

STARS AND STRIPES®

Friday, February 14, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Esper defends shifting funds for wall

From staff and wire reports

MUNICH, Germany — U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Friday defended his decision to divert \$3.8 billion in funding for Marine, Navy and Air Force aircraft and other military programs to help pay for President Donald Trump's wall on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Esper was asked by a reporter about criticism from Democrats and Republicans in Congress, including Rep. Mac Thornberry, a Republican from Texas, who called the diversion of funds contrary to the constitutional authority of Congress.

"Border security is national security," Esper said, "and national security is our mission."

The diversion of funds would scrap plans for two F-35 fighter jets and two Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft for the Marine Corps; one P-8A reconnaissance aircraft for the Navy; and four

C-130J transport planes and eight MQ-9 Reaper drones for the Air Force.

In addition, funding will be diverted from programs to update Humvees and trucks for the Army, buy \$1.3 billion in "miscellaneous" new equipment for the National Guard and Reserves and develop certain Navy vessels, including \$650 million for the Landing Helicopter Assault ship.

The Washington Post reported the Pentagon told Congress the funding is either in excess of the military's needs or is not yet needed given the timeline of the programs in question.

"The action we took is legal under the law, and so it should be no surprise, and I'll just leave it at that for now," Esper said Friday on the sidelines of an international security conference in Munich.

The Pentagon announced

Thursday that Esper approved shifting the funds to help the Department of Homeland Security build portions of the border wall. The Pentagon indicated that more such actions could be coming to provide additional funding for Trump's signature campaign promise.

Last year, despite congressional opposition, Trump faced no consequences when making similar transfers by canceling or postponing dozens of military construction projects to free up \$3.6 billion.

Some members of Congress have already voiced their outrage about the Pentagon's decision to divert money that Congress approved for another purpose.

"[This] undermines the principle of civilian control of the military and is in violation of the separation of powers within the Constitution," Thornberry,

the ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, said in a prepared statement Thursday. "To be clear, I continue to believe that the situation on our southern border represents a national security challenge for our country. ... The wall should be funded, but the funding must come through the Department of Homeland Security rather than diverting critical military resources that are needed and in law."

Money from this recent request will be used to build 177 miles of border barriers on federal land in six of the nine Customs and Border Patrol sectors: San Diego and El Centro in California, Yuma and Tucson in Arizona, and El Paso and Del Rio in Texas.

The Associated Press, The Washington Post and Stars and Stripes reporter Caitlin M. Kenney contributed to this report.

Official: US, Taliban reach Afghanistan truce agreement

Associated Press

MUNICH — A senior U.S. official said Friday the U.S. and the Taliban have reached a truce agreement that will take effect "very soon" and could lead to withdrawals of American troops from Afghanistan.

The official said the agreement for a seven-day "reduction in violence" to be followed by the start of all-Afghan peace talks within 10 days is "very specific" and covers the entire country, including Afghan government forces. There were indications a formal announcement could come as early as the weekend.

The official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss the matter and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the Tal-

iban had committed to a halt in roadside and suicide bombings as well as rocket attacks. The official said the U.S. would monitor the truce and determine if there were any violations.

Should the Taliban comply, the "reduction in violence" agreement would be followed by the signing of an agreement that would initiate peace negotiations that include all Afghan sides.

A Taliban official familiar with the deal said that the second agreement would be signed on Feb. 29 and that the inter-Afghan dialogue would begin on March 10. The officials said Germany and Norway have offered to host the talks but there has been no decision on the venue.

That Taliban official added

that the withdrawal of foreign troops would start gradually and would be phased over 18 months.

President Donald Trump previously called off the peace talks because of an attack that killed two Americans.

U.S. officials have not publicly spelled out their timetable for an initial drawdown of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, but the expectation is that a reduction from the current total of about 12,000 to approximately 8,600 will begin after the signing of a U.S.-Taliban deal. That initial reduction is likely to stretch out over a period of weeks or months.

A senior U.S. military officer told a small group of reporters Thursday that U.S. counterterrorism operations in Afghani-

stan against Islamic State and al-Qaida will continue, separate from a truce agreement. The official spoke to a small group of American reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive aspects of military operations ahead of an expected announcement of a U.S.-Taliban deal.

The new developments came as U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Mark Esper met Friday in Munich with Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani. They spoke on the sidelines of an international security forum in Munich.

A truce had been widely anticipated, and Trump agreed in principle to the deal, according to U.S. officials.

US Navy apprehends cache of illegal Iranian-made weapons

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars And Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy on Sunday captured a cache of illegal, Iranian-made weapons, including about 150 anti-tank missiles, from a small sailing vessel in the Arabian Sea, U.S. Central Command announced Thursday.

The weaponry was nearly identical to a cache seized in November, which was assessed to be a shipment from Iran on the way to Houthi fighters in Yemen, CENTCOM said in a statement. Defense officials said Thursday that they had not determined definitively where this most recent supply of weapons was being delivered.

The weapons seized by sailors aboard the USS Normandy, a guided-missile cruiser, included about 150 “Dehlavieh” anti-tank guided missiles — Iranian-made versions of the Russian Kornet anti-tank

missile. Also seized from the dhow sailing vessel were Iranian-built surface-to-air missiles, thermal imaging weapon scopes, components to build Iranian-designed drones and boats, and other advanced weapons parts and munitions, CENTCOM said.

The Normandy stopped the vessel and sailors boarded it while conducting regular maritime security operations, CENTCOM said.

Weapons shipments from Iran to Yemen are barred by a United Nations Security Council resolution, which sought to restrict Iranian support for the Houthi rebels. The Shiite fighters triggered a devastating civil war when they overran Yemen’s capital Sana’a in March 2015. The war has sparked the world’s worst humanitarian disaster, according to the U.N., and has resulted in near-famine. The Houthis

continue to fight against the U.N.-recognized Yemeni government, backed by a Saudi-led military coalition and supported by the U.S.

U.N. experts in a report this month to the Security Council said Iran has maintained its efforts to supply the Houthis weapons through overland and sea-based smuggling routes.

Those weapons have been used not only in the civil war in Yemen but also in attacks on Saudi Arabia, including ballistic missile strikes, U.S. and Saudi officials have said.

The Houthis claimed responsibility for a drone-and-cruise missile attack on critical Saudi oil infrastructure, but the U.N. experts said in their report that it was unlikely the attacks originated from Yemen. The U.S. has blamed Iran directly for that attack, as well as a series of attacks last year targeting commercial ships in the region.

Navy aims for advance screening of ‘Top Gun’

The Virginian-Pilot

The Navy’s top admiral has access to some of the most highly classified intelligence in the world, but not even he’s gotten a sneak peek at the much-anticipated sequel to the movie “Top Gun.”

Despite the Navy’s significant help in producing the feature film, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday told *The Virginian-Pilot* he’s only seen the same trailers for “Top Gun: Maverick” on YouTube as everyone else.

“I’ve not been privy to that yet,” Gilday said during a recent visit to Norfolk. “I hope to be.”

The Navy is in negotiations with Paramount Studios to get some advanced screenings in “select locations” before it hits theaters June 26, according to Cmdr. Ron Flanders, spokesman for Naval Air Forces.

It’s unclear how many screenings there might be or where, but there will be considerable interest in Hampton Roads. Virginia Beach is home to F/A-18 fighter squadrons like those featured in the film, as well as real-life Top Gun graduates. Also, Norfolk is home to about half of the nation’s aircraft carriers.

While most aerial filming took place in training ranges in the West, a production crew spent time aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln in 2018 off the coast of Virginia. The film crew’s visit to the Lincoln coincided with training that was occurring with F-35 and F/A-18 aircraft.

The newest trailer for the movie was shown before kickoff at the Super Bowl and immediately after a televised flyover by Navy fighter jets. Miles Teller, who plays the son of the original character “Goose” in the sequel, met with the real-life pilots before the big game.

1,700 health workers infected by virus

Associated Press

BEIJING — More than 1,700 Chinese medical workers have been infected by the new virus that has killed nearly 1,400 people and spread to other parts of Asia and as far as the U.S. and Europe, a senior Chinese official announced Friday.

Six of the workers have died, Zeng Yixin, vice director of the National Health Commission, said at a news conference.

The health commission is “highly concerned about this issue” and has issued guidelines for the prevention and control of infection within medical institutions, he said.

Medical workers account for about 3.8% of confirmed cases as of several days ago, Zeng said.

The commission also reported another sizable rise in the number of infections as a result of a new way of counting adopted by Hebei province, the hardest-hit area.

Confirmed cases in mainland China rose to 63,851 by the end of Thursday, up 5,090 from the previous day. The death toll rose by 121 to 1,380.

Hubei province is now including cases based on a physician’s diagnosis before they have been confirmed by lab tests. Of the 5,090 new cases, 3,095 fell into that category.

The acceleration in the number of cases does not necessarily represent a sudden surge in new infections of the virus that causes COVID-19 as much as the revised methodology.

The health commission has said that the change was aimed at identifying suspected cases so they can be treated more quickly, though experts also saw it as a reflection of the crush of people seeking treatment and the struggle to keep up with a backlog of untested samples in Hubei and its capital, Wuhan, where the disease first surfaced in December.

In an unprecedented attempt to contain the disease, the Chinese government has placed the hardest-hit cities — home to more than 60 million — under lockdown. People are restricted from entering or leaving the cities, and in many places can only leave their homes or residential complexes for shopping and other daily needs.

Trump ignores request to end DOJ tweets

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Friday ignored his attorney general's public request to stop tweeting about the Justice Department, saying he had the legal right to ask the agency to intervene in a criminal case, but he's so far "chosen not to."

Trump's Friday morning tweet came just hours after Attorney General William Barr said in a striking interview with ABC News that the president's tweets were making it "impossible" to do his job, especially following the depart-

ment's bungled handling of the sentencing recommendation for Trump ally and confidant Roger Stone.

Technically as the president, Trump has the right to compel the Justice Department to investigate as an executive branch agency. But historically, the Justice Department has functioned as an independent agency, unmoved and unbound by political sway. And that reputation is important to Barr, as he made clear in the interview.

"I'm happy to say that, in fact, the president has never asked me to do anything in a criminal case," Barr told ABC. "How-

ever, to have public statements and tweets made about the department, about our people ... about cases pending in the department, and about judges before whom we have cases, make it impossible for me to do my job and to assure the courts and the prosecutors in the department that we're doing our work with integrity."

Barr was directly asked whether he believed Trump had the authority to direct him to open an investigation.

"Terrorism or fraud by a bank or something like that where he's concerned about something, he can certainly

say I think someone should look into that. That's perfectly appropriate," Barr said. "If he were to say, you know, go investigate somebody because — and you sense it's because they're a political opponent, then an attorney general shouldn't carry that out, wouldn't carry that out."

After the interview Thursday evening, the White House offered a tempered response that Trump "wasn't bothered by the comments at all and he has the right, just like any American citizen, to publicly offer his opinions."

Trump allies vilify Buttigieg's sexuality

The Washington Post

Allies of President Donald Trump have sharply focused attention on the sexual identity of presidential contender Pete Buttigieg in recent days, questioning in stark terms whether Americans are ready for a gay candidate who kisses his husband onstage.

The attacks are prompting blunt responses from Buttigieg's allies and even his

Democratic rivals, who call the remarks inappropriate and offensive. The exchanges were ignited by radio host Rush Limbaugh, who received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Trump last week and who framed his comments as an ostensible analysis of how Democrats feel.

"They're sitting there and they're looking at Mayor Pete — a 37-year-old gay guy, mayor

of South Bend, loves to kiss his husband on the debate stage. And they're saying, OK, how's this going to look, a 37-year-old gay guy kissing his husband onstage next to Mr. Man Donald Trump? What's going to happen there?" Limbaugh said. (Buttigieg is 38.)

The episode abruptly injected the topic into the political discussion after months when it had a lower profile. And it

underlines a notable feature of Buttigieg's rise: An openly gay, married candidate has never gotten so far in the presidential arena, and it's not clear how some voters will react.

The episode is a window into what Buttigieg could face if he becomes the Democratic nominee. Buttigieg did not publicly address Limbaugh's remarks, but his surrogates and supporters pushed back.

Florida 'red flag' gun law use inconsistent

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — A 23-year-old man who posted on Facebook, "I don't know why I don't go on a killing spree." A West Palm Beach couple who shot up their home while high on cocaine. A 31-year-old Gulf Coast man who pointed a semiautomatic rifle at a motorcyclist.

All four Florida residents had their guns taken away by judges under a "red flag" law the state passed three weeks after a mentally disturbed gunman killed 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland two years

ago Friday.

The law, supported by legislators of both parties, has been applied more than 3,500 times since, with the pace accelerating during the last half of 2019. Even so, an Associated Press analysis of the law showed its use is inconsistent, with some counties and cities using it rarely and others not at all.

Advocates of Florida's red flag measure say that before it existed, it was often difficult to remove firearms from those making threats or suffering severe mental breakdowns. Investigators did not act on reports that the Parkland shooter was threatening to carry out a

school massacre. But even if they had, it is likely he would have been allowed to keep his guns because he had no felony convictions or involuntary, long-term mental commitments, they say.

But the law also has vocal critics: those who say it violates the U.S. and state constitutions, including the right to bear arms, and others who argue that laws already on the books in Florida made it unnecessary. Still others say it discriminates against the poor: Because the hearing with a judge is not a criminal proceeding, low-income defendants aren't provided with a free lawyer.

The AP analysis shows that from March 2018, when the law was enacted, through December 2019, there was a wide disparity in its per capita usage in Florida's 67 counties. Twenty issued at least one for every 5,500 residents during that time period, the statewide average. Three issued at least one for every 2,000 residents.

On the other extreme, 12 counties issued one for every 30,000 residents or less. Two neighboring Panhandle counties — Escambia and Santa Rosa — issued one for every 100,000 residents or more. Another nine small, rural counties issued none.

Closing arguments heard in Weinstein trial

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Harvey Weinstein believed he was so powerful he could get away with denigrating aspiring actresses drawn into a world where he considered them “complete disposables,” a prosecutor said on Friday in closing arguments at his New York City rape trial.

“The universe is run by me and they don’t get to complain when they get stepped on, spit on, demoralized and, yes, raped and abused by me — the king,” Joan Illuzzi-Orbon said, mimicking Weinstein.

Using a TV monitor next to the jury box, the prosecutors displayed photos of “Sopranos” actress Annabella Sciorra and five

other accusers who also testified. Illuzzi told jurors that aside from the more successful Sciorra, the others were “complete disposables. They were never going to be in his world.”

Illuzzi also showed a side-by-side comparison of Sciorra’s testimony about confronting Weinstein in the mid-1990s after he allegedly raped her and similar testimony by his rape accuser about how the mogul reacted when she told him she had a boyfriend in 2013.

“His eyes went black and I thought he was going to hit me right there,” Sciorra testified. With the click of a button, the rape accuser’s testimony popped up: “His eyes changed and he was not there. They

were very black and he ripped me up.”

Illuzzi’s closing comes a day after the defense offered an epic, hourslong closing argument painting the prosecution’s case as a “sinister tale” and the allegations as “regret renamed as rape.”

In her closing argument Thursday, Weinstein lawyer Donna Rotunno accused prosecutors of creating an alternate universe that “strips adult women of common sense, autonomy, and responsibility.”

“In this script, the powerful man is the villain and he’s so unattractive and large, that no woman would ever want to sleep with him voluntarily. Regret does not exist in this world, only regret renamed as rape.” Rotunno said.

US brings new charges against Chinese firm Huawei

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has added new criminal charges against Chinese tech giant Huawei and several subsidiaries, accusing the company of a brazen scheme to steal trade secrets from competitors in America, federal prosecutors announced Thursday.

The new indictment also alleges the company provided surveillance equipment to Iran that enabled the monitoring of protesters during 2009 anti-government demonstrations in Tehran, and that it sought to conceal business that it was doing in North Korea despite economic sanctions there.

The company disputed the allegations in a statement and called them “without merit.” China’s foreign ministry accused the U.S. government of “economic ebullying” and improperly using security allegations to “oppress Chinese companies.”

The new allegations come as the Trump administration raises national security concerns about Huawei, the world’s largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer, and aggressively lobbies Western allies to bar the company from wireless, high-speed networks.

The superseding indictment, brought by federal prosecutors in Brooklyn, adds to the company’s legal woes in the U.S. It adds charges of racketeering conspiracy and conspiracy to steal trade secrets to an existing criminal case in New York, where the company already faces charges of lying to banks about deals that violated economic sanctions against Iran.

Federal prosecutors in Seattle have brought a separate trade secrets theft case against the company. Meng Wanzhou, a senior Huawei executive and the daughter of the company’s founder, is accused of making false representations to banks about

Huawei’s relationship with its Iran-based affiliate. She was arrested in Vancouver, British Columbia, and has yet to be extradited to the U.S.

The latest indictment, an update of a case first filed last year, accuses Huawei of plotting to steal the trade secrets and intellectual property of rival companies in the U.S.

In some instances, prosecutors said, Huawei recruited employees of competitors to steal intellectual property. The company also provided incentives to its own employees by offering bonuses to those who brought in the most valuable stolen information, and it used proxies, including professors at research institutions, in the pursuit of inside information, prosecutors said.

The stolen information included antenna and robot testing technology as well as user manuals for internet routers.

Bitter cold in Midwest, Northeast to finally ease up

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Bitterly cold temperatures persisted from the Northern Plains to parts of the Great Lakes and northern New England, with schools in some Upper Midwest communities canceling classes for a second day Friday.

The National Weather Service issued a wind chill advisory for parts of North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois and Missouri on Fri-

day and several New England states. Wind chill readings in northern Minnesota dropped to about 30 degrees below zero early Friday as the coldest air of the season lingered.

In Minnesota and elsewhere, warming shelters were filled beyond capacity. Outreach workers and law enforcement hit the streets to make sure those without a home were safe.

Hennepin County Sheriff

Dave Hutchison was among those checking on those living on the streets Thursday night.

“Our goal, Minneapolis, everybody’s goal is to make sure we don’t have any fatalities,” Hutchinson told KMSP-TV. The sheriff and outreach workers directed the homeless to shelters and passed out winter gear.

In Omaha, Nebraska, the death of an 80-year-old man may be attributed to the cold.

Police found the body of Robert Freymuller on Thursday near the assisted-living center where he lived. His death is being investigated, but police said he was not dressed appropriately for the weather. The wind chill had dropped to minus 26 degrees at the time.

The National Weather Service expected the dangerously cold airmass to give way to more moderate temperatures over the weekend.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man busted for riding lawnmower while drunk

ME AUGUSTA — A Maine man fired up his lawnmower and went for a ride — in the dead of winter — leading to a drunken driving arrest, police said.

The Augusta Police Department posted a photo on Monday of two police cruisers pulling over a small riding lawnmower.

Edson Moody, 44, of Augusta, was issued a summons and his tractor was towed away, said Deputy Police Chief Kevin Lully.

Police said people are occasionally arrested for operating under the influence on a lawnmower on a public road in the summer. But it's rare to find someone on a riding lawnmower in the winter.

Mail carrier helps woman in blizzard

ND FARGO — A Fargo mail carrier is credited with helping an elderly woman in a potentially life-threatening situation.

Fargo Postmaster Greg Johnson said letter carrier Michael Sorum was out delivering mail in blizzard-like conditions when he encountered the disoriented woman standing near a vehicle.

"He came upon her standing by a vehicle, not really knowing who she was, or where she was" Johnson said. "He could tell that she had no idea of what was going on, so he did assist her into one of our postal vehicles to warm her up and then he called 9-1-1."

Winds were gusting up to 50 mph and the temperature was 10 below zero at the time, according to the National Weather Service.

KFGO reports Sorum guided her to his postal truck to warm up and called 911.

Police: 4 teens arrested in 80-plus car break-ins

OH CLEVELAND — Police have announced the arrest of four teenagers believed to have responsible for scores of vehicle break-ins in Cleveland.

Police said three 16-year-old boys and a 17-year-old boy are believed responsible for more than 80 car break-ins on the city's southeast side, Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights. Police say detectives are investigating whether they are also responsible for incidents in east Cleveland and the downtown area.

Police say the suspects were found with a weapon, but didn't say what the weapon was. Charges hadn't yet been filed but police said they could include aggravated robbery, carrying concealed weapons, breaking and entering, theft, criminal damaging and trespassing.

Police: Troopers led on high-speed chase

MA WESTON — A Massachusetts man led state troopers on a 27-mile chase at speeds of up to 115 mph early Wednesday morning before his car was stopped by a tire deflation device, state police said.

The chase started just after 3 a.m. when a trooper on patrol on Interstate 95 in Weston noticed the car speeding and driving erratically. The trooper followed the car onto the Massachusetts Turnpike west and attempted to pull it over, according to a statement from spokesman David Procopio.

The car at first appeared to

be stopping, but then suddenly sped up and the chase began, eventually ending on the Turnpike in Millbury when all four of the car's tires were deflated.

The driver, Sean McLaughlin, 35, of Oxford, faces several charges.

Buoy mistaken for Civil War cannonball

SC CHARLESTON — The digging of a swimming pool revealed what could have been a dangerous discovery in South Carolina.

But, as news outlets report, the round object found by workers in Charleston on Wednesday afternoon was much less thrilling.

A reported Civil War cannonball turned out to be a wooden buoy, Charleston police spokesman Charles Francis said.

Trooper finds suspected drug money in gas tank

KS WICHITA — Authorities say a Kansas Highway Patrol trooper found nearly \$350,000 of suspected drug money hidden in the gas tank of a pickup truck after pulling over the driver on Interstate 70.

The Wichita Eagle reported that federal prosecutors filed a civil asset forfeiture case Tuesday, asking a judge to give the money to the government.

The money was found in December after a trooper pulled over the driver for a traffic violation. The affidavit says the cash was "rubber-banded" and "wrapped in vacuum-sealed plastic bags" hidden in the fuel tank.

The driver told the trooper he was headed from Chicago to Pasco, Wash., but declined to answer questions about the money. He has a criminal history involving money laundering.

State senate approves balloon release ban

MD ANNAPOLIS — The Maryland Senate has approved a measure that would create a statewide ban on the intentional release of balloons into the atmosphere.

The Senate voted 38-8 on Tuesday for the measure.

The bill creates a civil penalty of up to \$250 per violation by an organization or a person who is at least 13 years old. Supporters of the measure say it's needed to stop littering.

Last year, researchers in Virginia released a study about the local problem of balloon litter in the marine environment.

'Minnesota Badgers' onesie prompts apology

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Target admits a onesie it carried in some stores misidentified the mascot for the largest university in its home state.

The Minneapolis-based retail giant apologized to University of Minnesota Golden Gophers fans Tuesday for carrying a maroon onesie with the words "Minnesota Badgers," the nickname of Big Ten rival Wisconsin. The fan website GopherHole.com tweeted a photo from a woman who noticed the onesies while shopping Sunday at a Target in Minneapolis.

"Color us red," Target said in a statement. "As a Minnesota-based company, we know we are home to the Gophers."

Kileigh Carpenter, a former University of Minnesota employee who spotted the onesie, told the Star Tribune she was "happy to see both fan bases unite." The onesies were available at four Minneapolis-area stores. Target said two were purchased and the rest were returned to the vendor.

From wire reports

On a mission to provide objective reporting to America's military, wherever they serve.
Read us online at www.stripes.com.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Logano, Byron win duel races

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Joey Logano and William Byron won the qualifying races that set the field for the Daytona 500.

The victory in the first 150-mile race Thursday night earned Logano a spot in the second row for the season-opening Daytona 500. Byron will join Logano in the second row, behind pole-sitter Ricky Stenhouse Jr. and teammate Alex Bowman, who earned the front row in time trials at Daytona International Speedway.

Byron pulled out of line late, received a push from fellow Chevrolet driver Kurt Busch and cruised to the confidence-building win.

"We are going to use this momentum as it should be. I feel we didn't luck into this," Byron said. "We just went out there and raced. That's what we did."

The 40-car field for Sunday's race is determined first by time trials that set the front row, then the remaining starting order is based on results from the pair of 60-lap qualifying races. There were five drivers racing Thursday night for two slots in the Daytona 500 and they went to Reed Sorenson and Timmy Hill.

Sorenson was aided in the first race when Daniel Suarez was crashed by Ryan Blaney. Hill got some breathing room in the second race after J.J. Yeley crashed.

"A lot of emotions ran through my veins the entire race," said Hill, who will make his Daytona 500 debut. "We were in, we were out, it was nerve-racking the entire time."

Logano won his qualifying race for the second consecutive year.

"It's the (qualifying) Duels, not the Daytona 500," said Logano, "but momentum is momentum."

Logano led 19 laps in the No. 22 Ford for Team Penske, which made a three-team swap during the offseason that paired the 2018 NASCAR champion with Paul Wolfe, former crew chief for teammate Brad Keselowski. The duo got their first experience working together last weekend in an exhibition event in which a block Logano threw on Kyle Busch triggered a crash.

Sorenson raced his way into the 500 for the first time since 2015.

His success came at the expense of Suarez, who has had a rocky ride in NASCAR the last three years. Suarez took another hit midway through his qualifying race when he was sandwiched between a pair of Ford drivers headed to pit road.

Suarez was caught in the middle and hit by Blaney, sending Suarez's Toyota sliding through Daytona's infield grass. The only Mexican full-time driver in any NASCAR national series, Suarez has lost his job with top Cup teams the last two years and the former Xfinity Series champion only signed a deal late last month to drive this season with fledgling Gaunt Brothers Racing.

"All I want to do is go home. I don't know, man, getting tired of this," Suarez said. "A lot of frustration. I'm brokenhearted. I've been working my ass off trying to make this happen."

Wild fire Boudreau

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — The Minnesota Wild fired coach Bruce Boudreau on Friday, with the team out of playoff position. He is the eighth NHL coach to lose his job this season.

First-year general manager Bill Guerin dismissed Boudreau following a shootout loss to the New York Rangers. Assistant Dean Evason was named interim coach.

The coaching change matches the most for one season in NHL history, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Boudreau is the sixth this season to be ousted for his team's performance. Minnesota is 27-23-7 and three points out of a playoff spot in the Western Conference with 25 games left.

Boudreau, 65, was in his fourth season with the Wild. He took Minnesota to the playoffs in his first two seasons there.

Boudreau is in his 13th season after previously coaching the Washington Capitals and Anaheim Ducks. His team has made the playoffs in 10 of 12 full seasons, and his 567 wins rank 22nd all-time.

Also:

■ Jay Bouwmeester had surgery Friday to insert a defibrillator to restore his heart's normal rhythm after the St. Louis Blues defenseman collapsed on the bench during a game in Anaheim this week.

Blues general manager Doug Armstrong said the procedure was performed at the UC Irvine Medical Center. The 36-year-old Bouwmeester will be monitored by a team of specialists at the hospital until he is cleared to return to St. Louis.

■ The Buffalo Sabres placed Zach Bogosian on waivers Friday in a move that could give the injury-plagued defenseman a new home and open a spot on Buffalo's crowded blue line.

Bogosian goes on waivers just over a week before the NHL trade deadline. He asked for a trade earlier this season.

Waiving the 29-year-old Bogosian opens a spot on Buffalo's blue line for young players like Lawrence Pilut.

Top 25 roundup

No. 17 Ducks rally, overtake No. 16 Buffaloes

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — Coming from behind to win is nothing new for Oregon.

The 17th-ranked Ducks had already rallied from double-figure deficits to win four games this season. They did it a fifth time Thursday night to overtake No. 16 Colorado 68-60 and move into a tie for the Pac-12 lead at 8-4. Both teams are also 19-6 overall.

Will Richardson scored 21 points, including 17 in the second half, as the Ducks came back from a 14-point deficit in the first half and 12 points in the second. They used a 12-0 run in the final minutes to overtake and put away the Buffaloes.

Colorado struggled when Or-

gon increased its pressure in the second half to spark a rally. The Ducks not only had 12 steals but four times Colorado had shot-clock violations when it was stymied.

"Stuff like that just gets you going as a player and as a team," Richardson said. "The crowd loves when you hustle. The crowd was amazing, one of the best of the year. Definitely got to thank the crowd."

Colorado coach Tad Boyle felt "we got on our heels offensively. In the first half we attacked their pressure. In the second half, we didn't attack their pressure."

"We beat (the Ducks) in Boulder because we took care of the ball. You can't turn the ball over 18 times in this build-

ing and win."

Richardson also had nine rebounds. Payton Pritchard added 15 points, 11 rebounds and six assists for the Ducks.

Indiana 89, No. 21 Iowa 77: Devonte Green scored 18 of his 27 points in the first half and Trayce Jackson-Davis added 17, helping the host Hoosiers beat the Hawkeyes.

Indiana (16-8, 6-7 Big Ten) snapped a four-game losing streak overall and a two-game skid in the series.

Luka Garza scored 38 points, falling two short of tying the Assembly Hall single-game scoring record by an opponent. Joe Wieskamp added 16 for Iowa (17-8, 8-6), which has lost three of five after winning five straight.

College baseball preview

Vanderbilt, Louisville armed for title run

Associated Press

With almost all of its pitching staff back from the team that made the program's deepest postseason run, Louisville begins the season Friday ranked No. 1 in three of the six major polls.

Defending national champion Vanderbilt lost six everyday players but is atop the other polls largely because it returns possible No. 1 draft pick Austin Martin and postseason pitching sensation Kumar Rocker.

Louisville coach Dan McDonnell embraces the high expectations.

"When six of your top eight arms come back and you finish third in the country, and with good position players, you feel like, 'OK, we're probably going to be ranked pretty high this year,'" McDonnell said. "We tried to prepare for the kids before Christmas as to what the rest of the country will think about us. You have to be mature in how you handle that."

Reid Detmers, the 2019 Atlantic Coast Conference pitcher of the year, Bobby Miller and Luke Smith make up the weekend rotation. Each started games in the College World Series. The Cardinals also have a proven closer in Michael Kirian.

Third baseman Alex Bineas, a freshman All-American last year, is among five position players who are back from a 51-18 team.

The Cardinals lost all three of their games with Vanderbilt last year, including two in the CWS. The last was in a bracket final, with the Commodores scoring twice in the ninth inning for a 3-2 win.

The teams have a regular-season game scheduled May 5 in Nashville, Tenn.

Vanderbilt has two of the college game's biggest names in Martin and Rocker.

Martin played mostly third base last year but is able to play shortstop or even in the outfield. He flirted with .400 last year,

finishing at .392, and is in line to join Atlanta Braves shortstop and ex-Vandy star Dansby Swanson as a No. 1 draft pick.

The 6-foot-4, 255-pound Rocker won 12 games as a freshman, struck out 19 while throwing the first no-hitter in the NCAA super regionals and was the CWS Most Outstanding Player. Rocker probably will remain the No. 2 starter, with Mason Hickman (9-0, 2.05 ERA) moving from Sunday to the Friday spot.

Vanderbilt went 59-12, setting a Southeastern Conference record for wins, and tied the league record with 13 players taken in the draft. Even with a revamped outfield and new starters at first base and shortstop, the Commodores remain the team to beat.

Arizona State (38-19)

No drop-off is expected by one of the top offensive teams in the nation. The Sun Devils batted .310, hit 94 homers and averaged better than eight runs a game. Spencer Torkelson has gone deep 48 times the past two years and has a strong supporting cast. The Pac-12 favorites brought in a top-10 recruiting class.

Cal St. Fullerton (27-26)

The Titans locked up coach Rick Vanderhook through 2024 before last season and then missed the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1992 and failed to win 30 games for the first time in the program's 45-year history. Vanderhook has reconfigured his coaching staff to lead what will be a young team. Cal State Fullerton is the preseason Big West favorite.

Florida State (42-23)

Mike Martin Jr. takes over for his father, the all-time wins leader in college baseball, and will field a team that brings back five position players, two starting pitchers and three re-

lievers who appeared in the CWS. Reese Albert, who hit nine homers despite missing 18 games because of injury, will be counted on to bolster the offense. Ten-game winner CJ Van Eyk is the ace of a strong pitching staff.

Florida (34-26)

The Gators won their fewest games since 2013 and didn't make the CWS for the first time since 2014. SEC coaches nonetheless picked the Gators to finish second in the conference. The spotlight will be on starters Tommy Mace and Jack Leftwich — poster boys for Florida's struggles on the mound (5.37 ERA) — and prized freshman left-hander Hunter Barco. Six starters are back from an offense that has pop.

Georgia (46-17)

The Bulldogs will go as far as their starting pitchers take them. Emerson Hancock's 1.99 ERA was the best by a Georgia starter since 1977. Cole Wilcox got better as his freshman season progressed. In SEC play, he went 3-1 with a 2.57 ERA and .188 opponent batting average. With the top three hitters gone, offense is the biggest question.

Miami (41-20)

The Hurricanes made an NCAA regional for the first time since 2016 and are looking to go farther in Gino DiMare's second year. The main contributors from a potent offense are back. Alex Toral hit 24 of Miami's 85 homers. Fifth-year senior Brian Van Belle won 10 games and anchors the pitching staff. The Canes also are excited about No. 2 starter Chris McMahon.

Michigan (50-22)

The Wolverines were the feel-good story of 2019. They made it to the CWS finals in

their first trip to Omaha since 1984 and their runner-up finish was their best since the 1962 team won the national title. Erik Bakich's club lost a couple of big bats, but much is expected from Jordan Nwogu and Jack Blomgren, among others. Jeff Criswell will be the No. 1 starter, and Willie Weiss is back as the closer.

Oklahoma State (40-21)

The buzz around the Cowboys is about the newcomers. The recruiting class was ranked as high as No. 3, Kaden Polcovich is Big 12 preseason newcomer of the year and Bryce Osmond is preseason freshman of the year. The switch-hitting Polcovich hit 12 homers at Northwest Florida State and is projected to start at second base. Osmond is in line to be the Cowboys' No. 2 starter.

Texas Tech (46-20)

Tim Tadlock has coached four of his past six teams to the College World Series, with the 2019 Red Raiders making it to the final four. Tech is ranked as high as No. 3 and favored to win the Big 12. Dylan Neuse, Brian Klein and Braxton Fulford are the core of an everyday lineup that should be potent again despite losing a couple of sluggers. John McMillon, Micah Dallas and Clayton Beeter headline the pitching staff.

UCLA (52-11)

The defending Pac-12 champion Bruins set school records with 52 wins overall and 24 conference wins. They also were the No. 1 national seed in the NCAA Tournament, losing a thrilling super regional at home to CWS runner-up Michigan. There's plenty of returning talent, led by All-American Garrett Mitchell and the nation's top closer in Holden Powell, and a recruiting class ranked among the top five.

NHL roundup

Marchessault lifts Knights in overtime

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Jonathan Marchessault's power-play goal in overtime lifted the Vegas Golden Knights to a 6-5 victory Thursday night over the St. Louis Blues, who played their first game since Jay Bouwmeester's medical scare.

The Blues' game Tuesday night against Anaheim was postponed after the 36-year-old Bouwmeester collapsed on the team's bench in the first period. A defibrillator was used on the veteran defenseman before he was taken to a hospital, where he continues to undergo tests.

St. Louis, mired in a 2-6-2 slide, hit the ice for the first time since the incident and got off to a fast start with their teammate on their minds, but couldn't hold off Vegas.

The Golden Knights tied a franchise record with four power-play goals, including two by Marchessault and one each by Max Pacioretty and Nate Schmidt. Pacioretty also had an even-strength goal, as did Alex Tuch.

Lightning 3, Oilers 1: Yanni Gourde scored a short-handed

goal and Andrei Vasilevskiy finished with 29 saves to lift host Tampa Bay to its ninth straight victory.

Tampa Bay also won its 10th in a row at home.

Capitals 3, Avalanche 1: T.J. Oshie deflected in the winning goal with 2:04 remaining and visiting Washington rallied for a win over Colorado as Alex Ovechkin remained stuck on 698 career goals.

Defenseman Nick Jensen sent a shot into traffic that Oshie got a piece of with his stick, sending it past Philipp Grubauer to help the Capitals break a two-game skid.

Stars 3, Maple Leafs 2: Tyler Seguin snapped a 17-game goal drought, Ben Bishop made 27 saves and visiting Dallas beat Toronto for its third straight win.

Denis Gurianov and Radek Faksa also scored for Dallas.

Flyers 6, Panthers 2: James van Riemsdyk had a goal and two assists and visiting Philadelphia beat Florida.

Robert Hagg, Sean Couturier, Scott Laughton, Nicolas Aube-Kubel and Tyler Pitlick

scored for the Flyers. Carter Hart made 26 saves for his first road win in eight games.

Devils 4, Red Wings 1: Wayne Simmonds scored twice in a four-goal third period outburst and host New Jersey rallied to beat Detroit.

Andy Greene and Jesper Bratt also scored in the four-minute barrage as the Devils posted only their third win (3-20-0) when trailing after two periods.

Sabres 4, Blue Jackets 3 (OT): Rookie Victor Olofsson scored his second goal of the game 2:44 into overtime, and host Buffalo beat depleted Columbus.

Jack Eichel had a goal and two assists for Buffalo. Evan Rodrigues also scored, and Carter Hutton stopped 28 shots to improve to 4-1 in his past five starts.

Senators 3, Coyotes 2: Marcus Hogberg made 32 saves and host Ottawa snapped a six-game winless streak with a victory over Arizona.

Vladislav Namestnikov, Brady Tkachuk and Nick Paul scored for the Senators, who

opened a season-high six-game homestand by ending a four-game skid (0-2-2) at home.

Predators 5, Islanders 0: Craig Smith recorded a hat trick, Juuse Saros made 31 saves and host Nashville beat New York.

Rocco Grimaldi had a goal and an assist and Mattias Ekholm also scored for Nashville, which snapped a two-game losing streak.

Rangers 4, Wild 3 (SO): Mika Zibanejad scored with 1:06 to play in regulation to force overtime and scored in the shootout, helping visiting New York erase a two-goal deficit in the third period and beat Minnesota.

Trailing 3-2, New York pulled goalie Alexandar Georgiev with 1:41 remaining for an extra skater and the move paid off when Zibanejad's 24th goal of the season tied it.

Flames 6, Ducks 0: Mikael Backlund and Mark Jankowski scored two goals apiece, and Cam Talbot made 44 saves for his 21st career shutout in visiting Calgary's rout of Anaheim.

The Ducks gave up four goals in the first period.

NBA roundup

Tatum helps Celtics outlast Clippers in double OT

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jayson Tatum didn't want to smile. But sometimes the moment calls for it.

The Celtics were trailing 124-123 in the final minute of overtime in their back-and-forth slugfest with the Clippers and Tatum found himself defended by Landry Shamet and Montrezl Harrell. Tatum hesitated, sidestepped Shamet, then spun around Harrell for a layup. As the crowd cheered around him, Tatum let out a loud yell, flexing his arms.

The play didn't win the game and gave Tatum just two of the

39 points he scored in Boston's thrilling 141-133 double-overtime win on Thursday night. But it's the latest sign that the first-time All-Star is getting more comfortable as a go-to player.

"I did get a little excited," Tatum said. "I try to be as calm as I can and try to keep a poker face and move on to the next play. But basketball is a game of emotions and the crowd was into it."

Marcus Smart added 31 points and Gordon Hayward finished with 21 points and 13 rebounds. Kemba Walker had

19 points and nine rebounds. Tatum and Smart combined for 16 of Boston's 27 points in the overtime periods.

The Celtics have won seven straight at home and eight of their last nine overall.

The Clippers played most of the game without Paul George, who left in the second quarter with a left hamstring strain. Lou Williams led Los Angeles with 35 points. Kawhi Leonard had 28 points and 11 rebounds, and Harrell finished with 24 points and 13 rebounds.

Thunder 123, Pelicans 118: Danilo Gallinari scored 29

points, Chris Paul had 14 points and 12 assists, and Oklahoma City beat host New Orleans.

Zion Williamson scored 32 points for New Orleans, his second straight game scoring more than 30, but Gallinari's clutch shooting — he had 11 points in the fourth quarter — kept the Pelicans at bay.

Dennis Schroder scored 22 points for the Thunder and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 17.

JJ Redick scored 24 points for the Pelicans, who saw their three-game winning streak snapped.