

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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## Law bars military-Russia alliance

*Tribune Washington Bureau*

WASHINGTON — The White House indicated Monday that President Donald Trump would be open to military cooperation with Russia to fight the Islamic State group, a move that would be a big policy change for the U.S. government, and one that would run afoul of current law.

“I think if there’s a way that we can combat ISIS with any country, whether it’s Russia or anyone else, and we have a shared national interest in that, sure, we’ll take it,” White House spokesman Sean Spicer told reporters, using an acronym for the militant group.

U.S. military cooperation with the Russians would upend the relationship between the two former Cold War adversaries, which have been on the opposite sides in the Syrian

conflict since the beginning of Russian military involvement more than a year ago.

But a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act first passed by Congress late in 2014 and renewed since then strictly limits the Pentagon’s ability to work with Russia. The law was passed in response to Moscow’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its continued involvement in the Ukrainian civil war.

Talks between the two countries’ militaries have been severely limited since Congress passed the law, which prohibits military cooperation until Russia has “ceased its occupation of Ukrainian territory and its aggressive activities that threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.”

The Pentagon and the Rus-

sian military established an emergency communications line in October 2015 to ensure that the two nations’ pilots do not mistakenly run into — or fire on — each other in their bombing runs over Syria. The two sides speak three times a week, U.S. officials said.

U.S. planes have carried out thousands of airstrikes in Syria against the Islamic State group as part of a coalition that has involved NATO and Arab air forces. The coalition’s strikes in Syria and in Iraq are coordinated each day by a U.S. command center in Qatar, where officials from dozens of countries are represented so each knows where others are operating.

Russian aircraft have been conducting a separate air campaign to support Syrian President Bashar Assad in the country’s blood-soaked six-year civil war. Russia began bomb-

ing Syrian rebel positions in September 2015.

When U.S. and Russian diplomats announced a temporary Syrian cease-fire agreement late last year, there was hope of additional communication between the two militaries. But that truce effort quickly collapsed after a U.N. aid convoy was bombed by Russia and a U.S. airstrike hit a Syrian army base. Each side accused the other of bad faith.

The Kremlin has repeatedly angled to collaborate further with the U.S. to share intelligence and targeting information in the Syrian war. Pentagon officials have been uneasy about any such arrangement because coordinating with Moscow would mean the U.S. would share responsibility for Russian actions.

## Report: Army’s ground combat weapons growing outdated

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Army’s primary ground combat weapons such as tanks and cannons are old, growing outdated and, in some cases, being surpassed by those of foreign militaries, raising questions about their usefulness on future battlefields, a recent Congressional Research Service report found.

The tanks, infantry-fighting vehicles, self-propelled howitzer cannons and multiple-launch rocket systems being used by America’s front-line combat soldiers were developed in the 1970s and first fielded in the 1980s, and the Army does not have any active programs to replace them, according to the Jan. 18 report titled, “Selected

Foreign Counterparts of U.S. Army Ground Combat Systems and Implications for Combat Operations and Modernization.” Those U.S. weapons have been routinely upgraded with new technology, but other nations — including rivals Russia and China — have developed entirely new systems in recent years.

Some of those systems have “outpaced” American military technology, the report added.

The Army has faced steep budget cuts in recent years mandated by the Budget Control Act of 2011, forcing the service to focus on combat readiness over modernizing its weapons. The service’s top general, Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, has said the Army will continue its focus on readiness in 2017, though it would make a “major effort” to

modernize its systems.

“We have got to pick the pace up there,” he said. “We intend to do that this year and next — to try to recoup some of the lost years of modernization accounts we have had over the past 15 years.”

President Donald Trump has vowed to pour money into the military, and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, recently released a defense budget plan that adds \$430 billion in Pentagon funding during the next five years. The added money will help improve weapon technology.

Since 1996, the Army has spent more than \$1 billion each year on programs that were eventually nixed, according to the Congressional Research

Service report. More so, the report found development of such programs could take roughly two decades.

Meanwhile, Russia and China have developed modern, lighter, more fuel-efficient and, perhaps, more lethal main battle tanks that employ Active Protection Systems, technologies that detect and neutralize anti-tank missiles, not yet available on American tanks.

The U.S. military is not likely to face war with Russia or China in the near future, the report stated, but American troops could face those ground combat weapons from those countries in battle with other nations or enemies. The Army will have to field better combat equipment to keep pace with such advances, according to the report.

## DOD unsure of its civilians' status under hiring freeze

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — A day after President Donald Trump announced a hiring freeze to take effect immediately across the executive branch, the federal government's largest civilian agency was still scrambling to figure out whether the halt applies to 750,000 Defense Department civilians.

The confusion comes from the language in the memorandum, which clearly exempts "military personnel." The Pentagon can continue to hire active-duty servicemembers. But DOD officials say they still do not know whether the civilian workforce, which makes up about 35 percent of the 2.1 million civil servants in the federal government, also is considered "military personnel" and thus can continue hiring.

"Our office for Civilian Personnel Policy is working with the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget to determine the applicability of this freeze to civilian personnel positions with the DOD," Pentagon spokesman Johnny Michael said in an email.

Trump has pledged to boost the size of the military, but broadly speaking, it is not clear whether that mandate will apply to civilians.

Even if the halt to hiring turns out to apply to Defense Department civilians, there is potentially a way for the agency to get around it. Monday's

memo also states that the head of an agency can exempt from the freeze "any positions that it deems necessary to meet national security or public safety responsibilities." That means that many, if not all, DOD civilians could, according to some interpretations, be considered employees whose jobs help secure the nation and be exempted from a freeze.

"It's not clear how far DOD can go in construing all of their jobs as coming up national security," said Jeffrey Neal, former personnel chief at the Department of Homeland Security and Defense Logistics Agency who is now a senior vice president at ICF International.

Neal said, however, that he believes the hiring ban clearly applies to DOD civilians, since Monday's order freezes "the hiring of Federal civilian employees to be applied across the board in the executive branch."

The memo also is vague on another group of employees: those who work at agencies with public health missions as well as the Department of Veterans Affairs. VA workers are usually considered "essential" in any shutdown of the federal government. But in this case, the exemption applies only to those with national security or "public safety" responsibilities.

Right now, it's unclear if public safety translates to public health and health jobs in general.

## Navy stays with new technology for landing jets

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. — The U.S. Navy says it will stick with an advanced fighter jet landing system for its new aircraft carriers, despite some initial problems.

The Navy said in a press release Monday that glitches in the technology are being worked out. Benefits of the new landing gear include more reliability and less maintenance.

The landing gear problems have helped delay delivery of

the USS Gerald R. Ford, the first of the Navy's new class of aircraft carriers. Construction was supposed to finish by September 2015. And the \$12.9 billion ship was initially supposed to cost \$10.5 billion.

Sea trials for the Ford are now set to begin in March. The Navy said the Ford will be ready to trap its first F/A-18 Super Hornet later this year.

From The Associated Press

# New Navy coveralls to be lightweight and flame-resistant

*The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot*

NORFOLK, Va. — The Navy this fall will start issuing flame-resistant uniforms to sailors at sea that are more comfortable and lightweight versions of the coveralls sailors have worn aboard ships the past few years.

Tests of the Navy's Type I working uniform in late 2012 showed it could catch fire from a single match, would melt and drip when burning and wouldn't self-extinguish.

There had not been a requirement for every sailor aboard a ship to wear a flame-resistant uniform since 1996, but video of the incident alarmed sailors, veterans and their families.

So the Navy began issuing new coveralls in late 2013 that were made from a cotton fabric treated with flame retardant. While those uniforms kept sailors safe from fires, they also were unpopular because of how hot they were.

Some sailors reported having to change two or three times a day because they sweated so heavily, according to Lt. Cmdr. Stephanie Turo, a Fleet Forces Command spokeswoman.

By 2015, complaints had worked their way up the chain of command, and Fleet Forces Command, Navy Exchange Service Command and the Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility got together to develop a new version that was more comfortable, durable and safer.

The new versions are called Improved Flame Resistant Variant, or IFRV.

"Shipboard wearability and functionality was of extreme importance with the development of the IFRV," Adm. Phil

Davidson, commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command, said in a statement.

"We will always make safety a priority, but if we can also improve quality of life for our Sailors in doing so, then everyone wins."

Sailors won't have to purchase the new coveralls, which are issued by each ship. Procurement costs for the new coveralls weren't available last week because the acquisition process is still underway, Turo said.

The dark-blue coveralls are made from a tri-fiber blend that allows moisture to more easily escape.

The Navy says the uniforms weigh "significantly less" than the current coveralls, although exact figures weren't readily available.

The new version also offers flash-arc protection to guard against electrical currents.

Initial feedback from the fleet has been positive.

Sailors aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge, guided-missile destroyer USS Carney and fast-attack submarine USS Newport News tested the new coveralls during their recent deployments.

Of the 700 sailors who were surveyed about the uniforms, 89 percent thought the new version looked better, 91 percent said it was more comfortable and 85 percent thought it was cooler in hot climates. Also, the survey showed that 86 percent thought the new version was more durable.

The Navy anticipates the new coveralls will last twice as long as the current version.

# Is it high noon on the South China Sea?

BY SIMON DENYER

*The Washington Post*

Was this a prelude to a major escalation in the South China Sea, or is the Trump administration foreign policy team having trouble articulating itself?

On Monday, new White House spokesman Sean Spicer said the United States would prevent China from taking over territory in international waters in the South China Sea.

His comments were widely interpreted as doubling down on remarks by President Donald Trump's nominee for secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, on Jan. 11 that the United States would not allow China access to islands it has built in the South China Sea, and upon which it has installed weapons systems and built military-length airstrips.

"The U.S. is going to make sure that we protect our interests there," Spicer said when asked if President Donald Trump agreed with his nominee.

"It's a question of if those islands are in fact in international waters and not part of China proper, then yeah, we're going to make sure that we defend international territories from being taken over by one country."

Experts had initially thought Tillerson might have misspoken, but Spicer's remarks appeared to raise the likelihood that the administration was indeed considering blocking China's access to its new islands in the Spratlys.

Last week, state-run China Daily dismissed Tillerson's remarks as "not worth taking seriously because they are a mishmash of naivete, shortsightedness, worn-out prejudices and unrealistic political fantasies." But nationalist tabloid the Global Times warned that any move to blockade the islands could provoke a "large-scale war."

That is an assessment broadly shared by many foreign policy experts.

Mira Rapp-Hooper, a South China Sea expert at the Center for a New American Security, called the threats to bar China's access in the South China Sea "incredible" and told Reuters it had no basis in international law.

"A blockade — which is what would be required to actually bar access — is an act of war," she added.

Trump himself has criticized China for building what he called a "massive fortress" in the South China Sea. But what exactly does he want to do about it?

Bonnie Glaser, a senior adviser for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, was quoted as saying last week that she had heard from some members of the Trump transition team that Tillerson "mis-spoke" during five hours of Senate testimony, but on Monday she told Reuters that Spicer's remarks were "worrisome" and more evidence of "confusing and conflicting messages."

As Bill Hayton, an associate fellow at Chatham House and South China Sea expert, pointed out in a piece for Foreign Policy last week, there are different interpretations of what the new administration might be thinking.

One is that Tillerson can be taken both seriously and literally: that the United States government will attempt a blockade as a way to force Beijing to respect last year's ruling by an international tribunal, that China's claim to the waters encompassed by its "nine-dash line" was not supported by the international law of the sea.

A blockade would be an attempt to force China to allow other nations more freedom to fish and drill for oil in the disputed waters, and "above all, give up any attempts to block U.S. naval ships transiting, exercising, or gathering intelligence in the South China Sea," Hayton wrote.

Indeed, that is one of the main bones of contention between Washington and Beijing

over the vital waterways. Chinese think-tanks complain that U.S. military vessels and aircraft are conducting operations and reconnaissance missions close to its shores more and more frequently.

Beijing insists it will allow commercial shipping free passage but clearly believes the U.S. Navy should stay out of its backyard, seizing an American underwater drone in the South China Sea last month apparently to make that point. The United States says its navy has the right to sail in international waters.

But as Hayton pointed out, a U.S. attempt to enforce its position through a blockade could provoke military conflict and lose the support of American allies in Asia keen to avoid a superpower confrontation.

Yet there is another possibility: that Tillerson and Spicer are in fact indirectly referring to concerns about Scarborough Shoal, a partly submerged chain of reefs and rocks close to the Philippines that China seized in 2012.

Sen. John McCain is among those who have warned that China was planning to build a military base on Scarborough Shoal, to form a triangular network when combined with existing bases in the Spratly and the Paracel islands.

The Obama administration, Hayton pointed out, was reported to have told China in 2016 it was prepared to physically deter any attempts to build on the shoal, and had deployed ships and aircraft to the area to back up that threat.

"Tillerson may therefore have been simply stating that he wants this strategy to continue — stopping any island-building on Scarborough Shoal by denying construction vessels access to it," Hayton wrote.

Yet given a chance this week to clarify where his government stands on the South China Sea, Spicer appears to have muddied the waters still further.

## Think tank: N. Korea may use east coast site for ICBM test

BY KIM GAMEL

*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea may use a launch site on its east coast to test fire an intercontinental ballistic missile, a U.S. think tank said.

Jitters have been high after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said earlier this month his country is in the "final stages" of developing an ICBM. That would be a major step toward its goal of targeting the U.S. mainland with a nuclear-tipped

missile.

38 North, a website that monitors the isolated communist state's activities, said Monday that a relatively new launch site near Kalma International Airport would be a "logical choice."

The base, which opened in May or June, already has been used to test four medium-range, road-mobile missiles known as Musudans, said the site, which is run by the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University.

"In addition, recent commercial satellite imagery indi-

cates that Pyongyang has made a number of improvements at the site suggesting that it could support an ICBM launch if the North decides to go ahead," said the analysis by military expert Joseph Bermudez.

The test site consists of a paved launch position surrounded by a sand berm, grading for a second firing position and graded access roads. It also is supported by components at the adjacent airport, including radars that could be used to track missile flights and ensure the airspace

is clear of traffic, according to the website.

North Korea frequently conducts missile tests or other activity in connection with high-profile events, raising fears it could act to test the new U.S. administration under President Donald Trump.

South Korean military officials told the Yonhap news agency last week there are indications the North has placed two presumed ICBMs on mobile launchers, although that report has not been confirmed.

# Storm survival matter of minutes

Associated Press

ADEL, Ga. — Bonnie and Wayne Collier were jolted awake in their mobile home by a cell-phone weather alert early Sunday. They jumped up, turned on the TV, saw a tornado warning and decided to run.

"We heard the Code Red," said Bonnie Collier, 65. "He told me, 'Get up. We've got to get out.'"

Quickly, they headed to a friend's nearby building just down the road from their mobile home near Cecil, Ga. There they met up with their son, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren — ages 5, 7 and 9.

They arrived just ahead of a tornado, part of an unusual midwinter barrage of tornadoes and thunderstorms that killed at least 20 across the Deep South over the weekend.

"My husband yelled, 'Get under the tables!' and then it just came right over the top of us like a freight train."

When they emerged, the home they had been sleeping in was blown clear across the street,

flattened and shattered to pieces. Her car and his pickup truck were buried under debris.

"If we had been five minutes later, they probably would have found us out here somewhere dead," she said.

Collier returned Monday to pick through the wreckage, pulling out clothes and family photos with a mix of smiles and tears.

"Material things can be put back and replaced and family can't. And I'm just glad we got out OK," she said.

Mobile homes were especially vulnerable to the storms, with seven people killed early Sunday in one trailer park community a few miles away — Sunshine Acres in the community of Adel.

Just the day after Devocheo Williams moved into Sunshine Acres, his mobile home — and many of those around him — were demolished as the winds descended before dawn with terrifying swiftness.

"The whole trailer park was gone in 15 seconds," Williams said, describing a funnel cloud

that appeared to loop back around and hit the place a second time. "It looked like a ball of fire was going 100 mph."

Georgia reported 15 deaths Sunday, and four people died Saturday in Mississippi. In northern Florida, a woman died after a tree crashed into her home in Lake City as a storm swept through.

The National Weather Service said 39 possible tornadoes were reported over the weekend. The agency sent out teams to examine the damage and confirm how many of the storms were twisters, which can happen any time of year but are far more common in the spring and early summer.

Elsewhere in southern Georgia, a tornado slammed into Albany, a city of 76,000 people, Sunday afternoon and carved a path of destruction a half-mile wide in places. The National Weather Service rated the twister as at least an EF-2, meaning it packed winds of 111 to 135 mph, if not greater.

# UK court: Parliament must give Brexit OK

Associated Press

LONDON — Britain's government must get parliamentary approval before starting the process of leaving the European Union, the Supreme Court ruled Tuesday, potentially delaying Prime Minister Theresa May's plans to trigger negotiations by the end of March.

The 8-3 ruling forces the government to put a bill before Parliament, giving pro-EU politicians a chance to soften the terms of Brexit — Britain's exit from the EU. "Leave" campaigners had objected, saying Parliament shouldn't have the power to overrule the electorate, which voted to leave the bloc in a June 23 referendum.

The Supreme Court's decision doesn't mean Britain will remain in the EU. But it could delay the process though May's Downing Street office said its timetable remained on track.

May had said she would use centuries-old powers known as royal prerogative to invoke Article 50 of the EU treaty and launch two years of exit talks. The powers — traditionally held by the monarch — permit decisions about treaties and other issues to be made without a vote of Parliament.

"The referendum is of great political significance, but the act of Parliament which established it did not say what should happen as a result, so any change in the law to give effect to the referendum must be made in the only way permitted by the U.K. Constitution, namely by an act of Parliament," President of the Supreme Court David Neuberger said in reading the judgment.

"To proceed otherwise would be a breach of settled constitutional principles stretching back many centuries," he said.

The case was considered the most important constitutional issue in a generation, clarifying who ultimately wields power in Britain's system of government: the prime minister and her Cabinet or Parliament.

# Trump acts to advance pipelines

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump moved to advance construction of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines Tuesday, a pair of projects that were blocked by the Obama administration due in part to environmental concerns. Both orders are subject to renegotiations of the agreements.

Trump also signed a notice requiring the materials for the pipelines to be constructed in the United States, though it was unclear how he planned to enforce the measure.

"From now we are going to start making pipelines in the United States," Trump said from the Oval Office.

Looking ahead, Trump announced that he planned to nominate a justice for the Supreme Court next week, moving swiftly to try to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. The president was summoning top senators

to the White House later Tuesday to discuss his upcoming nomination.

Trump has sought to focus his first full week in office on jobs and the economy. Republicans and some unions have cited the pipeline projects as prime opportunities for job growth.

Former President Barack Obama stopped the proposed Keystone XL pipeline in late 2015, declaring it would have undercut U.S. efforts to clinch a global climate change deal that was a centerpiece of his environmental legacy. The pipeline would run from Canada to Nebraska, where it would connect to existing lines running to U.S. refineries on the Gulf Coast. The U.S. government needs to approve the pipeline because it would cross the nation's northern border.

Separately, late last year, the Army Corps of Engineers declined to allow construction of the Dakota Access pipeline

under Lake Oahe, saying alternative routes needed to be considered. The Standing Rock Sioux tribe and its supporters say the project threatens drinking water and Native American sites, though Energy Transfer Partners, the company that wants to build the pipeline, disputes that and says the pipeline will be safe.

The pipeline is to carry North Dakota oil through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois.

Even as Trump moves to implement his agenda, he is still making false claims. During a reception with lawmakers at the White House on Monday, Trump claimed the reason he'd lost the popular vote to Democratic rival Hillary Clinton was that 3 million to 5 million immigrants living in the U.S. illegally had voted. That's according to a Democratic aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Winning \$1M lottery ticket expires soon

**WI** MADISON — Wisconsin lottery officials say a winning Powerball ticket worth \$1 million is days away from expiring.

The ticket was purchased Aug. 6 at Aberg Avenue Mobil on Madison's east side. The location is also known as Kelley's Market. The ticket matched the first five numbers, but missed the Powerball.

Winning ticket holders have 180 days to claim their prize. The person who bought the winning ticket has until Feb. 2 to claim the prize at Wisconsin Lottery headquarters in Madison. If not, the winnings are used for property tax relief.

The retailer who sold the ticket still receives 2 percent of the winning ticket amount up to \$100,000.

### Substance coats roads after explosion at mill

**FL** CANTONMENT — Authorities said no one was injured when a paper mill exploded Sunday in Florida's Panhandle.

In a statement, Florida Highway Patrol Lt. Eddie Elmore said some roads around the International Paper Co. plant in Cantonment were closed after the explosion. Elmore said the roads were coated with a sticky, black substance that causes skin, eye and respiratory irritations. It's unclear how long the cleanup will take.

Escambia County officials said all employees at the plant were accounted for.

### Tracking devices given to dementia patients

**CA** GLENDALE — Police in the Los Angeles suburb of Glendale are hoping

to reduce the time it takes to find missing people diagnosed with dementia by providing patients with tracking devices.

The Los Angeles Times reported Sunday that the Glendale Police Department has partnered with the nonprofit group Project Lifesaver to provide tracking devices to families with members who suffer from cognitive issues such as Alzheimer's disease or autism.

Glendale police Sgt. Traci Fox said 15 people are currently enrolled in the program, which costs \$375 per person for the first year.

### Veteran state trooper facing a DUI charge

**MA** ACTON — A veteran Massachusetts State Police trooper has been placed on administrative leave after being charged with drunken driving.

Police said Angela Guerrero, 41, was off duty and driving a personal vehicle when she was pulled over by Acton police about 1:30 a.m. Sunday.

Authorities said she had been spotted driving erratically in Maynard minutes before. She also allegedly ran a red light.

A state police spokesman said Guerrero has been placed on administrative leave pending a formal status hearing.

### Mayor ejected after protesting game call

**CO** GREELEY — Greeley Mayor Tom Norton is there for his hometown University of Northern Colorado men's basketball team. Unless he gets ejected after protesting a referees' call.

The Greeley Tribune reported Norton was ejected from Saturday's game against Weber State University when officials said he got up from his court-side seat and walked onto the

floor to object.

Norton denied being on the court, saying, "I'm behaving."

He was later readmitted and watched the rest of the game from a seat several rows up.

### Family with no address still doesn't have road

**SD** SIOUX FALLS — A Sioux Falls couple who have lived without a legal address for more than a decade got a win earlier this month when the City Council decided against rezoning land in the area and potentially boxing in their home with commercial property.

The Argus Leader reported that Jesse and Lynette Buckmiller still aren't getting the paved road they want. The Buckmillers live on a street that was vacated in 2004 to make way for a development that was promised but never delivered.

The street they gave up, South La Salle Avenue, is now a poorly maintained, blocklong gravel driveway. The only other home on the street, owned by Lynette Buckmiller's father, sits at a dusty intersection.

### Officials looking into death of 28 crows

**ID** BOISE — More than two dozen crows were found dead last week near Nampa City Hall, and wildlife officials are trying to figure out what happened.

A flock of crows is often called a "murder of crows," but it's not yet clear what killed 28 of the birds.

Nampa city spokeswoman Vickie Holbrook said the crows weren't shot. Animal control officials delivered the corpses to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to see if an avian autopsy of sorts could yield any clues.

### Parents charged after toddler found in road

**WV** CHARLESTON — Authorities say the parents of a 23-month-old girl are facing neglect charges after their child was found walking alone in a road, wearing only a diaper.

The Kanawha County Sheriff's Office said the toddler was seen walking on a road in Jefferson on Saturday. Officials said numerous people stopped to help the toddler and get her safely out of the roadway.

Deputies made contact with the parents, identified as Tammie L. Gibson, 25, and Robert R. Hayes, 32. They were each charged with neglect creating risk of serious bodily injury and sent to jail.

The toddler was not injured.

### Buffalo quarantined because of poison

**ND** BISMARCK — Hundreds of buffalo are under quarantine in North Dakota and South Dakota after an illegal poison was used to kill prairie dogs.

An Environmental Protection Agency investigation earlier found 40,000 pounds of Rozol poison had been distributed across 5,400 acres on the former Cannonball Ranch near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation and the Wilder Ranch which straddles both states to the south. The Bismarck Tribune said the investigation began last year after six bald eagles and bison were found dead at the Wilder Ranch.

David Meyer sold the Cannonball Ranch to Dakota Access Pipeline for a reported \$18 million five months after the Rozol incident. The company bought the ranch to build the pipeline that has attracted thousands of protesters.

From wire reports

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# NASCAR announces overhaul to format

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR is taking a progressive approach to modernizing its series with a radical new format.

It's complicated and confusing to explain.

But the panel that spent the last seven months on this overhaul promised it's going to be the best thing to happen in NASCAR in a very long time.

"Wait until you see it on the racetrack," said 2012 champion Brad Keselowski. "If you are watching right now, please trust us. When you see this on the racetrack, this is going to be the best racing you've ever seen."

The overhaul announced Monday assigns three stages to every race. The top 10 drivers at the end of Stage 1 and Stage 2 will be awarded points on a 10-through-1 scale. The third portion of the race will be for the overall victory, and although traditional point scoring will be applied for that stage, the win will be worth 40 points. The rest of the field will be scored on a 35 to 2 scale, and positions 36th to 40 will only receive 1 point.

All bonus points accumulated through the 26-race regular season can be used in the 10-race playoff, which will no longer be called "The Chase."

"You still have the start of

the race, you still have the end of the race, and in between, there's going to be a lot of moments," said Denny Hamlin, leader of the driver council.

"I think that there's a lot of different things within this — you don't necessarily need to know how a watch works, you just need to know what time it is. I think you're going to see better racing on the racetrack, and that's all that matters."

NASCAR worked with a wide range of industry stakeholders to come up with the changes. Heavily involved were the television networks, retired drivers Jeff Gordon and Jeff Burton, current drivers from the driver council and team and track executives. Monster Energy, which signed last month as the title sponsor for NASCAR's top series, was only informed of the changes in the last few weeks.

The new format begins with the Feb. 26 season-opening Daytona 500.

"As a driver, I'm happy to be rewarded for performing well throughout the event, not just for how I finished," said Dale Earnhardt Jr., NASCAR's most popular driver. "It'll tick you off if you're in that car for enough races and you're whooping everybody's butt all day long and then you get beat by somebody who's running 20th all day, just

by circumstance, how the cautions fall late in the race.

"So it's going to be great to be rewarded as a driver for consistently performing well throughout an event."

NASCAR was energized by the changes, particularly the stages that will allow for a commercial break that doesn't occur during green-flag racing. Segment winners will be interviewed during the breaks, and NASCAR likes that it creates a pause that gives fans a chance to reset. It comes as the series is desperately trying to improve both attendance and television ratings, and Fox Sports estimated it will air 20 percent more of actual racing action because of the commercial breaks.

Race distances will not change under the format, which will apply to all three national series. Had NASCAR run the system this past season, Jimmie Johnson still would have won the title, but Martin Truex Jr. would have advanced one more round through the playoffs based on his two victories in the first round.

Among other changes:

- There will be no bonus points for leading a lap or for leading the most laps.

- The number of laps in each of the first two segments will be the same in a race, and the

end of the second stage will be approximately at the halfway point of the race.

- Drivers will now earn bonus points that will be called playoff points and carry with them through the 10-race playoffs. Drivers will earn five playoff points for every race win and one playoff point for every segment win.

- The playoffs will remain divided into three three-race rounds with four drivers eliminated after each round to set up four finalists for the season finale, where the four finalists will not be eligible to earn segment victories.

- The exhibition duels during Speedweeks at Daytona next month will now be worth 10 points to the two race winners.

"You can get confused if you want to get into the weeds on math," said Steve O'Donnell, NASCAR's chief racing. "This is really about introducing two breaks and rewarding your favorite driver for racing up front. What I've heard loud and clear from the fans on Twitter, 'I want my driver rewarded for every race.' That's happening, and it's as simple as that. It's rewarding drivers for their effort all race long."

## NC State gets rare win at Duke; Zags perfect

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — The ball — and No. 17 Duke's final chance to tie — bounced off Jayson Tatum's foot and right to North Carolina State star freshman Dennis Smith Jr.

Smith grabbed it and sprinted to the other end as the final seconds vanished for a stunning 84-82 win in the Blue Devils' famously hostile Cameron Indoor Stadium. But he didn't stop when the horn sounded — continuing his downcourt charge, taking off a few steps inside the foul line and throwing down a rim-jarring dunk.

It didn't matter that the dunk didn't count. Smith had provided the perfect capper to a spectacular performance Monday night, one that had his teammates mobbing him in

celebration the moment he touched down.

"I'm not surprised at all," Smith said. "A lot of people say it's an upset. But I planned on winning. I believe our team planned on winning."

Still, that was something N.C. State (14-7, 3-5 Atlantic Coast Conference) hadn't done in Cameron since 1995. And this was the same team that had lost four of five coming in, including a 51-point loss at rival North Carolina earlier this month.

Yet N.C. State rallied from 12 down late in the first half, used a 20-5 run to erase a 68-59 deficit in the final 6½ minutes, then got the final stop when Tatum lost control of the ball before getting off a shot to end it for Duke (15-5, 3-4).

It all started with Smith, the point guard

and projected lottery pick as a potential one-and-done NBA prospect. Smith finished 10-for-18 from the floor and also had six assists.

**No. 3 Gonzaga 83, Portland 64:** Zach Collins had 13 points and visiting No. 3 Gonzaga remained the nation's only undefeated Division I team with a victory in a game that was rescheduled because of a winter storm earlier this month.

Gonzaga's 20-game winning streak is the fourth longest in school history, matching runs in the 2005-06 and 2003-04 seasons. The Bulldogs are now 8-0 in West Coast Conference play.

Silas Melson and Jordan Mathews each added 12 for the Zags, who led by as many as 33 and had four players in double-digits.

# Venus, Federer in semis at Australian

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — For all their Grand Slam successes, Venus Williams and Roger Federer still find themselves surprised to be in the semifinals at the Australian Open.

Injuries, illness and advancing age can do that to the best of athletes, even 17-time major champion Federer and seven-time Grand Slam singles winner Williams, who has overcome an energy-sapping illness and is playing some of her best tennis since being diagnosed with Sjogren's syndrome in 2011.

"I have a lot to give, I have a lot to give to the game. I feel like I have a lot of great tennis in me," Williams said when asked why she didn't retire when diagnosed with the illness that also causes joint pain.

"So anytime you feel that way, you continue. It's just the excitement of having the opportunity to compete at my best level."

The 36-year-old Williams beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-4, 7-6 (3) on Tuesday, becoming the oldest player to reach the semifinals at Melbourne Park in the Open era. She'll next play CoCo Vandeweghe, an American who beat French Open champion Garbine Muguruza 6-4, 6-0 in Tuesday's other quarterfinal match.

It was a long time coming for Williams, who reached her 21st Grand Slam semifinal but her first at the Australian Open in 14 years.

The 35-year-old Federer, meanwhile, is back from a six-month injury layoff due to left knee surgery. On Tuesday, he had a 6-1, 7-5, 6-2 win over Mischa Zverev, the player who eliminated top-seeded Andy Murray from the tournament two nights earlier.

Federer's semifinal opponent will be Stan Wawrinka, who had his major breakthrough in Australia in 2014. Wawrinka beat Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 7-6 (2), 6-4, 6-3.

Federer won the first five games in 12 minutes, setting up a straightforward win to reach his 41st Grand Slam semifinal and his 13th at Melbourne Park.

Only he didn't expect to be anywhere near the semifinals.

"Winning back-to-back matches in best-of-five sets against quality, great players, that's been for me the big question mark, if I could do that so early in my comeback," Federer said. "I felt I was always going to be dangerous on any given day in a match situation. But obviously as the tournament would progress, maybe I would fade away with energy.

"I think now that I'm in the semis, feeling as good as I am,

playing as good as I am, that's a huge surprise to me."

Another tournament surprise has been the No. 35-ranked Vandeweghe. She beat top-ranked Angelique Kerber, who won the Australian and U.S. Open titles last year, in the fourth round. Vandeweghe followed it up with an upset win over Muguruza.

Vandeweghe saved the only break point she faced in the first set with an ace, and only conceded 10 points in the 28-minute second set.

"Once I got rolling in the second, it was like a freight train," she said. "You couldn't stop it."

Williams has advanced through the tournament without dropping a set, and isn't ready to stop in the semifinals in the latest installment of her career revival.

"It's wonderful to start the year out with this appearance," said Williams, who hadn't reached the semifinals in Australia since 2003, the year she lost the final to sister Serena. "I want to go further."

Williams didn't reach the quarterfinals at any of the Grand Slams from 2011 until the 2015 Australian Open. She lost in the first round in Melbourne last year.

With her run to the Wimbledon semifinals last year, Williams became the oldest woman since Martina Navratilova (at

37 years, 258 days) in 1994 to advance so far at a major.

On Wednesday, the men's semifinalists from the other side of the draw will be determined when 14-time major champion Rafael Nadal plays Milos Raonic and David Goffin takes on Grigor Dimitrov.

With Murray and second-round loser Novak Djokovic gone, the "throwback" enthusiasts are hoping for a Federer-Nadal final, just for old time's sake.

And maybe on the women's side as well.

Serena Williams, aiming for a record 23rd Grand Slam title, plays Johanna Konta and Karolina Pliskova meets Mirjana Lucic-Baroni in the remaining women's quarterfinals on Wednesday.

So there's also the possibility of another all-Williams final, a flashback to 2003 in Melbourne.

But Venus isn't thinking about any opponent in particular, just the end result.

"Should I look across the net and believe the person across the net deserves it more? This mentality is not how champions are made," Venus Williams said. "I'd like to be a champion, in particular this year. The mentality I walk on court with is: 'I deserve this.'"

## Smith leads NC State to rare win at Duke

Associated Press

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Silas Melson and Jordan Mathews each added 12 points for the Zags, who led by as many as 33 points and had four players in double-digits.

# Walters' last-second shot boosts Heat

Associated Press

MIAMI — Dion Walters' three-pointer with 0.6 seconds left capped his 33-point effort, and the Miami Heat beat Golden State 105-102 on Monday night to end the Warriors' seven-game winning streak.

The Heat wasted a 10-point lead in the final 4 minutes, and Kevin Durant tied the game on a dunk with 11.7 seconds left. With no timeouts, Walters walked the ball up the court and drilled what became the game-winner over Klay Thompson.

Golden State star Stephen Curry missed a corner jumper as time expired, though referee Brian Forte signaled his attempt was a two-point try anyway.

Goran Dragic scored 19 points for Miami (15-30), which finished a 4-0 homestand. Luke Babbitt added 11, and Hassan Whiteside had 10 points and 15 rebounds.

Durant scored 27, Thompson had 22 and Curry added 21 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists for the Warriors (38-7).

**Pelicans 124, Cavaliers 122:** Terrence Jones filled in brilliantly for injured All-Star Anthony Davis, scoring a season-high 36 points and grabbing 11 rebounds while powering host New Orleans to the surprising victory.

Jrue Holiday added 33 points and 10 assists for the Pelicans, and Langston Galloway capped a 12-point night with a clean steal on LeBron James' drive in the final

minute, preventing the Cavs from erasing a deficit they had trimmed from 22 late in the first half to three with 1:32 left in the game.

**Thunder 97, Jazz 95:** Russell Westbrook hit a pull-up jumper with 1.4 seconds left, helping visiting Oklahoma City stop Utah's six-game win streak.

Westbrook took over down the stretch and scored 11 of the Thunder's final 13 points after going cold in the third quarter. He finished with 38 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his 22nd triple-double of the season.

**Clippers 115, Hawks 105:** Austin Rivers scored 27 points and Jamal Crawford broke out of a shooting slump with 19, helping Los Angeles to the road win.

Crawford had eight points in the fourth quarter, including a driving basket after Atlanta cut the Clippers' lead from 24 to five points.

The Clippers improved to 3-7 while playing without injured stars Blake Griffin and Chris Paul. Griffin, who had arthroscopic right knee surgery on Dec. 20, warmed up before the game and likely will return Tuesday night at Philadelphia.

**Wizards 109, Hornets 99:** John Wall had 24 points and seven assists, Markieff Morris added 23 points and eight rebounds, and visiting Washington earned its fifth win in six games.

Otto Porter Jr. was active all night with

14 points and 13 rebounds for his seventh double-double of the season.

**Knicks 109, Pacers 103:** Carmelo Anthony scored 26 points and broke a tie with a baseline jumper with 23.4 seconds left, sending New York to a rare victory at Indiana.

It was the Knicks' first road win in the series since March 17, 2012. Derrick Rose had 20 points and six assists for New York, which had dropped four of five.

**Bucks 127, Rockets 114:** Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 31 points, Jabari Parker had 28 and host Milwaukee snapped a five-game losing streak.

Antetokounmpo made 11 of 17 shots and scored nine points in the final 4:16. Houston got no closer than six points in the final three minutes.

**Spurs 112, Nets 86:** Patty Mills scored 20 points, LaMarcus Aldridge had 16 and visiting San Antonio rolled while playing without Kawhi Leonard and three other regulars.

Pau Gasol (broken bone, left hand) and Tony Parker (sore left foot) didn't even make the road trip, while Manu Ginobili was scheduled for a night off but couldn't have played anyway because of back spasms.

**Kings 109, Pistons 104:** DeMarcus Cousins had 22 points and 14 rebounds, and visiting Sacramento snapped a five-game losing streak.

## Marleau scores 4 in third to push Sharks past Avs

Associated Press

DENVER — Patrick Marleau had a third period to remember: Four shots and four goals.

Not bad for a 37-year-old veteran.

Marleau's four-goal flurry in a 13½-minute span helped the San Jose Sharks beat the last-place Colorado Avalanche 5-2 on Monday night for their fifth straight win.

The left wing became the 12th player in NHL history to score four goals in a period and the first since Mario Lemieux on Jan. 26, 1997, at Montreal, according to the NHL.

It was the third four-goal game in Sharks history. Marleau joins Owen Nolan (Dec. 19, 1995) and Tomas Hertl (Oct. 8, 2013).

Afterward, Marleau was

humble as always as he ended a seven-game goal drought.

"It was a good period to have," said Marleau, who's now just three goals shy of No. 500 for his career. "Tonight was a lot of fun."

Marleau scored in a variety of ways to break open a game tied at 1 heading into the third: He tipped a shot in off the post, scored on a wraparound, lined in a wrist shot and finally lifted a backhander over rookie goaltender Spencer Martin.

To commemorate Marleau's achievement, the team made sure to retrieve the puck for him. That's quite a souvenir.

"It was one of those kinds of periods, he got the momentum going, everything found him and he put everything in," Joe Pavelski explained. "Those were nice goals."

**Capitals 6, Hurricanes 1:** Defenseman Dmitry Orlov scored twice as host Washington kept the offense rolling to beat Carolina and extend its point streak to 14 games.

Orlov doubled his goal output for the season and Justin Williams, Evgeny Kuznetsov, T.J. Oshie and Lars Eller also scored for the Capitals, who have won three in a row and haven't lost in regulation since Dec. 27.

**Rangers 3, Kings 2:** Henrik Lundqvist stopped 36 shots to lead host New York over Los Angeles.

Brandon Pirri, Matt Puempel and Mats Zuccarello scored to help New York win its third straight since a three-game losing streak.

**Ducks 3, Jets 2:** Ryan Getzlaf scored a power-play goal in

the third period while Jonathan Bernier stopped 31 shots as Anaheim beat host Winnipeg.

Logan Shaw and Rickard Rakell also scored for Anaheim. Andrew Copp and Nikolaj Ehlers had a goal each for Winnipeg.

**Maple Leafs 4, Flames 0:** Nazem Kadri scored twice to tie his career high with 20 goals this season while Frederik Andersen stopped 26 shots as host Toronto ended a two-game winless streak with a win over Calgary.

**Coyotes 3, Panthers 2 (OT):** Tobias Rieder scored 48 seconds into overtime to give host Arizona a win over slumping Florida.

Rieder scored off a pass from Alexander Burmistrov, who has five assists in his first five games with Arizona.