

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## US warships sail near disputed Spratlys

BY WYATT OLSON

*Stars and Stripes*

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Two U.S. Navy warships sailed this week close to disputed islands militarized by Beijing in the South China Sea, the Navy said Monday.

The destroyers USS Spruance and USS Preble passed “within 12 nautical miles” of the Spratly Islands while conducting “freedom of navigation operations,” U.S. Pacific Fleet said in a statement.

The operations came as the U.S. and China were set to begin trade negotiations Tuesday in Beijing.

The operations were conducted “in order to challenge excessive maritime claims and preserve access to the water-

ways as governed by international law,” the statement said.

The South China Sea is a major shipping route, with an estimated \$3 trillion worth of goods passing through the waters each year.

“All operations are designed in accordance with international law and demonstrate that the United States will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows,” the Navy said. “That is true in the South China Sea as in other places around the globe.”

The Navy did not specifically identify what features the destroyers sailed past, but Reuters reported the ships had steamed near Mischief Reef, which is the largest artificial island created by China in the archipelago.

Before China built the island by dredging sand from the sea floor, Mischief Reef was completely underwater and thus regarded by international law as part of the continental shelf of the nearby Philippines.

China has built military outposts throughout the South China Sea on islands also claimed by Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei and the Philippines.

The U.S. has not taken sides in these sovereignty disputes but has been unwavering in its assertions that international maritime law allows ships to sail near these sites.

American ships and aircraft routinely pass through the South China Sea, usually raising China’s ire. U.S. Navy ships

conducted freedom-of-navigation operations near the Paracel Islands in January and the Spratlys last fall.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters Monday in Beijing that China’s navy had “warned off” the Spruance and Preble, according to a Bloomberg report. “We firmly oppose any action to jeopardize the sovereignty and security of countries under the pretext of freedom of navigation,” she said.

Asked by a reporter whether the latest operation would affect trade talks, Hua offered an oblique assessment about U.S. “tricks.”

“I believe you all see through these small tricks by the U.S. side,” she said.

## Space-A flights slated to resume at Aviano on trial basis

BY NORMAN LLAMAS  
AND CHAD GARLAND

*Stars and Stripes*

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — Routine passenger flights to Aviano Air Base are slated to resume this spring, at least temporarily, bringing the possibility of regular space-available travel to the base in Italy more than two years after it was discontinued.

From April to September, U.S. Transportation Command will run a “proof of principle” test of a Patriot Express rotator to and from the base at the foot of the Italian Alps, Air Mobility Command spokesman Capt. Mark Graff said Monday. Depending on the results, the route could become permanent.

A weekly run of the military chartered service from Aviano to Germany was cut in the fall of 2016, after which service-

members on permanent change of station orders and their families had to fly on commercial airlines into and out of Marco Polo International Airport in Venice. The cancellation also brought an end to a regular flight that was nearly free for leisure travelers eligible to fly on a space-available basis.

The proposed test of the service’s return to Aviano is expected to offer a minimum two flights per month, said Maj. Dave Dunn, a spokesman for TRANSCOM. The planned route is from Maryland’s Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, on to Aviano, and ending at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. Return trips follow the route in reverse.

The test, which is the only one TRANSCOM has planned for this year, will be used to

help determine whether the ridership volume justifies permanent reinstatement of the route, Dunn said via email.

“USTRANSCOM will evaluate a possible permanent route once the proof of principle is complete,” he said.

The Patriot Express program has provided flights from the United States to overseas bases since the 1960s but has undergone numerous route changes, cuts and reversals. The program runs about 20 different routes worldwide, Graff said.

The previous Aviano leg let travelers eligible to fly on AMC’s Space-A program hop a flight for the low cost of an international head tax.

Space-A allows military personnel and certain categories of government civilian employees, dependents, veterans and others to fly on military aircraft to selected airfields

on standby when mission and cargo loads allow. It is often billed as a military benefit that lets servicemembers on leave travel the world for almost nothing if they’re both patient and flexible. In 2017, AMC flew some 125,000 Space-A travelers, Graff said.

After the Aviano rotator was cut, the base contracted the Patriot Shuttle bus service to ferry air travelers between Aviano and Marco Polo airport. It’s about an hour’s drive and costs begin at 140 euro, depending on size and the number of vehicles needed.

Space-A seats were also still available from Aviano on C-130 transports to and from Ramstein, but they were less regular and availability was less predictable, officials have said.

Chad Garland reported from Kaiserslautern, Germany.

## USS Essex crew honors Marine lost in Sulu Sea

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

As the USS Essex sailed recently through the Sulu Sea, Marines and sailors on board solemnly paid tribute to one of their own who went overboard in the same body of water in August, the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit said in a Facebook post Tuesday.

Cpl. Jonathan Currier, 21, of New Hampshire, went missing near the Philippines the morning of Aug. 9, prompting a "Marine overboard" call on the amphibious assault ship, a 13th MEU statement said at the time.

The Marines, Navy, Coast Guard and Philippine vessels then looked for Currier through more than 13,000 square nautical miles and more than 300 flight hours before the search ended Aug. 13, according to the statement. He was declared dead Aug. 17.

Marines at the onboard memorial ceremony this week placed personal notes to Currier into an ammunition box that was later dropped into the sea, according to the Facebook post. Photos from the service show sailors and Marines standing side by side, their heads bowed in reverence for the missing corporal.

Currier was a CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter crew chief who enlisted in 2015, the 13th MEU said in August. At the time of his disappearance, he was deployed with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 166 Reinforced with the 13th MEU on the Essex.

A Super Stallion served as the backdrop to the memorial service on the deck of the Essex, according to photos from the event.

Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 166 commander Lt. Col. Charles Bodwell thanked Marines and sailors at the ceremony for their exemplary work done in Currier's honor, according to the 13th MEU post.

"Cpl. Currier was a quiet professional who loved being part of our team and always accomplished the mission at hand," Bodwell said, according to 13th MEU. "I challenged you to finish this deployment in his image, and you did."

Currier attended boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., later graduating from the School of Infantry at Camp Lejeune, N.C.; the Aviation and A&C School in Pensacola, Fla.; and the Center for Naval Aviation Training in Jacksonville, N.C. He was later assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361 at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., the statement said. His awards include the National Defense Service Medal and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, according to the statement.

## Verdict in for petty officer in Calif. crash that killed 4

*The San Diego Union-Tribune*

SAN DIEGO — A jury reached a verdict Monday in the trial for a Navy petty officer who crashed off the San Diego-Coronado Bridge, killing four people in 2016 — but it will not be revealed until Wednesday.

The delay is designed to give family members of the victims time to travel to San Diego.

Defendant Richard Sepolio is charged with several felony counts, including gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, driving under the influence and reckless driving in the Oct. 15, 2016, crash in San Diego. Killed were Cruz Contreras, 52, and his wife, Annamarie Contreras, 50, of Chandler, Ariz., as well as Andre Banks, 49, and his wife, Francine Jimenez, 46, of Hacienda Heights, Calif.

According to authorities, Sepolio was starting to drive across the bridge and was going 81 mph just before he lost control of his pickup.

It launched off the bridge and plunged 40 feet into a park below, crushing vendor booths at the La Raza motorcycle rally, which about 3,000 people were attending.

Witnesses testified that several men

rolled the truck off the victims, then hauled Sepolio out the back pickup window. He was clutching his cellphone and, some witnesses said, smelled of alcohol.

The jury has several options. Some of the counts involve alcohol or negligence; others do not.

The panel began deliberations Jan. 31 and reached its verdict Monday morning.

During the trial, prosecution and defense lawyers presented varying blood-alcohol test results on Sepolio. The defendant testified that he had two alcoholic drinks during a 2½-hour lunch with a colleague from North Island Naval Air Station in Coronado. He said they took an Uber ride back to her South Park apartment and hung out for an hour before he headed home.

Defense lawyer Paul Pfingst said Sepolio was not under the influence when he drove. The attorney said four blood and breath tests, taken later that evening, showed no higher than 0.05 to 0.06 percent blood-alcohol levels. San Diego Deputy District Attorney Cally Bright said one of the test results showed a 0.07 percent to 0.08 percent blood-alcohol level. Even with a lower level, she argued, Sepolio was still considered impaired for driving.

## General Dynamics to revamp Carl Vinson

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy has awarded a \$34.4 million contract to renovate the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson and alter it to accommodate fifth-generation, F-35C Lightning II fighters, according to the Defense Department.

The award to General Dynamics will fund work on the carrier's equipment, hull and systems as it goes into dry dock for scheduled upkeep later this year, according to an announcement Friday.

The contract is good for fiscal year 2019, and the work is expected to be complete by July 2020, according to the Defense Department. The work will be done at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility in Bremerton, Wash.

Part of the renovations include preparations needed to embark an F-35C Lightning II squadron, according to a statement in January by Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. Once finished, the Carl Vinson will be the first aircraft carrier to have F-35Cs.

The ship will also undergo "periodic

maintenance on major components like rudders, shafts and tanks, and will upgrade crew living spaces," according to the shipyard statement.

The Carl Vinson arrived Jan. 20 at its new homeport of Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton, Wash., according to the Navy. It was previously home-ported in San Diego.

In a Navy statement last month, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard commander Capt. Howard Markle said the Bremerton crew is "proud of the service (they have) provided to keep the ship in peak operational condition."

"I and the entire shipyard team are looking forward to supporting Vinson here at the shipyard in 2019, and we're committed to continue to provide her our very best support while she's in our care," he said.

The Carl Vinson was commissioned in 1982 and is expected to be replaced in the 2030s by a yet-to-be-named Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier. That ship, known for now only as CVN 81, is currently being designed, according to the Navy.



# USAF offers bonuses to keep EOD airmen

BY ROSE L. THAYER

*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — The Air Force is offering bonuses up to \$75,000 to entice the top enlisted ranks of explosive ordnance disposal airmen to delay retirement and remain on the job, according to a recent announcement by the Air Force's Personnel Center.

Retaining the experience and knowledge gained from their years on the job will ensure the small career field remains strong, said Capt. Carrie Volpe, a spokeswoman for the Air Force secretary. Because of the field's stressful mission of detecting and disarming bombs and heavy deployment rotation, Volpe said it can be difficult to keep enough senior enlisted EOD airmen to mentor and lead younger ranks.

"The high operational tempo

and combat intensity experienced by the EOD career field make it difficult to stabilize manning at sustainable levels for senior noncommissioned officers," she said. "The experience [senior NCOs] provide is key to executing the Air Force mission by ensuring highly trained and qualified (regular Air Force) airmen for the future."

The bonus amount is \$30,000 for a three-year service agreement, \$50,000 for four years and \$75,000 for five years, according to an Air Force news release. The offer took effect Jan. 29 and can't be authorized retroactively.

Officials set a goal for the incentive to retain about 40 personnel in fiscal year 2019, which ends Sept. 30. Offering the bonuses required an exception to a policy. Typically, selec-

tive retention bonuses are not available to enlisted regular Air Force airmen with more than 20 years of active service or if the airman will complete 24 years of active service before the end of the contract including the bonus, Volpe said.

Retaining the experience of these senior leaders helps ensure the future strength and stability of the Air Force, she said.

EOD is the only occupation where this waiver is available now, and eligible servicemembers can't have served more than 25 years of active duty. About 1,290 of the more than 321,440 active-duty airmen are part of this small career field, based on information from the personnel center. As the Air Force's bomb squad, those airmen are trained to detect, disarm, detonate and dispose of explosive threats all

over the world.

"Promoting younger NCOs may improve manning levels but won't replace the lost experience, which would cause a ripple effect throughout the force for years to come," Volpe said. "Senior NCOs have a wealth of knowledge that comes from their vast experience in both job performance and leadership. Those attributes are vital to train, manage and lead the upcoming airmen entering the EOD career field."

Edgar Holt, re-enlistments program manager at the Air Force's Personnel Center, said this type of bonus is intended to encourage qualified enlisted personnel to re-enlist in areas, such as EOD with this one, where there are retention shortfalls or when there are high training costs associated with losing experienced personnel.

## Abrams: Few military changes in N. Korea

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The top U.S. military commander in South Korea said Tuesday that North Korea has made few, if any, changes to its military posture and has provided no evidence it intends to end its nuclear program since agreeing last summer to do so.

Tensions have eased along the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea since the summit in June between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore, Army Gen. Robert Abrams, the chief of U.S. Forces Korea, told the Senate Armed Services Committee. But Kim's regime has declined to provide proof that they had taken any irreversible steps toward denuclearization, and his forces have continued to conduct "full spectrum" training exercises.

"I remain clear-eyed about the fact that despite the reduction in tensions along the [de-

militarized zone] ... we have observed no significant changes to size, scope or the timing of their ongoing exercises compared to the same time period over the last four years," said Abrams, who took command in South Korea about three months ago. "Further, North Korea's conventional and asymmetric military capabilities, along with their continued development of advanced conventional systems, remain unchecked. These capabilities continue to hold the United States, [South Korea] and our regional allies at risk."

North Korea remains the No. 1 immediate threat to American forces in the Indo-Pacific Command area of operations, said Adm. Philip Davidson, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command chief who testified alongside Abrams on Tuesday.

The observations come just weeks before Trump and Kim are set to meet face-to-face again. That summit is scheduled for Feb. 27 and 28 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

## Inhofe: Troops not leaving Syria or Afghanistan yet

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said Tuesday that he doesn't foresee troops leaving Syria or Afghanistan until conditions on the ground are right.

Inhofe also said he's talked with President Donald Trump on his objections on any time-based withdrawals, and that anyone who claims to have a date of withdrawal doesn't know what they are talking about.

"It should have been conditions on the ground from the beginning for any place where we have troops," Inhofe said during a wide-ranging discussion with reporters on Capitol Hill.

Inhofe also told reporters that acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan won't get the post permanently, and that he's fighting the use of military construction funds for the U.S.-

Mexico border wall and continues to push for a \$750 billion defense budget in the next fiscal year.

On Syria, the senator said, "I think what is going to happen is that we'll leave ample troops in there."

But Inhofe later told reporters that it's possible troops could be withdrawn in the coming year.

The comments add to the back-and-forth saga of when troops might leave Syria and Afghanistan after Trump raised the specter of quick troop withdrawals in both countries in recent months.

On Dec. 19, Trump stunned Capitol Hill and the Pentagon with a decision to withdraw the roughly 2,000 U.S. troops fighting Islamic State in Syria within 30 days. The next day, reports suggested Trump was also planning to draw down 7,000 troops in Afghanistan.

Since that time, former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned and was replaced by Shanahan, his then-deputy.

# Congress nears deal to avoid 2nd shutdown

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — GOP congressional leaders on Tuesday swung behind a hard-won agreement to prevent a new government shutdown and finance construction of more barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border, selling it as a necessary compromise even as some Republicans on the right voice opposition.

It's not clear whether President Donald Trump will support the deal, although GOP negotiators said they were hopeful.

Top Republicans Mitch McConnell in the Senate and Kevin McCarthy in the House

both claimed victory, crowing about Democratic concessions on new border barriers and a late-stage battle over the ability of federal authorities to arrest and detain immigrants living illegally in the U.S.

"You've got to remember where Nancy Pelosi was. She has said, 'No money for a wall.' That's not the case," McCarthy said on CNBC Tuesday morning. "The Democrats have now agreed to more than 55 miles of new barrier."

However, negotiators said it's pretty much the deal that Trump could have gotten in December. Aides revealed details under condition of anonymity because the agreement

is tentative.

Republicans and the White House were desperate to avoid another bruising shutdown. They tentatively agreed Monday night to far less money for Trump's border wall than the White House's \$5.7 billion wish list, settling for a figure of nearly \$1.4 billion, according to congressional aides. The huge funding measure, which combines seven spending bills into one, runs through the fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30.

Details might not be released until Wednesday, but the pact came in time to alleviate any threat of a second partial government shutdown this weekend.

At the White House on Tuesday, spokesman Hogan Gidley was noncommittal, saying: "We want to focus on what's actually in the document. Until we see that, it's going to be very difficult to have a conversation about what we will and won't accept."

The agreement means 55 miles of new fencing — constructed through existing designs such as metal slats instead of a concrete wall — but far less than the 215 miles the White House demanded in December. The fencing would be built in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. It closely mirrors Trump's original budget request from last winter.

## Former astronaut Kelly announces Senate bid

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Retired astronaut Mark Kelly, who rocketed to the national spotlight when his Congresswoman wife Gabrielle Giffords was shot in a failed assassination attempt, announced Tuesday he's running to finish John McCain's last term in the U.S. Senate.

Kelly is a top Democratic recruit to take on Republican Martha McSally in one of the most closely contested Senate races of the 2020 election.

McSally is a former Republican congresswoman who was appointed to McCain's seat last year after she narrowly lost to Democrat Kyrsten Sinema. McSally

leaned heavily on her record as the first woman to fly a combat mission as a fighter pilot, but she was hurt by her embrace of President Donald Trump.

If Kelly is nominated, the race would pit a Navy veteran and astronaut against a trailblazing Air Force pilot in the contest to replace McCain, a legendary Navy flyer who was famously shot down and held captive.

Democrats are eagerly watching the Arizona contest, having already defeated McSally in a Senate race a few months ago.

Kelly and Giffords have for years pushed Congress to enact gun control measures, with little success. They shifted their focus to state legislatures in recent years, help-

ing to strengthen background checks and domestic violence protections, among other modest protections

Gov. Doug Ducey appointed McSally to the vacant Senate seat after his first appointee, former Sen. Jon Kyl, resigned after only a few months in office. The seat is a top target for Democrats because McSally just lost a Senate race in November and Democrats posted a strong showing in the November election, winning three statewide contests and picking up legislative and congressional seats.

The 2020 election will decide who finishes the last two years of McCain's term. The winner would have to run again for a full six-year term in 2022.

## Jury convicts notorious Mexican drug lord 'El Chapo'

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mexico's most notorious drug lord, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, was convicted Tuesday of running an industrial-scale smuggling operation after a three-month trial packed with Hollywood-style tales of grisly killings, political payoffs, cocaine hidden in jalapeno cans, jewel-encrusted guns and a naked escape with his mistress through a tunnel.

Guzman, 61, faced a drum-

beat of drug-trafficking and conspiracy convictions that could put the escape artist behind bars for decades in a maximum-security U.S. prison selected to thwart another one of the breakouts that embarrassed his native country.

New York jurors whose identities were kept secret reached a verdict after deliberating six days, sorting through what authorities called an "avalanche" of evidence gathered since the late 1980s that Guzman and

his murderous Sinaloa drug cartel made billions in profits by smuggling tons of cocaine, heroin, meth and marijuana into the U.S.

Evidence showed drugs poured into the U.S. through secret tunnels or hidden in tanker trucks, concealed in the undercarriage of passenger cars and packed in rail cars passing through legitimate points of entry.

The prosecution's case against Guzman, a roughly 5½-

foot figure whose nickname translates to "Shorty," included the testimony of several turncoats and other witnesses.

One Sinaloa insider testified how Guzman sometimes acted as his own hitman, punishing a Sinaloan who dared to work for another cartel by kidnapping him, beating and shooting him and having his men bury the victim while he was still alive, gasping for air.

The defense case lasted just half an hour.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Phone shows home on fire 1K miles away

**NH** HAMPSTEAD — A New Hampshire man said he saw his house go up in flames on his cellphone while he was nearly 1,000 miles away watching the Super Bowl.

Michael Todesca, of Hampstead, told WMUR-TV he was at a Chicago bar with his girlfriend on Feb. 3 rooting for the New England Patriots when he received a phone alert from his home surveillance system.

Todesca said it looked like a white screen. He didn't think anything of it and put the phone in his pocket. Then a neighbor called to say his home was on fire.

At one point, he talked with firefighters, trying to help them get inside.

## New way to recycle beads at Mardi Gras

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — What to do with all those beads from parades during Carnival season around New Orleans?

Unwanted beads can be tossed at a big truck at the end of parades. The truck operated by the ARC of Greater New Orleans will follow most Metairie parades.

WWL-TV reported Jefferson Parish approved an ordinance allowing people to throw beads at the truck at the end of the parade. The beads will be taken to a center, and employees will repackage and resell the beads.

It's part of ARC's mission to help employ people with developmental disabilities.

## Horse rescued twice in 2 days euthanized

**DE** DELAWARE CITY — A 2,000-pound Clydesdale horse that was res-

cued from a frozen creek and then his own stable in Delaware was put down.

Owner Pam Collacchi told The News Journal that Bubba was euthanized last week.

The Delaware City Fire Company first met Bubba on Feb. 3 when he became mired in near-freezing mud after wandering 25 feet into a creek.

Firefighters were again called the next day after Bubba wedged himself into a corner and couldn't stand.

The vet said Bubba had no feeling in his hind legs and had suffered lung and other damage from being on his side.

## Rescuers take patient to hospital on foot

**MO** MARYLAND HEIGHTS — Suburban St. Louis firefighters gave up on using an ambulance and walked one patient to a hospital on a stretcher after roads became dangerously icy.

KSDK-TV reported that Maryland Heights firefighter Shaylor Taetz and his partner rushed to Interstate 270 after a bus spun around on the highway. Taetz said they had almost reached the bus when their ambulance slid on the ice and hit a guardrail.

The only person on the bus was the driver. They put her on a stretcher, covered her up to keep the sleet off her and walked her about a mile to SSM Health DePaul Hospital.

## Storm brings damage, and snow, to island

**HI** HONOLULU — A strong storm that hit Hawaii knocked out power, brought down tree branches, flooded coastal roads — and even brought snow.

Snow is not unheard of in mountainous parts of the tropical island chain, but officials

say the coating at 6,200 feet at a state park on Maui could mark the lowest-elevation snowfall recorded in the state.

The National Weather Service said gusts hit nearly 70 mph in some areas, and the agency is warning of coastal flooding.

## School receives \$10M donation from couple

**NJ** FRANKLIN LAKES — A New Jersey couple donated \$10 million to the University of Notre Dame, which will rename a college center for them.

Notre Dame said the gift from Anthony and Christie de Nicola, a Franklin Lakes couple, will allow them to expand the reach of the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture.

NorthJersey.com reported Anthony de Nicola is the president and managing partner of Welsh, Carson, Anderson & Stowe, a private New York investment firm, and Christie de Nicola has served on the board of St. Elizabeth Home School Association in Wyckoff.

## Officials warn of rabies exposure

**IN** INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana health officials said people who had contact with a bat last week during an Indiana Pacers game have possibly been exposed to rabies.

The Indiana State Department of Health said anyone who may have touched the bat with bare skin when it flew around at the Pacers game against the Los Angeles Clippers on Thursday in Indianapolis is urged to contact the department or a health care provider about receiving rabies vaccinations.

The department said since the bat is no longer in Bankers Life Fieldhouse, its rabies status is unknown.

## Chase reaches 100 mph in near-blizzard

**IA** CLEAR LAKE — Two men were arrested after police in northern Iowa were led on a chase reaching speeds of more than 100 mph in near-blizzard conditions.

The Mason City Globe Gazette reported the chase happened after a Cerro Gordo County sheriff's deputy tried to stop a car reported as stolen. Officials said the car fled through the town of Clear Lake as high winds whipped up fallen snow and caused blizzardlike conditions before the driver crashed west of Clear Lake.

Police said Jared Scott Schneckloth, 31, of Clear Lake was charged with felony car theft, driving under suspension, speeding 100 mph in a 45 mph zone and several other counts. Passenger Dylan Patrick Dimig, 26, of Schleswig, was charged with misdemeanor interference with official acts.

## Markers donated for horse cemetery

**KY** GEORGETOWN — Old Friends horse farm in Kentucky said a monument company is stepping forward to make sure each retired racehorse buried there is remembered with a headstone.

The farm near Georgetown said it has received a donation from Bardstown-based Kentucky Monument company. The farm said Kentucky Monument has donated three new markers for graves in the farm's horse cemetery.

Old Friends President Michael Blowen said all horses that die at the farm receive a grave marker, but only some receive permanent stone markers because of the expense.

From wire reports

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# Air Force pilot sets sights on Olympics

*The Idaho Statesman*

BOISE, Idaho — Like any great bobsledding story, Dakota Lynch's tale begins in Africa.

OK, so maybe the setting is not typical, but then again, neither is Lynch's path to earning a spot as one of 14 members of the USA national bobsled team.

Lynch serves as a pilot in the Air Force. It was last February during a deployment in Africa that a friend he was serving with noted how he had read a story about Nate Weber, an Army Green Beret who was bobsledding in the Olympics.

Lynch was a star athlete growing up in Boise, and had continued to stay in shape through his military service. His first experience on a sled was in August, and by the end of October he was named to Team USA.

"If this is as far as it goes, sweet, but I of course would like to go to the (2022) Olympics," Lynch said. "It's now in the realm of possibility, which

is really crazy to even think about."

Six months after the seed was planted, Lynch booked his ticket to his first combine in Park City, Utah, the day before the event. He figured he had friends in the area, so if it didn't work, he at least could see them.

Well, it worked out pretty well. He took first place, then attended a rookie camp that coincided with what would have been a fifth deployment, but a friend took his place. Lynch made it worthwhile, moving on to the National Push Championships, then the team trials before making the team as a push athlete. He won two silvers and a gold in his first races at the North American Cup in January in Calgary.

For a pilot who has flown 1,000 combat hours, hurtling down an icy track at 90 mph provides a different kind of rush.

"There's a lot of camaraderie, teamwork, it's an extension

of that," said Lynch, who is the rear pusher on two- and four-man teams. "When you're going into combat, you have to control your reaction, but in this you get to let that adrenaline be unleashed. It's like being in a jet plane with a monkey ripping the controls around, dealing with an angry Mike Tyson."

Lynch's journey would be interesting enough, but there's another twist — the guy who coaches him.

In the fall, Lynch met Nick Cunningham, who competed in the last three Olympics and is an Army National Guard sergeant. Oh, and like Lynch, he's also a Boise State graduate. Though their time at the school overlapped, they had never met one another.

"It's wild how people get into this sport," said Cunningham, who was a sprinter for the Broncos' track and field team. "There's people from all walks of life, but you tell me 10 years after we're in Boise together, we'd meet in upstate New York

bobsledding? It's amazing."

Part of Lynch's next step is turning himself from a raw athlete into a bobsledder. He is stationed in Florida, where there aren't exactly a ton of bobsled runs, so his focus is on developing his sprinting abilities. He hasn't even had an offseason to work on it yet.

Cunningham said the pair quickly became friends with their Boise backgrounds, but he was impressed with more than Lynch's abilities when a crash sidelined the rookie for a few weeks with concussion symptoms.

"We need more guys like him, because it wasn't like he got hurt and we never saw him again — he was out at the track helping the guys who were out there get better," Cunningham said. "He's as green as anyone, but he's fast, he's strong, he's a good teammate and those three components, if you have those, we can work with you. He's a valuable asset, and if he keeps going like he has, he'll go far."

## Hendrick makes statement by sweeping top four spots

*Associated Press*

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Rick Hendrick was telling the truth when he insisted this year was going to be much improved from last season, the worst in team history.

He moved personnel and split up seven-time NASCAR Cup champions Jimmie Johnson and Chad Knaus. He had a Navy SEAL deliver an inspirational speech to all of Hendrick Motorsports, met with all four of his teams and held luncheons and team-building events.

When he sent his teams to Daytona for the 36th time, he sent them to win.

Message delivered.

Hendrick horsepower routed the competition in qualifying for the Daytona 500 with a 1-2-3-4 sweep for Chevrolet. A few hours later, Johnson finally won a race after no victories last season.

Hendrick Motorsports is now 2-for-2 at Speedweeks with the front row for Sunday's season-opening Daytona 500 and Johnson's victory in the exhibition Clash. The proud Hendrick organization is using NASCAR's biggest stage to show how serious the boss is about rebounding from 2018, when Johnson was winless for the first time in his career, Alex Bowman and William Byron had forgettable first seasons, and Chase Elliott's three late victories were among the few bright spots.

"Last year sucked. I ain't gonna do that no more," Hendrick told The Associated Press just one week before his cars left North Carolina for Daytona.

If this was a sequel to "Days of Thunder," with Randy Quaid again playing a version of Hendrick, the car owner might guarantee a Daytona 500 victory. Hendrick, after all, is from

a romantic time in NASCAR when a car salesman from Virginia could scrape together the money to enter the Daytona 500 and turn a fledgling little Chevrolet team into one of the most valuable properties in sports. He still believes that with hard work and the right people, a team can step back and admire a glistening race car, confident that girl is a winner.

Hendrick still has his folksy Southern charm, still longs for those simpler days of racing, still wants to arrive in Daytona knowing his cars are the very best in the field.

So consider Sunday the first day in a new era at Hendrick Motorsports, where Byron and Bowman gave NASCAR its youngest front row in Daytona 500 history by qualifying first and second. Byron recently turned 21 and begins his second season with Knaus, who split with Johnson after 17

years.

Knaus made a statement in 2002 when he and Johnson debuted at Daytona and won the pole in their first race together. He opened this chapter of his career the same way: winning the pole with Byron in their first race together at the Daytona 500.

It was the fifth consecutive year a Hendrick car has won the pole for the Daytona 500 and it was the 700th pole for Chevrolet, the only partner Hendrick has had in racing. As Hendrick last season worked through a massive personnel consolidation, Chevrolet struggled with its NASCAR introduction of the Camaro and won just four of 36 Cup races.

Rolling off the trucks as the four fastest cars for the Daytona 500 was an important message for the carmaker and its flagship team.



## Top 25 roundup

## Guy helps No. 4 Cavs rally past Tar Heels

Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Virginia's halftime lead was gone. North Carolina was pushing further ahead. And the Cavaliers were committing so many turnovers that coach Tony Bennett's frustration bubbled over in the huddle.

Yet Kyle Guy, Ty Jerome and the rest of the fourth-ranked Cavaliers handled everything — dwindling clock, angry coach, powerful opponent and hostile crowd — with veteran poise.

Guy's back-to-back three-pointers in the final two minutes helped the Cavaliers beat the eighth-ranked Tar Heels 69-61 on Monday night, and Virginia remained near the top of the Atlantic Coast Confer-

ence standings after a weekend loss to No. 2 Duke.

Guy and De'Andre Hunter each scored 20 points for the Cavaliers (21-2, 9-2), who had less than 48 hours to regroup from the loss to the Blue Devils before visiting a UNC team that hadn't lost in nearly a month.

"Our guys knew what they had to do," Bennett said. "They responded. It wasn't perfect. I told them, 'This isn't about winning or losing.' I said, 'This is an important game to get back to what we need to do.'"

The Cavs certainly looked like themselves: efficient on both ends of the floor. The offense hummed along by shooting 53 percent, including 11-for-20 on three-pointers, and Virginia didn't turn it over

in the final 12 minutes.

The defense, aside from surrendering one fearsome second-half flurry, made the Tar Heels (19-5, 9-2) work for just about everything while keeping them out of transition. After allowing Duke to shoot 58 percent and make 13 of 21 three-pointers Saturday, Virginia held UNC to 35-percent shooting and just 9-for-30 (30 percent) from three-point range.

It all helped Virginia rally from seven down in the final eight minutes and avoid its first losing streak of any kind in two years.

"There's no excuses," said Jerome, who had 15 points and 11 assists. "I told the team before the game, 'I don't care if we played Duke Saturday, I

don't care if we're on the road today.' Every game we come out and we expect to win, no matter where we are and who we're playing against."

**No. 14 Kansas 82, TCU 77 (OT):** Devon Dotson scored 25 points, including six free throws in the final 40 seconds of overtime, and Kansas beat host TCU for its second win in a row while starting four freshmen.

After blowing a 12-point lead in the second half, the Jayhawks (19-6, 8-4 Big 12) never trailed in overtime. They broke the final tie on K.J. Lawson's jumper with 1:09 left before Dotson sealed it at the free-throw line.

## Browns sign Hunt, say RB deserves 2nd chance

Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — The lasting visual of Kareem Hunt's second NFL season wasn't him stiff-arming a linebacker, shedding a tackle or barreling over a cornerback at the goal line for a touchdown.

It was Hunt pushing a young woman and then kicking her while she was defenseless on the floor.

That moment caught on a surveillance camera mortified the sports world and led to the Kansas City Chiefs parting ways with one of their best players, a move universally admired.

The Cleveland Browns found it offensive as well. However, they also believe it was a random act by a good-hearted young man who feels remorseful and deserves another chance.

On Monday, the Browns, who seemed to finally emerge from years of gloom, doom and dysfunction by winning seven games behind rookie quarterback Baker Mayfield this past season, signed Hunt to a one-year contract.

The shocking signing came while the league continues to investigate Hunt's behavior in an incident that took place in a downtown hotel lobby last February. It came just weeks after Cleveland's turnaround season following an 0-16 calamity that resulted in the hiring of new coach

Freddie Kitchens, whose appointment created more momentum for a franchise that has spent the last 20 years spinning its wheels.

The Browns feel they're doing the right thing. Time will tell. Hunt remains on the commissioner's exempt list and could receive a significant suspension.

General manager John Dorsey, who drafted Hunt in the third round in 2017 while he was with Kansas City, said the decision to sign the 23-year-old was rooted in his Christian faith. Hunt has shown contrition, sought counseling and treatment, and vowed to never make the same mistake.

That's enough for Dorsey, who said nothing is guaranteed and that he will have zero tolerance for further wrongdoings by Hunt.

"You guys always hear me talk about men of character," he told reporters, who met with the GM in a conference room for 25 minutes not long after the team announced Hunt's signing. "I'll stand by that. I see a lot of men of character who commit egregious acts. But at the end of the day, they learn from those acts, moved forward and became better people. Again, I believe in second chances."

Dorsey was adamant that the Browns completed a "thorough" investigation — the league's inquiry is still not complete — before signing Hunt and that owners Dee and Jimmy Haslam approved the decision

to add another troubled player (see Johnny Manziel, Josh Gordon) to Cleveland's roster.

However, Dorsey said the team's diligence did not include speaking with the woman seen on the tape.

Later, standing in the lobby of the team's headquarters in front of a generic backdrop and not one that would typically feature one of the team's corporate sponsors, Dorsey was asked what his message would be to any female employees of the Browns.

"I think we're all appalled by it. It is an egregious act," he said. "We all understand that. But after doing our research, extensive research, analyzing the situation, we came to the conclusion that, you know what, I am willing to help a man from a second chance moving forward to be a better person, and that's all you can ask for in society, and that's all I'm trying to do."

Hunt released a statement saying he regretted his actions and vowed to change.

"I also understand the expectations that the Browns have clearly laid out and that I have to earn my way back to the NFL," he said. "I'm a work in progress as a person, but I'm committed to taking advantage of the support systems that I have in place to become the best and healthier version of myself."

## NBA roundup

## Westbrook sets triple-double record

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Chalk up another triple-double record for Russell Westbrook.

Westbrook set an NBA record with his 10th straight triple-double, Paul George scored 47 points, and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Portland Trail Blazers 120-111 on Monday night.

Westbrook broke a tie with Wilt Chamberlain, who had nine straight triple-doubles in 1968, by finishing with 21 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists. Westbrook already was the only person to average a triple-double in consecutive seasons, and he set the single-season record for triple-doubles with 42 in 2016-17.

He downplayed this record while still showing respect for Chamberlain.

"I just go play the game the right way," he said. "It's what I do. Go out and compete every night and leave it on the floor, and whatever happens, happens. I'm very, very blessed to be able to go out and play, and I

don't take it for granted."

Westbrook clinched the record on an assist to George for a three-pointer with 3:52 remaining in the fourth quarter.

"I thought he had it already," George joked. "Usually, Russ has that by the first quarter. I didn't know it was that close."

It was Westbrook's 23rd triple-double of the season and the 127th of his career. Most important to the Thunder, the team has a 9-1 record during his triple-double run.

"I do know the most important thing for him is to win," Thunder coach Billy Donovan said. "That's what he's about. He wants to win. I think a lot of the things he does that he gets attention for in terms of the triple-doubles are things that impact winning for our team."

George had 12 rebounds and 10 assists for the third triple-double of his career. Rookie Deonte Burton had a career-high 18 points and Raymond Felton added a season-high 15 for the Thunder.

**Rockets 120, Mavericks 104:** James Harden scored

31 points for his 30th straight 30-point game despite dealing with a shoulder injury, leading host Houston over Dallas.

Harden, who had eight rebounds and seven assists, seemed to be a bit slowed early by the strained left shoulder that he injured on Saturday against Oklahoma City, making just one of his first seven shots. But he warmed up after that and finished 9-for-23, capped by his sixth three-pointer with less than a minute left to put him over 30 and keep the streak going.

**Cavaliers 107, Knicks 104:** Collin Sexton scored 20 points and host Cleveland held off a late rally and sent New York to its franchise-record 17th straight loss.

**Raptors 127, Nets 125:** Kawhi Leonard banked home the tiebreaking basket with 4.2 seconds remaining and host Toronto edged Brooklyn.

Leonard scored 30 points, Serge Ibaka had 18 points and 12 rebounds and Pascal Siakam scored 17 for the Raptors, who have won eight straight home

meetings with the Nets.

**Bucks 112, Bulls 99:** Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 29 points and had 17 rebounds, Eric Bledsoe added 19 points and visiting Milwaukee outlasted pesky Chicago.

**Nuggets 103, Heat 87:** Denver snapped a three-game skid by beating visiting Miami behind 23 points and 12 rebounds from Nikola Jokic and 20 points from Malik Beasley.

**Pistons 121, Wizards 112:** Andre Drummond had 32 points and 17 rebounds, and host Detroit extended its winning streak to four with a victory over Washington.

**Pacers 99, Hornets 90:** Myles Turner scored 16 points and Thaddeus Young added 11 points and eight rebounds to help host Indiana hold on to beat Charlotte.

**Timberwolves 130, Clippers 120:** Derrick Rose and Jeff Teague gave a beleaguered backcourt a needed boost and lifted host Minnesota over Los Angeles.

## NHL roundup

## Murray makes 50 saves as Penguins put away Flyers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Matt Murray guzzled a sports drink through part of his postgame interview. It's not surprising the Pittsburgh Penguins goalie needed to rehydrate after such an intense outing.

Murray made a career-high 50 saves and Sidney Crosby had a goal and an assist to lead the Penguins to a 4-1 victory over the Philadelphia Flyers on Monday night.

"When you're out there, you don't really think about that," Murray said of the shot total. "You just do what you can to try to stop the puck."

Jake Guentzel and Nick

Bjugstad also scored and Kris Letang had an empty-netter for the Penguins, who snapped a four-game losing streak while winning for just the fourth time in 12 games. Pittsburgh entered holding the final wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

Murray was a wall for the Penguins, withstanding an offensive flurry by Philadelphia that included a franchise-record 28 shots in the second period.

"He was great, especially in the second period," coach Mike Sullivan said. "That's the type of game he's capable of."

Jakub Voracek scored for Philadelphia, which lost for just

the second time in 11 games. The Flyers now stand eight points behind the Penguins.

**Capitals 6, Kings 4:** Evgeny Kuznetsov had two goals and two assists to lead host Washington over Los Angeles.

Alex Ovechkin scored his NHL-leading 38th goal and had two assists and Brett Connolly, Christian Djoos and Jakub Vrana scored for the Capitals, who won for the third time in four games.

Kings goalie Jonathan Quick allowed six goals on 31 shots behind some uneven defense. Austin Wagner scored twice and Tyler Toffoli and Oscar Fantenberg had goals for Los

Angeles, which went 3-2-1 on its six-game trip.

**Sharks 7, Canucks 2:** Evander Kane scored twice, leading visiting San Jose past Vancouver.

The victory moves San Jose into first place in the Western Conference and extends the Sharks' winning streak to six games.

Timo Meier, Melker Karlsson, Tomas Hertl, Kevin Lebanc and Joe Pavelski also scored for the Sharks. Martin Jones had 25 saves.

Bo Horvat and Derrick Pouliot scored for Vancouver. Mike DiPietro stopped 17 of 24 shots in his NHL debut.