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Military buildup plan would cost extra \$683B

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The military buildup proposed in the Trump administration's 2018 budget would cost a total of \$683 billion over the next 10 years, culminating in a Pentagon base budget a decade from now that would dwarf peak Cold War-era spending, a report said.

Between 2018 and 2027, efforts to increase the readiness and size of the force would drive the budget 12 percent higher than the costs laid out for those same years under the Obama administration's final budget plan for the same period, the Congressional Budget Office said Monday.

President Donald Trump's goals for the military "would result in steady increases in costs so that by 2027, the base budget (in 2018 dollars) would reach \$688 billion, more than 20 percent larger than peak spending during the 1980s," the CBO said.

Plans for a larger overall force account

for most of the budget increase, with the administration seeking to have about 2.13 million military personnel in 2018 and 2.367 million by 2027. Previous projections under the Obama administration were for a force of 2.07 million by 2027, the CBO stated.

The Pentagon's 2018 budget calls for spending \$640 billion — \$575 billion of that amount set aside for the Defense Department's base budget, which funds day-to-day operations and procuring weapons systems. The base budget request is 3 percent higher than the projected amount for the same year as calculated against the previous administration's goals. In contrast, Russia's 2017 defense budget is estimated at \$65.4 billion and China's at about \$200 billion.

Besides added personnel expenditures, other factors include plans for the Navy to increase its fleet to 355 battle force ships, nearly 30 percent more than the current number.

For the Air Force, rising costs result primarily from existing plans to replace aging weapon systems.

"Those plans include beginning production of new bombers, supersonic trainers, nuclear cruise missiles, and intercontinental ballistic missiles," the CBO said.

The CBO's projections include an additional increase in F-35 procurement — a rise in production rate from 60 aircraft to 80 aircraft per year, for a total of 132 additional aircraft by 2027.

Last month, lawmakers passed the 2018 budget, which now awaits the White House's signature.

One obstacle that remains is the 2011 Budget Control Act, which caps the amount of money available for the Pentagon's base budget. The 2018 budget exceeds the spending cap by \$54 billion.

To avoid the automatic budget cut, Congress would have to eliminate or lift the spending caps or scale back military plans.

Wildfires force thousands to flee Calif. homes

Associated Press

SANTA PAULA, Calif. — Ferocious Santa Ana winds raking Southern California whipped explosive wildfires Tuesday, prompting evacuation orders for thousands of homes.

Ventura County Fire Chief Mark Lorenzen said the fire grew exponentially early Tuesday after breaking out Monday evening about 60 miles northwest of Los Angeles.

Authorities estimated the fire grew to more than 70 square miles overnight.

Another wind-driven wildfire on the northern edge of Los Angeles had grown to more than 6 square miles and 2,500 homes had been evacuated.

At least 150 structures had burned so far in Ventura

County, officials said. TV reports showed homes in flames as well as Vista del Mar Hospital, a facility that treats patients with mental problems or chemical dependency and veterans with post-traumatic stress syndrome.

The Los Angeles Fire Department said there's also a new fire on the north edge of the city that is threatening portions of the Sylmar and Lakeview Terrace neighborhoods.

Fire officials said more than 400 firefighters and 50 fire engines were on the scene near those neighborhoods.

The department said evacuations are being coordinated by the Los Angeles Police Department.

In Ventura Court, more than 27,000 people have been evacuated

and one firefighter was injured. There was no word on the extent of the injuries. After initial reports of a fatality, county fire Capt. Steve Kaufmann said a dead dog but no person was found in an overturned car.

The winds were pushing the fire toward Santa Paula, a city of some 30,000 people about 60 miles northwest of Los Angeles. Many of the evacuated homes were in that city.

"The prospects for containment are not good," Ventura County Fire Chief Mark Lorenzen said before dawn. "Really, Mother Nature is going to decide."

Thomas Aquinas College, a school with about 350 students, was also evacuated, with students going to their own homes

or to those of faculty and staff, the college said in a statement.

Nearly 180,000 customers in Ventura County lost power, and schools in the district were closed.

Typical of fall, the Santa Ana winds are spawned by high pressure over the Great Basin that sends air flowing toward Southern California where it speeds up as it squeezes down through mountain passes and canyons and blows out toward the coast.

Wind speeds at some locations in Ventura County were well over 60 mph early Tuesday.

Meteorologists say it's the strongest Santa Ana wind event so far this season.

Forecasters said winds would continue through Thursday.

Shutdown threat weighs on military pay and programs

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — As Congress and the White House flirt with another potential shutdown of the federal government, chances are growing for a disruption to military pay and programs starting this week.

Federal funding is slated to run out Friday, when Congress must strike a deal to keep the government's lights on or face the daunting prospect of a shutdown.

With a great deal of turmoil on Capitol Hill now, congressional members will have a tough time reaching a bipartisan funding deal. Democratic leadership have said there won't be a plan until there's a deal on the Child Health Insurance Program and immigration.

"If the government does shut down, this will have major impacts for the military," said Lauren Fish, a defense strategies research associate for the Washington think tank Center for a New American Security. First, "it's an embarrassing look to the rest of the world, especially at a moment when so much is happening that requires American leadership, namely North Korea's continued nuclear program and [intercontinental ballistic missile] testing. Secondly, government personnel doesn't get paid during a shutdown."

The military, along with the rest of the government, is operating off a short-term funding bill that was approved in September. It's become a common practice for Congress to rely on the temporary spending measures, known as continuing resolutions, to keep the government functioning. The

measures are used until a full budget is approved.

For example, a \$1.1 trillion omnibus government spending plan that included the 2017 defense budget that began Oct. 1, 2016, wasn't approved until May of this year.

Some congressional watchers are betting on another continuing resolution, or CR, to be approved, if not by Friday, then after a very brief government shutdown.

"I think we will see another CR. Some people think a two-week CR, but they should have one pushing into January 2018," said Andrew Sherbo, a University of Denver finance professor who has tracked the defense bill for several years. If not, "nobody wins in a shutdown and the only thing that gets accomplished is a lot of finger pointing on who caused it."

A short-term continuing resolution would give Congress time to work out a broader deal, said Molly Reynolds, a governance studies fellow at the liberal-leaning think tank Brookings Institution in Washington. However, the threat of a shutdown looms large.

A shutdown would force the federal government to send home nonessential workers without pay, shut down national parks and museums and trigger new administrative delays. It will also affect the Department of Defense.

A 16-day shutdown in October 2013 caused a rash of military programs to come to a sudden halt, including pay stoppage for military and civilian personnel and the disruption of base services such as commissaries. In addition, death gratuity payments for 30 Gold Star families were also disrupted.

Watchdog faults military failure to report convictions

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Thirty-one percent of courts-martial results that should have barred individuals from owning a firearm went unreported to the FBI by the U.S. military services in 2015 and 2016, the Pentagon Inspector General concluded in a report released Tuesday.

Investigators for the Inspector General found 780 convictions of felony-level offenses that were never reported to federal law enforcement officials responsible for maintaining the database used to determine whether individuals can purchase a gun.

Additionally, the IG found fingerprints were not submitted to the FBI in 601 of 2,502 cases, the watchdog group wrote in its report.

The Pentagon's struggles to properly report criminal data to the FBI grabbed national attention last month after the Air Force admitted it had failed to provide information to the FBI about an assault conviction that should have barred former airman Devin P. Kelley from purchasing the firearm that he used to massacre 26 people inside a Texas church on Nov. 5.

Between January 2015 and December 2016, the Air Force failed to report 14 percent of court-martial convictions and fingerprint cards, the IG found. The other services were worse.

The Army failed to provide conviction information in 41 percent of its cases, according to the IG. The Navy and Marine Corps each failed to submit conviction information in 36 percent of cases. Similarly, the Army failed to provide fingerprint cards in 28 percent of cases, while the Navy and Marine Corps both failed to provide fingerprints in 29 percent of cases, according to the IG.

The report shows an increase in reporting percentages across

the services since 1997, when each of the services failed to provide complete information in more than 50 percent of cases.

Nonetheless, the IG is pushing the services to do better, writing in its report that the failures not only allow convicted criminals, such as Kelley, to obtain firearms, but they also "hinder criminal investigations, and potentially impact law enforcement and national security interests."

"Our report again identified serious deficiencies throughout the [Department of Defense] in reporting criminal history information to the FBI," said Glenn Fine, the principal deputy inspector general for the Pentagon.

"It is critical that the DOD fully implement our recommendations to correct past deficiencies and prevent future lapses in reporting."

The report on Tuesday was not related to the Kelley case, said Bruce Anderson, a spokesman for the Pentagon IG.

It was launched in February and completed weeks before Kelley's attack in the town of Sutherland Springs, just outside San Antonio. The Pentagon Inspector General and the Air Force are conducting additional investigations into that case.

Kelley's 2012 court-martial conviction of assault against his wife and stepson should have barred him from owning any guns, said Heather Wilson, the secretary of the Air Force. Kelley, who died after the attack, was dismissed from the service with a bad conduct discharge and sentenced to one year of confinement for the assault conviction, which was never reported to the FBI.

The Air Force has found "dozens" of similar cases since opening its investigation, Ann Stefanek, a spokeswoman for the service said last week. The other services have also launched investigations into their own reporting practices, officials have said.

Embattled Conyers resigns from Congress

Associated Press

DETROIT — Besieged by allegations of sexual harassment, Democratic Rep. John Conyers resigned from Congress on Tuesday, bringing an abrupt end to the Detroit liberal's nearly 52-year career in the House.

The 88-year-old civil rights leader becomes the highest-ranking figure on Capitol Hill to be brought down by the sexual misconduct allegations that have toppled powerful men in Hollywood, the media and politics in recent weeks.

Conyers made the announcement on a Detroit radio talk show and endorsed his son, John Conyers III, to succeed him.

"I'm in the process of putting my retirement plans together," the congressman said from the hospital where he was taken last week after complained he felt light-headed. "I am retiring today."

Shadawn Reddick-Smith, Conyers' spokeswoman, said the retirement was effective Tuesday.

"My legacy can't be compromised or diminished in any way by what we're going through now," said Conyers, who has denied any wrongdoing. "This, too, shall pass. My legacy will continue through my children."

Conyers, who was first elected in 1964 and went on to become a founding member in

1971 of the Congressional Black Caucus, easily won re-election last year in the heavily Democratic district. Until Tuesday, he was the longest-serving current member of Congress. But amid a drumbeat of allegations he groped or sexual harassed women who worked for him, he faced growing calls to resign from colleagues in the House, including House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi.

As the furor grew in recent weeks, he stepped down as the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, who replaced Conyers as ranking member on the committee, said he was saddened by the resignation of his "friend and men-

tor" but added, "There can be no tolerance for behavior that subjects women to the kind of conduct that has been alleged."

The House Ethics Committee had been reviewing the harassment allegations.

On Monday, a woman who said she worked for the congressman for more than a decade said he slid his hand up her skirt and rubbed her thighs while she was sitting next to him in the front row of a church.

Elisa Grubbs made the allegation in an affidavit released by her attorney. Grubbs is the cousin of another accuser, Marion Brown, who reached a settlement with Conyers over sexual harassment allegations.

Pivotal high court justice grapples with same-sex wedding cake case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — His vote likely to decide the outcome, Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy voiced competing concerns Tuesday about respecting the religious beliefs of a Colorado baker who wouldn't make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple, and the gay couple's dignity.

Kennedy, the author of all the court's major gay rights cases, worried early in a riveting argument at the high court that a ruling in favor of baker Jack Phillips might allow shop owners to put up signs saying "We do not bake cakes for gay weddings."

Later, Kennedy said the Colorado Civil Rights Commission seemed "neither tolerant nor respectful of Mr. Phillips' religious beliefs" when it found his refusal to bake a cake for the gay couple violated the state's anti-discrimination law.

Phillips and the couple, Charlie Craig and David Mullins, were all in the courtroom Tuesday to listen to an argument that otherwise seemed to put the conservative justices squarely with Phillips and the liberals on the couple's side.

The case pits Phillips' First Amendment claims of artistic freedom against the anti-discrimination arguments of the Colorado commission, and the two men Phillips turned away in 2012.

The argument was the first involving

gay rights since the Supreme Court ruled in 2015 that states could not prevent same-sex couples from marrying. Protesters on both sides filled the sidewalk in front of the court, shortly before the start of the argument.

"We got Jack's back," Phillips' supporters said. Backers of Craig and Mullins countered: "Love wins."

The case's outcome also could affect photographers and florists who have voiced objections similar to those of Phillips.

All eyes were on Kennedy throughout the 75-minute argument. The 81-year-old Kennedy is the author of the 2015 gay marriage decision and all the court's major gay rights rulings.

At the same time, Kennedy has forcefully defended free speech rights in his nearly 30 years as a justice.

Colorado native Neil Gorsuch also will be taking part in the most important gay rights case since he joined the Supreme Court in April.

Colorado is among only 21 states with statewide laws barring discrimination against gays and lesbians in public accommodations.

The case, *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, 16-111, will be decided by late June.

Navy's second Zumwalt-class ship on sea trials

Associated Press

BATH, Maine — The second in the U.S. Navy stealthy Zumwalt class of destroyers headed out to sea for the first time on Monday, departing from Navy shipbuilder Bath Iron Works for builder trials.

The future USS Michael Monsoor carefully navigated the winding Kennebec River before reaching the North Atlantic. It'll be at sea for several days before returning to Bath Iron Works for adjustments.

Some crewmembers of the 610-foot-long ship posed for photos at Fort Popham, in Phippsburg, as the ship cruised past.

The Monsoor is the second in a class of three futuristic-looking ships that feature electric-drive propulsion, new radar and sonar, powerful guns and missiles and a stealthy shape.

The first, the USS Zumwalt, has been commissioned into service and is based in San Diego. The third will be the Lyndon B. Johnson, which is under construction.

The Monsoor is named for a Navy SEAL, Michael Monsoor, who died in Iraq in 2006 when he threw himself on an insurgent's grenade to protect his comrades. Monsoor, 25, a California native, was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously.

The three warships are the largest and most technologically sophisticated destroyers built for the Navy.

High court allows travel ban enforcement

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It's not a final ruling, but the Supreme Court is letting the Trump administration fully enforce a ban on travel to the United States by residents of six mostly Muslim countries.

Challenges to the policy are winding through the federal courts, and the justices ultimately are expected to rule on whether the ban is legal. It applies to travelers from Chad, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen.

The justices offered no explanation for their action Monday.

The Trump administration had said that blocking the full ban was causing "irreparable harm" because the policy is based on legitimate national security and foreign policy concerns.

The order indicates that the high court might eventually approve the latest version of the ban, announced by President Donald Trump in September. Lower courts have continued to find problems with it.

A presidential spokesman, Hogan Gidley, said the White House was "not surprised" that the court permitted "immediate enforcement of the president's

proclamation limiting travel from countries presenting heightened risks of terrorism."

Opponents of this and previous versions of the ban say they show a bias against Muslims. They say that was reinforced most recently by Trump's retweets of anti-Muslim videos.

Just two justices, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor, noted their disagreement with court orders allowing the latest policy to take full effect.

The new policy is not expected to cause the chaos that ensued at airports when Trump rolled out his first ban in January.

For people from the six countries covered by the ban, lower courts had said those with a claim of a "bona fide" relationship with someone in the United States could not be kept out of the country. Grandparents, cousins and other relatives were among those courts said could not be excluded. The courts were borrowing language the Supreme Court itself came up with last summer to allow partial enforcement of an earlier version of the ban.

Now, those relationships will no longer provide a blanket exemption from the ban, although visa officials can make exceptions.

Flynn tweet rattles Trump associates

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The shifting explanations for why President Donald Trump fired national security adviser Michael Flynn have revived questions about whether the president may have obstructed an ongoing investigation of potential contacts between his campaign and Russia.

Pressure on the administration has mounted since Flynn last week pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his conversations with the Russian ambassador, with prosecutors revealing that he is now cooperating with special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. A muddled White House response, including a problematic presidential tweet, has left some Trump confidants worried the president is not being well-served by his legal team and that his lawyers have painted a too-rosy picture of the president's potential plight.

The president's aides and legal advisers scrambled for 48 hours to explain a presidential tweet that raised the specter of obstruction. The tweet appeared to indicate a change in the White House explanation for Flynn's firing, suggesting Trump was aware when the White House dismissed Flynn on Feb. 13 that

the national security adviser had lied to the FBI, whose agents had interviewed him weeks earlier.

Former FBI Director James Comey has said Trump the following day brought up the Flynn investigation in private and told him he hoped he could "let this go."

With questions raised by the tweet, Trump associates tried to put distance between the president and the potentially incriminating message. One of Trump's attorneys, John Dowd, told CNN on Sunday that he was responsible for crafting the tweet.

The president angrily scolded aides for the tweet over the weekend, according to a person familiar with private conversations but not authorized to discuss them publicly.

The episode has rattled some of Trump's outside advisers, who have pressed upon Trump since Flynn's guilty plea that he needs to change his legal strategy.

Trump told two close allies over the weekend he believed he was in the clear and that Mueller's team wouldn't unveil any further charges, according to the advisers who discussed the private conversations under the conditions of anonymity. Both said they disputed that assessment and urged Trump to go on the offensive.

GOP looking past Moore allegations

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican leaders in Washington are coming to grips with the possibility — perhaps even probability — that Alabama's Roy Moore will win his special election next Tuesday and join them in the capital.

Looking past allegations of sexual misconduct with Alabama teenagers, President Donald Trump now has endorsed Moore, and the Republican National Committee quickly followed suit late Monday, announcing it was returning the support it had pulled last month.

Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell, who once called on Moore to get out of the race, changed his rhetoric over the weekend to say that it was Alabama voters who should decide.

The changed tone — and Trump's decision to do away with any facade of distancing himself from the race — make it clear they are increasingly confident in Moore's chances of victory despite the continued unease of some other Republicans.

The special election is next Tuesday for the seat once held by Jeff Sessions, now the U.S.

attorney general. Although the polls have showed a narrowing contest with Democrat Doug Jones, Alabama is a strongly Republican state and Democrats generally have little chance there.

A Moore victory would set up a potential clash with fellow Republicans in Congress, some of whom have resoundingly called on him to quit the race. While some have softened their rhetoric recently, others have said they still will try to expel him if he is elected.

Weeks ago, when accusations of sexual misconduct with teenagers first surfaced, Trump's spokesman had said the president believed Moore would "do the right thing and step aside" if the allegations were true.

Top Republicans had vowed to expel him from the Senate if he wins. Publicly and privately, GOP leaders described the allegations against Moore as credible and insisted there were no circumstances under which he should serve in the Senate.

Moore has denied the allegations, saying "I do not know any of these women. I did not date any of these women I did not engage in any sexual misconduct with anyone."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Squirrel blamed for vandalizing lights

NJ SEA GIRT — It was a squirrel that nearly stole Christmas in a New Jersey town.

Sea Girt officials were puzzled when wires to the town's Christmas tree and display were found torn last week. Workers repaired the damage so the tree could be lit on Friday.

Police kept watch over the display and on Saturday posted a photo on Facebook of the culprit — a squirrel.

Police said the squirrel was "charged with criminal mischief and released on bail."

Man found eating ice cream during burglary

KY LONDON — Authorities said a homeowner found an unknown Kentucky man in his kitchen, drinking milk and eating ice cream.

The Laurel County Sheriff's Office issued a news release announcing that Joshua Hampton, 24, was arrested Friday at a home south of London.

Deputies responding to a complaint of a burglary in progress were told by the homeowner that he had been upstairs when he heard his dog barking, and came down to find Hampton in his house.

Deputies determined he'd unlawfully entered the home.

Anonymous donor pays for couple's gifts

RI WARWICK — A Rhode Island couple said a mysterious donor paid off their layaway balance on Christmas gifts for their children.

Joshua and Kyla Turbitt, of Warwick, told WPRI-TV they had made only one of three pay-

ments on items at Toys R Us for their two young children.

The Turbitts said they were planning to make another payment over the weekend when the manager of the store called to say their layaway was completely paid off.

Joshua Turbitt said the donor paid for more than \$100 worth of toys.

Woman gets help with brother's special gift

MD BALTIMORE — A toy company and strangers are pitching in to help a Maryland woman find a particularly important Christmas gift for her disabled brother.

Cassie Gretschel turned to Reddit recently for help tracking down a discontinued Tonka truck for her brother, Max, 25, who lives in Baltimore.

Max has cerebral palsy and severe scoliosis, and Gretschel said the truck's design is easy for him to play with. It's his favorite toy, and her family is always on the hunt for a new one.

Her post went viral. Gretschel said she's already received one truck and promises of others.

Opera company seeks singers in cyberspace

OH COLUMBUS — An Ohio opera company is auditioning singers online for an upcoming production, with plans to create a virtual chorus synced to a live orchestra.

Opera Columbus is looking for singers of all types for next April's performance of "Orphee et Eurdice," a 1762 composition by Christoph Willibald Gluck.

Singers have until Jan. 15 to submit audition videos. One hundred entries will be selected to be projected onto the set during performances.

Use of surplus military gear investigated

MI THETFORD TOWNSHIP — The Genesee County sheriff said authorities are investigating how a township police department has used more than \$1 million in surplus military equipment from the federal government.

Thetford Township police Chief Robert Kenny told The Flint Journal he has participated in the program since 2008. He denies any wrongdoing.

Stan Piechnik, a township trustee, said some equipment, including all-terrain vehicles, have been used by the police chief's friends. The Journal said records show the township has received mine-detecting sets, rugged terrain forklifts and trailer-mounted hydro seeders.

Opossum breaks into store, gets drunk

FL FORT WALTON BEACH — An opossum that apparently drank bourbon after breaking into a Florida liquor store sobered up at a wildlife rescue center and was released unharmed.

Emerald Coast Wildlife Refuge officials said the opossum was brought in by a Fort Walton Beach police officer Nov. 24. A liquor store employee found the animal next to a broken and empty bottle of bourbon.

"A worker there found the opossum up on a shelf next to a cracked open bottle of liquor with nothing in it," said Michelle Pettis, a technician at the refuge.

Pettis told the Northwest Florida Daily News the female opossum appeared disoriented, was excessively salivating and was pale. The staff pumped the marsupial full of fluids and cared for her as she sobered up.

Boy helps homeless for his birthday

AK ANCHORAGE — An Anchorage boy said he didn't want presents for his birthday last week but wanted money to help homeless people.

KTVA-TV reported Logan More, 7, raised about \$1,500 with the help of his mother, Becky, who started an online fundraising page.

The mother and son purchased 86 jars of jam and 459 pairs of socks with the funds. They donated the items to Downtown Soup Kitchen Hope Center last week.

Center director Nicole Decker said the boy's actions were heartwarming and the donations were appreciated.

'Where's Waldo?' banned by prison

TX DALLAS — The children's book "Where's Waldo? Santa Spectacular" is among the 10,000 books banned from Texas prisons, but Adolf Hitler's autobiography, "Mein Kampf," makes the cut.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice provided to The Dallas Morning News the list of banned publications and the more than 248,000 works that inmates are allowed to read.

Alice Walker's "The Color Purple," a Pulitzer-Prize winner for fiction, and the 2005 best-seller "Freakonomics" also are not allowed. But two books by former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke are OK.

There are a variety of reasons why the Texas agency bans books, such as graphic depictions of illegal sex acts or information on criminal schemes.

From wire reports

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and Military News

Steelers win game filled with brutal hits

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Linebacker Ryan Shazier stayed overnight in a hospital with a back injury while the rest of the Steelers headed home with yet another improbable comeback in hand, one that was so much like all the rest at Paul Brown Stadium.

Nasty. Ugly. Way over the edge. And ultimately, a Steelers win.

Antonio Brown caught a game-tying 6-yard touchdown pass while taking a hit to the head — one of many that crossed the line — and Chris Boswell kicked a 38-yard field goal on the final play Monday night for a 23-20 victory over the stunned-again Bengals.

The Steelers (10-2) extended their best mark through 12 games since 2004 and remained tied with New England for best record in the AFC. They'll play in Pittsburgh in two weeks, a game that could decide home-field advantage for the playoffs.

For now, their biggest concern is Shazier, who is the leading tackler in one of the NFL's top defenses. He hurt his back

while making a tackle in the first quarter and was taken off the field on a cart. He got tests at a local hospital that indicated no surgery was needed "at this time," the team said in a statement.

Coach Mike Tomlin visited him after the game. The Steelers were hopeful that Shazier would return to Pittsburgh on Tuesday.

"Right now, we're just happy that he's getting the necessary medical attention that he deserves," Tomlin said.

It was the most frightening injury in a game full of vicious and illegal hits. Thousands of dollars will be handed out in fines by the league later in the week.

The Bengals (5-7) blew a 17-point lead in their latest meltdown against their Ohio River rival, one that essentially ended their playoff hopes. It was typical of their self-destruction whenever they play the Steelers. Cincinnati managed only 13 yards in the fourth quarter while the Steelers completed their comeback. The Bengals had a team-record 173 yards in penalties.

In some ways, it was reminiscent of the Bengals' implosion during the 2015 playoff game that helped the Steelers rally for an 18-16 win on Boswell's field goal in the closing seconds.

"It has the feel of when we lost the playoff game," said safety George Iloka, who hit Brown in the head on his tying touchdown catch. "It's frustrating to not get the end result we want, year after year."

Some takeaways from the Steelers' latest improbable yet familiar win at Paul Brown Stadium:

Shazier's outlook. The Steelers will have a challenging time replacing Shazier. Pittsburgh has given up a lot of big plays lately, but overcame it by getting sacks and turnovers, with Shazier leading the charge.

"When we need a big play, he's one of the guys we look to," linebacker Vince Williams said. "It's going to be tough."

Own the Bengals. The Steelers have won six straight and nine of 10 against Cincinnati, including that playoff game. So many of them have followed the same script — Cincinnati plays well at the outset, the Steelers

find a way to pull it out at the end — that nothing is really surprising anymore.

"It's sort of the best reality TV show out there — better than the Kardashians," Steelers defensive end Cameron Heyward said.

Burfict carted off, too. Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict has been in the middle of much of the ugliness in the rivalry. His hit to Brown's head set up the Steelers' winning field goal in the 2015 playoff and drew a three-game suspension. He's kept up the feud on Twitter with Bell, who grabbed his facemask and pushed him down in the first half Monday, drawing a penalty.

In the second half, receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster leveled Burfict with a high hit and then stood over him, drawing a penalty. Burfict was taken off on a cart and was in concussion protocol.

"I didn't mean to stand over him," Smith-Schuster said. "I shouldn't have done that. I hope he's OK and I hope he gets better."

Russians won't be allowed to compete under their flag

Associated Press

LAUSANNE, Switzerland — Russian athletes will be allowed to compete at the upcoming Pyeongchang Olympics as neutrals despite orchestrated doping at the 2014 Sochi Games, the International Olympic Committee said Tuesday.

The IOC suspended the Russian Olympic committee and IOC member Alexander Zhukov, and also banned Russian Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Mutko from the Olympics for life. Mutko was the sports minister in 2014 and is the head of the organizing committee of soccer's next World Cup.

The IOC also imposed a fine of \$15 million on the Russian Olympic committee to pay for investigations into the case

and toward future anti-doping work.

Still, the IOC ruled that some Russians will be invited to compete as an "Olympic Athlete from Russia (OAR)" without their national flag or anthem.

Russia could refuse the offer and boycott the games. Russian President Vladimir Putin has previously said it would be humiliating for Russia to compete without national symbols.

"An Olympic boycott has never achieved anything," IOC President Thomas Bach said at a news conference. "Secondly, I don't see any reason for a boycott by the Russian athletes because we allow the clean athletes there to participate."

The sanctions could be challenged at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

The Russian doping program caused "unprecedented damage to Olympism and sports," said IOC-appointed investigator Samuel Schmid, the former president of Switzerland who was asked to verify an "institutional conspiracy."

Russia has repeatedly refused to accept that a state-sponsored doping program existed. Such denials helped ensure bans on its track federation and anti-doping agency have not been lifted.

Instead, Russia blames Grigory Rodchenkov, the former director of Moscow and Sochi testing laboratories, as a rogue employee. It wants the scientist extradited from the United States, where he is a protected witness.

The executive board reached

its decision Tuesday after a scheduled 4½-hour debate when it heard from a Russian delegation that included world figure skating champion Evgenia Medvedeva. The delegation was led by Zhukov, who was later suspended.

Two IOC commission leaders — appointed after World Anti-Doping Agency investigator Richard McLaren upheld Rodchenkov's doping claims in July 2016 — also reported to the Olympic board.

Schmid's report included a 50-page sworn affidavit from Rodchenkov, who was also a key witness for McLaren and an IOC disciplinary commission.

Any sanctions imposed by the IOC can also be challenged at CAS, and later at Switzerland's supreme court.

NBA roundup

Cavs top Bulls for 12th straight win

Associated Press

CHICAGO — LeBron James could sense the Cleveland Cavaliers were starting to click the last time they lost. But a streak like this? He wasn't about to say he saw that coming.

Dwyane Wade and Kevin Love each scored 24 points, James had 23 and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Chicago Bulls 113-91 Monday night for their 12th straight win.

Backed by a trio of stars, the Cavaliers matched their longest winning streak since the 2014-15 season. They dropped a tight game at Houston on Nov. 9 and haven't lost since.

"I'm not Nostradamus so I did not see the streak," James said. "But in the Houston game, I'd seen the way we played in that game. And I'd seen that if we could build off that game, then we can kind of turn the things around. That was a great road trip for us."

Wade made nine of 13 shots in his first game in Chicago since agreeing to a buyout with his hometown team in late Sep-

tember. Love grabbed 13 rebounds and made eight of 13 from the field. James finished 9-for-15 with seven rebounds and six assists.

Kris Dunn led Chicago with 15 points as the Bulls fell to 3-19 with their ninth straight loss.

Warriors 125, Pelicans 115: Stephen Curry had 31 points and 11 assists but sprained his ankle late in the game, and visiting Golden State came back from 21 points down late in the first half to defeat New Orleans.

Klay Thompson scored 22 points and Kevin Durant and Draymond Green each had 19 for the Warriors, who won their fourth straight.

Celtics 111, Bucks 100: Kyrie Irving had 19 of his 32 points in the second half, helping offset a 40-point night by Giannis Antetokounmpo as host Boston held off Milwaukee.

Al Horford added 20 points, nine rebounds and eight assists to help Boston improve to an NBA-best 21-4.

Spurs 96, Pistons 93: LaMarcus Aldridge had 17 points

and 10 rebounds and host San Antonio rallied to beat Detroit.

Rudy Gay had 12 points, 10 rebounds and four assists. His final points came on a three-point play that gave San Antonio an 88-86 lead with 3:39 remaining.

Jazz 116, Wizards 69: Alec Burks scored 27 points for his third straight game with 20 or more, and host Utah blew out Washington for its sixth straight win.

Hornets 104, Magic 94: Kemba Walker had 29 points and seven assists in his return from a shoulder injury, and host Charlotte beat Orlando to snap a four-game losing streak.

Dwight Howard had 12 points and nine rebounds, moving past Paul Silas and Dikembe Mutombo for 19th on the all-time NBA rebounding list.

Knicks 115, Pacers 97: Thaddeus Young scored 20 points to lead seven Indiana players in double figures as the host Pacers routed short-handed New York.

Suns 115, 76ers 101: Devin Booker scored 46 points

and TJ Warren added 25 to lead visiting Phoenix over Philadelphia.

Booker made 17 of 32 shots and hit four three-pointers, including three in the fourth quarter.

Grizzlies 95, Timberwolves 92: Marc Gasol scored 21 points, Tyreke Evans added 16 — including two key free throws with 12.7 seconds left — and host Memphis snapped an 11-game skid with a victory over Minnesota.

Mavericks 122, Nuggets 105: Harrison Barnes scored 22 points, Dennis Smith Jr. added 20 and host Dallas beat short-handed Denver.

Denver played without two-thirds of its starting frontcourt as Paul Millsap (left wrist injury) and Nikola Jokic (sprained left ankle) remained out.

Nets 110, Hawks 90: Caris LeVert scored a season-high 17 points, Rondae Hollis-Jefferson had 16 points and visiting Brooklyn used a strong third quarter to grab momentum and beat Atlanta.

NHL roundup

Flyers snap 10-game losing streak

Associated Press

CALGARY, Alberta — Scott Laughton scored twice and Brian Elliott made 43 saves as the Philadelphia Flyers snapped a 10-game losing streak Monday night with a 5-2 win over the Calgary Flames.

Calgary held a wide edge in play, outshooting Philadelphia 45-21, but the opportunistic Flyers scored three times in a 1:11 span of the second period to break open a 1-all game.

Valtteri Filppula, Michael Raffl and Wayne Simmonds also scored for Philadelphia (9-11-7), and Jakub Voracek had three assists. The Flyers have points in six of their last 11 games as

five of the losses during their skid came in overtime.

Troy Brouwer, with his first of the season, and Sean Monahan scored for Calgary (14-12-1). The Flames lost three of four on their homestand and now head out East for games on back-to-back nights in Toronto and Montreal starting Wednesday.

A key moment came early in the second when a misplayed puck by Flyers defenseman Ivan Provorov enabled Johnny Gaudreau to race off on a breakaway. Elliott stopped the dangerous Flames winger with a sharp glove save, then stopped four more shots on the ensuing power play after defenseman

Andrew MacDonald was whistled for hooking Gaudreau.

Capitals 4, Sharks 1: Alex Ovechkin scored his NHL-leading 20th goal and assisted on another as host Washington stopped its recent run of futility against San Jose.

The Capitals beat the Sharks for the fourth time in 18 meetings since Ovechkin entered the NHL in 2005-06. It was Washington's second regulation win against San Jose in that time and first since Oct. 15, 2009. It also ended a four-game skid in the series.

Predators 5, Bruins 3: Craig Smith scored twice and added an assist to lead host Nashville

past Boston.

Kevin Fiala had a goal and an assist, and Nick Bonino and Filip Forsberg also scored for the Predators, who have won three of four. Pekka Rinne made 37 saves.

Islanders 5, Panthers 4 (SO): Mathew Barzal scored the winning goal in a shootout to lift visiting New York after Florida goalie Roberto Luongo injured his leg in the second period.

Anders Lee scored his 100th career goal. John Tavares, Brock Nelson and Thomas Hickey also scored in regulation for the Islanders. Jaroslav Halak made 39 saves and stopped all three attempts in the shootout.

Mayfield leads three Heisman finalists

Associated Press

Oklahoma quarterback Baker Mayfield made Heisman Trophy history just by being selected as a finalist.

Mayfield, reigning Heisman winner Lamar Jackson of Louisville and Stanford running back Bryce Love were chosen as finalists for the 83rd Heisman Trophy on Monday night.

The award for most outstanding college football player will be given out Saturday night in New York.

Mayfield and Jackson are finalists for the second straight year, and Jackson is trying to become the second player to win two Heismans, joining former Ohio State star Archie Griffin.

Mayfield, though, will come to Manhattan as the clear favorite. He finished fourth in the Heisman voting in 2015, but was not invited to New York. Last year, he was one of five finalists and finished third behind Jackson and Clemson's

Deshaun Watson.

Mayfield is the seventh player to finish in the top five of Heisman voting three times, joining Glenn Davis and Doc Blanchard of Army, Doak Walker of SMU, Griffin, Herschel Walker of Georgia and Tim Tebow of Florida.

The Heisman has been naming finalists and bringing them to New York for the presentation since 1982. Mayfield is the ninth Oklahoma player to be selected as a finalist, matching Miami for the most from one school.

Mayfield is trying to become the sixth Heisman winner from Oklahoma and third Sooners quarterback (Jason White and Sam Bradford) to win since 2003.

This season, Mayfield has led the No. 2 Sooners (12-1) to the Big 12 championship and the College Football Playoff. Oklahoma plays Georgia (12-1) in the Rose Bowl semifinal on Jan. 1. Mayfield leads the nation in efficiency rating at 203.76 and

has thrown for 4,340 yards and 41 touchdowns.

Jackson's numbers have been better than last season in some categories, but Louisville (8-4) has not had the big wins to go with it. With little fanfare, the quarterback is averaging 411 total yards — up from 393 last season — and accounted for 42 touchdowns.

"I'm honored to be chosen as a finalist with these two outstanding players," Jackson said in a statement. "They both had great seasons and deserve this tremendous honor. I want to thank all my teammates and coaches for achieving this honor together."

Griffin won back-to-back Heisman trophies for Ohio State in 1974 and '75.

Love is second in the nation in rushing at 164.42 yards per game and is averaging 8.32 yards per carry for the 15th-ranked Cardinal. An ankle injury slowed Love the last month of the season, but he still led the nation in rushes of at least 50

yards with 12. He also scored 17 touchdowns.

Not making that cut were a couple of talented running backs.

Penn State's Saquon Barkley is second in the nation in all-purpose yards (179.5) and is fifth with 21 touchdowns, including two kickoff return touchdowns for the No. 9 Nittany Lions. He was also 2-for-2 passing with a touchdown. He was considered the favorite heading into the final month of the season, but the Nittany Lions lost twice, and his production fell off until a late surge.

San Diego State's Rashaad Penny leads the nation in rushing (168.9) and all-purpose yards (224.8). Against Nevada three weeks ago, he scored on a rush, a kickoff return and a punt return. Penny had big games against Pac-12 teams Stanford and Arizona State early in the season but was held in check by San Diego State's top Mountain West rivals, Fresno State and Boise State.

College basketball roundup

Florida State knocks off in-state rival No. 5 Florida

Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Terance Mann scored 25 points, CJ Walker added 17 and Florida State upset No. 5 Florida 83-66 on Monday night to remain undefeated.

The Seminoles (7-0) also extended their winning streak against the Gators (5-2) to four, their longest in the 68-game history of the series.

Florida State's length and athleticism posed problems all night. The Seminoles altered shots, forced turnovers, controlled the boards and didn't allow Florida many clean looks, especially from long range.

Coach Mike White pleaded with his Gators to be more physical at halftime, but they didn't respond. Now, Florida has a two-game losing streak and questions about its lofty

ranking.

The Gators entered the game with the nation's top offense, having averaged 99.6 points in their first six games. But they went cold down the stretch against top-ranked Duke in the Phil Knight Invitational in Portland, Ore., last week, and never found a rhythm against the Seminoles.

Florida blew a 17-point lead with 10 minutes left against the Blue Devils and lost 87-84. Big man Marvin Bagley III dominated Florida inside in that one.

The 6-foot-6 Mann was the main culprit Monday.

Mann made 11 of 17 shots and added eight rebounds. Every time Florida looked like it would make a run, Mann answered on the other end. The junior had a tip-in and two

three-point plays in the final 8 minutes.

No. 23 Baylor 84, Sam Houston State 56: At Waco, Texas, Jo Lual-Acuil had 15 points and 11 rebounds, leading six players who scored in double figures for the Bears during a victory over the Bearkats.

Baylor (6-2) lost its only two games last week to Top 25 opponents and slipped seven spots in the new poll released Monday.

Baylor broke open the game early with a 12-0 run that made it 24-11. Another 12-0 spurt early in the second half stretched the Bears' lead to 52-27.

Nuni Omot added 15 points and Tristan Clark had 14 on 6-for-7 shooting. Manu Lecomte scored 12 points while Jake Lindsey and Mark Vital had 11

each.

Air Force 79, Western State Colorado 67: Lavelle Scottie had a career-high 27 points on 11-for-14 shooting and the host Falcons overcame an early 23-point deficit to beat the Mountaineers.

Air Force (5-3) missed nine of their first 11 shots while Division II Western State jumped to a 27-4 lead in the first nine-plus minutes. Air Force pulled the margin back to 46-33 by halftime and erased the deficit entirely at 53-all.

The Falcons tied it at 55, the Mountaineers tied it at 57 and then Air Force took off on a 15-4 run and led by at least nine the rest of the way.

Pervis Louder had 15 points, seven boards and six assists, Sid Tomes scored 11 and Ryan Manning 10 for Air Force.