

STARS AND STRIPES®

Monday, February 27, 2017

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Father of SEAL wants Yemen raid probed

The Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The father of a Navy SEAL killed during an anti-terrorism raid in Yemen is demanding an investigation into its planning and criticized the Trump administration for its timing.

Bill Owens told *The Miami Herald* in a story published Sunday that he refused to meet with President Donald Trump when both came to Dover Air Force Base, Del., to receive the casket carrying his son, Chief Special Warfare Officer William “Ryan” Owens.

“I want an investigation,” said Owens, a retired Fort Lauderdale police detective and veteran. “The government

owes my son an investigation.”

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders told ABC’s “This Week” on Sunday she believes the president would support an investigation.

“I can’t imagine what this father is going through,” she said. “His son is a true American hero, and we should forever be in his son’s debt.”

The younger Owens, a 36-year-old married father of three, was the lone U.S. fatality in the Jan. 27 raid on a suspected al-Qaida compound. Approximately 16 civilians and 14 militants died in the raid, which the Pentagon said was aimed at capturing information on potential al-Qaida attacks against

the U.S. and its allies.

The elder Owens told the *Herald* he refused to meet with the president because the family had requested a private ceremony.

“I’m sorry, I don’t want to see him,” Owens recalled telling the chaplain who informed him that Trump was on his way from Washington. “I told them I don’t want to meet the president.”

He said he also was troubled by the attack Trump leveled at Khizr and Ghazala Kahn, an American Muslim family whose Army officer son died in Iraq in 2004.

The couple had criticized Trump at the Democratic Na-

tional Convention last summer.

He also questioned why the president approved the raid a week after taking office.

“I told them I didn’t want to make a scene about it, but my conscience wouldn’t let me talk to him,” Owens told the *Herald*. “Why at this time did there have to be this stupid mission when it wasn’t even barely a week into his administration? Why?”

“For two years prior, there were no boots on the ground in Yemen — everything was missiles and drones — because there was not a target worth one American life. Now, all of a sudden, we had to make this grand display?”

Mattis to brief White House on plan to defeat Islamic State

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis was set to brief top national security officials at the White House on Monday afternoon on a Pentagon-led plan to “rapidly defeat” the Islamic State group, a Defense Department spokesman said.

Earlier on Monday, the Pentagon submitted the plan, a classified preliminary strategy to destroy the terrorist group through military and political actions, said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman. Mattis will present it — a written document with accompanying graphics — at a meeting of National Security Council principals.

The initial plan will not result in immediate adjustments to the ongoing fights against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria, Davis said.

“I would really emphasize

that this is the broad framework of a plan,” he said.

The new strategy will focus primarily on boosting the military actions against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, but it also will provide plans to target its offshoots in other locations as well as other extremist groups such as al-Qaida.

“It is a global plan,” Davis said. “It is not just military. It is not just Iraq [and] Syria.”

Marine Corps Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Thursday that the emerging strategy will take aim not just at the Islamic State militants but at al-Qaida and other extremist organizations in the Middle East and beyond, whose goal is to attack the United States. He emphasized that it would not rest mainly on military might.

“This is a political-military plan,” he said. “It is not a military plan.”

Dunford’s comment suggests

that Pentagon leaders have a more nuanced view of the Islamic State problem than is reflected in Trump’s promise to “obliterate” the group, as he put it on Friday. Dunford said the U.S. should be careful that in solving the Islamic State problem it does not create others, hinting at the sensitive question of how to deal with Turkey, which is a NATO ally with much at stake in neighboring Syria, and Russia, whose military action in Syria has had the effect of propping up the Syrian regime.

Mattis is giving the White House the ingredients of a strategy, which officials say will be fleshed out once Trump has considered the options. Officials described the Mattis report as a “framework” built on broad concepts and based on advice from the State Department, the CIA and other agencies. Officials have indicated the recommended approaches will echo central elements of the Obama

administration’s strategy, which was based on the idea that the U.S. military should support local forces rather than do the fighting for them. Mattis already has signaled publicly that he sees no value in having U.S. combat forces take over the ground war.

“I would just tell you that by, with and through our allies is the way this coalition is going against Daesh,” Mattis said last week in Baghdad, using an Arabic term for the Islamic State group. “We’re going to continue to go after them until we destroy them and any kind of belief in the inevitability of their message.”

Trump signed an executive order on Jan. 28 giving Mattis 30 days to present a “preliminary draft” of a plan. He said it should include a comprehensive strategy that would not only deliver a battlefield victory but also “isolate and delegitimize” the group and its radical ideology.

Trump looks to boost defense by \$54B

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—The White House says President Donald Trump's upcoming budget will propose a whopping \$54 billion increase in defense spending and will impose corresponding cuts to domestic programs and foreign aid. The result is that Trump's initial budget wouldn't dent budget deficits projected to run about \$500 billion.

White House budget officials outlined the information during a telephone call with reporters given on condition of anonymity. The budget officials on the call ignored requests to put the briefing on the record, even though Trump on Friday decried the use of anonymous sources by the media.

The senior budget office official said there will be a large reduction in foreign aid, and most domestic agencies will have to

absorb cuts. He did not offer details, but the administration is likely to go after Republican targets like the Environmental Protection Agency.

Tentative proposals for the 2018 budget year that begins Oct. 1 are being sent to agencies, which will have a chance to propose changes to the cuts.

Democrats and some Republicans are certain to resist the cuts to domestic agencies, and any legislation to implement them would have to overcome a filibuster threat by Senate Democrats. A government shutdown is a real possibility.

Trump's budget also won't make significant changes to Social Security or Medicare, according to an administration official.

Trump's first major fiscal marker will land in the agencies one day before his first address

to a joint session of Congress. For Trump, the prime time speech is an opportunity to refocus his young presidency on the core economic issues that were a centerpiece of his White House run.

The upcoming submission covers the budget year starting on Oct. 1. But first there's an April 28 deadline to finish up the unfinished spending bills for the ongoing 2017 budget year, which is almost half over, and any stumble or protracted battle could risk a government shutdown then as well.

The March release is also expected to include an immediate infusion of 2017 cash for the Pentagon that's expected to register about \$20 billion or so and contain the first wave of funding for Trump's border wall and other initiatives like hiring immigration agents.

In an interview with Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said cuts to Social Security and Medicare would not be part of the administration's first budget. Trump's priority is passing legislation to reduce middle-class and corporate taxes, he said.

The White House budget office issued a statement confirming an interim budget submission will be released in mid-March but declining to comment on an "internal discussion."

By increasing defense and leaving Medicare and Social Security untouched, the Trump final budget plan is sure to project sizable deficits. In the campaign, Trump promised huge tax cuts, but top GOP leaders like House Speaker Paul Ryan, of Wisconsin, don't want this year's tax reform drive to add to the budget deficit.

Nominee for US Navy secretary withdraws

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

The Trump administration's nominee for Navy secretary has withdrawn from consideration, citing conflicts over ethics requirements that would require him to sell his investments.

Financier Philip Bilden announced the decision through a Pentagon statement Sunday evening in Washington.

"I have determined that I will not be able to satisfy the Office of Government Ethics requirements without undue disruption and materially adverse divestment of my family's private financial interests," Bilden said.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said he would make a recommendation to the president for a new nominee in "the coming days," according to a Pentagon statement.

Bilden served in the Army

Reserve from 1986 to 1996, attaining the rank of captain. He joined the private equity firm HarbourVest in 1991 and moved to Hong Kong after leaving the Army Reserve to establish the firm's Asian subsidiary.

Bilden is on the U.S. Naval Academy Foundation's board of directors and is also a Naval War College Foundation trustee.

CBS News first reported on Feb. 18 that Bilden would withdraw, only to be rebutted by Pentagon officials and White House spokesman Sean Spicer.

It remains unclear who might be tapped next to lead the Navy. Randy Forbes, a former House Armed Services sea power subcommittee chairman, visited Trump Tower prior to the inauguration and was once considered a strong candidate.

Forbes accepted a position with the U.S. Naval War College after Bilden's nomination.

911 call: Shooting suspect said he killed two 'Iranians'

Associated Press

OLATHE, Kan. — A bartender at the restaurant where a man was arrested last week for an apparently racially motivated bar shooting in Kansas told a 911 dispatcher that the man admitted shooting two Iranians.

A recording from Henry County, Mo., 911 reveals that the bartender warned police not to approach the building with sirens blaring or the man would "freak out" and "something bad's going to happen."

The man, Adam Purinton, 51, of Olathe, Kan., has been charged with first-degree murder and first-degree attempted murder. According to witnesses, Purinton yelled, "Get out of my country!" at two Indian men, Srinivas Kuchibhotla and Alok Madasani, both 32, before he opened fire at Austin's Bar and Grill in the Kansas City suburb on Wednesday evening.

Kuchibhotla was killed and Madasani injured.

After the shooting, Purinton, who is white, drove 70 miles east to an Applebee's restaurant in Clinton, Mo., where he made the admission to the bartender.

In the 911 call, the bartender told the dispatcher a man had come into the bar and said he'd done something "really bad" and was on the run.

"I finally got him to tell me, and he said, like, that he shot and killed two Iranian people in Olathe."

The incident has raised concern about the treatment of immigrants, who feel targeted by President Donald Trump's promises to ban certain travelers, build a wall on the Mexico border and put "America first."

Madasani addressed a crowd of hundreds during a vigil Sunday night and drew applause when he called the shooting "an isolated incident that doesn't reflect the true spirit of Kansas, the Midwest and the United States."

S. Korean firm OKs land swap deal for THAAD missile site

BY KIM GAMEL AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's Lotte Group has approved a land-swap deal with the defense ministry, clearing another hurdle to the deployment of an advanced U.S. anti-missile battery as early as this summer to counter a growing threat from the North.

The Defense Ministry had reached a tentative agreement in November to exchange military land near Seoul for its hilltop golf course in a southeastern area that was selected as the home for the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system.

The deal stalled over concern about Chinese economic retaliation, as Beijing objects to stationing THAAD in the region out of fears its powerful radar could be used to spy on the Chinese military. The U.S. and South Korea insist the battery will be aimed only at North Korea.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said it now has received word that a contract could be signed as early as Tuesday.

Once finalized, the South Koreans will hand over the golf course to the U.S. military, which will then be able to install THAAD.

"To avoid delays in the installation, the ministry will carry out the process of handing over Lotte's golf course to the U.S. military for THAAD operation and designing the site for a THAAD unit at the same time," a ministry official told the Yonhap news agency.

Washington and Seoul agreed on the deployment last July after Pyongyang conducted its fourth underground nuclear test and a long-range rocket launch that sparked the current crisis.

Officials expressed increasing urgency about deploying THAAD as North Korea carried out a fifth nuclear test in September and test-fired several other ballistic missiles, including one on Feb. 12.

Data show little discipline at VA for drug loss, theft

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Doctors, nurses or pharmacy staff at the Department of Veterans Affairs' hospitals were fired or reprimanded in only a small fraction of thousands of reported cases of opioid theft and missing prescriptions since 2010, according to government data obtained by The Associated Press.

About 372 VA employees were disciplined for a drug- or alcohol-related issue across a network of 160 medical centers and 1,000 clinics during the past six years, according to internal figures kept by the facilities that were reported to the VA's headquarters. During that time, there were more than 11,000 reported incidents of drug loss or theft at federal hospitals — the vast majority within the VA, according to law enforcement data. Roughly translated, VA employees were disciplined in 3 percent of cases.

Nearly one-third of the disciplined employees were dismissed or forced to resign, according to VA data. Others were suspended without pay, were admonished or were given "last chance" warnings. Disciplined employees had failed drug tests or were suspected of stealing drugs, among other offenses.

The VA declined to comment on reasons behind the low disciplinary rate, saying some cases were still being adjudicated. It also would not immediately release the case reports, citing employees' personal information.

"We would like there to be no drug diversion anywhere at any time," Michael Valentino, chief consultant at the

VA's Pharmacy Benefits Management Services, told the AP. "No matter how robust our systems are, people will be determined to find ways to get around them."

The AP reported last week on government data showing a sharp increase since 2009 in opioid theft and drugs that had simply disappeared at the VA amid rising opioid abuse in the U.S. Reported incidents of drug losses or theft at federal hospitals jumped from 272 in 2009 to 2,926 in 2015 before dipping to 2,457 last year, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. "Federal hospitals" include the VA's facilities as well as seven correctional hospitals and roughly 20 hospitals serving Indian tribes.

Aggravating the problem is that some VA hospitals have been lax in tracking drug supplies. Congressional auditors said spot checks found four VA hospitals skipped monthly inspections of drug stocks or missed other requirements. Investigators said that signals problems for the VA's entire network.

A House panel planned a hearing Monday on the issue.

Addressing the Disabled American Veterans group on Sunday, new VA Secretary David Shulkin, who served as the department's undersecretary of health while the drug problem was growing, listed employee accountability as a top priority. Shulkin said he would work with Congress to pass legislation so "bad employees are leaving the system."

Advocate: NCO's sex assault sentence 'shockingly light'

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — An Air Force non-commissioned officer convicted of misconduct with eight women, including three who accused him of sexually assaulting them, was sentenced to three months confinement and another month of hard labor, a punishment a victims' rights advocate called "shockingly light."

Tech. Sgt. Anthony Lizana, 35, also was reduced in rank to airman first class and was given a dishonorable discharge Saturday night at his trial at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

The San Antonio Express-News report-

ed the jury of two officers and five senior noncommissioned officers could have sentenced Lizana to nearly 38 years in prison for his conviction on four charges and eight specifications of misconduct that included dereliction, adultery, assault consummated by battery and sexual assault.

Military prosecutors originally lodged seven charges and 17 specifications of misconduct against him. Conviction on all those charges could have resulted in more than 87 years in prison.

Lizana's civilian attorney, Tom Fleener, told jurors a dishonorable discharge "has a lasting effect forever" and was enough punishment.

Prosecutors asked for nine years and reduction to the lowest rank.

"I think it reflects that there is a massive need for reforming the way we do sentencing in the military," Don Christensen, a former Air Force judge and president of Protect Our Defenders, an advocacy group for military sexual assault survivors, told the newspaper. "I would say this is more the norm than the exception that we get shockingly light sentences for serious misconduct in the military."

"It reflects the military's inability to take sexual misconduct that strikes at the heart of good order and discipline seriously."

Flintlock exercise in Africa focused on extremist threats

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — In one of U.S. Africa Command's largest exercises, a contingent of U.S. special operations forces is working alongside hundreds of troops in western Africa, a region threatened by the militant group Boko Haram.

Flintlock 2017, run by Special Operations Command Africa, kicked off Monday. Two thousand elite U.S., European and African troops are taking part in three weeks of rugged field training.

This year, Chad is serving as the main host for the exercises, which also involve training events in Cameroon, Niger, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

Brig. Gen. Donald Bolduc, who heads SOCAF, said the training is focused on helping partners coordinate a regional response to extremist threats such as Boko Haram, al-Qaida-aligned groups and the Islamic State group, which has emerged more recently in parts of Africa.

"These threats are a shared challenge we can only meet together," Bolduc said during the Flintlock opening ceremony in Chad. "We are stronger together. We work smarter together to be more effective together."

For the nations situated around Nigeria, a key focus will be Boko Haram, which is from northern Nigeria. The group has forced thousands from their homes, displacing refugees into neighboring states such as Niger, which in turn has become the target of attacks.

"Despite direct support from Chadian troops since 2015 and improved collaboration with the Nigerian army, Nigerian forces have been unable to put a stop to attacks by insurgents, some of whom have links to the Islamic State," the International Crisis Group said in a report issued Monday.

Attacks by Boko Haram in Niger's Diffa region have resulted in an extended state of emergency that has limited commercial activities and heightened social tensions in the area, the International Crisis Group said.

This year's Flintlock is designed to improve coordination of military efforts to protect borders and guard against cross-border attacks. In recent years, western African nations have sought to establish closer military ties as a way to counter extremist groups. Tunisia, which borders Libya, has been concerned about the potential for local unrest as Islamic State fighters return from Iraq and Syria.

In all, about 20 nations are taking part in Flintlock 2017, including numerous European nations such as Germany and Britain.

Iraqis reach key Mosul bridge

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraqi forces reached one of Mosul's five destroyed bridges on Monday as they pushed deeper into the western half of the city, driving Islamic State militants back with the help of U.S.-led airstrikes.

Maj. Gen. Thamer al-Hussaini said the militarized Federal Police advanced in the face of snipers, anti-tank missiles and suicide car bombs, describing "fierce" clashes in which Iraqi forces suffered casualties, without providing exact numbers.

Just a few miles from the front, wounded troops streamed into field hospitals, many of them suffering from shrapnel wounds. One soldier had lost the lower part of his leg in an explosion.

Front-line medics at one field hospital

said they had received more than 20 casualties by midday. The medics spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations as Iraq's military does not release casualty information.

U.S.-led airstrikes disabled all of Mosul's bridges spanning the Tigris River last year in a bid to isolate the militants in the western half of the city. Iraq declared eastern Mosul "fully liberated" last month, but the militants have carried out attacks there since then.

Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen TV aired live footage from the western Gawsaq neighborhood showing Iraqi troops in armored vehicles and Humvees rolling through dusty streets as gunfire rattled. Thick black smoke could be seen billowing up after airstrikes.

Afghan security forces reshuffle leadership to thwart Taliban gains

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Leadership changes made throughout the winter should give Afghan security forces a boost on the battlefield this year, according to Afghan and U.S. military officials, who say better leaders are essential to stemming recent gains by the Taliban.

Ineffective and corrupt commanders within the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces — which include the armed forces and the police — have been identified as one of the biggest obstacles in the fight against Taliban insurgents, who now hold more territory than at any time since 2001, when a U.S.-led invasion removed them from power.

"In the Afghan National Army, we are looking at 15 Kandak (battalion) commanders being replaced over the last three months, at least three brigade commanders and one corps commander," Command Sgt. Maj. David Clark, the senior enlisted leader for NATO and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, told Stars and Stripes.

Clark said the adjustments already had resulted in positive change. "I see more of the platoons taking the fight to the enemy," he said. "The tactical failures are coming down."

The army's 215 Corps in Helmand saw major restructuring early last year, with the corps' commander, some brigade commanders and key core staff replaced for corruption and incompetence.

While the need for other ANDSF leadership changes was expressed at the time

— especially in the Interior Ministry, which maintains the police force — major replacements were held off until the winter, when fighting traditionally abates.

Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said "tens of people were changed" at the ministry in recent months. Those include several general directors and a number of provincial and district police chiefs. He said those changes would "help greatly in the upcoming fighting season."

At the Afghan air force, with guidance from U.S. and coalition partners, three senior leaders and several lower-level leaders have been replaced since December.

The top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson, told the Pentagon in early December that improving ANDSF leadership would be "a specific focus over the winter."

Nicholson's predecessor, Gen. John Campbell, told Congress last year that poor leadership was to blame for most of the difficulties plaguing Afghan forces.

Corruption has been a significant problem among Afghanistan's security forces. The Attorney General's Office in September announced that several Defense Ministry generals had been arrested on suspicion of corrupt practices. However, most of the ANDSF leaders replaced this winter were not involved in corruption or other illegal activity, officials said.

"Some were just getting older and a little bit set in their ways," said Col. Nicola Gismondi, deputy commander of NATO's Train, Advise, Assist Command-Air. He added that many leaders were rotated to other positions.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man shot in face walks 8 blocks to get help

NE OMAHA — Police said a man shot in the face Saturday at a northeast Omaha intersection walked about eight blocks for help.

Omaha police told the Omaha World-Herald that Terry Hudson, 54, was outdoors just after midnight when he was shot.

Police Sgt. Owen Gregg said Hudson walked to a house a block to the west, and a person there called 911, but Hudson continued on. A trail of blood marked his path.

Officials said Hudson was taken in critical condition to Creighton University Medical Center. Police said his injuries were not believed to be life-threatening.

2 teachers on leave for immigration posts

WA YAKIMA — A second Prosser School District employee has been placed on leave after posting Facebook comments about last week's Day Without Immigrants protests.

The Tri-City Herald reported that an assistant librarian at Prosser Heights Elementary School was suspended Feb. 21. The librarian had written she "loved it" that so many children stayed out of school to participate in the nationwide event because there were no "out of control kids" and added, "I hope they can do it again soon."

A teacher at a different elementary school in the heavily Latino district was suspended Friday after writing that the protest was a "great idea" because it would make it easier to identify illegal immigrants. Her post included contact information for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Nursing home cleared after grenades found

NY CLARKSTOWN — Two World War II-era grenades were found in a suburban New York nursing home resident's refrigerator, prompting an evacuation.

The Journal News reported the Tappan Zee Manor Nursing Home was evacuated Friday afternoon while police searched the facility and a 91-year-old resident's car for any additional explosives. No other devices were found during the search.

The grenades were removed by the Rockland County sheriff's bomb squad. Residents were allowed to return within hours.

Authorities said the man who owned the grenades was out of the nursing home for medical treatment at the time.

Man gets prison over finger amputation

WI GREEN BAY — A Wisconsin man was sentenced to 3½ years in prison after pleading no contest to cutting off a woman's finger as part of a ritual to honor a fellow rap music fan.

Jonathan Schrap, 24, was sentenced Friday on one count of second-degree reckless injury.

A complaint says Schrap and his friends were staging a "ritualistic memorial" at his house in August to commemorate a deceased member of the Juggalos, the name given to fans of the rap duo Insane Clown Posse.

WBAY-TV reported the woman allowed Schrap to cut her arm with a machete. She also let Schrap cut off her right pinky finger.

The mother of the woman's boyfriend persuaded her to go

to a hospital, where staff called police.

Mountain lion takes swipe at young girl

MT BUTTE — Wildlife officials said a mountain lion took a swipe at a 6-year-old girl in Montana but the child was not hurt.

The Montana Standard reported that two girls and a boy were playing in a backyard near Dillon on Feb. 17 when the mountain lion took a swipe at one girl's leg. Fish, Wildlife and Parks Captain Adam Pankratz said the big cat left a small, red mark on the child's leg.

The girl's father found the mountain lion hiding in a shed and killed it.

The agency sent the animal to a veterinarian for a necropsy to determine if it was sick.

Game officials say 28 antelope slaughtered

ID MONTEVIEW — Game officials said they're trying to figure out who slaughtered 28 pronghorn antelope in eastern Idaho.

The animals were left to waste in fields near Montevue, a small community about 50 miles northwest of Idaho Falls. The Idaho State Journal reported that Idaho Fish and Game authorities believe the killings occurred on multiple nights during a two-week stretch sometime during the last week of January through the beginning of February.

Because some of the poached animals were found close to roads, officials said it's likely the pronghorns were shot from a vehicle.

In a news release Friday, Regional Conservation Officer Doug Petersen called it the most offensive case of poaching he's seen in his career.

The Citizens Against Poach-

ing Board has issued a reward of \$2,000 for information about the case.

Woman gets probation for hoarding animals

NE LINCOLN — A Lincoln woman found hoarding dozens of cats and other pets in her home was sentenced to 18 months on probation and barred from owning any pets for five years.

The Lincoln Journal Star reported that Autumn Rupert, 42, received the sentence Friday after pleading guilty to three counts of animal neglect.

In May, officers found dozens of cats and the house smelling strongly of urine and feces.

Officials gave Rupert a week to clean up the house and on May 16 returned with animal control officers and removed nearly four dozen cats, a rabbit, three finches, two betta fish and 13 cages of tarantulas as well as 10 dead kittens.

Tribal village banishes 4 for dealing meth

AK FAIRBANKS — The chief of an Alaskan tribe said four community members have been banished for dealing methamphetamine.

Allakaket Chief PJ Simon told the News-Miner that 25 residents confronted the suspected meth dealers and escorted them out of town. They were placed on a flight Feb. 21.

The banishment came after an emotional town hall meeting, which required residents to brave temperatures of 40 degrees below zero. The village has no Alaska State Trooper post nor a village public safety officer.

Simon said someone who is not local came in with an Allakaket resident and was giving meth to underage girls for free.

From wire reports

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Busch gets Monster win at Daytona

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — The Outlaw, Smoke and Gronk turned the Daytona 500 into party central.

The good times were just getting started in Victory Lane on Sunday night. Flanked by models, the triumphant trio chugged drinks and gave NASCAR the buzz it craved in the season opener.

Might as well go wild for their first celebration on NASCAR's grandest stage.

Kurt Busch used a last-lap pass to win the crash-filled Daytona 500 on Sunday in the opening race of Monster Energy's new role as title sponsor of NASCAR's top series. Busch, it just so happens, also is sponsored by Monster, and the company has strongly stood by him through his rocky career.

This was a victory of redemption for Busch, who was suspended by NASCAR two days before the 2015 opener for his off-track behavior, and for Monster, which promised to pump new life into NASCAR's sagging sport.

Consider the inaugural race a monster success.

"There's just so many new things within this sport," Busch said. "You just keep rolling with it and you smile."

Known as The Outlaw, Busch has had plenty of reasons to smile since the offseason. He got married, and in a sign of the party to come, had Aerosmith's Steven Tyler play at the reception.

Add NFL star Rob Gronkowski to Busch's bandwagon, too.

Gronkowski celebrated with Busch and the famed Monster girls in Victory Lane. He raved about the win and really seemed to enjoy his first Daytona 500, the first for NASCAR's new three-segment format and one filled with wrecks.

"We picked Kurt to win and he won 'cause he's a Monster guy," Gronk told The Associated Press. "Kurt did an awesome job. Monster killed that race!"

Busch also helped team owner Tony Stewart fill one of the biggest voids in his illustrious career. It was the first Daytona 500 victory for Stewart-Haas Racing, which is co-owned by the retired driver nicknamed Smoke. The three-time champion called it quits at the end of last season and watched his four cars race from the pits.

Stewart's NASCAR career ended without a win in 17 tries in the Daytona 500. Turns out he just needed to trade the fire suit for street clothes to bring home the checkered flag.

"If I had known all I had to do was retire, I would have retired 17 years ago if I knew it was what it took to win the race," Stewart said.

It wasn't NASCAR's finest moment, though, as multiple accidents stripped the field of some top stars.

Ryan Blaney finished second, followed by AJ Allmendinger and Aric Almirola.

The first points race of the Monster era was run under a new format that split the 500 miles into three stages. Kyle Busch won the first stage, Kevin Harvick won the second and neither was a contender for the win. NASCAR also debuted a rule that gave teams just five minutes to repair any damage on their cars or they were forced to retire, sending many drivers home early.

They were long gone when the biggest bash started.

Here are some other items of note from the Daytona 500:

Elliott's heartbreak: Chase Elliott came close to victory several times last season, each defeat hitting him harder than the last.

So it was no surprise to see Elliott devastated after he ran out of gas while leading the Daytona 500. He left the track as a passenger in a car driven by his father, Hall of Famer Bill

Elliott, after slipping to a 14th-place finish. Elliott was seeking to become the first driver to win the pole, a qualifying race and the 500 since his father accomplished the feat in 1985.

"I can understand his disappointment," friend and second-place finisher Ryan Blaney said. "You're leading the race. Looks like you're going to win the Daytona 500. You know how he is. He's very hard on himself."

Waltrip's finale: Michael Waltrip ended his racing career exactly how he hoped.

He knew a victory was unlikely, so he set a more realistic goal for his final NASCAR start: to finish in the top 10 in his 30th and last Daytona 500.

The two-time Daytona 500 winner took the checkered flag in eighth, providing him the ideal conclusion to a career that began in 1985, spanned more than three decades and included 784 Cup Series starts and four victories.

"It's going to be a great memory," said Waltrip, who signed a one-race deal with Premium Motorsports to say goodbye at the famed speedway that has provided him triumph and tragedy. "I'm ready for it to be my last one, so it's going to be a good one to remember it by."

Earnhardt feels fine after race-ending crash

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Dale Earnhardt Jr. climbed out of his wrecked race car, surveyed the damage, chatted with his team and hopped onto a golf cart for a trip to the infield care center.

Eight minutes after checking in with doctors, Earnhardt walked out.

And he felt fine.

Earnhardt crashed out near the midway point of the Daytona 500 on Sunday, hitting the wall after Kyle Busch lost control and turned sideways in front of him. Earnhardt's team was unable to repair all the damage to his No. 88 Chevrolet, forcing him to make an early exit in NASCAR's signature race. He finished 37th in the 40-car field.

"I feel good," Earnhardt said. "I don't have any symptoms or anything I've expe-

rienced in the past. It wasn't that hard of a hit, but it still doesn't mean you can't get injured."

NASCAR's most popular driver missed 18 races, half the season, in 2016 because of lingering concussion symptoms that included nausea as well as vision and balance issues. He got back into the car in early December and then gained medical clearance to return this season.

Considering it was his first race in months, he acknowledged earlier in the week that walking away from a hard hit unscathed would "add a ton of confidence" and check a box in his recovery.

"I knew I was at risk, just like I was before the last injury," Earnhardt said. "You're always at risk. It's dangerous. You can't race with fear. You can't go out there

and worry about getting hurt. You have to kind of say, 'All right, man, if I'm going to get in there, I've got to be willing to accept anything — good or bad — result-wise.' I am willing to put myself out there, and I want to compete."

Earnhardt acknowledged that he would have kept racing under NASCAR's old rules. But the new rule regarding damaged race cars only gave his crew five minutes to repair damage, and that wasn't nearly enough time to get the wheels straight and pull out a radiator that was pushed into his oil pump.

Then again, that wasn't all bad.

"I'll be honest with you, I don't want to drive no wrecked race car for the rest of the day," he said. "I'm glad we took it to the garage."

Louisville rebounds, rolls by Syracuse

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Extra practice to improve free throw shooting yielded payoffs in other areas for Donovan Mitchell and Ray Spalding.

Mitchell made six three-pointers for 25 points, Spalding added 18 points with 11 rebounds and No. 7 Louisville shot 57 percent to pull away for an 88-68 victory over Syracuse on Sunday.

Seeking a second-place tie with Florida State in the Atlantic Coast Conference, the Cardinals rode a 14-4 run entering the break for a 15-point lead that grew to 23 early in the second half. That provided a buffer against shaky play Syracuse used to get within 11 but never closer as Louisville (23-6, 11-5) rebounded from its loss at No. 8 North Carolina.

"We came out with energy, which was a good sign," said Mitchell, who shot 9 of 16 from the field to lead four Cardinals in double figures.

"If we continue to play with the energy we played with in the second half, keep playing collectively and not let the press get to us, we'll be fine."

A revamped starting front-court featuring Spalding helped as the sophomore forward made eight of nine attempts to tie a career high in points while posting his second career double-double. He had just 23 points in his previous 10

games.

Louisville outscored Syracuse 38-22 in the paint in the process, success Mitchell attributed to a late-night workout with Spalding after returning from Carolina.

Deng Adel had 17 points and Quentin Snider 12 with six assists as Louisville completed a season sweep of Syracuse.

Tyus Battle had 20 points and Tyler Lydon added 17 for Syracuse (17-13, 9-8), which had sought a follow-up to its buzzer-beating win over No. 10 Duke. The Orange made just 20 of 56 from the field (36 percent).

"We got some good shots but just weren't making them today," said Battle, who went 7-for-17 from the field.

UCF 53, No. 15 Cincinnati 49: B.J. Taylor scored 27 points and 7-foot-6 Tacko Fall had seven points and four blocked shots to help host UCF pull off the upset.

It was the first time in nine meetings that the Knights defeated Cincinnati.

The Bearcats (25-4, 14-2) were trying to stay in step with American Athletic Conference-leading SMU.

The Knights (19-10, 10-7) won their fourth straight game and recorded their first win over a Top 25 opponent since defeating No. 4 UConn in 2011.

Michigan St. 84, No. 16 Wisconsin 74: Nick Ward had 22 points and nine rebounds, Miles Bridges had 17 points and

Matt McQuaid added a season-high 15 for the host Spartans.

Michigan State (18-11, 10-6 Big Ten) has won six of its last eight games, moving into a third-place tie in the conference and perhaps sealing a spot in a 20th straight NCAA Tournament.

The Badgers (22-7, 11-5) have lost four of five and lost a chance to pull into a first-place tie with No. 14 Purdue.

"It's not the end of the world," Bronson Koenig said after scoring 17 points in the setback. "We've been through this before."

No. 21 Notre Dame 64, Georgia Tech 60: Bonzie Colson had 20 points and 11 rebounds and host Notre Dame beat Georgia Tech for its fifth straight victory.

Matt Farrell added 17 points for the Irish (22-7, 11-5 Atlantic Coast Conference).

Tadric Jackson led Georgia Tech (16-13, 7-9) with 20 points, and Josh Okogie had 14 points and 10 rebounds.

No. 22 Butler 88, Xavier 79: Kelan Martin scored 25 points and Butler followed its biggest road win of the season with yet another.

The Bulldogs (23-6, 12-5 Big East) were coming off a 74-66 victory at No. 2 Villanova, one of the biggest road wins in their history. They kept the momentum with a strong finish, outscoring Xavier 19-8 down the stretch for their fourth straight

win.

Xavier (18-11, 8-8) has lost five in a row, its deepest slump in 35 years.

Monmouth 79, Iona 73: Je'lon Hornbeak scored 25 points and visiting Monmouth edged Iona to close the regular season with 16 straight wins and the top seed into the Metro Atlantic Athletic Association Tournament.

Hornbeak had five of Monmouth's nine three-pointers and the Hawks (26-5, 18-2) shot 47 percent from the floor (24-for-51).

Deyshonee Much led Iona (19-12, 12-8) with 18 points. The Gaels are third-seeded in the MAAC tourney.

Oakland 86, Milwaukee 75: At Milwaukee, Sherron Dorsey-Walker sank a career-high eight three-pointers for a career best 28 points and Oakland clinched the Horizon League regular season championship with its ninth straight victory.

The Golden Grizzlies (24-7, 14-4) ended in a tie with Valparaiso, but earned the conference crown and the No. 1 seed in the upcoming tournament by virtue of their 2-0 record against the Crusaders.

Martez Walker finished with 21 points, including four three-pointers, and Army veteran Isaiah Brock had a game-high nine rebounds for Oakland, which shot 51.8 percent and hit 13 three-pointers.

Fowler latest twenty-something Tour winner

Associated Press

PALMBEACH GARDENS, Fla. — Golf's youngest and biggest stars keep winning.

Rickie Fowler has mostly been watching.

He wasn't in Hawaii when Justin Thomas swept the Aloha State by a combined 10 shots, including a PGA Tour record for 72 holes and a 59 at the Sony Open. He took off the final two weeks of the West Coast swing when Jordan Spieth blew away all his challengers at Pebble Beach, and Dustin Johnson was overwhelming at Riviera.

"It's fun seeing it," Fowler said. "It's motivating to see my friends go win. And to have them texting me last night and wishing me the best, telling me to go get it done, it's a fun group to be part of because we're all trying to push each other to be the best players we can be."

Sunday at the Honda Classic was Fowler's turn.

He didn't want to recite the entire list of text messages he received, though he mentioned Spieth and Thomas and Rory McIlroy, who has been out with a rib injury the last six weeks. Even that old man in the

neighborhood, 41-year-old Tiger Woods, chimed in with a message to Fowler for him to get it done.

Fowler had a four-shot lead and he never lost it, though there were a few nervous moments.

He rolled in a 40-foot birdie putt on No. 12. He added a 25-foot birdie putt on No. 13. That restored his cushion and his comfort, and when he stuffed a 5-iron from 181 yards into the wind and over the lake at No. 16 to 3 feet and made another birdie, the tournament effectively was over.

Westbrook leads Thunder past Pelicans

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Russell Westbrook blew past Steven Adams' pick and saw 6-foot-11, 270-pound DeMarcus Cousins slide over to block his path to the rim.

Westbrook didn't care. Oklahoma City's 6-3 point guard leaped up and uncorked a devastating right-handed jam over the new member of the New Orleans Pelicans. It drew Cousins' sixth foul with 2:38 to go, and the Thunder led the rest of the way.

Westbrook scored 41 points in his 29th triple-double of the season to help his squad beat the Pelicans 118-110 on Sunday night.

The fact that Cousins fouled out was secondary to Westbrook.

"It don't matter how many fouls," Westbrook said. "It didn't matter. I just jumped, and it went in to finish it."

Newly acquired Thunder forward Doug McDermott, un-

accustomed to such feats, was stunned.

"Man, it was crazy," he said. "I'm glad I'm on his side."

Westbrook had a career-best 21 fourth-quarter points. He shot 7-for-19 from the field the first three quarters and was 7-for-10 in the fourth.

"Throughout games, I've got to find a better way to pick my spots," he said. "Tonight was the fourth quarter. Some nights it may be early, some nights it may be late."

Westbrook also had 11 rebounds and 11 assists in the 66th triple-double of his career.

Enes Kanter had 20 points and nine rebounds, and Adams added 13 points and 10 boards for the Thunder, who won their third straight.

Anthony Davis scored 38 points. Cousins had 31 points and 10 rebounds, but played just 22 minutes.

"We put ourselves in position to win, and when you do that, you have to make plays down the stretch," Pelicans coach

Alvin Gentry said. "We didn't, and they did."

The Pelicans fell to 0-3 since acquiring Cousins in a trade with Sacramento.

"It's a learning curve right now," Cousins said. "We're still getting to know one another. Just keep growing."

Jazz 102, Wizards 92: Gordon Hayward scored 30 points while Rudy Gobert added 15 points and 20 rebounds as Utah beat host Washington for its third straight victory.

Northwest Division-leading Utah led by as many as 24 points before Washington got within six with just over 2 minutes left. Hayward hit a pair of jumpers to seal the win.

Spurs 119, Lakers 98: Kawhi Leonard scored 25 points as San Antonio routed the Lakers in Los Angeles' first home game since Magic Johnson took over the franchise's basketball operations.

Bucks 100, Suns 96: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 28 points and Tony Snell made

a clinching three-pointer from the corner in the closing seconds as host Milwaukee held on to beat Phoenix.

Raptors 112, Trail Blazers 106: DeMar DeRozan scored 33 points, Serge Ibaka added 18 and host Toronto beat Portland.

Celtics 104, Pistons 98: Jaylen Brown sank a three-pointer from the right corner while being fouled with 37.6 seconds remaining, part of a five-point possession that lifted Boston over host Detroit.

Grizzlies 105, Nuggets 98: Mike Conley scored 31 points including 13 in the fourth quarter to help Memphis hold off host Denver.

Clippers 124, Hornets 121 (OT): Blake Griffin scored a season-high 43 points and Chris Paul had 15 points and 17 assists as host Los Angeles held off Charlotte in overtime.

The Hornets lost despite getting 34 points from Kemba Walker and 31 from Nicolas Batum.

Bergeron helps Bruins cap winning trip

Associated Press

DALLAS—Patrice Bergeron and the Boston Bruins kept surging under interim coach Bruce Cassidy, moving up in the race for the playoffs that begin in mid-April.

For defenseman Johnny Oduya and the Dallas Stars, the immediate future is much more uncertain.

Bergeron had two goals and an assist as the Bruins beat Dallas 6-3 Sunday, improving to 6-1 since Cassidy took over for the fired Claude Julien. Boston completed a 3-1 road trip.

"When your best players are your best players, you're a good hockey club," Cassidy said. "We're no different than any other team out there."

Bergeron has "really found his game and hopefully he stays healthy for us.

"Our top-end guys tonight were winning a lot of pucks and we were able to get on the at-

tack," Cassidy said.

Bergeron won 16 of 22 faceoffs.

"Right from the get-go I thought we were creating a lot of chances in their zone and using our speed," Bergeron said. "Brad (Marchand, one goal, two assists) was finding me a lot for great plays, great looks. When they're going in, sometimes you try not to think too much and put the puck on net."

Dallas dropped to 24-28-10, 12th in the West.

Blue Jackets 5, Rangers 2: Cam Atkinson and Alexander Wennberg each scored twice to lead visiting Columbus over New York.

Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 28 shots to tie his career high with his 32nd win. Josh Anderson also scored and Oliver Bjorkstrand had two assists to help the Blue Jackets win for the fourth time in five games.

Columbus won for the sec-

ond time in two days after its bye week and moved past the Rangers into third place in the Metropolitan Division.

Blackhawks 4, Blues 2: Artem Anisimov scored with 5:20 left in the third period to lift host Chicago to its fourth straight win and ninth in its last 10.

Anisimov beat Jake Allen on the glove side from the right edge of the crease for his 22nd goal after taking a pinpoint cross-ice pass from linemate Artemi Panarin. Tanner Kero added an empty-netter with 2.6 seconds left.

Patrick Kane assisted on Anisimov's winner and scored a power-play goal. Jonathan Toews also had a goal and an assist for surging Chicago.

Predators 5, Oilers 4: Filip Forsberg scored for the fourth straight game, Viktor Arvidsson got the go-ahead goal and host Nashville beat Edmonton.

Ryan Ellis, Vernon Fiddler

and Colin Wilson also scored for Nashville, winners of three straight.

Flames 3, Hurricanes 1: Johnny Gaudreau had two goals and an assist to help visiting Calgary beat Carolina.

Micheal Ferland also scored for the Flames. They have earned at least one point in six straight games, going 5-0-1 in that stretch to move into playoff position in the Western Conference.

Senators 2, Panthers 1: Kyle Turris scored the tie-breaking goal in the second period and Craig Anderson stopped 37 shots to lift Ottawa over host Florida.

Zack Smith had an early short-handed goal for the Senators, who have won four of six.

Coyotes 3, Sabres 2: Radim Vrbata scored with 18.9 seconds left to cap a three-goal third period and lift host Arizona over Buffalo.