

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Saturday, February 24, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Attacks kill more than 20 Afghan troops

From wire reports

KABUL, Afghanistan — More than 20 members of Afghan security forces were killed in a series of attacks by militants across the country Saturday in a sign of insurgents' mobility despite a surge of offensives by U.S. and Afghan troops in recent months.

In Kabul, a suicide bomber on foot detonated explosives attached to his body outside an intelligence agency office, near the headquarters of NATO-led troops, Afghan officials said.

Interior Ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said three Afghans were killed and six were wounded, but he did not identify the victims.

The death toll in Kabul could have been higher, but an official for the intelligence agency threw his arms around the bomber before he could reach an area farther up from the site

of the blast, where there was a larger group of officials and civilians, the Interior Ministry's chief spokesman told The Washington Post.

"He did an amazing job, sacrificed his life to save others by embracing the bomber before he could detonate the explosives," Najib Danesh said, adding that another intelligence official was also among those killed.

The Kabul explosion followed several other attacks over the preceding hours.

The bloodiest incident took place in Bala Boluk district of western Farah province where 18 troops were massacred overnight in their camps, said Defense Ministry spokesman Mohammad Radmanesh.

In addition, two suicide car bomb attacks targeted Afghan security forces on Saturday in two different parts of southern Helmand province, Afghan officials said.

Omar Zwak, spokesman for the provincial governor in Helmand, said a car bomber early Saturday was shot by Afghan army soldiers but his vehicle managed to reach the entrance of the army base in Nad Aali district, killing two soldiers and wounding another.

In a second suicide bombing attack near another military base in Helmand's capital city Lashkar Gah, one security person was killed and seven civilians wounded, Zwak said.

The Taliban militants claimed responsibility for all the attacks Saturday, except the one in Kabul. The Islamic State in a statement on its website claimed responsibility for that attack.

U.S. Gen. John Nicholson, commander of Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, said at a news conference he expected ISIS and the Taliban to continue such attacks.

"We will work hard with our

Afghan security counterparts and teammates to help protect the civilians of Afghanistan as much as possible," he said.

The resurgent Taliban and the newer ISIS affiliate have been blamed for increased violence in Afghanistan after U.S. and NATO forces concluded combat missions in 2014 that began after the 9/11 attacks in the U.S.

On Jan. 27, a Taliban attacker drove an ambulance filled with explosives into the heart of the city, killing at least 103 people and wounding as many as 235.

The Taliban claimed the ambulance attack, as well as an attack a week earlier in which militants stormed a luxury hotel in Kabul, killing 22 people, including 14 foreigners, and setting off a 13-hour battle with security forces.

The Washington Post and The Associated Press contributed to this report.

## If passed, law would equalize Reserve, Guard pay

Enid News & Eagle, Okla.

Deployed National Guardsmen and Reservists could achieve parity in pay and benefits with active-duty troops under bipartisan bills introduced in Congress last week.

The National Guard and Reserves Benefit Parity Act, "addresses early retirement eligibility, high-deployment allowance and pay for mobilized federal civilian employees," according to a press release from the National Guard Association of the United States.

Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., and Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., introduced the Senate version of the legislation, S. 2416. Rep. Steven Palazzo, R-Miss., and Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., introduced

the bill in the House, H.R. 5038.

"Equal work and sacrifice deserves equal pay and benefits," said NGAUS president, retired Brig. Gen. Roy Robinson. "We applaud the four sponsors for recognizing this and moving our force closer to a goal everyone should be able to support."

"Congress worked hard in the early years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to close the longstanding benefits gap between the active component and the Guard and Reserve," the news release stated. "The disparity, however, reopened after the creation of mobilization authority 12304b in 2012."

The new authority enabled the services to easily mobilize and deploy Guardsmen and Reserv-

ists for preplanned missions, but without education benefits, premobilization and transitional health care, credit toward early retirement and other benefits, the press release said.

Congress added education benefits and premobilization and transitional health care to 12304b last year. Palazzo and Walz were instrumental in the actions, Robinson said. The National Guard and Reserves Benefit Parity Act is the next step, he said, in closing the gap. It would:

- Reduce by three months the age at which a Guardsman or Reservist is eligible to receive military retirement pay for every 90 days mobilized under 12304b within a single

fiscal year.

- Provide Guardsmen and Reservists with a monthly allowance for each month during which they are deployed if they meet criteria already defined under other mobilization authorities.

- Protect federal civilian employees who are members of the Reserve or National Guard from a reduction in pay when activated by providing a "reservist differential" payment, which already exists under other mobilization authorities.

"And the timing couldn't be better as the Pentagon is increasing its use of 12304b to deploy the Guard and Reserve around the world," Robinson said.

# USAF in 'war for talent' to fill high-tech jobs

Dayton (Ohio) Daily News

The Air Force finds itself in a "war for talent," competing against "more nimble" private-tech companies to fill science and technology positions, a top civilian service leader said.

More streamlined hiring processes are necessary to compete to fill shortages or niche jobs requiring high expertise, said Shon J. Manasco, assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and reserve affairs.

A shortage of drone and manned aircraft pilots, cyber and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance airmen and other science and technology skills are high priorities among expectations to add 4,000 active-duty airmen by 2020, the Air Force says. At the same time, 500 would be added

to the Air National Guard and 200 to the Air Force Reserve.

Budget cuts have slashed positions before the latest push to reverse the decline. A recently reached two-year budget deal would push defense spending to \$700 billion this fiscal year, exceeding spending reductions, known as sequestration, imposed under the Budget Control Act of 2011.

"Sequestration definitely took a toll on all of the services, and even if you look at post-Desert Storm, the manning in our Air Force really went down dramatically," he said in an interview at Air Force Materiel Command headquarters at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. "We've been able to make some improvements over the last several years to

fill in critical vacancies that we have at the squadron level."

The Air Force will push production of pilots to 1,400 a year from 1,200 and has upped retention bonuses because of a shortage of nearly 2,000 pilots across the service branch.

"Importantly, with pilots, we have to continue to work on retention. But if we can produce more pilots, that will ease the tempo on our existing pilots," Manasco said.

In total, the active-duty Air Force will grow to 329,100; 107,100 in the Air Guard; and 70,000 in the Air Force Reserve by 2020. The civilian workforce would reach more than 184,000, Air Force figures show.

Manasco, who was appointed to the post in November, made his first trip to Wright-Pat-

terson this month to talk to some of the estimated 27,000 mostly civilian personnel at the sprawling base.

The "immersion" tour included stops at the Air Force Research Laboratory and the National Air and Space Intelligence Center.

"One of the things that was eye-opening for me was just the breadth of what we do here at Wright-Patt," said Manasco, a former corporate executive and Army veteran. "... I can't think of many things that happen in our Air Force today that in some way, shape or form, don't touch Wright-Patt or Wright-Patt has a big influence in what it is we do."

## Mattis forwards plan for transgender troops

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House has received a memo from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis making recommendations for dealing with transgender individuals serving in the military.

Trump gave Mattis six months to develop proposals for transgender individuals currently serving. Officials are not revealing Mattis' recommendations to the president. The Pentagon sent the memo to President Donald Trump by courier Friday. That from principal deputy press secretary Raj Shah.

Trump caught the Pentagon's leadership off guard in a 2017 tweet when he declared he would reverse an Obama-era plan to allow transgender individuals to serve openly in the military. But that pronouncement has been blocked by several legal challenges, and the Pentagon began allowing

transgender recruits to seek enlistment on Jan. 1. It's not clear if any have actually been approved for enlistment.

The Washington Post has reported that Mattis would recommend that transgender servicemembers be allowed to continue serving. The newspaper cited two U.S. officials with knowledge of the issue.

The Post reported that it was unclear whether Trump will adopt Mattis' recommendations, which the president requested in an Aug. 25 executive order.

Trump directed the military at the time to "return to the long-standing policy and practice on military service by transgender individuals that was in place prior to June 2016," but he left an opening under which Mattis could advise him in writing on changing Trump's new policy. The order gave Mattis until last Wednesday to establish a plan.

## Ex-Trump aide pleads guilty, to cooperate in Russia probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rick Gates' guilty plea to federal conspiracy and false-statements charges turns him from defendant to cooperating witness in the special counsel's probe of President Donald Trump's election campaign and Russia's interference.

The plea by Gates, a former senior adviser to President Donald Trump's election campaign, revealed he will help special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation in "any and all matters" as prosecutors continue to probe the 2016 campaign, Russian meddling and Gates' longtime business associate, one-time campaign chairman Paul Manafort.

With his cooperation, Gates gives Mueller a witness willing to provide information on Manafort's finances and political consulting work in Ukraine — and someone who had access at the highest levels of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

Gates, 45, of Richmond, Va., made the plea at the federal courthouse in Washington. He stood somberly beside his attorney and did not speak during his hearing, except to answer routine questions from the judge about whether he understood the rights he was giving up.

He admitted to charges of conspiring against the U.S. government related to fraud and unregistered foreign lobbying, as well as lying to federal authorities in a recent interview. Under the terms of the plea, he is estimated to face between 57 and 71 months behind bars and a possible fine ranging from \$20,000 to \$200,000. Prosecutors may seek a shortened sentence, depending on his cooperation.

The plea came a day after a federal grand jury in Virginia returned a 32-count indictment against Gates and Manafort, accusing them of tax evasion and bank fraud.

# Trump's gun control proposal meets Republican opposition

McClatchy Washington Bureau

OXON HILL, Md. — President Donald Trump's gun control proposal already is running into Republican resistance, as conservatives from across the country suggested in interviews Friday that they will not line up behind their leader on this issue.

Trump has outlined a wide-ranging series of proposals to combat gun violence in the wake of a massacre at a Florida high school that killed 17 people on Feb. 14. One measure: "raise age to 21," he tweeted last week. The idea of raising the age for buying certain weapons has support from a number of Republican lawmakers — most significantly, Florida Gov. Rick Scott, who on Friday proposed raising the minimum age for purchasing any firearm from 18 to 21.

But conservative officials and

activists are signaling significant discomfort with that idea, which is opposed by the powerful National Rifle Association.

"I don't know that there's going to be enough support in the House to get that passed," Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., who chairs the conservative House Freedom Caucus, told McClatchy. He didn't rule it out entirely, and added that lawmakers are looking at a "comprehensive" package.

In interviews, conservative sources repeatedly said that if a person is old enough to join the military at 18, he or she should also be considered old enough to purchase a semi-automatic weapon.

"If a man or woman can join the military at 18, we can trust them with that kind of service, should we be restricting their rights to own a weapon?" asked Dan Crenshaw, a former Navy

SEAL who is running in a contested Republican House primary in the Houston area. "Is it going to accomplish what we hope it will? I'm not so sure."

Added Chris McDaniel, a deeply conservative Mississippi state senator who is eyeing higher office: "Although I support President Trump, I respectfully disagree with him on this issue. If an individual is old enough to serve in the military, to fight and die for our country, then obviously his Second Amendment right to firearms should not be infringed."

Indeed, this is proving to be the rare issue where the president's strongest supporters are finding reason to differ with him — even as they take great pains to stress that the disagreement is with the policy, and that their overall support for Trump is undiminished.

## Caller told FBI suspect was 'going to explode'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A woman close to the man charged with killing 17 people at a Florida high school warned the FBI in chilling detail that he had a growing collection of guns and a temper so uncontrollable she worried about him "getting into a school and just shooting the place up."

The Associated Press on Friday obtained a transcript of the Jan. 5 tip to the FBI's call center. The FBI acknowledged it failed to investigate the tip about Nikolas Cruz, 19, but the transcript provides the fullest glimpse yet into the seriousness of the woman's concerns.

"I know he's going to explode," she told the call-taker.

The FBI briefed congressional staff Friday about its failure to act on the alarming tip, as well as why it did not delve into a September 2017 YouTube comment posted by a "Nikolas Cruz" that said, "Im going to be a professional school shooter." The FBI linked the January call to the report of the YouTube comment, but an FBI intake specialist and a supervisor at the call center took no further action, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley's office said Friday.

The tips were among a series of what authorities now describe as the clearest missed warning signs that Cruz, who had a history of disturbing behavior, posed a serious threat. The FBI declined to comment on the transcript, which was first reported by The Wall Street Journal.

Acting Deputy Director David Bowdich told reporters Thursday the bureau is still trying to determine exactly how the tip got botched.

## US visa boss defends mission statement change

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The head of the federal agency that grants citizenship and immigration benefits said Friday that he had a message for anyone who considers his new mission statement anti-immigrant: "A thousand times no."

Francis Cissna told The Associated Press that he cut reference to the U.S. being a "nation of immigrants" from the Citizenship and Immigration Services' mission statement because a "bureaucratic" document was the wrong platform to say so. He said the country is indisputably a nation of immigrants.

The agency's mission statement is "not something where you put eternal professions of American values. That sort of thing belongs chiseled in the wall of a monument, not in some bureaucratic mission statement," he said.

Cissna said he was surprised by criticism after announcing the change Thursday to his 18,000 employees. He said the White House had no involvement.

"This was all inside my head," he said.

Cissna, who became director Oct. 1 after 12 years in various positions at the parent Department of Homeland Security, said he proposed a complete rewrite of the mission statement with senior agency leaders and union officials at a meeting in mid-October. It was widely discussed in the agency over several months.

The old statement read, "USCIS secures America's promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship,

and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system."

Cissna said he "read it a bunch of times and it just didn't do it and I thought I would just start from scratch."

The new statement reads, "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services administers the nation's lawful immigration system, safeguarding its integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits while protecting Americans, securing the homeland, and honoring our values."

Annaluisa Padilla, president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, called the changes the "latest insidious attempt by the Trump administration to diminish the valuable contributions that immigrants have made to our nation, and our local communities will not turn Americans away from our most fundamental values."

# McCain's absence felt given big DOD budget

BY CHRISTIAN DAVENPORT  
*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., was his usual irascible self, frustrated with the nonanswers he was getting from the witness, whom he was increasingly treating as hostile.

Who, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee demanded, had been fired over the failure of the Future Combat System, a program that had gone so far off the rails that it was canceled after billions of dollars had been wasted on it?

"When I go to town hall meetings and tell my constituents that we lose \$6 billion and there's not been anyone fired or replaced or a new way of doing things, they're not really very happy," McCain said to Ellen Lord during a December hearing, shortly after she had been installed as the Pentagon's acquisition's chief. "So the next time you come before this committee — and you will — I want to know what you've done besides say, 'We don't know who's responsible.'"

Nobody does oversight of the Pentagon's budget like McCain. Nobody holds the brass accountable with the same vigor and, at times, vitriol. But now that President Donald Trump has proposed a massive Pentagon spending plan, a \$716 billion whopper that is a 13 percent increase over this year, McCain, 81, is sidelined by a deadly form of brain cancer. Although he is reportedly doing well and engaged with the daily events in Washington and the world, he has remained in Arizona since mid-December. And it's unclear when he'll return.

His absence comes as Congress is about to begin the arduous work of carving up the White House's proposed spending plan, and watchdogs and budget analysts wonder who will stand in for McCain, particularly when it comes to looking after the billions of dollars destined for a salivating contractor industry.

"You really can't overstate how influential Senator McCain has been on defense policy over the past couple of decades," said Todd Harrison, a senior fellow

at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "Quite frankly, there is no one who can easily step into his shoes and fill that role."

Many in Congress take their oversight role seriously. But few turn routine congressional hearings into ritualized grillings of some of Washington's most powerful, a rite of passage for procurement officials, generals and defense contractors, regardless of which party is in power. In addition to those public lashings, McCain also publishes a report titled "America's Most Wasted," which he says is designed to expose and shame "wasteful and outrageous government spending — all paid for by you, the American taxpayer."

**'You really can't overstate how influential Senator McCain has been on defense policy over the past couple of decades.'**

**Todd Harrison**  
Center for Strategic and International Studies

His reports have taken aim at programs big and small. There was the \$15,000 program from the Environmental Protection Agency "to study pollution from your backyard BBQ." The \$872,164 "to study how children cross the street." And the \$14 million for a "duplicative catfish inspection office."

But nothing gets McCain as fired up as when a big Pentagon item goes over budget, as they so often do.

He has called the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program "both a scandal and a tragedy" and "the poster child for acquisition malpractice." He said the Marine One presidential helicopter program "was an example of the procurement process gone amok." He blasted the Navy's Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier program as "one of the most spectacular acquisition debacles in recent memory."

Before his inauguration,

Trump, too, took aim at both the Air Force One and F-35 programs, threatening to cancel one and squeeze the other. But since his tweets sent shock waves through the defense industry, the president hasn't gone after particular programs. McCain, however, has remained dogged.

## Very much in charge

McCain did not respond to a request for comment. While he is treated in Arizona, his staff continues to stay busy, sending out news releases at a furious clip. McCain, friends and colleagues have said, remains active, tweeting recently about his concerns over the Ford-class aircraft carrier and praising the budget deal. On Tuesday, he wished a "Happy #Valentines-Day" to his wife.

Sen. James M. Inhofe, of Oklahoma, the No. 2 Republican on the Armed Services Committee, said that even though he has been running the meetings, McCain is still very much in charge.

"We're chairing the meetings consistent with what John feels we should be doing," Inhofe said during a C-Span interview last month. "He's calling the shots, and I'm showing up."

On the House side, the Armed Services Committee is run by Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, considered a thoughtful and diligent chairman who has led an effort to reform the government procurement process. But he is far more low-key than McCain.

McCain is "watching these hearings and sending in guidance," said retired Marine Maj. Gen. Arnold Punaro, who runs a defense consulting firm. "If anyone can beat the odds, it's him. ... You don't replace a John McCain. He is sui generis, one-of-a-kind unique."

But his absence on the Armed Services Committee is a concern for watchdog groups and a relief for those who fear his wrath.

McCain has been known to rip into generals and admirals, whose service and chest full of medals often earn them a pass in Congress. With his long military heritage, his reputation as scion

of war heroes and his storied tenure on the Hill, McCain's ire can have more firepower than the legions of inspector general and Government Accountability Office reports that flood the Capitol.

In a town where it's often said that power is the most lucrative currency, McCain offers something else: the ability to instill fear.

## Cowed by the military

Since so few members of Congress today have served in the military, they're unable or unwilling to challenge the institution, said Mark Thompson, a longtime Pentagon reporter now at the Project on Government Oversight. "These folks don't know the military and, more importantly, they are cowed by the military," he said. "They have a glint of guilt and tend to give the military what it wants without a hard scrubbing. The military knows this, and it's laughing all the way to the Treasury."

Sometimes, McCain's ire can turn to fury and he goes overboard, some defense and industry officials said, with critiques that can be unjustly harsh and punitive. "Many times, he gets it right and his criticisms are spot on," Harrison said. "But sometimes, he gets it wrong and is a bit unfair."

It's not just McCain's absence that is an impediment to congressional oversight but the fact that this is an election year in Congress, a distraction that "always leads to a stall in governing," said Mackenzie Eaglen, a defense analyst at the American Enterprise Institute. "Bills tend to stop moving by midsummer. August recess is elongated for campaigning. So difficult questions are always kicked to after the election."

She summed up the defense industry's response to the spending plan with one word: "thrilled."

Trump's budget is ripe for abuse, said Steve Ellis, a vice president at the advocacy group Taxpayers for Common Sense.

"Just shoveling cash into the Pentagon is recipe for waste going forward," he said.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Man gets 4 years for false distress call

**VA** NORFOLK — With his boat dead in the water, Justin Stahmer took to his radio in 2016 to broadcast a distress signal. But he didn't explain he was drunk and out of gas in the Chesapeake Bay. He didn't say much of anything. Just "man overboard," according to court documents.

In response, the Coast Guard sent a 45-foot rescue boat, an 87-foot cutter and a Sikorsky HH-60 helicopter into the dark of night to search for an endangered boater who never existed.

Stahmer, 39, of Newport News, was sentenced Tuesday to more than four years in federal prison. He also was ordered to pay \$56,704 in restitution.

A jury convicted Stahmer last year in U.S. District Court in Norfolk of making a false distress call and threatening a Coast Guardsman who came to help.

### Fake \$20 bill leads to seizure of \$2K in heroin

**SC** ROCK HILL — Authorities said a man's provision of a counterfeit \$20 bill to a friend for gas led to his arrest on heroin trafficking charges.

The Rock Hill Herald reported that a Rock Hill police report said a woman who tried to pay for gas with the bill early Tuesday told police that Christopher Matus, 33, had given her the bill.

Police searching Matus's jacket for more counterfeit money instead found a bag containing more than 15 grams of heroin, with an estimated street value of \$2,360. A search of the car revealed a suitcase belonging to the woman's brother, Joshua Hinson, 26.

That suitcase contained about .05 grams of black tar heroin and paraphernalia.

Matus was charged with trafficking heroin and Hinson was charged with possession.

### Sleepwalking student wanders into school

**PA** GREENSBURG — A Pennsylvania middle school canceled classes after a sleepwalking student was found inside the building.

State police said the seventh-grade student called 911 at about 2:30 a.m. Wednesday to report he was inside Wendover Middle School in Hempfield Township.

The student told authorities he had been sleepwalking and woke up inside the school. Police said the student entered the school through a window and wandered around for about 15 minutes.

The Hempfield Area School District canceled classes Wednesday due to security concerns, and police swept the building.

### Pedestrian yelled at, attacked with hatchet

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — Police in San Francisco said a 38-year-old man is in critical condition after being attacked with a hatchet.

San Francisco police said the man was walking home Tuesday in the Tenderloin neighborhood when the suspect yelled at him and attacked him with a hatchet.

Police did not release a motive in the attack. The Tenderloin neighborhood near San Francisco's City Hall has a large population of homeless and drug-addicted people.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported that the attack happened less than half a mile from UC Hastings School of Law.

Police said the suspect fled in an unknown direction and no arrests have been made.

Police did not identify the victim, who was transported to the hospital with life-threatening injuries.

### Man strips naked in stranger's house

**NY** LYONS — A western New York man is in jail after authorities say he stripped naked in a stranger's house and tried to bribe sheriff's deputies not to arrest him.

The Wayne County Sheriff's Office said Henry Mckenzie, 28, of Lyons, was charged with criminal trespass and bribery after he disrobed in a house in his hometown Tuesday evening. The sheriff's office said Mckenzie tried to bribe deputies with cash to let him go.

Authorities offered no explanation for Mckenzie's behavior.

After his arraignment in Galen Town Court, Mckenzie was jailed without bail because of previous felony convictions.

### Man fatally poisons self during freeway chase

**CA** VENTURA — Authorities said a rape suspect has died after poisoning himself during a freeway chase in Southern California.

The California Highway Patrol said the pursuit began Wednesday morning in Ventura County when officers tried to pull the man over and he sped away. Authorities did not immediately provide details about the alleged rape.

CHP Officer Kevin Denharder said the car drove onto the right shoulder of U.S. 101, drifted across all northbound lanes and then came to a stop after crashing into the center median.

Denharder said officers

found the man dead inside the car from an apparent self-inflicted poisoning. He was not identified.

### 5 more charged for bogus storm aid claims

**NJ** TRENTON — Five more New Jersey residents have been charged with filing fraudulent applications for Superstorm Sandy relief.

The new cases announced Friday by the state Attorney General's office brings the total number of people charged statewide to 109. Officials said all the false claims are responsible for diverting more than \$6 million in relief funds.

The five new defendants are all accused of falsely claiming in their grant and loan applications that their damaged shore homes were their primary residences. Each is charged with theft by deception, and three of them also face charges of unsworn falsification.

### Juvenile robber tries to flee on push scooter

**WY** CHEYENNE — A 14-year-old Wyoming boy is in custody after police responded to a call that someone was robbing a store at knifepoint and then fled on a push scooter.

Cheyenne Police Department spokesman Officer Kevin Malatesta said officers were called to a robbery in progress at about 11:20 a.m. Thursday.

KGAB-AM reported that the suspect was described as a person wearing a gorilla mask who displayed a knife.

Malatesta said officers arrested the suspect as he attempted to flee on the scooter.

Because the suspect is a juvenile, police aren't releasing his name. No one was hurt.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# US men capture curling gold

Associated Press

GANGNEUNG, South Korea — John Shuster's last throw in the eighth end of the Olympic curling final clacked off one Swedish stone and knocked it into another, sending them both skittering out of scoring range.

Five yellow-handled American rocks were left behind.

The score, known as a five-ender, is so rare it has only been topped once before in the history of the men's or women's Olympic final. And it effectively clinched gold for Shuster's erstwhile "rejects," who rallied from the brink of pool play elimination to claim only the second curling medal ever for the United States.

"It's hard to rationalize wanting to do it," vice-skip Tyler George said after the Americans beat favored Sweden 10-7 in nine ends in the gold medal match on Saturday. "But then days like this happen."

With the King of Sweden and Ivanka Trump looking on — and bolstered by social media messages from actor Mr. T., NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers and speedskater Dan Jansen — Shuster skipped the Americans from a 2-4 record at the start of pool play to five wins in a row, starting with a victory over

three-time defending Olympic champion Canada.

No U.S. curling team, men or women, had ever beaten Canada at the Winter Games.

Shuster's team did it again in the semifinals.

That set up a gold medal match with Sweden, the world championship runner-up and top winner in pool play, including a 10-4 victory over the Americans on Feb. 16.

After three back-and-forth ends in the final, the Swedes squandered a point in the fourth despite having the last-rock advantage known as the hammer. (The call was too close to be made with the naked eye; an umpire measured it with a gadget that goes to the millimeter.)

From there, Sweden was playing catch-up.

Tied 5-5 in the eighth, but with the Americans controlling the hammer, Sweden skip Niklas Edin failed on a double-takeout, clearing away just one of the two stones he was aiming for. That left Shuster with a relatively mundane shot for an almost unprecedented score. (Canada's six-ender in the 2006 men's final was the only other score of more than four in an Olympic gold medal match).

"During the entire end we could kind of feel it building.

Their margin for error got really small," Shuster said in the news conference with teammates Tyler George, Matt Hamilton, John Landsteiner and alternate Joe Polo. "I can't tell you how un-nervous I was sitting in the hack to throw it. Just let it go."

The Americans played defense in the ninth end to avoid giving up a big score. Sweden scored two, but with the hammer going to the United States for the 10th, a victory was out of reach.

On his second-to-last stone, Edin made a spin-o-rama out of the starting block, bringing laughter from the crowd.

Then he shook hands to concede the match.

"When I missed (in the eighth), we knew for sure he was going to make that double, and we knew we were going to lose," said Edin, who said he threw in the spin to lighten the mood so that perhaps he could "get a silver medal without throwing it into the sea."

"I don't know if I would use the word 'fun' in that situation," Edin said. "Instead of just shaking hands, it was one of those moves that you're trying to give the crowd, all the disappointment we felt, give them a little something back."

## Medals roundup

# Toutant goes high in Big Air

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Sebastien Toutant kept waiting for the pain in his back to ease. For three months leading up to the Olympics, it didn't.

Sure, the Canadian snowboarder could carve his way down the mountain with his friends. But he couldn't twist. He couldn't fly. And he certainly couldn't land. Those are three important elements when you earn a living flinging yourself 50 feet into the air.

Barely three weeks after the back felt good enough for him to return to competition, Toutant soared to gold in the Olympic debut of men's Big Air, hitting his first two jumps, then watching his total of 174.25 hold up as the big-name riders behind him came up just short.

Toutant, silver medalist Kyle Mack of the United States and bronze medalist Billy Morgan of Britain were the only riders in the 12-man final to post two jumps over 80 during 90 minutes of spins and spills.

**Snowboarding:** In the men's parallel giant slalom, Switzerland's Nevin Galmarini won the gold, beating South Korea's Sangho Lee to the line in the final. Slovenia's Zan Kosir won the race for bronze.

**Alpine skiing:** Switzerland knocked off top-seeded Austria in the gold-medal race during the debut of the Alpine team event.

Norway edged France for bronze as the Alpine ski program came to a close at the Pyeongchang Games.

**Speedskating:** In the last speedskating event at the Gangneung Oval, Lee Seung-hoon delivered the host nation's first gold medal.

Lee won the men's mass start, highlighting a strong showing for the South Korean team on the final night of competition.

# Ledecka pulls off unheard-of double

Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — When the book is closed on these Olympics — all Olympics, really — Ester Ledecka will have her own chapter.

Though they're both on snow, skiing and snowboarding are simply not supposed to mix.

Though she could have been expected to win at one, nobody was supposed to do what she did.

The Czech speed racer did what was considered impossible a mere week ago. She nabbed the second half of an unheard-of Olympic double by winning gold in snowboarding's paral-

lel giant slalom Saturday, only seven days after doing the same in skiing's Alpine super-G.

Both these sports have well-known stars that have shined brightly over the two weeks of action on the slopes in South Korea: Chloe Kim, Mikaela Shiffrin and Lindsey Vonn are just a few. None have changed the conversation about what the Olympics can be in quite the manner as this soft-spoken 22-year-old from Prague, who insisted on wearing her goggles to the winner's news conference.

"Do whatever you want," Ledecka said, when asked what the takeaway should be from her Olympic journey. "If you want

to choose just one, choose one. I wanted to choose both, and a lot of people were telling me that it's not possible to get on the top in both. And, I mean, obviously, this. It is not easy."

She made it look easy on the last day of competition at the action park.

She came into Saturday's event with 14 wins, 20 podiums and two world championships on the World Cup snowboarding tour. This was her day job. She made it look that way with a wire-to-wire exhibition of tight carving, perfect lines and pure domination. Nobody could've been too surprised.

# New allegations another blow to NCAA

Associated Press

The first blow to college basketball came in August, when a federal investigation revealed hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes and kickbacks being funneled to influence recruits.

The games went on under the dark cloud hanging over the sport, the season playing out while everyone wondered when the other sneaker would drop.

It did on Friday, when a Yahoo Sports report revealed documents from the federal probe showing more than two dozen players and their relatives received a wide range of impermissible benefits, from meals to five-figure payments.

This second black eye comes 16 days before the field of 68 is selected for the sport's marquee event, the NCAA Tournament.

"These allegations, if true, point to systematic failures that must be fixed and fixed now if we want college sports in America," NCAA President Mark Emmert said. "Simply put, people who engage in this kind of behavior have no place

in college sports. They are an affront to all those who play by the rules."

Now that the second blow has been struck, two questions arise: What can the NCAA do about it and do fans even care?

In August, the Department of Justice arrested 10 people, including assistant coaches from Arizona, Southern California, Auburn and Oklahoma State. The federal probe alleged bribes and kickbacks were used to influence star athletes' choice of schools, shoe sponsors, agents, tailors. Payments of up to \$150,000, supplied by Adidas, were promised to at least three top high school recruits to attend two schools sponsored by the shoe company, according to federal prosecutors.

The documents obtained by Yahoo include bank records and expense reports from former NBA agent Andy Miller and his agency, ASM Sports. Duke, North Carolina, Texas, Kentucky and Michigan State are among the schools involved.

The documents, obtained in discovery phase of the investi-

gation, also link current players including Michigan State's Miles Bridges, Duke's Wendell Carter and Alabama's Collin Sexton to potential benefits that would be violations of NCAA rules.

The NCAA was obviously outraged, but is in a difficult spot. The documents have not been made public and the organization can't exactly take action against schools or student-athletes based upon a report by a news agency.

Should the information be made public before or during the NCAA Tournament, the NCAA would be faced with potentially having to declare some of the nation's top players ineligible and impose sanctions on many of the game's most recognizable programs.

Long term, it could force the NCAA to take a much harder look at its amateurism rules. The organization has had many discussions about this very issue, but the magnitude of the latest allegations could spin the conversation forward much quicker.

"This problem can be solved if players are compensated," said Don Jackson, an Alabama-based attorney who has worked on numerous college eligibility cases. "The NCAA is not capable of adequately policing tens of thousands of athletes around the country."

The report has already sent ripples across the sport.

San Diego State provisionally suspended senior forward Malik Pope, the team's leading scorer and rebounder, while its compliance department investigates whether he received a \$1,400 loan from an agent.

Texas is withholding junior guard Eric Davis Jr. from competition until further notice after he allegedly received, according to the documents, a \$1,500 loan from ASM Sports associate Christian Dawkins.

"We can sit here and talk about it for days on end if we wanted to, all the things that have gone on in college basketball," current Tennessee and former Texas coach Rick Barnes said. "I'm not surprised by any of it."

## Top 25 roundup

# Ohio State edges Indiana in double OT

Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — Ohio State guard C.J. Jackson relied on sheer instincts Friday night.

Instead of going with the Buckeyes' designed final play, he changed it on the fly.

When Jackson finally got control of the pass in the closing seconds of double overtime, he faked another pass and spotted up for a 25-footer that silenced Indiana's crowd with 1.7 seconds left and gave No. 16 Ohio State an 80-78 victory.

"You dream of playing in buildings like this when you're younger and just to have one of these moments is unbelievable," Jackson said after scoring 13 points.

This wasn't just another win for the Buckeyes (24-7, 15-3 Big Ten), either.

They needed this one to have any hope of claiming a share of the conference crown in coach Chris Holtmann's first season. They still need No. 2 Michigan State to lose

Sunday at Wisconsin.

And on a night Ohio State dealt with foul trouble and fatigue, Jackson's brilliant switcheroo was exactly what Ohio State needed.

"We ran a similar action for Jae'Sean Tate at the end of the first OT or whatever it was, and we didn't execute that real well. The presence of mind to get the shot up," Holtmann said, shaking his head. "I think CJ may prefer to take a 25-footer rather than get it in a little deeper."

He didn't have much of a choice.

With both teams out of timeouts and Indiana clinging to a 78-77 lead after Juwan Morgan's layup with seven seconds to go, the Buckeyes pushed the ball up the floor.

But rather than look for the trailing Tate or star forward Keita Bates-Diop, Jackson did the natural thing.

"I just felt like I had the best look we were going to get with the time left," he said.

Bates-Diop had 24 points and tied his career-high with 14 rebounds. Tate finished with 12 points, five rebounds and six assists.

Indiana (16-14 9-9) was led by Juwan Morgan with 18 points and Johnson, who had 17 in what could be his final game at Assembly Hall.

**No. 18 Rhode Island 81, Dayton 56:** Jeff Downtin scored 20 points, E.C. Matthews added 18 and the host Rams wrapped up their first outright Atlantic-10 regular-season title with a victory over the Flyers.

Jared Terrell had 17 points to help Rhode Island (22-5, 15-1) win for the 18th time in 19 games. The Rams won their second straight after their school-record 16-game winning streak was halted by St. Bonaventure last Friday night.

In 1980-81, the Rams tied Duquesne for a share of the conference title, their only other regular-season A-10 championship.

## NHL roundup

# Pens' Kessel, Malkin lead rout of 'Canes

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Phil Kessel and Evgeni Malkin each had two goals and an assist and the Pittsburgh Penguins routed the Carolina Hurricanes 6-1 on Friday night for their season-best sixth straight victory.

Jake Guentzel had a goal and two assists, Sidney Crosby scored a late goal and Olli Maatta also scored. The Penguins took control with three goals — two by Kessel — in a 7:39 span in the second period.

Matt Murray made 27 saves for Pittsburgh, which has won 11 of 13 to overtake Washington for the Metropolitan Division lead. Since the Penguins were shut out by Carolina on Jan. 4, they are 16-3-1.

They were just as busy off the ice, completing a mid-game trade in which they picked up center Derick Brassard from the Ottawa Senators. As part of the complicated three-team deal, they sent defenseman Ian Cole to Ottawa and forward Ryan Reaves to the Vegas Golden Knights.

Teuvo Teravainen scored for the Hurricanes.

**Jets 4, Blues 0:** Connor Hellebuyck

made 34 saves for his sixth shutout of the season and Blake Wheeler and Kyle Connor each had a goal for visiting Winnipeg.

Hellebuyck has three shutouts in six career games against St. Louis.

Nic Petan and Patrik Laine also scored to help the Jets win for the fourth time in five games.

Jake Allen made 19 saves for the Blues. They are 0-4-1 in their last five.

**Blackhawks 3, Sharks 1:** Jean-Francois Berube made 42 saves in his first start for host Chicago.

Defenseman Jan Rutta, activated from injured reserve Friday, and Nick Schmaltz scored, and Artem Anisimov added an empty-netter with 30.5 seconds left.

The Blackhawks won their second straight and third in four games following an eight-game losing streak that dropped them to last place in the Central Division.

**Wild 4, Rangers 1:** Mikael Granlund and Eric Staal each scored twice and Devan Dubnyk made 22 saves in Minnesota's victory over host New York.

The Wild completed a three-game sweep

of New York-area teams after beating the Islanders on Monday night and New Jersey on Thursday night.

The Rangers lost for the sixth straight time in regulation. New York is 6-17-0 since beating Buffalo in the Winter Classic on Jan. 1.

Jesper Fast scored for New York.

**Golden Knights 6, Canucks 3:** William Karlsson scored two goals and Reilly Smith had three assists to lead Vegas to a victory over visiting Vancouver.

Tomas Hyka, Jonathan Marchessault, Tomas Nosek and David Perron also scored for the Golden Knights.

Vegas, which has won five of its past six games, improved to 16-2-1 against Pacific Division teams.

Vegas' Marc-Andre Fleury, who is four wins shy of becoming the 13th goalie in NHL history to register 400 career wins, stopped 30 shots.

Vancouver, which dropped to 3-7-1 in February, is 5-11-1 against intradivision foes.

## NBA roundup

# Rockets top T-wolves, win 11th straight

Associated Press

HOUSTON — James Harden scored 31 points and the Houston Rockets won their 11th straight game with a 120-102 victory Friday night over the Minnesota Timberwolves, who lost All-Star Jimmy Butler to a knee injury.

Butler left late in the third quarter. After grabbing a rebound, he pivoted and planted hard on his right foot before collapsing and grabbing his right knee. He was on the floor for at least three minutes before he was carried off the court by two teammates.

Coach Tom Thibodeau said Butler will have an MRI and be re-evaluated on Saturday.

**Pelicans 124, Heat 123 (OT):** Anthony Davis had 45 points, 17 rebounds, five blocked shots and five steals,

and host New Orleans earned its fourth consecutive victory.

Goran Dragic scored 30 points and Dwyane Wade hit two runners to give the Heat the lead twice in the last 36 seconds of overtime, but Davis responded to the first with a layup as he was fouled, and Jrue Holiday answered the second with a runner in the lane with 7 seconds left.

Wade had one last shot for the win with Holiday defending him closely. It bounced off the rim to Josh Richardson, whose rushed put-back missed the basket as time expired in Miami's third straight loss.

**Trail Blazers 100, Jazz 81:** CJ McCollum scored 26 points, Damian Lillard added 24 and visiting Portland snapped Utah's 11-game winning streak.

Donovan Mitchell scored 21

points for Utah, and Rudy Gobert had 15.

**Cavaliers 112, Grizzlies 89:** LeBron James had 18 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists in his 11th triple-double of the season, and visiting Cleveland pulled away after a slow start.

**Bucks 122, Raptors 119 (OT):** Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points and 12 rebounds, helping Milwaukee snap host Toronto's seven-game win streak.

**Clippers 128, Suns 117:** Super-sub Lou Williams had 35 points in 33 minutes, and visiting Los Angeles scored the first 19 points of the game while handing Phoenix its eighth loss in a row.

**Hornets 122, Wizards 105:** Kemba Walker scored 20 of his 24 points in the second half, leading Charlotte to the road win.

**Nuggets 122, Spurs 119:** Nikola Jokic had 28 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists for host Denver, and Wilson Chandler had 18 points and a season-high 16 rebounds.

**Celtics 110, Pistons 98:** Kyrie Irving scored 18 points and rookie Daniel Theis had a career-high 19 to lift visiting Boston to the win.

**Pacers 116, Hawks 93:** Thaddeus Young scored 16 of his 20 points in the first half, and host Indiana never trailed in a runaway victory.

**Lakers 124, Mavericks 102:** At Los Angeles, Julius Randle had 18 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists, and Lakers rookie Lonzo Ball made a triumphant return to the lineup.

Ball, who was sidelined for 15 games with a knee injury, had nine points, seven rebounds and six assists in 17 minutes.