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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Putin: No reprisal after US expels officials

Bloomberg

Russian President Vladimir Putin decided against a tit-for-tat retaliation for outgoing President Barack Obama's expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats from the U.S. over cyberattacks allegedly backed by the Kremlin and aimed at interfering with the 2016 election campaign.

"We won't send anyone away," Putin said in a statement from the Kremlin after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov asked to approve a mirror expulsion of U.S. diplomats in a televised meeting on Friday.

The Russian government accused the outgoing U.S. administration of spending its last weeks in power trying to sabotage President-elect Donald Trump's pledge to seek better relations with the Kremlin. Trump has said he wants to cooperate with Putin in fighting terrorism and may review sanctions that Obama imposed over Russia's involvement in a conflict in Ukraine.

Lavrov proposed the expulsion of 31 U.S. diplomats in Moscow and four in St. Petersburg, to match the 31 Russian embassy officials in Washington and four consular staff in San Francisco who were ordered to leave the country a day earlier.

Obama described the 35 Russians ejected from the U.S. as intelligence operatives working under diplomatic cover. The U.S. also imposed sanctions on top intelligence officials and said it shut down two Russian compounds — one in Maryland and another in New York — used for "intelligence-related purposes." Russia has denied it was behind the hacking in the U.S.

As part of the U.S. administration's re-

sponse, the FBI and Homeland Security Department also released a report with technical evidence intended to prove Russia's military and civilian intelligence services were behind the hacking and to expose some of their most sensitive hacking infrastructure. The report dubs the Russian operation "Grizzly Steppe."

"All Americans should be alarmed by Russia's actions," Obama said in a statement on Thursday. "These data-theft and disclosure activities could only have been directed by the highest levels of the Russian government."

Obama's actions put Trump in a bind less than a month before his inauguration. Reversing course effectively would reject the findings of U.S. intelligence agencies and would put him at odds with the Republican leaders in Congress who called the sanctions a necessary step.

Trump signaled a possible shift from his previous dismissals of Russian involvement in the hack, saying in a brief statement that while "it's time for our country to move on to bigger and better things," he'll meet with intelligence officials next week.

Trump repeatedly has scoffed at the conclusions of U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia was behind the pilfering and steady release of e-mails from Democratic National Committee and party officials in order to damage the campaign of Hillary Clinton. Trump once said the hacking could have been the work of "somebody sitting in a bed someplace" and told reporters Wednesday that "we ought to get on with our lives" instead of rehashing the cyberattack.

Russia is hopeful that it can ride out the storm and put ties with the U.S. on a better track once Trump takes office, said Fyodor Lukyanov, chairman of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, a Kremlin foreign-policy advisory group.

"Russia views these not as U.S. sanctions, but Obama sanctions, so he will go and we can both decide that we don't bear any responsibility for the actions of a jack-ass," Lukyanov said.

A White House official, briefing reporters on condition of anonymity, said Obama's successor could reverse the executive actions but suggested Trump may not want to be in the position of letting Russian spies return and giving Moscow a green light to meddle in European and U.S. politics. The U.S. has indications that Russia will try to interfere with elections on all levels, the official said.

Among those targeted in the sanctions announced by the Treasury Department were the GRU, Russia's military intelligence agency, and the Federal Security Service, or FSB, the main successor agency to the KGB. Cybersecurity experts in the U.S. have linked the GRU to the hacking of the Democratic National Committee and party officials through a group they have nicknamed APT 28 or Fancy Bear. The U.S. also is sanctioning several cyberoperations companies associated with them.

In addition, two Russians accused of commercial theft and fraud using computer networks were hit with sanctions. The two, Aleksey Belan and Evgeniy Bogachev, also are on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list.

1 of 2 killed in Texas Guard helo crash is recovered

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Army officials said Thursday they recovered the body of one of two soldiers killed when a Texas Army National Guard helicopter broke apart on a routine training mission and crashed into Galveston Bay, about 25 miles southeast of Houston.

Besides searching for the missing crewmen, recovery

teams also used a crane on a barge to retrieve parts of the wrecked Apache aircraft.

Witnesses said the helicopter was flying unusually low Wednesday afternoon when they heard a loud noise, saw it break up and plunge into the bay about 25 yards offshore near a vacant cruise-ship terminal.

The Army's Centralized

Accident Investigative Team based at Fort Rucker, Ala., was en route, said Maj. Gen. John Nichols, adjutant general of the Texas National Guard.

Nichols said it would be at least a month before any details of the investigation would be released.

The Army identified the men killed as Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dustin Lee Mortenson, 32, of

League City, Texas, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Lucas Maurice Lowe, 33, of Hardin, Texas. Mortenson was described as an aviation material officer; Lowe an aircraft maintenance officer.

They were assigned to the 1-149th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 36th Infantry Division, and based at nearby Ellington Field.

Navy: Off-duty SEAL dies after kayak accident

The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — An off-duty Virginia Beach, Va.-based Navy SEAL died after his kayak overturned in frigid Chesapeake Bay waters about 2 miles west of Cape Charles, near Cherrystone Inlet, the Navy said Thursday.

The Coast Guard recovered Petty Officer 1st Class Devon Grube on Wednesday and took him to Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital in Nassawadox, on the Eastern Shore, where he died from his injuries, the Navy said.

Lt. Trevor Davids, a Navy Special Warfare Center spokesman, said Grube's death "appears to be from environmental exposure." Water temperatures in the area were about 46 degrees, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"Our deepest condolences go out the sailor's family as we work to ensure that they have the support they need in this difficult time," Davids said in a statement. "We thank the Coast Guard Sector Hampton Roads Command Center, Virginia Marine Police, and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission for their assistance."

The Navy didn't release Grube's age or hometown but a 2008 Associated Press story that appeared in the Bismarck (N.D.) Tribune reported he's from Cavalier, N.D., near the Canadian border. That story said he was 27 and became a SEAL with one of his best friends from childhood.

He joined the Navy in 2005 after graduating from the University of North Dakota. He had been awarded a Joint Service Commendation Medal, an Army Commendation Medal and two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, among others.

The Coast Guard said Wednesday that watch-standers were notified at 9:20 a.m. that a man had overturned his kayak.

Watch-standers issued an urgent marine information broadcast; a 45-foot rescue boat from Coast Guard Station Cape Charles launched at 9:22 a.m.; and an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter from Air Station Elizabeth City took off at 9:42 a.m.

The boat crew reached the scene at 9:45 a.m., and the helicopter crew got there at 10:45 a.m. The helicopter crew located Grube about 11 a.m. and directed the boat crew to him to pull him out of the water, according to the Coast Guard. Grube was brought ashore and was transferred to Northampton County Emergency Medical Services personnel about 11:20 a.m., the Coast Guard said.

Coalition probes possible civilian deaths in Mosul

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group launched an investigation Thursday into an airstrike against a terrorist target that could have killed civilians, the coalition announced in a statement.

The airstrike was conducted Thursday and destroyed a van that had Islamic State fighters inside who fired a recoilless rifle, but coalition officials later determined the target was struck in the parking lot of a hospital where civilians might have been present, according to an Operation Inherent Resolve statement. It was not clear how many civilians might have been killed.

The coalition "takes all allegations of civilian casualties seriously and this incident will be fully investigated and the findings released in a timely and transparent manner," the statement read.

When faced with allegations of killing civilians, coalition officials have said they typically launch an investigation to determine whether there is evidence of civilian deaths. If evidence is found, they open an

official command investigation. There is no time frame for how long such an investigation might last.

Last month, the Pentagon said it inadvertently had killed 173 civilians in airstrikes targeting the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria since it began the Operation Inherent Resolve bombing campaign in August 2014.

The airstrike on Thursday came as coalition warplanes were backing Iraqi security forces driving deeper into Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city and the last urban center in the country held by the terrorist group. An Operation Inherent Resolve statement said the Iraqi security forces, after a brief tactical pause in Mosul operations, had begun advancing on three axes toward Mosul's center.

Iraqi security forces began the assault on Mosul in October, but they have faced a brutal urban battle and have cleared less than half the city of the terrorists who have held it for more than two years. The U.S. has backed the Iraqi forces with more than 7,650 bombs, rockets and mortars, but American and Iraqi officials have said the battle is likely to last well into 2017.

Syria cease-fire holds despite clashes

Associated Press

BEIRUT — A nationwide Syrian cease-fire brokered by Russia and Turkey that went into effect at midnight held Friday despite minor violations, marking a potential breakthrough in a conflict that has disregarded high-level peace initiatives for over five years.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported clashes early Friday between troops and rebels in the central province of Hama and near the capital, Damascus. It said that later in the day a man was killed by sniper fire in eastern suburbs of Damascus, becoming the first fatality since the truce went into effect. The group also reported an aerial attack on the rebel-held Barada Valley near Damascus. The Syrian army denied reports it was bombarding the Barada Valley region.

Opposition activist Mazen al-Shami, who is based in the Damascus suburb of Douma, said minor clashes nearby left one rebel wounded. Activist Ahmad al-Masalmeh, in the southern Daraa province,

said government forces had opened fire on rebel-held areas.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that the cease-fire will be guaranteed by both Moscow and Turkey, and the agreement has been welcomed by Iran. Moscow and Tehran provide crucial military support to Syrian President Bashar Assad, while Turkey has long served as a rear base and source of supplies for the rebels.

If it holds, the truce between the Syrian government and the country's mainstream rebel forces will be followed by peace talks next month in Kazakhstan, Putin said. He described it, however, as "quite fragile" and requiring "special attention and patience."

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called the cease-fire a "major achievement" in a tweet Friday. "Let's build on it by tackling the roots of extremist terror," he added.

Russia said the deal was signed by seven of Syria's major rebel factions, though none of them immediately confirmed it, and one denied signing it.

Will Trump make good on spending promises?

McClatchy Washington Bureau

Pentagon leaders and thousands of military contractors across the country might be wondering just what President-elect Donald Trump has in store for them.

In two tweets this month that sent shockwaves through defense companies and their lobbying firms, Trump criticized the spiraling costs of building a new Air Force One and a fleet of F-35 fighter jets.

That criticism triggered meetings a week ago with the heads of those two projects' main manufacturers, Boeing Co. and Lockheed Martin Corp., at the billionaire's Mar-A-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Fla. Trump said afterward that he'd extracted promises to cut costs.

But it remains to be seen whether Trump will be able to stay on top of Pentagon excess after he becomes president Jan. 20. The day after Trump met with the leaders of the two defense contractors, the Pentagon announced a long list of spending projects that totaled nearly \$550 million.

Trump will have a difficult time focusing on that wide range of spending and carrying out his pledge to pay for expanded military operations by trimming Pentagon waste, say experts on the way the Pentagon oversees its contracts. He won't find many friends in the process, they note.

"He's going to encounter a Pentagon bureaucracy that will instinctively say 'no' to most reforms he proposes," said Todd Harrison, a former defense lobbyist and retired Air Force Reserves captain who's now an analyst with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "He's certainly not the first president to come in saying we can cut waste and abuse within the Pentagon budget. Very few have had much success."

William Hartung, who in 2011 wrote a book about the clout F-35 contractor Lockheed-Martin wields in the U.S. Congress, made a similar observation about the Pentagon.

"They don't scrutinize the original bids carefully enough,

so contractors come in with a low bid while understanding that they're not going to meet it," Hartung said. "And then the Pentagon will add requirements and new features along the way. Eventually the costs get out of control."

By the time that's evident, however, inertia keeps the program going. "Once they put a certain amount of money on the table, they're reluctant to end or dramatically scale it back," Hartung said.

Case of the F-35

Whether Trump will be able to change that culture is what experts in Pentagon procurement are watching. With a price tag of \$400 billion and rising, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, for example, already is the most expensive weapons system ever built. It could end up exceeding \$1 trillion by the time all planned 2,457 planes are manufactured.

The preinaugural meetings with the defense firm bosses give Harrison some grounds to hope. The meeting is in keeping with Trump's penchant for the unconventional approach.

Afterward, Boeing CEO Dennis Muilenburg pledged to get Air Force One built for less than the \$4 billion budgeted. Lockheed Martin's CEO Marillyn Hewson was less committal, pledging only that her company is dedicated to "delivering an affordable aircraft to our U.S. military and our allies."

"I think he will be less likely to listen to the bureaucracy," Harrison said of Trump. "What we've seen so far is that he's more self-confident, and he's willing to say things and do things that buck the establishment. He almost takes joy in it."

Hartung, director of arms and security research at the Center for International Policy in Washington, said he, too, was impressed with Trump's meetings with the CEOs. But the new president will face deep-rooted problems in targeting bloated Pentagon spending, he cautions.

"If he doesn't change the budget and contracting procedures or inject some form of account-

ability, then it might just turn out to be good public relations as opposed to a real war on waste," Hartung said.

The challenge of bringing Pentagon spending under control is evident almost daily in the military's lists of the contracts it's awarded. Some are for new projects, while others are for modifications — almost always price increases — of on-going ones.

A look at the announcement from Dec. 23, the day after Trump's meetings with Hewson and Muilenburg, suggests how daunting Trump's challenge will be.

The announcement listed 12 projects for the Army, the Air Force and three other defense agencies, totaling \$549.4 million.

The new spending extends as far ahead as 2022, well into Trump's second term should he choose to run again and be re-elected.

While Trump has promoted the notion of pumping \$1 trillion into upgrading the country's roads, bridges and other infrastructure, the list shows how military spending is a permanent stimulus and jobs plan spread over every state and touching each of the 435 congressional districts.

On just that one day, the almost \$550 million was spread among 22 states plus the District of Columbia.

Spread among states

Distribution was completely bipartisan. Significant shares went to defense contractors and military bases in blue states — California, New Jersey, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Connecticut and Hawaii — red states — Texas, Missouri, Utah, Alabama, Arizona, Indiana, Alaska, Oklahoma and South Dakota — and swing states — Florida, Ohio, Virginia, Nevada and New Mexico.

While some congressional fiscal hawks have tried to rein it in, Pentagon spending has been hard to corral, especially since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

The total this year is about \$595 billion, almost 50 percent higher than 15 years ago even

with inflation taken into account. Nondefense spending has increased by some 13.5 percent during the same period.

And that's only the money that the Pentagon gets directly for troops, weapons, bases and support systems. The cost nearly doubles when you add to it other related expenditures such as \$164 billion that the Veterans Affairs Administration receives; \$100 billion the government pays in interest on past defense debt; \$51 billion the United States gives in military aid to foreign countries and \$20 billion for the Energy Department to maintain and upgrade U.S. nuclear arms.

And there have already been defense cuts since President Barack Obama ended major American military participation in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Obama is the rare president who actually has succeeded in ending a weapons program — the 2009 closeout of the F-22 Raptor tactical stealth fighter jet. But that victory came only with the assistance of heavy-weight Republicans, then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Arizona Sen. John McCain, who called the plane a Cold War relic and said the 187 already in service were more than adequate. Earlier Trump predecessors have met with mixed results in trying to scale back Pentagon megaprojects.

Republican Dwight Eisenhower fought hard in the late 1950s against development of the B-70 nuclear-armed strategic bomber. Arguing that land-based nuclear missiles already targeted the then-Soviet Union with greater power, the former World War II commander significantly scaled back its production.

Democrat Lyndon Johnson's Pentagon chief, Robert McNamara, pushed deep spending cuts in the 1960s based on his business background as head of the Ford Motor Co. But they stalled as the defense budget exploded during the Vietnam War.

NYPD ready to protect holiday revelers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Massive 20-ton sanitation trucks, weighted with an extra 15 tons of sand, will surround the iconic New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square, officials said Thursday, describing a security measure meant to stop deadly truck-driving attacks into crowds like those in Germany and France.

The placement of the 65 trucks, along with 100 patrol cars, at intersections surrounding Times Square is a new element to an already heavily policed event that will include 7,000 officers, specially armed counterterrorism units and bomb-sniffing dogs.

"We live in a changing world now," New York Police Department

Commissioner James O'Neil said. "It can't just be, 'What happens in New York, what happens in the United States?' It has to be more, 'What happens worldwide?'"

A Tunisian man who plowed a truck into a Christmas market in Berlin this month killed 12 people and injured 56 others. His attack followed a more deadly assault in Nice, France, in July that left 86 people dead when a man drove a 20-ton refrigerated truck into a crowd celebrating Bastille Day.

New York police studied those events in planning their Times Square security.

"As we formulated this year's plan, we paid close attention to world events and we learned

from those events," said Carlos Gomez, the NYPD's chief of department.

More than 1 million people are expected to attend the annual ball drop countdown in Manhattan, and officials said they didn't know of any terror threats.

The security measures are part of augmented precautions across the nation for New Year's Eve. To keep Las Vegas' lavish celebration secure, the entire police force will be working or on-call with help from the FBI, the National Guard and the Secret Service, and will close roads and beef up barriers to prevent vehicle attacks.

Times Square revelers, who are prohibited from carrying

umbrellas and large bags, will be screened at two points: once when they approach the Crossroads of the World and again when they enter one of the 65 pens that hold thousands of people each.

And, as in past years, officials have removed trash bins and mailboxes, sealed manhole covers and done sweeps of parking garages and hotels.

Police in New York have used trucks as blocker vehicles before, though never on this scale.

The sand-filled trucks were deployed in November at the Thanksgiving Day parade and on Election Day, when they were posted outside Donald Trump's Trump Tower, among other related places.

Shootings drive up number of police officers killed on duty

Associated Press

Ambushes in Dallas and Baton Rouge, La., and other shootings around the country led to a sharp increase in the number of police killed in the line of duty this year.

From Jan. 1 through Wednesday, 135 officers lost their lives. Some died in traffic accidents, but nearly half were shot to death. That's a 56 percent increase in shooting deaths over the previous year.

Of the 64 who were fatally shot, 21 were killed in ambush attacks, often fueled by anger over police use of force involving minorities.

"We've never seen a year in my memory when we've had an increase of this magnitude in officer shooting deaths," said Craig Floyd, president and chief executive of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. "These officers were killed simply because of the uniform they wear and the job they do. This is unacceptable to the humane society that we are."

In Dallas, a sniper on July 7 attacked at the end of what had been a peaceful rally against police brutality. He killed five law enforcement officers and wounded nine others — the largest death toll among law enforcement from a single event since the 9/11 attacks, which killed 72 officers. Months later, Dallas businesses and residents still display blue ribbons and banners declaring, "We support our Dallas police officers."

But even amid community support, the police department remains unsettled. Hundreds of officers have retired or left the force over the past

six months as the city struggles to find a way to increase pay and save a failing police and fire pension system. Former Chief David Brown, who became a national figure in the aftermath, was among those who opted to retire. And interim Dallas Police Association President Frederick Frazier said morale is "almost nonexistent."

"A lot of us are going through the motions at work. We're hoping things will get better with our struggle," he said. Frazier added that the attack was a "game-changer. It changed the perception of law enforcement. It reversed the role after Ferguson (Mo.). We were the pursuer, and now we're being pursued."

Less than two weeks after the Dallas attack, a lone gunman in Baton Rouge shot and killed three officers and wounded three others outside a convenience store in the weeks after a black man, Alton Sterling, 37, was shot and killed by police during a struggle.

Baton Rouge police Cpl. Lester Mitchell was partners with Matthew Gerald, one of the three slain officers, and was among the officers who raced to the scene of the shooting, which also killed sheriff's Deputy Brad Garafola and Officer Montrell Jackson. Mitchell has daily reminders of the deadly shootout, driving past the scene on his way to police headquarters.

Mitchell said the shooting has made him more alert and aware of potential dangers on patrol, sometimes in situations that wouldn't have alarmed him before, like a hand in a pocket.

"You learn to cope with it because if you don't, you can drive yourself crazy," he said.

Drunken driving rate at new low

The Washington Post

New federal statistics show that the rate of drunken driving in the United States fell to a 13-year low in 2014, the latest year for which data is available.

The rate of driving under the influence of illicit drugs has not changed meaningfully in recent years but remains slightly lower than it was in 2008 and 2009 at the start of the Obama administration.

In 2014, as part of the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 11.1 percent of Americans 16 or older told federal interviewers they had driven under the influence of alcohol in the past year.

There's a certain amount of squishiness about these numbers, given that they're self-reported.

But the survey has been administered with the same methodology since 2002, meaning it provides a particularly useful measure of drunk and drugged driving trends over time.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Feds: Stop using dry ice to kill rodents

MA BOSTON — The feds have given the cold shoulder to Boston's use of dry ice to control the city's rat population.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said the city has not registered dry ice as a pesticide and issued a cease-and-desist order through the state.

The city started using dry ice — frozen carbon dioxide — earlier this year. The ice is packed into the exits of rat lairs, sublimates into carbon dioxide gas, and suffocates the rodents.

City Inspectional Services Commissioner William Christopher told New England Cable News it's cheaper, safer, and more humane than poison.

The city is working to register dry ice as a pesticide with the state and federal governments.

Former legislator takes liquor store job

AL MONTGOMERY — A former legislator, who pleaded guilty to taking bribes from a state lobbyist, is working as a sales clerk at a state liquor store.

The Dothan Eagle reported that Terry Spicer took the job with the Alabama Beverage Control Board.

An ABC Board attorney told the newspaper that ABC Board Administrator Mac Gipson received a call from a mutual friend asking for help in finding Spicer a job.

Martin said Spicer properly disclosed his status as an ex-felon when applying.

Spicer, a former school superintendent and two-year college employee, needs another year and four months of state employment to be able to draw his \$50,000 state pension.

Spicer pleaded guilty in 2011 to taking cash and a ski vaca-

tion from a state lobbyist.

Wandering bull found in home's window well

MI LONG LAKE TOWNSHIP — A 700-pound bull found a temporary pen in northern Michigan: the window well of a home under construction.

Tucker got away from a farm in Grand Traverse County when strong winds opened a gate Monday night. The Traverse City Record-Eagle reported he was found Tuesday in a large window well but couldn't get out.

Owner Gary Jurkovich said the cow was guided through the window, into the unfinished home's basement and up the stairs. Tucker wasn't injured — and he even knew how to get home.

On its Facebook page, Grand Traverse 911 said maybe Tucker wanted to "moo-ve into a new home."

Teen caught with pot opts for push-ups

TX ARLINGTON — A North Texas police officer recently gave a teenager the option of being cited for marijuana possession or doing 200 push-ups after the boy was caught smoking pot outside a movie theater.

The teen opted for the push-ups Monday after Arlington officer Eric Ball smelled the odor of marijuana.

Police Lt. Christopher Cook said Ball was working an off-duty detail at the theater when he encountered the teen. He found the boy's mother inside and the woman hugged and thanked the officer.

Cook said the boy was respectful and realized he'd made a mistake.

A video showing the teen struggling to complete the

push-ups was posted on Facebook and has been viewed more than 100,000 times.

Man dies following weightlifting accident

IA ANKENY — Authorities say a 22-year-old man has died after a barbell slipped from his grasp and crushed him at a gym in Ankeny.

The accident occurred Monday morning at Elite Edge Transformation Center. A spokesman for the center, Mark Yontz, said Thursday that Kyle Thomson was lifting 315 pounds on a bench press when the barbell slipped. Yontz said there were spotters watching Thomson on the bench.

Ankeny Fire Chief James Clack said the barbell fell onto Thomson's neck. Clack said a fire ambulance took Thomson to a Des Moines hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Iowa State University spokeswoman Annette Hacker said Thomson was a student there.

EMT makes up story about being robbed

NY NEW YORK — Authorities say an off-duty New York City emergency medical technician made up a story about being robbed on Christmas morning.

Police said Wednesday that Steven Sampson was arrested on charges of making a false written statement and falsely reporting an incident.

Sampson worked as an EMT for the Fire Department of New York.

According to the New York Post, authorities said Sampson claimed four men stabbed him in the arm and robbed him of nearly \$3,000 worth of Christmas gifts as he was loading them into the car in the Bronx.

Deputies: Woman ran over own daughter

FL LEHIGH ACRES — A 64-year-old Florida woman faces aggravated assault charges after deputies say she hit her daughter and son-in-law with her car.

Lee County Sheriff's deputies tell local news outlets that on Tuesday, Lisa Newsome yelled, "I'm going to run him over," referring to her son-in-law, Walther Gilbert, 41. She then aimed the car at the couple and hit them, pinning her daughter, Prussia Gilbert, 33.

The News-Press reported Prussia Gilbert is in critical condition at a Fort Myers hospital.

Walther Gilbert told investigators that his wife told him she was going to a party with her mother and he was pleading with her not to go.

Man who killed golden eagles is sentenced

NV RENO — State wildlife officials say a Canadian man who admitted to killing federally protected golden eagles has been ordered to pay nearly \$3,000 in fines and penalties.

Dana Morely McIvor, 31, pleaded guilty to unlawful possession of a golden eagle and unlawful possession of a bird of prey. The Nevada Department of Wildlife said the man also was given a 30-day jail sentence with two years suspended.

Police had stopped McIvor for reckless driving in Elko on Jan. 31 when the bird parts were discovered inside his vehicle.

Authorities said they seized a rifle, two dead eagles, a dead hawk, two hawk wings and 124 separate eagle and hawk feathers.

From wire reports

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Washington's long road to prominence

SEATTLE — Twenty-five years ago, Washington stood on top of college football as co-national champions in the midst of a three-year run as Pac-10 Conference champs.

What happened in the 2½ decades since that 1991 season for Washington was a roller coaster of momentary highs and pitiful lows, providing a cautionary tale of how quickly the foundation for being on top can crumble due to a series of missteps.

When Washington takes the field for Saturday's Peach Bowl against top-ranked Alabama it will mark a return to the national stage for the Huskies. They were there briefly during the 2000 season when the Huskies won the Pac-10 and Rose Bowl, finishing the year ranked No. 3 in the AP Top 25. But this season marks the Huskies' first shot at a national title since that shared title with Miami in 1991.

So, what happened? A carousel of coaching changes; growing apathy of a once-rabid fan base; and the rise of programs Washington once dominated all added up to lead to the Huskies' demise.

"I think it was those combinations of things that the Northwest got way more competitive and the Huskies ship was lost at sea for a little bit," said ESPN analyst and former Washington captain Ed Cunningham. "It's pretty easy."

The stumble: Washington walked off the field on Jan. 1, 1992, after thumping Michigan 34-14 in the Rose Bowl, assuring itself a share of the national title. A year later, Washington was back in the Rose Bowl, this time falling to Tyrone Wheatley and Michigan in what proved to be the start of the Huskies' fall.

Before the start of the 1993 season, coach Don James resigned in protest of sanctions handed down by the Pac-10 for NCAA rules violations. Jim Lambright took over as head coach and while the Huskies went to bowl games in each of Lambright's four seasons after Washington's bowl game ban was lifted, it wasn't good enough in a place where the expectations were to compete for conference titles.

The bump: Rick Neuheisel was lured away from Colorado to take on the task of getting Washington back to elite status. For a short time, it worked. Led by Marques Tuiasosopo and a roster of future NFL players, Washington won the Pac-10 and Rose Bowl in 2000, Neuheisel's second season.

"That team was great," Cunningham said. "They weren't good. They were great."

But issues started to surface. Recruiting suffered. Washington went from 11 wins in 2000 to eight wins, then seven.

Then, the capper: Neuheisel was fired in June 2003 for taking part in a neighborhood NCAA basketball tournament pool. For the second time in 10 years, Washington was dealing with a coaching change just before the season started.

The fall: Washington's collapse was beginning before Neuheisel was fired. Keith Gilbertson took over and won six games in his first season, but the Huskies tumbled to 1-10 in 2004. Recruiting missteps finally caught up to the program and the talent was gone. Washington's nightmare was only just starting.

Enter Tyrone Willingham, who was the wrong coach at the wrong time. Washington went 11-37 under Willingham, capped by a 2008 season when the Huskies endured the

indignity of an 0-12 record that made the school the laughingstock of college football.

Washington had found its bottom.

"I guess it had to hit rock bottom for you to look up and see what it was going to take to start bringing it back," longtime Washington broadcaster Bob Rondeau said.

The rise: For as much as coach Steve Sarkisian is derided in Seattle for never getting Washington over the seven-win hump until his final season, he deserves acknowledgement for rebuilding the credibility of Washington and restocking the talent. He started to get top prospects to again consider the Huskies and was able to lift Washington from the bottom of the Pac-12 to at least the middle.

It was Chris Petersen who has been able to find the ingredients to make the leap back into prominence that Sarkisian could not. Much of Washington's rise this year was rooted in last year's challenge to reach bowl eligibility by winning its last two regular-season games before a bowl victory over Southern Mississippi.

The success this season was likely a year ahead of schedule. Most pointed to 2017 as the potential breakout for Petersen's crew. But now that they're here, the Huskies are intent not to let the missteps of the past keep them from being in the national discussion.

"Whether we're playing in this type of game, I don't really think like that," Petersen said. "I just think about getting really good people here and creating this environment where everyone can have a chance to get to their potential and they feel it and they're growing — from coaches to players to everybody. And when it's like that, you know really good things are going to happen."

Virginia Tech rallies to knock off Arkansas

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Jerod Evans threw for 243 yards and two touchdowns and ran for two scores and No. 18 Virginia Tech pulled off the largest comeback in its 124-year history, erasing a 24-point halftime deficit to beat Arkansas 35-24 on Thursday night in the Belk Bowl.

After being limited to 180 yards in the first half, the Hokies (10-4) took advantage of three of Austin Allen's interceptions and scored touchdowns on five of their first seven possessions of the sec-

ond half.

Evans scored on a 4-yard run and threw touchdown strikes to Sam Rogers and Chris Cunningham to cut it to 24-21 in the third quarter. Travon McMillan put the Hokies ahead for good with 12:03 left in the game when he scored on a 6-yard run. Evans sealed the win with an 8-yard touchdown scamper.

Alamo Bowl

No. 13 Oklahoma State 38, No. 11 Colorado 8: At San Antonio, Mason Rudolph passed for 314 yards and three touchdowns and the Cowboys' defense smothered the Buffa-

loes to earn the team's fifth 10-win season in seven years.

James Washington caught nine passes for 171 yards and a touchdown before leaving in the third quarter with an apparent hand injury. Rudolph and Washington have already announced they will return for their senior seasons, putting the Cowboys (10-3) among the favorites to win the Big 12.

Colorado's best season in more than a decade — dubbed "The Rise" — ended with a thud: consecutive losses in the Pac-12 title game and the program's first bowl appearance since 2007. Sefo Liufau

passed for 195 yards and ran for a touchdown for the Buffaloes (10-4).

Birmingham Bowl

No. 25 South Florida 46, South Carolina 39 (OT): At Birmingham, Ala., Quinton Flowers ran for three touchdowns and threw for two more to lead the Bulls past the Gamecocks.

South Florida (11-2) squandered a 39-21 lead in the second half, but recovered for its school-record 11th victory. Flowers threw a 25-yard touchdown pass on the first play of overtime, finding Elkanah Dillon in the end zone.

Rousey tries to reclaim title at UFC 207

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Ronda Rousey climbed on the scale and glared into the distance while the crowd roared. Moments later, she directed that withering gaze at UFC bantamweight champion Amanda Nunes, who stared right back.

Rousey then left the stage at T-Mobile Arena on Thursday without a word to Nunes or the thousands of fans gathered largely to support her at the weigh-in on the eve of UFC 207.

Rousey (12-1) was arguably the most dominant mixed martial arts fighter in the young sport's history until she lost her belt 13 months ago in a stunning knockout. After devoting

a year to getting back on top, Rousey is determined to earn her redemption Friday night with her skills, not her words.

Her comeback fight against Nunes (13-4) is the main event in the UFC's traditional end-of-the-year show in its hometown, and few events in the promotion's blockbuster 2016 have been more anticipated.

Nobody is certain which Rousey will show up in the cage.

Will it be the confident judo genius who thrashed a series of overmatched opponents while blazing a trail into the mainstream for women's MMA and the UFC in general?

Or will it be the shaky, distracted veteran who stumbled, flailed and eventually got

stopped by Holly Holm's head kick in Australia last year?

"I'm not sure how it's going to be, but she could do a lot of things," Nunes said. "Nobody knows, but I know I'm going to be ready. We will see about her."

Just don't ask Rousey what she thinks. She has largely refused to promote her fight, even declining to speak to the UFC's broadcast team after stepping on the scale.

The UFC reluctantly agreed to Rousey's media blackout, realizing it could cost the promotion untold numbers of pay-per-view buys.

"It's definitely not ideal," UFC President Dana White said of Rousey's decision. "It's what she asked for."

Rousey has a nascent acting career and innumerable endorsements, but her celebrity still hasn't outstripped her athletic accomplishments, as it did for fellow women's MMA trailblazer Gina Carano. Rousey could have walked away from the sport already, but the Olympic medalist's willingness to return underlines her determination to get back on top.

The women's bantamweight belt has changed hands three times in the last 13 months, and nobody has successfully defended it. Holm lost the belt when Miesha Tate choked her unconscious in March, and Tate lost the title when Nunes brutalized her at UFC 200 in July.

No. 7 Gonzaga off to best start in program history

Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — No. 7 Gonzaga beat Pepperdine by 30 points, dominated the boards and forced the Waves into 20 turnovers.

The verdict?

"We played OK," said Jordan Mathews, who scored 15 points on five three-pointers. "We had some sluggish moments."

Nigel Williams-Goss and Przemek Karnowski each had 16 points as Gonzaga beat short-handed Pepperdine 92-62 on Thursday night, extending the best start in program history.

Three other players scored in double figures for the unbeaten Bulldogs (13-0, 1-0 West Coast Conference).

"We didn't play our best tonight," Mathews said.

Gonzaga held a seven-point lead after the first half and did not put away scrappy Pepperdine until midway through the second.

"I didn't think that was one of our better efforts of the year," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "In the second half, we defended much, much better."

Lamond Murray Jr. scored

19 points for Pepperdine (4-9, 0-1), which has lost eight games in a row and was missing two starters because of injuries. Jeremy Major added 15.

No. 8 Kentucky 99, Mississippi 76: Malik Monk scored 34 points, Isaiah Briscoe had a triple-double and the visiting Wildcats bounced back impressively from a loss at Louisville with a victory over the Rebels in the SEC opener for both teams.

Briscoe added 19 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds for Kentucky (11-2), which led 60-41 at halftime and was never seriously threatened. Edrice Adebayo scored 25 points, primarily on the strength of seven dunks.

Monk finished 11-for-16 from the field, including 5-for-7 from three-point range, and added six rebounds and three steals. Adebayo was 12-for-19 from the field and blocked three shots.

Sebastian Saiz led the Rebels (9-4) with 23 points and 13 rebounds.

St. John's 76, No. 13 Butler 73: Freshman guard Shamorie Ponds scored 26 points, including four free throws in the final 9.1 seconds, and the host Red

Storm upset the Bulldogs in the Big East opener for both teams.

St. John's (7-7), coming off a 33-point win at Syracuse, stayed close with the Bulldogs (11-2) and finally took a lead at 72-71 on a free throw by Malik Ellison with 14.1 seconds left.

Bashir Ahmed added 19 points for the Red Storm.

Kelan Martin of Butler let a shot go from halfcourt at the buzzer and it hit the rim. Tyler Wideman had 20 points on 8-for-11 shooting for the Bulldogs, and Martin scored 13.

No. 19 Saint Mary's 72, Loyola Marymount 60: Emmett Naar scored 19 points and Jock Landale added 18 points and 11 rebounds to lead the visiting Gaels over the Lions in the West Coast Conference opener for both teams.

Naar went 6-for-9 from the field and had five assists as St. Mary's (11-1) won its fifth consecutive game. Landale shot 6-for-10 while posting his fourth straight double-double and fifth this season.

Joe Rahon had 11 points and seven assists for Saint Mary's, which defeated the Lions (7-5) for the 10th time in a row and

improved to 4-0 on the road this season.

Trevor Manuel led the Lions with 18 points before fouling out with 1:29 remaining.

No. 25 Florida 81, Arkansas 72: Guard KeVaughn Allen had a triumphant return to his home state, scoring 21 points as the visiting Gators beat the Razorbacks in the Southeastern Conference opener for both teams.

Daryl Macon did what he could to keep Arkansas close, but Allen drained a three-pointer nearly every time Florida needed to put down a threat.

Kevarrius Hayes' dunk and Allen's three-pointer made it 63-52 after Arkansas had trimmed the lead to six. After Moses Kingsley cut Florida's edge to 65-58, Allen drained another three with 6:35 left. Florida (10-3) led by double digits until the final 11 seconds.

Macon scored 22 points for Arkansas (11-2). Kingsley had 13 points and 14 rebounds, and Anton Beard scored 10 points.

Beard and Allen each went to North Little Rock High School.

Allen shot 5-for-9 from beyond the arc. Devin Robinson added 17 points for Florida.

Irving, Love help Cavs hold off Celtics

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Kyrie Irving scored 32 points and made two critical layups before leaving with a leg injury and Kevin Love scored 30, helping the Cleveland Cavaliers hold off a late rally for a 124-118 victory over the Boston Celtics on Thursday night.

The Cavs led by 20 points in the third and 17 early in the fourth but couldn't close out the Celtics, who pulled within one point three times in the final two minutes.

Irving, though, came up with his big baskets and the Cavs had to fend off Boston over the final 53 seconds as their star guard grabbed his right hamstring and went to the bench. His injury did not appear to be serious.

LeBron James had 23 points and 11 assists for the Cavs, who won for the 11th time in 13 games. The only two losses during that stretch came at

Memphis and Detroit — games James sat out.

Grizzlies 114, Thunder 80: Marc Gasol scored 25 points and Memphis took advantage of Russell Westbrook's ejection, dominating visiting Oklahoma City.

Westbrook, the NBA's leading scorer at 31.7 points per game, scored 21 before he was tossed midway through the third quarter when he was whistled for two quick technicals. At that point, Memphis already held a double-digit lead that reached 37 points in the fourth quarter.

Zach Randolph added 21 points for the Grizzlies. He and Gasol both grabbed eight rebounds.

Suns 99, Raptors 91: Eric Bledsoe scored 22 points and Devin Booker had nine of his 19 in the fourth quarter, helping host Phoenix beat Toronto.

The Raptors, in second place in the Eastern Conference, lost consecutive games for the first

time since Nov. 20 and 21. Both teams played the second of back-to-back games, with the first being on the road.

DeMar DeRozan and Kyle Lowry scored 24 points apiece for the Raptors.

Hornets 91, Heat 82: Nicolas Batum had 16 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists, providing a spark during a big third quarter that carried Charlotte over visiting Miami.

The Hornets outscored the Heat 31-17 in the quarter to take command, with Batum contributing nine points, five rebounds and four assists in the period.

Kemba Walker led Charlotte with 22 points. The Hornets improved to 19-14, and have won five of their last six games.

Jazz 100, 76ers 83: George Hill had 21 points in his return to the lineup after missing 13 games with a sprained toe, and host Utah blitzed Philadelphia in the fourth quarter.

Gordon Hayward and Rodney Hood each added 20 points for the Jazz (20-13), who outscored Philadelphia 30-9 in the final period. They shot 58 percent from three-point range overall to win their second consecutive game after dropping three in a row.

Philadelphia, playing without leading scorer and rebounder Joel Embiid, surprisingly led for most of the game before the fourth-quarter collapse. The 76ers shot 4-for-23 in the final 12 minutes.

Mavericks 101, Lakers 89: Wesley Matthews scored 20 points to lead Dallas to its 12th consecutive victory over host Los Angeles.

The Mavericks outscored the Lakers 31-13 in the third quarter to take command.

Julius Randle scored 18 points and Nick Young had 17 for the Lakers, who had as many turnovers (15) as assists.

Blue Jackets extend winning streak to 12 games

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — The Columbus Blue Jackets are among the hottest teams ever in the NHL.

Now, they'll make history in their next game just by showing up.

Alexander Wennberg had two goals and Brandon Saad also scored, helping Columbus beat the Winnipeg Jets 5-3 on Thursday night to extend its franchise-record winning streak to 14 games.

The run is tied for the fourth-longest ever in the NHL, and Columbus is closing in on the record of 17 set by Pittsburgh in 1992-93. The Jackets next play at Minnesota on Saturday night, and the Wild have won 12 straight, setting up the first meeting between clubs with such long streaks.

"It's going to be a blast," forward Brandon Saad said. "They're having a heck of a year and we're playing well

right now, too."

No teams have ever had concurrent 12-game winning streaks, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

"I think you're starting to see a team that's understanding that we expect to win if we play a certain way," captain Nick Foligno said. "That's great for this organization, for our fans and this group."

Foligno and Lukas Sedlak also scored for Columbus, and Foligno and Zach Werenski each had a pair of assists. Sergei Bobrovsky made 31 saves for his 23rd win of the season.

"I thought Bob made some key saves at key times," Columbus coach John Tortorella said.

Shawn Matthias, Bryan Little and Mathieu Perreault scored for Winnipeg, and Michael Hutchinson turned aside 30 shots.

Wild 6, Islanders 4: Erik Haula scored midway through the third period to help host Minnesota hold off New York

for its 12th victory in a row.

Marco Scandella, Chris Stewart, Jared Spurgeon, Jordan Schroeder and Mikael Granlund also scored for Minnesota, which had a franchise-record three goals in 80 seconds in the second period.

Rangers 6, Coyotes 3: Matt Puempel got two of his three power-play goals late in the third period to help visiting New York avert a collapse and beat Arizona.

Devils 2, Capitals 1 (SO): Keith Kinkaid made 43 saves and stopped two attempts in the shootout, helping visiting New Jersey beat Washington.

Oilers 3, Kings 1: Eric Gryba broke a tie at 6:58 of the third period and Jordan Eberle had two assists in host Edmonton's victory over Los Angeles.

Blackhawks 3, Predators 2: Patrick Kane had a goal and an assist to lead visiting Chicago over Nashville.

Canadiens 3, Panthers 2 (OT): Phillip Danault scored

39 seconds into overtime after Brendan Gallagher tied it late in the third period, leading visiting Montreal over Florida.

Ducks 3, Flames 1: Jakob Silfverberg scored the go-ahead goal 5:37 into the third period to lead visiting Anaheim over Calgary.

Bruins 4, Sabres 2: Ryan Spooner scored twice in the final four minutes and visiting Boston beat Buffalo.

Stars 4, Avalanche 2: Tyler Seguin had two goals and an assist and host Dallas beat lowly Colorado for its first three-game winning streak of the season.

Red Wings 3, Senators 2 (OT): Anthony Mantha scored at 1:07 of overtime after Bobby Ryan's turnover to give visiting Detroit a victory over Ottawa.

Maple Leafs 3, Lightning 2 (OT): Nazem Kadri scored on a power play 3:37 into overtime to give visiting Toronto a victory over Tampa Bay.