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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump taps commander as ambassador

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will nominate the top U.S. military commander overseeing the Asia-Pacific region as the next ambassador to Australia, the White House announced Friday.

Navy Adm. Harry Harris Jr. is completing a three-year assignment as head of U.S. Pacific Command, where his tough stance on North Korean and Chinese military adventurism drew notice and approval from the Trump administration. Australia is a plum diplomatic posting that sometimes goes to presidential donors or friends,

but the post has been vacant since Trump's inauguration. Australia, a close ally, was increasingly concerned last year that the vacancy signaled a downgrade in relations.

Trump erupted during a phone call a year ago with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, and later tweeted that an Obama-era agreement for U.S. resettlement of some refugees detained by Australia was a "dumb deal."

The White House statement about Harris describes him as "a highly decorated, combat proven Naval officer with extensive knowledge, leadership

and geo-political expertise in the Indo-Pacific region."

Harris, 61, has been a strong voice within the military and among government policymakers for a confrontational stance against Chinese military expansion or aggression. He has warned about the dangers of ignoring or appearing to condone Chinese militarization of artificial islands in the South China Sea, and he coined the term "Great Wall of Sand" to describe the Chinese effort to expand military influence.

The Chinese government has singled out Harris for criticism, and official media have some-

times suggested that Harris may be biased toward Japan because his mother was Japanese.

"To understand the Americans' sudden upgraded offensive in the South China Sea, it is simply impossible to ignore Admiral Harris's blood, background, political inclination and values," China's Xinhua news service once wrote.

Unlike many of Trump's nominees for ambassadorial posts, Harris is not expected to be subject to delay by Democrats. The blunt-spoken, wisecracking Navy officer has years of experience in the region and already holds a security clearance.

USS Sterett back on track to Western Pacific after delay

BY TYLER HLAVAC

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A San Diego-based destroyer is back on track toward the Western Pacific after engineering issues forced it to delay its deployment.

The USS Sterett, which departed Naval Base San Diego along with the USS Dewey on Feb. 6, returned to port after sailors heard unusual noises in the ship's main reduction gear, Naval Surface Forces spokesman Lt. Andrew DeGarmo told Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

The crew resolved the issue and the ship departed again Thursday. The Navy did not provide further details regarding the mechanical issues.

DeGarmo said the Dewey's departure was not affected by the Sterett's delay.

Both destroyers are scheduled to link up with the Japan-based USS Wasp Expeditionary

Strike Group to operate under the Navy's "Up-Gunned ESG" — a concept that pairs troop-carrying amphibious ships with surface vessels like the Sterett and Dewey.

The Wasp — an amphibious assault ship that recently arrived at its new homeport at Sasebo Naval Base and can handle F-35B stealth fighters capable of short takeoff and vertical landings — also bolsters the group's offensive capabilities.

The Sterett and Dewey are the latest 3rd Fleet ships to deploy to the Western Pacific, an area usually patrolled by the 7th Fleet. The San Diego-based USS Carl Vinson strike group began a deployment to the region last month. In addition to the aircraft carrier, the group includes Carrier Air Wing 2, a pair of guided-missile destroyers, a guided-missile cruiser and more than 6,000 sailors.

US sailors in Japan suspected of buying, selling, using drugs

BY TYLER HLAVAC

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy is investigating an alleged illegal drug ring involving at least a dozen sailors at the home of the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, Naval Forces Japan and the 7th Fleet.

The sailors, some of whom are assigned to the carrier, are suspected of buying, selling and using illegal drugs, including LSD and ecstasy, according to a report released Friday by The Wall Street Journal. The Navy is also looking into whether the sailors were buying and selling drugs online or distributing them to Japanese citizens outside Yokosuka.

Yokosuka Naval Base spokesman Sean Kelly confirmed to Stars and Stripes on Saturday that the Naval Criminal Investigative Service is looking into the allegations. He would not provide more details, citing the

ongoing investigation.

"The Navy has zero tolerance for drug abuse and takes all allegations involving misconduct of our sailors, Navy civilians and family members very seriously," he said.

The allegations came to light on Feb. 6 when the Navy received a tip that a sailor had been using illegal drugs. The sailor was detained before leading investigators to others aboard the carrier who he claimed were distributing or using illegal substances, according to the Wall Street Journal report.

Japanese authorities have also been brought into the investigation amid suspicions that drugs may have been distributed to locals, the report said. A suspicious package belonging to one of the sailors was intercepted by a local postal service. A Kanagawa Prefectural Police Department spokesman would not comment on the probe.

Osprey part falls off Okinawa

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — No injuries or damage have been reported after a large piece from a Marine Corps aircraft was lost last week off the coast of Okinawa.

Part of an air intake from an MV-22 Osprey washed ashore Friday on the western beach of Ikei Island, said a spokesman for the Okinawa Defense Bureau, which is a branch of Japan's Ministry of Defense. The piece, which came from the aircraft's right engine, is 2 feet long, 3 feet wide and 2 feet deep.

The helicopter-plane hybrid assigned to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma reportedly lost the part during a flight Thursday but was able to return safely to base.

The Marine Corps on Okinawa confirmed Friday that the

part had fallen from one of its Ospreys, bureau officials said. It's unclear whether Marine officials alerted their Japanese counterparts about the incident, which they are required to do by the status of forces agreement between the two nations.

Marine Corps officials could not be reached for comment Friday evening. Bureau officials said they would continue to investigate the incident.

A series of recent aircraft-related mishaps, including three emergency landings by Marine helicopters in January, has drawn criticism from Tokyo, which dispatched Japan Ground Self-Defense Force aircraft maintenance specialists to Futenma on Feb. 1 for a briefing on the issues.

On Dec. 13, a CH-53E Super Stallion's window inexplicably became separated from the aircraft and landed on an elementary school sports field

adjacent to Futenma's fence line. More than 50 schoolchildren were playing at the time, and a boy was slightly injured from a pebble that flew up during impact.

On Dec. 7, a plastic part thought to belong to a U.S. military helicopter was found on the roof of an Okinawan day care facility. In October, a Super Stallion made an emergency landing in a farmer's field outside Okinawa's Northern Training Area after an in-flight fire. The aircraft was an almost total loss.

In August, an Okinawa-based MV-22 Osprey crashed off the coast of Australia during a training exercise, killing three Marines.

At a maritime security forum last month in Washington, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller said the service's safety record was "horrible" in 2017 but that things were improving.

Aquilino is nominated to command Pacific Fleet

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Pentagon has tapped the head of the Navy's Middle Eastern forces to take over its largest fleet.

Vice Adm. John Aquilino, the commander of both the Navy's 5th Fleet and Naval Forces Central Command, has been nominated to take over the Hawaii-based Pacific Fleet, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis announced Friday.

If confirmed, Aquilino would be taking charge of a fleet stretching nearly 100 million square miles, nearly half of the Earth's surface, the Navy said. The Pacific Fleet consists of about 200 ships and submarines, nearly 1,200 aircraft and more than 130,000 sailors and civilians.

Aquilino started his current position as head of Navy forces in the Middle East only five months ago.

Current Pacific Fleet commander Adm. Scott Swift announced last September that he would retire at an unspecified date after learning he would not be nominated to lead U.S. Pacific Command.

"In keeping with tradition and in loyalty to the Navy, I have submitted my request to retire," Swift said in a statement released to the fleet.

Commanders of Pacific Fleet, which oversees U.S. naval forces from California to India, are often nominated to head PACOM. President Donald Trump recently nominated current PACOM commander Adm. Harry Harris Jr. to serve as the next U.S. ambassador to Australia.

Swift is among several Navy leaders who have either been fired or forced into early retirement after a pair of collisions last year killed 17 sailors aboard the USS Fitzgerald and the USS John S. McCain.

Navy program aims for intelligent prosthesis

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — It seemed like science fiction when the first prosthetic leg was surgically implanted in a post-9/11 veteran two years ago in Utah. Now, thanks to a program led by the U.S. Navy, scientists are on the verge of bringing those prostheses to life.

In 2016, the Office of Naval Research partnered with Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the Naval Research Laboratory and several universities to launch Monitoring Osseointegrated Prostheses, a program whose mission is to "advance prosthetics into the 21st century" using the latest biomedical and engineering technologies. MOIP focuses on improving socket-style devices and implanted percutaneous osseointegrated prostheses,

which feature a titanium rod that is surgically implanted into the bottom of the femur and exits the body where it can be attached to a prosthetic device.

The program's charge is broad, and progress is being seen in a multitude of areas, from synthetic immune systems that search for and destroy infections to sensors inside the body that measure healing, prosthetic strength, stress and walking gait and upload the information to doctors.

Researchers have seen success in labs across the U.S. and could be less than a year away from a polished prototype, though additional advances may be announced soon. They say that the technology will revolutionize prosthetics for injured warfighters and civilian amputees around the globe.

"It is in the early development stage, but this is an intelligent prosthetic system," said

Liming Salvino, a program officer in ONR's Warfighter Performance Department. "MOIP not only can improve quality of life but also usher in the next generation of prosthetic limbs."

Most of today's modern prostheses are socket-style, where the soft tissue of the amputated area is placed within a cradle of sorts and fastened.

Veterans often complain that these cause friction and can be painful to wear, which can lead to sores and blisters or an awkward walking motion. Sockets can also lead to skin infections.

Two years ago, two Iraq War amputees received the first implantable prosthetic legs through a Food and Drug Administration trial at the Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in Salt Lake City. The trial is ongoing and has been expanded to include more veteran amputees.

Female veterans set sights on Congress

The Washington Post

In Amy McGrath's pitch to voters in Kentucky, she wears a bomber jacket and stands next to an F/A-18, the fighter jet she flew as a Marine to drop bombs on Afghanistan.

In Mikie Sherrill's political ad in New Jersey, the camera lingers over a whirring Sea King helicopter, like the one she piloted on Navy missions.

And in Martha McSally's video announcing her run for Senate in Arizona, she is crouched in the cockpit of an Air Force fighter jet to underscore that she was the first woman to fly in combat.

Women who served in the military are running for elective office in greater numbers than at any time in history. Many broke gender barriers in uniform and say it's time to make their mark in politics. For generations, military veterans who become elected officials have overwhelmingly been male and Republican, but these female veterans, many of whom served in pioneering combat roles in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, are overwhelmingly Democrats and critical of President Donald Trump.

"Many of us felt like we really had to focus on some of the areas that needed further groundbreaking, such as the House of Representatives and the Senate," said Sherrill, 46, a Democrat running in New Jersey's 11th Congressional District. Sherrill said she and other female veterans are motivated to run for office by what she calls a "lack of respect" for women by the Trump administration and by the dearth of women on Capitol Hill.

Sherrill is considered a strong contender who could flip the Republican seat being vacated by Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, who surprised many by dropping out of the race in January after 24 years in Congress.

Only four of the 535 members of Congress are female veterans, two Republicans and two Democrats. But at least 32 more women who served in the military are now campaigning for the House and Senate — 25 Democrats and seven Republicans, said Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

Scores more are campaigning for statewide office and state legislative seats, many with the aim of running later for Congress.

The increase in veterans running — the number of men is rising, too — is beginning to reverse the long decline of veterans in Congress. In the 1970s, more than 70 percent of House and Senate members had served in the military. Today, about 20 percent have.

Although the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan created a larger pool of potential candidates, it is no coincidence that at a time of

'I am a fighter pilot, and I talk like one. That's why I told Washington Republicans to grow a pair of ovaries and get the job done.'

Martha McSally

candidate for a Senate seat in Arizona

sinking regard for politicians, bomber jackets, Bronze Stars, and aviator wings are showing up in so many 2018 campaign ads. A recent Gallup poll showed that 72 percent of people had "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the military, but only 12 percent did for Congress.

Combat veterans in Congress have a long history of commanding attention when discussing war. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., who lost her legs when a rocket-propelled grenade hit her Black Hawk helicopter in Iraq, was widely quoted recently when she called Trump a "five-deferment draft dodger" and accused him of goading North Korea.

In response to Trump calling Democrats "treasonous" for not clapping during his State of the Union address, Duckworth countered that she swore an oath to the Constitution and did not have to "mindlessly cater to the whims of Cadet Bone Spurs," a reference to Trump receiving a Vietnam War-era deferment because of bone spurs.

Democrats want to highlight the fact that many military veterans are appalled by Trump, who has filled his inner circle with retired generals and is planning a huge military parade later this year.

Studies have shown that veterans in office are more reluctant to vote to go to war, but that once war is declared, they back an all-out effort, said Rebecca Burgess, who studies veterans in public office for the American Enterprise Institute.

In half a dozen interviews with female candidates who are veterans, health care was a key reason they wanted to run. Many also talked about the need to improve education, to gain greater gender parity and to institute paid maternity leave. Wanting a strong national security, they said, was a given and rarely mentioned first.

"Women look around and see what is happening and they want to see change," said Maura Sullivan, 38, a Marine veteran who served in Iraq and is a Democrat running for an open seat in New Hampshire.

Sullivan, who worked at the Pentagon in the Obama administration, also said she has seen firsthand the devastating consequences of war, and thinks Trump "puts the national security of this country at risk" with his "erratic and bizarre" behavior.

McGrath agreed that many veterans are upset with the commander in chief: "A lot

of us are saying this isn't the country we fought for."

The former combat pilot singled out the need for better affordable health care for her candidacy. She first must win the Democratic primary — a field that includes Lexington Mayor Jim Gray — for the chance to unseat Republican Rep. Garland "Andy" Barr. A viral campaign video has boosted her bid. In it she says that at age 13, she wrote to her members of Congress saying she wanted an opportunity to fly fighter jets. Her House member wrote back saying that women were not allowed in combat, and her senator, Republican Mitch McConnell, never replied.

McGrath ended up flying 89 combat missions against al-Qaida and the Taliban.

Jeremy Teigen, author of a new book, "Why Veterans Run," said Republicans have had more success in getting their veterans elected. Democrats have a history of backing veterans in long-shot races. But he said there are signs this year that Democrats are being more strategic.

Of 36 veterans who attended a two-day workshop run by the nonpartisan Veterans Campaign held in Washington last month, 14 were Democrats, nine were Republicans and the rest were undecided or independents.

In Arizona, McSally is embracing Trump as she seeks the seat being vacated by Republican Sen. Jeff Flake.

Elected to the House in 2015, McSally faces former sheriff Joe Arpaio, another Trump ally, in the Republican primary. The retired Air Force colonel is flying herself to campaign stops, telling voters she will work with Trump on border security, a top issue in her Arizona district.

She also uses "salty language," as she calls it — just like the guys she served with in the military.

"Like our president, I am tired of PC politicians and their BS excuses," McSally said in a video announcing her Senate bid. "I am a fighter pilot, and I talk like one. That's why I told Washington Republicans to grow a pair of ovaries and get the job done."

McGrath, the Kentucky Democrat, said the male-dominated world of politics makes sense for female veterans like her. "Success in combat as a fighter pilot is not gender-dependent," she said. "A lot of women out there kicked butt."

White House grapples with Porter fallout

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Reeling from the downfall of a senior aide, the White House was on the defensive Sunday, attempting to soften President Donald Trump's comments about the mistreatment of women while rallying around the embattled chief of staff.

Several senior aides fanned out on the morning talk shows to explain how the White House handled the departure of staff secretary Rob Porter, who exited after two ex-wives came forward with allegations of spousal abuse. And they tried to clarify the reaction from Trump, who has yet to offer a sympathetic word to the women who said they had been abused.

"The president believes, as he said the other day, you have to consider all sides," said senior counselor Kellyanne Conway. "He has said this in the past about incidents that relate to him, as well. At the same time,

you have to look at the results. The result is that Rob Porter is no longer the staff secretary."

On Saturday, Trump tweeted that "lives are being shattered and destroyed by a mere allegation. Some are true and some are false." The day before, he pointed to Porter's assertions of innocence and wished him a great future.

Conway also delivered what she said was a vote of confidence from Trump for chief of staff John Kelly, who has come under fire for his handling of the Porter matter. Kelly initially defended his right-hand man before later offering a version of last week's events that puzzled aides and did not line up with the White House's earlier timeline.

Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, among those mentioned as a possible Kelly successor if Trump were to make a change, also downplayed the speculation about Kelly's standing, suggesting those stories "are mostly

being fed by people who are unhappy that they have lost access to the president."

But Trump has grown frustrated with Kelly, once commended for bringing discipline to the West Wing but who recently has been at the center of his own controversies.

Trump has begun floating possible names for a future chief of staff in conversations with outside advisers, according to three people with knowledge of the conversations but not authorized to discuss them. In addition to Mulvaney, the others are House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, of California; Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C.; and CIA Director Mike Pompeo.

There was no sign that a move was imminent, according to the people with knowledge of the conversations. Trump is known to frequently poll his advisers about the performance of senior staff and is often reluctant to actually fire aides.

Kelly has indicated he would

step aside if he lost the faith of the president. But he has not offered to resign, according to a White House official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

A number of West Wing aides were shaken by Kelly's handling of the Porter accusations. At a senior staff meeting Friday, Kelly tried to push his own timeline concerning Porter. Some aides in that meeting privately questioned Kelly's account, thinking his version of events was self-serving, according to one official with knowledge of the meeting but not authorized to discuss it publicly.

The week also cast a harsh spotlight on Hope Hicks, the White House communications director who was dating the staff secretary. She helped craft the White House's initial supportive response and has clashed with Kelly. But several aides, including Conway, delivered ringing support for Hicks and said that the president still valued her.

North Korea wraps up Olympic diplomacy

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister joined South Korea's president at a concert Sunday as she wound up a whirlwind round of Olympic diplomacy capped by an invitation to hold the first summit between the two adversaries in over a decade.

While the two Koreas were all smiles during meetings on the sidelines of the Winter Games, Vice President Mike Pence vowed to maintain the U.S. administration's policy of "maximum diplomatic and economic pressure" against the North.

He also insisted Washington was on the same page with its allies, saying "there is no daylight between the United States, the Republic of Korea and Japan on the need to continue to isolate North Korea economically and diplomatically until they abandon their nuclear ballistic missile program."

But his tough talk was largely overshadowed by the powerful image of athletes from both Koreas marching together under a unified flag and North Korean cheerlead-

ers rooting for a combined women's hockey team, even though it was routed 8-0 by Switzerland in its first game Saturday.

Many observers agreed the North had won this round in the propaganda battle, but many hurdles lie ahead before a lasting solution is reached.

Kim Yo Jong, the North Korean leader's younger sister, and the other North Korean delegates, led by head of state Kim Yong Nam, 90, were feted at a lunch with South Korea's prime minister Sunday before sitting next to South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the concert by North Korea's Samjiyon Orchestra in Gangneung, a city that is co-hosting the Olympics.

The North Koreans were to fly back to Pyongyang later Sunday on a private jet, wrapping up a three-day trip.

Kim Yo Jong delivered a letter from her brother during a meeting with Moon on Saturday. She said her brother would like to meet Moon "in the near future and would like to ask President Moon to visit North Korea at his earliest convenience," according to the Blue House.

Moon responded by saying he hopes the right environment will be created so the meeting between the two leaders could

occur, an apparent reference to demands by the U.S. and other allies that the North abandon its nuclear weapons program.

He also called on the North to resume dialogue with the United States, but the behavior of the North Koreans and the Americans toward each other at the Olympics opening ceremony Friday in Pyeongchang illustrated the difficulties that lie ahead.

North Korea has a track record of reaching out in talks following previous crises on the divided peninsula only to pull out after wresting concessions and aid from the West, and analysts cautioned the rapprochement with the South may be short-lived.

The communist state has test-fired numerous missiles, including three ICBMs, in recent months and conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test Sept. 3, prompting the U.N. Security Council to impose its toughest sanctions yet in a bid to get the North to stop.

President Donald Trump, meanwhile, stepped up his rhetoric against the North, calling Kim Jong Un "little rocket man" and promising to "totally destroy" North Korea if needed to defend the United States and its allies.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman sneezes, crashes into semi

ND EDGELEY — Authorities said a sneeze sent a North Dakota woman into a crash with a semitrailer.

The Highway Patrol said Michele Eckmann, 44, of LaMoure, was traveling north on Highway 281 Friday afternoon when she sneezed, causing her SUV to drift into the southbound lane and the truck's path.

The semi driver tied to avoid the collision, but the SUV struck the tanker trailer loaded with gasoline before coming to rest in the center of the road. The truck driver maintained control as the rig entered the ditch.

KQDJ reported Eckmann was taken to a Jamestown hospital. The truck driver, from Aberdeen, S.D., was not hurt. No gas was spilled from the tanker.

Professor: Australia isn't a country

NH MANCHESTER — An online adjunct professor incorrectly told a student that Australia isn't a country and gave her a failing grade, prompting Southern New Hampshire University to replace the instructor.

Buzzfeed News reported that the 27-year-old student in Idaho was assigned to compare American social norms to those of another country. She chose to study social media use in Australia, but the professor gave her a zero on that portion of the assignment, saying Australia is a continent, not a country. Australia is both a country and a continent.

University officials told WMUR-TV the instructor has been replaced following an investigation.

Thief asks owner for help restarting SUV

MN SARTELL — It didn't take police long to catch up with a suspect in the theft of a woman's SUV from the Walmart parking lot in Sartell.

Authorities said the Sauk Centre man took the Jeep Grand Cherokee left running in the parking lot Monday and drove to Isle, about an hour away. Police said a woman later called the vehicle's owner and said a man was asking questions about the SUV. She put the man on the phone with the owner and he said he was with an auto glass company and repaired the vehicle and just needed to get it started again.

WJON reported the man gave the owner an address where OnStar could find the vehicle and start it. Isle police went to the address and arrested the man on suspicion of stealing the SUV.

Stranger accused of spanking boy, 2

GA NEWNAN — Police said a stranger spanked a man's 2-year-old son at a grocery store in Georgia when the toddler kept asking his dad for a candy bar.

A Newnan police report says Juan Martinez, 62, was arrested Tuesday night. Police said Martinez smelled like alcohol and slurred his speech.

The 2-year-old's father, James Morris, told The Newnan Times-Herald his son was asking him for a candy bar in the store's checkout line when Martinez slapped his son's hand and bottom. Morris said his son was not hurt.

Police said Martinez was arrested on charges including battery and obstruction.

Missing hiker finds way out of woods

KY LANCASTER — A woman who went missing during a hike in central Kentucky found her way out of the woods nearly two days later.

Jessica Burk said she found a road Friday morning and made her way to a building in the Tom Dorman State Nature Preserve.

News outlets reported Burk got lost when her boyfriend left her on a trail Wednesday. When he came back, she had walked away. He searched for hours before calling police.

News video of Burke after she was found Friday morning showed her in good spirits, with no apparent injuries.

Sterilized woman gets a reduced sentence

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — An Oklahoma woman convicted of using a counterfeit check received a reduced sentence after getting medically sterilized at the suggestion of the judge.

The Oklahoman reported U.S. District Judge Stephen Friot showed leniency to Summer Thyme Creel, 34, during sentencing Thursday because she had surgery to prevent pregnancies. Friot had suggested the medical procedure in June, noting that Creel had relinquished her parental rights to six of her seven children.

Creel was sentenced to a year in federal prison and three years on supervised release and ordered to pay more than \$15,200 in restitution.

Creel pleaded guilty last year to using a counterfeit check at a Walmart in Moore in 2014. She faced a maximum 10 years in prison.

Firefighters rescue hurt cat from icy river

KS WICHITA — Firefighters rescued an injured cat from an icy river in downtown Wichita after the animal apparently was thrown off an overpass.

The Wichita Eagle reported that a motorist spotted the black cat Thursday afternoon and called 911. Wichita Fire Lt. Kenneth Ast said the cat was sitting on ice in the middle of the Arkansas River when crews arrived. Fire Capt. Neko McBee said the ice "was starting to crack" when rescuers reached the animal.

The animal rescue group Beauties and Beasts has dubbed the cat "River" and said on Facebook that he sustained "severe" injury to his rear legs.

Scientist shot in head in dispute in highway

NM SANTA FE — A scientist's father said his son is recovering from surgery after being shot in the head in an apparent road rage incident.

The Santa Fe New Mexican reported the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office said no arrest had been made as of Feb. 5.

A police report says the victim, a Los Alamos National Laboratory scientist, was driving behind a Jeep when the vehicle braked several times. The victim slowed down.

The report says the driver of the Jeep pulled over at an intersection, waited for the victim and got back onto the highway behind the victim's vehicle. The victim said the driver pulled up next to his vehicle and he heard two loud pops. Authorities said a CAT scan showed a bullet between the victim's scalp and skull.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Luge

For U.S., surprise silver good as gold

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Chris Mazdzer threw a fist in the air, grabbed an American flag from the stands and let out a scream of absolute jubilation.

Not even a month ago, he was at rock bottom. On Sunday night, he made history for USA Luge.

For the first time, the United States has a men's singles Olympic luge medalist. Mazdzer won silver at the Pyeongchang Games, matching the best finish ever for USA Luge in any event at the Olympics — Americans have been second in doubles twice — and giving the native of Saranac

Lake, N.Y., the sort of moment he's spent half a lifetime chasing.

"It's 16 years in the making, what you dream about as a young child and 20 years later you're finally on the podium," Mazdzer said. "I still don't know how to describe it. All I know is that I have my friends and family here celebrating with me and this is validation. Everything I've done, all the sacrifices, it's worth it."

And how.

For the rest of his life, he'll be introduced as an Olympic medalist. For the rest of his career, he'll know that he can come up big at the biggest moments. For the next few days, he'll get to bask in this medal while

seeking another in the team relay.

David Gleirscher of Austria was a surprise winner, finishing his four runs at the Alpensia Sliding Center in 3 minutes, 10.702 seconds for the gold. It was Austria's first in men's luge in 50 years, and Gleirscher's first major international medal ever — he's never even had one on the World Cup circuit. Mazdzer finished in 3:10.728 and Johannes Ludwig of Germany took third in 3:10.932.

Gold-medal favorite and two-time defending champion Felix Loch of Germany was the leader going into the final run, then skidded his way to fifth.

Medals roundup

Kramer earns third straight gold in 5,000

Associated Press

GANGNEUNG, South Korea — As always, when his rivals suddenly felt that pain in their legs, that burning in their lungs, Sven Kramer kept his mighty, unmatched stride going.

"I never saw that wall," he said.

Kramer won the 5,000 meters at the Pyeongchang Olympics on Sunday for his third straight gold medal over the distance, becoming the first man to achieve that streak.

The only thing that really burned inside the Dutch speed-skater was ambition, untamed at 31. And even when the gold was surely his, Kramer still shot that skate across the line to ensure he got the Olympic record, too.

"It never gets old. The Games never get old," he said. It was his fourth career gold medal and eighth overall spread over a dozen years, putting him among the greats of the Winter Games.

Yet there's little time for celebration, with at least two more golds to chase. And one he previously let slip away in a blunder for the ages — the 10,000.

At the Vancouver Olympics, with gold beckoning, Kramer inexplicably made a wrong

lane change late in a race he was comfortably leading.

"It's not a secret that it's really important to me. I've won a lot at the Olympics, but I've lost a lot as well."

Biathlon: The two-man race between Martin Fourcade and Johannes Thingnes Boe for Olympic gold never materialized.

They've pretty much become the Michael Phelps and Ryan Lochte of the biathlon — only they have skis and rifles instead of Speedos and swim caps.

So when neither landed on the medal podium Sunday at the Pyeongchang Games, it sent shockwaves through the biathlon world.

Fourcade, a Frenchman ranked No. 1 in the world, missed three of five shots from the prone position, forcing him to do three penalty laps. He finished eighth overall.

Thingnes Boe, the world's No. 2, was even farther behind. The Norwegian missed three from the prone position and one from the standing position with his .22 caliber rifle and wound up a distant 31st, more than a minute behind the leader.

No one was more stunned than Germany's Arnd Peiffer, who took home the gold

medal after hitting all 10 of his targets.

"I don't know how this could happen," Peiffer said. "The other two guys, Martin and Johannes, they were dominating the whole season. They were dominating with their ski time; they were dominating on the range as well. So I didn't expect it was possible to be in front of them. I'm quite surprised."

On Sunday, the rest of the podium consisted of Michal Krčmar of the Czech Republic in second and Dominik Windisch of Italy in third.

Cross-country skiing: Simen Hegstad Krueger crashed and fell on the first lap, and even that couldn't stop him from winning Olympic gold.

The 24-year-old Norwegian completed an amazing comeback to win the men's 30-kilometer cross-country skiathlon.

After Krueger crossed the line in 1 hour, 16 minutes, 20 seconds, he looked to the heavens and repeatedly pumped his fists in the air.

Just seconds after the mass start began and with skiers still bottled up in lines, Krueger appeared to slip in mid-stride and his right ski came out from under him, causing him to fall to the ground. The two skiers directly behind him — An-

drey Larkov and Denis Spitsov, Russians competing under the Olympic flag — couldn't stop and toppled over him in a heap.

Norway swept the podium with Martin Johnsrud Sundby taking silver and Hans Christer Holund earning bronze.

Freestyle skiing: Perrine Laffont put France in the medals column at the Winter Olympics, skiing through the bumps and snow to take the women's moguls title.

Justine Dufour-Lapointe of Canada finished second to add silver to the gold she took four years ago in Sochi. Yulia Galyshva of Kazakhstan, competing with a broken hand suffered last month at a contest in Utah, won bronze to give her country its eighth Winter Games medal since it started competing separately after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Alpine skiing: Fierce wind forced the Olympic men's downhill to be postponed, moving the marquee race from its traditional place opening the Alpine program.

The first race on an 11-event Alpine schedule was shelved three hours before the start time at the Jeongseon hill, and organizers said they would now try to hold the men's downhill on Thursday.

Teenager Gerard earns first gold for US

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — The grand plan when Red Gerard and his brothers set down some rails and attached a tow rope to a dirt bike in their backyard wasn't all that grand.

"Just having fun snowboarding," Gerard explained.

Look where all that fun landed him.

The 17-year-old snowboarder from just outside of Breckenridge, Colo., won the Olympic gold medal in slopestyle Sunday, courtesy of a nimble, creative ride through a wind-swept course that left almost everyone else scrambling to keep their footing.

Gerard captured America's first gold medal of the Pyeongchang Games — first medal of any color, in fact — and will soon go on a victory tour he never saw coming, even if the rowdy, red-white-and-blue mosh pit full of friends and family at the bottom envisioned it all along.

"I said it from Day 1," said Brendan Gerard, one of Red's five older siblings. "The kid was 2 years old when we started him snowboarding. I can recall him falling down the hill at 2 and him dragging ass behind me. Gave it two weeks, and he started moving faster. By 6, it was inevitable he was going to be something huge."

Thanks to a blustery wind that swirled upward from the bottom of the mountain, "huge" wasn't the word of the day on a course built more to reward technical tricks on the rails and interesting choices below as opposed to sheer massiveness on the jumps.

That couldn't have suited Gerard much better. Listed at 5-foot-5 and 116 pounds, he does not overpower courses and slam down landings the way that, say, silver and bronze medalists Max Parrot and Mark McMorris of Canada often do. Instead, Gerard relies on the quick reflexes he learned in the tight quarters of his backyard.

The top of the Olympic course is also tight. Unlike most of the other 10 finalists, Gerard didn't pick the straightest, easiest path through the rails. Instead, he mixed and matched with a variety of lobes and turns over rails and jibs with some cool grabs to match. He was the only contender to fly over a goal post feature in the top section.

On the second-to-last jump, Gerard took a risk by trying a 1080-degree jump off the quarterpipe side of the kicker instead of going straight through the jump and flying higher. The risk is that the landing won't create enough speed to take into the last ramp, but that worked out fine, too. Gerard closed with a backside triple-cork 1440, and his only thought while in the air was: "Just don't blow it."

A simple enough plan, and one very fitting for a kid who first stepped onto a snowboard for fun, not glory.

College basketball

Baylor knocks off Kansas for first time in five years

Associated Press

WACO, Texas — Manu Lecomte took a deep three-pointer, and then slowly took a few steps backward toward the other goal while watching the ball go through the net. The point guard then made another long shot for Baylor's next basket.

The consecutive threes were part of eight straight points by Lecomte after No. 10 Kansas had pulled within a basket, and the Bears went on an 80-64 victory over the Jayhawks — a team they hadn't beaten in five years.

"Everybody was playing really well, so I was kind of out there being a facilitator for everybody. And then when we needed a shot up, I took them," said Lecomte, who finished with 18 points on 6-of-10 shooting.

No. 1 Villanova 86, Butler 75: Donte DiVincenzo scored a career-high 30 points, Jalen Brunson had 27 and host Villanova bounced back from its second loss of the season.

No. 4 Michigan State 68,

No. 3 Purdue 65: Miles Bridges made a tiebreaking three-pointer with 2.7 seconds left and finished with 20 points, helping host Michigan State.

No. 5 Xavier 72, Creighton 71: Quentin Goodin made two free throws with three-tenths of a second left, allowing visiting Xavier to hold off Creighton.

No. 7 Texas Tech 66, Kansas State 47: Keenan Evans scored 19 points and visiting Texas Tech (21-4, 9-3) beat Kansas State to take sole possession of the Big 12 lead.

No. 8 Auburn 78, Georgia 61: Jared Harper scored 24 points and Auburn, playing without top scorer Bryce Brown, showed impressive depth by beating host Georgia.

No. 12 Gonzaga 78, No. 11 Saint Mary's 65: Rui Hachimura scored 23 points and visiting Gonzaga kept the ball out of Jock Landale's hands to end the nation's longest active winning streak at 19 games.

No. 13 Arizona 81, USC 67: Rawle Alkins scored 20 points, Deandre Ayton added 18 and host Arizona expanded

its Pac-12 lead with a victory over Southern California.

No. 14 Ohio State 82, Iowa 64: Keita Bates-Diop had 14 points and eight rebounds, and host Ohio State beat Iowa.

Alabama 78, No. 15 Tennessee 50: Donta Hall had 17 points and 11 rebounds and Collin Sexton scored 16 points to lead host Alabama (16-10, 7-5 Southeastern Conference) to a victory over Tennessee.

Iowa State 88, No. 17 Oklahoma 80: Iowa State freshman Lindell Wigginton upstaged Trae Young by scoring 26 points and the Cyclones upset Oklahoma, handing the Sooners their sixth consecutive road loss.

Oklahoma State 88, No. 19 West Virginia 85: Kendall Smith and Cameron McGriff each scored 20 points and Oklahoma State beat another ranked team on the road.

No. 21 North Carolina 97, N.C. State 89: Luke Maye scored 27 of his career-high 33 points after halftime to help visiting North Carolina.

No. 22 Wichita State 95, UConn 74: Landry Shamet

scored 16 points in just 23 minutes as host Wichita State cruised to a win over UConn.

No. 23 Nevada 83, San Diego State 58: Jordan Caroline scored 26 points and Lindsay Drew just missed a triple-double with 12 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists in host Nevada's victory.

Texas A&M 85, No. 24 Kentucky 74: Freshman point guard T.J. Starks scored 17 points and host Texas A&M toppled Kentucky in a sold-out and raucous Reed Arena.

Boston College 72, No. 25 Miami 70: Ky Bowman stole a rebound under the basket, drew a foul and hit two free throws with 2.9 seconds left as host Boston College scored the last nine points of the game.

Air Force 100, New Mexico 92: Ryan Swan scored 17 points and grabbed 10 rebounds and host Air Force (10-13, 4-7) earned a season split.

Navy 68, Army 59: Shawn Anderson and Evan Weick scored 16 of their combined 25 points in the second half to help visiting Navy.

Briefly

Romero KOs Rockhold

PERTH, Australia — Yoel Romero beat Luke Rockhold by knockout in the third round of their scheduled middleweight interim title bout Sunday, the main card highlight of UFC 221 at the Perth Arena.

But Cuba's Romero was ineligible to claim the interim title when he missed the weight at Friday's weigh-ins.

Rockhold would have taken the title with a win Sunday and seemed to have it in his grasp until Romero demonstrated all of his explosive punching power, opening his rival up with a left hook and following with an overhand left, which sent Rockhold to the canvas, and a final uppercut.

The title bout had been troublesome from the outset. Australian Robert Whittaker originally was to defend his UFC title against Rockhold but was forced to withdraw with an illness.

He contracted chicken pox while recovering from a staph infection and withdrew from the bout in January.

Source: Darvish, Cubs reach 6-year deal

CHICAGO — The winter-long dance is over. Yu Darvish is joining the Chicago Cubs.

Darvish has agreed to a \$126 million, six-year contract with Chicago, giving the Cubs one of the deepest rotations in baseball and taking one of the top players off the slow-moving free agent market.

The 31-year-old Darvish met with Cubs officials in December and the sides remained in contact while the right-hander listened to other potential suitors. Texas, Milwaukee, Minnesota and the New York Yankees also reportedly expressed some level of interest, but Chicago's approach paid off with the agreement just days before the start of spring training.

— Associated Press

NBA roundup

GSW's Kerr fastest to 250 wins

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Klay Thompson scored 25 points, 10 coming in the third quarter to help Golden State pull away, and the Warriors beat the San Antonio Spurs 122-105 on Saturday night.

Stephen Curry added 17 points and eight assists as coach Steve Kerr earned his 250th career coaching victory. Draymond Green had 17 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds in another well-rounded outing — and his first technical-free game in the last three.

Kerr became the fastest to 250 coaching wins in NBA history, doing so in 302 games. That tops his former coach, Phil Jackson, who reached the mark in 346 games. Yet Kerr, the 2016 NBA Coach of the Year, received 39 victories during a leave of absence following complications from back surgery at the start of the 2015-16 season, when then-top assistant and current Lakers coach Luke Walton coached Golden State.

Mavericks 130, Lakers 123: Dirk Nowitzki scored a season-high 22 points, Harrison Barnes had 21 and last-place Dallas spoiled Isaiah Thomas' strong debut with the visiting Lakers.

Thomas finished with 22 points and already looks like a better fit in coach Luke Walton's offense than he did in an ill-fated 15-game stint

with Cleveland after the offseason trade that sent Kyrie Irving to Boston.

The diminutive guard's first half with the Lakers was his highest-scoring half of the season, a team-high 16 points.

Doug McDermott had eight points in his Dallas debut following a deadline deal that brought him from New York.

Wizards 101, Bulls 90: Tomas Satoransky scored a career-high 25 points on 10-for-12 shooting and visiting Washington beat Chicago.

Bucks 111, Magic 104: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 32 points and Jason Terry came off the bench to score 11 points in the second half in Milwaukee's victory over host Orlando.

Pelicans 138, Nets 128 (2 OT): Anthony Davis had 44 points and 17 rebounds, Rajon Rondo had a triple-double, and visiting New Orleans recovered after blowing a 28-point lead to beat Brooklyn.

Nuggets 123, Suns 113: Wilson Chandler scored 26 points, Will Barton had 25 point and Denver used an extended second-half run to take control in a victory over host Phoenix.

76ers 112, Clippers 98: Joel Embiid had 29 points and tied a career high with 16 rebounds, and host Philadelphia beat Los Angeles for its third straight victory.

NHL roundup

Marner earns five points for Leafs

Associated Press

TORONTO — Mitch Marner had a big smile on his face after his stellar performance. The only thing missing was a hat trick.

"It's always in your mind," he said. "You know, it's always a pass mentality in my head."

Marner had two goals and three assists, helping the Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Ottawa Senators 6-3 on Saturday.

Patrick Marleau added a goal and two assists as the Maple Leafs (33-19-5) won for the seventh time in eight games. Auston Matthews, James van Riemsdyk and Nazem Kadri also scored, and Frederik Andersen made 22 saves.

Lightning 4, Kings 3: Andrei Vasilevskiy made 44 saves, Steven Stamkos had a goal and an assist for NHL-best Tampa Bay.

Sabres 4, Bruins 2: Scott Wilson had a goal and an assist during Buffalo's big second period, helping the Sabres cool off Tuukka Rask and the host Bruins.

Sharks 6, Oilers 4: Joakim Ryan's breakout game couldn't have come at a better time for host San Jose.

The 24-year-old rookie scored his first two NHL goals, including the tiebreaker with 2:27 left, and the Sharks rallied after giving up a three-goal lead to beat Edmonton.

Flyers 4, Coyotes 3 (SO): Nolan Patrick scored in the seventh round of the shootout to give visiting Philadelphia the win.

Predators 3, Canadiens 2 (SO): Ryan Ellis scored the only goal in the shootout, sending the visiting Predators to the victory.

Blue Jackets 6, Devils 1:

Artemi Panarin and Oliver Bjorkstrand each had a goal and an assist, Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 35 shots and host Columbus snapped a five-game losing streak.

Pierre-Luc Dubois, Josh Anderson, Nick Foligno and Matt Calvert also scored for the Blue Jackets in their first win in regulation in their last 14 games.

Wild 3, Blackhawks 0: Devan Dubnyk made a season-high 44 saves and Charlie Coyle scored twice, leading the host Wild to the victory.

Hurricanes 3, Avalanche 1: Brock McGinn scored twice, powering host Carolina to the win.

Jeff Skinner also scored, Elias Lindholm had two assists and Cam Ward stopped 29 shots to help the Hurricanes remain one point ahead of Columbus for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference.