

STARS AND STRIPES®

Thursday, January 25, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Experts, leaders: Promotion system outdated

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A panel of military experts and leaders urged lawmakers on Wednesday to revamp a woefully outdated officer promotion system that has plagued recruiting and retention efforts.

The system, born of a 1980 law called the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act, standardized military promotions and established an “up or out” career path for servicemembers.

Experts testifying before a subpanel of the Senate Armed Services Committee seem to agree that the policy, also known as DOPMA, is a one-size-fits-all approach that the military has outgrown.

“The bureaucracy still treats troops like interchangeable draftees. It’s not only disrespectful but short-sighted and this can’t be fixed until DOPMA is fixed,” Timothy Kane, a Hoover Institution fellow at Stanford University, said during testimony to the subpanel. “Our enlistees and our officers are fantastic, but how they get treated is not so fantastic. That’s why we have, repeatedly, a retention crisis.”

The comments before the Senate Armed

Services subcommittee on personnel issues marked a far-reaching discussion on military personnel practices that could influence the development of this year’s National Defense Authorization Act.

Military leaders at the hearing said they are facing a more competitive job market now and need to offer more to recruit and retain servicemembers, especially ones with specialty skills. Life-work balance must become a bigger priority, military leaders and experts agreed.

“We are in a war for talent. The propensity to serve is declining amidst an improving economy and it’s adversely impacting both recruiting and retention,” said Navy Vice Adm. Robert P. Burke, deputy chief of naval operations. “Sailors leaving the Navy continue to express frustration with the industrial-age personnel systems and inflexible and complex personnel processes.”

Lawmakers seem to agree that the military’s personnel management law needs to be updated. The current system limits the military’s ability to respond quickly to unforeseen threats, restricts rapid changes to force levels due to budget demands and doesn’t allow the services to differentiate among themselves, said Sen. Thom Tillis,

R-N.C., chairman of the subpanel.

“DOPMA’s authors never envisioned the post-Cold War military as presently constructed. Today’s force is 43 percent smaller than the military of 1980, and is constantly engaged in ways never predicted during the Cold War,” Tillis said. “Repeated overseas combat deployments strain the more traditional warfighting career fields, while at the same time new military domains require entirely different officer skill sets. We must ask ourselves, can a personnel system designed for an industrial-age military be successful in the information age?”

Military experts and leaders from each of the services testified they need more flexibility to allow servicemembers to follow their own career paths.

“We now believe it’s time to consider changes needed to more effectively and efficiently recruit, assess, retain the talented officers needed to sustain our ready force and to better manage and employ individual talents and specialize emerging skills,” said Lt. Gen. Thomas C. Seamands, the Army’s deputy chief of staff.

Tester F-35’s reliability stalled at ‘about 50 percent’

Bloomberg

Efforts to improve the reliability of Lockheed Martin’s F-35 are “stagnant,” undercut by problems such as aircraft sitting idle over the last year awaiting spare parts from the contractor, according to the Pentagon’s testing office.

The availability of the fighter jet for missions when needed — a key metric — remains “around 50 percent, a condition that has existed with no significant improvement since October 2014, despite the increasing number of aircraft,” Robert Behler, the Defense Department’s new director of operational testing, said in an annual report delivered Tuesday to senior Pentagon leaders and congressional committees.

The F-35 section, obtained by Bloomberg News, outlined the status of the costliest U.S. weapons system as it’s scheduled to end its 16-year-old development phase this year. Starting in September, the program

is supposed to proceed to intense combat testing that’s likely to take a year, an exercise that’s at least 12 months late already. Combat testing is necessary before the plane is approved for full-rate production — the most profitable phase for Lockheed.

Lockheed Martin defended the aircraft’s progress.

“We are confident in the F-35’s transformational capability that continues to be demonstrated through the steady progress in development, production and sustainment operations,” Lockheed spokeswoman Carolyn Nelson said in a statement. She said the company is working with the Pentagon’s F-35 program office to improve repair capability and the ordering of spare parts.

Nelson said that “the F-35 weapons system reliability continues to improve lot over lot” and “newer jets are averaging greater than 60 percent availability and some operational squadrons are consistently at or

above 70 percent availability.”

Pentagon officials including Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan and chief weapons buyer Ellen Lord have highlighted the need to reduce the F-35’s \$406.5 billion projected acquisition cost and its estimated \$1.2 trillion price tag for long-term operations and support through 2070. Still, the Defense Department is moving to accelerate contracting and production for the fighter despite the persistence of technical and reliability issues disclosed in the current phase of development testing.

A final version of the plane’s complex software has gone through 31 iterations and has yet to be deployed because of “key remaining deficiencies,” the report found.

The upcoming testing, “which provides the most credible means to predict combat performance, likely will not be completed until” December 2019, according to the testing office.

USS Portland might be RIMPAC flagship

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — This summer's Rim of the Pacific naval exercise in Hawaii is expected to include one of the Navy's newest amphibious warfare vessels as its flagship, the Army firing a Navy missile into the sea and a first-ever innovation fair.

The USS Portland has been tentatively chosen to serve as RIMPAC's flagship, Capt. Brian Metcalf, the program manager for LPD amphibious warfare vessels, said earlier this month at the Surface Navy Association's annual symposium in Arlington, Va., according to USNI News.

The final decision on that flagship designation will not be made until a RIMPAC planning meeting in early April, Navy officials said.

The Portland will become the Navy's 11th San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship after its ceremonial commissioning event scheduled for April in Portland, Ore.

The ship is slated this fall to be fitted with the next generation of the Navy's laser weapon system for testing, according to USNI. The previous iteration was tested in the Middle East aboard the USS Ponce.

All 26 nations, including China, that participated in the 2016 RIMPAC have been invited formally to the 2018 biennial international maritime exercise, the world's largest.

New this year will be the Army's land-based launching of a Navy missile to sink a ship at sea. The missile will be launched from an Army heavy expanded mobility tactical truck, said Col. Christopher Garver, a U.S. Army Pacific spokesman. The missile will be fired from Pacific Missile Range Facility Barking Sands on the Hawaiian island of

Kauai, he said.

A Japanese unit also will fire a missile during a sinking exercise, Garver said.

The decommissioned frigate USS McClusky and the retired tank landing ship USS Racine are expected to be used as targets during the sinking exercises, the Navy said.

The Army's missile drill was prompted by a challenge in 2016 by U.S. Pacific Command chief Adm. Harry Harris for the Army to operate outside its typical land-based domain, Garver said.

"Simply put, this concept provides us a way to ensure access to the global commons in the run-up to war and fight in those same commons should war come," Harris said last year of the multidomain battle concept that spawned the coming missile drill. "Components must increase their agility and provide support to each other across the warfighting domains."

This year's RIMPAC will continue to build on the growing importance of experimentation during the exercise by holding the first-ever innovation fair at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

The four-day event — slated for June 28 through July 1 — will include exhibitions, displays, contests and special events.

Unlike innovation fairs in which vendors and industry officials showcase technology or products for sale, this event is a chance for government offices and government-sponsored academic institutions — both U.S. and foreign — to display and demonstrate technological capabilities they are developing.

The displays are intended to focus on port and harbor security, robotics systems, virtual and augmented reality, green energy and disaster relief, among others.

US likely to send first aircraft carrier to Vietnam since war

Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam — A U.S. Navy aircraft carrier is expected to make a port visit to Vietnam in March, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Thursday. It would be the first such visit in the postwar era.

The planned visit to Danang is likely to irritate China, which is critical of U.S. moves to add to its military muscle in the region.

Mattis and his counterpart, Ngo Xuan Lich, discussed the planned carrier visit during a closed-door meeting, said Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis. Davis said the Vietnamese are awaiting final approval by more senior government authorities, but Mattis appeared to indicate it was a done deal.

"Thank you for the increasing partnership with our aircraft carrier coming in to

Danang here in March," Mattis said in remarks opening a meeting with Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong.

Mattis also thanked him for Vietnam's support for toughening United Nations Security Council sanctions against North Korea.

The Vietnamese Defense Ministry said separately that the two defense agencies had submitted their proposals for a U.S. carrier port visit to their leaders. The idea was floated last summer when Lich met Mattis at the Pentagon.

In a written statement after Mattis' meeting with Lich, the Vietnamese Defense Ministry said Lich had given Mattis "war artifacts of U.S. military personnel in the war." It did not elaborate.

The visit also included a meeting with President Tran Dai Quang.

Air Force Super Bowl flyover is billed as a training flight

BY STEPHEN CARLSON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Super Bowl LII will feature a flyover by two A-10 Thunderbolt II ground attack aircraft and an F-16 Fighting Falcon plane — a training flight that could cost the Air Force hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Katie Spencer, a sports outreach manager for the Air Force, said the Feb. 4 flyover in Minneapolis will be the first in four years that does not involve the Air Force Thunderbirds or the Navy Blue Angels, which typically alternate every year for the Super Bowl. The display will be paid for out of appropriated funds for training, she said, declining to reveal the cost.

"They will be at no additional

cost to the taxpayer. They are using allocated flying hours," she said. "Formation flying is very important in Air Force operations. It serves as time-on-target training as well."

Air Combat Command will cover the costs from its existing training budget, said Air Force spokeswoman Jennifer Bentley. "The flights are coordinated with existing training schedules and are paired with required pilot qualification training."

The planes, deploying from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base outside Tucson, Ariz., will be joined by an additional F-16 as backup.

There has been a military flyover at every Super Bowl except the first game in 1967, according to the NFL.

Purported photos, video of GI killed in Niger probed

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command said Wednesday it is investigating internet pictures and the existence of a video that claim to show the body of a U.S. soldier killed in an October ambush in Niger.

“We are reviewing the post and determining the veracity of the tweet and the assertions that there is an associated video,” AFRICOM said. “We cannot comment further on this issue.”

On Oct. 4, four U.S. soldiers were killed during a patrol with Nigerien forces near Niger’s border with Mali. The contingent was ambushed, but for three months no group claimed responsibility. In January, a local Islamic State affiliate claimed it was responsible for the attack.

AFRICOM is conducting an investigation into the incident and what went wrong. The findings of the probe are expected within weeks. The roughly 40-person U.S.-Nigerien patrol included about 12 U.S. soldiers.

Killed in the ambush were Staff Sgts. Bryan C. Black, Jeremiah W. Johnson and Dustin M. Wright and Sgt. La David Johnson, all assigned to the 3rd Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, N.C.

The U.S. maintains a drone site in Niger, which has emerged as the centerpiece for U.S. operations across a vast expanse of terrain. A mix of extremist groups operate in the region, including the Nigerian-based Boko Haram and al-Qaida affiliates.

About 700 U.S. troops are stationed in Niger where work on a new drone facility is underway.

US: 4 Americans were killed, 2 wounded in Kabul hotel attack

WASHINGTON — The United States says four American citizens were killed and two others were wounded in the Taliban attack over the weekend on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said the U.S. condemns the attack and offers condolences to the family and friends of those killed.

She said the State Department won’t comment further out of respect for the relatives of those who died.

The department had previously confirmed that multiple Americans were killed and injured, but had declined to give an exact figure until family members could be properly notified.

From The Associated Press

Trump ‘looking forward’ to questioning on Russia

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump declared he’s “looking forward” to being questioned — under oath — in the special counsel’s probe of Russian election interference and Trump’s possible obstruction in the firing of the FBI director.

Trump said he would be willing to answer questions under oath in the interview, which special counsel Robert Mueller has been seeking but which White House officials had not previously confirmed the president would grant.

“I’m looking forward to it, actually,” Trump said late Wednesday when asked by reporters at the White House. As for timing, he said, “I guess they’re talking about two or three weeks, but I’d love to do it.”

He said, as he has repeatedly, that “there’s no collusion whatsoever” with the Russians, and he added, “There’s no obstruction whatsoever.”

The full scope of Mueller’s investigation, which involves hundreds of thousands of documents and dozens of witness interviews, is unknown. And there have been no signs that agents aren’t continuing to work on ties between Trump’s campaign and a Russian effort to tip the 2016 election.

But now that Mueller’s team has all but concluded its interviews with current and former Trump officials and expressed interest in speaking with the president, the focus seems to be on the post-inauguration White House. That includes the firing of FBI Director James Comey and discussions preceding the ouster of White House national security adviser Michael Flynn.

The timing and circumstances of a Trump interview are not set. But soon it will probably be the president himself who will have to explain to Mueller how his actions don’t add up to obstruction of justice. That conversation will be dominated by questions tied to whether he took steps to thwart an FBI investigation.

Asked if he thinks Mueller will be fair, Trump replied, “We’re going to find out.” He then reiterated that there is “no collusion.” In a potential signal of his defense, Trump suggested that he didn’t obstruct — he simply fought back against a false accusation.

So far, witness interviews and the special counsel’s document requests make clear Mueller has a keen interest in Comey’s May 9 firing and the contents of Comey’s private conversations with the president, as well as the ouster months earlier of Flynn and the conversations leading up to it.

A focus on potential obstruction has

been evident almost since Mueller’s appointment. And recent interviews with administration officials, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions, have shown that Trump is dealing with prosecutors who have amassed a wealth of knowledge about the events he’ll be questioned about. Prosecutors have interviewed numerous Trump aides, including White House counsel Don McGahn, former chief of staff Reince Priebus and the president’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Sessions, who had urged Comey’s firing, was interviewed for hours, becoming the highest-ranking administration official known to have submitted to questioning. Mueller also wants to interview former adviser Steve Bannon, who has called Comey’s firing perhaps the biggest mistake in “modern political history.”

The White House initially said the firing was based on the Justice Department’s recommendation and cited as justification a memo that faulted Comey’s handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation. But Trump himself said later he was thinking of this “Russia thing” and had intended to fire Comey anyway.

Sessions, the target of the president’s ire since he stepped aside in March from the Russia investigation, would have been able to offer close-up insight into the president’s thinking ahead of the termination. He also could have been able to speak to the president’s relationship with Comey, which Comey documented in memos about conversations with Trump that bothered him.

Mueller has been investigating the events leading up to Flynn’s dismissal from the White House, including how officials responded to information from former acting Attorney General Sally Yates that Flynn had misled them by saying that he had not discussed sanctions. Despite that warning, and despite an FBI interview days after Trump’s inauguration, Flynn was not forced to resign until Feb. 13 — the night of media reports about Yates’ conversation with McGahn. Mueller will likely want to know what Trump understood, before asking Comey to let the Flynn investigation go, about Flynn’s interview with the FBI — and whether he had made false statements — and about his conversation with the Russian ambassador.

Four people have been charged in the Mueller investigation, including Flynn and former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort. Flynn and former campaign foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos have pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI.

Trump open to 'Dreamers' citizenship path

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump says he's open to an immigration plan that would provide a pathway to citizenship for hundreds of thousands of young people who were brought to the country as children and are now here illegally.

"We're going to morph into it," Trump told reporters Wednesday. "It's going to happen, at some point in the future, over a period of 10 to 12 years."

Trump's pronouncements came as the White House announced it would unveil a

legislative framework on immigration next week that it hopes can pass both the House and the Senate. The president's remarks amounted to a preview of that framework. He said he'll propose \$25 billion for building a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border and \$5 billion for other security measures.

But immediately after Trump spoke, a senior White House official stressed the idea of a pathway to citizenship so-called "Dreamers" was just a "discussion point" in the plan that the White House intended to preview to the House and Senate.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity to preview the administration's thinking on a contentious issue that has roiled lawmakers for months.

Despite his previously harsh rhetoric, Trump told reporters he had a message for the Dreamers. "Tell 'em not to be concerned, OK? Tell 'em not to worry. We're going to solve the problem."

Trump repeatedly has said that any deal to protect those immigrants from deportation is contingent on money for the border wall and other security measures. Trump also wants to limit the family members

whom immigrants are able to sponsor to join them in the U.S. and either to replace or transform a visa lottery aimed at increasing diversity.

Trump has given Congress until March to come up with a plan to protect the nearly 700,000 young people who had been protected from deportation and had been given the right to work legally in the country under the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA. Trump announced last year that he was ending DACA.

N. Korea preps for military parade ahead of Olympics

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea is preparing for a massive military parade that could put new missiles on display on the eve of the Olympics, according to satellite images.

The North raised the possibility Tuesday when it announced that it's changing the date of a national holiday honoring its army to Feb. 8, the day before the Winter Games begin in South Korea.

A parade putting columns of goose-stepping soldiers, tanks and new missiles on display would threaten to renew tensions that had ebbed after North Korea agreed during negotiations with the South to participate in the Olympics.

The two Koreas will march together under a "unification" flag during the opening ceremony and will compete with a combined women's ice hockey team. The North Korean athletes arrived Thursday in South Korea.

The state-run Korean Central News Agency didn't mention a parade, but said the North would "significantly mark" Army Building Day, which previously had been celebrated on April 25.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said the military was closely

monitoring possible preparations for a parade.

Commercial satellite images monitored since November also show an increase in activity outside the Mirim parade training facility near the capital, Pyongyang, according to 38 North, a website that monitors activity in the reclusive communist state.

"These military parades are of great interest to outsiders, as North Korea has frequently used them to showcase new military equipment and its latest weapons systems," defense expert Joseph Bermudez Jr. said in an analysis.

North Koreans in Pyongyang have been assembling in frigid temperatures to practice for an apparent mass rally, and the area around Kim Il Sung square has been sporadically closed to traffic, The Associated Press reported.

North Korea last staged a parade on April 15 to mark the birthday of Kim Il Sung, the grandfather of current leader Kim Jong Un.

On Wednesday, President Donald Trump's administration slapped new sanctions on North Korean financial and business networks in China and Russia as well as five North Korean shipping companies and six of its vessels.

Deal on shutdown cut taxes further

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The deal that ended the government shutdown also cut taxes further, adding billions of dollars more to the national deficit.

The tax cuts were a little-noticed element of the much-discussed deal, which provided funding to keep government agencies operating for about three weeks and renewed a popular health insurance program for poor children. They were added to entice Republicans to line up behind the temporary spending bill even before the Democrats dug in and forced the three-day shutdown.

The bill enacted late Monday suspended three taxes that came in under the Affordable Care Act, President Barack Obama's signature health care law: a tax on medical devices, one on high-cost health care plans offered by employers, and another on health insurance companies.

The Republicans were relieved when enough Democrats flipped and supported the spending bill so that the government could reopen. And, they were gleeful at the chipping away of the health care law by delaying or suspending the three taxes.

Just a few weeks after the Republicans catapulted a sweeping, \$1.5 trillion tax plan into law, here they were cutting taxes again, they told the public. Even the shutdown "couldn't keep this Congress from finding new ways to cut taxes and let the American people keep more of their hard-earned money," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday.

Delaying the three taxes will add \$32 billion over 10 years to the deficit, according to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, a joint venture of the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution, in addition to the anticipated \$1.5 trillion in federal red ink from the new GOP tax law.

Amid the furious negotiations over the spending bill, GOP leaders used the tax cuts as "sweeteners" to attract the support of balking Republican conservatives in the House.

The taxes also are opposed by plenty of Democrats. That's in contrast to many of the tax levies, credits and deductions in the comprehensive tax legislation, which starkly split Republicans and Democrats in a bitter battle last year.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

No students hurt after bus slides on icy street

MA SUTTON — Officials in a Massachusetts town said no one was hurt when a school bus full of middle school and high school students slid backward down an icy road and crashed into a stopped car.

A nearby resident captured video of the crash early Tuesday in Sutton. Neither vehicle was badly damaged, and the bus continued on to school after the crash.

Later Tuesday, a Sutton school van crashed into a pole. Two adults and a child were hospitalized after that crash.

Sutton Superintendent Theodore Friend said most main roads had been treated before the first crash, but some smaller roads had not.

Cop feeds critter for Squirrel Appreciation Day

CA CLOVIS — You may have overlooked Squirrel Appreciation Day, but the police force in Clovis didn't forget.

The Fresno Bee reported that on Sunday the Clovis Police Department posted a video on its Facebook page showing Officer John McGrory give a nut to a squirrel that scampered over to him.

The squirrel took the nut and went back to a tree as McGrory laughed.

Squirrel Appreciation Day is celebrated every Jan. 21.

Museum looks to ID soldiers in sketches

NY SARATOGA SPRINGS — More than a dozen sketches of American soldiers who served during World War II have been posted on a New York museum's web-

site in the hopes the men can be identified.

The sketches made by Stan Dube were posted Tuesday on the New York State Military Museum's website. Dube drew portraits of 17 fellow soldiers while serving with the Army's 27th Infantry Division in Hawaii in 1943. He died in 2009.

The soldiers in two of the sketches have been identified and the artwork was sent to relatives. The IDs of the other 15 remain a mystery.

Man arrested after biting of police dog

NH BOSCAWEN — A New Hampshire man was charged with resisting arrest and biting a police dog.

Police said the man unsuccessfully tried to hide under a pile of clothes to evade arrest over the weekend and then put the police dog in a chokehold and bit it on the head.

State police were asked to help deal with a shooting last weekend in Boscawen. They said two men in a home were wanted on outstanding warrants and both resisted arrest before one exchanged bites with the dog.

Police said the man who bit the dog faces charges including resisting arrest, interfering with a police dog and assaulting an officer.

Student seeks Claudia after dating app mishap

MO SPRINGFIELD — A Missouri State University student who feared he swiped a potential sweetheart out of his life with a dating app mishap emailed every Claudia on campus to find her.

The freshman meant to swipe right on the woman's Tinder profile — a sign that he wanted to meet her. Instead he

swiped left, rejecting her. All he knew was her first name and that she also was a Missouri State student. Over the weekend, he emailed the 22 Claudias on campus, offering to take the one that got away out for doughnuts.

When freshman Claudia Alley got the email, she knew it was about her because it referenced a joke in her bio. She told the Springfield News-Leader she's agreed to the doughnut date.

Felines airlifted from island in frozen bay

VA TANGIER — The National Guard had to fly groceries to an island in the Chesapeake Bay when December's cold snap froze the water. But there was another mission underway: helping the island's homeless cats.

The Baltimore Sun reported that last month marked the first "cat lift" from Virginia's Tangier Island. The island's estimated 500 felines outnumber humans in this isolated fishing and tourist community.

Helen Woods, a flight instructor from Laurel, Md., said she asked fellow pilots to bring cat food and possibly rescue some cats. One resident had just died, leaving 14 cats homeless.

1 dead after attempt to clear clogged drain

IL GRAND TOWER — Authorities in southern Illinois said a man is dead after mixing drain cleaner with bleach in an attempt to clear a clogged drain.

The Southern Illinois of Carbondale reported that the Jackson County Sheriff's Office said in a news release that a preliminary investigation shows the man created a poisonous gas that killed him.

Authorities said a woman escaped the home "due to the fast thinking of the dispatcher" who realized a deadly exposure occurred. She was taken to a St. Louis hospital.

Officials seize hundreds of animals from home

NV LAS VEGAS — Hundreds of animals including horses, chickens, pigeons and turtles were seized from a Las Vegas home after officials found the animals living in what were described as deplorable conditions.

Animal control officers on Sunday went to the home after neighbors said a horse was loose, Lt. Grant Rogers said. They put it in a trailer and found the rest of the animals at the owner's home, Rogers said.

Authorities removed 13 horses, 150 roosters and hens, 400 pigeons, four turtles and two guinea pigs. A criminal investigation is underway.

Girl bitten on finger by rodent at zoo

CT BRIDGEPORT — A small child visiting a Connecticut zoo was bitten on the finger by a rodent native to South America.

Lisa Clair, a spokeswoman for the Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport, told the Connecticut Post the "toddler-aged" girl was visiting Sunday when she was bitten by a red-rumped agouti, which is about the size of a large guinea pig.

The animal is kept in an enclosure of clear acrylic panels and it appears the girl stuck her finger in a gap between two panels. The zoo took action to secure the enclosure.

Clair said the bite was not serious but the child's mother took the girl to a hospital for an evaluation.

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®

Jones, Thome, Guerrero, Hoffman elected

Associated Press

NEW YORK—Over 600 home runs. More than 600 saves. A .300 career average.

In the age of baseball analytics, there's still room in the Hall of Fame for big, round numbers you can count on.

Chipper Jones, Jim Thome, Vladimir Guerrero and Trevor Hoffman were rewarded Wednesday, easily elected in the newest class headed for Cooperstown.

"I don't know how you tabulate or calculate WAR," Jones said, referring to a saber-metric stat that didn't exist for much of his career.

"Yes, you can dig deeper," he said. But he added: "What I want to see is batting average, on-base percentage, runs produced."

Designated hitter Edgar Martinez came close after a grass-roots campaign to promote him. Boosted by advanced metrics, he'll get his last chance on the ballot next year.

Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens, both tainted by the steroids scandal, edged up but again fell far short.

A switch-hitter who batted .303 with 468 home runs, Jones was an eight-time All-Star third baseman for the Atlanta Braves.

He was a force for most of the Atlanta teams that won 14 straight division titles — his election put another member of those Braves clubs in the Hall, along with pitchers John Smoltz, Tom Glavine and Greg Maddux, manager Bobby Cox and general manager John Schuerholz.

Of the four new members, Jones was the only one to win a World Series. He joined

Ken Griffey Jr. as the lone overall No. 1 draft picks to reach the Hall.

Jones and Thome made it 54 players elected in their first year of eligibility by members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Jones drew 97.2 percent (410 of 422) of the vote and Thome was at 89.8 percent — 75 percent is needed for election.

"It was waterworks," Jones said after receiving the call.

Thome hit 612 home runs, ranking him eighth on the career list, and launched a record 13 walk-off homers. The five-time All-Star played mostly for Cleveland.

Thome was known for his pre-swing routine, standing absolutely still in the box while pointing his bat at the pitcher. He said the posture helped him relax, slow down and "not be so tense."

The slugger praised his longtime hitting coach, Charlie Manuel, for all the work they did together.

"It's about sweat equity, and getting after it," Thome said on MLB Network.

Guerrero was elected in his second try, getting 92.9 percent. The nine-time All-Star played half his career with the Montreal Expos.

The outfielder batted .318 with 449 homers and 1,496 RBIs, and was a notorious bad-ball hitter. He said he developed that talent as a kid in the Dominican Republic, playing a game similar to cricket in which hitters swung broomsticks while pitchers tried to bounce balls past them and knock over folded license plates.

"That opened up my hitting zone," Guerrero said through a translator.

Dominican Republic President Danilo Medina, who was in Switzerland, congratulated Guerrero, saying on his Twitter account that "it fills all Dominicans with pride that he has carried our flag to the top."

CDN television in the Dominican Republic showed images of fireworks and people celebrating in the streets in Nizao, Guerrero's hometown located 30 miles west of the capital in Santo Domingo.

Hoffman was chosen in his third year, getting 79.9 percent after missing by just five votes last time. The former Padres closer used an outstanding changeup to post 601 saves, second to Mariano Rivera's 652, and revved up fans in San Diego with rocking entrances to "Hells Bells" by AC/DC.

Hoffman became the sixth pitcher who was mostly a reliever to make the Hall, along with Goose Gossage, Bruce Sutter, Dennis Eckersley, Rollie Fingers and Hoyt Wilhelm.

As for his wait, Hoffman said: "You can't do anything to enhance your career after not getting that call. I'm not worried about whatever year it is. I'm ecstatic to get in."

It took 317 votes to be elected. There were 422 ballots submitted, including one blank entry.

The four new members will be inducted on July 29. They will be enshrined with pitcher Jack Morris and shortstop Alan Trammell, picked last month by a committee that considered older players and executives.

NHL roundup

Penalty shot lifts Maple Leafs over Blackhawks

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Toronto Maple Leafs found themselves in yet another tight game. William Nylander found a way to make sure they got two points this time.

Nylander scored on a penalty shot 6 seconds into overtime to lift the Maple Leafs to a 3-2 win over the sagging Chicago Blackhawks on Wednesday night.

Nylander was awarded the attempt after he broke in alone on Jeff Glass from the opening faceoff in the extra period, but was hooked from behind by

Chicago's Duncan Keith. Nylander scored the game-winner and his 10th goal by faking Glass and then burying a high backhand to send the Blackhawks to their fourth straight defeat.

"I thought I needed to throw a little harder fake on him so he'd bite," Nylander said. "I went to the backhand on the two previous breakaways. Third time's the lucky charm."

Nylander was stopped by Glass with 4:02 left in the third period when he pounced on Jordan Oesterle's turnover and cut in alone.

"I've had breakaways in the

previous games and hadn't scored," Nylander said. "So it's nice to score on one."

Eight of Toronto's last nine games have been decided by one goal, including three overtime losses and one in regulation. In the Maple Leafs' 4-2 loss to Colorado on Monday, the Avalanche's Gabriel Landeskog finished the scoring with a late empty-netter.

"That's the way it is every night," said Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock, whose team won for the second time in seven games. "I still think we can play way better."

Toronto's Nazem Kadri con-

nected for his 15th goal, a power-play score that snapped a seven-game scoring drought and was just his second goal in 20 games. Mitch Marner also scored for the Maple Leafs.

Kings 2, Flames 1 (OT): Tanner Pearson scored with 26.1 seconds left in overtime to lead visiting Los Angeles past Calgary.

Pearson took a pass from Drew Doughty and shot the puck past Mike Smith to help the Kings beat the Flames for the first time this season after losing the previous two meetings between the teams.

Australian Open

Halep, Wozniacki earn berths in final

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — For the second time in the tournament, Simona Halep faced match points and knew one mistake would mean an exit from the Australian Open and the likely loss of her No. 1 ranking.

For the second time in just over a week, she attacked rather than take the safe approach. The 26-year-old Romanian saved two match points and needed four of her own against 2016 champion Angelique Kerber before winning 6-3, 4-6, 9-7 in the semifinals.

Halep will face No. 2 Caroline Wozniacki in the final on Saturday, with one of them guaranteed to win a first Grand Slam title. The winner will also be No. 1 when the next rankings are released. Wozniacki, who beat Elise Mertens 6-3, 7-6 (2) in 1½ hours in the first semifinal, hasn't held the top ranking in six years.

For Halep, playing in her first Grand Slam as the top seeded player, it's a first major final beyond the clay courts of Roland Garros. She lost French Open

finals to Jelena Ostapenko last year — having led by a set and a break — and to Maria Sharapova in 2014.

For Wozniacki, it's her first Grand Slam final outside of America. The two-time U.S. Open runner-up also had to save match points to reach her first Australian Open final. She rallied from 5-1 down in the third set of her second-round win and said she's been "playing with the house money" ever since.

Previous Australian Open winners have saved match points en route to the final, but no woman has done it in two matches.

Halep is hoping to change that, saying that saving triple match point in her third-round win against Lauren Davis that finished 15-13 in the third set had set her up mentally for the pressure of the semifinals.

"Definitely was very tough. I'm shaking now, I'm really emotional because I could win this match," Halep said immediately after beating Kerber in another marathon. "I'm glad I could resist. Not easy in the tour-

namment to have these matches, but I have just to enjoy."

Marin Cilic is also enjoying his run, following up his quarterfinal upset of top-ranked Rafael Nadal with a 6-2, 7-6 (4), 6-2 win over No. 49 Kyle Edmund on Thursday. In his first Australian final in his 10th attempt, the 2014 U.S. Open champion will face the winner of Friday's semifinal between defending champion Roger Federer and Hyeon Chung.

Cilic lost to Federer in last year's Wimbledon final, where he was injured and struggling at the end.

"I'm feeling really, really good physically," he said. "I played a great tournament so far with my level of tennis."

Halep twisted her left ankle in the first round, and said she'd made the decision then to risk it all at Melbourne Park and take a rest later.

"This match I had two match balls and I lost them so I said that if she came back, I can do it. I had just confidence in myself," she said.

Halep has a new resolve after back-to-back first-round

exits previously at Melbourne Park. She won a lot of the long, intense rallies against Kerber and hit 50 winners, which surprised even her. She raced to a 5-0 lead in the first set, and led 3-1 in the second, but didn't wilt as Kerber came back.

"I try to be very calm, but today I was like a roller coaster, up and down," she said. "But I didn't give up, not even a ball. I'm really proud of myself, actually."

It wasn't too different for Kerber, who was the only Grand Slam champion still in the women's draw after she beat Sharapova in the third round.

"I had the two match points, but even I did two chances, she played good, so I couldn't do anything," Kerber said. "It was just a battle at the end. It's just one or two points which decides the match. I gave everything."

Wozniacki appeared to be coasting, getting breaks in the middle of each set of her semifinal match, but got tight when she was serving for the match at 5-4. From 30-15, she double-faulted twice and Mertens passed her with a forehand winner to level the set at 5-5.

Michigan State president resigns in wake of scandal

Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Michigan State President Lou Anna Simon submitted her resignation Wednesday amid an outcry over the school's handling of allegations against Larry Nassar.

The announcement that Simon was stepping down came hours after the sentencing of Nassar, who worked at Michigan State as a doctor and received 40 to 175 years in prison for molesting young girls and women under the guise of medical treatment. Several of the 150-plus victims who spoke at the hearing were former athletes at the school, and many victims accused the university

of mishandling past complaints about Nassar.

"As tragedies are politicized, blame is inevitable," Simon said in her resignation letter. "As president, it is only natural that I am the focus of this anger."

Simon was promoted to school president in 2005 after moving up the ranks while flourishing in various administrative roles.

"We agree with Dr. Simon that it is now time for change," Board of Trustees Chairman Brian Breslin said in a statement. "President Simon has served with distinction as MSU's President for 13 years and has been a constant presence at the university for more than 40 years. She literally has devoted her entire professional

life to this institution, and more than anyone else has helped make MSU a national and international leader in higher education."

Simon's resignation was welcomed in Michigan's Legislature, where pressure had been building for her to step down.

Sen. Curtis Hertel Jr., a Democrat from East Lansing, where the campus is located, called it "an important step in moving the university forward."

"We need to create a culture at Michigan State where survivors are listened to and believed," Hertel said. "I don't think that's happened — not just in this case. I don't think anyone could say that Lou Anna Simon hasn't had great accom-

plishments. But I think in this case, her actions did not meet the leadership that we need at Michigan State."

Hertel, who graduated from Michigan State, said further investigation is needed. State Attorney General Bill Schuette will review how Michigan State handled the allegations against Nassar. And the NCAA has asked the school for information regarding potential violations related to Nassar.

Former Michigan State gymnastics coach Kathie Klages resigned last year after she was suspended for defending Nassar over the years. Klages is accused of downplaying complaints made by two teens in 1997.

NBA roundup

Simmons' 5th triple-double lifts Sixers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Ben Simmons had 19 points, 17 rebounds and 14 assists for his fifth triple-double of the season to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 115-101 victory over the Chicago Bulls on Wednesday night.

Dario Saric added 21 points and 10 rebounds and Joel Embiid had 22 points for the 76ers, who have won seven of 10.

Bobby Portis scored 22 points and Zach LaVine had 21 for the Bulls.

Philadelphia played without guards JJ Redick (left leg), T.J. McConnell (personal) and Jerryd Bayless (left wrist), but

Simmons picked up the slack.

The rookie was just two assists away from a triple-double in the first half when he helped the 76ers to a 55-41 halftime lead with 11 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists. His slam dunk with 7:40 left in the third quarter was part of a dominating period for Philadelphia.

Rockets 104, Mavericks 97: James Harden scored 25 points after getting named to his sixth straight Western Conference All-Star team and Houston beat host Dallas.

Celtics 113, Clippers 102: Kyrie Irving scored 20 points, Jayson Tatum had 18 and visiting Boston defeated Los An-

geles to snap a season-high four-game losing streak.

Trail Blazers 123, Timberwolves 114: Damian Lillard had 31 points a day after getting his third All-Star nod and host Portland beat Minnesota.

Spurs 108, Grizzlies 85: At Memphis, Tenn., Pau Gasol finished an assist short of a triple-double, Patty Mills scored 15 points and San Antonio beat the Grizzlies.

Pelicans 101, Hornets 96: Jrue Holiday and Anthony Davis each scored 19 points, DeMarcus Cousins had 16 points and 13 rebounds and New Orleans defeated host Charlotte for its sixth win in

the last seven games.

Pacers 116, Suns 101: Thaddeus Young scored 22 points, Victor Oladipo had 21 points and nine assists and Indiana pulled away from host Phoenix.

Jazz 98, Pistons 95 (OT): Joe Ingles made a tying layup in the final seconds of regulation, then added two straight three-pointers in overtime to lift visiting Utah over Detroit.

Raptors 108, Hawks 93: Jonas Valanciunas had 16 points and 13 rebounds, and well-rested Toronto used strong three-point shooting to beat host Atlanta.

College basketball roundup

Goodin leads No. 8 Xavier past Marquette

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Point guard Quentin Goodin scored 13 of his team-high 15 points while No. 8 Xavier took control in the first half, and the Musketeers routed Marquette 89-70 on Wednesday night to remain unbeaten at home.

The Musketeers (19-3, 7-2 Big East) surged ahead by 26 and were never threatened as they beat the Golden Eagles for the second time this season. Xavier has won eight of the last 10 games between the schools.

Trevon Bluiett scored 13 and became the fifth Musketeers player with 2,000 career points.

Markus Howard had 33 for Marquette (13-7, 4-4), which entered second in the nation in three-pointers. But the Golden Eagles went only 6-for-23 from outside the arc, matching their season low for threes.

No. 9 Cincinnati 75, Temple 42: Gary Clark had 17 points and 10 rebounds, and Jarron Cumberland scored 11 of his

13 in the first half to help the Bearcats extend the nation's longest home winning streak with a victory over the Owls.

Kyle Washington had 13 points and nine rebounds for Cincinnati (17-2, 7-0 American Athletic Conference), which won its 11th consecutive game and 37th straight at home while completing a regular-season sweep of the Owls.

No. 19 Auburn 91, Missouri 73: Jared Harper scored 21 points for the visiting Tigers (18-2, 6-1 Southeastern Conference).

Bryce Brown and Desean Murray each added 16 points as five Auburn players scored in double figures.

South Carolina 77, No. 20 Florida 72: Wesley Myers scored a season-high 22 points, Chris Silva added a double-double and the visiting Gamecocks upset the Gators.

Wyoming 104, No. 23 Nevada 103: Hayden Dalton scored seven of his 25 points in the second overtime and the host Cowboys outlasted the

Wolf Pack.

Justin James had 33 points and 10 rebounds for Wyoming (13-7, 4-3 Mountain West). Louis Adams added 17 points, including a free throw that put the Cowboys up 104-100 with 6.2 seconds left.

No. 24 Rhode Island 78, Fordham 58: Andre Berry scored 20 points on 9-for-12 shooting, Jared Terrell had 17 points and six assists, and the visiting Rams won easily.

Stan Robinson added 16 points, seven steals and six rebounds for newly ranked Rhode Island (16-3, 8-0 Atlantic 10), which moved into the AP Top 25 this week for the first time since November 2016. Rhode Island has won 11 straight games for the first time in 70 years.

Service academies

Bucknell 87, Navy 67: Stephen Brown scored a career-high 27 points with seven three-pointers and the visiting Bison beat the Midshipmen for their seventh straight victory.

Bucknell (14-8, 8-1) main-

tained sole possession of first place in the Patriot League with its sixth straight road win of the season — equaling its longest in the last six years.

Bryce Dulin scored 10 points of Navy's first 13 points and finished with 14 points. Shawn Anderson added 13 points for the Midshipmen (13-9, 4-5), who have lost 17 of the last 18 meetings in the series.

Utah St. 71, Air Force 49: Sam Merrill scored 21 points with five three-pointers, Koby McEwen added 20 points, and the host Aggies opened the second half with a big run to beat the Falcons and end a four-game skid.

Ryan Swan led the Falcons (8-11, 2-5) with 10 points.

Colgate 81, Army 78: Jordan Robertson scored 14 points with a career-best eight rebounds and the visiting Raiders survived a last-gasp three-point attempt as time ran out, allowing them to hang onto a come-from-behind victory over the Black Knights.