

STARS AND STRIPES®

Sunday, February 17, 2019

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Trump threatens to release ISIS fighters

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

MUNICH — President Donald Trump threatened Sunday to release hundreds of Islamic State fighters being held in Syria if allies in Europe don't agree to take custody of the militants.

"The United States is asking Britain, France, Germany and other European allies to take back over 800 ISIS fighters that we captured in Syria and put them on trial," Trump said in a late night tweet. "The Caliphate is ready to fall. The alternative is not a good one in that we will be forced to release them."

Trump, who intends to pull U.S. troops out of northern Syria, said the likely destination for the militants would be

'The United States is asking Britain, France, Germany and other European allies to take back over 800 ISIS fighters that we captured in Syria and put them on trial.'

President Donald Trump

European countries. "The U.S. does not want to watch as these ISIS fighters permeate Europe, which is where they are expected to go," Trump said.

During the civil war in Syria, hundreds of militants flooded into the country, many coming from Europe to join ISIS' ranks. It's unclear how many of the militants Trump is referring to are actually European citizens.

Trump's comments come as global leaders wrap up three days of security talks in Mu-

nich, where the conflict in Syria was among the agenda items.

James Jeffrey, the U.S.' special representative on Syria issues, said in Munich that the U.S. will leave northeastern Syria, but the troop pullout will not be abrupt.

"It will be an orderly step-by-step withdrawal," Jeffrey said without offering a timeline.

In December, Trump called for a complete withdrawal of U.S. forces in the country.

Still, the U.S. said it intends to

keep its coalition together and wants allies to play a larger role in the broader campaign to root out ISIS elements.

Jeffrey said there are hundreds of ISIS cells scattered throughout the region. U.S. air power will remain ready to respond when needed, he said.

Trump has essentially declared victory over the group, which has been forced out of all its former strongholds in Iraq and Syria. But there remain concerns that ISIS could regroup if the U.S. pulls out. Trump said the time has come for other countries to pick up the slack.

"We do so much, and spend so much — Time for others to step up and do the job that they are so capable of doing. We are pulling back after 100% Caliphate victory!" Trump tweeted.

4th USS Reagan soldier pleads guilty in drug case

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A fourth USS Ronald Reagan sailor on Thursday pleaded guilty to charges related to a drug operation that involved 15 7th Fleet sailors.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Sean Gevero, a nuclear electrician's mate, was found guilty of wrongful use or possession of controlled substances after admitting to possessing LSD with intent to distribute in August 2017 and illegally possessing steroids on Feb. 9, 2018, according to a pretrial agreement.

A military judge sentenced Gevero to 90 days in confinement, followed by a bad conduct discharge, according to Naval Forces Japan spokesman Marshall Smith. His rank

was also reduced to E-1.

Gevero's is the latest in a string of courts-martial related to the case. On Jan. 14, Petty Officer 3rd Class Philip Colegrove, also a nuclear electrician's mate, was sentenced to 10 months in jail, a bad conduct discharge and reduction in rank to E-1 after pleading guilty to selling drugs from the Ronald Reagan.

Colegrove admitted he sold LSD and methylenedioxymethamphetamine — also known as MDMA or ecstasy — onboard the Ronald Reagan several times from January 2017 to February 2018.

He also pleaded guilty to bringing LSD "onto a vessel used by the armed forces" with intent to distribute, according to his pretrial agreement.

In December, Petty Officer

2nd Class Ethan D. Strandberg and Petty Officer 2nd Class Andrew W. Miller, both nuclear machinist mates, were reduced in rank to E-1 and discharged from the Navy for bad conduct in exchange for pleading guilty to drug distribution charges.

Strandberg admitted to conspiring to distribute MDMA onboard the aircraft carrier between January 2017 and February 2018. Miller admitted to distributing LSD near Yokosuka during the same period.

Strandberg was sentenced to 60 days and Miller received 30 days in confinement.

A fifth, unnamed defendant in the case is awaiting an Article 32 preliminary hearing, Smith said. Article 32 hearings, the military equivalent of a grand jury, are used to determine if there is enough evi-

dence to justify a trial.

As part of their pretrial agreements, Gevero, Colegrove, Strandberg and Miller agreed to testify against others involved in the case if called upon.

Ten other Reagan sailors received nonjudicial punishments in connection with the case, 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Joe Keiley said in November.

Further information about those disciplinary actions was not publicly released, per Navy policy on administrative issues.

Fourteen of the 15 implicated sailors were assigned to the Ronald Reagan's nuclear reactor department, Keiley said in June. Those suspected of involvement were removed from those duties as the investigation got underway.

US, Japanese forces stage mock battle

BY JAMES BOLINGER

Stars and Stripes

TAKASHIMA, Japan — Reserve infantry Marines and Japan Ground Self-Defense Force soldiers fought side by side during a three-day mock battle at the Aibano Exercise Area near Takashima earlier this month as the capstone for Exercise Forest Light 19-2.

A company of riflemen from the Marine Corps 2nd Battalion, 23rd Regiment, who are on their first deployment since 2009 in Iraq, joined two companies of Japanese soldiers from 7th Regiment for a week of training before fighting a simulated battle that concluded Thursday.

The annual Forest Light exercise brings together Marine Corps units with those from the Japan Self-Defense Forces for

some training and tightening of their military relationship. This year, it was also an opportunity for more intensive training than reservists normally experience.

"This allows our company to train for common goals," said Capt. Ayrton Foy, the G Company commander. "It's something that we don't have time for during regular reserve duty. Since we are working with another infantry company, the training goals are the same. We practice patrolling, tactics, etc."

The week of training before the pitched battle included a multitude of infantry missions such as obstacle clearance, first aid, close-quarters combat and urban warfare.

This is the second international exercise for the Marines of 2/23 since they deployed to Okinawa in October. The first was

Forest Light 19-1 in December.

The experience of deploying as a whole battalion can't be replicated any other way, said Lt. Col. David Ortiz, the battalion commander. Most of the battalion operations stateside happen at a company level, and the companies that form 2/23 attend drill weekends in three different states: California, Utah and Arizona.

Reserve Marines train for one weekend a month and participate in a two-week annual training when they are not deployed. A Marine infantry battalion consists of a headquarters company, three rifle companies and a weapons company — usually more than 400 Marines.

The goal of Forest Light is to build a stronger relationship with the Japanese military and increase the ability for the two

countries to practice actions at the battalion and company levels, Ortiz said.

Forest Light 19-2 was conducted alongside Iron Fist 19, a separate bilateral exercise between the 1st Marine Division and Japan Ground Self-Defense Force soldiers at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., that wrapped up Feb. 8.

The best part of the exercise in Japan has been interacting with the Japanese, Ortiz said. The Marines get to understand and see a new culture.

Japanese soldiers also do some things differently, and it's good for the Marines to understand that there are different ways to accomplish a mission.

The Marines of 2/23 are scheduled to return stateside in April and will be replaced by Reserve Marines from 1st Battalion, 25 Infantry Regiment.

New Army rifle provides more versatility in combat

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

Army Sgt. James Snow has carried an M-4 carbine and an M-110 sniper rifle as an infantryman on missions. With the M-4, he knew he was capable of hitting a target accurately up to only 300 meters. With a sniper rifle, he had less maneuverability and spent a lot of time breaking down and reassembling the larger weapon to carry.

Last month, Snow was given the opportunity to try out the Army's new Squad Designated Marksman Rifle, or SDM-R. After just a couple days handling the new weapon, he said it felt like something that could fill the needs of both his previous weapons. It had more mobility and close combat capabilities like the M-4, but also better precision at a distance like the M-110.

"It's easy to move around, and you can do a lot of things with it," Snow said. "Absolutely, I would carry this around every day if I was deployed. Every

day, you could carry it for every single situation."

That was exactly the type of weapon that the Army looked to create for its combat arms squads — a weapon for one member of an infantry, armor, cavalry scout or combat engineer squad to carry and provide precision fire between 300 and 600 meters without losing the capability of hitting closer-range targets.

The need for such a rifle was identified in the 2015 Small Arms Capabilities-Based Assessment that stated "squads must have an organic, precision-fire capability to engage select personnel targets from zero to 600 meters."

With two weeks of testing completed this month at Fort Bliss, Texas, the Army is in the final stages of deciding what ammunition and accessories to field with the rifle. It will then purchase 6,612 for fielding with infantry, armor, cavalry scout and combat engineer units, said Capt. Sean McIntosh, assistant program manager of individual

weapons, under Program Executive Office Soldier, which guides the development of new Army equipment.

"The challenge that we face is trying to provide as much capability as possible through one rifle system," said McIntosh, who began assisting in management of the new rifle project in September 2017.

The new rifle doesn't replace any one weapon within the Army but offers another capability to a squad. The designated rifleman, or marksman, within each nine-person squad now carries an M-16, or the enhanced battle rifle. That soldier's weapon will soon be replaced with the new Heckler and Koch-made SDM-R. It weighs about 12 pounds with accessories, is 36 inches long and is based on the company's compact semi-automatic sniper system.

To compare, an M-16 is lighter at about 8 pounds and 39.5 inches long. An M-110 sniper rifle is about 16 pounds and 46 inches long. Other infantrymen carry the M-4, which is about 7

pounds and 33 inches in length.

McIntosh's team also wanted to ensure the new rifle was something soldiers would want to carry.

"This system was completely built off what soldiers wanted. All the components on this rifle were hand-picked by soldiers," said McIntosh, referencing feedback collected from soldiers about what they wanted in a new rifle. "We're trying to do our due diligence to get these guys everything they're asking for."

Some of the soldier-chosen accessories include a Sig Sauer optic with a one-to-six variable for aiming the weapon at various distances, and Geissele brand rail and trigger systems.

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Shoup, assistant team chief for the instructor training group of the Army Marksmanship Unit at Fort Benning, Ga., traveled to Fort Bliss for the testing and will help prepare training manuals on the new rifle. He agrees it has strong potential to fill its multipurpose role for squads.

Operation Cobra Gold teaches troops survival skills in Thailand

BY CARLOS M. VAZQUEZ II
Stars and Stripes

U.S. soldiers drank blood from cobras and water from the trunks of banana trees, survival skills their hosts taught them last week during the Cobra Gold exercise in Thailand this year.

Participants in the annual multinational exercise, one of the largest and longest-running in the world, consider its survival training a highlight of the event. Soldiers of the U.S. Army 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, and Royal Thai Armed Forces took part in training Wednesday at Phitsanulok, Thailand.

Thai instructors shared with the Americans their knowledge of food and water sources in the jungle. Drinking the still-warm blood of the namesake reptile is more than a show of bravado; it's a life-sustaining measure.

'You learned what you can eat and what you can find.'

Spc. Louis Smith
U.S. Army

"They taught us a lot, and it's something you put in the back of your head just in case something ever happened to you," U.S. Army Spc. Louis Smith said in a video interview released Wednesday by the U.S. military after the survival training. "You learned what you can eat and what you can find."

It's no surprise that cobra blood tastes like blood, Smith said in the video, "but it gives you that special little warm feeling."

Thai instructors also taught the Americans how to find water at the base of a banana tree, which insects are good

to eat and how insects can also lead someone to water.

"I didn't know that ants are a trace of water. Wherever they are [going], they know the location of water," said Smith, of Bravo Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment. "That is something I would take back home and teach other people."

The 38th annual, 11-day exercise, officially known as Cobra Gold 19, concludes Friday. The exercise brings together 27 other nations, including Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea and Singapore. China and India take part in civic action parts of the exercise.

Roadside bomb kills 3 civilians in Afghanistan

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Afghan official said a roadside bomb killed three civilians in the southern Kandahar province.

Gen. Tadeen Khan, the provincial police chief, said a small child was among those killed in Sunday's blast, which he blamed on the Taliban.

The insurgents routinely plant explosives targeting Afghan security forces, but the bombs often end up killing or maiming civilians.

In the northern Balkh province, the Taliban stormed a police checkpoint late Saturday, killing six police. Adel Shah Adel, spokesman for the provincial police chief, said the insurgents targeted a force charged with guarding a gas pipeline. The Taliban claimed the attack.

ISIS holds 1,000 civilians hostage in eastern Syria

Associated Press

AL-OMAR OIL FIELD BASE, Syria — Islamic State militants are preventing more than 1,000 civilians from leaving a tiny area still held by the extremist group in a village in eastern Syria, a spokesman for the U.S.-backed Syrian militia fighting the group said Sunday.

"Regrettably, Daesh have closed all the roads," Mustafa Bali, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, told The Associated Press, referring to ISIS by its Arabic acronym.

SDF officials have said the extremists are hiding among civilians in a tented village and using a network of caves and tunnels. ISIS, which once ruled a proto-state in large parts of Syria and Iraq, is clinging to an area less than a square mile in the village of Baghouz, in eastern Syria.

'Regrettably, Daesh (Islamic State) have closed all the roads.'

Mustafa Bali
spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces

The extremists may include high-level commanders and could be holding hostages among those trapped inside.

Occasional coalition airstrikes and clashes continue inside the village of Baghouz. Artillery rounds were meant to clear land mines for the SDF fighters to advance. SDF commanders say the end of ISIS' self-declared caliphate is near.

"We will very soon bring good news to the whole world," Ciya Furat, an SDF commander, said Saturday at a news conference at al-Omar Oil Field Base, miles away from Baghouz in the Deir el-Zour province.

The capture of the last pocket of territory held by ISIS in either Syria or Iraq would mark the end of a devastating four-year global campaign to end the extremist group's so-called caliphate. At the height of their power in 2014, the extremists controlled nearly a third of both countries.

But experts and U.S. defense officials warn that the group still poses a major threat and could regroup within six months if pressure is not kept up.

Thousands of ISIS fighters and their families have emerged from the last bastion

held by the group in the past few months. The SDF is holding around 1,000 foreign fighters in lockups and camps in northern Syria, and their fate is a major concern, particularly as American troops prepare to withdraw from Syria.

The Kurds want their countries to take them back, and the U.S. has called on Europeans to repatriate and put them on trial.

President Donald Trump repeated that call in a tweet Saturday. "The United States is asking Britain, France, Germany and other European allies to take back over 800 ISIS fighters that we captured in Syria and put them on trial. The Caliphate is ready to fall," Trump posted.

He suggested the alternative would be that the U.S. would be forced to release them.

Shanahan: No amount determined for wall

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The acting secretary of defense said Saturday he has not yet determined how much money he will redirect to President Donald Trump's border wall project.

Pat Shanahan, who has been leading the Pentagon since Jim Mattis stepped down Dec. 31, made the comment in an interview with reporters flying with him from Germany to Washington.

Shanahan said he has a great deal of discretion in deciding how to use the authorities granted to him by Trump's declaration Friday of a national emergency.

The former Boeing executive said he would be working out details starting Sunday, emphasizing that his mission is to support the border security needs of the Department of Homeland Security.

The White House said before Trump's an-

nouncement that the border project, which is opposed by Democrats, would receive \$3.6 billion that Congress originally provided for military construction projects and \$2.5 billion from the Pentagon's 2019 drug interdiction program.

Shanahan, however, indicated that he has the discretion to provide less, although he said the \$3.6 billion figure is likely to prove correct. He stressed that he has not yet made any decisions.

Ultimately, the amounts will be determined by linking the available funds to specific border security projects, he said, adding that those connections are not yet complete.

The law allowing a repurposing of military construction funds during a national emergency says the secretary of defense is authorized "to determine whether border barriers are necessary to support the use of the armed forces" in an emergency.

Asked whether that means he can de-

cide whether a wall is militarily necessary, he said, "For us the determination will be made in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security." He said later, "There have been no determinations by me."

He also said the staff that supports the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon has been working out a "mission analysis" of border security needs, including a recommendation on where barriers should be prioritized. That work began some time ago in anticipation of a possible Trump emergency declaration.

"I will go in and review that analysis now that an emergency has been declared," he said.

A defense official said later that Shanahan is scheduled to be briefed in coming days by the military service secretaries and his internal staff on funding sources and likely project priorities. The official spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Illinois warehouse shooter owned gun illegally

Associated Press

AURORA, Ill. — The man who opened fire and killed five co-workers including the plant manager, human resources manager and an intern working his first day at a suburban Chicago manufacturing warehouse took a gun he wasn't supposed to have to a job he was about to lose.

Right after learning Friday that he was being fired from his job of 15 years at the Henry Pratt Co. in Aurora, Gary Mar-

tin pulled out a gun and began shooting, killing the three people in the room with him and two others just outside and wounding a sixth employee, police said Saturday.

Martin shot and wounded five of the first officers to get to the scene.

After that flurry of shots and with officers from throughout the region streaming in to help, he ran off and hid in the back of the building, where officers found him about an hour later and killed him during an ex-

change of gunfire, police said.

Martin, 45, had six arrests over the years in Aurora for what police Chief Kristen Ziman described as "traffic- and domestic battery-related issues" and for violating an order of protection. He also had a 1995 felony conviction for aggravated assault in Mississippi that should have prevented him from buying his gun, Ziman said.

He was able to buy the Smith and Wesson .40-caliber handgun on March 11, 2014, because he was issued a firearm owner's

identification card two months earlier after passing an initial background check.

It wasn't until he applied for a concealed carry permit five days after buying the gun and went through a more rigorous background check using digital fingerprinting that his Mississippi conviction was flagged and his firearm owner's ID card was revoked, Ziman said.

Once his card was revoked, he could no longer legally have a gun.

Airlines to offer 'nonbinary' gender ticketing choice

Associated Press

DALLAS — Major U.S. airlines say they will soon change their ticketing process to give passengers the option of identifying themselves as other than male or female.

The gender option on airline sites will soon include choices such as "undisclosed" or "unspecified." There could also be the optional title of "Mx."

The airlines say they are making the change to be more inclusive in dealing with a di-

verse population of travelers.

The move was praised by advocacy groups for transgender people.

"It's a significant step forward for nonbinary individuals so they are not faced with a mismatch between their ticketing information and their legal identification," said Beck Bailey, of the Human Rights Campaign.

The Transportation Security Administration says passengers should use the name, gender and birth date on their govern-

ment-issued ID.

Bailey said he did not know of people with nonbinary identification being kept off planes or trains, but that fear of being stopped added to their stress.

American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Alaska Airlines and JetBlue confirmed Friday that they are in the process of updating their booking tools and plan to add a binary option to the gender menu on their sites. They said the change will be made in the next several weeks.

United Airlines plans to let people select M for male, F for female, U for undisclosed or X for unspecified from the gender menu when booking a ticket on its website or mobile app, said spokeswoman Andrea Hiller. They will also have the option of picking "Mx" as a title.

U.S. and international airline trade groups recently approved a new standard to handle customers with "nonbinary" IDs.

The standard, which is not mandatory but more like guidance, takes effect June 1.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Passengers disembark after joke about bomb

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — Passengers on an Air Canada plane had to disembark and a terminal was closed at a South Florida airport after a woman made a joke that a piece of luggage might have a bomb.

Authorities said Nathalie Tremblay made the joke Tuesday after a flight attendant asked passengers who was the owner of an unclaimed bag that wouldn't fit into an overhead bin.

The South Florida Sun Sentinel said the flight attendant was alarmed by Tremblay's response and reported it to the flight's captain, and passengers were forced to disembark from the flight at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International.

Body found on island in 1996 is identified

CT NORWALK — Authorities have released the name of a man whose naked body was found on an island off Connecticut nearly 23 years ago.

Norwalk police said Friday they had identified Landberto Quintero through a search of an updated law enforcement fingerprint database.

Lt. Art Weisgerber said Quintero, 24, had no known address. Records from a 1993 arrest for trespassing indicate he was born in Mexico and include the fingerprints used to identify him.

Officials haven't identified any of Quintero's relatives.

Quintero's body was discovered on Shea Island in Long Island Sound on April 18, 1996. The medical examiner's office concluded he had been dead for eight to 10 months but was not able to determine the cause of death.

Bear goes for ride on a trash truck

NC WINDSOR — Drivers were startled to see a hungry bear that got stuck in the back of a garbage truck and took a ride across a stretch of eastern North Carolina.

News outlets reported that a motorist called Bertie County 911 on Wednesday morning about a bear hanging off of the truck on U.S. Route 17.

Apparently, the snack-seeking bear climbed into the truck during a stop and became trapped after the driver secured the netting that prevents garbage from blowing out.

Sheriff John Holley said a deputy stopped the truck just outside of Windsor.

The driver, who hadn't been aware of the stowaway, pulled back the net and the bear ran off.

Water-soaked library books in deep-freeze

IA ASBURY — Hundreds of water-soaked library books in eastern Iowa are in a deep-freeze while officials figure out how to save the publications.

The Telegraph-Herald reported the books were damaged Feb. 1 when a pipe burst in the Dubuque County Library's branch in Asbury. Officials estimate about 10 percent of the branch's 18,000 books became soaked.

When books get wet, they must be frozen within hours to prevent the growth of mold.

Library district director Michael Wright said some of the books will be dried with fans, some might go to a specialized freeze dryer and some will be thrown away.

Met Museum says it's returning stolen coffin

NY NEW YORK — New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art said it's returning a prized artifact to Egypt after learning it was stolen from the country in 2011.

The Met said Friday that the Manhattan District Attorney's office found evidence the museum was given a false ownership history for the gilded Coffin of Nedjemankh.

The Met bought the piece from a Paris art dealer in 2017 and displayed it until last week. Nedjemankh was a high-ranking first century B.C. priest.

The Met said it's cooperating with the DA's investigation and revising its acquisitions process.

Employee accused of selling police guns

FL HALLENDALE BEACH — Authorities said a Florida police employee sold department-owned guns and other equipment to a pawn shop.

Broward County jail records show that Yan Kleymann, 33, was arrested Friday and charged with dealing in stolen property. Hallendale Beach Police Chief Sonia Quinones said in a video posted to Facebook that the theft had been discovered during an internal equipment audit and that Kleymann has been fired. Officials didn't say what his job was.

A complaint affidavit said Kleymann conducted 15 pawnbroker transactions between March 2017 and August 2018.

The report said the stolen items included a rifle, a handgun and several laser sights. Kleymann was being held on \$3,500 bond.

Woman drives car into police station lobby

CA LOS ANGELES — Police are trying to determine why a woman crashed through the lobby of a police station with an infant in her car.

It happened around 4:45 a.m. Feb. 9 at the Los Angeles Police Department's Harbor Division station in San Pedro.

LAPD video shows the woman maneuvering around barriers, crashing through the glass doors and pulling into the lobby. The woman then backs out, nearly knocking over an officer who had to dodge out of the way from her open car door.

The woman and the infant were taken to a hospital as a precaution.

Boy with rare disorder given own man cave

RI WARWICK — A 10-year-old Rhode Island boy with a rare disorder is getting his very own man cave.

Officials announced Thursday the Impossible Dream is using a \$3,000 donation from state police to build Travis Williams the man cave of his dreams in the garage of his Cranston home.

Travis has a rare congenital disease called Caudal regression syndrome, and had asked the organization for the man cave so he can have a place to recover from future surgeries.

Travis was presented with memorabilia to go inside his man cave, including a signed jersey from New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

On a mission to provide credible reporting and daily news to America's military, wherever they serve.

Mobile apps available: www.stripes.com/apps.

Diallo, Harris, Tatum win All-Star titles

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Boston's Jayson Tatum got his gamewinner from midcourt. Oklahoma City's Hamidou Diallo went over Shaquille O'Neal to help win his trophy. And Brooklyn's Joe Harris made all the shots at all the right times to deny Golden State's Stephen Curry a storybook ending in his hometown.

Say this for All-Star Saturday Night: It had flair.

Tatum won the skills competition, Diallo put on a show for the league's annual slam dunk title, and in easily the most anticipated part of the night, Harris held off the Warriors' shooting star for the win in the three-point contest.

Harris made 12 straight shots in the final round and went a staggering 15-for-18 on moneyballs — the shots worth the most — to win the three-point title. He finished with 26 of a possible 34 points in the final round, beating Curry by two. Sacramento's Buddy Hield was third with 19 final-round points.

"Obviously, it's incredible," Harris said. "Steph is the greatest shooter of all time. But, again, shooting off of the rack for a minute is not indicative of being a better shooter than Steph Curry. I don't want anybody to get it twisted at all."

And the runner-up left a winner, too.

Stephen Curry and his brother Seth Curry of the Portland Trail Blazers had a bet where the winner of the three-point contest — they were both entrants — would have to pay for tickets for the family over the rest of their careers.

Seth Curry didn't get out of the first round. He said that even though his brother didn't win, he'd pay up.

"It stands. He got that 27 in Round One and that's impressive," Seth Curry said. "He deserved to win the bet and I have to do what I got to do."

Stephen Curry won the first round with 27 points, making his last 10 shots. Hield was second with 26 points, and Harris finished with 25 to grab the last spot in the finals. And in a weekend where the Curry family — Dell Curry is a former Charlotte star, Steph is a three-time NBA champion, Seth is in the league and mother Sonya beat them all by making an underhand half-court shot Friday — was celebrated, the trophy finish didn't happen.

Stephen Curry went a combined 37-for-50 in the two rounds, the best of anyone in the event. But Harris' timely makes of the moneyballs put him over the top.

The night started with the skills challenge, and Tatum edged Atlanta rookie Trae Young in the final by making a shot from just past the midcourt stripe. Young was ahead

of Tatum in the competition where players have to execute some passes, a layup and then a three-pointer. So fearing that Young would make his three before Tatum could even get one off, he let it fly from about 50 feet.

The slam dunk contest field of four — New York's Dennis Smith Jr., Oklahoma City's Hamidou Diallo, Charlotte's Miles Bridges and Atlanta's John Collins — was pared to Diallo and Smith for the final.

Diallo pulled off a dunk that will be talked about for years in the first round — dunking over Shaquille O'Neal, hanging on the rim by his elbow, then tearing open his jersey to reveal a "Superman" shirt underneath. And his first dunk of the final round had the top of his head at basically rim level, putting him in control after Smith failed to make a dunk in his debut try of the final.

Smith leapfrogged Miami's Dwyane Wade and took a lob from Stephen Curry to give himself a chance with his last dunk, getting a perfect score from the judges — and a round of boos from the crowd, many of whom weren't that impressed.

That left Diallo as the night's final participant. Diallo got rapper Quavo out of the crowd, put the ball in his hands, then grabbed it as he went airborne for the slam that sealed the title.

Silver: League can boost competitive balance

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Milwaukee has the best record in the NBA, Denver has its coaching staff at the All-Star Game and Sacramento is in position to end the league's longest current playoff drought.

Overseeing a league that has wanted competitive balance, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver likes what he's seeing on those fronts.

But he acknowledged during his annual address at All-Star Weekend that there are still ways for the league to have more top-to-bottom competitiveness.

"You can point to teams like Milwaukee, teams like Oklahoma City, what's happening in Denver now and Sacramento as signs that the system is working better than it has historically,"

Silver said Saturday. "I'd say we still have work to do, though. ... We can still come up with a better system to create more competition."

While Golden State is still widely believed to be the favorite for what would be its fourth title in five years, the Bucks have been a success story all season in the East. Denver was leading the Western Conference two weeks ago, which is why Michael Malone and his staff will coach the All-Star Game on Sunday. And the Kings haven't been to the playoffs since 2006 and weren't picked by many to be postseason-bound this year.

Those are the examples Silver likes of a balanced system.

"I look at the NFL, which among sports leagues, probably has the best parity and the best system in terms of creating

competition than any league I'm familiar with," Silver said. "Yet the New England Patriots have been in the Super Bowl nine out of the last 18 years. And I don't think anyone points to that as a sign that the system isn't necessarily working. What people recognize is you want parity of opportunity."

In some NBA cities, that opportunity is already gone this year.

There are four teams — Chicago, Cleveland, Phoenix and New York — who are on pace to win less than 25 percent of their games this season. The last time the league saw so many teams fail to win more than 20 games in the same full season was 1997-98, when six teams went 20-62 or worse. The NBA has tried to combat tanking by changing the odds of winning the draft lottery in

an effort to discourage teams from all-out trying to lose.

In other topics addressed by Silver:

Tampering: Silver said the NBA is "doing a good job enforcing our rules" when it comes to tampering, though stressed that tampering and trade demands — such as the one where it became known that Anthony Davis wants to leave the New Orleans Pelicans — are very different things.

"I recognize that there's very little I'm going to do to ever stop that completely," Silver said.

Silver said he would rather trade demands not be made, or at the very least not become publicly known. But he also said that given the way the current collective bargaining agreement is written, there are "unintended consequences" — such as the Davis situation.

Roundup

No. 5 Kentucky knocks off No. 1 Tennessee

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — No. 5 Kentucky got the strong start it sought against No. 1 Tennessee and for a moment was blowing out the Volunteers.

Most important was that the Wildcats finished off the Vols on a national stage, just what they needed days after letting one slip away.

PJ Washington scored 23 points, Keldon Johnson added 19 and Kentucky beat Tennessee 86-69 Saturday night to end the Volunteers' school-record, 19-game winning streak.

The Wildcats used a 25-7 surge over a little more than seven minutes for a 62-38 lead, providing a cushion that withstood the Volunteers' 13-0 spurt soon after that cut the advantage in half. Kentucky maintained a double-digit lead to win the highly anticipated matchup of top-five schools.

Kentucky (21-4, 10-2) also avoided a second consecutive SEC loss to stay within reach of co-leader Tennessee (23-2, 11-1), which hadn't lost since Nov. 23 to No. 2 Kansas.

No. 2 Duke 94, North Carolina State 78: RJ Barrett had the Blue Devils' first triple-double in 13 years, finishing with 23 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists in host Duke's victory.

Zion Williamson scored 32 points on 12-of-16 shooting and Tre Jones added 13 to help the Blue Devils (23-2, 11-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) win their ninth straight.

No. 3 Gonzaga 79, San Diego 67: Rui Hachimura scored 16 of his 22 points in the second half and had 10 rebounds and the Bulldogs pulled away at San Diego in the second half for their 16th straight victory.

Zach Norvell Jr. added 18 points, Josh Perkins 15 and Brandon Clarke 14 for the Gonzaga (25-2, 12-0 West Coast). The nation's highest scoring team, the Bulldogs had only 30 points in the first half but then

scored 31 points in the first 9:59 of the second half to take control.

No. 4 Virginia 60, Notre Dame 54: Kyle Guy scored 22 points, De'Andre Hunter had 20 with 10 rebounds and the host Cavaliers withstood a late push.

Hunter scored six points during a 9-0 run for Virginia (22-2, 10-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) after the Fighting Irish closed to within 45-44 with 8:12 left.

No. 6 Michigan 65, No. 24 Maryland 52: Charles Matthews scored 14 points and Iggy Brazdeikis added 13 to lift the host Wolverines over Maryland.

Michigan (23-3, 12-3 Big Ten) rebounded from its loss at Penn State earlier in the week. The Wolverines raced out to a 14-2 advantage and led by as much as 15 in the first half.

No. 7 Nevada 82, Wyoming 49: Trey Porter scored 14 points, Jordan Caroline and Caleb Martin added 13 apiece, and the Wolf Pack easily won at Wyoming for their 10th straight win.

Jazz Johnson contributed 12 points and Tre'Shawn Thurman had 11 points and 12 rebounds for Nevada (24-1, 11-1 Mountain West). The Wolf Pack shot 54.4 percent from the field.

No. 8 North Carolina 95, Wake Forest 57: Cameron Johnson scored 27 points, and the Tar Heels scored the game's first 18 points en route to their biggest margin of victory in an Atlantic Coast Conference road game.

Freshman Coby White added 10 points, five rebounds and six assists for North Carolina (20-5, 10-2).

No. 12 Purdue 76, Penn State 64: Carsen Edwards scored 15 of his 21 points in the second half and Matt Haarms added a career-high 18 for the host Boilermakers.

Purdue (18-7, 11-3 Big Ten) reclaimed a share of the conference lead with its ninth win in 10 games.

No. 14 Kansas 78, West Vir-

ginia 53: Devon Dotson and K.J. Lawson each scored 15 points, and the host Jayhawks beat the depleted Mountaineers.

Dedric Lawson, K.J.'s brother, had 14 points for Kansas (20-6, 9-4 Big 12), which won its third straight as it continues to start four freshmen.

No. 15 Texas Tech 86, Baylor 61: Jarrett Culver scored 18 points and Davide Moretti added 17 as the host Red Raiders cruised past the short-handed and turnover-prone Bears.

Jared Butler scored 16 points and Mario Kegler added 15 for Baylor (16-9, 7-5 Big 12), which was without key backcourt players Makai Mason (foot) and King McClure (knee) for the third consecutive game.

No. 16 Louisville 56, Clemson 55: Christen Cunningham scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half to rally the host Cardinals, who hung on in the final seconds.

Louisville (18-8, 9-4 Atlantic Coast Conference) led 56-49 with 17 seconds left after a free throw by Steven Enoch but then nearly lost a third straight in disastrous fashion. Marcquise Reed hit two three-pointers that cut the deficit to one, but Louisville survived.

No. 17 Florida State 69, Georgia Tech 47: Christ Koumadje had 10 points and 12 rebounds as the visiting Seminoles tied a school record with their seventh straight Atlantic Coast Conference win.

Freshman Devin Vassell came off the bench to score a team-high 11 while playing in his hometown for FSU (20-5, 8-4).

No. 19 LSU 83, Georgia 79: Tremont Waters scored 20 points, Ja'vonte Smart added 19 and the visiting Tigers won their fourth straight game.

LSU (21-4, 11-1 Southeastern Conference) is off to its best start in league play since the 1981 Final Four team was 11-0. The Tigers never trailed after Smart's three-pointer midway through the second half, but the Bulldogs (10-15, 1-11)

stayed close and didn't allow LSU to lead by more than eight the rest of the way.

No. 23 Iowa State 78, No. 18 Kansas State 64: Lindell Wigginton hit five three-pointers and scored 23 points, Talen Horton-Tucker buried six threes and had 20, and the visiting Cyclones pulled away late to tighten up the Big 12 title race. Marial Shayok added 13 points and 13 rebounds for Iowa State (19-6, 8-4), which pulled within a game of the Wildcats (19-6, 9-3) with six games to go in the conference schedule.

No. 21 Iowa 71, Rutgers 69: Joe Wieskamp banked in a three-pointer from the corner with less than a second to play and the Hawkeyes posted a miraculous victory at Rutgers for their fourth straight win.

The Scarlet Knights appeared on the verge of their second upset of a ranked team this season when Gio Baker got a friendly roll on a three-pointer from the top of the key with 3.3 seconds to play to put Rutgers (12-13, 5-10 Big Ten) ahead 69-68.

No. 22 Virginia Tech 70, Pittsburgh 64: Kerry Blackshear Jr. scored a season-high 29 points, Ahmed Hill added 14 and the visiting Hokies held off the slumping Panthers.

Virginia Tech (20-5, 9-4 Atlantic Coast Conference) has won two straight following a two-game losing streak.

Navy 79, Army 68: John Carter Jr. had a season-high 26 points as the host Midshipmen stopped the Black Knights.

Carter Jr. made nine of 12 shots, including six of seven from deep. He added seven rebounds.

Utah State 76, Air Force 62: Sam Merrill had 20 points as the visiting Aggies downed the Falcons.

Neemias Queta had 17 points for Utah State (20-6, 10-3 Mountain West Conference).

Lavelle Scottie had 25 points for Air Force (10-15, 5-8). Ryan Swan added 13 points and nine rebounds.

Golf roundup

Woods gets into contention at Riviera

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Tiger Woods had Riviera rocking with cheers that could be heard a half-mile away, three birdies and an eagle in his opening four holes for his hottest start on the PGA Tour in nearly 10 years.

On the other side of the course, and still well ahead of him on the leaderboard, Justin Thomas made a 12-foot eagle putt to take a one-shot lead over Adam Scott, who narrowly missed his eagle attempt from 10 feet.

It was the kind of Saturday drama at the Genesis Open that sets the table for the final round, with one big difference.

The third round was just getting started at rain-delayed Riviera.

"There's so much golf to play," Scott said. "It feels like it's late in the tourney, but it's only halfway."

Thomas got a lot done in the eight holes he played Saturday — six in the morning to complete the second round, two in the twilight to at least leave Riviera with the

lead. He nearly holed a 9-iron on No. 5 for a tap-in birdie, and then clipped a flop shot from the putting green and over the bunker to make par on the par-3 sixth on his way to a 6-under 65. Scott played behind him — he got in nine holes — and matched his 65 to join him in the 36-hole lead at 11-under 131.

Both made tough par saves on No. 2 in the third round. Both hit their tee shots on the next hole, wanting to get in as many holes as possible in superb conditions and to keep Sunday even a little bit shorter.

But they ran out of light.

Scott always leaves the flagstick in, but he couldn't see it from 136 yards away. Thomas decided to mark his ball in the right rough. Play stopped across Riviera, as Woods chose to mark his ball well short of the green at the par-5 17th, where he will return to try to get up-and-down for par.

The third round resumed Sunday at 6:45 a.m., and then the 76 players who made the cut headed right back out in the same groups.

LPGA Tour: Nelly Korda added to her

family's impressive sports pedigree Down Under with a win Sunday at the Women's Australian Open.

Korda led by three strokes after the third round, increased it to four with a tap-in birdie on the 10th and added a 25-foot birdie on the 11th to make it a lead of five.

She had a third consecutive birdie on the 12th to help claim a two-stroke victory at The Grange Golf Club, finishing with a 17-under total of 271. Defending champion Jin Young Ko was second after a 64.

Korda's father Petr was an Australian Open tennis champion, winning the tournament in 1998. Her golfing sister Jessica won the Australian Open seven years ago.

Champions Tour: Ken Tanigawa had six back-nine birdies in a 5-under 66 for a share of the Chubb Classic lead Saturday with Glen Day and Stephen Ames in Naples, Fla.

Day birdied the final two holes for a 66. Ames, tied for the first-round lead with Sandy Lyle after a then-course record 63, had a 68 to keep a share of the top spot at 11-under 131.

NHL roundup

Blues shut out Avalanche for 9th-straight victory

Associated Press

DENVER — Jake Allen made 32 saves, Vladimir Tarasenko and Zach Sanford scored 57 seconds apart in the third period and the St. Louis Blues beat the Colorado Avalanche 3-0 on Saturday for their ninth straight victory.

The winning streak is St. Louis' longest since also winning nine in a row from Oct. 15-Nov. 5, 2002.

Allen has two shutouts this season and 18 overall. St. Louis hasn't allowed a goal in 127 minutes, 14 seconds.

The Blues outshot Colorado 25-19 through the first two periods, but couldn't get one past Semyon Varlamov until Tarasenko broke through with his 25th goal at 4:01 of the third.

After Colorado nearly scored at the other end, Sanford scored on an ensuing odd-man rush,

tipping Oskar Sundqvist's pass past Varlamov at 4:58 for his seventh of the season. Tarasenko also assisted on the goal.

Lightning 3, Canadiens 0: Nikita Kucherov had a goal and an assist in the third period and host Tampa Bay beat Montreal for its fifth consecutive victory.

Andrei Vasilevskiy made 20 saves in his second consecutive shutout and franchise-record 18th for his career. Vasilevskiy tied Las Vegas' Marc-Andre Fleury for the NHL lead with six shutouts.

Flyers 6, Red Wings 5 (OT): Travis Konecny scored his second goal of the game 1:27 into overtime and host Philadelphia beat Detroit after blowing a four-goal lead in the third period. Detroit remained winless in Philadelphia for more than 20 years.

Flames 5, Penguins 4: Michael Frolik had the first of

four second-period goals for Calgary and the Flames won at Pittsburgh to end a four-game skid.

Frolik, Austin Czarnik, Travis Hamonic and Sam Bennett scored during a mid-game 17-minute span. Andrew Mangiapane also scored for Calgary, and Mike Smith made 34 saves.

Hurricanes 3, Stars 0: Petr Mrazek stopped 33 shots in his third shutout of the season and host Carolina beat Dallas to move into a wild-card playoff spot.

Blue Jackets 5, Blackhawks 2: Artemi Panarin had two goals and an assist against his former team and Columbus won at Chicago for its fifth win in six games.

Coyotes 2, Maple Leafs 0: Darcy Kuemper stopped 21 shots and host Arizona spoiled Auston Matthews' return to his hometown with a victory over

Toronto.

Islanders 5, Oilers 2: Mathew Barzal and Anders Lee scored in the third period and host New York beat Edmonton in the final game of the regular season at Barclays Center.

Senators 4, Jets 3 (OT): Ryan Dzingel scored at 3:44 of overtime to lift Ottawa to a win at Winnipeg.

Golden Knights 5, Predators 1: Max Pacioretty scored twice, Malcolm Subban made 29 saves in his first start since early January and host Las Vegas stopped Nashville.

Sharks 3, Canucks 2: Joe Pavelski, Logan Couture and Timo Meier each had a goal and an assist to lead host San Jose past Vancouver.

Bruins 4, Kings 2: Charlie McAvoy scored with 1:13 remaining and Boston won at Los Angeles for its fifth consecutive victory.