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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Experts: DOD budget to be well-received

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Despite questions over a ballooning U.S. deficit and other funding dramas, the 2019 military budget proposal out Monday is poised to win support on Capitol Hill, experts say.

The Pentagon released a plan seeking a 10 percent increase in funding, asking Congress for \$686.1 billion next year to grow the size and might of the military, primarily in response to China and Russia's growing capabilities.

Experts say that with a deal in place to bust statutory spending limits and Congress invested in military improvements in an

election year, the budget plans are poised to win Hill support.

"The amount of the budget, I don't expect a problem there. Everyone signed off there," said Mark Cancian, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. "It should be an easier year this year, assuming nothing blows up."

The Defense Department's request for fiscal year 2019, which begins Oct. 1, seeks an increase of more than 15,000 active-duty troops and investment in key modernization programs. Pentagon budget writers faced a challenge predicting lawmakers' plans before Friday's deal to lift 2019 defense spending

caps to \$716 billion.

"Given that the DOD request was locked and loaded before Friday's budget deal was confirmed, this budget will have less impact than other years," said Lauren Fish, a defense strategies research associate for the Center for a New American Security, a Washington think tank. "They just didn't know the state of the political operating environment on the Hill when drafting the request. However, the top lines match up. The president requested \$716 billion for national defense, which is what Congress is prepared to give him."

The budget represents a \$74 billion increase over the Defense Department's current

funding. It calls for \$617.1 billion in base funding and \$69 billion for the Overseas Contingency Operations war fund. The request does not include national defense money for other agencies that contribute to the overall \$716 billion request.

"I want to thank you and the president for negotiating a budget agreement that gives long overdue relief to the military," Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., told Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney during a Senate budget hearing Tuesday.

President Donald Trump's overall \$4.4 trillion budget proposal was met with controversy for adding \$7 trillion to the U.S. deficit.

Navy seeks 7 percent budget hike for 'more lethal force'

BY DIANNA CAHN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — After playing two years of readiness catch-up, the Navy wants to expand its strength and fighting capabilities in fiscal year 2019 to meet the demand for a "more lethal, resilient and agile force," the Navy said in the presidential budget request released to Congress on Monday.

The Navy seeks \$151.4 billion, along with \$13.7 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations, a sharp increase over the \$7.17 billion for the war fund for 2018. The request is \$12.6 billion above fiscal year 2018 — a 7 percent increase.

Procurement has the sharpest rise, at more than \$8 billion, and personnel costs are up by more than \$2 billion. The request will allow the Navy to build 10 warships and eight support vessels to bring the ship count to 299; add 7,500 active-duty personnel to reach 335,400; and add 120

new manned and unmanned aircraft.

The budget request includes a five-year growth projection, with Navy active-duty manpower climbing to 344,800 by 2023; construction of 111 vessels including 54 warships; and 655 new aircraft.

Rear Adm. Brian Luther, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for budget, described the demands on America's sea services around the globe as laid out in the new National Defense Strategy. The Navy and Marine Corps are being called upon to meet an "increasingly complex security environment" fraught with growing competition, particularly in the maritime domain, where shipping traffic represents 90 percent of global trade, he said Monday.

Luther described the emergence of great power competitors and unconventional forces, state and nonstate actors and humanitarian demands on the Navy like the triple punch of

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria last fall.

Luther showed a map of the world with hundreds of lines depicting international undersea cables that carry 99 percent of international data transmissions; natural and oil resources dotting shores and waterways; global shipping channels and emerging lanes where ice caps are melting; international conflict zones or hot spots; and military bases.

"Trade, information resources and free access to all are critically important to the continued prosperity of the global economy," he said.

Under the 2019 budget, the Navy says it can sustain 11 aircraft carriers and 33 large amphibious ships that serve as the fleet's foundation. It will take possession of two nuclear attack submarines, four littoral combat ships, one expeditionary fast transport ship, one expeditionary sea base, one amphibious

assault ship and two destroyers. One nuclear attack submarine will be retired.

The request for \$21.9 billion for shipbuilding includes funding for two Virginia-class submarines, one of which will include the modernized Virginia Payload Module missile launch tubes; three DDG 51 Arleigh Burke destroyers that will include air and missile defense radar; two oilers; an expeditionary sea base; and a towing, salvage and rescue ship. It also includes the procurement of the last littoral combat ship, and will serve as a bridge to sustain private shipbuilders until the Navy can begin construction of its replacement, the FFG(X) frigate, Luther said Monday.

The budget proposes \$19.1 billion for aircraft acquisition that includes more than \$11.7 billion for combat aircraft. The request more than doubles the number of F-35C aircraft for carriers, going from four in 2018 to nine in the 2019 request.

2019 budget

Marine Corps eyes boost in end strength

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Marine Corps would get a 1 percent boost in end strength under the Pentagon's budget proposal released Monday, accounting for 1,100 of about 15,000 active-duty servicemembers that would be added in fiscal 2019 if Congress approves the plan.

The request was made as part of President Donald Trump's budget proposal for fiscal 2019, which includes more than \$686 billion for the Department of Defense. Pentagon budget documents emphasized the need for stable and predictable funding after operating through the current fis-

cal year under stop-gap funding measures that limited spending to 2017 levels.

The Marine Corps — part of the Department of the Navy budget — would grow its active-duty force from 185,000 to 186,100. The Reserve component would remain at 38,500. The Navy would grow by 7,500 sailors.

About 54 percent of the Marine Corps' fiscal 2019 budget would go toward personnel — the key asset of the U.S. military's crisis reaction force.

The proposal states the increases are needed in order to “deter aggression” and respond to emerging security threats, including terrorist groups, disease and natural disasters.

In addition to the modest increase to Marine Corps end strength, the proposal would provide a boost to the service's air defense. Under the plan, the Marine Corps would receive 20 new F-35s and eight CH-53K helicopters.

The fiscal 2019 budget proposal comes as Congress is working on a deal for the current fiscal year. The Pentagon is currently operating with a funding plan — the fifth since the 2018 year began Oct. 1 — and by March 23 will need another funding measure in place to keep the government open. Pentagon funding documents said Monday the series of temporary funding measures “contributes to the erosion of our military advantage.”

USAF boost would help fight global threats

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Air Force said Monday that a proposal to boost its annual budget in 2019 by \$10 billion will help accelerate the service's readiness and modernization efforts in the face of new global threats.

Under the \$156.3 billion plan, the Air Force would see a 2.6 percent pay increase proposed for all servicemembers, boost its military force by 4,700 to 506,200 and grow its bomber force for its new B-21 Raider Fleet.

The budget will help the service meet the demands of the new National Defense Strategy, which last month said the U.S. is in a national security race against China and Russia and faces emerging threats from North Korea and Iran.

“The United States now faces a more competitive and dangerous international security environment than we have seen for generations,” Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson said in an overview of the 2019 fiscal year request. “The Air Force must build a more lethal and ready force.”

The request is part of an overall budget proposal released by President Donald Trump's administration Monday. Some 2019 budget figures were leaked in recent weeks, but specific spending requests for each of the services were released to Congress on Monday.

On Friday, lawmakers reached a deal to lift statutory spending limits for defense and nondefense spending. That budget-cap deal sets a spending guide but doesn't appropriate the money.

For now, the Pentagon, like the rest of the government, is operating with a temporary funding plan — the fifth since the 2018 fiscal year began Oct. 1 — and by March 23 will need another funding measure in place to keep the government's lights on.

Friday's deal raises a \$549 billion budget cap for defense spending in 2018 to \$629 billion and puts \$71 billion in a war account known as Overseas Contingency Operations, for a total of \$700 billion. The 2019 plan raises a \$562 billion budget cap to \$647 billion and puts \$69 billion in the war fund for a total of \$716 billion.

Army would grow active force by 4,000

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army wants to grow its active force by 4,000 soldiers and speed up modernization programs for key warfighting platforms as it seeks to regain its “eroded” battlefield advantage over potential foes including Russia and China, according to 2019 budget request documents.

President Donald Trump's budget request for fiscal year 2019, released Monday, included a \$182 billion request for the Army that adds troops and seeks to field upgraded tanks, armored fighting vehicles and artillery systems more quickly than planned. It's a reversal from recent budget requests that deferred modernization programs to focus on rebuilding units' combat readiness.

“The Army is at a deflection point,” David Welch, the Army's deputy budget director, said Monday. “We can no longer afford to defer maintenance. We must expand capabilities and we must develop new ones.”

The service intends to pour \$32.1 billion into procurement of weapons systems and research

and design for future programs, a \$4.2 billion increase over its request for 2018. The 2018 budget has yet to be enacted by Congress, leaving the Defense Department largely operating at fiscal year 2017 levels.

The Army for several years chose to focus its funds on training for soldiers, but with the emergence of “great power competition” with rivals such as Russia and China, the Pentagon is now asking it to update its technology to be decidedly better than that of any potential enemy.

The modernization money would fund long-term projects such as the Army's program to develop its next generations of helicopters and combat vehicles and to upgrade its communications networks. It would speed up the procurement of upgraded M1 Abrams tanks, M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and M109 Paladin self-propelled howitzers.

The budget request seeks to add 4,000 soldiers to the Army's active-duty force, which would bring the service to 487,500. It does not request increased end strength for the Army National Guard or the Reserve.

VA slated to receive \$198.6B

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs would get another multibillion-dollar increase in 2019 under President Donald Trump's new budget proposal.

The proposal, released Monday, asks for \$198.6 billion for the VA for fiscal 2019 — significantly more than the \$186 billion budget that Congress is working to approve for the current fiscal year. It places emphasis on mental health care, information technology, access to private-sector medical care and efforts to stop waste, fraud and abuse.

"The 2019 budget reflects the strong commitment of the president to provide the services and benefits that our nation's veterans have earned," VA Secretary David Shulkin said in a written statement.

Trump's budget proposal, an overview of priorities for the administration, was shared with Congress on Monday. Shulkin is expected to answer questions about the request Thursday during a hearing of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

While the proposal includes an overall increase for the VA, it includes ideas to cut millions of dollars from specific programs. According to the budget document, the savings would be used to implement expected reforms

to the VA Choice program, which allows veterans to receive medical care in the private sector.

The White House is again offering a controversial proposal to round-down cost-of-living adjustments to the nearest dollar amount for all veterans who receive disability compensation. The practice was standard until 2013, and there have been numerous attempts to reinstate it.

It's an unpopular idea among veterans service organizations that don't want to see any decrease to veterans' benefits, but the White House argues the round-down would have minimal effect on veterans. The budget document estimated the change would cost each veteran about \$12 a year and would save the VA \$34 million in 2019 and nearly \$2.3 billion over the next 10 years.

The proposal states the COLA round-down would be used to "partially offset the costs" of replacing the VA Choice program. Lawmakers are negotiating legislation to overhaul the program.

The budget also proposes slashing the amount the VA will pay for student veterans to complete flight training at public schools. Late last year, multiple veterans organizations expressed concerns to lawmakers that some flight programs were targeting GI Bill recipients and overcharging them.

Study: DOD health coverage for women below par globally

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

American servicewomen receive "below average" reproductive health coverage compared with that of their counterparts in the armed forces of many other countries, according to a study released Tuesday by a pro-abortion-rights group.

In particular, access to abortions by U.S. women in uniform is far more limited compared with that of those who serve in almost two dozen countries that researchers rated "exceptional," from Canada and the United Kingdom to Nepal, Turkey and South Africa.

The study was published by Ibis Reproductive Health, a nonprofit research organization whose website says it promotes increasing access to safe abortion as well as "expanding contraceptive access and choices" and "comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services."

Based on complete data received from 31 countries and

partial data from eight others, researchers found that 25 countries fully covered abortion services for their servicewomen.

The Defense Department's military health system covers abortions only in the cases of rape, incest or when a pregnant woman's life is in danger. That coverage became available with the inclusion of the so-called Shaheen Amendment in the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act. Servicewomen seeking an abortion for any other reason must use civilian facilities at their own expense.

The report recommends that the DOD's health system policy be amended to include coverage for abortion and that military treatment facilities be allowed to perform the procedures. In the absence of that change, the study recommended that DOD establish abortion referral and support guidelines for servicewomen who will need to seek the procedure outside the military system.

Feds: Military impersonator used helo to impress woman

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — A man pretending to be a three-star U.S. Army general wanted to impress a woman when he unexpectedly landed in a chartered helicopter at the headquarters of a North Carolina technology company last year, a federal agent testified Monday.

Details about the strange case of Christian Desgroux emerged at a hearing before a federal magistrate, who ordered that the defendant remain in jail pending his upcoming arraignment. Desgroux, 57, is charged with pretending to be a military officer, which carries a maximum of three years

in prison.

It was around sunset on Nov. 6 when the pilot of the helicopter chartered by Desgroux landed on a soccer field at the sprawling corporate campus of SAS Institute in Cary.

As security officers approached, Desgroux stepped out wearing a "full military battle dress uniform" and displaying three stars that implied a rank of lieutenant general, Homeland Security Special Agent Tony Bell testified.

"He saluted the security officers, and they actually saluted him back," Bell said.

A suspicious security supervisor confronted Desgroux, who told him he was there to

pick up a female employee to take her to Fort Bragg for a classified briefing that had been authorized by President Donald Trump.

But none of it was true: Desgroux later acknowledged to federal agents that he had never served in the U.S. military, Bell said.

The woman, a longtime acquaintance of Desgroux, expected him to arrive in a car for a visit. Instead they went on a 30-minute helicopter ride around Raleigh, Bell said.

She and the pilot, who has not been charged, appear to have been swept up in Desgroux's strange behavior.

"She didn't know what to

make of it," Bell told the judge. "She just went along with it."

Bell testified that investigators suspect Desgroux is mentally ill, but didn't elaborate.

Federal Magistrate Judge Robert T. Numbers noted that while the impersonation charge carries a relatively low maximum sentence for a federal criminal case, the circumstances warrant continued detention for Desgroux.

"The defendant has engaged in substantial dishonesty," Numbers said, noting that a number of unrelated state criminal charges are also pending against him.

US Syria strikes killed scores of Russian fighters

Bloomberg

U.S. forces killed scores of Russian contract soldiers in Syria last week in what may be the deadliest clash between citizens of the former foes since the Cold War, according to a U.S. official and three Russians familiar with the matter.

More than 200 mercenaries, mostly Russians fighting on behalf of Syrian leader Bashar Assad, died in a failed attack on a base and refinery held by U.S. and U.S.-backed forces in the oil-rich Deir el-Zour region, two of the Russians said. The U.S. official put the death toll at about 100, with 200 to 300 injured.

The Russian assault may have been a rogue operation, underscoring the complexity of a conflict that started as a domestic crackdown, only to morph into a proxy war involving Islamic extremists, stateless Kurds and regional powers Iran, Turkey and now Israel. Russia's military said it had nothing to do with the attack, and the U.S. military accepted the claim. Defense Secretary

Jim Mattis called the whole thing "perplexing" but provided no further details.

"Coalition officials were in regular communication with Russian counterparts before, during and after the thwarted, unprovoked attack," U.S. Col. Thomas F. Veale, a military spokesman, said in a statement. "Russian officials assured coalition officials they would not engage coalition forces in the vicinity."

The offensive began about 5 miles east of the Euphrates River deconfliction line late on Feb. 7, when adversaries fired rounds and advanced in a "battalion-sized dismounted formation supported by artillery, tanks, multiple-launch rocket systems and mortars," Veale said. No fatalities were reported on the coalition side, and "enemy vehicles and personnel who turned around and headed back west were not targeted."

The death toll from the incident, already about five times more than Russia's official losses since it entered the war in 2015, is still rising, according to one mercenary commander.

US, Thailand limit talk of Myanmar at Cobra Gold exercise

Associated Press

U-TAPAO AIR BASE, Thailand — Thailand and the United States downplayed the presence of a Myanmar military officer at the opening Tuesday of the largest annual joint military exercise in Southeast Asia.

Myanmar's military has been accused of human rights violations in its crackdown on the Rohingya Muslim minority, who have fled by the hundreds of thousands to Bangladesh. U.S. lawmakers had demanded Myanmar's exclusion from the exercise.

"The truth is Myanmar is not a participant nation," U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Glyn T. Davies told reporters at in the Cobra Gold exercise in eastern Thailand. "They're not part of the exercises here." He did not explain the Myanmar officer's attendance.

Thai Gen. Thanchaiyan Srisuwan acknowledged inviting

Myanmar to the opening ceremony. However, Myanmar's flag was not flown at the ceremonial opening. It's believed the Thais invited Myanmar to send three personnel though only one appeared to be attending.

In Washington last week, both Republican and Democratic members of Congress criticized the invitation to Myanmar. Arizona Sen. John McCain, the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told The Associated Press "militaries engaged in ethnic cleansing should not be honing their skills alongside U.S. troops," a reference to accounts of atrocities committed by Myanmar troops.

A U.S. statement said 11,075 servicemembers from 29 countries are taking part in this year's exercise, with Thailand, the U.S., Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia the seven main participants.

NATO struggles to meet US spending demands

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Nearly half of NATO allies are still not on track to meet defense spending goals, falling well short of an alliance pledge that also has become a U.S. demand for all 29 members.

Based on current spending projections, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Tuesday that he expects 15 allies to spend at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024. In 2014, NATO agreed that within 10 years all members would hit the spending target.

"What we have seen so far is a good start, but we still have a long way to go," Stoltenberg said at a news conference in Brussels that came ahead of a meeting

Wednesday of NATO defense ministers.

In 2018, eight allies are expected to reach the 2 percent benchmark, up from just three in 2014, Stoltenberg said.

However, for Washington, the failure of many European countries to dedicate more resources to defense or lay clear plans for reaching spending goals has long been a political flashpoint. President Donald Trump has made the issue the focal point for his dealings with NATO, frequently calling out allies for their spending shortcomings and suggesting that U.S. commitment to the alliance hinges on members boosting their defense investments.

Last year, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, during his first visit

to NATO headquarters, put the U.S. demands in stark terms.

"America will meet its responsibilities, but if your nations do not want to see America moderate its commitment to this alliance, each of your capitals needs to show support for our common defense," Mattis said in February 2017.

On Wednesday, Mattis will be back in Brussels, where defense spending again will be on the agenda. Much focus will likely be on Germany, Europe's economic power, which still spends only a little over 1 percent of its GDP on defense.

Still, Stoltenberg highlighted the progress on defense spending in recent years, noting that allies have stopped their cuts and

have begun gradually increasing their budgets.

NATO allies aside from the U.S. have added \$46 billion to defense budgets in the last three years, Stoltenberg said. European allies and Canada also have invested \$19 billion more on major equipment during that same time, with 22 allies expected to invest 20 percent or more of their defense budgets on major capabilities by 2024.

"This should lead to significant improvements to our forces and their readiness," Stoltenberg said.

However, pressure will remain on NATO to ramp up spending across the board, which is a drum Stoltenberg said he still continues to beat.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Server posts church didn't tip, gets fired

FL PALM BEACH GARDENS — A 25-year-old server at a Florida restaurant said she lost her job after posting on Facebook that she didn't get tipped for a \$735 take-out order placed by a local church.

Tamlynn Yoder told the Palm Beach Post that she took to social media after Christ Fellowship church placed a 75-item order from Outback Steakhouse in Palm Beach Gardens.

Yoder said that because she spent much of her shift preparing the order, she only made \$18 in total tips that day.

When she went to work the next day, she was fired.

Couple weds at annual ice fishing derby

NH MEREDITH — Even before the official winners were announced, John Parry was pretty sure he won best catch of the day at the annual Great Meredith Rotary Ice Fishing Derby.

WMUR-TV reported that Parry and his longtime love, Jaye, got married on Lake Winnepesaukee's frozen Meredith Bay on Saturday, the first day of the weekendlong tournament.

The annual event features food, fishing and prizes.

Wedding dress found 32 years after mix-up

OH WILLOWICK — An Ohio woman was reunited with her wedding dress 32 years after a dry cleaner mix-up.

Ame Bartlebaugh said she went looking for her mother's wedding dress at her grandmother's house in Willowick on Feb. 4. The 25-year-old is getting married in December 2019.

Bartlebaugh opened the box expecting a simple, sleeveless dress. She instead found a lacy, tiered dress. The wrong dress had been in her grandmother's attic since it left a now-defunct dry cleaner in 1985.

Bartlebaugh posted about the mix-up on Facebook, and 24 hours later she got a response.

Michelle Havrilla received her dress Monday, the first time she's seen it since her own wedding in 1985.

Police seek man who hit sign with cross

WI AHSWAUBENON — Police in the Green Bay area are seeking a man who stole a large crucifix from a church and used it to damage a sign outside a TV station.

Nativity Parish members waiting for Mass on Friday became terrified when a man hiding his face came into the chapel, complaining loudly about the Catholic Church. After being asked to leave, he took off with a 5-foot-tall crucifix from behind the altar.

WLUK-TV reported he showed up there. He can be seen on security video swinging the cross at the FOX11 sign before an employee chased him away. He dropped the crucifix across the street.

Woman, 84, accused of shooting at kids

CA REDDING — Northern California sheriff's officials said an 84-year-old woman was arrested on suspicion of shooting toward her neighbor's children because they were too noisy.

Authorities said Betty Frances Sanders fired a handgun Friday in the direction of the kids, who are between the ages of 8 and 10, after complaining about the noise from their motorcycles.

The Redding Record Search-

light said the children's mother told deputies she argued with Sanders before the woman opened fire.

Turtle named Booga released after rehab

FL MARATHON — A young loggerhead sea turtle rescued from a fishing trap line was returned to her ocean home off the Florida Keys.

Booga, named after the commercial fishing boat whose crew rescued the 125-pound reptile in late September, was released Saturday at Marathon's Sombro Beach as hundreds of Keys residents and visitors watched. Booga's right rear flipper was amputated due to the severe entanglement injury.

Aquarium captures video of octopus birth

VA VIRGINIA BEACH — A remarkable video showing the birth of an octopus at the Virginia Aquarium has been viewed more than 1 million times on social media.

The clip shows a baby Caribbean reef octopus wriggling out of a flowerlike section of eggs. Almost immediately, the colorless creature's cells fire pigment, giving it a brownish hue. It waves its tiny arms and shoots off into the water.

Aquarium spokesman Matthew Klepeisz said researchers theorized that the swift pigment flow is either due to the stress of being born or an instinct to camouflage fast.

Bear wakes up early, attacks dog, owner

ME DEDHAM — Bear attacks are unusual and even rarer in the winter when bears are supposed to be hibernating. But a Maine man

said that's just what happened.

Dustin Gray, 29, said a black bear lunged at him and his 11-month-old puppy. The 6-foot-5 man told the Bangor Daily News that he punched and kicked the 150-pound bear until it fled and knocked him over in the process.

Gray suffered scratches and bruises, but his Labrador mix, Clover, suffered severe puncture wounds.

Girl caught in leash; mother is arrested

NH HUDSON — Police said a 3-year-old New Hampshire girl wrapped a retractable dog leash around her neck and couldn't breathe and her mother was charged with endangering the welfare of a child.

They said the toddler was left unattended in the living room of a home for an extended period of time Jan. 27 while the leash was on an ottoman.

Police said the girl wrapped the leash tightly around her neck multiple times. They responded to a 911 call, found the girl and took her to a hospital.

Woman accused of shooting driver in face

PA CHURCHILL — Police said a woman is accused of shooting a man in the face during an argument while they were driving through a Pittsburgh-area borough.

Allegheny County police said officers and paramedics were called to an intersection shortly before 2:30 a.m. Saturday.

They found a 31-year-old man who was taken to a hospital and later listed in stable condition.

Police charged Taneisha Buice, 32, with attempted homicide, aggravated assault and reckless endangering.

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USA's Kim wins halfpipe gold

White leads qualifying

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Chloe Kim stamped her name on a new era of snowboarding with a run down the halfpipe that, officially, did not mean anything. To her, it meant everything.

The Olympic gold medal was already hers but she knew she could do better. So she cinched on her gloves, cranked up “Motorsport” on her iPod, said “This one’s for you, Grams” — a shout-out to her South Korean grandmother, who was watching her in person for the first time — and dropped into the halfpipe to make history.

On the last run of Tuesday’s sun-splashed final, Kim hit back-to-back 1080-degree spins on her second and third jumps — repeating a combination no other woman has ever done in a competition.

She landed them squarely, sent her already super-hyped family at the bottom into overdrive, scored a 98.5 and sent out the message that everyone from Grandma to those at the roots of this sport love to hear: “I knew I wasn’t going to be completely satisfied taking home the gold, but knowing that I could’ve done better.”

The 17-year-old from California made it look easy, but only afterward did she concede how difficult the past several

months have been. Her story has been told and sold and marketed for gold: Her parents both immigrated to the United States from South Korea, and though it was more coincidence than any grand plan, Kim making her Olympic debut in the country where her family was from set up a sure path to stardom in the halfpipe and beyond.

She has commanded the progression in women’s snowboarding for at least two years now, and it was hard to imagine anyone beating her on the sport’s biggest stage, at her official coming-out party. But halfpipes are hard, the snow is slippery and nothing is for sure.

“There is a lot of pressure revolving around these Games,” she said. “You wait for four years to come here and it’s definitely a lot of hype around a 1½, 2-hour time period. It’s pretty nerve-wracking. You know you’re at the Olympics. It’s been a dream of mine since I was a little girl, to land a run that’s very important for me.”

She didn’t have to do it.

In the first of the day’s three runs, she flew higher than anyone on her opening straight air, then landed one 1080, and closed with a pair of inverted spins, each with well-timed, easy-to-see grabs of the board that the judges appreciate. Her

score there was a 93.75, which put her nearly nine points clear of the other 11 riders, none of whom would crack 90.

The rest of the day was a contest for second, and China’s Liu Jiayu won it. She said injuries made her reboot and reconnect with her love of the sport, regardless of the result. It will be interesting to see how the 25-year-old’s attitude shifts four years hence, at the Winter Olympics in Beijing.

Third place went to another young American: 21-year-old Arielle Gold, who casually announced afterward that she had separated her shoulder here on the second day of training, much the way she did on a practice run in Sochi four years ago that forced her to scratch from the competition.

That bronze-medal run pushed Kelly Clark — she of the one gold and two Olympic bronzes — into fourth. This was Clark’s fifth Olympics, and the 34-year-old left the halfpipe with her own future to consider, but knowing the future of the sport she helped bring to the masses is in very good hands.

“Chloe’s an outstanding snowboarder, but I’m more proud of her for how she’s handled herself as a person,” Clark said. “She’s handled success and pressure with grace and class, and it’s refreshing.”

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — The legend, the brash upstart and the soft-spoken prodigy have been circling each other for months, trading boundary-pushing runs with one eye on the halfpipe and the other on their long-awaited faceoff in the South Korean mountains, the one for all the swag and an Olympic gold to boot.

Time to shred.

Shaun White, Australia’s Scotty James and Japan’s Ayumu Hirano delivered an epic teaser trailer in qualifying, setting up a finals showdown at Phoenix Snow Park on Wednesday that could deliver one of the defining moments of the Pyeongchang Olympics.

All three posted at least one run of 95 or better on Tuesday, well clear of the rest of the other nine men who will try to elbow their way onto the podium. It won’t be easy, not with White, James and Hirano pushing each other and their sport in the process.

White exhaled after putting up a 93.75 on his first run, assuring the two-time Olympic champion of a spot in the finals. The 31-year-old elder statesman didn’t plan on trying to go even bigger on his second run, but after watching James, Hirano and American teammate Ben Ferguson go big he realized he didn’t have much choice.

“I started seeing everybody putting in these great runs and I figured I would just kind of step it up and they motivated me to send it,” said White, whose 98.50 second run didn’t even include a 1440-degree jump. That’s a double-twisting double flip (four 360-degree body rotations in all).

Asked if he was trying to send a message, White shrugged and said no. Oh, and also yes.

“It’s like I knew I had it in me and I watched these young guys completing these amazing runs and it fired me up,” White said. “I just wanted to show this is what I’ve been doing my entire life and I’m here to put it down.”

Ligety pleased with combined

Associated Press

JEONGSEON, South Korea — Ted Ligety pondered the thought that Valentine’s Day marks the 12th anniversary of earning his first Olympic gold medal.

“It feels like both yesterday and 100 years ago,” the American ski racer said.

Beleaguered by injuries the past few seasons — a torn ACL followed by back surgery — this gives him another sign he’s on the right track: a fifth-place finish at the Pyeongchang Games on Tuesday in the combined, an event that combines the times

of one run of downhill and another of slalom.

He wasn’t all that fast on the downhill track, which he expected since it’s not his specialty and it was windy. But he was much better in the slalom, keeping up with some of the best technical skiers in the world.

No one could catch Austrian Marcel Hirscher, who won his first Olympic gold. There was a time when Ligety and Hirscher had a burgeoning rivalry — the two of them trading wins on the World Cup circuit.

“My body breaking down hasn’t helped the symmetry of

our relationship as far as skiing goes,” said the 33-year-old Ligety, who was 1.45 seconds behind Hirscher. “I haven’t been able to ski at a high level. The last two years, I didn’t ski at all really. Before that, I was already starting to break down.

“Now I actually feel healthy ... keep that momentum going — hopefully I can bring parity back to that.”

Hirscher finished in 2 minutes, 6.52 seconds, 0.23 seconds faster than silver medalist Alexis Pinturault of France. Another Frenchman, Victor Muffat-Jeandet, was third

Sweeney crashes out of women's luge

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Natalie Geisenberger refuses to call herself the best women's luge athlete ever.

The history books may do it for her.

Germany has yet another Olympic gold medalist after Geisenberger prevailed in the women's luge final on Tuesday — her second consecutive title and one that added yet another page to her burgeoning résumé of accomplishments.

"The most of what you reach in sport is an Olympic gold medal," Geisenberger said.

And now, no luger has ever won more gold than Geisenberger. It's the third gold in her collection, the two singles wins now paired with the team relay win from the Sochi Games. That ties her with Georg Hackl and Felix Loch — both fellow Germans, of course — for the most in Olympic history.

She'll go for a fourth gold later

this week in the Pyeongchang team relay.

"For me, it was the most big goal or dream — I would say dream — that I wanted to reach," Geisenberger said.

Geisenberger's winning time for four runs at the Alpensia Sliding Center was 3 minutes, 5.232 seconds. German teammate Dajana Eitberger was second, nearly four-tenths of a second back. Alex Gough was third for Canada, giving that nation its long-awaited first Olympic luge medal.

For the Americans, it was a night that won't be forgotten, for an array of reasons. Erin Hamlin's long career ended with a sixth-place finish in her fourth Olympics, while Summer Britcher struggled and finished 19th and Sgt. Emily Sweeney, an Army Olympian who is part of the World Class Athlete Program, failed to finish at all after losing control of her sled on the final run in what

was a horrifying crash.

Sweeney was down for several minutes, but avoided serious injury.

"I'm OK," she said as she left the finish area.

Hamlin was all smiles as she left, completely at ease at the end of a career that saw her win 23 World Cup medals on 12 different tracks, two world championships and Olympic bronze at Sochi in 2014. She was fifth going into the final run and held nothing back, but the storybook finish wasn't in the cards.

"I was really hoping to end on a more positive note," Hamlin said afterward, smiling broadly. "But unfortunately, that did not happen. And that's all right."

So now, retirement starts. Hamlin said she would sleep in on Wednesday, hang out in Pyeongchang for the remainder of the Olympics, then probably take a trip to Hawaii.

"I've kind of experienced all

bits of the spectrum," Hamlin said. "I have been completely devastated by an Olympics, just kind of cruised through one and had fun, was super-elated at one. The years of experience play into it for sure, and keeping everything in perspective I think is big."

USA Luge picked Britcher — the track record-holder in Pyeongchang — to do Thursday's team relay. That means Hamlin has competed internationally for the final time.

"Summer's fast here," Hamlin said. "I think we have a really good shot. It's going to be exciting. I can't wait to see how things go down."

Hamlin is gone, and Gough sounds like she's going: After getting Canada its first medal, Gough said she's likely to retire.

Gough jumped back into the top three after Germany's Tatjana Huefner had trouble in her final run.

NHL roundup

Nylander's two goals help Maple Leafs top Lightning

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Toronto Maple Leafs put together the perfect response to a big rally by the Tampa Bay Lightning.

They got right back to work.

William Nylander had two goals and an assist and James van Riemsdyk scored a tie-breaking goal in the third period, sending streaking Toronto to a 4-3 victory over Tampa Bay on Monday night.

"We've found a rhythm and this is what we want to stick to," Nylander said.

The Maple Leafs jumped out to a 3-0 lead, but the Lightning tied the game on goals by Nikita Kucherov and Yanni Gourde 20 seconds apart in the third. Van Riemsdyk then put Toronto in front again when his shot just squeezed past Andrei Vasilevskiy's pad at 4:37.

"Everybody kind of just took

a deep breath and went back to playing how we did in the first two periods," said Auston Matthews, who picked up three assists. "(We) took care of the puck a little more, (we) just got in deep and obviously a big goal by James there."

Jake Gardiner also scored for the Leafs (34-19-5), who extended their home winning streak to five with their eighth win in nine games overall. Frederik Andersen made 28 saves in his 28th win of the season.

Toronto also pulled within six points of Eastern Conference-leading Tampa Bay for the top spot in the Atlantic Division.

Alex Killorn also scored for Tampa Bay (38-15-3), and Vasilevskiy made 19 saves.

"We played well enough to get points out of this one, that's probably a little discouraging," Lightning coach John Cooper

said. "I thought their goaltender got them points."

Toronto jumped in front 11:55 into the first on Nylander's one-timer off a pass from Matthews. It was Nylander's 13th goal of the season.

Nylander scored again 3:08 into the second, beating Vasilevskiy on the blocker side. Nylander then picked up an assist when Gardiner's wrist shot from inside the blue line went through Vasilevskiy's legs, making it 3-0 with 8½ minutes left in the period.

Panthers 7, Oilers 5: Vincent Trocheck had three goals in the third period, Evgenii Dadonov scored twice and Florida got the high-scoring victory on the road.

Aaron Ekblad and Denis Malgin also scored for the Panthers, who have won five of their last six games.

Edmonton dropped its fourth

straight game. Connor McDavid and Patrick Maroon each had a goal and an assist for the Oilers, and Leon Draisaitl, Drake Caggiula and Anton Slepyshev also scored.

Florida scored four times in the third after the game was tied at 3 after two.

Coyotes 6, Blackhawks 1: Max Domi, Clayton Keller, Alex Goligoski and Tobias Rieder each had a goal and an assist, and host Arizona pounded slumping Chicago.

The Coyotes ended a nine-game losing streak to the Blackhawks and sent Chicago to its season-high sixth straight loss.

Antti Raanta had 37 saves for Arizona. The Coyotes' six goals were their highest total of the season.

Alex DeBrincat scored his 20th goal for Chicago.

NBA roundup

Warriors coach themselves to victory

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — With the grind of a long NBA season wearing on his team, Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr believed it was time for his players to hear a new voice in the huddle: their own.

Kerr turned over most of the coaching duties to his players on Monday night and they responded in fine fashion, playing with more focus than they had in recent weeks in a 129-83 victory over the Phoenix Suns.

“It’s the players’ team,” Kerr said. “It’s their team and they have to take ownership of it. As coaches, our job is to nudge them in the right direction, guide them. We don’t control them. They determine their own fate. I don’t think we’ve focused well the last month. It just seemed like the right thing to do.”

Kerr said he told the players of his plan after the previous game and they ran the show for most of the day. Andre Iguoda-

la took over at morning shoot-around, JaVale McGee ran the computer for the film session and Iguodala, Draymond Green and David West got most of the work designing plays and running the huddle during timeouts.

Jazz 101, Spurs 99: Donovan Mitchell scored 25 points, including a go-ahead pull-up jumper with 39.2 seconds left, and host Utah extended its league-best winning streak to 10 games with a win over San Antonio.

Mitchell hit a pair of go-ahead baskets and a free throw to give the Jazz the lead in the final minute after they trailed by as many as 13 points in the fourth quarter. Joe Ingles added 20 points, seven rebounds and five assists for Utah. Derrick Favors had 19 points and eight rebounds.

Pelicans 118, Pistons 103: Anthony Davis had 38 points and 10 rebounds to lead New Orleans in another one of his

strong performances against host Detroit.

Davis is averaging 30.4 points per game against the Pistons, his highest total against an NBA team. He scored a career-high 59 against them nearly two years ago.

That’s one reason the Pelicans have won 11 of the last 12 games against the Pistons.

76ers 108, Knicks 92: Dario Saric scored 24 points to lead host Philadelphia to its fourth straight win.

J.J. Redick had 18 points and Joel Embiid scored 17 for the 76ers, who won their 10th straight at home to remain in playoff position in the Eastern Conference. Reserve T.J. McConnell had a triple-double with 10 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists.

Clippers 114, Nets 101: Lou Williams scored 20 points and DeAndre Jordan had 16 points and 17 rebounds, lifting balanced Los Angeles to the road win in Brooklyn.

Los Angeles had seven players in double figures and shot 56.5 percent from the field in its fourth win in five games, bouncing back nicely from a loss in Philadelphia.

Austin Rivers scored 17 points, and reserve Montrezl Harrell collected 15 points on 6-for-6 shooting. The Clippers made 19 of their first 26 shots and won for the 12th time in 17 games.

Bulls 105, Magic 101: Zach LaVine had a tiebreaking dunk for host Chicago after stealing an inbounds pass in the closing seconds.

The Bulls blew an 18-point lead in the fourth quarter but still came away with their second win in three games after dropping seven in a row.

LaVine stole Jonathon Simmons’ inbounds attempt with 15 seconds left and finished with a thunderous slam. He added two free throws after Mario Hezonja missed a three-pointer.

College basketball roundup

No. 14 North Carolina pulls away from Notre Dame

Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — North Carolina beat its two biggest rivals, then pulled away late to beat Notre Dame to cap a demanding stretch.

The 14th-ranked Tar Heels are tired. They also might have found a groove.

Theo Pinson scored 14 of his 16 points after halftime to go with 10 rebounds, helping UNC pull away late to beat Notre Dame 83-66 on Monday night for its third win in five days.

Things certainly look different from 10 days ago for the Tar Heels (20-7, 9-5 Atlantic Coast Conference), who were coming off their first three-game losing streak in four years and a win against a winless-in-the-

ACC Pittsburgh team before the stretch. But they beat Duke at home on Thursday then won Saturday at North Carolina State in a pair of emotional rivalry games.

This time, UNC needed a 13-0 burst in the final 5½ minutes to finally get some separation against a team that just kept hanging around.

“You could tell we were out there and had a rhythm,” Pinson said. “But at the same time, it’s still tough recovering so fast, going from game to game. You want to celebrate one win and be like, ‘Dang, that was a good win for us,’ but you’ve got to get ready for the next game. It was a big-time stretch for us.”

Martinas Geben and John

Mooney each scored 18 points for the Fighting Irish (15-11, 5-8), with Mooney going 6-for-6 from three-point range. But UNC — which shot 57 percent — later used its clinching run to turn a 67-63 margin into a 17-point bulge near the 2-minute mark.

It didn’t help the Irish that point guard Matt Farrell struggled; he scored nine points on 3-for-18 shooting, including 1-for-12 from three-point range.

“I loved how we fought,” Notre Dame coach Mike Brey said, “but they had about a three-minute stretch where they were unbelievable offensively. And we certainly couldn’t absorb that.”

No. 20 West Virginia 82,

TCU 66: Teddy Allen scored 16 points, giving the host Mountaineers a needed spark off the bench in their victory over the Horned Frogs.

James “Beetle” Bolden added 14 points, Daxter Miles Jr. scored 13 and Wes Harris had 11 points for West Virginia (19-7, 8-5 Big 12). The Mountaineers’ 38 bench points were their most in a Big 12 game this season.

Desmond Bane had 16 points, Vlad Brodziansky added 15 and Kouat Noi scored 12 for TCU (17-9, 5-8).

West Virginia has had trouble holding onto leads throughout the Big 12 season but didn’t let the Horned Frogs come back from a 38-27 halftime deficit.