

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## US, Taliban make progress in peace talks

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — President Ashraf Ghani told Afghans on Monday that the rights they've gained since the U.S. invaded the country more than 17 years ago would not be jeopardized in any peace deal with the Taliban, as he urged insurgents to hold direct talks with his government.

Ghani spoke in a televised address that followed six days of negotiations between U.S. and Taliban officials in Qatar, during which officials said "significant progress" was made at finding a peaceful solution to end America's longest war.

The Afghan government, which the Taliban has said it considers Washington's "puppet," has so far been excluded from the discussions that started last year. News of a possible breakthrough has left some Afghans worried that their future was being decided without their input.

Ghani's address appeared to be aimed at assuring his country that is not the case. In addition to promising their rights would be secured, he insisted there would be no final

agreement without the full participation of his government.

"Our commitment is to provide peace and to prevent any possible disaster," Ghani said. "There are values that are not disputable, such as national unity, national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

He went on to say the Taliban had two choices: to stand with the people of Afghanistan or be used as a tool by other countries who profit from the ongoing conflict.

The address followed a meeting between Ghani and Zalmay Khalilzad, the top U.S. negotiator at the Qatar talks.

On Monday, Khalilzad acknowledged Afghans' worries while speaking with the media.

"The Afghan people are understandably concerned about their security," Khalilzad said. "We are working together to get a comprehensive cease-fire. We are working with the Afghan government, with international partners, to find implementing mechanisms to reach these goals."

Khalilzad also told The New York Times that his team had agreed in principal to a framework for a peace deal that would in-

clude withdrawal of U.S. troops, a cease-fire and talks between the insurgents and the Afghan government.

"The Taliban have committed, to our satisfaction, to do what is necessary that would prevent Afghanistan from ever becoming a platform for international terrorist groups or individuals," Khalilzad told The Times.

Preventing extremist groups — particularly al-Qaida, which the Taliban has harbored — from using Afghanistan as a base to launch attacks on the United States has been a key demand for Washington.

Meanwhile, the Taliban have always insisted on the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country as a precondition for opening talks with Kabul.

Part of the draft agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban includes an 18-month timeline for the withdrawal of foreign troops once the deal is officially agreed to, according to a Reuters report last week, which quoted unnamed Taliban officials. The Taliban is also seeking inclusion in an interim government after any cease-fire.

## Militia leader says US troops should leave Iraq

*Associated Press*

BAGHDAD — The leader of one of the most powerful Iran-backed Shiite militias in Iraq believed to be behind numerous attacks on Americans during the 2003-11 Iraq War said Monday that he expects a vote in the coming months by Iraq's parliament calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, underscoring the jostling for power between Iran and the U.S. in this key Middle Eastern country.

Qais al-Khazali, who rose to prominence as a leader in the Shiite insurgency after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, said there's no longer a justification for thousands of U.S. troops to remain in Iraq after Islamic State has been defeated. He suggest-

ed U.S. troops may eventually be driven out by force if they do not yield to the will of the Iraqi people.

"I think more than half the members of parliament reject the presence of American military forces as a matter of principle," he said.

"If the United States wants to impose its presence by force, and to bypass the Iraqi constitution and parliament, Iraq can treat it the same way and drive it out by force ... But the first phase is political," al-Khazali said.

The 45-year-old head of Asaib Ahl al-Haq, or League of the Righteous, who was captured by coalition forces in 2007 and released here years later in exchange for a British computer expert working for

the Iraqi government, spoke with The Associated Press in a wide-ranging interview at one of his group's offices in a highly fortified area in the Iraqi capital, just across the Tigris River from the U.S. Embassy.

Curbing foreign influence has become a hot-button issue in Iraq after parliament elections in May in which Shiite militias backed by Iran made significant gains. The militias fought alongside U.S.-backed Iraqi troops against ISIS in recent years, gaining outsized influence and power along the way.

Al-Khazali, whose forces are fighting in Syria alongside President Bashar Assad's troops, said he was "certain and confident" there will be an Iraqi parliament vote call-

ing for the withdrawal and regulation of U.S. forces in the country.

"If the main purpose for their presence is to confront the military danger posed by Daesh, then this threat is eliminated," he said, referring to ISIS. "So what is the justification for keeping this number (of troops) now?"

He said a small contingent of advisers and trainers for logistical matters could stay on as determined by a joint committee that would specify their numbers and locations.

"Anything other than that will be considered an infringement on sovereignty by the Iraqi parliament, the Iraqi people and political factions, including ours, and we will not allow it," he said.

## Army may say bon voyage to part of its seagoing fleet

By J.P. LAWRENCE  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Army may say bon voyage to part of its seagoing fleet.

The Army's little-known but sizable maritime fleet may be facing cuts as the service considers eliminating dozens of boats and forcing hundreds of reservists out of their jobs in the next two years.

The service's watercraft deliver supplies, assist in dive operations and land troops on beachheads during combat operations. But many of those boats are aging, costly to maintain and require upgrades to keep up with modern warfare, according to government reports.

The Army is mulling plans to shutter its National Guard and Reserve component watercraft units, according to a PowerPoint slide deck dated Jan. 8 and obtained by Stars and Stripes. The plans come amid warnings of a looming crisis in the military's transport fleet necessary for carrying troops, equipment and supplies at a time when China and others are spending more on coastal warfare capabilities.

The Army confirmed that a formal analysis of its fleet inventory is underway.

"The Army is assessing its watercraft program to improve readiness, modernize the force and reallocate resources," spokeswoman Cheryle Rivas said via email.

Soldiers concerned about the cuts told Stars and Stripes they have been briefed on the proposed reductions.

Last June, Army Secretary Mark Esper decided that the Reserve would "divest all watercraft systems," according to the January briefing. That was prepared in part by Maj. David Finn, chief force manager for the New Orleans-based 377th Theater Sustainment Company, which oversees most of the Reserve's boats.

The unit could see eight of its watercraft units and civilian maintenance facilities shuttered under the proposal, which would affect at least 746 positions, according to the slides. The move would reduce the size of the regular Army's seagoing capabilities, and it "potentially eliminates" all Reserve and National Guard Bureau watercraft systems and support, according to one slide.

It would also halt maintenance spending as well as curtail recruitment and training for mariners until a final decision is made on the disposition of the craft.

Reserve units operated 27 of the Army's fleet of 105 vessels, according to a statement from last July.

An Army memo quoted in the slides states that Esper directed the Army's partial divestment and reorganization in preparation for its 2020 budget.

## Artifacts discovery slows work on Guam base

HAGATNA, Guam — Construction work stopped in part of the new U.S. Marine Corps base on Guam after artifacts were discovered.

A contracted archaeologist identified the artifacts last week, finding prehistoric items and items from the late 1800s, the Pacific Daily News reported.

The military has proposed careful excavation of the items, which include rock tools and pottery fragments, said Al Borja, environmental director for Marine Corps Activity Guam.

The military has a duty to curate the items, meaning they will be placed in an approved facility after they are collected and studied, Borja said.

The area where construction was halted represents only a small portion of the overall project, said Kelly Rodriguez, a spokeswoman for Marine Corps Activity Guam. Construction in that area will resume when the archaeological investigation is completed.

From The Associated Press

## Navy couple: Bill to ship dogs from Va. to Guam nearly \$12K

By WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

Early last month, Kenneth and Emily Sanders learned the Navy was transferring them from Norfolk to Guam at the end of February.

The transfer was somewhat unexpected because Kenneth, a petty officer second class and master-at-arms, and his wife had been at Norfolk Naval Station, Va., for only about a year after returning from a stint in Bahrain.

But the real shock came weeks later when the couple learned how much it would cost to ship their two beloved German shepherds, Nautia and Phoenix, to Guam: \$11,592.

The couple find themselves being squeezed by an onerous flight route that spans half the globe and by United Airlines' decision last year to stop transporting large dogs.

Emily Sanders recalled that it cost only about \$250 to ship each dog when they traveled on Delta Airlines on the flight the couple took to Bahrain.

But dog transport for military members became thornier in the wake of a high-profile incident early last year resulting in United Airlines changing its pet-shipping policy.

During a United flight in March from Houston to Newark, a flight attendant insisted that the owners of a French bulldog in a pet carrier be placed in an overhead bin instead of beneath the seat where such crates are normally placed. The dog suffocated during the flight.

In response, on June 18 United banned transporting snub-nosed dogs and cats, as well as breeds of dogs regarded as "strong-jawed," out of concern for "higher adverse health risks," according to the policy.

But the airline also stopped

hauling pet crates taller than the 30-inch-high Series 500 carrier.

United told Sanders that Nautia and Phoenix require the next-largest crate, Series 700, for shipping, which, by the airline's own policy, it will not carry, she said.

The Sanders had routinely shipped their dogs in Series 500 crates, including their trips to and from Bahrain, but United will not allow them to use Series 500 carriers because the dogs' ears and tails touch the crate's ceiling, she said.

Aside from that, she said, United's new policy of excluding big dogs seems to have little to do with potential breathing problems for snub-nosed dogs while aboard planes.

Meanwhile, Delta is unable to ship the dogs to Guam because of its own policy restrictions.

"Delta won't allow a dog on one flight more than 12 hours for health reasons," Emily Sanders said. Delta would allow the dogs to travel in the smaller Series 500 crates, with a potential route to Los Angeles, then a flight to Guam. But the shortest-duration flight time — including connections — to Los Angeles is 12 hours and 5 minutes, she said.

For a fee of \$5,692, the dogs will fly on Lufthansa from Washington to Amsterdam, where they will spend the night.

They then fly to South Korea, where they will require veterinarian's health certificates for import into that country. Once that import paperwork is completed, they will stay at a pet hotel overnight.

For another fee of \$5,900, they will then fly to Guam, where they will need a new set of health certificates.



# Code changes could mean tax reductions

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The biggest changes to the tax code in more than a generation could mean substantial tax reductions for servicemembers and civilian federal employees when they file their taxes this year, according to the executive director of the Armed Forces Tax Council.

Tax filing season began Monday for taxpayers, and last year “marked one of the biggest changes in the tax code ... since 1986,” said Lt. Col. David Dulaney, the executive director of the council.

Changes in the tax code that affect the military community come from multiple laws that affect taxes for 2018, including the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and the Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act.

“The good news is that most of our servicemembers should see a substantial reduction in their overall federal taxes for 2018, even if their itemized deductions were either suspended or capped because of the changes in the tax code. And the reason why that is, is because of the reduced tax rates,” Dulaney said.

This year, due to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, families who earn \$165,000 or less when filing jointly, which is many military families, could see a reduction of 3 percent overall in their tax rate, according to Dulaney. The child tax credit doubled to \$2,000 per child, and standard deductions also doubled for 2018.

As an example, a military family with two children earning \$100,400 in 2018 could see their federal income taxes drop by about \$3,000 because their tax rate decreased from 25 percent to 22 percent, according to the Defense Department. Their standard deductions would also increase from \$12,700 to \$24,000.

For civilians who work for the federal government including the Department of Defense, their moving reimbursements will now be taxed. That means the allowance will be counted toward their overall taxable income. Dulaney said he has received questions from DOD civilian employees about that, specifically, people overseas whose cost to move is higher.

“So this is going to include in their taxable income anywhere between \$25,000 and \$40,000. And so that could potentially bump them up in a different tax bracket and see an increased tax liability because of that,” Dulaney said.

Most of these civilian employees are eligible to apply for the Withholding Tax Allowance and the Relocation Income Tax Allowance, which according to Dulaney’s estimates could reimburse them for almost all of their increased taxes from the moving allowance. The WTA and RITA allowances are also taxable, which is why it does not cover the entire expense, according to Dulaney.

Another upside is long-term storage of household goods and personal vehicle shipment allowances for overseas civilian employees are still tax-exempt.

Due to the change to itemized deductions, reservists who could previously deduct drill-duty expenses for travel less than 100 miles will no longer be able to do so. Reservists who travel more than 100 miles will still be able to deduct the expense.

Veterans have until July to claim a standard refund based on the year that they received the pay or file an amended tax return during this tax season, according to Dulaney.

For more information on changes to the tax code and how they affect servicemembers, visit [militaryonesource.mil](http://militaryonesource.mil).

# Some overseas civilians relieved of PCS taxes, many still face burden

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

Some civilian federal employees whose overseas moves were paid by the government in the past year are sighing with relief: The IRS has declared that a portion of that benefit is tax-exempt.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 eliminated the tax deduction for moving expenses for everyone except active-duty servicemembers. Until recently, that meant most everything the federal government paid to move its civilian employees permanently, including shipping and storing their household goods, was considered taxable income.

Many overseas federal employees — new hires and trainees included — and all stateside workers still face a tax on that benefit.

Some overseas federal workers have been granted a reprieve. The IRS in November said federal employees moving overseas from one federal job to another will not be taxed on government allowances for such costs as shipping vehicles and household goods or for temporary housing.

The news came as a great relief to Hans Garcia, a 14-year Army civilian employee who retired last year and moved back to the United States from Stuttgart, Germany.

Garcia estimated the cost to move his household goods and his vehicle at \$80,000, he told Stars and Stripes in an email.

“I will be taxed an additional \$17,600 — 22 percent tax bracket — over my regular wages,” he said before learning he would be exempt from that tax.

Garcia called the new guidance for overseas employees “great news,” adding that the moving expense taxation “would have been a hard financial burden for many.”

Some moving-expense allow-

ances are still taxable under the 2017 law, however, including airfare, passport and visa fees, en route lodging and per diem expenses, according to the Army statement.

However, most federal employees who moved will see their moving allowances listed as income on their W-2 forms.

The Army statement in December omitted an important caveat: New hires (or appointees), trainees and employees leaving government work and moving overseas are not exempt from the tax on moving allowances, according to the IRS.

Those employees — along with those who move within the continental U.S. — are responsible for paying taxes on money they never see that’s paid directly by the government to service providers such as airlines and moving companies.

Taxes on such moves can bump an employee into a higher tax bracket. A 2015 Government Accountability Office report estimated the average cost of an overseas move for active-duty servicemembers came to more than \$13,000, and more than \$10,000 for a stateside move. The study did not report costs for civilian moves.

Some relief is available for civilian employees moving from one federal job to another and facing steep tax bills as a result.

A May bulletin from the General Services Administration said those workers can be reimbursed for moving-related tax expenses through Withhold Tax Allowance and Relocation Income Tax Allowance payments.

There remains confusion among employees on how to access those benefits. The Federal Education Association said in a Nov. 23 statement that there is a “lack of clear information being presented” to employees about both programs.



## Rubio: No plan to oust president of Venezuela

*The Washington Post*

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., disputed Sunday that the United States would participate in a coup to oust Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, saying he doesn't know of any U.S. leaders who are calling for one.

The remarks came four days after the Trump administration recognized Venezuelan National Assembly leader Juan Guaido as interim president after his supporters asserted that the election last year that kept Maduro in power was illegitimate. Many other U.S. allies followed suit, including Canada.

But the history of U.S. military involvement in Latin America, along with reports that the administration met last year with Venezuelan officers who wanted to plot a coup before rebuffing them, has raised questions about whether the White House would direct a military intervention again.

President Donald Trump has said that "all options" are on the table, while defense officials have sought to tamp down speculation that the Pentagon could become involved.

Rubio, speaking on CNN's "State of the Union," said the United States is "simply supporting the democratic institutions" in Venezuela, along with many other countries in the Western Hemisphere.

"This is not the U.S.," he said. "This is Honduras. This is Guatemala. This is Canada, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, et cetera, et cetera. This is not a U.S.-sponsored anything. This is the U.S. supporting the people of Venezuela, who want their constitution and democracy followed. That's a fact."

Administration officials, however, have openly called for Maduro's departure. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has additionally called on the Venezuelan military to stand on the side of "democracy," while Vice President Mike Pence has issued a video that supports anti-Maduro street protests.

## Poll shows most disapprove of president's foreign policy

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — A majority of Americans disapprove of the way President Donald Trump is handling U.S. foreign policy and about half think the country's global standing will deteriorate during the next year, according to a new poll that highlighted the nation's partisan divide on foreign issues.

The poll, conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, also found the public split about the president's plan to remove U.S. troops from Syria and possibly Afghanistan — and about a quarter don't have an opinion one way or the other.

Overall, the president receives low marks from the public for his job handling foreign policy — 35 percent approve, while 63 percent disapprove. Like other issues, the partisan divide is startling. While 76 percent of Republicans approve, just 8 percent of Democrats say

the same.

"I just think that anytime you buddy up with Russia or North Korea, it's going to be bad business," said Samantha Flowers, 30, a third-grade teacher from Columbia, Mo.

"Also, the way that he's handling our neighboring countries — Mexico in particular. I think it just goes against our American values in general. We've been a welcoming and compassionate country," she said before starting to recite words emblazoned on the Statue of Liberty, which read in part, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

Richard Cleaveland, 65, a truck driver from Ogden, Utah, disagrees and wholeheartedly backs Trump and his foreign policy.

"I think he's doing a good job with North Korea. He's done better than anybody else has ever done. Nobody else has even got it this far with North Korea,"

he said referring to Trump's meeting last year in Singapore with the North Korean leader to discuss Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program.

Turning to U.S. involvement in foreign wars, the poll showed 39 percent of Americans approve of pulling the 2,000 American troops from Syria and 35 percent say they disapprove. The president's decision is supported by 56 percent of Republicans and 26 percent of Democrats.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,062 adults was conducted Jan. 16 to 20 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points. Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods and later interviewed online or by phone.

## 'Black Panther' SAG win is significant

*Associated Press*

"Black Panther" took the top award at Sunday's 25th Screen Actors Guild Awards in Los Angeles, giving Ryan Coogler's superhero sensation its most significant awards season honor yet and potentially setting up Wakanda for a major role at next month's Academy Awards.

The two leading Oscar nominees — "Roma" and "The Favourite" — were bypassed by the actors guild for a best ensemble field that also included "BlacKkKlansman," "Crazy Rich Asians," "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "A Star Is Born."

Chadwick Boseman tried to put into context the moment for the trailblazing "Black Panther," which also won for its stunt performer ensemble.

"To be young, gifted and black," he said, quoting the

Nina Simone song. "We know what it's like to be told there isn't a screen for you to be featured on, a stage for you to be featured on. ... To be beneath and not above. And that is what we went to work with every day," said Boseman. "We knew that we could create a world that exemplified a world we wanted to see."

The win puts "Black Panther" squarely in contention for best picture at the Academy Awards where it's nominated for seven honors including best picture. In the past decade, the SAG ensemble winner has gone on to win best picture at the Academy Awards half of the time.

In the lead acting categories, Glenn Close and Rami Malek solidified themselves as front-runners with wins that followed their triumphs at the Golden Globes. Close, 71, a seven-time

nominee but never an Oscar winner, won best actress for her performance in "The Wife."

Malek, winning best actor over Christian Bale ("Vice") and Bradley Cooper ("A Star Is Born") for his performance in "Bohemian Rhapsody," seemingly sealed the Oscar many are predicting for him.

More surprising was Emily Blunt's best supporting actress win for her performance in the horror thriller "A Quiet Place." Blunt, also nominated by the guild for her lead performance in "Mary Poppins Returns," was visibly shocked. She wasn't among the Oscar nominees for either film.

"Guys, that truly has blown my slicked hair back," said Blunt, who praised her husband and "A Quiet Place" director John Krasinski as a "stunning filmmaker."

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Man clings to hood of SUV in fit of road rage

**MA** BOSTON — State police said they were called to the Massachusetts Turnpike because a man was clinging to the hood of a moving SUV in an apparent fit of road rage.

Massachusetts State Police responded Friday to Interstate 90 westbound in Weston, where witnesses had gotten the SUV to stop.

Police said Mark Fitzgerald, 37, and Richard Kamrowski, 65, got into a minor crash, then Kamrowski got onto Fitzgerald's SUV.

Police said Fitzgerald traveled at speeds of up to 70 miles per hour, stopping and accelerating when Kamrowski didn't get off.

Fitzgerald, of Lynn, is charged with assault with a dangerous weapon and other violations. Kamrowski, of Framingham, was charged with disorderly conduct.

## Using 'The Office,' man revives woman

**AZ** TUCSON — A classic scene from a decade-old episode of "The Office" helped an Arizona mechanic save an unconscious woman's life.

The Arizona Daily Star reported that Cross Scott, 21, found a woman locked in her car and broke in, finding she wasn't breathing.

He doesn't have any emergency training but thought of the show where Steve Carell's character does CPR to the tune of the Bee Gees' song "Stayin' Alive." The song has the correct tempo for chest compressions.

Within a minute, the woman was breathing and she was taken to a hospital and later released.

## Police: Woman who hit squad car drunk

**WI** BEAVER DAM — Authorities said a woman, 46, was driving drunk when she collided with a Dodge County Sheriff's Office squad car.

WITI-TV reported that a Dodge County deputy was stopped to help a disabled semi-trailer early Saturday morning when the woman rear-ended the squad car while the deputy was inside of the vehicle. The woman sustained minor injuries and was treated at the scene by paramedics. The deputy was not hurt.

Authorities said the woman was arrested for operating while intoxicated and inattentive driving.

## Police escort buses after objects thrown

**OR** WILLAMINA — Several vehicles, including log trucks and school buses, have been damaged by someone throwing objects at them near the Oregon town of Willamina.

The Oregon State Police is looking into at least five such incidents, most of them reported within the last week, Portland television station KATU reported.

Police escorted school buses in Willamina on Friday after the district reported rocks, apples and other objects being thrown at the buses while they were carrying students.

## Puppy shot in head with an arrow survives

**SC** SWANSEA — Authorities said a 5-month-old puppy survived after showing up on its owner's porch in South Carolina with an arrow through its head.

Calhoun County deputies said the owner let the dog out of the house without a leash and "Loca" returned with an arrow that had entered the front of its head near the snout.

The owner rushed the dog to a Columbia veterinarian.

Technician Meghan Ames said the puppy is recovering.

## Vets reposition puppy's front paws

**OK** STILLWATER — A puppy born with his front paws facing up instead of down and unable to walk is recovering after surgery at Oklahoma State University's Center for Veterinary Health Sciences.

Dr. Erik Clary said Friday that he's pleased with the progress of the 10-week-old dog, named Milo. The 8-pound puppy had elbow surgery Jan. 9 in Stillwater.

Clary said Milo, apparently part beagle and coon hound, suffered from congenital elbow dislocation. Clary inserted pins in Milo's elbows to realign the joints and help the dog eventually learn to walk.

## Coke pays \$1M to cover museum fees

**GA** ATLANTA — Officials say Coca-Cola Co. is paying for a month of free public admission to the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta.

Coca-Cola Foundation President Helen Smith Price told news outlets a \$1 million donation to the center will allow free admission through February. Center Interim CEO Brian Tolleson said the grant will help the museum share civil rights history with Super Bowl visitors and others.

Atlanta-based Coke isn't an official sponsor of the game

that will be played Feb. 3 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. But its World of Coca-Cola museum is next to the center, which is about a mile from the stadium.

## 200 pounds of pot seized at illegal party

**MA** SPRINGFIELD — Police in Springfield said they seized 200 pounds of marijuana at an illegal party held at a strip club.

The Republican newspaper reported that police said 150 customers and 30 to 40 marijuana vendors attended the party at Mardi Gras in Springfield on Friday.

Springfield Mayor Domenic Sarno has called for disciplinary hearings to consider revoking the establishment's licenses.

Dan Kelly, attorney for Mardi Gras Entertainment as well as its president, said Saturday it's a large building with multiple tenants and open warehouse space. He said it's inaccurate to say the drug bust was at the club.

## Former home of Johnny Cash for sale

**TN** HENDERSONVILLE — A four-acre lakefront property near Nashville where Johnny Cash and his wife June Carter Cash lived is for sale for \$3.9 million.

The house on the property where Cash lived burned down in 2007, but the estate includes a swimming pool, a tennis court and a 546-square-foot log cabin. The couple lived there for 35 years.

The Tennessean reported the Cashes lived on the Hendersonville property until they died four months apart in 2003. A fire in 2007 destroyed their 14,000-square-foot house.

From wire reports

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# After tough year, Gronk making impact

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Even as Rob Gronkowski turned in a vintage performance with his big grabs down the stretch in the AFC championship game, the veteran Patriots tight end also did plenty of dirty work.

Gronk the blocker? The label didn't fit in the past. But this season, one of the best receiving tight ends in NFL history and Tom Brady's longtime favorite target made some big contributions to the Patriots' rejuvenated running game.

"Whatever coaches call, whatever plays we call ... blocking, receiving, no matter what is, whatever play is called, just got to go out there and do your job," Gronkowski said.

It was an underwhelming season statistically for Gronkowski, who contemplated retirement after last year's Super Bowl loss. He appeared in 13 games as he fought through nagging back and ankle injuries, finishing with 47 catches for 682 yards and three touchdowns.

But Gronk did more of the things that don't appear on the stat sheet. And he's

fine with that as he heads into a Super Bowl matchup with the Rams eyeing the third ring in his nine-year career.

Brady said Gronkowski's ability as a blocker might be the most underrated part of his game.

"He's one of the most dominant blocking tight ends in the league," Brady said. "He's a threat anytime he's out there."

One of his biggest plays in the Patriots' overtime victory over Kansas City for the AFC title came in the run game.

After the Chiefs took their first lead, New England responded with a 10-play, 75-yard drive that ended with Gronkowski pushing aside Kansas City linebacker Justin Houston on fourth-and-inches and allowing Sony Michel to jog into the end zone from 10 yards out.

Gronk's future beyond this season is once again an open question. He will be entering the final season of a six-year contract in 2019 and is scheduled to make about \$9 million. Before the season, he acknowledged he would like to rework the deal, and he skipped a voluntary offseason workout. He later had bonus incentives added to his

contract.

He'd be missed if he doesn't return. After a quiet performance in the Patriots' divisional playoff win over the Chargers, Gronkowski was targeted a season-high 11 times against the Chiefs, catching six passes for 79 yards and coming up with big grabs down the stretch.

Brady was 5-for-5 on third down in the fourth quarter and overtime, with two of those passes going to Gronkowski. Those catches, for 25 and 15 yards, set up the go-ahead and game-winning touchdowns.

It was nothing new for Gronk, 29, who entered the season with 75 postseason receptions — the most by a tight end in NFL history. In the regular season, he has the most TD catches thrown by Brady to any player (78).

The Rams' defense was the second-worst in the league this season, giving up 1,075 yards receiving to opposing tight ends. It should mean plenty of opportunities for Gronkowski to show the combination of size, strong hands and agility that has made him a matchup nightmare throughout his career.

## AFC wins third consecutive Pro Bowl

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — The Pro Bowl has long been considered a laughable representation of the NFL game.

It reached a new level of comedy Sunday as several players swapped positions during the annual all-star game.

Jacksonville Jaguars cornerback Jalen Ramsey caught a touchdown pass in the final minute, capping a dominant performance for the AFC defense in a 26-7 victory over the NFC in steady rain. It was the third consecutive victory for the AFC, all of them at Camping World Stadium.

The last two were played in sloppy weather, with the latest one also coming amid temperatures in the mid-50s. It was far from ideal conditions, raising speculation about the game's future in Orlando, but fairly fitting considering the effort players provided. It was two-hand touch most of the day, with officials blowing

plays dead at the slightest hint of contact.

"Who cares, man?" New York Jets safety Jamal Adams said. "At the end of the day, we're like little kids out there just playing in the mud, playing in the rain."

Regardless of the elements, the AFC made the plays the NFC didn't.

Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes completed an 18-yard touchdown pass to Indianapolis' Eric Ebron on the opening possession, helping Mahomes earn the offensive Most Valuable Player award. Mahomes pleaded with voters to give it to Chiefs fullback Anthony Sherman, who caught three passes for 92 yards and ran for a score.

"Sherman had my vote. Sherman had my vote," said Mahomes, who completed 7 of 14 passes for 156 yards. "I thought I told everybody on the camera. He made some plays out there. For a fullback, we have one of the best in the

league so I'm always happy to try to get him a little vote like that."

Adams, who made headlines for sacking the New England Patriots mascot during a Pro Bowl skills competition, was named the defensive MVP thanks to an interception and a sack.

"It's a great achievement, but the main thing was to come out here and get the victory," Adams said. "That was the main thing, just to get the money, man. That's what we wanted."

Mahomes and Adams each got a luxury vehicle.

AFC players will get \$67,000 each for the victory, \$8,000 more than the guys who lose the Super Bowl next week in Atlanta. The Pro Bowl losers will get \$39,000 each.

The AFC defenders earned their share of the pot. The conference allowed the NFC 148 total yards and 10 first downs while intercepting three passes and notching seven sacks.

Ramsey got in on offense late, catching a 6-yard slant pass from Houston's Deshaun Watson with 19 seconds remaining. Los Angeles Chargers rookie safety Derwin James failed to haul in the 2-point conversion.

"Man, me and Deshaun, that's my brother from another mother," Ramsey said. "We've been plotting and scheming all week, manifesting, and it just came about."

New York Giants running back Saquon Barkley, Dallas running back Ezekiel Elliott, Tampa Bay receiver Mike Evans and New Orleans' Alvin Kamara all got in on defense for the NFC. Evans notched an interception.

The AFC led 20-0 early in the fourth quarter, looking like it might record the first shutout in Pro Bowl history. But Dallas' Dak Prescott found Atlanta's Austin Hooper for a 20-yard score on fourth down with 9:09 remaining.

The NFC had plenty of chances before that.

## Briefly

# 5-time All-Star Davis seeks trade

Associated Press

Anthony Davis wants out of New Orleans.

And the NBA might soon see a blockbuster trade come together.

The five-time All-Star has told the Pelicans that he wants to be traded to a championship-contending team and will not sign an extension with New Orleans, agent Rich Paul told The Associated Press on Monday.

Davis is having the best season of his career, averaging 29.3 points and 13.3 rebounds per game. He'll almost certainly become a six-time All-Star later this week when the NBA announces the full rosters for this year's game that will be played Feb. 17 in Charlotte.

Now it's unclear if Davis will be there as a member of the Pelicans or not. The trade deadline is Feb. 7. The Pelicans did not have any immediate comment. They next play Tuesday at Houston.

Davis' future has long been in question. He's an elite superstar on a team that hasn't gotten past the second round of the playoffs since he's been in New Orleans — and in four of his first six full seasons, the Pelicans didn't qualify for the postseason at all. They entered Monday 13th in the Western Conference standings, six games out of the final playoff spot with 32 games remaining.

His telling New Orleans that he wants out is the latest power move by a star player who wants to get traded, following a path now similar to what Kawhi Leonard did when he wanted to be traded by San Antonio and what Paul George did when he decided it was time to move on from Indiana. Telling the Pelicans that he won't resign with them provides a blunt message: Move me, or lose me for nothing.

But New Orleans, which controls Davis' contract through

the 2019-20 season, has been steadfast for months. The Pelicans have no desire to move their best player, who is in line to sign a \$240 million, five-year extension in 2020.

"We're not trading him," Pelicans coach Alvin Gentry said last month, one of many times he's addressed the topic. "I can say that to the world. We're not going to trade him, no matter what. That's not an option."

## Chen repeats as US men's skating champ

DETROIT — Nathan Chen was skating up to collect his medal — gold, of course — when he tripped on the small carpet in front of the podium and nearly fell.

So maybe he's not perfect.

Until then, there was hardly any hint of a misstep for Chen, who lived up to his own impressive standard by winning his third straight title at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships. The reigning world champion, Chen was the biggest star at this competition coming in, and he won the final event Sunday with a score of 342.22 — over 58 points more than runner-up Vincent Zhou. Jason Brown was third.

## Berhalter gets first win as US men's coach

GLENDAL, Ariz. — Gregg Berhalter ushered in a new era for the U.S. men's national team with an attacking style and a new captain.

A lopsided win was a great way to get started, even in a match involving mostly second- and third-stringers.

Berhalter became the third U.S. coach in the modern era to start with a win, Djordje Mihailovic and Christian Ramirez scored in their national team debuts and the Americans beat Panama 3-0 Sunday night in an exhibition.

## NBA roundup

# Raptors, Leonard spoil Doncic's historic night

Associated Press

DALLAS — Even as a 19-year-old rookie, Dallas' Luka Doncic continues to make his case for an NBA All-Star spot.

Kawhi Leonard is already one, and came through to spoil Doncic's career-best game Sunday night.

Leonard, voted last week to start the All-Star Game for the third time, scored 33 points to help the Toronto Raptors overcome a triple-double from the Dallas rookie in a 123-120 win over the Mavericks.

Doncic, who will turn 20 on Feb. 28, finished with a career-high 35 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists to become the first teenager in NBA history with two triple-doubles.

However, he and his teammates faltered down the stretch, losing a seven-point, fourth-quarter lead after coming back from 12 down at halftime.

"For me, what matters is the victory," Doncic said. "[The triple-double] was special for sure, but it would be even more if we got the win."

Pascal Siakam's three-point play snapped a 108-all tie with 3:56 remaining as the Raptors recovered from a poor third quarter and a 92-85 deficit early in the fourth.

Danny Green's floater in the lane extended Toronto's lead to 116-112 with 1:34 remaining. Harrison Barnes missed two critical free throws for the Mavericks, and Leonard scored on a driving lay-up and then converted a free throw after a turnover by Doncic. The Raptors iced the game at the line.

**Thunder 118, Bucks 112:** Paul George had 36 points and 13 rebounds, and host Oklahoma City beat Milwaukee for its fifth straight victory.

Russell Westbrook had 13 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists for his 16th triple-double of the season and No. 120 for his career. Jerami Grant added 16 points, helping the Thunder knock off the team with the

NBA's best record.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 27 points and 18 rebounds for Milwaukee, and Khriston Middleton added 22 points.

**Rockets 103, Magic 98:** James Harden scored 40 points, and host Houston rallied for the win in Chris Paul's return from a hamstring injury.

Houston trailed by as many as 16. The game was tied with about 75 seconds left when a three-pointer by Harden put the Rockets up 98-95. Terrence Ross missed a three on the other end and Harden added a step-back jumper with 30 seconds left.

**Jazz 125, Timberwolves 111:** Donovan Mitchell had 29 points for surging Utah, and Ricky Rubio added 18 points and eight assists for the visitors.

**Spurs 132, Wizards 119:** LaMarcus Aldridge had 30 points, nine rebounds and six assists, powering host San Antonio to the victory.

**Clippers 122, Kings 108:** Montrezl Harrell scored 25 points, and the host Clippers earned their third consecutive win.

Tobias Harris added 18 points for Los Angeles, which was coming off a 3-1 road trip. Lou Williams had 12 points and 10 assists.

**Heat 106, Knicks 97:** Wayne Ellington scored each of his 19 points in the second half, and the Heat handed the host Knicks their ninth straight loss.

Miami had seven players score in double figures in its second straight win. Dwyane Wade had 15 points and 10 assists.

**Cavaliers 104, Bulls 101:** Jordan Clarkson and Alec Burks each scored 18 points, and the visiting Cavaliers ended a six-game losing streak.

**Lakers 116, Suns 102:** Ivica Zubac and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope each scored 24 points and the short-handed host Lakers led throughout.



# Cline, Purdue knock off No. 6 Michigan St.

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — First, Purdue took a page from Michigan State's playbook.

Then Nojel Eastern rewrote the script.

Ryan Cline scored 17 points and Eastern overcame his season-long free throw troubles by making six straight down the stretch to help the Boilermakers fend off a frantic late charge and hang on for a 73-63 upset Sunday over the sixth-ranked Spartans.

"They kind of get down six or 20 (in road games) and they have you right where they want you," coach Matt Painter said, referring to the Spartans' proclivity to come back. "You're nervous the whole damn time. I was nervous till 30 seconds (left)."

With good reason, too.

Purdue opened with a 19-6 run, extended the margin to 23 midway through the second half before nearly giving it all away during a drought in which it missed eight straight shots. Michigan State took advantage by going on a 24-5 run to cut the deficit to 60-56 with 5:14 to play.

But just when it looked like the Boilermakers (14-6, 7-2 Big Ten) might crack, Eastern, a 50 percent free-throw shooter, was fouled three times in a row. He made all six to give the Boilermakers a 71-60 lead with 2:35 left.

Michigan State (18-3, 9-1) had three significant winning streaks end — a 13-game streak that dated to November, a 21-game regular-season streak against conference foes and a 12-game road streak in league play.

To coach Tom Izzo, the obvious was difference: Purdue played better defense, was better in the paint and had a better supporting cast.

"The stars didn't beat us in the first half, the bench did and that's a great tribute to Purdue and what they're doing with the development of their bench," he said. "Our ineptness on the boards was probably the difference in the game."

Purdue had a 42-33 rebounding edge including 16-9 on the offensive end. The Boilermakers have won four in a row and 12 straight at home.

Preseason All-American Carsen Edwards scored just 14 points. He was averaging 24.7.

But the Boilermakers made up for it by getting five three-pointers and four assists from Cline, three threes and 11 points from Aaron Wheeler, 10 points and eight rebounds from Matt Haarms. Edwards had four rebounds, three assists and three steals and Eastern wound up with 12 points — the last six at the line.

"You know if he misses a couple front

ends there, you're in a different position and you have a different feeling," Painter said.

Cassius Winston had 23 points, seven rebounds and eight assists to lead the Spartans. Matt McQuaid had 12 points in a game Michigan State never led.

Despite shooting poorly and getting beat at their own game, the Spartans showed why they are one of America's best teams. Sure, they're now tied with Michigan for the conference lead. And yes, they'll fall in the polls after this loss but it shouldn't be a precipitous drop.

The Boilermakers have been playing good basketball for a while — and now they have the signature win they needed to seal the perception. By getting key contributions out of Edwards' supporting cast, they moved within a game of the Big Ten lead and should reappear in the Top 25 soon.

Michigan State suffered its first loss in 61 days after posting an average victory margin of 16.8 points. The Spartans scored 19 points in the first half, surpassing their previous low mark for scoring in a half. They had 28 in the second half at Florida on Dec. 8.

The Boilermakers now have 12 wins against top 10 teams at Mackey Arena, with seven of those coming against Michigan State.

## Top 25 roundup

### No. 17 Houston pulls away late against Tulsa for 20th win

Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. — Nate Hinton and No. 17 Houston heated up in a hurry.

Hinton hit a tough three-pointer as the Cougars broke away late in the first half, becoming the first Division I men's team to reach 20 wins this season by beating Tulsa 77-65 Sunday.

Armoni Brooks scored 22 points, including six three-pointers, for the Cougars (20-1, 7-1 American Athletic Conference).

After a fairly even first half, Houston made four three-pointers in a two-minute burst to grab a 33-21 lead. Hinton had a contested three and a pair of free throws in the final minute as the Cougars increased their

lead to 45-29 at the break.

"We can do that," Houston coach Kelvin Sampson said. "We've got guys who can really shoot it."

Fabian White had 14 points and Hinton came off the bench to add 13. Chris Harris Jr. had 10 rebounds and Brady Breanon nine.

"Our young guys are really coming on," Sampson said. "When they play and practice that hard, you've got to reward them. Hinton did a really nice job tonight."

DaQuan Jeffries led Tulsa (12-9, 2-7) with 17 points as the Golden Hurricane lost for the fifth time in six games.

**No. 18 Villanova 80, Seton Hall 52:** Phil Booth hit seven three-pointers and scored 25 points, helping the host Wild-

cats to their eighth consecutive victory.

Villanova (16-4, 7-0 Big East) made 17 threes and is rolling toward another conference crown under coach Jay Wright. The national champions still have some kinks to work out to become a deep threat in March — namely, finding a third scorer — but again should be a low single-digit seed in the NCAA Tournament.

The Pirates (12-8, 3-5) remain 0-for-Nova on the road since 1994. The Wildcats have won 17 straight games on their home court against Seton Hall (15-0 Pavilion; 2-0 Wells Fargo Center) and were never threatened in this one.

Myles Cale led Seton Hall with 14 points. The Pirates shot 35 percent from the floor.

**Minnesota 92, No. 19 Iowa 87:** Jordan Murphy and Amir Coffey each scored 23 points to help the host Golden Gophers hang on for the win.

Freshman Gabe Kalscheur had 19 points, his most in a Big Ten game, to help push Minnesota (15-5, 5-4) past the Hawkeyes (16-5, 5-5) into sixth place in a crowded conference race despite late free-throw struggles that nearly derailed their upset.

Luka Garza matched his career high with 25 points and Isaiah Moss pitched in 23 points on 6-for-10 shooting from three-point range, but the Hawkeyes didn't bounce back with much energy from their 15-point loss at home to sixth-ranked Michigan State three nights earlier.