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Trump: Iran ‘appears to be standing down’ after attack

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
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Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Iran “appears to be standing down” after launching a missile attack on bases used by Americans in Iraq.

The development “is a good thing for all parties concerned and a good thing for the world,” Trump said Wednesday, seeming to indicate the U.S. would not retaliate for the strike.

The president also said no American troops were injured or killed when Iran launched more than a dozen ballistic missiles in retaliation for the U.S. drone attack that killed one of Iran’s top military leaders.

“I am pleased to inform you, the American people should be extremely grateful and happy no Americans were harmed in last night’s attack by the Iranian regime,” Trump said Wednesday morning in a White House address, flanked by his top national security officials. “We suffered no casualties — all our soldiers are safe and only minimal damage was sustained at our bases.”

Trump also said no Iraqis were injured or killed.

Trump vowed Iran would not be allowed to pursue nuclear weapons, touting the strength of U.S. forces and calling on other nations to disown and renegotiate the 2015 agreement that limited Iran’s nuclear programs, which he chose to walk away from in 2018.

“We must work together to make a deal with Iran that makes the world a safer and more peaceful place,” Trump said. “We also must make a

deal that allows Iran to thrive and prosper and take advantage of its enormous untapped potential. Iran can be a great country.”

The president said he would ask NATO to increase its involvement in the Middle East.

Trump also said the U.S. would levy more sanctions against Iran until it “changes its behavior.”

Pentagon officials said late Tuesday that more than a dozen short-range ballistic missiles had struck al Asad Air Base and facilities used by U.S. troops in Kurdish northern Iraq. Iraqi and other officials said they had received early warning the Iranians would launch the attack, providing U.S. and other military troops at the bases time to prepare.

Despite apparent measures to limit the impact of the missile strikes, Iran claimed high casualties in the attacks. Its elite military force, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which launched the missiles, claimed 80 American troops were killed and another 200 injured, according to Fars News, an Iranian state-run news service closely tied to the IRGC.

The attack, which began at about 1:40 a.m. in Iraq, targeted two Iraqi bases that house U.S. forces — six missiles struck al Asad Air Base in western Iraq’s Anbar province and one hit in Irbil in northern Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdish region. Several missiles failed to hit their target, U.S. officials said.

The Iranians named the attack “Martyr Soleimani,” claiming responsibility for it immediately and announcing it was the promised retaliation for the death of Maj. Gen. Qas-

sem Soleimani, commander of Iran’s Quds Force. Soleimani was among the closest advisers to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader, and was revered among Iran-backed forces in the Middle East.

Soleimani, who was killed by a drone-fired missile Friday at the international airport in Baghdad, was responsible for Iran’s operations outside its borders, including training and coordinating actions of Tehran’s proxy forces in nations including Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon. The U.S. had long labeled Soleimani a terrorist responsible for hundreds of U.S. troop deaths in Iraq. Top officials, including U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper, said his death was necessary to at least partially thwart plans for an imminent attack on Americans in the Middle East.

Esper and Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were at the Pentagon during the Iranian attacks and called Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and national security officials, according to a defense official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the attacks. Esper and Milley went to the White House on Tuesday evening to brief Trump and Pence further on the attacks and discuss the situation, the defense official said.

Esper also called several senior congressional members to update them on what occurred, while other senior Defense Department officials made calls to regional and NATO allies to discuss the attack, according to the defense official.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

US officials: Iran strikes deliberately missed GIs

Bloomberg

Iran apparently intended to avoid U.S. casualties when it launched more than a dozen missiles at U.S.-Iraqi airbases in retaliation for an American airstrike that killed a top Iranian general, according to U.S. officials with knowledge of the matter.

U.S. assessments of the strikes indicate Iran may have been aiming at unpopulated areas of the sprawling al Asad Air Base, because precision guided missiles struck sandy areas, said one of the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the information wasn’t yet publicly announced. The absence of U.S. casualties could mitigate the potential for a dramatic escalation.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps claimed responsibility for the barrage, which the Pentagon said was launched from Iran, and warned that additional operations were being prepared. At the same time, there were signs that both sides wanted to pull back from the brink of conflict, with Iran’s foreign minister saying his country didn’t wish to go to war.

In an address Wednesday, Trump seemed to indicate the United States would not retaliate for the missile strike.

Iran has for years operated a carefully calibrated strategy of attacks, often via proxies, in the Middle East, that preserves its influence without drawing major retaliation.

Iran “needed to do something quick,” said Kamran Bokhari, founding director of the Center for Global Policy in Washington. “This is a placeholder move and a low-cost one.”

Yokota not faulted on groundwater issues

BY SETH ROBSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Contaminated groundwater has been detected near the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo, but officials found no evidence the pollutants came from inside the base, a Tokyo Metropolitan Government official said Wednesday.

Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) — synthetic chemicals found in firefighting foam and other products — were detected in two wells near the base during a survey from December 2018 to January 2019, said Aya Kono, an official with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Bureau of Social

Welfare and Public Health.

The contamination was about 19 times the level set by a U.S. drinking water health advisory, the Asahi newspaper reported Monday. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends limiting the combined presence of PFOS and PFOA in water to 70 parts per trillion, according to a factsheet on the agency's website.

Surveyors checked water for PFOS and PFOA at 61 sites in western Tokyo, including spots near Yokota in the cities of Fussa, Tachikawa, Akishima and Musashimurayama, after reports that firefighting foam had leaked on the base between 2010 and 2017, Kono said.

However, she said determining the origin of the pollution

is difficult since those compounds are widely used and underground water flows are complex.

The wells where the chemicals were detected do not supply drinking water, she added.

"We couldn't draw a conclusion that it was or was not caused by Yokota Air Base," Kono said, noting that pollution was also detected in six other places that were not close to the base.

Tokyo officials hope to receive more details from the base to be able to determine the pollution source, said the metropolitan government's director of military facilities relations, Jun Sakurai.

U.S. forces in Japan haven't used aqueous firefighting foam

in training since 2016, said 374th Airlift Wing spokeswoman Kaori Matsukasa.

The chemicals found in the wells have been used for years in a variety of products such as carpets, clothing and paper packaging for food and cookware to make them oil- and water-repellent, she added.

"U.S. Forces rigorously manage the stored firefighting foam within U.S. facilities and areas, including Yokota Air Base," she said.

U.S. officials on Okinawa reported "minimal to no impact" on the environment from the release of firefighting foam at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma when auxiliary power in an aircraft hangar was inadvertently switched on Dec. 5.

Walmart to change policies after denying reservist a job

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Walmart will revise its hiring policies and pay an undisclosed amount of back wages to a Navy reservist who said the retail giant refused to hire her three years ago because of her military duties.

The changes and back pay are part of a deal reached this week to settle a lawsuit brought by the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office on behalf of Petty Officer 3rd Class Lindsey Hunger, who said the retail giant refused to hire her at a store in Grand Junction, Colo., after she mentioned she would need time off for Navy duty.

Hunger said that when she applied in 2016 for a job, she told personnel coordinator Kathleen Kelsey in a phone interview that she would need two weeks off to complete her mandatory annual training, the court complaint said.

Kelsey "responded that summer was a busy time at Walmart, the store needed someone who would be there, and that Walmart could not support Hunger's absence for two weeks," court documents stated.

Hunger was not hired and Walmart

never called her back to discuss employment, the complaint said.

When the Department of Labor investigated Hunger's claim, Kelsey told investigators that she did not recall speaking with Hunger, the complaint said.

The lawsuit brought on Hunger's behalf says Walmart violated the 1994 Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. As part of the settlement, Walmart will revise its hiring policies to prevent discrimination "based on their military service (including required military training obligations) or membership in the uniformed services," the Justice Department said.

The retail chain also said it would provide training "on employees' and service members' rights and obligations" under USERRA to staff in the store where Hunger was refused a job.

"Walmart is one of the nation's largest employers and scores of dedicated service members all across the United States will benefit from this settlement and Walmart's agreement to update its employment and training practices," said Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband, of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

Lockheed's '19 F-35 production exceeds goals, lowers costs

The Dallas Morning News

Lockheed Martin is making good on its commitments to the U.S. military and other customers, delivering more F-35 aircraft than originally planned, according to a release last week.

The defense and aerospace company delivered its 134th F-35 aircraft of 2019 on Dec. 30, exceeding its joint government and industry commitment of 131 for the year. The 134 aircraft delivered in 2019 is a 47% increase over production in 2018, according to Lockheed Martin.

The jets — the company's largest source of profit — are manufactured at Lockheed's Fort Worth, Texas, assembly plant.

The 134th aircraft is an F-35B, a variant that specializes in short takeoffs and vertical landings, that was delivered to the U.S. Marine Corps. The program has produced 490 aircraft and surpassed 240,000 cumulative flight hours, according to Lockheed Martin.

The defense company says it lowered the cost of an F-35A to \$77.9 million, meeting a goal set with the Pentagon to cut costs below \$80 million a year early.

McConnell says he has the votes to set rules for trial

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he has the votes to start President Donald Trump's impeachment trial as soon as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi releases the documents, winning support from GOP senators to postpone a decision on calling witnesses.

The announcement Tuesday was significant, enabling McConnell to bypass for now Democratic demands for new testimony as he launches the third impeachment trial in the nation's history. It could begin this week if Pelosi sends the articles of impeachment to the Senate.

But Pelosi gave little indication of her next move. She cut short an impeachment discussion with her leadership team Tuesday night at the Capitol

when an aide handed her a note about the crisis unfolding in the Middle East. She asked Democrats to "pray," according to a lawmaker at the closed-door session.

Pelosi appears in no rush to transmit the articles of impeachment as Democrats push to hear from more witnesses but McConnell focuses Republicans on a strategy for speedy acquittal. The Senate can't start the proceedings until the charges against Trump are sent.

"We have the votes," McConnell told reporters about his proposal that would set the rules for a trial and would be modeled after President Bill Clinton's impeachment 20 years ago. He said the question of new witnesses and documents will be addressed later "and not before the trial begins."

The contours of a Senate trial have been in dispute for weeks.

Pelosi is delaying transmission of the articles as Democrats press for testimony from former national security adviser John Bolton and other new witnesses.

"Sadly, Leader McConnell has made clear that his loyalty is to the President and not the Constitution," Pelosi wrote to colleagues late Tuesday. She said the process he is outlining "is not only unfair but designed to deprive Senators and the American people of crucial documents and testimony."

Trump faces charges that he abused the power of the presidency by pressuring Ukraine's new leader to investigate Democrats, using as leverage \$400 million in military assistance that is critical for the ally as it counters Russia at its border.

The funding for Ukraine was eventually released but only after Congress intervened.

GOP's Hunter resigns after conviction

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Republican Rep. Duncan Hunter submitted his resignation Tuesday, one month after pleading guilty to a corruption charge, leaving vacant one of the GOP's few remaining House seats in heavily Democratic California.

Hunter's departure effective Jan. 13 ends his family's political dynasty in which he and his father, Duncan L. Hunter, represented the San Diego County district for nearly 30 years. The combat Marine veteran — a staunch supporter of President Donald Trump — served 11 years in Congress.

His two-page letter of resignation — one version addressed to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and another to California Gov. Gavin Newsom — lists his accomplishments and doesn't mention his criminal conviction. Newsom has not said whether he will order a special election or leave the seat open until a successor emerges from the November general election.

Hunter, 43, gave no reason for resigning in his letter, instead offering a sweep of his achievements as a Marine and a six-term congressman.

"During my time in Congress, I had the privilege of helping thousands of individuals in my district — from making sure veterans received the benefits they earned, to helping Social Security and Medicare recipients cut through red tape, to assisting immigrants seeking legal citizenship, and countless others going up against the IRS, ATF or other government agencies," he wrote.

Hunter pleaded guilty Dec. 3 to a single charge of conspiring with his wife to illegally spending at least \$150,000 in campaign funds on personal expenses. Among the improper spending were a birthday gathering for his young daughter at a posh California hotel and social outing with friends at a French bistro in Washington.

He is scheduled to be sentenced March 17. Prosecutors have said they will ask for no more than a year of jail time.

Dem establishment fears Sanders' win

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Increasingly alarmed that Bernie Sanders could become their party's presidential nominee, establishment-minded Democrats are warning primary voters that the self-described democratic socialist would struggle to defeat President Donald Trump and hurt the party's chances in premier House, Senate and governors' races.

The urgent warnings come as Sanders shows new signs of strength on the ground in the first two states on the presidential primary calendar, Iowa and New Hampshire, backed by a dominant fundraising operation. The Vermont senator has largely escaped close scrutiny over the last year as his rivals doubted the quirky 78-year-old's ability to win the nomination. But less than a month before Iowa's kickoff caucuses, the doubters are being forced to take Sanders seriously.

Former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, previously a senior aide to President Barack Obama, warned Democrats that Sanders' status as a democratic socialist and his unwavering support for "Medicare for All" won't play well among swing voters in the states that matter most in 2020.

"You need a candidate with a message that can help us win swing voters in battleground states,"

Emanuel said in an interview. "The degree of difficulty dramatically increases under a Bernie Sanders candidacy. It just gets a lot harder."

The increasingly vocal concerns are coming from a number of political veterans tied to the Obama administration and the 2020 field's moderate wing, including those backing former Vice President Joe Biden, former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Colorado Sen. Michael Bennet.

Sanders' chief strategist Jeff Weaver dismissed the growing criticism as a reflection of the strength of his candidacy.

"People in establishment Washington are terrified of Bernie Sanders," Weaver said. "The truth of the matter is their centrist tacking over the years has led us to the place where someone like Donald Trump can get elected."

Several Sanders critics noted that he has largely escaped intense scrutiny throughout the campaign, in part because some assumed that Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, another progressive firebrand, was a stronger candidate who would cannibalize his support. With Warren's candidacy struggling to maintain momentum, however, those assumptions are now being questioned.

Ukrainian plane crash near Tehran kills 176

Associated Press

SHAHEDSHAHR, Iran — A Ukrainian passenger jet carrying 176 people crashed Wednesday, just minutes after taking off from the Iranian capital's main airport, turning farmland on the outskirts of Tehran into fields of flaming debris and killing all on board.

The crash of Ukraine International Airlines came hours after Iran launched a ballistic missile attack on Iraqi bases housing U.S. soldiers, but Iranian officials said they suspected a mechanical issue brought down the 3½-year-old Boeing 737-800 aircraft. Ukrainian officials initially agreed, but later backed away and declined to offer a cause while the investigation is ongoing.

The plane carried 167 passengers and nine crew members from different nations. Ukraine's foreign minister, Vadym Prystaiko, said that there were 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians and 11 Ukrainians on board — the Ukrainian nationals included two passengers and the nine crew. There were also 10 Swedish, four Afghan, three German and three British nationals, he said.

Airline officials said most of the passengers were en route to the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, transiting through there to other destinations. Staff at the Boryspil airport in Kyiv told The Associated Press that passengers on this flight are usually Iranian students returning to Ukraine after winter holidays.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelens-

kiy extended his condolences to the families of the victims. His office said he had cut his visit to Oman short and was returning to Kyiv because of the crash. The country's Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk confirmed the casualty toll.

"Our task is to establish the cause of the crash of the Boeing and provide all necessary help to the families of the victims," said parliament speaker, Dmytro Razumkov, in a Facebook statement.

Ukraine International Airlines said it had indefinitely suspended flights to Tehran after the crash. "It was one of the best planes we had, with an amazing, reliable crew," Yevhen Dykhne, president of the Ukraine International Airlines, said at a briefing following the crash.

Puerto Ricans feel powerless after earthquakes

Associated Press

GUANICA, Puerto Rico — Cars, cots and plastic chairs became temporary beds for hundreds of families who lost their homes in southwest Puerto Rico as a flurry of earthquakes struck the island, one of them the strongest in a century.

The magnitude 6.4 quake that struck before dawn on Tuesday killed one person, injured nine others and knocked out power across the U.S. territory, and a majority of Puerto Ricans remained without electricity early Wednesday.

In addition, nearly 750 people were staying in government shelters in the island's southwest region as Gov. Wanda Vazquez declared a state of emergency and activated the National Guard.

The hardest hit municipality was the southwest coastal town of Guanica. More than 200 people had taken shelter in a

gymnasium after a quake on Monday, only for the latest shake to damage that structure — forcing them to sleep outside.

Among them was 80-year-old Lupita Martinez, who sat in the dusty parking lot with her 96-year-old husband by her side. He was sleeping in a makeshift bed, a dark blue coat covering him.

"There's no power. There's no water. There is nothing. This is horrible," Martinez said.

The couple was alone, lamenting that their caretaker had disappeared and was not answering their calls. Like many Puerto Ricans affected by the quake, they had children in the U.S. mainland who urged them to move there, at least until the earth stops shaking.

While officials said it was too early to estimate the total damage caused by the string of quakes that began the night of Dec. 28, they said hundreds of homes and

businesses in the southwest region were damaged or destroyed. Just in Guanica, a town of roughly 15,000 people, nearly 150 homes were affected by the quake, along with three schools, including one three-story structure whose first two floors were completely flattened.

In Guanica itself, "We are confronting a crisis worse than Hurricane Maria," said Mayor Santos Seda, referring to the 2017 storm that devastated the island. "I am asking for empathy from the federal government."

He said officials believe the homes of 700 families in his municipality are close to collapsing.

Tuesday's quake was the strongest to hit Puerto Rico since October 1918, when a magnitude 7.3 quake struck near the island's northwest coast, unleashing a tsunami and killing 116 people.

Cancer group finds biggest 1 year drop in death rate

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Researchers on Wednesday reported the largest one-year decline in the U.S. cancer death rate, a drop they credited to advances in lung-tumor treatments.

The overall cancer death rate has been falling about 1.5% a year since 1991. It fell 2.2% from 2016 to 2017, according to the new American Cancer Society report. That's the largest drop ever seen in national cancer statistics going back to 1930, said Rebecca Siegel, the lead author.

"It's absolutely driven by lung cancer," which accounts for about a quarter of all cancer deaths, she said. Take lung cancer out of the mix, and the 2017 rate drop is 1.4%, she added.

Government researchers previously reported a slightly lower drop in the cancer death rate for the same period. But the Cancer Society calculates the death rate differently, and Wednesday said the decline was larger — and record-setting.

Most lung cancer cases are tied to smoking, and decades of declining smoking rates led to falling rates of lung cancer illnesses

and deaths.

But the drop in deaths seems to have been accelerated by recent lung cancer treatment advances, Siegel said.

Experts mainly credit advances in treatment. Topping the list are refinements in surgery, better diagnostic scanning, and more precise use of radiation.

They also celebrate the impact of newer drugs. Genetic testing can now identify specific cancer cell mutations, which allow more targeted therapy using newer pharmaceuticals that are a step beyond traditional chemotherapy.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman accused of throwing human feces

FL OSTEEN — A Florida woman tossed a bucket of human feces at her landlord and somehow ended up with dried excrement smeared all over her own face, authorities said.

Joanne Mercader, 59, initially told deputies that her landlord first assaulted her with excrement.

Mercader eventually told deputies that she had intended to toss a bucket of water on the landlord but she got confused and threw the bucket of feces at her.

The landlord told deputies she was met with the bucket of feces when she opened the door after no one answered. She said she had prearranged the visit to Mercader's home to look at several broken items.

Fake passports used to launder fraud money

MD GREENBELT — Federal officials said a Maryland man used fake passports to facilitate a money laundering conspiracy involving nearly \$1 million.

Arinze Michael Ozor, 36, pleaded guilty to federal charges of forgery or false use of a passport, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland said. He's a dual citizen of the U.S. and Nigeria.

Ozor used at least two passports to open eight so-called "drop accounts," prosecutors said. He took more than \$976,000 from business email compromise schemes and romance fraud schemes and put it in those accounts.

Officials say Ozor used a Ghanaian passport to open five bank accounts and a Beninese passport to open three addi-

tional accounts. The money was then largely sent to other entities involved in the schemes.

Squirrel wrecks home; insurance won't fix it

GA ATLANTA — An Atlanta couple said they came home from a winter vacation to find their house had been ransacked by an unusual suspect: a squirrel.

Kari and Dustin Drees came home from vacation to find their house was a mess, with floors scratched up, baseboards chewed on and a kitchen faucet running, Kari Drees said.

A squirrel had fallen down their chimney and was trapped in the house, defecating and scratching at everything to get out. Eventually it made a nest in the couple's couch.

The couple's home insurance provider, Mercury Insurance, told them it wouldn't cover the damages because "a squirrel is a rodent," which is not covered under the policy.

Officer sorry for faked expletive on coffee cup

KS HERINGTON — A former Kansas police officer who made up a story that a McDonald's employee wrote an expletive and the word "pig" on a coffee cup has apologized.

"I did not consider the magnitude of the decision I was making at the time, and did not display the courage needed to end the situation before it got out of control," William Darling, 23, said in a statement to the Herington Times newspaper.

Herington Chief of Police Brian Hornaday said at the time that the officer told him the coffee cup report was intended as a "joke" that got out of control.

Police seek person who put bedbugs in store

PA EDINBORO — Pennsylvania State Police are searching for the pest who left bedbugs in a Walmart.

A store manager of the Walmart southwest of Erie found a closed pill bottle containing live bugs in a boy's jacket that was for sale, according to police. He threw out the jacket and the container without contacting authorities, but found more insects later.

An Ecolab representative discovered bugs crawling around the men's fitting room the next day and identified them as bloodsucking bedbugs.

A Walmart spokesperson told WENY News that the retail giant is working with law enforcement to find the culprits. The affected area has been treated by a pest-control company and has been blocked off from the public, the station reported.

2 teens suspected of setting Walmart fire

MN HUTCHINSON — Two 13-year-old boys are suspected of setting a fire at a Walmart store in Hutchinson that caused an estimated \$1 million to \$2 million in damage, according to officials.

Hutchinson Police Chief Tom Gifferson told the Star Tribune detectives used the store's surveillance video to identify the boys.

The fire broke out in the men's clothing section. Gifferson said the store's sprinkler system activated, but a small fire that was still burning was extinguished by firefighters.

The store was evacuated and there were no reports of injuries.

Driver shoots children who threw snowballs

WI MILWAUKEE — A driver shot and wounded two children who threw snowballs at a car in Milwaukee, police said.

Officers who responded to a shooting report found the injured children and gave them first aid until they were taken to a hospital.

The children — a 13-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl — suffered non-life-threatening gunshot wounds, police said in a news release.

Lawsuit: Dentist set girl's mouth on fire

NV LAS VEGAS — The parents of a 5-year-old girl said a Las Vegas dentist set their daughter's mouth on fire as she underwent a routine dental procedure.

The parents filed a lawsuit in state district court against Deep Karan Dhillon for injuries the girl suffered, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported.

According to court documents, Dhillon used a tool known as a diamond bur to smooth the girl's teeth while she was under anesthetics. But the lawsuit said the procedure emitted a spark that "caused the throat pack in (the girl's) mouth to ignite and produce a fire" that lasted one or two seconds.

The lawsuit said the girl was rushed to University Medical Center, where she was hospitalized for four days with burns to her palate and lower lip.

The family is seeking more than \$15,000 in damages.

From wire reports

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Trio of Texans powering No. 1 Gonzaga

Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Growing up in the Dallas area, Ryan Woolridge and Admon Gilder once played together on an AAU team as kids.

They are still not entirely sure what age they were — somewhere around 10 or 11 years old — and can barely recall how the other was as a player.

But for Gilder, there is one specific memory he has of Woolridge.

“(Ryan) had very long hair. He had hair down to his back. ... And he’s always been fast. Always,” Gilder recalled.

The pair followed a circuitous path after that to reunite in a place neither could have ever imagined playing basketball. Spokane, Wash., was never on either player’s radar until Gon-

zaga came calling after last season looking to replenish its depleted backcourt.

So the two guards made separate but equally important decisions to play their final year of college basketball for the Bulldogs.

They’re part of a Texas trio playing big roles for the No. 1 team in the country. Woolridge, Gilder and backup forward Drew Timme all left the comforts of Texas — the Dallas area, to be specific — for the chance to play for an elite program.

So far, they’re giving Gonzaga exactly what it needs. Woolridge has started every game, leads the team in assists, is second in minutes played and is scoring 10.5 points per game. Gilder is right behind him at 10.2 per game. Timme is usually Gonzaga’s first post player

off the bench and is averaging 9.2 points per game while shooting nearly 58% from the field. If Timme has a couple of big games scoring, the Zags could have an unheard of seven players averaging in double figures.

While Timme was Gonzaga-bound from the start, the additions of Gilder and Woolridge have become critical for the Zags.

The two guards immediately stepped into important roles for a team lacking depth in the backcourt. The graduation of Josh Perkins and the early departure of Zach Norvell Jr. for the NBA left the Bulldogs extremely thin at the guard spots, and while Gonzaga has guard help coming for the 2020-21 season, it needed to find a solution in the transfer market for this season.

“Gonzaga hit me up and I was like, OK, well I’m gonna, I have to take a visit out there for sure,” Woolridge said. “I think I had taken two visits already, but I was like, I have to take one out there.”

Gilder was hoping just to play again. The former Texas state player of the year as a senior in high school should be done with his college career. Last year at Texas A&M was supposed to be the conclusion.

Gilder missed the start of the season due to a knee injury. He was then diagnosed with a blood clot. He missed his entire senior season with the Aggies and wasn’t cleared to resume basketball activities until after the season was over. And when former Texas A&M coach Billy Kennedy was fired after the season, Gilder decided to move on as well.

College basketball roundup

Maryland downs Ohio State, stays unbeaten at home

Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Anthony Cowan Jr. scored 20 points, and No. 12 Maryland used an unyielding defensive performance to defeat 11th-ranked Ohio State 67-55 Tuesday night and remain unbeaten at home.

Jalen Smith had 11 points and seven rebounds for the Terapins (13-2, 3-1 Big Ten), who have won three straight. Maryland went up by 10 on a three-pointer by Cowan with 12:58 left and cruised to the finish.

Ohio State (11-4, 1-3) shot a miserable 31%, went 5-for-27 from three-point range and committed 14 turnovers.

No. 4 Baylor 57, No. 22 Texas Tech 52: Davion Mitchell scored 14 points, Mark Vital grabbed 13 rebounds and the visiting Bears stretched their winning streak to 11 games with a win over the Red Raiders.

Baylor (12-1, 2-0 Big 12) held on even though its last field goal

came with 3:06 left.

No. 13 Louisville 74, Miami 58: Jordan Nwora scored 19 points, including a critical layup with 5:21 remaining, and Darius Perry and Ryan McMahon followed with key baskets down the stretch to help the host Cardinals pull away from the Hurricanes.

Louisville (12-3, 3-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) bounced back from consecutive losses to ranked foes, at Kentucky and at home to Florida State.

No. 14 Kentucky 78, Georgia 69: Immanuel Quickley’s three-pointer gave his team its first lead of the second half and the visiting Wildcats overcame Anthony Edwards’ 23 points to beat the Bulldogs and continue their domination of the Southeastern Conference rivalry.

Kentucky (11-3, 2-0) trailed 37-31 at halftime before finally taking the lead on Quickley’s three with 8:06 remaining. Georgia (10-4, 0-1) never regained the lead.

No. 16 Villanova 64, Creighton 59: Collin Gillespie and Saddiq Bey made back-to-back three-pointers to give their team the lead for good in the final four minutes, and the visiting Wildcats ended a six-game Big East road losing streak by beating the Bluejays.

Villanova (11-3, 2-1 Big East) overcame another poor shooting performance to end Creighton’s 15-game home winning streak and deny Bluejays coach Greg McDermott his 500th career win. Creighton (12-4, 1-2) has lost two in a row, both to ranked opponents.

Boston College 60, No. 18 Virginia 53: Jared Hamilton hit a tiebreaking three-pointer with 37 seconds left and added a pair of free throws to clinch it as the host Eagles beat the Cavaliers and sent the defending national champions to their first Atlantic Coast Conference loss of the season.

Jay Heath scored 17 for Boston College (9-6, 3-1), which

had not beaten Virginia since 2013. It was BC’s first win over a ranked team since a victory over No. 11 Florida State last January.

Rutgers 72, No. 20 Penn State 61: Ron Harper Jr. had 22 points to help the host Scarlet Knights beat the Nittany Lions.

Rutgers took a lead at 34-33 on a second-chance basket by Myles Johnson with 17:53 to go. It was the Scarlet Knights’ first lead since 4-3, when Harper hit two foul shots from a flagrant foul on Jamari Wheeler. As Rutgers was trying to inbound, Wheeler elbowed Harper in the chin.

Air Force 79, Utah State 60: Ryan Swan had a season-high 31 points with 11 rebounds as the host Falcons topped the Aggies.

A.J. Walker had 12 points for Air Force (8-8, 2-2 Mountain West Conference). Swan was 11-for-16 from the field and made 8 of 11 free throws.

MLB probing Red Sox for sign stealing

Associated Press

BOSTON — Major League Baseball says it will investigate allegations the Boston Red Sox illegally used their video replay room to steal signs between opposing pitchers and catchers during their 2018 World Series championship season.

The claims were made Tuesday in a report by The Athletic. The website cited three anonymous sources it said were with the Red Sox during the 2018 season who said some players visited the replay room during games to get information on sign sequences.

Those sources told The Athletic that the Red Sox weren't able to do it during the post-season because of in-person

monitors used by MLB in those games.

"The Commissioner made clear in a September 15, 2017 memorandum to clubs how seriously he would take any future violation of the regulations regarding use of electronic equipment or the inappropriate use of the video replay room. Given these allegations, MLB will commence an investigation into this matter," the league said in a statement.

The Red Sox said they will cooperate as MLB looks into the allegations.

"We were recently made aware of allegations suggesting the inappropriate use of our video replay room," the team said in a statement. "We take these allegations seriously and

will fully cooperate with MLB as they investigate the matter."

The incident that prompted MLB's 2017 warning from Commissioner Rob Manfred to teams came after the Red Sox were fined an undisclosed sum for "sending electronic communications from their video replay room to an athletic trainer in the dugout" during an August 2017 series against the rival New York Yankees.

The New York Times reported that general manager Brian Cashman filed a complaint with the commissioner's office regarding that incident which included video. The newspaper said it showed a member of Boston's training staff looking at his Apple Watch in the dugout and relaying a message to

players.

Manfred said at the time that future violations would be subject to more serious sanctions, including possible loss of draft picks. He said last month that he has the authority to levy even stiffer penalties.

The latest allegations against the Red Sox come after The Athletic reported last month that the Houston Astros allegedly stole signs during home games of their 2017 World Series championship season by using a camera positioned in center field.

Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora was the bench coach for that team and has spoken with MLB. He has declined further comment on the matter.

Not really a rematch: Texans face new Chiefs squad

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs will welcome the Texans to Arrowhead Stadium on Sunday for the divisional round of the playoffs, a rematch in name only of their Week 6 nail-biter won by Houston on a fourth-quarter touchdown.

The Chiefs are so markedly different that their early October game is nearly meaningless.

The Chiefs were in the midst of a shaky 6-4 start to the season, their defense was still adjusting to Steve Spagnuolo's new 4-3 scheme, and their injury list was about as long as the receipt at a CVS. Five starters were missing because of injuries, including offensive linemen Eric Fisher and Andrew Wylie, and a handful of other key contributors were hobbled by ailments.

Among them was quarterback Patrick Mahomes, who was still dealing with a sore ankle.

Well, the league's reigning MVP is back to putting up mind-blowing stats, the Chiefs' postseason bye has the team

as healthy as it has been all season, and a defense that was once the Achilles' heel has become one of the biggest reasons that Kansas City is among the favorites to reach the Super Bowl in Miami.

"Every team I think changes throughout the season. They develop their personalities," said Chiefs coach Andy Reid, whose team was back at work Monday. "We all have highs and lows. You kind of work through that and here you sit. We're not the same as we were at the beginning. They're not the same as they were at the beginning. So here we go."

The easiest change to parse out between the Chiefs of three months ago and the current bunch is in personnel.

Fisher is back from his groin injury and Wylie from his ankle sprain. Chris Jones is back from his groin injury, fellow defensive tackle Xavier Williams has returned from injured reserve and linebacker Anthony Hitchens — voted one of Kansas City's playoff captains — has returned from yet another groin injury.

Those big numbers that Mahomes has been putting up

have come thanks in part to the emergence of rookie wide receiver Mecole Hardman, who was still getting his legs under him in October, and the return of veteran Sammy Watkins, who was absent during the first meeting with Houston because of a hamstring injury.

The Chiefs also lost cornerback Kendall Fuller in that game. He is back to 100%, too.

There have been other personnel changes, of course, and not all of them have been good. The Chiefs lost defensive end Alex Okafor to a torn pectoral muscle late in the season, and rookie safety Juan Thornhill had his dynamic debut season cut short when he tore his ACL in a Week 17 win over the Chargers that helped the Chiefs earn the No. 2 seed in the AFC playoffs.

But even those losses have been offset by some noteworthy additions. First came defensive tackle Mike Pennel, who has helped to shore up the run game. Then came seven-time Pro Bowl pass rusher Terrell Suggs, who was waived by the Arizona Cardinals and claimed by the Chiefs just in time to play in their final two regular-season games and get fully ac-

quainted with the defense for what he hopes is another championship push.

"This team plays with tremendous swagger," said Suggs, who climbed another notch on the career sack list with one against the Chargers. "That's the No. 1 edge that a football player has: confidence. When you have a team that's playing with swagger, and the head ball coach is encouraging that, that can help you in January in playoff football."

That swagger comes in part from a defense that has leaned on newcomers Frank Clark and All-Pro safety Tyrann Mathieu, the latter of whom played for the Texans last season. They put together a streak of 10 consecutive quarters without allowing a touchdown late in the season, shutting down Tom Brady and the Patriots along the way, and had become so dominant that one of the league's best offenses was left playing little more than a supporting role.

It certainly isn't the same hodgepodge bunch that was still picking up the scheme in Week 6, when Deshaun Watson ran for two scores and threw for another in leading the Texans to a 31-24 victory.

NBA roundup

Lakers' win over Knicks leaves Davis bruised

Associated Press

The Los Angeles Lakers gathered around Anthony Davis while the six-time All-Star writhed in pain on the Staples Center floor.

Another breezy blowout win had just become much less fun for the Lakers and their superstar big man, although it's too soon to say just how serious it will be for their championship dreams.

Davis left in the third quarter after bruising his lower back on a painful fall during the Lakers' sixth straight victory, 117-87 over the New York Knicks on Tuesday night.

Davis bruised his sacrum — the bottom part of his spine above the tailbone — when he attempted to block Julius

Randle's driving shot. He got knocked off balance and fell awkwardly to the court, landing hard on his back with 2:45 left in the third.

Kings 114, Suns 103: De'Aaron Fox scored 27 points, Nemanja Bjelica added 19 and Sacramento rallied from a 21-point deficit in the third quarter to win at Phoenix.

The Kings — who have won three of their last four — got big contributions from bench players Dewayne Dedmon and Trevor Ariza. Dedmon finished with 12 points and 10 rebounds and Ariza — who played for the Suns part of last season — added 15 points.

Trail Blazers 101, Raptors 99: Carmelo Anthony made the winning basket with four

seconds remaining and Portland rallied to win at Toronto.

Anthony scored 28 points, Damian Lillard had 20 and Hassan Whiteside added 14 points and 16 rebounds for the Trail Blazers, who snapped a four-game losing streak at the Raptors and won for the second time in 10 meetings with Toronto.

Anfernee Simons scored 12 points and C.J. McCollum had 10.

Pistons 115, Cavaliers 113: Derrick Rose hit a 15-footer with 27 seconds left and Detroit rallied to a win at Cleveland.

Rose, who scored 24 points, scored on a runner in the lane to give the Pistons a 114-113 lead and cap a comeback that began with the Pistons trail-

ing 110-91 early in the fourth quarter.

Cleveland set up for a go-ahead shot, but Collin Sexton was called for stepping out of bounds with seven seconds left. The ruling was overturned, but Sexton's shot in the lane didn't hit the rim and Detroit was awarded possession on a shot-clock violation.

Thunder 111, Nets 103 (OT): Chris Paul scored 20 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter and overtime, leading Oklahoma City to a win at Brooklyn.

Grizzlies 119, Timberwolves 112: Dillon Brooks scored 28 points, Ja Morant added 25 and host Memphis rallied in the fourth quarter for a victory over Minnesota.

NHL roundup

Bruins hammer Predators in Hynes' debut as coach

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — David Pastrnak scored for the third consecutive game, Tuukka Rask made 34 saves and the Boston Bruins beat the Nashville Predators 6-2 on Tuesday night.

Danton Heinen, Patrice Bergeron, Chris Wagner, David Krejci and Charlie Coyle also scored for the Bruins, who snapped a three-game losing streak.

"Anytime you get balanced scoring, it just takes so much pressure off of the other guys," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "It turns a lot of those one-goal games into two- or three-goal wins if they can pitch in every night. That's the goal."

New Nashville coach John Hynes lost his debut. Hynes replaced Peter Laviolette, who was fired Monday after 5½ seasons.

Blues 3, Sharks 2: David Perron scored his 18th goal of the season and Jordan Binnington stopped 28 shots to lead host St. Louis over San Jose.

Tyler Bozak and Ivan Barbashev also scored for the Blues, who have won six straight at home. Timo Meier and Erik Karlsson had San Jose's goals.

Rangers 5, Avalanche 3: Artemi Panarin had a goal and two assists, and Igor

Shesterkin stopped 29 shots to win his NHL debut as host New York beat Colorado.

Mika Zibanejad and Ryan Strome each had a goal and an assist, and Chris Kreider and Brady Skjei also scored for the Rangers. Jesper Fast had three assists and Tony DeAngelo added two.

Capitals 6, Senators 1: T.J. Oshie and Alex Ovechkin each scored two goals as host Washington defeated Ottawa.

Oshie, who scored the tying goal in Sunday's wild comeback win over San Jose, tied this one at 1. The Capitals, who have won three straight, scored six unanswered goals after Artem Anisimov gave the Senators a 1-0 lead at 5:40 of the first period.

Hurricanes 5, Flyers 4 (OT): Dougie Hamilton scored 1:56 into overtime on a shot between goalie Brian Elliott's pads to lift host Carolina over Philadelphia.

Warren Foegele, Jake Gardiner, Lucas Wallmark and Joel Edmundson also scored for the Hurricanes, who bounced back from a two-goal deficit in the first period with four straight goals, then squandered their own two-goal cushion.

Islanders 4, Devils 3 (OT): Anders Lee scored with 51 seconds left on the clock in overtime to lift visiting New York over New Jersey.

Flames 2, Blackhawks 1: Elias Lindholm scored twice to reach 300 points in his 500th NHL game, and visiting Calgary topped Chicago for its third straight win.

Matthew Tkachuk had two assists for the Flames.

Lightning 9, Canucks 2: Carter Verhaeghe had his first career hat trick and his team scored three times in less than a minute to finish a six-goal second period that propelled host Tampa Bay past Vancouver for its season-best eighth straight victory.

Penguins 4, Golden Knights 3: Dominik Kahun had a goal and an assist, Tristan Jarry made 32 saves and visiting Pittsburgh defeated Vegas.

Coyotes 5, Panthers 2: Taylor Hall scored the go-ahead goal late in the second period and visiting Arizona downed Florida for its fourth straight win.

Red Wings 4, Canadiens 3: Filip Zadina scored the tiebreaking goal with 3:52 left in the third period to send host Detroit past Montreal.

Zadina connected on a one-timer in front off Adam Erne's pass from behind the net.

Blue Jackets 4, Ducks 3: Zach Werenski scored two goals to lead visiting Columbus over Anaheim. The win pushed Columbus' road point streak to nine games (6-0-3).