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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

USAF fitness test aims for neutrality

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The Air Force is exploring a fitness assessment that would plug in a value for an airman's 1.5-mile run time into an equation that would include waist and height measurements.

The result: a fitness-fatness index that could be gender neutral.

Last month, Neal Baumgartner, chief of the Air Force Exercise Science Unit, briefed the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service about the idea, which would measure airmen's aerobic fitness against their body composition.

Nothing, however, is official, and the concept is still in the research stage, Baumgartner said in a follow-up interview with Stars and Stripes.

"We care most about consistent, positive fitness behavior, consistent physical activity," he said. "That's what we're driving towards. The test is very important, but training is more important."

Breaking down the potential new formula, Baumgartner said an airman's run time would yield a number representing VO₂ max, or maximal oxygen uptake. That figure would be divided by his or her waist-to-height ratio for a total fitness score.

"When I put all those together in the equa-

tion — now I'm looking at maybe gender neutrality," he said.

It's not known yet how strength would be assessed alongside that formula, Baumgartner said. "We're trying to think 'are there better ways to do that ... or are there better ways to do pushups and situps?'"

The Army plans to adopt a new gender- and age-neutral fitness test for all soldiers by October 2020.

The Army Combat Fitness Test has six components: standing power throw; strength deadlift; leg tuck; 2-mile run; sprint-drag-carry event; and hand-release pushups. Certain occupational specialties in the Army, such as infantrymen or cannon crew members, may be required to achieve higher test scores or higher standards, officials have said.

The Air Force in June will roll out its first career-specific, Tier 2 fitness standards for air liaison officers and tactical air controllers.

A team from Baumgartner's unit will be at Ramstein next month to train explosive ordnance disposal noncommissioned officers from Air Force bases across Europe in the new EOD fitness assessment in the works.

Tier 2 fitness standards are gender neutral, Baumgartner said.

Most airmen, however, fall under Tier 1 fitness standards, in which health is the ul-

timate goal.

The current test — introduced in 2004 — is adequate, Baumgartner said. It scores airmen according to gender and age on the 1.5-mile run, timed pushups and situps, and waist measurement.

The concept being studied takes "the latest and best science to address the ... inextricable relationship between aerobic fitness and the location of fat in the body," Baumgartner said.

The most "dangerous" fat in the body is visceral fat, located in the trunk region. It's associated with various disease states that progress more rapidly the more abdominal fat one has, he said.

"I could have an airman who has 24% body fat and another airman of very similar age ... with 20% body fat," Baumgartner said. If the airman with less overall body fat carries more fat in the gut, however, "he's at a higher health risk."

Airmen don't have to be superb athletes to do well on an assessment measuring aerobic fitness against body composition.

"I can tell you that just getting off the couch, just getting out from behind your desk and doing something on a routine basis" is enough, he said. "We're not asking for fast running times ... just get out and move and you're going to be able to meet the minimum requirement."

S. Korea ratifies cost-sharing accord with US

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The South Korean parliament overwhelmingly voted to ratify a \$915 million military cost-sharing deal with the United States on Friday, clearing the final hurdle more than three months after the previous pact expired.

The so-called Special Measures Agreement calls for an 8.2% increase in the amount South Korea pays to offset the expense of stationing some 28,500 U.S. troops on the divided peninsula. The agreement

was to retroactively take effect from Jan. 1 and will remain in force until Dec. 31.

The new contract will last only one year as part of a compromise reached last month after the longtime allies failed to meet a Dec. 31 deadline when the previous, five-year version expired.

Talks stalled over U.S. demands that Seoul pay significantly more for its own defense. President Donald Trump's administration reportedly insisted that South Korea and other allies pay the full cost of hosting American troops plus a

50% bonus.

The demand almost derailed talks with the South when Trump overruled his negotiators with a note to national security adviser John Bolton saying, "We want cost plus 50," Bloomberg reported last month.

The new agreement, which was signed by both sides, calls for South Korea to pay 1.04 trillion won (\$915 million) this year, up from 960 billion won (\$844 million) last year.

South Korea's National Assembly approved the measure 139 to 33, with 22 abstaining

on Friday. The U.S. does not require congressional approval.

Seoul and Washington notified each other that requisite domestic procedures had been completed, according to the South Korean Foreign Ministry.

"This move is expected to provide conditions for the stable stationing of American troops here and to greatly contribute to strengthening the alliance and building trust between the two countries," it said in a statement.

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this report.

US pulls troops from Libya as violence rises

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — The U.S. military has withdrawn its troops from Libya as a local military commander's forces advanced on the capital for a showdown with militias holding the city.

"Due to increased unrest in Libya, a contingent of U.S. forces supporting U.S. Africa Command temporarily relocated in response to security conditions on the ground," AFRICOM said in a statement.

"We will continue to monitor conditions on the ground and assess the feasibility for renewed U.S. military presence, as appropriate," said Nate Herring, an AFRICOM spokesman.

AFRICOM's concern over the "evolving security situation" comes amid an offensive by the renegade general, Khalifa Hifter, whose forces are making an attack on Libya's capital of Tripoli. Various media reports say Hifter's troops have made inroads and seized control of Tripoli International Airport.

"The security realities on the ground in Libya are growing increasingly complex and unpredictable," said U.S. Marine Corps Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, commander, U.S. Africa Command. "Even with an adjustment of the force, we will continue to remain agile in support of existing U.S. strategy."

The Associated Press reported fighting was underway Sun-

day at the international airport, some 15 miles from central Tripoli, after Hifter claimed to have seized the area.

The rival militias, which are affiliated with a U.N.-backed government in Tripoli, said they had carried out airstrikes, slowing Hifter's advance.

Armed groups behind the U.N.-backed government of national accord, or GNA, have announced an effort to defend Tripoli, vowing to recapture all areas seized by Hifter's forces.

Col. Mohamed Gnounou, a spokesman for GNA forces, said in televised comments Sunday that the counteroffensive, dubbed "Volcano of Anger," was aimed at "purging all Libyan cities of aggressor and illegitimate forces," the AP

reported.

The two sides reported that at least 35 people, including civilians, had been killed since Thursday.

The Health Ministry of the Tripoli-based government said in a statement that at least 21 people, including a physician, were killed and at least 27 wounded. Ahmed al-Mesmari, a spokesman for Hifter's forces, said Saturday that 14 troops had been killed since the offensive began.

The fighting has displaced hundreds of people, the U.N. migration agency said. The U.N. mission to Libya called for a two-hour cease-fire on Sunday in parts of Tripoli to evacuate civilians and the wounded.

Joint task force has evolving role in Central America

By WYATT W. OLSON
Stars and Stripes

SOTO CANO AIR BASE, Honduras — For the frequently rotating cadre of U.S. soldiers and airmen with Joint Task Force-Bravo in Honduras, success can be a tricky thing to measure.

Their assignments last six months to a year, with some as short as 90 days — little chance to see the fruit of one's labor.

But Lt. Col. Patrick Blankenship, commander of the task force's Army Forces, had an aha! moment late last year when the unit's medical element was on a mission in northern Honduras, which 20 years earlier had been devastated by Hurricane Mitch.

Mitch killed more than 11,000 people when it hit Central America in October 1998. Honduras took the brunt of the storm, with more than 7,000 killed, mostly due to flooding.

During last year's mission to the region hit hardest, a local television reporter told Blankenship of his experience in the 1998 storm, when he was just 14 years old.

The boy had stood with his mother on a building rooftop in the town of Saba, surrounded by water with only the tops of banana trees poking above the surface.

"He remembered seeing endless streams of helicopters from JTF-Bravo picking people up off their rooftops," Blankenship said. "He wanted to say thanks for that."

"That was one of those moments like, 'Yes! This is great.' You don't get that all of the time, but people here have a deep-seated memory of the good things they've experienced from the United States and JTF-Bravo, specifically."

As the U.S. Defense Department's longest-standing joint task force, Bravo has been the face of America's military presence in Central America since it was established in 1983.

For the past two decades, the task force has focused on enhancing security and stability in Central America, particularly by providing disaster assistance to a region whose major exports are coffee, cacao and bananas. It conducts that

mission with a relatively small number of people. Roughly 1,200 Americans — almost 600 of whom are servicemembers — work out of Soto Cano Air Base, which also houses the Honduran Air Force Academy.

JTF-Bravo's 612th Air Base Squadron oversees America's sole military airfield in Central America, the only one in the region capable of handling the Air Force's largest plane, the C-5 Galaxy.

The 228th Aviation Regiment operates a fleet of helicopters used for medical evacuations, counternarcotics missions, search and rescue and disaster relief throughout Central America. The regiment shuttles Army Special Forces teams throughout the region on numerous joint training and counternarcotics missions.

The medical element, staffed by rotating deployments of Army Reservists, is the only expeditionary medical unit capable of performing surgery in Central and South America.

U.S. military involvement in Central America, however, has morphed over the past four

decades.

In the 1980s, efforts were focused on rolling back Soviet Union-backed communist influence — a goal that at times led to America supporting militaries of harsh regimes.

Under President Ronald Reagan's administration, right-wing Nicaraguan Contra rebels were trained in Honduras to overthrow the socialist Sandinista government in nearby Nicaragua. By 1987, more than 1,000 personnel were assigned to JTF-Bravo.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Bravo's emphasis shifted to countering the flow of illegal narcotics and providing humanitarian assistance, and it has responded to numerous regional disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions and flooding.

Under President Donald Trump, the State Department's updated strategy for engagement in Central America is "addressing the security, governance and economic drivers of illegal immigration and illicit trafficking."

Suspicion high as AG Barr redacts report

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The escalating political battle over special counsel Robert Mueller's report centers on redactions — a lawyerly editing process that has angered distrustful Democrats eager to see all the evidence and conclusions from his 22-month investigation of President Donald Trump's conduct and Russia's elaborate interference operation during the 2016 election.

Attorney General William Barr is redacting at least four categories of information from the report, which spans nearly 400 pages, before issuing it to Congress and the public. Legal

experts say he has wide discretion to determine what should not be revealed, meaning the fight over blacked-out boxes is likely to spawn months of fights between Congress and the Justice Department, and it may end up in the courts.

The first public confrontation is imminent, with Barr scheduled to appear Tuesday and Wednesday before the House and Senate Appropriations committees for hearings ostensibly about the Justice Department's budget.

He is expected to face extensive questioning about the Mueller report and his ongoing redaction process, though, and his testimony will be scruti-

nized for any sign he is trying to protect the president.

"There's a lot of pressure all pointing in the direction of doing a robust release, said John Bies, who held senior roles in the Justice Department during the Obama administration and now works at American Oversight, a liberal watchdog group.

"We are very hopeful the attorney general will do the right thing here and make everything public that can lawfully be made public," he said.

Barr has promised to release the redacted report by mid-April, having announced in late March that Mueller did not find a conspiracy between Russians

and Trump or his campaign and that Mueller decided not to reach a conclusion about whether Trump obstructed justice. The attorney general and his deputy, Rod Rosenstein, looked at the obstruction evidence and determined it did not rise to the level of a crime, Barr wrote.

The president's critics questioned whether Barr softened Mueller's findings, concerns that intensified after recent reports indicating some on Mueller's team are unhappy with the brevity of Barr's initial report to Congress and believe more could and should be said about the seriousness of what they found.

Chief of staff says Dems will never see Trump's tax returns

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats will "never" see President Donald Trump's tax returns, White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney said Sunday as a new front opened in the confrontation between the administration and Congress.

Mulvaney accused Democrats of engaging in a "political stunt" and wanting "attention" after the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Richard Neal, asked the IRS to provide six years of Trump's personal tax returns and the returns for some of his businesses.

"That is not going to happen and they know it," Mulvaney told "Fox News Sunday." Asked whether he believes Democrats would ever view the president's returns, Mulvaney replied: "Oh no, never. Nor should they."

Last week, Massachusetts Democrat Neal, one of only three congressional officials authorized to request tax returns, requested Trump's personal and business returns in a letter to IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig. He asked for returns covering 2013 through 2018. He also asked for the doc-

uments in seven days, setting an April 10 deadline.

An obscure 1924 statute includes no exceptions to Neal's authority to ask the Treasury Department for returns and says the department "shall furnish" them when requested. It does require that the review of an individual's return be conducted by members of Congress in "closed executive session" if the returns are provided without the taxpayer's consent.

Still, Mulvaney claimed the law provides for lawmakers to review individual tax returns but "political hit job is not one of those reasons." His comments echoed those made by Trump's lawyers who argued the Democratic request "would set a dangerous precedent" if granted.

Trump broke with precedent when he chose not to release any tax returns as a presidential candidate. Mulvaney tried to cast the issue of the president's taxes as old news, saying it was "already litigated during the election" and the American people "elected him anyway."

Trump has said he won't release the information because he is under audit.

Senate GOP plans to focus on nominees, not legislation

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., says the Senate will be in the "personnel business" this year. But the majority leader's focus on confirming President Donald Trump's nominees is coming at the expense of any big legislative priorities.

Nearly 100 days into the new Congress, the drive to confirm is adding more conservatives to the courts and putting more Trump appointees in government offices. But Trump's promises to replace the Affordable Care Act, invest in infrastructure or cut middle-class taxes have been essentially shelved.

The result is that the GOP-controlled Senate is on a very different path heading into the 2020 election than is the House, where the Democratic majority is churning out a long list of bills on ethics, gun violence and other topics that, while unlikely to become law, show voters their priorities.

Sara Binder, an expert on Congress at George Washington University, said there doesn't seem to be much room in the Senate "to set out a policy

agenda and make some progress toward it." She added: "It does leave on the table quite a number of issues that don't get any progress."

Underlying his strategy, McConnell engineered a rules change last week to speed the confirmation process, pushing past Democrats' stalling of Trump's picks for administration jobs and district courts.

"Look, we know you don't like Donald Trump, but there was an election," McConnell argued on the Senate floor to the Democrats, saying the president "is at least entitled to set up the administration and make it function."

Democratic senators see a much more deliberative strategy. Rather than try to work with Democrats — and Trump — to pass bills that can be turned into law, they say McConnell is simply blocking bills from the House while spending his time packing the courts with conservative judges as part of a broader legacy of reshaping the judiciary.

Already, McConnell spent the first two years of the administration confirming a record 30 circuit court nominees.

Lawyers say moving plutonium contradicts Nevada risk claim

Associated Press

RENO, Nev. — Nevada's demand for the U.S. government to remove weapons-grade plutonium that was secretly trucked to a site north of Las Vegas last year contradicts its claim that moving radioactive material is dangerous, according to lawyers for South Carolina, where the shipment originated.

South Carolina and the U.S. Energy Departments last week filed their first response to Nevada's legal challenge in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Nevada appealed after a federal judge in Reno refused to temporarily ban any more shipments to the state, and it added a request to remove the plutonium already there.

The Trump administration has promised no more plutonium will be transported to Nevada from the Savannah River Site in South Carolina

or any other nuclear facility. But government attorneys say the courts have no legal power to undo the shipment that's already been made.

South Carolina says moving the plutonium from the Nevada National Security Site would "repeat the risks of effects that Nevada claimed in district court would cause it irreparable harm."

"The public's interest does not favor unnecessary shipments of defense plutonium over the nation's highways," South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson wrote in a brief filed April 1.

He argued that the plutonium is stored safely at the Nevada National Security Site and should stay there until the federal government is ready to move it to its final home in New Mexico.

The filing did not reference

a March 13 warning from an independent government advisory board about "significant" earthquake dangers at the site's facility where officials say the plutonium is stored, 60 miles from Las Vegas.

The board said the facility is operating with "unknown risk," which a 2007 hazards study revealed.

The shipment of 1,102 pounds of plutonium — which was kept secret until January — was part of the government's effort to comply with an earlier court order to remove at least 2,204 pounds of the material from the Savannah River Site by Jan. 1, 2020.

The Energy Department unsuccessfully appealed the December 2016 order, arguing that removing the plutonium by the deadline was "simply impossible" if it also complied with environmental laws.

Rwanda's genocide remembered

Associated Press

KIGALI, Rwanda — Rwanda on Sunday somberly commemorated the start 25 years ago of its genocide in which some 800,000 people were killed, as the country continues to grapple with the lasting consequences of the mass killings.

President Paul Kagame and first lady Jeannette Kagame laid wreaths and lit a flame at the mass burial ground of 250,000 victims at the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center in the capital, Kigali.

Those attending the ceremonies included the leaders of Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Djibouti, Niger, Belgium, Canada and Ethiopia as well as the African Union and the European Union.

A procession was planned through the capital to Kigali's National Stadium, where as many as 30,000 were expected to participate in an evening candlelight ceremony.

"Twenty-five years ago, Rwanda fell into a deep ditch due to bad leadership. Today, we are a country of hope and a nation elevated," Agnes Ntamamba, 25, a teacher who was born during the genocide, told The Associated Press in Kigali.

"Today, the government has united all Rwandans as one people with the same culture and history and is speeding up economic transformation," said Oliver Nduhungihere, Rwanda's state foreign affairs minister.

The mass killing of Rwanda's Tutsi minority was ignited on April 6, 1994, when a plane carrying President Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down and crashed in Kigali, killing the leader who, like the majority of Rwandans, was an ethnic Hutu.

The Tutsi minority was blamed for downing the plane, and bands of Hutu extremists began slaughtering the Tutsis, with support from the army, police and militias.

Survivors of Hurricane Michael feel neglected

The Washington Post

MEXICO BEACH, Fla. — The towering debris piles that lined Highway 98 are gone now, six months after the 16-foot storm surge from Hurricane Michael pulverized this town. But smaller berms of waste remain: concrete blocks, rebar, pipes and planks, mounded like artificial dunes on the side of the road.

The landscape is still scraped to bare sand and dirt, denuded of trees and plants. The few longtime residents who remain talk about losing their way because they have no landmarks. The occasional tourist passes through, astonished by the lingering destruction from the storm, which made landfall on Oct. 10 with wind speeds of up to 155 mph.

"You kind of want to believe it's all OK now," said Priscilla Moore, 51, of Powder Springs, Ga., who has vacationed here for 47 years. "But oh, my

goodness, it's gone; it's just all gone."

The stretch of the Florida Panhandle east of Panama City is known as the Forgotten Coast because it's so rural and undeveloped — a remnant of a wild, pre-Disney, pre-air-conditioned Florida. That moniker has become more searing in the aftermath of the fourth-strongest hurricane, as measured by wind speed, to hit the mainland U.S.

Government agencies have cleared the roads and utilities have restored power, water and communications, but thousands of people are still desperate for permanent housing, competing not only with one another for the scarce supply of rental units but with construction workers who have come into the area.

Many residents are living in damaged homes or trailers unfit for human habitation. Some live in tents. Homeowners are frustrated by stingy insurance companies and

bewildering government paperwork, and they're wary of shady contractors.

The American Red Cross calculated that designated donations for Hurricane Michael victims totaled \$35 million through the end of March.

Michael caused 49 deaths and more than \$5.5 billion in damage. Work crews have removed 31 million cubic yards of debris in Florida left by Hurricane Michael, according to T.J. Dargan, deputy federal coordinating officer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hurricane Michael response and recovery effort.

FEMA said it has poured \$1.1 billion into Florida in Michael-related response and recovery efforts.

But Congress has failed to pass a major disaster-relief supplemental funding bill to pay for long-term recovery from Michael and other disasters across the country.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Most trash in beach cleanup was plastic

NJ SANDY HOOK — Volunteers cleaning up New Jersey beaches last year found everything but the kitchen sink. Oh, wait, they found one of those, too.

Nearly 82% of the trash removed during Clean Ocean Action's beach sweeps last spring and fall was plastic. The number of condoms and baby diapers found rose from a year earlier. But the number of cigarette butts picked up was down by nearly a quarter.

More than 10,000 volunteers plucked 454,365 pieces of debris from the ocean coast, bay shores and the banks of rivers, lakes and streams as part of the annual survey by the coastal environmental group that tallies the garbage left behind on the state's beaches.

Harbor sees large influx of jellyfish

CA OXNARD — Visitors to Southern California's Channel Islands Harbor have been treated to the sight of large numbers of jellyfish.

The moon jellies are common along the California coast but are usually found in the small-craft harbor in Oxnard.

UC Santa Barbara research biologist Milton Love told the Ventura (Calif.) County Star that moon jellies are carried by currents, and when they appear, there are usually hundreds of thousands of the creatures.

Judge: Animal shelter to keep seized tiger

TX HOUSTON — A judge ruled that an animal shelter can keep a tiger that was rescued from an abandoned Houston home.

The Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch in Murchison has looked after the tiger since February, when some people entered the house to smoke marijuana and found the big cat. Authorities said the 350-pound tiger was improperly secured in a small cage, and was sitting on hay and its own waste.

Houston police believe Britany Garza is the tiger's owner and have filed a civil lawsuit accusing her of animal cruelty.

Old dog tags found hidden behind wall

AR FORT SMITH — A developer who was renovating a building on a former U.S. Army base in Arkansas made a surprising discovery when he knocked down a wall and found a stash of empty Pabst Blue Ribbon cans and three dog tags belonging to servicemembers.

Developer Lloyd Sumpter said he found one of the tag's owners, Ollie Shields, and mailed them to his home in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Fort Smith television station KFSS reported that Shields trained from 1953 to 1954 at Fort Chaffee, about 110 miles northwest of Little Rock.

4 men face charges of vandalizing shrine

IN ST. JOHN — Four men are facing charges in connection with vandalism that caused \$80,000 in damage to a religious shrine in northwestern Indiana that depicts Jesus' final days.

St. John Police said arrest warrants were issued Thursday for the men, who allegedly vandalized 20 granite lights and speaker posts at the Shrine of Christ's Passion on Christmas Eve.

Firefighters rescue injured crane operator

OH CINCINNATI—Firefighters in Cincinnati rescued a crane operator after his arm was partially severed in an accident nearly 300 feet in the air.

A fire official said the crane operator called 911 after a cable sliced underneath his arm Friday, causing the partial amputation. Rescue crews used a basket to lower the worker.

Authorities said the man lost a lot of blood but was conscious when he was brought down.

The accident happened at a construction site at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

California condors could reach Oregon

OR MEDFORD — A plan to reintroduce the California condor to the Redwood National Forest could mean the giant raptors will eventually repopulate Oregon's Rogue Valley as well.

The Mail Tribune in Medford reported Friday that Northern California's Yurok Tribe, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a detailed plan for the reintroduction in a recent environmental impact report. The last condor sighting in Oregon was near Drain in 1904.

The Oregon Zoo in Portland would hatch the condor chicks and they could be in the air over the Klamath River next year.

Man finds stranger sleeping in his kitchen

PA ALTOONA — Police said a Pennsylvania man awoke to find a stranger sleeping on his kitchen floor surrounded by torn-up sani-

tary napkins.

Altoona police said they arrested Brian Smith, 60, Thursday.

The homeowner told police it also appeared someone had eaten some of his Krave cereal.

Police said Smith told them he had used methamphetamine within the previous two days, and was unable to explain how or why he entered the house.

He's been charged with burglary and trespass.

Man freed on bond arrested in parking lot

FL PORT ST. LUCIE — A Florida man was rearrested within minutes after he was released from jail for burglarizing cars in the jail's parking lot.

The St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office said Casey Lewis, 37, bonded out of jail Thursday, only to be caught by deputies burglarizing several cars outside the jail.

Lewis was booked on burglary charges and released a second time that day on bond.

Treasure Coast Newspapers reported Lewis originally was brought to the jail on a grand theft charge.

\$1K reward offered in slashing of tires

IL CHICAGO — Somebody has slashed hundreds of vehicle tires in recent months across Chicago and now a reward is being offered in the hopes of finding out who it is.

The Chicago Sun-Times reported that Cook County Crime Stoppers is offering a cash reward of \$1,000 to anyone with information on the crimes. Those with information are asked to call the hotline at 800-535-7867.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

UVA, Texas Tech grind into title game

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Slap the floor, bend those knees and get both hands up.

This national championship game is going to be a clinic on defense.

Virginia and Texas Tech are the last two teams alive in the NCAA Tournament, and they're here because they barely let their opponents breathe with the ball.

Two of the three best defenses in the nation will meet for the title on Monday night, the first appearance in the final for each program. So after surviving a low-scoring semifinal on Saturday, here come the Cavaliers and the Red Raiders for another clash of the paint packers and ball hawkers.

Virginia stunned Auburn 63-62, when Kyle Guy sank three free throws with 0.6 seconds left after a late foul call. Then Texas Tech grinded past Michigan State 61-51, buoyed by 22 points from Matt Mooney and bolstered by coach Chris Beard's smothering defensive approach.

"I have a lot of respect for Virginia," Beard said. "I watch them on TV all the time, and we study the things they do defensively."

The Red Raiders are now Ph.D. level defenders, too.

No matter the number of shots made, the trophy will be lifted and the confetti will be dropped either way at U.S. Bank Stadium, where 72,711 fans packed the 3-year-old football facility for the semifinal games. The last time the national title was awarded in Minneapolis was in 2001, when Duke beat Arizona at the Metrodome.

"Hopefully we won't have to have a close game like that on Monday, but if we do, we

have experienced it and I feel like we're going to be ready," Virginia's De'Andre Hunter said.

The last big-time sporting event held in this building was the Super Bowl just 14 months ago when the Philadelphia Eagles beat the New England Patriots 41-33 in the second-highest-scoring NFL title game in league history.

The chance of Virginia and Texas Tech establishing a similar feat will be slim at best, considering the record for combined points in an NCAA championship game is 182, when Kentucky beat Duke 94-88 in 1978. The Cavaliers (55.5) and Red Raiders (58.8) enter the championship ranked first and third, respectively, in the country in average points allowed per game.

To no surprise, gamblers seized on the under.

The projected scoring total for this NCAA final opened at 121 and bettors quickly drove it down to 117½ within an hour. Virginia opened as a 2-point favorite, and early action tightened the spread to 1 over Texas Tech.

"We just want to continue to be the underdog," Red Raiders backup guard Brandone Francis said.

Virginia has been a fixture in the top 10 of basketball data expert Ken Pomeroy's defensive efficiency rankings since the team's breakout 2014 season under coach Tony Bennett. The Cavaliers entered the weekend fifth nationally with 88.7 points per 100 possessions, a metric factoring out their slower offensive pace and offering a sharper measure of performance than scoring averages depressed by low-possession games.

sion games.

Texas Tech has made a rapid rise in three seasons under Beard, entering the Final Four with the best defensive efficiency rating (84.0) ever recorded in the KenPom ratings that date back to the 2002 season.

Virginia, the No. 1 seed from the South Region, gives the Atlantic Coast Conference a representative in the championship game for the fourth time in five years.

Even with this six-year run as one of the best teams in the country, the Cavaliers don't have that Duke-North Carolina cachet. They're best remembered for losing to UMBC last season, the only No. 1 seed to ever be beaten by a No. 16 seed. They're also the program guilty of one of the biggest regular season upsets in history, when the Cavs lost to tiny Chaminade in 1982 as the No. 1 team in the Associated Press poll with all-time great Ralph Sampson in the paint.

Bennett beamed next to guards Kyle Guy and Ty Jerome at the podium afterward, recalling the pain of one year ago.

"Now to sit with them here brings great joy to my heart, it really does, because it's good. That's all I can say, and I'm so thankful," Bennett said.

Texas Tech, the No. 3 seed in the West Region, has even less of a hoops history.

"Why not us? We've got good players. We've got a great university. We play in arguably the best league in the country," Beard said, making the argument that, of course, coaches from three or four other conferences would. "We won the Big 12 regular season title. We're a good team."

Virginia stuns Auburn on Guy's 3 free throws

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Hard to call Virginia basketball boring after the last two games. And the Cavaliers have pretty much put the choker label to rest, too.

From one-and-done to NCAA Tournament miracle men, Virginia will play for the national title for the first time after pulling off another last-second stunner.

Kyle Guy made three free throws with 0.6 seconds left, steadily swishing each one as

debate immediately started over the sequence that sent him to the line, and Virginia beat Auburn 63-62 Saturday in the Final Four.

A year after becoming the first No. 1 seed to lose to a No. 16, these top-seeded Cavaliers now look like destiny's team.

"It's a great story," Virginia coach Tony Bennett said. "It is."

The Cavaliers (34-3) will face Texas Tech on Monday night as the slight favorite to win the tournament.

Mooney, Texas Tech get by Michigan State

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — For those who thought Texas Tech only plays defense, it's time to meet Matt Mooney.

While the Red Raiders were locking down Michigan State on one end, the graduate transfer shooting guard was raining in threes on the other, lifting Tech one win away from a title Saturday night with a 61-51 victory over the Spartans in the Final Four.

Mooney matched his season-high with 22 points, including

three three-pointers over the span of 3 minutes to give Texas Tech a 13-point lead midway through the second half.

Now the Red Raiders are getting ready for another defensive battle, in a Monday final against Virginia, and its vaunted pack line defense.

Michigan State (32-7) leaves coach Tom Izzo's eighth Final Four with its seventh loss — the 2000 title is still the only time the Spartans have taken it all the way under their veteran coach.

MLB roundup

Diamondbacks drop Red Sox to 2-8

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Carson Kelly drilled a single into the left field corner, scoring Nick Ahmed with two outs in the ninth inning to lift the Arizona Diamondbacks over the struggling Boston Red Sox 5-4 Saturday night.

Boston has dropped three straight and fell to 2-8 overall, a lousy start to their World Series championship defense.

Colten Brewer (0-1) allowed consecutive singles to Eduardo Escobar, Ahmed and Kelly in the ninth. Right fielder Mookie Betts threw out Escobar at home on Ahmed's hit, but Kelly's rip to left allowed Ahmed to score easily.

Kelly had two hits and three RBIs. The walkoff knock was the first of his career.

Greg Holland (1-0) pitched a scoreless top of the ninth.

Padres 6, Cardinals 4: Austin Hedges and Manny Machado each hit a two-run homer off Andrew Miller in the eighth inning, helping visiting San Diego defeat St. Louis for its third consecutive win.

Fernando Tatis Jr. opened the eighth with a walk and Hedges followed with a go-ahead drive over the wall on in left. With two out and Ian Kinsler on first via another walk, Machado made it 6-3 with his second homer of the season.

Angels 5, Rangers 1: Mike Trout hit a grand slam for his fourth homer in three days, and host Los Angeles beat Texas for its first back-to-back victories of the season.

Trout's 458-foot blast in the fourth inning off Drew Smyly (0-1) cleared the bullpens beyond the left field fence at Angel Stadium. After homering in the Halos' home opener Thursday and adding two more Friday, Trout delivered the biggest blow yet with his fifth career grand slam, his first since 2015.

Albert Pujols added his 634th career homer in the seventh for Los Angeles. Pujols' first

homer of his 19th big league season was his 3,089th career hit, tying Ichiro Suzuki for 22nd place in major league history.

Tyler Skaggs (1-1) pitched 6¹/₃ innings of five-hit ball in a strong outing for the Angels. The left-hander won his third consecutive start against Texas, giving up just two earned runs in 17¹/₃innings.

Cubs 14, Brewers 8: Jason Heyward went deep twice for his first multihomer game with Chicago, Cole Hamels grinded through six solid innings and the Cubs ended a six-game skid with a win at Milwaukee.

Heyward hit the first of three Chicago homers against starter Corbin Burnes (0-1), with Javier Baez and Victor Caratini also going yard. Heyward added his second shot off Alex Wilson during a seven-run eighth inning. His last multihomer game was on Aug. 16, 2015 for St. Louis against Miami, a season before he signed a \$184 million, eight-year contract with Chicago.

Dodgers 7, Rockies 2: Alex Verdugo homered and added an RBI triple as Los Angeles kept up its early power surge in a win at Colorado.

The Dodgers have gone deep in all nine games this season, piling up 22 home runs. Los Angeles had four through nine games last year when the team set a franchise record with 235.

Mets 6, Nationals 5: Rookie Pete Alonso and Robinson Cano opened the eighth with consecutive homers, helping host New York rally for the win.

Keon Broxton put the Mets ahead to stay with a two-out RBI single off Tony Sipp (0-1). Unlikely cleanup man J.D. Davis went deep twice and Michael Conforto also connected as New York improved to 6-2.

Anthony Rendon hit a leadoff homer and Wilmer Difo added a two-run shot in the top of the eighth, putting Washington ahead 5-3. Both drives came off Jeurys Familia (2-0) — never before had he given up two home runs in a game.

Astros 6, Athletics 0: Michael Brantley broke out of a slump with two hits, including a two-run homer, and George Springer added a two-run shot of his own to power host Houston over Oakland.

The Astros were up 1-0 with nobody out in the fifth when Springer launched a 90 mph fastball from Aaron Brooks (1-1) into the left field seats.

Yankees 6, Orioles 4: Aaron Judge homered twice, Clint Frazier hit a three-run shot in the eighth inning and New York won at Baltimore for its first series win of the season.

Judge hit a solo drive in the first inning and connected with a runner on in the third, his first two homers of the year. The 6-foot-7 slugger had 52 in 2017 and 27 last season.

Indians 7, Blue Jays 2: Carlos Carrasco became the first Cleveland pitcher since at least 1908 to strike out 12 over five innings.

Carrasco (1-1) was overpowering a week after struggling in his first start of the season. The right-hander completed his 23rd double-figure strikeout game, holding visiting Toronto scoreless until the fifth.

Freddy Galvis hit a one-out homer and Randal Grichuk had an RBI double with two away. With the tying run at the plate, Carrasco struck out Rowdy Tellez on his 90th and final pitch.

Twins 6, Phillies 2: Max Kepler and Willians Astudillo hit consecutive homers, Eddie Rosario hit a three-run shot and Minnesota won at Philadelphia.

Making his second start since Tommy John surgery in 2017, Michael Pineda (1-0) allowed two runs and four hits, striking out five in five-plus innings for the Twins. Rhys Hoskins went deep for the Phillies, and Bryce Harper had two hits. Both teams are off to 5-2 starts.

Mariners 9, White Sox 2: Jay Bruce hit two solo homers and Tim Beckham connected

for a three-run shot, powering Seattle to the victory at Chicago.

Beckham had four hits for the Mariners, who are off to the best start in club history at 8-2. Seattle has homered in each of its first 10 games, also a franchise first, and leads the majors with 24 long balls.

Tigers 7, Royals 4: Christian Stewart hit a two-out grand slam in the seventh inning, lifting host Detroit to the win.

The Tigers trailed 4-2 in the seventh but rallied against Kansas City's struggling bullpen. Kevin McCarthy (0-1) allowed three hits and a hit batter.

Whit Merrifield, Jorge Soler and Hunter Dozier homered for the Royals.

Pirates 6, Reds 5 (10): Kevin Newman hit a game-ending double in the 10th inning, lifting host Pittsburgh to its third straight win and giving Cincinnati its seventh straight loss.

With one out in the 10th, Francisco Cervelli singled off Raisel Iglesias (0-2). Newman drove the first pitch he saw to the 410-foot left-center notch at PNC Park, and Cervelli easily beat the relay home. It was the first game-ending hit of Newman's career.

Pirates pitcher Francisco Liriano (1-0) struck out two in the top half of the inning.

Giants 6, Rays 4: Brandon Belt homered and drove in three before an unusually small home crowd, and host San Francisco beat Tampa Bay.

Steven Duggar had three RBIs and Joe Panik scored twice to help the Giants snap a three-game losing streak.

Marlins 4, Braves 2: Jorge Alfaro homered twice, including a tiebreaking, two-run shot in the ninth inning, and Miami stopped host Atlanta's four-game winning streak.

Alfaro, a right-handed hitter, homered to the opposite field on both swings. His first long ball came off Braves starter Kyle Wright and the second one off reliever A.J. Minter (0-1).

NHL roundup

Lightning tie record with 62nd victory

Associated Press

BOSTON — Nikita Kucherov and the Tampa Bay Lightning finished the regular season with one more impressive performance.

Next stop: Stanley Cup playoffs.

The Lightning matched an NHL record with their 62nd win, using a three-goal second period to beat the Boston Bruins 6-3 on Saturday.

“Sixty-two is a number that’s only been touched once and for a team that’s kind of been locked into a playoff spot for quite some time, to be able to bring it every single night, to continue to find a way to get that number is a credit to the players and staff,” coach Jon Cooper said. “We didn’t sit there and circle 62 and say that’s going to be our number, but it’s kind of cool that we actually got to that number.”

Kucherov, Anthony Cirelli and Braydon Coburn each had a goal and an assist for Tampa Bay (62-16-4), which tied the 1995-96 Detroit Red Wings for most victories during the regular season. Steven Stamkos got a short-handed goal during the second, and Erik Cernak also scored during the period.

Third-string goalie Edward Pasquale stopped 30 shots, and Tyler Johnson added an empty-netter.

Predators 5, Blackhawks 2: Viktor Arvidsson scored the go-ahead goal at 3:33 of the third period, and Nashville won its second straight Central Division title by rallying from an 0-2 deficit.

The Predators, who will face Dallas in the opening round of the playoffs next week, now are assured of home-ice advan-

tage through at least the first two rounds.

Islanders 3, Capitals 0: Valtteri Filppula scored twice in his return from injury, Robin Lehner stopped all 29 shots he faced and New York won at Washington to clinch home-ice advantage in the first round of the playoffs.

Matt Martin scored an empty-net goal with 2:33 left to seal it.

Sharks 5, Avalanche 2: Evander Kane scored to make San Jose the first team in 10 years with at least four 30-goal scorers and host San Jose wrapped up the second-best record in the West by beating Colorado.

Jets 4, Coyotes 2: Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor each had a goal and an assist and Winnipeg won at Arizona to earn home-ice advantage in the first round of the playoffs.

Oilers 3, Flames 1: Connor McDavid left Edmonton’s victory at Calgary after injuring his left leg, and the team said X-rays came back negative.

After the game, the Oilers tweeted the results of the X-rays and added that the 22-year-old McDavid would travel home with the team and have an MRI in Edmonton.

Blues 3, Canucks 2: Jordan Binnington stopped both shots he faced in the shootout as host St. Louis beat Vancouver, but the Blues fell a point short of first place in the Central Division.

Binnington finished with 23 saves and closed out his breakthrough season with a 24-5-1 record.

Blue Jackets 6, Senators 2: Pierre-Luc Dubois scored two goals and Columbus won easily at Ottawa.

The Blue Jackets finished 47-31-4 and secured the second wild card in the East.

They’ll face the Tampa Bay Lightning in the first round of the playoffs.

Hurricanes 4, Flyers 3: Jordan Staal scored the go-ahead goal in the second period and Carolina hung on to win at Philadelphia for the Hurricanes’ its fourth win in five games.

Sabres 7, Red Wings 1: Jeff Skinner scored twice to reach the 40-goal mark for the first time in his career and Buffalo won at Detroit in the season finale for both teams.

Rookie defenseman Rasmus Dahlin had a goal and an assist, and Sam Reinhart, Conor Sheary, Zemgus Girgensons and Brandon Montour scored for the Sabres. Linus Ullmark made 23 saves.

Rangers 4, Penguins 3 (OT): Ryan Strome scored 2:09 into overtime and New York won at Pittsburgh in its regular-season finale.

Devils 4, Panthers 3 (OT): Travis Zajac scored the winning goal on the power play in overtime, lifting New Jersey to a win at Florida.

Canadiens 6, Maple Leafs 5 (SO): Ryan Poehling recorded a hat trick and added the shootout winner in his NHL debut as host Montreal beat Toronto.

Stars 3, Wild 0: Tyler Seguin broke open a scoreless game with two third-period goals, and host Dallas beat Minnesota to take the Western Conference’s top wild-card spot.

Kings 5, Golden Knights 2: Ilya Kovalchuk had two goals, Dustin Brown had two assists and last-place Los Angeles closed the season with a home win over playoff-bound Vegas.

NBA roundup

Russell, Dudley lead Nets past Bucks

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Jared Dudley brought a veteran’s presence and poise to a tense situation, helping the Brooklyn Nets to a crucial win in their bid for the playoffs.

Dudley’s offensive rebound set up Joe Harris’ go-ahead three-pointer with 1:24 left in Brooklyn’s 133-128 victory over the short-handed Milwaukee Bucks on Saturday.

Brooklyn (40-40) made 19 three-pointers and placed eight players in double figures. D’Angelo Russell had 25 points and 10 assists, reserve Caris LeVert scored 24 points and Dudley collected 14 of his season high-tying 16 points in the second half.

The Nets, who had dropped four of five, moved into sixth place in the East. Orlando also is 40-40, and Detroit is a

half-game back with a 39-40 record.

The Nets have tiebreakers with both the Magic and Pistons.

Milwaukee played without MVP candidate Giannis Antetokounmpo, who was sidelined by a left calf injury. The Bucks (59-21) clinched the NBA’s best record with a road victory against Philadelphia on Thursday night.

76ers 116, Bulls 96: Joel Embiid had 20 points and 10 rebounds and JJ Redick scored 23, leading Philadelphia to the road win.

Embiid dominated inside, Redick supplied the outside touch and the 76ers got back to winning after dropping three in a row, even though guard Jimmy Butler missed his second consecutive game because of back tightness.