

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Survey finds toxic base housing

The Washington Post

For thousands of servicemembers and their families, military housing is decrepit, dangerous and inescapable, according to survey results released Wednesday by an armed services advisory organization.

The grievances paint a picture of slum-like conditions at bases across the United States, including black mold, lead, infestations of vermin, flooding, radon and faulty wiring.

Tenants say their complaints have been met with resistance, and in some cases threats from property management companies and commanders to silence them. Some families say their children have been sickened by toxic living conditions but feel there is no recourse; respondents suggested they cannot withhold rent payments as leverage for improvements.

The survey was conducted by the Military Family Advisory Network after a 2018

Reuters investigation sparked congressional inquiries. In the seven days the survey was available, the organization said it received a cascade of more than 16,000 respondents eager to express simmering frustrations.

More than half of the respondents, 56 percent, reported a “negative” or “very negative” opinion of their living conditions, which the group concluded showed a “systemic problem” that defies location, rank and branch of service.

“No one should be worried about their safety in their own home,” said Shannon Raszadin, the executive director of the Military Family Advisory Network.

In 1996, the Pentagon reported to Congress that federally run housing was so neglected it posed the risk of “collapsing the force.” Privatization began the same year under the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, created specifically to address

poor living conditions and the shortage of “quality affordable private housing.”

Contractors moved in to absorb reconstruction costs in exchange for the steady flow of income from 50-year leases.

Since then, 99 percent of on-base housing has been privatized. But families were not as happy as shareholders. A 2015 Pentagon inspector general report found “pervasive” health and safety hazards at military homes operated by such companies, and the IG blamed poor maintenance and oversight.

About 15 private real estate companies partner with the Army, Air Force and Navy to manage about 200,000 units, a Reuters investigation found, but the Pentagon has not said how much of housing stipends paid to troops flow to the companies as rent payments. Reuters estimated it was \$3.9 billion in 2018 alone.

Admiral defends Navy after sea disasters

The Washington Post

The top U.S. military official in the Pacific defended the Navy on Tuesday concerning two collisions at sea that combined killed 17 sailors, saying that “the fact of the matter is 280-odd other ships weren’t having collisions.”

The comments by Adm. Phil Davidson came during questioning at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing after he said the Navy’s senior leadership feels “an immense amount of accountability” for disasters involving the USS Fitzgerald and USS John S. McCain. The ships collided with commercial vessels about two months apart in the summer of 2017, with the sailors drowning inside flooded compartments.

Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, asked Davidson, who oversaw

the Navy’s investigation of the disasters, about the recent publication of investigative reports by ProPublica in which former senior defense officials said Navy leaders had ignored pleas for help to make sure sailors were appropriately trained and ships were well-maintained. The senator appeared to take exception to Davidson’s remarks.

“Airplanes are landing all over America, and just because they aren’t all crashing doesn’t mean they don’t need a high level of maintenance,” King said. “To tell me that isn’t very convincing.”

“I think it had been 40 years since we’ve had collisions of this nature? Are you saying that there were failures that led to these collisions because there were 280 ships that didn’t have collisions? Isn’t that the

standard? No collisions?”

King called the collisions “avoidable tragedies” and asked for specific data about the certification of sailors to deploy, maintenance aboard ships, training and staffing levels.

Davidson said the suggestion that there isn’t transparency about the Navy’s readiness “is appalling” and that he testified before Congress in 2016 about what it took to keep deploying under difficult circumstances. The admiral performed a review that led to 58 recommendations, Davidson said, “and the Navy is moving out on those recommendations” to improve the situation.

Davidson also repeated a frequent warning from Pentagon officials that China continues to erode the U.S. military advantage in the Pacific region.

The Pentagon’s financial investments last year helped, he said, but more is necessary in each of the next two budgets, he said.

“I don’t want to give the impression that last year’s budget is necessarily putting us on the track to regain that advantage,” he said.

One new option on the table could be intermediate ballistic missiles. The Trump administration announced this month that it will withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty with Russia, allowing the United States to pursue arms that it says China and Russia already are pursuing.

Davidson said about 95 percent of the ballistic missiles built by China, which was not a party to the treaty, would violate it.

Female Viper demo team chief relieved of command

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Air Force Capt. Zoe Kotnik, the first female F-16 pilot to lead the service's Viper demonstration team, was relieved of command Monday, just two weeks after taking the team's reins, officials said Tuesday.

Col. Derek O'Malley, the commander of the 20th Fighter Wing, removed Kotnik from her position after losing confidence in her ability to lead and command the demonstration team, which showcases the newest model of F-16V fighter jets at airshows throughout the country, according to an Air Combat Command statement.

O'Malley attempted to explain his decision in a social media post on the Shaw Air Force Base's Facebook page.

"We have thousands of airmen across our Air Force serving our country, and not one of

them is perfect," he wrote. "As good people, like Capt. Kotnik make mistakes, I want them to have the opportunity to learn from them without being under public scrutiny, and to continue to be a part of this great service. They'll be better for the experience, and in turn, we'll be better as an Air Force."

O'Malley acknowledged Kotnik's removal would be tough on her, but he said she was "surrounded by wingmen [who] will help her every step of the way."

Capt. Alannah Staver, a spokeswoman for the 20th Fighter Wing, which is based at Shaw, in South Carolina, declined to provide additional information.

She has been replaced by Maj. John Waters, who previously commanded the demonstration team, Staver said. The team's first scheduled performance for 2019 is March 30 and 31 at Naval Air Station Key

West in Florida.

"The Viper demonstration team is working to minimize impacts on scheduled performances and looks forward to inspiring crowds around the country during their upcoming season," Staver said.

Kotnik's selection to lead the Viper team on Jan. 29 garnered significant attention on social media and in the news, as the Air Force featured her in comic book-style imagery, evoking advertising for the upcoming movie "Captain Marvel." The film is set to premiere March 8 and features Brie Larson in the role of the titular superhero, whose alter ego Carol Danvers is an Air Force F-16 pilot.

Kotnik — call sign SiS — is a 2011 Air Force Academy graduate who has flown F-16s with the 35th Fighter Squadron at Kunsan Air Base in South Korea and the 55th Fighter Squadron at Shaw, according to her official biography.

Judge airs concerns in SEAL's murder case

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A military judge on Tuesday asked the Navy to address claims that allegations from a potential government witness were being leaked to the media in the case of a SEAL charged with murder in the 2017 death of an Iraqi war prisoner.

The judge, Capt. Aaron Rugh, said the leaks are "disconcerting" because violating a protective order could taint the jury, affect testimony and affect whether Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher, 39, receives a fair trial. He said the government has "all the power to investigate."

The Navy says it is investigating and has limited the number of people who have access to the information to stop the leaks.

Defense attorney Phil Stackhouse said the Navy Times received a letter from an attorney representing one of the SEALs expected to testify for the prosecution that detailed his potential testimony. The report came around the same time Stackhouse was given the letter by the prosecution.

The Navy Times reported over the weekend that an officer in Gallagher's chain of command has said Gallagher called in "false target coordinates to engage a mosque" during their 2017 deployment in Iraq, tried to start unnecessary firefights with insurgents and was so mentally unstable the officer feared the platoon was at risk.

A second letter from another attorney representing a SEAL was also obtained by the Navy Times. The attorney said the SEAL described how Gallagher threatened former members of the SEAL team and their families.

The trial is set to begin Feb. 20.

US to boost Poland military presence

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. will deploy hundreds more troops to Poland in a push to further boost its military presence in a region where the Pentagon already has thousands of servicemembers conducting operations, America's top diplomat in the country said.

U.S. Ambassador to Poland Georgette Mosbacher said the increase will be "significant."

"It passes the ... hundreds mark," Mosbacher told the Financial Times on Wednesday.

Mosbacher stopped short of saying whether the move involves setting up a permanent military base in the country, but she suggested future de-

ployments will be rotational. Warsaw has lobbied for a permanent U.S. base and more ground troops, offering \$2 billion to help fund the idea.

The Pentagon wants a "more agile, more rotating, rather than where you have physical hospitals and homes and you bring your families," Mosbacher told the newspaper. "But in terms of a presence that is undeniable and a large number of American troops here, that's a given. And I think [the Poles are] going to get most of what they want."

The U.S. already has roughly 4,000 troops in Poland. In addition to an armored brigade on rotation, infantrymen guard Poland's border with the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and a U.S. Air Force detachment

operates in Lask. The Navy also has a contingent of sailors in the northern Polish town of Redzikowo, where work continues on a missile defense site that integrates with systems in Romania and at sea.

This week, Vice President Mike Pence is in Warsaw for a summit on security in the Middle East. During his visit he was expected to discuss U.S. military relations with Poland and security in Europe.

Meanwhile, acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan was in Brussels on Wednesday for talks with NATO defense ministers. Among the topics being reviewed are efforts to bolster alliance defenses in Europe amid concerns about a more aggressive Russia.

Brit carrier's 1st mission includes US jets

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

The HMS Queen Elizabeth, the United Kingdom's newest aircraft carrier, will make its debut operational mission this year with a complement of U.S. fighter jets, British Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson announced this week.

The Queen Elizabeth will carry both British and American F-35 Lightning II fighter jets on upcoming patrols, Williamson said during a speech Monday at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies.

Williamson said the mission will include a patrol through the Pacific Ocean, where the U.S. has been conducting freedom-of-navigation operations within 12 nautical miles of the Spratly and Paracel island groups in the South China Sea, both claimed by China.

"The first operational mission of HMS Queen Elizabeth will include the Mediterranean, Middle East and the Pacific — making Global Britain a reality," Williamson said, according to the U.K. Ministry of Defense.

In January, the U.S. and British navies conducted their first joint military exer-

cise in the South China Sea since Beijing began militarizing islands and reefs there. The destroyer USS McCampbell and the frigate HMS Argyll worked together Jan. 11-16, 7th Fleet officials said at the time.

The navies "conducted communication drills, division tactics and a personnel exchange designed to address common maritime security priorities, enhance interoperability and develop relationships that will benefit both navies for many years to come," according to a 7th Fleet statement.

Interoperability refers to a country's ability to use another military's equipment and training methods.

The Navy, the Royal Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force also worked together on an anti-submarine warfare exercise Dec. 21-22 in the Pacific.

Britain has shown increased interest in the Pacific over the past year, conducting a freedom-of-navigation operation in the region in August when the amphibious assault ship HMS Albion sailed near the Paracel island chain, irking China. It was the first time for the U.K. to complete such a mission in the South China Sea in recent history.

Williamson during his speech Monday also spoke about the importance of the U.K.'s alliance with the United States.

"Our relationship with the United States will continue to be one of the closest," Williamson said, according to the institute. "There are also opportunities for Britain to lead and bring alliances together. We should look at doing that increasingly in the years ahead."

After Williamson's speech, acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Pat Shanahan in a Twitter post said Williamson has "determined leadership and lucid vision," and his speech highlighted Britain's "global presence, more mass and increased lethality."

"The UK's global leadership, underpinned by a capable military, makes the world safer for the US and our allies," Shanahan tweeted. "I look forward to discussing with Gavin Williamson this vision, our strong U.K.-U.S. relationship, and our firm commitment to NATO, this week at the NATO Defense Minister's meetings."

Information about when the HMS Queen Elizabeth will deploy was not available Wednesday.

Searchers find wreck of WWII-era carrier

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

Searchers have found the wreck of the World War II-era aircraft carrier USS Hornet, which played a role in the famed Doolittle Raid on Tokyo and the pivotal Battle of Midway.

The wreckage was discovered in late January by the crew of the research vessel Petrel more than 3 miles beneath the surface of waters near the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific Ocean where it sank in October 1942.

"We had the Hornet on our list of WWII warships that we wanted to locate because of its place in history as a (capital) carrier that saw many pivotal moments in naval battles," Robert Kraft — director of subsea operations for Vulcan Inc., the private company overseeing the Petrel's excursions — said in a statement.

The Petrel's continuing search missions are among the many activities funded by Paul Allen, a co-founder of Microsoft who died in October.

"Paul Allen was particularly interested in aircraft carriers, so this was a discovery that honors his memory," Kraft said.

The ship appears well-preserved in photographs, among them one of the ship's 5-inch guns, a blast-hole in the hull.

The Hornet sank during the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands after a devastating assault from Japanese dive-bombers, torpedo planes and two destroyers.

One hundred-forty sailors of a crew of almost 2,200 died in the attack. The 10-person expedition team on the 250-foot research boat found the Hornet's position about 17,500 feet below the surface.

Cobra Gold exercise kicks off in Thailand

BY CARLOS M. VAZQUEZ II

Stars and Stripes

One of the world's largest and longest-running international military exercises officially began this week in Thailand.

The 38th annual Cobra Gold exercise, scheduled to run through Feb. 22, is co-sponsored by the Royal Thai and U.S. armed forces. They are joined by another 27 nations, including Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea and Singapore. China and India participate in civic-action parts of the exercise.

"The benefits of Cobra Gold have been clearly demonstrated through the past years," said Peter Haymond, the interim charge d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, during the opening ceremony at Akatotsarot Camp in the northern province of Phitsanulok, Thailand.

Its organizers say Cobra Gold is the largest annual Asia-Pacific military exercise. Its stated goals are to improve the capabilities of participating nations to plan operations and conduct them together, build relationships and enhance maritime security and response to natural disasters.

Haymond was joined by Gen. Pornpipat Benyasri, the Thai chief of defense forces, and Lt. Gen. Gary Volesky, U.S. Army I Corps commander.

Haymond said the exercise improved the participating nations' response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Indonesia, the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and the 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

Approximately 4,500 U.S. personnel are participating this year.

Trump expected to sign funding deal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Under mounting pressure from his own party, President Donald Trump appears to be grudgingly leaning toward accepting an agreement that would head off a threatened second government shutdown but provide just a fraction of the money he's been demanding for his Mexican border wall.

Trump said Tuesday he would need more time to study the plan, but he also declared that he was not expecting another shutdown this weekend when funding for parts of the government would run out. He also strongly signaled he planned to scrounge up additional dollars for the wall by raiding other

federal coffers to deliver on the signature promise of his presidential campaign.

"I can't say I'm happy. I can't say I'm thrilled," Trump said of the proposed deal. "But the wall is getting built, regardless. It doesn't matter because we're doing other things beyond what we're talking about here."

Trump sounded more accepting in a Tuesday night tweet, thanking "all Republicans for the work you have done in dealing with the Radical Left on Border Security."

Accepting the deal, worked out by congressional negotiators from both parties, would be a disappointment for a president who has repeatedly insisted he needs \$5.7 billion

for a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border, saying the project is paramount for national security.

Trump turned down a similar deal in December, forcing the 35-day partial shutdown. There is little appetite in Washington for a repeat.

Lawmakers tentatively agreed to a deal that would provide nearly \$1.4 billion for border barriers and keep the government funded for the rest of the fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30.

Filling in the details has taken some time, as is typical, and aides reported Wednesday that the measure had hit some snags, though they doubted they would prove fatal.

White House press secre-

tary Sarah Sanders said the president was awaiting a final version.

"We want to see the final piece of legislation, and we'll make a determination at that point," she said Wednesday.

The agreement would allow 55 miles of new fencing — constructed using existing designs such as metal slats — but far less than the 215 miles the White House demanded in December. The fencing would be built in Texas' Rio Grande Valley.

Full details were not expected to be released until later Wednesday as lawmakers worked to translate their verbal agreement into legislation.

Army civilian says he 'fought like hell' during home invasion

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

The 41-year-old former Air Force major was reading a Sunday night bedtime story to his 5-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter when the doorbell rang.

Nighttime visitors were unheard of for the American family, who moved from Albuquerque, N.M., to Landstuhl, Germany, only four months ago and were still getting to know people. It was dark downstairs and he couldn't see who was at the door, but he heard a muffled voice.

"Stupidly, I opened the door," said the American, who contacted Stars and Stripes to describe his version of events and asked not to be identified by name for safety reasons. "They all rushed me."

In an instant, the American said he was in a fight for his and his family's lives. The confrontation lasted less than 10 minutes. One of the home invaders would later die of stab wounds. Now, the family of five is in protective custody, worried about possible recriminations from the attackers, some of whom are on the loose.

Meanwhile, the former major, who now works as an Army civilian employee, is being investigated by German prosecutors over whether he used excessive force in the fight.

In Germany, a conviction for causing death by bodily harm typically carries a prison term of no less than three years. German officials typically weigh whether force used was necessary for self-defense

when deciding whether to prosecute.

But while the American is anxious about the outcome of the probe, he said the circumstances gave him no choice but to fight with force.

After he opened the door, a fight ensued as the American battled against the four men pushing into the house.

"I was trying to keep them at the door," he said.

His wife, who had been tending to their infant upstairs, began walking downstairs when he screamed to call the police. The other children also were upstairs looking down as the men stormed in.

As the wife turned to run back up the stairs, one of the invaders slipped past and chased her.

"The whole time I am swinging," he said. "I am pounding on anybody and everything that comes near me. I just fought like hell. I don't know how I got the three guys back out the door."

He then dashed to the kitchen, grabbed a knife off the drain board and charged upstairs screaming, "Where is he?"

The invader had pinned the wife down and was smothering her with one hand on her neck, the American said.

During the melee, their 5-year-old boy looked for a place to hide.

"He had seen one guy get past me," the American said. He took his sister and hid under the bed. "I am amazed he had that in him."

Now armed with a knife, the father

charged upstairs.

"I can see him coming at me as soon as I get to the top of the stairs," he said. "We collided in the doorway, scuffled right there in the door and into the hall at the top of the stairs. I think I got three stabs on him."

The invader then ran down the stairs. Concerned that he would let in the three other culprits, the American said he attacked as he chased after the man. The culprit managed to make it out the door, which shut before anyone could come back in.

At 7:49 p.m., the call was made to German police who were on the scene in minutes.

The burglars fled by car but stopped in the village of Krickenbach, about 10 miles southeast of Landstuhl, German police said. They laid the 43-year-old injured man on the sidewalk. One of the suspects, the older brother of the injured man, asked a witness to call for medical help, officials said.

The wounded man died at the scene from blood loss related to puncture wounds, investigators said, citing an autopsy result. His 51-year-old brother was arrested and charged with attempted robbery. Both brothers are German nationals, the police said.

Police continue to search for the other two suspects who fled.

Now, German prosecutors say legal protocol means they must investigate.

"What I am being ... investigated for is excessive use of force in the situation," the father said. "I haven't met with anyone on the prosecution side yet."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Rare monkey taken from zoo recovered

FL WEST PALM BEACH — Police in Florida have found Kali, a 12-year-old rare monkey stolen from the Palm Beach Zoo.

West Palm Beach police said on Twitter on Wednesday morning that “Kali is home!”

Zoo President and CEO Margo McKnight said in a news release detectives brought the Goeldi’s monkey back to the zoo just before midnight and she appeared to be in good condition.

A zookeeper discovered the monkey missing early Monday.

Argument over music leads to fatal stabbing

MA NEW BEDFORD — Authorities said a dispute over the volume of music led to a fatal stabbing inside a Massachusetts home.

The Standard-Times reported that William Macomber was held without bail after pleading not guilty to murder at his arraignment Monday.

Police allege Macomber, 55, stabbed Steven Doyle, 27, in the New Bedford home where they both rented rooms just after midnight Sunday. Police said the men got into a fight because Macomber was trying to sleep and complained that Doyle was playing music too loud.

Macomber claimed self-defense, saying he was in his room when Doyle kicked in the door and began to attack him.

Officer rescues doe trapped in storm drain

KS OLATHE — Authorities said a doe was rescued after being found trapped in a storm drain in suburban Kansas City.

Police in Olathe said in a Face-

book post that someone saw the animal Saturday while walking a dog. The post described the doe as “very agitated and in distress.” The department estimated it had been in the hole for about a week.

A video shows an animal control officer reaching a long pole with a loop on the end into the open manhole and pulling out the doe. After emerging, the doe bounds into a wooded area.

Newborn abandoned in frigid temperatures

CA MADERA — A newborn girl with her umbilical cord still attached was found by a newspaper carrier in the middle of a rural road before dawn in near-freezing temperatures. Authorities are seeking the mother.

Sheriff’s officials said a man walking about 4:30 a.m. Monday was approached by a woman in a white SUV who asked him to take her baby. He refused and suggested she take the newborn to a fire station or hospital.

KFSN-TV reported that the hours-old baby was wearing only a onesie when the newspaper carrier, Aurelio Fuentes, found her a short time later.

The child was hospitalized in good condition and is expected to fully recover.

4 charged for drawing penises on photos

FL MIAMI — Four fired Miami firefighters were charged with criminal mischief for their roles in drawing penises on another firefighter’s family photos.

The case drew national attention because a noose was also found at the scene, just as Hurricane Irma was bearing down on Florida in September 2017.

The Miami Herald reported that none of the men are being

charged in connection with the noose, which was placed over the framed family photos belonging to Robert S. Webster, a black firefighter. That’s because detectives never proved who placed the noose there or why.

The ex-firefighters are Harold Santana, Kevin Meizoso, Justin Rumbaugh and Alejandro Sese.

Police: Man built pipe bombs in his home

NJ MIDDLESEX — Police in New Jersey said a man faces charges of detonating a bomb and having bombs in his home.

Police said Joseph Colucci, 59, admitted to police that he detonated a pipe bomb near a bridge in Middlesex on Oct. 18, 2017. NJ.com reported the detonation resulted in a cloud of smoke and an explosion noise that prompted residents to call police.

The Middlesex County Prosecutor’s Office said police were at Colucci’s home for an “emergency aid call” when they spoke to the suspect and discovered two pipe bombs and bomb-making material including gun powder.

Oldest known wild bird hatches chick

HI HONOLULU — Federal wildlife officials said the world’s oldest known wild bird has become a mother again at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported the Laysan albatross named Wisdom hatched a chick earlier this month at the atoll northwest of Hawaii.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials said Wisdom is at least 68 years old and has raised at least 31 chicks.

Wisdom and her mate,

Akeakamai, have been returning to the atoll to lay and hatch eggs since 2006. Laysan albatrosses mate for life and lay one egg per year.

Mom scouting date for son draws ire

MD TOWSON — It’s almost Valentine’s Day, and at Towson University in Maryland, a mother has been trying so hard to find a date for her son that police are concerned.

The Baltimore Sun reported that a woman in her 50s wearing a multicolored scarf approached students in two campus buildings last week, showing them a picture on her cellphone and asking if they would date her son.

After receiving multiple complaints from the mother’s picks, campus police issued an “incident advisory” that included a link to pictures of the woman so she might be identified.

University officials said the woman isn’t being sought for a criminal investigation but they do want the third-party propositioning to stop.

Officials: Most birds survived business fire

SC AWENDAW — Fire officials said most of the exotic birds survived when a blaze started at a bird breeding business on the South Carolina coast.

News outlets reported the fire was reported at Delorce’s Bird Barn in Awendaw about 25 miles northeast of Charleston.

Awendaw-McClellanville Fire Battalion Chief Michael Bowers said there were between 200 and 400 birds in the building when the fire started.

The owner told reporters that some birds had died in the fire.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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Not many Murrays in specialization era

Associated Press

Kyler Murray has chosen football over baseball, at least for now. It is anyone's guess when the world will see another athlete with the skills and opportunity to have such a choice.

The Oakland Athletics selected Murray ninth overall in the Major League Baseball draft last June. He then went out and won the Heisman Trophy in his only year as Oklahoma's starting quarterback, declared for the NFL Draft last month and picked the NFL over MLB on Monday.

Few athletes have positioned themselves to have such dynamic options. And in this age of youth sports specialization, it could become rarer still.

Deion Sanders played pro football and baseball, and "Prime Time" has a special place in his heart for athletes who excel at a high level in both sports. He wishes more young men had the same opportunities as Murray, but laments that youth sports coaches often encourage kids to pick one main sport at an early age.

"You've got some idiot in a youth league telling a kid, 'If you just focus on this one thing, you're going to be great,'" Sanders said. "Then, you've got the same [kind of] idiot in high school — 'You're not going to play this other sport because I'm not going to let you start until you dedicate yourself.'"

Sports specialization has drawn a lot of attention in recent years, with baseball greats such as John Smoltz suggesting it can hurt young players simply because of the wear and tear. Still, many believe it has its place.

After all, most athletes don't have the

gifts of Murray, Sanders or Bo Jackson, the 1986 Heisman winner for Auburn who was an All-Star for the Kansas City Royals in 1989 and made the Pro Bowl for the Los Angeles Raiders in 1990. Tom Westerberg, Murray's football coach at Allen (Texas) High School who now coaches at Barbers Hill (Texas) High, said even the really good ones often are best served honing their skills in one sport.

"Athletes like him (Murray) come around once in a long time, with that athletic ability and been doing it for that long," Westerberg said. "How many Deion Sanderses have there been? You can name the Bo Jacksons, the Deion Sanderses — you can name those guys on one hand. So it's not that all of a sudden you tell a kid to play multiple sports and you're going to get a ton of Kyler Murrays and Deion Sanderses."

And having options comes with complications and questions.

Back in 1992, Sanders played cornerback for the Atlanta Falcons during the day in Miami, then flew to Pittsburgh to join his Atlanta Braves teammates for a National League Championship Series game. Sanders looked back at that day during a recent ESPN documentary called "Deion's Double Play."

Sanders' true love was football, and it was his focus. He is in the Pro Football Hall of Fame and had a productive baseball career, but he offered a glimpse of what might have been during the 1992 World Series, when he hit .533 with four runs, eight hits and two doubles in four games.

"I regret often that I didn't put a lot more into the game of baseball," Sanders said. "I really do. I have those thoughts often."

Oklahoma baseball coach Skip Johnson said being special in both sports requires brains, too. Murray said he has been clocked at 4.3 seconds in the 40-yard dash, yet Johnson said his unusually high intellect is what allowed him to progress in both sports.

"To have the thought process that Kyler has, to go through the things that he has, to learn (Oklahoma football coach) Lincoln Riley's system, to learn our system in baseball — it just goes to show you what kind of aptitude that guy has as an athlete," Johnson said.

Dr. Mininder Kocher, a professor at Harvard Medical School and associate director of the Division of Sports Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital, has contributed to research that shows youth sports specialization is on the rise. He said the fact that Murray played both football and baseball for so long might have helped him excel in both.

"On one hand, he clearly is sort of a unique athlete — maybe genetically or maybe just intrinsic athleticism that he can be so good at two different sports," Kocher said. "Some of that might just be a blip, that he's that good of an athlete. Part of it is that there are transferrable skills. It's good for the body to be doing different sports because you're not doing the same movement patterns over and over and over again."

Murray's success makes Johnson more than willing to look for more multi-sport superstars. Last season, Murray hit .296, had a .556 slugging percentage and hit 10 home runs in 189 at bats for the Sooners.

"There's more athletes out there that can do the same thing," Johnson said.

Broncos get QB Flacco

Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — The Baltimore Ravens have agreed to trade quarterback Joe Flacco to the Denver Broncos in exchange for a fourth-round pick in this year's NFL draft, a person with knowledge of the agreement told The Associated Press.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity Wednesday because neither team announced the deal, which was first reported by ESPN. NFL rules prohibit teams from discussing trades until the start of the league year on March 13.

Flacco, the MVP of the 2013 Super Bowl following a miraculous win at top-seeded Denver, became expendable in Baltimore with the emergence of rookie Lamar Jackson, who led the Ravens into the playoffs after Flacco got hurt.

The Broncos again need an upgrade at QB after Case Keenum's middling debut in Denver, where a 6-10 finish led general manager John Elway to turn to Vic Fangio, his fourth head coach in six seasons.

Now, he's landed his seventh quarterback since Peyton Manning.

WR Brown requests trade

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Pittsburgh Steelers still haven't decided whether there's a path for wayward wide receiver Antonio Brown to return in 2019.

Not that it matters to Brown. He's already made up his mind.

A person with knowledge of the situation tells The Associated Press the perennial Pro Bowler has formally asked the Steelers for a trade, the latest move in a game of brinkmanship by the 30-year-old designed to force Pittsburgh to move him by the start of training camp this summer.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not permitted to publicly discuss personnel matters.

Brown appeared to make his decision official in a social media post released on Instagram on Tuesday. The video includes highlights from Brown's career with the Steelers.

"SteelerNation thank you for nine big years!!!" Brown wrote. "Time to move on and move forward."

The post came shortly after Brown was found guilty in absence on a charge of reckless driving in a suburban Pittsburgh court on Tuesday morning.

Shiffrin new face of women's skiing

Associated Press

ARE, Sweden — During her inexorable rise to someday becoming the most successful Alpine skier in history, Mikaela Shiffrin has been shooting some admiring glances at another young female athlete excelling at her chosen sport.

And she, too, is emerging from the shadow of an all-time great.

"Somebody I've been watching lately, and I'm really excited for, is Naomi Osaka," Shiffrin said Tuesday. "I think that she at least seems like a really nice, down-to-earth girl, trying to

do her job and coming up the ranks in a sport that has Serena Williams, the face of tennis.

"Watching Osaka and seeing how she handles herself competing against one of her biggest idols has been pretty cool for me to see."

While Osaka, the winner of the last two Grand Slam tennis tournaments and — at only 21 — the new No. 1 player in the world, is just starting on the long road to emulating Williams, Shiffrin is already close to eclipsing Lindsey Vonn's record-breaking exploits.

Fifty-six World Cup victories. Two Olympic gold med-

als. Four world championship golds, with possibly two more coming in Are, Sweden, this week. Shiffrin is on course to obliterate perhaps every skiing record in the book.

At 23, and with Vonn newly retired, Shiffrin is the face of skiing — whether she likes it or not.

"In my own head, I'm thinking about what I'm going to have for lunch. I'm not thinking, 'Oh, the face of ski racing,'" she said, laughing.

In Vonn's farewell news conference after concluding her show-stopping career with a bronze in the downhill on

Sunday, she included Shiffrin when listing the ski racers she believes need to step up and promote the sport in the coming years.

"It's not just about success," Vonn said. "It's about doing everything you can to promote (skiing). That's a part of your job as an athlete."

Shiffrin is belatedly coming around to that train of thought, even though she says being a poster girl doesn't come naturally to her.

"I wouldn't say I'm the most self-confident person out there but I feel comfortable in my own skin."

College basketball roundup

No. 2 Duke rallies from 23 down to beat Louisville

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Cam Reddish made a tying three-pointer with 1:28 left and the go-ahead free throws with 14 seconds remaining, helping No. 2 Duke overcome a 23-point second-half deficit to beat No. 16 Louisville 71-69 on Tuesday night.

After making two of 17 shots to open the second half, the Blue Devils (22-2, 10-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) got hot and shut down the Cardinals over the final 9:54.

"I think our mentality changed," Reddish said. "We didn't want to go home with a loss. We had to fight for Duke, just give it our all for the name on our chest."

Zion Williamson (27 points, 12 rebounds) ignored foul trouble and instead drew whistles in his favor, making eight of nine from the line before Reddish added a couple of threes in between free throws — the last two of which followed an official review of a play under Duke's basket.

Christen Cunningham tried to tie it for Louisville (17-8, 8-4), but his jumper in the lane bounced off the rim and into Williamson's hands as the final

seconds ticked off. The Blue Devils celebrated as they left the court after completing the second-biggest second-half comeback in program history.

No. 19 LSU 73, No. 5 Kentucky 71: Kavell Bigby-Williams's tip-in at the buzzer lifted the visiting Tigers to a win over the Wildcats.

With the game tied after Keldon Johnson made two free throws with 6 seconds left, Skylar Mays drove the length of the court. His shot missed but Bigby-Williams got the offensive rebound and scored to give the Tigers their first win over the Wildcats since 2009. It was just the sixth time ever that LSU (20-4, 10-1 Southeastern Conference) has beaten Kentucky (20-4, 10-2).

Penn State 75, No. 6 Michigan 69: Lamar Stevens scored 15 of his 26 points in the first half and grabbed 12 rebounds to lead the host Nittany Lions to an upset of the Wolverines.

Michigan coach John Beilein received back-to-back technical fouls and was ejected for arguing with officials as the teams entered the locker rooms after the first half.

No. 10 Marquette 92, DePaul 73: Markus Howard

scored 36 points, Sam Hauser had 17 and the visiting Golden Eagles cruised by the Blue Demons.

Howard went 12-for-21 from the field and 8-for-10 at the free-throw line in another impressive performance. He has scored at least 30 points in four of his last five games.

No. 11 Michigan State 67, No. 20 Wisconsin 59: Cassius Winston scored 23 points to help the visiting Spartans beat the Badgers.

In doing so, the Michigan State (20-5, 11-3 Big Ten) star outdueled Wisconsin's Ethan Happ, who scored 20 points and grabbed 12 rebounds.

No. 18 Kansas State 71, Texas 64: Barry Brown and Xavier Sneed each scored 16 points, and the visiting Wildcats beat the Longhorns for their ninth straight Big 12 victory.

Three other Kansas State players scored in double figures: Dean Wade had 12 points, and Kamau Stokes and Makol Mawien had 11 apiece.

No. 24 Maryland 70, No. 12 Purdue 56: Jalen Smith scored 14 of his 16 points in the second half, and the host Terapins used a strong defensive performance to end the Boil-

ermakers' eight-game winning streak.

Down by eight at halftime, Maryland (19-6, 10-4 Big Ten) took the lead for the first time with 10 minutes left before pulling away. The comeback was fueled by Smith, Eric Alaya and fellow freshman Aaron Wiggins.

No. 25 Buffalo 76, Akron 70: CJ Massinburg scored 21 points, Dontay Caruthers added 15 and the visiting Bulls turned up their defensive intensity in the second half and held on, dropping the Zips to 0-31 against ranked teams.

Buffalo (21-3, 9-2 Mid-American Conference) was held to one of its lowest point totals this season, but the defending conference champion was able to do enough against Akron (14-10, 6-5), ranked 13th nationally in scoring defense.

UNLV 77, Air Force 72: Amauri Hardy had a career-high 24 points as the host Runnin' Rebels narrowly beat the Falcons.

Nick Blair had 13 points for UNLV (13-11, 7-5 Mountain West Conference). Lavelle Scotie had 25 points for Air Force (10-14, 5-7).

NBA roundup

Davis criticizes Pelicans following loss

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Anthony Davis doesn't want to play for New Orleans anymore. In a blowout loss Tuesday night, he noticed his teammates may have felt the same way.

"We sucked," Davis said. "Nobody was interested in playing is what it looked like."

Davis scored just three points on 1-for-9 shooting and was thoroughly outplayed by Orlando center Nikola Vucevic as the Magic beat the listless Pelicans 118-88.

"Obviously, I missed a lot of shots, a lot of easy shots — layups and stuff that I normally make — early in the game," Davis added. "But they came out more desperate. They played like they were playing

for something, and they showed it."

Davis played 24 minutes in his third game since his agent told New Orleans the six-time All-Star wanted to be traded to a championship-contending team and won't sign an extension with the Pelicans.

It was also his third game since returning from an injured left index finger. In his first game back, he had 32 points in a win over Minnesota, but he has averaged 8.5 points over the two games since.

Davis' scoring output Tuesday was the lowest of his career in any game where he played at least 21 minutes.

The reeling Pelicans (25-33), who've lost six of seven, sit in 13th place in the West, six

games behind Sacramento for that conference's final playoff spot with 24 games left.

While the Magic (26-32) remain below .500, they've won four straight — including three straight on the road by 16 or more — to pull within two games of the Eastern Conference's final playoff spot as the All-Star break approaches.

Vucevic had 25 points and 17 rebounds, Evan Fournier scored 22 points, and Jonathan Isaac scored a career-high 20 points, including 16 in the first quarter, when Orlando raced to a 39-11 lead.

Celtics 112, 76ers 109: Gordon Hayward scored 26 points, including a go-ahead three-pointer with 1:50 remaining, and visiting Boston

beat Philadelphia.

Warriors 115, Jazz 108: Stephen Curry overcame a sluggish night shooting and made a pair of pivotal three-pointers in the fourth quarter, Kevin Durant had 28 points and seven assists, and host Golden State rallied from behind for the third consecutive game and beat Utah.

Hawks 117, Lakers 113: Rookie Trae Young had 22 points and 14 assists, and John Collins also scored 22 points despite foul trouble for host Atlanta.

Spurs 108, Grizzlies 107: LaMarcus Aldridge scored 22 points, including his team's final seven, as San Antonio broke a four-game losing streak by beating host Memphis.

NHL roundup

Bruins end Blackhawks' winning streak at 7 games

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Boston Bruins needed someone to replace David Pastrnak's production while their leading scorer recovers from thumb surgery.

For one night, at least, they found the solution: just about everyone.

David Krejci, Danton Heinen and Brad Marchand each scored during a four-minute span at the end of the first period and the Boston Bruins beat the Blackhawks 6-3 on Tuesday night to snap Chicago's seven-game winning streak.

"We're going to need contributions from everybody with Pasta going down like that," Marchand said, singling out Heinen and Jake DeBrusk, who each had a goal and two assists. "It's great to see them add so much depth to our group. We need that to continue."

Krejci scored again in the third period, when Marchand picked up his third assist,

to help the Bruins win for the fifth time in six games. Peter Cehlarik also scored for Boston and Patrice Bergeron had a pair of assists on the day that general manager Don Sweeney announced that Pastrnak would miss at least two weeks after injuring a tendon in his left thumb.

"It doesn't hurt (to score a lot) when your best scorer goes down," said Tuukka Rask, who stopped 23 shots. "Six goals, that's good for the goalie."

Collin Delia made 31 saves, and Alex DeBrincat and Duncan Keith scored for Chicago, which hadn't lost since Jan. 17. Patrick Kane had an assist for the 14th straight game, tying Stan Mikita for the longest assist streak in the history of the Original Six franchise.

Coyotes 5, Golden Knights 2: Nick Cousins scored his first game-winning goal of the season and Darcy Kuemper made 41 saves to lead visiting

Arizona.

Stars 3, Panthers 0: Anton Khudobin recorded his second shutout of the season and Tyler Seguin had two goals and an assist as visiting Dallas topped Florida.

Lightning 6, Flames 3: NHL points leader Nikita Kucherov had a goal and three assists, Brayden Point added a goal and two assists, and host Tampa Bay doubled up Calgary.

Sabres 3, Islanders 1: Jack Eichel set up two goals in leading host Buffalo to a win over Metropolitan Division-leading New York.

Blue Jackets 3, Capitals 0: Sergei Bobrovsky made 13 of his 20 saves in the third period to lift host Columbus over Washington.

Hurricanes 4, Senators 1: Teuvo Teravainen scored twice and visiting Carolina scored four unanswered goals in the third period to beat Ottawa.

Red Wings 3, Predators 2:

Andreas Athanasiou scored at 4:08 of the third period, and struggling Detroit beat host Nashville to snap a three-game skid.

Blues 8, Devils 3: Alex Pietrangolo and Ivan Barbashev each scored twice and host St. Louis won its seventh straight game.

Jets 4, Rangers 3: Mark Scheifele had two goals and an assist as host Winnipeg edged New York.

Flyers 5, Wild 4: James van Riemsdyk scored two goals, including the game-winner late in the third period, as visiting Philadelphia bested Minnesota.

Maple Leafs 5, Avalanche 2: Nazem Kadri and Kasper Kapanen scored power-play goals 22 seconds apart in the second period, Frederik Andersen stopped 34 shots and visiting Toronto extended Colorado's winless streak to eight games.