

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Cost of border troops could total \$1B

*The Washington Post*

The cost of President Donald Trump's deployment of active-duty troops and National Guard forces to the U.S. border with Mexico could approach \$1 billion by the end of the fiscal year if the missions continue apace until then, according to figures the Department of Defense has released and independent assessments.

Trump said Tuesday during his State of the Union address that he had ordered a new infusion of 3,750 active-duty troops to the border to prepare for a "tremendous onslaught."

The president said Mexican cities, in order to remove Central American migrants in their communities, "are getting trucks and buses to bring them up to our country in areas where there is little border protection."

Mexican authorities recently expedited the journey of a caravan of Central American migrants headed toward the border crossing at Eagle Pass, Texas, using a fleet of buses. On Wednesday, the Pentagon said a small contingent of troops, including military police, medical personnel and engineers, would reposition to Eagle Pass to harden ports of entry.

According to the Pentagon, the addition-

al active-duty forces deployed to the border will conduct mobile surveillance for Customs and Border Protection and install razor wire.

The contingent brings the number of active-duty troops currently there to about 4,350, the Defense Department said, down from a high of about 5,900 after Trump ordered the deployment in late October.

An additional 2,200 or so National Guard forces remain there, stemming from orders Trump issued in April.

Taken together, the contingent of forces on the border numbers about 6,550, including active-duty and National Guard, according to official figures.

If the numbers hold roughly steady, estimates indicate that the cost of the National Guard and active-duty deployments together could reach about \$1 billion, measured from the time they started in April and October, respectively, through the end of the government's fiscal year on Sept. 30.

That estimate comes from combining figures the DOD has released and estimates from outside experts to fill in the gaps.

Vice Adm. Michael Gilday, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in testimony to the House Armed Services Committee on Jan. 29 that the National

Guard portion of the deployment is projected to cost \$550 million by the end of September.

The active-duty deployment, meanwhile, already cost \$132 million from its start in late October through the end of January, Gilday said. He said he couldn't give an estimate of the active-duty deployment's cost for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The cost of the active-duty deployment for the remainder of the fiscal year is difficult to estimate. Outside experts pegged it between \$316 million and \$460 million, though they cautioned that with unstable troop numbers and changing tasks, as well as a lack of full budget data from the Pentagon, the figures are hard to pinpoint with accuracy.

All told, the cost of the deployments would approach \$1 billion at the minimum estimate by the end of September, as long as the troop presence and activity level isn't altered significantly.

The possible \$1 billion price tag for the border deployment through the end of September is a small slice of the \$716 billion defense budget and a tiny expenditure compared with the amount of money the Pentagon has spent on other military missions.

## AFRICOM: Airstrikes will not be enough

BY JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. military's airstrike campaign in Somalia won't be enough to defeat Islamic militants in the country, where indigenous forces need to "step up" the fight, the commander for U.S. Africa Command said Thursday.

"At the end of the day, these strikes aren't going to defeat al-Shabab," AFRICOM's Gen. Thomas Waldhauser said during testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

AFRICOM has picked up the pace of its airstrikes in the country, going from 35 in 2017 to 47 last year. The strikes are "causing problems" for al-Shabab, but Somalia's own military needs to grow in size and ef-

fectiveness to counter the militant group, Waldhauser said.

Still, the Marine general conceded it was "an open question" about how much the strikes are deterring al-Shabab aggression.

While Somalia has been AFRICOM's main operational focus in recent years, the command also is turning its attention to Chinese and Russian involvement on the continent.

The United States is expected to scale back some of its counterterrorism programs in Africa, where the Pentagon plans to cut force levels by about 10 percent in the coming years. At the same time, the United States recently announced a shift in strategy in Africa that puts more focus on "great power competition in Africa and beyond."

Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., questioned

whether AFRICOM has sufficient resources to carry on a mission of countering terrorism and Beijing and Moscow's growing clout "with limited funds, equipment and people." One challenge is resources are getting diverted to the Indo-Pacific Command and European Command, where missions have grown, Reed said.

Waldhauser concurred his command was under-resourced, particularly in the area of intelligence and surveillance capabilities and medical evacuation assets.

In Africa, Russia has become more active as an arms supplier to various countries and provider of military training, all with an eye on getting involved in mineral extraction, Waldhauser said.

"They (Russia) want to have influence on the continent," he said.

# Senator Reed: No moves into Venezuela without Congress

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee warned Thursday that Congress must play a part in making any decisions that could lead to a U.S.-led military intervention to oust Venezuela's embattled leader, Nicolas Maduro.

"Congress must be consulted if there is any military action beyond the current planning for the evacuation of U.S. citizens and embassy personnel," Sen. Jack Reed, R.I., said during a hearing on U.S. military efforts in South America and Africa. "I know the events on the ground are changing day by day and it is impossible to tell what event or set of events will trigger Maduro's departure."

President Donald Trump said

in recent days that all options, including a military intervention, remained under consideration.

Last month, Trump announced the United States would recognize opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's interim president, charging Maduro's election win last year was illegitimate, a stance that is now backed by some 30 other nations.

However, other world powers including Russia and China have backed Maduro and warned the United States against meddling in Venezuela.

"The situation in Venezuela is dire," Navy Adm. Craig Faller, the chief of U.S. Southern Command, said Thursday while testifying before the Senate panel alongside Marine Gen. Thomas Walhauser, the chief of U.S. Africa Command. "While Russia, Cuba and China prop up the

Maduro dictatorship, the remainder of the world is united."

Maduro has surrounded himself with a large contingent of Cuban security forces, Faller said, likening their role to that of the U.S. Secret Service. That move, coupled with reports that Russia has sent mercenaries to back Maduro, show he has little trust for his own guards, despite his retention of power over the nation's military.

Pentagon officials have said in recent days that they had not received orders to plan for an invasion of Venezuela.

Faller said Thursday that the U.S. military in the region was prepared to execute defensive operations if American diplomats faced violence in Venezuela. He stopped short of addressing the potential of an armed intervention or invasion.

## USAF general apologizes for uniform gaffe

By LEON COOK  
*Stars and Stripes*

Four-star Air Force Gen. Joseph Lengyel took to social media to apologize for a uniform gaffe committed while attending President Donald Trump's annual address before Congress on Tuesday night.

"A not-so-funny thing happened on the way to the State of the Union last night," Lengyel, who serves as chief of the National Guard Bureau, wrote Wednesday on his official Facebook page. "If you look closely, you'll see that the ribbons on my uniform jacket are upside down."

The mistake, in which Lengyel wore his highest precedence awards on the bottom row instead of the top, had already been spotted by eagle-eyed viewers after he was briefly shown during the televised address.

"I missed it ... plain and simple," he said in his Facebook post. "I hope this is a lesson for everyone who wears the uniform, and really for anyone. They put erasers on pencils for a reason. When you make a mistake or miss a detail, own it and move on."

Comments on Facebook and a similar Twitter post were supportive of his admission.

"No one understands Air Force uniforms anyhow. I think you are safe," wrote MMA fighter Tim Kennedy, a former Army Ranger.

Another commenter suggested Lengyel could use the character Maverick's "because I was inverted" line from the 1986 blockbuster film "Top Gun" as an excuse.

"One thing is for sure ... My ribbons will NEVER be upside down again," Lengyel said on Facebook.

Lengyel is the 28th chief of the National Guard Bureau, a post he's held since 2016. He was commissioned in 1981 through the Reserve Officer's Training Corps and has more than 3,000 flight hours, mostly in the F-16 fighter.

## Germany: No choice but to reject extradition

*Associated Press*

BERLIN — An American request for the extradition of a Turkish man wanted in the United States on terrorism charges was rejected because there was no other option under German law, authorities said Thursday, in a case that has raised the ire of officials in Washington.

Adem Yilmaz, who was indicted under seal in the U.S. in 2015 on charges of participating nearly 10 years earlier in attacks on U.S. military forces along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, was convicted of membership in a terrorist organization in Germany in 2010.

To extradite him to face trial in the U.S. on terrorism charges would constitute double jeopardy under German law, Frankfurt state court spokeswoman

Gundula Fehns-Boeer told The Associated Press.

"An extradition could have only occurred if the Americans said they would restrict the charges to crimes not already punished," she said.

After the Frankfurt court's decision on the American request last week, Hesse state officials on Tuesday deported Yilmaz to his native Turkey, said state Interior Ministry spokesman Marcus Gerngross.

Gerngross said there was "nothing unusual" about deporting a foreign national who had violated German laws, but the decision angered American officials.

American officials filed additional assurances on Monday, attempting to address the Frankfurt court's decision, but the deportation was carried out before those arguments could be considered.

After learning of the deportation, Deputy U.S. Secretary of State John Sullivan called a meeting with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, who was in Washington to take part in meetings of the coalition fighting against Islamic State, to express American displeasure.

In addition to the allegations of participating in attacks on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, Yilmaz was charged with giving advice and instructions on military-type training to a man involved in a 2008 suicide bombing in Afghanistan that killed two American soldiers and injured at least 11 others.

It was not immediately clear whether he would face charges in Turkey, but he will be questioned by prosecutors, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly on security issues.



# House to act on academy sex assaults

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A House committee will take a closer look at the “tremendous problem” of sexual assault in the military following a damning report on the service academies, the chairwoman of a House subpanel said Thursday.

The comments, which were part of a House Appropriations Committee subpanel hearing on the quality of life in the military, highlighted recent Defense Department findings that reports of sexual assaults at academies have risen dramatically.

The subpanel’s new chair-

woman told the panel of military leaders that the findings painted a “devastating portrait.”

“Sexual assault in the military continues to be a ... really tremendous problem,” said Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., chairwoman of the subpanel on military construction, veterans’ issues and other related concerns. “In all branches of the services, it begins, it seems, right from the academies.”

Claims of sexual assaults at U.S. military service academies have increased by nearly 50 percent since 2016, according to survey results released last week. The Defense Department’s “Annual Report on Sex-

ual Harassment and Violence at the Service Academies” included an anonymous survey of servicemembers that found 50 percent of women and 16 percent of men said they had experienced sexual harassment.

“If there’s one thing I could rid from our Army tomorrow morning, this would be it. ... That’s the way we’ve got to come to work every day,” said Army Sgt. Maj. Daniel Dailey. “The information we received on the academies is disheartening. That’s the future of our Army’s officer corps and we’ve got to do a better job of getting after it. And we’ve got to do a better job of changing the culture of the

individuals who come there.”

The exchange was part of a wide-ranging discussion on challenges facing military personnel, such as lawmaker concerns that military leaders must improve oversight of private housing plagued with dilapidated conditions.

Wasserman Schultz said her committee would closely monitor oversight of sexual assault concerns. Congressional lawmakers issue required recommendations for their constituents to attend the Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.; the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.; and the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo.

## New Army Stryker simulators use Xbox parts to train troops

BY MARTIN EGNASH  
*Stars and Stripes*

VILSECK, Germany — The Army’s newest armored vehicle training tool in Germany is outfitted with Xbox controllers, luxury gaming chairs and gas pedals used for racing games.

This week, the Army finished building a virtual Stryker armored vehicle trainer at Rose Barracks to help soldiers of the Army’s 2nd Cavalry Regiment familiarize themselves with Stryker tactics without having to go into the field with the real things. The Stryker Virtual Collective Trainer, as it’s called, simulates several of the vehicles on shared missions.

“The trainers allow soldiers to work together in a virtual battlefield and get comfortable with their tactics and techniques in a safe and cost-effective place,” said Joe Mercer, an Army tactical gaming spokesman.

The Combined Arms Center-Training Innovation Facility at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., originally developed the simulator after a 2013 request for a Stryker trainer that cost less than systems used to train the crews of Abrams tanks or Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

The setup, made of wood, re-

sembles the shells of six Stryker vehicles — the typical number of vehicles in a platoon — and is decked out with many video gaming extras. Each unit has computer screens all around it, so when a soldier looks out a window or pops their head through the gunner’s turret, they see the battlefield the same as they would in a vehicle.

The Stryker simulators used commercial products in place of specially developed equipment to save money, Army officials said. But soldiers using the simulators will notice some authentic military gear as well.

For instance, the gunner’s seat comes from an actual Stryker, complete with a Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station joystick to fire a virtual .50-caliber machine gun, or in some cases virtual 30 mm autocannons. The Europe-based 2nd Cavalry Stryker unit became the only one outfitted with those guns last year.

Up to a platoon of soldiers using the system will be able to fight together on virtual battlefields based on real-world locations the unit routinely visits.

In the future, the Army plans to have soldiers using these simulators training together around the world.

## Lawmakers hit VA with transparency concerns

BY NIKKI WENTLING  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The ongoing fight between members of Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs continued Wednesday when 12 senators criticized the agency for failing to give them even basic information while VA officials declared they were “providing unprecedented transparency.”

The 12 senators — 11 Democrats and one Independent — sent 24 questions to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie about his proposed rules stipulating when veterans will be allowed to receive private sector medical treatment — changes that he said would revolutionize the VA health care system. The senators complained that Wilkie released the rules last week “before engaging in meaningful consultation with Congress” and veterans organizations.

Under the VA’s draft rules, veterans who must drive more than 30 minutes to reach their VA mental health or primary care providers — or wait longer than 20 days for an appointment — would be allowed to use a private doctor.

“Once briefed, we were disappointed that VA couldn’t pro-

vide basic information on how the proposed wait- and drive-time standards would affect the department, the veterans who rely on it for care, and the American taxpayer,” the senators wrote.

They asked Wilkie for his reasoning behind the rules, including the data that he used and any input from private entities. They also wanted to know cost estimates and budget plans, as well as how many more veterans would be eligible to receive private sector care under the new rules and whether the VA would need to hire more staff to schedule appointments with private doctors.

On Monday, Republican and Democratic leaders of the veterans affairs and appropriations committees sent an initial letter to Wilkie urging a more collaborative relationship.

In its statement Wednesday, the VA listed the number of congressional hearings, roundtables and briefings it participated in during fiscal year 2018. The agency conducted 1,302 congressional briefings, according to the statement. But lawmakers have criticized the lack of substance at those briefings.

# Some federal workers still feeling shutdown

Associated Press

Nearly two weeks after the end of the longest government shutdown in U.S. history, many federal workers are still reeling financially and waiting to be made whole by government agencies that have struggled with payroll glitches and delays in ensuring everyone gets paid.

Thousands have not yet received full back pay while scrambling to catch up on unpaid bills and repay unemployment benefits — all while another government shutdown looms next week.

“President (Donald) Trump stood in the Rose Garden at the end of the shutdown and said, ‘We will make sure that you guys are paid immediately.’ ... And here it is, it’s almost two weeks later,” said Michael Walter, who works for the U.S. Department of Agriculture food safety inspection service in Johnstown, Pa., and got his paycheck Wednesday. He said two co-workers told him they still had received nothing.

The government has been short on details about how many people are still waiting to be paid.

Bradley Bishop, a spokesman for the Of-

fice of Management and Budget, said the Trump administration had taken “unprecedented steps to ensure federal employees impacted by the shutdown received back pay within a week.”

“Much opposite of ‘slow and chaotic,’ an overwhelming majority of employees received their pay by Jan. 31,” he said, though he didn’t respond to questions about how many people still hadn’t been paid.

The USDA said in a statement that pay was its top priority but also did not respond to questions about how many workers were still awaiting paychecks.

# Russian diplomat: 2nd nuclear pact in danger

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Another U.S.-Russian nuclear pact is in danger following the U.S. move to withdraw from a Cold War-era arms control treaty, a senior Russian diplomat said Thursday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov charged that the U.S. refusal to negotiate an extension to the New Start treaty signals Washington’s intention to let it expire in 2021.

He warned that time is running out to save the pact, which was signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

Ryabkov said the U.S. has shown “no

readiness or desire” to engage in substantive talks on extending the pact, which limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers.

He noted that the U.S. said it has converted 56 Trident submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missiles and 41 B-52H strategic bombers that carried nuclear weapons for use with conventional weapons but has stonewalled Russia’s repeated requests for a verifiable way to exclude their conversion back to nuclear status.

“In the worst-case scenario, they may carry 1,286 nuclear warheads,” he said, meaning that the U.S. could nearly double the number of deployed warheads allowed

by the New Start treaty.

He said “that there is almost no time left” to discuss that and other issues for the treaty to be extended by another five years as envisaged during the signing.

“It gives reason to suspect our American counterparts of setting ground to avoid those discussions ... and just let the treaty quietly expire,” Ryabkov said.

Ryabkov also said Russia stands ready for talks on a possible successor to the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty.

“We are ready for dialogue,” Ryabkov said.

“If the U.S. is interested, it should spell out its proposal.”

# POW’s son building memorial to hospital on Bataan

BY SETH ROBSON  
Stars and Stripes

The son of a former American prisoner of war is building a memorial on the site of a hospital that treated U.S. and Filipino troops during World War II in the Philippines.

Bob Hudson’s late father, Richard Hudson, was among tens of thousands forced to march nearly 70 miles to Japanese prisoner-of-war camps after the Bataan Peninsula fell on April 9, 1942. The younger Hudson has been maintaining concrete markers along the Bataan Death March trail with his wife, Rosalie, since 2012.

In 2014, searchers identified the site, on a road to Mariveles, of the Army hospital where troops were treated during the Battle of Bataan. They made the identification after talking to locals and comparing surviving foundations with wartime sketches

showing the layout of the facility, Hudson said.

“During the siege of the peninsula its defenders ran low on food, ammunition and medicine, and many were struck down with dysentery and malaria,” he said. “There were thousands being treated and they ran out of medicine.”

A search of the old hospital site with a metal detector turned up a dog tag belonging to Pvt. Edward McCain, who reportedly died there in June 1942 after the fall of Bataan, he said.

Japanese troops kicked over and scattered crosses in a graveyard beside the hospital after they captured it, but there must have been a clue to McCain’s identity because his name is inscribed on a marble cross in Manila American Cemetery, he said.

“Most of those who were buried at the hospital were exhumed and reburied as unknowns in Manila,” Hudson said.

Work on the hospital memorial, which needs final approval from local authorities, could begin as soon as next week.

The memorial is being paid for with a grant of \$7,600 in proceeds from an annual march by thousands of Filipino civilians, troops and American veterans’ families, Hudson said.

The memorial will be more than 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide and inscribed in honor of the doctors, nurses and medics who worked at the hospital and the troops who they cared for, he said.

It’s hoped that it will be ready in time for this year’s march, which is scheduled for March 2-3 ahead of the commemoration of Philippine Veterans Week, according to the event’s official website.

This year’s march will include a “Ride for Valor” on bicycles along the trail on March 10 and a bus tour March 1-3, the website states.



## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Woman finds man in closet in her clothes

**NC** GREENSBORO — A college student said she found a man in her closet wearing her clothes.

The University of North Carolina Greensboro student heard strange noises coming from her closet in her off-campus apartment on Saturday. The student told WFMY-TV she asked who was in there and was told, "My name's Drew."

The student, who asked to be identified only as Maddie, opened the door to find the man sitting on the floor in her clothing with a bag full of clothes, shoes and socks. She talked to him for about 10 minutes and texted photos to her boyfriend. The man left when the boyfriend arrived.

Police arrested Andrew Clyde Swofford, 30, at a nearby gas station. He was charged with misdemeanor breaking and entering.

### Priest found hiding outside woman's home

**MO** RICHMOND HEIGHTS — A priest at a St. Louis County Catholic school was charged with stalking after police said he was found hiding in the bushes outside a female co-worker's home.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that Michael McCusker, 36, was arrested the night of Feb. 1 after a woman reported a man looking through her windows in Richmond Heights.

Officers learned that McCusker is a priest and teacher at St. Louis Priory School in Creve Coeur. He goes by his religious name, the Rev. John McCusker.

Besides the second-degree stalking charge, McCusker also was charged with resisting arrest.

### Homeless woman's blankets set on fire

**KS** PITTSBURG — Pittsburgh police said a man is being held on \$100,000 bond after he allegedly set a homeless woman's blankets on fire while she slept.

Police said in a news release that the woman, Chrystal Thompson, originally thought a hand-warming device accidentally set her blankets on fire the night of Jan. 31 while she slept in the alcove of a business.

The Pittsburgh Morning Sun reported that the business owner told police on Feb. 1 that surveillance video showed a man intentionally setting Thompson's blankets on fire and walking away. The blankets burned briefly before the fire went out.

The suspect, Richard Lee Dickerson, 60, of Pittsburgh, was arrested Saturday.

### Runner fights off, kills attacking mountain lion

**CO** FORT COLLINS — A man is recovering after he fought off and killed a mountain lion that attacked him during a trail run in northern Colorado.

Rebecca Ferrell, a spokeswoman for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, told the Fort Collins Coloradoan that the man was running alone at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space near Fort Collins when he was attacked from behind Monday. The runner, whose name has not been released, fought off the cougar, hiked out of the area and drove himself to a hospital.

He suffered facial cuts, wrist injuries and puncture wounds to his arms, legs and back.

Wildlife officers searching the trail found the juvenile mountain lion's body near several of the runner's possessions.

### Man throws cigarette receptacle at firetruck

**TN** KNOXVILLE — Police said a Tennessee man threw a container for disposing of cigarette butts at a firetruck, disabling the vehicle while it was responding to an emergency call.

Knoxville police said they arrested Jeremy Wynn, 42, on Sunday on charges of vandalism, reckless endangerment and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Police said that early Sunday, Wynn took the cigarette butt receptacle and tossed it in the front of the Knoxville Fire Department firetruck while it had its lights and siren on.

The container got lodged between the front axle and tie rod of the truck, disabling it.

Police said Wynn fled on foot, but firefighters chased and caught him at a hotel.

### Wig helps deputies catch armed robber

**FL** FORT MYERS — Detectives in southwest Florida said a telltale wig helped them catch an armed robber.

Lee County Sheriff's Office deputies said that after a convenience store in Fort Myers was robbed Saturday a cashier gave them a description of a pistol-wielding robber who was wearing a wig and a gray hoodie.

Witnesses led deputies to an apartment complex, where officers said they found a suspect who matched the description given by the cashier.

Deputies said when they searched the apartment after obtaining a warrant, they found a gray-hooded sweater, several wigs and a large amount of wadded-up cash in an open dresser drawer.

The suspect, David Rodriguez, faces a robbery charge.

### Woman breaking up 'dog fight' grabs cougar

**ID** MACKAY — Idaho wildlife officials said a woman who thought she was breaking up a dog fight quickly realized she'd grabbed hold of a young mountain lion.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game wrote in a prepared statement Monday that the woman thought her dog was fighting with another dog outside their home in Mackay on Jan. 30 when she started pulling the animals apart.

She managed to restrain both the 35-pound male cougar and her dog while she yelled for her husband, who was still inside, to come out with his gun. He arrived and shot the wild animal while she held on to it.

Wildlife authorities have taken the carcass for testing at the Wildlife Health and Forensic Laboratory to determine if the animal was diseased.

### Crew survives shrimp trawler wreck off coast

**NC** FRISCO — Three crew members of a shrimp trawler that wrecked off the coast of North Carolina have been found alive.

Citing a National Park Service news release, news outlets reported that the vessel, Big John, was found overturned and broken apart Monday. Rangers assisted the U.S. Coast Guard and Hatteras Island Rescue Squad in the search. The three-person crew was found and taken by ambulance to the hospital for medical evaluation. Their current conditions are unknown. It's still unclear how the boat wrecked.

The large debris field resulted in the temporary closure of the beach between off-road vehicle ramps 48 and 49 at Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# SEC lands bulk of gridiron talent

Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Leave it to the Southeastern Conference to provide some drama on signing day that otherwise seemed anticlimactic.

Even though the vast majority of recruits already had finalized their college decisions in the December signing period, the traditional February signing date still provided a few surprises as players SEC teams were targeting backed out of longstanding verbal commitments.

Wide receiver George Pickens, the nation's No. 24 overall prospect according to composite rankings of recruiting sites compiled by 247Sports, flipped his commitment from Auburn to Georgia. Alabama lost a couple of top-200 verbal commitments when defensive end Khristian Bogle (No. 71) chose Florida and cornerback Christian Williams (No. 160) signed with Miami.

Alabama still topped the 247Sports Composite team recruiting rankings for the eighth time in the last nine years, thanks mainly to the wealth of heralded prospects it signed in December. Alabama enhanced its class Wednesday by signing defensive tackles Ishmael Sopsheer (No. 47) and Byron Young (No. 77) and running back Keilan Robinson (No. 244).

The SEC had four of the top five teams in the 247Sports Composite rankings as of early Wednesday evening. Georgia was second, Texas A&M fourth and LSU fifth. Also in the top 15 were Florida at No. 9 and Tennessee at No. 12.

Ole Miss had one of the day's biggest victories when it beat out Clemson and Alabama for running back Jerrion Ealy, rated 29th in the 247Sports Composite.

Tennessee landed the nation's top remaining unsigned prospect when it added offensive tackle Darnell Wright, who was 10th overall in the 247Sports Composite.

## Big Ten

Michigan finished the football recruiting cycle with the top class in the conference, and four other conference programs were ranked in the top 25 in the nation.

Wolverines coach Jim Harbaugh added one player on the second letter-of-intent signing day to a 26-man class that was No. 1 in the Big Ten and No. 8 nationally, according to the 247Sports.com composite rankings. It was Michigan's first top ranking in the Big Ten since 2007.

Penn State coach James Franklin assembled a 23-man class made up of players from 11 states, including three from Florida and one from Oregon. The Nittany Lions were ranked No. 2 in the conference and No. 13 nationally.

Ohio State, which had been No. 1 in Big Ten recruiting eight years in a row and in 10 of the last 11, slipped to No. 3 during the coaching transition from Urban Meyer to Ryan Day. The Buckeyes' No. 14 national ranking was their lowest since 2010 and ended a streak of eight straight classes ranked seventh or higher. The drop is partly attributable to the 17-man class being Ohio State's smallest since 2007.

## Big 12

Oklahoma and Texas each had only one spot to fill in their top-10 recruiting classes. The four Big 12 schools with new coaches were a bit busier.

New Kansas coach Les Miles added nine players in the second signing period, including running back and former Michigan commitment Amauri Pesek-Hickson, for an initial Jayhawks class of 19 signees.

Kansas State coach Chris Klieman, who didn't start full time with the Wildcats until after North Dakota State's latest FCS national championship in early January, got their class to 23 with seven more players.

Matt Wells also added seven more signees at Texas Tech, after 11 before Christmas soon after he left Utah State for the Big 12.

New West Virginia coach Neal Brown signed three defensive players, even as the former Troy coach is still in the process of delegating recruiting responsibilities for his staff.

While highly touted receiver Bru McCoy wasn't part of the initial Texas signees in December, he is one of 10

early enrollees who will take part in spring practice with the Longhorns after he transferred from Southern California.

## ACC

Clemson just keeps on winning — on the football field, and in recruiting.

Less than a month after the Tigers won their second national championship in three years, they polished off the best class in the Atlantic Coast Conference, the first day of the traditional signing period.

The Tigers' class grew to 29 players with the addition of two players — including in-state three-star running back Michel Dukes — but they missed out on five-star running back Ealy, who donned a Mississippi cap during his nationally televised signing ceremony and picked his home state school.

Even without him, they did plenty to remain ranked first in the ACC and in the top 10 nationally by 247Sports.com and Rivals.com.

Miami signed a punter who immediately became a social media sensation. He's a 25-year-old native Australian who's 6-foot-4, 215 pounds and covered in tattoos. Louis Hedley worked as a scaffolder in his home country, according to The Miami Herald, and he played Australian rules football there before giving the American version of the sport a try.

## Pac-12

The traditional signing day merely padded Oregon's already stellar recruiting class, the best in school history.

The major ranking services all had Oregon's class in the top 10 nationally, which also put the Ducks atop the Pac-12 Conference.

Oregon got commitments from 21 prospects when the early signing period opened in December. Among them was five-star defensive end Kayvon Thibodeaux, who was ESPN's top overall prospect and the highest-ranked signee ever for the school.

Washington capped its recruiting class by landing two of the top defensive players on the West Coast. The Huskies signed safety Asa Turner out of Carlsbad, Calif., and linebacker Daniel Heimuli from East Palo Alto, Calif.

## NHL roundup

# DeAngelo's goal lifts Rangers in shootout

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Successful in his only previous shootout attempt, Tony DeAngelo tried the same approach. And he got the same result.

DeAngelo scored the decisive goal in the seventh round of the shootout and the New York Rangers rallied from two goals down in the third period to beat the Boston Bruins 4-3 on Wednesday night.

"I kind of did the same move as last time," said DeAngelo, who beat Jaroslav Halak with a forehand into the top right corner. "To come back, pick up two points coming back down two in the third is a big win."

Mika Zibanejad, Kevin Hayes and Filip Chytil scored for New York and Alexandar Georgiev finished with 27 saves. The Rangers won for the second time in five games (2-2-1) after a stretch in which they won four of five.

"We gave them too many opportunities in the second period," New York coach David Quinn said. "We talked about we just go to move past that, we can't let that bad second period get in the way of the third period. ... We did a pretty good job in the third."

Danton Heinen, David Pastrnak and Patrice Bergeron scored for Boston, Brad Marchand had two assists, and Halak stopped 36 shots. The Bruins, who squandered a 3-1 lead in the second, had a two-game winning streak end, but earned a point for the fifth straight game (2-0-3).

**Maple Leafs 5, Senators 4:** Morgan Rielly broke a tie midway through the third period and Toronto won at Ottawa.

Rielly started a rush after an Ottawa turnover, passed to Zach Hyman, and took Hyman's backhand pass alone in front of the goal for his 14th of the season.



## College basketball roundup

# No. 14 Villanova still unbeaten in Big East

*The Associated Press*

VILLANOVA, Pa. — After losing four top players to the NBA, this was supposed to be something close to a rebuilding season for Villanova.

There's no such thing for coach Jay Wright and the Wildcats.

Freshman forward Saddiq Bey scored a career-high 17 points, senior guard Phil Booth hit key baskets down the stretch and No. 14 Villanova remained perfect in Big East play by beating Creighton 66-59 in overtime Wednesday night.

Booth finished with 14 points and eight rebounds while Eric Paschall scored 15 and Collin

Gillespie had 13 for the Wildcats (19-4, 10-0), who have won their first 10 Big East games for the first time in program history. Their previous best start in league play came in 2009-10 when they opened 9-0.

"On nights when you're not at your best and you can still find a way," Wright said, "that's a good team."

The defending national champions also became the first Big East team to start 10-0 in conference games since UConn won its first 11 on the way to the 1999 national title.

**No. 6 Nevada 98, Colorado State 82:** Jordan Caroline scored 30 of his season-high 40 points in the first half and the

visiting Wolpack beat the Rams for their eighth straight win.

**No. 19 Wisconsin 56, Minnesota 51:** Ethan Happ had 15 points and 13 rebounds to help the Badgers avenge a loss to the host Gophers with their sixth straight win.

**No. 21 LSU 92, Mississippi State 88 (OT):** Freshman forward Naz Reid tied a career high with 29 points, including a three-pointer with 15 seconds left, to lift the visiting Tigers in overtime.

**No. 24 Maryland 60, Nebraska 45:** Jalen Smith had 18 points and 11 rebounds as the visiting Terrains beat the fading Cornhuskers.

**Air Force 81, Wyoming 76:**

Lavelle Scottie scored a career-high 34 points and grabbed seven rebounds as the host Falcons snapped a two-game skid.

**Holy Cross 56, Army 42:** Jacob Grandison and Austin Butler each scored 14 points and the host Crusaders limited the Black Knights to just 14 field goals en route to a Patriot League victory.

**Navy 77, American 67:** Hasan Abdullah scored a career-high 23 points with six rebounds and six assists and the host Midshipmen (8-14, 5-6 Patriot League) scored seven unanswered points in the final 1:17 to beat the Eagles.

## Baseball mulling bold changes to rulebook

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball and its players are discussing bold changes to spark the sport that include a three-batter minimum before a pitching change except at the start of an inning, a single trade deadline set before the All-Star break and expanded rosters.

The union renewed its push to extend the designated hitter to the National League, suggested amateur draft incentives for winning records and penalties for losing records and proposed a change in service-time rules that would lead to faster free agency for top rookies held in the minor leagues early in the season. Management proposed expanding minimum time on the disabled list and optional assignments to the minor leagues to 15 days.

The talks are an expansion of the ones last offseason in which management threatened to implement a pitch clock, then backed off but did institute limits on mound visits without pitching changes. Management made its proposal on Jan. 14, the union responded last Friday and discussions are ongoing.

Management is concerned about a drop in offense that saw strikeouts exceed hits for the first time last year and the big league batting average drop to its lowest level since 1972. In a season that included an unusually cold and wet April, average attendance dropped for the third straight season and fell below 30,000 for the first time since 2003.

Some of the most interesting changes appear likely to be put off until 2020 at the earliest:

**Relief pitchers:** Management proposed that a team not be allowed to bring in a reliever until the previous pitcher has faced three batters or an inning ends. There were 1,145 one-batter outings last season, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, up from 1,119 the previous year but down from 1,182 in 2016. The change would have an impact on the use of "openers" for a few batters, a move pioneered by Tampa Bay manager Kevin Cash and emulated by Milwaukee manager Craig Counsell in Game 5 of the NL Championship Series.

Players countered the change should start in the minor leagues this year and reach the majors in 2020.

**Designated hitter:** The DH has been used in the AL since 1973, but the NL has never adopted the rule and Commissioner Rob Manfred has said he supports the status quo. The union proposed the DH start being used in the NL this year, but management in the past has considered the DH an economic issue, and Manfred has said that economic changes must wait for negotiations for a new labor contract that would start ahead of the 2022 season.

**Pitch clocks:** Management again has proposed a pitch clock, and the union countered with limitations on its use.

**Mound visits without pitching changes:** A limit of six began last season, and man-

agement wants to lower that to four this season and three in 2020. The union countered with five this year and, if the average time of a nine-inning game is longer this year than last, then four in 2020.

**Trade deadline:** Players proposed a single trade deadline be instituted before the All-Star break to keep teams from dealing veterans when the clubs conclude their chances of a playoff berth have dwindled. The deadline for trades without waivers was June 15 from 1923 through 1985 and has been July 31 since. Players who clear waivers can be dealt after the deadline, but they must be in an organization by Aug. 31 to be eligible for the postseason.

**Roster size:** Many have criticized the roster rules, which generally allow a team 25 active players through Aug. 31 and then 40 until the end of the season. Management proposed allowing a 26-man roster, including a 12-pitcher maximum, through Aug. 31, and then up to 28 for the rest of the season. The union countered each team should be required to have 28 active from Sept. 1 on and that there be a supplemental roster of four players after the Triple-A postseason ends.

**Study on lowering pitcher's mound:** The pitcher's mound was dropped from 15 inches to 10 for the 1969 season, and management wants to establish a committee to study whether it should be lowered again. The union wants the committee to include active players.

# Kings, Sixers make trades at deadline

Associated Press

MIAMI — Anthony Davis is still a member of the New Orleans Pelicans.

By 3 p.m. Thursday, that may change.

Davis remained in place Wednesday, though the run-up to the NBA's annual trade deadline picked up steam in plenty of other locales around the league — including Dallas, where Mavericks forward Harrison Barnes didn't play in the fourth quarter of a win over Charlotte because of a trade with Sacramento.

"I got word of it during the game," Dallas coach Rick Carlisle said.

Tobias Harris going to Philadelphia from the Los Angeles Clippers as the centerpiece of a six-person, four-draft-pick swap was the first notable deal of Trade Deadline Eve. Later, Chicago agreed to acquire Otto Porter Jr. from Washington

for Jabari Parker and Bobby Portis. The Mavs and Kings agreed to swap Barnes for Zach Randolph and Justin Jackson, and as the day was winding down the Wizards struck again — this time sending Markieff Morris to New Orleans for Wesley Johnson.

The Wizards-Pelicans deal was confirmed to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity by people directly involved in the negotiations, all speaking on condition of anonymity pending the mandatory NBA trade calls to make the deals official.

"Part of the business," New Orleans coach Alvin Gentry said.

And business, on Wednesday, was busy — as expected.

The Dallas-Sacramento deal is significant for both sides.

The Kings are trying to get into the Western Conference playoffs, and now can add Barnes to their promis-

ing young core. Barnes has a \$25.1 million player option for next season. Meanwhile, Dallas — which got Kristaps Porzingis and Tim Hardaway Jr. from New York last week in a massive deal — will have salary-cap space to spend in the coming months as it looks to add more pieces around Luka Doncic.

"Things are going to look different on the court," said Carlisle, who wished Barnes well and told him after Dallas' game that he believes the Sacramento deal is a good situation for him.

Harris, Boban Marjanovic and Mike Scott went to the 76ers, while Wilson Chandler, Mike Muscala and Landry Shamet went to the Clippers. Philadelphia — with an eye on moving way up from the No. 5 spot in the Eastern Conference — also gave up a protected 2020 first-round pick, a 2021 first-rounder that was once owned by Miami, and second-round-

ers in 2021 and 2023 through Detroit.

Porter will be headed to Chicago, with the Wizards taking back Parker and Portis. Parker has been bracing for a trade, and moving Porter is a financial win if nothing else for Washington. So is the move that sends Morris to the Pelicans, one that should get the Wizards out of having to pay anything in luxury tax this season.

Another deal with tax ramifications was worked out between Miami and Phoenix. The Heat sent Tyler Johnson and Wayne Ellington to the Suns for Ryan Anderson, helping alleviate the logjam of guards that Miami coach Erik Spoelstra has been dealing with all season — plus considerably lowering the Heat's expected luxury tax bill. It's likely that Ellington will be a buyout candidate, and therefore would be able to pick his own spot to finish the season.

## NBA roundup

# Antetokounmpo scores 43 points as Bucks top Wizards

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 43 points, Eric Bledsoe had 22 points and 11 assists, and the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Washington Wizards 148-129 on Wednesday night for their fifth consecutive victory.

The Bucks shot 60 percent (56-for-93) from the field and placed six players in double figures while becoming the first NBA team with 40 victories. Malcolm Brogdon had 18 points, and Khriston Middleton finished with 16.

Washington trailed by as many as 25 in the first half, but closed to 120-113 on Chasson Randle's layup with 10:22 left.

Bledsoe helped finish off the Wizards with 10 points in a quick scoring flurry, including a dunk off a missed free throw by Antetokounmpo. He made a

three-pointer with 7:07 remaining to make it 138-118.

Bradley Beal led Washington with 30 points, and Thomas Bryant had 26. Jeff Green finished with 22 points for his fourth straight game with 20 or more.

**Warriors 141, Spurs 102:** Kevin Durant had 23 points, nine assists and eight rebounds, and host Golden State ran away from San Antonio in the second and third quarters.

The two-time defending champions scored 49 points on 16 assists in the third quarter alone, making 5 of 7 three-pointers. They made 24 of 25 field goals in one blistering stretch spanning halftime — including 14 straight shots at one point.

**Mavericks 99, Hornets 93:** Luka Doncic scored 19 points in his third triple-double, Dorian Finney-Smith had 15 points

and 10 rebounds and new-look Dallas made another move by trading Harrison Barnes while beating visiting Charlotte.

Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 12 points in his Dallas debut after the blockbuster deal that brought Kristaps Porzingis from the New York Knicks.

**Nets 135, Nuggets 130:** D'Angelo Russell had 27 points and 11 assists, and host Brooklyn surpassed last season's win total by beating Denver.

Russell made six of the Nets' 19 three-pointers, one game after they made only five as a team in their poorest shooting performance of the season.

**Pelicans 125, Bulls 120:** Julius Randle scored 31 points, and visiting New Orleans beat struggling Chicago with All-Star Anthony Davis watching from the bench.

Davis was healthy enough to return from a sprained left

index finger that has sidelined him since Jan. 18. But the Pelicans opted to hold him out with Thursday's trade deadline approaching.

**Rockets 127, Kings 101:** James Harden made eight three-pointers and scored 36 points, helping visiting Houston beat Sacramento.

The Rockets won their third straight game. Gerald Green matched his season high with 25 points, and Eric Gordon scored 20 points.

**Jazz 116, Suns 88:** Donovan Mitchell scored 21 points and Joe Ingles had a career-high 11 assists, leading host Utah past Phoenix.

Rudy Gobert added 16 points and 12 rebounds as the Jazz won for the fifth time in seven games. Ingles and reserve Royce O'Neale each finished with 15 points.