

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Officials ID Marines killed in Calif. helo crash

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The helicopter training crash earlier this week in the desert of Southern California killed three early-career Marines in their 20s and a 33-year-old crew chief who had served two tours in Iraq, Corps officials said Thursday.

The Marines' CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter wrecked as the crew practiced landing the heavy-lift chopper on ungroomed grounds about 15 miles west of El Centro, Calif., along the Mexican border, the Marines said in a statement. All four Marines were assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar north of San Diego. Their training mission had begun earlier Wednesday at the Marines' Mojave Desert training post, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, said Capt. Morgan Frazer, a service spokesman.

Killed were Capt. Samuel A. Schultz, 1st Lt. Samuel D. Phillips, Gunnery Sgt. Derik Holley and Lance Cpl. Taylor J. Conrad, Frazer said. The cause of the crash remains under investigation.

"The hardest part of being a Marine is the tragic loss of life of a fellow brother-in-arms," said Col. Craig Leflore, the commander of Marine Aircraft Group 16, which oversees the fallen Marines' unit.

"These 'Warhorse' Marines brought joy and laughter to so many around them. They each served honorably, wore the uniform proudly and were a perfect example of what makes our Marine Corps great — its people."

The oldest of the Marines killed in the crash, Holley, 33, had served in the Corps since 2003, according to the Marines. The crew chief from Dayton, Ohio, was a veteran of several deployments, including two combat tours in Iraq and another to Japan with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

On a Facebook page for veterans of a unit in which Holley once had served, Marines wrote he left behind a wife and a young son, recalling him as a solid Marine.

Holley was "a genuinely good dude who would talk to anybody and as best I can recall one squared-away Marine," wrote one Marine who said he had served with him.

Schultz and Phillips were Marine pilots who were flying the aircraft, the military's heaviest and most powerful helicopter.

Schultz, 28, of Huntington Valley, Pa., had served in the Corps since 2012, when he was commissioned through Penn State University's ROTC program. He had served one deployment with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, according to the Marines.

His father also was a pilot, his mother,

Julie Rosoff Schultz, told the San Diego Union Tribune, saying, "flying was in his blood."

"He loved adventure," she told the newspaper. "He sailed. He fished. He was a motorcycle rider. He jumped out of an airplane once. He enjoyed life and people loved to be around him."

Phillips, 27, of Pinehurst, N.C., had joined the Corps in 2013. He had not deployed but had served previous assignments at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla., Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, and Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., according to the Corps.

The youngest of the four fallen Marines, Conrad, 24, of Baton Rouge, La., also had not deployed, according to the Marines. He joined the Corps in 2016.

Conrad was a 2012 graduate of Central High School in Baton Rouge, where he played football, ran track and competed in powerlifting, the school's head football coach, Sid Edwards, told The Associated Press.

The coach said Conrad had expressed interest in teaching special-needs children after serving in the Marines. Edwards, whose own children both have autism, said Conrad had taken to working with them.

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## Thunderbirds pilot killed in crash was longtime aviator

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Air Force Thunderbirds pilot killed in a training crash Wednesday in Nevada was a longtime aviator who joined the elite demonstration team this season after 2½ years flying F-35s in Florida, according to the Air Force.

Maj. Stephen Del Bagno, 34, died in the crash at the Nevada Test and Training Range during a routine aerial demonstration training flight in preparation for a planned

air show this weekend, an Air Force statement said Thursday. The Nevada Test and Training Range is near the Thunderbirds' home station of Nellis Air Force Base, just outside Las Vegas.

"We are mourning the loss of Maj. Del Bagno," Brig. Gen. Jeannie Leavitt, commander of the 57th Wing, which oversees the Thunderbirds, said in a statement. "He was an integral part of our team and our hearts are heavy with his loss. We ask everyone to provide his family and friends the space to heal during this difficult time."

An investigation into the crash is ongoing, according to the statement.

Del Bagno, whose call sign was "Cajun," was promoted to major recently and was entering his first season as a Thunderbirds pilot, according to an Air Force biography. He was flying the Thunderbirds' No. 4 plane and was the demonstration team's slot pilot for the 2018 season, meaning he flew his plane just behind the lead aircraft and between two others in the team's tightly packed diamond formation.

Del Bagno already was an

experienced pilot when he joined the Air Force in 2007, commissioning through Officer Training School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala. He had served since as an F-16 pilot and instructor and as an evaluator and instructor for the Air Force's developing F-35A program, according to the Air Force.

He was serving at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., as the 58th Fighter Squadron's chief of standardization and evaluation for the F-35 program when he was selected to join the Thunderbirds.

# Questions arise over funding for border plan

*The Washington Post*

The U.S. military suffered a rash of aviation incidents just as President Donald Trump ordered the National Guard deployed to the border with Mexico, raising questions about whether the mission will strain funding the Pentagon relies on to prevent such accidents.

Five people died in four crashes in less than two days this week, just as the White House announced plans to bring in military might from the National Guard in its effort to secure the border.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has said his top priority is ensuring that the U.S. military is as lethal as possible and ready to fight, which means guaranteeing stable funding for training, equipment and maintenance that commanders hope will reduce the number of aviation accidents.

Trump's decision to enlist

the Pentagon to help secure the border could strain the funds Mattis wants dedicated to ensuring troops are ready and trained.

Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said Thursday that the administration hadn't decided where the Defense Department would get the funds for the National Guard deployment. She said it wouldn't take away from Mattis' mission to shore up training and maintenance programs that top military officials say suffered for years as a result of congressional budget caps.

"Border security is national security, and we are leaning forward to support the president in his intent and his goal, but readiness remains our top priority," White said. "I can assure you that our resources will still be dedicated to our warfighters."

The Pentagon will set up a special operations cell that will

coordinate the effort to secure the border with the Department of Homeland Security, White said. She added that the military first must receive the requirements for the mission before deciding on funding sources, troop numbers and a timeline for deployment.

Rep. Mac Thornberry, the Texas Republican who chairs the House Armed Services Committee, said in an interview with a Texas newspaper before the White House announced the border deployment that he didn't want to see border security efforts draw on funds needed to rebuild the U.S. military.

"I fully support doing more at the border," Thornberry said in an interview with the Times Record News. "But we don't need to rob the military."

Thornberry, working alongside Mattis, has led the effort to increase funding for the military, which in the latest omnibus spending bill included \$47.4 billion to upgrade old air-

craft, replace broken aircraft and recruit and train more airmen and mechanics. His committee said the funding was needed because less than half the Navy's aircraft can fly due to maintenance and spare parts issues and 80 percent of Marine Corps aviation units lack the minimum number of ready basic aircraft.

The Pentagon has drawn upon its operations and maintenance budget to deploy the National Guard to the border in the past.

President George W. Bush sent the National Guard to the border with Mexico from 2006 to 2008 in a deployment that cost a total of \$1.2 billion, including operations and maintenance costs of \$120 per person per day, according to the Government Accountability Office. At the time, the Pentagon reprogrammed operations and maintenance funding from the Air Force and Navy Reserve to help pay for the deployment.

## Trump: 2,000-4,000 troops needed at border

*Associated Press*

PHOENIX — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he wants to send between 2,000 and 4,000 National Guard members to the U.S.-Mexico border to help federal officials fight illegal immigration and drug trafficking, but it wasn't clear who would be called up or if they would even be allowed to carry guns.

Trump's comments to reporters on Air Force One were his first estimate on guard levels he believes are needed for border protection. It is lower than the 6,400 National Guard members that former President George Bush sent to the border between 2006 and 2008.

Trump said his administration is looking into the cost of sending the troops to the border and added "we'll probably keep them or a large portion of them until the wall is built."

Earlier Thursday, Ronald Vitiello, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's acting deputy commissioner, cautioned against a rushed deployment.

"We are going to do it as quickly as we can do it safely," Vitiello told Fox News

Channel.

He said that guard members would be placed in jobs that do not require law enforcement work, an apparent reference to undertaking patrols and making arrests.

The Republican governors of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas have backed the deployment, but it was unclear Thursday how Democratic California Gov. Jerry Brown would respond to Trump's call.

Brown's office repeatedly referred requests for comment to the California National Guard, which said the state first must be informed where money for the deployment would come from, how long it would last and clearly define the operation's objectives.

In Washington, Marine Lt. Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie told reporters at the Pentagon that it has not yet been determined how many, if any, of the troops in the border security operation will be armed.

Trump ordered the deployment because "we are at a crisis point" with illegal immigration, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said.

"We'd like to stop it before the numbers get even bigger," she said.

Nielsen said guard members would provide support to border officials, "help look at the technology, the surveillance, in some cases we'll ask for some fleet mechanics" and free up agents trained in law enforcement for other duties.

Arrests along the U.S. border with Mexico jumped to 50,308 in March, a 37 percent increase from February, and more than triple the same period last year. Border arrests rose 10 of the last 11 months after falling in April 2017 to the lowest since the Department of Homeland Security was created in 2003.

After the 9/11 attacks, Bush sent unarmed National Guard units to the border.

The troops that Bush sent improved lighting at border crossings, extended existing fencing along the international boundary, built roads, monitored remote cameras, operated communications equipment and sat in mobile observation towers watching for people sneaking into the U.S.

President Barack Obama in 2010 deployed National Guard troops to the border over fear of increasing drug-trafficking violence.

## US flights in Djibouti still suspended, but ops go on

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. air operations in Djibouti remain suspended Friday after two Marine Corps aircraft were involved in crashes earlier this week, but the pause hasn't put a stop to airstrikes in neighboring Somalia, U.S. Africa Command said.

"We are still assessing the impacts of this operational pause," said Maj. Karl Wiest, an AFRICOM spokesman.

AFRICOM did not say when it expected flights to resume. However, the pause will not affect the military's ability to conduct counterterrorism operations in the region nor to perform crisis response missions, the military said.

On Thursday, while flights in Djibouti were grounded, AFRICOM carried out an airstrike in neighboring Somalia that killed three terrorists. Though Djibouti is a hub for U.S. counterterrorism efforts, Thursday's strike is an indication that AFRICOM has alternatives.

"As a matter of policy, I can't go into where this strike originated from, but I will say we have a range of capabilities at various locations in the region that allow us to carry out these airstrikes," Wiest said.

American commanders reached an agreement with the Djiboutian government to pause U.S. military flights following Tuesday's accidents.

"That's just a reasonable precaution by the commander on the ground to determine that we're not doing something that we need to fix," Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, director of the Joint Staff, said Thursday.

The Navy also canceled the rest of its Alligator Dagger exercise off Djibouti's coast.

On Tuesday, a Marine AV-8B Harrier jet crashed at Djibouti's international airport, forcing the pilot to eject. Later that day, a CH-53 helicopter suffered structural damage during a landing in Arta Beach.

# Trump wants out of Syria, but don't mention 'timeline'

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has spoken: He wants U.S. troops and civilians out of Syria by the fall. But don't call it a "timeline."

Wary of hypocrisy accusations for telegraphing military strategy after criticizing former President Barack Obama for the same thing, the White House has ordered Trump's national security team not to speak of a "timeline" for withdrawal. That's even after Trump made it clear to his top aides this week that he wants the pullout completed within five or six months.

It wasn't the result top national security aides wanted. Trump's desire for a rapid withdrawal faced unanimous opposition from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Pentagon, the State Department and the intelligence community, all of which argued that keeping the 2,000 U.S. soldiers currently in Syria is key to ensuring Islamic State does not reconstitute itself.

But as they huddled in the Situation Room, the president was vocal and vehement in insisting that the withdrawal be completed quickly, if not immediately, according to five administration officials briefed on Tuesday's White House meeting of Trump and his top aides. The officials weren't authorized to discuss internal deliberations and requested anonymity.

If those aides failed in obtaining their desired outcome, it might have been because a strategy that's worked in the past — giving Trump an offer he can't refuse — appears to have backfired. Rather than offer Trump a menu of pullout plans, with varying timelines and options for withdrawing step by step, the team sought to frame it as a binary choice: Stay in Syria to ensure ISIS can't regroup, or pull out completely. Documents presented to the president included several pages of possibilities for staying in, but only a brief description of an option for full

withdrawal that emphasized significant risks and downsides, including the likelihood that Iran and Russia would take advantage of a U.S. vacuum.

Ultimately, Trump chose that option anyway.

The president had opened the meeting with a tirade about U.S. intervention in Syria and the Middle East more broadly, repeating lines from public speeches in which he denounced previous administrations for "wasting" \$7 trillion in the region during the past 17 years.

What has the U.S. gotten for the money and American lives expended in Syria? "Nothing," Trump said over and over, according to the officials. The intensity of his tone and demeanor raised eyebrows and unease among the top brass gathered to hash out a plan, officials said: Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, CIA chief Mike Pompeo and acting Secretary of State John Sullivan.

At one point, Dunford spoke up, one official said, telling Trump that his approach was not productive and asked him to give the group specific instructions as to what he wanted.

Trump's response was to demand an immediate withdrawal of all American troops and an end to all U.S. civilian stabilization programs designed to restore basic infrastructure to war-shattered Syrian communities.

Mattis countered, arguing that an immediate withdrawal could be catastrophic and was logistically impossible to pull off in any responsible way, without risking the return of ISIS and other terrorist groups in newly liberated territories, the officials said. Mattis floated a one-year withdrawal as an alternative.

Trump then relented — but only slightly, telling his aides they could have five or six months to complete the mission to destroy ISIS and then get

out, according to the officials. Trump also indicated that he did not want to hear in October that the military had been unable to fully defeat ISIS and had to remain in Syria for longer.

The president had spoken. But what to say about it publicly? In a brief, vague statement released the day after the meeting, the White House said the U.S. role in Syria is coming to a "rapid end" and emphasized that the U.S. was counting on other countries and the United Nations to deal with Syria's future. It offered no specificity as to the timing of a U.S. withdrawal.

"The president has actually been very good in not giving us a specific timeline," Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, director of the Joint Staff, said Thursday. "We've always thought that as we reach finale against ISIS in Syria, we're going to adjust the level of our presence there. So in that sense, nothing has actually changed."

Pentagon officials stressed that no formal order had been handed down to alter course or start a withdrawal. Nonetheless, the officials said Trump was clear in his intent.

For Trump, any notion of a "timeline" comes with significant political risk. After all, he had bashed Obama regularly on the campaign trail for forecasting his military moves in advance. In fact, Trump was so critical of Obama for putting an arbitrary deadline on the 2011 Iraq withdrawal that he dubbed Obama "the founder of ISIS," arguing that Obama had signaled to al-Qaida sympathizers in Iraq that they need only wait the U.S. out. And Trump's whole strategy for dealing with Afghanistan, for example, is based on the idea that the U.S. presence should be "conditions-based" and not time-based.

"I'm not like other administrations, where they say we're going to do this in four weeks and that. It doesn't work that way," Trump said shortly after becoming president.

# US adds Russian oligarchs, officials to sanctions list

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. hit seven Russian oligarchs and 17 Russian government officials with sanctions on Friday for what it called “malign activity” around the world, as the Trump administration tried to show that President Donald Trump is taking tough action to stand up to Moscow.

A dozen Russian companies owned by the oligarchs also were targeted, along with a state-owned arms-dealing company and a subsidiary bank, the Treasury Department said. Senior Trump administration officials cast the penalties as part of a concerted, ongoing effort by the U.S. to push back against Russian President Vladimir Putin’s government, emphasizing that since Trump took office last year, the U.S. has punished 189 Russian-related people and entities with sanctions.

Trump has continued to

avoid directly criticizing Putin himself, and recently invited the Russian leader to meet with him, possibly at the White House. Still, in recent weeks, Trump’s administration has rolled out a series of actions — including several economic and diplomatic steps — to increase pressure on Putin and those in his circle.

“Nobody has been tougher on Russia than I have,” Trump said at a news conference on Tuesday.

Rather than punishing Russia for one specific action, the new sanctions are in response to “the totality of the Russian government’s ongoing and increasingly brazen pattern” of bad behavior, said the officials, who weren’t authorized to comment by name and briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

The officials ticked through a list of activities they said had prompted the U.S. to act, including Russia’s actions in Crimea

and eastern Ukraine, support for Syrian President Bashar Assad, cyberhacking and attempts to subvert Western democracy.

There was no immediate reaction from Russia’s government.

Many of the targets are individuals and businesses associated with Russia’s energy sector, including those affiliated with state-owned Gazprom. Officials said the goal was to show that those who have benefited financially from Russian President Vladimir Putin’s position of power are fair game for U.S. punishments, noting that many of those being sanctioned are closely tied to Putin himself.

Also targeted is aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska, a figure in the Russia investigation over his ties to former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort. Deripaska has been targeted with U.S. sanctions previously, but officials said those being announced Friday were more comprehensive.

## Puerto Rico to close 283 schools

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Puerto Rico’s Department of Education announced Thursday that it will close 283 schools this summer following a sharp drop in enrollment amid the island’s long economic slump and the continued departure of families after Hurricane Maria.

Education Secretary Julia Keleher said there would be no layoffs, with teachers and other employees being reassigned to other schools as part of a fiscal plan that aims to save the department some \$150 million.

The U.S. territory currently has more than 1,100 public schools that serve 319,000 students.

“We know it’s a difficult and painful process,” Keleher said. “Our children deserve the best education that we are capable of giving them, taking into account Puerto Rico’s fiscal reality.”

Keleher said that enrollment has dropped by more than 38,700 students since just last May and that nearly half of the schools are using only 60 percent of their capacity.

After the closures, 828 public schools will remain operational. Keleher said she has invited mayors in the island’s 78 municipalities to propose new uses for the shuttered schools.

The announcement of closures came two weeks after Gov. Ricardo Rossello signed a bill for implementing a charter schools pilot program in 10 percent of public schools and offering private school vouchers to 3 percent of students starting in 2019-2020 as part of an education overhaul.

Aida Diaz, president of a union that represents some 30,000 teachers, said she and others would fight the closures.

“The damage that the Secretary of Education is doing to children, youth and their parents is immeasurable,” Diaz said in a statement sent to The Associated Press.

## Trump says he didn’t know about Stormy Daniels payment

Associated Press

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE — President Donald Trump said Thursday he didn’t know about the \$130,000 payment his personal attorney made to Stormy Daniels, issuing a firm denial in his first public comments about the adult-film actress who alleges she had an affair with him.

Asked aboard Air Force One whether he knew about the payment, Trump said flatly: “No.”

Trump also said he didn’t know why his longtime lawyer, Michael Cohen, had made the payment.

Until now, Trump had avoided questions on Daniels, though the White House has consistently said Trump denies there was a relationship. Still, he has been dogged by the focus on the porn actress, who says she had a sexual encounter with him in 2006 and was paid to keep quiet as part of a nondisclosure agreement she signed days before the 2016 presidential election. Daniels is now seeking to invalidate that agreement.

Her attorney, Michael Avenatti said in a state-

ment: “Our case just got that much better. And we very much look forward to testing the truthfulness of Mr. Trump’s feigned lack of knowledge concerning the \$130k payment as stated on Air Force One.”

Avenatti argued on MSNBC that Trump’s denial could create legal problems, saying: “If the president didn’t know anything about the payment, then he obviously didn’t know anything about the agreement, in which case you can’t have an agreement. And then there is no such thing as an NDA.”

Daniels, one of several women pursuing potentially damaging legal action against Trump, has kept up the highest profile in the media, helped by a punchy Twitter feed, a widely viewed interview on CBS’ “60 Minutes” and a camera-ready attorney who has become a fixture on cable news.

Earlier this week, Trump asked a federal judge to order private arbitration in the case. Trump and Cohen filed papers in federal court in Los Angeles asking a judge to rule that the case must be heard by an arbitrator instead of a jury.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### School official warned for passing school bus

**FL** MELBOURNE — Authorities said a Florida schools superintendent was pulled over for illegally passing a school bus as police were running a bus safety campaign.

Florida Today reported that Superintendent of Brevard Public Schools Desmond Blackburn was driving his district-issued SUV the morning of March 27 when he was stopped and given a warning.

Melbourne police had increased patrols around school buses from Feb. 26 until March 29 as part of “Operation BUSt-ed.” A police spokeswoman said officers issued 115 tickets and 14 warnings for failure to stop for a school bus during the campaign.

Blackburn acknowledged he was one of the drivers who needed a reminder and thanked police for their work.

Florida law says vehicles traveling in both directions on an undivided roadway must stop for a stopped school bus.

### Daffy idea? Voter wants ducks at polling station

**WI** MADISON — A voter in a tiny northeast Wisconsin town wants to bring ducks to the polling station along with a sign that reads: “If you don’t vote, you can’t squawk.”

Winneconne town clerk Yvonne Zobel said the voter asked town officials Tuesday whether she could bring three caged ducks and the sign to the town hall during the November election.

Zobel ducked giving an answer initially and instead checked with the state Elections Commission. It advised her to keep the ducks at least

100 feet away from the polling booths so they wouldn’t be disruptive.

Zobel said she’s going to tell the voter everyone likes the idea, but maybe it makes more sense to have the ducks someplace else “where it would prompt somebody to go out and vote.”

### Woman violates order by giving helping hand

**OR** ROSEBURG — A Coos Bay woman who responded to a man’s request for assistance has been arrested for violating a restraining order that prohibits her from going near him.

The News-Review reported Christopher Nelson, of Coos Bay, had trouble with his car Tuesday in Roseburg. He called Kathryn Leany, 56, for help. Nelson, however, has a restraining order against Leany that restricts her from being within 150 feet of him.

Police lodged Leany at the Douglas County Jail.

### Girl pays it forward to kids in need

**NY** LITTLE FALLS — A New York girl whose family got help after a fire five years ago is making it her mission to pay it forward.

The Observer-Dispatch said Paytin Synakowski, 8, of Little Falls gave away 55 book bags of school supplies last summer after holding bake sales, collecting cans and bottles, and asking for donations.

Now she’s filling bags with toys, art supplies, books, snacks and puzzles for children in hospitals and shelters.

To help reach her goal of helping 50 kids, the second-grader is selling her own toy kitchen, Barbies and Disney movies.

Paytin already has given gift bags to a sick friend and two boys affected by a building explosion.

Said Paytin, “It makes me happy when I help people.”

### Man charged with stealing officer’s ashes

**FL** LAKELAND — Authorities said they’ve recovered a stolen urn that contained the remains of a retired Florida police officer.

A Polk County Sheriff’s Office news release said Daniel Antonio Nolasco Cardona, 27, was arrested Tuesday in Miami. He’s charged with four burglaries in the Lakeland area, but officials said he’s connected to 14 other thefts in nine Florida counties.

Detectives said the four Lakeland burglaries occurred March 28. Officials said that includes the one in which Cardona stole the urn containing retired Lakeland Police Officer Buddy Newsome’s ashes.

Video surveillance gave detectives a tag number for a rental van involved in the crimes, and authorities said the van led them to Cardona.

Cardona faces multiple theft-related charges, along with a charge of destroying a monument or gravestone. Jail records didn’t list an attorney.

### Marijuana advocate gets probation for pot party

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — A marijuana advocate who invited hundreds of people to his pot-smoking party at a Philadelphia warehouse has been fined, ordered to perform community service and sentenced to four years’ probation.

Philly.com reported that Richard Tamaccio Jr. was sentenced Wednesday after plead-

ing guilty in January to felony drug charges. His lawyer described him as a “true crusader” for marijuana legalization.

Prosecutors said Tamaccio was charged for facilitating the sale of marijuana at the party in April 2017 and for possessing about 9 pounds of marijuana plants and products at his home.

The city in 2014 made possession of small amounts of the drug punishable only by a citation and a fine, but marijuana sales weren’t decriminalized.

Twenty-one other people also were arrested at the party.

### Months after theft, dog sniffs out store’s Vespa

**VA** ARLINGTON — A Washington-area establishment known simply as “The Italian Store” lost its emblematic green Vespa in early December. Arlington police listed the scooter stolen and, despite the store’s publicity blitz, staff thought it was gone forever.

The Washington Post reported this week, however, the Vespa scooted back into their lives, courtesy of a curious golden retriever named Toby. The newspaper cites the store’s Facebook post, which says Toby began sniffing around in Lubber Run Park, leading his owner to excavate the scooter from leaves and branches Tuesday.

The store credits community outreach — including posts from nearly 1,000 people — with Toby’s owner’s ability to immediately identify the Vespa’s owners.

The store hasn’t said if it’ll take special measures to secure the scooter once it returns to its sidewalk home.

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# UFC's McGregor facing criminal charges

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ultimate fighting star Conor McGregor is facing criminal charges after a backstage melee injured two fighters and forced the removal of three bouts on Saturday night from UFC's biggest card this year.

Video footage appears to show the promotion's most bankable star throwing a hand truck at a bus full of fighters on Thursday after a news conference for UFC 223 at Brooklyn's Barclays Center.

The New York Police Department says McGregor was charged and is awaiting a court appearance Friday. He faces three counts of assault and one count of criminal mischief. It was not immediately known if McGregor has an attorney who could comment on his behalf.

UFC President Dana White said Friday he spoke to McGregor via text and the brawler said the confrontation "had to be done."

"It was probably the worst conversation we ever had," White told FS1's "First Things First" on Friday morning. "We talked yesterday before he turned himself in.

"It's not that I don't think he understood what happened. He justified it. It was justified to him."

White said the 29-year-old McGregor said he was sorry about the fighters who were injured, but, "this had to be done."

Video showed McGregor with a group of people causing chaos Thursday as they took an elevator to the loading dock at Barclays Center. He can be seen tossing trash cans and being prevented from throwing a barricade at a bus during his unannounced appearance in New York.

Michael Chiesa was sent to the hospital with injuries sustained in the attack and was forced out of his scheduled fight against Anthony Pettis.

Flyweight Ray Borg suffered multiple cornea abrasions in the wake of the McGregor attack and his fight against Brandon Moreno was also scratched.

"The organization deems today's disruption completely unacceptable and is currently working on the consequences that will follow," UFC said in a statement. "Individuals involved in the incident are not welcome at tomorrow's ceremonial weigh-in or Saturday's event at Barclays Center."

McGregor hasn't fought for UFC since

November 2016 and was stripped this week by White of the 155-pound championship he had never defended. White also said this week he did not expect McGregor to attend Saturday's fights.

McGregor profanely responded on Twitter and wrote, "You'll strip me of nothing."

The popular Irishman is tight with UFC 223 fighter Artem Lobov, who was involved this week in a scuffle in a hotel with Khabib Nurmagomedov. Nurmagomedov was to fight Max Holloway on Saturday for the lightweight championship left vacant by McGregor.

Lobov was yanked from the card and banned from the building. Holloway failed to make weight on Friday, canceling the main event of UFC 223 and adding further upheaval to the promotion.

Holloway had agreed to fight Khabib Nurmagomedov on Saturday on just six days' notice after original challenger Tony Ferguson injured a knee. But Holloway was unable to reach the weight limit for the bout Friday in New York and was ruled out by the UFC medical team.

There was no immediate word if a replacement fighter would face Nurmagomedov.

# McIlroy gets off to solid start at Masters

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Rory McIlroy wanted to get off to a solid start at the Masters, his latest shot at a career Grand Slam.

Saving par on the final three holes in the opening round Thursday helped him keep it in sight.

McIlroy shot a 3-under 69, breaking 70 in the first round at Augusta National for the first time since 2011. He shot a 65 that year and looked like he would win a green jacket before a final-round meltdown.

McIlroy heads into the second round Friday three shots behind Jordan Spieth, who made five consecutive birdies on the back nine to build a two-stroke lead over Tony Finau and Matt Kuchar.

"You look at it and not anyone is really getting away," McIlroy said. "Jordan had a pretty strong finish there. But this is my best start in a few years. And, yeah, it's such a hard golf course to play catch-up on. If

you start to chase it around here, that's when you start to make mistakes. But to be right up there and have the ability to stay patient because of the position I'm in, that's a nice luxury I have over the next few days."

He can thank a few timely shots down the stretch.

McIlroy sank an 8-footer for par at No. 16, holed a sweeping, downhill, 13-footer for par on the next green and then chipped to a couple feet to save another par on 18.

"It's not always the birdies that stick out in your mind," McIlroy said, calling those shots the highlights of his round. "Those three holes. Big for momentum. I don't feel like I'm going out trying to get those two shots or whatever back (Friday) morning. I can just be relaxed going on to the first tee, not being too concerned about trying to get those birdies back."

The first time McIlroy had a chance for the Grand Slam at the Masters, he opened 71-

71 and found himself 12 shots back because Spieth ran away with it.

"Obviously it was very benign for us coming in the last few holes," McIlroy said. "I'm not surprised about (Spieth) at all. He loves this golf course. He plays well around here. He always has."

Some other things to know heading into the second round of golf's first major:

**Tiger tales:** Tiger Woods' first Masters appearance since 2015 was a bit of a letdown — he shot a 73, leaving him seven shots off the lead — but the four-time Augusta champion insisted that he's still in the game.

Woods was encouraged by two birdies coming down the stretch.

"I could have easily let the round slip away from me, but I got it back," he said. "And I'm right back in this tournament."

**Tough Tony:** Tony Finau may not win the green jacket, but there's no doubt he deserves

some sort of award for being the toughest guy on the course.

One day after dislocating his left ankle while celebrating a hole-in-one during the Par 3 Contest — he literally popped it back into place right in the middle of the course — Finau was only two shots off the lead after shooting a 68 in his Masters debut.

"I look at myself as a mentally tough person, and I think I showed that today in my round, just able to put my head down and just play," he said.

**Big names:** Phil Mickelson lamented a "terrible putt" on No. 18 that could have salvaged a better opening round. Lefty finished 2 under, the best score among a host of big names and pre-Masters favorites chasing Spieth.

World No. 1 Dustin Johnson was 1 over, one shot better than Justin Thomas and two ahead of Jason Day. Rickie Fowler was 2 under, and Justin Rose was at even-par.

## NBA roundup

# James keys Cavs' rally

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — LeBron James scored 13 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter and brought the Cleveland Cavaliers back from a 17-point deficit to stun the Washington Wizards 119-115 on Thursday night and maintain the No. 3 playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

The Cavs trailed 104-87 with 7:35 left before storming back behind James, who added 14 assists and nine rebounds to give coach Tyronn Lue a win in his return after missing nine games due to health reasons.

Jeff Green added 21 points and Kevin Love had 16 for the Cavs, who are 10-1 since March 17, when Lue was forced to leave a game in Chicago with "piercing" chest pains.

**Rockets 96, Trail Blazers 94:** Chris Paul hit an off-balance layup with 0.8 seconds left to lift host Houston past Portland.

Paul scored 27 points to help Houston get its second straight victory since a loss to San Antonio.

Portland's Damian Lillard sat out after spraining his left ankle Tuesday against Dallas.

**Pacers 126, Warriors 106:** Bojan Bogdanovic had 28 points, Victor Oladipo scored 14 of his 21 points in the second half and playoff-bound Indiana beat visiting Golden State.

**Nets 119, Bucks 111:** Allen Crabbe scored 25 points and hit two three-pointers in the closing minutes of a tight game, and Brooklyn shot 48 percent from behind the arc to beat host Milwaukee.

**Nuggets 100, Timberwolves 96:** Jamal Murray had 22 points to lead six Denver players in double figures, Nikola Jokic wrapped things up with a late tip-in and the Nuggets beat visiting Minnesota.

**Jazz 117, Clippers 95:** Donovan Mitchell scored 19 points, Rudy Gobert had 15 points and 10 rebounds and Utah beat visiting Los Angeles for its fourth straight victory.

## MLB roundup

# Conforto, Mets blast Nationals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Michael Conforto got exactly what he wanted. So did the New York Mets.

In his first regular-season game since August, Conforto came off the disabled list to hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer off Stephen Strasburg, Yoenis Cespedes also went deep against the ace, and Jay Bruce tacked on an insurance grand slam, leading the Mets to an 8-2 victory over Washington in the Nationals' home opener Thursday.

When new Mets manager Mickey Callaway was asked beforehand about throwing Conforto in against one of the NL's premier pitchers instead of giving him a minor league rehab assignment, this was the reply: "He wanted Strasburg."

"As a competitor, you want to go up against the best. They don't get much better than him," said Conforto, a 2017 NL All-Star who had surgery on his left shoulder in September. "If we're starting there, then we should be OK."

Well, then.

Conforto struck out on three pitches leading off the game, then grounded into a double play in the third inning. And his third AB? With two outs in the fifth, he drove a 97 mph pitch out to left. It was originally ruled that the ball remained in the field of play, so Conforto stopped at second; after a replay review, it was changed to a homer.

Bruce joked about the Mets' center fielder and leadoff hitter: "His first two at-bats were his rehab. And his third at-bat, he was ready."

Bruce's sixth career grand slam, and first homer of 2018, came off Brandon Kintzler in the seventh.

The Mets improved to an NL East-leading 5-1, while the two-time reigning division champion Nationals have lost three in a row after a 4-0 start under rookie manager Dave Martinez.

**Diamondbacks 3 Cardinals 1:** Robbie Ray worked around five walks over six innings and the bullpen closed out a two-hitter, helping Arizona spoil St. Louis' home opener.

Arizona improved to 6-1 for the second straight season and tied a franchise record for its best seven-game start. The team was also 6-1 in 2000. St. Louis dropped its first home opener since 2015.

Ray (2-0) gave up a run and two hits while striking out nine. He was making his first appearance in St. Louis since being knocked out of a game by a line drive off his head on July 28, 2017.

**Red Sox 3, Rays 2 (12):** Hanley Ramirez blooped a bases-loaded fly ball over the drawn-in outfield in right to break a 12th-inning tie after Boston overcame a two-run deficit in the ninth in its home opener.

It was the sixth straight victory for Boston and new manager Alex Cora, and the sixth loss in a row for Tampa Bay. Bobby Poyner (1-0) pitched two innings, striking out three for his first major league win.

**Tigers 9, White Sox 7 (10):** Niko Goodrum hit a two-run homer after replacing the injured Miguel Cabrera, and Detroit rallied to win Chicago's cold home opener.

Goodrum's shot with two outs in the ninth got the comeback going. The White Sox were leading 7-4 when he drove a 3-2 fastball from Joakim Soria out to right-center to cut the lead to one. Nicholas Castellanos singled and Victor Martinez tied it with an RBI double, drawing boos from a sparse crowd.

**Twins 4, Mariners 2:** Mitch Garver hit the go-ahead home run in the seventh, one inning after Miguel Sano tied it with a two-run shot in Minnesota's chilly home opener.

Eddie Rosario went deep in the eighth to pad the lead, and Fernando Rodney worked the ninth for his first save with the Twins.

**Orioles 5, Yankees 2:** Adam Jones hit a go-ahead home run, Andrew Cashner (1-1) pitched six strong innings and beat host New York to snap a five-game losing streak.

Jones' third homer of the season was a two-run drive off Masahiro Tanaka (1-1) in a five-run seventh inning.

**Cubs 8, Brewers 0:** Jon Lester (1-0) pitched six sharp innings and hit a tricky grounder that was tough to corral and visiting Chicago beat Milwaukee.

Brewers star closer Corey Knebel exited with a hamstring injury while getting some work in the ninth inning. Manager Craig Counsell said Knebel will likely go on the disabled list.

**Rockies 3, Padres 1:** Ryan McMahon drew a bases-loaded walk off All-Star closer Brad Hand to break a scoreless tie in the ninth inning, and DJ LeMahieu added a two-run single for visiting Colorado.

Hand (0-2) walked Trevor Story and Chris Iannetta to open the ninth and the Rockies loaded the bases when second baseman Carlos Asuaje committed an error when he couldn't hold onto the throw from third baseman Christian Villanueva after Gerardo Parra's bunt.

**Phillies 5, Marlins 0:** Maikel Franco homered, tripled, singled and drove in four runs for host Philadelphia, and Nick Pivetta struck out nine in 5<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings.

Pivetta (1-0) allowed four hits and no walks. Adam Morgan retired the four batters he faced and Luis Garcia and Hector Neris combined on the four-hitter.

**Pirates 5, Reds 2:** Gregory Polanco hit a two-run home run during a four-run fifth inning to lift host Pittsburgh past Cincinnati.

**Rangers 6, Athletics 3:** Adrian Beltre singled and doubled to become the career hits leader among Latin-born players with 3,055 in visiting Texas' victory over Oakland.

## Frozen Four roundup

# Irish, Bulldogs earn berths in title game

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Notre Dame won another nail-biter, and this one has the Irish on the verge of a school first.

Jake Evans scored his second goal of the game with 5.2 seconds left and Notre Dame beat Michigan 4-3 on Thursday night in the Frozen Four semifinals.

It is the fifth straight post-season game that Notre Dame has scored in the final minute or overtime.

Charging down the slot, Evans redirected a pass from Cam Morrison past Hayden Lavigne to send the Irish to their second championship game in school history.

"I knew there was a little bit of time left so I thought I'd give it one last rush and Cam

just did a really good job of putting it out there for me," Evans said.

Notre Dame, which fell to Boston College for the 2008 title, will face Minnesota Duluth on Saturday for the title. The Bulldogs scored two quick goals and held off Ohio State 2-1 in the other semifinal.

It's been a dramatic ride for the Irish. Dylan Malmquist scored with 27 seconds left to beat Providence 2-1 to get to the Frozen Four. That goal came a day after Jordan Gross scored in overtime to beat Michigan Tech 4-3. Morrison scored in overtime to beat Ohio State 3-2 in the Big Ten Tournament final after Jack Jenkins scored with 31 seconds left to beat Penn State 3-2 the game before.

**Minnesota Duluth 2, Ohio State 1:** The Bulldogs played

like a team that knew their way around a big stage, especially early. The reward was another crack at the national title.

Louie Roehl and Jared Thomas scored in the first 3:04 and Minnesota Duluth held off Ohio State on Thursday night to reach the NCAA championship game for the second straight year.

Hunter Shepard made 19 saves for the Bulldogs (24-16-3), allowing only Tanner Laczynski's power-play goal in the third period. Sean Romeo stopped 26 shots for the Buckeyes (26-10-5).

The Bulldogs will face Notre Dame, a 4-3 winner over Michigan in the second semifinal, on Saturday night. Duluth lost 3-2 to Denver in the title game last season in Chicago. The

Bulldogs were the last at-large entrant to make the 16-team NCAA field.

"When you're fighting for your life to get into the tournament, you're kind of playing playoff hockey a couple weeks earlier than everyone else, and you get on a run and keep it going and find out how to play tough, close games like that," Thomas said. "I think the fact that we had to crawl and scratch our way from the bottom from the start of the season to where we are now, it's been a heck of a run.

Duluth's lone NCAA title came in 2011 when the Bulldogs beat Michigan 3-2 in overtime, the last time the Frozen Four was played at Xcel Energy Center. This will be their fourth title-game appearance in six trips to the Frozen Four.

## NHL roundup

# Predators edge Capitals, wrap up Presidents' Trophy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Craig Smith scored twice and Ryan Johansen had the go-ahead goal late in the third period to help the Nashville Predators beat the Washington Capitals 4-3 Thursday night to clinch first place in the Central Division, the top seed in the Western Conference and the best record in the NHL.

Even though it'll be Pekka Rinne in net for the Predators when they open the playoffs next week, backup Juuse Saros stopped 28 of the 31 shots and captain Roman Josi scored on the power play to give them their first division title in 19 seasons of existence.

Nashville has a franchise-record 52 victories and will open the playoffs against the second wild card in the West as it tries to return to the Stanley Cup Final. The Predators clinched the Presidents' Trophy for

the league's top record when Boston lost to Florida 3-2 later Thursday. Nashville watched from the arena as the Panthers scored late in the third period to top the Bruins.

Evgeny Kuznetsov scored twice and Alex Ovechkin added his NHL-leading 47th goal of the season for the Metropolitan-champion Capitals, who have nothing left to play for and could still face any of a handful of teams in the first round. Philipp Grubauer made 25 saves and strengthened his case to be Washington's Game 1 playoff starter over 2016 Vezina Trophy winner Braden Holtby.

**Canucks 4, Coyotes 3 (OT):** Daniel Sedin scored on a power play 2:33 into overtime with his brother Henrik Sedin earning an assist in their final home game before retiring after 17 seasons with host Vancouver.

**Devils 2, Maple Leafs 1:**

Host New Jersey is back in the playoffs for the first time since 2012 after beating Toronto.

**Kings 5, Wild 4 (OT):** Dustin Brown scored his fourth goal of the game 23 seconds into overtime and host Los Angeles moved into third place in the Pacific Division.

**Flyers 4, Hurricanes 3:** Jakub Voracek scored with 5:45 left to lift host Philadelphia past Carolina.

**Panthers 3, Bruins 2:** Jared McCann scored with 5:37 left and Roberto Luongo got the win in his 1,000th career game, helping host Florida beat Boston to stay in playoff contention.

**Penguins 5, Blue Jackets 4 (OT):** Phil Kessel scored 1:06 into overtime for visiting Pittsburgh, and Columbus earned a point to clinch a playoff spot for the second consecutive season.

**Jets 2, Flames 1:** Connor Hellebuyck made 31 saves to tie the record for victories in a sea-

son by an American goalie and host Winnipeg beat Calgary for its fourth straight victory.

**Sharks 4, Avalanche 2:** Logan Couture scored his NHL-leading 16th go-ahead goal six minutes into the third period and host San Jose improved its chances for home-ice advantage in the first round of the playoffs.

**Islanders 2, Rangers 1:** Thomas Hickey and Anthony Beauvillier scored 2:32 apart in the second period and the host Islanders kept up their recent mastery of the Rangers.

**Oilers 4, Golden Knights 3:** Connor McDavid had three assists to push his NHL-leading points total to 106 and help host Edmonton beat Vegas.

**Canadiens 4, Red Wings 3:** Nicolas Deslauriers' second goal put his team ahead late in the second period and visiting Montreal held on to beat Detroit.