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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Antietam commander relieved of duty

BY ERIK SLAVIN

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The commander of the guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam was relieved Wednesday following results of an investigation into the ship's grounding earlier this year.

Capt. Joseph Carrigan was relieved due to a "loss of confidence" in his ability to command by Rear Adm. Charles Williams, commander of Task Force 70, according to a Navy statement from U.S. Pacific Fleet in Hawaii on Wednesday.

Carrigan's relief comes after the Antietam ran aground on shoals just outside Yokosuka Naval Base on Jan. 31, leaking an estimated 1,100 gallons of hydraulic fluid into the bay.

"While the investigation is

still under review by leadership, sufficient findings of fact emerged during the investigation to warrant the relief of the commanding officer," the statement said.

The Antietam was anchored near the northeastern side of the base at the ammunition-handling anchorage area about 11 a.m. when it drifted into the rocks, Naval Forces Japan officials said in January.

The area is a common anchorage point for both U.S. and Japanese ships prior to entering the base harbor.

Sailors from other ships have told Stars and Stripes that rough seas and winds can make it difficult to control ships there but within a crew's capabilities during normal circumstances.

A high-wind warning was posted by weather officials at

Yokosuka for early Jan. 31, but it remains unclear if the ship was affected by wind or what other circumstances may have come into play.

Navy officials called the Antietam's grounding a "minor operational setback." It is one of at least seven ships homeported at Yokosuka equipped for intercepting ballistic missiles.

The Navy is still finalizing plans for the Antietam's repair, which is expected to commence in Japan in "the coming weeks," a Navy statement said.

Capt. Jonathan Duffy, deputy commodore of Destroyer Squadron 15, will assume temporary duties as the ship's commander until a permanent relief is assigned.

Carrigan has been temporarily reassigned to 7th Fleet headquarters in Yokosuka, which is

typical following a command relief.

Carrigan previously served as executive officer aboard the destroyer USS Nitze and commanded the destroyer USS Russell before taking over the Antietam.

He earned his commission after graduating from the University of Notre Dame in 1993. He later graduated first in his class among all officers after earning a graduate degree in national security and strategic studies at the Navy War College.

His ashore duties included service as a Navy legislative fellow for former Sen. Jeff Sessions, who is now attorney general. Carrigan also was a speechwriter for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Navy punishes troops who flew Trump flag

The Washington Post

The sight of a large blue-and-white Trump flag perched atop the lead vehicle in a military convoy was a shocking sight for some Kentucky drivers on the final weekend in January.

Video and photos of the vehicle spread rapidly online, prompting Navy officials to open an investigation after they confirmed that the convoy was from a special warfare unit from Virginia Beach.

Nearly a month later, the Navy has announced that the investigation is over and that "corrective measures" have been doled out to select members of the unit.

Lt. Jacqui Maxwell, a spokeswoman for Naval Special Warfare Group 2, said in a statement to The Washington Post that

punitive actions were taken but declined to comment on the precise nature of the punishment or how many individuals were affected.

"The inquiry was completed between the unit's commanders and servicemembers," Maxwell's statement said. "It has been determined that those servicemembers have violated the spirit and intent of applicable DOD regulations concerning the flying of flags and the apparent endorsement of political activities. Administrative corrective measures were taken with each individual based on their respective responsibility."

Though images of the controversial display were largely condemned by government officials, the public reaction was more varied. For some, seeing military personnel publicly

endorsing a political figure exacerbated existing fears about American institutions falling prey to an administration that has been accused of having authoritarian impulses.

For others, the display was nothing more than a playful celebration of American might as the country transitions — peacefully — from one president to the next.

The images provoked strong reactions on both sides of the debate. One of the Facebook videos showing the convoy was viewed tens of thousands of times before it was taken down.

The punishment, whatever it may be, was hardly a surprise and came after Maxwell said last month that the display was "unauthorized."

She noted at the time that the vehicles captured on camera

were based in Fort Knox, Ky., and were driven by members of an East Coast Naval Special Warfare unit. At the time, officials confirmed, the convoy was traveling between two military training areas.

The action may have run afoul of a Defense Department directive that bans servicemembers from acting in political manners while on active duty. Among the specific actions banned are displaying political signs or banners on a private vehicle and displaying a "partisan political sign, poster, banner or similar device" outside a residence on a military base.

"Department of Defense and Navy regulations prescribe flags and pennants that may be displayed as well as the manner of display," Maxwell said last month.

Iranian film hails US Navy's demise in imagined Gulf battle

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — In a climactic battle at sea, an Iranian commander orders his forces to open fire on a much larger U.S. fleet, obliterating it with a barrage of rockets, some of which tear American flags from their masts.

The scenario unfolds in "Battle of the Persian Gulf II," a new Iranian animated film more than four years in the making that imagines a devastating response to an American attack on the country's nuclear program.

It might have seemed out of date this time last year, when a nuclear accord reached with world powers had lifted sanctions and raised hopes for a broader rapprochement between Iran and the West.

But now tensions are rising again. President Donald Trump repeatedly has criticized the nuclear deal, and his administration put Iran "on notice" last month after it tested a ballistic missile. Iranians, meanwhile, were angered over Trump's travel ban, which temporarily barred their entry into the U.S. before it was blocked by the courts.

Director Farhad Azima said the timing of the film's release is purely coincidental. The movie has begun showing in the city of

Mashhad, where it was produced, and will open in other cities in the coming weeks.

The nearly 90-minute film, a sequel to a production about the 1980s Iran-Iraq war, begins with a U.S. attack on an Iranian nuclear reactor. Washington has long warned it would take military action to prevent Iran from developing an atomic weapon, while Iran insists its nuclear program is entirely peaceful.

That sets up a showdown in the Persian Gulf, where the real-life U.S. Navy has accused Iranian forces of harassing its vessels in recent months.

In the film, a character who closely resembles Gen. Qassem Soleimani, head of Iran's elite Quds Force, leads a single vessel against more than a dozen American warships. When a U.S. commander orders him to surrender or die, he replies. "General, I am not a diplomat, I am a revolutionary!"

He warns that any American soldiers taking part in an attack on Iran "should order their coffins" before his forces destroy the whole U.S. fleet.

The U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, which is based in Bahrain and is responsible for naval operations in the Persian Gulf, declined to comment on the film when contacted by The Associated Press.

Study: Iran's navy itching for end of ban

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — Iran is likely to go on an international shopping spree for surface warships, submarines and anti-ship missiles after the expiration in 2020 of a United Nations resolution prohibiting it from acquiring sophisticated weapons, according to the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence.

The expiration "will allow Iran to pursue foreign acquisitions that have been inaccessible since sanctions were imposed," according to a new assessment of Iran's naval forces, strategy and capability obtained by Bloomberg News. Titled "Iran's Naval Forces: A Tale of Two Navies," it is an update to a 2009 version.

The ban on conventional weapons will be lifted as part of the international deal reached in July 2015 between the U.S., five allies and Iran to curtail its nuclear program in return for easing international sanctions. The Navy report is likely to be cited by those who agree with President Donald Trump's past description of the nuclear accord as "the worst deal ever negotiated."

The Trump administration has stopped

short of suggesting the U.S. will back out of the agreement. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told senators in his nomination hearing that "it is an imperfect arms control agreement — it's not a friendship treaty" but, "when America gives her word, we have to live up to it and work with our allies." The new report nevertheless could bolster moves in Congress to place new sanctions on Iran for its support of terrorism and its ballistic-missile tests.

For now, Iran is likely to continue to deploy indigenous weapons its engineers copied from foreign designs, including submarine-launched anti-ship cruise missiles, the "Hoot" high-speed torpedo "and potentially a supersonic" anti-ship cruise missile, "which Iran claims is in development," according to the Navy assessment.

After the ban expires in 2020, "Iran may look to foreign acquisitions of ships and submarines with a wide array of weapons suites. Reportedly, Iran has entered into negotiations with Russia to acquire the SS-N-26 Yakhont coastal defense cruise missile, as well," it said. Russia has sold the 186-mile-range missile to Syria, according to the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency.

GI financial planning help is available this week

BY MARCUS FICHTL

Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — The military is partnering with more than 100 financial institutions this week to help servicemembers save some of their hard-earned pay.

During Military Saves Week, which runs through Saturday, servicemembers at installations worldwide can take part in one-on-one financial counseling sessions and receive in-depth training on the military's new retirement system.

"If you look at savings statistics across the country, we have a crisis," Joseph Montanaro, a military relationship director for the USAA financial services group, said in an email to Stars and Stripes. "According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the current savings rate is just over 5 percent. That's just not going to get it done."

Military Saves — a subsidiary of the nonprofit America Saves — is encouraging servicemembers and their families to sign a pledge at militarysaves.org, where they can plan, create and commit to a savings goal.

"By signing up for Military Saves, you're formalizing a commitment to do some financial good," Montanaro said.

Osan-based Air Force Staff Sgt. Shane Gaynor, 24, of Riverbank, Calif., is saving for a new house and retirement.

"Every third paycheck I put directly into savings, which is on top of the 15 percent of my paycheck already going toward a Roth TSP," he said, referring to the military's Thrift Savings Plan for retirement.

Senior airman Raquel Chaparro, 20, a Cleveland native stationed at Osan, said the Air Force could do a better job with financial training, especially at the start of a servicemember's career.

"When I was at Basic Military Training, they had us take classes at the end of the day when everyone was beaten down and tired," said Chaparro, who added she now saves half of every paycheck. She suggested that computer-based financial training be tangible and interactive, not something servicemembers just click through to meet a deadline.

US launches wave of strikes on Yemen targets

BY TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. jets and drones conducted more than 20 airstrikes against al-Qaida targets in Yemen on Thursday, roughly one month after U.S. special operators carried out a raid in the same province that led to the death of a Navy SEAL, Pentagon officials said.

The strikes, which were conducted overnight in a mountainous region where the provinces of Bayda, Shabwa and Abyan converge, targeted buildings, weapon systems, fighters and equipment along Yemen's southern coastal area, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said in a statement.

The region has been used by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as a hideout, and the strikes killed at least four militants, according to Yemeni officials in a report by The Associated Press.

"The strikes will degrade [al-Qaida's] ability to coordinate external terror attacks and limit their ability to use territory seized from the legitimate government of Yemen as a safe space for terror plotting," Davis said.

Thursday's airstrikes come after U.S. special operations forces carried out a raid Jan. 29 in which Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer William "Ryan" Owens was killed, four other U.S. servicemembers were wounded and a military aircraft was destroyed after it crash-landed. The attack was launched just days after President Donald Trump's inauguration.

It was not clear Thursday whether intelligence captured in the Jan. 29 raid led to Thursday's airstrikes, or if this was the first operation against the terrorist group in Yemen since that operation. A U.S. defense official who spoke on the condition of anonymity said the Pentagon is not required to announce every strike conducted in Yemen.

The defense official said the Defense Department, as instructed by President Barack Obama's administration, is not required to announce strikes outside of "areas of active hostility." Yemen, Libya, Pakistan and Somalia are considered outside those areas, the official said.

"We have not announced all strikes in Yemen," the official said.

Al-Qaida has seized large swaths of land in Yemen and entire cities starting in 2011 with the mass uprising that ended with the ouster of longtime ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2012.

However, the group grew in weapons and numbers after the start of the 2015 Saudi-led campaign that targeted Houthi rebels, who had seized control of the capital Sanaa, forcing the internationally recognized government to flee the country. Since then, the war exacerbated the state of lawlessness and gave al-Qaida freedom of movement and recruitment.

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

Yemen raid, SEAL's death still reverberate for Trump

The Washington Post

Almost as soon as the U.S. and Emirati commandos slipped into the village, their weapons shouldered in the moonless night, a surprise counterattack erupted and a Navy SEAL was hit.

Struggling to hold off an escalating fusillade from al-Qaida fighters and Yemeni tribesmen, the American forces, fearing the worst for their comrade, made an urgent request for a helicopter to evacuate Chief Petty Officer William "Ryan" Owens.

The 36-year-old SEAL, who died of his wounds, is now at the center of a debate over the first counterterrorism operation of the Trump administration, one that has provided ammunition for critics of the new president's decision-making process and has dealt a potential blow to future action against one of the world's most potent militant groups.

President Donald Trump paid tribute to the fallen SEAL on Tuesday night in his address to a joint session of Congress, singling out Owens' widow, Caryn, in a sharply emotional episode that juxtaposed the president's assertions about the success of the raid with his apparent attempts to distance himself from the criticism it has generated.

According to current and former officials, the deliberations leading up to the Jan. 29 raid, intended as the first step in a major expansion of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen, marked a departure from the more hands-on, deliberative process used by the prior administration.

The raid, the product of a more abbreviated White House process, has been followed by confusion within the U.S. government over how operations against al-Qaida in Yemen will proceed.

It also has generated friction with a key counterterrorism ally, smarting from the lack of advance notice about the raid and, according to local reports, up to 31 Yemeni civilian deaths.

The raid, which took place just over a week into the Trump administration, came as U.S. military officials sought to restore their counterterrorism capability in Yemen, severely damaged in the country's ongoing civil conflict. In 2015, the U.S. was forced to suspend a long-standing program that partnered special operations forces with Yemeni troops on the ground, severely limiting the U.S. government's ability to track

and disrupt a feared militant adversary, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

Long seen as a particularly threatening branch of al-Qaida, the group has used the chaos that followed the 2011 Arab Spring to expand its influence, seizing territory and recruiting supporters from Yemen's tribal society. It has also demonstrated an ambition to strike the U.S. homeland.

Hoping that expanded operations would provide an opportunity to recover information that would increase their understanding of AQAP's network and goals, military officials last fall developed proposals to resume a more robust counterterrorism program.

Colin Kahl, a former official who oversaw Middle East issues at the Pentagon and was national security adviser to Vice President Joe Biden, said a proposal put forward by the Pentagon in the final weeks of former President Barack Obama's administration would have expanded military authorities to conduct partnered ground operations and placed additional special operations and aviation assets in the region. "This was a big piece of business," Kahl said.

In early January, White House officials examined the military request but decided to table a decision for the new administration, recommending to incoming officials that they conduct a thorough review of the proposal.

On Jan. 25, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis requested urgent approval at a dinner meeting with Trump of a nighttime mission that represented a first step in expanding activities against AQAP. The meeting also was attended by Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; then-national security adviser Michael Flynn; CIA Director Mike Pompeo; and a handful of others. Trump approved the operation.

The U.S. military is conducting investigations into the operation, including a probe into reports of noncombatant deaths.

The White House was dealt a blow last week when news reports revealed that Owens' father, Bill, questioned the necessity of the raid and had refused to meet with Trump when his son's remains were repatriated in early February.

Speaking to Congress on Tuesday, Trump cited Mattis' description of the raid as a success, but the president has also appeared to distance himself from the operation. Earlier this week, he said the generals "lost Ryan."

Sessions spoke with Russian envoy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Jeff Sessions talked twice with Russia's ambassador to the United States during the presidential campaign, the Justice Department confirmed, communications that spurred calls in Congress for him to recuse himself from an investigation into Russian interference in the U.S. election.

Sessions, an early supporter of President Donald Trump's candidacy and a policy adviser to the Republican, did not disclose those discussions at his Senate confirmation hearing in January when asked what he would do if "anyone affiliated" with the campaign had been in contact with officials of the Russian government.

Sessions said he had not communicated with the Russians.

In a statement late Wednesday, Sessions said, "I never met with any Russian officials to discuss issues of the campaign. I have no idea what this allegation is about. It is false."

Justice Department spokeswoman Sarah Isgur Flores said Wednesday night that "there was absolutely nothing misleading about his answer."

That statement did not satisfy Democrats, who even before Wednesday had sought Sessions'

recusal from the federal investigation and had raised questions about if he could properly oversee the probe.

Sessions said Thursday in a brief interview with NBC, "I have said that, when it's appropriate, I will recuse myself."

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders earlier called the disclosure of the talks with the ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, "the latest attack against the Trump administration by partisan Democrats."

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi accused Sessions of "lying under oath" and demanded that he resign. Other Democrats called on him to step aside from the investigation.

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said it isn't unusual for members of Congress to meet with ambassadors, but he added that if a question arose about the integrity of a federal investigation, "I think it'd be easier" for an attorney general to step away from the probe.

Sessions had more than 25 conversations with foreign ambassadors last year as a U.S. senator and senior member of the Armed Services Committee, and had two separate interactions with Kislyak, the department confirmed.

One was a visit in Septem-

ber in his capacity as a senator, similar to meetings with envoys from Britain, China, Germany and other nations, the department said. The other occurred in a group setting following a Heritage Foundation speech that Sessions gave during the summer, when several ambassadors — including the Russian ambassador — approached Sessions after the talk as he was leaving the stage.

Rep. Adam Schiff, of California, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said: "If reports are accurate that Attorney General Sessions — a prominent surrogate for Donald Trump — met with Ambassador Kislyak during the campaign, and failed to disclose this fact during his confirmation, it is essential that he recuse himself from any role in the investigation of Trump campaign ties to the Russians."

At the confirmation hearing in January, Sen. Al Franken, of Minnesota, asked Sessions about allegations of contact between Russia and Trump aides during the 2016 election. He asked Sessions what he would do if there were evidence that anyone from the Trump campaign had been in touch with the Russian government during the campaign. Sessions replied he was "unaware of those activities."

Carson is confirmed to lead HUD

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson was confirmed Thursday as secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Support for Carson's confirmation came down largely along party lines. Carson ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016 against Donald Trump and endorsed the celebrity real estate developer shortly after ending his bid.

In addition to steering housing policy, Carson will oversee an expansive set of programs that provide assistance to low-income Americans and minorities. HUD's annual budget for 2017 is nearly \$49 billion, which is used for various government supports including rental assistance, programs to mitigate homelessness and investments to combat urban poverty.

Urban policy experts and progressive activists have expressed intense concern that Carson will seek to cut money for government assistance programs and wear down the social safety net.

Indicted Baltimore cops likened to '30s 'gangsters'

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Seven Baltimore officers were so unfazed by U.S. Justice Department scrutiny of abusive policing that they kept falsely detaining people, stealing their money and property, and faking reports to cover it up, according to a damning federal indictment.

Federal prosecutors announced charges Wednesday against seven officers in Baltimore, where a consent decree approved in the final days of the Obama administration obligates police to stop abusive tactics and discriminatory practices, including unlawful stops of drivers and

pedestrians.

U.S. Attorney Rod Rosenstein said the investigation began about a year ago, and that his office has "quietly dropped" five federal cases brought by one or more of the officers.

In a statement, State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby said the charges will have "pervasive implications on numerous active investigations and pending cases."

The indictment describes a criminal enterprise that began in 2015, when the city was rocked by civil unrest after the death of a young black man, Freddie Gray, in police custody that April. Weeks later, the Justice Department began a

"pattern and practice" investigation of the city's police force. Intense reform efforts followed, including the expanded use of cameras to record police interactions.

In August 2016, the Justice Department released a scathing report detailing systemic failures, including excessive use of force, illegal stops, inadequate oversight and a dearth of training.

By then, federal agents had spent months following officers assigned to the Gun Trace Task Force, a squad formed to reduce violent crime by tracking illegal guns and removing them from the streets.

The officers charged with

racketeering are detectives Modu Gondo, Evodio Hendrix, Daniel Hersl, Wayne Jenkins, Jemell Rayam, Marcus Taylor and Maurice Ward. Gondo also is charged with participating in a drug conspiracy. All were arrested, suspended without pay and jailed overnight pending detention hearings Thursday.

These officers "arrogantly" ignored clear directives, Police Commissioner Kevin Davis said.

"These officers are 1930s-style gangsters," Davis said. "They betrayed the trust we're trying to build with our community at a very sensitive time in our history."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man to spend lottery cash on house, goats

NC CHARLOTTE — A Charlotte man plans to spend his \$1 million North Carolina lottery prize on a house with enough room for two goats his fiancée wants to get.

Lottery officials told the Charlotte Observer that Bobby Murphy bought five \$10 50X The Cash tickets at 7-Eleven and saw he won the top prize on the last ticket he scratched off.

Murphy told lottery officials he wants to buy a house where his fiancée's son will have space to play, and "she can have her goats."

Murphy claimed the prize Monday at lottery headquarters. He chose to take the prize in a \$600,000 lump sum and received \$417,009 after taxes.

2 accused of buying votes in Senate race

TN KNOXVILLE — Federal authorities say two people, including a 60-year-old alleged pot dealer, are accused of buying votes in the 2014 U.S. Senate primary election.

The Knoxville News Sentinel reported that Betty Jane Best and Brian Keith Hodge were named in a 14-count federal indictment alleging a vote-buying conspiracy in Monroe County.

The indictment alleges that 13 people were paid to vote in the 2014 Senate primary. It doesn't say who they were supposed to have voted for how or much they allegedly received for casting a ballot.

U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander and attorney Gordon Ball won those primary races. There's no indication either was aware of the alleged scheme.

Best, also known as Betty Hawkins, has been indicted in

Monroe County on charges of selling marijuana.

Invasive parakeet is posing problems

HI HONOLULU — An invasive parakeet is causing health and environmental problems on Kauai, according to Hawaii officials.

The rose-ringed parakeet was introduced to the islands about 50 years ago, KHON-TV reported.

Kauai Invasive Species Committee member Billy Lucey said a bed-and-breakfast brought the parakeets in, clipped their wings and had them hang out around the porch. The birds escaped and began to establish themselves at some point after 1968, Lucey said.

Kathryn Fiedler, of the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, said the birds not only eat up fruit crops but also contaminate fruits and vegetables.

Man rescued after he's caught in a bear trap

VA ONANCOCK — Authorities on Virginia's Eastern Shore helped rescue a man who got his lower leg caught in a bear trap along the side of a road.

Onancock Volunteer Fire Department Chief Adam James told news outlets that the man got his leg caught Saturday evening when he jumped over a fence and into a ditch in order to avoid traffic in Accomack County.

Rescue workers were able to free the unidentified man from the trap and take him to a hospital for treatment. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has been called to investigate.

Substitute teacher gives students pills

MO JENNINGS — Leaders of a St. Louis-area school district are investigating after a substitute teacher gave more than 30 sixth-grade students over-the-counter digestive supplements during a health lesson.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that Riverview Gardens spokeswoman Melanie Powell-Robinson said a bottle with a few remaining pills was confiscated after they were offered Feb. 24 to students at Westview Middle School. Powell-Robinson said they were made of papaya enzymes, a plant-based digestive supplement with a side effect of stool softening.

It was not clear if any students ingested the pills. There were no reports of any students suffering any side effects.

Law would make attack on pizza person a felony

RI PROVIDENCE — Attacking the person who delivers your pizza could become a felony in Rhode Island under a proposed state law.

Democratic Senate Majority Leader Dominick Ruggerio, of North Providence, says he introduced the bill because of increasing assaults on delivery people.

The legislation would make assaulting a delivery person a crime subject to up to three years in prison and \$3,000 in fines, which are stiffer penalties than an assault charge.

Punishment would be more severe — five to 20 years in prison — if a weapon is used that seriously injures the delivery person.

The Providence City Council requested the legislation after more than a dozen robberies last year.

2 jailed for roles in disrupting child's party

GA DOUGLASVILLE — A Georgia judge sentenced two people to lengthy prison terms for their role in the disruption of a black child's birthday party with Confederate flags, racial slurs and armed threats.

Atlanta news outlets reported Jose Ismael Torres, 26, will spend 13 years in prison; Kayla Rae Norton, 25, is to serve six years. They are the last of 15 people charged in the confrontation, which took place in Douglasville in July 2015.

They were found guilty of yelling racial slurs and threatening to kill partygoers, even the kids. Prosecutors said Torres pointed a shotgun at the party.

Woman charged with killing uncle during spat

MO KANSAS CITY — A Kansas City woman has been charged with killing her uncle during an argument over missing car keys.

Jackson County prosecutors said Tanya Starr 44, is charged with second-degree murder, second-degree assault and armed criminal action a shooting that killed Leroy Farris and wounded another man. Bond is set at \$200,000.

The probable cause statement says several people were drinking and playing cards at Farris' home when Starr began arguing about the keys with a man whom she had been romantically involved in the past and used a gun to hit him.

The statement says the weapon went off, striking the man in the shoulder and Farris in the head.

From wire reports

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Reporting
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and Military News

Celtics get by Cavaliers

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Boston Celtics know any road to the NBA Finals will likely pass through Cleveland.

They put the defending champs on notice that they are gearing up to challenge them for their Eastern Conference throne.

Isaiah Thomas scored 31 points, including a pair of go-ahead free throws, as the Celtics outlasted LeBron James and the Cavaliers 103-99 on Wednesday night.

Boston's win overshadowed the seventh triple-double of the season for James, who finished with 28 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists. Kyrie Irving added 28 points for the Cavaliers, who lost for the first time when leading at any point in the fourth quarter on the road.

The game marked the third meeting this season between the top two teams in the East, and the first win by the Celtics.

"We just played to win," Thomas said. "They're the No. 1 team in the East. One of the best teams in the NBA, and we just wanted to protect home court and get a win. We did that tonight."

Jae Crowder had 17 points and 10 rebounds for Boston, which led by three entering the fourth quarter before there were six ties and 10 lead changes in the final 12 minutes.

It was a three-point barrage down the stretch,

with the Celtics connecting on six straight attempts during one stretch. They also made this more difficult for a Cavs team that had averaged 126 points in its wins over the Celtics.

"This needs to carry over for us," Celtics guard Avery Bradley said.

Deron Williams, signed by Cleveland earlier this week, scored four points in 24 minutes in his Cavaliers debut. But it did little to help the Cavs overcome a night in which they were out-rebounded 47-41.

It was tied at 99 when Thomas connected on a pair of free throws to put Boston in front 101-99. Irving then missed a jumper and Tristan Thompson grabbed the rebound and got it to Deron Williams, who then missed from the corner. Crowder got the rebound, was fouled and made his two foul shots to seal it.

"I saw Crowder running to me, he jumped and then I saw Marcus Smart running toward me," James said of the Cavs' missed opportunity in the waning seconds. "I saw D-Will naked in the corner, so I gave him an opportunity and he just missed it. We got the shot we wanted."

Despite the loss, coach Tyronn Lue was pleased with his team's effort.

"It was a good game — went down to the wire, shot for shot," Lue said. "I.T. made two big shots, Avery made two big shots. We competed, we fought. That's all you can ask for."

Embiid out for season

Associated Press

MIAMI — Philadelphia center Joel Embiid's season is over because of left knee problems, including a torn meniscus that is worse than the 76ers first thought.

Embiid hadn't played since Jan. 27, and the 76ers had said in recent days that his return was likely later this week. But an MRI performed Monday showed the meniscus problem was worse than the original diagnosis suggested, and the 76ers decided to end his season.

"He's got good people around him," 76ers coach Brett Brown said Wednesday before Philadelphia visited the Miami Heat. "There is a level of disappointment. Selfishly, you go through it as a coach, you're trying to lead our program, but my immediate thought goes to just being with him and helping him navigate through that. And we will do that, and he will do that."

Embiid missed his first two NBA seasons with right foot issues, then finally made his debut this season and appeared in 31 games. Embiid averaged 20.2 points and 7.8 rebounds.

"He's just in the early stages of what I think is going to be a long, long time having tremendous success," Brown said. The No. 3 overall pick in the 2014 draft still could win the award, given how dominant he looked at times this season.

The 76ers were cautious with Embiid, never playing him more than 30 minutes in a game — yet he still had a penchant for big numbers. He scored at least 20 points in 19 of his 31 appearances, had nine double-doubles, blocked at least three shots 12 times and even was a 37 percent shooter from three-point range.

The 76ers said Embiid's bone bruise has gotten better, but the meniscus tear was "more pronounced in this most recent scan," 76ers Chief Medical Director Dr. Jonathan Glashow said.

Rockets shoot past Clippers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — When the Houston Rockets get going the way they did Wednesday night, all those three-pointers become a blur.

James Harden scored 26 points and the Rockets hit 20 of their first 39 attempts from beyond the arc in a 122-103 win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Houston opened a 31-point lead early in the fourth quarter, so it didn't even matter that the Rockets missed their last 13 tries from three-point range.

"You don't really realize how many we are taking until you hear later because it's so naturally the way we play," said Ryan Anderson, who had 23 points and a team-high six threes. "It's fun basketball when you trust the next guy to give up the shot and make the right play to get the open look."

Wizards 105, Raptors 96:

Bojan Bogdanovic had 27 points off the bench and Bradley Beal added 23 as visiting Washington ended an eight-game losing streak against Toronto.

John Wall had 12 points and 13 assists for his 39th double-double of the season.

Spurs 100, Pacers 99:

Kawhi Leonard had 31 points and 10 rebounds, and host San Antonio returned from an eight-game road trip to beat Indiana.

Leonard hit a turnaround, fade-away jumper from 16 feet against Paul George with 2.4 seconds left to win it.

Nets 109, Kings 100: Brook Lopez had 24 points and eight rebounds, and visiting Brooklyn never trailed in snapping a 16-game losing streak.

Hawks 100, Mavericks 95: Paul Millsap scored with 30.5

seconds remaining to help host Atlanta hold off Dallas.

Heat 125, 76ers 98: Tyler

Johnson scored 24 points off the bench, and host Miami never trailed against Philadelphia.

Pelicans 109, Pistons 86:

Anthony Davis had 33 points and 14 rebounds, and host New Orleans snapped a three-game skid with a win over Detroit.

Nuggets 110, Bucks 98:

Nikola Jokic had his second triple-double in two nights to lead Denver over host Milwaukee.

Knicks 101, Magic 90: Kristaps Porzingis had 20 points and nine rebounds, and Derrick Rose scored 19 to help New York cruise past host Orlando.

Timberwolves 107, Jazz 80:

Karl-Anthony Towns had 21 points and 15 rebounds to lead Minnesota over host Utah.

No. 3 UCLA routs Washington

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — UCLA coach Steve Alford kidded TJ Leaf that his two points, one rebound, one assist, one block and one steal in 5 minutes was pretty impressive.

That's all the time Leaf got because the freshman sprained his left ankle. His absence didn't bother the third-ranked Bruins who went on to rout Washington 98-66 on Wednesday night for their eighth straight win.

"I really don't want to add any additional pressure, but that UCLA team could win a national championship," said Huskies coach Lorenzo Romar, a former UCLA assistant.

Bryce Alford scored 29 points and Lonzo Ball added 19 points, seven rebounds and eight assists for the Bruins (27-3, 14-3 Pac-12), who improved to 15-1 at home. They completed a season sweep of Washington after winning by 41 points on the road last month.

Leaf will wear a boot and use crutches in between getting treatment to see if he can return in time for Saturday's regular-season finale.

"He's such a positive, uplifting dude, it's hard to tell what happened," Bryce Alford said.

The Bruins led by 21 points at halftime and extended the lead to 42 in the second half.

"We were engaged right from the beginning," the elder Alford said. "Our guys really concentrated well in a lopsided game. We were really good in a lot of areas."

Noah Dickerson tied his career high with 23 points for the Huskies (9-20, 2-15). They have lost 11 in a row and 13 of 14. Their 20 turnovers led to 34 points by the Bruins.

"We want to finish the season strong," Dickerson said. "At the Pac-12 Tournament, we want to have a strong showing."

Alford hit three consecutive three-pointers in the game's final 5:15. He finished with eight, one off his career high, and the Bruins had 14.

Early in the second half, Ball put on a show. The freshman phenom took a bounce pass from Thomas Welsh and

scored on a fastbreak layup. He and Alford passed the ball back and forth before Alford stepped back in the left corner and hit a three. On the Bruins' next play, Ball swiped David Crisp, picked up the ball bouncing low on the court and dunked. He later made back-to-back three-pointers.

"It was fun," Ball said. "The second half we picked up the pace and had a lot of up and down."

Wake Forest 88, No. 8 Louisville 81: John Collins had 25 points and 11 rebounds to help the host Demon Deacons rally from 14 down.

Keyshawn Woods added 20 points for Wake Forest (17-12, 8-9 Atlantic Coast Conference), which came into the game desperately needing a big win to bolster its NCAA Tournament resume.

They got it, with Dinos Mitoglou and Mitchell Wilbekin hitting huge three-pointers in the final 3 minutes to turn a 75-72 lead into a nine-point margin.

Wake Forest is trying to reach the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2010.

No. 12 Florida 78, Arkansas 65: Canyon Barry scored 14 points, his best game since injuring an ankle two weeks ago, to lead the host Gators.

Kasey Hill, KeVaughn Allen and Chris Chiozza added 12 points apiece for Florida (24-6, 14-3), which bounced back from its first loss in 10 games and clinched the No. 2 seed in the Southeastern Conference Tournament next week.

No. 19 Notre Dame 82, Boston College 66: V.J. Beachem scored 22 points to lead the host Fighting Irish to their sixth straight win.

Bonzie Colson added 18 points and 11 rebounds for Notre Dame (23-7, 12-5 Atlantic Coast Conference), which has all but locked up a top-four finish in the ACC and a double-bye for next week's conference tournament.

Kansas St. 75, TCU 74: Wesley Iwundu scored 16 points and had 10 rebounds in his record 119th career start for the visiting Wildcats, and Kansas State held on to beat the

Horned Frogs in a matchup of teams considered to be on the NCAA Tournament bubble.

USC 87, Washington St. 64: Hovering near the bubble for the NCAA Tournament, the host Trojans rolled over the Cougars to snap a four-game losing streak.

Dayton 79, VCU 72: Kendall Pollard and Kyle Davis each grabbed clutch defensive rebounds and were perfect in four tries at the free-throw line in the last 16 seconds as the Flyers (24-5, 15-2) held off the visiting Rams (23-7, 13-4) in the battle for the Atlantic 10 championship and top seed into the conference tournament.

Illinois 73, Michigan State 70: Malcolm Hill scored 22 points to lead the host Illini to a win over the Spartans.

Michigan State had a chance to win the game in the last 10 second, but Miles Bridges missed a layup when Illinois' Te'Jon Lucas stripped the ball away.

Kipper Nichols made one of two free throws to give Illinois a 73-70 lead with three seconds left.

Vermont 86, Maine 41: Anthony Lamb hit all 10 of his shots from the field and finished with 23 points as the top-seeded Catamounts (27-5) routed the visiting Black Bears in an American East tournament quarterfinal game.

Vermont, which has won 19 straight and was undefeated in conference play, opened up a 45-16 lead in the first half. The Catamounts advance to face New Hampshire in the semifinals at Burlington.

San Diego St. 51, Air Force 38: Senior Matt Shrigley made two clutch three-pointers in the final eight minutes and junior guard Trey Kell had a career-high 12 rebounds to lead the host Aztecs to a victory over the Falcons in a matchup of erratic Mountain West Conference teams.

There wasn't a double-digit scorer until Air Force's Frank Toohey made two free throws with 2:56 left. He finished with 12 points.

Pardon's layup at buzzer lifts Northwestern

Associated Press

EVANSTON, Ill. — Moments like this were exactly what coach Chris Collins envisioned for Northwestern and just what he sold his players on when he was making his recruiting pitch.

A packed crowd roaring from the opening tip. A raucous celebration after a spectacular, buzzer-beating play. And another big step toward an NCAA Tournament for a program still trying to get there.

Dererk Pardon scored on a layup at the buzzer off a long inbound pass from Nathan Taphorn to give Northwestern a 67-65 victory over Michigan on Wednesday night.

The Wildcats (21-9, 10-7 Big Ten) set a program record for wins and moved closer to that ever-elusive tournament bid thanks to one spectacular finish.

The ball got knocked out of bounds after the Wolverines' Zak Irvin missed a three-pointer in the closing seconds, and what transpired from there was nothing short of wild.

Both teams called timeouts. Collins decided to go for the win rather than head to overtime, and with 1.7 seconds left, Taphorn unleashed a pass that might have caught the eyes of some NFL general managers.

The 6-foot-8 Pardon — with guard Derrick Walton Jr. on him after a switch — hauled it in with both hands on the right block and put up the winner with his left just in time. He then got mobbed and dragged to the court by teammates, and delirious fans poured out of the stands.

"I saw the ball, I thought it was long," Pardon said. "As I caught it, I'm like the rim is right there."

Vic Law scored 18 for Northwestern. Bryant McIntosh added 13 points and five assists, and the Wildcats matched their highest conference win total since the 1932-33 team tied for the Big Ten championship.

Who won, who lost at trade deadline?

Associated Press

Although the NHL trade market produced no whopping deals this year, just about everybody had their nets in the water all the way up until the deadline Wednesday.

Several Stanley Cup contenders caught good players for the postseason grind ahead, while several struggling teams made judicious use of their assets.

Standard disclaimer: Nobody really wins or loses on deadline day because the results of their endeavors are revealed in the coming weeks, months and years. Nevertheless, here is the league consensus on which teams made savvy moves — and avoided foolish ones — over the past several days:

Winners

Washington Capitals: The overall NHL leaders bolstered their loaded lineup with defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk, and they gave up nothing more painful than their low first-round pick this summer. They also didn't lose any assets that could disrupt team chemistry as they chase that elusive first Stanley Cup.

Pittsburgh Penguins: The defending champs didn't get Shattenkirk, but general manager Jim Rutherford fleshed out his defense with the additions of veteran blue liners Mark Streit and Ron Hainsey. Rutherford also kept Marc-Andre

Fleury, giving the Pens goaltending depth if they need it.

Minnesota Wild: Sensing a pattern here? The NHL's best teams mostly got better, and they usually did it without giving up major assets. The Central Division-leading Wild added steady center Martin Hanzal and Ryan White in a deal for draft picks — a small price to pay for a team with a wide-open window to reach its first Stanley Cup Final.

Chicago Blackhawks: Perhaps there was nostalgia involved in the return of defenseman Johnny Oduya, but the Blackhawks have some awfully good times to recapture. Putting him back alongside fellow Swede Niklas Hjalmarsson down the stretch immediately makes Chicago a nightmare for opposing forwards.

Colorado Avalanche: Their season is a wreck, yet the Avs didn't panic by giving up on Gabriel Landeskog or Matt Duchene. GM Joe Sakic also gave Jarome Iginla freedom to chase his first Stanley Cup, albeit with the longshot Los Angeles Kings.

Florida Panthers: Steady scorer Thomas Vanek for a conditional mid-round draft pick? That's a no-brainer, and it could be a big factor in the Panthers' playoff hopes.

Vancouver Canucks: Good returns for Jannik Hansen and Alex Burrows have created goodwill for embattled GM Jim Benning. The rebuild finally might be under way in earnest.

Losers

Buffalo Sabres: They were the odd team out, failing to make a deal on the NHL's trade deadline day for the first time since 2002. General manager Tim Murray couldn't move defensemen Dmitry Kulikov and Cody Franson before their contracts expire, and captain Brian Gionta wasn't interested enough in a move to pursue it. He acknowledges that's a "speed bump" in his rebuilding plan.

Montreal Canadiens: They've already got a fine team, yet they added no scoring depth and did little to get faster or more versatile in the postseason. Steve Ott, Dwight King and Jordie Benn are capable NHL players, but Washington and Pittsburgh still appear to be a cut above the Habs in total talent, particularly in the offensive end.

St. Louis Blues: Almost nobody thinks they got enough for Shattenkirk, who could have just stayed and played a key role in helping his longtime club's playoff push, even if the Blues didn't re-sign him this summer.

Edmonton Oilers: They largely stayed pat, deciding to lean on the young core around Connor McDavid as they attempt to end their 10-season playoff drought. And for that, the Sharks, Ducks, Kings and Flames all thank them.

Somewhere in between

Arizona Coyotes: Millennial

GM John Chayka got a decent return for Martin Hanzal and Michael Stone, as long as the Coyotes draft well. But they didn't appear to maximize their available assets when they kept Shane Doan and Radim Vrbata, who seemed almost certain to bring something to help the Desert Dogs' latest rebuild.

Los Angeles Kings: Goalie Ben Bishop's pre-deadline arrival revealed the top brass' deep ambivalence about Peter Budaj, one of the league's feel-good stories. If the Kings are actually committed to giving rest to Jonathan Quick while they attempt to get into playoff position, Bishop is an immense acquisition. And while some have scoffed at the addition of the 39-year-old Iginla to an already slow team, they haven't calculated the importance of Iginla's leadership and hunger — and let's just say they're probably overestimating the importance of departing two-time Cup champion Dwight King.

Tampa Bay Lightning: GM Steve Yzerman did some nifty roster shuffling to help his chances of re-signing Jonathan Drouin, Tyler Johnson and Ondrej Palat this summer, but he gave up a chunk of his club's identity to do it. Valtteri Filppula and Brian Boyle will be missed, and Yzerman really didn't get much for the well-liked Bishop, one of the NHL's best goalies over the past four years in Tampa Bay.

Kane's hat trick helps Blackhawks pummel Penguins

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Patrick Kane and the Chicago Blackhawks pushed aside the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Kane had his second hat trick in three games, Scott Darling made 36 saves and the Blackhawks beat the Penguins 4-1 on Wednesday night for their fifth straight victory and 10th in 11 games.

Richard Panik also scored to help Chicago pull within three points of first-place Minnesota in the Central Division and Western Conference. Kane, last season's MVP, has a team-lead-

ing 27 goals — scoring 12 times and adding seven assists in his last 11 games.

Kane said he was pumped up for the first meeting this season between the last two Stanley Cup winners.

"It felt like a playoff game out there," Kane said. "It's a team we don't really see a lot. We knew they're coming off a back-to-back game, but they still played hard tonight. A tough team to play against."

It's tougher to play against the Blackhawks right now, especially with Kane at top speed.

"He's made some great

shots," coach Joel Quenneville said. "He's a threat to shoot and he's a threat to make a play, so I think you've got to respect the other option which is not easy on goalies."

Darling started a second straight game in place of Corey Crawford, the No. 1 goalie who has been fighting an illness. Crawford said he felt much better following Wednesday's morning skate and was on the bench to back up Darling.

"Scotty had some huge saves, and we got some timely goals tonight," Kane said.

Lightning 4, Hurricanes 3 (OT): Victor Hedman scored

his second goal of the game 46 seconds into overtime, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 28 saves in host Tampa Bay's victory over Carolina.

Tyler Johnson and Nikita Kucherov also scored to help the Lightning improve to 7-1-2 in their last 10 games. Noah Hanifin, Derek Ryan and Jay McClement scored for Carolina, and Eddie Lack stopped 12 shots. The Hurricanes are 1-5-3 in their last nine.

Hedman lifted a shot over Lack during the extra session. Kucherov got his second assist on the play, and has 12 points over the last four games.