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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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General: More troops needed in Afghanistan

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The top U.S. military commander in Afghanistan told lawmakers Thursday that he needs several thousand additional troops to break “a stalemate” in the 15-year-old war against the Taliban and other terrorist organizations including al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

Army Gen. John Nicholson told the Senate Armed Services Committee that more troops could come from the United States or other NATO nations and would be tasked with training Afghanistan’s military and police forces to provide better offensive capabilities in the fight that the Afghans have led since the beginning of 2015. The general also warned lawmakers of growing influence from Russia and Iran in the country.

“I have adequate resources in my counterterrorism mission,” said Nicholson, who leads the NATO training mission and the U.S. counterterrorism mission in Afghanistan. “In my train, advise and assist mission, we have

a shortfall of a few thousand.”

The general did not specify how many additional troops he needs. He told Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., he did not need 50,000 NATO troops in the country, but he did not rule out the potential for up to 30,000.

“Sir, that’s a conversation I’d need to have with my chain of command,” Nicholson told Graham during the Senate hearing.

There are about 8,400 American troops in Afghanistan now supporting the NATO and counterterrorism missions. Thirty-eight additional NATO countries provide about 6,300 troops to the mission, according to NATO.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., the committee’s chairman, criticized the troop limit for Afghanistan that was imposed last year by President Barack Obama as a political move, but he also blasted President Donald Trump for failing to publicly discuss his position on the war, which received little attention throughout the presidential campaign.

“The new administration has an opportunity to turn the page and finally give our commanders the resources and au-

thorities they need to seize the initiative and force the enemy to react, instead of the other way around,” McCain said. He added later, “We are not winning, and ... we need a strategy to succeed.”

Adding more NATO trainers would be the first step in a new strategy, Nicholson said. In recent years, the Afghan security forces have primarily focused on retaining the land that they control, but a boost in NATO training capacity could surge the Afghans’ ability to take the offensive.

The Afghan government controls about 57 percent of the country’s populated districts, about 15 percent fewer than it controlled in November 2015, according to the most recent report by the Special Investigator General for Afghanistan Reconstruction released Jan. 30.

Nonetheless, Nicholson said he is confident in the Afghan forces’ abilities. He also touted the nation’s fledgling air force, which while overworked has made “amazing progress for such a young capability.”

Nicholson also said his chain of command, including Central Command chief Army Gen. Jo-

seph Votel and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, is discussing how to add trainers who would embed with Afghans closer to the fighting than NATO is operating now. NATO trainers work primarily at the “corps level,” advising the nation’s most senior military commanders. But Nicholson would like to move them as low as the “brigade level” to aid units directly involved in combat.

Nicholson also warned senators on Thursday that the United States and Afghanistan have seen increased activity from Russia and Iran within the country in recent months, including cooperation between the two nations and the Taliban. Iran has primarily worked in western Afghanistan to recruit Shiite Muslims from that nation to fight against the Islamic State group in Syria, he said. But Russia has negotiated directly with the Taliban, citing concerns about that terrorist organization in Afghanistan’s eastern region.

“When we look at Russian and Iranian actions in Afghanistan, I believe that they are in part there to undermine the United States and NATO,” Nicholson said.

Only about 25 percent of Marines’ Hornets OK to fly

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Roughly 25 percent of the Marines’ 280 F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets could fly now if needed, the top aviation Marine said Wednesday.

Only 72 “could take off today, this morning, right now,” said Lt. Gen. Jon Davis, deputy commandant for Marine Corps aviation. Of the rest, 109 are in longer-term, scheduled work and 99 are temporarily offline for less complex maintenance or because they are awaiting parts, he said.

The strain on aircraft isn’t limited to the Hornets. Of the service’s 1,065 aircraft,

including all helicopters and jets, 439 are flying today, Davis said.

The Marine Corps doesn’t expect all 1,065 aircraft to be available at any given time; those numbers incorporate planned rotations of used planes and helicopters to receive upgrades or maintenance. But the 439 is far short of what the service needs to ensure Marine pilots get the time in the air they need for training, he said.

“I’m 150 airplanes shy of what I need” to meet those needs, he said, noting that to meet the Marines’ flight hour goals he would need 589 aircraft ready to fly.

With the Hornets, the lack of parts con-

tinues to be the biggest challenge for the Marines. Of the 72 available aircraft, 56 Hornets are committed to active-duty squadrons and the rest are with training or reserve units, Davis said. He said those units would need about 20 more for pilots to stay fully trained.

“I’ve never seen the Marine Corps as operationally deployed and out there as we are in a sustained fashion ... probably since Desert Storm,” he said.

The Marines will request additional funds to restore more Hornets, Davis said. “Our need to recapitalize airplanes is large — certainly on the F-18 side.”

Court tosses Okinawans' lawsuit over noise at Kadena

By CHIYOMI SUMIDA
Stars and Stripes

OKINAWA CITY, Okinawa — A Japanese court dismissed a demand Thursday by 146 Okinawans to restrict flight operations at Kadena Air Base because of aircraft noise.

The suit, filed against the U.S. government in November 2012, called for no flights between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., and a payment of 1.5 million yen (about \$13,000) to each plaintiff for health damages that included sleep deprivation, sleep disorders and noise-induced hearing loss.

The Okinawa City branch of the Naha District Court ruled that U.S. military activities in Japan are outside of its jurisdiction.

"All we want is to restore a livable environment. I wished our plight was heard by the U.S. government in court," said Shusei Arakawa, 80, the director of a local child-care center and leader of the residents' group.

In a separate lawsuit, the residents are suing the Japanese government over noise generated from the air base, demanding suspension of noise in late evening and early morning hours and compensation for their health troubles.

That ruling is scheduled for Feb. 23.

"What we are seeking is not money but quiet, undisturbed sleep at night and an environment in which children can play outdoors, free from noise that roars over their heads," said Arakawa, a former Okinawa City mayor.

He said the residents would appeal Thursday's ruling.

In November, a three-judge panel ruled that the Japanese government must pay 3,417 Okinawans roughly \$6,614 each for legal expenses because of aircraft noise at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

However, the panel dismissed the plaintiffs' demands to halt flight operations at Futenma, leaving some upset and vowing to appeal.

In December, the Japan Supreme Court rejected a lower-court ruling banning Japan Self-Defense Forces nighttime flights out of Naval Air Facility Atsugi, west of Tokyo. The court also reduced compensation for noise and upheld a lower-court ruling that allowed late-night U.S. military flights to continue.

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NATO considers intel center in Naples for fighting terror

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S.-led NATO alliance is developing plans for a new crisis center in Italy in an effort to sharpen the military pact's focus on terrorism threats emanating along its southern doorstep, German media reported Thursday.

The coordination center in Naples will function as a hub for better analyzing information and intelligence from hot spots in Syria, Iraq and Libya, the dpa news agency reported. It said planning for the center, which is expected to employ about 90 military personnel, began before President Donald Trump's election.

Trump has emphasized the need for the alliance to place greater focus on counterterrorism efforts.

Next week, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis will be in Brussels to meet with his counterparts for two days of talks at NATO headquarters. Ways to boost NATO's pro-

file in fighting the Islamic State and other terrorist groups will be at the top of the agenda.

In recent weeks, NATO has emphasized its efforts in support of the U.S. coalition battling the Islamic State group in the Middle East, including a program focused on training troops inside Iraq.

NATO officials also have said they foresee a larger role in intelligence gathering in any expanded counterterrorism effort.

When asked about the plans for a new crisis center in Naples, NATO confirmed that the anti-terrorism fight would be on the agenda of the talks in Brussels.

Naples is home to NATO's Allied Joint Force Command, which is responsible for preparing and conducting alliance military operations. The headquarters, which played a key role in NATO's 2011 bombing campaign in Libya, is led by U.S. Adm. Michelle Howard.

Howard also commands U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa, also headquartered in Naples.

Pokemon Go invades South Korea

By MARCUS FICHTL
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — Pokemon characters have invaded South Korea.

About seven months since the augmented-reality game Pokemon Go became a smash hit around the world, the mobile phone app finally crossed the border here Jan. 24.

"It's the game of our generation," said Pfc. Nicholas Serra, 20, a representative for the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program at Yongsan Garrison. "Most of my friends are playing it, and for us, it's nostalgia in game form."

The game relies on Google Maps as it sends players hunting for virtual pocket monsters in real-world locations using smartphones. In the past, it couldn't be played in most parts of security-conscious South Korea because of strict rules regarding GPS and map data.

Some gamers were able to exploit a technicality and accessed the app by traveling to Sokcho, a coastal town near the border with North Korea. But it remained off-limits for most South Koreans and some

28,500 U.S. servicemembers deployed in the country.

Niantic Inc., the game's co-developer, told reporters in Seoul that it used public data sources to finally launch Pokemon Go there, although it didn't provide details.

Within three days of the launch, users in South Korea downloaded the app 4.3 million times, adding to 500 million downloads from across 130 countries, according to the Yonhap news agency.

Pokemon, based on Japanese cartoon characters, have been a centerpiece of pop culture since the 1990s, starring in everything from trading cards to movies.

Pokemon Go uses a phone's camera and GPS while a graphic overlay allows the players to hunt, fight and challenge wild pocket monsters from their house to their local bibimbap restaurant.

Military officials caution that common sense and military regulations still apply.

Bob McElroy, a spokesman for Camp Humphreys, said servicemembers are free to play across base but must refrain from using the game where operational security or sensitivity are concerns.

Senate confirms Ala. Sen. Sessions as AG

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday confirmed Sen. Jeff Sessions to be attorney general in the Trump administration despite fierce Democratic opposition to the Alabama Republican over his record on civil rights and immigration.

The nearly party-line vote of 52-47 capped weeks of divisive battles over Sessions, an early supporter of President Donald Trump and one of the Senate's most conservative lawmakers. After the vote was announced, Sessions' Republican colleagues applauded the outcome while barely a handful of Democrats did the same.

In a post-vote valedictory speech, Sessions alluded to the bitter partisanship and wished for more collegiality.

"Denigrating people who disagree with us, I think, is not a healthy trend for our body," he said.

Since Trump tapped Sessions, Democrats have laced into the lawmaker, casting him as too cozy with Trump and too harsh on immigrants. They asserted he wouldn't do enough to protect voting rights of minorities, protections for gays and the legal right of women to obtain abortions. They fear immigrants in the country illegally won't receive due process with Sessions as the top law enforcement officer.

"His record raises doubts about whether he can be a champion for those who need this office most and it also raises doubts about whether he can curb unlawful overreach" by Trump, said Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va.

Republicans say Sessions has demonstrated over a long career in public service — and two decades in the Senate — that he possesses integrity and honesty and is committed to justice.

"He's honest. He's fair. He's been a friend to many of us, on both sides of the aisle," Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said. "It's been tough to watch all this good man has been put through in recent weeks. This is a well-qualified colleague with a deep reverence for the law. He believes strongly in the equal application of it to everyone."

Sessions won unanimous backing from Senate Republicans but picked up the support of just one Democrat, Joe Manchin, of West Virginia.

Wednesday's vote came amid rising tension between Republicans controlling the chamber over delaying tactics by minority Democrats that have left fewer of Trump's picks in place than President Barack Obama had eight years ago. Democrats no longer have filibuster power over Cabinet picks, however, after changing Senate rules when they controlled the chamber in 2013.

Trump slams courts; his nominee hits back

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's criticism of the judiciary prompted a rebuke from his nominee for the Supreme Court, who told a senator the president's comments were "demoralizing and disheartening."

Judge Neil Gorsuch, who was nominated by Trump to the nation's high court last week, made the comments Wednesday after Trump accused an appellate court considering his immigration-and-refugee executive order of being "so political." During the weekend, the president labeled a judge who ruled on his executive order a "so-called judge" and referred to the ruling as "ridiculous."

Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal, of Connecticut, first relayed Gorsuch's remarks on Wednesday following a meeting with the judge. Trump's own confirmation team for Gorsuch later confirmed he had made those remarks.

But Trump suggested that Blumenthal had misrepresented Gorsuch, tweeting early Thursday, "Sen. Richard Blumenthal, who never fought in Vietnam when he said for years he had (major lie), now misrepresents what Judge Gorsuch told him?"

Blumenthal, who served in the Marine Corps Reserves

during Vietnam, apologized in 2010 for saying he had served in Vietnam.

GOP former Sen. Kelly Ayotte, who is helping with Gorsuch's confirmation and was at the meeting, issued a statement saying Gorsuch made clear he was not referring to any specific case. But she said the nominee said he finds any criticism of a judge's integrity and independence to be "disheartening and demoralizing."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., each confirmed that Gorsuch made the same comments to them.

Sasse told MSNBC's "Morning Joe," "Frankly, he got pretty passionate about it," said Sasse, adding that Gorsuch said any attack on the "brothers or sisters of the robe is an attack on all judges."

Fellow Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., came to Blumenthal's defense Thursday, lashing out in a tweet directed at Trump: "Ha! As a prosecutor, Dick used to put guys like u in jail. Now, u use your position to mock vets, he uses his to make their lives better."

Gorsuch's comments came at the end of a week of meetings with members of the Senate, which is considering his nomination.

Developer set to finish pipeline; legal fight planned

Associated Press

CANNON BALL, N.D. — The developer of the Dakota Access pipeline has promised to quickly resume construction of the long-delayed project that would route oil under a North Dakota reservoir, even as American Indian activists vowed to take legal action to protect their water supply.

The Army granted Energy Transfer Partners formal permission Wednesday to lay pipe under Lake Oahe, clearing the way for completion of the 1,200-mile, \$3.8 billion pipeline.

Work has been stalled for months due

to opposition by the Standing Rock Sioux and a prolonged court battle between the developer and the Army Corps of Engineers that oversees the federal land where the last segment of the pipeline will be laid. President Donald Trump last month instructed the Corps to advance pipeline construction.

"We plan to begin immediately," Vicki Granado, a spokeswoman for Energy Transfer Partners, said in an email to The Associated Press on Wednesday night.

An encampment near the construction site has drawn thousands of protesters in support of the Standing Rock Sioux since

April, leading on occasion to clashes with law enforcement and hundreds of arrests. Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault said in a statement that the tribe is prepared to keep up the battle "in the courts."

"We will continue to fight against an administration that seeks to dismiss not only our treaty rights and status as sovereign nations, but the safe drinking water of millions of Americans," the chairman said.

The tribe fears a leak in the pipeline could contaminate water at its reservation that is just downstream from the proposed Missouri River crossing. ETP says the pipeline will be safe.

Media duped by fake N. Korea Twitter account

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean media perfected the art of “fake news” long before it became a buzzword in Washington.

So how can you tell the difference between fact and fiction when it comes to the so-called Hermit Kingdom?

Two self-described “jerks from the United States” have put that to the test with a Twitter account called DPRK News Service, fooling many journalists and others who believed the tweets come from the North Koreans.

The site mimics the exaggerated and belligerent tone of North Korea’s official news organizations, which are government mouthpieces, as a form of commentary, or just as a joke.

This is, after all, a country that reportedly banned sarcasm, an idea that became a topic for @DPRK_News.

See if you can tell which of the following statements came from the state-run Korean Central News Agency, famous

for its hyperbole, and belligerent rhetoric, and which is from the parody site:

■ “Obama should live as a monkey in an African natural zoo licking the breadcrumbs thrown by spectators.”

■ “Donald Trump plagued by deep insecurities regarding small size of his tiny crowds. Marshal Kim Jong-un has large and manly crowds.”

The crude racist rant against President Barack Obama came from the North’s official press.

The mention of Trump was the giveaway. North Korea has issued some indirect statements clearly aimed at the new U.S. administration but hasn’t directly targeted Trump, perhaps because it doesn’t want to engage in a hostile manner until his policies become clear.

The DPRK News Service, on the other hand, has taken on Trump with full force.

Patrick Popehat, who studied Russian and the Soviet Union in the 1980s, started the Twitter account in 2009 while recovering from a sprained ankle.

“The initial point was just to see how far I could get away

with a prank, informed by years of reading communist news services,” he said in an email responding to questions.

A Norwegian news site was the first to take the bait, reporting that North Korea was threatening war with Cyprus, based on one of his tweets.

Popehat stopped posting after revealing the joke, but took it up again later in collaboration with his friend Derrick Popehat. Their names, of course, are pseudonyms that they adopted from another satirical legal blog they were writing for on Twitter called Popehat. The duo operates anonymously out of an abundance of caution because of the provocative nature of the tweets.

Patrick, who describes himself as an attorney in the southeastern U.S., said the closest he has come to the divided peninsula was dating a Korean girl in high school.

The site is believable in part because North Korea refers to itself as the DPRK, the acronym for its official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The fake Twitter feed

describes itself as the official news feed of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea — no apostrophe. It also has a link to KCNA’s official website.

It’s easy to mistake the hyperbole and socialist terminology for the real deal, although the authors say they are always surprised when their tweets are reported as news.

Patrick recounted one tweet quoted by then-Fox News host Greta Van Susteren: “We told her through Twitter she was wrong, that it was written by jerks in the United States. She doubled down, claiming ‘some say’ the account is fake.”

Other duped outlets include CNN, The Washington Post, USA Today and MSNBC’s “Morning Joe” show.

Derrick, a data analyst with an MBA, blames the media’s obsession with scoops and clickbait, and says that the site’s parody content can be determined by a quick web search.

“From a satirical standpoint, I think as long as one is coming from a motive to entertain instead of deceive, things will be OK,” he said.

Military looking for biodegradable germinating munitions

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — In a famous photograph from 1967, a Vietnam War protester placed flowers into rifle barrels of National Guardsmen. That role could one day fall to tank commanders and mortarmen.

The U.S. Army recently sought proposals to make biodegradable 40 mm to 120 mm training rounds loaded with specialized indigenous seeds that, when grown, will eliminate ammunition debris and contaminants from ranges around the world.

The three-phase study will test the concept’s viability and look at the potential financial and environmental impact, according to Frank Misurelli, a spokesman for the U.S. Army’s Armament Research Development and Engineering Center

at Picatinny Arsenal, N.J. If successful, the winning proposal would become a “Program of Record,” and the rounds could make their way into America’s military training arsenal.

Proposals under the Small Business Innovation Research Program were due by Feb. 8, Misurelli said. Up to \$100,000 has been allocated for selected Phase 1 participants.

“Proving grounds and battlegrounds have no clear way of finding and eliminating [the current crop of] training projectiles, cartridge cases and sabot petals, especially those that are buried several feet in the ground,” program documents state. “Some of these rounds might have the potential [to] corrode and pollute the soil and nearby water. The solution sought by this topic is naturally occurring biodegradable material to replace the current

training round materials.”

The U.S. Army burns through hundreds of thousands of training rounds, the program documents state. Those rounds include “low-velocity 40 mm grenades; 60 mm, 81 mm and 120 mm mortars; shoulder-launched munitions; 120 mm tank rounds; and 155 mm artillery rounds.” The rounds are fired at proving grounds and ranges across the U.S. and around the world. Most end up stuck in the ground, where they can take hundreds of years or more to break down. They also have the potential to pollute.

Historically, munitions and unexploded ordnance were responsible for the contamination of more than 15 million acres of land, with \$8 billion to \$35 billion in cleanup costs, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, citing Defense Department acknowledgements in

2003.

While the current crop of 40 mm to 120 mm training rounds does not contain lead or depleted uranium, which are known contaminants, they do contain plastic and metals like steel and aluminum, Misurelli said.

Phase 1 of the program focuses on the process to produce biodegradable composites with embedded seeds, and will last about six to 12 months, Misurelli said.

Phase 2 will confirm the process and lead to prototypes. A “sufficient” number of prototypes will be provided to the government for testing.

Phase 3 would likely mean the transition from technology to production.

The rounds have to meet current performance requirements, and the plants must be safe for animals to eat.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Surprise proposal their Super Bowl highlight

NY ALBANY — The 51st Super Bowl will be remembered for the New England Patriots pulling off the game's biggest comeback ever for their fifth NFL title. A New York woman will remember it as the night she got engaged at halftime.

Unknown to Albany-area resident Kourtney Lynn Myers, her boyfriend had won a local jewelry store's contest dubbed "Surprise Super Bowl Proposal." WTEN-TV reported that Chris Garguilo taped a short video last week at Northeastern Fine Jewelers during which he asked Myers to marry him.

The ad aired locally just before the halftime show as the couple watched with friends at home. Garguilo repeated the question in person, she said yes and he placed the engagement ring on her finger as their friends whooped for joy.

Accused rescue squad president found hiding

PA MOUNT CARMEL — A Pennsylvania rescue squad president reported missing after he was charged with stealing \$100,000 from a business was found hiding in his own basement.

Mount Carmel police said Jeffrey Kays, 36, was found by his wife Monday, a day after his family reported him missing.

Kays is president of the Mount Carmel Area Rescue Squad. He was arraigned last week on charges he stole \$100,000 from RW Light-Comm LLC, which sells equipment to emergency medical service agencies.

Investigators say the thefts occurred from September 2013 and February 2016. Kays is charged with theft and related charges.

Man held after grabbing wheel of charter bus

KS EMPORIA — The Kansas Highway Patrol said a man is being held in the Lyon County jail after he reportedly grabbed the wheel of a charter bus and caused it to veer off the Kansas Turnpike.

No injuries were reported after the incident Sunday about 11 miles northeast of Emporia. A suspect fled on foot but was captured after a nearby resident reported a stranger banging on the door of a house.

Patrol Lt. Mark Christensen said the suspect told officers he thought people on the bus were going to hurt him.

National Zoo's panda slated to fly to China

DC WASHINGTON — The National Zoo said 3-year-old panda Bao Bao will fly to China this month.

The zoo tweeted Monday that Bao Bao will move to China on Feb. 21. The zoo recently announced a celebration of Bao Bao starting Feb. 16 in anticipation of her departure.

The zoo's cooperative breeding agreement with the China Wildlife Conservation Association requires all cubs born at the zoo move to China by the time they turn 4 years old. Bao Bao turns 4 on Aug. 23.

Bao Bao is the first surviving cub born at the zoo since 2005. Older brother Tai Shan left for China in 2010. Their mother, Mei Xiang, has since had a third surviving cub, Bei Bei, who was born on Aug. 22, 2015.

Deputy charged after gun given to inmate

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Federal prosecutors said a San Francisco Sheriff's

deputy gave her duty pistol to a former inmate she allegedly had a relationship with, then claimed it was stolen in a made-up robbery at her home.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported April Myres, 52, was arrested Feb. 2 after the gun was found inside the car of the former inmate, Antoine Fowler. Prosecutors say the two had a romantic relationship when Fowler was imprisoned.

Prosecutors say Myres filed a claim with her insurance company last March alleging the theft of her personal property, including her handgun. A search of Myres' home uncovered a number of the items she had reported stolen.

Myres was released on a \$1 million secured bond. She faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

Man attacks pastor after questioning beliefs

NJ NEWARK — Newark authorities say a man attacked a church pastor during a brief street encounter after questioning the victim about his religious beliefs.

The 63-year old pastor was walking near Broad and Court streets when he encountered Michael Healy, 32, of Irvington, around 7:35 p.m. Saturday. Authorities say Healy asked the victim about his beliefs and then struck him.

The pastor was treated at a hospital for minor injuries. His name was not disclosed.

Healy was charged with simple assault and taken to a hospital for psychological evaluation.

Dad is sentenced for holding 2 in elevator

WA BELLINGHAM — A Washington state father whose battle with Child Protective Services received

widespread attention was sentenced to three months in jail for restraining two state workers in an elevator.

The Bellingham Herald reported that jurors found Cleve Goheen-Rengo, 25, guilty of unlawful imprisonment.

Goheen-Rengo's story went viral in 2014 after he and his partner said they were being bullied for their beliefs in home birth and a holistic lifestyle. The state says it got involved because the kids appeared underweight, underfed and at risk of abuse.

Charging papers say Goheen-Rengo trapped the case workers in a courthouse elevator after one worker cut short a supervised meeting between Goheen-Rengo and his children.

Veteran cop admits to stealing pills from safe

FL SANFORD — Authorities say a 23-year veteran of the Seminole County Sheriff's Office has admitted to stealing pain pills from an evidence safe.

The Orlando Sentinel reported that Lt. Jason Bender, 42, of Oviedo, was charged in August with one count of grand theft.

In prosecution records, authorities say Bender told them last year that he became addicted to pills after he had shoulder surgery and said he stole pills from the evidence safe four times.

Bender was expected to be admitted to the county's drug court, which involves a year of drug treatment. It's unclear whether he'll be stripped of his right to work as a law enforcement officer.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Knicks' dysfunction nothing new

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jeff Hornacek was told to expect days like this in New York.

Although with the Knicks, dysfunction often lasts entire seasons.

Things have rarely been weirder than Wednesday, when Charles Oakley was arrested during a Madison Square Garden main event card pitting team president versus star player, and beloved former player versus loathed team owner.

Once the fighting was done, there was yet another loss on the basketball court.

The Knicks fell to 22-32 after a 119-115 loss to the Los Angeles Clippers, but the game result was at best the third story, behind Oakley's altercation and ejection, and the latest turn in the Phil Jackson-Carmelo Anthony saga.

Hornacek, in his first season as Knicks coach, insists he was actually prepared for all this.

"I kind of, not was warned, but it was expected that there was going to be something all the time, and it's lived up to the billing," he said before the game. "There's been something all year. So OK, let's go play a game, try to win."

Then, as usual, don't.

They often did when Oakley played in New

York from 1988-98, making him adored by fans — some of whom were chanting "Oakley! Oakley!" as security forcefully removed the rugged power forward from his seat and into New York Police Department custody.

He had been sitting a few rows behind James Dolan and shouting at the MSG chairman when security was summoned. Oakley shoved one security guard in the face and appeared to push another as players from both teams, along with tennis great John McEnroe sitting nearby, watched while Knicks forward Kristaps Porzingis was preparing to shoot free throws.

"He's the best teammate in the world. He really is," Clippers coach Doc Rivers said of Oakley, his teammate in New York. "Honestly, the players could see, that was a tough thing to watch. I've been in the league a long time and I've never seen a thing like that."

The Knicks have fallen from playoff contention by losing 19 of their last 25 games after a good start to what was thought could finally be their first playoff season under Jackson. He brought in veterans Derrick Rose, Joakim Noah, Courtney Lee and Brandon Jennings, and with that not looking good enough, may be trying to ship out Anthony.

Jackson seemed to take another dig at

Anthony on Tuesday with a tweet referencing a column by Bleacher Report writer Kevin Ding that suggested Jackson is frustrated because Anthony doesn't have the same will to win as Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant, two of Jackson's greatest players when he coached.

Anthony has grown tired of the drama with Jackson and largely shrugged off questions about him after the game, while refusing to say he still trusted his boss.

"I told you once, I'll tell you again. I'm in that building every day. Until something is said to me directly, then I'm not going to feed into it," Anthony said.

Anthony's future will probably be the hot topic until the Feb. 23 trade deadline. Eventually, the talk will move on to Jackson, who can opt out of his contract after this season.

The endless drama doesn't surprise Clippers guard and former Knick Jamal Crawford. He's played in the NBA's three biggest markets, but says Los Angeles and Chicago don't compare to the circus running annually in the Big Apple.

"Honestly I'm not, because of the standpoint that it's New York," he said. "It's there before I got there, it's been there. I'd be surprised if it was quiet. This is New York."

Korver gets hot as Cavaliers top Pacers

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — LeBron James wanted Kyle Korver on his team for one reason.

He knew the 35-year-old sharp-shooter could still play, and now Korver is proving how valuable he can be.

Korver scored a season-high 29 points and James gave the Cleveland Cavaliers a second-half energy boost to help the defending champs erase a 15-point deficit and blow out the Indiana Pacers 132-117 on Wednesday night.

"I've been waiting for a game like this, where you get hot and you get some good corner looks," Korver said. "I feel like I should have been shooting it better the last couple of weeks."

Cleveland has won the first three games on a four-game road trip and six of its last seven overall.

Korver was 10-for-12 from the field, 8-for-9 on three-point-

ers and scored 20 points in the second half — living up to the scouting report offered after the Cavs acquired Korver in a trade with Atlanta last month.

"Korver was in a league of his own," James said. "When he's open, we've got to get it to him."

Clippers 119, Knicks 115: Blake Griffin scored a season-high 32 points as the Los Angeles Clippers beat New York 119-115 on Wednesday after former Knicks star Charles Oakley was ejected from Madison Square Garden in the first quarter.

DeAndre Jordan added 28 points and 15 rebounds for the Clippers, who rallied from a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter to end a three-game skid.

Heat 106, Bucks 88: Hassan Whiteside had 23 points and 16 rebounds, Miami extended its winning streak to 12 games with a victory over host Milwaukee.

Kings 108, Celtics 92: Darren Collison scored 25 points and host Sacramento, playing without suspended All-Star center DeMarcus Cousins, snapped Boston's seven-game winning streak.

Warriors 123, Bulls 92: Kevin Durant bounced back from his worst game since joining the Warriors with 22 points, 10 rebounds, seven assists and three steals, and Golden State beat visiting Chicago for a 138th straight regular-season game without consecutive defeats.

Spurs 111, 76ers 103: Kawhi Leonard scored 32 points, Tony Parker added 18 and San Antonio beat host Philadelphia.

Wizards 114, Nets 110 (OT): Bradley Beal scored 31 points, John Wall added 23 points and 12 assists, and Otto Porter Jr. had 20 points and 10 rebounds as visiting Washington sent the Brooklyn Nets to

their 11th straight loss.

Hawks 117, Nuggets 106: Dennis Schroder had 24 points and 10 assists and host Atlanta held off a late rally by Denver.

Pistons 121, Lakers 102: Andre Drummond had 24 points and 17 rebounds, and host Detroit handed Los Angeles one final loss at The Palace.

Grizzlies 110, Suns 91: Mike Conley scored 23 points, Marc Gasol added 19 and visiting Memphis took advantage of Phoenix's poor shooting.

Timberwolves 112, Raptors 109: Andrew Wiggins scored 31 points against his hometown team, Tyus Jones hit a three-pointer with 19.5 seconds left and host Minnesota beat Toronto.

Jazz 127, Pelicans 94: Joe Johnson scored 27 points, George Hill added 19, and Utah extended its winning streak to four games with a victory over struggling host New Orleans.

Americans finalize roster for WBC

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Miami slugger Giancarlo Stanton and Baltimore star Adam Jones are among the returnees on the 28-man U.S. World Baseball Classic roster, which also includes Colorado's Nolan Arenado, Arizona's Paul Goldschmidt, San Francisco's Buster Posey and Pittsburgh's Andrew McCutchen.

Cleveland reliever Andrew Miller is part of a 13-man pitching staff that also has Tampa Bay's Chris Archer, Kansas City's Danny Duffy, Detroit's Michael Fulmer, Oakland's Sonny Gray, Toronto's J.A. Happ and Marcus Stroman and Seattle's Drew Smyly.

The roster announced Wednesday by USA Baseball includes 18 All-Stars, two

MVPs and nine Gold Glove winners.

Jim Leyland will manage the U.S. team and Joe Torre is the general manager.

Miami has the most players on the roster with three, while eight teams have two players each.

Brett Cecil, Fulmer, Gray, Happ, Smyly and Alex Wilson comprise the designated pitcher pool. For the first time, teams will be able to select up to two pitchers to join the roster following each round.

Houston's Luke Gregerson, Eric Hosmer of Kansas City, Jonathan Lucroy of Texas and Stanton return from the 2013 WBC squad.

The U.S. will play its first-round games as part of Pool C at Marlins Park in Miami. The

Americans open against Colombia on March 10. They take on defending champion Dominican Republic on March 11 and play Canada on March 12.

The Dominican roster includes 43-year-old pitcher Bartolo Colón of Atlanta, Robinson Cano of Seattle and Manny Machado of Baltimore.

Puerto Rico has 13 players returning from its runner-up squad four years ago, including Carlos Beltran of Houston, free agent Angel Pagan and Giovanni Soto of the White Sox.

Canada's roster includes Freddie Freeman of Atlanta, reliever John Axford of Oakland and Dalton Pompey of Toronto. Left off the roster was Blue Jays catcher Russell Martin, who had minor offseason knee surgery, and outfielder

Michael Saunders, who just signed a deal with the Phillies.

Mexico's roster includes Dodgers first baseman Adrian Gonzalez and free agent reliever Sergio Romo. The team will be managed by Gonzalez's brother Edgar, a former major leaguer, and Fernando Valenzuela will serve as a coach.

Kansas City Royals free agent pitcher Peter Moylan and Oakland reliever Liam Hendriks are among the players on Australia's roster.

Played every four years, the WBC will be held March 6-22 in Japan, South Korea, Mexico and the United States, with the semifinals and championship game set for Dodger Stadium. The Dominican Republic won the 2013 tournament, beating Puerto Rico in the final.

Toews' overtime goal lifts Blackhawks over Wild

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Sure, no game is a must-win this time of year. Still, the Chicago Blackhawks couldn't afford to slip much further behind the Minnesota Wild.

Jonathan Toews scored a power-play goal 3:09 into overtime to lift the Blackhawks over the Western Conference-leading Wild 4-3 on Wednesday night.

The Blackhawks closed within five points of Minnesota for the conference lead. The Wild also have two games in hand, and the Blackhawks admitted feeling a sense of urgency heading into the game.

"There was some added meaning to it, for our team anyways," said Toews, who also had two assists.

Ryan Suter was called for holding midway through the overtime, and with the man advantage, Toews slipped a rebound between the skates of goalie Darcy Kuemper.

"It was a huge win," Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville said. "We had to win the game to keep us within striking

distance."

Corey Crawford stopped 35 of 38 shots as the Blackhawks snapped an eight-game regular-season losing streak against Minnesota. He came up huge in the overtime, stonewalling Mikael Granlund alone in the slot and stopping Suter on a breakaway.

"We had the opportunities, but when they needed a save, they got it," Minnesota coach Bruce Boudreau said. "Usually when you don't score on your great opportunities, bad things happen."

The Wild salvaged a point when Erik Haula scored with 3:03 left in the third period to tie it at 3. Defenseman Marco Scandella carried the puck from behind his own blue line deep into the Chicago zone, then flipped a backhanded pass across the goalmouth, where Haula was waiting to tip it past Crawford.

"It was kind of a playoff game environment, a little bit," Haula said.

Nino Niederreiter had two assists for the Wild, and Kuemper made 28 saves.

Minnesota closed a four-game Canadian road trip on Tuesday night at Winnipeg, while the Blackhawks had been resting since a Feb. 4 game at Dallas. Perhaps feeling the effect of that late-night flight, the Wild looked sluggish early as Chicago raced to a 2-0 lead.

Ryan Hartman started the scoring at 10:54 of the first period when Vinnie Hinostroza carried the puck deep into the Minnesota zone and centered to the slot, where Hartman one-timed it past Kuemper.

Chicago doubled its lead 1:09 into the second period as Toews found Nick Schmaltz alone in front of the net for an easy tap-in.

Minnesota got one back 37 seconds later when Jared Spurgeon finished a rush with a wrist shot over Crawford's left shoulder.

That goal energized the Wild, who outshot the Blackhawks 19-10 in the second period and dominated the next 15 minutes of play.

Zach Parise tied it at 7:15 of the second on a disputed goal. Charlie Coyle threw the puck

toward the net, and Parise, with his back to the goal, tipped it between his legs. Crawford made the save, but Parise spun around and chipped the rebound over the goalie.

Chicago challenged the play, arguing that Parise had been offside when Minnesota's rush began. After a lengthy delay, the officials ruled the video evidence was inconclusive and the call stood.

Late in the period, Richard Panik put Chicago on top 3-2 when he controlled a pass from Niklas Hjalmarsson and tucked the puck just inside the post.

"We got back to the way we want to play these road games right away early tonight, especially against this team," said Toews, whose team is in the midst of a six-game road trip. "Nice for us to find that resiliency and find a way to get a power-play goal at the end."

Notes: Wednesday's game was the first of a franchise-record eight-game homestand for Minnesota. ... The Wild recalled D Gustav Olofsson from Iowa of the AHL. He replaced D Mike Reilly, who was sent to Iowa.

Countdown begins for Pyeongchang '18

Associated Press

GANGNEUNG, South Korea — The one-year countdown to the Pyeongchang Games began Thursday with Yuna Kim revealing the Olympic torch and organizers opening online ticket reservations.

South Korean Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn and an International Olympic Committee delegation led by Gunnilla Lindberg, who heads the IOC's coordination commission for the games, also attended the ceremony in Gangneung, which will host the ice sports events next year.

"I am convinced that the Pyeongchang Olympics will be a success," Hwang said in a speech at the ceremony. "I believe in the great strength of our people who have successfully hosted international events like the 1988 Olympics and 2002 World Cup."

Kim, a figure skating gold medalist who is perhaps the country's most popular sports personality even in retirement, carried the white-and-gold Olympic torch onto a stage built

over ice as a group of pop singers sang "We Are the Champions," highlighting an event that also included a video message from IOC President Thomas Bach.

"It is my great pleasure to invite the national Olympic committees of the world and their athletes to participate in the Olympic Winter Games Pyeongchang 2018," Bach said in the message.

Hwang has served as the country's acting head of state since December when President Park Geun-hye's powers were suspended after lawmakers voted to impeach her over a corruption scandal. He told organizers in a meeting earlier in the day that government is ready to invest "every reliable resource" to build buzz for the games and ensure the safety of athletes and spectators.

With preparations entering the last phases, the participation of North Korea and Russia have emerged as major issues ahead of next year's games.

Relations between the two Koreas have worsened since

North Korea conducted two nuclear tests and a string of rocket launches last year as it continues to expand its nuclear weapons and missile programs.

Russian athletes have been caught up in a scandal following allegations of state-sponsored doping around the time of the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

Lee Hee-beom, Pyeongchang's organizing head, expressed hopes to see athletes from both countries at the Games.

"Every country and every athlete who loves peace has a right and obligation to participate in the Olympics," Lee said. "North Korea is no exception. We are making preparations for the possibility that North Korea participates in the Games."

The Pyeongchang Games will mark the second time the Olympics have been staged in South Korea, which also hosted the 1988 Games in Seoul.

Organizers have had to overcome delays, local conflicts regarding venue constructions and difficulties attracting domestic sponsorships before

putting preparations on track.

Construction workers are putting the finishing touches on the 12 competition venues in Pyeongchang and nearby Gangneung, including six new facilities that organizers say are about 96 percent complete on average.

The athletes and media villages, an international broadcasting center, and a pentagonal stadium that will host the opening and closing ceremonies are expected to be finished by September.

The political turmoil surrounding President Park has been a massive distraction that slowed organizers' efforts to stoke lukewarm public interest, and also rattled the country's ministry of culture and sports, which oversees the Olympic preparations.

Lee said that the recent political situation "to a degree" negatively affected preparations for the games, but said such impact could be overcome with more help from government organizations and the business community.

White ponders run at 2020 skateboarding

Associated Press

The next Olympics are still a year away, and already, Shaun White is thinking about the Games after that.

And it has nothing to do with the halfpipe.

The world's best-known snowboarder told The Associated Press he's exploring competing at the Tokyo Summer Olympics in skateboarding, which will be added to the program for 2020.

"It's right there in the distance for me," White said.

Since he was a kid, the 30-year-old White has excelled on both the snow and on the ramps. Of the 23 X Games medals he's won, five of them came in vert at the Summer X Games. But with snowboarding part of the Winter Olympics and no similar option in the Summer Games, White put most of his focus on the snow, and it paid off with gold medals in 2006 and 2010.

The International Olympic Committee is adding street and park skateboarding, neither of which are White's specialty. Some

thought it might count him out for the Summer Games, but he's viewing park skateboarding — which mixes vertical jumps with street features like rails and stairs — as a conquerable challenge.

"It's going to take a little learning curve but it won't be too dramatic," White says.

Right now, White's main focus is returning to the top on the halfpipe. Wednesday marked the one-year-out celebration to next year's Olympics in South Korea.

White's fourth-place finish in Sochi was a stunner — and it still leaves a sour taste in his mouth, though White says ultimately, it kept his career going.

"I didn't think that would be my last Olympics; I was thinking about Korea," White said. "But people kept bringing it up, and it kept getting spun in the media about that being it for me and I should retire. And I started listening. I started thinking, 'Oh, wow, should I?'"

Answer: No.

White doubled down on his fitness, brought 2002 Olympic medalist J.J. Thomas in as his new coach and considers him-

self as fit and prepared as ever.

White struggled at this year's Winter X Games, finishing 11th, but last weekend, he bounced back with a title at the Mammoth Grand Prix.

He will not go into Korea as the favorite for gold, the way he entered the last three Winter Games. Japanese snowboarders Ayumu Hirano and Taku Hiraoka won silver and bronze in Sochi behind Iouri Podladtchikov, the iPod.

White describes his ascent in the two sports as "a hard and strange time in my life when I bounced around" and didn't exactly fit in on either universe. In snowboarding, he was too young (and too successful) to be welcomed in with other top riders; in skateboarding, he says he was, at first, viewed as an outsider coming in to chip away some of the other riders' shot at money and fame.

"I'm obviously taking my time to just focus on Korea right now," White said. "But I'm already talking about trying to build a (skateboarding) setup at my house or somewhere accessible to me in L.A. so I can start training for that."