

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Navy commander fired after allegation of misconduct

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser

The Navy's Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing 10 in Washington state on Wednesday relieved of duty the commanding officer of a P-3 Orion squadron that was based in Hawaii but which left on a deployment Sept. 20 and started returning to its new home at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island in Washington on Feb. 28.

Cmdr. Ryan Cech, who was in charge of Patrol Squadron 47, or VP-47, was removed after "allegations of misconduct," the Naval Air Forces said in a news

release.

"The decision to relieve Cech was based on actions that demonstrated poor judgment and lack of professionalism, calling into question Cech's leadership which undermined his credibility to continue to serve effectively in command," the Navy said.

The Navy said Capt. Kevin Long has assumed command of the squadron temporarily, while Cech has been reassigned temporarily to the Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing 2 staff. Long is listed as deputy commodore of Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing 10.

Supporters of Okinawan foe of US base decry his detention

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND CHIYOMI SUMIDA

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Dozens of Okinawans gather every weekday morning outside an Okinawa courthouse to protest the detention of Hiroji Yamashiro, an anti-U.S. base protest leader who's been held in solitary confinement since mid-October.

"Release him immediately," a fellow Okinawa Peace Activity Center member shouted into a microphone last week. "Give Hiroji back to us."

Yamashiro, 64, chairman of the group opposed to relocating Marine Corps Air Station Futenma within Okinawa, has been accused of a string of protest-related offenses, from cutting barbed wire to obstructing businesses and law enforcement.

The U.S. and Japanese governments consider the base relocation on Okinawa a critical component of U.S. military force realignment in the Asia-Pacific region despite calls from protestors like Yamashiro to move the base off the island.

Moving Futenma out of Okinawa would separate the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit from its helicopters and aviation assets.

Yamashiro's supporters say the Japanese government is trying to quell anti-base dissent while making an example out of him. Human-rights groups such as Amnesty International have called for Yamashiro's immediate release, and there have been demonstrations in his name as far away as New York.

"Detaining him for as long as five months over such minor offenses is impossible and illegal," said friend and supporter Isamu Nakasone, a former Okinawa magistrate. "The arrest itself does not meet the requirements mandated by law. It was done following a scenario drawn by the government, targeting him, with an attempt to curtail the protest movements."

An opening hearing is slated for March 17. Japan's Ministry of Defense declined to comment on the case.

Yamashiro was taken into custody Oct. 17 on suspicion of vandalism after police said he cut an \$18 strand of barbed wire on a perimeter fence at Okinawa's Northern Training Area while protesting the construction of U.S. military helicopter landing pads.

Three days later — before his detention expired — police added other charges stemming from incidents that they said happened months before.

US, Japan wrap up exercise in East China Sea

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. and Japan have wrapped up a week-long exercise in the East China Sea, where tensions have risen with China over the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands.

The exercise, led by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, included communication drills, precision ship maneuvers, combined flight operations and liaison officer exchanges, a Navy statement said.

"This exercise is ... designed to improve coordination, teamwork, operational proficiency and readiness," Rear Adm. Jim Kilby, the Carl Vinson strike group's commander, said in the statement. "Our two navies working together demonstrate our combined resolve to ensure peace and stability for all our partners and allies in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region."

Also participating in the drills, which ended Friday, were the guided-missile destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer and aircraft from Carrier Air Wing 2. Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels included the JS Sazanami and the JS Samidare.

Japanese and Chinese fighter jets regularly fly over the uninhabited Senkakus, which China claims as its own, and coast guard and other vessels have shadowed one another in nearby waters.

Japan nationalized the Senkakus, which lie near Okinawa prefecture and Taiwan, in 2012. The following year, China declared an Air Defense Identification Zone over the islands.

Last month, during his first trip to Japan as Pentagon chief, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis reaffirmed U.S. support for defending its ally, including the Senkakus.

"I made clear our longstanding policy on the Senkaku Islands," Mattis said last month in Tokyo. "The U.S. will continue to recognize Japanese administration of the islands."

China Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang later reasserted Beijing's claim on the islands and called on the U.S. to cease "making wrong remarks" over the issue, according to The Associated Press.

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Turkey's resolve against Kurds repels US, Russia

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Turkey achieved a milestone in its goals in Syria: It established a foothold in the heart of the country's north after driving Islamic State militants away from its borders and seizing al-Bab, one of the extremist group's major strongholds and a major supply route.

But Turkey's determination to also push back the Kurds is alienating the other big players in Syria — Russia and the United States — and threatens to undermine the fight against the Islamic State group in the imminent assault on Raqqa.

Ankara's threats to attack the nearby town of Manbij, held by U.S.-backed Kurdish-led forces, prompted Washington to deploy new troops in the area to prevent Turkish advances. Turkey's Syrian allies have been fighting the Kurds around the town, reportedly with Turkish cover, raising the possibility of frictions with the Americans.

At the same time, Turkish forces shelling Kurds hit Syrian government forces, whose patron Moscow reportedly has advisers in the area.

As a result, Ankara has effectively unified Russia and the U.S. in the goal of limiting Turkish expansion in the north. Syria experts say Ankara has lost influence to realize its aim of pushing the Kurdish forces back to the east of Manbij across the Euphrates. Moreover, Washington is pushing ahead with partnering with the Kurdish-led forces in the planned attack on Raqqa, despite Turkish opposition.

"Turkey's valuable lever-

age" to disrupt that alliance "has been tossed away as the Russian military and U.S. Special Forces moved last week in Syria's Manbij to prevent Turkish-backed Syrian opposition forces from attacking the city," wrote Ragip Soylu, a Washington-based Turkish columnist for the pro-government English language Daily Sabah newspaper.

From the start, Turkey's goal with its military incursion into Syria has been to push Islamic State militants back from its border and prevent Kurdish forces from holding contiguous territory from east to west across the border. Turkey considers the main Syrian Kurdish force, the People's Protection Forces, or YPG, as terrorists since they are linked to Kurdish insurgents in Turkey.

Capturing al-Bab last month met both those aims. Turkish forces and allied Syrian fighters marched into al-Bab after the militants withdrew following a grueling fight that lasted over two months and claimed dozens of Turkish soldiers. With al-Bab in its hands, Turkey blocked the Kurds from joining territory they hold to the east and the west.

But from the very start, a chief goal was Manbij, a small but crowded town 40 kilometers east of al-Bab that is the birthplace of one of the Arab world's most prominent classical poets. When the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces captured the town from the Islamic State in August, Turkey sent its troops into Syria, complaining to the Americans that the Kurdish forces must retreat east across the Euphrates.

Iraqi envoy: There's no evidence of Islamic State chemical attack

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Iraq's U.N. ambassador said Friday there is no evidence that the Islamic State extremist group used chemical weapons in an attack in Mosul, the country's second-largest city.

Mohamed Alhakim told reporters ahead of a closed Security Council meeting on a reported chemical attack that he had spoken to officials in Baghdad and informed U.N. disarmament chief Kim Won-soo of the lack of evidence in advance.

The alleged attack occurred last week in eastern Mosul, an area declared fully liberated by Iraqi forces in January.

The attack hit a neighborhood along the Tigris River, which roughly divides the city in two. Doctors in an urgent care hospital in the nearby city of Irbil say they began receiving patients showing symptoms of chemical weapons exposure on Thursday.

But Alhakim said "there is really no evidence that Daesh has used this chemical weapon," using the Arab name for the Islamic State group.

If chemical weapons are used, he said, there is evidence of people injured and material left on the ground but "we don't have anything from the operation in Mosul that tells us we have that."

But after the closed consultations, British U.N. Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, the current council president, said Iraq's investigation isn't over.

"We expressed concern over reports of possible use of chemical weapons by

Daesh, and we look forward to the results of Iraq's investigation into those allegations," he said.

Rycroft said Kim briefed the council on his meeting with Alhakim who told him "there is no evidence of the use of chemical weapons as discovered so far ... but I don't think that this was the definitive end of this investigation."

The U.N. humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, Lisa Grande, had warned that the alleged use of chemical weapons in Mosul, if confirmed, would be a war crime and a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Alhakim said the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the international watchdog, sent a letter to Iraq saying it was ready to come and help if there were any indications of chemical weapons use.

The Islamic State group has used chemical weapons in Iraq and Syria at least 52 times according to a report published late last year by IHS conflict monitor, a London-based research and intelligence gathering group.

The report said that at least 19 of the 52 attacks took place in and around Mosul.

Iraqi and U.S.-led coalition officials have repeatedly expressed concern regarding Islamic State chemical weapons attacks.

However, Islamic State-claimed insurgent attacks in Iraq and attacks targeting civilians attempting to flee Mosul cause far greater numbers of injuries and deaths to civilians.

House panel wants evidence for Trump's wiretap claim

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House intelligence committee is asking the Trump administration for evidence that the phones at Trump Tower were tapped during the campaign, as its namesake has charged.

President Donald Trump asserted in a tweet just over a week ago: "Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!"

He continued the allegation against former President Barack Obama in other tweets

but offered no evidence.

The request for evidence by Monday was made in a letter sent by the committee chairman, Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Calif., and the panel's ranking Democrat, Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., an aide, who wasn't authorized to discuss the request by name and requested anonymity, said Saturday.

Obama's director of national intelligence, James Clapper, has said that nothing matching Trump's claims had taken place, but that has not quelled speculation that Trump's communications were monitored by the Obama administration.

Trump has asked Congress to investigate.

Early last week, Schiff said the committee would answer the president's call to investigate the claim. He also said that he would ask FBI Director James Comey directly when he appears later this month before the full committee, which is investigating Russian activities during the election.

Nunes has said that so far he has not seen any evidence to back up Trump's claim and has suggested the news media were taking the president's weekend tweets too literally.

Mexican firm grants Trump trademarks

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — On Feb. 19, 2016, at a campaign rally in North Charleston, S.C., then-candidate Donald Trump gave a stump speech in which he railed against American jobs moving to Mexico. "We lose our jobs, we close our factories, Mexico gets all of the work," he said. "We get nothing."

That same day, a law firm in Mexico City quietly filed on behalf of his company for trademarks on his name that would authorize the Trump brand, should it choose, to set up shop in a country with which he has sparred over trade, migration and the planned border wall.

The Trump trademarks now have been granted by the Mexican Institute of Industrial Property, or IMPI for its initials in Spanish. Records show the last three were approved Feb. 21, just over a month after Trump took office, and a fourth was granted last Oct. 6, about a month before the U.S. election.

The Associated Press reported Wednesday that the Chinese government recently granted preliminary approval for 38 trademarks to Trump and a related company. That sparked outrage from some Democratic senators and critics, who have been pushing Trump to sever financial ties with his global businesses to avoid potential violations of the emoluments clause of the U.S. Constitution, which bars federal officials from accepting anything of value from foreign governments unless approved by Congress.

The Mexican trademarks cover a broad range of business operations that can be broken down roughly into construction; construction materials; hotels, hospitality and tourism; and real estate, financial services and insurance. They are all valid through 2026.

"We're not being granted anything we didn't have before," Trump Organization General Counsel Alan Garten said. The original trademarks came "years before (Trump) even announced his candidacy."

AFRICOM: Resource limits add to US forces' risk

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Inadequate surveillance, poor supply-chain networks and an inefficient personnel-rescue system are putting U.S. forces in Africa at increased risk, U.S. Africa Command warned Thursday.

"These constraints risk our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, Coast Guardsmen, and civilians executing activities on the African continent," AFRICOM's Gen. Thomas Waldhauser said in an annual posture statement to Congress.

Perhaps the biggest problem is AFRICOM's ability to respond to potential crises at embassies in Africa, where a lack of manpower and the "tyranny of distance" force the command to take on added risk.

"Our capability constraints are most profound in our support to the Department of State-led mission to protect U.S. personnel and facilities," AFRICOM's posture statement said.

AFRICOM has sought to offset insufficient manpower by placing crisis-response units in various locations in Europe and Africa, along with small outposts

scattered across Africa, but "we knowingly accept risk for operations," the statement said.

Waldhauser, who testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee in Washington, cited a range of security challenges in Africa. In the past year, Islamic militants in Somalia have gained territory, and instability in Libya has left that country vulnerable to Islamic State group fighters.

"The instability in Libya and northern Africa, caused by years of political infighting, may be the most significant, near-term threat to U.S. and allies' interests on the continent. Stability in Libya is a long-term proposition," Waldhauser said.

In 2016, AFRICOM led Operation Odyssey Lightning, which involved several months of U.S. airstrikes that helped clear an Islamic State stronghold in the coastal city of Sirte. The operation could serve as a model for future operations, according to AFRICOM.

Still, the Stuttgart-based headquarters says it is challenged by insufficient resources in several key areas.

For example, only some 20 to 30 percent of the command's intelligence, surveillance and re-

connaisance requirements are being met, AFRICOM said.

AFRICOM also relies heavily on contracted search-and-rescue assets because of a lack of resources

In Somalia, U.S. special operations forces advising Somali and African Union troops operate near the front lines in the fight against the militant group al-Shabab, and they now find themselves at increased risk as they support indigenous forces.

Somalia, which has waged a decadelong battle against al-Shabab, also faces a growing famine, which will test the fledgling government's ability to care for its population, Waldhauser said.

In Djibouti, home to the only major U.S. base in Africa, Waldhauser is keeping an eye on China's construction of a new military base. China will open its naval base later this year, only 4 miles from the U.S.'s Camp Lemonnier.

Waldhauser said he had expressed concerns about "operational security" to the Djiboutian government, citing the presence of the Chinese so close to a base where sensitive U.S. operations are carried out.

Hospitals worry about impact of GOP plan

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — When Colorado expanded Medicaid under former President Barack Obama's health care law, the largest provider in the Denver region hired over 250 employees and built a \$27 million primary care clinic and two new school-based clinics.

Emergency rooms visits stayed flat as Denver Health Medical Center directed many of the nearly 80,000 newly insured patients into one of its 10 community health centers, where newly hired social workers and mental health therapists provided services for some of the county's poorest residents.

The hospital system, like others across the country, now is facing enormous uncertainty under the health care overhaul

proposed by congressional Republicans.

The GOP plan would scale back the Medicaid expansion and take away direct federal subsidies to help consumers pay their insurance premiums, replacing them with age-adjusted tax credits.

Denver Health could see revenue losses between \$50 million and \$85 million by 2020, which is between 5 and 9 percent of their annual revenue, according to the hospital's chief financial officer. Denver Health and many other hospital systems and medical providers across the country still would be required to care for many of the same patients, even if they lost their health coverage. That would leave hospitals, state and local governments or privately insured patients to foot the bill.

"If it's full removal of Medicaid expansion, we would have to make cuts on our system, and I really think that those cuts would roll back our progress and could paradoxically increase the cost of care by driving care back to where it shouldn't be — in the emergency rooms," said Dr. Bill Burman, interim CEO for Denver Health.

The Republican plan would limit the amount of federal money available to states that opted to expand Medicaid. It also would overhaul the framework of Medicaid so that states would receive a limited amount per person based on enrollment and costs.

The Republican proposal would boost one revenue stream for hospitals that had been cut under Obama's plan — a pool

of money helping hospitals that care for a disproportionately high share of uninsured patients.

The American Hospital Association, which represents nearly 5,000 institutions nationwide and the Catholic Health Association of the United States, the nation's largest not-for-profit health provider, wrote Congress warning that the bill would lead to significant cuts in a program that provides services to the most vulnerable.

Moody's Investors Service said it expects the legislation's provision to cap federal Medicaid payments to the states, starting in 2020, will cause states to reduce payments to hospitals. The bill also would saddle hospitals with more unpaid bills and uninsured patients, according to Moody's.

Trump praises arrest of White House intruder

Associated Press

POTOMAC FALLS, Va. — President Donald Trump on Saturday praised the U.S. Secret Service for doing a "fantastic job" apprehending a "troubled person" who climbed a fence and was approaching a south entrance to the White House while Trump was inside the executive mansion.

Washington police identified the intruder as Jonathan Tran, 26, of Milpitas, Calif.

When approached by a Secret Service officer about 11:38 p.m. Friday and asked whether he had a pass authorizing him to be in the restricted area, Tran replied, "No, I am a friend of the president. I have an appointment," the police report said.

The Secret Service said the intruder climbed an outer perimeter fence near the Treasury Department and East Executive Avenue.

Authorities found two cans of Mace on Tran, according to a criminal complaint filed in U.S. District Court. Tran was also carrying a U.S. passport, an

Apple laptop computer, a book written by Trump and a letter he had written to the president, the complaint said.

"Secret Service did a fantastic job last night," Trump said Saturday from his golf club in Virginia. Trump was briefed on the matter Friday night, said his spokesman, Sean Spicer.

Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly was also briefed, the Secret Service said. Kelly was among several Cabinet secretaries and White House staff members who attended a working lunch with the president at the Trump National Golf Club.

Trump said he brought the Cabinet secretaries, White House staff and some of their spouses to the club for a working lunch to discuss the military, the economy, health care and other issues.

Besides Kelly, joining Trump were Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, White House chief of staff Reince Priebus, chief strategist Steve Bannon and Spicer.

15 dead in landslide at Ethiopian dump

Associated Press

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — Fifteen people have been killed in a landslide at a massive garbage dump on the outskirts of Ethiopia's capital and several dozen people are missing, officials and residents said Sunday.

Addis Ababa Mayor Diriba Kuma said 15 bodies had been recovered since the landslide Saturday night at the Koshe Garbage Landfill buried several makeshift homes and concrete buildings. The landfill has been a dumping ground for more than 50 years.

About 150 people were at the site when the landslide occurred, resident Assefa Teklemahimanot told The Associated Press. The mayor said 37 people had been rescued.

Many people at the site had been scavenging items to make a living, but others live at the landfill.

An AP reporter saw four bodies taken away by ambulances. Elderly women cried, and others stood anxiously waiting for

news of loved ones. Six excavators dug through the ruins.

"My house was right inside there," said a shaken Tebeju Asres, pointing to where one of the excavators was digging. "My mother and three of my sisters were there when the landslide happened. Now I don't know the fate of all of them."

The resumption of garbage dumping at the site in recent months likely caused the landslide, Assefa said. The dumping had stopped in recent years, but it resumed after farmers in a nearby restive region where a new garbage landfill complex was being built blocked dumping in their area.

Around 500 waste-pickers are believed to work at the landfill every day. City officials say close to 300,000 tons of waste are collected each year from the capital, most of it dumped at the landfill.

City officials in recent years have been trying to turn the garbage into a source of clean energy with a \$120 million investment.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Deputies: Substitute teacher drunk in class

SC CAYCE — Lexington County deputies have charged a substitute teacher they say was drunk while in class at Brookland-Cayce High School.

Authorities told local media outlets Judith Elizabeth Richards-Gartee, 52, was charged Friday with disorderly conduct.

Deputies said an administrator at the Cayce school notified a resource officer at the school that the substitute was drunk. Authorities said Richards-Gartee had an open container of alcohol.

Richards-Gartee was taken to a hospital.

Man held in ATM theft using front-end loader

AK ANCHORAGE — An Anchorage man was charged with a snatch-and-grab theft with the use of heavy equipment.

Federal prosecutors charged Adrian Turnbow, 25, with bank larceny in the attempted theft of an ATM with a front-end loader.

The FBI is investigating three other Anchorage ATM thefts with heavy equipment since Dec. 25. Excavators in at least two previous cases were stolen from Turnbow's former employer.

Turnbow was arrested after a security guard called Anchorage police March 6 to report a front-end loader being used to take an ATM from an east-side bank, according to an FBI affidavit.

As officers responded, the loader became stuck in a parking lot embankment. Police detained the driver, who was wearing a ski mask and carrying a loaded handgun.

Sheriff: Drunken forklift thief had lost car keys

FL MARATHON — Florida Keys authorities said a drunken man from Rhode Island stole a forklift and crashed into a gate, telling deputies he lost his car keys and needed something to drive.

The Monroe County Sheriff's Office says in a news release that Edward Quinton, 44, of Greenwich, R.I., told deputies he was in the Keys helping friends move.

Quinton said that after he lost his keys Thursday night, he needed a vehicle and took the forklift from a Marathon marina because he knew how to drive one. Quinton also told deputies he thought he could fix the damaged gate.

Breath tests showed Quinton's blood-alcohol level was twice Florida's legal limit. He faces drunken-driving, criminal mischief, burglary and grand theft charges.

Man gets new trial after judge nods off in court

KS TOPEKA — A Kansas appellate court said a man convicted of assault and weapons charges deserves a new trial because his trial judge fell asleep during testimony.

The Kansas City Star reported the Kansas Court of Appeals on Friday threw out Daquantrius Johnson's 2014 convictions.

According to the ruling, a juror noticed that Sedgwick County District Judge Ben Burgess had fallen asleep and asked a bailiff whether Johnson could get a fair trial.

The bailiff passed that comment on to Burgess, who later told jurors they alone would decide the case and that no attorneys indicated his nodding off affected his decisions.

Fake police car used in St. Louis robbery

MO ST. LOUIS — St. Louis police are investigating a robbery in which the assailants used a car that looked like a police car as part of their crime.

Police said a man and a woman were sitting in a parked vehicle early Friday when a white Chevrolet Impala with red and blue emergency lights parked behind them. Police said the victims were told to get out of the vehicle.

Once they got out, one of the suspects pulled out a gun and demanded the contents of the pockets of one of the victims.

The man threw his cellphone and money to the ground and both victims ran.

The suspects drove away. No arrests have been made.

Mom held over video of boy riding in truck bed

CA CORONA — A video on YouTube of a boy riding in the bed of a pickup filled with beads in Southern California led to the arrest of his mother on suspicion of child endangerment.

The video titled "Driving a truck full of Orbeez" was posted on the YouTube channel RoccoPiazzaVlogs.

It shows the boy, Rocco Piazza, and his nanny buried up to their necks in water and Orbeez, soluble beads that swell in water, sloshing back and forth as the truck drives around.

Corona police saw the video and arrested and cited the boy's mother, Holly Piazza, 45, and her fiance, Brian Chase, 37, for misdemeanor child endangerment. They also were cited for illegally dumping the beads in the road.

Holly Piazza told KABC-TV that she told police "it was just

five minutes of a stupid parent choice."

Officer accusing of groping woman

MD ARNOLD — An Anne Arundel police officer was charged with assault and a sex offense on suspicion of groping a female victim.

The police department received a complaint from a woman alleging misconduct on the part of an officer on Jan. 30.

Police said that during the investigation they learned Officer Bradley Tuthill, 33, first responded to the victim's house for a well-being check, then returned unnecessarily later that day.

The victim said that during the second visit, Tuthill groped her back and buttocks.

Tuthill also faces a charge of malfeasance in office.

\$2,500 reward offered in killing of bald eagle

AL CENTRE — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering \$2,500 for information leading to the conviction of whoever shot and killed a bald eagle in Alabama near the Georgia state line.

Agency spokesman Phil Kloer said the eagle's body was found March 6 in a farm field in Cherokee County, about 8 miles from Centre, near Weiss Lake. That's about 20 miles west of Rome, Georgia.

Kloer said he doesn't know when the eagle was killed.

The national bird was removed from the endangered species list in June 2007. However, it is still protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection acts.

From wire reports

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Arizona holds off Ducks

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Arizona stayed resilient while its best player was suspended, fought through injuries, kept finding ways to win.

That composure helped the Wildcats share the Pac-12 regular-season crown with Oregon and withstand a furious rally by the Ducks in the conference title game.

Now they're Pac-12 Tournament champions and have a decent shot to be a No. 1 seed in the NCAAs.

Led by ever-calm sophomore guard Allonzo Trier, No. 7 Arizona outlasted No. 5 Oregon 83-80 on Saturday night in the Pac-12 final to enter the NCAA Tournament with a surge of momentum.

"It has never been easy for us," Arizona coach Sean Miller said. "We have dealt with adversity and obstacles as much as almost any group that I've been a part of, and yet we've been able to continue to climb and grow."

Arizona (30-4) played superb defense while building a 14-point lead and shot 58 percent overall to answer Oregon's big push in the second half.

Trier sat out the first 19 games of the season after being suspended for performance-enhancing drugs and got better as the season progressed.

Trier hit some big shots when the Ducks charged and calmly made two free throws in the final 17 seconds after Arizona missed the previous four, sealing the Wildcats' second Pac-12 title in three years.

"I don't think we had the picture painted like this. Everything looked so down," said Trier, the tournament MVP after scoring 23 points in the title game. "But just extremely proud to be a part of this team, extremely happy to be able to play basketball again and do something I really loved that was taken away from me for quite an extended period of time."

Oregon (29-5) got bad news before tipoff, learning senior forward Chris Boucher is out for the season with a torn ACL sustained in the semifinals against California.

The Ducks struggled in the first half before rallying in a dazzling second half by both teams. They couldn't stop the Wildcats, though.

Dillon Brooks carried Oregon early and finished with 25 points. Tyler Dorsey added 23 for the Ducks, who made 15 of 29 shots in the second half.

"I love the way our guys battled back," Oregon coach Dana Altman said. "Our guys really, really battled back, put ourselves in a position. We just didn't get it done."

Cyclones top WVU to win Big 12 crown

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Everybody on the Iowa State bench got a snippet of net from the Big 12 Tournament.

Monte Morris got just about the whole thing.

It was only fitting the most valuable player in the Big 12 Tournament, the senior guard who kept willing the No. 23 Cyclones to victory, got to hang the net around his neck. Morris scored 17 points in the title game Saturday night to send Iowa State to an 80-74 victory over No. 11 West Virginia.

It was the third title in four years for the Cyclones.

Deonte Burton added 16 points and Matt Thomas finished with 12 for the fourth-seeded Cyclones (23-10), who will enter the NCAA Tournament as one of the nation's hottest teams. They've won nine of their last 10 games, their only loss during that stretch coming a week ago in Morgantown.

No. 8 Kentucky 79, Alabama 74: At Nashville, Tenn., De'Aaron Fox scored a career-high 28 points, including seven straight down the stretch, and Malik Monk added 20 to lift the Wildcats past the Crimson Tide in the Southeastern Conference Tournament semifinals.

No. 12 SMU 70, UCF 59: At Hartford, Conn., Sterling Brown scored 22 points as the Mustangs beat the Knights in the semifinals of the American Athletic Conference Tournament.

No. 15 Cincinnati 81, Connecticut 71: Gary Clark scored 25 points to lead the Bearcats over the Huskies in the American Athletic Conference semifinals in Hartford, Connecticut.

No. 24 Wisconsin 76, Northwestern 48: The Badgers revved up the defense against the weary Wildcats and got the desired result, a victory that earned Wisconsin a berth in the Big Ten Tournament championship game for the third time in five years.

Hart, Wildcats beat Creighton

Associated Press

NEW YORK — This time, Villanova is going into the NCAAs with a conference tournament title and probably the No. 1 overall seed.

The second-ranked Wildcats will find out Sunday when and where their national championship defense will begin. On Saturday, they showed that when they play Villanova basketball, they are very tough to beat.

Josh Hart scored 29 points to lead Villanova to a 74-60 victory over Creighton in the Big East championship game.

"We wanted to set the tone," the senior guard said, wearing a net around his neck. "We wanted to play 40 minutes of Villanova basketball."

Good defense, sharing the ball and making three-pointers is the formula that has led top-seeded Villanova (31-3) to four consecutive Big East regular-season titles.

"We might have played our best defensive game of the year," coach Jay Wright said.

Hart, the conference player of the year, became just the third player to win the tournament MVP award twice, joining Patrick Ewing of Georgetown and Peyton Siva of Louisville.

"Just being a winner," Hart said when asked how he wanted to be remembered in the Big East. "That's all I care about."

Duke captures 20th ACC title

Associated Press

NEW YORK — In a season that has been anything but routine for Duke, the Blue Devils won the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament as it had never been done before.

Jayson Tatum took over in the final three minutes, making key plays all over the floor, and No. 14 Duke became the first team to win the league's postseason title with four victories in four days by rallying past No. 22 Notre Dame 75-69 on Saturday night.

"We're extremely tough, and we never say die," Tatum said. "Especially this last week, we've found that out."

The freshman forward finished a spectacular week in Brooklyn with 19 points and eight rebounds for the fifth-seeded Blue Devils (27-8). Duke won its first ACC Tournament championship since 2011 and its 20th overall, most in conference history. It was the 14th under coach Mike Krzyzewski.

"We've won a lot of these, but this one is so different," the 70-year-old Krzyzewski said. "I've been on a lot of good journeys, but this was such a good one."

Bonzie Colson was a beast for third-seeded Notre Dame (25-9), with 29 points and nine rebounds.

Cruz homer caps rally for Dominicans

Associated Press

MIAMI — With their team playing the United States in a frenzied atmosphere at the World Baseball Classic, Dominican rooters spent much of the game on their feet while honking horns, pounding drums and rattling noisemakers.

Eventually they rattled the Americans.

Nelson Cruz hit a go-ahead, three-run homer off Andrew Miller in the eighth inning, Starling Marte added a solo shot off the All-Star reliever and the defending champion Dominicans overcame a five-run deficit to beat the United States 7-5 Saturday night.

“If you didn’t feel the emotions of this game, either you were dead or need to be checked out,” Cruz said.

The comeback delighted a clamorous crowd of 37,446, the largest for baseball in the five-year history of Marlins Park.

“The fans were incredible,” Miller said. “It was a different atmosphere from anything we’re used to — different from the playoffs or World Series games. It was a blast to be a part of it. I just would have liked to have gone in there and done my job and made them quiet. I didn’t do that.”

The U.S. fell to 1-1 and is in jeopardy of being eliminated in the first round. The Americans, who played Canada on Sunday, failed to reach the finals of the three previous WBCs.

“In Little League you get emotional when you hit one like that,” Cruz said in Spanish. “Only in a movie or dream you can describe what occurred.”

One batter later, Marte also homered.

“They did a good job, whether it was me getting a little too much of the plate or them knowing what was coming,” Miller said. “They made me pay.”

The Dominicans improved to 10-0 in the past two Classics, including 2-0 this year. They can clinch first place in Pool C and advance to the second round by beating Colombia on Sunday.

Westbrook moves into 2nd behind Robertson on triple-double list

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Russell Westbrook broke a tie with Wilt Chamberlain and inched closer to Oscar Robertson.

Westbrook had 33 points, 14 assists and 11 rebounds for his 32nd triple-double of the season, leading the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 112-104 victory over the Utah Jazz on Saturday.

“Just being able to attack the basket,” Westbrook said. “When they don’t have any shot blockers, your job is to be able to take advantage of it, and I thought we did a good job.”

Westbrook broke a tie with Chamberlain (1967-68) for the second-most triple-doubles in a season. Robertson set the record of 41 in 1961-62.

“They are historic numbers you are talking about — Wilt Chamberlain and Oscar Robertson — two of the greatest players to play the game,”

Thunder coach Billy Donovan said. “They are impactful in the game. And I think that when Russell’s career is done, whenever that time is, he is a guy that you are going to look at and say that what he’s done throughout his career is historic.”

Victor Oladipo added 22 points to help the Thunder win for the third time in four regular-season meetings with the Jazz.

“To play this game, you have to feel like you are the best,” Oladipo said, “so I feel like we are the best backcourt in the NBA.”

Utah was without center Rudy Gobert and forward Derrick Favors because of leg soreness, and Gordon Hayward played only 21 minutes, finishing with nine points — 13 below his average.

Utah coach Quin Snyder used his entire available roster. Dante Exum scored 22 points on 7-for-8 shooting, playing a team-high 27 minutes.

Stars sit as Spurs top Warriors

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Patty Mills had 21 points and the San Antonio Spurs rolled to a 107-85 victory over the Golden State Warriors on Saturday night in a game short on star power to pull within a half-game of the NBA’s top record.

The big showdown between the league’s top two teams turned into a huge letdown with both teams missing their star players.

Already without Kevin Durant due to a knee injury, Golden State opted to rest Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson, Draymond Green and Andre Iguodala.

Earning the top seed is important, but Warriors coach Steve Kerr said keeping his team healthy is a greater priority. Golden State concluded a stretch of eight games in 13 days, including the second night of a back-to-back that saw the Warriors arrive in San Antonio at 3 a.m. Saturday.

“We had to get through this night. That was the main thing,” Kerr said. “We had to get through this trip and they allowed us to do that.”

The Spurs were expecting to be without Kawhi Leonard,

Tony Parker and Dejounte Murray due to injuries, but received a jolt when they were informed that LaMarcus Aldridge will be out indefinitely with a minor heart arrhythmia. Aldridge underwent tests Saturday and will have more Monday.

“Both sides were missing some players, but at the end of the day it’s an important game either way,” said Pau Gasol, one of five Spurs players in double figures. “We got it done.”

Wizards 125, Trail Blazers 124 (OT): John Wall scored 39 points, and Washington picked up a controversial road win.

It looked as if Markieff Morris stepped out of bounds before making a go-ahead baseline jumper with 0.4 seconds left in overtime. The crowd at the Moda Center howled in protest and the players pointed to the video replay to no avail.

Bradley Beal added 26 points for the Wizards, who have won five straight.

Heat 104, Raptors 89: Dion Waiters scored 20 points, Tyler Johnson added 16 and host Miami improved to 21-4 in its past 25 games.

Pelicans 125, Hornets 122 (OT): Anthony Davis had 46 points and 21 rebounds, and visiting New Orleans won with

DeMarcus Cousins sitting on the bench during crunch time.

Cavaliers 116, Magic 104: LeBron James had 24 points, 13 assists and 12 rebounds, and visiting Cleveland stopped a three-game losing streak.

Bucks 102, Timberwolves 95: Tony Snell scored 19 points, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 18 and balanced Milwaukee earned its season-high sixth consecutive victory.

Suns 100, Mavericks 98: Devin Booker hit a 19-footer with 1.4 seconds left to lift Phoenix to the road win.

Clippers 112, 76ers 100: Chris Paul scored 30 points and DeAndre Jordan had 19 points and 20 rebounds, helping host Los Angeles to its fourth win in five games.

Hawks 107, Grizzlies 90: Taurean Prince scored a career-high 17 points, and visiting Atlanta handed Memphis its fifth straight loss.

Nuggets 105, Kings 92: Jamal Murray scored 11 of his 14 points in the fourth quarter, and Denver held on for the road win.

Pistons 112, Knicks 92: Tobias Harris scored 23 of his 28 points in the first half, leading Detroit to the victory at home.

Flames blank Jets for 9th straight win

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — The Calgary Flames aren't all that interested in talking about their nine-game winning streak.

After the Flames blanked the Winnipeg Jets 3-0 Saturday night with Brian Elliott's second straight shutout, the players said it wasn't a big topic of conversation for them.

"Just stay level-headed," said defenseman Dougie Hamilton, who had three assists to reach a career-high 44 points. "I think we're just trying to keep going. You can't get too high or get too low in this league."

Added Elliott: "You can't sit back and look at the little run we've been on. You have to look forward to the next game."

It was a bit more than a little run. The nine-game win streak set a record since the franchise moved from Atlanta in 1980. The franchise record is 10 games in 1978.

Mikael Backlund and Mi-

chael Frolik each scored on the power play as the victory also gave Calgary points in 11 straight games. Alex Chiasson also scored, while Frolik added one assist.

The Flames were 2-for-5 on the power play, a feat considering they only had two power-play goals in their 12 previous games.

Elliott's second shutout of the season, and 36th of his career, followed Thursday's 24 saves in a 5-0 win over Montreal on Thursday.

Connor Hellebuyck stopped 26 of 29 shots for the Jets, who lost their third straight and wrapped up a six-game home-stand (2-4-0).

"We can't be taking that many penalties," Hellebuyck said. "And, like I said, they got some lucky bounces off the bar and even pucks that hit me kept going through. Sometimes it just happens."

Senators 4, Avalanche 2: Craig Anderson made 14 saves

to set the franchise wins mark as Ottawa defeated host Colorado for its sixth consecutive victory.

Kings 4, Capitals 2: Adrian Kempe scored his first NHL goal with 11:14 to play and captain Anze Kopitar had a goal and an assist in host Los Angeles' victory over NHL-leading Washington.

Penguins 3, Canucks 0: Matt Murray made 27 saves as Pittsburgh beat host Vancouver.

Bruins 2, Flyers 1: Drew Stafford scored with 5.6 seconds left in the third period when his dump-in shot tipped off Philadelphia defenseman Brandon Manning's stick, lifting host Boston.

Predators 3, Sharks 1: Ryan Johansen and James Neal scored goals to help Nashville snap a four-game losing streak with a victory over host San Jose.

Maple Leafs 3, Hurricanes 2 (OT): Morgan Rielly scored 2:13 into overtime to lift Toron-

to over host Carolina.

Rielly's wrist shot past Cam Ward gave Toronto its third straight victory and moved them one point ahead of the New York Islanders for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Sabres 5, Blue Jackets 3: Evander Kane scored a power-play goal with 2:29 remaining as host Buffalo rallied from a three-goal deficit to beat Columbus.

Lightning 3, Panthers 2: Ondrej Palat scored with 2:23 left to give host Tampa Bay a victory over Florida.

Coyotes 5, Devils 4: Tobias Reider and Anthony DeAngelo each had a goal and an assist as host Arizona handed New Jersey its 10th consecutive loss.

Blues 4, Islanders 3: Vladimir Tarasenko scored twice to lead host St. Louis over New York.

Washington CB Jones injures leg at pro day

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Sidney Jones, a potential first-round draft pick, injured his left leg during defensive back drills in pro day workouts at the University of Washington on Saturday.

The Washington cornerback was performing one of his final drills of the session when he quickly pulled up and went down to the turf at the Dempsey Indoor Center.

As he was beginning to make a break out of his backpedal, Jones immediately began favoring his left leg and tumbled to the ground. Jones began to grab at the underside of his leg after coming to a stop.

He was helped to his feet by fellow defensive back Budda Baker and to the sideline by Washington head coach Chris Petersen.

After brief conversations on the sideline, Jones hopped on the back of a cart and was taken out of the building.

"It's really tough, just because Sidney's one of our best friends, all of our best friends, [and] he's a great prospect coming out," Baker said.

"Felt like he could have been the first corner and still can be the first corner off

the draft board. The last drill, last thing you've got to do, and that happens. Definitely sad, but we know Sidney's strong and he's going to still be there."

Jones was the top cornerback for a Washington defense that led the Pac-12 with just 17.7 points per game allowed. He finished his Washington career with 145 tackles, eight interceptions and six forced fumbles in 40 games.

Shiffrin clinches slalom title

OLYMPIC VALLEY, Calif. — Mikaela Shiffrin shook her head after a final run that featured plenty of mistakes followed by some remarkable recoveries.

She left the door open, she feared. Turns out, not so much. Not the way she's racing.

The American standout clinched her fourth slalom title in five seasons before she took her first run and then capped off an electric day with the win at a World Cup race in Squaw Valley on a warm Saturday.

"I'm not proud of my skiing, I think it was very scrappy and I'm proud of the fight," Shiffrin said. "But it's not my best skiing. To fight my way to the finish and

come away with another win today, sometimes it's better to do that than to feel like I skied unbelievable."

Trailing going into the final run, Shiffrin overcame some early slip-ups to turn in a combined time of 1 minute, 39.48 seconds.

First-run leader Wendy Holdener of Switzerland was the last racer of the day and took some chances before crashing out near the finish line to give Shiffrin her 31st career World Cup victory. Sarka Strachova of the Czech Republic was second, 1.03 seconds back, and Bernadette Schild of Austria finished third.

Logano wins Vegas Xfinity race

LAS VEGAS — Joey Logano got plenty of chances to test his skills Saturday in the Xfinity race, and made all the right moves.

Logano pulled away from Kyle Larson on a restart with four laps left and held on to win his 21st race in the second-tier circuit.

Logano chose the outside lane and moved in front of Larson out of the fourth turn at Las Vegas Motor Speedway for his first Xfinity victory since October at Charlotte.