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Shanahan: Joint drills building capability

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Joint military exercises conducted by the U.S. and South Korea last month boosted readiness, the U.S. defense chief said, defending changes aimed at maintaining calm with the North to facilitate nuclear talks.

Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan spoke Monday as he met with his South Korean counterpart in Washington to discuss the recent drills and other alliance issues as efforts to persuade Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons have faltered.

Washington and Seoul said early last month that they were ending annual exercises known as Key Resolve and Foal Eagle in favor of lower-profile drills that were re-named Dongmaeng, or Alliance.

Shanahan dismissed concerns that the decision — seen as a concession to the North, which considers the drills a rehearsal for an invasion — would hurt military readiness.

“I don’t think we’re scaling back exercises. I think we’re building capability up,” he said Monday as he welcomed South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo with

an enhanced honor cordon at the Pentagon.

Key Resolve and Foal Eagle featured tens of thousands of U.S. and South Korean troops, including many who came from other countries to practice so-called decapitation plans and other scenarios targeting the North Korean regime.

By contrast, the militaries have not revealed details about the number of participants or about the computer-simulated drills held in March.

Shanahan and Jeong also stressed that they were working toward the eventual transfer of wartime operational control from the United States to the South Koreans. Currently, the Americans would lead joint operations if war broke out.

“As we do operational control and transfer, we want to make sure that there are no gaps or seams and that we continue to build on these exercises,” Shanahan said. “We’re going to talk about the September exercises and the lessons learned from these ones in March.”

Joint military exercises have long been the lynchpin in the U.S.-South Korean alliance, which was forged in the 1950-53 Korean War that ended in an armistice instead

of a peace treaty.

President Donald Trump announced that he was suspending the drills, which he said were “very expensive” and “provocative,” after his first summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on June 12 in Singapore.

He reiterated that sentiment after the second summit between the two leaders collapsed without agreement on Feb. 28 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

U.S. commanders insist they have been able to adjust by revising the drills.

Gen. Robert Abrams, who commands U.S. Forces Korea as well as the Combined Forces Command and the United Nations Command, was quoted as telling the defense chiefs during a briefing in Washington that Dongmaeng had “strengthened their combined defense and readiness posture and contributed to the groundwork for the transition of wartime operational control.”

Shanahan and Jeong also reaffirmed that the alliance between their two countries is “ironclad” and “ready to face an evolving security environment,” according to a Defense Department readout of their meeting.

Cobra Ball on Okinawa amid fears of N. Korean tests

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A U.S. reconnaissance aircraft that specializes in surveilling and collecting data on ballistic missiles has arrived on Okinawa amid fears that North Korea may be planning to resume test launches.

An Air Force RC-135S Cobra Ball landed at Kadena Air Base on Saturday evening, according to Satoru Kuba, an Okinawan who monitors military aircraft traffic for Japan’s Fuji Television. The 135-foot-long, Cold War-era aircraft was parked in a hangar and was still at Kadena as of Tuesday.

North Korea has rebuilt a launch site at Sohae that it had partially dismantled as part of disarmament steps last year, according to recent satellite images. However, the Cobra Ball’s deployment could also be related to flooding at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., where the Air Force’s three Cobra Ball aircraft are permanently based.

All Cobra Balls are operated by the Air Force’s 55th Wing and manned by crews from the 45th Reconnaissance and 97th Intelligence squadrons, according to an Air Force website.

Kadena officials declined to comment on the deployment due to operational security, according to an email signed

Tuesday afternoon by the Media Section of 18th Wing Public Affairs. The message said the Cobra Ball is also operated by the 82nd Reconnaissance Squadron, a tenant unit of the base.

Masashi Katsuren, a spokesman for Japan’s Okinawa Defense Bureau, which represents the Ministry of Defense on Okinawa, told Stars and Stripes the bureau had not been informed of the aircraft’s presence.

The Cobra Ball’s deployment to Okinawa comes on the heels of a second summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi, Vietnam, in Feb-

ruary. Negotiations collapsed abruptly, with Trump saying the North had demanded too much in the way of sanctions relief.

Reuters reported last week that Trump had given Kim a list of demands that included handing over nuclear weapons and bomb fuel to the United States.

North Korea later warned that it was considering ending talks over its nuclear program and canceling a moratorium on missile testing.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said last month that the Trump administration expected Kim to keep his word not to do so.

US relief efforts in full swing in Mozambique

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command has conducted at least 30 humanitarian flights, delivering more than 120 tons of food and supplies to Mozambique, where a multinational relief effort is underway after a cyclone caused catastrophic damage in the region, military officials said.

Cyclone Idai, which hit on March 14, spurred widespread flooding in Mozambique, causing more than 900 deaths and displacing thousands of people in Mozambique, neighboring Zimbabwe and Malawi.

AFRICOM was authorized to spend up to \$15 million in overseas disaster relief funds to provide logistics support in the effort, which has been underway for more than a week.

“In addition to loading, transporting and delivering aid for distribution by the command’s interagency partners, U.S. Africa Command forces are actively working to open airfields and maximize available transportation routes,” a statement said Monday.

U.S. forces are also providing advice to the Mozambique government on accelerating response efforts, the command said.

AFRICOM said it is using a “hub-and-spoke” concept in which large military and commercial aircraft transport aid to a hub in the capital of Maputo. From there, smaller military aircraft transport aid to outlying areas where supplies can be delivered to affected communities.

“Our efforts reflect the values of our nation,” AFRICOM boss Gen. Thomas Waldhauser said in the statement. “We are committed to our African partners while helping to ensure the security and stability of the region.”

AFRICOM’s Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, headquartered in Djibouti, is leading the military’s efforts in Mozambique.

NATO anniversary brings celebrations, uncertainty

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — NATO will be awash in nostalgia as leaders assemble this week in Washington to mark the security pact’s 70th anniversary, but behind the ceremonial pomp, feuds between key members pose a growing threat to alliance solidarity, analysts say.

In Washington, NATO will have center stage for much of the week. Its top official, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, will meet at the White House with President Donald Trump on Tuesday. Stoltenberg will give a speech the next day before both houses of Congress.

Foreign ministers from across the 29-nation alliance are traveling to the U.S. capital for high-level talks, not only to mark NATO’s anniversary on Thursday, but to work on their strategy for countering Russian threats.

However, even as NATO leaders tout generations of solidarity, there is uncertainty over whether the pact’s close ties will last.

NATO is at a turning point, and its durability over decades shouldn’t be taken for granted, said Heather Conley, director of the Europe program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. While allies will be “swimming in nostalgia” this week, there has been an “erosion of credibility of America’s security guarantees,” she said.

“We are not going back to the way it was,” Conley said. “The stakes are absolutely enormous, and this anniversary gives us an opportunity to reflect on how enormous they are.”

A chief concern, according to NATO observers, is that the source of tension is mainly coming from two of the alliance’s most important member states: the U.S. and Germany.

Berlin’s refusal to meet a NATO defense spending target of 2% of gross domestic product by 2024 has provoked accusations that Europe’s economic powerhouse is a security free-rider. The criticism has intensified to new levels under Trump.

German budget plans unveiled last month also reveal that military spending as a share of GDP is projected to be lower than expected — declining from 1.37 in 2020 to 1.25 by 2023, German media reported. That drew a fresh rebuke from U.S. Ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell, who said such a move was “unacceptable.”

Wolfgang Ischinger, a former ambassador in the United States who now chairs the Munich Security Conference, said Germany’s backtracking on its NATO commitments risks

further escalation with Washington.

“It is said that we will not achieve NATO’s goal of spending 2% of the gross domestic product on defense — we do not even want it anymore,” Ischinger told the Die Welt newspaper on Monday. “We underestimate the frustration of our 1.5% announcement in Washington and Brussels.”

If the U.S. were to abandon NATO, Germany would be “completely blind, deaf and defenseless,” Ischinger said.

Partly in response to such concerns, Germany and some other European allies have sought to reduce their military dependence on America.

French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel last year agreed to sharply increase military cooperation. In January, Ursula von der Leyen, the German defense minister, declared that a European army “is already taking shape,” though the details are unclear.

The differences between Berlin and Washington don’t end with defense spending. The Trump administration has blasted Germany over its Nord Stream 2 gas line project with Russia, and there are deep disagreements over how to resolve America’s trade imbalance with Germany.

Pressure over such issues was building well before the arrival of Trump.

“But we are allowing them to fester and deepen,” Conley said. “The approach Trump is taking rhetorically is causing the German public to go in the opposite direction.”

Germany talks up the value of NATO, “but there is no doubt that Germany is undermining alliance solidarity in its backing away from the 2%. It’s a really big problem for the alliance,” said John R. Deni, a NATO expert at the U.S. Army War College. “But the browbeating from Trump only gets you so far — it actually generates its own antibodies.”

Trump’s rhetoric has stoked fears that he wants to pull America out of the trans-Atlantic military bloc. It also has raised concerns that adversaries, namely Russia, could begin to view the alliance as a paper tiger — even though the talk has coincided with the U.S. military expanding its mission in Europe.

Stoltenberg, speaking Monday with reporters at his Brussels headquarters, downplayed the tensions.

“The strength of NATO is that despite these differences we have always been able to unite around our core task, and that is to protect and defend each other,” Stoltenberg said.

US suspends Turkey from F-35 program

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The United States has suspended Turkey's participation in the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jet program until Ankara cancels its planned purchase of a sophisticated Russian air defense system, the Pentagon said Monday.

"We have ... been clear that acquisition of the (Russian) S-400 is not compatible with the F-35," according to a statement by Lt. Col. Mike Andrews, a Defense Department spokesman. "We very much regret the current situation ... but the DOD is taking prudent steps to protect the shared investments made in our critical technology."

The move is the most direct U.S. response yet to a worsening dispute with Turkey over

its purchase of the Russian system, which both the Trump administration and NATO have said would compromise the technology of the new-generation stealth fighter. It comes as the U.S. and NATO member Turkey are locked in a dispute over Syria, and the day after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's party lost control of major cities in hard-fought local elections.

The Pentagon order stops all "deliveries and activities" related to Turkey's purchase of 100 of the next-generation stealth fighters. Turkey already has officially taken delivery of two of the planes, but the aircraft have remained in the U.S. while Turkish pilots are being trained.

Turkey is also one of the co-

producers of the \$85 million jet, responsible for the manufacture of key components of the fuselage and cockpit. Last year, when U.S. lawmakers first threatened to block Turkey's participation in the F-35 program, then-Defense Secretary Jim Mattis objected, saying it could delay production lines by up to two years.

Monday's statement indicated that the Defense Department was prepared to take that step; the Pentagon said it was developing "secondary sources of supply for Turkish-produced parts."

Last week, a bipartisan group of senators introduced legislation prohibiting the transfer of any F-35s to Turkey. The bill, co-sponsored by Sens. James Lankford, R-Okla.; Thom Til-

lis, R-N.C.; Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H.; and Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., said Turkey's S-400 purchase not only risked NATO security but was a violation of a 2017 law threatening sanctions for any allied purchase of sophisticated Russian technology.

In recent weeks, senior Trump administration officials had speculated that Erdogan was refusing to back down on the S-400 purchase to present a tough national security stance in the run-up to the local elections. They expressed hope that he would soften his position after the vote.

But Friday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that "this agreement is a done deal."

2 Marine pilots killed in helicopter crash identified

Associated Press

YUMA, Ariz. — The names of two Marine pilots who died in a helicopter crash during a training mission in southwestern Arizona were released Monday as the crash remained under investigation.

U.S. Marine Corps officials identified the dead pilots as

Maj. Matthew M. Wiegand, 34, of Ambler, Pa., and Capt. Travis W. Brannon, 30, of Nashville, Tenn.

They said the AH-1Z Viper crashed about 8:45 p.m. Saturday on the vast Marine Corps Air Station Yuma training grounds while the pilots were conducting a training mission

as part of a weapons and tactical instructor course.

Officials said Wiegand held qualifications in the AH-1Z Viper and AH-1W Super Cobra, and Brannon was attending the semiannual weapons and tactics instructor course hosted by the Yuma base.

"It is a somber day for the

entire Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command as we mourn this tremendous loss," Brig. Gen. Roger B. Turner Jr., a commanding general at the base in Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey ordered flags to be lowered to half-staff Tuesday.

2 command nominees tell panel Russia, China major threats

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

The nominee to serve as the next head of U.S. European Command said Tuesday he wants more troops on the Continent, as well as two additional Navy destroyers in the theater and an upgraded logistics network to speed forces east in the event of a conflict with Russia.

Another top priority will be to continue improving infrastructure in Eastern Europe, such as rail lines, to "ensure we can close on the enemy at a faster pace," Air Force Gen.

Tod Wolters said during Senate testimony.

If confirmed by the Senate, Wolters, who leads the Air Force in Europe and Africa, would replace retiring Army Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti in the dual role of EUCOM boss and NATO supreme allied commander in Europe. Wolters testified alongside Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, who is nominated to serve as the next U.S. Africa Command chief.

Both generals, whose prospective headquarters will be in Stuttgart, Germany, high-

lighted Russia as a top concern, along with China. While China has been active in Africa for years, Russia also is expanding efforts, with military advisers operating in places like the Central African Republic.

"I think [the Russians] are after access and influence to our detriment," said Townsend, who currently serves as the head of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. Russia's main motives are "exploitative," Townsend said, with a focus on mineral extraction and arms sales.

In the case of China, lawmak-

ers expressed concern about its first overseas base in Djibouti, a small East African country where the U.S. also has its main military hub.

Sen. James Inhofe, the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he was worried China was involved in secretive underground work at its base. "You have to wonder what they are up to in Djibouti," Inhofe said.

"I don't know what is beneath their base, but I will make it a point to find out," Townsend said in response.

Trump mulls bringing on ‘immigration czar’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As he threatens to shut down the southern border, President Donald Trump is considering bringing on a “border” or “immigration czar” to coordinate immigration policy across various federal agencies, according to four people familiar with the discussions.

Trump is weighing at least two potential candidates for the post: former Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach and former Virginia Attorney General

Ken Cuccinelli, according to the people who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Kobach and Cuccinelli are far-right conservatives with strong views on immigration. Cuccinelli was seen at the White House on Monday.

The planning comes as Trump is threatening anew to close the U.S.-Mexico border as soon as this week if Mexico does not completely halt illegal immigration into the U.S.

Also, it serves as the latest sign that the president plans to

continue to hammer his hard-line immigration rhetoric and policies as he moves past the special counsel’s Russia investigation and works to rally his base heading into his 2020 re-election campaign.

Aides hope the potential appointment, which they caution is still in the planning stages, would serve as the “face” of the administration on immigration issues and would placate both the president and his supporters, showing he is serious and taking action.

Kobach and Cuccinelli did not immediately respond Monday to requests for comment. Kobach previously served as vice chairman of the president’s short-lived election fraud commission, which was disbanded after finding little evidence of widespread abuse.

A Department of Homeland Security official noted that White House czars have been appointed in the past when there has been an “urgent need” for sustained, inter-agency policy coordination.

Pelosi: Biden should stop being so touchy-feely

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As former Vice President Joe Biden’s camp scrambles to contain any political damage over his past behavior with women, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has some words of advice: Keep your distance.

“Join the straight-arm club,” Pelosi told a breakfast hour Washington event on Tuesday.

In other words, keep your handshakes at arm’s length and don’t be touchy-feely.

“Just pretend you have a cold and I have a cold,” Pelosi said.

Pelosi, D-Calif., told the event, which was sponsored by Politico, that Biden “has to understand that in the world we are in now people’s space is important to them and what’s important is how they receive

it, not necessarily how you intended it.”

Her remarks came as Biden’s aides are striking a more aggressive tone as he considers running for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination and faces scrutiny over his past behavior toward women. In a statement on Monday, Biden spokesman Bill Russo blasted “right wing trolls” from “the dark recesses of the internet” for conflating images of Biden embracing acquaintances, colleagues and friends in his official capacity during swearing-in ceremonies with uninvited touching.

That statement came on a day on which a second woman said Biden had acted inappropriately, touching her face with both hands and rubbing noses with her in 2009. The allegation by Amy Lappos, 43, a former aide to Democratic Rep. Jim Himes, of

Connecticut, followed a magazine essay by another woman, former Nevada politician Lucy Flores, who wrote that Biden kissed her on the back of the head in 2014.

The developments underscored the challenge facing Biden, 76, should he decide to seek the White House. Following historic wins in the 2018 midterms, Democratic politics is dominated by energy from women. The allegations could leave Biden, long known for his affectionate mannerisms, appearing out of touch with the party.

Biden hasn’t made a final decision on whether to run for the White House. But aides who weren’t authorized to discuss internal conversations and spoke on the condition of anonymity said there were no signs that his team was slowing its preparations for a campaign.

Los Angeles police identify suspect in rapper’s slaying

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles police are seeking a 29-year-old man who they believe fatally shot Nipsey Hussle outside the rapper’s clothing store where he was trying to remake his community.

Los Angeles police Chief Michel Moore was scheduled to hold a briefing Tuesday to explain how detectives came to identify Eric Holder as the man suspected of killing Hussle on Sunday afternoon and wounding two others.

Moore also planned to discuss a wider upsurge of violent crime in the city.

A disturbance at a memorial for Hussle on Monday night left at least 19 people in-

jured, including two people taken to local hospitals in critical condition.

Dozens of police officers cleared the memorial site after a fight apparently broke out and a stampede ensued.

At least one of the critically injured persons was struck by a car and the other one had a “penetrating injury,” although it’s unclear whether that person was stabbed or cut by broken glass, a fire department spokeswoman said. Two other injuries were serious and 15 were considered not life-threatening.

The incident occurred after hundreds of people gathered for a candlelight vigil outside Hussle’s The Marathon clothing store.

Hussle, who joined the gang Rollin 60’s

Neighborhood Crips as a teenager, had planned to meet with Moore and the city’s police commission president Monday to discuss preventing gang violence.

An autopsy completed Monday showed that Hussle, 33, died after being shot in the head and torso. The rapper, whose real name was Ermias Asghedom, had recently purchased the strip mall where the shop is located and planned to redevelop it into a mixed-use commercial and residential complex.

The plan was part of Hussle’s broader ambitions to remake the neighborhood where he grew up and attempt to break the cycle of gang life that lured him in when he was younger.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Using dirt, boy fills potholes on his street

MI MUSKEGON HEIGHTS — A west Michigan boy is getting attention for taking matters into his own hands to deal with potholes.

WZZM-TV reported Monte Scott, 12, recently used dirt from his backyard to even out a street near his Muskegon Heights home. He said he “didn’t want people messing up their cars like my mom did.”

Trinell Scott said her son “took it upon himself” to fix the road.

Time capsule found near zoo entrance

IN LAFAYETTE — Construction workers uncovered a time capsule that had long been rumored to be buried near the entrance of a northwestern Indiana zoo.

Workers preparing for landscaping work at the Columbian Park Zoo in Lafayette found a copper box on March 22 as they used equipment to move a boulder that once held a Spanish-American War Memorial plaque that was dedicated in 1931.

The Journal & Courier reported that the small box contained several newspapers still legible despite spending 88 years beneath the boulder.

Agency, university work to save plant

WI WHITEWATER — The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater are working together to find a way to save one of the state’s rarest plants.

For the past few years, the university has been growing

seedlings of Fassett’s loco-weed in a lab, Wisconsin Public Radio reported. The DNR plans to transport the seedlings to a lakeshore where the plant hasn’t been seen in 15 years.

The plant, unique to Wisconsin, is on state and federal lists as endangered and threatened.

Researchers hope giving the plant more time to develop before planting will help the seedlings flourish.

Trapper catches a 750-pound alligator

FL JUPITER — A massive gator weighing more 700 pounds and measuring nearly 12-feet long has been caught in South Florida.

A spokeswoman for Jupiter Police said a trapper caught the unusually large gator near an office park Thursday after a business owner reported it. The reptile, which weighed nearly 750 pounds, is being taken to a gator farm in central Florida.

The Sun Sentinel reported alligators are especially active in South Florida in warm weather.

Alcohol by volume limit raised for beer

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Utah Gov. Gary Herbert has signed into law a compromise deal reached by state lawmakers that raises the amount of alcohol allowed in beer sold in grocery and convenience stores.

Herbert recently announced the signing of a law that raises the alcohol limit to 4 percent. That is still relatively low, but will allow for most production-line beers to be sold in grocery and convenience stores.

Utah had limited beer to 3.2 percent alcohol outside of state-owned liquor stores, but large breweries have been dis-

continuing weak-beer products as other states abandon similar limits.

Schools seek help on weeks of lost time

SC COLUMBIA — A few South Carolina school districts that missed more than two weeks of classes because of Hurricane Florence are turning to lawmakers for help.

A bill that unanimously passed the House would allow school districts to send a request to the South Carolina Department of Education to waive any days missed beyond the 10th day for bad weather. Because districts need to finalize their calendars, the Senate Education Committee reluctantly sent the bill to the Senate floor Wednesday, promising to look at possible changes.

Bomb, gun found are linked to late suspect

MD LINGANORE — An explosive device and a loaded handgun found in the Maryland woods have been linked to a stalking case in which the suspect died by suicide in open court nearly two decades ago.

News outlets cited a joint news release from the Office of the Maryland State Fire Marshal and Howard County police saying documents found alongside the items indicated they belonged to Alan Bruce Chmurny.

Chmurny was a vice president of Oceanix Biosciences when he was accused in 2000 of pouring mercury into the vents of an employee’s car. Chmurny had left the woman threatening messages, including at least one mentioning a bomb.

He died by suicide in 2001.

Felon elected, but can’t serve as mayor

LA BATON ROUGE — Voters in a small central Louisiana town will have to elect another mayor after the man they chose got sidelined by a new constitutional restriction on felons holding elected office.

Roy Hebron, a Democrat, turned in paperwork last week formally declaring that he won’t accept the office of mayor representing the town of Ball. Hebron’s lawyer, Charles Elliott, said the filing came after the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled against Hebron and his pardon application was denied.

Hebron, a former Ball mayor, was elected on the same November ballot on which voters statewide enacted a constitutional provision requiring felons to wait five years after their sentences before seeking office. Hebron was under corrections supervision for a hurricane-related fraud conviction until 15 months ago.

Sheriff: Parents didn’t know girl was at park

FL WEST PALM BEACH — Sheriff’s officials in Florida said they have arrested the parents of a child who was found wandering alone in a park.

The Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office posted the little girl’s picture on social media after she was found in Haverhill Park. The next morning, they located the parents, who told investigators they didn’t realize they’d left the child, who had been missing for 14 hours.

Investigators arrested Jolanda and Makenson Alexandre on child neglect charges.

From wire reports

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Chris Beard took long road to Minneapolis

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — It's fair to say there would be no Final Four for Texas Tech if there weren't plenty of places like Fort Scott.

Fort Scott Community College in Kansas is one of the 11 stops Red Raiders coach Chris Beard made before he landed the top job in Lubbock, Texas, where he's built the Red Raiders into a title contender in a mere three years.

"I always say, 'There are junior colleges, and there's Fort Scott,'" the program's current coach, Michael Cook, told The Associated Press. "We share our arena with the rodeo team."

Arnold Arena is more like a big metal barn with a huge wall in the middle that separates the rodeo arena from the basketball court. Later this year, Beard is expected back at the barn; Fort Scott is inducting him into its sports Hall of Fame.

Next week, Cook is hoping

to be in Minneapolis to watch Texas Tech play for the championship. It will be a world away from the life he lives — a life where the coaches drive the vans and tape the ankles and make the motel reservations.

"There are no airplanes, or charters or shuttle buses," Cook said. "You get your meals going to the game, and it's Burger King on the way there and Whataburger on the way back. You cram four or five people into a room because the budget's low."

"But you do whatever you can to make sure you instill fundamentals of team, and to make sure you're building a program to be successful."

Beard did it at Fort Scott. And while the perks and lifestyle have changed — these days, it's eggs and bacon instead of Lucky Charms out of the motel's complimentary breakfast bar — very little about his coaching philosophy is different at Texas Tech.

"I think all great players

want to be coached," Beard said Friday, the day before the Red Raiders topped Gonzaga 75-69 to punch their ticket to the Final Four. "I've never coached any player that didn't want to be disciplined, didn't want to be told the truth."

Cook still hears from Beard, and a number of Division I coaches, for that matter. Community colleges are the proving ground for players with potential big-time talent, but who need time to acclimate, either to a new country or to the rigors of college schooling. Or, sometimes the coaches at the next level simply need a place for the player to play while they find room for him on their roster.

They are the overlooked and underappreciated.

"Coaching at places like this is probably what helped instill that grind mentality," Cook said. "That's how he coaches. It's why his teams play great defense. He looks for street dogs on his team, not store-

bought dogs."

Cook said he's had his share of success stories in 11 years at the school — a lot of players move on from Fort Scott to NAIA or Division II programs; some have gone to Division I; a few have graduated and played pro ball overseas.

"Every level needs its players," he said.

Asked if Fort Scott has ever produced any household names, he mentioned one shot-blocking small forward, Ramell Taylor, who got sniffs from some bigger programs and ended up at Southern Utah.

Now, Fort Scott has its household name: Chris Beard, a coaching lifer who never forgot where he came from.

"I talk about it a lot with our guys, and I mention Coach Beard," Cook said. "I tell them to look at him. He was here once."

"And sometimes where you start is not where you're going to end."

Williamson, Barrett top All-America team

Associated Press

The season did not end as Zion Williamson and R.J. Barrett intended. The fabulous freshmen came to Duke to win a national championship and their bid came up short with a loss to Michigan State in the Elite Eight.

Williamson and Barrett still managed to make a bit of history.

The Duke duo was named to The Associated Press All-America team on Tuesday, becoming the second freshman teammates to make the first team in the same season. They were joined by Tennessee's Grant Williams, Michigan State's Cassius Winston and Ja Morant of Murray State.

Kentucky's DeMarcus Cousins and John Wall were the only other freshman teammates to take first-team AP honors in 2010.

The 6-foot-7, 285-pound Williamson electrified college basketball with an array of thunderous dunks and soaring blocks, occasionally having to tilt his head to avoid hitting it on the backboard. He was selected unanimously by 64 voters as a first-team All-American. He averaged 22.1 points, 8.9 rebounds, 2.2 blocked shots and 1.8 steals per game while leaving everyone wonder-

ing what he would do next.

"He's got the most incredible first step," Michigan State coach Tom Izzo said. "That's why he's getting all those steals. He can take one dribble and cover more space than most human beings that I know can do. And so then he has the strength to finish at the end. So he's not Superman, but he's damn close."

Barrett arrived at Duke as the higher-rated recruit and while everyone fawned over his high-flying teammate, the athletic 6-7 guard had a superb season in Durham. Barrett led the Blue Devils with 22.9 points, grabbed 7.5 rebounds and dished 4.1 assists per game on a team that came a game short of the Final Four.

Williams was the SEC player of the year a season ago and may have been even better while winning the award this year.

The 6-7 junior averaged 19 points per game while shooting 57% and had 7.6 rebounds, 3.1 assists and led the Vols to the Sweet 16 for the first time in five years.

Morant was the most exciting player in college basketball not named Zion, lighting up highlight reels with emphatic dunks and no-look passes.

The 6-3 point guard may have turned himself into an NBA lottery pick his sophomore season, leading the nation with 10 assists per game and averaging 24.6 points to become Murray State's first first-team All-American.

"He's one of the most exceptional players that I've had a chance to watch play," Florida State coach Leonard Hamilton said. "He's kind of a throwback to guys who have the ability to score points. But also has the passion and the excitement about creating opportunities for his teammates."

Winston is not the most athletic player, even on his own team. He is heady, ultra tough and a big reason the Spartans are in the Final Four.

Second team: Rui Hachimura, Gonzaga, 6-8, 230, junior, Toyama, Japan, 20.1 rpg, 6.6 rpg, 60.9 fg pct, 1.0 steals (25, 207).

Jarrett Culver, Texas Tech, 6-6, 195, sophomore, Lubbock, Texas, 18.5 ppg, 6.3 rpg, 3.7 apg, 1.4 steals (15, 188).

Markus Howard, Marquette, 5-11, 175, junior, Chandler, Ariz., 24.8 ppg, 3.9 rpg, 4.0 apg, 40.6 3-pt fg pct, 3.5 3-pt fg/game, 88.7 ft pct, 1.1 steals (11, 186).

Ethan Happ, Wisconsin, 6-10, 237, senior, Milan, Ill., 17.5 ppg, 10.1 rpg, 4.6 apg, 53.1 fg pct, 1.3 blocks, 1.1 steals (6, 139).

Carsen Edwards, Purdue, 6-1, 200, junior, Atascocita, Texas, 23.0 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 3.0 apg, 84.3 ft pct, 3.3 3-pt fg/game, 1.4 steals (6, 133).

Irish, Bears make women's Final Four

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Jackie Young scored 25 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to lead defending national champion Notre Dame back to the Final Four with an 84-68 victory over Stanford on Monday night.

The top seed in the Chicago Region, Notre Dame (34-3) got some payback for tournament losses to the second-seeded Cardinal (31-5) in 2016 and 2017.

The Fighting Irish are headed to the Final Four for the ninth time and will face UConn in Tampa, Fla., on Friday in a

semifinal rematch from last year. They beat the Huskies and Mississippi State on last-second shots by Arike Ogunbowale to claim their second NCAA title.

Young scored seven points in an 11-2 run to end the third quarter that gave Notre Dame a six-point lead.

Ogunbowale finished with 21 points on 6-for-19 shooting, and the Irish pulled away in the second half for their 13th straight win after struggling to get their high-powered offense going.

Kiana Williams led Stanford with 20 points. Dijonai

Carrington scored 18. Alanna Smith added 14 points and eight rebounds. But instead of advancing to the Final Four for the 14th time, the Cardinal came up short.

Baylor 85, Iowa 53: At Greensboro, N.C., Lauren Cox had 22 points and 11 rebounds, and the Bears earned their first Final Four berth since 2012 by beating the Hawkeyes in the Greensboro Regional final.

Didi Richards added 16 points and 10 rebounds, Chloe Jackson had 14 points and Baylor (35-1) — the top overall seed — won its 27th straight game by shooting 53%, clamping

down on All-American Megan Gustafson and her supporting cast and holding the nation's best shooting team to a season-worst 32%.

Now it's on to Tampa for the school's fourth Final Four and its first in seven years — when the Bears won their second national championship.

The 6-foot-4 Cox — a third-team AP All-America pick — and fellow twin tower Kalani Brown, a 6-7 second-team All-American, teamed up to dominate both the glass and the heavily hyped matchup with Gustafson, the nation's leading scorer at 27.9 points per game.

MLB roundup

Yankees win, but lose Stanton, Andujar to injuries

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Giancarlo Stanton and Miguel Andujar had already joined the Yankees' long injured list when Aaron Judge sprinted into right-center field and made a spectacular, sprawling grab on Niko Goodrum's hard-hit liner to preserve a two-run lead in the eighth inning.

Judge snapped the webbing around the ball as his gloved left hand hit the turf and he slid on his chest, picking up grass stains on both knees before popping up and throwing the ball to second to make sure both runners could not advance.

"That's one of those dangerous plays for an outfielder," New York manager Aaron Boone said Monday night after Judge preserved a 3-1 win over the punchless Detroit Tigers. "It's hard for them to sometimes get underneath that ball to make the play and not hurt themselves. I felt like I saw it pretty well and I felt like I knew he was fine, but definitely one of those that you kind of hold your breath on."

Domingo German (1-0) pitched one-hit ball for five innings to overcome five walks on a chilly night and win for

the first time since last June. Gary Sanchez and Brett Gardner homered for the banged-up Yankees.

New York said before the game that Stanton strained his left biceps Sunday and Andujar tore his right labrum. Andujar will be treated conservatively for a few weeks but could require surgery if it does not respond.

They joined a group of sidelined Yankees that includes pitchers Luis Severino, Dellin Betances, Jordan Montgomery and Ben Heller, shortstop Didi Gregorius and outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury; pitcher CC Sabathia is set to be added to the injured list Wednesday, after he completes a suspension for hitting a batter with a pitch last September.

Orioles 6, Blue Jays 5: David Hess was pulled after 6¹/₃ hitless innings, but Baltimore's bullpen couldn't see the bid through in a win over host Toronto.

Hess struck out eight and walked one before being pulled after 82 pitches.

Athletics 7, Red Sox 0: Kris Davis hit his fifth home run in his team's first seven games, Ramon Laureano connected

and also saved a run with a perfect throw home from center field, and host Oakland scored its first five runs via homers to beat struggling Boston.

Mets 7, Marlins 3: Rookie slugger Pete Alonso hit his first major league homer, a three-run shot to cap a four-run ninth inning, and visiting New York overcame 16 strikeouts by its hitters to rally past Miami.

Mariners 6, Angels 3: Felix Hernandez (1-0) allowed one earned run and pitched into the sixth inning for his first victory since last June, and host Seattle beat Los Angeles.

Brewers 4, Reds 3: Christian Yelich failed to homer for the first game this season, ending his record-tying streak, but he doubled in the ninth and scored on Ryan Braun's double as visiting Milwaukee rallied for a victory before an announced crowd of 7,799, the smallest in Great American Ball Park history.

Astros 2, Rangers 1: Brad Peacock (1-0) allowed two hits while pitching into the seventh inning, Robinson Chirinos looped a go-ahead double in his first game against his former team and visiting Houston beat Texas.

Braves 8, Cubs 0: Brian McCann made the most of his Atlanta homecoming by hitting a two-run single in a four-run first inning, and his team took advantage of six Chicago errors.

Cardinals 6, Pirates 5 (11): Paul DeJong scored on a passed ball in the top of the 11th inning as St. Louis rallied to spoil Pittsburgh's home opener.

Giants 4, Dodgers 2: Brandon Belt hit a go-ahead, two-run double off Scott Alexander in the seventh inning, and visiting San Francisco rallied for a victory over rival Los Angeles.

Diamondbacks 10, Padres 3: Merrill Kelly (1-0) won his big league debut at age 30 by throwing six strong innings and benefiting from an offensive outburst started by Adam Jones' leadoff homer to lead visiting Arizona over San Diego.

Indians 5, White Sox 3: Roberto Perez drew a bases-loaded walk on four pitches from Dylan Covey (0-1) in the eighth inning as Cleveland rallied for a chilly win in its home opener.

Rays 7, Rockies 1: Brandon Lowe and Kevin Kiermaier homered to back a strong performance by host Tampa Bay's bullpen.

NHL roundup

Leafs edge Isles to clinch playoff berth

Associated Press

UNIONDALE, N.Y. — John Tavares scored against his former team and the Toronto Maple Leafs clinched a playoff berth with a 2-1 victory over the New York Islanders on Monday night.

Calle Rosen also had a goal for Toronto, which needed just one point to secure its post-season spot and won for the fourth time in 11 games (4-5-2). Frederik Andersen stopped 28 shots.

Tavares, held without a point while the Maple Leafs lost by a combined 10-1 margin in his first two games against the Islanders since leaving last summer to sign with his hometown team, broke through off a pass from Mitch Marner to make it 2-0 at 3:50 of the third period. Tavares added to his career best with his 46th goal and set a career high with his 87th point.

Jordan Eberle scored and Robin Lehner finished with 36

saves for the playoff-bound Islanders, who were playing their final regular-season home game.

New York squandered a chance to pull within a point of first-place Washington in the Metropolitan Division. Instead, the Islanders remained three points behind the Capitals and two ahead of third-place Pittsburgh.

Panthers 5, Capitals 3: Vincent Trocheck scored two goals, including his 100th in the NHL, and host Florida withstood a late surge to beat Washington.

The Capitals had their four-game winning streak snapped and missed a chance to clinch their fourth straight Metropolitan Division title.

Blues 3, Avalanche 2 (SO): Ryan O'Reilly scored the only goal in a shootout and host St. Louis slowed Colorado's playoff push.

Trying to hold onto the final postseason spot in the Western Conference, the Avalanche earned one point to move two

ahead of Arizona for the second wild card in the West. Both teams have three games remaining.

Colorado is three points behind Dallas for the top wild card. By getting to 86 points, the Avalanche eliminated Edmonton from playoff contention.

Jets 4, Blackhawks 3 (OT): Kevin Hayes scored at 3:38 of overtime and visiting Winnipeg beat Chicago to snap a three-game slide and move into sole possession of first place in the Central Division.

The playoff-bound Jets improved to 96 points, two ahead of St. Louis and Nashville atop the crowded division race.

Lightning 5, Senators 2: Yanni Gourde had two goals and an assist, and visiting Tampa Bay became the third team in NHL history to win 60 games in a season with a victory over Ottawa.

The other teams to win at least 60 regular-season games were the 1976-77 Montreal Canadiens (60-8-12) and the

1995-96 Detroit Red Wings (62-13-7).

Flames 7, Kings 2: Derek Ryan scored twice and Mark Jankowski had a goal and two assists as playoff-bound Calgary defeated host Los Angeles.

The night before, Calgary clinched the Pacific Division title and the top seed in the Western Conference playoffs with a 5-3 win at San Jose.

Golden Knights 3, Oilers 1: Jonathan Marchessault scored his sixth game-winning goal and host Vegas topped Edmonton.

With third place in the Pacific Division and a first-round playoff date with San Jose already locked up, Vegas ended a five-game losing streak.

Devils 4, Rangers 2: Defenseman Connor Carrick scored with 4:10 left to break a tie and host New Jersey defeated New York to avoid being swept in the season series by its longtime rival.

NBA roundup

Antetokounmpo returns as Bucks pull away from Nets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Giannis Antetokounmpo had 28 points and 11 rebounds in his return to the lineup, Eric Bledsoe added 29 points and the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Brooklyn Nets 131-121 on Monday night.

Reserve guard George Hill chipped in 22 points while Brook Lopez and Sterling Brown each scored 14 for the Bucks, who played without All-Star forward Khris Middleton because of soreness in his left groin.

Milwaukee was unable to clinch the best record in the Eastern Conference because Toronto won earlier Monday.

D'Angelo Russell had 28 points and 10 rebounds for the

Nets, who remained seventh in the East.

Celtics 110, Heat 105: Kyrie Irving had 25 points, including a pair of key late free throws, and host Boston held off Miami.

Miami (38-39) maintained its half-game lead over Orlando for the final playoff spot in the East after the Magic's loss to Toronto.

Raptors 121, Magic 109: Danny Green scored a season-high 29 points, Kawhi Leonard and Serge Ibaka each had 15 and host Toronto clinched its sixth Atlantic Division title by beating Orlando.

The win also means Toronto can finish no lower than second in the Eastern Conference.

Pacers 111, Pistons 102: Thaddeus Young scored 19 points and Domantas Sabonis added 18 points and 12 rebounds to help host Indiana snap a three-game losing streak with a victory over Detroit.

Detroit is in the No. 6 spot with a 1½-game lead over Orlando for the final playoff spot in the East.

Jazz 111, Hornets 102: Donovan Mitchell scored 23 points, Rudy Gobert had 18 points and 18 rebounds, and surging Utah overcame Kemba Walker's 47 points to beat visiting Charlotte.

Trail Blazers 132, Timberwolves 122: Evan Turner had 13 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists off the bench, and visit-

ing Portland moved into a tie for third place in the Western Conference with a victory over Minnesota.

Suns 122, Cavaliers 113: Devin Booker scored 25 points after two 50-point games and a 48-point night over the past three, and that was enough to lead host Phoenix over Cleveland.

Mavericks 122, 76ers 102: Justin Jackson scored 16 of his 24 points in the third quarter and host Dallas took advantage of a short-handed Philadelphia.

Knicks 113, Bulls 105: Luke Kornet scored a career-high 24 points and host New York snapped a six-game losing streak.