

STARS AND STRIPES®

Friday, February 16, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US denies 'bloody nose' strike plan for N. Korea

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. doesn't have a "bloody nose" strategy for North Korea, senators of both parties and a Trump administration official said Thursday, rejecting claims the U.S. wants to strike the North's nuclear program in a way that avoids an all-out war.

The harmonized message could quell speculation that President Donald Trump is contemplating limited military action to demonstrate U.S. resolve toward North Korea without provoking a wider conflict. Such a strategy would be seen widely as dangerous, given the North's capability to inflict a devastating retaliation on U.S. ally South Korea.

A senior White House official, at a briefing Wednesday, told lawmakers no such approach has been adopted, Sens. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., and James Risch, R-Idaho, said at a Senate hearing Thursday. An administration official who was testifying confirmed their accounts.

The White House had "made it very clear there is no bloody nose strategy for a strike against North Korea," Shaheen told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which was considering the nomination of Susan Thornton, Trump's choice to be the top diplomat for East Asia.

"We were told clearly by administration people about as high up as it gets that there is no such thing as a bloody nose strategy, that they've never talked about, they've never considered it, they've never used that term, and it's not something that people ought to be talking about," Risch said.

Suspect in Fla. school shooting had been reported to FBI in fall

Associated Press

The massacre at a Florida high school is again raising concerns about whether the FBI missed signs that might have stopped a mass shooting.

Last fall, a Mississippi bail bondsman and video blogger noticed a comment on one of his YouTube videos that said, "I'm going to be a professional school shooter." He immediately reported it to YouTube and the FBI and the next day two agents came to his office to take a print-out of the comment and to ask him whether he knew anything about the person who posted it.

Although the commenter's username was "Nikolas Cruz" — the same name as the 19-year-old man who authorities say killed 17 people at his former high school on Wednesday — the FBI couldn't identify the poster, Robert Lasky, the special agent in charge of the FBI office in Miami, said Thursday.

Federal agents interviewed the man who reported the comment and searched public records databases, actions in line with those done during an FBI assessment — the lowest level, least intrusive and most elementary stage of an FBI inquiry — but came up short. The FBI says it still hasn't conclusively linked the account to the suspected shooter.

Cruz is suspected of walking into his former high school in Florida with an AR-15 rifle on Wednesday and opening fire, shooting at students and teachers in hallways and on school grounds.

It was the latest attack to raise questions about whether people who once caught the attention of law enforcement should have remained on the FBI's radar. In the past two years, a man who massacred 49 people at an Orlando nightclub, another who set off bombs in the streets of New York City and a third who gunned down travelers at a Florida airport each had been looked at by federal agents but later determined not to warrant continued law enforcement scrutiny.

FBI assessments routinely are opened after agents receive tips, which could be sparked by something as simple as noticing odd activity in a neighbor's garage or a classmate's comments. Agents routinely face a challenge of sifting through the tens of thousands of tips received every year — and more than 10,000 assessments that are opened — to determine which could yield viable threats.

Had agents been able to confirm Cruz was the same person as the YouTube poster, they would have found dozens of photos of rifles, ammuni-

tion, and targets filled with bullet holes, which likely would have led to a face-to-face interview. The FBI did not notify police in Florida about the post before the mass shooting.

"They owe us some more detail on what they did," retired FBI assistant director Ron Hosko said.

The questions come as the FBI already is under intense scrutiny and facing unprecedented attack from President Donald Trump and some congressional Republicans, who have seized on what they say are signs of anti-Trump bias, particularly as it relates to special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe.

But it's not clear the agency dropped the ball in this case, Hosko said.

"With anything that the FBI receives, they are constrained to act based on what they have in front of them," said Hosko. "You have a random internet posting that suggests the person wants to do something, not that they are planning on doing something."

FBI guidelines meant to balance national security with civil liberties protections impose restrictions on the steps agents may take during the assessment phase.

Agents, for instance, may analyze information from government databases and open-source internet searches, and can conduct interviews during an assessment. But they cannot turn to more intrusive techniques, such as requesting a wiretap or internet communications, without higher levels of approval and a more solid basis to suspect a crime.

"It's a tricky situation because sometimes you get information regarding individuals and they may be just showing off, blustering," said Herbert Cousins Jr., a retired FBI special agent in charge.

A vague, uncorroborated threat alone may not be enough to proceed to the next level of investigation, said Jeffrey Ringel, a former FBI agent and Joint Terrorism Task force supervisor who now works for the Soufan Group, a private security firm.

Many assessments are closed within days or weeks when the FBI concludes there's no criminal or national security threat, or basis for continued scrutiny. The system is meant to ensure that a person who has not broken the law does not remain under perpetual scrutiny on a mere hunch — and that the FBI can reserve its scarce resources for true threats.

Afghans submit 1.17M claims of war crimes

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Since the International Criminal Court began collecting material three months ago for a possible war crimes case involving Afghanistan, it has gotten a staggering 1.17 million statements from Afghans who say they were victims.

The statements include accounts of alleged atrocities not only by groups like the Taliban and Islamic State, but also involving Afghan Security Forces and government-affiliated warlords, the U.S.-led coalition, and foreign and domestic spy agencies, said Abdul Wadood Pedram of the Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization.

Based in part on the many statements, ICC judges in The Hague then would have to decide whether to seek a war

crimes investigation. It's uncertain when that decision will be made.

The statements were collected between Nov. 20, 2017, and Jan. 31, 2018, by organizations based in Europe and Afghanistan and sent to the ICC, Pedram said. Because one statement might include multiple victims and one organization might represent thousands of victim statements, the number of Afghans seeking justice from the ICC could be several million.

"It is shocking there are so many," Pedram said, noting that in some instances, whole villages were represented. "It shows how the justice system in Afghanistan is not bringing justice for the victims and their families."

The ICC did not give details about the victims or those providing the information.

US and Turkey return from brink, aim to 'normalize' ties

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — The U.S. and Turkey pulled back from the brink of a potentially disastrous crisis on Friday, agreeing to normalize badly strained relations over Syria and other issues that had threatened the NATO allies' longstanding ties.

However, details of the rapprochement were vague as the two sides agreed in principle only to form working groups that will begin meeting within the month to examine points of contention and to try to resolve them.

After talks in Ankara, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu announced the creation of new "mechanisms" to improve the relationship, starting with the question of American support for Kurdish rebels in northern Syria.

Those talks followed a

lengthy meeting of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Cavusoglu and Tillerson late Thursday at which a broad range of disagreements were covered.

In addition to Syria, those included Ankara's complaints against a U.S.-based Turkish cleric whom Erdogan accuses of fomenting a failed 2016 coup, U.S. concerns about the state of Turkey's democracy and opposition to Turkey's planned purchase of a Russian air defense system.

"We brought forward proposals on how we can address all of the critical issues that are standing between our countries," Tillerson said during a joint news conference with Cavusoglu. He said that joint working groups would take up specific issues including troop deployments to address Turkish border security concerns before the middle of March.

Official rips war fund reliance by special ops

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The chairwoman of a House Armed Services Committee subpanel on Thursday praised a proposed 10 percent funding hike for U.S. special operations forces but pushed back against the continued reliance on the so-called war fund.

Rep. Elise Stefanik, R.-N.Y., said in a Thursday hearing that under the 2019 budget request, U.S. Special Operations Command, also known as SOCOM, would see its funding increase to \$13.6 billion and would grow its force to more than 71,000.

Both would mark the largest ever, and money would be sourced largely from Overseas Contingency Operations, or OCO.

"While I am pleased to see continued fiscal support for special operations forces, it is deeply troubling to see continued dependency on (OCO) funding," said Stefanik, chairwoman of the House Armed Services Committee subpanel on emerging threats and capabilities.

The fund has raised concerns as a runaway spending train for its wide range of uses and lack of budget caps.

On Monday, the Pentagon released a 2019 budget plan seeking a 10 percent hike in funding to \$686.1 billion, which includes a \$617.1 billion base budget plus \$69 billion for OCO.

The special operations request represents about 2 percent of the overall Defense Department request.

"Congress is continuing to provide us with all the resourcing we need to do our job," SOCOM commander Gen. Tony Thomas testified at Thursday's hearing. "Special operations forces provide unique and highly effective capabilities and extraordinary return on investment across the full spectrum of conflict."

The command's budget was \$11.8 billion in 2017. It's pro-

jected to reach \$12.3 billion in 2018 and \$13.6 billion in 2019, Thomas said.

In a similar hearing about a year ago, Thomas said a reliance on the war fund had created a force that is "largely a façade."

"Unfortunately, we find ourselves in the same place today, if not worse," Stefanik said. "We must commit to remedy this imbalance."

Thomas said that currently, OCO covers a third of SOCOM's budget, "a huge dependency." He would prefer to see recognition that the capabilities of SOCOM deserve to be maintained from base budget funds.

Owen West, the new assistant secretary of defense for special operations, testified that the war fund must be addressed when it comes to special operations forces.

"It has the potential to build some really bad habits," he said.

Also of concern, the budget request shows a decline in funding for research and development, which is key to technological and battlefield advantages in the future, Stefanik said.

"Rest assured, our near-peer adversaries are already aggressively exploring these technologies, which present both economic and national security challenges for our nation," she said. "To this end, I am somewhat disappointed that SOCOM's budget request decreases research-and-development funding for a second year in a row."

Still, the proposed funding gains will be key to the force's growth to meet the demands of the new National Defense Strategy, said West, who was confirmed to his new post in December. The strategy, revealed in January, labeled China and Russia new threats to the U.S. as a result of their growing capabilities.

"To sustain this expansion, we must be fiscally hawkish," West said.

Food box idea draws Dems', advocates' ire

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is pushing what it calls a “bold new approach to nutrition assistance:” replacing the traditional cash-on-a-card that food stamp recipients currently get with a pre-assembled box of canned foods and other shelf-stable goods dubbed “America’s Harvest Box.”

Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney likened the box to a meal kit delivery service, and said the plan could save nearly \$130 billion over 10 years. But the idea, tucked into President Donald Trump’s 2019 budget, has caused a firestorm, prompting scathing criticism from Democrats and nutrition experts who say its primary purpose is to punish the poor.

“The main goal is to alleviate food insecurity, and the reason SNAP is so successful is because it gives low-income families the autonomy and dignity to make their own food choices,” said Craig Gundersen, a professor in agricultural strategy at the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Gundersen said people will leave the program as a result of the shift.

Senate rejects immigration bills

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate has left hundreds of thousands of “Dreamer” immigrants in limbo, rejecting rival plans that would have spared them from deportation and strengthened the nation’s border security. Senators dealt President Donald Trump an especially galling defeat as more than a quarter of fellow Republicans abandoned him on an issue that helped propel him to the White House.

Also defeated Thursday was a plan by a bipartisan group of senators who offered a compromise that would have shielded the young immigrants and would have financed Trump’s demands for money to build his border wall, though more gradually than he wants. Eight Republicans joined most Democrats in backing that plan, but it fell short after the White House threatened a veto and GOP leaders opposed it.

The day’s votes, in which four separate proposals were defeated, illustrated anew Congress’ steep challenge in striking a deal on an issue that’s proven intractable for years and on which each party’s most fervent supporters refuse to budge. The outcome suggested there may be no permanent solution soon to help the young immigrants, who were brought to the U.S. as children, despite their sky-high support in public polling.

The Senate votes left the young immigrants facing a March 5 deadline that Trump has given Congress for restoring the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, that he annulled last year. Federal courts have blocked him temporarily from dismantling the Obama-era initiative, but without congressional action the immigrants

will face growing risks of deportation as their protections expire.

“Dreamers” are immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children and now risk deportation because they lack permanent authorization to stay. DACA gives them the ability to live and work in the U.S. for two-year periods that can be renewed.

“It looks like demagogues on the left and the right win again on immigration,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who helped craft the bipartisan package but also backed Trump’s plan. He added, “The only way forward is for President Trump to grab the reins and lead us to a solution.”

That scenario wasn’t in sight Thursday. The White House trashed the bipartisan proposal as “dangerous policy that will harm the nation,” denouncing a provision directing the government to prioritize enforcement efforts against immigrants who arrive illegally — beginning in July. Trump proved unwilling to fold on his demands for a tougher bill, reflecting the hard-line immigration stance that fueled his presidential run.

After the Senate rejected all four proposals on Thursday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., blamed Democrats for failing to accept what he said was a “generous” offer from Trump.

Trump had dangled a chance for citizenship for 1.8 million young immigrants, meeting a top Democratic demand. But that plan also included \$25 billion to build his border wall with Mexico and to enact other border security measures, tighter curbs on relatives whom legal immigrants could sponsor for citizenship and an end to a visa lottery that encourages immigration from diverse nations.

General: US troops in Europe must continue to adapt

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. European Command has reshuffled its headquarters in the past year and complicated its training regime, and will tinker with its force mix to counter potential Russian aggression, the top American military commander in Europe said Thursday.

Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, who leads EUCOM and serves as NATO’s military commander, said an era of “great-power competition” means his force of about 62,000 U.S. troops in Europe will need to continue to adapt to meet the “changing character of war.”

Scaparrotti met with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who visited troops in Stuttgart during a closed-door town hall meeting at EUCOM headquarters.

Mattis’ visit came on the heels of a meet-

ing of NATO defense ministers Thursday in Brussels, where allies agreed to launch two new operational commands focused on moving allied forces back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean and moving with greater speed around Europe. A new cyberwarfare center, intended to bolster defenses against Russian intrusions and misinformation campaigns, also will be formed at Scaparrotti’s NATO headquarters in Mons, Belgium.

The moves coincide with a push by the U.S. to rejuvenate EUCOM into a warfighting headquarters capable of commanding troops in a crisis. Military officials have said such high-end command-and-control skills languished during the post-Cold War era, but EUCOM has sought to bring them back.

EUCOM war games now focus on confronting a “peer competitors” and sophisticated military threats that weren’t

a priority during the previous 15 years, when military attention was on counterinsurgency campaigns in the Middle East.

In Russia, Scaparrotti said he sees a military that also is evolving. Moscow’s interventions in Ukraine and Syria have been a “testing ground” for regular Russian forces. Meanwhile, Russia’s military buildup in Kaliningrad, a fortified enclave with sophisticated Iskander missiles, also is an area of concern, Scaparrotti said.

U.S. efforts to deter potential Russian aggression rely heavily on rotational forces to augment permanently based units in Europe. However, concerns were raised in a recent Army War College study, which said the long rotations were taking a toll on the morale of troops, many of whom are on nine-month deployments away from family.

Scaparrotti, however, said he believes the rotational model is sustainable, but may need tweaking.

Feds: Detainee joined ISIS after studies in La.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — He was a college student in Louisiana, where he mixed booze and gambling with electrical engineering classes. A decade later, he was guarding an Islamic State oil field in Syria and storing bomb-making files and military handbooks on thumb drives.

This still-unidentified dual American-Saudi citizen, who's been detained by the U.S. military in Iraq for nearly five months, has become a test case for how the government should treat U.S. citizens picked up on the battlefield and accused of fighting with ISIS militants.

U.S. authorities say that when he surrendered in mid-September to U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, he was carrying thumb drives containing thousands of files. There were 10,000 or more photos — some depicting pages of military-style manuals. There were files on how to make specific types of improvised explosive devices and bombs. There also were nearly a dozen spreadsheets in Arabic, including one, dated Nov. 11, 2016, titled "Islamic State Spoils and Booty Bureau."

The government made its case against the detainee in a public version of a sealed document filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Washington. It said he voluntarily signed up to be an ISIS fighter, worked for the group for 31 months and has an extensive social media history

espousing pro-ISIS philosophy.

The government also said it discovered the detainee's name, biographical details and information labeling him as an ISIS fighter on another thumb drive the Defense Department obtained separately in November 2015. That drive, full of what appear to be intake forms for new ISIS recruits, was recovered by local Syrian forces in July 2015.

While the government's more-than-150-page filing doesn't identify the detainee nor say when or where he was born in the U.S., it discloses extensive detail about his activities and travels worldwide leading up to his surrender at a Syrian battlefield checkpoint.

An individual who met the detainee in July 2005 in New Orleans where he was studying told the FBI that he was a "wild and typical" college student, who drank and partied. In early 2015, he flew to Athens, Greece, and then to Gaziantep, Turkey, where he paid a smuggler \$300 to get him into Syria.

The detainee said three days after he entered Syria he was kidnapped by ISIS militants and was imprisoned for seven months. He said he was released only after agreeing to work for ISIS. He spent two months at a ISIS training camp near Mayadin, Syria, before being assigned to a brigade responsible for guarding the front lines in Deir el-Zour province.

Cops: Ex-teacher got student help on bomb

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A former high school teacher and his brother were accused on Thursday of stockpiling explosive materials and paying students to dismantle fireworks for gunpowder to make bombs.

Christian Toro and his brother, Tyler Toro, were charged in a federal complaint with unlawfully manufacturing a destructive device. Christian Toro also was charged with distribution of explosive materials to a minor.

The brothers pleaded not guilty and were being held pending their next court date. There was no immediate response to requests for comment from their attorneys.

At a press conference, Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio said, "The brave men and women of the (New York Police Department) and of the FBI have done extraordinary work and, in this case, likely saved many, many lives."

Authorities said that there was no indication of any continued threat and that all the suspects involved had been arrested.

The case grew out of a bomb threat called into a school by a student in December. Authorities said Christian Toro then resigned, Tyler Toro returned the ex-teacher's school laptop and a technician found a docu-

ment about explosives on it.

Authorities interviewed Christian Toro at his Bronx apartment earlier this month.

Christian Toro told law enforcement agents that he'd come across the document about explosives while researching the deadly 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, looked only at its contents and never meant to download it, the complaint said. He said he'd never built a bomb.

But on Wednesday, students at his former school told agents that he paid at least two students about \$50 an hour between October and January to break up fireworks and store the powder from them, a federal complaint said, which didn't say what the purpose of the bomb was.

Agents got a warrant and searched the Toros' apartment on Thursday, finding more than 30 pounds of various chemicals used in explosives, a box of firecrackers, a bag of metal spheres that could be used to pack a bomb with damaging projectiles and a diary, the complaint said.

The diary, with Tyler Toro's name in it, said "Christian arrested" and "If you're registered as a sex offender, things will be difficult. But I am here 100 percent, living, buying weapons. Whatever we need," according to the complaint.

Family mourns Filipina maid found dead in Kuwait freezer

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The body of a Filipina maid found stuffed in a freezer in an abandoned apartment in Kuwait was flown home to her grieving family Friday, as attention focused on the plight of millions of mostly poor Filipinos toiling abroad.

As Joanna Daniela Demafelis' remains were wheeled to the Manila airport's cargo bay, her sister broke into tears and embraced the casket before being pulled back. A brother wept quietly.

Demafelis' body was found Feb. 6 in a Kuwait City apartment that had reportedly been abandoned for over a year. Philippine

President Rodrigo Duterte said there were indications she was strangled.

Her death is the latest overseas tragedy to befall a worker from the Philippines, a labor exporter with about a tenth of its 100 million people working abroad. The income the workers send home accounts for about 10 percent of annual gross domestic product.

Philippine officials are under pressure to do more to monitor the safety of its worldwide diaspora of mostly house maids, construction workers and laborers. There are also calls for the government to boost employment and living standards at home so that fewer people need to find work abroad.

Duterte has ordered a ban on the deploy-

ment of new Filipino workers to Kuwait.

Demafelis' family told The Associated Press on Friday that Joanna was 29 years old and the sixth of nine children born into a poor farming family in the central province of Iloilo. She left for Kuwait in 2014 to be employed by a Syrian and Lebanese couple.

It's unclear how the woman remained missing for so long, or if Kuwaiti police had requested extradition for the couple.

Duterte said last week he did not want a quarrel with Kuwait, but he warned he may resort to drastic steps, such as a complete ban on the deployment of Filipino workers, if Kuwait and other governments fail to safeguard Filipinos.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman stood up by mystery man in mural

NY NEW YORK — It wasn't meant to be for a New York City woman seeking a mystery missed connection via a 20-foot mural asking him to meet her on Valentine's Day.

Devin Custalow, 25, waited for nearly 30 minutes at the billboard that asked the mystery man with yellow shoes she met on a subway train in October to meet with her at 1 p.m. Wednesday. She was surrounded by friends, family and plenty of cameras for the meeting that never came to pass — but her loved ones were on hand with a bouquet of flowers.

Custalow said despite the outcome, the search for her mystery Valentine was a really great experience, and she hopes she's encouraged others to look for love.

Farm's anti-racism sign stirs up political debate

VA CENTREVILLE — A northern Virginia farm again has found itself embroiled in a political debate thanks to a welcome sign that carries the message "Resist White Supremacy."

Cox Farms in Centreville, a popular destination for field trips and pumpkin-patch enthusiasts in the suburbs of the nation's capital, has a long history of stirring the pot with its political messages. In 2015, some people tried to organize a boycott in response to a Black Lives Matter poster on the farm property.

The Washington Post reported the family-owned farm recently switched its welcome sign from "Rise and Resist" to "Resist White Supremacy."

The message still has proved controversial, prompting tens of thousands of responses on

Facebook. The Cox family said it appreciates the ability to advocate for social justice.

Work on mystery crack set for completion

ME AUGUSTA — Maine transportation officials are close to finishing multimillion-dollar emergency repairs to an Augusta overpass, but they are still at a loss as to who caused the damage.

The state Department of Transportation said they will configure the Interstate 95 overpass back to its original layout on Thursday. The Bangor Daily News reported officials were forced to install temporary exit ramps in November while crews repaired the nearby overpass where workers found a massive crack in October.

DOT spokesman Ted Talbot said there are still no leads on the driver who caused the crack and officials have not found witnesses, video footage or debris related to the crack.

Teen helps save coach having heart attack

OH TWINSBURG — An Ohio teen has helped save a track coach who suffered a massive heart attack at a local fitness center.

Twinsburg assistant track coach Chuck Glover told WJW-TV he had just put weights onto the floor at the Twinsburg Fitness Center in October when he collapsed. He said he had close to 100 percent blockage in a main artery.

Nicole Fruscella, 17, a life-guard at the facility, was called to the scene and was asked to bring an automated external defibrillator. Fruscella said that while she was trained to use an AED, she had never used it to give someone aid before.

Fruscella gave Glover a shock before paramedics took

him to a hospital.

Glover said he had an angel on his shoulder that day, and her name is Nicole.

Town will install nicer signs on closed roads

NJ LEONIA — The mayor of a New Jersey borough that recently banned non-resident drivers from using its streets as a shortcut said officials will replace imposing "Do Not Enter" signs with more welcoming versions.

Leonia Mayor Judah Zeigler said Wednesday the new signs will be more understated and "business friendly." The Record reported the signs still will have information about side streets that are open only to residents and visitors of Leonia destinations during rush hour times.

In January, Leonia began closing 60 residential side streets to nonresident commuter traffic in response to drivers who cut through the borough for a shortcut to the George Washington Bridge.

The signs will be installed as soon as they are received.

Police: Crash victim stuck for 10 hours

ME HARPSWELL — Police in Maine said a man who crashed his car into an unoccupied house went unnoticed for nearly half a day before a passer-by saw the vehicle.

Kevin O'Connor, 35, was driving in Harpswell when he crashed about midnight Tuesday. The Portland Press Herald reported the car crashed into an unoccupied house down a slope.

A passer-by discovered the wreck about 10 a.m. Wednesday — 10 hours after the crash — and called police. O'Connor is being treated at an area hospital for serious injuries, including multiple broken bones

and a head injury. Police said speed was a factor in the crash.

Property records show the vacant house is owned by an Arizona-based company.

Waitress receives share after lottery dispute

AR STUTTGART — An Arkansas waitress who complained that a co-worker stiffed her after they won \$300,000 in the state lottery said she has received an undisclosed share of the prize and is dropping a lawsuit.

Leslie Underwood said a co-worker at Sportsman's Drive-In, Mandy Vanhouten, cashed a scratch-off ticket their boss gave them. Underwood told the Stuttgart Daily Leader the amount she received wasn't what she expected, but it was still "free money" she didn't have to begin with.

After Underwood's plight came to light last month, an anonymous donor offered the woman and her family a trip to Disneyland.

Student arrested after school locked down

MD TOWSON — Authorities said a Baltimore County high school was placed on lockdown after a student arrived with a weapon in his backpack.

The weapon at Loch Raven High School turned out to be a pellet gun. The Baltimore County Police and Fire Department said nobody was injured. The student is in police custody. Charges are pending.

In a series of Thursday tweets, police said the school resource officer was informed that a student was concealing a weapon. The student ran off when the officer approached. The lockdown began when the officer lost sight of the student.

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American Shiffrin fails to medal in slalom

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Mikaela Shiffrin is, without a doubt, the best women's slalom skier there is. Has been for years. All of the victories confirm it. Her competitors are aware of it. And, yes, so is she.

"This is going to sound so arrogant," Shiffrin said Friday, her eyes closed. "I know that I'm the best slalom skier in the world."

She spoke those words after failing to live up to that billing. After, as she put it, "puking before the first run" because of what she initially thought might be food poisoning or a virus but eventually decided was simply anxiousness. After, she acknowledged, skiing too conservatively to put up a proper defense of her Olympic title and finishing fourth behind gold medalist Frida Hansdotter of Sweden.

"Sometimes," the 22-year-old American said, "I feel like the only one who can beat myself in slalom is me. And I beat myself ... today."

Hansdotter took advantage, putting together two legs with a combined time of 1 minute, 38.63 seconds for her first Olympic medal. Switzerland's Wendy Holdener was 0.05 seconds back for the silver, followed by Austria's Katharina Gallhuber.

"A lot of surprises today," Holdener said.

Not really in the men's race across the way at the Jeongseon Alpine Center, where

Austria's Matthias Mayer added a super-G gold to the downhill title he won four years ago. This time, Mayer edged Switzerland's Beat Feuz and Norway's Kjetil Jansrud.

The biggest news 30 miles away at the Yongpyong Alpine Center, really, was Shiffrin's showing. She finished in 1:39.03 — 0.08 away from the bronze and less than a half-second from the gold.

That Shiffrin's poor-for-her performance in slalom came one day after she won the gold medal in the giant slalom, an event at which she is not as good, was not only stunning but also perhaps related.

After attending the medal ceremony Thursday night, Shiffrin said, she didn't get to bed until around 10 p.m., roughly 1½ hours later than normal during the Pyeongchang Games. More influential than that, she thought, was the inability to properly modulate her emotions after that victory in the opening women's Alpine event.

"I had too much of a peak yesterday and too much of a valley today. And when you have two races in a row, it's really important to keep that mental energy stable. And I didn't really do that," Shiffrin said. "So today, it was like all of the tools that I have that make me feel equipped to handle whatever pressure I feel, I didn't have anymore."

Her whole Olympics are shifting now.

Shiffrin's mother, Eileen, who also coaches Mikaela, already said Saturday's super-G

was no longer part of the plan. Now Shiffrin says she might not ski the downhill, either, for what would shape up as a showdown against U.S. teammate Lindsey Vonn, the 2010 gold medalist in that event. Shiffrin did say she definitely will remain part of the field for the combined.

There is pressure galore, from others and from Shiffrin herself.

That is based in large part on her résumé: She won the slalom gold at the age of 18 at the 2014 Sochi Olympics; she won three consecutive world championships in that event; she had a five-race winning streak in January; she is on pace for a second overall World Cup title.

"I think it's more my own expectations and knowing the magnitude of what I'm trying to do," Shiffrin said. "Less about what everybody else wants to see."

That might be.

It's why she says she would vomit before races last season. And it's what she thinks caused her to get sick Friday.

Now Shiffrin gets a few days to recalibrate. Won't be easy to forget what happened Friday, though.

"Moving forward? I am terrible at that. Every single, like, loss that I've ever had, I remember that feeling so thoroughly, it's like a piece of my heart breaks off and I can never get it back. And today is no different than that," she said.

Jacobellis leaves empty-handed again

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — In many ways, Lindsey Jacobellis walked away from these Olympics the same as she has from all the previous ones.

She is still the best-known figure in her sport.

She is still without a gold medal.

The 32-year-old American had the lead in the final of women's snowboardcross Friday, one day short of 12 years after she cemented her name in Olympic lore as the showboat snowboarder who gave away a victory near the finish line because she started celebrating too soon.

This loss was more straightforward.

Jacobellis raced to an early lead on a course where it's bet-

ter to use the draft from other riders and slingshot past them. She got passed by the eventual winner, Italy's Michela Moioli, on a curve about halfway down the course. She got pushed to the side and raced the rest of the course all alone. Without a drafting partner, she could not make up ground, and ended up finishing fourth — behind silver medalist Julia Pereira de Sousa Mablieu of France, and 0.03 seconds back of Eva Samkova, who slid across the finish and now has a bronze to go with her 2014 gold.

"I mean, I could be upset about it, but where is that going to get me?" Jacobellis said. "Anything can happen in boardercross, and I didn't get injured today. The fact I'm still walking out of here is great."

In a sport where the riders play bumper cars with their bodies after being literally dumped out of the starting gate, then taking jumps at 40 mph, that is certainly nothing to sneeze at.

And Jacobellis has been the best and most-durable rider for more than a decade in a game that many equate to a crapshoot.

She has nine Winter X Games titles, 29 World Cup wins and 49 podiums in 84 World Cup starts. She is dedicated to bringing more girls into her sport to ensure the future, both at the grass roots and on the world stage.

She is also the person who made this sport famous.

It was at snowboardcross' Olympic debut in 2006, when she was 20, and a good 5 seconds clear of the field as she moved toward the final jump in

the gold-medal race. Celebrating too soon, she tweaked her board — a method grab — and went tumbling on the landing. Tanja Frieden cruised by for the gold. Jacobellis limped in for the silver.

"It definitely brought more attention to the sport," Jacobellis said. "How often do you remember the second-place medalist?"

In her case, every time the Olympics roll around.

This time, the gold went to Moioli, who was racing as well as anyone this season, and now has an Olympic title to go with four World Cup victories in 2017-18.

"She made history of the sport, really," the 22-year-old winner said of Jacobellis. "I am a baby. But I am happy to race with girls like her, and she's so strong."

Chen falls, teammates soar in short

Associated Press

GANGNEUNG, South Korea — Nathan Chen was nearly at a loss for words trying to explain where his Olympic short program went awry, leaving the American medal contender fortunate just to qualify for the free skate.

In fact, Chen was at a loss for what to do next.

“I’ve never been in this spot before,” he said Friday. “I mean, I thought I did everything right in terms of my general approach going into this. Things just didn’t click together.”

After crowd-pleasing performances from teammates Adam Rippon and Vincent Zhou, Chen, 18, failed to cleanly land a single jump in his high-flying short program. The best hope for an American figure skating gold medal fell on his opening quad flip, stepped out on a quad toe and triple axel, and never could work a missed combination back into his shaky program.

The result was a score of 82.27 points, more than 20 off his season best. It left the Grand Prix Finals champion in

17th place, and so far adrift of Yuzuru Hanyu’s stellar 111.68 score that Chen will skate hours before the Japanese leader for his free skate on Saturday.

“I’m going to talk to my team and see what the best approach is,” Chen said. “It was just rough. Nothing clicked. I did all the right stuff going into it. It just didn’t go how it should have.”

Making the performance even more disappointing was that it came just after Hanyu, the reigning Olympic champion, effortlessly landed both of the quads in his program.

Hanyu’s fans showered the ice with Winnie the Pooh bears — the Japanese sensation once said he collects them — after his music ended. That caused a minor delay while a flock of children skated out to gather them, even though Chen insisted that it didn’t bother his concentration.

Chen certainly was in no mood to make excuses.

He said the team event, where he likewise struggled with the short but still helped the U.S. win bronze, did not

affect his preparation. He also dismissed any notion that he might be hurt.

Asked whether he succumbed to the pressure of being the face of U.S. Figure Skating, not to mention ever-present in NBC promos, Chen replied: “It was the same pressure I always put on myself.”

The other two Americans in the competition fared much better.

The 17-year-old Zhou, skating third among the 30 competitors, and became the first figure skater to land a quad lutz in an Olympic event. He used the four-rotation jump to lead into a triple toe and wound up with a season-best 84.53 points.

That left Zhou in 12th place entering the free skate.

“I’m happy I committed to all my jumps,” he said, “and yeah, happy that I gave it my all.”

Rippon was similarly pleased with his performance, which scored 87.94 points despite not having a single quad. The personable 28-year-old landed a clean triple flip-triple toe combination to start, then got into a

rhythm with a crowd-pleasing performance.

He finished in seventh place.

“My most important thing at this competition was to deliver in the team skate, get a bronze medal for the United States, and I was able to do that,” Rippon said. “Now I’m able to go out in the individual and show the world I’m a cut-through competitor. And I’m an awesome skater.”

That self-confidence is part of what has made the openly gay Rippon one of the Olympics’ endearing personalities. He’s been interviewed by everyone, from the mainstream to the niche, and has transcended not only the sport of figure skating but the American audience.

Even the South Korea fans were waving American flags for him inside Gangneung Ice Arena.

“I want to share my story and, more importantly, when I’m out there on the ice it’s important I show that I put a lot of hard work into this,” he said. “I’m confident in the work I put out. And I know I might not be the best in the competition but I’m definitely the most fun.”

Olympics medal roundup

Austria’s Mayer surprises in men’s super-G

Associated Press

JEONGSEON, South Korea — Matthias Mayer came to the Pyeongchang Games as an Olympic champion, and he’ll leave as an Olympic champion.

Just not in the event he expected.

A sliding crash into a TV cameraman was the inelegant end of the Austrian’s charge for a medal in the opening combined event. It caused a hip injury that left him little hope of retaining the Olympic downhill title he won at the 2014 Sochi Games.

But on Friday, Mayer broke Norway’s 16-year grip on the men’s Olympic super-G title, winning an unexpected gold medal four years after unexpectedly winning the downhill.

“Unbelievable,” said Mayer, who had been a disappointing ninth one day earlier in the marquee speed race. “I didn’t know if I would start the downhill. I had real pain in my hip.”

Mayer was 0.13 seconds faster than Beat Feuz of Switzerland. Feuz flipped places on the podium with Kjetil Jansrud, who added a bronze to his silver from a day earlier.

Jansrud, the defending champion in super-G, was 0.18 behind Mayer’s time of 1 minute, 24.44 seconds. He missed the chance to extend Norway’s winning run — a four-race streak that began at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

Skeleton: Yun Sungbin left no doubt. It’s his track. It’s his gold medal.

The most decisive Olympic skeleton champion ever is a 23-year-old who had no idea what he was doing on a sled a few years ago and now stands taller than anyone else in the sport.

Yun won in commanding fashion, his four-run time of 3 minutes, 20.55 seconds easily coming in 1.63 seconds ahead of silver medalist Nikita Tregubov of Russia.

Freestyle skiing: Hanna Huskova sur-

vived the tricky wind to give Belarus a second straight gold medal in women’s aerials.

Huskova, 25, narrowly edged Zhang Xin in tricky conditions that wreaked havoc with much of the 12-woman field. Huskova nailed her final jump, a double-twisting back layout, and posted a score of 96.14, just ahead of Zhang’s 95.52.

China’s Kong Fanyu took bronze.

Speedskating: In a battle of youth against experience, rookie Esmee Visser came out on top and gave the Netherlands yet another gold medal in Olympic speedskating.

Visser, 22, won the 5,000 meters on Friday while Claudia Pechstein, 45, faded and fell short of a fourth gold over the distance.

Cross-country skiing: Switzerland’s Dario Cologna became the first cross-country skier to win three Olympic gold medals in the same event, capturing the 15-kilometer freestyle.

NBA roundup

Jokic, Nuggets defeat Bucks

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — There's something about playing in Milwaukee that brings out the best in Nikola Jokic.

Just over a year after recording the first triple-double of his career at the BMO Harris Bradley Center, Jokic wrapped up the feat in the first half on the same floor Thursday night.

Besides Jokic's big night, the Denver Nuggets put together one of the best three-point shooting nights in league history in a 134-123 win over the Bucks.

Denver matched a franchise record with 24 three-pointers, one shy of the NBA record, on 40 attempts.

"Each guy kind of had their own little stretch," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said.

Jokic finished with 30 points, 15 rebounds and a career-high 17 assists, reaching a triple-double with 1:54 remaining in the second quarter. That was the quickest triple-double in the NBA in the last 20 seasons, according to ESPN Stats & Info. He now has 11 career triple-doubles and five this season, four of which have come since Jan. 27.

Giannis Antetokounmpo also recorded a triple-double, finishing with 36 points, 11 rebounds and 13 assists for his ninth career triple-double, passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for most in Bucks history.

Timberwolves 119, Lakers 111: Taj Gibson scored a season-high 28 points and Jimmy Butler added 24, providing host Minnesota with the production and energy for a comeback victory over Los Angeles.

Jeff Teague had 20 points for the Timberwolves. They allied from a deficit as large as 15 points in the second quarter and 12 points late in the third to raise their home record to 24-7 on an emotional evening that started with a tribute to former coach and executive Flip Saunders.

Julius Randle had 23 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers.

Top 25 roundup

Houston snaps Cincinnati streak

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Corey Davis Jr. and Devin Davis each scored 16 points, and Houston beat No. 5 Cincinnati 67-62 on Thursday night to snap the nation's longest winning streak at 16 games.

Rob Gray chipped in 13 points and Armoni Brooks added 12 as the Cougars (20-5, 10-3 American) earned their second win this season over a top-10 team after beating then-No. 7 Wichita State on Jan. 20.

Houston last beat two top-10 teams in a season in 1984, when it did that four times en route to the national championship game.

Wisconsin 57, No. 6 Purdue 53: Ethan Happ had 21 points and 12 rebounds, and host Wisconsin secured its biggest win of a challenging season.

Brad Davison added 16 points for the Badgers (12-16, 5-10 Big Ten), who handed the Boiler-

makers (23-5, 12-3) their third straight loss.

Penn State 79, No. 8 Ohio State 56: Tony Carr scored 30 points and Penn State routed visiting No. 8 Ohio State 79-56 to sweep the Buckeyes.

C.J. Jackson led Ohio State (22-6, 13-2) with 13 points and Keita Bates-Diop added 10 for the Buckeyes, who had their four-game winning streak snapped.

No. 9 Gonzaga 76, Loyola Marymount 46: At Spokane, Wash., Corey Kispert led a balanced attack with 14 points and Gonzaga retained at least a share of first place in the West Coast Conference.

Johnathan Williams had 12 points and 13 rebounds, and Killian Tillie scored 12 points for Gonzaga (24-4, 14-1), which has won eight games in a row.

San Francisco 70, No. 15 St. Mary's 63: Frankie Ferrari made a key three-pointer

as part of a big run for host San Francisco late in the second half, and then added a clinching layup with 58.5 seconds remaining.

It was a bitter loss for the Gaels (24-4, 13-2), who lost their second straight and dropped a game behind No. 9 Gonzaga in the WCC. Saint Mary's back-to-back losses have come on the heels of a 19-game winning streak that was the longest in the nation.

No. 17 Arizona 77, Arizona State 70: Deandre Ayton had 25 points and 16 rebounds, and visiting Arizona held off Arizona State to sweep the season series.

No. 19 Wichita State 93, Temple 86: Shaquille Morris had 23 points and 13 rebounds, including a tie-breaking put-back in the final two minutes, to lead host Wichita State.

NHL roundup

Halak saves 50 to blank Rangers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The New York Islanders invariably raise their game against the Rangers. This time they kept that trend — and a winning streak — against their crosstown rivals going with a shutout.

Jaroslav Halak had a season-high 50 saves for his first shutout of the season in a 3-0 victory over the Rangers on Thursday night.

Halak was masterful as the Islanders beat the Rangers for the third time in three meetings this season, and 10th of the last 11.

Penguins 3, Kings 1: Zach Aston-Reese broke a third-period tie with a power-play goal an Pittsburgh earned its 10th straight home victory.

Golden Knights 4, Oilers 1: William Karlsson got the 100th

point of his career with his 30th goal of the season as host Vegas beat Edmonton for the first time in three meetings.

Devils 5, Hurricanes 2: Nico Hischier had a goal and two assists, and Stefan Noesen scored twice to help host New Jersey win its second straight after losing four in a row.

Lightning 4, Red Wings 1: Steven Stamkos scored twice, Nikita Kucherov had a goal and three assists, and host Tampa Bay beat Detroit for the 11th straight time.

Senators 3, Sabres 2 (OT): Mike Hoffman scored 1:13 into overtime to lift host Ottawa past Buffalo.

Capitals 5, Wild 2: Alex Ovechkin scored his league-leading 34th goal and had three assists, and Tom Wilson

scored twice to lead visiting Washington.

Flames 4, Predators 3: Matthew Tkachuk and Dougie Hamilton each had a goal and an assist to lead visiting Calgary over Nashville.

Ducks 3, Blackhawks 2: Ondrej Kase had a goal and two assists, Adam Henrique scored in the third period and Anaheim handed host Chicago its eighth straight loss.

Coyotes 5, Canadiens 2: Brendan Perlini scored twice in a 19-second span in the second period, and host Arizona won its third straight and fourth in the last five games.

Sharks 4, Canucks 1: Brent Burns and Chris Tierney each had a goal and an assist, and host San Jose won for the third time in four games.