

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Defense official: Syria pullout has started

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — After days of conflicting statements about a timeline for President Donald Trump's decision to pull out American troops from Syria, a U.S. defense official said Friday the withdrawal process has begun with some military cargo pulled out.

The official said the movement of equipment is part of what the military calls the start of a "deliberate withdrawal" from Syria, where some 2,000 troops have been working with a coalition for Syrian Kurdish and Arab fighters to defeat the remnants of Islamic State.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details that have not yet

been publicly announced, provided no numbers, but said the equipment withdrawal is underway and that an unspecified number of additional U.S. troops have been brought into Syria to assist with the withdrawal process, including troops to provide additional security.

Hours earlier, Col. Sean Ryan, spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition fighting ISIS, said "the process of our deliberate withdrawal from Syria" has started. He said the U.S. will not discuss a specific timeline, locations or troop movements out of concern for operational security.

Confirmation of the first withdrawals comes amid con-

fusion over plans to implement Trump's pullout order and threats from Turkey to attack Kurdish fighters, who have been America's partners on the ground in the war against ISIS in Syria.

Earlier this week, national security adviser John Bolton said American troops will not leave northeastern Syria until ISIS is defeated and American-allied Kurdish fighters are protected, signaling a slowdown in Trump's initial order for a rapid withdrawal.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the conflict in Syria through a network of activists on the ground, said the withdrawal began Thursday

night. It said a convoy of about 10 armored vehicles, in addition to some trucks, pulled out from Syria's northeastern town of Rmeilan into Iraq.

A senior Kurdish politician said the Kurds are aware of the U.S. beginning its withdrawal process, describing it as "America's decision."

"The Americans have a right to make decisions that are in their country's security and national interests," said Ilham Ahmed, who co-chairs the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Council in northeast Syria. But the peace and stability of areas U.S. forces withdraw from "must be guaranteed," she added.

## Trump edging closer to declaring national emergency

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is edging closer to declaring a national emergency to fund his long-promised border wall, as pressure mounts to find an escape hatch from the three-week impasse that has closed parts of the government, leaving hundreds of thousands of workers without pay.

Some 800,000 workers, more than half of them still on the job, missed their first paycheck on Friday under the stoppage, and Washington was close to setting a dubious record for the longest government shutdown in the nation's history. Those markers — along with growing effects to national parks, food inspections and the economy overall — left some Republicans on Capitol Hill increasingly uncomfortable with Trump's demands.

Asked about the plight of those going without pay, the president shifted the focus, saying he felt bad "for people that have family

members that have been killed" by criminals who came over the border.

Trump visited McAllen, Texas, and the Rio Grande on Thursday to highlight what he calls a crisis of drugs and crime. He said that "if for any reason we don't get this going" — an agreement with House Democrats who have refused to approve the \$5.7 billion he demands for the wall — "I will declare a national emergency."

There is no evidence of an immigrant crime wave, though. Multiple studies from social scientists and the libertarian think tank Cato Institute have found that people in the U.S. illegally are less likely to commit crime than U.S. citizens are and that those in the country legally are even less likely to do so.

Trump was consulting with White House attorneys and allies about using presidential emergency powers to take unilateral action to construct

the wall over the objections of Congress. He claimed his lawyers told him the action would withstand legal scrutiny "100 percent."

Such a move to bypass Congress' constitutional control of the nation's purse strings would spark certain legal challenges and bipartisan cries of executive overreach.

A congressional official said the White House has directed the Army Corps of Engineers to look for billions of dollars earmarked last year for disaster response for Puerto Rico and other areas that could be diverted to a border wall as part of the emergency declaration. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak publicly.

On Friday, officials in Puerto Rico called that "unacceptable" and said the island is still struggling to recover from Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm that

hit more than a year ago and caused more than \$100 billion in damage.

Gov. Ricardo Rossello said the wall should not be funded "on the pain and suffering" of U.S. citizens who have faced tragedy after a natural disaster.

"To use this now as a political football is not what U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico deserve," said Jenniffer Gonzalez, Puerto Rico's representative to Congress. She said the island still has not received \$2.5 billion worth of funds. "I vehemently reject anyone playing with our pain and hope."

It was not clear what a compromise might entail, and there were no indications that one was in the offing. Trump says he won't reopen the government without money for the wall. Democrats say they favor measures to bolster border security but oppose the long, impregnable barrier that Trump envisions.

# Naval officer steals \$2.7 million from US to pay for poker habit

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

NORFOLK, Va. — In order to fund a high-stakes poker habit and buy luxury vehicles and a second home, a naval officer based in Virginia Beach helped swindle the government out of \$2.7 million, according to federal prosecutors.

Lt. Randolph Prince, 45, was sentenced this week to more than four years in federal prison.

The prosecution asked for 7½ years, while the defense asked for two.

“It’s a shame that he squandered an otherwise outstanding 27-year Naval career,” defense attorney Shawn Cline said in an email. “He suffered from a terrible gambling addiction and abused a position of trust to fuel that addiction.”

Prince, a member of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Training and Evaluation Unit 2, pleaded guilty in August to wire fraud and making a false statement on his 2014 tax return.

According to court documents, Prince, as a member of

his unit’s supply staff, steered government contracts to three sham companies that were run by his friends. They were selling the Navy “inert training aids,” or fake bombs, that were never shipped but marked as delivered.

**‘He suffered from a terrible gambling addiction and abused a position of trust to fuel that addiction.’**

**Shawn Cline**  
defense attorney

Among his co-conspirators were Lt. j.g. Courtney Cloman, a naval flight officer, and Clayton Pressley III, a former sailor.

Both have pleaded guilty to participating in the fraud.

Pressley, who netted more than \$644,000 from the conspiracy, was sentenced last year to two years in prison. That is on top of four years

and two months he received for stealing the identities of his subordinates in an unrelated federal case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney David Layne acknowledged Pressley — a Bronze Star recipient — helped form one of the firms involved in the scheme and assisted in its operations. But, he said, the scheme involved two other sham companies.

In court documents, Cline asked the court for leniency in light of his client’s lengthy military record. Prince enlisted in 1991, at the age of 18, and was commissioned in 2008. He became a lieutenant in 2012.

Layne said Prince still deserved a lengthy sentence. Prince, he noted, controlled the fraud from beginning to end — both steering the fraudulent orders to the sham companies and also telling the Navy the shipments had been delivered when they had not.

“The greed underpinning Prince’s activities is shocking, and his actions were impressively calculated,” Layne said.

## Judge denies request for release of Navy SEAL

*Associated Press*

SAN DIEGO — A military judge on Thursday denied a request to release a Navy SEAL awaiting trial on charges of premeditated murder and other offenses in relation to the death of an Islamic State prisoner and the shooting of unarmed Iraqi civilians.

The Navy did not release details on the written ruling by the judge, Navy Capt. Aaron Rugh.

Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher, 39, has been in the brig since his September arrest. He is scheduled to stand trial Feb. 19. He has denied all the charges.

His lawyers had argued in making the request that Gallagher looks forward to his trial to clear his name and is not a flight risk. They could not be immediately reached for comment.

Gallagher is accused of fatally stabbing the teenage ISIS prisoner in his care in Iraq in 2017. He also has been charged with opening fire on crowds of civilians and shooting two civilians — a girl and an elderly man — during separate incidents on the same deployment.

Prosecutors say he posed with the prisoner’s corpse, including at his re-enlistment ceremony on the battlefield. They had asked that he not be released because of the seriousness of the charges. They also say Gallagher intimidated witnesses in the case.

Gallagher’s lawyers say their client did not murder anyone and that disgruntled SEALs made the accusations because they wanted to get rid of a demanding platoon leader.

California Republican Congressman Duncan Hunter, a Marine combat veteran, called for Gallagher’s release after visiting him in the brig at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar this week.

## Misconduct probe requested for Guard unit

*Associated Press*

MADISON, Wis. — Sen. Tammy Baldwin has asked Air Force investigators to look into allegations of sexual assault and harassment within a Wisconsin Air National Guard unit that were brushed aside by senior officers, according to a member of the unit.

The Wisconsin Democrat sent a letter to the Air Force office that handles congressional inquiries in mid-November asking it to investigate the claims involving members of the 115th Fighter Wing’s Security Forces Squadron, a group of about 100 airmen that polices the Truax

Field Air National Guard Base in Madison.

Baldwin made the request after receiving a letter from Jay Ellis, a master sergeant in the security squadron. Ellis wrote that he learned of six incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault against female members of the squadron that happened between 2002 and 2016, and that high-ranking officers have done little to address them.

“There’s a culture in our unit ... (that) sexual misconduct, depending on who does it, it’s no big deal,” Ellis told The Associated Press during a recent interview.

Sexual assaults have plagued the U.S. military for years. In fiscal year 2017 alone the four branches received 5,864 reports from military members who said they had been sexually assaulted sometime during their service, up 10 percent from 2016, according to Department of Defense data.

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations told Baldwin that her request had been referred to personnel responsible for the Madison area. Baldwin wrote back asking the office to confirm an investigation had begun.



# Rescue earns medevac crew valor medals

BY CHAD GARLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

Under fire and carrying a badly wounded patient, the Black Hawk helicopter was just lifting off an Afghan battlefield when the crew chief saw an Army Ranger in the landing zone get shot and drop to the ground.

The Black Hawk darted back to evacuate the fallen Ranger.

Spc. Emmanuel Bynum, thinking quickly, directed the pilot to make an emergency landing on a dusty patch masked from most enemy fire. They still took fire — in all, about two dozen rounds to the helicopter, which would become nearly unflyable.

After the wounded Ranger was loaded, the Black Hawk lifted off. But there was more danger to come as they flew from Paktia province toward a base in Logar province dozens of miles to the north.

For their courage during the July operation, Bynum and four other aircrew members received the Distinguished Flying Cross with valor during a Jan. 5 ceremony officiated by Gen. Scott Miller, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan.

Each of the five “completely disregarded his own safety” and refused to leave Army Ranger Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Celiz and an unnamed casualty on the battlefield, award citations said.

The award, created in the early years of military aviation and given to servicemembers participating in aerial flight who distinguish themselves through heroism in combat or extraordinary achievements, is the military’s seventh-highest personal decoration.

Other soldiers receiving the medal with Bynum, now a corporal, were Black Hawk pilots Capt. Benjamin Krzczowski and

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jonathan Cole, and combat medics Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Six and Sgt. Armando Yanez. All five were with Company C, 6th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and assigned to the brigade’s 5th Battalion under Task Force Eagle Assault.

Shortly before 6 a.m. on July 12, and after relocating from Forward Operating Base Dahlke to support combat operations from FOB Lightning, some 25 miles further south, the crew got its second medevac mission of the morning — at least one patient in need of urgent treatment. There might be enemy fire in the area, they were warned.

Dustoff 24 was in the lead on the 12-minute flight to the battlefield, with Krzczowski in command of the bird and the two-helicopter mission. Cole manned the radio and the aircraft systems.

Six, the senior medic, spotted purple smoke marking the landing zone and helped orient the crew for landing, but soon the Black Hawk began taking fire. Without hesitation, Six and Bynum hopped out to cover Yanez as he rushed to the casualty, maneuvering across the battlefield under heavy fire, their citations said.

A team of U.S. soldiers laid down suppressing fire as they accompanied Yanez and the patient back to the helicopter, where the pilots — despite the enemy fire — calmly readied to launch.

Then, just after takeoff, Bynum called out that he saw a soldier get shot.

It would turn out to be Celiz, who at the time was assigned to 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, based at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., and was securing the landing zone. His team was assisting CIA counterterrorism efforts to kill or capture top mili-

tant targets, Politico reported later, citing unnamed sources.

The ground force immediately called Dustoff 24 back. As Krzczowski circled back, Bynum guided him to a spot past the original landing zone that he hoped would shield them from enemy fire, the documents say. Once they’d landed, Bynum hopped out.

“SPC Bynum completely disregarded his own safety by exiting the aircraft while under heavy fire to provide security for the aircraft and crew,” his citation says.

Meanwhile, Six ran to where Celiz was being placed on a litter, finding the Ranger in critical condition. He rushed him back to the helicopter, moving from cover under fire to load him into the aircraft.

Within a minute of launching, Cole, who had been seated closest to enemy fire in the front right seat, reported that parts of the bird’s control system appeared to have sustained serious damage. Flying on would be extremely risky.

Normal procedure is to land right away, but the Ranger was gravely wounded and Krzczowski decided to fly to Dahlke, where a forward surgical team was waiting.

“Ballsy to say the least,” said Navy Lt. Jack McCain, a Black Hawk pilot who talked about the citation with Stars and Stripes. “It was a judgment call, but yeah, I would say the situation was about as serious as you could get.”

Despite their efforts, Celiz later died of his wounds. The mortar platoon sergeant, who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan before joining the Rangers, was on his fifth deployment with the regiment. His commander would refer to the 32-year-old, a husband and father of an 8-year-old daughter, as a “national treasure.”

## Navy to commission its newest littoral combat ship

BY CHRISTIAN LOPEZ  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy is slated to commission its newest littoral combat ship, the future USS Wichita, during a ceremony Saturday in Naval Station Mayport, Fla.

Kate Lehrer, wife of Wichita native Jim Lehrer, former anchor of “The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour” on the Public Broadcasting Service, is the ship’s sponsor. According to naval tradition, the sponsor gives the crew its first order: “Man our ship and bring her to life!” Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., is expected to deliver the principal address at the ceremony.

The Lockheed Martin-built Freedom-class LCS can travel up to 40 knots — or

nearly 46 mph — and will have a Sikorsky MH-60R/S Seahawk helicopter and Northrop Grumman MQ-8B Fire Scout unmanned autonomous helicopter, the Navy said in a statement Wednesday.

“This commissioning represents USS Wichita’s entry into the active fleet and is a testament to the increased capabilities made possible by a true partnership between the Department of the Navy and our industrial base,” Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer said in the statement.

Following the ceremony, the 387-foot-long ship can set sail and begin service to the Navy, said Jeffrey Penfield, a retired rear admiral and chairman of the USS Wichita Commissioning Committee, in a news article from the Kansas Eagle.

The future Wichita is a quick, navigable, focused-mission platform designed for near-shore missions as well as the open-ocean and will specialize in handling asymmetric “anti-access” threats such as fast surface crafts, quiet diesel submarines and mines, according to the Navy statement.

This will be the third naval vessel to wear the name of Kansas’ largest city. The first was a heavy cruiser that ran from 1939 to 1947, serving through World War II and earning 13 battle stars. The second USS Wichita was a first-in-class replenishment oiler fulfilling duties from 1969 to 1993. It earned four battle stars for service during the Vietnam War.

# Pompeo calls for more pressure on Iran

Associated Press

CAIRO — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo brought the Trump administration's anti-Iran message to Gulf Arab states on Friday, arriving in Bahrain to continue a nine-nation tour of the Middle East aimed at reassuring America's partners that withdrawing troops from Syria does not mean Washington is abandoning the region.

Pompeo was traveling to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, where he will call for increasing pressure on Iran and push for unity among Gulf neighbors still embroiled in a festering dispute with Qatar.

He'll also be promoting a U.S.-backed initiative to form what some have termed an "Arab NATO" that would bring the region together in a military alliance to counter threats from Iran.

In Bahrain, the UAE and, later, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait, Pompeo will also be making the case as he did on

previous stops in Jordan, Iraq and Egypt that President Donald Trump's decision to pull U.S. troops from Syria is not a sign Washington is retreating from the fight against Islamic State. The trip came as a U.S. military official announced Friday that the withdrawal had begun, though he declined to comment on specific timetables or movements.

U.S. partnerships with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council "are critical to achieving shared regional objectives: defeating ISIS, countering radical Islamic terrorism, protecting global energy supplies and rolling back Iranian aggression," the State Department said in a statement released as Pompeo departed Egypt for Bahrain, which is home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet.

But the now-two-year-old crisis between GCC members Saudi Arabia and UAE and Qatar has hampered U.S. attempts to forge

a unified front against Iran. Washington's efforts to ease the dispute, begun by former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, have thus far failed and took another hit this week when the former general tasked to broker a solution stepped down.

"A united GCC is the backbone for regional peace, prosperity, security and stability, and is essential to countering the single greatest threat to regional stability: the Iranian regime," the State Department said.

At each of his stops in the Gulf, Pompeo will be urging progress on creating the Middle East Strategic Alliance, which would join GCC militaries with those of Egypt and Jordan to serve as a counterbalance to Iran, which they all accuse of fomenting unrest and rebellion throughout the region.

Pompeo told Fox News before departing from Cairo that there would be an international conference on Iran and the Middle East in Poland on Feb. 13-14.

## Wis. man arrested for abduction after girl found

Associated Press

BARRON, Wis. — A man is jailed in the deaths of a Wisconsin couple he killed because he wanted to kidnap their teenage daughter, investigators said Friday, a day after the girl approached a stranger along a rural road saying she'd been abducted in October and held against her will.

Jake Thomas Patterson, 21, was taken into custody shortly after Jayme Closs, 13, sought help from a woman walking her dog in a rural, heavily wooded neighborhood near the small town of Gordon, about 60 miles north of Barron. Jayme disap-

peared from her family's home in Barron when her parents were killed Oct. 15.

During a news conference Friday, Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald said Jayme was taken against her will. The sheriff also said investigators don't believe Patterson had any contact with the family.

Fitzgerald said investigators believe Patterson killed Jayme's parents because he wanted to abduct her, and that Patterson "planned his actions and took many steps to hide his identity."

Jayme went missing after police discovered someone had broken into the family's home

outside Barron and fatally shot her parents, James and Denise Closs. Jayme was nowhere to be found. The Barron County Sheriff's Department said the girl had likely been abducted.

A woman said she was walking her dog along a rural road Thursday afternoon when a disheveled teenage girl called out to her for help, quickly grabbed her and told her she was lost. Only then did the girl reveal her name.

Jeanne Nutter said Friday that Jayme told her she had walked away from a cabin where she'd been held captive, a cabin not far from Nutter's home.

"I was terrified, but I didn't want to show her that," Nutter, a social worker who spent years working in child protection, told The Associated Press on Friday. "She just yelled, 'Please help me! I don't know where I am. I'm lost.'"

The two went elsewhere in the neighborhood, to the home of Peter and Kristin Kasinskis.

During the 20 minutes Jayme was in their home, Peter and Kristin Kasinskis said they tried to make her feel more comfortable. They offered her water and food, but she declined both. Jayme was quiet, her emotions "pretty flat," Peter Kasinskis said.

## Roadkill: In growing number of states, it's what's for dinner

The Washington Post

Oregon state Sen. Bill Hansell's rural district is the size of Maryland, and it is crisscrossed with hundreds of miles of road splayed with all manner of roadkill. While driving one of those routes a couple of years ago, Hansell spotted a dead deer and had what he called an "aha moment": Could the carcass feed someone?

"It just struck me, you know: This is such a waste," he said.

Chowing down on roadkill was not legal in Oregon then. But now it is. With the enactment of a bill sponsored by Hansell and unanimously passed by the legislature, Oregon became the latest of about 20 states that allow people to scoop dead animals off the road and serve them for dinner.

Among them are Washington, which issued 1,600 roadkill salvaging permits within one year of legalizing the practice in 2016; Pennsylvania, where more than 5,600 vehicle-deer crashes were reported in 2017; and Georgia, where motorists may take home struck bears. The rules vary by state, though most require timely reporting of the collection to authorities,

and most absolve the state of responsibility if the meat turns out to be stomach-turning.

Oregon allows the salvaging of deer and elk for human consumption only (sorry, Fido). People who pick up a carcass must apply online for a free permit within 24 hours, and they must turn over the animal's head and antlers to the state wildlife agency.



## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Naked driver arrested after 2-state chase

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — Police used spike strips to help apprehend a naked motorist who led officers on a chase through Delaware and Pennsylvania.

Delaware State Police began pursuing the vehicle after it was spotted traveling south in the northbound lanes of Interstate 95 on Wednesday evening. The vehicle switched direction several times before crossing into Pennsylvania.

Police said the naked driver attempted to flee after the spike strips flattened the vehicle's tires near Philadelphia International Airport.

Authorities took Kyle Merena, 29, of Harrisburg, Pa., into custody. He was taken to a hospital for evaluation. Merena faces a variety of charges.

### Community college to move to funeral home

**MI** GRAND HAVEN — A Michigan community college plans to hold classes in the fall at a renovated funeral home.

The Grand Haven Tribune reported that Muskegon Community College purchased the Clock Life Story Funeral Home building for \$378,000.

The college's Grand Haven campus is currently at the Grand Haven Community Center. College President Dale K. Nesbary said the college pays nearly \$8,000 a month to lease part of the facility. The campus opened in 2012 and serves about 1,000 students each year.

Nesbary said officials searched for more than six months for a building the college could own and invest in. He said there will likely be about \$300,000 in renovations before classes begin in August.

Nesbary said the new loca-

tion's proximity to the Grand Haven High School may lead to an increase in early college enrollment.

### Man accidentally kills puppy with pellet gun

**FL** DAVIE — A man said he accidentally killed an 8-year-old girl's puppy when the dog wandered into the path of his pellet gun.

The South Florida Sun Sentinel reported Johansen Concepcion De La Ros, 19, pleaded not guilty to animal cruelty Wednesday. Authorities said Concepcion De La Ros was standing on the balcony of a Davie apartment in September when he fired the scoped pellet rifle at the Chihuahua puppy named Princess. An off-duty police officer saw the shooting and called 911.

Police found the girl holding the limp, bleeding animal. Concepcion De La Ros told police the puppy walked into his line of fire as he was shooting toward a lake. Concepcion De La Ros' friend, Daniel Alvarez, told police that Concepcion De La Ros planned to shoot the dog.

### Man throws coffee in food worker's face

**SC** CAMDEN — Police in South Carolina said a McDonald's patron became angry over the wait for his order and threw hot coffee in the face of a teen drive-thru worker.

News outlets report Camden police released surveillance video of the man on Tuesday and asked the public for help identifying him. Police said the man went to through the Camden restaurant's drive-thru last month and asked for a large order of fries because he was unsatisfied with the wait.

A police report said the man

then requested to see the girl's manager and began acting "obnoxious." It said the man threatened to throw the coffee and called the girl over to the window where he splashed the hot drink in her face. She declined medical treatment. Authorities haven't released her identity.

### Man found dead with his dog by his side

**KS** TOPEKA — Authorities have found a missing man dead with his dog at his side after his pickup truck became stuck in the mud in rural Kansas.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported that Dannie Smith, 70, of Topeka, hadn't been seen for five days when his body was found Wednesday afternoon on a low-maintenance road in Jackson County. Jackson County Sheriff Tim Morse said Smith was known to drive to the reservation in Jackson County to purchase cigarettes. Morse said Smith was reported missing Sunday because he hadn't been seen since Friday. An autopsy is planned.

His chocolate Labrador retriever, named Bear, was determined to be in good health.

### State bans smoking on public beach area

**AL** GULF SHORES — Gulf Shores' sugar-white sandy beaches are Alabama's most popular half-mile stretch of public beachfront.

It's also undergoing \$15 million in renovations and city officials want to keep it looking nice. So, in June, city officials adopted a wide-ranging list of regulations that included an Alabama first: The public beachfront became smoke-free.

Al.com reported the ban is part of a national trend. From the beachfronts of New Jersey

to Florida, politicians are looking to snuff the butts in an effort to lure tourists and keep the popular tourist attractions from looking like ashtrays.

The smoke-free public beach is part of an ordinance that also bans pets, fireworks, alcoholic beverages, open fires, drones, and laser pointers.

Gulf Shores Recreation and Cultural Affairs Director Grant Brown said enforcement is not rigorous but fines are stiff. Violators could face fines of up to \$500 and jail time.

### Man killed by tree he was cutting down

**ME** WASHINGTON — Police in Maine said a man cutting down a tree on his property was killed when the tree fell on top of him.

The Knox County Sheriff's Office said Shannon Condon, 47, of Washington, Maine, died at the scene. Officials said the death was reported by a passerby who spotted Condon by a tree just after 1 p.m. Wednesday.

### Possible grenade found outside gym

**CT** NEWINGTON — Police are investigating what appears to be a grenade found in the trash outside a Connecticut gym.

Police said an employee of LA Fitness in Newington was taking out the trash on Thursday morning and noticed what appeared to be a grenade with the pin still in on top of the garbage bins.

The building was evacuated and a state bomb squad was dispatched to the scene to determine whether it's an active explosive device.

Police were checking surveillance video from the area to see if anyone placed the object in the trash.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Mahomes, Chiefs have sights set on title

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs didn't draft Patrick Mahomes merely to make the playoffs.

Matt Cassel accomplished that, and quarterbacks Steve Bono, Elvis Grbac, Trent Green and Alex Smith went one better by making it to the divisional round. Smith even won a wild-card game, the first playoff victory by the long-suffering Chiefs since Joe Montana led them to the AFC title game in the 1993 season.

No, the Chiefs didn't trade up to select Mahomes just to make the playoffs — they did it to win in the playoffs.

Now, Mahomes gets his first chance when the first-year starter leads the AFC West champions against the Colts — their longtime playoff nemesis — on Saturday at Arrowhead Stadium.

Win and the young All-Pro

quarterback has the Chiefs one game away from playing in the Super Bowl. Lose and Mahomes has to wait a full year to get another crack at wiping away the stink of all those playoff failures.

"A playoff run in general would mean a ton to everyone in this community, including us. I know the history," Mahomes said, "but at the same time, we are a different generation."

That may be true, but he was on the sideline last season for the latest postseason letdown.

Mahomes was given his freshman season to learn the ropes under Smith, who ended a streak of eight straight playoff defeats by beating Houston in the wild-card round in January 2016. But they lost the following week at New England to end their playoff run, then lost at home to the Steelers in the divisional round in 2017 and blew a big lead against the Titans in

the wild-card round a year ago.

Three defeats after that rarest of playoff wins.

The sting has been even more brutal at home, where the Colts have won just as many playoff games as the Chiefs (two apiece) over the years. Both of the Chiefs' wins were in the wild-card round.

They've never won a home playoff game in the divisional round or beyond.

Yet if there's any reason to believe that stretch of futility will end Saturday, it just may be the optimistic kid with the big arm and curly Mohawk. Bono, Grbac and the rest never put up the kind of numbers that Mahomes has this season, nor did they engender the same kind of confidence in their teams.

Mahomes exudes poise. And the rest of the Chiefs can feel it.

"It's the way he plays," Chiefs center Mitch Morse said recently. "Not only his talent, which is

uncanny, but the way he prepares, the way he conducts himself in the huddle, and then the guy has got a swagger about him that's infectious."

Mahomes said he's chatted with Smith about his postseason experience, and he's soaked up what he can from the veterans in his locker room. Defensive back Ron Parker, linebacker Justin Houston and fullback Anthony Sherman are among those who have been part of several postseason letdowns.

As they take the field with Mahomes on Saturday, they have a chance to scribble over that history.

"I mean, we are definitely ready. We know what it's going to take," Mahomes said. "It's going to take a full effort from everyone, every single day, to the game and hopefully on."

## One Championship looking to make MMA splash

Associated Press

How many casual American sports fans about a year ago had heard of One? Try none.

OK, maybe that's a bit of a reach. But the Singapore-based mixed martial arts organization was an afterthought at best in the United States among the hodgepodge of companies trying to put a dent in UFC's heavyweight share of the combat sports marketplace.

Try ignoring One Championship now.

After staging shows for seven years across Asia from Myanmar to China, One has come out swinging in the U.S. — throwing millions at big-name free agents, signing a major cable TV deal and raising capital needed to not only keep its grip as the dominant MMA promotion of the East, but perhaps use global expansion to eventually rival UFC as the champ of the West.

"They're making a serious push," One fighter Eddie Alvarez said. "I don't think it's going to be long before you can crown them one of the top promotions in the world. They've done everything possible in their favor to become that."

Alvarez, a Philadelphia native, should know as well as any fighter about One's commitment to becoming a major player

in the U.S. fight game. "The Underground King" has fought for several MMA promotions and made his name in Bellator as a two-time lightweight champion and in UFC where he won the same title in 2016 and headlined the promotion's first card in Madison Square Garden against Conor McGregor. The 34-year-old Alvarez became a free agent after his last fight in July 2018 and decided to explore his options outside UFC. He traveled to Singapore and met One founder and CEO Chatri Sityodtong and learned U.S. expansion plans and acquiring other name fighters were on the horizon, as well as ongoing talks that would broadcast fights in America. Alvarez was impressed, not just by One's outline for the future, but in a multimillion dollar contract offer that he says makes him one of the highest-paid fighters in the sport.

"Our deal is more in the lines of a real pro sport deal, like football or baseball," Alvarez said. "The package deal is an eight-figure deal. When we brought that to the UFC to match it, they declined matching it and I had to move forward. I'm happy I did because One Championship is the only major promotion that I have not won and conquered the world title in. It's history and legacy for me."

Alvarez was part of a flurry of transac-

tions that put MMA fans on notice that One was intent on becoming a singular sensation. One obtained Demetrious Johnson, the long-reigning UFC flyweight champion better known as "Mighty Mouse," in a trade with UFC — yes, a trade — for Ben Askren. Sage Northcutt, once hailed as a future UFC star, also signed with One. Meisha Tate, a former 135-pound champion in UFC and Strikeforce, has signed on as One's vice president and was set to move to Singapore.

One strengthened its roster with notable U.S.-based talent ahead of a North American television deal with Turner Sports. The three-year deal will see One content broadcast on Turner's platforms including TNT, which is received by more than 90 million households in the United States, as well as streaming platform Bleacher Report Live and other Turner properties. Turner, which also broadcasts the NBA and the NCAA Tournament, is set to air 24 events in 2019 on its various outlets. B/R Live will stream One: Eternal Glory on Jan. 19 from Jakarta, Indonesia.

Alvarez has a stout belief that the MMA promotion made in Asia can make it in America.

"The fans there get it," Alvarez said, "and it won't be long until the American fans here get it, as well."



## NHL roundup

# Maple Leafs' Tavares scores 300th goal

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — John Tavares is earning every penny of the seven-year, \$77 million contract the Toronto Maple Leafs gave him in the offseason.

Not only is he living up to the hype, the 28-year-old center is having a career year.

Tavares scored twice and hit the 300-goal mark for his career in leading the Maple Leafs to a 4-2 victory over the New Jersey Devils on Thursday night.

"It's always that much more satisfying when it contributes to a big win, especially bouncing back after the other night, so credit a lot of guys who I've played with over my career because obviously that was a big part of helping me be successful," said Tavares, who also picked up an assist on linemate Mitch Marner's empty-net goal with 22 seconds to play.

Tavares' best season was 38 goals and 48 assists in 2014-15 with the New York Islanders.

He now has 29 goals and 21 assists in 43 games with the Maple Leafs.

Tavares and Marner were helped by the return of left wing Zach Hyman, who was activated after missing eight games with an ankle injury.

"They're awesome," Hyman said after posting a plus-4 night. "I just try and get them the puck as much as I can. John's pretty tenacious on it and you see how strong he is and how he gets the puck back all the time. He's one of the best finishers around the net. Mitch is an elite passer but he can also get himself open to shoot and you're seeing more of that this year."

Defenseman Ron Hainsey also scored in Toronto's three-goal first period and third-string goaltender Michael Hutchinson made 27 saves as the Maple Leafs beat the Devils for the third time in as many games.

"We need to start stringing together wins and playing complete games and giving

ourselves a shot," forward Kyle Palmieri said after New Jersey lost for the fourth time in five games. "Tonight, obviously, we dug ourselves a bit of hole, but it was good to see we stuck with our game."

**Lightning 3, Hurricanes 1:** Brayden Point had a tiebreaking power-play goal in the third period and added a late empty-netter in NHL-leading Tampa Bay's comeback victory over visiting Carolina.

**Islanders 4, Rangers 3:** Josh Bailey scored with 1:26 remaining to lift the Islanders over the Rangers at Madison Square Garden.

**Oilers 4, Panthers 3 (SO):** Connor McDavid had two goals — including the tying score with 8 seconds left in regulation — and also scored in the shootout, helping host Edmonton beat Florida.

**Sharks 3, Golden Knights 2:** Melker Karlsson and Joonas Donskoi scored third-period goals 39 seconds apart to lift visiting San Jose over Vegas.

**Senators 4, Kings 1:** Chris Tierney scored twice and visiting Ottawa beat Los Angeles.

**Blue Jackets 4, Predators 3 (OT):** Artemi Panarin scored his second goal of the night 1:22 into overtime to lift host Columbus past Nashville.

**Wild 3, Jets 2:** Jason Zucker scored twice, giving his team's lagging power play a lift with his first goal and getting one later just after leaving the penalty box, and host Minnesota beat Winnipeg.

**Blues 4, Canadiens 1:** Oskar Sundqvist had a goal and an assist and rookie Jordan Binnington made 28 saves to lead host St. Louis past Montreal.

**Flyers 2, Stars 1:** Carter Hart stopped 37 shots and host Philadelphia beat Dallas to end an eight-game losing streak.

**Coyotes 4, Canucks 3 (OT):** Richard Panik scored his second goal of the game 4:10 into overtime to lift visiting Arizona over Vancouver.

## College basketball roundup

# No. 2 Michigan downs Illinois to remain undefeated

Associated Press

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — Zavier Simpson scored 16 points, Ignas Brazdeikis had 15 and No. 2 Michigan beat Illinois 79-69 on Thursday night to improve to 16-0.

Michigan (4-0 Big Ten) and Virginia are the only unbeaten teams in the country. The Wolverines jumped to a 7-0 lead and easily held off the overmatched Illinois (4-12, 0-5).

"I'm feeling very fortunate," Michigan coach John Beilein said. "I know we got the win, but this is a good league and Illinois is going to be a very good team."

Charles Matthews added 14 points for the Wolverines, and Jon Teske had 13 points and 11

rebounds.

Ayo Dosunmu scored 23 points for Illinois. Giorgi Bezhaniashvili added 15, and Trent Frazier had 13.

"I thought we played well defensively," Illinois coach Brad Underwood said. "That's usually good enough to win, but we had some inconsistencies on offense."

Michigan led 39-34 at the half. Illinois pulled within five points at 49-44 with 13:30 left on Aaron Jordan's three-pointer, but it was the closest the Illini got, thanks to Michigan's offense and smothering defense.

Underwood drew a technical foul late in the first half when he became angry protesting a possession call and threw his

suit jacket into the crowd. Illinois responded with two three-pointers by Dosunmu to close the half.

**No. 5 Gonzaga 67, Pacific 36:** Josh Perkins had 14 points and six assists, and the host Bulldogs won their sixth straight by beating the Tigers.

Zach Norvell Jr. scored 11 points for Gonzaga (15-2, 2-0 West Coast Conference), which has beaten Pacific 13 consecutive times. Rui Hachimura and Brandon Clarke each scored 10 points, and Clarke had five blocks.

Roberto Gallinat scored nine points to lead Pacific (10-8, 0-3).

Pacific was held to its lowest point total of the season after shooting just 26.7 percent and

committing 22 turnovers. Gonzaga also scored a season low.

Pacific used a slow-down offense to keep the score close in the early going. The teams were tied 10-10 midway through the first.

Then Gonzaga broke the game open.

Consecutive three-pointers by Norvell and Perkins highlighted a 24-5 run that put Gonzaga ahead 34-15 at halftime.

Pacific shot just 27.8 percent in the first half, while Gonzaga shot 56.5 percent.

Gonzaga slowly added to its lead in the second half.

Jeremy Jones' three-pointer put Gonzaga up 50-26 midway through the second.

The Zags went on an 11-1 run to push their lead to 61-27.

## NBA roundup

## Spurs outlast Thunder in double OT

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — LaMarcus Aldridge scored a career-high 56 points and the San Antonio Spurs overcame Russell Westbrook's triple-double with 24 points, 24 rebounds and 13 assists and outlasted the Oklahoma City Thunder for a 154-147 victory in double-overtime on Thursday night.

Aldridge had seven points in the second overtime and Derrick White added four points, a steal and a block of Jerami Grant at the rim with San Antonio up 148-144 with less than 2 minutes remaining. White finished with 23 points and Marco Belinelli made all five of his

three-point attempts while scoring 19 points for the Spurs, who have won seven straight at home.

San Antonio made its first 14 three-pointers to set a franchise record — but still needed two overtime periods to topple Oklahoma City.

Aldridge surpassed his previous career high of 45 points, which he set against Utah on March 23, 2018.

The Thunder lost their seventh straight in San Antonio despite Westbrook's huge game. Paul George scored 30 points and Grant added 25 points and 12 rebounds, but fouled out with 25 seconds remaining in the second overtime.

**Nuggets 121, Clippers 100:** Nikola Jokic had 18 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists for his 21st career triple-double and Denver extended its home winning streak to 11 with a victory over Los Angeles.

Jamal Murray scored 23 points, and Mason Plumlee added a season-high 17 points to go with 12 rebounds for the Western Conference-leading Nuggets. They're 17-3 at home.

**Heat 115, Celtics 99:** Dwyane Wade scored 19 points, Josh Richardson added 18 and host Miami connected on a season-high 18 three-pointers on the way to beating Boston.

Derrick Jones Jr. scored 14 points, and Justise Winslow

finished with 13 points and a career-best 11 assists. Miami had 33 assists on 45 field goals.

Kyrie Irving had 22 points for the Celtics.

**Kings 112, Pistons 102:** Buddy Hield scored 18 points, Willie Cauley-Stein had 14 points and 14 rebounds, and host Sacramento beat Detroit with Blake Griffin out for rest.

Iman Shumpert had 13 points and De'Aaron Fox had 12 points and six assists for the Kings, who had lost five of six.

Stanley Johnson had 16 points off the bench, Reggie Bullock added 15 points and Andre Drummond had 12 points and 11 rebounds for the Pistons.

## Wizards telecast opens door for fans to bet through TV

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A new, gambling-focused telecast of Washington Wizards games is just the appetizer to what the NBA team and its TV partner hope will be a more substantial main course: giving fans the ability to place bets in real time while watching games at home.

Whether that idea comes to fruition will depend on laws in the states where Wizards games are shown on the regional network NBC Sports Washington. But the concept shows how legal sports betting continues to change the way sports are presented to the public.

The new telecast was scheduled to debut Friday. NBC Sports Washington will continue to present conventional game coverage on its main channel, but its supplemental channel, NBC Sports Washington Plus, will offer what it calls a "free-to-play predictive gaming contest" while the Wizards host the Milwaukee Bucks.

"From a fan perspective, I'm sure fans would want to be able to sit on their couch, press a button and place a bet. That's the best fan experience that

can happen," said Damon Phillips, general manager of NBC Sports Washington. "Will that happen? That's something that has to be sorted out over time."

For now, the contest will offer roughly 30 free proposition bets on the performances of the teams and individual players during the game. Fans can enter their guesses on the NBC Sports Washington website, and those who predict the correct outcomes will be entered in a drawing for a \$500 cash prize. The network plans to produce eight gambling-focused telecasts this season.

City lawmakers in Washington voted just last month to legalize sports gambling. The law has yet to take effect, but legal betting is likely to launch sometime this year. Delaware and West Virginia, which are part of the NBC Sports Washington viewing area, already have legal sports betting, and lawmakers in Maryland and historically gambling-averse Virginia are expected to consider it during this year's legislative sessions.

Last May, the Supreme Court cleared the way for states to legalize sports betting when it

struck down a 1992 law that limited gambling on sports to Nevada and three other states. Since then, sports books have opened in seven states.

In addition to betting at casinos or other physical locations, Nevada, New Jersey and West Virginia allow betting anywhere within their borders via a mobile app. The new District of Columbia law also allows mobile betting but only through a yet-to-be-developed app provided by the city's lottery.

None of the state laws or the city's bill specifically address the prospect of placing bets through a TV screen, which illustrates the novelty of the concept being developed by the Wizards and NBC Sports Washington. Ted Leonsis, who owns the Wizards, the NHL's Washington Capitals and the WNBA's Washington Mystics, has been a vocal proponent of sports betting as a way to engage fans and bring in new revenue.

Whether the city lottery app could accommodate prop bets offered on the NBC Sports Washington telecast is unclear. But the Wizards are open to exploring the possibility.

"If this performs well, we would seriously contemplate a larger rollout of similarly programmed events and potentially tie to an actual betting experience," said Zach Leonsis, Ted's son and a senior vice president for the ownership group, Monumental Sports and Entertainment.

There are no casinos in Washington, but the new law allows sports books at the city's sports venues, including Capital One Arena, home to the Wizards and Capitals.

The D.C. Council approved the sports gambling bill with little debate on the merits of the policy, with supporters and city officials arguing it would bring in millions of dollars in revenue. Marie Drissel, a civic activist who led a successful effort to quash online gambling in the city earlier this decade, said betting through a mobile app or TV screen raises a host of concerns, from minors placing bets to federal workers gambling illegally on the job. The D.C. Lottery is prohibited from selling or advertising its products on federal property.