

STARS AND STRIPES®

Monday, January 20, 2020

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Gun rights rally draws thousands to Va.

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Thousands of gun-rights activists rallied peacefully at the Virginia Capitol on Monday under a heavy police presence, protesting plans by the state's Democratic leadership to pass gun-control legislation.

The size of the rally and the expected participation of white supremacists and fringe militia groups raised fears that the state could see a repeat of the violence that exploded in 2017 in Charlottesville. But the rally concluded uneventfully around noon, and attendees spilled into the streets, chanting and waving signs.

A spokesman for the Capitol police said that as of 11 a.m.,

there had been no reports of arrests or injuries.

The Richmond protesters, who were mostly white and male, came out in the thousands despite the chilly temperature to send a message to legislators, they said.

"The government doesn't run us, we run the government," said Kem Regik, 20, a private security officer from northern Virginia who brought a white flag with a picture of a rifle captioned, "Come and take it."

Many of the protesters wore camouflage. Some waved flags with messages of support for President Donald Trump.

Trump, in turn, tweeted support for their goals.

"The Democrat Party in the

Great Commonwealth of Virginia are working hard to take away your 2nd Amendment rights," he tweeted. "This is just the beginning. Don't let it happen, VOTE REPUBLICAN in 2020!"

The Virginia State Police, the Virginia Capitol Police and the Richmond Police had a strong presence, with officers deployed on rooftops and others patrolling in cars and on bicycles.

Police limited access to Capitol Square to only one entrance, and a long line formed to get into the rally zone. Thousands more stood outside on nearby streets, where the governor's order didn't apply and they were free to carry weapons.

PJ Hudson, 31, a truck driver from Richmond, wore an AR-15 and posed for pictures.

"I love this. This is like the Super Bowl for the Second Amendment right here," said Hudson, whose shirt said "Black guns matter."

Erich Pratt, senior vice president of Gun Owners of America, among the speakers, said voters need to replace the Democrats in control of the government in Virginia.

The pushback against proposed new gun restrictions began right after Democrats won majorities in both the state Senate and House of Delegates in November. Much of the opposition has focused on a proposed assault weapons ban.

MLK Day: Faith, politics mix this holiday

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The nation marked the legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. with tributes on Monday recalling his past struggles for racial equality, observing the federal holiday named for him against the backdrop of a presidential election year.

In an early tribute to King, Vice President Mike Pence spoke on Sunday in Memphis, Tenn., at a church service in which he recalled the challenges and accomplishments of the slain civil rights leader.

In South Carolina, Democratic presidential contenders marked the day with parishioners at Zion Baptist Church. Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Tulsi Gabbard and Amy Klobuchar all attended the service before they were expected to join Joe Biden, Pete

Buttigieg and other contenders in a crowd of tens of thousands marching to the Statehouse.

In the closing days before the first votes are cast in the 2020 Democratic presidential contest, the party's leading hopefuls are splitting their time between the critical early-voting states of South Carolina and Iowa at events celebrating King.

While Iowa and New Hampshire Democrats vote first for their nominee, South Carolina's first-in-the-South primary is a crucial proving ground for a candidate's mettle with black voters. The state's showcase holiday celebration, Columbia's King Day at the Dome, is a notable event for Democratic politicians.

Before the service in Memphis, Pence toured the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis,

where King was fatally shot on April 4, 1968, while standing on a balcony.

"I'm here to pay a debt of honor and respect to a man who, from walking the dirt roads of the Deep South to speaking to hundreds of thousands on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, touched the hearts of the American people and led the civil rights movement to triumph over Jim Crow," Pence said on Sunday at the Holy City Church of God in Christ.

As a presidential election looms this fall, divisions rankle, according to recent opinion polls.

Among black Americans, more than 80% said last year that President Donald Trump's actions in office have made things worse for people like them, while only 4% said they thought Trump's actions have been good for African Ameri-

cans in general. That's according to a poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The same poll found about two-thirds of Americans overall disapprove of how Trump handles race relations.

In King's hometown of Atlanta, Monday's commemorations could draw attention to the continuing leadership role of the clergy in African American thought and politics.

The Rev. Howard-John Wesley, senior pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Va., was to be the keynote speaker at a service on Monday organized by the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change.

It was held in the sanctuary of Ebenezer Baptist Church, which King and his father both led.

Army rules out an 'imminent threat' to GIs in Germany

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Army Europe investigators found no "imminent threat" to personnel after an intelligence report of a potential terror attack led to heightened security at U.S. bases in Germany over the weekend.

"We can confirm a potential threat was identified and investigated last night," USAREUR spokeswoman Beth Clemons said Sunday. "German and U.S. officials were consulted and no imminent threat was found to exist."

An internal memo was circulated within some Army units in Germany on Saturday that warned of a possible attack at the Army's Tower Barracks in Grafenwoehr, or at Tower Barracks in Duellmen. The document cited an unnamed "third party" report about a possible "imminent attack" against soldiers by a Jordanian extremist.

"The unknown Jordanian ... recently advocated killing U.S. soldiers in Germany," the memo stated.

There was no indication in the memo that the threat had any connection to recent tensions with Iran.

On Saturday night, security was noticeably tightened at the Army facilities in Grafenwoehr, one of the military's largest hubs in Germany. However, the credibility of the reported threat wasn't clear.

The 66th Military Intelligence Brigade out of Stuttgart received a report about a possible threat Saturday, it said in a spot memo. It cautioned that spot reports are based on "ambiguous circumstances (and) not fully evaluated information."

Still, USAREUR urged the military community to be on alert.

Stars and Stripes reporters Immanuel Johnson and David Edge contributed to this report.

USAF warns Boeing's new CEO it's not happy, either

Bloomberg

The Air Force's top military officer has sent Boeing's new CEO a blunt reminder that the ill-fated 737 Max passenger jet isn't the only troubled project he has to rescue.

There's also the company's failure to provide a combat-ready refueling tanker, nine years after Chicago-based Boeing won a competition for the \$44 billion project.

"We require your attention and improved focus on the KC-46" tanker, Gen. David Goldfein, the Air Force chief of staff, warned in a letter four days before Dave Calhoun took over as chief executive officer of the company. "The Air Force continues to accept deliveries of a tanker incapable of performing its primary operational mission."

Calhoun has been entrusted with turning around a company that is reeling from a pair of crashes of the Max that killed 346 people and spurred the grounding of its best-selling jet, sent its stock into a swoon and raised questions about its commitment to safety.

"As one of your largest military customers, we also rely on a relationship of trust and confidence in not only Boeing's products" but also the long-term sustainment effort needed for equipment that "our warfighters require," Goldfein said in the Jan. 9 letter made available to Bloomberg News.

Calhoun is leading a once-proud company whose reputation for engineering prowess is now in tatters. On top of the grounding of its best-selling plane, Boeing has suffered delays to its 777X jetliner and an embarrassing mishap that caused its new space capsule to miss a rendezvous

with the International Space Station.

The letter got Calhoun's attention: He met with Goldfein on Wednesday, according to a Boeing official familiar with the issue. The same day at the White House signing ceremony for the initial trade agreement with China, President Donald Trump singled out Calhoun, quipping that "he's got a very easy company to run. He just took over Boeing." The president added, "Let me tell you, it's not your fault, you just got there."

Larry Chambers, a spokesman for Boeing, declined to comment on the meeting with Goldfein or the letter. "Boeing is fully committed to addressing the Air Force concerns with the KC-46 program and devoting resources required to make the KC-46 fully mission capable," he said.

Brig. Gen. Ed Thomas, a spokesman for Goldfein, said "at this point, the chief intends for any communications with our industry partners to be between himself and them."

In the letter, Goldfein expressed concern about the tanker's crucial "Remote Vision System" and "additional unmet requirements." The plane has multiple cameras used by an airman sitting at a console behind the cockpit to guide a 59-foot-long extended boom to connect with a plane needing fuel and then to monitor the procedure.

Shadows or the glare of the sun can hamper the cameras' view on occasion, possibly resulting in scraping the plane being refueled or difficulty in performing the operation, according to the Air Force. Boeing officials have said they've deployed a software solution expected to overcome the main hurdle.

Navy crew finds, aids stranded fisherman in the Pacific

Stars and Stripes

A fisherman stranded about 600 nautical miles from Guam is safe thanks to the crew of a Navy P-8A Poseidon operating out of Kadena Air Base on Okinawa.

Aviators from Patrol Squadron 45, which is based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville in Florida, were called upon to help on Friday by the U.S. Coast Guard in Guam, according to a statement from 7th Fleet. At that point, the mariner and his 16-foot skiff

had been missing in the western Pacific for five days.

Later that day, the Poseidon crew spotted the vessel about 50 nautical miles from its last known location, the statement said. They dropped a search-and-rescue kit, which typically includes food, water, medical supplies and communication devices, and reported his whereabouts to the Coast Guard.

The rescue happened less than a week after a Navy helicopter flew an ailing man

from a fishing boat to a Guam hospital on Jan. 11. The man was found unconscious aboard a 252-foot Taiwanese-flagged vessel by other crewmembers, a U.S. Coast Guard statement said.

The MH-60 Seahawk crew, from Navy Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 on Guam, hoisted the man from the boat, which was about 150 nautical miles south of the U.S. territory, the statement said. He was flown to U.S. Naval Hospital Guam in stable condition.

Iraqi security forces fire tear gas, rounds during protests

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraqi security forces fired tear gas and live rounds during clashes with anti-government protesters overnight and on Monday morning in Baghdad, killing three and wounding dozens of demonstrators, officials said.

The clashes prompted authorities to close key streets and thoroughfares leading to the Iraqi capital's center.

The violence is the latest since protests in Iraq reignited last week after a brief lull amid soaring tensions between Washington and Tehran following a U.S. drone strike that killed top Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad earlier this month.

Anti-government protests have similarly resumed in Lebanon after a brief hiatus, entering a new, violent phase as anger

against a worsening economic crisis and politicians' inaction mounts. Hundreds of people were injured over the weekend as security forces fired tear gas and rubber bullets in clashes in downtown Beirut.

In Baghdad, the tear gas and live rounds were fired near Sinak Bridge and also the nearby Tayaran Square, which have been the scene of violence in recent days, medical and security officials said.

A gunshot wound killed one protester, while a second died after being struck in the head by a tear gas canister, medical officials said. A third later succumbed to his injuries, the officials said.

A statement from the Baghdad Operations Command said 14 officers were wounded by a group of rock-throwing "inciters of violence" while trying to secure the entrance to Tah-

rir Square, the epicenter of the protest movement.

Among the dead was Yousif Sattar, 21, a local journalist covering the protest movement, a medical official and an activist said.

"Despite these actions, our forces continued to exercise restraint and follow up on the security duties assigned to them," said the statement.

The U.N. envoy to Iraq, meanwhile, urged Iraqi political elites to resume pushing for reforms and for protests to remain peaceful.

"Any steps taken so far to address the people's concerns will remain hollow if they are not completed," said Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert in a statement issued by the U.N. "Violent suppression of peaceful protesters is intolerable and must be avoided at all costs."

Death toll in attack on Yemeni troops rises

Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — The death toll from a missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels on a government military camp climbed to at least 111 troops, a military spokesman said Monday, making it one of the deadliest rebel assaults since the beginning of the country's bloody civil war.

Ballistic missiles smashed into a mosque in the training camp in the central province of Marib over the weekend, wounding at least 68 other troops, said Abdu Abdullah Magli, spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces.

The oil-rich province of Marib is about 70 miles east of the Houthi-controlled capital, Sanaa. The attack came amid a barrage of assaults by Saudi-backed government forces on rebel targets east of the capital.

Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry on Monday condemned the attack, saying that "such heinous, terrorist crimes deliberately undermine the path to a political solution" in the Yemeni conflict, according to the kingdom's official news agency.

In recent months, Saudi Arabia started backchannel negotiations with the Houthis in the neighboring country of Oman, after the rebels claimed an attack on Saudi oil infrastructure that threatened global oil supplies.

Yemen's civil war erupted in 2014 when the Iran-backed Shiite Houthi rebels seized Sanaa, and much of the country's north, ousting the internationally recognized government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

The Saudi-led coalition launched its campaign in 2015 to drive out the Houthis and restore the government of Hadi, now exiled in Saudi Arabia.

China: Virus transmits human-to-human

Associated Press

BEIJING — The head of a Chinese government expert team said Monday that human-to-human transmission has been confirmed in an outbreak of a new coronavirus, a development that raises the possibility that it could spread more quickly and widely.

Team leader Zhong Nanshan, a respiratory expert, said two people in Guangdong province in southern China caught the virus from family members, state media said. Some medical workers have also tested positive for the virus, the English-language China Daily newspaper reported.

The late-night announcement capped a day in which authorities announced a sharp uptick in the number of confirmed cases to more than 200, and China's leader called on the government to take every possible step to combat the outbreak.

"The recent outbreak of novel coronavirus pneumonia in Wuhan and other places must be taken seriously," President Xi Jinping said in his first public statement on the crisis. "Party committees, governments and relevant departments at all levels should put people's lives and health first."

The spread of the viral pneumonia comes as

the country enters its busiest travel period, when millions board trains and planes for the Lunar New Year holidays. The outbreak is believed to have started late last month when people picked it up at a fresh food market in Wuhan, a city in central China.

Wuhan health authorities said Monday an additional 136 cases have been confirmed in the city, raising the total to 198. Three have died.

Authorities elsewhere also announced cases in other Chinese cities for the first time.

Five individuals in Beijing and 14 in Guangdong have also been diagnosed with the new coronavirus, CCTV reported Monday evening. A total of seven suspected cases have been found in other parts of the country, including in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces in the southwest and in Shanghai.

Zhong said the two people in Guangdong had not been to Wuhan but fell ill after family members had returned from the city, the China Daily said.

The outbreak has put other countries on alert as millions of Chinese travel for Lunar New Year. Authorities in Thailand and in Japan have already identified at least three cases, all involving recent travel from China.

IG: Mission Act could extend wait times for health care

BY STEVE BEYNON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Department of Veterans Affairs patients seeking private sector health care saw a nearly two-month delay for medical appointments in 2018, and the problem could worsen under the new Mission Act, the VA Office of Inspector General reported on Thursday.

The inspector general's report based its conclusions on the region of VA hospitals that includes 1.6 million veterans across Florida, south Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

VA officials in that region referred more than 206,500 requests in 2018 for community care at clinics outside the VA network, with veterans facing a 56-day wait on average before receiving care, according to the report.

The findings highlight that the wait times problem could balloon under the VA reforms of the Mission Act, which was

approved into law in 2018.

The Mission Act, one of the most consequential veteran care efforts in years, aims to expand the scope of private sector care that veterans can receive outside the VA network.

The measure was a response to the VA wait-time scandal in 2014, hoping to expedite veterans' access to treatment.

An investigation by the VA inspector general into the scandal found that 35 veterans died while waiting for care from VA facilities in Phoenix and found a pattern of officials in the department falsifying records.

The inspector general said that the number of patients seeking community care will increase from 684,000 to 3.7 million, now that the eligibility for veterans to seek private care has expanded under the Mission Act.

In 2018, 39% of patients were sent for treatment outside a VA hospital because the government's facilities could not provide care in a timely manner, investigators reported.

Now, with the Mission Act passed, the workload to transfer VA patients to private hospitals could swell.

"While the VA is in the process of hiring well-trained staff to streamline the scheduling process, they will also need the right technology and data solutions to make community care appointments more seamless for veterans," Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said in a statement. "The VA's implementation of the VA Mission Act is a top priority and an issue the committee will be examining closely in the coming months."

Investigators put the bulk of the blame on Health Net, a contractor who handled some of the VA's referral process, but no longer does business with the department.

But after the VA stopped working with Health Net, department staff still struggled to keep up with the workload of referrals to community care, according to the IG's report.

Security probe targets Trump's Russia adviser

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A White House adviser on Europe and Russia issues has been placed on administrative leave pending a security-related investigation, two people with knowledge of his exit said Sunday.

Andrew Peek was escorted off the White House compound on Friday, according to one of those familiar with his departure.

In response to questions, the National Security Council, the foreign policy unit at the White House, said in a statement that "we do not discuss personnel matters."

Peek, former deputy assistant secretary of state for Iraq and Iran, has been in the position since November. His two predecessors in that position — Tim Morrison and Fiona Hill — both testified in the House impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump.

Peek was a U.S. Army intelligence officer serving in Afghanistan where he advised now-retired Marine Corps Gen. John Allen on several matters, including intelligence and Pakistani aspects of the war.

Foreign-language film nabs top honors at SAG awards

Associated Press

"Parasite" has officially infected Hollywood's award season. Bong Joon Ho's Korean class satire became the first foreign language film to take top honors from the Screen Actors Guild on Sunday, setting itself up as a legitimate best picture contender to the front-runner "1917" at next month's Academy Awards.

The best ensemble win for "Parasite" came over the starry epics "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood" and "The Irishman." It was only a slight surprise. "Parasite," up for six Oscars including best picture, has emerged as perhaps the stiffest competition for Sam Mendes' "1917," which won at the highly predictive Producers Guild Awards on Jan. 18.

But "Parasite" was the clear crowd favorite Sunday at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, where even the cast's appear-

ance introducing the film drew a standing ovation. Yet until the SAG Awards, the many honors for "Parasite" have seldom included awards for its actors, none of whom was nominated for an Oscar.

Before the win for "Parasite," the SAG Awards were most notable as a reunion for Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston. They each took home awards and celebrated the other's win.

Pitt is headed toward his first acting Academy Award for his supporting performance in "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood," and he added to his front-runner status with a win from the actors' guild.

Aniston won an award for best female actor in a drama series for the Apple TV Plus show "The Morning Show."

All the Oscar acting favorites won, including Renee Zellweger ("Judy"), Joaquin Phoenix ("Joker") and Laura Dern ("Marriage Story").

As expected, Phoenix took best performance by a leading male actor.

Phoebe Waller-Bridge continued her awards sweep for "Fleabag," a winner at the Emmys and the Golden Globes. Waller-Bridge added a SAG win for best female actor in a comedy series.

"The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" also continued its streak, winning best comedy series ensemble for the second straight year, along with a win for Tony Shalhoub.

Robert De Niro was given the guild's lifetime achievement award.

"Game of Thrones" closed out its eight-season run with wins for Peter Dinklage for best male actor in a drama series and for best stunt ensemble work. "The Crown" took best ensemble in a drama series. And both "Fosse/Verdon" stars — Michelle Williams and Sam Rockwell — won for their performances in the miniseries.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Athletes' mass baptism prompts complaint

AL REELTOWN — The baptism of high school football players on the 50-yard-line in their football stadium has drawn complaints from a group that pushes for separation of church and state.

After more than two dozen Reeltown High School players were baptized on the field in November, the Wisconsin-based Freedom from Religion Foundation demanded an investigation.

Tallapoosa County Schools Superintendent Joe Windle told Al.com that he found no wrongdoing. The baptism was not conducted by the school, he said.

The baptisms occurred inside a tub filled with water. About 35 students asked to be baptized, Windle said. Of those, 26 were football players who requested the baptisms take place on the football field. The other students had their baptisms at their churches, Windle said.

Burger chain offers fries, side of cricket salt

ID BOISE — Want some crickets with your fries?

Boise Fry Co. already offers customers a choice of several seasoning-salt mixtures to sprinkle on their french fries: Cajun spice, rosemary, jalapeno, salt and vinegar.

Now, add crickets to the list.

The locally owned restaurant chain debuted four new salt blends that include pulverized crickets at its three locations in Boise and one each in Meridian and Nampa, the Idaho Statesman reported.

The response has been overwhelming, with reactions mostly positive, though some people

are a little skittish, said Brad Walker, Boise Fry Co.'s CEO.

\$56M raised to build Coast Guard museum

CT NEW LONDON — More than \$56 million has been raised to build a Coast Guard museum in Connecticut.

The Day newspaper reported that the National Coast Guard Museum Association has secured \$15 million in federal funds, \$21 million in private donations and \$20 million through state borrowing for the downtown New London waterfront project.

Construction has been pushed back toward the end of 2020, The Day reported.

The 80,000-square-foot, five-story, partially glass building is expected to take four years to build.

Officer pleads guilty to using seized Porsche

PA PHILADELPHIA — A former Philadelphia police officer charged with taking a Porsche SUV from an impound lot and using it for his stepdaughter's prom pleaded guilty, prosecutors announced.

James Coolen Jr., 47, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor count of unauthorized use of a motor vehicle. He was sentenced to a year of probation.

Coolen seized the Porsche Cayenne during a drug investigation in April and placed it in the Narcotics Bureau Headquarters' secure impound lot, according to prosecutors. They said surveillance footage showed Coolen entering the lot in his personal pickup and leaving in the Porsche.

Prosecutors cited evidence including GPS data from the Porsche to show Coolen had used it for his stepdaughter's prom.

Police: Suspect hid in air vent, got stuck

NC SALISBURY — Authorities in North Carolina say they had to rescue a suspect after he tried to escape arrest by hiding in an air vent.

The man got stuck and had to be rescued by deputies before being taken to jail, according to the Rowan County Sheriff's Office, which conducted a roundup targeting people who allegedly weren't paying child support.

Ten people with outstanding warrants were arrested, as were six more for interfering with deputies, the Charlotte Observer reported.

Coyote killed after cop helping motorist bitten

OH COLUMBUS — Police in Ohio's capital city shot and killed a coyote after it bit an officer who had stopped to help a stranded motorist, the police department said.

The coyote appeared out of nowhere and first tried to attack a state road worker also helping the motorist, said police, who released body camera and dash cam video of the incident.

When the officer tried to intervene, he was bitten by the animal, said Sgt. James Fuqua, a spokesman for the Columbus Division of Police.

The coyote ran away after the officer punched it, then returned after other officers arrived as backup. The original officer tried unsuccessfully to use pepper spray on the animal, and responding officers also tried unsuccessfully to use a stun gun on the coyote before shooting it, Fuqua said.

Famous ice disk seems to be re-forming

ME WESTBROOK — What goes around comes around.

An ice disk appears to be forming in the same Maine river where an unusually large one formed last winter and quickly gained international fame.

The City of Westbrook tweeted an aerial view of the disk in the Presumpscot River with the message: "ICE BREAKING NEWS: Ice Disk 2020 is making a run for it ... It's not a perfect circle yet, but it is rotating counter-clockwise again & the seagulls are along for the ride."

The ice formation comes just about a year after a disk measuring about 100 yards was spotted in the Presumpscot.

Property managers to pay in harassment case

KS WICHITA — A Wichita property manager accused of inappropriately touching female tenants and repeatedly asking them for sex in exchange for rent will pay \$160,000 in damages and penalties under a settlement in a federal housing lawsuit, the Department of Justice announced.

The Federal Housing Act lawsuit alleged Thong Cao sexually harassed numerous tenants since at least 2009 at rental properties he owned or operated in Wichita. His wife, Mai Cao, was also named in the lawsuit because she owned or co-owned some of the properties.

The consent order filed in U.S. District Court in Kansas requires the couple to pay \$155,000 in damages to 11 former tenants and a \$5,000 civil penalty.

From wire reports

Your objective source for military news
updated 24/7 from bases
around the world.
Now online at www.stripes.com.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Mahomes helps Chiefs end title drought

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — With his best imitation of a tightrope walker, Patrick Mahomes high-wired the Kansas City Chiefs into their first Super Bowl since 1970.

Oh sure, Mahomes did his usual superb job passing, but it was his 27-yard tap dance down the left sideline late in the first half that gave the Chiefs their first lead. From there, they outran the run-oriented Tennessee Titans and star back Derrick Henry for a 35-24 victory Sunday in the AFC championship.

For the third time overall, the Chiefs (14-4) are Super Bowl bound.

In two weeks in Miami, they will play San Francisco, which rolled to a 37-20 win over Green Bay in the NFC title game.

"I mean, it's amazing. It really is," said Mahomes, who had 294 yards passing and three touchdowns. "To be here, to be a part of Chiefs Kingdom and to be able to do it here at Arrowhead, these people deserve it. And we're not done yet."

Adding to the joy of the achievement, coach Andy Reid and owner Clark Hunt accepted the Lamar Hunt Trophy — named after his father — emblematic of the AFC title. It was handed over to them by Chiefs Hall of Famer Bobby Bell, with Mahomes and safety Tyrann Mathieu jumping for joy on the makeshift stage.

Next up: chasing the Vince Lombardi Trophy.

"Very excited and very emotional to win the trophy that has my dad's name on it," Hunt said. "Yeah, 50 years were too long, but we're going to another Super Bowl."

"Chiefs Kingdom, we are going to the Super Bowl."

The Chiefs lost in 1967 in the first AFL-NFL Championship Game — nope, it wasn't called the Super Bowl yet — to the Lombardi-led Packers 35-10. Three years later, one year after the New York Jets shocked Baltimore to lay claim to the AFL being equal to the long-established NFL, Kansas City was back. This time, it was known as the Super Bowl — in-

deed, Lamar Hunt is credited with coming up with the name — and his Chiefs hammered Minnesota 23-7 with the typical Wild West offensive flair and a staunch defense. Those are characteristics that helped carry KC this season.

Reid isn't as animated as Hall of Famer Hank Stram, who famously urged the Chiefs team to "keep matriculating the ball down the field, boys." Caught up in the moment Sunday, Reid said, "It's awesome," before asking the crowd to chant "How about those Chiefs?"

Moments later, tight end Travis Kelce proclaimed, "You gotta fight for your right to party."

There will be plenty of partying on South Beach for Chiefs Kingdom heading into the championship matchup.

"Fired up to go to Miami, got to get on a diet so I can fit into my clothes," Reid said. "Very proud."

As they had done in their past three "elimination" games, the sixth-seeded Titans (11-8) got started quickly. The difference

at Arrowhead as opposed to Houston, New England and Baltimore was that the Chiefs had Mahomes, Tyreek Hill, Sammy Watkins and Damien Williams on offense, and a vastly upgraded defense from when they lost in last year's AFC title game. Henry was held to 7 yards rushing in the second half.

"They were doubling all these guys," Mahomes said of his spectacular TD run on which he barely stayed in bounds. "I just ran it and got some good blocking at the end and found a way to get in the end zone."

A week after they overcame a 24-0 deficit against Houston, the Chiefs had to rally again.

Down 10-0 and 17-7, Kansas City didn't flinch, building a 35-17 lead while controlling the clock with a strong ground game. Naturally, Mahomes complemented that with sharp passing, spreading the ball on short and deep throws. The dagger came with a 60-yard completion to Watkins for the Chiefs' 28th straight point mid-way in the final period.

Mostert runs 49ers past Pack to Super Bowl

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Coach Kyle Shanahan received the NFC championship trophy from his Super Bowl-winning father Mike and raised it to the sky.

The San Francisco 49ers have gone on a surprising journey from No. 2 pick in the draft to one of the last two teams standing. They have one of the most unlikely playoff heroes to thank for it.

Journeyman Raheem Mostert rushed for 220 yards and four touchdowns to make quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo mostly a spectator, Nick Bosa harassed Aaron Rodgers from the start and the 49ers beat the Green Bay Packers 37-20 for the NFC championship on Sunday.

"I did have a lot of doubters and naysayers," said Mostert, who has been cut seven times in

his career. "Now I get to actually tell them, 'Look where I'm at now.'"

"I never gave up on my dreams."

The Niners (15-3) also had their skeptics after winning just 10 games in the first two seasons under Shanahan and general manager John Lynch.

But they put pieces and systems in place during those rough two seasons and now have advanced to the franchise's first Super Bowl in seven years. The Niners will play the Kansas City Chiefs in two weeks in Miami.

"It was pretty special," Shanahan said of getting handed the trophy from his father at the postgame ceremony. "To get a trophy handed to you by anyone is really cool. ... It was pretty cool it happened there at the end."

After giving a second thorough beating of the season to

Rodgers and the Packers (14-4), the 49ers are the third team to make it to the Super Bowl a year after winning four or fewer games.

"It's still kind of surreal," linebacker Fred Warner said. "With the stuff this team has gone through, this organization, it's special. It's the pinnacle of football right here."

Bosa, the prize for last year's rough season as the No. 2 overall pick, helped set the tone when he ended Green Bay's second drive of the game with a 13-yard sack of Rodgers.

Mostert, a former special teams standout, did much of the rest in a remarkable redemption story. He has become a key part of the NFC's top team this year, and delivered a performance for the ages in the NFC title game.

He had the second-most yards rushing in a playoff game

to Eric Dickerson's 248 for the Rams on Jan. 4, 1986, and was the first to rush for at least four TDs and 200 yards in a playoff game.

He burst 36 yards on a third-and-8 trap play to open the scoring on San Francisco's second drive and kept ripping off long runs behind impressive blocking.

"He's so fast," tackle Joe Staley said. "He's incredibly fast. He's fearless going through the hole. He has trust in the linemen to block it up. He's a great running back."

He added TD runs of 9 and 18 yards in the second quarter and had 160 yards rushing at the half, becoming the only player in NFL history to rush for at least 150 yards and three TDs in the first half of a playoff game.

Different slam, same result for Coco, Venus

Gauff, 15, ousts Williams, 39, in first round, just like at Wimbledon

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Everyone had the same question when the Australian Open draw was revealed: What were the odds that Coco Gauff and Venus Williams would face each other again in the first round at a Grand Slam tournament?

"I was a bit shocked," Gauff said, "I'm sure everyone was a bit shocked."

Gauff, 15, played Williams, 39, to begin her first appearance in the main draw at Melbourne Park, just like they matched up to start things off at Wimbledon about six months ago. And, just like at the All England Club, the youngest woman in the field got the better of the oldest woman in the field, with Gauff beating Williams 7-6 (5), 6-3 on Monday.

"I definitely was more confident this time. I think I was used to playing on big courts, so the crowd — I guess the size of the crowd didn't startle me as

much as last time," Gauff said. "Definitely a bit more positive coming into this match."

It was the most anticipated contest of Day 1 at the first major tennis tournament of the decade, and it did not disappoint. The first set, in particular, was intriguing, with Gauff repeatedly pulling ahead, only to have Williams — who already had won four of her seven Grand Slam singles trophies by the time her foe was born — rebuff her.

It wasn't until her fourth set point that Gauff finally pulled it out. She quickly grabbed a 3-0 lead in the second and never let that edge go.

Gauff already has demonstrated all sorts of terrific qualities on a tennis court, from her big, gutsy serves to an ability to track down opponents' shots. Now you can add stick-to-it-iveness to the list.

The match was held in Margaret Court Arena, one of three stadiums with a retractable

roof, and that was a good thing. The air quality was fine, but a heavy storm that arrived in the afternoon suspended nine matches on outside courts in progress and postponed more than 20 others entirely, creating a jam-packed schedule for Tuesday. The start will be a half-hour earlier than usual, and three courts have seven-match programs.

Among the players who got a chance to play — and win — were Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer, 2019 semifinalist Stefanos Tsitsipas, defending women's champion Naomi Osaka, 23-time major champion Serena Williams, No. 1 Ash Barty and 2018 Australian Open winner Caroline Wozniacki, who is retiring after this tournament.

Barty got off to a rough start, dropping her opening set, before asserting herself and coming back for a 5-7, 6-1, 6-1 victory over Lesia Tsurenko.

Serena, who is 38, did what

her older sister couldn't: defeat a teen.

Other than a brief second-set blip, Serena had very little trouble getting past 18-year-old Anastasia Potapova of Russia 6-0, 6-3 to begin her latest bid for a 24th Grand Slam singles championship.

Serena took the last three games of the match, then declared with a laugh: "I started out well today. Ended well."

Her most recent major trophy came in Australia in 2017; that also had been her last title of any sort until this month, when she won a hard-court tuneup in Auckland, New Zealand.

Gauff beamed Monday while discussing a dance routine she did with Serena that went viral on social media.

There were laughs about her love of TikTok and her self-deprecating discussion of a propensity for procrastination when it comes to schoolwork.

She is, after all, still just a 15-year-old.

Golf roundup

Landry wins after blowing 6-stroke lead on back nine

Associated Press

LA QUINTA, Calif. — Andrew Landry was reeling after blowing a six-stroke lead on the back nine Sunday in The American Express.

"I don't want to be a part of something like that ever again," the 32-year-old Texan said.

He regrouped — telling caddie Terry Walker, "Let's go get this job done, like, quit messing around" — to win his second PGA Tour title with a shot to spare.

Landry broke a tie with Abraham Ancer with a 7-foot birdie putt on the 17th hole, the jagged rock-ringed, island-green par 3 called Alcatraz.

"That was probably the shot of the tournament for me," Landry said. "Just to be able to go over there and, to that right hole location, and just hold one up and hit a good distance and have a 7-, 8-footer to look at. ... Thankfully, it went in and kind of made 18 a

little bit easier."

He closed with a 6-foot birdie putt on the par-4 18th for a 5-under 67 and a two-stroke victory, winning two years after losing a playoff to Jon Rahm at PGA West.

"This is a golf course that has suited me very well in the past," Landry said. "And just to look back on some of the things that happened a couple years ago and then now, just to be able to finally get it done. I didn't want to have to go back into a playoff again."

Lopez wins LPGA event on 7th hole of playoff

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Having already battled for five extra holes into darkness without producing a champion a day earlier, Gaby Lopez and Nasa Hataoka showed up to work at 8 a.m., just like regular folks.

The early wake-up call and extra golf

was worth it for Lopez, who rolled in a 30-foot putt for birdie to prevail on the seventh playoff hole Monday and capture the season-opening Diamond Resorts Tournament of Champions.

It was the second LPGA title for Lopez, who 14 months ago became only the second player from Mexico to win on tour, joining World Golf Hall of Fame member Lorena Ochoa.

This was the LPGA's fourth-longest playoff. The longest was 10 holes at the 1972 Corpus Christi Civitan Open, where Jo Ann Prentice beat Sandra Palmer and Kathy Whitworth.

Lopez and Hataoka played the difficult 197-yard 18th hole eight times in two days, with two birdies from Lopez the difference. Lopez birdied from 18 feet on her final hole of regulation Sunday to earn a spot in a playoff alongside Hataoka and Inbee Park, who was eliminated on the third playoff hole.

NBA roundup

Pacers, Sabonis rally past Nuggets

Associated Press

DENVER — Despite playing from behind for most of their game against the Denver Nuggets, Domantas Sabonis never felt the Indiana Pacers were out of it.

Sabonis had 22 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists for his first career triple-double, Doug McDermott scored 18 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter and the Pacers rallied late to beat the Nuggets 115-107 on Sunday night.

"I just felt like we were always right there, down 5-6 points all game," Sabonis said. "I felt like this was the game we needed to get to start the road trip right and just believed in my teammates that we could make that next step. And in the fourth quarter, everybody stepped up and made big-time plays."

In one sequence with just under three minutes remaining, Sabonis helped protect the Pacers' late lead by fighting through traffic in the low post to grab three offen-

sive rebounds before finishing with a tip-in. "McDermott killed us. Sabonis killed us," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "The fourth quarter, they had six offensive rebounds. The very few times they did miss, they just pushed us around, much more physical than us. Disappointing loss."

Malcom Brogdon and T.J. Warren added 22 points each for the Pacers, who snapped a 10-game skid at Pepsi Center. They overcame a 30-point performance from the Nuggets' Nikola Jokic to win their fifth straight.

Spurs 107, Heat 102: Patty Mills provided a late spark, LaMarcus Aldridge scored 21 points and host San Antonio held off Miami.

The win came as the Spurs became the first NBA team to hold Indigenous People Night — a meaningful cause to Mills, an Australian of aboriginal descent.

"It's an important night and it's really

important to Patty," San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said. "For the indigenous people here in Texas it's important to all of us, but it's sort of double for him because of his history and his background. He didn't play like he did because of that; he does that every night. His energy has been there his whole career. It's who he is."

Mills had 18 points and DeMar DeRozan added 20 as the Spurs snapped a two-game skid.

Mills requested the team honor his ancestry as well as those of Native Americans, and the franchise obliged on the eve of Martin Luther King Day.

The Heat's Duncan Robinson missed a three-pointer with 10.2 seconds left and the Heat trailing 105-102. Miami fouled Marco Belinelli, who made both free throws to cap the scoring.

"It's a big moment," Robinson said. "I want to make that shot for this team."

NHL roundup

Kane reaches 1,000th point as Blackhawks top Jets

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Patrick Kane's 1,000th career point created one big party for the Chicago Blackhawks.

Kane reached 1,000 when he picked up an assist on Brandon Saad's third-period goal, and the Blackhawks beat the Winnipeg Jets 5-2 on Sunday night for their season-high fifth straight win.

Kane became the 90th player in NHL history to reach the milestone with 5:46 left in the game. The All-Star winger passed from behind the net to Ryan Carpenter in the right circle. Carpenter then fed a wide-open Saad at the left side of the net for an easy tap-in before goalie Connor Hellebuyck could slide across the crease.

The 31-year-old Kane got an extended ovation from the crowd of 21,487 and was mobbed by his teammates after extending his point streak to 10 games.

Captain Jonathan Toews, who has 799 points himself, checked with the referees before the game to make sure it was all right for the team to take the ice to congratulate Kane after he hit 1,000.

"That was special," Kane said. "What a moment. Obviously, everyone coming on

the ice and sharing that moment with me. You see some faces in that pile that have been a big part of a lot of those points.

"The team's rolling right now, too. There's a lot of good things happening. We're playing well. Nice to have it come in a win."

In the midst of the celebration, Saad made sure to pick up the puck for Kane.

"Kinda felt bad for him," Kane said. "All the guys on the ice came to me and he was in the corner even though he was the one that scored."

Hurricanes 2, Islanders 1 (SO): Justin Williams returned to the lineup for the first time since last year's Eastern Conference final and scored in the shootout to lift host Carolina over New York.

James Reimer stopped six shots in the tiebreaker for the Hurricanes, the last against Anders Lee to lock up the win. Andrei Svechnikov and Teuvo Teravainen also scored in the shootout for Carolina. Svechnikov had a goal in the first period.

The Hurricanes ended a three-game skid thanks to Williams, the 38-year-old who took an extended break after last season. He scored in the eighth round of the shootout.

Lee scored in regulation, and Mathew Barzal and Anthony Beauvillier connected in the shootout for the Islanders, who lost their third straight.

Blue Jackets 2, Rangers 1 (SO): Oliver Bjorkstrand scored his second goal of the game with 26.5 seconds left to lift Columbus over host New York for its fifth straight win.

Blue Jackets rookie Matiss Kivlenieks made his first NHL start and stopped 31 shots. Columbus is 15-2-4 since Dec. 9. The surging Blue Jackets are also 8-1-3 in their past 12 road games.

Rangers defenseman Brady Skjei opened the scoring at 18:28 of the first period.

Penguins 4, Bruins 3: Jack Johnson and Bryan Rust scored third-period goals as host Pittsburgh rallied to defeat Boston.

The Penguins trailed 3-0 in the first period before scoring four unanswered goals. Dominik Simon and Teddy Blueger also scored, and Matt Murray rebounded from a shaky start to make 34 saves.

David Pastrnak scored his 37th goal, Patrice Bergeron scored his 21st and Anders Bjork his eighth for the Bruins.