall in England so he could fly home to his new wife. Two hours later, he crashed into the English Channel.

Now, a team of British divers called Deeper Dorset hopes to raise \$8,430 on an all-or-nothing Kickstarter to find the plane and uncover the truth behind the crash.

The divers have until April 11 to meet their fundraising goal or go back to the drawing board.

"We've known about the Hercules story for about 10 years, and it's one of those stories that grabs the imagination," said Deeper Dorset photographer Simon Brown said. "It's a human tale as much as re-

search of as to where it is."

What happened to Meyer has been subject to rumor and speculation for nearly half a century.

An Air Force investigation found that at least two U.S. F-100 Super Sabre fighter jets from RAF Lakenheath, a C-130 from Mildenhall and two RAF English Electric Lightning interceptors attempted contact with Meyers before he crashed into the English Channel near Alderney Island.

Members of Deeper Dorset believe they can locate the missing Hercules using existing research, sonar and photogrammetry, a technique that builds 3-D models of wreckage.

"We've nailed down where we think the aircraft might be within a 10-square-mile box," Brown said. "Within that box, there's five hot spots. Places where people have reported losing fishing gear or snagging something, and those kinds of snags are usually man-made."

United will fly pets of troops based in Guam

By LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

United Airlines will resume flying servicemembers' pets off Guam until the end of the month despite a worldwide suspension of its pet shipment service, the carrier announced Tuesday.

"Effective April 3, we are allowing an exception to our suspension of new PetSafe reservations for members of the military and their spouses, and State Department Foreign Service personnel and their spouses, who wish to travel with or ship their pets out of Guam between April 3 and April 30," United said in a statement posted on its website.

The exception also applies to Department of Defense civilians but doesn't include military contractors working on the island, United PetSafe staff said.

Guam's congressional representative-at-large, Madeleine Bordallo, said in a statement that she was "very pleased that United Airlines is working to

accommodate Guam families and their pets, including our military servicemembers who are re-deployed."

Bordallo said she would work with the Defense Department, other federal agencies and airlines serving Guam to make sure pets could travel safely off the island with their owners.

United has suspended its pet shipment program until no later than May 1 following multiple delivery mistakes and the death of a dog placed in an overhead bin at the behest of a flight attendant last month.

The suspension was a voluntary action to "conduct a thorough and systematic review of our Petsafe program, and make improvements that will ensure the best possible experience for our customers and their pets," United said in an earlier statement.

Some people scheduled to leave Guam for new duty stations thought they would have to find accommodation for their pets until the ban was lifted.

Gov. OKs \$3.5M for 'Norfolk 4'

Capital News Service

RICHMOND, Va. — Gov. Ralph Northam signed legislation to provide nearly \$3.5 million in compensation to the “Norfolk Four,” the U.S. Navy sailors who were wrongfully convicted and imprisoned for a 1997 rape and murder.

Northam last week signed identical House and Senate bills to compensate Danial Williams, Joseph Dick, Derek Tice and Eric Wilson, who were wrongly convicted in 1999 of raping and killing 18-year-old Michelle Bosko.

Under the legislation, Williams will receive \$895,299; Dick, \$875,845; Wilson, \$866,456; and Tice, \$858,704.

On Thursday, Northam signed the measures containing the compensation package — Senate Bill 772, proposed by Sen. Scott Surovell, D-Fairfax, and House Bill 762, proposed by Del. Chris Jones, R-Suffolk.

The legislation notes that

the “Norfolk Four” defendants “spent nearly four decades in prison collectively for crimes they did not commit, and another collective 30 years after release from prison under highly restrictive parole and sex offender registry conditions that imposed onerous barriers to their reentry to society.”

The four men were “imprisoned and experienced assaults and other horrific experiences during the imprisonment that irreparably broke them in a manner that no time or money will ever fix,” according to the legislation.

The defendants were convicted because of their coerced confessions, even though the real rapist and murderer, Omar Ballard, confessed in 1999 to committing the crime alone and his DNA was found at the crime scene, bills state.

Ballard is an inmate at Sussex II State Prison and serving two life terms plus 42 years for capital murder, two rapes, two

counts of malicious wounding, and abduction.

In 2009, then-Gov. Tim Kaine granted conditional pardons to Williams, Dick and Tice. That action ended their sentences, but the men remained on the sex offender registry. Wilson had already been released from prison in 2005 after serving more than eight years behind bars.

A decade after their convictions, U.S. District Judge John Gibney dismissed the convictions of Dick and Williams.

“Considering the evolution of their admissions, their subsequent recantation and the other physical evidence, the admissions of guilt by Williams, Dick and Tice are far from convincing,” Gibney’s decision stated. “Any reasonable juror considering all of the evidence would harbor reasonable doubt as to whether Williams, Dick, or anyone else, was with Ballard in Bosko’s apartment.”

Couple found dead in Italy identified

By NANCY MONTGOMERY

Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — A couple found dead in a suspected murder-suicide on Monday have been identified as a retired U.S. Army major and his Russian-born wife.

Maj. Bradley Kinser, formerly a strategic intelligence research officer for U.S. Army Africa who retired in 2015, was found dead by local authorities in the bathroom of his home near Vicenza.

His wife, Leila, was found dead in the couple’s bedroom, according to Italian media reports, and had apparently been killed either by strangulation or suffocation.

Italian Carabinieri investigating the deaths said it appeared that Kinser had killed his wife, then slit his own throat, Italian media reported. Investigators found a note with the word “Sorry,” the shape of a heart and the letter U written in blood and stuck on the bedroom door, according to Italian media.

The couple were in their late 30s or early 40s.

The deaths were discovered after friends who were aware that Kinser was suffering from depression, including a Caserma Ederle chaplain, alerted authorities that they had not answered phone calls.

Kinser had served in Iraq and had lived in Poland, according to a Facebook page. Since his retirement, Kinser had been working as a contractor for Inverness Technologies Inc. to provide “Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program” services in support of the Army Human Resources Command, authorities said.

Leila Kinser’s Facebook page showed numerous photos of her pet turtle, Mashka. A post on the page that went up at 8:51 p.m. Saturday said, “I don’t have any more my Mashka I want to die.”

It was tagged “Leila Kinser is with Mashka Kinser.”

‘Marine drill sergeant’ among April Fool’s jokes

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

Military working cats were in the news along with other unbelievable stories on April 1.

U.S. Forces Japan celebrated April Fools’ Day by tweeting a photo of “MWC (Military Working Cat) Muffins” wearing tactical patches and the sort of camouflage harness you might expect to see on a military working dog.

The image shows Muffins alerting on a suspect during a tracking exercise, according to USFJ’s post.

“Muffins is part of a prototype program recently unveiled by the DOD Working Animal Program,” the tweet said. “Ten cats have made it to the final phase of training and will be sent to military installations.”

The Marine Corps also got in on the act, telling its social media followers that “the term Drill Instructor will be replaced with Drill Sergeant beginning next quarter.”

“The Marine Corps plans to modify recruit training in efforts to streamline training across the ground forces of the Department of Defense,” the message said.

After clicking a link to find out more, readers are brought to an image of a shouting drill instructor with the words: “April Fools! Say aye, sir!”

Military April fool’s pranks are a time-honored tradition. In 1915, a French aviator dropped what appeared to be a large bomb onto a German camp. The Germans scattered but eventually discovered that the object was actually a football with a note attached reading, “April Fool,” according to press reports posted on the Museum of Hoaxes website.

Stars and Stripes got in on the act in 1943, announcing plans for 30-day home furloughs for all personnel who had served for a year in Europe.

The men were to be transported back to the States on the

SS Normandie, salvaged after capsizing in the Hudson River the previous year, crewed by members of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps and staffed with entertainers including Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, burlesque star Gypsy Rose Lee and pin-up girl Betty Grable, the prank said.

“The Governor of the State of Texas has promised a sufficient number of Texas long horn yearlings to provide “inch-thick steaks” for each evening meal,” it added.

On arrival in New York, each servicemember would get the keys to the city and a date with “a charming debutant” before traveling back to hometowns first class.

“Requests for furlough should be forwarded in triplicate to Stars and Stripes, where they will be carefully filed until next April Fool’s Day, on which date we hope to have the entire plan in actual operation,” the editorial concluded.

Teachers defiant in Okla., Ky. as protests intensify

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Hundreds of teachers crammed into the Oklahoma Capitol for a second day Tuesday to press demands for additional funding for the state's public schools, and many of those schools remained closed amid a rebellion that has hit several Republican-led states across the country.

Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin signed legislation last week granting 15 to 18 percent higher salaries to teachers. But some educators — who haven't seen a pay increase in 10 years — say that isn't good enough and walked out.

"If I didn't have a second job, I'd be on food stamps," said Rae Lovelace, a single mom and a third-grade teacher at Leedey Public Schools in northwest Oklahoma who works 30 to 40 hours a week at a second job teaching online courses for a charter school.

Oklahoma's three largest school districts — Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Edmond — remained closed Tuesday to honor the walk-out. Some schools are offering free meals to students aged 18 or younger, while various churches, faith organizations and charitable agencies are providing free day care services. Spring break was last week in many Oklahoma districts.

Fallin warned Monday that the state budget is tight and there are other critical needs besides education. "We must be responsible not to neglect other areas of need in the state, such as corrections and health and human services, as we continue to consider additional education funding measures," the Republican said.

But Democratic lawmaker Collin Walke said teachers should keep up the pressure. Two separate bills pending in the Legislature to expand tribal gambling and eliminate the income tax deduction for capital gains could generate more than \$100 million in additional funding each year.

"I think the Republican strategy is to wait the teachers out," Walke said.

In Frankfort, Ky., teachers and other school employees chanted, "Stop the war on public education" during a rally at the Capitol on Monday.

"We're madder than hornets, and the hornets are swarming today," said Claudette Green, a retired teacher and principal.

Schools across Kentucky were closed, due either to spring break or to allow teachers and other school employees to attend the rally.

Amid a chorus of chants from teachers, Kentucky lawmakers considered a new state budget that includes higher spending for public education.

Trump wants military to guard US-Mexico border

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday he wants to use the military to secure the U.S.-Mexico border until his promised border wall is built.

Speaking at a lunch with Baltic leaders, Trump said he'd already discussed the idea with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

"We are going to be guarding our border with the military," Trump said, calling the measure a "big step."

Trump has been deeply frustrated about the lack of progress building what was the signature promise of his campaign: a "big, beautiful wall" along the Mexican border. He's previously suggested using the Pentagon's budget to pay for building the wall, arguing it is a national security priority, despite strict rules that prohibit spending that's not authorized by Congress.

The Department of Homeland Security, Pentagon and White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment on how such a plan might work.

Sending military to the border, in the form of National Guard troops, has been done before. In 2006, under Operation Jump Start, 6,000 troops were sent to the border in an effort to increase security and surveillance. The operation used the National Guard to assist border patrol with non-law-enforcement duties while additional border agents were hired and trained.

The number declined during the second year to about 3,000.

Over the two years, about 29,000 National Guard forces participated in the missions as forces rotated in and out.

The Guard members were used for surveillance, communications, administrative support, intelligence, analysis and, in some cases, the installation of border security infrastructure. Over the two years, more than 30 miles of fencing and 13 miles of road were built, and more than 86 miles of vehicle barriers were installed. Active-duty troops were not used for the operation since there are prohibitions on using so-called Title 10 troops for law enforcement and similar duties within the U.S.

Trump's announcement came on a day administration officials said they're crafting a new legislative package aimed at closing immigration "loopholes." Trump has called on Republican lawmakers to immediately pass a border bill using the "Nuclear Option if necessary" to muscle it through.

"The big Caravan of People from Honduras, now coming across Mexico and heading to our 'Weak Laws' Border, had

better be stopped before it gets there. Cash cow NAFTA is in play, as is foreign aid to Honduras and the countries that allow this to happen. Congress MUST ACT NOW!" Trump tweeted at daybreak Tuesday. The president also tweeted about "caravans" on Sunday and Monday.

The president has been tweeting about immigration and the border for the last few days, declaring protections for so-called Dreamer immigrants "dead," accusing Democrats of allowing "open borders, drugs and crime" and warning Mexico to halt the passage of "caravans" of immigrants or risk U.S. abandonment of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Trump has been seething since realizing the major spending bill he signed last month barely funds the border wall he has promised supporters. The \$1.3 trillion funding package included \$1.6 billion in border wall spending, but much of that money can be used only to repair existing segments, not to build new sections.

Among the new measures the administration is pursuing is ending special safeguards that prevent the immediate deportation of children arrested at the border and traveling alone. Under current law, unaccompanied children from countries that don't border the U.S. are turned over to the Department of Health and Human Services and undergo often lengthy deportation proceedings before an immigration judge instead of being deported.

Trump's tweets calling on Mexico to halt "caravans" followed a "Fox & Friends" report Sunday that featured the leader of the union representing border patrol agents predicting that those in the caravan would create havoc and chaos in the U.S. as they wait for immigration reform.

About 1,100 migrants, many from Honduras, have been marching along roadsides and train tracks in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. These "Stations of the Cross" migrant caravans have been held in southern Mexico for at least the last five years. They began as short processions of migrants, some dressed in biblical garb and carrying crosses, as an Easter-season protest against attacks against Central Americans as they cross Mexico.

Individuals in the caravans often try to reach the U.S. border but usually not as part of the caravan. The caravans typically don't proceed much farther north than the Gulf Coast state of Veracruz. The current march is scheduled to end this month with a conference on migration issues in the central Mexican state of Puebla.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman's ex hides, falls through ceiling

KS SALINA — A Kansas woman suspicious that someone had broken into her home later found her ex-boyfriend's legs punched through her ceiling.

The Salina Journal reported that a 23-year-old Salina woman called police to her house after finding her front door chained from the inside. Police said they searched the house but didn't find an intruder.

Two hours later, the woman and her current boyfriend heard a loud noise and found Tyler Bergkamp, 25, had fallen partly through the living room ceiling. Police said Bergkamp was hiding in the attic.

Bergkamp faces charges of aggravated burglary, stalking, criminal damage to property, criminal threat and possession of methamphetamine.

Renegade cattle living good life after escape

MO ST. LOUIS — One year after bursting through a St. Louis slaughterhouse door to freedom, five renegade cattle are living the good life.

The steers are grazing on 15 acres of rolling hills and munching on treats flavored like apple pie, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported. Their faces are printed on the sides of mugs.

Six steers escaped Star Packing Co. in north St. Louis on March 30, 2017, and led police on an hourslong chase through the city. News helicopters tracked them as they went through neighborhoods flanked by police vehicles. Crowds came out to watch and cheer.

One of the steers was euthanized because of injuries, but the others were purchased

from the slaughterhouse by the Gentle Barn, an animal rescue organization in California.

The rescue group recently held a party to mark the anniversary of the steers' escape.

Couple married in aisle of supermarket

PA LOWER BURRELL — A Pennsylvania couple tied the knot with canned carrots and peas among their wedding guests in attendance.

The Valley News Dispatch reported that Larry Spiering, 69, and Becky Smith, 61, married Sunday at the Community Supermarket in Lower Burrell, where the couple met 10 years ago.

Smith said she was working at the supermarket when Spiering walked up and gave her a piece of paper with his name and phone number. She said it was only fitting that they tied the knot in the same aisle where they met.

Man charged in chase involving stolen semi

MN WINONA — A Winona man is accused of leading police on a chase in a stolen semi that went on for 50 miles through at least seven Minnesota communities.

A criminal complaint charging Michael Kronebusch, 42, with assault with a dangerous weapon and fleeing from police said he rammed the semi into squad cars at least twice during the pursuit early Saturday morning. Authorities said the driver was wearing a blue face-mask and hat during the chase, which reached speeds of nearly 70 mph.

The complaint said officers used a stun gun on the man to pull him out of the semi and arrest him.

Traffic stop leads to recovery of goods

DE GEORGETOWN — Delaware State Police said a traffic stop led to the recovery of thousands of dollars of stolen merchandise and the arrest of a couple in connection with previous shoplifting incidents.

Police issued a news release that said a trooper stopped a vehicle for speeding in Georgetown and a search revealed electronic devices and miscellaneous merchandise worth more than \$5,500.

The release said troopers determined the items had been stolen from a Wal-Mart in Maryland and then linked the driver and passenger of the vehicle to two previous shoplifting incidents at the same store, in which merchandise in excess of \$12,000 had been stolen.

Police said the couple, Detwon Banner and Jaleesa Banner, of Wilmington, are being held in lieu of bail.

Couple to remarry 50 years after divorce

KY LEXINGTON — A half-century after getting a divorce, a Kentucky couple plans to get married again.

The Lexington Herald-Leader reported Harold Holland, 83, and Lillian Barnes, 78, will exchange wedding vows on April 14 in Lexington. Their grandson will perform the ceremony at Trinity Baptist Church.

Holland and Barnes first got married on Christmas Eve in 1955. They had five children together before splitting up.

Both remarried, and their spouses died in 2015.

Holland and Barnes attended a family reunion, and by last December, they were talking marriage again.

11-foot alligator takes a dip in backyard pool

FL SARASOTA — An 11-foot-long alligator was found taking a dip in a backyard swimming pool in Florida.

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office posted images of the floating gator on Twitter late Friday.

It wasn't the only alligator roaming where it didn't belong.

According to an WFTV-TV report, a 7-foot gator was removed Saturday from a front yard in Titusville. Neighbor Dennis Sweeney said he thought the animal was a large palm frond until he got close to it.

WFTS-TV reported that a Tampa family was awakened early Friday by a 7-foot gator prowling in their front yard.

Deer with glass bowl stuck on head rescued

NJ COLTS NECK — Animal welfare officials in New Jersey said a deer was rescued after getting a glass bowl stuck on its head.

The Monmouth County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said on its Facebook page that a homeowner in Colts Neck reported the plight of the young buck.

SPCA officers and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife waited for the buck to appear Friday, sedated him and removed the glass bowl.

Officials said it turned out to be a light fixture cover that probably filled with water the deer tried to drink. The buck was dehydrated from four days without food and water and had some scrapes but was able to get up and walk away.

From wire reports

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Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Villanova tops Michigan for NCAA title

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Somewhere between all those heart-stoppers and tearjerkers, all the upset-riddled brackets and things we'd never seen before, the best team in college basketball was hiding in plain sight.

How could anyone have missed Villanova?

Sparked by a 31-point night off the bench from Donte DiVincenzo, the Wildcats defeated Michigan 79-62 on Monday night to cap one of the most dominating NCAA Tournament runs ever seen.

They won all six games by double digits, joining the rare air of great teams such as Michigan State in 2000, Duke in 2001 and North Carolina in 2009.

They won both their Final Four contests by 16 or more, joining the 1968 UCLA team that was in the midst of its 10-title dynasty.

They became only the fourth program since UCLA to win two titles in the span of three years — joining Duke (1991-92), Kentucky (1996, 98) and Florida (2006-07).

"I knew we were good, but you don't think we can win this," said Villanova's Jay Wright, who became the 14th coach in history to win multiple titles. "It's a struggle in your mind, up until three minutes to go in the game tonight."

It was over earlier than that.

DiVincenzo made it so by scoring nine straight points for his team, capping it with an NBA-range three-pointer that he punctuated by turning back downcourt and winking toward the TV guys on the sideline.

"I did not think I was going to have this kind of night," he said, "because every night I come into a game, I just try to bring energy."

The story lines that domi-

nated this tournament were all about unpredictability and craziness — all made better by a 98-year-old nun who provided the perfect counterbalance to the win-at-all-costs culture in college basketball. Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt cheered 11th-seeded Loyola-Chicago all the way to a spot in the Final Four.

March Madness featured the first-ever 16 vs. 1 upset, a pair of No. 9 seeds in the Elite Eight and one region that didn't advance any of its top four seeds to the Sweet 16. No. 3 seed Michigan became the first team to make the title game without having to play a single team seeded in the top 5.

It was madness all right — except when Villanova walked on the court.

The top-seeded Wildcats (36-4) won by margins of 26, 23, 12, 12, 16 and 17.

They won with great shooting on some nights — the Final Four-record 18 threes in the

semifinal against Kansas — great defense on others — holding Texas Tech to 33 percent shooting in the Elite Eight — and, in the finale, a virtuoso performance from a sixth man who, for one magical night, turned Villanova's brand of team ball into a one-man show.

They won by making an NCAA-record 464 three-pointers over the season — putting an official end to the notion that this game must be played from the inside out, while perhaps sparking debate as to whether the three-point line needs to be scooted back.

Most importantly, at least in their coach's estimation, they won not by trying to become one of the best teams in history, but simply by trying to get better every game.

"I don't think these kids will even think that we dominated the tournament," Wright said. "They'll just think we played Villanova basketball."

DiVincenzo comes off bench to score 31 points

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Donte DiVincenzo's biggest contribution to Villanova's 2016 national championship was made at practice, often playing the role of the opponents' best player.

The Michael Jordan of Delaware, as his teammates call him, has come a long way from a redshirt freshman season that was frustrating at times, but probably helped set the stage for a bigger role toward Villanova's next national championship.

DiVincenzo was the breakout star of the NCAA Tournament title game Monday night, scoring a career-high 31 points against Michigan in a 79-62 victory that gave the Wildcats two titles in three seasons.

"Donte's willingness to come off the bench this year and be the sixth man really separated us from other teams. He was a sixth starter," Villanova coach Jay Wright said. "He had a

clear head and he did whatever we needed all year. Tonight we needed 31. I didn't think we'd need him to do that but he has done it, so we'll take it."

When Villanova was struggling with its shots early in the first half, DiVincenzo provided a wakeup call for the Wildcats. He scored 16 and was the main reason the Wildcats were able to erase an early seven-point deficit against a Michigan defense that was one of the stingiest in the nation.

In the second half, when Michigan tried to make a move, DiVincenzo put down the uprising with 11 straight points and a wink toward the sideline at his buddy and former Wildcats star Josh Hart, who is in his rookie season with the Los Angeles Clippers.

"Me and Josh have a unique relationship," DiVincenzo said as he held court with reporters in the locker room long after most of the players were done doing interviews. "We compete

against each other so hard. We got into a lot. I think we're so similar, that's the reason why. I knew he was proud at that moment."

DiVincenzo became the first non-starter to win most outstanding player of the Final Four since Luke Hancock of Louisville in 2013, and the first player with a 30-point NCAA championship game since Miles Simon of Arizona in 1997 against Kentucky.

"Honestly, when I got into the game, all I was trying to do was play hard," DiVincenzo said. "I just wanted to help my team offensively."

DiVincenzo was just a cheerleader and practice squad player for Villanova during that championship run in the 2015-16 season. The sophomore from Newark, Del., broke his foot early in his freshman season and was limited to eight games and a medical redshirt, though he probably could have played later.

"That year versus this year it was tough not being out there competing with these guys," DiVincenzo said.

He was healthy enough to practice and played the role of Oklahoma All-American Buddy Hield as the Wildcats prepared to play the Sooners in the 2016 national semifinals.

"Here's a kid that went to Villanova and redshirted a year," Michigan coach John Beilein said. "You say, 'redshirt,' to a kid right now, it's like, 'Hey, how would you like to have the bubonic plague?' And he redshirts, and there he is right now, scoring 30-some points in the national championship game. There's a process that young men have to go through in their maturation in this game, and he's done that, and what a special player."

DiVincenzo was on the bench when Kris Jenkins hit the winner at the buzzer to give Villanova the championship against North Carolina.

Jansen blows save, D-backs win in 15th

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Kenley Jansen calls it a “slow start” to the season.

In two appearances, he’s lost a game and blown a three-run lead. No one expects that from one of the game’s most dominant closers.

Chris Owings hit a three-run homer off Jansen with two outs in the bottom of the ninth to force extra innings, and the Arizona Diamondbacks scored twice in the 15th to rally past the Los Angeles Dodgers 8-7 early Tuesday.

The first matchup between the teams since the NL champion Dodgers swept their Division Series last October became the longest game in Chase Field history at 5 hours, 45 minutes.

“We’re down to barely nothing,” Arizona manager Torey Lovullo said, “and these guys found a way to win the game. It’s a special night.”

Or, more accurately, a special morning.

Chase Utley’s RBI single shortly after

midnight put the Dodgers up 7-6 in the 15th, but Nick Ahmed’s run-scoring double tied it in the bottom of the inning and pinch-hitter Jeff Mathis, the last position player on the Arizona bench, singled home Ahmed with the game-winner.

Both teams used all their available relievers. Mathis was going to pitch if the game had remained tied.

Wilmer Font (0-1) threw four scoreless innings before giving up two runs in the 15th. Fernando Salas (1-1) went three innings to get the win.

Jansen blew one save in 42 opportunities last season, earning his second consecutive Trevor Hoffman NL reliever of the year award. But this season has not started well. The Dodgers’ closer gave up a home run to Joe Panik in a 1-0 loss to San Francisco in his first outing last Friday, then squandered a three-run lead in his second on Monday night.

“I definitely know I’m fighting with some stuff,” he said, explaining the timing of his

delivery was a problem.

Both Jansen and manager Dave Roberts said the All-Star closer is healthy.

“I know that he’s got pinpoint command, doesn’t walk guys,” Roberts said. “And I know there were some close calls tonight that didn’t go his way. But regardless, Kenley still has the ability to throw strikes when he needs to. Just the pitch to Owings, it was a cutter that was down and in his nitro zone.”

With the Dodgers up 6-3, Jansen got the first two batters to ground out but walked Paul Goldschmidt and A.J. Pollock, both on 3-2 counts, to bring up Owings, who hit the first pitch he saw into the left field seats.

“That pitch was right where I was kind of looking,” Owings said. “Definitely got us back in the game. From there, the rest is history.”

Owings became just the fourth player to hit a three-run homer or better (grand slam) against Jansen, who was touched up a bit in the World Series last year, too.

MLB roundup

After ‘Imperial March,’ Harper strikes back

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Pitchers are having a hard time keeping Bryce Harper off the bases — and inside the park.

Harper’s hot start is a big reason the Washington Nationals are unbeaten.

The star slugger hit a three-run homer and the quick-scoring Nationals beat the Atlanta Braves 8-1 on Monday night for the first 4-0 start to a season in their Washington history.

After Sean Newcomb (0-1) gave up singles to Pedro Severino and Anthony Rendon in the second inning, Harper walked to the plate as stadium organist Matthew Kaminski played the somber “Imperial March.” Braves fans chimed in with boos.

Harper crushed a first-pitch fastball.

“I was trying to come in more,” Newcomb said, adding the pitch instead “was middle and low where he swings.”

Harper’s shot gave the Nationals a 5-0 lead. He also drew

four walks and scored three runs.

Harper has three homers — including two in his last two at-bats during Sunday’s 6-5 win at Cincinnati — and seven RBIs. He reached in eight consecutive plate appearances, two shy of the Nationals record, before grounding out in the ninth.

Astros 6, Orioles 1: Charlie Morton pitched six scoreless innings, Marwin Gonzalez homered and host Houston unveiled its World Series banner before defeating Baltimore in its home opener.

The pregame unveiling of the World Series pennant in left field hit a bit of a snag. Tugging ropes on the fabric covering the golden pennant on a windy day didn’t work. So after a minute or so, a man with a leaf blower appeared and helped get it off. Players chuckled during the delay and fans cheered loudly when it finally came off.

Red Sox 7, Marlins 3: Brian Johnson gave the visiting Red Sox their fifth solid start in five games, allowing one run in six

innings.

Tigers 6, Twins 1: Francisco Liriano pitched into the seventh inning and Victor Martinez drove in three runs to hand Ron Gardenhire his first win with the host Tigers.

Blue Jays 4, White Sox 2: Russell Martin, Josh Donaldson and Aledmys Diaz connected, powering host Toronto to its third straight victory.

Pirates 5, Twins 4: Colin Moran hit a first-inning grand slam in his debut at PNC Park, Jameson Taillon tied a career high with nine strikeouts and Pittsburgh held on for the win in its home opener.

Cardinals 8, Brewers 4: Pitcher Miles Mikolas hit a home run and got the win in his return from a three-year stint in Japan, and the Cardinals spoiled the Brewers’ home opener.

Reds 1, Cubs 0: Rookie Tyler Mahle pitched one-hit ball for six innings, Raisel Iglesias struck out Anthony Rizzo with the bases loaded to end the eighth, and the host Reds edged the Cubs for their first win of

the season.

Athletics 3, Rangers 1: Jed Lowrie hit a two-out, two-run double in the seventh inning and Oakland spoiled Bartolo Colon’s debut with Texas.

At 44 years, 313 days old, Colon became the oldest player in the majors this season, slipping past Seattle’s Ichiro Suzuki, who is four months younger.

Indians 6, Angels 0: Edwin Encarnacion hit the second inside-the-park home run of his career, and Tyler Naquin and Yonder Alonso cleared the fences to help Cleveland ruin Los Angeles’ home opener and snap its three-game win streak.

The 35-year-old Encarnacion also hit an inside-the-park homer on Aug. 31, 2007, against St. Louis while with the Cincinnati Reds.

Rockies 7, Padres 4: Ian Desmond, Charlie Blackmon and DJ LeMahieu homered to power Colorado past winless host San Diego.

NHL roundup

Leafs match franchise mark for points

Associated Press

TORONTO — William Nylander and Auston Matthews each had two goals and an assist as the playoff-bound Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Buffalo Sabres 5-2 on Monday night.

Andreas Johnsson also scored as the Maple Leafs extended a franchise record with their 48th win and matched the team mark for points (103) set in 2003-04. Backup goalie Curtis McElhinney stopped 32 shots to help Toronto win for the 15th time in the last 17 at home.

Matthews extended his point streak to seven games in Toronto's 28th home win of the season. He has five goals and 10 points on his run.

Sam Reinhart got his career-high 24th goal for the last-place Sabres, and Jason Pominville

also scored. Chad Johnson finished with 31 saves.

Kings 3, Avalanche 1: Dustin Brown's short-handed goal helped host Los Angeles move back into third place in the Pacific Division with a win over Colorado.

Torrey Mitchell and Kyle Clifford also scored for the Kings, who are one point ahead of Anaheim. Jonathan Quick made 27 saves and the Kings won their third consecutive home game.

Panthers 3, Hurricanes 2: Alexander Petrovic scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period and host Florida snapped a three-game skid.

Evgenii Dadonov and MacKenzie Weegar also scored to help the Panthers pull five points behind idle New Jersey for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference. Florida

has four games remaining, one more than the Devils. Roberto Luongo stopped 26 shots.

Wild 3, Oilers 0: Zach Parise scored twice and Devan Dubnyk made 22 saves to blank his original team, pushing host Minnesota to the brink of the playoffs.

Playing for the first time in nearly three years without stalwart defenseman Ryan Suter, the Wild wrapped up their home schedule with a post-season-caliber performance punctuated by a staggering 21-3 shots advantage in the third period. Joel Eriksson Ek added an empty-net goal as the Wild finished 27-6-8 at Xcel Energy Center, currently the second-best home record in the NHL.

Capitals 4, Blues 2: Nicklas Backstrom started a three-goal second period, Braden Holtby made 34 saves, and visiting

Washington won for the seventh time in eight games and 11th in the last 13.

Alex Ovechkin got his league-leading 46th goal, and Alex Chiasson and Andre Burakovsky also scored for the Capitals. Holtby won for the fourth time in his last five starts, and improved to 7-0-0 in seven career starts against St. Louis.

Jets 6, Senators 5: Blake Wheeler scored twice and visiting Winnipeg held off Ottawa.

Andrew Copp had a goal and an assist, and Josh Morrissey, Brandon Tanev and Mathieu Perreault also scored for the Jets, who pulled five points behind first-place Nashville in the Central Division with three games remaining. Adam Lowry and Mark Scheifele each had two assists, and Connor Hellebuyck stopped 32 shots.

Roars are back for Tiger at Augusta National

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — The roar sounded like Sunday at Augusta National.

This was Monday afternoon, and it was so sudden and thunderous that it reached the clubhouse. It was loud enough to startle spectators who wondered what they had missed. They had a pretty good idea who it was.

Tiger Woods is back at the Masters.

Woods teed off with Justin Thomas and Fred Couples shortly before 3 p.m. when thousands of fans were making their way toward the exit. Thousands more crowded around the tee, lined the first fairway and followed him down the par-5 second hole. Some of them rushed over to the third hole to stake out a spot. Most of them surrounded the second green, and they were responsible for all the noise when Woods chipped in from behind

the green.

About the only thing missing was a beam of light from the heavens.

Any talk about this being one of the most anticipated Masters in years starts with one player. Woods is at Augusta National for the first time since 2015, at least with his golf clubs, and he showed during the Florida swing of the PGA Tour that he is more than capable of winning a fifth green jacket.

"When Tiger walked onto the range today, you can tell there's an anticipation and an excitement from the crowd to watch him compete again," Justin Rose said.

Woods was at Augusta National last year only for the Champions Dinner, and it wasn't much fun. If the pain in his lower back wasn't enough, it was looking out at the course he loves and knowing that he wouldn't be playing the major he calls a "players' heaven" for the second straight year, and

maybe never.

Fusion surgery — his fourth on his lower back in four years — followed a few weeks later.

And now it looks as though he never left.

Woods still hasn't won a tournament in the five PGA Tour events he has played this year, but he has shot par or better in his last 10 rounds. He was runner-up by one shot at the Valspar Championship. He was one shot out of the lead at the Arnold Palmer Invitational until indecision sent his tee shot on the 16th hole out of bounds.

He hasn't won the Masters since 2005, so long ago that only 18 players from then are in the field this year, and 15 of them are Masters champions.

"You hear guys talk about the early 2000s and that intimidation factor," said Rickie Fowler, who made his major championship debut 10 years ago at Torrey Pines, where Woods won his 14th and last major. "The young guys in a way have heard

about that. I think they're getting to see some of that as far as his presence and him being out on the golf course and getting a glimpse of what he's capable of. But I think we relish the opportunity to play against him and see him back to maybe close to where he was."

Monday is typically a lazy practice round at the Masters, which has only 87 players competing this year. Most players have been to Augusta National over the last few weeks to get acquainted with any subtle changes and recall sight lines. That's the heavy work, followed by a light load in the practice rounds this week to conserve energy.

So it was unusual to see so many people, so late in the afternoon, chasing after Woods.

He is not a one-man show when it comes to slipping on the green jacket. Rose badly wants one, especially after missing a short par putt on the 17th hole and losing in a playoff last year.