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US urges its allies to boost presence in South China Sea

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon is urging America's Pacific allies to increase their military presence in the South China Sea in line with its own efforts to confront China.

Randy Schriver, the assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific affairs, made the call during a recent interview with *The Australian* newspaper.

Chinese influence operations in the South Pacific, which have included donations to politicians and financing infrastructure projects in small island nations, have caught the attention of officials in Australia and New Zealand, and Schriver warned that the communists may want to establish military bases in the South Pacific.

"I think what could potentially bring more pressure on the Chinese is other partners and allies joining in these activities [in the South China Sea]," he said. "If not freedom-of-navigation operations ... just joint patrols, presence operations."

U.S. freedom-of-navigation operations are a challenge to Chinese territorial ambitions that have seen military facilities and equipment such as aircraft and missiles placed on artificial islands claimed by neighboring nations.

American ships involved in the operations have clashed with Chinese vessels. In August, for example, a Chinese warship almost collided with the USS Decatur, a destroy-

er, near the disputed Spratly Islands.

"There have been several public accounts of Australian activities in the South China Sea and some of the assertive challenges [to Australia] from China," Schriver said.

In April, three Royal Australian ships transiting the South China Sea on their way to Vietnam were harassed by Chinese navy vessels.

In September, the HMAS Melbourne, a guided-missile frigate, traveled through the Taiwan Strait. The USS Mustin and the USS Benfold had passed through the strait two months earlier.

Schriver told *The Australian* that other U.S. allies, including Britain, France and Canada, have enhanced their military activities in the South China Sea.

"We've seen a lot more activity from other interested parties because I think there is recognition that an erosion of international law and norms in the South China Sea has implications globally," he said.

U.S. allies are likely to respond favorably to the call to get tougher on China, said Paul Buchanan, an American security analyst based in Auckland, New Zealand.

Australia and New Zealand, major trading partners of China, are balancing economic and defense relationships he said.

"[The Australians] have to walk a tightrope with the Chinese but, as of late, they have been a lot more forceful in pushing back," Buchanan said, noting the recent moves

to establish a military base on Manus Island, off the coast of Papua New Guinea, and the ban on Chinese telecom company Huawei participating in new 5G services in Australia and New Zealand.

The moves haven't been met with major blowback from China, Buchanan added.

"China may realize that what is happening is that they are shoring up a defensive alliance, whereas before there were differences [between America and its allies]," he said. "Now there seems to be a coordinated effort to push back ... particularly in the South China Sea [where China's behavior] ... is seen as egregious."

In contrast to the Western powers, Japan's relations with China are thawing.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed with Chinese President Xi Jinping in October to resume mutual naval visits.

Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force may join the Chinese navy's fleet review in April, the *Japan Times* newspaper reported recently.

The visit to the city of Qingdao marking the 70th anniversary of the founding of China's navy would be the first by a Japanese warship since 2011, the newspaper reported.

U.S. Navy officials did not indicate whether an American ship would participate.

"As a matter of policy, we do not discuss future operations," Pacific Fleet spokeswoman Navy Lt. Rachel McMarr said in an email Friday.

Command master chief of US destroyer relieved of duty

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The command master chief of the 7th Fleet's USS Milius destroyer was relieved of duty on Friday for "misconduct," the Navy said.

Task Force 70 commander Rear Adm. Karl Thomas removed Master Chief Petty Officer Jason Pick "due to misconduct identified during an ongoing investigation," said Task Force 70 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Matt Knight.

Knight did not reveal the nature of the misconduct nor did he give details about the investigation. He said Pick has been reassigned temporarily to Destroyer Squadron 15.

As command master chief, Pick served as the highest-ranked enlisted leader on the Milius.

Pick began his career in 1997 as a flight-deck plane handler on the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, later climbing the ranks while serving on the carriers USS Lincoln, USS Constellation and USS Nimitz. Prior to joining the Milius in 2016, Pick spent four years aboard the carrier USS Ronald Reagan, where he earned the rank of master chief, according to the Navy.

The Milius came to Yokosuka Naval Base last summer from its previous homeport of San Diego. The ship's repositioning helped fill a gap in destroyers in the Pacific after two 7th Fleet destroyers — the USS Fitzgerald and the USS McCain — were damaged severely in separate, deadly crashes in 2017.

Female vets buck trend, vote for Dems

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It had been months since retired Lt. Cmdr. Michele Fitzpatrick paid attention to news coverage. She was turned off by President Donald Trump's tweetstorms and attacks on critics such as the late Republican Sen. John McCain, a war hero. But as the November midterm elections approached, she fired up her laptop.

A member of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy's Class of 1980, the first to include women, Fitzpatrick began researching candidates and poring over issues. On Election Day, she voted without hesitation: all Democrat.

"I just don't think what's happening now is helpful," Fitzpatrick, of Groton, Conn., said in a telephone interview, pointing to the negative discourse in Washington. "It's almost like watching kids and bullies on the playground instead of people actually doing something about helping this country to survive and to thrive."

That's hardly a startling view from a Democrat these days. But from a military vet?

The face of the U.S. military and its veterans, long seen as a bastion of support for Republicans, is changing — and perhaps, too, is their political bent.

Veterans by and large did vote for GOP candidates on Nov. 6, affirming Trump's frequent claim that they stand among his strongest backers. But more women are joining the military, and they are bucking the pattern, according to data from AP VoteCast.

Fitzpatrick, 60, recalled suppressing her opinions as a young, "hard-core Democrat" in an overwhelmingly Republican military but finding other ways to promote change, such as supporting other female cadets.

Now, women in the military are helping elect new Democratic lawmakers and are spurring discussion on once little-mentioned topics such as sexual harassment and women in combat roles. As political candidates, female veterans also had a breakout performance in the midterms, sometimes campaigning as a foil to Trump: empathetic and competent on issues such as health care while also trustworthy on military and defense, typically a GOP strength.

Both current and former female service-members were more likely to vote in the 2018 midterm elections for Democrats than Republicans, 60 to 36 percent, according to the data from VoteCast. Men with military backgrounds voted Republican by roughly the same margin, 58 to 39 percent.

A record number of female veterans — four — were elected to the House, all Democrats. Three won in political swing districts, helping give the party control of the chamber next year.

Democratic Rep.-elect Chrissy Houlahan, a former Air Force captain, said she was motivated to run after organizing a bus trip last year to the Women's March in Washington. She felt her election would serve as a repudiation of Trump, but she avoided sharp rhetoric in favor of a message of service to country and getting things done.

Women now make up 20 percent of the Air Force, 19 percent of the Navy, 15 percent of the Army and 8.6 percent of the Marines, according to Defense Department figures. In the Coast Guard, a division of the Department of Homeland Security, women make up 22 percent of the officers and 13 percent of those enlisted. The Coast Guard Academy, where Fitzpatrick was among the first women to attend in 1976, enrolled a class this year that is 40 percent female, a new high.

Houlahan will serve her first House term starting in January, along with former Navy pilot Mikie Sherrill, D-N.J., and Navy veteran Elaine Luria, D-Va., who defeated another veteran, Republican Rep. Scott Taylor, a former Navy SEAL. The women prevailed in tight races by tying their opponents to Trump and the GOP congressional majority while pledging to work on both sides of the aisle.

Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii, a frequent Trump critic, also won re-election. She is a member of her state's National Guard.

In all, seven female veterans will serve in the next Congress, up from four. The veterans in the House will join Sens. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., a former U.S. Army helicopter pilot, and Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, a combat veteran in the Iowa Army National Guard. Rep. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., a retired Air Force colonel, lost her Senate bid but was later appointed by Arizona's governor to replace Sen. Jon Kyl in the seat that belonged to McCain.

Poll shows high approval for Trump among veterans

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Nearly 6 in 10 military veterans voted for Republican candidates in the November midterm elections, and a similar majority had positive views of President Donald Trump's leadership. But women, the fastest growing demographic group in the military, are defying that vote trend.

That's according to AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of more than 115,000 midterm voters — including more than 4,000 current and former servicemembers — conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago. It found that veterans overall approved of Trump's job perfor-

mance, showing high support for the president's handling of border security and his efforts to make the U.S. safer from terrorism.

Male veterans were much more likely to approve of Trump than those who haven't served, 58 to 46 percent.

But 58 percent of female veterans disapproved of Trump, which is similar to the share of women overall (61 percent).

Here are some takeaways on veterans:

■ **Trump approval.** Overall, 56 percent of veterans — both current and former servicemembers — said they approve of the job Trump is doing as president, while 43 percent disapproved. Voters who have not served in the military were more

likely to disapprove (58 percent) than approve (42 percent) of the president's job performance.

■ **Trump's leadership.** The poll showed veterans more likely than nonveterans to say Trump has the right temperament to serve as president (48 to 32 percent) and that he's a strong leader (59 to 49 percent). They were slightly more likely to say Trump cares about "people like you" (46 to 40 percent).

On the issues, veterans were significantly more likely than those who have not served to approve of Trump's handling of border security, 62 to 48 percent, and to think the Trump administration has made the U.S. safer from terrorism, 51 to 35 percent.

■ **Drain the swamp?** Vet-

erans had good success running for Congress compared with previous years. Eighteen new veterans were elected to the House, seven of whom are Democrats.

That's the largest number of new veterans elected to the House since 2010, and the biggest influx of Democratic vets since 1996, according to Seth Lynn, a University of San Francisco professor who runs Veterans Campaign, a group that prepares veterans for careers in politics.

One fresh veteran face — Republican Rick Scott of Florida — will join the Senate.

A total of 96 military veterans will serve as lawmakers next year, 66 Republicans and 30 Democrats.

Security issues concern African officials

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

Violent extremism and other security issues continue to threaten stability in many African countries, air force officials on the continent say, despite U.S. plans to trim back Pentagon commitments and foreign aid in some areas.

This month, U.S. national security adviser John Bolton unveiled the Trump administration's strategy in Africa, focused on countering the rapidly expanding financial and political influence of China and Russia across the continent, with efforts to curb radical Islamic terrorism, mainly through allies, taking a secondary priority.

The Pentagon had announced in the fall that it would begin scaling back special operations

missions and pulling hundreds of troops from the continent, where Americans have been training, advising and fighting side-by-side with security forces in countries such as Somalia, Mali and Libya.

The move came about a year after four U.S. soldiers were killed in an ambush in Niger and reflects a broader change in U.S. defense strategy focused more on what the administration has called "great power competition."

But security issues remain a chief concern for African defense officials who met in Morocco in October for a wide-ranging Air Force symposium meant to foster greater cooperation weeks ahead of the Pentagon's drawdown announcement.

Though it's not clear whether the latest shift in Africa will af-

fect the Air Force mission there, experts say it signals the Defense Department is downgrading the terrorist threat to U.S. interests in the region, which could chip away at support for U.S. military programs across the continent.

Analysts warn that if troop reductions aren't done carefully, it could expand China's and Russia's influence in Africa — as those countries seek to fill the void — and could give terrorist organizations an opportunity to rise up.

"If the U.S. doesn't want to cede influence in Africa over the next decade or two decades, it really does need to (think) differently about what its military has been doing in Africa over the last 10 years and what types of changes it needs to make," said Jonathan Schroden, direc-

tor of the center for stability and development at the nonprofit research group CNA in Arlington, Va.

Some of those changes could include shifting forces from counterterrorism to monitoring Chinese activities across the continent, Schroden said.

But Schroden and others cautioned any shift away from special operations missions should not be too drastic or the U.S. could risk losing some of the gains made in countering violent extremism in recent years.

"I think the concern is always if you don't stay on top of this problem, there's a lot of merging and shifting of territory and these threats can pop up, by their very nature. They're very hard to track," said Linda Robinson, a Rand Corp. senior researcher.

Assad authorizes Iraqis to strike ISIS forces in Syria

Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Syrian President Bashar Assad authorized Iraqi forces Sunday to attack Islamic State inside Syria without waiting for permission from authorities in Damascus, the state news agency SANA said, as the two allies coordinate their fight against extremists ahead of a planned U.S. withdrawal from Syria.

The announcement highlights the close relations between the two neighboring Arab countries that are both allied with Iran. ISIS once controlled large parts of both countries when it declared a caliphate in 2014.

Iraqi warplanes and artillery have in the past pounded ISIS positions inside Syria after getting the green light from Syrian authorities.

The extremists have been defeated in Iraq but still hold a small area in Syria close to the Iraqi border.

On Saturday, Assad received a letter from Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi calling for

both countries' coordination in "fighting terrorism."

President Donald Trump announced earlier this month that the U.S. will withdraw all of its 2,000 forces in Syria. The main U.S.-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces has expressed concerns that the U.S. plans to pull out could lead to the revival of ISIS, saying that the extremists have not been defeated yet in Syria.

In Washington, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said he is going to encourage Trump to sit down with generals and reconsider pulling troops from Syria.

"Slow this down, make sure that we get it right, make sure ISIS never comes back," Graham said on CNN. "Don't turn Syria over to the Iranians. That's a nightmare for Israel."

Graham has been a confidant of Trump's, but it's unclear how much Trump will listen to him on Syria. Still, Graham said he's generally pleased with Trump's foreign policy initiatives.

Navy automates worksheets for promotion-eligible sailors

BY JOSHUA KARSTEN

Stars and Stripes

The Navy has announced the automation of enlisted advancement worksheets, the first step for promotion-eligible sailors before an exam.

The automation, according to an administrative message signed Thursday by the Navy's personnel boss, Vice Adm. Robert Burke, scraps the paper signature on the worksheet that confirmed a sailor's time in rate, awards, education and performance mark averages from previous exams — all of which factored into a sailor's final multiple score after completing the rating test.

The elimination of the paper forms is "designed to streamline our advancement worksheet processes, and enable sailors to focus on studying their advancement exam reference material," Chief of Naval Personnel spokesman Lt. Rick Moore said in an email Friday. "We constantly review our advancement exam processes to

determine ways to increase efficiencies and reduce administrative burden for our sailors, Educational Services Officers and command leadership."

The new electronic form will pull information from sailors' personalized online service records and populate all the required information from the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System, or NSIPS.

"Sailors will have the ability to view enlisted advancement worksheets several months prior to exam administration, providing additional time for validation and corrections (if needed)," the Thursday message said.

The change also eliminates the requirement for manually blacking out circles on answer sheets during exams.

The paperless worksheets will be tested during a pilot phase from January to March, and the Navy will "assess if capability is ready for future exam cycles" by April 1. Full implementation is planned for June.

Trump blames Dems for partial shutdown

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump was firing Twitter barbs at Democrats over the weekend as talks to end a week-long partial government shutdown remained at a stalemate.

Trump was cooped up in the White House after canceling a vacation to his private Florida club.

As the disruption in federal services and public employees' pay appeared set to continue into the new year, there were no signs of any substantive negotiation between the blame-trading parties. Trump held out for billions in federal funds for a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, which Democrats have said they were intent on blocking.

Trump tweeted Saturday that he was "in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come on over and make a deal on Border Security." But there has been little direct contact between the sides during the

stalemate, and Trump did not ask Republicans, who hold a monopoly on power in Washington for another five days, to keep Congress in session.

Trump earlier had upped the brinkmanship by threatening anew to close the border with Mexico to press Congress to cave to his demand for money to pay for a wall. Democrats are vowing to pass legislation restoring the government as soon as they take control of the House on Thursday, but that won't accomplish anything unless Trump and the Republican-controlled Senate go along with it.

Talks have been at a stalemate for more than a week after Democrats said the White House offered to accept \$2.5 billion for border security last Saturday. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer told Vice President Mike Pence that it wasn't acceptable, nor was it guaranteed that Trump, under intense pressure from his

conservative base to fulfill his signature campaign promise, would settle for that amount.

Trump has remained out of the public eye since returning to the White House early Thursday from a 29-hour visit to U.S. troops in Iraq, instead taking to Twitter to attack Democrats.

He also moved to defend himself from criticism that he couldn't deliver on the wall while the GOP controlled both the House and Senate.

"For those that naively ask why didn't the Republicans get approval to build the Wall over the last year, it is because IN THE SENATE WE NEED 10 DEMOCRAT VOTES, and they will give us "NONE" for Border Security!" he tweeted. "Now we have to do it the hard way, with a Shutdown."

Trump appeared no closer to securing money for his signature border wall, which he vowed during the campaign that he would make Mexico pay for. He's failed to do so. Now, Demo-

cratic leaders are adamant that they will not authorize money for the project, calling it wasteful and ineffective. They show no signs of bending either.

The shutdown is forcing hundreds of thousands of federal workers and contractors to stay home or work without pay.

The White House has not directly engaged in weeks with House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, who has all but locked up the support she needs to win the speaker's gavel after the new Congress convenes on Thursday.

Pelosi has vowed to pass legislation to reopen the nine shuttered departments and dozens of agencies now hit by the partial shutdown as soon as she takes the gavel. Pelosi spokesman Drew Hammill added that Democrats are united against the wall and won't seriously consider any White House offer unless Trump backs it publicly because he "has changed his position so many times."

Experts scoff at crowd size estimates

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ryan Seacrest and Anderson Cooper will be there. Snoop Dogg, too.

But 1 million or 2 million people in New York's Times Square for New Year's Eve? As Snoop would say, you must be sippin' on gin and juice.

Crowd-size experts scoff at those mammoth figures — floated annually by city officials and event organizers — saying it's impossible to squeeze that many of even the skinniest revelers into such a relatively small space.

The real Times Square ball drop crowd likely has fewer than 100,000 people, crowd science professor G. Keith Still said.

"Generally, people are overestimating crowd sizes by 10- to 100-fold," said Still, who teaches crowd science at Manchester Metropolitan University in England and trains police departments on techniques to calculate crowd sizes.

The crowd estimates come from the New York City Police Department, according to the Times Square Alliance, which runs the ball drop.

In recent years, the department estimated that 2 million people had packed into Times Square. Mayor Bill de Blasio used a big number again Friday, saying the city expected "up to 2 million people in Times Square itself," a bow-tie-shaped zone running five blocks between Broadway and 7th Avenue.

New York University professor Charles Seife, a mathematician and journalist who explored statistical manipulation in his book "Proofiness," said the city has an interest in promoting a bigger number because it "helps cement the image of New York City as the center of the universe at a certain date and time."

He suggested fuzzy math and fuzzier geography were also at play.

"How do you count a partici-

pant in the Times Square ball drop?" Seife asked. "Is it everyone who can see the ball, or anyone squeezed into a bar in Manhattan?"

To actually fit 1 million revelers, the city would have to jam more than the equivalent of a sold-out Yankee Stadium on every block of 7th Avenue between Times Square and Central Park — which starts about 15 blocks to the north.

Still and his colleagues perform detailed analyses when calculating precise crowd totals. But even using simple techniques, like measuring Times Square on a map and running a few calculations, it's clear the numbers don't get anywhere near 1 million.

It might reach 120,000 if the crowd packed in at seven people per square yard, but Still said that density, involving people squished together front-to-back and shoulder-to-shoulder, is unlikely.

6 injured at airport after jet bridge issue

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Officials said six people were injured after an "equipment failure" involving a jet bridge at Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport.

The airport tweeted Saturday night that six people had been taken to a hospital with injuries that were not life-threatening due to the incident at Gate E-10.

A jet bridge is the hallway structure leading to the plane that passengers use to both board and exit.

The airport said the jet bridge will stay closed until an investigation is complete. It said the aircraft has been moved, and the incident has not caused further impacts to the airport's operations.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

County bans smoking in cars with children

NY BUFFALO — Smoking is now banned inside cars with kids in a western New York county, adding to similar prohibitions in a couple of other places in the state.

Besides prohibiting smoking in cars carrying people under 18 years old, the Public Health Protection Act signed on Friday also bans smoking at bus shelters and bars pharmacies from selling tobacco products. Drugstores have until the end of February to rid the shelves of tobacco and nicotine products.

Violators will be given warnings for the first three months, before facing fines of \$50 or more.

Animatron's clothing stolen from Epcot

FL ORLANDO — Authorities said they're investigating the theft of clothing that belonged to a retired animatronic character at Walt Disney World.

The Orange County Sheriff's Office announced Thursday that the theft occurred in August. The stolen items had belonged to Buzzy, who was part of the now-closed "Wonders of Life" attraction at Epcot.

Investigators said someone sneaked into a backstage area that's not open to the public and took a red jacket, green cap and rubber molded hands. An incident report lists the items' value at \$600, but it wasn't known what a black-market collector might pay for parts of a Disney attraction.

The sheriff's office said they interviewed a suspect who was charged with resisting arrest after refusing to hand over his phone.

Post office renamed to honor Jimi Hendrix

WA RENTON — Music icon Jimi Hendrix will have a post office near his hometown named after him.

The Seattle Times reported a bill was signed into law rechristening the Renton Highlands Post Office the James Marshall "Jimi" Hendrix Post Office in the legendary guitarist's honor.

The bill was sponsored by Rep. Adam Smith, of Bellevue, and was supported by the other members of the Washington state delegation in the House as well as both Washington U.S. senators, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell.

Before rising to international fame in the late 1960s, Hendrix grew up in Seattle.

Hendrix tributes scattered around his hometown range from a statue to his namesake park.

Purse stolen from pew on Christmas Eve

NY GREENLAWN — Police are looking for thieves who snatched a woman's pocketbook from a Long Island church pew while she went to receive Communion during Christmas Eve Mass.

Two people who appear to be women were seen on security cameras walking into St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church in Greenlawn, passing through pews toward the back and picking up something. They walk out with a bag they hadn't brought with them.

Its owner, Linda Barling, told Newsday she finds it disgusting that anyone would go to a church on Christmas Eve to steal.

Weed that sprouted yule cheer uprooted

OH TOLEDO — A street corner weed that had been decked out with Christmas lights and brought out holiday goodwill in Ohio has apparently met an early demise.

WTVG-TV in Toledo reported that someone pulled out the "Christmas weed" early Friday morning and drove off with it in his trunk.

The weed had become a holiday attraction after a family decorated it with tinsel to spread Christmas cheer.

Police: Dad beat girl with selfie stick

TN NASHVILLE — Police in Tennessee said a Nashville man beat his 6-year-old daughter with a selfie stick after the girl broke it.

WSMV-TV reported on Dec. 23 that Metro Nashville police said Aaron Moore, 28, was arrested and charged with felony child abuse. Police said the girl and her siblings were visiting Moore when she accidentally broke the selfie stick.

A police report said Moore then beat the girl with the broken device, leaving welts across her back. The girl's siblings told police they witnessed the attack, and the children's mother reported the attack to authorities.

Police probe bomb threat to church

NY SCHENECTADY — Police spent six hours investigating a bomb threat at a church that turned out to be false.

The Schenectady Police Department said in a news release that someone called police at 2 p.m. Friday claiming there

were "multiple explosive devices" inside the First Reformed Church. Police said the caller also said someone was inside the church with a weapon.

Multiple police agencies were called in, and officers swept the inside of the church as well as the surrounding area. The all-clear was given about 8 p.m.

Boy not seriously hurt in fall from a ski lift

UT EDEN — An 8-year-old boy apparently escaped serious injury when he fell roughly 33 feet off a ski lift in northern Utah.

The Standard-Examiner reported that Weber Fire District Capt. John Wood said the boy walked away with only cuts and bruises after falling from a lift Friday at Nordic Valley Ski Resort in Eden, which is 38 miles north of Salt Lake City.

Wood said the child's parents were told by paramedics to take him to a hospital to be checked out as a precaution but he did not appear to have any serious injuries.

Man with toy gun in standoff with police

CT PLAINVILLE — A standoff with a man police believed had a gun ended without serious injury at a Connecticut shopping plaza.

Plainville Police Sgt. Mark Connoy said the man was eventually taken into custody after being subdued with beanbag rounds. He said officers discovered the man had a toy gun, not a real weapon.

Connoy said the man was taken to an area hospital for treatment for some bumps and bruises from the beanbags.

From wire reports

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No. 1 Alabama rolls over No. 4 Oklahoma

BY STEVEN WINE
Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — Tua Tagovailoa threw for 318 yards and four touchdowns and No. 1-ranked Alabama beat No. 4 Oklahoma 45-34 on Saturday night in the College Football Playoff semifinal at the Orange Bowl.

The high-scoring Sooners reached the semifinal despite a porous defense that was no match for Alabama's diverse attack, and the Crimson Tide led 28-0 after only 17 minutes.

Alabama (14-0) advanced to the national championship game for the fourth consecutive season and will play Jan. 7 in Santa

Clara, Calif., against familiar foe Clemson, which beat Notre Dame 30-3 in the Cotton Bowl. Clemson, ranked No. 2, and Alabama will face off in the playoffs for the fourth year in a row, and have split two title games.

"They've got a great program and a great team," Alabama coach Nick Saban said. "I'm sure it'll be a great challenge for us, and I'm sure we'll need to play better than we did today."

Tagovailoa's performance in the semifinal argued for a Florida recount in the Heisman Trophy vote. He finished as the runner-up to Oklahoma's Kyler Murray but won sweet consolation by completing 24 of 27 passes, with scores to four receivers.

"It's always good to see your hard work pay off," said Tagovailoa, who played on a sore left ankle.

While Tagovailoa connected on his first nine passes for 184 yards, Murray was sacked twice before he threw a pass, and his first completion came with his team already down 21-0.

Murray had one brilliant moment, a perfect deep throw on the move to Charleston Rambo in the end zone for a 49-yard score. He passed for 308 yards and ran for 109 but took several jarring hits, including when All-America nose guard Quinnen Williams dislodged his helmet and forced him from the game for one play in the fourth quarter.

Lawrence's 3 TD passes lead No. 2 Tigers past Irish

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — When Clemson's Dabo Swinney entrusted a team with championship aspirations to freshman quarterback Trevor Lawrence in September, this is what the Tigers' coach had in mind.

Lawrence threw for 327 yards and three touchdowns and No. 2 Clemson beat No. 3 Notre Dame 30-3 on Saturday in the Cotton Bowl to reach the College Football Playoff title game. The Tigers (14-0) will play No. 1 Alabama — a 45-34 winner over No. 4 Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl — for a fourth straight season in the playoff on Jan. 7 in Santa Clara, Calif.

"He's just so poised. He just sees it. And he's got a gift of an arm," Swinney said. "But I just love his humility and how consistent he is with his preparation, day in and day out. Easy, easy guy to coach. Easy guy to get behind and support. His teammates love him."

Clemson's overpowering and experienced defensive line, led by ends Clelin Ferrell and Austin Bryant, smothered Ian Book and the Fighting Irish (12-1), holding them to 248 yards. On offense, freshmen led the way.

Lawrence, making his 10th career start, was 27-for-39 and did not throw an interception against a Notre Dame defense that had been one of the

best in the country. Freshman receiver Justyn Ross had six catches for 148 yards and two long touchdowns.

"It makes it a lot easier on me when you just have guys all around you who are such great players and take that load off of you. There's not much pressure when you have guys this good playing around you," Lawrence said.

The Irish hung around for a quarter, with the teams exchanging field goals. But in the first quarter, Notre Dame All-America cornerback Julian Love went out with what coach Brian Kelly said after the game was a head injury and Lawrence started taking apart the Irish.

Lawrence hooked up with Ross deep down the sideline and the big receiver beat Love's backup, Donte Vaughn, for a tackle-breaking, 52-yard score early in the second quarter. The Irish looked as if they might keep it close to halftime, but they couldn't keep Clemson out of their backfield — even without suspended star tackle Dexter Lawrence.

In the final 2 minutes, Trevor Lawrence connected with Ross on a 42-yard score and with Tee Higgins for a one-handed, 19-yard touchdown reception — again over Vaughn — with 2 seconds left in the second quarter. Lawrence was 13-for-15 for 229 yards in the quarter.

Bowls roundup

No. 10 Gators cap season with rout of No. 8 Michigan

BY CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Florida capped its big comeback season — and left Michigan reeling again.

Lamical Perine had a 5-yard scoring catch and 53-yard touchdown run to lead No. 10 Florida's strong rushing attack Saturday, helping the Gators affirm their return to relevance with a 41-15 rout of No. 8 Michigan in the Peach Bowl.

After finishing 4-7 in 2017, Florida enjoyed a dramatic turnaround in Dan Mullen's first season as coach.

The victory put Florida (10-3) in position to enter next season as a Top 10 team.

"In year one, to come here and to know where we were this time a year ago to where we are today, it's special to me," Mullen said. "... To finish as a 10-win season, one of the Top 10 teams in the country, that's

pretty special."

Florida (10-3) closed the season with four straight wins.

Michigan (10-3) closed a promising season with two straight lopsided losses.

Virginia 28, S. Carolina 0: Bryce Perkins threw three touchdown passes to Olamide Zaccheaus, the game's Most Outstanding Player, and the Cavaliers' 14th-ranked pass defense dominated a South Carolina team that had aver-

aged more than 38 points over its previous five games.

Perkins was 22-for-31 passing with 208 yards and ran for 81 yards. Zaccheaus had 12 catches for 100 yards and Jordan Ellis ran for 106 yards and a touchdown as Virginia held more than a 24-minute edge in time of possession, ending the ACC's longest bowl drought.

"This is the first step toward making big strides," Perkins said.

Nunes KO's Cyborg; Jones claims title

Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Amanda Nunes pulled off one of the most surprising wins in mixed martial arts history when she left the world's most feared female fighter face-down on the canvas.

Jon Jones merely did exactly what everyone expects him to do whenever he manages to get out of his own way.

Nunes knocked out Cris "Cyborg" Justino 51 seconds into the first round at UFC 232 on Saturday night, ending the featherweight champion's 13-year unbeaten run in spectacular fashion.

Jones also reclaimed his light heavyweight title in his return from a 17-month cage absence. The two-time champ stopped Alexander Gustafsson with strikes on the ground in the third round.

Nunes (17-4), the UFC's bantamweight champion, made history after she fearlessly moved up 10 pounds to challenge Justino (20-2), widely considered the most accomplished female fighter in MMA.

The undersized underdog dominated her fellow Brazilian from the start, buckling Justino's knees and knocking her down twice before landing the overhand right that ended it.

"Nothing was going to stop me from what

I wanted to do tonight," Nunes said. "When she connected with a couple of punches, I just said, 'I'm going to walk right through her.'"

Nunes is the third fighter in UFC history to hold two title belts simultaneously, joining Conor McGregor and Daniel Cormier.

"I knew this was happening, I told you all!" Nunes said. "I'm the new 'champ-champ.' I said that before, and now I'm just achieving this dream."

Just six days after the UFC moved the entire 232 card from Las Vegas to the famous Forum south of downtown Los Angeles, Jones (23-1, 1 no-contest) closed the show with a methodical dismantling of Gustafsson (18-5). The bout was a rematch of Jones' toughest fight, a thrilling decision in 2013 over Gustafsson.

But in Jones' first bout since completing his second drug-related suspension, the star picked apart Gustafsson with kicks in the first two rounds. He got a takedown in the third and finished the fight with several brutal shots to Gustafsson's head on the ground.

"It was always about being the champion again," Jones said. "It was never about the opponent, nothing personal. I'm just happy with my belt, and for now I want to go back to the gym and improve my game."

The UFC made the extraordinary decision to move its show 280 miles to California during a holiday week just to keep Jones on the card. The former champion recently tested positive for low levels of a banned steroid, but California regulatory officials didn't consider the result serious enough to keep the long-troubled star out of the octagon, while Nevada's commission did.

The 31-year-old Jones had fought only twice in the previous 47 months, losing an enormous chunk of his fighting prime due to his misbehavior. He held the UFC's 205-pound title twice before, but had it stripped both times.

Jones returned from his first doping suspension with a stoppage of Cormier in July 2017 to reclaim his light heavyweight title, but lost the belt again after testing positive for steroids.

A capacity crowd of 15,862 in Southern California watched another groundbreaking achievement by Nunes, the ferocious brawler who calls herself "The Lioness." Nunes also knocked out Ronda Rousey in less than a minute two years ago, and she has victories over bantamweight champion Miesha Tate and future 125-pound champion Valentina Shevchenko.

Top 25 roundup

Unranked Princeton stuns No. 17 Arizona State

The Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Richmond Aririguzoh sank two free throws with 24.8 seconds remaining and Princeton held on to stun No. 17 Arizona State 67-66 on Saturday, a week after the Sun Devils had beaten then-No. 1 Kansas on the same floor.

The Tigers (7-5) beat a ranked opponent for the first time since a victory over then-No. 25 Harvard in 2012. Princeton beat a top 17 team for the first time since a victory over UCLA in the NCAA Tournament in 1996. Princeton coach Mitch Henderson was a member of that Tigers team.

In the back-and-forth contest Saturday, Arizona State (9-3) had three shots in the final seconds to win the game.

No. 3 Tennessee 96, Ten-

nessee Tech 53: Grant Williams scored 25 points and went 10-for-11 from the floor to lead a strong shooting performance for host Tennessee in a blowout of Tennessee Tech.

No. 5 Kansas 86, Eastern Michigan 63: Udoka Azubuike scored 23 points and grabbed nine rebounds in his return from an ankle injury, and host Kansas cruised.

No. 6 Nevada 86, Utah 71: Caleb Martin scored a career-high 33 points, Jordan Caroline added 17 for visiting Nevada.

No. 8 Michigan State 88, Northern Illinois 60: Cassius Winston matched a career-high with six three-pointers and scored 24 points, leading host Michigan State to the win.

No. 12 Auburn 95, North Florida 49: Bryce Brown scored 18 points and made five

three-pointers, and host Auburn raced to a victory over North Florida with a smothering defensive performance.

No. 13 Ohio State 82, High Point 64: C.J. Jackson scored 14 of his 20 points in the second half and Kaleb Wesson added 17 points for host Ohio State.

No. 14 North Carolina 82, Davidson 60: Cameron Johnson scored 17 points, Luke Maye had 11 points and 14 rebounds for host North Carolina.

Western Kentucky 83, No. 15 Wisconsin 76: Dalano Banton nearly had a triple-double and Western Kentucky rode the freshman to a win over visiting Wisconsin.

No. 16 Kentucky 71, Louisville 58: Tyler Herro had a career-high 24 points, Keldon Johnson added 15 and Kentucky beat host Louisville in

this fierce Bluegrass rivalry.

No. 19 Mississippi State 103, BYU 81: Aric Holman scored a career-high 28 points and Quindary Weatherspoon had 27, leading host Mississippi State past BYU for the Bulldogs' ninth straight victory.

No. 21 Buffalo 87, Canisius 72: CJ Massinburg scored 22 points and Nick Perkins added 18 to help host Buffalo close out its non-conference schedule.

No. 22 Houston 80, NJIT 59: Corey Davis Jr. scored 19 points, DeJon Jarreau had 13 and host Houston beat NJIT to remain undefeated.

No. 24 Iowa 72, Bryant 67: Tyler Cook scored 19 points with 12 rebounds and host Iowa held off lowly Bryant.

NBA roundup

Harden scores 41 as Rockets keep rolling

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — James Harden scored 41 points, becoming the first NBA player since Oscar Robertson to record at least 35 points and five assists in seven consecutive games, to power the Houston Rockets to a 108-104 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Saturday night.

Harden had 26 points in the first half and reached 40 for the third straight game. He was 7-for-16 from three-point range, made all 14 free throws and added six assists.

Anthony Davis looked sluggish a night after scoring a season-high 48 points in a victory over Dallas, taking only five shots in the first half and finishing with 22 points. Julius Randle led the Pelicans with 23 points and 11 rebounds.

Warriors 115, Trail Blazers 105: Klay Thompson scored 32 points, Stephen Curry and Kevin Durant each had 25 and Golden State avenged a loss from earlier this week, beating host Portland.

Golden State, stinging from a 110-109 home loss to the Blazers on Thursday, outscored Portland in each of the first three quarters to avoid its second three-game losing streak of the season. Damian Lillard made six three-pointers and scored 40 points for Portland. It was the fifth time this season Lillard, who made the go-ahead three-pointer, has scored at least 40 points.

Hawks 111, Cavaliers 108: Trae Young and Vince Carter each scored 21 points, John Collins added 14 points and 12 rebounds, and Atlanta beat visiting Cleveland. The Hawks, enjoying a rare run of success in their first season of rebuilding under new coach Lloyd Pierce, have won five of six.

Nuggets 122, Suns 118: Jamal Murray scored 46 points

and made a career-high nine three-pointers to carry Western Conference-leading Denver over host Phoenix.

Wizards 130, Hornets 126: Trevor Ariza scored 24 points and was one of seven Washington players in double figures as the Wizards beat visiting Charlotte amid news five-time All-Star guard John Wall will have season-ending surgery. Thomas Bryant added 21 points and 10 rebounds and Ariza had nine assists and seven rebounds for Washington, which won for the third time in 12 games.

Spurs 122, Clippers 111: LaMarcus Aldridge scored 38 points and San Antonio beat host Los Angeles.

DeMar DeRozan had 25 points, 13 rebounds and six assists for the Spurs, who won for the fifth time in their past seven games. Rudy Gay had 12 points, and San Antonio's starters combined for 97 points.

Celtics 112, Grizzlies 103: Kyrie Irving had 26 points and 13 assists, Al Horford added 18 points, including a pair of key three-pointers in the closing 1:32, and visiting Boston rallied for a victory over Memphis.

Bucks 129, Nets 115: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 31 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists, helping to turn away Brooklyn's attempt to rally from a 23-point deficit early in the fourth quarter.

Jazz 129, Knicks 97: Rudy Gobert had 25 points and 16 rebounds as Utah beat visiting New York. Dante Exum scored 13 points and had a career-high 13 assists in his first start of the season.

Exum filled in for Ricky Rubio, who sat out with lower back and left knee contusions. Donovan Mitchell added 15 points and Kyle Korver chipped in 15 off the bench.

NHL roundup

Barzal's hat trick boosts Islanders

Associated Press

TORONTO — John Tavares had a front-row seat for Mathew Barzal's first career hat trick a little over a year ago as his friend, teammate and captain.

The New York Islanders center's second three-goal game in the NHL left Tavares with a decidedly different feeling Saturday.

Barzal scored a natural hat trick in the second period, Valtteri Filppula had a highlight-reel goal and the New York Islanders beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 4-0 in their first game against Tavares, their former captain.

New York has won six of seven. Robin Lehner made 36 saves for his second shutout of the season, and Ryan Pulock had two assists.

The Islanders pounded the Maple Leafs in a reunion with Tavares, who signed with Toronto as a free agent July 1.

"Anticipation and a lot of unknown," Tavares said of his emotions before puck drop. "Going against a lot of familiar faces ... I just tried to handle it as best I could."

"Just wish I could have played better and got a better result."

Tavares, 28, played nine seasons in New York, collecting 272 goals and 349 assists for 621 points in 669 games.

Devils 2, Hurricanes 0: Rookie goalie MacKenzie Blackwood stopped 37 shots for his first shutout and Pavel Zacha scored short-handed as host New Jersey topped Carolina.

Wild 3, Jets 1: Devan Dubnyk stopped 26 shots to help visiting Minnesota end a season-high five-game losing streak.

Blackhawks 3, Avalanche 2 (OT): Patrick Kane scored his second goal of the game 41 seconds into overtime as Chicago outlasted host Colorado.

The Blackhawks were on a power play when Kane knocked

in the decisive shot off a feed from Jonathan Toews.

Sharks 7, Oilers 4: Erik Karlsson had a goal and three assists, Logan Couture and Melker Karlsson each scored twice, and San Jose beat slumping host Edmonton.

Golden Knights 4, Kings 1: Malcolm Subban stopped 30 shots to help Vegas beat host Los Angeles and snap the Kings' four-game winning streak.

Panthers 2, Flyers 1: Jonathan Huberdeau scored with 1:06 left to cap a third-period rally and lift host Florida.

Bruins 3, Sabres 2 (OT): Sean Kuraly scored 3:44 into overtime to give visiting Boston a win.

Capitals 3, Senators 2: Tom Wilson and Tyler Lewington each had a goal and an assist in Washington's win over short-handed host Ottawa.

Lightning 6, Canadiens 5: Adam Erne scored twice in the third period, including the go-ahead goal with 1:02 left, and NHL-leading host Tampa Bay extended its point streak to 14 games.

Rangers 4, Predators 3: Jesper Fast scored two goals, including the game winner, and added an assist as visiting New York snapped a three-game losing streak.

Stars 5, Red Wings 1: Alexander Radulov scored twice and host Dallas routed Detroit.

Penguins 6, Blues 1: Sidney Crosby had a goal and three assists to lead surging Pittsburgh on the road.

Canucks 3, Flames 2 (OT): Alex Edler scored 3:06 into overtime for visiting Vancouver.

Coyotes 5, Ducks 4 (OT): Nick Schmaltz scored 33 seconds into overtime and visiting Arizona rallied from a two-goal deficit. The Coyotes trailed 4-2 less than nine minutes into the second but tied it before the period was over.