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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Sexual assault reports up at Naval Academy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Reports of sexual assaults increased at two of the three military academies last year and an anonymous survey suggests sexual misconduct rose across the board at the schools, The Associated Press has learned.

The new data underscore the challenge in stemming bad behavior by young people at the military college campuses, despite a slew of programs designed to prevent assaults, help victims and encourage them to come forward. The difficulties in some ways mirror those the larger military is struggling with amid revelations about Marines and other servicemembers sharing nude photos on websites.

Assault reports rose at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., while dropping at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado. The Air Force decline was sharp, going to 32 last year from 49 in 2015, contributing to a overall decrease in the overall number of reported assaults at the academies. The total reported cases fell to 86 from 91 in 2015, according to details obtained by the AP.

Pentagon and military officials believe more people are reporting sexual assaults, which they see as a positive trend because it suggests students have more confidence in the system and greater willingness to seek help.

But the anonymous survey results suggest more assaults and crime occurring. They showed more than 12 percent of women and nearly 2 percent of men saying they experienced unwanted sexual contact. In that survey, the largest increases in sexual misconduct were also at the Navy and Army academies. A majority of students said they didn't file a report on the assault because they didn't consider it serious enough. Many women said they took steps to avoid the perpetrator, while more than a third of the men said they confronted the person.

Senior defense officials expressed disappointment. They were particularly concerned that more men and women said they experienced unwanted sexual contact. The rate two years ago was about 8 percent of women and 1 percent of men.

Admiral, 7 others charged in lurid 'Fat Leonard' case

The Washington Post

The Justice Department unsealed a fresh indictment Tuesday charging eight Navy officials — including an admiral — with corruption and other crimes in the “Fat Leonard” bribery case, escalating an epic scandal that has dogged the Navy for four years.

Among those charged were Rear Adm. Bruce Loveless, a senior Navy intelligence officer who recently retired from a key job at the Pentagon, as well as four retired Navy captains and a retired Marine colonel. The charges cover a period of eight years, from 2006 through 2014.

The Navy personnel are accused of taking bribes in the form of lavish gifts, prostitutes and luxury hotel stays courtesy of Leonard Glenn “Fat Leonard” Francis, a Singapore-based defense contractor who has pleaded guilty to defrauding the Navy of tens of millions of dollars.

The indictment lists page after page of bribes allegedly provided to the defendants including \$25,000 watches, \$2,000 boxes of Cohiba cigars, \$2,000 bottles of cognac and \$600-per-night hotel rooms.

According to the charging documents, Francis also frequently sponsored wild sex parties for many officers assigned to the USS Blue Ridge, the flagship of the Navy's 7th Fleet, and other warships.

During a port visit by the Blue Ridge to Manila, Philippines, in May 2008, for example, five of the Navy officers attended a “raging multi-day party, with a rotating carousel of prostitutes,” at the Shangri-La Hotel, according to the indictment. The group allegedly drank the hotel's entire supply of Dom Pérignon champagne and rang up expenses exceeding \$50,000, which Francis covered in full.

On another port visit by the Blue Ridge to Manila in February 2007, Francis allegedly hosted a sex party for officers in the MacArthur Suite of the Manila hotel. During the party, “historical memorabilia related to General Douglas MacArthur were used by the participants in sexual acts,” according to the indictment.

In exchange, according to federal pros-

ecutors, the officials provided Francis with classified or inside information that enabled his firm, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, to gouge the Navy out of tens of millions of dollars.

Federal agents fanned out across six states Tuesday in a coordinated operation to arrest the defendants, authorities said.

Loveless, the retired admiral, was arrested at his home in Coronado, Calif. The Navy had announced in November 2013 that he was under scrutiny by the Justice Department and suspended his access to classified material. He was allowed to retire last fall.

Navy officials have said that about 30 admirals are under investigation, although only a handful have been named publicly.

Robert Gilbeau, a one-star admiral, was convicted last June after he pleaded guilty to making false statements to investigators about his contacts with Francis. He has since retired. He is scheduled to be sentenced next month in federal court.

Separately, the Navy has censured or disciplined three admirals for ethics violations after they accepted lavish meals and other gifts from Francis.

Others taken into custody Tuesday included David Newland, 60, a retired captain from San Antonio; James Dolan, 58, a retired captain from Gettysburg, Pa.; David Lausman, a retired captain from The Villages, Fla.; and Donald Hornbeck, a retired captain who lives in Britain.

Agents also arrested Enrico de Guzman, a retired Marine colonel from Honolulu; Lt. Cmdr. Stephen Shedd, an active-duty officer from Colorado Springs, Colo.; and Robert Gorsuch, 48, of Virginia Beach, Va., a retired chief warrant officer.

None of the defendants could be reached for comment Tuesday. The charges against them include bribery, conspiracy, obstruction of justice and making false statements to federal investigators.

All of the accused officers formerly held key positions on the command staff of the Japan-based 7th Fleet and were bribed by Francis because they could help steer business to Glenn Defense Marine Asia, according to court papers.

Navy officials vow crackdown after scandal reports widen

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

Navy officials issued stern warnings Tuesday and vowed to crack down on “toxic” behavior after reports surfaced that a recent Marine Corps nude photo-sharing scandal has widened to other services, with female sailors at dozens of commands targeted.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson and Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Scott Swift released separate messages to sailors condemning the allegations, saying they have degraded the Navy’s ability to function as a fighting force.

Swift said he considered such behavior an “insider threat,” echoing language used by Marine Commandant Gen. Robert Neller during recent congress-

sional testimony on the Marines’ response to the scandal, in which servicemembers are suspected of sharing explicit photos of female co-workers on the private Facebook group Marines United.

Richardson’s comments added that such behavior “makes us weaker, and cedes advantage to the enemy.”

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service is investigating the matter.

The statements are likely in response to recent reports alleging that the Marines’ scandal has engulfed the other services.

One anonymous image-sharing message board cited in a Business Insider report has dedicated pages for posting photos of female servicemembers.

A screenshot from the site indicated that several major Navy

commands were listed as potential targets for members looking for such photos, including those from the aircraft carriers USS Harry S. Truman and the USS Ronald Reagan.

Other commands targeted include Naval Base San Diego, Naval Station Norfolk, Naval Air Stations Oceana, North Island and Pensacola, the hospital ship USNS Mercy, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and the U.S. Naval Academy, according to a Navy Times report.

The site also includes requests for photos from Army, Air Force, Marine and National Guard commands.

Richardson said such harassment is a crime that sailors should take more seriously, and that the Navy was not making progress combating the issue.

US, Japan trade aircraft for exercise

BY LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

CAMP SOUMAGAHARA, Japan — Okinawa-based U.S. servicemembers have joined Japanese troops in central Japan for training that includes air assaults from MV-22 Ospreys and CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

Six hundred Marines and sailors from the III Marine Expeditionary Force are taking part in the 12-day, semi-annual Exercise Forest Light, which wraps up Friday at the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force’s Camp Soumagahara in Gunma Prefecture.

The Americans are working with Japanese personnel on basic infantry skills such as marksmanship, unarmed combat, air mobility and air assault operations that involved Marines flying in Japanese aircraft and Japanese soldiers flying in the Ospreys.

“Every second counts during an air-mobile or air-assault mission, so being familiar with each other’s equipment is a great advantage to have,” said 1st Lt. Michael Maggitti, a Marine Corps spokesman.

Even knowing how the aircraft’s harness fastens can make a difference, shaving valuable seconds off a combat drop, he said.

Participants practiced sliding down ropes to the ground from each other’s hovering aircraft. During one part of the training, Marines disembarked from a Japanese Chinook and secured a zone so their Japanese counterparts could land safely.

After treating a simulated casualty, the troops guided an Osprey’s landing and evacuated the patient.

The U.S. servicemembers also spent time exploring Gunma Prefecture, checking out local landmarks and visiting homes.

Forest Light training is also underway at the more mountainous Sekiyama Training Area in Niigata Prefecture, officials said.

USS Carl Vinson makes port call in S. Korea

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

BUSAN, South Korea — The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson made a port call in South Korea on Wednesday, while allied military leaders warned that the North may stage a provocation during the allies’ joint war games.

The chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph Dunford, also offered reassurances of Washington’s commitment to the alliance amid concerns about a political crisis over the ouster of South Korea’s president.

The caretaker government announced Wednesday that new elections will be held on May 9, as required by the constitution.

“The [South Korea]-U.S. Alliance is ironclad, and the combined defense posture is firm regardless of the political situation in Korea,” Dunford said in

a statement after discussing the situation with his South Korean counterpart, Gen. Lee Sun-jin, on Wednesday in a phone call.

The military chiefs also “recognized the possibility that North Korea could conduct provocative actions during the Key Resolve/Foal Eagle exercise, or in connection with North Korean major political events in April,” the statement said.

As usual, North Korea has strongly denounced the annual military drills, which it considers a rehearsal for an invasion. It also criticized the Carl Vinson’s participation, warning it would stage “merciless ultra-precision strikes” if the aircraft carrier violates its sovereignty.

Its belligerent rhetoric has taken on added significance after more than a year of stepped-up North Korean missile tests and two underground nuclear explosions. The North fired four ballistic missiles into

the sea off Japan on March 6, days after Foal Eagle began.

The Nimitz-class carrier, with about 5,500 crewmembers, has been operating in waters off the divided peninsula as part of Foal Eagle. The guided-missile destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer also pulled into Busan on Wednesday.

The carrier strike group’s commander, Rear Adm. James Kilby, told reporters in Busan that the U.S. understands the threat to South Korea “is increasing with every act of aggression” from the North and stressed the ship’s presence “is a clear signal of our commitment to the Republic of Korea.”

The Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group was recently forward deployed as part of the Navy’s plan to shift 3rd Fleet forces to the Western Pacific. The group left San Diego on Jan. 5 and arrived in the South China Sea last month.

US might send up to 1,000 more troops to Syria

The Washington Post

The U.S. military has drawn up early plans that would deploy up to 1,000 more troops into northern Syria in the coming weeks, expanding the American presence in the country ahead of the offensive on the Islamic State's de facto capital of Raqqa, according to U.S. defense officials familiar with the matter.

The deployment, if approved by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and President Donald Trump, would potentially double the number of U.S. forces in Syria and increase the potential for direct U.S. combat involvement in a conflict that has been characterized by confusion and competing priorities among disparate forces.

Trump, who charged former President Barack Obama with being weak on Syria, gave the Pentagon 30 days to prepare a new counter-Islamic State plan, and Mattis submitted a broad outline to the White House at the end of February. Gen. Joseph Votel, the head of U.S. Central Command, has been filling in more details for that outline, including by how much to increase the U.S. ground presence in Syria. Votel is set to forward his recommendations to Mattis by the end of the month, and the Pentagon secretary is likely to sign off on them, according to a defense official familiar with the deliberations.

While the new contingent of U.S. troops would initially not play a combat role, they would be entering an increasingly complex and dangerous battlefield. In recent weeks, U.S. Army Rangers have been sent to the city of Manbij west of Raqqa to deter Russian, Turkish and Syrian opposi-

tion forces all operating in the area, while a Marine artillery battery recently deployed near Raqqa has already come under fire, according to a defense official with direct knowledge of their operations.

The moves would also mark a departure from the Obama administration, which resisted committing more ground troops to Syria.

The implementation of the proposed plan, however, relies on a number of variables that have yet to be determined, including how much to arm Kurdish and Arab troops on the ground, or what part regional actors, such as Turkey, might have in the Raqqa campaign.

The new troops, if sent, would be focused on supporting Kurdish and Arab fighters in northern Syria battling the Islamic State. Under the plan, the added American forces would act primarily as advisers, offering expertise on bomb disposal and coordinating air support for the coalition of Kurds and Arabs, also known as the Syrian Democratic Forces.

There are already in Syria about 500 U.S. Special Operations forces operating alongside the SDF, in addition to about 250 Rangers and 200 Marines. The new U.S. troops, if approved, would probably come from parts of both the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit — a flotilla of ships loaded with 2,200 Marines that is now steaming toward the region — and the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division, of which 2,500 recently arrived in Kuwait. These conventional troops would supplement the Special Operations forces already on the ground and operate much like their counterparts fighting in the Iraqi city of Mosul.

White House is set to unveil budget proposal

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The White House will release a budget blueprint Thursday that includes \$603 billion for defense in 2018 as well as an additional \$30 billion in defense spending this year, said Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The blueprint, based on President Donald Trump's campaign promises of a military buildup, is a "hard power budget" designed to send a message of U.S. intentions abroad and take a budget ax to foreign aid, including a 28 percent cut in the State Department.

Congress must still debate and approve the White House spending plan. Armed Services Committee chairmen Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, have called for more military spending, with a \$640 billion defense budget for 2018. More so, cuts to foreign aid and domestic spending are likely to meet hard resistance from Democrats.

"There is no question this is a hard-power budget; it is not a soft-power budget ... and that was done intentionally," Mulvaney said. "The president very clearly wants to send a message to our allies and our potential adversaries that this is a strong power administration."

The White House pulled money from foreign aid programs and other areas of the budget to fund higher spending on the military. The blueprint sets the base defense budget at \$54 billion, about 10 percent above sequestration caps on spending for 2018. The White House proposal is about a 3 percent increase above projections by former President Barack Obama's administration for military spending in the coming year.

"The Defense Department has given us every assurance they can spend this

full \$54 billion next year in a responsible fashion and I believe [Defense Secretary Jim] Mattis when he tells me that," Mulvaney said.

The White House is also proposing an additional \$30 billion for current military operations that will include \$1.5 billion for a wall along the Mexico border, a key promise of Trump's campaign.

A briefing Wednesday did not include details on how the defense money could be spent and the planned release Thursday of the budget blueprint was expected to provide additional bullet points. The White House does not expect to release a full, detailed budget proposal until May.

Trump has promised a historic military buildup including major increases in troop levels, hardware and a 350-ship Navy, but some experts and lawmakers question whether the budget proposal would accomplish that.

Roger Zakheim, a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative-leaning think tank in Washington, said the president is eager to tout the fulfillment of his campaign promises but the budget proposal will only provide triage to the military.

"No one can make the argument that the \$603 billion number is going to provide a rebuild," Zakheim said.

McCain and Thornberry have blasted the figure as inadequate for the military to rebound from the effects of the Budget Control Act, legislation passed in 2011 that set federal spending caps and held down the DOD budget.

The cap for defense spending in 2018 is set at \$549 billion and will remain in place unless a divided Congress can reach a deal to lift it — or decides to push large amounts of base defense spending into the overseas war fund, which has been criticized as a slush fund because it is not subject to the cap.

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Facing health bill resistance, GOP leaders press on

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Facing mounting rank-and-file defiance, Republican leaders and the White House redoubled their efforts Tuesday to muscle legislation overhauling America's health care system through Congress following a sobering report about millions being shoved off insurance coverage.

President Donald Trump, whose strong Election Day showing in GOP regions makes him the party's ultimate Capitol Hill vote wrangler, discussed the legislation by phone with the House's two top Republicans. He also dispatched Vice President Mike Pence and health secretary Tom Price to hear GOP senators' concerns.

With leaders hoping to move the measure through the House next week so the Senate can debate it, House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell acknowledged they were open to changes. Trump's spokesman affirmed a willingness to accept revisions to win support.

"This has never been a take it or leave it," said press secretary Sean Spicer.

The GOP bill is the party's response to seven years of promising to repeal President Barack Obama's 2010 health care overhaul. It would undo that law's individual mandate, which requires most people to have coverage, by ending the tax penalty on those who don't. It would also provide age-based tax credits instead of the subsidies geared to income in Obama's statute, end that law's expansion of Medicaid and curb its future spending, and let insurers boost rates for seniors.

On Monday, the Congressional Budget Office said the Republican legislation would reduce the ranks of the in-

sured by 24 million in a decade, largely by cutting Medicaid recipients and people buying individual policies. That would be more than the 20 million who've gained coverage under Obama's overhaul — and attach a big number to a problem haunting GOP governors and members of Congress whose states have benefited from "Obamacare."

"I plan to vote NO" on the GOP bill, tweeted Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, of Florida, among a mounting number of Republicans who expressed opposition following the report's release. "As written the plan leaves too many from my #SoFla district uninsured."

The budget office report also said the measure would reduce federal deficits by \$337 billion over the next decade, largely by cutting Medicaid, the health insurance program for the poor, and eliminating Obama's subsidies for low- and middle-income people. The report said that the bill's changes would result in federal subsidies that would fall to half their current size in a decade and that older, lower-earning people would be hit especially hard. Those findings further energized Democrats, who already were unanimously opposing the GOP repeal effort.

Pence and Price discussed the legislation over lunch with GOP senators at the Capitol. Participants said senators suggested targeting the bill's new tax credits more at lower-earning people, improving benefits for seniors and protecting the expansion of Medicaid, the federal-state program that helps lower-income people afford care.

McConnell, R-Ky., acknowledged the bill could be reshaped, saying, "It will be open to amendment in the Senate."

Trump earned \$153M, paid \$36.5M in '05 taxes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump earned \$153 million and paid \$36.5 million in income taxes in 2005, paying a roughly 25 percent effective tax rate thanks to a tax he has since sought to eliminate, according to newly disclosed tax documents.

The forms show that Trump paid an effective tax rate of 24.5 percent, a figure well above the roughly 10 percent the average American taxpayer forks over each year, but below the 27.4 percent that taxpayers earning \$1 million a year average were paying at the time, according to data from the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation.

The tax form was obtained by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Cay Johnston, who runs a website called DCReport.org, and reported on

MSNBC's "The Rachel Maddow Show." Johnston, who has long reported on tax issues, said he received the documents in the mail, unsolicited.

Tax records obtained by The New York Times last year showed losses in 1995 were so large they could have allowed Trump to avoid paying taxes for up to 18 years. But his 2005 filing shows that another tax prevented him from realizing the full benefit of those deductions.

The bulk of Trump's tax bill that year was due to the Alternative Minimum Tax, a tax aimed at preventing high-income earners from paying minimal taxes.

Trump's campaign website called for the end of the AMT, which is expected to bring in more than \$350 billion in revenues from 2016 to 2025.

Northeast faces icy mess

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Plunging temperatures ushered in by the storm that plastered the Northeast turned the snow and sleet into rock-solid ice, leaving roads and sidewalks treacherous Wednesday and making shoveling seem like hard labor.

Tuesday's powerful nor'easter paralyzed much of the Washington-to-Boston corridor, but fell short of the predicted snowfall totals in New York, Boston and Philadelphia.

The storm, which followed a stretch of unusually mild winter weather, dumped 1 to 2 feet in many places and grounded more than 1,000 flights Wednesday after 6,200 flights were canceled a day earlier. It also knocked out power to nearly a quarter-million customers from Virginia northward.

By the time it reached Massachusetts, it had turned into a blizzard, with near hurricane-force winds gusting to over 70 mph along the coast. Boston

ended up with 6.6 inches of snow, far less than what was predicted.

The storm was on track to be one of the biggest on record for Burlington, Vt., which had 25.6 inches of snow as of Wednesday morning, with another 2 to 5 inches due by the end of the day. About 70 miles to the northeast, Jay led the way with 34 inches.

Philadelphia and New York City got anywhere from a few inches of snow to around half a foot before it switched over to sleet. Forecasters had predicted a foot or more.

Government meteorologists realized by late Monday afternoon that there was a good chance the storm wasn't going to produce the giant big-city snow totals predicted. But they didn't change their forecast for fear people would mistakenly think the storm was no longer dangerous, said Greg Carbin, chief of forecast operations at the Weather Prediction Center.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

200-year-old tavern moved to another state

MA SOUTHBOROUGH — A 200-year-old tavern has been moved in its entirety from Massachusetts to Connecticut.

The MetroWest Daily News reported that hundreds of pieces of the nine-room Woodbury Tavern that had been stored in a barn behind Paul Bourdon's Southborough home were trucked about 100 miles to Guilford, Conn., on Saturday.

The federal-style building that dates to 1808 had been on Route 9 until 2006, when Bourdon bought and dismantled it, hoping to rebuild it for use as a home. But the project proved too costly and time-consuming.

Bill Butterly saw the tavern for sale on Craigslist and jumped.

Butterly, who has experience with similar projects, plans to reconstruct the tavern and use it as a home on his property in Guilford.

Loose moose surprises snowboarders, skiers

CO BRECKENRIDGE — A moose on the loose caught several skiers and snowboarders by surprise as it galloped headlong down a run at Breckenridge Ski Resort in Colorado.

Cheri Luther was snowboarding Friday when she saw the moose approaching, and she shot video of the large animal coming within feet of her.

Luther, who kept snowboarding, is heard saying, "Oh, my God, I don't know where to go" before screaming as the moose runs by her.

Resort officials said no one was hurt, and the encounter is a good reminder that skiers and snowboarders share the mountain with wildlife.

Thief with a sweet tooth robs same store 3 times

NJ NEWARK — It's three strikes and take your seat — in a cell — for a thief with a sweet tooth.

New Jersey prosecutors said a Newark man pleaded guilty Monday to robbing the same 7-Eleven store three times in four days. Each time, Idris Allen grabbed candy from the store and brandished a knife.

About 14 hours after the last robbery in December 2015, Allen was captured after he went to the back of the store, took merchandise and left. The shift manager followed him and pointed him out to police.

Allen is expected to face seven years in prison when he's sentenced next month.

Ex-mayor pleads guilty after meth-for-sex sting

VA FAIRFAX — A former Virginia mayor has pleaded guilty to distributing methamphetamine after a drugs-for-sex sting.

News outlets reported that former Fairfax Mayor R. Scott Silverthorne entered the plea Monday in Fairfax County Circuit Court.

Silverthorne had been free on bond, but the judge ordered him held in jail until his June sentencing. Attorney Brian Drummond said Silverthorne faces up to 40 years in prison but will likely get a light sentence or probation.

Police said they set up the sting after receiving a tip that Silverthorne was using a dating website to set up sexual encounters with men in exchange for drugs.

Police said Silverthorne gave an undercover detective 2 grams of methamphetamine before his arrest.

Radio host back on air after posting apology

MT BILLINGS — A Billings radio host returned to the airwaves Monday after apologizing for suggesting that Native Americans should have separate basketball tournaments due to unruly fan behavior.

Paul Mushaben posted his apology on the KCTR-AM website, saying he intended to point out fan behavior and disrespect for facilities that he's seen. He previously said such behavior was common at games involving predominantly Native American teams.

The Billings Gazette reported that Mushaben's statement said he would continue to pressure the Montana High School Association to "stop the unconscionable behavior and destruction of property" at tournament venues by anyone involved.

Passenger who didn't say 'excuse me' punched

DC WASHINGTON — Metro Transit police said a subway passenger was punched in the face after he sat down next to a younger man who had refused to scoot over.

The Washington Post reported that the victim on Friday morning had approached a man who had been blocking the aisle, asking him to move over so he could sit down. When the man refused, the passenger slid past him and sat down.

A police report says the suspect said, "You could have said, 'Excuse me' before sitting," then punched him and fled.

Metro spokesman Dan Stessel said police took witness statements and began searching but were unable to find the attacker.

Stessel said the victim was treated at a hospital with injuries

that weren't life-threatening.

Cellphone theft leads police to drug discovery

CA LA HABRA — Authorities in Orange County have arrested five people and seized heroin and methamphetamine after a theft victim helped police track down his stolen cellphone.

The Orange County Register reported that police had responded Saturday night to a report of a cellphone theft at a shopping center.

Police said the victim was able to track the phone and helped lead officers to a home in La Habra, where they found more than 5 ounces of heroin and 15 grams of meth.

Five men and women were arrested at the residence and face several drug and theft charges.

Man attacked with 'Samurai-type' sword

CT NEW LONDON — A Connecticut woman is heading to court to face charges that she attacked a man with what police described as a "Samurai-type" sword.

Police said Juanita Bentley, 51, of New London, was scheduled to be arraigned on charges including first-degree assault.

The Day reported that police responded to a report of a stabbing just before midnight Friday. The purported victim told officers that he and Bentley had been arguing when she asked him to leave the apartment.

He told police Bentley took the sword from the wall and cut him on the back and arms as he fled. He was treated at the hospital for injuries not considered life-threatening.

Bentley was held on \$10,000 bail.

From wire reports

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updated 24/7 from bases
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Middle Tennessee ready for next step

Associated Press

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. — The Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders have gotten downright greedy when it comes to March.

They are trying to build Middle Tennessee into a powerhouse basketball program, rising from the ranks of mid-majors to join the Gonzagas and Wichita States on the NCAA landscape. The Blue Raiders are back in the tournament for the second straight year with a gaudy 30-4 record featuring wins over two Southeastern Conference teams after upsetting Michigan State in the tourney a year ago.

“But the hardest part is the sustainability, and that’s what Gonzaga and those teams have done,” Blue Raiders coach Kermit Davis said. “So we still have a lot of hard work ahead of us.”

The Blue Raiders will try to take another step Thursday against Minnesota in Milwaukee as a popular pick to be the latest No. 12 seed to upset a five seed. Middle Tennessee has a chance to even reach the Sweet 16 in a loaded South Region.

Their biggest success to date came a year ago, stunning Michigan State as a No. 15 seed. Texts and messages poured in celebrating the shocking win, then the bottom fell out in a 25-point loss to Syracuse in the next round.

Even though they were blown out by the Orange, the big win against the Spartans lingered to the point that Davis had to sit his team down in July and remind everyone they could not fast-forward to March.

“Nick Saban’s the best at it where they go through that same process all the time, so we got back to the basics of what really makes you good,” Davis said.

It also helps to have talent, and Davis’ team has that.

JaCorey Williams, a 6-foot-8, 220-pound forward, paid his own way to St. Louis to watch that upset of Michigan State while sitting out his transfer year from Arkansas. Now he is Middle Tennessee’s leading scorer, averaging 17.3 points and 7.3 rebounds per game. Tyrik Dixon has started 32 of 34 games at point guard as a freshman.

Davis still had senior Reggie Upshaw and junior guard Giddy Potts along with a deeper bench.

“It makes us a tough team to beat,” Upshaw said.

The Blue Raiders (30-4) have lost only once in 2017, 57-54 at UTEP, which they avenged in the league tournament last week by 26 points. They beat a pair of NCAA Tournament teams in UNC Wilmington, the No. 12 seed in the East, and Vanderbilt, the ninth seed in the West. They also beat a second SEC team, downing Mississippi by 15 in Oxford.

After fighting for respect a season ago, Davis said Middle Tennessee has gotten every team’s best shot. That has helped build the Blue Raiders’ confidence.

“I talk to them all the time about being a national program, and I think they carry themselves like they think they belong in the elite of college basketball,” Davis said.

Middle Tennessee’s No. 12 seed is three spots better than a year ago. But Davis still worries where his team would’ve been if it hadn’t won the league’s

automatic bid with the tournament title even with a nonconference strength of schedule of 18, a 35 RPI, the first team receiving votes in the final AP college basketball rankings.

Conference USA last sent two teams to the tournament in 2012 when Memphis, now in the American Athletic Conference, was still a member.

“That was my only thought process,” Davis said. “Where do we go from here?”

For now, the Blue Raiders must prove they aren’t a one-year wonder even though they’ve already made school history simply by qualifying for the NCAA Tournament in consecutive years.

“To kind of cement ourselves up there with those mid-major teams that are known nationally, it’s all about being consistent year in and year out,” Upshaw said.

That’s where Davis believes experience will be a huge benefit.

“Boy, that feeling that our players had last year,” Davis said, “I mean you want to be back in the worst way.”

Butler ready to cast aside longtime underdog role

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Butler spent more than a decade as America’s favorite NCAA Tournament darling.

The little school that could became a trendy upset pick, a favorite among dog-loving basketball fans and a model program for other Division I mid-majors. It strung together a résumé that made some of college basketball’s biggest names jealous — nine tourney appearances in 14 years, four trips to the Sweet 16 and back-to-back national runner-up finishes in 2010 and 2011.

Today, Butler has outgrown its underdog status. When the fourth-seeded Bulldogs open play Thursday in Milwaukee, they will be the favorite after

earning the highest seed in school history.

“I think it speaks to the quality of our season and the work we’ve put into it throughout the year,” coach Chris Holtmann said after the pairings were announced Sunday. “But seeding doesn’t really matter because at this time of the year, anyone you play is going to be good.”

The Bulldogs understand that notion better than any school in this 68-team field because they spent so much time on the flip side.

In 2000, they nearly ended Florida’s run to the national championship game — in the first round.

In 2001, they upset Wake Forest for their first NCAA Tournament victory.

In 2003, they stunned fourth-seeded Louisville to reach their first regional semifinal.

Seven years later, the Bulldogs embarked on their most ambitious journey of all, going from a No. 5 seed to within a buzzer-beating heave of beating Duke in a national championship game played eight miles from their campus. Butler made it back the next year in Houston, too, as an eight seed, only to be undone by the worst shooting percentage (18) in championship game history.

Over the years, star players such as Andrew Chrabasz have heard the tales and learned the lessons about how Butler did it.

But mostly, those points were reinforced by the daily remind-

ers sprinkled throughout Hinkle Fieldhouse.

And what could still come.

This season the Bulldogs (23-8) have been anything but Cinderella.

They handed defending national champion and top overall seed Villanova two of its three losses. They beat second-seeded Arizona and ninth-seeded Vanderbilt on a neutral court. They beat sixth-seeded Cincinnati, eighth-seeded Northwestern and 13th-seeded Vermont and Bucknell at home. They swept 10th-seeded Marquette, split with 11th-seeded Providence and won road games at ninth-seeded Seton Hall and 11th-seeded Xavier.

They’re 14-5 against the tourney field.

Mount St. Mary's holds off New Orleans

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Diminutive point guard Junior Robinson fearlessly dribbled into the heart of New Orleans' defense, pulled up and hit yet another of his oh-so-soft jumpers. This one decided a frenetic opening game for the NCAA Tournament.

The smallest player in Division I scored 23 points Tuesday night, including that go-ahead jumper with 1:27 to play, and Mount St. Mary's held on for a 67-66 victory over New Orleans in the First Four.

Robinson carried the Mountaineers (20-15) to only their second NCAA Tournament win, making jumpers with so much arc they appeared to tease the ceiling.

"The way he plays out there — his speed, his athleticism — it's just so special," coach Jamion Christian said. "When you're a smaller guy, you're naturally going to have a chip

on your shoulder and you want to go out there and show the world the things you can do."

The Mountaineers will head to Buffalo to play defending national champion and top overall seed Villanova in the East Regional on Thursday. They had a charter flight waiting after the game.

"It's a dream come true," guard Elijah Long said. "But this is March Madness, and this is part of the madness."

Mount St. Mary's led most of the way, but New Orleans (20-12) pulled off a comeback befitting its resurgent season. The Privateers had a chance for a final shot, but Erik Thomas' inbound pass with 2.6 seconds left was off target and stolen by the Mountaineers' Chris Wray.

The Privateers' tournament appearance was part of a huge turnaround for the school, which was severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They went 10-20 last season, but won the Southland's regular-

season and tournament titles for the first time in school history.

Their final comeback came up short.

After trailing by as many as 11 in the first half and nine in the second, they briefly took a 64-63 lead on Christavious Gill's free throws with 1:48 left. Robinson responded with his soft jumper, and the Mountaineers held on.

"We started the engine on the car, and now the car is moving," said Nate Frye, who led New Orleans with 18 points. "We've got to pick up speed and keep building off what we did this year. We established the building blocks of what was broken down from Katrina."

Cool it: New Orleans forward Travin Thibodeaux and Gill had to be separated by a coach during a timeout with 6:36 left in the game.

Thibodeaux was called for a 3-second violation and complained to Gill as they headed to the bench. They exchanged

words, and Gill pushed the forward away. Thibodeaux appeared to wrap his arm around the point guard's neck as they were separated.

Thibodeaux was benched the rest of the way. He finished with 11 points.

"Unfortunately, it will take away a little bit from the experience of the game and how great of an experience this was for us," coach Mark Slessinger said.

Big picture: Mount St. Mary's: The Mountaineers wear warmup shirts with "Mayhem" on the back, reminding them of their pressure defense. They forced 14 turnovers that set up 19 points.

New Orleans: The Privateers' offense was unbalanced. They scored 42 points in the paint, taking care of their advantage on the front line, but were only 1-for-9 from beyond the arc.

Kansas State wins First Four matchup, advances

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — After finally making it into the NCAA Tournament with its offensive balance, Kansas State showcased its array of scorers in the First Four.

Kamau Stokes scored 19 of his 22 points in the second half of a wide-open game on Tuesday night, and the Wildcats' versatility was the difference as they pulled away to a 95-88 victory over Wake Forest.

Eleventh-seeded K-State (21-13) got its first NCAA Tournament win in five years and a trip to play No. 6 Cincinnati on Friday in Sacramento, Calif., as part of the South Regional. The Bearcats are known for their tight defense.

"It's a good matchup for us," said Wesley Iwundu, who had 24 points. "You know they're a tough team, but we're down for any challenge. We're the underdogs now but we like being

the underdogs."

In a matchup of two versatile offenses, the Wildcats had the most options and hot shooters. Four players finished in double figures — their season norm — as the Wildcats shot a season-high 66 percent from the field against a team they had never faced.

"Now you're playing somebody new and maybe you can get some of the little looks that you haven't gotten in probably like the last six weeks," coach Bruce Weber said.

Stokes missed three of his four shots in the first half, but found his touch right away after the break, hitting a pair of quick threes.

"I think he just needed to shake off his jitters in the first NCAA Tournament game," Iwundu said. "But in the second half, he got back to doing what he does best, hitting some big shots."

Wake Forest (19-14) couldn't

keep up during its first NCAA Tournament game in seven years. The Demon Deacons scored 90 points nine times during the season, but couldn't match the Wildcats.

"We came close and then we let them build another lead," said John Collins, who had 26 points and nine rebounds. "So I think it was kind of a trend."

It was a breakthrough season for the Demon Deacons in coach Danny Manning's third season. He led Kansas to the 1988 national championship — Danny and The Miracles, as they're known — by beating K-State along the way. And now he had the Demon Deacons back in the tournament for the first time in seven years.

Big picture: Kansas State: The Wildcats repeatedly made clutch shots to hold onto the lead down the stretch. After falling behind by 10 points, Wake Forest got the lead within three points 11 times, but K-

State always matched it. The Demon Deacons overcame double-digit deficits to win their last three regular-season games, but couldn't do it in the tournament.

Wake Forest: The Demon Deacons shot only 36 percent from the field in the first half and had more turnovers (nine) than field goals (eight), forcing them to play from behind.

Where's the defense?: Both teams went through long stretches without missing a shot in the second half. Kansas State made its first five shots and six of seven, while Wake Forest made seven in a row over one stretch.

Getting to the line: The teams combined for 51 fouls and 68 free throws, with things working out almost evenly. Kansas State went 27-for-36 from the line, while Wake Forest was 29-for-32. K-State's 27 points off free throws were a season high.

Warriors beat 76ers, end 3-game skid

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Even after a series of misses from deep where he makes his money, Stephen Curry kept letting it fly from long range.

Then, at last, the ball started falling.

Curry scored 29 points on his 29th birthday, Klay Thompson added 28 and the Golden State Warriors used a frenetic fourth-quarter rally to snap a three-game skid and beat the Philadelphia 76ers 106-104 on Tuesday night.

"It's frustrating only because in the moment, everything feels good. You want to make shots, as a competitor and a gamer, that's what you expect to happen," Curry said. "It's one of those things you just will yourself through."

Dario Saric intentionally missed his second free throw with 2.6 seconds remaining to try to give the Sixers one last shot, but Curry secured the ball.

Curry struggled to knock down open three-pointers again

but came through from deep with 5:38 left and again with a key baseline three at 3:42. Matt Barnes hit one a minute later from the opposite corner for a 104-99 lead.

"He found it at the right time and he came through for us when we needed it the most," Draymond Green said of Curry.

Curry's jumper with 9:55 to play pulled the Warriors within 90-86 after Golden State trailed 90-78 to begin the final quarter. Green's three at 8:04 made it a one-point game, and Shaun Livingston gave Golden State the lead the next time down.

Green had 20 points with 11 free throws, eight assists, eight rebounds and six blocks for the Warriors, who trailed by as many as 16 in the third.

Saric had 25 points in the Sixers' eighth straight loss to Golden State. The Warriors' winning streak in the series matches their longest ever, along with a stretch from Dec. 16, 1971, to March 11, 1973.

"It should hurt," 76ers coach Brett Brown said. "We put in

the time, we were in a position on the road to try to get a great win."

Curry shot just 8-for-23 and 5-for-13 from three-point range, making him 26-for-89 from deep in his past eight games.

The Warriors aren't worried. Thompson and others remind him of all his incredible feats.

"He'll have a huge breakout game coming soon," Thompson said. "He's better missing now than come May or June."

Cavaliers 128, Pistons 96: LeBron James got his 52nd career triple-double, Kyrie Irving scored 26 points and host Cleveland used a blazing start to overpower Detroit.

James picked up his 10th triple-double of the season and third in the last four games at the 3:45 mark of the third quarter. In only 28 minutes, the four-time MVP finished with 16 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists.

Thunder 122, Nets 104: Russell Westbrook had 25 points, 19 assists and 12 rebounds in his 33rd triple-dou-

ble of the season, and visiting Oklahoma City beat Brooklyn.

Westbrook shot just 6-for-18 from the field after scoring 40 or more points in five of his previous eight games, but as usual he was the dominant player on the floor even when his shot didn't fall.

Knicks 87, Pacers 81: Carmelo Anthony scored 15 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter, Derrick Rose added 16 points and host New York overcame a 13-point third-quarter deficit to beat Indiana.

Knicks forward Kristaps Porzingis exited in the third quarter with a left leg injury. Rookie Willy Hernangomez entered in his place and had 13 points and 16 rebounds.

Pelicans 100, Trail Blazers 77: DeMarcus Cousins scored 22 points, Anthony Davis had 15 points and 15 rebounds and host New Orleans beat Portland.

Cousins had nine rebounds and three assists. He made 9 of 17 2-point shots but missed all five of his three-point attempts.

Ovechkin, Capitals snap streaks vs. Wild

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alex Ovechkin broke out of his career-worst goal drought just as former coach Bruce Boudreau feared.

Ovechkin scored for the first time in 10 games as the Washington Capitals beat Boudreau's Minnesota Wild 4-2 Tuesday night to snap a season-worst four-game losing streak.

Ovechkin's 28th of the season was his first since Feb. 19 and also ended an 18-game drought without an even-strength goal.

Boudreau on Monday predicted that Ovechkin is "going to get out of it one day" and hoped it wasn't at his new team's expense.

He knew what was coming because Ovechkin scored 197 regular-season and 25 playoff goals — 37 percent of his NHL totals — with him behind the bench.

"You make a mistake against Alex, you're going to pay for it," Boudreau said.

It was a flubbed shot that center Nick-

las Backstrom called a "muffin," but the Russian superstar's 553rd goal helped end Washington's worst skid since November 2015 and sent the Wild to their fifth loss in seven games.

"We're in position where we were losing four in a row and I kind of don't feel like you have to worry about your personal stats," Ovechkin said. "It was not a perfect shot, but sometimes I have pretty good opportunities before and it didn't go in. It's [going to] turn around very quickly if I'm gonna get that kind of goal."

Blackhawks 4, Canadiens 2: Patrick Kane had a goal and two assists, and Corey Crawford made 40 saves to lead visiting Chicago past Montreal.

Johnny Oduya, Artemi Panarin and Jonathan Toews, into an empty net, scored for the Blackhawks, who jumped over Minnesota and lead the Central Division with 93 points.

Islanders 3, Hurricanes 2 (OT): John Tavares scored 34 seconds into overtime to lift visiting New York over Carolina.

Lightning 2, Senators 1 (OT): Victor Hedman scored with 55 seconds on the clock in overtime and visiting Tampa Bay defeated Ottawa for its fourth straight victory.

Panthers 7, Maple Leafs 2: Jonathan Marchessault scored two goals, Thomas Vanek had a career-high four assists and host Florida topped Toronto to stop a five-game slide.

Oilers 7, Stars 1: Patrick Maroon had a goal and an assist, and Edmonton snapped a three-game skid with a victory over visiting Dallas.

Sharks 4, Sabres 1: Joe Pavelski scored twice and host San Jose ended a long streak of futility against Buffalo.

Coyotes 3, Kings 2 (SO): Anthony DeAngelo and Brendan Perlini scored in an 11-round shootout, Louis Domingue made 44 saves and visiting Arizona defeated Los Angeles.

Max Domi scored two goals for the Coyotes, who have won three consecutive games for the second time this season.