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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Shanahan visits Afghanistan amid US push for peace deal

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — At an extraordinary moment in Pentagon history, a former business executive with little political stature and without military experience is making his international debut as the acting U.S. secretary of defense.

After conferring Monday with Afghan leaders and American military commanders and diplomats in Kabul, Pat Shanahan was scheduled to attend a NATO defense ministers meeting in Brussels and an international security conference in Munich, Germany. It was Shanahan's first-ever visit to Afghanistan, where American troops have been at war for 17 years and the Trump administration is pushing for a peace deal with the Taliban.

Shanahan's performance on the global stage could influence whether President Donald Trump elevates the longtime Boeing executive from his uncertain status as interim Pentagon leader to be the administration's nominee to replace Jim Mattis. The retired Marine general quit in late December in protest of Trump's policies.

In his resignation letter, Mattis offered to stay on until after this week's NATO meeting to ensure that the Pentagon's interests were "properly articulated and protected." But three days after Mattis gave Trump that letter, the president on Dec. 23 told Mattis to leave the Cabinet on Dec. 31. The unusually sudden transition came at sensitive junctures in Syria, where Trump has ordered a U.S. troop withdrawal, and Afghanistan, where a potential troop pullout looms amid continued Taliban violence.

The status of U.S. forces in Iraq also has been put in question as Iraqi leaders responded with anger to Trump's statement in early February that he would keep American troops in Iraq in order to watch neighboring Iran. Trump had earlier angered Iraqis by saying he would use Iraq as a base to strike Islamic State targets inside Syria.

It is extraordinary for the Pentagon to be run by an interim leader and even rarer that the leader is a career defense industry executive. Shanahan is only the third person to serve as acting defense secretary and the first in 30 years.

The last was William H. Taft, who served for two months in 1989 after President George H.W. Bush's first choice to be defense secretary, John Tower, became mired in controversy and ultimately failed to be confirmed by the Senate. Dick Cheney, the future vice president under President George W. Bush, then was nominated and confirmed.

Shanahan is the first to undertake an international trip while serving as acting secretary, according to Pentagon spokesman Chris Sherwood.

No one has been nominated to succeed Mattis, nor has anyone been nominated to succeed Shanahan in his previous role as deputy defense secretary. The Pentagon's budget chief, David L. Norquist, has been "performing the duties" of the deputy secretary since Jan. 1.

Presidents typically take pains to ensure the Pentagon is being run by a Senate-confirmed official, given the grave responsibilities that include sending young Americans into battle, ensuring the military is ready for extreme emergencies like nuclear war and managing overseas alliances that are central to U.S. security.

Trump, however, seems in no hurry to end Shanahan's limbo status.

"I like acting," the president said Jan. 6. "It gives me more flexibility."

He did not explain what he meant, but the implication was that he can keep Shanahan on a string and not immediately seek the advice and consent of the Senate. Mattis sought a certain independence from the White House, which seemed to irritate Trump.

Shanahan told reporters on Jan. 29 he isn't thinking about how long he might keep his "acting" status, jokingly adding that his mother each morning sends him a "pray" emoticon.

Trump has publicly praised Shanahan several times, suggesting he favors keeping him on.

"Patrick has a long list of accomplishments" during his tenure as deputy defense secretary, Trump tweeted on Dec. 23. Mattis' resignation from three days earlier had implicitly criticized Trump's unwillingness to stand up to Russia and his inclination to disrespect America's longtime allies.

3 suspected in Afghan terrorist attacks arrested

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Three men suspected of being responsible for the deadliest terrorist attack in Kabul and another man accused of recruiting hundreds of Islamic State fighters were arrested Saturday, the national intelligence agency said.

Mohammad Sharif, Mohammad Jawed and Ghulam Mustafa, members of the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network, were described by the National Directorate of Security as the masterminds behind the May 2017 attack outside Kabul's Green Zone that killed 150 people.

A truck bomb was used in the attack, which destroyed the German Embassy and was felt at the nearby U.S. Embassy and NATO headquarters buildings.

The trio was also behind a separate attack in November that killed five employees of a defense contracting company, the NDS said in a statement on Monday. In that attack, Taliban fighters, including a suicide bomber, stormed a compound on the outskirts of Kabul used by British security company G4S, resulting in an 11-hour battle with the police. More than 30 people were wounded.

"NDS forces are trying their best to target terrorists wherever they are hiding," the agency statement said. Intelligence officials declined to explain the specific roles each of the detained men played in organizing the assaults.

In a separate incident Saturday, NDS special operations forces arrested Abu Obaidullah Mutawakil, a former university lecturer, for recruiting militants for the local ISIS affiliate.

Mutawakil recruited hundreds of young people for the group, which in recent years has become one of Afghanistan's most dangerous terrorist organizations, the agency said.

Combating ISIS is at the core of the U.S. counterterrorism mission in the country. Those efforts are separate from NATO's mission, which focuses solely on training and advising Afghans.

Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report. wellman.phillip@stripes.com

Cornered ISIS forces slow Kurdish fighters

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Islamic State militants cornered in their last foothold in eastern Syria fought back with suicide car bombs, snipers and booby traps Monday, slowing Kurdish fighters advancing under the cover of U.S.-led coalition airstrikes, Kurdish news agencies and a Syrian war monitor said.

An Italian photographer was wounded in the clashes between the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces and the militants holed up in the village of Baghouz, near the border with Iraq, an Italian news agency said.

No one knows exactly how many ISIS fighters are still holding out in the sliver of territory under attack, although they are estimated to be in the hundreds, most of them foreign fighters. It is also unclear if civilians are still inside, caught under heavy bombardment.

The SDF on Saturday launched its final push to clear the area from ISIS after months of fighting that saw 20,000 civil-

ians fleeing just in the past few weeks. The numbers have overwhelmed Kurdish-run camps in northeastern Syria, where humanitarian conditions are already dire amid a cold winter and meager resources.

The capture of the ISIS-held village of Baghouz and nearby areas would mark the end of a devastating, four-year global war to end the ISIS extremists' territorial hold over large parts of Syria and Iraq, where the group established its self-proclaimed "caliphate" in 2014. That, in turn, would open the way for President Donald Trump to begin withdrawing U.S. troops from northern Syria as he has promised to do once the ISIS has been defeated.

"The U.S. will soon control 100% of ISIS territory in Syria," Trump tweeted Sunday. He has said repeatedly that he doesn't want the U.S. to be the world's policeman and that he intends to bring the 2,000 U.S. troops home.

U.S. officials and Trump's

own military advisers, however, have warned that losing its territorial hold does not mean that ISIS is defeated, warning that the group could stage a comeback in Syria within six months to a year if the military and counterterrorism pressure on it is eased. Gen. Joseph Votel, the commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East, estimated there are between 1,000 and 1,500 ISIS fighters in the small area they still control, but he said others have "dispersed" and "gone to ground."

In recent weeks, U.S. officials have said ISIS has lost 99.5 percent of its territory and is holding on to under 2 square miles, where most of the fighters are concentrated in Syria. But activists and residents say ISIS still has sleeper cells in Syria and Iraq and is laying the groundwork for an insurgency.

Assad Bechara, a Lebanese political analyst, said ISIS is an ideology, not just a military structure, and it cannot be defeated simply by reclaiming ter-

ritory from the group.

"This (American) pullout will leave a huge vacuum despite the allegations of defeating the last pockets of ISIS. This vacuum will increase the international and regional struggle for power and influence in Syria," he said, which in turn may make it easier for the militant group to return.

It is not clear how long the final push to free Baghouz from ISIS will take. Trump said last week he had been told that the full territorial conquest to defeat ISIS could be completed in the coming week.

But progress appears to be slower than what SDF officials had initially estimated. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the SDF was moving slowly due to land mines and sniper fire, as well as the extremists' use of tunnels and suicide car bombs. ISIS also is using civilians as human shields, the Observatory said.

Fort Sill first to provide complete plant-based meal

BY JAMES BOLINGER

Stars and Stripes

The Guns and Rockets Dining Facility at Fort Sill, Okla., is setting a new standard for healthy food options by offering a 100 percent plant-based entree during every meal.

It's the only dining facility in the Army providing options for soldiers who don't eat meat, eggs or dairy, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeremy Patterson, a food adviser for the 75th Artillery Brigade, told Stars and Stripes via telephone Friday.

Patterson, who has been eating a plant-based diet for years, pushed to update the menu after receiving a comment card in late 2017 asking for more options at the dining facility.

That request was based on religion, but Patterson, who takes pride in his knowledge of nutrition, wanted to go farther

and provide as many healthy options as possible to help the Army combat heart disease and obesity.

"We began testing items in February 2018 and were fully operational with labeling and an option at every meal by July of 2018," he said. "Now, we sell out of the plant-based entree at every meal."

In addition to leaving the meat, dairy and eggs out of the main entree at every meal, Patterson said the cooks stopped adding butter or pork to other vegetable offerings.

"We didn't change the menu. We just substitute the meat within the dish," he said. "Instead of chicken enchiladas on Taco Tuesday we use black beans, and instead of beef stir fry, we use tofu."

The cooks also created a "cheese" sauce using potatoes,

carrots and nutritional yeast, a combination that tastes like cheddar that the cooks then ladle over broccoli. Patterson said the serving line typically runs out of the sauce halfway through the lunch hour.

"People try it and like it. People are talking about it," he said. "We are not reinventing the wheel with recipes. We are just taking the recipe and substituting some ingredients."

Having 100 percent plant-based options during deployments would be a huge benefit, said Petty Officer Jacob Stephens, an aviation electronics technician with the Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

"It means I wouldn't have to carry an additional seabag full of food with me on deployments," he said. "It would be

great if I could get something other than salad."

It would not be hard to make a plant-based macaroni and cheese, or even swap out the beef burgers for plant-based Beyond Meat burgers, a brand that is popular in some U.S. restaurants, he said.

Stephens and his wife are both vegan and, like Patterson, are part of a growing demographic within the U.S. military, whose population mirrors the civilian world.

Plant-based diets have grown in popularity with the introduction of brands like Beyond Meat, Impossible Foods Inc. — maker of the Impossible Burger — and others in the past 10 years.

In a taste test of Beyond Meat burgers at Fort Sill in the fall, 121 soldiers responded that they would prefer it over a beef patty, said Patterson.

Calif. governor to draw down 260 guard troops at border

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California Gov. Gavin Newsom planned Monday to withdraw more than 200 National Guard troops from the state's southern border with Mexico in defiance of the Trump administration's request for support from border states.

About 100 of the 360 troops will remain deployed under California's agreement with the federal government to focus specifically on combating transnational crime such as drug- and gun-smuggling, Newsom spokesman Nathan Click said. Specifically, they will be tasked with providing intelligence on transnational crime and assist with cargo dock operations and searches of commercial trucks for contraband.

Newsom's move comes on the heels of New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, also a Democrat, pulling back her state's troops from the U.S.-Mexico border. The two states' former governors agreed to send troops to the border last April at the Trump administra-

tion's request along with Texas and Arizona.

Newsom's and Grisham's actions are a fresh, if symbolic, affront to President Donald Trump's description of an immigration crisis on the nation's southern border.

"The border 'emergency' is a manufactured crisis, and California will not be part of this political theater," Newsom plans to say Tuesday in his State of the State address, according to excerpts released by his office.

Newsom will reassign roughly 110 troops to beef up California's fire preparation efforts ahead of the next wildfire season and expand the guard's counterdrug task force program. The expansion of the counterdrug task force requires approval from the U.S. Department of Defense.

The original mission, approved by former California Gov. Jerry Brown, was set to end March 31. The order Newsom plans to send Monday will require the guard to immediately begin withdrawing troops

but still give it until the end of March to do so. When Brown, a fellow Democrat, approved the mission in April, he said no California troops would participate in immigration-related activities. He similarly ordered the troops to focus on combating transnational crime.

"This will not be a mission to build a new wall," Brown wrote at the time in a letter to Trump administration officials. "It will not be a mission to round up women and children or detain people escaping violence and seeking a better life. And the California National Guard will not be enforcing federal immigration laws."

Newsom's Monday order will argue that the increase in Central American migrants crossing over the border is the result of a desire to escape violence and repression fueled in part by the activities of transnational crime organizations. The California guard's resources are best spent tackling those activities, he plans to argue.

Texas and Arizona still have troops on the border.

Unvaccinated teens try to get shots on their own

The Washington Post

Ethan Lindenberger, frustrated by years of arguments about his mother's anti-vaccination stance, staged a quiet defection via Reddit.

The Norwalk, Ohio, teenager needed advice, he said, on how to inoculate himself against infectious disease and his family's dogma. At 18, he was old enough, Lindenberger explained. He wanted to get vaccinated. But he didn't know how.

"My parents think vaccines are some kind of government scheme," Lindenberger wrote days before Thanksgiving. "But, because of their beliefs I've never been vaccinated for anything. God knows how I'm still alive."

As anti-vaccination movements metastasize amid outbreaks of dangerous disease, internet-savvy teenagers are fact-checking their parents' decisions in a digital health reawakening — and seeking their own treatments in bouts of family defiance.

In three states, at least three self-described teenagers told Reddit they have a common problem: Their parents are staunchly opposed to vaccination, and they fear for their health if they do not take action. Different state laws affect how old minors need to be to make their own medical decisions.

Lindenberger's post drew more than 1,000 comments, including detailed information on navigating the health care system in one post from someone who identified as a nurse.

His mother, Jill Wheeler, was angered by Lindenberger's pursuit, she told Undark, an online science magazine. "It was like him spitting on me," she told the site, "saying, 'You don't know anything, I don't trust you with anything. You don't know what you're talking about. You did make a bad decision and I'm gonna go fix it.'"

Wheeler did not respond to a request for comment.

Okinawa-based Marine given 6 months in military prison for solicitation, child porn

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — An enlisted Marine was sentenced to six months in a military prison Feb. 1 on solicitation and child pornography charges.

Lance Cpl. Vincent Taman Jr. — a member of the 3rd Marine Division's now-deactivated combat assault battalion — was found guilty at a general court-martial of soliciting and receiving visual imagery of a 16-year-old engaged in sexually explicit conduct, according

to 3rd Marine Division spokesman Capt. Gerard Farao. The images were sent and streamed via mobile phone applications.

The conduct occurred on Okinawa between Dec. 1, 2016, and Feb. 28, 2017, according to a copy of the charge sheet.

Taman, 22, of El Paso, Texas, was charged on Aug. 6, Farao said. He pleaded not guilty during a five-day court-martial but was convicted of both charges by a jury.

Taman's sentence also includes a letter of reprimand, a bad conduct discharge and

lifetime registration as a sex offender. He will be reduced in rank to E-1, and his pay could be automatically forfeited.

He was being held in the Camp Hansen brig as of Monday.

"These violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice do not reflect the Marine Corps values of honor, courage and commitment and are not in keeping with the high standards of conduct to which we hold all our Marines," Farao said in a statement.

Klobuchar to take campaign to Midwest

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — With snow falling steadily and the temperature well below freezing, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar said she's joining the group of Democrats running for president and would take her campaign — and her Midwest sensibilities — directly to parts of the region Donald Trump won and that her party wants to recapture in 2020.

"For every American, I'm running for you," she told an exuberant, snow-covered crowd gathered Sunday at a park along the Mississippi

River with the Minneapolis skyline in the background.

"And I promise you this: As your president, I will look you in the eye. I will tell you what I think. I will focus on getting things done. That's what I've done my whole life. And no matter what, I'll lead from the heart."

Klobuchar, who easily won a third term last year, is the most prominent candidate from the Midwest to enter the race. She's pointed to her broad appeal across Minnesota — where she's drawn support from voters in urban, suburban and

rural areas, including in dozens of counties Trump won in 2016 — and says that success could translate to other Midwestern states such as Michigan and Wisconsin, reliably Democratic in presidential races for decades until Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton.

Klobuchar said she would travel next weekend to Iowa, home to the nation's first caucus, joking it's "a place where we in Minnesota like to go south for the winter." That trip will be followed by stops in Wisconsin, where Clinton was criticized in 2016 for not spending enough

time.

Klobuchar, 58, is known as a straight-talking pragmatist willing to work with Republicans, making her one of the Senate's most productive members at passing legislation.

A Des Moines Register/CNN/Mediacom poll conducted by Selzer & Company in December found that Klobuchar was largely unfamiliar to likely Iowa caucus-goers, with 54 percent saying they didn't know enough about her to have an opinion, while 38 percent had a favorable opinion and 8 percent had an unfavorable opinion.

Iranians rally, mark Islamic Revolution 40th anniversary

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Waving Iranian flags, chanting "Death to America" and burning U.S. and Israeli flags, hundreds of thousands of people poured out onto the streets across Iran on Monday, marking the date that's considered victory day in the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

On Feb. 11 that year, Iran's military stood down after days of street battles, allowing the revolutionaries to sweep across the country while the government of U.S.-backed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi resigned and the Islamic Republic was born.

In Tehran, crowds streamed in the rain from a dozen of the capital's far-flung neighborhoods to mass in central Tehran Azadi, or Freedom Square, on Monday, waving Iranian flags and chanting "Death to America" — a chant that has been standard fare at anti-U.S. rallies across Iran. Chants of "Death to Israel" and "Death to Britain" followed, and demonstrators burned U.S. and Israeli flags. Iranian state TV, which said millions participated, ran archive footage of the days of the uprising and played revolutionary songs. It later broadcast footage showing crowds across

this country of 80 million.

The 6-mile-long downtown Enghelab, or Revolution Street, in Tehran was decorated with huge balloons as loudspeakers blared out revolutionary and nationalist songs to encourage people to join the rallies.

Every year, the anniversary festivities start on Feb. 1 — the day Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned home from France after 14 years in exile to become the supreme leader as Shiite clerics took power — and continue for 10 days, climaxing on Feb. 11.

Speaking from a podium in central Tehran, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani addressed the crowds for nearly 45 minutes, lashing out at Iran's enemies — America and Israel — and claiming their efforts to "bring down" Iran through sanctions will not succeed.

In the backdrop to Monday's marches, the military displayed Iran-made missiles, which are showcased every year during anniversary celebrations.

"We do not and we will not ask permission for producing any type of missiles from anybody," Rouhani said Monday, though he stressed that Iran would "continue constructive engagement" with the international community.

Rap artists, women have their day at the Grammys

Associated Press

Rap artists and women have both felt shunned by the Grammy Awards in recent years. But this year, they took center stage.

Childish Gambino's disturbing look at race relations, "This Is America," won record and song of the year on Sunday's telecast. It was the first time a rap-based song won both of those awards, considered — with album of the year — the recording industry's most prestigious.

Kacey Musgraves won top album and matched Childish Gambino with four Grammys total. A year after many women felt left out of the Grammy telecast, they delivered the night's most memorable performances. The best new artist winner, British singer Dua Lipa, also cast major shade on the outgoing recording academy president.

Lady Gaga and Brandi Carlile won three Grammys apiece, and former first lady Michelle Obama was a surprise guest at the top of the show in Los Angeles.

Childish Gambino, the stage name of actor Donald Glover, and another prominent rap nominee, Kendrick Lamar,

both declined invitations to perform or attend. Some rap artists feel the Grammys have been slow to recognize how the genre now dominates popular music.

Cardi B became the first solo female to win best rap album, although Lauryn Hill was the lead singer of the Fugees, which won the same award in 1997.

Cardi B's rendition of "Money" was among the night's performance highlights. Janelle Monae delivered a smoking version of her hit "Make Me Feel"; St. Vincent and Dua Lipa's duet on "Masseduction" was steamy; H.E.R. turned heads with "Hard Place"; and Carlile sang an inspired version of "The Joke."

When Dua Lipa accepted her best new artist award, she pointedly said, "I guess this year we really stepped up."

That was a reference to outgoing Recording Academy CEO Neil Portnow, who said women needed to "step up" when he was asked about the lack of women in top categories in 2018.

Drake's appearance to accept the Grammy when "God's Plan" won best rap song was a surprise because he's not big on award shows.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

\$100,000 Porsche lawsuit is revived

MI OKEMOS — Was a \$100,000 Porsche a lemon? The Michigan appeals court says a Kent County woman will get a second chance to make her case with a jury.

Jane Meyering bought a new Porsche Cayenne in 2015, but she sued after having problems with the heating and cooling system.

The appeals court says an Ingham County judge wrongly disregarded Meyering's trial testimony and ruled in favor of Porsche North America. The court says the jury should have settled the dispute.

In Michigan, a car manufacturer can be forced to buy back or replace a new vehicle if it's not fixed after repeated attempts.

High school imposes basketball fan rules

NM CARLSBAD — A southeastern New Mexico high school has imposed crowd restrictions after improper behavior from student fans.

The Carlsbad Current-Argus reported that Carlsbad High School Athletic Director James Johns announced last week he was barring students from sitting on the bottom row of the bleachers during games.

The move came after several students were escorted from a Jan. 29 game and a Feb. 1 game because of unruly behavior toward opposing teams.

Police wouldn't arrest wanted man with no ID

LA NEW ORLEANS — A Louisiana man found out that turning himself in on a second-degree murder warrant in New Orleans wasn't as easy

as he thought it would be.

Frank Sams Jr., 25, spent nearly an hour Wednesday pleading with police to arrest him before they did, an attorney said.

Sams hoped to start the process of fighting the murder charge, but lawyer Kelly Orians said deputies refused to process Sams because he didn't have a state ID on him, The New Orleans Advocate reported.

The impasse ended after Orians produced a copy of a news article that featured Sams' picture and noted that he was wanted for second-degree murder in connection with the fatal shooting of a gas station clerk in September.

Man suspected of impersonating officer

CA LOS ANGELES — A man who authorities say was recorded antagonizing demonstrators during a Black Lives Matter protest in January has been arrested on suspicion of impersonating a police officer.

Daniel Sohn, 36, was arrested Friday by Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies after they noticed he was wearing a shirt with the Los Angeles Police Department logo and recognized him as the man in the video, authorities said in a press release.

The video posted on social media last month shows an Asian man who appears to be wearing the same shirt and chanting "white power" to people protesting the fatal shooting in October of an unarmed black man by an LAPD officer inside a gym.

House call turns into horse call for police

MN INVER GROVE HEIGHTS — Authorities said a suburban Min-

neapolis resident reported a strange intruder in her basement. It was a horse.

Inver Grove Heights police arrived at the woman's home late Friday night to find a pale-colored horse walking through various rooms as officers watched from outside.

Police Sgt. Adam Wiederhoeft said it isn't clear how the horse got into the house, but that the animal's owner came to remove it.

2 charged with taking safe from an office

ME PORTLAND — Two Maine men are charged with stealing a safe containing more than \$10,000 in cash and checks from a Spectrum office in Portland in December.

Police said Michael Luchini, 33, of Ellsworth, and Matthew Smart, 39, of Southwest Harbor, each face one count of burglary and theft.

Police believe the men pried open several doors and wheeled the safe outside before cutting a hole to access the contents.

Woman uses bat to protest no patty

NY NEW YORK — A woman who couldn't get a beef patty at a favorite New York eatery used a baseball bat in protest.

On Saturday, police released surveillance video of the woman in action in the Bronx — smashing a restaurant's windows after learning the eatery had run out of her favorite food.

Police said the woman at the Back Home restaurant in the Morrisania neighborhood came in on Jan. 15 and ordered a patty. She was told they'd run out and she got upset.

Authorities said she left and came back to the Jamaican res-

taurant with the bat. The video shows a woman bashing in two windows.

Man facing bigamy charges misses court

NH DOVER — A Maine man facing bigamy charges faces arrest after missing a court date in New Hampshire.

Michael Middleton, 43, is accused of marrying a New Hampshire woman while also being married to women in Georgia and Alabama.

The Journal Tribune in Biddeford, Maine, reported that Middleton never showed up for his arraignment Thursday in Strafford County Superior Court in Dover.

The New Hampshire wife, Alicia Grant, of Exeter, said Middleton made her feel like he cared about her but eventually scammed her out of \$20,000. Police said he also scammed other women after marrying them.

Employee dies as wind topples smokers' shed

PA ALTOONA — Authorities said a woman was killed when high winds tipped a temporary shed on top of her outside a Pennsylvania workplace.

The Altoona fire department and Blair County coroner said Tammy Hockenberry, 47, was smoking outside Blair Companies Millwork and Fixtures about 8:30 a.m. Friday. Officials said the wooden structure that served as a smokers hut and under which she and a male co-worker were standing was hit by a gust of wind and toppled onto them.

Coroner Patricia Ross said Hockenberry died of blunt force trauma. The man was in stable condition at UPMC Altoona with leg and ankle injuries.

From wire reports

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Johnson triggers crash, wins Clash

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Jimmie Johnson's youngest daughter prays every night for Daddy to win a race. When Johnson scuffled through the worst season of his career, he felt the strain of not reaching victory lane.

"It was putting some pressure on me," Johnson said.

Johnson called the invocation "cute to hear."

He didn't feel the same about critical comments saying Johnson was past his prime. The 43-year-old Johnson tweeted "I'm far from done" in the offseason, and with a risky move in the rain, he showed there's plenty left.

Johnson triggered a wreck that wiped out nearly the entire 20-car field at Daytona and zipped to the lead to win the rain-shortened exhibition Clash on Sunday.

The seven-time Cup Series champion failed to win a race for the first time in his career in 2018, but a dose of aggression put him back in victory lane during the opening weekend of Speedweeks. Johnson's win capped a banner day for Hendrick Motorsports. Teammates William Byron and Alex Bowman locked in the front row for the

Daytona 500 earlier in the day in qualifying.

"It's been a pretty awesome day," Hendrick said. "I hate we had the wreck there at the end, but it's been a really good day for the team."

The celebration at Daytona comes with a caveat: the last Daytona 500 pole-sitter to win the race was Dale Jarrett in 2000, and Johnson's victory doesn't count in the official NASCAR record book.

Paul Menard led 51 laps and controlled the race interrupted three times for rain. With more rain looming, Johnson dipped low and tried to side-draft Menard as they battled for the lead. But Johnson turned Menard and started a chain-reaction accident that left cars sideways and smoking behind the No. 48 Chevrolet.

"I looked in the mirror and there were a lot of cars caught up in it," Johnson said.

The rain that ended the race hit not long after the decisive move and Johnson won for the first time with new crew chief Kevin Meendering and new primary sponsor Ally.

The wreck came 55 laps into the 75-lap event, and the race was called just four laps later. Kurt Busch was second, followed by Joey Logano, Ryan Blaney and Bowman.

Heisman winner Murray chooses football

Associated Press

MESA, Ariz. — Heisman Trophy winner Kyler Murray says he will pursue a career in the NFL over playing baseball for the Oakland Athletics.

Murray was the ninth overall pick in last June's baseball amateur draft, and the outfielder agreed to a minor league contract with Oakland for a \$4.66 million signing bonus. He is a football quarterback eligible for this year's NFL Draft, which starts April 25.

Oakland, which started spring training workouts Monday, had a locker with a No. 73 jersey waiting for him.

"I am firmly and fully committing my life and time to becoming an NFL quarterback," Murray tweeted Monday. "Football has been my love and passion my entire life. I was raised to play QB, and I very much look forward to dedicating 100 percent of myself to being the best QB possible and winning NFL championships. I have started an extensive training program to further prepare myself for upcoming workouts and interviews. I eagerly await the opportunity to continue to prove to NFL decision makers that I am the franchise QB in this draft."

Murray's baseball deal called for him to receive \$1.5 million within 30 days of the deal's approval last summer by Major League Baseball and \$3.16 million on March 1.

Murray passed for 4,361 yards and 42 touchdowns for Oklahoma last season. He ran for 1,001 yards and another 12 scores, posting the second-best passer efficiency rating in FBS history.

Teammates Byron, Bowman make up youngest Daytona 500 front row ever

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — William Byron put Hendrick Motorsports in a familiar position: on the pole for the Daytona 500. His bigger goal is to make the starting spot pay dividends for the NASCAR powerhouse.

The 21-year-old Byron and 25-year-old teammate Alex Bowman locked in the front row for "The Great American Race" during qualifying laps Sunday at Daytona International Speedway. They comprise the youngest front row in Daytona 500 history.

The coveted starting spot hasn't meant much for NASCAR's season opener over the last two decades, though. The last Daytona 500 pole-sitter to win the race was Dale Jarrett in 2000.

The last four — Hendrick's Jeff Gordon, Chase Elliott (twice) and Bowman — have failed to notch a top-10 finish.

"To have them on top of each other means the organization did a heck of a job," Hendrick

said. "This is the deal to sit on the pole at Daytona."

Byron and Bowman edged the other two Hendrick drivers: seven-time Cup Series champion Jimmie Johnson and fan favorite Chase Elliott.

"That's a pretty amazing feat, I feel," said longtime Hendrick crew chief Chad Knaus, who is entering his first season with Byron after 18 years with Johnson.

Knaus and Johnson landed the Daytona 500 pole in their first race together in 2002. After splitting with Johnson at the end of last season, Knaus essentially repeated the feat with Byron.

"I think it's huge," Knaus said. "We've had a lot of late nights, a lot of long hours. The last time I came here with a new driver, we sat on the pole. This is really special for me."

Byron reached a top speed of 194.304 mph in the final round of qualifying, nearly two-tenths of a second faster than Bowman (194.153).

"I thought we were going to be somewhere in the hunt," Byron said. "I was excited to get down here and see what we had. It's really cool."

The rest of the 40-car lineup will be set by two qualifying races Thursday. Thirty-six of those spots are already filled because of NASCAR's charter system.

Former Hendrick driver Casey Mears and Tyler Reddick secured two of the remaining spots in the Daytona 500. They posted the top speeds of the six drivers vying for four open spots in NASCAR's season opener.

"I really feel like we'll be able to be competitive," Mears said. "I can tell you this: I've been at Daytona with a lot less and ran inside the top five."

Joey Gase, Ryan Truex, Parker Kligerman and Brandon Gaughan likely will have to race their way into the 500 during the qualifying races. Two of them will make it, and the other two won't.

NBA roundup

76ers show potential in win over Lakers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Magic Johnson and LeBron James have captured eight NBA titles between them. With Johnson in the stands and James on the court, the Philadelphia 76ers showed off their own championship potential.

Joel Embiid had 37 points and 14 rebounds, Tobias Harris scored 22 points in his second game with Philadelphia, and the new-look 76ers beat James and the Los Angeles Lakers 143-120 on Sunday.

JJ Redick added 21 points for the Sixers, who have won two straight after acquiring Harris and four others at Thursday's trade deadline. Jimmy Butler finished with 15 points in front of a packed Philly crowd that brought a playoff-like feel to the nationally televised game.

"The East better watch out," said Johnson, the Lakers president who made the trip to Philly for the game. "This is a stacked team."

Kyle Kuzma led the Lakers with 39 points while James had 18 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists.

James was facing Philadelphia for the first time since the Sixers made a big push

to sign the superstar as a free agent last summer. He and Kuzma both missed the last matchup with Philly on Jan. 29, which the Sixers won 121-105.

"I thought they were going to be very good anyway before they made any moves, before the season even started," James said. "And they've made a bunch of moves to improve their club."

Fresh off a buzzer-beating win at Boston, the Lakers shot nearly 60 percent and scored 40 points in the first quarter. But fueled by Redick's four-point play, the Sixers closed the first half on a 19-6 run to take a 76-67 lead into halftime.

Embiid, who was questionable to play because of gastroenteritis, led the charge with 25 points in the first half after lighting up the Lakers for 28 in the teams' first matchup.

"I must not be a big LA fan," said Embiid, who had his league-leading 23rd game with at least 30 points and 10 rebounds.

Warriors 120, Heat 118: Kevin Durant scored 39 points and DeMarcus Cousins made two free throws with 5.4 seconds to play that helped host Golden State cap a comeback from a 19-point deficit in the first quarter.

Cousins rebounded a missed three-pointer by Durant and drew a foul, setting the stage for his winning free throws that gave the Warriors their 11th double-digit comeback of the season, and second straight after rallying from 17 points down in the first quarter Friday in Phoenix.

Klay Thompson scored 29 points and Stephen Curry added 25 for Golden State.

Mavericks 102, Trail Blazers 101: Luka Doncic scored 28 points, Tim Hardaway Jr. had 24 and host Dallas erased a 15-point deficit in the fourth quarter.

Doncic also had nine rebounds and six assists. Damian Lillard scored 21 of his 30 points in the last half of the third quarter.

Kings 117, Suns 104: Marvin Bagley III had a career-high 32 points and six rebounds and host Sacramento handed Phoenix its 14th straight loss.

Buddy Hield scored 18 points, De'Aaron Fox had 17 points and nine assists, and Nemanja Bjelica added 10 points and eight rebounds to help Sacramento win for the fifth time in six games.

Magic 124, Hawks 108: All-Star Nikola Vucevic had 19 points and two rebounds, leading Orlando past host Atlanta.

Top 25 roundup

No. 12 Cougars shut down Bearcats late

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Houston coach Kelvin Sampson has made defense a big part of the Cougars' DNA.

With No. 25 Cincinnati threatening an upset on Houston's home court, the 12th-ranked Cougars clamped down completely.

Houston held Cincinnati scoreless for the final 6:11, staving off the Bearcats 65-58 on Sunday for a key American Athletic Conference win.

"That's what Coach preaches every day at practice," DeJon Jarreau said. "We defend and rebound. We go at it, we compete. We try our best to carry it over to the game because that's our culture. If you aren't buying into our culture, you aren't

playing."

Jarreau scored 14 of his 16 points in the second half and added eight rebounds and five assists. He scored 11 consecutive points in the second half, including six straight to give Houston a 63-58 lead with 3½ minutes left.

"I just took what they gave me," Jarreau said. "They were on our shooters, so that gave me a lane to go and make a play."

Corey Davis Jr. also had 16 points. Davis and Jarreau each made free throws in the final 20 seconds to seal it for the Cougars (23-1, 10-1).

"To win as many games as we have, you have to win so many different ways," Sampson said. "I don't know offensively if there's a constant with us. If there is a constant, it's that there

is somebody that steps up."

Houston entered Sunday ranking second nationally in field goal percentage defense, third in three-point percentage defense and seventh in scoring defense.

"That's the way we practice," Sampson said. "Outrebounding teams, defending, whatever action it might be."

Galen Robinson Jr. had 10 points for Houston, which won its eighth straight and extended its home winning streak to 32.

Jarron Cumberland scored 27 points on 9-for-25 shooting, and Cane Broome added 10 points for Cincinnati (20-4, 9-2), which had its eight-game winning streak snapped. The Bearcats shot 33 percent from the field, including 27 percent in the second half.

"We came out on the short end of the stick," Cincinnati coach Mick Cronin said. "We didn't finish getting the ball in the basket around the rim. They had nine blocked shots. That was the difference in the game."

No. 20 Iowa 80, Northwestern 79: Jordan Bohannon hit a three-pointer from 23 feet with three-tenths of a second remaining and the host Hawkeyes rallied from a 13-point deficit to beat Northwestern.

Bohannon finished with 15 points with 3-for-4 shooting from three-point range, including

Vic Law had 24 points and 10 rebounds, Ryan Taylor scored 16 points, A.J. Turner added 15 and Dererk Pardon scored 13 for Northwestern (12-11, 3-9).

Lefty matches record with 5th Pebble win

Associated Press

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — With plenty of sunlight and no drama, Phil Mickelson finished off a 7-under 65 to win the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am on Monday and match the tournament record with his fifth victory.

Mickelson had a three-shot lead over Paul Casey with two holes to play when it was too dark to finish Sunday night — no matter how hard Mickelson lobbied to keep going — because of delays from rain and a hail storm.

Casey's only hope was for Mickelson to make a mistake on the closing holes, and there was little chance of that.

Mickelson was at his best on a course he loves. He drilled a 7-iron into 8 feet on the par-3 17th and made par, and then played conservatively up the par-5 18th and finished with a 6-foot birdie for a three-shot victory.

He matched the low score of the final round while playing in the last group, turning a three-shot deficit into a three-

shot victory. Mickelson never came close to making bogey and won for the 44th time on the PGA Tour.

He finished at 19-under 268 and joined Tiger Woods as the only players to surpass \$90 million in earnings.

Casey finished with a birdie that was worth \$152,000 because he wound up alone in second place. He also won the pro-am with Don Colleran, the chief sales officer for FedEx.

Even so, it was the fourth time Casey took a 54-hole lead of at least two shots into the final round on the PGA Tour and failed to win. There wasn't much he could do to stop Mickelson, who at age 48 looks just as tough as when he won his first PGA Tour event in 1991 when he was still at Arizona State.

Mickelson tied Mark O'Meara's record with his fifth victory in the AT&T Pebble Beach, the first one also a Monday finish in 1998 because of bad weather, with one big difference — that Monday finish was more than six months later in August.

Scott Stallings finished Sunday night with a 66 to finish alone in third.

Mickelson and Casey were waiting to tee off Sunday when clouds moved in quickly moved in, and rain turned into hail that pounded umbrellas, many of them held sideways to account for the wind.

Some players finished in the dark Sunday with no chance of winning, but showed the effect of playing without light. Scott Piercy had a 15-foot putt that was slightly uphill, and he still ran it 7 feet by the hole and three-putted for bogey.

Jason Day closed with a 68 and at 13-under 175 with Si Woo Kim (68).

Mickelson won on American soil for the first time since the Phoenix Open in 2013. He won that summer's British Open at Muirfield and last year's Mexico Championship.

He will return to Pebble Beach in June for the U.S. Open, where he made his pro debut in 1992. The U.S. Open remains the final piece missing for him to complete the career Grand Slam.

NHL roundup

Rangers' Georgiev saves career-high 55

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After his team allowed 56 shots on goal, Rangers coach David Quinn thought the defense was pretty good.

He had Alexandar Georgiev to thank for that.

Georgiev had a career-high 55 saves to lead New York over the Toronto Maple Leafs 4-1 on Sunday night. Georgiev had the second-most saves in a regular-season game in franchise history. Mike Richter has the record with 59 on Jan. 31, 1991.

"He played outstanding. He's getting better and better," Quinn said of his second-year goalie on his 23rd birthday.

"It was a special birthday," Georgiev said. "I tried not to concentrate on the birthday wishes. I knew I had an important game in front of me. I'm very happy it ended the way it ended."

Mika Zibanejad, Jimmy Vesey and Adam McQuaid scored for the Rangers, who finished their five-game homestand at 2-2-1.

"Sometimes you need a performance like this and he came up big for us, gave us a chance," Zibanejad said of Georgiev.

Kevin Hayes added an empty-netter, and Mats Zuccarello and Chris Kreider each had two assists.

Blackhawks 5, Red Wings 2: Dominik Kahun had two goals and an assist, Cam Ward made 43 saves and host Chicago earned its seventh straight victory.

Chicago's second line of Kahun, Dylan Strome and Alex DeBrincat delivered once again to help the Blackhawks continue their surprising push after a lackluster first half of the season. Strome had a goal and two assists, and DeBrincat had three assists to extend his career-best points streak to eight games.

Lightning 5, Panthers 2: Nikita Kucherov had two goals and an assist to lift Tampa Bay past host Florida.

Brayden Point, Ryan Callahan and Steven Stamkos also scored for the Lightning. Louis Domingue made 25 saves, and Anton Stralman had two assists.

Denis Malgin and Frank Vatrano scored for the Panthers. James Reimer allowed three goals on 12 shots before being replaced by Roberto Luongo to start the third period. Luongo made nine stops.

Bruins 2, Avalanche 1 (OT): Brad Marchand scored 4:03 into overtime and host Boston beat Colorado to extend its points streak to seven games.

Patrice Bergeron left the puck at the

top of the right circle for Marchand, who skated into the slot and fired it past goalie Semyon Varlamov to extend his franchise record with 14 overtime goals.

Jets 3, Sabres 1: Blake Wheeler scored the go-ahead goal with 3:55 remaining and visiting Winnipeg beat Buffalo to snap an 0-2-1 skid.

Connor Hellebuyck made 35 saves to help the Jets end their longest winless streak of the season and maintain the Central Division lead.

Islanders 2, Wild 1: Devon Toews scored the tiebreaking goal early in the second period, Thomas Greiss stopped 26 shots and host New York beat Minnesota.

Anthony Beauvillier also scored for Metropolitan Division-leading New York. The Islanders won for the fourth time in five games and ninth in 12 (9-1-2).

Blues 5, Predators 4 (OT): Vladimir Tarasenko completed a hat trick 16 seconds into overtime and visiting St. Louis beat Nashville to sweep a home-and-home set with their season-best sixth straight win.

Devils 3, Hurricanes 2: Marcus Johansson scored twice, Keith Kinkaid made 32 saves and New Jersey prevented Carolina from moving into a playoff spot.