

STARS AND STRIPES®

Thursday, February 16, 2017

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Marines urged to clear unit in Afghan deaths

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — House lawmakers on Thursday urged the Marine Corps to publicly clear the names of 30 special operators dogged by false claims that they indiscriminately killed Afghan civilians a decade ago.

The service should release a document stating the Marines of Fox Company, part of Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, did not target the civilians amid an ambush and firefight during an ill-fated 2007 patrol in Nangarhar province, Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., and Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., said during a news conference on Capitol Hill.

The special operations Marines and their former commander, retired Maj. Fred Galvin, were cleared of wrongdoing by a military court of inquiry in 2008 but have been fighting for years to clear their reputations,

which they say have been tarnished by initial news reports of civilian carnage and a lack of support from the Marine Corps.

“These Marines have every right to be appreciated,” Jones said. “These Marines will be old someday ... they need to be vindicated today and not 14 years from now.”

Jones, a longtime advocate for the Marines whose district includes Camp Lejeune, is sponsoring a House resolution that, if passed, would call on Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller to issue a statement to help clear their names.

Gallego, a Marine who served in Iraq, said there is “nothing more scary or confusing when your honor is called into question.”

The Marines were on patrol in the Bati Kot district when their six-vehicle convoy was attacked by a car bomb and then was ambushed.

A brief, intense firefight ensued and

news stories surfaced that the Marines had targeted and killed as many as 19 Afghan civilians.

“We saw no civilians killed at all,” said Galvin, who was in the convoy.

At the time, the U.S. military was under pressure to minimize civilian casualties as part of its military campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The incident sparked a street protest, brought condemnation from then-Afghan President Hamid Karzai and threatened to complicate the war effort.

The Marines were pulled out of the country and the Pentagon publicly apologized for the incident two months later, before the military court had ruled on the charges against them.

However, the military court later found the Marines acted appropriately and heeded the rules of engagement during the ambush.

Experts warn lawmakers about ability to fight wars

BY ALEX HORTON
Stars and Stripes

A panel of defense experts on Thursday raised concerns over the ability of Russia and China to match and contest U.S. military power in the next decade, focusing on issues ranging from advanced Russian guided munitions to the Pentagon’s personnel shortfalls.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., chairman of the Armed Services Committee, called the hearing to discuss reshaping American forces for emerging threats. Defense experts told lawmakers on Capitol Hill that the U.S. has only taken “rudimentary” steps to match capabilities against conventional militaries.

The experts also warned the U.S. is playing catch-up over readiness and technology.

“For 20 years, our adversaries have gone to school on the American way of war,” McCain said in his opening remarks, honing on Russia’s focus on matching and overpowering traditional U.S. strengths such as nuclear and submarine warfare.

“We can go longer take victory for granted. America could lose the next war we

fight,” the senator said.

The hearing comes amid a defense buildup of U.S. forces in Europe reminiscent of the Cold War. An Army armored brigade of 4,000 soldiers arrived in January and fanned out across Poland, Germany, Estonia and other Baltic states, marking the first permanent rotational brigade in the region.

About 2,000 aviation soldiers unloaded equipment in Germany last week as part of the escalation.

Those deployments, part of the Pentagon’s European Reassurance Initiative — created in response to Russian’s aggression in Ukraine and Crimea — were authorized by then-President Barack Obama. The continued fate of those deployments remain unclear, as President Donald Trump has signaled a commitment for reduced tensions with Moscow.

However, during the hearing, Russia and China often were mentioned as looming adversaries. More so, McCain and the defense experts raised the specter of Pentagon acquisition and personnel policies as a self-created enemy, one that McCain said hinder the ability to close technological gaps as U.S. troops wait to receive new

equipment stuck in bureaucratic pipelines.

“If we can get new stuff in the hands of soldiers, sailors and Marines, they will find amazing ways to employ it,” said Thomas Donnelly, the co-director of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank.

Difficulty with acquisition is mostly a problem in which the government does not ensure proper tools and innovative methods are created, Donnelly said.

“It’s not a question of talent, but capability,” he said.

The Pentagon’s chronic problems with staffing combat-ready Army brigades also affects strategic capabilities, Donnelly said.

The next brigade slated to replace the rotational unit in Europe, now at Fort Riley, Kan., has struggled to fill billets, with some companies failing to assign Bradley crews and dismounted soldiers for as many as a third of the vehicles, he said.

The experts also agreed permanent forces should remain in Europe and the Pacific to deter aggression and to respond quickly to any threats to allies.

Fenton to lead Naval Forces Japan

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A former commanding officer of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington will be returning to Yokosuka as commander of Naval Forces Japan and Navy Region Japan, the Defense Department announced Wednesday in Washington.

Rear Adm. Greg Fenton will assume the command, which includes oversight over installations and shore-based sailors in Japan, as well as planning and coordination with the Japan Self-Defense Forces.

A date for the command transfer has not yet been specified.

Fenton takes over for Rear Adm. Matthew Carter, who assumed command in 2015.

No plans for Carter's next assignment have been announced at this time, Navy officials in Japan said Thursday.

Fenton is serving as director of operations and plans in the Chief of Naval Operations office in Washington.

Fenton, of Grand Ledge, Mich., last served in Yokosuka in January 2015 as commander of George Washington.

Later that year, the carrier returned to the United States and swapped crews with the USS Ronald Reagan, which is now homeported in Yokosuka.

Fenton also served as executive officer of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, commanded the amphibious transport dock USS Denver and served as chief of staff for Combined Joint Task Force — Horn of Africa before taking command of George Washington.

Fenton's shore assignments include a flight instructor tour and another executing tests of the X-35C Joint Strike Fighter developmental aircraft, which has since developed into the F-35 aircraft.

Mattis mum on NATO comment

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

BRUSSELS — U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis declined to elaborate Thursday on his comment that the U.S. could “moderate” its support for NATO if allies didn't pay more for their defense, saying he expected members of the 28-nation pact to respond to U.S. concerns about military burden-sharing.

“Sometimes you say the things you don't want to have happen so that you head them off,” Mattis said at the end of two days of talks with allies in Brussels.

Mattis created a stir at NATO headquarters Wednesday when he delivered one of the sharpest U.S. messages to allies in recent years, warning that patience had run out after years of lackluster defense spending from European allies.

“America will meet its responsibilities, but if your nations do not want to see America moderate its commitment to this alliance, each of your capitals needs to show support for our common defense,” he said during a meeting of NATO's defense ministers.

Mattis' cryptic warning prompted fears that the U.S. might no longer stand by allies if they came under attack, signaling a possible weakening of NATO's Article 5 policy that an

attack on one member requires a response from all.

Mattis' remarks were not so far removed from those made by former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who told the alliance in 2011 that there was a “dwindling appetite” in the U.S. to bear a heavy defense burden in Europe.

But doubts about President Donald Trump's commitment to the alliance has put new urgency into the issue of European defense spending.

During a brief news conference on Friday at the close of the ministerial meeting, Mattis, when pressed by reporters, would not elaborate on how Washington could limit its support for NATO. Instead, he emphasized that American backing for Article 5 remained intact.

The U.S., along with Britain, Estonia, Poland and Greece, are the only alliance members who spend at least 2 percent of gross domestic product on defense, which is NATO's benchmark.

Many countries fall far short of 2 percent levels, including Germany, which dedicates about 1.2 percent of GDP to defense. Allies who have said they are willing to do more include German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen.

Still, the U.S. directive could face challenges inside parliaments in Europe. In the case

of Germany, which is perhaps under the most pressure from the U.S. as Europe's economic and political powerhouse, there has been recognition that more investment in its military is needed.

Mattis said allies must establish a clear road map toward 2 percent spending levels — including financial milestones — sometime this year.

In a separate matter, Mattis said he was not certain whether the U.S. needed to send more ground troops into Syria, which CNN reported was under consideration.

“I don't know. I think you'd have to ask that question from some others to get a full answer,” he said.

In Brussels, Mattis met with members of the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq. He said he needed to consult more with allies and military leaders before reaching a determination on what more may be needed in the fight.

Mattis' meetings Thursday in Brussels came on the same day Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was to meet with Russia's top military officer, Gen. Valery Gerasimov. That meeting in Azerbaijan was the first such encounter between the two countries' top officers since Russia's 2014 intervention in Ukraine.

Pentagon makes it official: Militant group to be called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

BY TOM VANDEN BROOK
USA Today

WASHINGTON — What's in a name?

The Islamic State terrorist group would be still be as barbaric under any of its labels: ISIL (preferred under the Obama administration), or Daesh (the moniker of choice for many world leaders and some of its adversaries in the

Middle East).

But henceforth, by decree, the Pentagon, in all official references will now refer to the terror network as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS.

A memo circulated Tuesday throughout the military makes that clear.

“Subject: Naming Convention for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

“Consistent with National

Security Presidential Memorandum-3 of January 28, 2017, ‘Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria,’ and guidance from the Secretary of Defense, the Department of Defense will use the term Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, when referring to this threat.”

The move simply simplifies terms, said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman.

White House wrestles with crush of crises

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Less than a month into his tenure, Donald Trump's White House is beset by a crush of crises.

Divisions, dysfunction and high-profile exits have left the administration nearly paralyzed and allies wondering how it will reboot. The bold policy moves that marked Trump's first days in office have slowed to a crawl, a tacit admission he and his team had not thoroughly prepared an agenda.

Nearly a week after the administration's travel ban was struck down by a federal court, the White House is still struggling to regroup and outline its next move on that signature issue. It's been six days since Trump has announced a major new policy directive or legislative plan.

His team is riven by division and plagued by distractions. This week alone, controversy has forced out both his top national security aide and his pick for labor secretary.

Fellow Republicans have begun voicing their frustration and open anxiety that the

Trump White House will derail their high hopes for legislative action.

Sen. John Thune, of South Dakota, demanded Wednesday that the White House "get past the launch stage."

"There are things we want to get done here, and we want to have a clear-eyed focus on our agenda, and this constant disruption and drumbeat with these questions that keep being raised is a distraction," said Thune.

Such criticism from political allies is rare during what is often viewed as a honeymoon period for a new president. But Trump, an outsider who campaigned almost as much against his party as for it, has only a tiny reservoir of goodwill to protect him within the GOP.

Officials have begun trying to change some tactics, and some scenery. The White House announced Wednesday that Trump would hold a rally in Florida on Saturday, the first of his term.

To be sure, pinballing from one crisis to the next is not unprecedented, particularly for a White House still finding its

footing. But the disruptions that have swirled around Trump achieved hurricane force early and have not let up.

On Wednesday his choice for labor secretary, fast food CEO Andy Puzder, withdrew his nomination while the administration continued to navigate the fallout from the forced resignation of national security adviser Michael Flynn. Flynn was ousted on grounds he misled the vice president about his contacts with a Russian ambassador.

After the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected his immigration ban last week, Trump emphatically tweeted "SEE YOU IN COURT!" and the administration vowed that it would reappeal the block and either revise its original executive order or write a new one from scratch.

But confusion soon followed. After first indicating they would not take a temporary restraining order request to the Supreme Court, administration staffers squabbled audibly, behind closed doors, over the accounts emerging in news reports.

When the dust settled, a new statement was printed out and

handed to journalists, stating, "to clarify," that all options were still on the table.

The collapse of the ban, which poured fuel on simmering staff rivalries, was followed by a period of stark inaction by a White House suddenly put on the defensive. Trump did sign legislation Tuesday that rolled back a financial regulation, but his administration has not issued any executive orders in days.

House Republicans have been nudging the White House to get behind Speaker Paul Ryan's tax overhaul, which includes a border adjustability plan of which Trump has been skeptical. GOP aides believed they were making progress, but the matter has been overshadowed by controversies.

Other possible executive actions have been bandied about, from a task force on allegations of voter fraud to strengthening cybersecurity, but have yet to be released.

Trump's new administration has also been plagued by ethics brushfires that are taking up the time and energy of communications and legal staff members.

House GOP mulls options for health law revamp

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With the Republican drive to craft a new health care plan sputtering, House GOP leaders are offering options to rank-and-file lawmakers for replacing President Barack Obama's health care law with a conservative approach dominated by tax breaks and a transition away from today's Medicaid program.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and other House leaders planned to discuss details of their plans with lawmakers Thursday and to gauge their receptiveness. The briefing was coming hours before a weeklong recess sends Congress home to energized voters — mostly Democrats — who recently have crammed town hall meetings to complain noisily about GOP efforts to repeal Obama's statute.

Lawmakers are eager to have something to show constituents.

"This is complicated work. We're not going to rush it," said Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, one of the panels helping craft the legislation. Walden said that by the end of March, his committee would start writing its part of the measure voiding much of Obama's law and substituting GOP programs. That's the most recent of several self-imposed deadlines that President Donald Trump and GOP leaders have set, but until now failed to meet, for reconfiguring the nation's health care system.

With Senate Republicans straining to coalesce around plans, new Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price met privately with GOP senators Wednesday, but participants

said no specifics were discussed. Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., said lawmakers and the White House are trying to decide who should release a plan to replace Obama's law first — the White House or Congress.

Asked to characterize those discussions, Wicker said: "You go first. No, you go first."

Thursday's House GOP meeting was coming a day after the Trump administration took regulatory steps aimed at curbing Obama's law. These included making it harder for people to sign up for coverage outside of open enrollment periods and eased IRS enforcement of fines for people who don't buy insurance.

Lawmakers, aides and lobbyists who described House leaders' plans said they strongly resembled a broad outline that Ryan released last summer as

a campaign document for GOP candidates to tout to voters. Most spoke on condition of anonymity because the proposals hadn't been released publicly.

In a significant departure from Ryan's summertime proposal, the options being discussed Thursday will not address Medicare, which helps pay for guaranteed health care for the elderly. Ryan has backed reshaping it into a voucher-like program that people could use to buy coverage, but Trump has said he doesn't want to revamp Medicare. Under the ideas being discussed Thursday, the tax penalties that Obama's law imposed on people who don't buy insurance would be killed. Also eliminated would be the subsidies the government provides most people who buy coverage on the online marketplaces the statute established.

Colo. nears measure on pot clubs

Associated Press

DENVER — At risk of raising the ire of the White House, Colorado is on the brink of becoming the first state with licensed pot clubs. But the details of how these clubs will operate are as hazy as the underground clubs operating already.

Denver officials are working on regulations to open a one-year pilot of bring-your-own marijuana clubs, while state lawmakers are expected to consider measures to allow either marijuana “tasting rooms” run by marijuana dispensaries, or smoke-friendly clubs akin to cigar bars.

Alaska regulators, spooked by how the Trump administration might view marijuana, recently decided not to move forward with rules for use of marijuana at authorized stores, though the issue there isn't dead. California and Maine voters expressly signed off on public marijuana consumption, but haven't settled on rules. That means Colorado may be first out of the gate with statewide pot-club regulations, possibly by this summer.

Colorado officials from both parties have come around to the idea of Amsterdam-style pot clubs for a simple reason: Everyone is tired of seeing pot smokers on public sidewalks.

A Republican-sponsored measure to allow marijuana clubs to be regulated like cigar bars was put on hold for a re-write. That's because sponsors are trying to address concerns that pot clubs shouldn't allow medical marijuana use.

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, a Democrat who opposed pot legalization but is undecided on signing a bill to allow clubs, said he's not sure how the administration would respond to clubs. The governor did indicate he'd veto a bill that allowed indoor smoking, not just smoking on enclosed private patios. The Denver clubs would have to abide by clean-air laws banning burned marijuana inside; the statewide proposal would allow indoor smoking with “proper ventilation.”

Group says 2016 US traffic fatalities highest in decade

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A jump in traffic fatalities last year pushed deaths on U.S. roads to their highest level in nearly a decade, erasing improvements made during the Great Recession and economic recovery, a leading safety organization said Wednesday.

Fatalities rose 6 percent in 2016, reaching an estimated 40,200 deaths compared to 37,757 deaths the previous year, according to the National Safety Council. The group gets its data from states. The last time there were more than 40,000 fatalities in a single year was in 2007, just before the economy tanked. There were 41,000 deaths that year.

The increase came as Americans drove more last year — a 3 percent increase in total miles.

The council cited continued lower gasoline prices and an improving economy as key factors.

Following an increase in fatalities in 2015, the U.S. has had the sharpest two-year increase in traffic deaths in 53 years, the council said.

Americans have come to accept large numbers of traffic deaths as inevitable instead of taking actions that would prevent them, said Deborah Hersman, the council's president.

“Motor vehicle fatality numbers have been ringing the alarm for two years,” she said. “Unfortunately, we have been tone-deaf to the data and the carnage on our roadways. If we fail to take action, the death toll will continue to rise.”

Jonathan Adkins, executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association,

which represents state highway safety offices, said state officials continue to point to three predominant factors in traffic deaths — “belts, booze and speed.”

The estimated annual mileage death rate last year was 1.25 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles, an increase of 3 percent from the 2015 rate.

The surge comes as cars and trucks have more safety features than ever. Nearly all new cars and light trucks now have electronic stability control and rearview cameras, for example. Automakers are also beginning to equip more cars with sophisticated safety technology like adaptive cruise control, automatic emergency-braking and blind-spot monitoring that are designed to prevent crashes rather than merely make them survivable.

AF colonel wins ‘space poop challenge’

The Washington Post

And on the sixth day of the Apollo 10 mission, the identifiable floating object struck.

It was May 1969. As the Apollo crew headed back to Earth after a successful moon orbit, the three astronauts discovered it had joined them aboard the command module.

Commander Thomas P. Stafford, his microgravity reflexes honed on two prior spaceflights, jumped to action. “Give me a napkin quick,” Stafford said, according to the flight transcript. “There's a turd floating through the air.” After bickering about who did not properly use the adhesive toilet bag — an abortive attempt to deduce the poop's creator based upon its consistency — the astronauts wrangled the IFO into the waste compartment. (This was the first of two Apollo 10 fecal escapees.)

Nearly 50 years later the matter of space pooping is not com-

pletely solved. Inside a habitable satellite, such as the International Space Station, toilets with suction-generating fans collect and dump solid waste, which may incinerate in the atmosphere like shooting stars. But during a rocket launch or spacewalks, adult diapers are the best technology available.

Available — but not ideal. Diapers may pose a risk of irritation or infection when astronauts are confined to their suits for long durations. In preparation for expeditions such as the Orion mission, which will send astronauts to space beyond the moon, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration sought a new way for space suits to contain fecal, urine and menstrual waste for 144 hours at a go. Enter the Space Poop Challenge, led by crowdfunding platform HeroX with support of NASA. During the 60-day challenge, 19,000 thinkers and inventors submitted 5,000 pos-

sible solutions. The design of Col. Thatcher R. Cardon, a physician and officer in the U.S. Air Force, and two other winning technologies were announced Wednesday. Cardon's two-part design hinged on a machine he called the perineal access port. This access port would cover an area of the astronaut called the perineum, the crotch zone below the tailbone and forward, occasionally described as the “fig leaf area.” The port was two flaps and a tiny valve — essentially, a small airlock to expel waste from the suit without losing precious oxygen supply.

Like building a ship in a bottle or repairing a heart valve through a blood vessel, the access port would require specialized tools to work. To get from the biological business end through the weenie airlock and into space, Cardon devised a second class of devices he called introducers. For his efforts, Cardon scored \$15,000.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Teacher charged in attempt to record girls

MD BALTIMORE — A Baltimore teacher was charged after police say he tried to record the school's cheerleading team changing in his classroom.

Baltimore County police spokeswoman Jennifer Peach told local media that Christopher Clark, 46, a teacher at Milford Mill Academy, faces one voyeurism-related charge.

According to charging documents, Clark admitted that on Jan. 23 he propped his cellphone on his desk, pressed record and then left his classroom to allow the cheerleaders to change into their uniforms. Peach said a cheerleader discovered the phone before the girls started undressing.

Clark also told police he recorded two girls changing in his classroom in a separate incident earlier in January.

Clark is no longer employed at the school.

Trump poster removed due to spelling error

DC WASHINGTON — An inauguration poster of President Donald Trump that included a misspelling in a quote has been removed from the online store of the Library of Congress.

The poster includes Trump's quote, "No dream is too big, no challenge is to great. Nothing we want for the future is beyond our reach." The phrase should be "too great."

Twitter users quickly spotted the error over the weekend and the item was removed. An archived version of the listing is accessible through the Internet Archive website.

The marketing materials for the poster came from a third-party vendor and the Library regrets not catching the mis-

take, said Library spokeswoman Gayle Osterberg.

Man arrested after transit worker kissed

PA UPPER DARBY — Police charged a man after they say he forcibly kissed a public transit worker in suburban Philadelphia.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority police said a man grabbed a SEPTA transit officer who was patrolling a terminal in Upper Darby on Monday afternoon and kissed her. The officer escaped unharmed.

SEPTA Police Chief Thomas Nestel tweeted out his support for the officer and called the offense "outrageous."

The man was arrested and charged with assault along with other offenses. Police have not identified him.

State panel backs bill to end 'tampon tax'

CO DENVER — A Democratic-led state House committee has endorsed a bill to end Colorado state sales taxes on menstrual products.

The Finance Committee voted 7-6 along party lines Monday to send the so-called "tampon tax" bill to the House Appropriations Committee. The bill would affect feminine hygiene products such as tampons or menstrual pads. It would cost Colorado an estimated \$1.2 million in lost tax revenue its first year.

Advocates say the taxes unduly affect women, especially low-income women.

Police investigating fliers promoting KKK

NJ CINNAMINSON — Police are investigating the appearance of fliers promoting the Ku Klux Klan in

Burlington County.

Police said Cinnaminson and Maple Shade residents found the fliers near their driveways Sunday. The fliers had two heart shapes. Inside the hearts were the messages "love your own race" and "stop homosexuality and race mixing."

Each KKK paper also had a number and website listed.

The Cinnaminson Police Department denounced the fliers.

Wife, stepson of Klan leader accused in killing

MO LEADWOOD — The wife and stepson of a Ku Klux Klan leader found fatally shot next to a river in eastern Missouri were charged in his death Monday.

Malissa Ann Ancona, 44, and her son, Paul Edward Jinkerson Jr., 24, were charged with first-degree murder, tampering with physical evidence and abandonment of a corpse in the death of Frank Ancona. Both are jailed without bond.

A probable cause statement alleges that Jinkerson shot his 51-year-old stepfather as he slept at his home in Leadwood, about 70 miles south of St. Louis.

St. Francois County Sheriff's Department detective Matt Wampler wrote that after the shooting, Ancona's body was taken in Jinkerson's vehicle to an area about 20 miles away.

Woman reunited with her cat after 15 years

HI WAILUKU — A Maui woman has been reunited with her cat that went missing about 15 years ago.

Tori Takayesu received a call last month saying her cat had been found and was at the Maui Humane Society.

The female cat, named James, was traced to the Makawao resident through a number tattooed on her ear when she was

spayed at the shelter years ago, The Maui News reported.

Takayesu said her family had James for only a short period of time before the animal disappeared in 2001. She was told James was found on a street not too far from her family's home.

Second teen brother dies after being shot

WI WEST ALLIS — A second teen has died after being shot along with his brother during an attempted robbery in a Milwaukee suburb.

Trajan Edwards, 17, was pronounced dead Tuesday at Froedtert Hospital.

His brother, Croshian "CJ" Edwards Jr., 19, died Sunday after the two were shot at a residence in West Allis.

Police have arrested a 14-year-old boy for the shooting.

The victims' uncle, Eric Darrington, told WITI-TV the outpouring of love from schoolmates at West Allis Central High School has been touching. He said dozens of visitors came to the hospital Monday alone.

1 person dies in blaze; firefighter is injured

AL SUMITON — One person was dead and a firefighter badly injured after what investigators are calling a suspicious residential fire in Walker County.

Authorities who were called to a fire in Sumiton arrived to find a mobile home engulfed in flames Tuesday night.

The victim's name hasn't been released.

A firefighter who fell through the floor of the burning structure was being treated at a hospital in Birmingham for severe injuries. Sumiton police and the state fire marshal's office are investigating.

From wire reports

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MVPs Curry, Durant sharing stardom

Associated Press

Stephen Curry had no preconceived notion on how being Kevin Durant's teammate was supposed to work.

He just knew it would.

It was a fair question when the season began: How were superstars like Curry and Durant going to mesh with the Golden State Warriors? No one need ask anymore, not with the Warriors holding the best record in the NBA and the team about to send four players — Curry and Durant included, of course — to New Orleans for Sunday's All-Star Game.

"I kind of went into it with a fresh perspective, just understanding what KD's game is like and what he's like as a person," Curry said. "I knew some things from playing with him, on Team USA and stuff. From there, we had a certain identity to how we play. I knew that he would blend right in and bring his skill set to the table.

"I didn't want to put too much pressure on the transition," Curry added. "We just let it happen."

He makes it sound so simple.

Those who have been there before know it's not. Paul Pierce went through it in Boston when the Celtics added Kevin Garnett and Ray Allen, and Dwyane Wade did in Miami when the Heat landed LeBron James and Chris Bosh.

"It's very challenging. It's like being a bachelor and then you get married,"

Wade said. "You aren't going to have as much bathroom time, you aren't going to have as much of the bed. You have to figure out how to get comfortable."

Curry apparently has. His scoring is down from a league-best 30.1 per game last season to 25.2 this season. He's shooting less and doesn't have the ball in his hands as often.

There's other parts to the formula. Harrison Barnes took 10 shots per game last season for Golden State; he's now in Dallas. Draymond Green has given up some of his shots, and Durant himself is shooting a tad less often than he did in Oklahoma City.

But when Durant signed with the Warriors last summer Curry immediately knew his role would change, even coming off consecutive MVP seasons.

He hasn't complained.

"When you have an opportunity to get a piece who isn't just a good piece but a great piece, a future Hall of Fame piece, it's easier to take a little bit of a side step," former NBA star Jerry Stackhouse said. "It's not a backstep at all. You still need Steph Curry to be Steph Curry for them to have a chance to win a championship."

A play in Saturday's game that had Durant back in Oklahoma City might illustrate how well he and Curry are clicking.

It was midway through the first quarter, Warriors down by seven and Durant having missed his last three jumpers. Curry dribbled across midcourt with his left hand,

and pointed at Durant with his right.

Pass. Catch. Shoot. Score.

Curry let the whole arena know what was coming, and it still worked. The Warriors had the lead not long afterward, and won going away.

"All these guys are great guys," Durant said. "They're easy to get along with. A lot of guys know how to just play the game. I knew if I came here, not think about myself and just play within the offense, I'd figure out how to be aggressive and score."

Curry and Durant also said there are times when they can read the other without needing words — a look here or a nod there is sometimes enough to tell the one exactly what the other is thinking.

The numbers are showing that Curry is finding his rhythm now, too: A month ago, he was below 40 percent for the season from three-point range. In his last 10 games going into Monday, he's shot 50 percent from beyond the arc.

If all that wasn't enough, there's also this: Curry and Durant both say they're only going to get better.

"At the end of the day we are about winning," Curry said. "The spotlight will come and I'll be able to do what I need to do on the floor and push my game to the next level regardless. That's the mentality we both had going into this. And we're getting better at it."

Westbrook tallies 27th triple-double

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Russell Westbrook scored 38 points and had his 27th triple-double of the season to help the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the New York Knicks 116-105 on Wednesday night.

Westbrook moved into sole possession of third place for the most triple-doubles in a season, behind Oscar Robertson's 41 in 1961-62 and Wilt Chamberlain's 31 in 1967-68. The star guard had 14 rebounds and 12 assists in the 64th triple-double of his career.

Celtics 116, 76ers 108: Isaiah Thomas scored 13 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter and host Boston held on to beat Philadelphia.

It was the 40th straight 20-point game for Thomas, tying the team record set by John Havlicek during the 1971-72 season. Marcus Smart added 21 points and eight steals for the Celtics.

Cavaliers 113, Pacers 104: LeBron James scored 31 points, Kyrie Irving added

26, Kyle Korver made six three-pointers and Cleveland beat visiting Indiana to roll into the All-Star break with its seventh win in eight games.

Warriors 109, Kings 86: Klay Thompson scored 10 of his 35 points during a big third-quarter run and host Golden State beat Sacramento.

Heat 117, Rockets 109: Hassan Whiteside had 23 points, 14 rebounds and five blocks to help visiting Miami beat Houston.

Bucks 129, Nets 125: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 33 points in his final game before making his All-Star debut, Greg Monroe added 25 and Milwaukee sent host Brooklyn to the break on a 14-game skid.

Timberwolves 112, Nuggets 99: Andrew Wiggins scored 40 points and Karl-Anthony Towns added 24 points and 18 rebounds in visiting Minnesota's victory over Denver.

Suns 137, Lakers 101: Eric Bledsoe had his third career triple-double, the first for a Phoenix player since November 2015,

and the hosts routed Los Angeles.

Raptors 90, Hornets 85: Kyle Lowry scored 21 points and Toronto overcame a 17-point fourth-quarter deficit to beat visiting Charlotte.

Spurs 107, Magic 79: LaMarcus Aldridge scored 23 points and Kawhi Leonard added 22, leading San Antonio past short-handed host Orlando.

Pelicans 95, Grizzlies 91: Solomon Hill scored a season-high 23 points and Anthony Davis added 18, including a key basket with 38.8 seconds left that helped visiting New Orleans hold off Memphis.

Pistons 98, Mavericks 91: Reggie Jackson scored 22 points, Jon Leuer added 20 and host Detroit beat Dallas.

Jazz 111, Trail Blazers 88: At Salt Lake City, Gordon Hayward scored 22 points and George Hill added 19 for Utah.

Clippers 99, Hawks 84: Blake Griffin scored 17 points and Los Angeles beat visiting Atlanta to head into the All-Star break on a four-game winning streak.

Gonzaga's leader shrugs off criticism

Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Nigel Williams-Goss hears the doubts being voiced about top-ranked Gonzaga and he dismisses them.

The leading scorer for the only undefeated team remaining in Division I firmly believes this year's Bulldogs can make their first trip to the Final Four.

"I want it bad, I want the national championship bad, to kind of put to rest all the naysayers," Williams-Goss said.

Williams-Goss, a junior in his first season in Spokane after transferring from Washington, has yet to lose in a Gonzaga uniform. The Zags are 26-0 so far and seem unlikely to lose again

during the regular season.

However, despite 18 consecutive trips to the NCAA Tournament, Gonzaga has never gotten beyond the Elite Eight. Critics say that's proof the Bulldogs are overrated because they play in the relatively weak West Coast Conference.

Williams-Goss rejects such notions, and sees parallels between him and his team.

"I just feel a lot of times I've been overlooked my entire life and I've had to work for everything I've gotten," he said. "I feel like the worker's mentality, coming from a small city, small school in Spokane."

"We both pride ourselves on just being nitty and gritty and putting the work in and letting

the results speak for itself," Williams-Goss said.

The 6-foot-3, 195-pound guard grew up in suburban Portland, Ore., but he played his high school basketball at powerhouse Findlay Prep in Henderson, Nev., where he won two national titles.

He played his first two seasons at Washington, where he made the All-Pac-12 Freshman Team and was the team's leading scorer as a sophomore.

But he was unhappy with the direction of the slumping program, and decided to leave. Many assumed he would try for a job in the NBA.

There was much surprise, and some hurt feelings, when he chose to transfer across the

state to rival Gonzaga and sit out a year under NCAA rules.

Williams-Goss is also an excellent student who learned Mandarin in the fifth grade and is a regional All-Academic selection. He carries a 3.84 grade-point average in psychology.

Williams-Goss is averaging 15.7 points, 5.8 rebounds and more than four assists per game, part of a balanced attack that has seven players scoring at least eight points per game. He is a finalist for both the Wooden and Naismith awards.

His best performance may have been at BYU on Feb. 2 when he scored 33 points in an 85-75 win.

Berry leads No. 10 North Carolina past N.C. State

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Joel Berry II scored 18 points to help No. 10 North Carolina beat rival North Carolina State 97-73 on Wednesday night to stay alone in first place in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Luke Maye added a career-high 13 points for the Tar Heels (22-5, 10-3), who shot 56 percent while dominating both the paint and the glass to blow out the Wolfpack for the second time in a month. UNC had won the first meeting 107-56 for the second-worst loss in N.C. State's history.

UNC finished with a 60-22 edge in points in the paint and a 41-25 rebounding advantage that led to a 27-13 edge in second-chance points.

Freshman Dennis Smith Jr. scored 27 points but little else went right for the Wolfpack (14-13, 3-11), who continued their accelerating descent that has led to growing uncertainty about the future of sixth-year coach Mark Gottfried.

No. 12 Duke 65, No. 14 Virginia 55: Jayson Tatum scored 21 of his 28 points in the second half and the visiting Blue Dev-

ils pulled away late for their sixth victory in a row.

No. 18 Cincinnati 68, South Florida 54: Kevin Johnson scored 14 points and Gary Clark had 13 points and 14 rebounds as the visiting Bearcats bounced back from their first loss in two months.

No. 19 SMU 80, Tulane 75: Semi Ojeleye scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half, including consecutive three-pointers in the run that finally put the host Mustangs ahead.

Seton Hall 87, No. 20 Creighton 81: At Newark, N.J., Khadeen Carrington tallied the final 10 points of his career-high 41 in the closing minute and the Pirates made a big stride toward the NCAA Tournament.

Arkansas 83, No. 21 South Carolina 76: Jaylen Barford tied his career high with 23 points and the visiting Razorbacks got their first road win over a ranked opponent in almost three years.

No. 23 Maryland 74, Northwestern 64: Melo Trimble scored a career-high 32 points on 12-for-17 shooting, and the visiting Terrapins strengthened their position in the Big

Ten.

No. 24 Butler 110, St. John's 86: Avery Woodson scored a season-high 20 points and Andrew Chrabascz also had 20 for the host Bulldogs.

Vermont 87, UMass-Lowell 66: Anthony Lamb scored 24 points on 8-for-11 shooting, Trae Bell-Haynes added 18 points, five assists and three steals and the visiting Catamounts won their school-record 16th straight.

Wichita State 87, Southern Illinois 68: Conner Frankamp scored 14 points to lead a balanced offense as the visiting Shockers led wire-to-wire.

Service academies

Army 52, Holy Cross 47: Jacob Kessler scored a season-high 17 points and grabbed nine rebounds and the visiting Black Knights snapped a three-game skid with an upset in a Patriot League battle.

Kessler scored on a layup with 49 seconds left in the first half to give Army a 32-25 advantage at intermission, but Robert Champion hit a jumper, a three-pointer and converted a three-point play to open the second half and give Holy Cross

the lead, 33-32. Thomas Funk answered with a three-pointer to give Army (10-17, 4-11) a lead it never relinquished.

Lehigh 74, Navy 55: Austin Price scored 19 points and led five players in double figures as the host Mountain Hawks cooled off the Midshipmen in a contest between teams seeking a home-court advantage in the upcoming Patriot League tournament.

Tim Kempton, Kyle Leufroy and Pat Andree each scored 12 for Lehigh (15-11, 9-6) and Brandon Alston added 10.

Navy (15-12, 10-5) was on a hot streak, winning 10 of its last 11 games, but the Midshipmen were just 23-for-58 from the floor (40 percent) and made just 6 of 19 three-point tries.

Nevada 78, Air Force 59: Cameron Oliver scored 25 points with 15 rebounds and the visiting Wolf Pack beat the Falcons (10-16, 3-10).

Oliver was 9-for-12 shooting and went 5-for-5 at the line as Nevada (20-6, 9-4) rebounded from a Sunday loss to San Diego State and now trails Colorado State by a half-game in the Mountain West Conference.

Freshman Sid Tomes led the Falcons with 18 points.

Pyeongchang makes good impression

Associated Press

The first impression some members of the USA Luge team got regarding how the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics will operate came on the bus ride from the airport to the mountain resort where they're staying.

Sensing the athletes were weary after long flights, the bus stopped for lunch.

Whether it's the South Korean volunteers learning all the names of athletes, offering wireless connectivity just about everywhere or even letting sliders pick what sort of music they want to hear on the start ramp, many of those vying for spots on next year's U.S. Olympic Team are liking what they're seeing so far from Pyeongchang and the surrounding areas.

"They're asking a lot of questions," doubles luge veteran Matt Mortensen said from South Korea on Tuesday. "They're doing the right things and everybody just seems re-

ally happy to be putting on this show for the world."

A dry run for the Olympics is essentially going on right now in the Pyeongchang area; cross country, nordic combined, luge, speed skating, freestyle skiing, snowboarding, ski jumping, figure skating and curling either have held or are currently contesting international events there, and other sports — alpine skiing, nordic skiing, bobsled, skeleton and biathlon included — will do so in the next few weeks.

"It's kind of surreal thinking that next year is the Olympics and they'll be here," U.S. speed skater Mia Manganello said after she competed in Pyeongchang at the world single distance championships this month. "Hopefully, I'll be able to represent as well."

It's a critical time for athletes, and even more critical for the hosts. These test events, as they're known, are designed to both welcome the world and

work out the kinks before the Olympics.

U.S. Olympic Committee sport performance chief Alan Ashley was in South Korea this month, and said he left the venues and villages convinced that Pyeongchang will be — or is — ready.

Downhill architect downplays low speeds

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland — Stop worrying, downhill racers. The 2018 Olympic course will be faster than you think.

The new track in South Korea has been criticized — at a men's test race last year and at the world championships this week — as being too slow with too many twists and turns.

Not so fast, veteran Olympic course designer Bernhard Russi told The Associated Press.

"It was on purpose to do it like this," Russi said of last February's World Cup down-

hill where race winner Kjetil Jansrud of Norway peaked at 70.6 mph.

If that sounds fast, 2014 Olympic champion Matthias Mayer hit close to 84 mph on Russi's design in the mountains above Sochi. A record speed of 100 mph in World Cup downhill was set by Johan Clarey of France in Wengen, Switzerland, in 2013.

"When you go the first time in a new downhill you start from the slow side. You don't want to kill the guys," said Russi, the 1972 Olympic champion and silver medalist behind Austrian great Franz Klammer four years later.

The Swiss veteran is skiing's master architect, and always planned to learn from last year's debut race and a scheduled women's World Cup downhill on the same wide course next month.

"Now we know how much faster we can go, and we will. And the jumps will be longer."

Blue Jackets move into tie for second in Metropolitan

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Nick Foligno and Boone Jenner each scored a goal, backup goalie Joonas Korpisalo made 31 saves and the Columbus Blue Jackets beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 5-2 on Wednesday night.

Josh Anderson, Oliver Bjorkstrand and Matt Calvert also scored, and Alexander Wennberg, Zach Werenski and Seth Jones had a pair of assists each for the Blue Jackets. Columbus moved into a tie with Pittsburgh for second place in the Metropolitan Division two days before the Penguins visit Nationwide Arena.

Nazem Kadri scored both goals for Toronto, and Curtis McElhinney blocked 30 shots — McElhinney was waived by the Blue Jackets earlier this season after backing up Sergei Bobrovsky the past few seasons. Josh Leivo assisted on both goals for the Maple Leafs,

who squandered a chance to move ahead of Ottawa and Boston for second place in the Atlantic Division.

Anderson started the scoring by poking in a rebound from the blue paint 4:30 into the game. The call was delayed while officials looked at the video replay to make sure McElhinney wasn't pushed out of the way by a Columbus player. It was Anderson's 11th goal of the season and his first in 15 games.

Later in the first period, Jenner scored by pushing in the rebound from a shot by Werenski.

Panthers 6, Sharks 5 (OT): Jonathan Huberdeau scored 1:38 into overtime after host San Jose's Joe Pavelski scored twice late in the third period to tie it.

Nick Bjugstad and Aleksander Barkov each scored twice for the Panthers, who have won five of six games.

Jussi Jokinen also scored.

Jaromir Jagr assisted on Barkov's second goal for his 1,900th NHL point. Sharks' fans gave him a nice ovation.

Brent Burns, Joel Ward and Marc-Edouard Vlasic also scored for the Sharks, who have lost five of six.

Roberto Luongo stopped 29 of 34 shots for Florida and had to leave the game with a lower-body injury with 38 seconds left in the third period. He was replaced by James Reimer, who stopped two shots.

Blues 2, Red Wings 0: Carter Hutton made 25 saves for his second straight shutout, Ivan Barbashev scored 2:06 into the game and Jaden Schwartz had an empty-net goal in the final seconds, helping visiting St. Louis beat Detroit.

The Blues have won a season-high five straight games, and coach Mike Yeo has won six of seven since replacing the

fired Ken Hitchcock.

Detroit has dropped five straight games for the second time in less than a month, matching its season-long losing streak. Detroit also lost five straight following a 6-2 start to what's become a difficult season.

The Red Wings played their first home game since team owner Mike Ilitch died Friday.

Flames 3, Flyers 1: Matthew Tkachuk had a goal and an assist, Brian Elliott made 33 stops and host Calgary beat Philadelphia.

The 19-year-old Tkachuk pulled Calgary even at 1 with a goal 4:28 into the first period, then assisted on TJ Brodie's go-ahead goal 12:45 into the second. Mark Giordano added an empty-net goal with 39 seconds left for the Flames.

Nick Cousins scored for the Flyers, and Michal Neuvirth stopped 20 of 22 shots.