

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

Thursday, December 27, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Trump touts Iraq commitment during visit

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump said he has no plans to withdraw American forces from Iraq, a week after announcing a surprise pullout of troops from Syria and ordering the Pentagon to bring home roughly half of the American forces deployed to Afghanistan.

The decision allows the U.S. to maintain a presence in the heart of the Middle East and a bulwark against Iranian influence while also keeping a nearby staging ground should American troops be forced to re-enter Syria and engage a resurgent Islamic State.

A longer-term presence in Iraq provides Trump with a hedge against his withdrawal from Syria, a decision that was widely opposed by his advisers and led to the resignation of his defense secretary, retired Marine Corps Gen. Jim Mattis.

The development also suggests that Trump's proclamation of victory over ISIS in a video message from the White House lawn last week had been overstated. Trump said during a visit to Iraq on Wednesday that a presence in the country would en-

able the U.S. to re-enter Syria if need be, suggesting that concerns persist about the possibility of ISIS regrouping there.

"In fact, we could use this as the base if we wanted to do something in Syria," Trump said during Wednesday's unannounced visit to al-Asad Air Base in western Iraq, between Baghdad and the Syrian border.

He was accompanied by first lady Melania Trump. Trump traveled with a small group of journalists, who were ordered for security reasons not to report that he was in Iraq until he had finished delivering his remarks to the troops, roughly three hours into his visit to the base. Air Force One landed at Joint Base Andrews, Md., at 5:12 a.m. EST, The Associated Press reported.

The decision to remain in Iraq also highlighted a contradiction in Trump's messaging about the broader U.S. military presence in the Middle East. He said last week that U.S. troops would be coming out of Syria because victory had been achieved over the ISIS.

But the mission of the roughly 5,200 U.S. troops deployed to Iraq is to support gov-

ernment forces in their fight against the Sunni extremist group, which wouldn't need to continue if a lasting victory had been achieved. U.S. forces remain in Iraq with the permission of the government, unlike in Syria, where the presence of American troops has been complicated by an alliance with a local militia.

Trump's announcement about Iraq comes at a moment of deep uncertainty at the Pentagon, which was thrown into turmoil last week by the president's surprise decisions on the future of American involvement in the Middle East and South Asia, as well as Mattis' resignation.

The Defense Department has declined to offer details about the timing of the Syria withdrawal or whether the air campaign against the ISIS in that country will continue apace. Neither the White House nor the Pentagon has made an announcement about Trump's order to withdraw roughly half of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. On a trip to the region over the holidays, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph Dunford, dismissed reports of the order as "rumors."

Navy to end its bread-and-water confinement

BY SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

The age-old naval punishment of jailing junior sailors for three days with just bread and water soon will go the way of flogging and keelhauling.

The ban on bread-and-water confinement will go into effect Tuesday as part of an extensive change to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which President Barack Obama signed into law in late 2016 and President Donald Trump amended earlier this year.

Bread-and-water confinement is a nonjudicial penalty that ship commanders can mete out to misbehaving sailors in the lowest three pay grades. It dates back to when warships

had wooden hulls and sails.

Offenses that might earn sailors a bready diet in the brig are unauthorized absences, insubordination and lewd behavior.

When asked, sailors and former sailors were mostly in favor of the practice being scrapped.

"I did it once," said Don Inbody, a retired Navy captain referring to a subordinate he punished with bread and water. "It's time for it to go, though."

Inbody couldn't recall the infraction, only that it was a good sailor who did something out of character.

The old-fashioned penalty was preferable to docking the sailor's pay or demoting him, Inbody said, adding that it works best on smart sailors who think about what they did

wrong instead of just getting mad.

A military justice review group recommended eliminating bread-and-water confinement, stating it was confident that commanders could render effective discipline through other punishments available under the UCMJ's Article 15, as well as through nonpunitive measures, said Patty Babb, spokeswoman in the Navy Justice Advocate General's office.

Some say the bread-and-water regimen isn't as severe as it sounds. At most brigs, detainees eat as much bread as they can in 20 minutes, three times a day, and receive ample water.

Brenda Lettera, a retired sailor, said when she was a cook aboard the USS Frank Cable

in the late 1980s, a man got three days of bread and water in a makeshift brig for running naked through the women's berthing. She recalls delivering him two to three loaves each meal.

"They get to eat as much bread as they want during the time," Lettera said. "Except for raisin bread. That wasn't allowed."

Aircraft carriers and the larger amphibious transport vessels are generally the only ships with enough space for a dedicated brig.

Sailors usually are taken to a shore facility for the bread-and-water treatment, said Chief Petty Officer Zach Winemiller, a sailor with a Tomahawk missile unit based in Naples, Italy.

Army revokes ban against sex

BY MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Christmas came late for some Army troops on rotation to Europe when officials canceled an order Wednesday that for nine days banned various sexual acts, and even cuddling, for a unit's soldiers in the rotational barracks at the Grafenwoehr Training Area.

The memorandum, an image of which circulated around the internet after it was shared by the popular website U.S. Army WTF Moments!, had been issued Dec. 17.

The document banned “sexual intercourse, acts that are sexual in nature” and other acts within the “footprint” of a particular battalion in the 1st Cavalry Division, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team's barracks area. The name of the battalion and the commander who issued the memo had been redacted.

The 1st Armored BCT's soldiers have been living in close proximity while deployed to Europe for nine months, officials said.

“The intent of the policy letter was to ensure Soldiers remained professional and respectful of one another while they work and live in close, public quarters, like the barracks that house multiple soldiers in an open bay,” said Maj. Bonnie Conard, an Army spokeswoman.

In particular, the memo's background paragraph said the policy was meant to focus the unit on cleaning and preparing vehicles, equipment and personnel for return to Fort Hood, Texas.

In short, the memo appeared to ban every form of sexual behavior in remarkable detail that included a list of several combinations.

Going further, the order barred other varieties of hooking up. Kissing, of course, was prohibited, but so was the trifecta of outercourse — “rubbing, humping, grinding” — along with the seemingly tame act of cuddling and the decidedly risqué lap dancing.

To ensure all bases were covered, the memo also prohibited “acts that are done with the intent to sexually gratify any

person” stationed at the training area and residing in the barracks footprint.

The memo stated that those caught getting some action could face another kind of action — either the adverse administrative type or punishment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. It's not clear how many Saturday nights or special events the rule quashed before it was withdrawn.

But it seems someone may have gotten a little too excited and issued the order prematurely. On further review, the Army rescinded it after determining that there are existing ways to limit such behavior among soldiers living in close quarters.

“The command decided that the policy is unnecessary, as good order and discipline may be enforced through existing administrative and UCMJ provisions,” Conard said. “As a result, the policy letter was rescinded 26 Dec. and soldiers were briefed on the importance of respecting others and maintaining good order and discipline.”

Bath Iron Works gets \$26M contract for Zumwalts

Bangor (Maine) Daily News

BATH, Maine — The U.S. Navy has awarded Bath Iron Works a \$26.4 million contract to provide planning yard services for the DDG 1000 “stealth” guided missile destroyer.

If all options are exercised and it is fully funded, the total value of the contract could reach \$86.7 million and extend through 2023, according to a news release from the Navy.

Planning yard services include engineering and support, design, maintenance and modernization planning, repair and/or overhaul availability planning and scheduling, material kitting, logistics, planning and execution. Most of the work will be completed in Bath, according to the release.

The shipyard already manages post-delivery maintenance and modernization activities for the Arleigh Burke-class and LCS-class ships.

The contract was awarded following a limited competition, according to the Navy.

Air Force says MAGA hats are not in violation of rules

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany—U.S. Air Forces Europe said troops holding “Make America Great Again” hats during President Donald Trump's visit Thursday to Ramstein Air Base were not in violation of military rules that prohibit taking part in partisan activities while in uniform.

“There is no rule against Airmen bringing personal items to be signed by the president,” USAFE said in a statement.

More than 200 airmen greeted Trump on Thursday at a Ramstein Air Base aircraft hangar, where the president and first lady Melania Trump

were greeted with cheers. Trump posed for photos, shook hands and signed autographs with airmen. But the public display by some uniformed troops, who held red “Make America Great Again” hats synonymous with Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, prompted widespread criticism on social media. An Air Force captain carrying a Trump banner also was scrutinized.

“There are myriad reasons for both a Department of Defense and an Army Regulation against military personnel participating in or showing allegiance to ANY political party while in uniform,” wrote retired Army Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling on Twitter Thursday. “Good

commanders enforce; good NCOs jerk a knot in the (expletive) of those who violate.”

USAFE said troops held the hats for signing, but did not wear them while in uniform. A Defense Department directive states that personnel must refrain from engaging in partisan political activities when in uniform and “should avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement of a political candidate, campaign, or cause.”

However, USAFE said it is unaware of any actions during the event that amounted to a violation of regulations.

“Any time the commander

in chief offers the opportunity to meet with Airmen, such as this official holiday visit by the President and First Lady, Airmen are welcome to participate. No policy violations have been brought to our attention at this time,” USAFE said.

On social media, there also were defenders of the troops with Trump hats and signs who argued there is nothing inherently partisan about the “Make America Great Again” slogan.

“Asking your Commander-in-Chief to sign a MAGA hat is NOT a political campaign action and is not illegal,” tweeted Sebastian Gorka, an outspoken former Trump administration official.

Shutdown looks unlikely to end soon

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Chances look slim for ending the partial government shutdown anytime soon.

Lawmakers are away from Washington for the holidays and have been told they will get 24 hours' notice before having to return for a vote. Although the Senate was slated to come into session Thursday afternoon, few senators were expected to be around for it.

After a weekend and two holiday days for federal employees, Wednesday was the first regularly scheduled workday affected by the closure of a variety of federal services.

Trump vowed to hold the line on his budget demand, telling reporters during

his visit to Iraq on Wednesday that he'll do "whatever it takes" to get money for border security. He declined to say how much he would accept in a deal to end the shutdown.

"You have to have a wall; you have to have protection," he said.

Back from the 29-hour trip to visit U.S. troops, Trump said in a Thursday tweet "we desperately need" a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border, funding for which has been a flashpoint between the White House and Congress ever since Trump took office.

He called on Democrats in Congress to fund his wall, saying the shutdown affects their supporters. He asserted without evidence: "Do the Dems realize that most of the people not getting paid are Democrats?"

Virginia Democratic Sen. Mark Warner called Trump's comments "outrageous." In his tweet, he added: "Federal employees don't go to work wearing red or blue jerseys. They're public servants. And the President is treating them like poker chips at one of his failed casinos."

The shutdown started Saturday when funding lapsed for nine Cabinet-level departments and dozens of agencies. Roughly 420,000 workers were deemed essential and are working unpaid, while an additional 380,000 have been furloughed.

While the White House was talking to congressional Democrats — and staff talks continued on Capitol Hill — negotiations dragged Wednesday, dimming hopes for a swift breakthrough.

Border agency under scrutiny after 2 deaths

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The deaths of two migrant children in just over two weeks raised strong new doubts Wednesday about the ability of U.S. border authorities to care for the thousands of minors arriving as part of a surge of families trying to enter the country.

An 8-year-old boy identified by Guatemalan officials as Felipe Gomez Alonzo died in U.S. custody at a New Mexico hospital on Christmas Eve after suffering a cough, vomiting and fever, authorities said. The cause is under investigation, as is the death Dec. 8 of another

Guatemalan child, 7-year-old Jakelin Caal.

"There is a real failure here that we all need to reckon with," said incoming Rep. Veronica Escobar, a Democrat elected last month to represent El Paso in Congress. "We need to know how many other Jakelins and Felipes there have been."

The U.S. government's system for detaining migrants crossing the border is severely overtaxed. Authorities would not say how many children U.S. Customs and Border Protection is now holding. But the country is seeing a sharp rise in families with children.

In the wake of the two

deaths, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen asked the Coast Guard to study CBP's medical programs and announced that all children who enter the agency's custody will be given "more thorough" assessments.

Felipe had been detained by U.S. border authorities for a week and moved between facilities with his father, officials said. The last place the boy was held — after the first of two visits to the hospital on the day he died — was a highway checkpoint in New Mexico.

Felipe's father, Agustin Gomez, did not see any signs of illness from his son until Mon-

day, according to Guatemalan consul Oscar Padilla, who spoke to Gomez on Wednesday. Felipe and his father had left Guatemala on Dec. 14 and were detained at the U.S.-Mexico border four days later, Padilla told The Associated Press.

By its own regulations, CBP is supposed to detain people for no more than 72 hours before turning them over to other government agencies responsible for long-term detention. CBP facilities are typically spartan, with food, water and blankets but often no medical professionals, teachers or some of the other resources longer-term detention centers offer.

Oregon man completes solo trek across Antarctica

Associated Press

An Oregon man became the first person to traverse Antarctica alone without any assistance on Wednesday, trekking across the polar continent in an epic 54-day journey that was previously deemed impossible.

Colin O'Brady, of Portland, finished the bone-chilling, 930-mile journey as friends, family and fans tracked the endurance athlete's progress in real time online.

"I did it!" a tearful O'Brady

said on a call to his family gathered in Portland for the holidays, according to his wife, Jenna Besaw.

"It was an emotional call," she said. "He seemed overwhelmed by love and gratitude, and he really wanted to say 'Thank you' to all of us."

O'Brady was sleeping near the finish line in Antarctica late Wednesday and could not immediately be reached for comment.

O'Brady, 33, documented his

nearly entirely uphill journey — which he called The Impossible First — on his Instagram page. He wrote Wednesday that he covered the last roughly 80 miles in one big, impromptu final push to the finish line that took well over an entire day.

"While the last 32 hours were some of the most challenging hours of my life, they have quite honestly been some of the best moments I have ever experienced," O'Brady posted.

The day before, he posted

that he was "in the zone" and thought he could make it to the end in one go.

"I'm listening to my body and taking care of the details to keep myself safe," he wrote. "I called home and talked to my mom, sister and wife — I promised them I will stop when I need to."

Though others have traversed Antarctica, they either had assistance with reinforced supplies or kites that helped propel them forward.

Russia adds hypersonic weapon

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia's new strategic weapon has rendered any missile defenses useless at a small fraction of their cost, officials said Thursday.

The Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle flies 27 times faster than the speed of sound, making it impossible to intercept, Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov told Russian state television.

Borisov spoke a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin oversaw what he described as the conclusive successful test of the Avangard and hailed it as a reliable guarantee of Russia's security for decades to come.

In Wednesday's test, the weapon was launched from the Dombrovskiy missile base in the southern Ural Mountains. The Kremlin said it successfully hit a practice target on the Kura shooting range on Kamchatka, 3,700 miles away.

The Defense Ministry released footage from the test launch, in which a ballistic missile could be seen blasting from

a silo in a cloud of smoke, but it hasn't released any images of the vehicle itself.

Putin said the Avangard will enter service with the Russian Strategic Missile Forces next year.

The test comes amid bitter tensions in Russia-U.S. relations, which have been strained over the Ukrainian crisis, the war in Syria and the allegations of Moscow's meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Sergei Ivanov, a former Russian defense minister, said in televised comments that the Avangard constantly changes its course and altitude as it flies through the atmosphere.

He emphasized that unlike previous nuclear warheads fitted to intercontinental ballistic missiles that follow a predictable trajectory allowing it to calculate the spot where they can be intercepted, the Avangard chaotically zigzags on its path to its target, making it impossible to predict the weapon's location. A smiling Ivanov likened the weapon's flight through the atmosphere to a

pebble skipping off the surface of water.

Ivanov, who now serves as Putin's adviser, said the Avangard could be fitted to the Soviet-made UR-100UTTKh intercontinental ballistic missile, which is code-named SS-19 Stiletto by NATO.

He noted that Russia has a stockpile of several dozen such missiles, which are in mint condition and not filled with fuel, allowing them to serve for a long time to come. Ivanov added that they could be put in existing silos, sharply reducing the costs of Avangard's deployment.

"The Avangard has cost hundreds of times less than what the U.S. has spent on its missile defense," Ivanov said.

He noted that Russia began to develop the Avangard after the 2002 U.S. withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and started to develop defenses against ballistic missiles.

Wrestler who cut dreads won't take legal action

Associated Press

BUENA, N.J. — An attorney for a New Jersey high school wrestler forced by a referee to cut his dreadlocks before a match to avoid a forfeit says the boy's family won't pursue legal action.

The Buena Regional school board held an emergency meeting Wednesday night.

The board said the Buena High School wrestling team won't compete in events officiated by referee Alan Maloney.

Wrestler Andrew Johnson had his dreadlocks cut minutes before the match Dec. 19.

Johnson, who is black, had a cover over his hair, but Maloney, who is white, said that wouldn't do. Maloney didn't respond to requests for comment.

At Wednesday's packed meeting, the school's board said its investigation into the incident is ongoing.

Super Galaxy moves closer to use in medical evacuations

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

The Air Force is moving ahead to certify the cargo hold of its largest plane, the C-5M Super Galaxy, for use in medical evacuations for both casualties of war and victims of natural disasters.

With a length almost that of a football field, the Super Galaxy has significantly more capacity than the C-17, the largest aircraft used by the Air Force for aeromedical evacuations in the cargo area.

The Super Galaxy is certified for such evacuations using its passenger area, not its cargo hold.

This month, the Air Force completed a two-year initiative to prepare, equip and test the Super Galaxy for the broader certification.

Its cargo floor can accommodate 89 unstacked litters, twice as many as the C-17, which can fit 48 unstacked litters, according to a statement provided to Stars and Stripes by the Air Mobility Command.

A final proof-of-concept test for the Super Galaxy was recently successfully completed at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., and certification to support aeromedical evacuations could come as early as this summer.

About 100 personnel were involved in the culminating test, with the C-5M and crew flying in from Travis Air Force Base, Calif.

For the purposes of certification, the Super Galaxy was configured with a proprietary litter-stacking system that reduces the maximum number of stretchers its bare cargo area could hold.

Under this configuration, the Super Galaxy "can safely move 244 ambulatory patients and has space for 40 litters," Air Mobility Command said.

The aeromedical evacuation squadron brought aboard its standard in-flight kits used for medical care, and a transportable galley and lavatory were also added.

The Super Galaxy can carry a payload of nearly 135 tons, with enough cargo space to carry, say, two tanks, 16 Humvees and three Black Hawk helicopters. Without cargo, it has a range of 7,000 miles without the need for refueling.

The Super Galaxy is an upgraded version of the legacy C-5, which was introduced in the 1960s. Its more powerful engines provide more thrust, shorter takeoffs and longer range.

Those engine enhancements, as well as upgrades to its cargo compartment, made the plane suitable for aeromedical evacuation use, according to Air Mobility Command, which is headquartered at Scott.

"The engine upgrade allowed the aircraft to produce a lot more power and to use the jet more efficiently," Master Sgt. Christopher Boots, a C-5M flight engineer evaluator, said in an Air Force statement.

"Another factor was the environmental system received upgrades," he said. "We now have better control over the systems, and we're able to better control the environment [temperature and cabin pressure] that the [aeromedical evacuation] folks would have downstairs in the cargo compartment."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Unsuspecting victim gives burglar ride

ME WATERBORO — Authorities in Maine said a burglar had a bite to eat, watched TV and even got a ride from his unsuspecting victim.

The York County Sheriff's Office said Derek Tarbox, 35, broke into a Waterboro home Sunday afternoon, took a shower, got dressed in the homeowner's clothing and was watching television when the homeowner arrived. The intruder said he mistakenly thought the house belonged to a friend and asked for a ride home.

The homeowner told authorities that he drove him to a house in Hollis, which actually belonged to Tarbox's relatives. The victim later realized his home had been ransacked.

Crash scatters dead chickens dyed blue

DE GREENWOOD — A weekend collision brought an unusual group to a Delaware church's doorstep: dead, blue chickens.

A Greenwood Volunteer Fire Co. post on Facebook said a truck carrying the already dead chickens collided with an SUV on Saturday. The chickens scattered across the House of Praise For All People church had also already been dyed blue.

News outlets reported the truck driver works for Valley Proteins, which disposes of animal waste. He was trapped in his vehicle after the crash.

Police say man threw ham at woman

KY LONDON — Authorities said a Kentucky man was arrested after he threw a ham at a woman during an argument over when Christmas dinner should take place.

WAVE-TV reported that David Brannon was arrested Sunday after he tried to flee from police officers who reported to a home on a domestic dispute call. The Laurel County Sheriff's Office said Brannon threw items at the woman, including the ham to be eaten for Christmas dinner.

Brannon is being held in the Laurel County Correctional Center on charges of assault and fleeing or evading police.

Orphaned bear cubs now at wildlife center

VA WAYNESBORO — The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries said a man killed a black bear over bird seed last summer, leaving her two cubs to fend for themselves.

The News & Advance reported the cubs are now at the Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro. The state agency said the man complained this year about black bears visiting his bird feeder and was told to remove it.

It says he instead left it up and shot the bears when they returned. The mother bear died, and the wounded cubs were taken to the center.

Community seeks to make largest s'more

VT MIDDLESEX — One Vermont community is celebrating the holidays and the winter solstice with a massive bonfire and what they hope will be the world's largest s'more.

The Winter S'morestice takes place Saturday at Camp Meade in Middlesex.

A local bakery will make the 4-by-8-foot s'more. The giant dessert will be chopped up and shared with attendees.

Organizers were too late in pursuing a Guinness World Record but may try next year.

Baked good settles issue with neighbor

NC WINSTON-SALEM — A woman from North Carolina was able to solve an issue with a noisy neighbor with three simple ingredients: ingenuity, kindness and pound cake.

The Winston-Salem Journal reported North Carolina native Candice Marie Benbow now lives in New Jersey and was struggling to sleep this month because her neighbor was playing loud music. The way she handled the noise and the noise-maker received thousands of responses on Twitter, where she posted an image of the cake and note.

The note says Benbow has come to expect and even appreciate the music of Tommy Amaro, but it was just too much on Dec. 15. Benbow left the cake and note outside the door of Amaro, a music video producer who was initially suspicious of the cake. The two later announced online they've become friends.

Police shut down city's dinosaur march

MO KANSAS CITY — A Kansas City parade of dozens of people dressed in dinosaur costumes was shut down by police.

The Kansas City Star reported that Jacob Honnold said police will send him a ticket for his role in organizing the second annual March of the Dinosaurs on Sunday at the Country Club Plaza.

Honnold estimated between 100 and 120 people dressed as dinos came for the event. They marched for about 25 minutes before police ordered them to stop.

Kansas City Police spokesman Lionel Colon said in an

email that the crowd spilled into the street. He said foot and vehicle traffic in the area was at increased capacity because of the holiday weekend, so the flash mob raised safety concerns.

Fearing it may attack, man shoots own dog

CT HAMDEN — Police in Connecticut said a man shot and killed his own dog in a park because he feared it might attack some children.

The incident happened Sunday in Hamden and remains under investigation.

Police Capt. Ronald Smith said the man told officers that his dog, a pit bull that was not on a leash at the time, attacked and seriously injured another dog that was on a leash. The owner of the injured dog was also with his three children at the time.

Smith said the owner of the pit bull, who was not immediately identified, told police he was worried his dog might also attack the children.

Teacher receives colorful gift from kids

FL SEMINOLE — A high school history teacher in Florida received the gift of color from his students this holiday season.

The students in his Advanced Placement U.S. History course last year, all seniors, wondered why all the markers beneath the teacher's dry erase board are labeled by color.

Teacher Brian Yarbrough, 38, was born color-blind.

The Tampa Bay Times reported that this Christmas, Yarbrough's students pooled their money and bought him a \$350 gift: glasses from EnChroma, a brand that promises to "unlock a new world of color for people with colorblindness."

From wire reports

On a mission to provide objective reporting to America's military, wherever they serve.
Read us online at www.stripes.com.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Story of the year

Nassar's depravity triggers reflection, anger and reform

Associated Press

The depths of Larry Nassar's depravity began to emerge some 15 months before the calendar flipped to 2018 — when reports of his sexual abuse first appeared in newspaper stories that would eventually lead to a trial and, ultimately, to the doctor's imprisonment.

But it was January 2018, the month when more than 150 female athletes testified at Nassar's sentencing hearing for convictions on child porn and sex abuse charges, that marked a turning point in a crisis that has inflicted untold damage.

The testimony brought the true nature and number of Nassar's crimes to the fore, triggering spasms of anger, soul-searching and attempts at reform, while also giving women in sports — and society in general — a more powerful voice when it comes to exposing abuse swept out of the public's conscience for decades.

Nassar's crimes and the chaos they provoked — the massive turnover at Michigan State, the U.S. Olympic Committee and USA Gymnastics, to say nothing of the trauma wrought on the victims themselves — was the Story of the Year in balloting by AP members and editors. The Nassar saga earned more than double the number of votes as the second- and third-place finishers: the Eagles first Super Bowl championship and the Supreme Court's decision to strike down a law that prohibited sports gambling outside of Nevada.

The year 2018 was also notable for a string of stirring comebacks and surprises, but the steadiest flow of headlines came out of the Nassar scandal — not only detailing his depravity, but

also the slow, often ham-handed way in which some of the most powerful people in sports dealt with the aftermath.

Those who failed paid dearly, and it's no exaggeration to say the entire Olympic movement inside the United States could be reconfigured because of it.

USOC chairman Larry Probst, CEO Scott Blackmun and sport performance director Alan Ashley all left or were forced out under a cloud. In his going-away speech, Probst said despite the USOC's success under his watch, "it is our collective failure to keep you safe that will forever cause me deep and profound regret." Brought on to repair USA Gymnastics, president Kerry Perry got forced out after a series of embarrassing and out-of-touch missteps. Her predecessor, Steve Penny, was arrested on charges he ordered files pertaining to Nassar removed from the team's training center at the Karolyi Ranch in Texas.

Blackmun's successor, Sarah Hirshland, eventually called for decertification of USA Gymnastics — an unwieldy process that could be hastened by Congress, which held a number of hearings and called for changes in the law that governs the entire U.S. Olympic charter.

The one sure thing is that even though 2018 is coming to an end, the pain, lessons and impact felt from the Nassar saga will resonate in 2019 and beyond.

"I think we have opened this door and revealed a lot of bad truths about our sport and sports in general," said one of Nassar's many victims, Olympic champion Jordyn Wieber. "Not only in sports in general, but a big child abuse problem. People are opening their eyes a little bit more."

Top 10 plays of the year

Here are the best plays in sports for 2018:

10. Holtby saves the Caps: Washington goalie Braden Holtby might have turned the Stanley Cup Final around with one save. Alex Tuch had a chance to tie Game 2 of the series with about two minutes left in regulation. Alone in the slot, he took a pass and had tons of open net to shoot at from right on the doorstep — only to be denied by Holtby, who stabbed his stick at the air and just managed to find the puck. The Capitals went on to win the series.

9. Harden breaks ankles: All Wesley Johnson was trying to do was guard Houston's James Harden. Harden crossed Johnson over and caused him to stumble to the floor — it's called "breaking ankles" in basketball vernacular — before staring at him, holding the ball for nearly three seconds, and making a three-pointer.

8. Messi, in a flash: Argentina's Lionel Messi, even in a full sprint, simply does things that hardly anyone else in the soccer-playing world can pull off. He took a long pass in a World Cup game against Nigeria, controlled it with his left thigh, then tapped it forward with his left foot — the ball hadn't hit the ground yet — then stutter-stepped his way to the ball and delivered a right-footed strike into the far side of the net.

7. Bump, kick, spike: The pass from Kailey Elrod wasn't perfect, and all Talia Watson could do was get her foot on the ball and flick it skyward. By the way, this wasn't soccer. This was volleyball. The Cedar Crest College Falcons of Allentown, Pa., had match point against the College of Staten Island on Sept. 6, and Elrod's bump from the baseline was low. Watson got her foot on the ball to extend the point, and eventually had a more conventional set to set up a kill that capped a 3-0 win.

6. Sling and a prayer: Julian McGarvey is a quarterback at Marist College, and his best throw of 2018 had nothing to do with football. Down by two with time running out in New York state's Section 1 Class A boys basketball championship game, McGarvey intercepted a long pass, stumbled, gathered himself and heaved a 70-foot desperation try that dropped to give Ardsley a 52-51 win over Tappan Zee.

5. LeBron saves the day: Jimmy Butler tried a layup with about three seconds left in overtime, only to have it swatted away by LeBron James, who tracked the play perfectly and rejected Butler's

shot with ease. And moments later, James outdid himself — again. After a timeout, James delivered Cleveland a win over Minnesota when he took an inbounds pass, turned and swished a fadeaway over Butler to help the Cavs top the Timberwolves 140-138.

4. Tua for the win: This has to be the best second-and-26 play in football history. Down by three in overtime, in the national championship game, one play after taking a very bad sack for a 16-yard loss, Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa connected with DeVonta Smith on a 41-yard toss on what became the final play of the Crimson Tide's 26-23 win over Georgia.

3. Patriots posterized — twice: The two most memorable plays of 2018 in the NFL were both touchdowns against the New England Patriots. The Philly Special was Nick Foles catching a touchdown pass from Trey Burton late in the first half of the Philadelphia Eagles' win in the Super Bowl over the Pats, and the Miami Miracle was the Dolphins connecting on a pass and two laterals before Kenyan Drake darted into the end zone to cap a 69-yard touchdown that beat New England 34-33 on the final play.

2. Arike's two miracles: Saying Notre Dame's Arike Ogunbowale had a flair for the dramatic at the women's Final Four doesn't even come close to doing what she did justice. She broke ties, and broke the hearts of Connecticut and Mississippi State. Against UConn, Ogunbowale's jumper with 1 second left put Notre Dame ahead to stay in the national semifinals — and two nights later, in the national-title game, she went to the right and let fly with a wild, high-arching three that dropped at the buzzer for the win.

1. A dive into Red Sox lore: Andrew Benintendi may never make a better catch. The left fielder for the Boston Red Sox made a diving grab to end Game 4 of the AL Championship Series, a huge play on his team's run to the World Series title. Boston led 8-6 in Game 4, up 2-1 in the series, but the bases were loaded in Houston and the crowd at Minute Maid Park was roaring. Alex Bregman hit a liner that was sinking fast, and if it had gotten past Benintendi the Astros would have likely scored three runs to win. But Benintendi dove perfectly, snared the ball just above the grass and the rest is now Red Sox lore — as well as the play of the year.

First-round picks had big first seasons

Associated Press

From Baker Mayfield at the top of the first round to Lamar Jackson at the bottom, rookie quarterbacks had an impact, one way or another, in their NFL debuts.

And don't forget some of the players, at some of the other positions, in between.

The betting favorite for NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year is New York Giants running back Saquon Barkley, taken No. 2 behind Cleveland's Mayfield in the draft this past spring.

The first-year player with the biggest impact on the standings has been Los Angeles Chargers safety Derwin James, the No. 17 pick and a strong contender for top defensive rookie honors for a team assured of making the playoffs for the first time since 2013 — and still in the running for the best record in the AFC going into the final weekend.

Even though Mayfield and the Browns were eliminated from playoff contention with two games left, the impact of

the 2017 Heisman Trophy winner from Oklahoma was profound. Think of what it says that the Browns stayed in the postseason chase coming off an 0-16 season, and despite a mid-season coaching change.

Not to mention Mayfield was backing up Tyrod Taylor when the season began, before his knack for winning games gave the Browns little choice but to promote him.

"The amount of work that he puts in does not shock us that he also takes it to the ballgame because he works extremely hard to have an overall understanding of every aspect of the game," said interim coach Gregg Williams, who took over when Hue Jackson was fired halfway through the season. "That does not come easy."

The Ravens selected Lamar Jackson with the 32nd pick of the first round, figuring he was a backup at best behind 10-year starter Joe Flacco. Since a hip injury that sidelined Flacco in early November, Baltimore is 4-1 with Jackson leading a run-

first attack that has kept the Ravens alive as they try to end a three-year playoff drought. A victory against the Browns on Sunday gives Baltimore the AFC North title.

Flacco was ready to return last week, but coach John Harbaugh stuck with Jackson over the 2013 Super Bowl MVP.

Sam Darnold (third overall to the New York Jets), Josh Allen (seventh to Buffalo) and Josh Rosen (10th to Arizona) have had pretty much typical rookie quarterback years — more struggles than successes. But all three have offered glimpses that they can lead their respective franchises for years.

Darnold strained his foot at Miami on Nov. 4, a game in which he threw four interceptions. In the three outings before he was sidelined, the 21-year-old quarterback completed just 47 percent of his passes — 52-for-110 — for 558 yards and two touchdowns with a whopping seven INTs.

After missing three games, he has six TDs and one pick,

attributing the turnaround to getting a chance to watch and learn from Josh McCown. But the Jets lost the past two.

Allen also was much better after returning from a right elbow injury that kept him out four games. On the open-ended question of who had emerged as the leader of the Buffalo offense, coach Sean McDermott chose Allen, citing how he responded coming off the injury.

"You become the leader by earning the respect of your teammates," McDermott said. "He was willing to do that early on. He didn't try to jump out in front when he hadn't earned it."

Barkley has several rookie records for the Giants: first with 1,000 yards rushing (third in the NFL with 1,198 with a game to go) most touchdowns (10); and most 100-yard rushing games (6). The downside for the Giants was a 1-7 start that turned Barkley's season mostly into a stat chase. The former Penn State standout made an impression.

Red hot Baltimore needs win to get into postseason

Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — After missing the postseason for three straight years, the Baltimore Ravens probably wouldn't complain at all about squeezing into this year's playoffs as a wild card.

Entering as AFC North champions is so much better — a scenario that stands as a distinct possibility entering the final weekend of the regular season.

Thanks to a Lamar Jackson-infused surge of five wins in six games, the Ravens are on the cusp of winning the division and hosting a first-round game. All it will take for that to happen is a victory Sunday at home against the Cleveland Browns (7-7-1).

"That's definitely the first goal, to be division champions," coach John Harbaugh said

Monday. "And we're playing a championship game on Sunday. That's what you work for."

Baltimore was 4-5 on Nov. 4 before entering its bye week. An injury to Joe Flacco paved the way for Jackson to take over at quarterback, and the Ravens promptly turned their season around by combining a sound running game with the top-ranked defense in the NFL.

Now, after Baltimore (9-6) upset the Los Angeles Chargers on the road Saturday night and Pittsburgh lost in New Orleans on Sunday, the Ravens are poised to win their first AFC North title since 2012.

"That's what we put in all that time for," Harbaugh said. "In order to do that, we've had to weather some storms and overcome some challenges and win some games. Guys have done a great job. We appreciate where we're at. This is the opportunity

that we wanted, and now it's ours to go get."

The Ravens have been here before, with lamentable results. Two years ago, they lost in Pittsburgh on Christmas night in a matchup for the division crown. Last year, Baltimore had its playoff hopes crushed by the Cincinnati Bengals in the season finale when Tyler Boyd caught a 49-yard, fourth-down touchdown pass with 44 seconds left.

Harbaugh doesn't intend to remind the team about that game because, well, those who experienced it won't soon forget it.

"We all know where we've been. We don't need to talk about anything," he said. "When you have a gut-wrenching experience, a tough one like we've had the last two years, you take those with you. It makes you stronger. It forges you as a per-

son, as a competitor."

This isn't the same team as last year, the year before, or even the 2012 version that rode Flacco's arm to a world championship. A year ago, Jackson was preparing to lead Louisville against Mississippi State in the TaxSlayer Bowl, and Don Martindale was working with the Ravens linebackers under defensive coordinator Dean Pees.

Now, Jackson is in charge of a flourishing offense that counts heavily on ball control and Martindale oversees a blitzing, gambling defense that has allowed fewer yards and fewer points than any unit in the league.

On Friday night, just over 24 hours before the Ravens faced the Chargers, the team announced that Harbaugh would return for the 2019 season and both sides are working on an extension to his contract.

NBA roundup

Leonard leads Raptors' rally past Heat

Associated Press

MIAMI — Danny Green slipped to the right corner, somehow forgotten by the Miami Heat.

He made them pay.

Kawhi Leonard scored 30 points, Green's three-pointer with 22.7 seconds left — a wide-open one — became the gamewinner, and the Toronto Raptors improved the NBA's best record to 26-10 by topping the Heat 106-104 on Wednesday night.

Toronto has now won three games this season when trailing by 17 points. "We've always got a chance to come back," Fred VanVleet said.

Green had 18 points and VanVleet added 16 for the Raptors, who survived a wild fourth quarter that saw 12 lead changes and four ties. Miami had three shots on the game's final

possession, with Dwyane Wade and Justise Winslow missing threes and Wade having a chance at a tip-in that wouldn't fall.

The Heat saw its five-game winning streak snapped.

Wade blamed himself for Green being so open, acknowledging that he blew the coverage.

"I'm not mad at the loss. I'm mad at the way I played," Wade said. "You're going to lose games in this league. That's fine. We've been playing good basketball and we played some good basketball today. ... Losses are going to happen. It's the way you bounce back from them and the last few times we've had losses we've bounced back pretty well."

Nets 134, Hornets 132 (2OT): Joe Harris made the tiebreaking layup with 3.4 sec-

onds left in the second overtime and finished with a season-high 27 points as host Brooklyn outlasted Charlotte.

The teams swapped mistakes over the final stretches of regulation and overtime

Pistons 106, Wizards 95: Blake Griffin had 23 points and nine rebounds, Andre Drummond got his 10th straight double-double, and host Detroit beat Washington.

Suns 122, Magic 120 (OT): Devin Booker scored 35 points and T.J. Warren added 24 points, including all four Phoenix points in overtime, to lead the visiting Suns.

Timberwolves 119, Bulls 94: Derrick Rose had 24 points and eight assists in just his second career game in the United Center against his former team, lifting Minnesota.

Pacers 129, Hawks 121:

Thaddeus Young scored 21 points, Domantas Sabonis and Tyreke Evans each added 19, and visiting Indiana won its third straight game.

Grizzlies 95, Cavaliers 87: Marc Gasol had 20 points, nine rebounds and six assists to help host Memphis beat Cleveland.

Mavericks 122, Pelicans 119: Luka Doncic scored 21 points, including the tiebreaking free throws with 30 seconds left, and host Dallas ended a six-game losing streak.

Spurs 111, Nuggets 103: DeMar DeRozan had 30 points, LaMarcus Aldridge scored 27 and host San Antonio beat Denver.

Clippers 127, Kings 118: Lou Williams scored 24 points, Montrezl Harrell added 22 and the Clippers nearly squandered a 27-point lead before holding off Sacramento.

Bowls roundup

Ibrahim, Golden Gophers run all over Yellow Jackets

Associated Press

DETROIT — Mohamed Ibrahim ran for career-high 224 yards and two touchdowns, leading Minnesota to a 34-10 victory over Georgia Tech on Wednesday night in the Quick Lane Bowl.

The Golden Gophers (7-6) won three of their last four games, and Ibrahim had a lot to do with that. The redshirt freshman running back had 121 yards rushing in a win at Wisconsin that made Minnesota bowl eligible and ran for 155 yards last month in a victory over Purdue.

The Yellow Jackets (7-6) did not have the speed or strength to slow down Ibrahim and their triple-option offense was stunted in coach Paul Johnson's finale. The Gophers limited Georgia Tech to 206 yards on the ground after it led the na-

tion with 335 yards rushing per game.

Minnesota led 13-0 early in the second quarter after Tanner Morgan threw an 18-yard touchdown pass to Tyler Johnson in the first quarter and Emmitt Carpenter made two field goals. Ibrahim's 3-yard touchdown run midway through the third quarter made it 20-3.

The Yellow Jackets responded with Nathan Cottrell's 20-yard touchdown run, but their defense allowed Ibrahim to score again on the ensuing drive. Morgan connected with Johnson on a 30-yard touchdown strike with 6:19 left, giving the Gophers a 24-point cushion.

Cheez-it Bowl

TCU 10, California 7 (OT): Jonathan Song kicked a 27-yard field goal in overtime after

being replaced for a potential winning kick at the end of regulation, lifting the Horned Frogs to a wild victory over the Golden Bears in Phoenix.

TCU (7-6) had a chance to win it in regulation, sending out Song for a 44-yard field goal. After Cal (7-6) called a timeout, the Horned Frogs switched kickers and Cole Bunce hooked the kick wide left.

TCU's Juwuan Johnson intercepted Chase Forrest's pass to open overtime and nearly returned it for a touchdown. The Horned Frogs were called for sideline interference on the play and had to start their overtime possession at the 40.

TCU worked its way down the field and Song was sent out for the winner. Cal called another timeout, but this time Song stayed out and sent the kick straight through the uprights to end a crazy night in

the desert.

The Golden Bears and Horned Frogs combined for nine interceptions — the most in the bowl's 30-year history by two — including three in five plays of the second quarter. Cal's Jaylinn Hawkins broke a Cheez-It Bowl record with three interceptions.

Servpro First Responder Bowl

No. 23 Boise State vs. Boston College, ccd., weather: The Broncos' first appearance at historic Cotton Bowl Stadium in Dallas turned into what is believed to be the first bowl game called off because of weather.

The game between Boise State (10-3) and Boston College (7-5) was canceled because of the threat of severe weather after a delay of nearly 1½ hours.