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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Candidates turn up the heat at NH debate

The Washington Post

MANCHESTER, N.H.—The Democratic campaign entered a more combustible phase Friday as the party's candidates attacked each other on a debate stage with blistering policy critiques and arguments over who was best positioned to beat President Donald Trump in November.

With no clear front-runner and four days to go before the New Hampshire primary, seven of the party's leading candidates abandoned the wonky policy contrasts and opaque tonal critiques that had filled the race before Monday's caucuses in Iowa. The debate stage became a free-fire zone instead, the candidates seizing the moment to call each other out.

They harped on age and political records, flashed anger and indignation, and warned their rivals' policy prescriptions would fail. Multiple candidates warned that the polling

leader, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., would not be electable given his identification as a democratic socialist.

In a sign of the reordering of the Democratic primary race, it was Sanders and former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg who often took control of the stage, engaging in impassioned monologues — and seeing their records scrutinized — while rivals raised their hands in the hopes of being called on next.

Former Vice President Joe Biden and Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., entered the evening looking to break out of their sudden second-tier status, as billionaire former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg, while not on the ballot or on the debate stage here, continues to increase his campaign spending in the hopes of upsetting the race next month.

In one of the most pointed parries, Buttigieg, 38, attacked Biden's longevity in politics,

suggesting the party should not “fall back on the familiar” and urging voters to “finally allow us to leave the politics of the past in the past.”

“The politics of the past were not all that bad!” Biden interjected, pointing toward measures on violence against women, arms control and other legislation he shepherded through over the course of more than four decades as a U.S. senator and vice president.

“I don't know what about the past of Barack Obama and Joe Biden that were so bad,” he said.

Buttigieg also turned toward Sanders, saying a nominee can't be someone “dividing people with a politics that says if you don't go all the way to the edge, it doesn't count. A politics that says it's my way or the highway.”

“Politics should be one of addition and inclusion and belonging,” he said, “not one that beats people over the head and

says they shouldn't even be on our side. If we don't agree 100 percent of that.” Asked if he was referring to Sanders, Buttigieg said yes.

“I've never said that,” Sanders responded. “But let me tell you what I do say. The way you bring people together is by presenting an agenda that works for the working people of this country, not for the billionaire class.”

Bloomberg came under unified condemnation from the stage.

“It's a funny thing,” Sanders said. “There are millions of people who can desire to run for office. But I guess if you're worth \$60 billion and you can spend several hundred million dollars on commercials, you have a slight advantage. That is nonsense.”

Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., agreed: “I don't think people look at the guy in the White House and say ‘We need someone richer.’”

Anger rises as outbreak cases grow in China

Associated Press

BEIJING — The number of confirmed cases of the new virus has risen again in China while fatalities increased to 722 on Saturday including an American, as the ruling Communist Party faced anger and recriminations from the public over the death of a doctor who was threatened by police after trying to sound the alarm about the disease over a month ago.

The government announced that another 3,399 people had been diagnosed over the last 24 hours, reversing two days of declines, and raising the total accumulated number of cases

on the mainland to 34,546.

The U.S. Embassy in Beijing said a 60-year-old U.S. citizen diagnosed with the virus died in Wuhan on Wednesday, apparently the first American fatality of the outbreak.

Japan's Foreign Ministry said a Japanese being treated in Wuhan had died of pneumonia and also was likely infected with the virus.

Cruise ship passengers faced more woe as Japan reported three more cases for a total of 64 on one quarantined vessel and turned away another. President Xi Jinping spoke with President Donald Trump on Friday and urged the U.S.

to “respond reasonably” to the outbreak, echoing complaints that some countries are overreacting by restricting Chinese travelers.

Following an online uproar over the government's treatment of Dr. Li Wenliang, the Communist Party struck a conciliatory note, saying it is sending a team to “fully investigate relevant issues raised by the public.”

Li, a 34-year-old ophthalmologist, contracted the virus while treating patients, and his death was confirmed early Friday. Li, one of eight medical professionals in Wuhan who tried to warn colleagues and others when the

government did not, had said that police forced him to sign a statement admitting he spread falsehoods.

Even the staunchly pro-government Global Times newspaper said the treatment of Li and other whistleblowers was “evidence of local authorities' incompetence to tackle a contagious and deadly virus.”

The episode has raised longstanding complaints that party officials lie about or cover up disease outbreaks, chemical spills, dangerous consumer products or financial frauds. Chinese citizens can be jailed on charges of rumor-mongering or making trouble.

Real military reunions differ from TV

The Washington Post

The flight shuttling war-weary Green Berets home had been delayed, and nobody thought to unlock the door for their families in the freezing rain.

It was one last odd moment to cap a brutal tour in Afghanistan, with a tinge of irony: Families who persevered together had to wait out the closing hours alone in their cars.

Rebekah Sanderlin used the opportunity to take a nap. That deployment had been particularly hard. Her father had died, she had a lymphoma scare and her husband left when she was pregnant with their third child. She gave birth during a hurricane.

Rudy was already 5 months old in February 2009, sleeping with her two siblings and her mother in the car, when a man tapped on the truck's window at 2 a.m. Sanderlin jolted awake. There he was, in the flesh, back at Fort Bragg.

"That's how he met our daughter," she said.

That reunion bore little resemblance to Tuesday night's, when President Donald Trump surprised one of his guests, Army spouse Amy Williams, with the news that her husband,

Sgt. 1st Class Townsend Williams, was home from Afghanistan and present at the State of the Union address.

The moment, a gut punch engineered to strike emotional chords of duty, sacrifice and love, was remarkable and familiar all at once: The stoic military spouse, tested but unbowed by her husband's deployment, suddenly drops her worries when a uniformed man enters to embrace his family.

Through reality TV and insurance commercials, it's often what most of the country sees when it sees military families shouldering the longest war in U.S. history.

But it is also a tiny moment that obscures the mosaic of chaos, relief, confusion and anger that often accompanies deployments and homecomings, said Sanderlin, 43.

"Coming home is a good moment. You're happy it's over," she told *The Washington Post* on Wednesday. "But it's not a pretty moment. It's awkward. It feels like it's an arranged marriage. It's been so long, and so much has happened, and you both changed so much."

Sanderlin — who has written about and advocated for military families — reiterated that

every family is different and voiced no judgment of the Williams family for the choice of a public reunion, or the public for embracing it.

Deployments are traumatic and confusing for children and families, but public reunions may fuel the problem. Some clinicians warn that adults may project their own feelings onto children with no ability to regulate their emotions.

"I would, from a policy standpoint and as a senior Army doctor, say that I would discourage families, and I would discourage the Army, from in any way agreeing to this kind of filming and programming," Stephen Xenakis, a Washington child and adolescent psychiatrist who is also a retired Army brigadier general, told *The Washington Post* in 2011.

For military families, the complexities begin even before the service member gets on the plane, Sanderlin said.

Sanderlin's husband, whom she declined to name because he is a Special Forces soldier, has deployed or left for assignments 20 times in his career, she said. So she created ways to subtly remove his presence before he leaves, she said, like taking over breakfast-making duties. That can help cushion

her three children from a sudden change.

But the approaching moment can be tense. Deploying service members want to soak up every moment, but for many families, fights occur in those last weeks together, she said. "You have to start building those walls so you can cope with the trauma of sending someone to war," she said.

Sanderlin and other families have sought to dampen the loss by trying to pack in activities and trips. Sanderlin showed photos of his face to her children as a memory aid.

Meanwhile, time itself breaks down. Many soldiers expect life to pause and return to exactly the same moment, Sanderlin said, but life keeps going. Kids pick up a new instrument or adopt a new sport. They have different bedtimes and new dreams.

Social media has fueled the expectation of a romantic, emotional homecoming, she said, with parents and kids both elated. And while women make up an increasingly larger portion of the armed forces, most of these videos conform to a traditional gender role of men returning home to doting wives and kids — or, occasionally, dogs.

Two Air Force facilities to bear Space Force name

Orlando Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. — Two Air Force installations on Central Florida's Space Coast will soon bear the Space Force name.

Both Patrick Air Force Base and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Brevard County will be changing their names to reflect their recent change in status as designated Space Force facilities, according to a report from Florida Today.

Patrick Air Force Base, located between Satellite Beach and Cocoa Beach, is home to the 45th Space Wing that supports launches from Cape Canaveral AFS and Kennedy Space Center.

The name shift will come within the next 30 days, according to 45th Space Wing

Commander Brig. Gen. Douglas Schiess, who Florida Today reported said, "The names of the two bases will change. When that happens, we believe we'll probably be one of the first, if not the first, bases to do that."

The new names would change to Patrick Space Force Base and Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida Today reported.

They were singled out with some other Air Force bases around the nation as part of the December creation of the Space Force, which became a reality when President Donald Trump signed into law the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act.

The airmen of the 45th are now among

the 16,000 active-duty military and civilian members of the Space Force. They will continue to wear Air Force uniforms with Air Force logos for now, but earlier announcements said that would shift within 18 months of the creation of the Space Force.

Patrick and Canaveral join Vandenberg Air Force Base in California as well as Buckley, Peterson and Schriever Air Force bases in Colorado as redesignated Space Force bases.

For now the U.S. Space Force is led by Air Force Gen. Jay Raymond, who is the head of Air Force Space Command and U.S. Space Command. In time, a Space Force chief will be confirmed by the Senate.

Rescues needed as Ore. floodwaters rise

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Residents in the foothills of the towering Blue Mountains in rural northeast Oregon were plucked from their flooded homes by helicopter and others rode to safety in the bucket of a front-end loader as relentless rain and melting snow pushed multiple rivers over their banks.

An earlier heavy snowfall in the mountains combined with two days of steady rain and warming temperatures to unleash floodwaters on the city of Pendleton and rural, mountain foothill communities to its east late Thursday and Friday. The

Umatilla River crested just before 10 p.m. Thursday at more than 19 feet, nearly four times the average height for that date. Rivers all around the region overran their banks, setting records as they went.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown declared a state of emergency in Umatilla, Wallowa and Union counties late Friday to help communities deal with the severe flooding. The declaration means Oregon can mobilize the National Guard if needed.

Authorities were still conducting search and rescue operations Friday with two helicopters, trying to reach

residents still boxed in by high water in rural communities like Gibbon and Bingham Springs. They also described a chaotic scene from late Thursday, when rescue personnel had to improvise to get the last few residents out of a rapidly flooding area of Pendleton using heavy machinery like a front-end loader, usually used for road maintenance.

Authorities in Umatilla County had used 35,000 sandbags by Friday and another 50,000 were en route from Portland, Ore., about 210 miles to the west.

Evacuation shelters were open in Pendleton and on the Confederated Tribes of the

Umatilla Indian Reservation, which was also hit hard by the flooding.

All but a 9-mile stretch of I-84 was once more open Friday after much more extensive closures earlier in the day. About a 5-mile stretch of the freeway — which links Idaho and Oregon — will be closed for up to a week because of damage from the flooding, said Tom Strandberg, a spokesman for the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest, officials braced for more flooding and landslides from relentless rains.

Trump ousts officials who testified during trial

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Exacting swift punishment against those who crossed him, an emboldened President Donald Trump ousted two government officials who had delivered damaging testimony against him during his impeachment hearings. The president took retribution just two days after his acquittal by the Senate.

First came news Friday that Trump had ousted Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, the decorated soldier and national security aide who played a central role in the Democrats' impeachment case. Vindman's lawyer

said his client was escorted out of the White House complex Friday; he was told to leave in retaliation for "telling the truth."

"The truth has cost Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman his job, his career, and his privacy," attorney David Pressman said in a statement. Vindman's twin brother, Lt. Col. Yevgeny Vindman, also was asked to leave his job as a White House lawyer on Friday, the Army said in a statement. Both men were reassigned to the Army.

Next came word that Gordon Sondland, Trump's ambassador to the European Union, also

was out.

"I was advised today that the President intends to recall me effective immediately as United States Ambassador to the European Union," Sondland said in a statement.

The White House had not been coy about whether Trump would retaliate against those he viewed as foes in his impeachment. White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said Thursday that Trump was glad it was over and "maybe people should pay for that."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a statement that Vindman's ouster was "a clear and

brazen act of retaliation that showcases the President's fear of the truth. The President's vindictiveness is precisely what led Republican Senators to be accomplices to his cover-up."

It was Alexander Vindman who first told the House that in America "right matters" — a phrase repeated in the impeachment trial by lead prosecutor Schiff.

Sondland, too, was a crucial witness in the House impeachment inquiry, telling investigators that "Everyone was in the loop" on Trump's desire to press Ukraine for politically charged investigations.

Dem Iowa caucus to undergo independent review

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Iowa Democratic Party Chairman Troy Price, under immense pressure following the state's presidential caucus debacle, said Friday that an independent review will determine what caused the problems that led to a dayslong delay in reporting the results, inconsistencies in the numbers and no

clear winner.

But almost nothing went right Monday night, first when an app local Democratic volunteers were to use to report the results from almost 1,700 precincts failed, and then when a massive backlog of phone reports and inquiries followed. It brought the reporting of the results of the leadoff presidential nominating contest to a

standstill.

It took until Thursday for the state party to issue what it said are complete results. The Associated Press said Thursday it is unable to declare a winner based on the available information. The results as reported by the Iowa Democratic Party, the AP believes, may not be fully accurate.

Price also announced he was

extending until Monday the deadline for presidential candidates to request a review of the results of the Iowa presidential caucuses and was allowing campaigns to submit their own data for comparison by noon Saturday.

Nonetheless, Price said the state party would be allocating the national delegates won Monday over the weekend.

Thai soldier kills at least 20 people and holes up in mall

Associated Press

NAKHON RATCHASIMA, Thailand — A soldier who holed up in a popular shopping mall in northeastern Thailand shot multiple people on Saturday, killing at least 20 and injuring 31 others, officials said.

Police said they have secured the mall, and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said there were no more bodies left inside. But he added, “we don’t know whether there are any additional injuries or deaths or not.” He did not say whether the shooter had been found.

Anutin said a doctor was shot while helping an injured person.

The gunman, described by police as a soldier angry over a land dispute, appeared to be armed with an assault rifle, based on security camera video aired on Thai Rath television. Thai Rath said the incident began at about 3:30 p.m.

Shortly before midnight, police announced they had secured the entire mall in the city of Nakhon

Ratchasima. They released photos of officers escorting people to the exits, but they gave no information about the gunman’s whereabouts.

A police officer contacted by phone said the soldier initially shot dead another soldier and a woman and wounded a third person, apparently over a land dispute.

City and neighborhood police officers, who asked not to be identified because they were not authorized to release information, said the man took a gun from his base and drove to the Terminal 21 Korat mall, shooting along the way. Several Thai media reported that he traveled in a military vehicle.

Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Kongcheep Tantrawanich identified the suspect as Sgt. Jakrapanth Thomma.

The suspect posted updates to his Facebook page during the rampage with statements including “No one can escape death” and “Should I give up?” In a later post he wrote, “I have stopped already.”

Software defect halts Starliner’s first test

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Defective software could have doomed Boeing’s crew capsule during its first test flight that ended up being cut short late last year, NASA said Friday.

The Starliner capsule launched without astronauts in December, but its automatic timer was off by 11 hours, preventing the capsule from flying to the International Space Station as planned.

In addition, a software problem with the Starliner’s service module was not detected until the flight was underway, according to NASA. That would have interfered with the separation of the service module before touchdown.

If ground controllers had not intervened to fix the problems, NASA said the Starliner could have been destroyed.

These latest findings stem from a joint investigation team formed by NASA and Boeing in the wake of the aborted test flight. The capsule ended up in the wrong orbit and returned to Earth two days later, parachuting down to a landing in New Mexico.

NASA has yet to decide whether Boeing must conduct another test flight without a crew, before putting astronauts on board. Just in case, Boeing reported last week that it took a \$410 million charge in its fourth-quarter earnings, to cover a possible mission repeat.

“It remains too soon to speculate about next flight dates,” Boeing said in a statement.

The investigation team found that “critical software defects” weren’t detected before the flight “despite multiple safeguards,” NASA said in a statement. The breakdowns in designing, coding and testing the software will require “systemic corrective actions.”

Syrian advance sends people fleeing

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Turkey on Friday sent more troops and tanks to bolster its military presence in northwestern Syria, where President Bashar Assad’s forces have been advancing in a devastating, Russian-backed offensive that has sparked a massive wave of people fleeing in wet and blustery winter weather.

Syria’s Idlib region near the border with Turkey is the last rebel-held bastion in the war-ravaged country. The push by Assad’s forces into towns and villages in the province over the past months has uprooted more than a half-million people who fled the advancing troops. Many of them already have been displaced several times in the 8-year-old Syrian war.

The campaign also has angered Turkey, which backs the rebels, and brought the two countries’ troops into a rare, direct confrontation: At least eight Turkish troops and civilians and 13 Syrian soldiers

have been killed.

As Syrian and Russian warplanes indiscriminately pounded hospitals, clinics and schools in the enclave, civilians packed their belongings in cars, taxis and pickup trucks. They streamed toward the Turkish border with few options left that are outside Syrian government control.

Many end up in tents or sheltering in abandoned buildings during rainy and windy weather, with temperatures hovering around freezing but predicted to fall over the weekend.

“If they stay, they run the risk of falling victim to the indiscriminate violence taking place in urban areas. If they leave, they have nowhere to go,” said Lorenzo Redalie, head of the Aleppo office of the International Committee of the Red Cross. “The shelters can’t accommodate everyone, and it is more and more challenging for humanitarians to reach them and meet their needs.”

The Syrian offensive appears aimed for now at securing a

strategic highway in rebel-controlled territory, as opposed to an all-out campaign to retake the entire province, including the city of Idlib, the densely populated provincial capital.

Earlier this week, Syrian government troops took control of the former rebel town of Saraqeb, which is strategic because it sits on the intersection of two major highways. One of them leads to the capital, Damascus, to the north, and another connects to the country’s western and eastern regions.

Turkey, which backs the Syrian opposition and has been monitoring a cease-fire in the rebel enclave, has protested the government assault, calling it a violation of the truce it negotiated with Russia. In recent weeks, Ankara sent in troops and equipment to reinforce monitoring points it set up to observe a previous cease-fire, which has since crumbled, and also deployed forces around towns that are threatened by the Syrian advance.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Box of bear cubs bewilders homeowner

NC CAMDEN — It was a bear-y baffling discovery in front of a North Carolina home.

Cornelius Williams returned home from the grocery store and heard a squeaky noise coming from a cardboard box left in his walkway, WTKR-TV reported.

It was dark outside, so Williams called authorities for help. A deputy approached the box, peered inside and to his surprise — he found two newborn bear cubs.

The bears were taken to the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro to be examined and cared for, news outlets reported.

Suspicious sheriff stops phony cop car

MI WATERFORD — A man driving what appeared to be a police car didn't fool a suspicious sheriff in suburban Detroit.

Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard said he was driving away from a meeting when he spotted a vehicle with police-style bumpers, an array of lights on the back and a decal that read "emergency response."

Bouchard activated his emergency lights and stopped the vehicle. He said there was a fake radar on the dashboard and a police-style computer. He also discovered a loaded gun and a large knife.

'Harm reduction kits' being offered to addicts

CT NEW HAVEN— Police in Connecticut's second largest city will begin distributing clean syringes and glass pipes in what are being

called "harm reduction kits" to residents who use drugs.

The kits, to be offered to those discharged from the New Haven police lockup, are also expected to include information about care and treatment options, Brillo pads to use as filters for smoking crack cocaine, sterilizing pads, cotton, condoms and a tourniquet, among other items, city officials said, according to The New Haven Register.

Fluffy malfunction as foam fills airport hangar

VA MANASSAS — A fire-fighting malfunction left a frothy mess at a northern Virginia airport when foam filled a hangar and spilled out onto a nearby road.

Officials in the city of Manassas said Wakeman Drive leading to Manassas Regional Airport was closed as workers began cleaning up the mess.

The city said a fire-suppression system malfunctioned at one of the businesses around the airport, causing white foam to fill a hangar. Overflow foam covered Wakeman Drive, which runs in front of the airport.

Sturgeon spearing season is underway

WI OSHKOSH — There are concerns about the ice condition for the annual spearfishing rite that draws thousands to Lake Winnebago and Upriver Lakes.

The sturgeon spearing season began Saturday in eastern Wisconsin. More than 12,000 licenses were sold for Lake Winnebago and nearly 500 for the other lakes.

WLUK-TV reported fishing clubs are asking spearmen to unload their equipment before venturing out on the lakes because the ice in some spots isn't thick enough to support a truck or car.

Judge charged with second DUI offense

SC ORANGEBURG — A South Carolina magistrate crashed head-on into a truck and was charged with his second driving under the influence offense.

Magistrate Jacob Gillens, 70, of Eutawville was charged with first-offense driving under the influence with a blood alcohol concentration of .10 or less, The Times and Democrat reported.

S.C. Highway Patrol Lance Cpl. Tyler Tidwell said Gillens was involved in a two-vehicle crash Jan. 31. Gillens was driving north on U.S. Highway 301 when his vehicle ran off the road and through a culvert, striking a truck head-on.

The two passengers in the truck along with Gillens were hospitalized with minor injuries.

Gillens has pending charges of first-offense driving with an unlawful alcohol concentration of .08 but less than .10 and violating the state's ABC law.

Dogs who ate branches to survive are rescued

CA ONTARIO — Nearly two dozen neglected dogs that were so malnourished they ate small tree branches to survive were removed from a Southern California home, authorities said.

The dogs — mostly Labrador retrievers and spaniel breeds ages 1 to 13 — were found in "deplorable conditions" in Ontario, according to the Inland Valley Humane Society and Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The agency had received multiple complaints about conditions at the home.

Police found 21 dogs during a search of the property. Be-

cause there was no fresh water or food available, the dogs had been eating small tree branches, officials said.

Mail collection box thieves investigated

MA BOSTON — A task force of investigators is working with the U.S. Postal Service to apprehend whoever has been stealing mail from collection boxes in the Boston area, authorities said.

Wellesley Detective Mark D'Innocenzo said the culprits are using glue and string to fish envelopes from mailboxes, The Boston Globe reported.

The thieves use chemicals to rewrite checks to themselves, cash them in and use the bank information they acquired to forge more checks, D'Innocenzo said.

Ski area announces improvement plan

ME NEWRY — Maine's Sunday River intends to replace and upgrade six ski lifts, build a mountain observation tower and a mountain roller coaster, and add housing as part of a 10-year plan, the resort said.

Some of the steps outlined, like building the North Peak multi-story observation tower and renovating the 6,000-square-foot ballroom at Grand Summit Hotel, could start in the next year.

The plan also includes upgrading and replacing six of the resort's 18 ski lifts.

The plan includes new radio-frequency identification ticketing that will allow skiers to buy a season pass or reload lift tickets onto a card, and skip the ticket purchase lines and go straight from the parking lot to the lift.

From wire reports

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Giants' Nakken ready to make history

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Alyssa Nakken stole a quick glance out a window high above the ballpark toward McCovey Cove on a picture-perfect day and grinned.

She is honored to take on the challenge — and embrace the responsibility — of being the first female major league coach, having joined new San Francisco Giants manager Gabe Kapler's staff last month.

"I'm most comfortable at a baseball field," she said.

It's a good thing, since she will be spending countless hours over the coming eight months in this very setting. Nakken will be in uniform and helping the Giants with everything from cage work to infield practice.

For Nakken, making history means being ready each day to make an impact in her own distinct way while ignoring the critics and anyone who figures she is unfit for an on-field baseball job based on her gender.

"No turning back now, you're in it," she said. "Here we go."

She does accept her role as an example for girls and women that they can work in baseball.

"It's a big deal. I feel a great sense of responsibility and I

feel it's my job to honor those who have helped me to where I am," she said.

Kapler and Giants president of baseball operations Farhan Zaidi have all the confidence in Nakken's ability to help build clubhouse continuity through stronger bonds between young players and veterans.

"I think why it's difficult for me to put it into words is because throughout the interview process and getting to know Gabe and Farhan a little bit more, it was never about this," Nakken said. "It was never about being a female. It was never about being the first.

"It was about, 'Hey, we have a brand new staff, there's a lot going on, we need somebody to come in here and make an impact in this clubhouse, for this staff, for the team and help us win, somebody who knows baseball, is a good communicator, can build relationships, can build trust,' and that's what it was about."

A polished speaker who has become adept at hiding any nerves, Nakken is taking initiative early. She put on a two-day coaches retreat this week that included a "culinary experience" — much more than "a food tour," she said — through

San Francisco's historic and diverse Mission District.

"For the record, I won the poker tournament," she noted. She also got a shout-out from retired manager Bruce Bochy when they crossed paths Thursday. He is now a senior adviser for the franchise.

Nakken doesn't claim to be an expert on hitting or pitching. She plans to assist coaches on both sides, and will also work a lot on outfield defense and baserunning. Nakken will be in uniform but not in the dugout during games, rather working with players in the cage to keep them ready.

She's felt welcomed by players so far, with spring training set to start next week.

"I've been ready for a challenge like this, something new," she said.

Cleveland Cavaliers assistant coach Lindsay Gottlieb, the former California women's basketball coach in nearby Berkeley, hopes Nakken paves the way for more women to work in prominent baseball jobs — and not just behind the scenes.

"That's great news for the Giants and for baseball," Gottlieb said. "Any organization benefits from diverse opinions and experiences, and baseball

is no different. I don't know Alyssa but I'm sure she'll be a fantastic addition to the Giants staff, and that in turn should make the hiring of women and baseball something every team considers to ensure they have the strongest possible staff."

The NBA has several female assistant coaches. The NFL's San Francisco 49ers, who lost to Kansas City in Sunday's Super Bowl, have Katie Sowers as an offensive assistant. Sowers became the first woman and openly gay coach to work at a Super Bowl.

At Sacramento State from 2009-2012, Nakken was a three-time all-conference player at first base and four-time Academic All American. She went on to earn a master's degree in sport management from the University of San Francisco in 2015 — after interning with the Giants' baseball operations department a year earlier.

The idea of working with USF's baseball program helped draw her to the city and to pursue this career path.

Nakken is ready to get to work.

"In terms of this setting, I love what I'm doing," she said, "and I love this position that I'm in."

MLB briefs

Union head calls for Red Sox-Dodgers deal to be done

Associated Press

BOSTON — The holdup in the trade that would send 2018 AL MVP Mookie Betts to the Los Angeles Dodgers is unfair to the players involved, the head of their union said on Friday.

The Boston Red Sox had a pending trade that would send Betts and lefty David Price to the Dodgers for outfielder Alex Verdugo and Twins prospect Brusdar Graterol. The deal was agreed to on Tuesday night pending the exchange of medical information, two people

with knowledge of the negotiations told The Associated Press.

The people spoke on the condition of anonymity because the deal was not final.

But Boston is said to have balked when it saw Graterol's medical records, and the deal still has not been finalized. That is holding up a side deal that would send outfielder Joc Pederson from the Dodgers to the Angels.

"The proposed trades between the Dodgers, Red Sox, Twins, and Angels need to

be resolved without further delay," Major League Baseball Players Association boss Tony Clark said in a statement. "The events of this last week have unfairly put several Players' lives in a state of limbo."

Popular OF Pence returning to Giants

SAN FRANCISCO — Hunter Pence could hardly hide his enthusiasm about returning to San Francisco.

"I have GIANT news... I'm back!" he posted on Twitter

along with a photo of him walking across the street to the ballpark.

A fan favorite while playing parts of seven seasons for the Giants, Pence is returning on a \$3 million, one-year contract that will give the young club a veteran presence in both the outfield and clubhouse in a season of big change ahead.

The Giants announced Friday night they had signed Pence, who can also earn up to an additional \$2.5 million in various roster and performance bonuses.

No. 9 Maryland outlasts No. 20 Illinois

Associated Press

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — With Illinois shredding Maryland's man-to-man defense, Terrapins coach Mark Turgeon switched to a zone — something the team rarely uses outside of practice.

It worked.

Anthony Cowan scored 20 points and Turgeon's ninth-ranked Maryland held on to beat No. 20 Illinois 75-66 on Friday night.

The Terrapins (19-4, 9-3 Big Ten) took sole possession of first place in the conference with the win. Illinois (16-7, 8-4) fell into second place.

"Great win for us," Turgeon said. "Illinois plays as well as anyone in our league. They are a talented group with size."

Illinois led by as many as 14

points midway through the first half, but the Terrapins fought back and pulled to within 42-40 with a three-pointer by Wiggins at the halftime buzzer.

Maryland opened the second half with an 11-0 run to take a lead it never relinquished.

"We kind of lost ourselves there at first," Turgeon said. "But we utilized the zone and it got us back in the game. It gave us some confidence."

Maryland plays mostly a man defense, although Turgeon said they practice different zones.

"We haven't really shown much of our zone," he said. "We practice it every day, and today we played it. It worked and it really took them out of their rhythm."

The switch caught Illinois off

guard.

"They went zone on us and it changed the rhythm of the game," said Illinois coach Brad Underwood. "We had some unfortunate lineups out there because of foul trouble. And it worked. They really controlled the game after that."

Feliz, who has been superb off the bench for Illinois this season, said the shift from man to zone changed the Illini's game plan.

"They made some adjustments," he said. "It slowed us down and forced us to take outside shots."

Darryl Morsell scored 18 and Eric Ayala added 12 for Maryland.

Ayo Dosunmu led Illinois with 16 points. Andres Feliz

added 12.

Five technicals: Emotions were running high from the opening tip. There were four technical fouls called in the first half, two on the Maryland bench (the first on Turgeon) and one each on Illinois (Feliz) and Maryland (Morsell).

"I don't want to talk about that," Turgeon said of his technical. "I deserved it and we moved on."

Illinois coach Brad Underwood was called for the game's fifth technical foul midway through the second half for yelling at the referees.

"Eh," Underwood said, shrugging, when asked about the foul. "Lots of emotion out there tonight."

NBA roundup

Oubre scores career-high 39 as Suns roll past Rockets

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Kelly Oubre Jr. scored a career-high 39 points, Devin Booker added 33 and the Phoenix Suns rolled past the Houston Rockets 127-91 on Friday night.

The Suns poured in 46 points in the first quarter and led the rest of the way, turning back a handful of Houston rallies. The Rockets were playing without All-Star guard Russell Westbrook, who was held out for rest one night after Houston beat the Los Angeles Lakers.

The 24-year-old Oubre had a stellar game on his bobblehead night, hitting a three-pointer at the buzzer to give the Suns a 97-73 lead going into the fourth quarter. He shot 14-for-19 from the field, including 7-for-9 from three-point range.

The Suns snapped a four-game losing streak overall and a 13-game losing streak against the Rockets that dates to 2016.

James Harden led the Rockets with 32 points despite not playing in the fourth quarter because the Suns were well

ahead. He finished 9-for-19 from the field and made five three-pointers.

Wizards 119, Mavericks 118: Bradley Beal made a layup with 0.2 seconds left to reach 29 points and give Washington a win over visiting Dallas, which has dropped three of five games without Luka Doncic.

Beal's heroics came after Mavericks guard Tim Hardaway Jr. drew a blocking foul and hit one of two free throws with 1.8 seconds left. Beal was 11-for-28 from the field.

Washington made 19 of 38 three-pointers. Davis Bertans was responsible for five of them and finished with 20 points.

Doncic is rehabbing a sprained right ankle, and the Mavericks hope he can play at least one game before the All-Star break.

Kings 105, Heat 97: Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 23 points, Buddy Hield added 21 and Sacramento used 19 three-pointers to beat visiting Miami.

The Heat played short-hand-

ed. All-Star Jimmy Butler did not play after straining his right shoulder in a loss to the Clippers on Wednesday, but got good news after an MRI test on his shoulder came back negative.

76ers 119, Grizzlies 107: Furkan Korkmaz scored a career-high 34 points, Ben Simmons added 22 points and 10 assists and host Philadelphia snapped a four-game losing streak with a victory over Memphis.

Ja Morant had 15 points to pace Memphis, which lost for just the fourth time in 17 games.

Celtics 112, Hawks 107: Jayson Tatum had seven three-pointers and scored 32 points to help host Boston hold off Atlanta.

It was Tatum's eighth consecutive game with at least 20 points. Enes Kanter added 16 points and 15 rebounds as Boston posted its sixth consecutive win.

Raptors 115, Pacers 106: Serge Ibaka had 22 points and

10 rebounds and Fred VanVleet added 20 points, leading Toronto past host Indiana for its franchise-record 13th consecutive victory.

The Raptors haven't lost since Jan. 15 and beat the Pacers for the second time in three days, winning their first game in Indianapolis in 13 months.

Thunder 108, Pistons 101: Chris Paul scored 22 points and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 21 as Oklahoma City beat visiting Detroit.

Danilo Gallinari scored 19 points, Dennis Schroder 18 and Steven Adams 16 for the Thunder, who have won nine of 10.

Jazz 117, Trail Blazers 114: Bojan Bogdanovic had 27 points and Donovan Mitchell scored a go-ahead layup with 19.5 seconds left as host Utah overcame a 42-point performance by Damian Lillard and beat Portland.

Mike Conley added 18 points for the Jazz. Mitchell and Rudy Gobert (14 rebounds) chipped in 16 points apiece. Utah snapped a five-game losing streak.

USWNT earns Olympic berth in soccer

Associated Press

CARSON, Calif. — Samantha Mewis' goal on a blistering free kick in the second half against Mexico left no doubt that the United States was on its way to the Olympics.

Mewis scored twice and the U.S. national team secured its place in Tokyo this summer with a 4-0 semifinal victory Friday night in the CONCACAF Women's Olympic Qualifying tournament.

"I hope so," she said about her statement-making goal putting the U.S. firmly in control. "There were ups and downs in the game. I thought Mexico played really well, they did a great job and they were a hard team to beat. I think every time we were able to score it helped us kind of reset ourselves."

Rose Lavelle and Christen Press also scored for the United States, which extended its unbeaten streak to 27 games.

The United States will face Canada in the tournament's title game on Sunday. Canada earned the region's other Olympic berth with a 1-0 victory over surprisingly resilient Costa Rica 1-0 in the earlier match Friday.

Canada has finished as runner up to the United States in the last three qualifying tournaments.

"Canada is always a really hard team, we obviously have a big rivalry with them and of course they're playing well defensively — and offensively. So it's going to be a tough game, but we're excited for the challenge," Mewis said.

The top-ranked U.S. team is coming off a victory in the World Cup last summer in France. It was the team's fourth title in soccer's premier tournament.

The United States has made the field for every Olympics

since soccer became an Olympic sport in 1996, and has won the gold medal four times. But the Americans were eliminated by Sweden in the quarterfinals four years ago in Brazil for the team's earliest exit in the tournament.

"Coming into this game we had the same attitude as the game before and the game before. And that attitude is not going to change going forward: Every game that we go into is going to be the most important, whether its a qualifying tournament or a friendly game, or any game that we have in front of us," U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski said.

Mexico, ranked No. 26 in the world, finished second in its group to draw the United States in the semis.

Mexico made the field for the 2004 Olympics, but has not been back since. However, Mexico is on the rise, boosted

by a domestic women's league. The team won its first two group-stage matches before falling 2-0 to Canada.

"The competition that they have here in the U.S., the number of options that they have to play, I think every practice is probably tougher than a lot of their matches," Mexico coach Christopher Cuellar said. "I think when you train at that level, and you have that kind of competition, the game becomes a little easier."

The United States swept its group stage matches without allowing a goal. Lindsey Horan led the way with five goals and Press added four. Neither Press nor Horan started against Mexico.

Lavelle's goal in the fifth minute gave the United States an early lead before Sam Mewis scored on a set piece in the 14th, blasting the ball past Mexico goalkeeper Emily Alverado.

NHL roundup

Merzlikins picks up another shutout for Blue Jackets

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Columbus Blue Jackets rookie goalie Elvis Merzlikins is racking up some impressive stats since becoming the starter by attrition on New Year's Eve.

Merzlikins, who took over after Joonas Korpisalo was injured, got a fifth shutout in his last eight games on Friday night in a 2-0 win over the Detroit Red Wings. He's got back-to-back shutouts and eight straight wins. He is 12-2-0 since becoming the starter. The five shutouts lead the NHL.

And it was probably his easiest win of the season, with Columbus outshooting the hapless Red Wings 44-16.

"We didn't give them much, but (Merzlikins) made some great saves for us," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella said.

Zach Werenski's second-period goal, his 17th of the season,

broke a franchise season scoring record for defensemen for the Blue Jackets, who have won three straight and nine of 10.

The Blue Jackets dominated Detroit but were clinging to a 1-0 lead as the clock ticked down under 2 minutes and the Red Wings pulled goalie Jimmy Howard for a sixth skater. Columbus finally got to breathe easier when Boone Jenner got an empty-netter with 1:25 left.

Howard faced a shooting gallery at times, finishing with 42 saves and slipping to 2-21-2 on the season. The 35-year-old has lost 18 straight and hasn't won since October.

"They just throw pucks at the net," Howard said. "They're one of those teams that's got big bodies up front. They like to work it down low and throw it to the middle and just crash. A lot of shots were in tight."

Columbus has been on a roll the past two months. It was 9-0-

1 in the last 10 and 19-2-5 since Dec. 9, earning 43 of its 69 points in that stretch. The win moved it back into third place in the Metropolitan Division, one point ahead of the New York Islanders and two behind Pittsburgh.

Sabres 3, Rangers 2: Jimmy Vesey had a goal and an assist against his former team, Carter Hutton stopped 37 shots, and visiting Buffalo held on to beat New York.

Zemgus Girgensons and Sam Reinhart also scored to help the Sabres get just their second win in seven games.

Hutton had six saves in the first period, 10 in the second and 21 in the third when New York tried to rally from a 3-0 deficit.

Maple Leafs 5, Ducks 4 (OT): John Tavares scored his second goal of the game at 4:53 of overtime to lift host Toronto over Anaheim.

Auston Matthews got his 40th goal of the season to tie Alex Ovechkin for the NHL lead and had three assists, while Jason Spezza and Andreas Johnson also scored for the Maple Leafs. Mitch Marner also had three assists and Tavares had one.

Jack Campbell made 26 saves in his first start for Toronto, two nights after being acquired from Los Angeles.

Wild 3, Stars 2: Joel Eriksson Ek scored his second goal of the game with 27 seconds to play and visiting Minnesota rallied from a two-goal deficit to beat Dallas.

Eriksson Ek skated from behind the net to the right goalpost and put a wraparound behind Stars goalie Ben Bishop for the winning goal.

Ryan Donato also scored for the Wild, and Devan Dubnyk stopped 31 shots.