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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Okinawans in Tokyo to decry US military aircraft incidents

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Okinawans angry about parts falling from U.S. military aircraft have taken their concerns to their nation's capital.

In December, workers discovered a small part from a Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter on the roof of Midorigaoka nursery school, about 300 meters from Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. A week later, a Super Stallion's window dropped onto a sports field at a nearby elementary school, where more than 50 schoolchildren were playing.

The nursery school's headmaster, Takehiro Kamiya, told reporters Wednesday at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan that 20 to 30 children were playing outside when the cylindrical, 4-inch-long part fell onto their roof.

"It was fortunate that no child was hurt but ... it could have been a major catastrophe with a slight difference," he said.

Kamiya showed a photo of the object and held up a map displaying official flight paths for Futenma aircraft and the location of his school, which he said is supposed to be outside those paths.

"Every day, U.S. military helicopters and Ospreys fly over our nursery school," he said. "There have been no apologies and no explanations of any kind to date."

The Marine Corps takes the report of the falling object seriously and is actively investigating the incident working closely with local authorities, Marine 1st Lt. Karoline Foote, a spokeswoman from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, said in an email to Stars and Stripes after the incident was reported.

"We care deeply about the safety of our friends and neighbors in the communities around

which we live and operate," she said.

Last month, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis apologized to his Japanese counterpart, Itsumori Onodera, for a string of recent aircraft mishaps, including the emergency landings of Okinawa-based Marine Corps helicopters. He also vowed to address the "important" issue of aircraft safety. During their call, Onodera reportedly asked Mattis, a retired Marine four-star general, to take additional measures to prevent future mishaps. The nursery school and parents want the Marines to halt flight operations until they find out what happened.

Tomoko Miyagi, president of the facility's parents' association, also spoke at Wednesday's press conference. She said her group has submitted to Japanese government officials a petition signed by 126,000 people calling for the suspension of military aircraft flights over the school.

The nursery school was built in 1964, two decades after U.S. forces liberated Okinawa during World War II and built Futenma.

The American and Japanese governments are engaged in a complex process to move some U.S. forces off the island and relocate others away from heavily populated areas such as Ginowan, the city surrounding Futenma. The southern island prefecture is strategically important to stability in the region and deterring aggression from China and North Korea.

However, Kamiya said North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile threats are less of a risk than the U.S. military presence on Okinawa.

"Nothing would fall from North Korea on top of Okinawa," he said. "Is it OK that our children are being sacrificed because U.S. forces are protecting Japan from North Korea?"

Navy: Actor-based training to battle assault is effective

By TYLER HLAVAC

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Theater-based training that reinforces positive behaviors and encourages discussion remains one of the Navy's top tools for battling sexual assault, a Navy official said Wednesday.

Jill Loftus, director of the Navy's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, said the service has seen a substantial drop in sexual assaults over the past few years. She credits some of that to Pure Praxis, a Department of Navy-contracted theater group whose performances address themes such as victim retaliation and male-on-male sexual assault.

"From 2014 to 2016, the Navy reduced their sexual incidents by 30 percent," Loftus said. "Reporting went up 114 percent at the same time. So, both numbers in the right direction."

"What that tells me is people are getting the training. People understand what is acceptable behavior and what is not. People understand they can report unacceptable behavior."

The California-based theater group, which performs regularly at Navy and Marine Corps bases worldwide, is at Yokosuka this week for a series of shows addressing sexual assault and harassment. Scenarios include a sailor being ostracized by friends and peers for reporting a rape and a sailor struggling to reconcile a childhood sexual assault with his ideas of tradi-

tional masculinity.

Half of the performances center on victim retaliation, with servicemembers being asked to analyze the scenarios acted out in front of them.

Loftus said 130,000 sailors and Marines have attended a Pure Praxis event and that the training is effective because the performances center on group discussion and reinforcing positive behaviors.

"We are convinced that small-groups, interactive training that's innovative and new is what you need to teach a subject like this," she said. "We're trying to shift our training to emphasize the positive behaviors and what's the positive thing to do rather than harping on the negative. I'm not convinced that telling people not to do something will ever solve any problem."

Chief Miguel Garcia, a cryptologic technician with Task Force 70, attended a performance Wednesday and participated in a skit onstage. He said the Navy's approach to sexual assault training has changed during his 13 years in the service and that Pure Praxis effectively targets junior sailors.

"[The actors'] attitude and demeanor onstage is really on point with what's going on," he said. "Definitely over the past three or four years it's really changed to be more interactive. Before it was always PowerPoints. Now it's scenarios and things people can take more from."

Troops give blood for Cobra Gold

BY LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

American servicemembers stationed around Okinawa have donated 55 pints of blood and 15 pints of blood plasma for Cobra Gold drills underway in Thailand.

The vital body fluids — collected during donation drives at bases on Japan's southern island prefecture — are intended for U.S. troops in case of emergencies during the largest multinational military exercise in Southeast Asia, which kicked off Tuesday and runs through Feb. 23.

"Blood is the same as any other medical supplies," Navy Lt. Nii Adjei Oninku, a III Marine Expeditionary Force health service support officer, said in a Marine Corps statement. "We bring our own bandages, gauze, and tongue suppressors. So, we bring our own blood too."

The Armed Services Blood Program is storing the fluids at two civilian hospitals in Bangkok for the duration of the exercise. Any unused blood or plasma will be donated to the facilities.

"Every time there is a blood drive I try to donate," Marine Corps Pfc. Melvin Barnard, a defense clerk with Legal Services Support Section at Camp Foster, Okinawa, said in the statement. "I started donating because I figured it could help someone. So, why not do it?"

Now in its 37th iteration, Cobra Gold is aimed at improving coordination between U.S. forces and key allies in the region. More than 11,000 servicemembers from 29 nations are participating in the exercise, which will include evacuation drills, disaster-relief missions and traditional military drills such as amphibious landings. Participants include host Thailand, the United States, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and representatives from 22 other nations either observing or participating in a limited manner.

PACOM head: Diplomacy is critical to national security

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The outgoing head of Pacific Command told a panel of House lawmakers Wednesday that the State Department and U.S. diplomatic efforts are critical to national security.

The comments were part of a House Armed Services Committee hearing examining military posture and security challenges in the Pacific region.

On Monday, the Trump administration unveiled its 2019 budget plan, which includes controversial cuts to the State Department and other diplomacy efforts.

"A weak State Department means you are going to have to have a much stronger Defense Department," said Navy Adm. Harry Harris. "Diplomacy and military capabilities and defense go hand in hand."

Harris, who is slated to retire this year and is President Don-

ald Trump's pick to be the next ambassador to Australia, suggested the diplomacy efforts will be critical as the U.S. faces growing threats in the Pacific.

In recent days, more than 1,200 veterans and 150 retired generals wrote congressional leaders rejecting the proposed cuts to the international affairs budget, which includes the State Department and other diplomacy efforts.

This comes as Trump administration officials have sent mixed messages on diplomacy, leading some congressional members to worry that escalated U.S. rhetoric with North Korea could inadvertently lead to a costly and deadly war.

"I'm really concerned about this new budget and its significant cuts to the State Department," said Rep. Jacky Rosen, D-Nev., who raised the questions with Harris. "Combating the threat of North Korea, it's going to require a lot of strong cooperation ... just like we are

heading off China's attempts to become the world's leading military and economic power. It's going to necessitate us strengthening our alliances."

Wednesday's hearing covered a wide scope of issues facing the military in the Pacific region, from speculation on North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's motivations to a more crucial need for ground-based interceptors in Hawaii to increased threats in the area.

Harris, who submitted 58 pages of prepared testimony, said he believes Kim is angling for a unified Korean Peninsula. He agreed the U.S. will need to do more to head off China's efforts to take over as a dominant power.

"U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific are real and enduring, while the growing challenges to our interests are daunting and cannot be overstated," Harris said in his prepared remarks.

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Pentagon report: Civilian at Army IG office harassed women

USA Today

WASHINGTON — A senior civilian in the Army Inspector General's office sexually harassed subordinate employees, including forcing a kiss on one and touching another employee's buttocks, made racially charged comments and talked about the "belly fat" of other women in the office, according to a Pentagon report released Wednesday that called for him to be disciplined.

Joseph Guzowski, the principal director for the Army Inspector for Inspection, the Army's internal watchdog, denied all the allegations, according to the report by the Defense Department's inspector general.

But the report sides with the four women who

complained about his sexist, racist and boorish behavior.

The Pentagon inspector general concluded that it stands "by our conclusion that his overall course of conduct toward employees discussed in this report exhibited his failure to treat them with dignity and respect. We recommended that the Army take appropriate action regarding Mr. Guzowski."

The report was released one week after inspectors general for the armed services and the Pentagon along with top military brass appeared before a panel of the House Armed Services Committee to discuss misconduct among senior civilians and officers.

Syria's crowded battlefield puts US, Russia on collision course

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It's a scenario many feared in the fog of Syria's multi-front war: a confrontation in which U.S. forces, responding to a provocation, kill Russian soldiers or mercenaries on a crowded battlefield.

Russian news reports Tuesday described such a scenario, with an unknown number of Russian military contractors killed in a ferocious U.S. counterattack last week. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and other U.S. officials said they had no such information on casualties, and the Kremlin did not confirm any Russian deaths. U.S. officials also said the Russian government had lodged no complaint about its citizens being killed.

What is not disputed is the fast-changing, often confusing nature of a battlefield on which forces of multiple countries are bumping against one another, increasing the prospect of violent collisions. Whether by accident or intention, such clashes risk plunging Washington and

Moscow into a situation they studiously avoided even during some of the darkest hours of their relationship: their forces directly warring with each other.

Russian forces are supporting the Syrian government in its war with opposition groups, some of which are backed by the U.S. Elements of both sides are fighting the last remnants of Islamic State in Syria. U.S. and Russian military officials maintain daily contact to avoid battlefield mishaps.

Beyond doubt is the ferocious scale of the U.S. attack on Feb. 7, in response to what the Pentagon called a barrage of artillery and tank fire from several hundred "pro-regime" fighters in Deir el-Zour province, an area in eastern Syria where the last ISIS fighters have converged among oil fields. Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Harrigian, commander of U.S. air forces in the Middle East, told reporters a broad range of U.S. air power was unleashed.

For more than three hours, American F-15E attack planes,

B-52 strategic bombers, AC-130 gunships, Apache attack helicopters and Reaper drones fired on the attacking ground force, which Harrigian said was advancing under covering fire from artillery, mortars, rockets and tank rounds. The air power stopped the attackers' advance and destroyed an unspecified number of artillery guns and battle tanks, he said, but he gave no estimate of casualties or full picture of the assailants.

In a second episode, the U.S. struck a Russian-made T-72 battle tank Saturday after it "took a shot at us" in the same general area of Deir el-Zour province, Harrigian said, adding that he did not know who was operating the tank.

Russian media said Russian private contractors were part of pro-Syrian government forces that advanced on oil fields in the Deir el-Zour province and were targeted by the U.S. The reports cited activists who said at least four Russian citizens were killed in Syria on Feb. 7.

IG criticizes Shulkin, staffer on London trip

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin improperly accepted two tickets to the Wimbledon tennis tournament for himself and his wife in July during an official trip to London, a VA watchdog said Wednesday in a 97-page report that also listed misconduct by the VA chief of staff.

The VA inspector general's office released the report Wednesday — the result of five months of investigation into Shulkin's 10-day European trip. The investigation was prompted by a Washington Post report in September that Shulkin and his wife spent much of the trip on leisure activities. The inspector general found "serious derelictions by VA personnel" and outlined five instances of poor judgment or misconduct by Shulkin and VA Chief of Staff Vivieca Wright Simpson.

Simpson doctored an email and sent it to Tammy Kennedy, the designated VA ethics official, as the basis for having the VA pay travel expenses for Shulkin's wife, Merle Bari, the report stated. Simpson made it appear Shulkin would receive an award in Denmark — the pretext needed for Bari's travel expenses to be approved. The VA paid more than \$4,000 for Bari's airline ticket — an expense that Kennedy said she wouldn't have approved if she knew Shulkin was not receiving an award.

The inspector general shared the finding with the Department of Justice, which decided not to pursue criminal prosecution against Simpson "at this time," the report states.

Investigators didn't find any evidence that Shulkin knew about the altered email.

Defense alliance plans to launch new training mission in Iraq

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

NATO will plan for a new training mission in Iraq which comes after a request for more alliance support from the Iraqi government and the U.S.-led coalition fighting there.

"This will put our presence (in Iraq) on a firmer footing," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said at a defense ministerial meeting in Brussels on Wednesday.

The aim is to launch the mission in July.

Last year, NATO formally joined the U.S.-led coalition battling Islamic State, but the

move was largely symbolic and followed intense pressure from the Trump administration for allies to do more in the counterterrorism fight.

The newly announced effort will allow NATO to tap into the alliance for generating procedures and funding, Stoltenberg said.

Allies have not said how many troops will be needed for the expanded training mission, and it is unclear how many of the alliance's 29 members will be eager to venture deeper into Iraq. There are no plans for a NATO-led combat role in Iraq, where ISIS has been forced out of all its former strongholds.

The new mission will allow for a larger, more coordinated effort to build Iraqi defense institutions and add support in tactical areas, such as countering roadside bombs, Stoltenberg said. "This will help make Iraq safer. And us more secure," he said.

NATO operated a small training mission in Iraq from 2004 until 2011, when its 130 personnel were withdrawn after disagreement with Baghdad over the legal status of foreign troops in the country. The U.S. cited the same reasons when it withdrew most of its forces in 2011.

House panel plans Porter probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers on Capitol Hill want to know how former presidential aide Rob Porter was allowed to work at the White House under an interim security clearance despite allegations of spousal abuse.

Rep. Trey Gowdy, R-S.C., chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, told CNN on Wednesday that the panel decided Tuesday night to launch an investigation.

Word of the probe comes a day after the FBI publicly contradicted the White House over Porter, who has been accused of domestic abuse by his two ex-wives. The FBI said it gave the Trump administration information on multiple occasions last year about Porter and that the investigation wrapped up in January.

That account by FBI Director Christopher Wray challenged the White House assertion that Porter's background "investigation was ongoing" and officials first learned the ex-

tent of accusations against him only last week, just before he abruptly resigned.

Wray's testimony on Tuesday marked the latest development in a scandal that has called into question the judgment of senior members of the White House staff, put new stress on the administration's already strained credibility with the public and drawn accusations of tone-deaf handling of abuse allegations.

The weeklong fallout from the allegations against Porter, President Donald Trump's staff secretary, has thrown the West Wing into chaos and has sparked new rounds of recriminations inside the White House.

Privately, officials acknowledge that the public timeline offered last week — that the administration first learned of the ex-wives' charges against Porter last Tuesday — was flawed at best.

Several senior officials, including chief of staff John Kelly and White House counsel Don McGahn, were aware of the broad allegations against Porter for months, officials said.

Kelly found out after request-

ing an update on the large number of senior staffers operating without full security clearances, according to a senior administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal discussions. McGahn told Kelly last fall there was concern about information in the background investigation involving Porter's ex-wives, the official said, and Kelly expressed surprise that Porter had previously been married.

Despite that, Porter took on an increasingly central role in the West Wing and was under consideration to serve as Trump's deputy chief of staff, two officials said.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Monday, "The White House had not received any specific papers regarding the completion of that background check." Yet Wray testified that the FBI sent the White House its preliminary report in March 2017 and its completed investigation in late July.

Lawyer says porn actress paid by him

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's personal attorney said Tuesday he paid \$130,000 out of his own pocket to a porn actress who allegedly had a sexual relationship with Trump in 2006.

Michael Cohen said in a statement to The New York Times that he was not reimbursed by the Trump Organization or the Trump campaign for the payment to Stormy Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford.

Cohen wrote, "The payment to Ms. Clifford was lawful, and was not a campaign contribution or a campaign expenditure by anyone."

Cohen told the Times he had delivered a similar statement to the Federal Election Commission in response to a complaint filed by Common Cause, a government watchdog group.

Common Cause had asked the FEC to investigate the source of the \$130,000 payment and determine whether it represented an excessive campaign contribution. Cohen told the Times, "The allegations in the complaint are factually unsupported and without legal merit."

The Wall Street Journal reported in January that Cohen had arranged the payment to Clifford in October 2016 to keep her from publicly discussing the alleged sexual encounter during the presidential campaign.

A week later, In Touch magazine published a 2011 interview with Clifford in which she claimed she and Trump had a sexual encounter after meeting at a golf tournament in Lake Tahoe, Nev., a year after Trump's marriage to his third wife, Melania.

At the end of January, Daniels said in a statement that the alleged affair never occurred. But in a TV appearance the same day, Daniels appeared to disown the statement, saying she didn't know where it came from and the signature didn't look like hers.

Teacher defends anti-military talk

Associated Press

PICO RIVERA, Calif. — City Council members in a Los Angeles suburb passed a resolution Tuesday night condemning and asking for the resignation of one of their colleagues who in his work as a schoolteacher called members of the U.S. military "the lowest of our low."

"God bless America!" one Pico Rivera councilman shouted as the vote passed.

Councilman Gregory Salcido, who has been on leave from El Rancho High School in Pico Rivera, is seen on a video scolding a 17-year-old student wearing a U.S. Marine Corps sweatshirt and urging him not to join the military.

"They're not like high-level thinkers, they're not academic people, they're not intellectual people; they're the frickin' low-

est of our low," Salcido said on a recording made by a student. "I don't understand why we let the military guys come over here and recruit you at school. We don't let pimps come in the school."

The video was posted to social media and has drawn millions of views, along with outraged comments.

Mayor Gustavo Camacho called it "bullying, arrogant and aggressive behavior." The council can't force Salcido from his post, but Camacho introduced a motion to censure Salcido, which would bar him from city committees and appointments, and to ask him to resign from the council.

The meeting was Salcido's first public appearance since making the comments Jan. 26.

He said he was sorry to any-

one his comments may have hurt, but he did not apologize for the remarks themselves, which he said "were definitely out of context."

Salcido said he was trying to get his students, most of whom are low-income minorities, not to settle for the Army or Navy.

"My goal as it relates to my students is to get them to do everything to get to college," said Salcido, who was shouted down by some angry members of the audience. "I wanted to challenge them to reach their academic potential."

He gave no indication he would resign from the council.

Salcido's comments came after he listened to nearly 50 angry but mostly orderly and calm speakers, many of them veterans.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Pooch barred from running for governor

KS HUTCHINSON — Kansas election officials are putting the brakes on a dog's campaign for governor.

KWCH-TV reported that Terran Woolley, of Hutchinson, decided to file the paperwork over the weekend for his 3-year-old pooch, Angus, to run for the state's top office after reading stories about six teenage candidates. The teens entered the race after learning Kansas doesn't have an age requirement, something lawmakers are seeking to change.

Angus is a type of hunting dog called a wire-haired Vizsla. Woolley figured Angus would need to run as a Republican. He described Angus as a "caring, nurturing individual who cares about the best for humanity and all creatures other than squirrels."

The Kansas Secretary of State's office said man's best friend is not capable of serving the responsibilities required of the governor.

Woman says she was ticketed for honking

HI HONOLULU — A woman said she was issued a \$72 fine on Oahu for honking her horn.

KHON-TV reported Friday that Lynette Atuaia said she was crossing an intersection when she used her horn because she thought another vehicle was cutting her off.

Atuaia said she did not realize the driver was a police officer until after she honked.

She said the officer then pulled her over and issued her a ticket.

Atuaia said the officer told her she should have seen he was an emergency vehicle, but she said the vehicle's emergency

lights and sirens were not on.

A Honolulu Police Department spokesman said Atuaia may contest the ticket if she feels it was issued in error. Atuaia said she plans to do so.

Burglars leave fowl mess behind at home

SC YORK — Authorities said burglars in South Carolina broke into a house and cooked chicken wings and drank RC Cola.

The Rock Hill Herald cited a police report that said the victim, 77, said he came home Saturday to find the house and a vehicle ransacked. The report says the suspects left a pan of cooked chicken wings on the stovetop and stole food and a car battery.

A neighbor told police that someone had tried to enter his house the previous night.

No arrests have been made.

'Obit bandit' targets homes of mourners

MA BARNSTABLE — Police have arrested a man they say broke into people's homes in Massachusetts while they attended wakes or funerals.

Authorities said they began to suspect Randy Brunelle, 35, during an investigation into a series of break-ins on Cape Cod. Brunelle previously had served an 18-month prison sentence on a 2012 conviction for breaking into a police officer's home as the officer attended his mother's funeral.

Barnstable police said they followed Brunelle's car Friday while other officers went to homes of residents attending funerals.

Officers discovered a break-in and pulled Brunelle over. Police said they arrested him after finding jewelry in his pockets.

Man is charged in attack on roommate

OR BEND — Sheriff's deputies arrested a Bend man who they allege attacked a roommate with a hammer.

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office allege Matthew Planteen, 34, struck the 63-year-old victim early Sunday while the man was asleep. He then dragged him around the house, continuing to hit him with the hammer, police said.

It took the victim about 12 hours to get to his phone and call friends. They went to the home, called 911, grabbed a baseball bat and held Planteen at bay until deputies arrived.

KTVZ reported that the victim was taken to a hospital in Bend, where a supervisor said he was in critical condition. Investigators said the roommates had a recent disagreement about Planteen moving out.

Teen shot while testing flak jacket

NE LINCOLN — Authorities said a teen was shot in the buttocks after trying to test a Vietnam-era flak jacket with two friends.

The friends decided to test the flak jacket Saturday at a cabin in northwest Lancaster County. After the jacket successfully stopped the bullets, the 19-year-old man put it on and stuffed a pillow underneath to absorb shock.

Another 19-year-old fired a .22-caliber pistol but missed the vest and hit the victim in the buttocks. He was treated for injuries that were not life-threatening. The victim had been drinking, but the shooter had not.

Condom-wearing chile pepper has message

NM LAS CRUCES — February is National Condom Month, and state health officials are spreading the word.

The Las Cruces Sun-News reported that the New Mexico Department of Health started the month with an Instagram post: "Wrap it up! It's your health — Take charge and be safe! #CondomMonth," paired with a red chile pepper outfitted with a condom.

The chile is one of the designated state vegetables of New Mexico. A recent study by Backgroundchecks.org says New Mexico is the fifth most "sexually diseased" state in America.

Woman: Investigators seized and kept \$700

KS TOPEKA — An elderly woman in northeast Kansas said she paid her neighbor \$700 in cash for yard services, but when authorities arrested the man, they seized her money and kept it.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported that Suzanne James, 72, alleges the Kansas Bureau of Investigation balked at returning her money unless she went to its headquarters for questioning, which she refused to do.

James said she paid \$700 in cash to her neighbor, Chad Wendlandt, 42, to mow her lawn and provide tree care services while she was out of town last summer. Wendlandt was arrested by the KBI on charges of bond violation before he could do the work.

The bureau said Wendlandt's case concluded when he was sentenced to prison in December for drug crimes.

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White wins gold medal in men's halfpipe

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Snowboarding at the Olympics turned 20 this year, and there's a good chance that in another two decades, people will still be talking about the contest that went down in the mountains of South Korea on Wednesday.

They will definitely still be talking about Shaun White.

It wasn't so much that White won his third gold medal to place his name among the greatest to compete in the Olympics, or in any realm of sports, for that matter.

It was the way he did it.

His winning run capped a contest that, even before he dropped in for the finale, was the best, in terms of pure difficulty, showmanship and guts that has ever been seen on a halfpipe.

It came with the heart-thumping pressure of knowing he had to land the most difficult run he ever attempted, or settle for silver.

It included back-to-back

jumps, each with 1440 degrees of spin, that are, quite literally, death-defying. They were tricks White said afterward that he had never landed in succession — not in practice and, of course, never in a contest.

"I knew I had it in me," he said. "The fear was out of the door. I'm at the Olympics. I had to do it. I'm standing at the top, in my favorite position, with the pressure of the world and one run to go. Man, it brings out the best in me. I'm so glad that's a part of me as a competitor."

On the winning trip, White got the tough stuff out of the way early, dropping straight into the halfpipe, flying nearly 20 feet above it and whipping his body around twice while going head-over-heels two times for the first 1440. He landed high enough on the wall to gather sufficient speed to travel to the other side and essentially do a mirror image of the first trick.

From there, it was simply a matter of staying upright.

He performed what's known as the Sky Hook — a 20-foot vault above the deck in which

he bent himself into the shape of a comma, while grabbing the board and tweaking it up toward his backside to show judges the style they demand. His final trick was one he patented: the Double McTwist 1260, in which he took off from the wall for two flips with 1½ twists, grabbing the board and practically wrestling it over his head to complete the jump and stick the landing.

He knew he'd done it, but the wait — about 120 seconds — was agonizing.

The score came up. A 97.75. It was enough to beat Ayumu Hirano, the 5-foot-2, 19-year-old from Japan who has been asked, quite often, exactly when he was going to beat Shaun White.

Australian Scotty James, who made news at the start of the games by complaining about judging, finished third with a run that included three double-cork 1260s; it was a performance that would've won all but a handful of all the contests ever held up through last December.

But it was Hirano, who now has back-to-back Olympic silvers, who set the stakes for these games by becoming the first man to land the back-to-back 14s at the Winter X Games last month. He did it again on his second run under a slate-gray sky in Pyeongchang to set the mark (95.25) that White had to beat.

White did it.

Shortly after his winning score came up to make him the winner of America's 100th Winter Games gold medal, White was hugging friends and family and sobbing, almost uncontrollably. It was the sort of emotion rarely seen from the man who burst onto the scene as the ebullient redhead shredder dude, then grew into a multi-platform megastar whose light cascades well beyond any halfpipe.

White would be the first to admit that a lot of that fame came because of the Olympics. So the win wasn't so hard to put into perspective.

"It means everything to me," he said.

China's world champions lead pairs figure skating

Associated Press

GANGNEUNG, South Korea — To team or not to team?

That was the question posed to the top three pairs after Wednesday's short program at the Pyeongchang Olympics. Each defended their strategy, saying their performances — and all of them were outstanding — emanated from participating or skipping the team event that concluded Monday.

China's world champions, Sui Wenjing and Han Cong, missed the team competition, and they won the short. Russian skaters Evgenia Tarasova and Vladimir Morozov were a close second to the Chinese, closer than some expected, in fact. Canada's Meagan Duhamel and Eric Radford were third. Those two couples were key members of medal-winning nations in the

team event.

Sui and Han had no plans to skate before Wednesday because she was recovering from a left leg injury sustained in a training accident that required five stitches and kept them off the ice for a while. Han blamed himself for that.

"I was not careful enough," he said. "But luckily it was not a very big cut, five stitches, and after that ... we had to wait to participate."

Added Sui, who laughed when Han took the blame: "Our coach decided one month ago when I hurt myself that we needed more practice, so we could come here later."

They certainly weren't rusty, putting together an almost hypnotic short program to Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" that earned them a career-best 82.39 points, beating their

score in last year's worlds.

"I think today we did quite well and enjoyed ourselves," she said. "Hope tomorrow we can cash our bet."

The Russians trailed by 0.71, a margin as slim as the blades they skate on. They were convinced doing the team in which they took silver was a benefit. And a duty, even if they are skating as Olympic Athletes from Russia because of the IOC's decision in a Russian doping scandal.

"The team competition I think was a chance for us to skate in the main arena," Morozov said through a translator. "It was a training bout for us and carried a very high responsibility for our team. And the fact that we could win medals for our team was even better. I think it was a big help for us."

No one got more benefit out

of the team event than the Canadians, who won gold. Four years ago at the Sochi Games, the first time there was a team competition, Canada finished second to Russia. Almost as soon as those games concluded, the Canadians set forth a plan to win the gold in 2018.

Bingo.

That achievement provided much more than satisfaction, both Radford and Duhamel said.

"The team event was energizing so much that we had a good practice, better than maybe you would think. We have a calm energy that we are using," Radford said.

"In the team event, being on that podium and getting the gold made us want to be right back up there so badly to get a medal of any color," Duhamel added.

Olympic men's hockey roundup

Slovenia rallies past US in overtime

Associated Press

GANGNEUNG, South Korea — Five practices were supposed to prepare the Americans for this, and they knew at the second intermission Slovenia was going to come out punching.

The preparation and the knowledge were not enough to fend off the fatigue as the United States blew a two-goal lead and lost a 3-2 stunner in overtime Wednesday night in the Olympic opener for both teams. Slovenia captain Jan Mursak scored the tying goal with 1:37 left in regulation and the winner 38 seconds into overtime.

Long before that, the U.S. started letting the game slip away with mistakes all over the ice.

"We started turning the puck over in our zone and they were getting chances and that led to some momentum for them," said goaltender Ryan Zapolski, who allowed three goals on 25 shots. "We can't give up those

chances that we were giving up out of nothing there in the third. That really kills your momentum. And they scored a goal off one of them and from that point we were kind of on our heels."

Brian O'Neill and Jordan Greenway, who became the first African-American hockey player for the U.S. at an Olympics, scored to build the 2-0 lead in a dominant showing, and the shots were 24-12 after two periods. Coach Tony Granato pointed out that Slovenia probably should have been the more tired team from playing so much in its defensive zone, but there was none of that from a group that has only one player — Mursak — with NHL experience.

Slovakia 3, OAR 2: The latest iteration of the Russian Red Machine started its Olympic hockey tournament with a loss.

The Russians gave up a two-goal lead as defensive errors allowed Slovakia to end the first

period at 2-2. Peter Ceresnak then scored the game-winner with a slapshot in the third period.

Before the tournament, the Russians were considered to be the gold-medal favorites in the first Olympics since 1994 without NHL players. However, they were also the favorites on home ice in Sochi four years ago, only to struggle under the pressure before losing to Finland in the quarterfinals.

This time around, they are playing under the name "Olympic Athletes from Russia" as part of the country's punishment from the International Olympic Committee for doping at the 2014 Sochi Games. If they win the gold medal, the Olympic anthem will play.

Still, the red and white jerseys are a powerful reminder of Russian and Soviet hockey heritage. And failing to beat Slovakia at the Olympics is a reminder of more recent problems.

Russian teams have now played Slovakia in four consecutive Olympic tournaments, losing three of those and winning in 2014 in a shootout.

The Russians scored twice in the first five minutes at the Gangneung Hockey Center, with Nikolai Prokhorin scoring off an assist from Vladislav Gavrikov to take the early lead. Minnesota Wild prospect Kirill Kaprizov followed up with another, hitting the puck in mid-air past Slovakia goaltender Branislav Konrad.

Slovakia recorded only four shots in the first period, but scored on two of them just before the intermission.

Peter Olvecky first beat Russian goalie Vasily Koshechkin with a wrist shot. Then Martin Bakos, who had been checked into the Russian bench minutes before, made it 2-2 on a breakaway after opposing defenseman Nikita Nesterov lost the puck at the blue line.

NHL roundup

Eichel-less Sabres take down league-leading Lightning

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The last-place Buffalo Sabres are suddenly playing havoc with the Eastern Conference's top teams — and without their top offensive threat, Jack Eichel, no less.

Ryan O'Reilly scored a goal and added two assists in a 5-3 win over the East-leading Tampa Bay Lightning on Tuesday night.

"That's a really good hockey team over there, but we showed good composure and good maturity," O'Reilly said. "We didn't panic. Even when they scored the power-play goal at the end there, we stuck with it. It was nice to see and it's a good lesson for us."

It was O'Reilly's second consecutive three-point outing after he also had a goal and two assists in a 5-4 loss to Colorado on Sunday. The boost in production comes after Eichel sprained his right ankle in a 4-2 win over Boston on Saturday, an injury that will cost him between four and six weeks.

Penguins 6, Senators 3: Jake Guentzel scored twice, and Zach Aston-Reese scored his first two NHL goals for host Pittsburgh.

Predators 4, Blues 3 (OT): Filip Forsberg scored on a penalty shot at 1:19 of overtime to give host Nashville a wild comeback victory over St. Louis.

Wild 3, Rangers 2: Devan Dubnyk made 32 saves, and

host Minnesota's early three-goal lead held up.

Devils 5, Flyers 4 (SO): Travis Hall scored twice in regulation, Drew Stafford had the only tally in the shootout and visiting New Jersey snapped a four-game losing streak.

Hurricanes 7, Kings 3: Justin Faulk had his first career hat trick, Jeff Skinner scored twice, and the host Hurricanes routed the short-handed Kings.

Blue Jackets 4, Islanders 1: Oliver Bjorkstrand and Pierre-Luc Dubois scored power-play goals in the second period to give their team the lead, and host Columbus went on to a win over New York.

Red Wings 2, Ducks 1: Dylan Larkin and Frans

Nielsen scored in the first two periods and host Detroit held off Anaheim.

Jets 4, Capitals 3 (OT): Defenseman Tyler Myers scored 3:35 into overtime as host Winnipeg came back from a two-goal deficit to beat Washington.

Bruins 5, Flames 2: Patrice Bergeron and Riley Nash scored two goals apiece, helping host Boston beat Calgary.

Coyotes 2, Sharks 1: Alex Goligoski scored in his third straight game to help Arizona beat host San Jose.

Golden Knights 5, Blackhawks 2: Reilly Smith scored the go-ahead goal in the third period, and host Vegas beat Chicago.

NBA roundup

New additions helping revive Cavaliers

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — LeBron James and his new teammates are playing like old buddies.

James scored 37 points, and the new-look Cleveland Cavaliers got a much different result this time against the Oklahoma City Thunder in a 120-112 victory on Tuesday night.

Cleveland claimed its second straight win since adding George Hill, Rodney Hood, Jordan Clarkson and Larry Nance Jr. in trades, and their fourth straight victory overall. The Cavaliers lost to the Thunder 148-124 on Jan. 20 with a very different roster.

"It's a change of scenery and they're just trying to take advantage of it," James said. "For the guys that were here, we're just trying to make them as comfortable as possible. Make the transition as seamless as possible."

Thunder coach Billy Donovan said the changes create a lot of problems.

"I think their ability to space it, drive it, kick it, their skill level, I think — not that it was bad before, but I think the speed, probably the tempo and the pace they are playing at is a little bit faster," he said.

Each of Cleveland's additions made solid contributions against Oklahoma City. Hill started at point guard and went 24 minutes without a turnover. Hood and Clarkson each scored 14 points and Nance had 13 points and nine rebounds, including eight offensive boards.

James praised Cleveland general manager Koby Altman for getting what the team needed at the trade deadline.

"It just wasn't working out for us. He made the changes he felt best fit our team," James said. "Then, it's on me to make sure the new guys that come in, that

they fit in and make it as seamless as possible. That's my job. This is the third game in a row my voice is gone. So I am just trying to have communication at an all-time high for us."

Holdover guard J.R. Smith added 18 points for the Cavaliers. It was Cleveland's second straight road win against top competition — the Cavaliers rolled past Boston 121-99 on Sunday.

"We've got to keep working," Cleveland coach Tyronn Lue said. "It's a process. You've got to keep playing well, keep getting better and hit that stride late."

Paul George scored 25 points and Carmelo Anthony 24 for the Thunder. Steven Adams added 22 points and 17 rebounds, and Russell Westbrook scored 21 points. Westbrook and Anthony had missed the past two games with sprained ankles.

Rockets 126, Timberwolves 108: James Harden had 34

points, 12 assists and six rebounds, and visiting Houston beat Minnesota for its ninth straight victory.

Raptors 115, Heat 112: DeMar DeRozan scored 27 points, Kyle Lowry had 22 and Toronto beat Miami for its sixth straight win.

Nuggets 117, Spurs 109: Nikola Jokic had 23 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists, Will Barton scored 20 points and host Denver beat struggling San Antonio.

Bucks 97, Hawks 92: Khris Middleton had 21 points to lead a balanced attack for host Milwaukee, and All-Star forward Giannis Antetokounmpo hit two key buckets in the final three-plus minutes.

Kings 114, Mavericks 109: Zach Randolph scored 22 points, and Sacramento used a big first half to beat host Dallas.

Top 25 roundup

Virginia rolls past Miami in debut at No. 1

Associated Press

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — New No. 1 Virginia looked the part Tuesday, never trailing and holding Miami to 38 percent shooting to win 59-50.

Virginia's De'Andre Hunter scored 22 points, including a four-point play. But defense was the difference for the Cavaliers, who limited an opponent to 50 points or less for the 12th time.

The Cavaliers (24-2, 13-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) won in their first game since 1982 as the No. 1 team. They bounced back from an overtime home loss Saturday to Virginia Tech that ended a 15-game winning streak.

The Hurricanes (18-7, 7-6) lost their second in a row, and lost at home for only the second time.

No. 2 Michigan State 87, Minnesota 57: Jaren Jackson Jr. scored a career-high 27 points on 10-for-14 shooting and the vis-

iting Spartans cruised to their ninth consecutive victory.

Michigan State (25-3, 13-2) notched its best 28-game record under coach Tom Izzo and pulled within a half-game of first-place Ohio State in the Big Ten despite just five points in 25 minutes from star Miles Bridges.

No. 7 Texas Tech 88, No. 23 Oklahoma 78: Keenan Evans scored 26 points and the host Red Raiders beat the Sooners in Division I scoring leader Trae Young's first college game in the city where he was born.

Young, the son of former Texas Tech player Rayford Young, missed all nine three-pointers while finishing with 19 points in front of a hostile Lubbock crowd that booed him just about every time he touched the ball in the Sooners' fourth straight loss.

No. 13 Kansas 83, Iowa State 77: Udoka Azubuike scored 19 points, Malik

Newman had 17 and the visiting Jayhawks bounced back from a brutal loss at Baylor.

Lagerald Vick scored 16 points for Kansas (20-6, 9-4 Big 12), which shot 48.4 percent from the floor and committed just seven turnovers.

No. 16 Rhode Island 85, Richmond 67: Jared Terrell had 17 points and the host Rams extended their winning streak to 16 games.

No. 18 Tennessee 70, South Carolina 67: Grant Williams scored 22 points and made a big basket in the closing seconds as the host Volunteers handed the Gamecocks their sixth consecutive loss.

Missouri 62, No. 21 Texas A&M 58: Kassius Robertson scored 16 points, Jordan Barnett added 15 and the host Tigers pushed their winning streak to five games.

Missouri (18-8, 8-5 Southeastern Conference) played solid defense and clean offense, but struggled in the last five minutes against the press.