

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump helps commission USS Ford

Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. — President Donald Trump helped commission the USS Gerald R. Ford on Saturday and declared the most advanced aircraft carrier to join the Navy will cause America's enemies to "shake with fear" whenever they see it on the horizon.

"I hereby place United States Ship Gerald R. Ford in commission," Trump said after a speech in which he praised the military and the American labor that went into building the \$12.9 billion warship.

He was followed by Susan Ford Bales, the ship's sponsor and daughter of the 38th president, whom the ship honors.

"There is no one, absolutely no one, who would be prouder of the commissioning of this mighty ship than the president of the United States, Gerald R. Ford," she said. "I am honored

to give the command: 'Officers and crew of the United States Gerald R. Ford, man our ship and bring her to life.'"

And with those few words, the ship was brought to life. "Anchors Aweigh" played, and sailors who stood in formation in their crisp, white uniforms began filing off to their stations.

Sirens and bells sounded. Horns blared. The U.S. flag was raised to full mast.

Within minutes, the captain was informed that "the ship is manned and ready, and reports for duty to the fleet."

Trump arrived aboard the carrier's flight deck on the Marine One presidential helicopter and was greeted by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and other officials.

Trump, who visited the carrier in March to promote his plans for a military buildup,

told Time magazine earlier this year that the Navy should revert to using steam catapults to launch fighter jets because some of the state-of-the-art systems and technology aboard the USS Ford "costs hundreds of millions of dollars more money, and it's no good."

Construction on the USS Ford started in 2009 and was to be completed by September 2015 at a cost of \$10.5 billion. The Navy has attributed the delays and budget overruns to the ship's state-of-the-art systems and technology, including electromagnetic launch systems for jets and drones that will replace steam catapults.

The warship also has a smaller island that sits farther back to make it easier and quicker to refuel, rearm and relaunch planes, and a nuclear power plant designed to allow cruising speeds of more than

30 knots and operation for 20 years without refueling.

The vessel completed sea trials in April but still will go through a battery of tests and workups at sea before becoming operational and ready for deployment, work that is expected to cost nearly \$780 million and take more than four years to complete, congressional auditors said in a report this month.

The USS Ford is named after the country's 38th president, who rose to the rank of lieutenant commander in the Navy during World War II. After military service, Ford was elected to the House of Representatives, serving Michigan until he was tapped by President Richard M. Nixon to become vice president.

Ford became president after Nixon resigned during the Watergate scandal.

Death toll rises in errant US strike on Afghan police

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN AND ZUBAIR
BABAKARKHAIL

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The number of Afghan police officers mistakenly killed by a U.S. airstrike in Afghanistan's embattled Helmand province has risen to 16, officials said Saturday.

Friday's strike on a security forces compound in Gereshk district was part of a U.S.-supported operation against Taliban militants in the area.

"Afghan security forces had coordinated an airstrike with the foreign forces, but some Afghan National Police officers arrived at the area before

the strike," said Omar Zwak, spokesman for the governor of Helmand, suggesting a communications failure.

"Sixteen ANP officers were killed and another two were wounded," Zwak said Saturday, adding that an investigation was still ongoing.

The incident came less than a week after Afghan officials praised U.S. air support for boosting morale among local forces battling to reclaim territory from the Taliban in Helmand.

On Monday, the U.S. support was instrumental in helping the Afghans retake the key district of Nawa, just south of the provincial capital Lashkar Gah, which the Taliban had held for

nine months.

The U.S. military confirmed an airstrike it conducted Friday resulted in the deaths of friendly forces.

"We would like to express our deepest condolences to the families affected by this unfortunate incident," it said in a statement.

Helmand is valued by the Taliban for its extensive opium fields, the insurgent group's primary income source. The province has been the site of some of the fiercest fighting of the 16-year war, and hundreds of American troops have died there.

Meanwhile, another 11 Afghan police officers were killed on Friday during clashes with

the Taliban in northern Badakhshan province.

Local officials said 20 more officers are missing and that it wasn't clear if they had been kidnapped or if they had escaped.

And in a third incident on Friday, five Afghan soldiers and one police officer were killed during fighting with the Taliban in western Farah province.

"Some 300 enemies tried to capture the center of Push-e-Koh district, but they faced strong resistance by the security forces," Mohammad Naser Mehri, spokesman for the governor of Farah said, adding that 12 Taliban fighters were also killed.

US soldier indicted on terrorism charges

Associated Press

HONOLULU — A federal grand jury in Hawaii indicted a U.S. soldier Friday for attempting to provide support to Islamic State.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Ikaika Kang was arrested by an FBI SWAT team on July 8. Kang was ordered held without bail.

Kang will be arraigned in federal court on Monday when he had previously been scheduled for a preliminary hearing. Kang's court-appointed attorney, Birney Bervar, told The Associated Press on

Friday that the indictment was expected. "We haven't had a preliminary in federal

court here in probably 25 years," Bervar said. "They don't like to let us question their witnesses."

Bervar said his client will plead not guilty on Monday when a federal judge will set a trial date.

Bervar said he is working on getting Kang a mental evaluation and that Kang may suffer from service-related mental health issues.

A "turning point" for Kang's mental state seems to be a 2011 deployment, Bervar said. "He's a decorated American soldier for 10 years, goes to Afghanistan and comes back and things start going off the rails."

Elliot Enoki, acting U.S. attorney for the

District of Hawaii, and Dana Boente, acting assistant attorney general for national security, announced the indictment in a statement.

Kang is charged with four counts of attempting to provide material support to ISIS based on events that occurred in Hawaii between June 21 and July 8, they said.

Federal officials say Kang met with undercover FBI agents he thought were with the terror group and provided classified military documents to the agents.

The FBI said in their criminal complaint Kang wanted to commit a mass shooting after pledging allegiance to ISIS.

Mattis: US still debating ideas on Afghanistan plan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is still sorting out "the big ideas" for a new Afghanistan strategy, beyond troop levels and other military details, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Friday.

"We're close," he said in an impromptu exchange with reporters at the Pentagon one day after President Donald Trump met with him and his military chiefs for a broad discussion that aides said touched on Afghanistan and other issues.

The U.S. has been fighting in Afghanistan for nearly 16 years, and as recently as June, Mattis said "we are not winning."

Mattis told Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., at a hearing last month that he would have the Afghanistan strategy ready by mid-July. On Friday he was asked what is holding it up.

"It just takes time," he said. "It wasn't that past presidents were dumb or anything else. This is hard work, so you've got to get it right. That's all there is to it."

He also said it is vitally important to "get the big ideas right," meaning to establish a consensus within the government on what problem Afghanistan poses and what policy goal is being pursued by committing U.S. troops there. He

called this "orders of magnitude" more difficult that deciding military tactics.

"It's easy only for the people who criticize it from the outside and who don't carry the responsibility for integrating it altogether," he said, referring to making diplomatic and economic elements a part of the overall strategy.

Although Mattis did not mention him Friday, McCain is among the more vocal critics of the administration's lack of an Afghan strategy.

On Thursday, McCain mentioned his frustration on Afghanistan in a statement on the separate matter of the administration reportedly deciding to end a program to assist the Syrian opposition to President Bashar Assad.

"Six months into this administration, there is still no new strategy for victory in Afghanistan, either," McCain said. "It is now mid-July, when the administration promised to deliver that strategy to Congress, and we are still waiting."

In his remarks at the Pentagon, Mattis revealed no details of the ongoing administration debate.

He cast the Afghanistan problem in the context of past American wars, including those that did not end well — such as

Vietnam — and those that still have not ended, such as Iraq. He said he wants to be sure there is administration agreement on the political goals as well as the military means.

"I realize this probably looks easy, but it is not easy," he said.

Mattis said a decision disclosed by the Pentagon on Friday to withhold \$50 million in "coalition support funds" for Pakistan — money it receives each year as reimbursement for logistical support for U.S. combat operations — was separate from deliberations over a new Afghanistan strategy. Officials have said the U.S. approach to Pakistan is an important part of the Afghan strategy debate, in part because a Taliban faction known as the Haqqani network enjoys sanctuary in Pakistan. U.S. officials called the Haqqani network the most lethal element of the Taliban opposition in Afghanistan.

The Pentagon said in a statement Friday that Mattis has informed congressional committees that he could not certify that Pakistan has taken sufficient action against the Haqqani network to deserve full reimbursement this year. Of \$900 million in proposed reimbursement, Pakistan earlier received \$550 million and Congress a few months ago with-

held \$300 million.

Mattis' certification decision means the remaining \$50 million also will be withheld.

The Pentagon chief said this was not a reflection of a new, tougher U.S. policy toward Pakistan.

"This is simply an assessment of the current state of play" with regard to suppressing the Haqqani threat. "It's not a policy. It is the reality."

Pakistan is authorized to receive up to another \$900 million in support funds this coming year, of which \$400 million is subject to Pentagon certification of sufficient Pakistani effort against the Haqqani network.

"In our discussions with Pakistani officials, we continue to stress that it is in the interest of Pakistan to eliminate all safe havens and reduce the operational capacity of all militant organizations that pose a threat to U.S. and Pakistani interests as well as regional stability," a Pentagon spokesman, Adam Stump, said.

Last year, then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter determined the Pakistani effort against the Haqqani network was insufficient, and as a result \$300 million in support funds was withheld.

Mosul's 'Clock Church' intact

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

MOSUL, Iraq — A historic church thought to have been blown up by Islamic State has been found intact following the liberation of Mosul's Old City.

Al-Saa Church, also known as the "Clock Church" after its distinctive clock tower, is only a few hundred yards from the Great Mosque of al-Nuri, where ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a caliphate in 2014.

Militants used explosives last month to demolish the 12th century mosque and its distinctive leaning minaret but spared the nearby church.

That the church survived is a surprise since it was reputed to have been destroyed more than a year ago.

In April 2016, Britain's *The Telegraph* newspaper reported that the church had been blown up — something that would have

been routine for ISIS, which has targeted historic buildings and ancient relics throughout the Middle East.

On Thursday, a group of Iraqi federal police and an armored Humvee were parked beside the damaged but relatively intact church.

The clock tower, a gift from Empress Eugenie, wife of Emperor Napoleon III of France, when the church was built by Dominican Fathers in the 1870s, still stands, minus its clock, amid a landscape of collapsed homes and bomb-cratered streets.

A wall beside the church has been spray-painted with a message from "Lt. Mohammed EOD — IED," suggesting the area may have been cleared of booby traps, though the police walk gingerly in and around the building.

One of them, Sgt. Bassam Nadhim Ibrahim, said security

forces killed many enemy fighters in the battle to capture the church.

Ibrahim said U.S. ground troops weren't involved in the battle to liberate the church.

"They only helped from the air," he said of American forces, who bombarded the Old City with air and artillery strikes to overcome ISIS defenses.

Ibrahim and other police officers climbed up a metal gate propped against a wall to tear down a black ISIS banner inside the church.

The church roof, reached by clambering up a pile of rubble and some concrete steps, overlooks the ruins of al-Nuri and offers 360-degree views of the Old City.

It was a sniper's nest for the militants. Once captured, Iraqi security forces used it to call in air and artillery strikes, police officers said.

Al-Qaida suspect in plot extradited to Philadelphia

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — An al-Qaida suspect linked to a plot to kill a Swedish cartoonist has been brought to Philadelphia from Spain to face terrorism charges in federal court, despite President Donald Trump's promises to send terror suspects to the military prison at Guantanamo Bay.

Ali Charaf Damache, 52, of Algeria, appeared in court Friday and will be arraigned next month on charges that he conspired with two American women and a high school honors student from Maryland, court officials said.

A 2011 indictment accused him of aiding terrorism, including the plan to kill Swedish artist Lars Vilks, who depicted the Prophet Muhammad as a dog. The plot never materialized.

The Trump administration's decision to bring him to the United States marks a break from Attorney General Jeff Sessions' belief Guantanamo Bay is the best place for "these kinds of dangerous criminals."

Damache married a Colorado woman the day she traveled to Ireland to meet him in 2009. Jamie Paulin-Ramirez eventually helped the FBI investigate the terror cell, which included a Pennsylvania woman who called herself "Jihad Jane" online.

Damache, known as "Black Flag" had been fighting extradition after his 2015 arrest in Spain.

Officials said Damache joined co-defendants Mohammad Hassan Khalid, Colleen "Jihad Jane" LaRose and Paulin-Ramirez in forming a cell that recruited men online to wage jihad in South Asia and Europe, and to recruit women with western passports to travel through Europe in support of the cause.

LaRose is serving a 10-year prison term and Paulin-Ramirez eight years after pleading guilty to providing material aid to terrorism while Khalid, whose family had emigrated from Pakistan, was sentenced to five years.

Iraqi elite forces struggle to regroup

The Washington Post

When the Iraqi government launched an online recruitment drive for its elite counterterrorism forces in May, a startling 300,000 men applied. Of those, 3,000 passed a preliminary screening. Only about 1,000 are expected to be accepted into the rigorous joint American-Iraqi training academy, an American military trainer said.

The staggering response points to the popularity of the "Golden Division" following its high-profile role in wresting back territory from the Islamic State. But the rigorous selection process highlights the challenge of rebuilding a force that the United States says lost 40 percent of its human and military resources in the battle for Mosul.

The counterterrorism forces are the undisputed cream of Iraq's armed forces, but powerful Iran-backed majority Shiite militias are also among the most trusted fighters in the nation.

With several important towns in Iraq still under ISIS control, quickly regrouping the counterterrorism forces remains a priority in the short term. But the force's strength also has long-term implications for preventing another insurgency.

Replenishing the Golden Division will also likely determine whether Iraq will rely on a regular force firmly under government command to finish the job against the Islamic State and prevent a successor group from forming, or if that task will fall to the militias, known as the Popular Mobilization

Units, which have become legal entities of Iraq's security forces but mostly operate outside the control of the central government in Baghdad.

For the United States, the latter is not an option, given the militias' intimate ties to Iran and the training and equipping of new Iraqi commandos is quickly becoming central to U.S. policy in Iraq.

The counterterrorism forces were established by U.S. Special Forces in 2004 to tackle the insurgency unleashed by the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Some 100 U.S. Special Forces work with their Iraqi counterparts to mold recruits into elite soldiers that "look like us, are mentally agile and conduct operations like we do," said Brig. Gen. Patrick Roberson, a U.S. Special Forces commander involved in training counterterrorism troops.

Roberson said that Iraqi officers have taken over about 95 percent of the 30 to 40 month training of new troops, but that the United States maintains a close quality control role — a testament, he said, to the rapid maturation of the officer ranks.

Their importance to the fight against Islamic State, coupled with the high rates of casualties they suffered, makes getting troops trained and quickly assigned to units in the field a critical priority. But the lengthy training program may not be able keep up with battlefield losses. Since July, only 500 recruits joined units in the field.

Trump Jr., Manafort won't testify publicly

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's eldest son and his former campaign chairman won't testify publicly next week and are instead discussing being privately interviewed by a Senate committee investigating Russia's meddling in the 2016 election, the panel said.

The committee initially called for Donald Trump Jr. and Paul Manafort to appear publicly Wednesday. But the top Republican and Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee now say the men are negotiating the terms of their appearances, and lawmakers don't currently plan to issue subpoenas to force them to appear.

In a joint statement, Sens. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, and Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.,

also said they are negotiating with Trump Jr. and Manafort about possibly turning over documents.

Both men face questions about attending a Trump Tower meeting with a Russian lawyer in June 2016 that was described to Trump Jr. in emails as part of a Russian government effort to help his father's campaign. Trump Jr. was told the lawyer had damaging information that could be used against Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and top White House aide, also attended the meeting. He is scheduled to speak behind closed doors with the Senate intelligence committee Monday and with the House intelligence committee Tuesday.

The revelation of the Trump

Tower meeting renewed questions about the Trump's campaign's possible connections with Russia and put some of Trump's inner circle at the forefront of ongoing federal and congressional probes.

Manafort spokesman Jason Maloni declined to comment on the committee's announcement. Trump Jr. attorney Alan Futerfas did not respond to several attempts by The Associated Press to contact him this week, including calls and emails Friday.

Also Friday, The Washington Post, citing anonymous U.S. officials, reported that the Russian ambassador to the U.S. has said he discussed election-related issues with U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions when the two men met during the 2016 presidential race.

Trump responded to the re-

port on Twitter on Saturday, complaining about "illegal leaks."

"A new INTELLIGENCE LEAK from the Amazon Washington Post, this time against A.G. Jeff Sessions," he tweeted. "These illegal leaks, like Comey's, must stop!"

The Post had cited anonymous U.S. officials who described U.S. intelligence intercepts of Ambassador Sergey Kislyak's descriptions of his meetings with Sessions, who was then a foreign policy adviser to Trump and now serves as attorney general.

Department of Justice spokeswoman Sarah Isgur Flores said Sessions stands by his previous assertion that he never had conversations with Russian officials about any type of interference with the election.

Dems herald agreement on sweeping Russia sanctions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congressional Democrats announced Saturday that a bipartisan group of House and Senate negotiators have reached an agreement on a sweeping Russia sanctions package to punish Moscow for meddling in the presidential election and its military aggression in Ukraine and Syria.

Rep. Steny Hoyer, of Maryland, the No. 2 House Democrat, said lawmakers had settled lingering issues with the bill,

which also includes stiff economic penalties against Iran and North Korea. The sanctions targeting Russia, however, have drawn the most attention due to President Donald Trump's persistent push for warmer relations with President Vladimir Putin amid ongoing investigations into Russia's interference in the 2016 campaign.

Passage of the bill, which could occur before Congress breaks for the August recess, puts Congress on a possible collision course with Trump.

The White House had objected to a key section of the bill that would mandate a congressional review if Trump attempted to ease or end the sanctions against Moscow. But if Trump were to veto the bill, he risks sparking an outcry from Republicans and Democrats and having his decision overturned. The sanctions review was included in the bill because of wariness among lawmakers from both parties about Trump's affinity for Putin.

The precise mechanics of how involved House Democrats

would be in the review process had been a key sticking point, but Hoyer said he was pleased with the outcome.

"The legislation ensures that both the majority and minority are able to exercise our oversight role over the administration's implementation of sanctions," Hoyer said.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, of New York, called the sanctions legislation "strong" and he expected the legislation to be passed promptly.

Minnesota's chief of police resigns after fatal shooting

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Minneapolis police Chief Janee Harteau said she is "willing to step aside to let a fresh set of leadership eyes" be in charge of the department, which has been criticized in the wake of the July 15 fatal police shooting of an unarmed Australian woman who had called 911.

Harteau's resignation Friday came at the request of Mayor Betsy Hodges, who said she lost confidence in the chief's "ability to lead us further." She said she asked Harteau to step down after assessing where the department needs to go.

"For us to continue to transform policing — and community trust in policing — we need new leadership at MPD,"

Hodges said.

Harteau, who worked her way up from the bottom of the department to become the city's first female, first openly gay and first Native American police chief, said Friday she was proud of the work she accomplished and honored to serve as chief.

But, she said, the shooting of Justine Damond, 40, by one of

her officers and other incidents "have caused me to engage in deep reflection."

The chief, who once successfully filed a discrimination and sexual harassment complaint against the police force along with her partner, said she must "put the communities we serve first" despite the department's accomplishments under her leadership.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Homeowner finds WWI shell in basement

NY BUFFALO — An upstate New York woman has found a World War I artillery shell in her basement.

Buffalo resident Judith Sobresky said she was pulling up tiles in her basement when she saw an odd object in the corner. Lodged between the floor and wall was the old artillery shell.

Sobresky called the police after examining it. Buffalo police, the fire department and bomb squad arrived, and later U.S. Air Force bomb specialists were called.

Officials took close to four hours to remove the shell, which was taken to a secure location to be detonated.

Sobresky has lived in the home with her daughter for two years.

Woman steals taxi, picks up passengers

PA PHILADELPHIA — Police said a woman stole a taxi in Philadelphia and picked up a fare.

They said the 65-year-old woman caught the cab around midnight Thursday and asked to be taken to the SugarHouse Casino. On the way, she asked the driver to make a stop at a gas station.

Police said that is when the woman jumped into the driver's seat and drove off.

Police stopped the taxi 30 minutes later and found a woman and her daughter in the backseat.

The mother told officers she had hailed the cab earlier, not realizing it was stolen.

Live Civil War-era shells found in library

MA CARLISLE — A Massachusetts li-

brarian on her first day came across live military shells from the Civil War inside a closet in her new office.

Gleason Public Library director Abby Noland told The Boston Globe she found the shells inside a box with a label explaining they had been examined by a munitions expert and could be live.

The state bomb squad determined the shells were live and took the shells to have them safely detonated.

The shells turned out to be part of a Gettysburg collection that was donated to the town years ago.

Community service for illegal mansion builder

CA LOS ANGELES — The father of fashion models Bella and Gigi Hadid has been fined and given community service for illegally building a gigantic mansion in Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles Times reported that real estate developer Mohamed Hadid was sentenced to 200 hours of service, fined \$3,000 and ordered to pay the city more than \$14,000 to cover building department costs.

Hadid pleaded no contest in May to charges for building portions of a 30,000-square-foot mansion in Bel Air without permits.

Fish chews on girls' foot, leaves deep cuts

MN DULUTH — An 11-year-old girl suffered bone-deep lacerations when what was probably a fish chewed on her foot and ankle as she cooled off in a northeastern Minnesota lake.

Maren Kesselhon suffered nine deep cuts and tendon damage when she jumped off a paddleboard on Island Lake, near Duluth.

Maren told WDIO-TV that she could feel her foot was inside a fish's mouth and kicked at it with her other foot to free herself. The doctors who treated Maren said the razor-sharp cuts probably were caused by a muskie, which inhabit Island Lake.

Gambler drops 75 pounds to win bet

NV LAS VEGAS — A professional gambler dropped some pounds and gained some wealth after bettors wagered \$1 million he couldn't reduce his body fat to less than 10 percent.

Walter Fisher, 36, told the New York Post he began overeating while on a losing streak and gained 40 to 50 pounds in a month. The 6-foot-1 Fisher weighed 245 pounds and was more than \$100,000 in debt in December. The Post reported that's when a group of gambler acquaintances bet \$1 million Fisher couldn't drop his body fat to under 10 percent in six months.

Fisher got financial backing from friends. He weighed 175 pounds with 8.8 percent body fat on June 22.

Worker falls into septic tank at resort

PA LEWISBERRY — A contract worker is in the hospital after falling into a septic tank that is under construction at a Pennsylvania ski resort.

The contractor was working on scaffolding at Ski Roundtop in Lewisberry on Friday. The unidentified man fell about 8 feet down into the 30-foot tank.

The man suffered a shoulder injury and a possible concussion. He was breathing and alert when he was taken to a local hospital.

Motorist killed by deer struck by passing car

OH WARREN — Authorities said an Ohio woman was killed when a deer struck and sent airborne by a motorist traveling in the opposite direction smashed into the windshield of her family's car.

The State Highway Patrol in Trumbull County said Amy Stoneburner, 39, of Negley, was in the front passenger seat when the deer flew into and through the car's windshield. The crash occurred on State Route 7 in Kinsman Township, about 68 miles east of Cleveland.

Stoneburner died at the scene. Her husband, Daniel, 37, who was driving, and their two children, Jessica, 9, and Michelle, 12, were treated for minor injuries.

Money added to women's prize in race

OR BEND — An Oregon cycling race will again offer equal prize money for men and women racers.

Companies and others in the Bend area donated thousands of dollars after learning men competing in the Cascade Cycling Classic would earn more than those in the women's race — a change from previous years.

The Bulletin newspaper reported the women's prize purse will now be the same as what is listed for the men's through the top 15 positions.

Race organizers said the gap arose because the men's race is now sanctioned by the International Cycling Union. The organization requires the men's prize purse to be at a certain threshold, and there wasn't enough money before Thursday's donations to pay the same to women.

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Source says Irving asked Cavs for trade

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Kyrie Irving wants the stage for himself.

Cleveland's All-Star point guard has asked the Cavaliers to trade him, two people familiar with the situation told the Associated Press on Friday. Irving made the request last week to owner Dan Gilbert, said the people who spoke on condition of anonymity because the team is not commenting on the star's demands.

Irving's appeal was first reported by ESPN.

A four-time All-Star, Irving has spent six seasons with the Cavs, who selected him with the No. 1 overall pick in 2011. The 25-year-old has overcome injury issues and blossomed into one of the league's elite point guards and biggest stars.

And now that he's finally established himself playing alongside LeBron James, Irving wants out.

He's under contract for two more seasons with Cleveland (he has a player option in 2020), but the Cavs could be inclined to move Irving now and begin another rebuild around James, who can opt out of his contract next summer and leave Ohio for the second time.

The bombshell about Irving adds to what has been a tumultuous offseason for the Cavs fol-

lowing their loss in five games to Golden State in the NBA Finals. General manager David Griffin parted ways with the club after failing to work out a new contract with Gilbert and while other teams have been active in signing free agents the Cavs have been limited in their ability to revamp their roster because of salary-cap issues.

Also, the Cavs courted former NBA star Chauncey Billups but couldn't get him to join their front office.

Irving's request to be dealt perhaps sheds some light on the Cavs' recent pursuit of former league MVP Derrick Rose. The team has talked to Rose about a one-year contract in recent days, a source familiar with the negotiations told the AP on Thursday.

Rose was thought to be a potential backup, but now it appears he could be needed to start if the Cavs and Irving are indeed breaking up.

There is certain to be major interest in Irving, who averaged a career-high 25.2 points and 5.8 assists in 72 games last season. Irving averaged 25.9 points in his third straight Finals, but he and James couldn't do enough to match the Warriors, who took back their crown after adding Kevin Durant last summer.

A potential trade partner for the Cavs could be the New York

Knicks, who have been trying to unload Carmelo Anthony, a close friend of James. Irving is from New Jersey and would welcome a chance to go back to his home area. However, the Knicks may not have enough assets to intrigue the Cavs and there is a sizeable imbalance in contracts, so the Cavs would have to include other players in any potential deal.

All of it will fall on Koby Altman, who has been serving as the team's interim GM and is being promoted to the position full-time. A person familiar with the decision said Altman's deal is being finalized and he will be announced as the team's new GM in the next few days.

Altman, who has been with the club since 2012, will be the fifth GM to work for Gilbert since 2005.

It's strange that Irving would choose now to ask for a trade.

After all, he has finally developed into a bona fide superstar following three tough seasons following James' departure to Miami in 2010. Irving had no help during those years and the Cavs were in a state of disarray before James came back in 2014.

In his second year alongside James, Irving made the biggest shot in franchise history, draining a three-pointer in the closing moments of Game 7 to give the Cavs their first title — and

the first for any Cleveland pro team since 1964.

By all accounts, Irving and James got along but there were times when they didn't quite see eye to eye.

James was demanding of his younger teammates but he was always adamant that Irving would grow into a superior player. Following Cleveland's Game 5 loss in the Finals, Irving credited James for leading the way.

"He's freaking awesome," Irving said. "As a student of the game, it would be a disservice to myself if I didn't try to learn as much as possible while I'm playing with this guy. Every single day demanding more out of himself, demanding more out of us, the true testament of a consummate professional. And understanding how things work, not only just in the game but off the court, things that matter, just taking care of your body, understanding the magnitude of what the goal is at hand and what steps it takes in order to achieve that goal."

Moments earlier, James had walked off the court at Oracle Arena where Irving was waiting

They made their signature handshake and James told Irving, "We'll be back."

Now, they may be headed in opposite directions.

Wall reportedly inks \$170M, 4-year extension with Wizards

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — All-Star point guard John Wall and the Washington Wizards have agreed to a \$170 million, four-year contract extension that will start with the 2019 season, two people with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Friday night.

The people confirmed the terms of the agreement to the AP on condition of anonymity because the Wizards have not officially announced the deal.

The extension includes a player option for the final sea-

son in 2023, and a 15 percent trade kicker, according to one of the people.

"Re-signed with the Wizards, man. Signed my extension. You know where I want to be. I love being in D.C. I love the organization. Love my teammates. Love the amazing fans," Wall said in a video posted on Twitter. "Just had to think it out with my family and friends and made the decision."

"Definitely going to bring y'all that championship," Wall added. "That's my ultimate goal and I ain't going to stop

until I get it."

Wall is a four-time Eastern Conference All-Star who was the No. 1 overall pick in the 2010 NBA draft out of Kentucky. He becomes the third player to agree this summer to a designated player "super-max" extension, joining Houston's James Harden and Golden State's Stephen Curry.

Wall's deal was first reported by NBA.com.

The mechanics for Wall's extension are new to the NBA in the latest version of the collective bargaining agreement and were put in place to help teams

hold on to their star players. A player has to reach certain parameters to qualify, including making an All-NBA team the prior season. A player can also become eligible by making All-NBA in two of the prior three seasons or being named MVP or Defensive Player of the Year.

Wall was a member of the All-NBA third team last season, averaging 23.1 points, 10.7 assists, 4.2 rebounds and 2.0 steals. He led the Wizards to a 49-33 record under new coach Scott Brooks during the regular season.

Grace posts lowest score ever in major

Associate Press

SOUTHPORT, England — Branden Grace posted the lowest 18-hole score in 157 years and 422 major championships, and he didn't even know it.

He knocked in his short par putt on the final hole at Royal Birkdale for a 62 when his caddy, Zack Raswego, walked up to him and said, "You're in the history books."

Grace didn't know what he meant.

The 29-year-old South African was so locked in on a flawless round Saturday at the British Open that he wasn't even aware of the scoring record. Grace was only thinking about trying to get through the third round without a bogey.

"I had no idea that a 62 was obviously the lowest ever," Grace said. "Now it makes it even more special than what it was."

Grace pounced on a serene day that was ideal for scoring at Royal Birkdale with a 29 on the front nine. And after a lull to start the back nine, he resumed

his march with a 36-foot birdie putt on the par-3 14th, a birdie putt from just inside 30 feet on No. 16, and then he moved to 8 under on his round by hitting 3-iron onto the green at the par-5 17th for a two-putt birdie.

From about 60 feet behind the 18th green, he rolled a beautiful lag to 2 feet and tapped in for the record.

Johnny Miller shot his famous 63 in the final round at Oakmont in 1973 to win the U.S. Open. Since then, 28 players posted a 63 in the majors 30 times, most recently by Justin Thomas in the U.S. Open last month at Erin Hills.

No one ever got lower — until Grace.

"Look at that number! That is sweet," Miller, now a golf analyst, said as NBC flashed a 62 on the screen.

With his name in the record book, still to be determined was whether he had a chance to add his name to the claret jug. Grace, who made the cut by one shot, finished at 4-under 206. He was two shots behind

Jordan Spieth, who was on the range still warming up, when Grace finished.

Spieth went out in 31, however, and Grace was falling further behind. The conditions were perfect for scoring, and he wasn't the only one to take advantage. Dustin Johnson missed an 8-foot birdie putt on the 16th and failed to birdie the par-5 17th from the fairway and still shot 64.

No matter.

"You still have to do it out there," said Grace, who said par felt more like 67 than 70 because of the light wind and turf that was on the soft side. "There's a lot of spots you want to keep out of on this golf course. And I did it today. So just fortunate the way things finished."

He played the third round with Jason Dufner, who shot a 63 at Oak Hill in the second round of the PGA Championship four years ago. Dufner also had a shot at 62, facing a 10-foot birdie on the last hole. He left it well short and barely made the par for 63.

"It's kind of neat to be a part of history," Dufner said. "It's a great experience for him. It was semi-cool for me."

Grace's record score came one year after Phil Mickelson almost became the first to shoot 62 until his birdie putt on the 18th at Royal Troon in the first round swirled around the edge of the cup.

And there were others over the years. Tiger Woods had a vicious lip-out in his bid for 62 in the second round of the 2007 PGA Championship at Southern Hills. And then there was Jack Nicklaus in the first round of Baltusrol for the 1980 U.S. Open. He missed a 3-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole and had to settle for a 63.

Now, there's a new standard for scoring in the majors.

Grace's record score came 44 years after Miller was the first to shoot 63 in a major. Miller's record was 33 years after Lloyd Mangrum was the first to shoot 64 in a major, at the 1940 Masters.

Froome virtually wraps up his fourth Tour victory

Associated Press

MARSEILLE, France — Chris Froome virtually sealed a fourth Tour de France victory on the penultimate stage on Saturday, stamping his authority on the race in a time trial in Marseille streets.

Froome, the last rider to set off from the Stade Velodrome, finished third in the 22.5-kilometer stage won by Maciej Bodnar, and increased his overall lead.

Colombian rider Rigoberto Uran moved to second place in the general classification, 54 seconds behind Froome, after Frenchman Romain Bardet cracked and dropped to third overall.

Only the largely ceremonial stage into Paris on the Champs-Élysées on Sunday stands between Froome and his fourth triumph in five years.

"It's just an amazing feeling," Froome said.

"It was so close coming into this TT. This was my closest Tour de France, the most hard-fought between the riders on GC. I didn't think it would come down to this TT in Marseille. There was a bit of pressure but, for me, it's always a good thing having pressure."

The British rider from Team Sky also won cycling's biggest race in 2013, 2015 and 2016. Only the four men who have won the Tour five times have more victories than Froome: Jacques Anquetil, Eddie Merckx, Bernard Hinault, and Miguel Indurain.

Froome did not win a single stage this year.

He was booed and whistled by fans at the Stade Velodrome when he went down the starting ramp, but he was in control throughout, gaining time on his

main rivals at all intermediate check points. He almost caught Bardet in the finale.

Bardet endured his first bad day after three grueling weeks, and reached his limits in the small climb up to Notre-Dame de la Garde cathedral.

Bardet salvaged a spot on the podium by one second, ahead of Mikel Landa of Spain.

Bardet had been second overall before the clock race, with an advantage of more than a minute over Landa. But the French rider melted in the heat on the twisting and technical time trial course.

He said, "I was in poor health and I paid for it, in cash."

He felt his immune system starting to react after the last stage in the high Alps, and "I didn't feel well this morning."

Twice a runner-up at the Giro d'Italia, Uran added another second-place finish at a

Grand Tour on his resume but his hopes were almost ruined when he hit barriers as he entered the Velodrome, which hosted the start and finish of Stage 20. Uran managed to stay on his bike but lost precious time and finished 31 seconds off the pace.

Froome's teammate, Michal Kwiatkowski, was second in the time trial, one second behind Bodnar.

The Polish rider missed out on a stage win in Pau after being swallowed by the pack only 250 meters from the finish.

"I still can't believe it," Bodnar said. "Last year was close and this year was even closer and now I finally get one. It's amazing. I have been here three hours waiting. It was really nice seeing the atmosphere in the stadium. I was waiting for Froome because he's a really good time triallist."

Cardinals rally late, cool off hot Cubs

Associated Press

CHICAGO — For 11 straight batters in the eighth inning, the St. Louis Cardinals were unstoppable.

It was an emphatic response to a heartbreaking loss.

Paul DeJong hit a tiebreaking two-run double in St. Louis' highest-scoring inning of the season, and the Cardinals cooled off the Chicago Cubs with an 11-4 victory on Friday.

"I've never been a part of something like that, scoring nine runs with no outs," DeJong said. "But I think that really made a statement for us."

Chicago carried a 3-2 lead into the eighth, looking for its seventh consecutive win. But St. Louis' first 11 batters reached in its biggest inning since it scored nine in the eighth against the Cubs on Aug. 30, 2014, at Busch Stadium. The

Cardinals made the most of a combined six walks by three relievers while improving to 4-4 since the All-Star break.

"We just pitched badly for one inning, and some really good pitchers had a tough time," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said.

St. Louis blew a late, one-run lead in a 3-2 loss to the New York Mets on Thursday. The game ended when reliever Trevor Rosenthal was late covering first on Jose Reyes' winning single with two outs in the ninth.

Cardinals manager Mike Matheny was interested in his team's response, and his players provided an answer.

"I saw a little bit of everything," Matheny said. "I saw some angry. I saw some, you know, kind of like you got the wind kicked out of you a little bit, and I think everybody

needed a little bit of something and that eighth inning provided a whole lot of wind in everybody's sail."

Carl Edwards Jr. (3-2) was pulled after the first three batters reached. Hector Rondon then walked Jedd Gyorko, tying it at 3, and DeJong followed with a drive into the ivy in right-center for a ground-rule double.

The Cardinals were off and running from there. Carson Kelly hit a two-run double in his first game since being recalled from Triple-A Memphis. Tommy Pham's two-run single made it 11-3 before Dexter Fowler bounced into a double play.

When DeJong, the 14th batter of the inning, struck out swinging with runners on second and third for the final out, the crowd of 42,186 cheered sarcastically.

"That was a weird, weird inning," Rondon said. "First time I've seen something like that — nine runs with no outs. It's weird, but it is what it is."

Willson Contreras hit a two-run homer for Chicago, and Ben Zobrist had three hits. Jake Arrieta pitched six effective innings, allowing two runs and five hits.

The Cubs played without third baseman Kris Bryant, who sprained his left little finger on a headfirst slide in the first inning of Chicago's 8-2 victory at Atlanta on Wednesday. X-rays were negative, but Bryant is experiencing soreness and there is some concern about gripping a bat.

Fowler had three hits for St. Louis, and Randal Grichuk homered in his return from a lower back injury. Matt Bowman (2-3) got the final out of the seventh for the win.

Astros take big lead, hold off late Orioles comeback

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — A commanding lead had been reduced to one run during a wild ninth inning, and the Houston Astros found themselves turning to their closer to hold off the Baltimore Orioles.

In the end, the best team in the American League found a way to win — again.

Rookie Yuli Gurriel had a career-high four hits, including a home run, and the Astros squeezed out an 8-7 victory on Friday night to end Baltimore's four-game winning streak.

Houston took an 8-2 lead into the ninth before Adam Jones hit a two-run double off James Hoyt and Jonathan Schoop homered with two on against Chris Devenski.

After Chris Davis was thrown out trying to bunt against the shift, Ken Giles struck out Mark Trumbo to earn his 21st save.

"It was a mess of an inning from the beginning," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said.

"They obviously put some good at-bats together. It can happen fast in this park.

"All's well that ends well with a win — albeit a stressful one in the end."

Colin Moran hit his first major league homer and first triple for Houston, and Brian McCann also went deep.

Yankees 5, Mariners 1: Aaron Judge hit a colossal three-run homer that nearly soared out of Safeco Field, and CC Sabathia won on his 37th birthday as New York beat Seattle.

Braves 12, Dodgers 3: Pitcher Jaime Garcia (4-7) hit a grand slam off previously unbeaten Alex Wood (11-1) to highlight visiting Atlanta's victory over Los Angeles.

Diamondbacks 6, Nationals 5: Host Arizona opened the game with three straight home runs off Washington ace Max Scherzer and ended it with Brandon Drury's bases-loaded single in the bottom of the ninth inning.

Red Sox 6, Angels 2: Chris Sale (12-4) pitched six scoreless innings and visiting Boston rode its five-run first to a victory over Los Angeles.

Pirates 13, Rockies 5: Pittsburgh rookie Josh Bell had a career-high four hits, Andrew McCutchen had three hits and reached base five times, and surging Pittsburgh beat host Colorado.

Royals 7, White Sox 6 (10): Whit Merrifield's sacrifice fly in the 10th inning lifted host Kansas City over skidding Chicago.

Indians 13, Blue Jays 3: Edwin Encarnacion homered and drove in four runs against his former team, and host Cleveland broke open a close game with an eight-run seventh inning to pull away from Toronto.

Phillies 6, Brewers 1: Aaron Nola (7-6) tied a career high with nine strikeouts in seven sharp innings, Freddy Galvis hit a two-run homer and host Philadelphia beat reeling Milwaukee.

Rangers 4, Rays 3 (10): Elvis Andrus homered early and snapped a 10th-inning tie with a two-out infield single that gave struggling Texas a comeback victory over host Tampa Bay.

Tigers 6, Twins 3: Victor Martinez hit two homers and visiting Detroit topped Minnesota.

Mets 7, Athletics 5: Michael Conforto hit a pair of two-run homers and Jerry Blevins rescued the Mets' bullpen with a five-out save as host New York held off Oakland for its third straight victory.

Marlins 3, Reds 1: Jose Urena (8-4) pitched three-hit ball into the seventh inning, Christian Yelich drove in two runs and Miami opened a six-game road trip with a rain-delayed victory over Cincinnati.

Padres 12, Giants 9 (11): Matt Szczur blooped a tie-breaking single in the 11th inning, his fourth hit of the game after coming off the bench, and visiting San Diego outlasted San Francisco.