

STARS AND STRIPES®

Saturday, March 11, 2017

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Task force to look into photo scandal

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Marine Corps task force will investigate the nude-photo scandal and scrutinize internal cultural issues and policies that might have led some male servicemembers to share explicit images of female Marines on the internet, Gen. Robert Neller, the service's commandant, announced Friday.

During a news conference about the scandal, Neller said he has appointed Assistant Commandant Glenn Walters to lead the task force.

"They're going to look at what is going on while developing plans for corrective actions and recommendations to policies, procedures, education and training of Marines that will prevent this in the future and the culture — I'd say subculture — that may have given rise to this," Neller told reporters at the Pentagon.

"We're going to address this ... head on. We're going to be self-critical, self-analytical, and we also have to recognize that there is a problem, and we have to figure out how to solve it," he said.

The nude-photo-sharing scandal was uncovered last weekend in a report by the Center for Investigative Reporting with the War Horse, a nonprofit military news website.

Other military services also have begun to focus on reports that servicemembers have engaged in activities similar to the allegations raised against the "Marines United" Facebook group.

An International Business Times report on Thursday revealed another website containing hundreds of photos of women identified as servicemembers. Some commentators on the website referred to nude photos posted as "wins"

and sometimes identified the women in the photos by their names and home stations.

Like the Center for Investigative Reporting's report, the International Business Times report was written by a Marine veteran.

Mattis 'disturbed'

In the coming days, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis will meet with top uniformed and civilian Pentagon leaders to discuss the issue, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said Friday. Mattis, a retired Marine Corps general, was "disturbed" by the allegations, Davis said.

"The purported actions of civilian and military personnel on social media websites, including some associated with the Marines United group and possibly others, represent egregious violations of the fundamental values we uphold at the Department of Defense," Mattis said in a written statement.

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service has opened a criminal probe into the allegations. NCIS officials declined to comment on the ongoing investigation. It was unclear Friday whether other criminal investigations had been launched into the scandal.

Two defense officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the matter candidly, said rumors occasionally cropped up in recent years of websites on which some servicemembers shared "revenge porn-style" photographs of ex-wives or ex-girlfriends, including active-duty servicemembers.

At least 34 states have outlawed the online sharing of private nude photographs intended only to be seen by specific individuals, according to Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, a nonprofit activist group dedicated

to outlawing "revenge porn." But punishments vary. For example, it is a misdemeanor in Georgia and Michigan but it is a felony in Idaho and the District of Columbia.

The officials said they were unaware of any previous, large-scale military investigations into such websites.

Neller declined to speculate Friday on whether he thought male Marines were targeting females because they were averse to women serving in traditionally all-male, front-line combat jobs. However, if that was the purpose behind the postings, Neller had a message for those Marines: "If you think you are helping me or the institution, I don't need your help this way. I do not."

The first two female Marine infantrymen reported to their unit in January.

"We've been fighting for 15 years, men and women, side by side," Neller said. "Women — they did their thing. I don't know what else they've got to do for some to say, 'Yeah, they're good to go.' I mean, we all bring something to the game."

Evidence of scandal

The Marine Corps first learned of the allegations about the Marines United webpage in late January, when an anonymous source — later revealed to be the Marine veteran who reported the Center for Investigative Reporting article — provided them with evidence of the scandal, Neller said Friday.

So far, less than 10 female servicemembers have reported they were victims of harassment on the Marines United page or similar websites, the general said. He added that he encourages anyone who believes they were a victim of online or another harassment to report it to their commanders.

"We need their help," Neller said.

No criminal charges have been filed so far in the probe, he said.

It is not clear how long the Marine task force's investigation could last. Neller said he charged the group with helping him get "some sort of understanding of what's going on and who is involved," but he did not provide a deadline.

"We don't want to be in a hurry," he said. "We want to make sure we are thorough and we are within the law. We'll uncover things as we go along."

Lawmakers, too, will look into the matter.

Neller will brief the Senate and House armed services committees this week on the scandal, though much of those discussions could happen behind closed doors due to the ongoing investigation.

"They will be able, I suspect, to tell us what they know so far, but they certainly do not want to do anything — and we don't want to ask them to do anything — that could jeopardize potential disciplinary action or steps that may be appropriate in the case," said Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

Neller said he canceled a planned trip to visit Marines training in Norway to meet with lawmakers.

"I was going to go see a bunch of Marines above the Arctic Circle training, and doing all this stuff that the great, great majority of us came into the Marine Corps to do — travel, do challenging things, represent our nation," he said. "Instead, I'm going to be up on Capitol Hill."

Stars and Stripes reporter Travis Tritten contributed to this story.

Mattis still only Trump pick at Pentagon

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Jim Mattis is not lonely in the Pentagon, but two months into his tenure as secretary of defense not a single political appointee has joined him.

The retired Marine general, who took office just hours after President Donald Trump was sworn in, has sparred with the White House over choices for high-priority civilian positions that, while rarely visible to the public, are key to developing and implementing defense policy at home and abroad.

When the Obama administration closed shop in January, only one of its top-tier Pentagon political appointees stayed in place — Robert Work, the deputy defense secretary. He agreed to remain until his successor is sworn in. So far no nominee for deputy has been announced, let alone confirmed by the Senate.

The administration has announced four nominees for senior Pentagon civilian jobs, and two of those later withdrew. Trump's nominee to lead the Army, Vincent Viola, withdrew in early February because of financial entanglements, and about three weeks later Philip B. Bilden, the Navy secretary nominee, withdrew for similar reasons.

On Tuesday, the White House announced it intends to nominate John J. Sullivan to be the Pentagon's chief lawyer. In January, Trump announced former congresswoman Heather Wilson of New Mexico as his nominee to be Air Force secretary, but

he has not submitted the nomination to the Senate.

"The process has definitely slowed," said Dov Zakheim, who served as the Pentagon budget chief during the George W. Bush administration. He said he would be surprised if Mattis gets any senior appointees confirmed before mid-April.

"The delays are already causing much consternation among allies, especially in Europe and Southeast Asia, as their most senior working level day-to-day contacts — the deputy assistant secretaries — may not come onboard until the summer," Zakheim said in an email exchange.

"Lots of mayhem could take place before then."

This is not an issue at the Pentagon alone. While most of Trump's choices for Cabinet and Cabinet-level posts have won Senate confirmation, 500 or more government-wide sub-Cabinet-level positions requiring Senate confirmation remain unfilled.

There are few visible signs that the absence of Trump appointments in the Pentagon has affected its management of the counter-Islamic State campaign or military operations in Afghanistan. But the president has ordered a number of major policy reviews that require senior-level Pentagon attention, including counter-Islamic State strategy, nuclear and missile-defense plans and a blueprint for building up and improving the combat readiness of the military.

Even Republicans are taking note. Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, chairman of the

House Armed Services Committee, said at a hearing Wednesday that when lawmakers have nuclear-policy questions, "we do not have people in place in the new administration to answer some of those questions."

Pentagon insiders say the appointment process, while contentious at times, has not produced significantly more friction than previous transitions in which the White House changed political parties. Democrat Barack Obama had fewer issues at the Pentagon when he took office in January 2009 because he kept in place Bush's defense chief, Robert Gates, and Obama's transition team quickly settled on nominees for key senior defense policy jobs.

When Bush made Donald Rumsfeld his defense chief in January 2001, Rumsfeld did not get his policy chief, Douglas Feith, in place until July. Rumsfeld, however, had an advantage that Mattis does not: Some of his predecessor's senior staff agreed to remain for months. By Rumsfeld's count, it took the Bush White House 70 days, on average, to approve a recommended nominee, plus 52 more days for Senate confirmation.

A Pentagon spokesman, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, said Mattis is committed to getting the right people into key jobs.

"He and his staff are actively conducting interviews and working collaboratively with the White House to nominate people to the Senate for confirmation," Davis said. "We are in the final stages of vetting on several of these, and expect they will be announced soon."

Kin: Charges in death of Marine recruit 'insufficient'

Detroit Free Press

WASHINGTON — The family of a Muslim Marine recruit from Michigan who died in a fall at boot camp said Friday they don't believe the charges announced so far in their son's death are severe enough for the hazing and abuse he endured.

"The charges appear to be insufficient and do not address the magnitude of the torture, assault, abuse, hazing, neglect and maltreatment" to which Raheel Siddiqui, 20, a former high school valedictorian from Taylor, was subjected, his family said through their lawyer, Shiraz Khan, Friday evening.

The statement came less than two hours after the Marine Corps' Training and Education Command in Quantico, Va., announced it would hold a preliminary hearing in North Carolina next Thursday to determine whether charges against a still-unnamed gunnery sergeant should go forward.

TECOM officials late Friday afternoon issued a release saying an Article 32 hearing had been scheduled related to the investigation into the death of Siddiqui last March in a three-story fall from a stairwell at the iconic training depot at Parris Island, S.C., 11 days into his boot camp.

A Marines spokesman would not say what specific role the gunnery sergeant may have had in the death, which an earlier investigation found occurred after the recruit was slapped by a drill instructor and forced to run back and forth repeatedly in a barracks and refused medical treatment for a sore throat.

But Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., told the Free Press last week that the Marines were preparing to hold an Article 32 hearing for the instructor most directly linked to the Siddiqui investigation, which also detailed reports of physical abuse and Siddiqui being called a

"terrorist" by his drill instructor in the days before he fell from an exterior stairwell.

The charges include failure to obey a lawful general order; cruelty and maltreatment; making a false official statement; drunk and disorderly conduct; and obstruction of justice. Missing from those charges, however, is a charge of assault, which the earlier investigation had recommended.

"The Siddiqui family does not believe that the charges that are being brought forth accurately justify an explanation of what happened to their son," Khan said in a statement to the Free Press.

Liquor trickles into Iraq town

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

BASHIQA, Iraq — Life is trickling back into this northern Iraq town that was cleared of Islamic State fighters in November, and so is the alcohol.

Called “Little Iraq” because of its mix of Yazidis, Muslims and Christians living together and surrounded by villages of the Shabak ethnic minority, it’s also known as a source of arak, a clear, anise-flavored liquor that was once made here.

The distilleries remain shuttered. Bashiqa and neighboring Bahzani were largely evacuated in 2014, when Islamic State militants swept in. The fighting to reclaim it reduced dozens of buildings to rubble, and there is still no water or electricity.

But just weeks after Kurdish forces cleared it of militants, Bassam Makhmoud, a Yazidi man, returned to run his brother’s shop, where the back shelves are stocked with beer, whisky, ouzo and, of course, arak.

It was here in November that Kurdish President Masoud Barzani said areas outside Kurdistan’s boundaries that had been freed by Kurdish fighters, known as peshmerga, wouldn’t be returned to Baghdad’s direct control. Baghdad still wants the Kurds to withdraw once Mosul is liberated.

The territorial dispute is just one of many issues likely to heat up as life returns to villages and neighborhoods in Mosul’s recently liberated east. The eventual retaking of the city’s western half,

where U.S.-backed Iraqi forces are battling the Islamic State group in a campaign now in its fifth month, will probably only intensify the tensions.

On the border between Bashiqa and Bahzani stands a row of pastel houses — one owned by Yazidis, one by Christians and one, now rubble, owned by Muslims. Makhmoud’s shop, which is located across from them, also sells snack cakes and sodas, security chains and padlocks, and hand tools and garden hoses for cleanup. But he said most customers come for booze and cigarettes, forbidden under Islamic State rule.

Before the Islamic State group came, Makhmoud was a furniture maker, but he said militants took all of his tools, which he thinks they used to dig tunnels to hide from surveillance aircraft.

The destruction and lack of utilities have prevented most families from returning to Bashiqa and Bahzani. The situation is difficult in several areas on Mosul’s eastern side that have been cleared of militants but aren’t fully habitable.

At the end of the block, mortar shells lay in the grass in front of a gunfire-damaged statue of a Yazidi horseman. Nearby, a man turned soil in a flower bed in front of a whitewashed wall where people had recently painted pictures and slogans in bright colors. Several walls in the city bore fresh murals painted over Islamic State graffiti.

Makhmoud said he returned not only because he needed income but because he felt he had to.

“This is my village,” he said. “If I didn’t come back, who would come back? We need to gradu-

Attack kills 8 Afghan police

BY PHILLIP WALTER

WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Eight police officers were killed in an insider attack in southern Afghanistan on Friday.

The killings came just hours after Tadamichi Yamamoto, the U.N. secretary-general’s special representative for Afghanistan, said he was “gravely concerned” by reports pointing to an intense fighting season this year.

The officers were shot dead in the Shinkai district of Zabul province after being drugged by two of their colleagues, provincial governor’s spokesman Gul Islam Seyal said.

He added that the attackers stole the dead officers’ weapons and a vehicle at the checkpoint that they were all manning.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that the two assailants had defected to the militant group.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for two suicide bombings that targeted a police station and an intelligence agency office in Kabul earlier this month that killed at least 22 people.

But they denied involvement in an attack Wednesday on Afghanistan’s largest military hospital that the Defense Department said left more than 30 people dead and dozens more injured. Some have put the death toll closer to 50.

The Islamic State group said its militants stormed the hospital, raising fears that the group is growing more capable of conducting high-profile attacks similar to the Taliban in the most secure areas of the country. The storming of the hospital in Kabul followed warnings by local officials that the capital could see an uptick in violence this year from emboldened Taliban insurgents and militant groups such as the Islamic State.

Iraq forces struggle to hold gains in Mosul

The Washington Post

MOSUL, Iraq — Iraqi forces are suffering fierce counterattacks in areas of Mosul recaptured from the Islamic State group, soldiers say, and are barely holding the main government compound they triumphantly declared cleared.

Police units have made a rapid push into the city over the past two weeks, reaching its main government buildings Tuesday. But forces were ambushed there in what one police officer described as a “well-planned trap,” while their grip on other neighborhoods they claim to control appeared tenuous.

Capt. Waleed Ibrahim said Iraqi forces had lost control of two streets that morning after the militants deployed car bombs in a counterattack.

After eastern neighborhoods were secured weeks ago, the ferocious tug-of-war now is taking place in the city’s densely packed neighborhoods west

of the Tigris River, which are home to about 750,000 people. Some 50,000 people have fled since the offensive began two weeks ago.

Soldiers said rivalries among the Iraqi security forces had pressured them to overreach.

In the raid on the main government compound, forces from the emergency response division took over the key administrative buildings with little resistance early Tuesday morning, soldiers said.

But after the area was handed over to other police forces later that morning, the militants counterattacked.

Police forces had not properly cleared the surrounding buildings, and the Islamic State group positioned snipers on their roofs. Capt. Safaa al-Yasiri said his unit fled in their Humvees, but others were trapped inside the government compound.

First Lt. Ashraf Hussein of the emergency response division, who was also there during

the ambush, said the compound was now effectively a no man’s land.

The counterterrorism troops led much of the fighting in eastern Mosul and have steadily been progressing through their sector of the west.

Families in the city are moving from neighborhoods on police front lines to others led by counterterrorism forces.

The Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights said at least 700 civilians have been killed in fighting for the city’s western side, though numbers are hard to track in Islamic State-held neighborhoods.

President Donald Trump has asked for recommendations to change the U.S. military’s rules of engagement, which are more restrictive than required by international law.

Col. John Dorrian, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition, said no changes had been made yet.

Tens of thousands celebrate South Korea leader's ouster

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Carrying flags and candles and cheering jubilantly, tens of thousands of South Koreans occupied a boulevard in downtown Seoul on Saturday to celebrate the ouster of President Park Geun-hye, a day after the Constitutional Court removed her from office over a corruption scandal that consumed the nation for months.

Meanwhile, in a nearby grass square, a large crowd of Park's supporters glumly waved national flags near a stage where organizers, wearing red caps and military uniforms, vowed to resist what they called a "political assassination."

Police had braced for violence between the two crowds

after three people died and dozens were injured in clashes between police and Park's supporters after the ruling on Friday. Nearly 20,000 police officers were deployed Saturday to monitor the protesters.

The anti-Park protesters shouted, "The candles have won!" and, "Arrest Park Geun-hye!" as they began marching toward the presidential Blue House, where Park continued to stay a day after her removal.

The court's decision capped a stunning fall for the country's first female leader. Park rode to victory in 2012 on a wave of lingering conservative nostalgia for her late dictator father, only to see her presidency crumble as millions of furious protesters filled the nation's streets.

The ruling allows possible criminal proceedings against Park, 65 — prosecutors have already named her a criminal suspect — and makes her South Korea's first democratically elected leader to be removed from office since democracy replaced dictatorship in the late 1980s.

It also deepens South Korea's political and security uncertainty as it faces existential threats from North Korea, reported economic retaliation from a China furious about Seoul's cooperation with the U.S. on an anti-missile system, and questions in Seoul about the Trump administration's commitment to the U.S.-South Korea security alliance.

South Korea must hold an election within two months to choose Park's successor.

Tsunami trauma persists 6 years on

Associated Press

TOKYO—Six years ago, more than 18,000 people died or went missing as a tsunami triggered by a massive quake engulfed coastal areas of northeastern Japan. Tens of thousands more people's lives were unraveled when they lost family members, friends, homes and livelihoods. The displacement widened as entire communities fled after meltdowns at the Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear plant.

Japan was slated to mark the anniversary of the disaster Saturday with somber ceremonies in Tokyo and in cities and towns in the northeast. Most of the towns devastated in the March 11, 2011, disasters have only partially rebuilt, and local authorities are struggling to finance construction.

Here are some measures of progress in Japan's recovery:

■ **Reconstruction:** The government spent 26 trillion yen (\$220 billion) in recovery and rebuilding from 2011 to 2015, but is due to slash that to only 6.5 trillion yen between 2016 and 2020.

■ **Displaced families:** As many as 150,000 people fled radiation-affected areas near the Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear plant. As of February, 123,000 were still displaced.

■ **The nuclear plant:** Tokyo Electric Power Co. is struggling to decommission the wrecked plant and the estimated total cost exceeds 21 trillion yen (\$182 billion). Cleanup of nearby areas has lagged and radiation levels remain high.

■ **Fisheries:** Many of the seaside towns in the disaster zone relied heavily on fishing and aquaculture. Data from Iwate prefecture, one of the hardest-hit areas, show harvests of salmon and oysters still only at 40 percent of the level when the tsunami hit. Other industries, such as sea urchin and abalone, have recovered to about 80 percent of normal.

Possible patrols mark China's interest in Afghan area

By E.B. BOYD

Stars and Stripes

Reports that Chinese forces are patrolling inside Afghan territory near the countries' shared border, if confirmed, would underline China's desire to play a larger role in regional stability.

"Assuming it's true, this should not be concerning for

ANALYSIS U.S. forces at all," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center. "Given how troubled the Afghan forces are, they can use all the help they can get."

In November, an Indian news outlet, WION, published photographs of what experts said appeared to be Chinese military trucks in the Wakhan corridor, a narrow stretch of mountainous territory extending from northeastern Afghanistan to China that separates Tajikistan from Pakistan.

Last month, a Western journal, the Central Asia-Cauca-

sus Analyst, said there was "overwhelming evidence" that Chinese units have been inside Afghanistan.

Afghan officials have denied the reports. A Defense Ministry spokesman said only that Afghanistan and China, as well as Tajikistan — which borders the two countries — are sharing intelligence and stepping up individual patrols as part of an agreement to combat smugglers, drug traffickers, and terrorists.

A Pentagon spokesman declined to say whether the United States had any intelligence on possible Chinese activity, saying only, "We're aware of the reporting."

Like other neighbors of Afghanistan, China is concerned about the country's worsening security situation and its potential impact on prized economic initiatives.

Beijing mostly stayed out of Afghan security affairs during NATO's 13-year ISAF mission, but it has stepped up its involvement since the drawdown of

Western forces two years ago.

China has donated military supplies to Afghanistan and has trained Afghan police officers. The two countries have signed several security agreements, including one focused on increased cooperation between border police forces. China has also joined various peace initiatives.

Last month, a Chinese military spokesman said Afghan and Chinese "law enforcement authorities" had conducted "joint law enforcement operations" to fight terrorism "in border areas."

Though relations between the United States and China are tense elsewhere around the globe, including in the South China Seas, Kugelman said any Chinese operations inside Afghanistan probably wouldn't worry NATO.

"In Afghanistan, the U.S. and China have very similar interests," he said. "They want Afghanistan to become a more stable place ... and they want any form of militancy to be kept at bay."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

4-year-old takes flight amid high wind gusts

OH LYNDHURST — High winds that blew through the Cleveland area knocked a little girl off her feet, literally.

Brittany Gardner posted a video on Facebook of her daughter, Madison, 4, opening the storm door to a home on Wednesday, only to be blown off the steps. She is seen desperately clinging to the door handle while her mom runs to her rescue.

Gardner told WJW-TV that Madison held on to the door handle until she came to take her down. She said her little girl “is totally OK.”

Barber college owner sentenced for fraud

VA CHESAPEAKE — The co-owner of a Chesapeake barber college has been sentenced to more than five years in prison on charges he defrauded the Veterans Affairs Department out of more than \$4.5 million.

Media outlets reported that William E. Grobes IV, 45, pleaded guilty to the charges in November 2016. His wife, Katherine, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy and was to be sentenced Friday.

The charges against the Grobeses relate to their operation of the College of Beauty and Barber Culture from October 2011 through this past September. Court documents show the school collected more than \$4.5 million under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and veteran students collected \$10.5 million more.

The documents said veterans “rarely, if ever,” received the required hours of instruction.

Women prison visitors can keep their bras on

ME WARREN—Maine’s corrections commissioner has ordered state prison workers to stop making women remove their bras to go through screening to visit inmates.

Commissioner Joseph Fitzpatrick said he didn’t know that women were being required to remove undergarments after the bras apparently set off metal detectors. The commissioner said he became aware of the complaints through news media reports.

He said he had not received any formal complaints.

In 2015, female lawyers visiting clients at the Cumberland County Jail in Portland lodged complaints after being required to remove their underwire bras before they could meet with their clients. That policy was later rescinded, as well.

Branch impales ski instructor’s lip

ID POCATELLO — A ski instructor trying to jump between two trees on a Wyoming mountain said he crashed and ended up with an 18-inch branch impaling his lip.

Natty Hagood, 29, who works at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, was snowboarding with friends recently when he tried to navigate the gap between the trees. Hagood told the Idaho State Journal that at first, he thought his helmet strap got pushed into his face.

But he said he soon realized it was a branch jabbing through one side of his lip and out the other.

Hagood said he thought: “I just got impaled. And then I yelled over to Pete, ‘Hey, look, I got a new piercing.’”

Hagood said he didn’t have much pain until he got to the hospital and the doctor gave

him shots to numb the area. They then trimmed the branch, removed it and used 15 stitches to close the wounds.

The crash left Hagood with a \$1,500 hospital bill and a new nickname — “Lipstick,” or “Sticky” for short.

City’s old website hijacked for porn

FL SPRINGFIELD — Officials in a Florida Panhandle city said their former website has been taken over by someone hosting pornographic content.

The Panama City News Herald reported that the city of Springfield began receiving complaints from citizens who were visiting the city’s old website.

Mayor Ralph Hammond said the city apparently let the old domain name expire, and the site now contains pornography.

Springfield switched its website to a .gov domain about three years ago.

Funeral home staffers help uncover slaying

MD BALTIMORE — Police said funeral home staffers’ sharp eyes led to murder charges for a Baltimore man accused of strangling his mother.

Police said Friday that officers responding to a report of a suspicious death Wednesday found Cathy Kuhn, 63, unresponsive. Since there were no visual signs of trauma, police said the medical examiner’s office declined to investigate.

Kuhn’s body was released to her family and then to a funeral home, where police say staff discovered possible signs of trauma to her neck and head.

Detectives responded, and police say their investiga-

tion revealed that Kuhn’s son, Erich, 32, strangled his mother at her home. He was arrested Thursday.

Juggling act caught on officer’s body camera

AR CONWAY — An Arkansas college student who moonlights as a magician showed off his juggling skills after he was pulled over, and the act was captured on an officer’s body camera and police cruiser video.

University of Central Arkansas police pulled over Blayk Puckett, 21, in Conway, about 25 miles northwest of Little Rock.

Police said Puckett was driving slowly, and officers suspected that he might have been under the influence.

UCA police spokesman Michael Hopper said the officers quickly saw that Puckett was sober and agreed to give him a warning. Puckett then revealed he was a magician and juggled some bowling pins for the officers.

Couple stages ketchup murder, texts pictures

OH SANDUSKY — Police said a couple in Ohio staged a murder scene in a bathtub in which they poured ketchup over her and then sent pictures to friends, saying the man did it.

Sandusky officers showed up after getting calls Thursday night from three people police said were “hysterical.”

That’s when officers discovered that the scene in the couple’s bathtub had been staged.

Police said Nataleigh Schlette and Micah Risner are charged with inducing panic.

Both pleaded not guilty Friday.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

On a mission to provide credible reporting and daily news to America’s military, wherever they serve.

Mobile apps available: www.stripes.com/apps.

US team avoids upset, beats Colombia 3-2

Associated Press

MIAMI — Retired manager Jim Leyland was back at his familiar perch on the dugout steps Friday night, looking tense as he watched his U.S. team go hitless until the sixth inning and flirt with a devastating defeat before pulling out a 10th-inning win in its first game at the World Baseball Classic.

“Now you know why I’m not managing anymore,” Leyland said with a laugh.

He and his players could smile only after Adam Jones hit the winning RBI single with two out in the 10th to beat Colombia 3-2.

The Americans improved their all-time WBC record to 11-10. They failed to make the finals in the three previous events and next face the Dominican Republic, the defending champion.

“I’m hoping this win takes a little bit of pressure off and we can relax a little bit,” Leyland

said. “You don’t relax against the Dominican Republic, but at least the guys feel good they got a win under their belt.”

U.S. starter Chris Archer retired all 12 batters he faced. Archer, coming off a 9-19 season with Tampa Bay, struck out three and needed only 41 pitches to get through four innings.

He left the game well shy of the limit of 65 pitches for the first round because the Rays had requested that Archer pitch only four innings, Leyland said.

“It was tough, but we stuck to the plan,” Archer said.

Colombian starter Carlos Quintana was also dominant, holding the Americans hitless until Brandon Crawford singled with two out in the sixth. Quintana was then pulled because he had thrown 63 pitches, and Colombia’s 2-0 lead was soon gone, too.

William Cuevas gave up an RBI double by Jones and threw a wild pitch that allowed the

tying run to score in the sixth.

“I was very hurt with the outcome,” Quintana said in Spanish. “We had many chances to get the victory. We didn’t come here for a vacation. Every pitch was with all energy possible.”

With one out in the 10th, Christian Yelich and Crawford walked against Guillermo Moscoso, and both advanced on a groundout. The noisy crowd of 22,580 was on its feet when Jones lined a single on an 0-2 pitch and was mobbed by his teammates.

“I’ve had a lot of good moments with the Orioles,” Jones said, “but this one ranks up there pretty high.”

Pat Neshek struck out Jesus Valdez with two on to end the Colombian ninth. Tyler Clippard pitched around a walk in the 10th to earn the win.

The Americans’ star-studded lineup managed just six hits.

“At times we were probably trying to do too much,” Leyland said. “We were probably a little

anxious.”

Marcus Stroman is scheduled to start for the United States against the Dominican Republic’s Edinson Volquez before a sellout crowd Saturday night. The Dominicans won their opening game Thursday against Canada.

The Colombians were making their WBC debut after qualifying for the first time, and they took a 2-0 lead with three consecutive two-out doubles in the fifth off Mychal Givens.

Single-A center fielder Tito Polo of Colombia put on a defensive clinic. He retreated to make running catches and rob Jones and Ian Kinsler of extra-base hits, and made a sprawling catch of Nolan Arenado’s liner with the score tied and two on to end the eighth.

“The end was not good,” manager Luis Urueta said, “but this shows what Colombian baseball is.”

Bears turn to Glennon as QB; Browns release Griffin

Associated Press

It looks like Mike Glennon has a starting job in the NFL. Robert Griffin III no longer has any job.

The Bears finalized their deal with Glennon, the former Tampa Bay quarterback, on Friday, one day after cutting Jay Cutler. Glennon wasn’t about to beat out Jameis Winston with the Buccaneers, and he got a three-year contract in Chicago.

“I haven’t played in two-plus years, but I was playing when I was 23, 24,” Glennon said. “I’m 27 now and I feel like I’m a much better player.”

“I’ve grown physically, I’ve grown mentally. I’m more confident in my abilities.”

RG3 spent one injury-filled year with the Browns, who released him less than 24 hours after trading for Houston QB Brock Osweiler. Not that Osweiler is certain to be staying

in Cleveland, which has stockpiled draft picks for the next two years and could be bargaining for the likes of New England backup Jimmy Garoppolo.

Meanwhile, the highest-profile quarterback who soon figures to become available, Dallas’ Tony Romo, was still a Cowboy.

Julius Peppers is a Panther once again. Carolina’s career sacks leader and No. 5 on the NFL chart left Green Bay to return to the team that drafted him second overall in 2002. The 37-year-old Peppers has 143½ sacks during 15 NFL seasons. He played eight of those seasons for the Panthers (2002-2009) and was a two-time All-Pro.

Carolina then dealt DE Kony Ealy to New England, which also signed cornerback Stephon Gilmore. The Panthers kept busy as they signed three other free agents: wide receivers

Russell Shepard from Tampa Bay and Charles Johnson from Minnesota and safety Mike Adams from Indianapolis.

The Patriots lost cornerback Logan Ryan to Tennessee, and TE Martellus Bennett, who went to Green Bay. He was a solid sidekick to star tight end Rob Gronkowski last season, but when the Patriots traded for Dwayne Allen this week, it was clear Bennett was heading elsewhere. They also added another offensive option late Friday, giving a first- and third-round pick to New Orleans in exchange for speedy receiver Brandin Cooks.

College quarterback turned NFL receiver Terrelle Pryor left Cleveland for Washington for a one-year contract worth up to \$8 million. The Redskins lost their two top receivers on Thursday in free agency, Pierre Garçon and DeSean Jackson.

Veteran linebacker Lawrence Timmons of the Steelers

joined the Dolphins for \$12 million over two years.

Also on the move on the second day of free agency were several more offensive linemen as NFL teams look at the crop of blockers in this year’s draft and shudder. So big bucks were handed out to Andrew Whitworth by the Rams, Russell Okung by the Chargers, Riley Reiff and Mike Remmers by the Vikings, Ricky Wagner by the Lions, and Manelik Watson by the Broncos.

Cincinnati re-signed cornerback Dre Kirkpatrick, while Dallas brought back receiver Terrance Williams.

One player who was franchise-tagged got a long-term deal as LB Chandler Jones re-upped with Arizona for five years and \$82.5 million, with \$53 million guaranteed. Arizona also added kicker Phil Dawson on a two-year contract and LB Karlos Dansby on a one-year contract.

No. 2 Villanova holds off Seton Hall 55-53

Associated Press

NEW YORK — When Villanova comes up with another big win, you just expect Josh Hart to be a big part of it. He was again Friday night.

Hart, the Big East's player of the year, turned an offensive rebound into the game-winning three-point play with 9.6 seconds left and the second-ranked Wildcats beat Seton Hall 55-53 in the semifinals of the Big East Tournament.

"I think we got outplayed tonight. We just found ways at the end. Great players make great plays," Villanova coach Jay Wright said.

Hart had 19 points and 10 rebounds, the biggest the last one that moved the top-seeded Wildcats (30-3), the four-time defending regular-season champions, into the championship game against sixth-seeded Creighton.

"I'm not sure what happened but somehow we got the ball in transition," Hart said of the winning play. "I kicked it to Kris (Jenkins). I think he was kind of surprised he was so open."

"And I just saw him shoot it.

Right when I saw him shoot it, I knew when he shot he put a little too (much mustard) on it and I was like you know what, just go get it.

"And luckily it bounced in the perfect spot and I was able to just get it and go with up with."

No. 7 Arizona 86, No. 3 UCLA 75: At Las Vegas, Lauri Markkanen scored 29 points, Allonzo Trier added 20 and the Wildcats shot their way past the Bruins in the Pac-12 Tournament semifinals.

No. 5 Oregon 73, California 65: At Las Vegas, Tyler Dorsy had 23 points, Dylan Ennis scored on a key three-point play with 22 seconds left, and the Ducks outlasted the Golden Bears in the Pac-12 Tournament semifinals.

No. 14 Duke 93, No. 6 North Carolina 83: At New York, Jayson Tatum scored 24 points and the Blue Devils rallied for the win in the Atlantic Coast Conference semifinals.

No. 8 Kentucky 71, Georgia 60: At Nashville, Tenn., Isaiah Briscoe and De'Aaron Fox each scored 20 points, helping the Wildcats advance to the semifinals of the Southeastern Conference Tournament.

No. 11 West Virginia 51, Kansas State 50: At Kansas City, Mo., The Mountaineers' Esa Ahmad made the second of two free throws with 20.2 seconds left, and an off-balance three-pointer by the Wildcats' Kamau Stokes was off at the buzzer in the Big 12 Tournament semifinals.

No. 12 SMU 81, East Carolina 77: At Hartford, Conn., Semi Ojeleye scored a career-high 36 points, and the Mustangs held off the Pirates in the quarterfinals of the American Athletic Conference Tournament.

Michigan 74, No. 13 Purdue 70 (OT): At Washington, two days after their airplane's scary abandoned takeoff, the Wolverines moved into the Big Ten semifinals behind D.J. Wilson's 26 points.

No. 15 Cincinnati 80, Tulsa 61: At Hartford, Conn., Kyle Washington scored 21 points and Jacob Evans finished with 20, powering the Bearcats to the runaway win in the American Athletic Conference quarterfinals.

No. 22 Notre Dame 77, No. 16 Florida State 73: At New York, Steve Vasturia and

Bonzie Colson each scored 18 points, helping the Fighting Irish advance to the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament title game.

Vanderbilt 72, No. 17 Florida 62 (OT): At Nashville, Tenn., Riley LaChance scored five of his 18 points in overtime, and the Commodores topped the Gators in the Southeastern Conference Tournament quarterfinals.

No. 23 Iowa State 84, TCU 63: At Kansas City, Mo., Deonte Burton scored 22 points, Monte Morris had 15 and the Cyclones reached their third Big 12 Tournament title game in the past four seasons.

No. 24 Wisconsin 70, Indiana 60: At Washington, the Badgers slowed the Hoosiers' offense, and Ethan Happ had 14 points and 12 rebounds to help them advance to the Big Ten semifinals.

Northwestern 72, No. 25 Maryland 64: At Washington, Scottie Lindsey and Vic Law each scored 17 points as the Wildcats roared into the Big Ten tournament semifinals.

Wizards outlast Kings in OT for fourth straight win

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Bradley Beal scored 21 of his 38 points in the fourth quarter and overtime to lead Washington past the Kings 130-122 for its fourth straight victory.

The Wizards rallied from a 15-point deficit in the fourth to win for the sixth time in seven games. The victory, combined with a loss by Boston, gave the Wizards the second-best record in the Eastern Conference.

John Wall had 25 points and 12 assists for the Wizards. Otto Porter scored 18 points and Bojan Bogdanovic had 17. The Wizards are 25-8 since Jan. 1, the NBA's second-best mark. They have won nine of 10 on the road after struggling early on away from home.

Timberwolves 103, Warriors 102: Andrew Wiggins scored 20 of his 24 points in the second half and hit the go-ahead free throws with 12.8 seconds left to lift host Minnesota to a victory over scuffling Golden State.

Ricky Rubio had 17 points and 13 assists, and Karl-Anthony Towns scored 23 points to give the Timberwolves their sixth win in eight games as they try to chase down the eighth seed in the Western Conference playoff race. They entered the night 2½ games behind Denver, with Portland and Dallas also ahead of them in the standings.

Klay Thompson scored 30 points for Golden State, but Stephen Curry's remarkable shooting slump continued in the Warriors' second straight loss and fourth in six games

without injured star Kevin Durant. Curry scored 26 points, but was just 10 for 27 from the field and 1 for 8 from 3-point range. And he missed an 18-footer in the closing seconds that would have won the game.

Rockets 115, Bulls 94: James Harden had 19 points, 13 assists and seven rebounds as visiting Houston used a dominant third quarter for a victory over Chicago.

Hawks 105, Raptors 99: Dennis Schroder scored 26 points, including 13 in the final period as host Atlanta beat Toronto to pull closer in the race for the fourth seed in the Eastern Conference.

Bucks 99, Pacers 85: Greek star Giannis Antetokounmpo and Khris Middleton

each scored 21 points as host Milwaukee won its season-high fifth straight game by beating Indiana.

Nuggets 119, Celtics 99: Nikola Jokic had 21 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists in his return to the lineup, helping Denver beat visiting Boston.

Hornets 121, Magic 81: Kemba Walker scored 23 points and Nic Batum and Marvin Williams had double-doubles as Charlotte beat visiting Orlando for its third win in the last four games.

Mavericks 105, Nets 96: Harrison Barnes scored 21 points and Dirk Nowitzki had 13 after a slow start in his first game since reaching 30,000 points as host Dallas beat lowly Brooklyn.

Kessel lifts Penguins over Oilers

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Edmonton's Connor McDavid stretched his lead atop the NHL scoring race, but Sidney Crosby's Pittsburgh Penguins got the even more important two points for the win Friday night.

Phil Kessel scored the shootout winner and the Penguins came away with a 3-2 victory over the Edmonton Oilers.

McDavid had a goal in regulation to move him to 75 points for the season while Crosby was held off the score sheet, and is five points behind the Oilers phenom.

Both players notched goals in the shootout.

McDavid said he still gets a charge out of playing one of his childhood idols in Crosby.

"To say it's a normal game would be lying," he said. "Obviously, he's someone I've looked up to my whole life. To play against him is fun. It was probably to my advantage, it's easier for me to get up to play against him than it is for him to get up to play against me."

Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said it was a pleasure to watch all the high-end talent on display.

"It was a pretty fast-paced game and those guys (Crosby, McDavid) are elite

players," he said. "It was certainly one of the faster-paced games that we've played in."

Nick Bonino and Evgeni Malkin scored in regulation for the Penguins, who have won four games in a row.

Crosby said the player most deserving of credit on the night was goalie Marc-Andre Fleury, who made 40 saves.

"It was one after another as far as some of the saves he made," he said. "He was incredible tonight. You can tell when he's got that mindset and he's having fun."

David Desharnais also scored for the Oilers, who have lost two straight.

Pittsburgh scored the game's first goal six minutes into the opening period as Oilers goalie Cam Talbot was down on a rebound, allowing Scott Wilson to pass it in front and give Bonino an easy goal.

The Penguins went up 2-0 at 17:25 of the first as a shot got behind Talbot and was rolling slowly into the net before McDavid tried to kick the puck to safety, only to have it hit Talbot's pads and go in. Malkin was credited with the goal.

Blue Jackets 4, Sabres 3: Boone Jenner broke a tie with 5:07 left and Sergei Bobrovsky made 29 saves in host Columbus' victory over Buffalo.

Nick Foligno and Sam Gagner had

power-play goals, and David Savard also scored for the Blue Jackets. They have won three straight and seven of their last 10. Bobrovsky had a three-game shutout streak broken, but still got his NHL-leading 36th victory.

Red Wings 4, Blackhawks 2: Tomas Tatar had two goals and an assist while Jimmy Howard made 24 saves in his return from a knee injury to help host Detroit beat Chicago.

Howard saw his first NHL action since injuring a knee Dec. 20 at Tampa Bay.

The Blackhawks lost for the second straight night and had their club-record road winning streak end at eight games.

Wild 7, Panthers 4: Zach Parise scored the go-ahead goal with 5:07 left and visiting Minnesota pulled away to beat reeling Florida.

The Panthers have lost seven of their past eight. Jaromir Jagr scored his 762nd NHL goal.

Blues 4, Ducks 3: Joel Edmundson scored with 20 seconds left and Jake Allen made 23 saves in host St. Louis' victory over Anaheim.

Paul Stastny, Vladimir Tarasenko and Ryan Reaves also scored to help the Blues win their third straight.

Spurs' Aldridge out due to minor heart issue

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — San Antonio Spurs forward LaMarcus Aldridge will be out indefinitely because of a minor heart problem.

The team said Saturday he has an arrhythmia, a deviation from the normal heart rhythm. He will undergo further tests before the team determines how much time he misses.

The 6-foot-11 player was diagnosed at the end of his rookie season in 2007 with a condition that can cause a rapid heartbeat.

Aldridge is averaging 17.3 points and 7.4 rebounds for the Spurs, who are 50-14 and have the second-best record in the league.

This development comes on the heels of San Antonio star Kawhi Leonard being placed

in the league's concussion protocol.

Shields stops Szabados on milestone night

DETROIT — Claressa Shields became the first woman to headline a fight card on premium cable, stopping Szilvia Szabados at the midway point of the fourth round Friday night in their fight for the NABF middleweight championship on Showtime.

Referee Harvey Dock stopped the fight at the 1:30 mark of the fourth, after Shields (2-0) had landed a strong left-handed punch to the head of Szabados. Shields had controlled the fight from the outset in front of a boisterous crowd in her home state of Michigan, but Szabados (15-9) did well to avoid being

knocked down. Szabados, of Hungary, was still on her feet when the fight was stopped, and she shook her head a bit in apparent disbelief that it was over.

Source: Bills re-sign versatile LB Alexander

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — A person with direct knowledge of the decision confirmed to The Associated Press that the Buffalo Bills have agreed to a two-year, \$9 million contract to re-sign veteran linebacker Lorenzo Alexander.

Alexander is a 10-year NFL journeyman who enjoyed a resurgence last season in Buffalo. He led the Bills with a career-best 12½ sacks, more than doubling the nine he had during his first nine seasons. He was voted a second-team All

Pro and earned his second Pro Bowl nomination.

Keselowski on pole for Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS — Brad Keselowski will begin his bid for a third victory in the past four NASCAR Cup races at Las Vegas Motor Speedway from the pole after topping qualifying Friday night.

Keselowski, who also won last week's race at Atlanta, posted a top speed of 193.68 mph in his No. 2 Ford for his 13th career pole. He won at the 1.5-mile track last year and in 2014.

Martin Truex Jr., who was the fastest in the midday practice, will join him on the front row Sunday in the 400-mile race thanks to a speed of 193.458 mph in his No. 78 Toyota.