

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Trump signs bill to reopen government

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The record 35-day federal shutdown ended as President Donald Trump gave in to mounting pressure and signed legislation to reopen the government for three weeks, a retreat from his demand that Congress commit billions of dollars to a U.S.-Mexico border wall before federal agencies could resume work.

Trump, in a weakened negotiating position, will try again to persuade lawmakers to finance the wall, with a Feb. 15 deadline looming as he holds out the potential of another shutdown. He tweeted Saturday that “21 days goes very quickly” and that making a deal “will not be easy” because both Republicans and Democrats are “very dug in.”

Without explaining how it would happen, the president asserted, “We will build the

Wall!” even though the measure he signed into law Friday after reaching agreement with congressional leaders contained no new money for the wall. And House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has said repeatedly she will not go for it: “Have I not been clear? No, I have been very clear.”

The administration asked department heads to reopen offices in a “prompt and orderly manner” and said hundreds of thousands of furloughed employees, whose latest missed payday had brought new urgency to efforts to resolve the standoff, could return to work. The deal includes back pay, which the administration promised to get out as soon as possible.

The shutdown ended as Democratic leaders had insisted it must, with the government first reopening and then having talks about border security. Also, a strong majority of

Americans blamed Trump for the stalemate and rejected his arguments for a border wall, recent polls show.

“The president thought he could crack Democrats, and he didn’t, and I hope it’s a lesson for him,” said the Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer of New York.

Trump, nonetheless, tweeted, “This was in no way a concession” and said he wanted to help those “badly hurt” by the shutdown.

The president also said, without elaboration, that if there is no “fair deal” with Congress by Feb. 15, “it’s off to the races!”

Earlier, in a Rose Garden speech when he announced the short-term agreement, Trump raised the prospect of using “the powers afforded to me under the laws and Constitution of the United States” to get what he wants.

The president has said he could declare a national emer-

gency and use money under such a declaration to pay for the border wall unilaterally. Such a move would almost certainly face legal challenges.

A bipartisan committee of House and Senate lawmakers was being formed to consider border spending as part of the legislative process in the coming weeks.

Also to be determined is a new date for the president to deliver his State of the Union address, which was postponed from Jan. 29 during the shutdown.

As border talks resume, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said he hopes for “good-faith negotiations over the next three weeks to try to resolve our differences.”

Schumer said that while Democrats oppose the wall money, they agree on other ways to secure the border “and that bodes well for coming to an eventual agreement.”

## Coast Guard spouses keep to tight budgets as shutdown ends

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — U.S. Coast Guard spouses in southern New England say they’ll continue to spend money cautiously even though the longest government shutdown in U.S. history has ended.

President Donald Trump signed a bill Friday to reopen the government for three weeks, backing down from his demand that Congress give him money for his border wall before federal agencies go back to work.

Mariah Battermann and Rachel Malcom, whose husbands serve in the Coast Guard in Rhode Island, and Crystal Sim-

mons, whose husband serves in Connecticut, all said on Saturday that they’re sticking to the tight budgets they adopted when the government shut down. They worry the government will be shuttered again.

“I would have breathed a much larger sigh of relief if it was a permanent, not temporary, agreement,” Battermann said. “We’re just still uncertain as to how to proceed with this. For our household, we’re definitely going to stay cautious.”

“You can only be so happy because you just have to know that it could happen again,” added Malcom. “We’re going to be playing catch up, so I don’t want to overspend.”

Battermann and Malcom were at the United Baptist Church in Newport, Rhode Island on Saturday, opening a resource center where people affected by the partial government shutdown could pick up household goods. They said they wanted to open the “Beacon for the Brave Resource Center” as planned because there’s going to be a lapse in time before people get their paychecks and they want to be of service until this uncertainty is over.

Some 800,000 workers were furloughed or required to work without pay for 35 days, including members of the Coast Guard. They will receive back pay, but it’s unclear when. The

White House tweeted that it will be “in the coming days.”

“You’re looking at almost a week to process back pay and that gives us maybe two weeks to breathe a little more normally, then we may be in the same situation,” Simmons said by phone from Connecticut. “I don’t think I can really relax and go back to the way things were.”

Simmons said she’ll continue to buy bare necessities and go fewer places to save on gasoline, but it won’t take too long for her family to recover because they relied on income from her job in admissions at Mitchell College in New London, Conn.

# Marines, Seabees rebuild island runway

*Associated Press*

AVALON, Calif. — U.S. Marines and Navy Seabees are rebuilding the mountaintop runway on storied Santa Catalina Island, a tourist destination off the Southern California coast.

About 100 Marines and sailors began working on the island this month under an agreement with the I Marine Expeditionary Force at California's Camp Pendleton

and the Catalina Island Conservancy. The work on Catalina's Airport in the Sky is paid for by \$5 million donated to the non-profit land trust.

However, the group isn't paying the Marines and sailors for the work, which the military considers valuable training.

The conservancy had been patching the runway at a cost of about \$250,000 a year until the state Department of Transportation's aeronautics division said it needed a

long-term repair plan. The trust then partnered with the Defense Department's Innovative Readiness Training Program, which looks to match up the needs of communities with military training opportunities.

The airport closed in December, when tons of construction supplies were sent over from the mainland. The military set up an encampment at the airport and began work to replace the existing asphalt with concrete.

## 4 charged in Fort Bragg marriage case

*The News & Observer (Raleigh, N.C.)*

RALEIGH, N.C. — A sergeant and a private at Fort Bragg sought to arrange sham marriages between soldiers and immigrants, offering cash, housing benefits and furniture as incentive for potential brides, according to federal court documents.

Arrest warrants were issued this week for Sgt. Edward Kumi Anguah, described as "the facilitator" of the conspiracy, and Pvt. Ahmid Mohammed-Murtada, a recently naturalized citizen from Ghana serving in a Fort Bragg Army unit, court records show.

The investigation began in December when an agent for the Department of Homeland Security interviewed Pvt. Endasia East about having an affair with a single soldier while married to Sulemana Ibrahim, according to a criminal complaint filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

During that interview, "she confirmed the marriage was in fact fraudulent," according to court records.

On its website, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services says it does not recognize "relationships entered into for purposes of evading immigration laws."

Mohammed, as he is called in court records, served in the same unit with East and approached her about marrying Ibrahim, who wanted to gain lawful permanent residence, an affidavit said. Court records show Ibrahim was a citizen of Ghana living in New York on a tourist visa that expired in July 2018.

As part of the deal, East was to receive a Basic Housing Allowance stipend, typically \$1,000 or more, two months' rent totaling \$1,250 and furniture for a new off-post apartment.

East and Ibrahim married at the Cumberland County Courthouse in July, then East went to dinner with Anguah, who said he arranged many fraudulent marriages, the affidavit said.

"Private East stated Sgt. Anguah had asked her if she was willing to find additional soldiers for him to arrange mar-

riages to," the affidavit said. "She told Sgt. Anguah she would be on the lookout."

East later called Anguah and mentioned a friend "interested in doing the same thing that I'm doing with Ibrahim," records said, to which Anguah answered, "Yeah."

In January, an undercover officer met Anguah at a Starbucks in Fayetteville and told him she wanted \$800 to marry an immigrant, and Anguah suggested \$2,000 instead. Later, the affidavit said, he told her he was going to get \$6,000 and take a cut.

On Monday, Anguah called the agent with a man who identified himself as Kwaphoom Eugene Hoomkwap on the line. On the phone, Hoomkwap said he wanted to get off work in New York to get married in Fayetteville, court records said.

On Thursday, they met at the Fayetteville courthouse for the marriage license.

Federal arrest warrants were issued Thursday for Hoomkwap, Ibrahim, Mohammed-Murtada and Anguah on charges of marriage fraud, misuse of visas and aiding and abetting.

## Report: US, Taliban near agreement on withdrawal

*The Washington Post*

KABUL, Afghanistan — After six days of negotiations, Taliban insurgents and U.S. officials meeting in Qatar appear close to an agreement that could withdraw American troops after 17 years of war, reports said Saturday.

News agencies reporting from Doha, the Qatari capital, said the outlines of an agreement have been reached.

But it was not clear whether it would lay out a timetable for the U.S. troop pull-back, as the Taliban have demanded, or a lengthy cease-fire while insurgent and Af-

ghan leaders negotiate domestic issues, as U.S. officials have proposed.

Taliban leaders have insisted they will not stop their battles until all foreign troops have been ordered to leave.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the Trump administration's special envoy for Afghan peace, was reportedly flying to Kabul to brief Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on the talks. Media reports from Doha also said a statement from the Taliban or a joint statement from both sides was expected.

Until now, Taliban officials have refused to talk to Afghan authorities, insisting that they are the country's true leaders and

that the Ghani government is an American puppet. Afghan officials have expressed concern that the crucial issues of a future governing arrangement and the protection of basic civic freedoms could be at risk by the U.S. impatience to end its military involvement.

A second concern of Afghan officials and the Afghan public is that once U.S. troops leave or agree to leave, there will be no incentive for the insurgents to compromise on their domestic agenda, which includes the establishment of strict Islamic law and a dominant role in future governance.



# EU demands new elections in Venezuela

*The Washington Post*

CARACAS, Venezuela — President Nicolas Maduro faced increasing international pressure to step down on Saturday, as European governments warned they would recognize his chief opponent as Venezuela's leader unless a date for new elections is called within eight days.

The statements from Germany, France, Spain and Britain came as the U.N. Security Council was meeting at Washington's request to discuss the economic and political crisis in Venezuela.

The United States is among nearly two dozen countries that recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó interim leader in recent days, after Maduro was sworn in for a second term following elections riddled with fraud. But Russia, China and others have defended Maduro,

whose oil-rich country has been in an economic meltdown for years.

"After banning opposition candidates, ballot box stuffing and counting irregularities in a deeply flawed election it is clear Nicolás Maduro is not the legitimate leader of Venezuela," Jeremy Hunt, Britain's foreign minister, tweeted Saturday.

Meanwhile, diplomats at the U.S. Embassy in Venezuela hunkered down to await the consequences of disobeying an order by Maduro to exit the country by Saturday afternoon — an act of defiance that the socialist government has suggested could lead to electricity and gas cuts at the U.S. compound.

The State Department ordered the departure of a number of non-emergency employees and their families after Maduro broke relations with Washington. On Friday, a

convoy of official vehicles with tinted windows sped away from the building as the Americans left the country. The streets outside the embassy were quiet Saturday morning, however, with no sign of Venezuelan security forces. Embassy personnel guarded the massive building in the Andean foothills.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he expected the rights of those diplomats who remain will be protected.

"It is literally a 24/7 moment-by-moment exercise to evaluate risk to the people who work for me in the State Department," he said. "And we'll get this right."

At the same time, the United States and other nations sought to cut off the Maduro government's already fragile sources of funding, including a move aimed at putting Citgo — the U.S.-based oil company wholly

owned by Venezuela's state energy giant — in the hands of Guaidó, leader of the opposition-controlled National Assembly. The Bank of England, meanwhile, declined to allow Maduro's government to repatriate \$1.2 billion worth of gold, Bloomberg News reported.

In Washington, Pompeo announced Elliott Abrams, an assistant secretary of state under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, will be a special envoy to Venezuela. A prominent conservative, Abrams, who pleaded guilty in 1991 to charges related to the Iran-contra affair but was later pardoned by President George H.W. Bush, said he relished tackling the situation in Venezuela.

"This crisis in Venezuela is deep and difficult and dangerous," he said, "and I can't wait to get there."

## Response to Venezuelan crisis leaves Pentagon out for now

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon remained on the margins of the U.S. response to the crisis in Venezuela on Friday as military officials stressed they had not been asked to evacuate Americans amid an intensifying standoff between the Trump administration and President Nicolás Maduro.

The cautious response from the Defense Department, which said it had sent no troops, planes or ships to assist diplomats defying an expulsion order, highlighted the negligible military role in the administration's mainly diplomatic and financial campaign to force out Maduro's government.

The reluctance of defense officials to discuss even the position of U.S. military assets underscored the Pentagon's desire to avoid escalating a potentially explosive situation in a region where the United States has limited military weight.

Some U.S. diplomats flew out of the country on commercial flights Friday as the U.S. Em-

bassy in Caracas curtailed its operations, two days after the Trump administration recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó the country's legitimate leader. Others remained at the embassy despite a Saturday departure deadline from Maduro, who had announced he would cut ties with the United States.

The dramatic events this week follow two years of political pressure and economic sanctions on the Maduro government. They also raised questions about whether embassy employees and their families would be caught in the tug of war.

While President Donald Trump and his national security adviser, John Bolton, have suggested that the United States would consider "all options" in the crisis, the military has not yet made any of the moves typically associated with an armed confrontation or the kind of militarized evacuation that has occurred during past conflicts.

Military officials said the White House had not issued any

orders to help Americans depart or increase protection for those who remain. On Thursday, the State Department initiated the departure of certain embassy employees and asked others, deemed more central to the U.S. mission, to remain. It also advised American citizens in Venezuela — who number almost 50,000 — to leave while they can.

One defense official, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, pushed back on any notion that additional U.S. military involvement is anticipated in Venezuela.

"Let me just throw cold water on that," the official said. "I'm not seeing anything with any movement at this time."

The crisis in Venezuela marks a rare moment of focus on Latin America for the Pentagon, which has been consumed by insurgent wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan for nearly two decades and is now seeking to reorient toward China.

Officials said the U.S. military presence in Venezuela itself is minimal, consisting mainly of less than 20 Marine guards at the embassy.

That relationship deteriorated after the rise of Maduro's predecessor, Hugo Chávez, who saw Washington as an adversary and embraced close military ties with Russia.

Defense officials said the State Department had not requested to bolster security at the Caracas embassy, such as sending additional Marine embassy security guards or deploying Special Operations troops, or to help American citizens depart.

Embassies typically conduct planning exercises for emergency evacuations. In this case, military officials said they had a noncombatant evacuation plan for Venezuela "on the shelf" and had identified units that could assist in executing that plan if needed. But, they stressed, they did not expect to need to take such a step unless conditions changed significantly.

# Icy blast hits Midwest with worst to come

Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. — An arctic blast spread painful cold across the Midwest on Friday, closing schools, opening warming centers and even intimidating ice fishermen in a taste of the even more dangerous weather expected this week.

Forecasters called it a replay of the “polar vortex” that bludgeoned the U.S. in 2014 — and maybe even colder, with wind chills by midweek as much as 45 below in Chicago.

“We’re going to be feeling it big time,” Jeff Masters, meteorology director at the private Weather Underground, said. “It’s going to be the coldest air in five years.”

For much of middle America, the leading edge was bad enough. Cold weather adviso-

ries were in effect Friday from North Dakota to Ohio, with dangerously cold wind chills that could dip to as low as 45 below zero in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota and to 35 below in parts of northern Illinois and Iowa.

When the polar vortex plunges into the U.S., it will be warmer in parts of the Arctic — Greenland, northern Canada and Alaska — than in Chicago and Minneapolis, meteorologists said.

Schools in Milwaukee canceled classes Friday, when the expected high was just 2. So did schools in western Michigan, eastern Iowa and northern Illinois. In northern Michigan, residents of islands in the river connecting Lake Superior and Lake Huron were warned to stock up on supplies in case ferry service was cut off. In Chicago,

warming centers opened.

Masters said the cold snap is due to the polar vortex, the gigantic circular upper air weather pattern in the Arctic region enveloping the North Pole, splitting into three pieces in late December because of an occasional weather condition called “sudden stratospheric warming.”

One chunk of that trapped cold air went to Siberia, another to Scandinavia, and the third piece is heading through Canada. On Wednesday, it will be over northern Michigan somewhere, he said.

The polar vortex rarely plunges as far south as the U.S., maybe every few years or more, Maue said. The last big plunge was Jan. 6, 2014, when Chicago’s temperature dipped to minus-16.

## Powell gets roadside assistance from man who lost leg in Afghanistan

BY SETH ROBSON

*Stars and Stripes*

A leg lost in Afghanistan didn’t deter a Virginia man from helping a fellow motorist change a flat on his way to an appointment Wednesday at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Anthony Maggert — a self-described Marine Corps veteran who walks with the aid of a prosthesis — got a surprise when the person he stopped to help turned out to be retired four-star Army Gen. Colin Powell.

The former secretary of state was so impressed by Maggert’s good deed that he posted a photo of the pair along with a note of thanks that’s been liked hundreds of thousands of times on his Facebook page.

“I was on my way to Walter Reed ... for an exam,” Powell wrote in the post. “As I drove along Interstate 495 my left front tire blew out. I am a car guy and knew I could change it but it was cold outside and the lug bolts were very tight.”

Powell wrote that he’d jacked his car up and removed several bolts when a vehicle pulled in front of him.

“As the man got out of his car I could see that he had an artificial leg. He said he recognized me and wanted to help me. We chatted and I learned that he lost his leg in Afghanistan when he worked over there as a civilian employee. He grabbed the lug wrench and finished the job as I put the tools away.”

The pair took a photo together and parted ways without exchanging names, but Maggert followed up with a message to Powell that read:

“Gen. Powell, I hope I never forget today because I’ll never forget reading your books. You were always an inspiration, a leader and statesman. After 33 years in the military you were the giant whose shoulders we stood upon to carry the torch to light the way and now it is tomorrow’s generation that must do the same.”

Powell, who actually served 35 years, thanked Maggert in his Facebook post.

“You touched my soul and reminded me about what this country is all about and why it is so great,” he wrote. “Let’s stop screaming at each other. Let’s just take care of each other. You made my day.”

## Hundreds missing after Brazil dam collapse

Associated Press

SAO PAULO — Rescuers in helicopters on Saturday searched for survivors in a huge area in southeastern Brazil buried by mud from the collapse of a dam holding back mine waste, with at least nine people dead and up to 300 missing.

Nearly a full day since the disaster happened, finding many more survivors was looking increasingly unlikely.

“Most likely, from now on we are mostly going to be recovering bodies,” said Romeu Zema, the governor of the state of Minas Gerais.

Workers with Brazilian mining company Vale were eating lunch Friday afternoon when the dam collapsed, unleashing a sea of reddish-brown mud that knocked over and buried several structures of the company and surrounding areas.

The status of the workers and others in the city of Brumadinho was unknown Saturday, but the level of devastation quickly led President Jair Bolsonaro and other officials to describe it as a “tragedy.”

Nine bodies had been recovered by Saturday, according to a statement from the Minas Gerais governor’s office. But the fear

was that there would be many more as rescue and recovery teams dug through feet of mud.

Vale CEO Fabio Schvartsman said he did not know what caused the collapse. About 300 employees were working when it happened. About 100 had been accounted for, and rescue efforts were underway to determine what had happened to the others.

After the dam collapsed in the afternoon, parts of Brumadinho were evacuated, and firefighters rescued people by helicopter and ground vehicles. Local television channel TV Record showed a helicopter hovering inches off the ground as it pulled people covered in mud out of the waste.

Another dam administered by Vale and Australian mining company BHP Billiton collapsed in 2015 in the city of Mariana in Minas Gerais state, resulting in 19 deaths and forcing hundreds from their homes.

Considered the worst environmental disaster in Brazilian history, it left 250,000 people without drinking water and killed thousands of fish. An estimated 60 million cubic meters of waste flooded rivers and eventually flowed into the Atlantic Ocean.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Doctor removes kidney from the wrong man

**MA** WORCESTER — A Massachusetts doctor who erroneously removed a kidney from the wrong patient received a reprimand from the state.

The Telegram & Gazette reported that the state Board of Registration in Medicine issued its reprimand to Dr. Ankur Parikh last month after he admitted to the error.

The board said in 2016 the urologist removed a healthy kidney from Albert Hubbard Jr., 65, after mistakenly reading the CT scan of another man with the same name who had his abdomen scanned the same day.

The state catalogued three mistakes on Parikh's part it said fell below the standard of care, including electing to remove the kidney despite observing it wasn't heavy with tumors.

## Hundreds of unmarked graves found in woods

**GA** MOULTRIE — Employees doing maintenance work in woods near their cemetery found hundreds of unmarked graves in southern Georgia.

WALB-TV reported Tuesday that workers for Saint James Pallbearer Cemetery in Moultrie found the graves as they were working in woods near the cemetery.

Property manager John Strong said as crews cut trees and started digging up stumps, they found the unmarked graves. Strong said he could find no documents that there had ever been a cemetery in those woods.

Strong said his research shows the graves hold the remains of African-American slaves dating to the 1800s.

## Tests planned after 30 swans found dead

**IN** HAMMOND — Officials in a northwestern Indiana city plan more testing in and around a lake where at least 30 swans have been found dead since late September.

The (Northwest Indiana) Times reported officials plan more tests around a former Federated Metals facility and will collect water and sediment samples from nearby George Lake.

The Hammond Department of Environmental Management released a second round of soil sample results last week during a public meeting showing lead contamination levels trending upward.

Whiting Metals currently operates at the site of the former Federated Metals, which did smelting and recycling there. Officials, including representatives from Whiting Metals, suspect a cap on a Federated Metals landfill is likely failing.

## Man shot at driver who parked in assigned spot

**MD** COLUMBIA — Police in Maryland said a man fired shots at a driver who parked in his assigned parking space.

Howard County police said in a statement Tuesday that officers called to a Columbia neighborhood early Monday found a man visiting a friend there who said a man told him to move his parked vehicle, then fired three shots. The driver wasn't hit, but his vehicle was hit twice.

Police said surveillance video showed a suspect and they arrested Cornelius Harcum, 47, of Columbia later in the day.

Harcum is charged with attempted murder, assault, reckless endangerment and other offenses. He's being held without bond.

## Parrot rescued after 3 nights in storm drain

**CA** LOS ANGELES — An African Grey parrot is home after being trapped for nearly three nights in a storm drain in Los Angeles.

Arturo Vasquez told KABC-TV he turned to YouTube parrot advocate Marlene Mc'Cohen when no one would help him try to free his 10-year-old parrot Milly.

Mc'Cohen said she rounded up a group of volunteers, who improvised using cameras, piping and remote control vehicles. They eventually coaxed Milly out of the drain.

## Ex-employee spent \$5K on purses, other items

**TN** NASHVILLE — A state investigation found that a former Tennessee utility worker spent more than \$5,400 of the utility's money on purses, headphones and other items.

According to a Tennessee Comptroller's Office news release, the investigation found that the former information technology clerk spent the City of Cleveland Utilities' money from September 2017 through April 2018.

The probe found that the woman used utility money to buy at least 92 items for personal use.

## Giant cabbage brings girl, 9, a \$1K bond

**PA** MCCANDLESS — A girl with a green thumb was rewarded with the other kind of green for growing an extraordinarily large cabbage.

Lily Ries, 9, a fourth-grader at Peebles Elementary School in Pittsburgh, won \$1,000 sav-

ings bond for her extra-large vegetable. She grew it as part of National Bonnie Plants Third Grade Cabbage Program.

Her mom, Megan Ries, said they had no idea cabbages could get so big, but it just kept growing and growing.

## Students ill after vaping in school bathroom

**CT** PORTLAND — Officials said an ambulance was called to a Connecticut high school for four students who reported feeling ill after vaping.

Portland Schools Superintendent Philip O'Reilly said the four male students had been vaping in the boy's bathroom at Portland High School and went to the nurse's office Tuesday.

O'Reilly said first responders were called to the school around 1 p.m. in "an abundance of caution."

## Rebuilt WWII bomber 'Doc' to be on display

**KS** WICHITA — After years of work by scores of volunteers, the public got a chance to see a restored World War II B-29 bomber known as "Doc" in its home over the weekend.

A public open house and dedication ceremony was held at the B-29 Doc Hangar and Education Center, at Eisenhower National Airport in Wichita.

The Wichita Eagle reported the bomber is a decommissioned Boeing B-29 Superfortress and one of 1,644 manufactured in Wichita during WWII.

It was discovered rotting in the Mojave Desert in 1987 and, after more than 100 volunteers worked about 450,000 hours, it is now just one of two operational B-29s in existence.

From wire reports

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# Osaka wins second straight Grand Slam

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — So close to victory, Naomi Osaka suddenly was letting the Australian Open final slip away. Three championship points? Gone. A sizable lead? Soon all gone, too.

She was playing poorly. She yelled at herself. Slammed a ball. Tugged at her visor's pink brim. Trudged to the locker room between sets with a towel draped over her head.

And then, after returning to the court, Osaka turned it all around just as quickly as she had dropped 23 of 27 points. Refocusing and reasserting herself, Osaka edged Petra Kvitová 7-6 (2), 5-7, 6-4 on Saturday night to win the Australian Open for a second consecutive Grand Slam title.

"I felt like I didn't want to have any regrets," Osaka said. "I think if I didn't regroup after the second set, then I would have looked back on this match and probably cried or something."

On top of that, Osaka will rise to No. 1 in the rankings.

"Amazing achievement," two-time Wimbledon champion Kvitová said. "Definitely she is a great one. We'll see what the future will bring."

Osaka added the Australian Open trophy to the one she collected in a U.S. Open final last September that forever will be remembered for the way runner-up Serena Williams was docked a game after arguing with the chair umpire.

Unlike that day, there was no jeering from the confused crowd. No controversy. No chaos. No sharing the spotlight.

Clearly marking herself as tennis' bright new star, Osaka is the first woman to win two major championships in a row since Williams picked up four straight in 2014-15.

Almost didn't happen.

Osaka held three match points in the second set at 5-3, love-40 as Kvitová served. But Osaka couldn't close it out. Instead, she completely lost her way.

That allowed Kvitová to come back and make a match of it, reeling off five games in a row

to take the second set and go up 1-0 in the third.

At that point, Kvitová would say later, she figured it was going to keep going her way.

"In the end," she said, "it wasn't."

After Kvitová double-faulted to offer up a break point at 1-all, Osaka converted it with a cross-court backhand winner. There was still more work to be done, of course, and some additional drama when it began raining at the changeover right before Osaka tried to serve for the match at 5-4 in the third set.

This time, Osaka didn't falter. She didn't let this lead disappear.

"I knew that Petra couldn't keep it up for that long if Naomi could just manage those emotions," said Osaka's coach, Sascha Bajin, "and she did that beautifully."

Osaka was born in Japan — her mother is Japanese, her father is Haitian — and she moved to New York at age 3. Now she's based in Florida and has dual citizenship. Osaka already was the first player rep-

resenting Japan — female or male — to win a Grand Slam singles title. Now she also is the first to top the WTA or ATP rankings.

At 21, Osaka is the youngest No. 1 in nearly a decade; Caroline Wozniacki was 20 when she first ascended to that spot in 2010.

And to think, a year ago, Osaka was ranked 72nd.

What a climb. What a quick climb.

Kvitová was playing in her first Grand Slam final since winning Wimbledon in 2014 — and the first since she was stabbed in the hand by an intruder at her home in the Czech Republic a little more than two years ago.

Kvitová needed surgery, missed the first 4½ months of the 2017 season, including the Australian Open, and couldn't be sure she'd ever get back to the top of tennis.

"You've been through so much," Osaka told Kvitová during the trophy ceremony. "I'm really honored to have played you in the final of a Grand Slam."

## Baseball Hall of Famers lament changes to game

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Baseball has transformed at dizzying speed since Edgar Martinez took his final swing and Mike Mussina, Mariano Rivera and Roy Halladay threw their final pitches.

"We don't have enough time to talk about that," the ever erudite Mussina said Wednesday when a trio of newly minted living Hall of Famers appeared at a news conference. "The game always evolves — it always has. I'm not sure I love the way it's changed lately, but that's just the nature of it."

When Mussina retired Boston's Dustin Pedroia on a double-play grounder to end his final outing in 2008 — a start that made him a first-time 20-game winner at age 39 — strikeouts in the major leagues totaled

32,884. That broke a mark that had stood since 2004.

There were 41,207 whiffs last year, setting a record for the 11th straight season.

When Martinez took his final swing in 2004, grounding into a double play against Texas reliever Brian Shouse, infield shifts weren't even totaled, employed only for a few lefty pull hitters like Red Sox slugger David Ortiz.

Baseball's Analytics Age, the successor to the Steroids Era, had just begun by 2013, when Derek Jeter and Andy Pettitte walked to the Yankee Stadium mound to remove Rivera. The closer left in mid-inning against Tampa Bay to tears and cheers in what turned out to be his finale, after Yunel Escobar had flied out. That month also marked the final appearance

of Roy Halladay, who died in a plane crash 14 months ago and was elected posthumously on Tuesday.

There were 34,673 infield shifts on balls in play last year, up from 8,180 in 2013 and 2,357 two years later. Partly as a result, the major league batting average dropped to .248, its lowest since 1972.

"In the past when I played, with two strikes we tried to put the ball in play," Martinez said in the corner of the ballroom atop The St. Regis New York. "I don't see many players doing that anymore. Two strikes, it's like, swing hard still. I wish that could change with the players today."

The Hall of Fame is baseball's annual celebration of itself. Hall President Jeff Idelson saluted its exclusivity: Among

19,429 major league players, just 232 have been chosen for the Hall, including 132 from the Baseball Writers' Association of America annual ballot, which requires a supermajority vote.

"It is important to note that the magic number remains 75 percent, a figure never attained by anyone who lived in the White House," BBWAA secretary-treasurer Jack O'Connell said.

Having achieved the greatest at the highest level, perhaps these players' thoughts should count the most when it comes to the sport's evolution.

"As a starter, if you can't get deep in games, you lose opportunities to win games and you won't pitch as many innings. There's a whole list of things that happen," Mussina said.



# Pro Bowlers: Officiating must improve

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Jacksonville Jaguars defensive end Calais Campbell watched the NFL's conference championship games on his phone while flying home from South Africa last weekend.

The stream cut in and out occasionally, causing Campbell to think for a brief moment that he missed something when no flag was thrown on Los Angeles Rams cornerback Nickell Robey-Coleman late in the NFC title game. Turns out, Campbell saw it perfectly clear and was stunned officials chose not to penalize Robey-Coleman for flattening Saints receiver Tommy Lee Lewis before the ball arrived.

"Very, very surprised," Campbell said.

The now-infamous no-call has been the talk of Pro Bowl week, with several players calling for better officiating and more accountability for those in black and white. Others suggest expanding the use of video replay.

"You just make a better call," Philadelphia Eagles safety Malcolm Jenkins said. "I know there's been talk about replay. But you really didn't need replay to make that call. It was just a missed call. It was that simple. That happens. You have human error, but it's unfortunate when that chang-

es everything that you've worked for as a team and how hard it's been to get back to that spot. That's tough."

No one at the league's annual all-star game went as far as retiring New Orleans Saints tight end Benjamin Watson did, though. Watson ripped NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell on Thursday for his public silence following the blown call.

Watson posted a letter to Goodell on Twitter, saying "we all realize that football is an imperfect game, played, coached and officiated by imperfect people. What occurred last Sunday in New Orleans, though, was outside of that expected and accepted norm."

"Your continued silence on this matter is unbecoming of the position you hold, detrimental to the integrity of the game and disrespectful and dismissive to football fans everywhere," Watson continued. "From the locker room to Park Ave., accountability is what makes our league great. Lead by example. We are waiting."

Officials could have — and by most accounts should have — flagged Robey-Coleman for pass interference and helmet-to-helmet contact during the play. Drew Brees' pass fell incomplete inside the Rams 10-yard line with 1:45 left in a

tie game. The Saints settled for a field goal. The Rams tied the game on Greg Zuerlein's 48-yarder in regulation and won it in overtime with his 57-yarder.

"How many times have you played a football game and seen the call that should have been called but didn't, or a call that got called and it shouldn't have been called?" Campbell said. "It happens all the time in this game. It's just part of football."

But the overwhelming sentiment at the Pro Bowl was something needs to be done to prevent errors as egregious as the one in the NFC title game.

"The tough thing is we have things that are reviewable, things that aren't reviewable," Buffalo Bills defensive lineman Kyle Williams said. "You can't review it inside of two minutes. I don't know why we put limitations on things, but at the same time, games have missed calls one way or another. But you hated to see something that appeared to be that way finish a game like that, finish a season. For us as a league, it's hard to limit when you can and when you can't review those things and do all that."

Added Dallas Cowboys linebacker Leighton Vander Esch: "If dudes are missing calls on the field, they've got to make them up in the box."

## Women's player Schofield shines at All-Star weekend

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Connor McDavid won the fastest skater competition once again but Kendall Coyne Schofield won over the crowd.

The U.S. women's hockey star became the first woman ever to compete in the NHL All-Star skills competition on Friday night, racing around the rink in a time competitive with the top skaters in the men's game in a barrier-breaking moment for women's hockey.

"The crowd was electrifying," Coyne Schofield said. "To hear the USA chants, everyone erupted when I started. Definitely gave me some momentum and the adrenaline was pumping."

Coyne Schofield was the first skater to take the ice and finished her lap in 14.346 seconds, impressing the NHL's biggest stars with her speed.

"When she took off, I was

like, 'Wow!'" McDavid said after winning his third fastest skater competition. "I thought she might have won the way she was moving. She was a really good skater and that was an amazing thing for the game to see her participate like that in an event like this."

The 26-year-old Coyne Schofield plays for the Minnesota Whitecaps of the National Women's Hockey League and won an Olympic gold medal for the United States last February.

She found out earlier Friday that she'd get the chance when Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon pulled out with an injury and then took full advantage of the opportunity. She had been previously invited to All-Star weekend with other women's players from the U.S. and Canadian teams but now she had the chance to perform on the big stage.

"My first impression was, I can do this," she said. "My

speed is definitely my strength. Obviously, I was a little nervous. I knew it was a moment that could break a lot of barriers and a moment that would change the perception of our game and show support to our game."

She finished seventh out of eight skaters, beating Arizona forward Clayton Keller's time of 14.526 seconds.

"She beat me so she's doing something right," Keller said. "She's really fast. I was surprised. It was great to see that. It was a great experience for the NHL to have her do that event. It was really cool."

McDavid skated last and finished his lap in 13.378 seconds, edging Buffalo's Jack Eichel (13.582) and the New York Islanders' Mathew Barzal (13.780).

The other winners in the NHL All-Star skills competition Friday night were Calgary's Johnny Gaudreau in the puck control contest, the New York Rangers

Henrik Lundqvist in the save streak competition, Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl in the premier passer contest, Washington's John Carlson in the hardest shot, and Boston's David Pastrnak for accurate shooting.

Gaudreau narrowly beat out Chicago's Patrick Kane in the puck control contest as the two were among the only contestants who made it through the course without a mishap. Gaudreau finished the course in 27.045 seconds, beating out Kane's time of 28.611 to repeat his title from a year ago.

Lundqvist stopped 12 breakaways in a row to win the save streak competition. Lundqvist threw his arms up in celebration after stopping John Tavares for his ninth save in a row, topping Tampa Bay's Andrei Vasilevskiy for the top spot.

Draisaitl completed the passing contest in 1:09.088, beating out Carolina's Sebastian Aho.

## NBA roundup

## Harden, Rockets knock off Raptors

Associated Press

HOUSTON — James Harden scored 35 points for his 22nd straight game with 30 or more and the Houston Rockets never trailed in a 121-119 victory over the Toronto Raptors on Friday night.

After averaging 52.2 points over the last five games, capped by a franchise-record 61 on Wednesday night at New York, Harden slowed a bit as all of Houston's starters scored 10 points or more.

Eric Gordon led that group with 24, Kenneth Faried had 21, P.J. Tucker added 18 and Austin Rivers 13. Faried also had a season-high 14 rebounds and blocked two shots in his third game with the Rockets.

Kawhi Leonard had 32 points for Toronto.

**Bucks 108, Hornets 99:** Giannis Antetokounmpo had 34 points and 14 rebounds and NBA-leading Milwaukee rallied to win by outscoring visiting Charlotte 32-12 in the fourth quarter.

Charlotte star Kemba Walker was injured in a scrum with 2:06 left when Antetokounmpo landed on him. Walker headed directly to the locker room.

**Nets 109, Knicks 99:** Theo Pinson, Ed Davis and Shabazz Napier carried a Brooklyn bench that dominated host New York — even without Spencer Dinwiddie — for its sixth straight victory.

Pinson, on a two-way contract, scored a career-high 19 points. Davis had 17 points and 16 rebounds, and Napier added 18 points as the Nets' reserves turned around and then ran away with the game even without Dinwiddie, their sixth man who has torn ligaments in his right thumb.

**Nuggets 132, Suns 95:** Paul Millsap scored 20 points and host Denver overcame Nikola

Jokic's one-game suspension to race past Phoenix, sending the short-handed Suns to their seventh straight loss.

Jokic, the Nuggets' leader in points, rebounds and assists, was banished for a night by the NBA for leaving the bench during an altercation in Utah two nights earlier.

**Wizards 95, Magic 91:** Jeff Green made the go-ahead layup with 42 seconds left and scored a season-high 24 points to help visiting Washington beat Orlando.

Bradley Beal had 27 points and seven assists for the Wizards. They won for the fifth time in seven games. Nikola Vucevic led the Magic with 28 points and nine rebounds.

**Clippers 106, Bulls 101:** Lou Williams had 31 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds for his first career triple-double to help Los Angeles beat host Chicago.

Zach Lavine scored 29 points for Chicago. The Bulls have lost 12 of their last 13.

**Jazz 106, Timberwolves 102:** Donovan Mitchell scored 24 points and had a career-high 11 assists and Utah outlasted visiting Minnesota.

Rudy Gobert added had 18 points and 16 rebounds to help the Jazz win for the eighth time in nine games.

**Mavericks 106, Pistons 101:** Luka Doncic scored 32 points, Maxi Kleber hit a key three-pointer after blocking a shot by Blake Griffin and host Dallas beat Detroit.

**Heat 100, Cavaliers 94:** Justise Winslow scored 27 points and Hassan Whiteside had 14 points and 13 rebounds to help visiting Miami beat Cleveland.

**Kings 99, Grizzlies 96:** Buddy Hield scored 26 points, De'Aaron Fox added 22, including a key 19-footer in the final minute, and Sacramento held off host Memphis.

## Top 25 roundup

## No. 5 Michigan starts fast, rolls over Indiana

Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — No. 5 Michigan started fast Friday night and never let up.

It was everything coach John Beilein hoped to see at Indiana.

The Wolverines' defense was virtually impenetrable, the offense was balanced and they delivered the knockout punch right from the start. Ignas Brazdeikis scored 20 points, Xavier Simpson added 12 and after scoring the first 17 points of the game, Michigan pulled away for a 69-46 victory.

"I don't think anybody realizes how you envy that situation where we got off to that great start, how difficult that is to manage when you get off to that great start because no matter what happens it's nothing to be up that much that early. Nothing," Beilein said. "To manage it and have your kids persevere through it is really good."

The Wolverines (18-1, 7-1 Big Ten) aren't just winning — they're making it look easy.

Michigan has won two straight since suffering its first loss, six straight over the Hoosiers and two in a row in Bloomington. The reason: Beilein's defense took full advantage of the struggling Hoosiers, who have lost six straight.

The Wolverines jumped to their enormous lead by forcing the Hoosiers into 10 consecutive missed shots, not allowing a point for more than seven minutes, not allowing a basket for nearly and never allowing the Hoosiers (12-8, 3-6) to get close enough to be a serious threat on a night public address announcer Chuck Crabb counted down the seconds on each possession at the south end of Assembly Hall because the shot clock was broken.

"Our team in general right now is soft, and we're also for whatever reason right now scared, and you can just tell by the way that we played," Hoo-

siers coach Archie Miller said. "The fight isn't there right now, and the confidence isn't there on either end of the floor to be able to capitalize on any type of opportunity that we have." How ugly was it?

The crowd cheered wildly when Indiana finally scored its first points on two free throws from Durham with 12:57 left and again when Durham scored their first basket with 10:15 left in the half. They trailed 33-18 at halftime, their lowest total in any half this season.

Indiana opened the second half with four straight baskets in the lane, closing to 38-29 on Phinisee's 3 with 16:47 left. But Michigan answered with a 12-3 spurt to make it 50-32 and the Hoosiers never got close again.

"We were really good after that (spurt) as well," Beilein said. "Our defense was so solid the entire night,"

Juwan Morgan finished with 16 points and 12 rebounds to lead Indiana.

**No. 14 Buffalo 88, Kent State 79:** CJ Massinburg and Nick Perkins scored 20 points apiece as the visiting Bulls pulled away in the final minutes and avoided dropping their second Mid-American Conference game in four days with a win over the Golden Flashes.

Buffalo (18-2, 6-1 MAC) showed its experience and poise down the stretch to hold off upset-minded Kent State (15-5, 4-3), which hosted its first ranked opponent since 1989.

Clinging to a 78-75 lead, Buffalo, which was beaten at Northern Illinois on Tuesday, forced Kent State into three straight turnovers and converted each time to open some breathing room.

Jaylin Walker scored 21 points and Philip Whittington 18 and 13 rebounds to pace the Golden Flashes.