

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Photo investigation includes all branches

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The investigation into the sharing of nude photos of female servicemembers on websites has widened to include each military branch.

A multiservice task force will be joined by the FBI, The San Diego Union-Tribune reported. Headquartered in Quantico, Va., the Military Criminal Organization Task Force includes detectives from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.

Investigators have served multiple subpoenas on Facebook, Google and internet service providers, the Union-Tribune reported. Until those electronic records arrive, investigators are combing through screen shots preserved by tipsters before Facebook shuttered the private Marines United page.

The effort was launched in the wake of a nude-photo-sharing scandal in the Marine Corps that forced its top general and the acting Navy secretary to testify in front of House and Senate lawmakers last week. The allegations that active and veteran Marines on Marines United shared hundreds of photographs — some nude — of female Marines were made in a March 4 report by nonprofit news agency The Center for Investigative Reporting and veterans' news website The War Horse.

NCIS said Friday it has now identified about 20 victims.

The Navy agency also announced in a statement that it might seek charges against some of the people involved.

Some defense officials expressed concern people directly involved in the scandal could go unpunished because of limitations of the Uniform Code of

Military Justice and the nature of anonymous internet activity.

Stars and Stripes, and other news outlets, have identified at least two additional web pages where anonymous users — many of them claiming to be active-duty servicemembers — regularly share explicit photographs of women they purport to be members of the military.

The Army and Air Force are aware of the existence of at least one of the websites where the photographs are being shared, Grey and Anderson said.

Business Insider first reported on such a website, where anonymous message board posters refer to nude photographs as “wins.” On that website, users — including some who claim to be members of Marines United — often solicit others for photographs of women, posting innocuous photos apparently stolen from other social media

sites and sometimes including information such as a first name, service and base.

Among the issues that investigators, and eventually prosecutors, could face is the lack of a federal law or Uniform Code of Military Justice article that directly addresses the sharing of explicit photographs taken consensually but later shared without the consent of the photo's subject. Often called “revenge porn,” many of the photographs are likely to fall into that category, said a defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the matter publicly.

Prosecutors could seek punishment under UCMJ Article 134, which covers actions that disrupt good order and discipline or bring discredit on the armed forces, said Eric Carpenter, a former Army defense attorney and prosecutor.

Military photo scandal spreads to gay porn websites

USA Today

WASHINGTON — The military scandal involving sharing of sexually explicit images of troops has expanded beyond the private social media site Marines United to a slew of gay pornography webpages with images of men wearing military uniforms engaged in sex acts, USA Today has learned.

The broadened investigation to an increasing number of websites underscores the complexity of policing social media sites where sensitive images can be uploaded in an instant for all to see. In the case of the sites with gay pornography, military investigators will be tasked with determining whether active-duty troops were involved in conduct that could bring discredit on their service, a potential violation of

military law.

The Marine Corps is not the only service affected. Images of men in the uniforms of sailors, soldiers and airmen also appear on an array of Tumblr sites. It is unclear whether men appearing in the images — some photographed engaging in sex — provided consent to have their images shared publicly. Victims of so-called revenge porn in the Marines United case have limited protection under military law if the photographs or videos were taken originally with their consent.

On some of the gay Tumblr sites, fully dressed troops appear in photos with their nametags visible. At least one such Marine did not agree for his photo to be republished amid a sea of images of men having sex, according Lt. Col. Eric Dent, a Marine

Corps spokesman.

Determining whether the men in the photos, many involved in group sex, are active-duty troops is possible, said a congressional source on a military oversight committee who was not authorized to speak publicly about the issue. The NCIS can comb through the photos and identify troops with the use of facial-recognition software.

The revelation of the expanded investigation drew swift response from Capitol Hill. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, a New York Democrat and member of the Armed Services Committee, called on Congress to intervene. Earlier this week, she blasted Marine and Navy officials for failing to hold commanders accountable for the problem.

Sen. Claire McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat, also on the

committee, said the violation of fellow troops' privacy strikes at the heart of military values.

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller told the Senate last week that Marines need “to commit to get rid of this perversion to our culture.”

Punishment, including court-martial, is possible if active-duty troops can be identified on the pornographic websites, said Don Christensen, president of Protect Our Defenders, an advocacy organization for victims of sexual abuse in the military.

Precedent exists for booting troops from the ranks for posing nude in men's magazines, said Christensen, who was also the top prosecutor for the Air Force. Court-martial would be possible for troops who posted images of themselves in uniform exposing themselves or having sex.

Trump: Germany owes US 'vast sums'

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — President Donald Trump on Saturday demanded that Berlin increase financial support to pay for the “protection” the U.S. military provides NATO ally Germany.

Trump, one day after meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Washington, took to Twitter on Saturday to blast the longtime U.S. ally for not investing enough in NATO and not doling more dollars to Washington directly.

“Germany owes vast sums of money to NATO & the United States must be paid more for the powerful, and very expensive, defense it provides to Germany!” Trump tweeted.

Trump frequently scolds allies, including Germany, for not

investing enough in their own defense and demands NATO members pay their fair share.

On Saturday, Trump took his criticisms a step further by essentially saying he now wants the U.S. to be paid more for the “defense it provides to Germany.” This is his clearest demand yet that not only should Germany spend more on its own defense, it should pay more directly to the U.S. for its contributions to Europe’s security.

Germany is the centerpiece of the U.S. military’s force structure in Europe, hosting the majority of U.S. troops and major bases such as Ramstein Air Base. The headquarters for U.S. European and Africa Commands as well as Europe-focused Army, Air Force and Marine headquarters also operate out of Germany along with a

mix of line and enabling units.

However, unlike Japan and South Korea, both of which pay about half the expense of hosting U.S. forces, Germany picks up a much smaller portion of the tab. Not only does Germany pay less — about \$1 billion, or 18 percent of the overall cost — most of the funds come in the form of in-kind services rather than hard cash, according to a 2013 analysis by the Rand Corp.

Such discrepancies are unlikely to go unnoticed by Trump, who already has complained about Germany’s sizable trade advantage with the U.S. Berlin also has an overall budget surplus of some \$25 billion.

Since Russia’s intervention in Ukraine, the Pentagon has spent billions of dollars on adding rotational forces to aug-

ment its forward-based troops in Europe, sending in an Army armored brigade, combat aviation assets and prepositioned tanks and other equipment. This year’s European Reassurance Initiative costs roughly \$3.4 billion.

Allies also have increased spending on their own defense in light of concerns about a more aggressive Russia and are taking part in operations in the Baltics.

The issue of military spending is likely to dominate talks between NATO members in the months ahead. While Merkel has said Germany will meet the 2 percent NATO spending benchmark, Berlin is years away from reaching that mark. It isn’t clear if there is the political will in Berlin to reach the target faster.

Tillerson urges China-US alliance on North Korea

Associated Press

BEIJING — U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Saturday pushed for closer China-U.S. cooperation on dealing with North Korea’s nuclear program in his first face-to-face talks with top Chinese diplomats.

Tillerson’s visit to Beijing followed his remarks in South Korea on Friday in which he warned that pre-emptive military action against North Korea might be necessary if the threat from its weapons program reaches a level “that we believe requires action.”

China, the North’s biggest source of diplomatic support and economic assistance, hasn’t responded directly to his remarks, although Beijing has called repeatedly for all sides to take steps to reduce tensions.

Tillerson stressed the need for a “results oriented” relationship with China in comments following his meeting Saturday with Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

“We renewed our determina-

tion to work together to convince North Korea to choose a better path and a different future for its people,” Tillerson said.

He said Wang agreed on the need for a “course correction” with Pyongyang. Bringing North Korea “to a different place” is a matter to be approached with “a sense of urgency,” Tillerson said.

Wang restated Beijing’s calls for dialogue between the U.S. and North Korea, and called Tillerson’s visit an important step toward a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his U.S. President Donald Trump, expected next month.

Tillerson met later with Yang Jiechi, Xi’s top foreign policy adviser. He is scheduled to meet with Xi on Sunday morning before returning to the U.S.

As North Korea’s most important source of diplomatic support and economic assistance, China has grown increasingly concerned about the possibility of conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

Man killed after attacking soldier at Paris’ Orly airport

Associated Press

ORLY, France — Soldiers at Paris’ busy Orly Airport shot and killed a man who wrestled one of their colleagues to the ground and tried to steal her rifle Saturday, officials said.

Thousands of travelers were evacuated and at least 15 flights were diverted to the city’s other airport, Charles de Gaulle. No one else was hurt.

Police did not immediately provide a motive or identify the attacker, though the Paris prosecutor’s office said he was 39 and had a record of robbery and drug offenses. The office said he did not appear in a French government database of people considered potential threats to national security.

Earlier Saturday, he fired birdshot at officers during a traffic stop in a Paris suburb, wounding one in the face. Then, Paris police said, he stole a woman’s car at gunpoint. It

was found near Orly.

The prosecutor’s office said its anti-terrorism division was handling the investigation and had taken the attacker’s father and brother into custody for questioning.

French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said the attacker, whom he did not identify, assaulted three Air Force soldiers who were patrolling the airport. He said the soldier who was attacked managed to hold on to her rifle and the two soldiers she was with opened fire to protect her and the public. A spokesman for the force later said she was shocked but not hurt.

The soldier who was attacked is part of the Sentinelle special force installed around France to protect sensitive sites after a string of deadly Islamic extremist attacks. The force includes 7,500 soldiers, half deployed in the Paris region and half in the provinces.

Navy looks to sea life for ship innovation

Associated Press

NEWPORT, R.I. — The U.S. Navy is enlisting the help of seals — but not the kind of highly trained special operatives with whom it usually associates.

Real seals, specifically their whiskers, may be the key to a new way for ships and underwater vehicles to sense their environment, scientists think.

When a fish swims by, a hungry seal senses the wake with its whiskers. It can tell characteristics of the fish, such as shape and size, and track the location even when it's murky or dark.

Despite the adorable possibilities, scientists aren't looking to outfit ships and vehicles with whiskers. They're studying how the whiskers function to learn how to reverse-engineer the system. The science could be applied to the development of a future sensor.

"If we want to design the best systems, it makes sense to take advantage of millions of years of work that nature has done for us," said Christin Murphy, a marine mammal biologist.

The research is taking place at the Newport division of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center.

Murphy and colleague Joy Lapseritis looked to seal whiskers because they're a highly sensitive system of underwater touch that employ bumps to reduce their own self-induced vibrations, something that may help increase their sensitivity to water disturbances.

That, Lapseritis said, could lead to a novel, passive sensor.

"You don't need to put sound into the water, like sonar," she said. "This is literally feeling the landscape."

The seal whiskers project shows "remarkable promise" for the Navy because a seal's sensory capabilities are so specific and sensitive, said Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution researcher Andrea Bogomolni, who leads the Northwest Atlantic Seal Research Consortium.

Report: Zero deployed troops suffered amputations in 2016

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

After 1st Lt. Melissa Stockwell came to on Baghdad's Route Irish, she looked down and saw the terrible truth. "Where my leg should have been, there was just a whole lot of blood," she said.

It was April 13, 2004, and the roadside bomb that took Stockwell's left leg was a precursor to thousands more, part of a bell curve mapping some of the worst wounds of war over the next dozen years. Recognized as the first U.S. female soldier to lose a limb in combat, Stockwell doesn't especially welcome the distinction. Instead, she sees herself in a larger context, as one of about a dozen U.S. troops in Iraq who suffered amputations that month, and one of the lucky ones. "I had only lost one limb," she said. "I felt very lucky."

Since 2001, about 1,650 U.S. troops have lost hands, arms, legs or feet during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Year after year, combat in both theaters created amputees — scores in some years, hundreds in others. Six years ago, in June and July alone, 78 servicemembers who entered the service with all their limbs left with one or more missing.

But in 2016, the number of deployed troops who suffered amputations was zero.

The milestone was assessed recently in the Medical Surveillance Monthly Report, a publication from the Defense Health Agency's Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch.

The report tracked amputations involving deployed troops by month since 2003. That year, nearly six deployed troops per month, most of them soldiers, had amputations.

Tracking amputations, which the health surveillance branch breaks out by service, helps military officials identify incidence, distribution, impact and trends, said Col. Douglas Badzik, health surveillance branch chief. Ultimately, he said, such analyses help provide "a force that is healthy and ready to carry out its mission."

The data, based on hospital dismissal records, is not flawless. A medically retired Air Force airman injured in a 2012 roadside bomb attack in Afghanistan had his foot amputated in June, for instance, and was not captured in the MSMR data.

Still, the data tell a story — about troop numbers, intensity and nature of combat and the ferocity of attacks — as about 5,000 troops remain in Iraq and 8,400 in Afghanistan. Just one deployed person lost a limb in 2001 after the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, but two years later, after the Iraq invasion, the number had climbed to 80, according to a Congressional Research Service report.

Almost every year showed significant increases until a respite in 2008 and 2009, which was followed by the steepest increase yet until 2012.

Amputations in both theaters increased with troop surges, closer combat and increasing

use of improvised explosive devices by enemy combatants.

In 2007, as troops poured into Iraq, 197 troops — 50 more than in each of the two previous years — lost limbs. When the surge ended, the numbers dropped to 67 in 2008, then 24 in 2009, according to the CRS report, which broke out its data by year and theater.

As the Iraq numbers fell, however, Afghanistan combat amputations were increasing rapidly. They went from 67 in 2009, when President Barack Obama began surging troops there, to three times that in 2010.

There were more amputations in 2011 than in any other year, with 260 troops, many of them Marines, losing at least one limb. That June — as 39 troops were rendered amputees, the most of any month — Obama announced that 10,000 troops would be withdrawn by the end of the year. The numbers began dropping in 2012.

Afghanistan became infamous for "dismounted complex blast injuries," in which both legs and an arm or a hand were blown off, along with severe injuries to the abdominal, pelvic and genital areas. Some troops — more than 100 in 2010, according to an Army report — died of their injuries. But others lived, including five who lost all their limbs — both arms and both legs.

"When we started off (with the wars), it was onesies and twosies," said Bob Bahr, a physical therapist at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., one of the military's three centers for amputee care. "Then we got a triple amputee and said, 'What do we do?'"

They decided to use the same techniques — get patients up and walking as soon as possible, with humor, kindness, firmness and camaraderie.

"It seemed to work," Barr said. "It's amazing how people adapt and become whole again."

Recovery from such a significant wound is usually a long, arduous process often with setbacks: infection, bone growth in soft tissue, repeated surgeries. "It was frustrating," Stockwell, now 37, said of her own repeated surgeries. "But I've always been a glass-half-full type."

She took her first steps on a prosthetic leg 52 days after she lost her real one.

Often the blast that caused the amputation came with additional injuries: burns, vision loss, brain injury. Some amputees have committed suicide. "We've lost a few," said Steve Springer, Walter Reed amputee care coordinator. "That's the exception."

Stockwell is a national paratriathlon champion and coach, due to have her second baby this summer.

After losing her leg, "it wasn't always easy, getting looks," Stockwell said.

Any self-consciousness or regret is long gone. "I wear shorts all the time," she said. "I'm proud of it."

DOD deems Russian company that paid Flynn 'unsuitable'

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — A Russian air cargo carrier that paid former national security adviser Michael Flynn more than \$11,000 had been blacklisted without warning by the Pentagon months before he became Donald Trump's top campaign adviser on military matters, according to documents obtained by McClatchy.

Documents released Thursday by Democrats on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee omitted an important piece of information: At the time the U.S. affiliate of Russian cargo airline Volga-Dnepr paid Flynn \$11,250 in August 2015, the Russian company had been frozen out by the Pentagon since February that year and was trying to learn why.

"Unsuitable for use," is how a U.S. Transportation Command email in May 2015 characterized the air cargo carrier.

One possible explanation in the heavily redacted documents obtained by McClatchy: Volga-Dnepr in December 2014 ferried two Su-30MK2 attack aircraft to Da Nang, Vietnam, on behalf of Russian arms exporter Rosoboronexport.

The Russian defense company was one of 23 hit by U.S. sanctions in September 2015 for alleged violations of treaties that banned the spread of missile technologies.

Documents released Thursday by Rep. Elijah Cummings, of Maryland, the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, about Volga-Dnepr showed that an affiliate of the air cargo company had paid Flynn \$11,250 in August 2015.

The revelation Flynn was paid by a Russian air cargo company considered off-limits by the Pentagon first emerged in a posting Friday by blogger Christo Grozev, a Bulgarian with media interests in Western

Europe and Ukraine.

Flynn's speech to the company was arranged by U.S.-based Battle Born Munitions, which had co-sponsored a Middle East & African Logistical and Security conference in Washington with the Houston-based subsidiary of Volga-Dnepr, according to a statement provided to American Shipper magazine. It said Friday that Battle Born had gone through the Leading Authorities Speakers Bureau.

"At that time General Flynn was a retired military officer, not a member of President Trump's election team, and his nomination as national security adviser more than a year after the conference was not a factor in his being invited as a speaker," the statement said.

Efforts to reach Flynn and associates were unsuccessful.

Four months after he was paid for the Volga-Dnepr speech, Flynn was seated next to Russian President Vladimir Putin at a dinner in Moscow paid for by the RT news network. RT paid Flynn and his speakers' bureau more than \$45,000, according to the documents released by Cummings.

Flynn was a decorated combat veteran who rose to the rank of lieutenant general and was appointed by President Barack Obama to head the Defense Intelligence Agency in October 2012. After repeated clashes with superiors, he took early retirement in August 2014 and soon afterward opened a consulting business, Flynn Intel Group. He was tapped by President-elect Donald Trump to serve as national security adviser in November 2016.

But Flynn's tenure lasted just 24 days, brought down by reports that he had not been truthful with Vice President Mike Pence about meetings in December with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak.

Retailer: Nintendo Switches on the way

The Washington Post

Since the Nintendo Switch has hit shelves, it's been hard to get a hold of it across the country. The console has been either out of stock or egregiously marked up at most major retailers — with asking prices on eBay going for more than \$4,000.

But if you've been dying for a Nintendo Switch to call your own, there's some relief in store. GameStop on Friday announced it will be getting new shipments of Nintendo's new \$300 console and expects a fresh supply to hit shelves about March 22.

GameStop, the country's largest video game retailer, has had trouble keeping up with demand, said Eric Bright, the company's senior director of merchandising, in a statement.

Nintendo hasn't released actual sales numbers but said the Switch had the fastest-selling debut of any of its consoles in the U.S. The demand has been so great that the company plans to double the production of the console, according to The Wall Street Journal.

Sure, we haven't seen widespread Black Friday-style fist fights over these consoles. But the fact that GameStop issued a news release about a restock — normally a mundane event — certainly says something.

It's best to call a local store ahead to ask when units are coming in. If ordering online, prepare to set aside more cash. Online auction sites regularly show the Switch going for more than its markup price, with a median selling price of \$440, or about 47 percent, according to an analysis from Ars Technica.

Maryland man arrested over seizure-spurring tweet

The Washington Post

A Maryland man was arrested Friday on a cyberstalking charge in connection with allegedly sending an epilepsy sufferer an animated Twitter message telling the victim that "you deserve a seizure," federal officials said.

The victim has been identified as a Newsweek writer who is a critic of President Donald Trump.

Newsweek said the victim was Kurt Eichenwald, a senior writer. The Justice Department said that after viewing the strobe image, the victim "immediately suffered a seizure."

Eichenwald has written for Newsweek about having epilepsy.

Cyberspace is filled with harsh exchanges. However, the allegations in this case suggest it may be one of the first in which physical harm resulted from receipt of a cybermessage.

The suspect was identified by the Justice Department as John

Rayne Rivello, 29, of Salisbury, Md. The department said he was arrested Friday in Maryland on a criminal complaint filed in the Northern District of Texas. Eichenwald lives in Dallas.

The Twitter message told the recipient "you deserve a seizure for your post," according to a statement from the Justice Department.

In October, shortly after publishing an article about Trump's conflicts of interest, Eichenwald said that he received a video from a Twitter account that listed "Mike's Deploable AF" as the handle.

According to a Newsweek article, Eichenwald said the video contained strobe lights, flashing circles and a picture of Pepe the Frog flying at the screen. Eichenwald said the images were designed to trigger an epileptic seizure.

He said he avoided injury by dropping his iPad facedown on the floor.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Prison time for theft of Army weapons

MA WORCESTER — A woman is headed to prison for her role in the theft of 16 weapons stolen from a U.S. Army Reserve Center in Worcester.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said Ashley Bigsbee, 27, was sentenced Wednesday in federal court to almost two years behind bars.

Bigsbee, of Dorchester, pleaded guilty in December to charges including conspiracy to possess and sell stolen weapons and aiding and abetting the sale of stolen firearms.

Authorities said Bigsbee and another person helped sell some of the six assault rifles and 10 handguns stolen from the Lincoln W. Stoddard U.S. Army Reserve Center in November 2015.

Bigsbee's attorney had recommended that Bigsbee enter drug treatment and be sentenced to time served of 7½ months, arguing that her two co-defendants were the main perpetrators.

Owner ecstatic after dog returned to her

NJ JERSEY CITY — A New Jersey woman has been reunited with her beloved pet dog that skipped out of her apartment six months ago.

Tanya Flowers told The Jersey Journal that she spent days handing out hundreds of fliers and contacting animal shelters after her year-old Maltese named Paris vanished last September.

The Jersey City woman feared she wouldn't see the dog again. But just over a week ago, a New York City shelter called to tell her that Paris had been

found.

Paris supposedly was found walking the streets in North Bergen four months ago, Flowers said. A man who spotted her took her in, but then decided he could no longer care for her and took her to his mother's home in Staten Island.

The mother took the dog to a veterinarian, who discovered a microchip that linked Paris to Flowers.

Navy training petite drug-sniffing dog

VA NORFOLK — An unusual drug-sniffing dog is joining the ranks of Naval Station Norfolk.

The Virginian Pilot reported Puskos, a 15-pound Jagdterrier, has been in training since January and is expected to be certified to search for narcotics by the end of the month.

His handler, Petty Officer 2nd Class Jordyn Japoc, said there are less than five small-breed dogs in the Navy.

Puskos is around a fifth of the size of most working dogs like German shepherds and Belgian Malinois, and that comes with some advantages. It makes it easier to fit into tight spaces aboard ships and submarines and allows him to be carried down steep stairwells.

Japoc says his 2-year-old partner is a little stubborn, just wants to work and "has no fear."

No Jailhouse Rock for owner of Elvis the cobra

FL ORLANDO — A Florida man whose king cobra got loose in 2015 won't stand trial for the venomous snake's escape.

Michael Kennedy faced a

misdemeanor charge for failing to properly maintain an enclosure for his cobra, named Elvis. The snake turned up more than a month later, in a garage a half-mile away.

Orlando stations reported Kennedy entered a no contest plea Wednesday. He agreed to pay \$2,500 for investigative costs and donate \$1,500 to a Florida wildlife fund. Prosecutors agreed to drop two other charges.

Meanwhile, a monocled cobra remained loose in Ocala, about 65 miles north of Orlando. Authorities said that snake was reported missing late Monday by its owner, who left the cobra with a man who was learning how to handle venomous reptiles.

Police offer services to remove dealers' rivals

NE SIDNEY — A police department in far western Nebraska is offering — tongue in cheek — drug dealers "a FREE service to help you eliminate your drug competition!"

The Sidney Police Department posted the faked form in fun on its Facebook page Tuesday, imploring drug dealers to report their competitors' names, addresses, phone numbers and normal business hours.

Police Chief Joe Aikens told the Scottsbluff Star-Herald that the posting had several shares and likes, but no one had yet turned in a faked form with real information.

On a serious note, Aikens says the post has stirred conversation about community involvement in drug cases. He said the more people involved in reporting suspicious activity, the better off everybody is.

'Guided meditation' to be offered to runners

MA BOSTON — Maybe they'll rename it the Boston MarathOM.

Marathon organizers have announced a new sponsorship arrangement with Equinox. They say the chain of upscale fitness clubs will give runners at the start line a chance to engage in a little "guided meditation."

The Boston Athletic Association, which runs the marathon, said Tuesday that "Equinox will help runners get in the zone" as they gather in the athletes village in Hopkinton, Mass.

Equinox operates 86 fitness clubs worldwide.

The 121st edition of the Boston Marathon will be run on April 17.

Man hides in back, robs dollar store of cash

CA CARUTHERS — Authorities said an armed man hid in the back of a central California discount store until closing time and then robbed the store clerk of cash before getting away.

The Fresno Bee reported the robbery happened in the city of Caruthers on Saturday as the Dollar General store was closing for the night.

Fresno County Sheriff's Office spokesman Tony Botti said the man came out from hiding and waited behind some shelves for one of the clerks to walk by.

He jumped out and pointed a gun at the woman. He ordered her and another clerk to fill a bag with cash from the register and safe.

One of the clerks then put the bag outside the front door, as ordered by the suspect. He then ran away. Though shaken up, the clerks were not physically harmed.

From wire reports

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Michigan advances with long-range shots

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Derrick Walton Jr. scored 26 points and Michigan made 16 three-pointers Friday to hold off Oklahoma State 92-91 in the first round of the Midwest Regional.

The seventh-seeded Wolverines (25-11) set a school record for threes in an NCAA Tournament game. They have won six straight — five since a frightening plane mishap on the way to last week's Big Ten Tournament.

Juwan Evans scored 23 points to lead the 10th-seeded Cowboys (20-13), who finished the season with four consecutive losses.

It looked like that streak might end Friday after Oklahoma State opened the second half on a 12-5 run to take a 52-46 lead.

But Michigan charged back with a relentless three-point barrage, taking a 62-61 lead on Walton's three with 12:26

left and making three more threes in a 14-4 run that made it 76-68.

The Cowboys never led again though they closed to within two twice in the final eight seconds.

Rhode Island 84, Creighton 72: At Sacramento, Calif., Jeff Dowtin scored a career-high 23 points with a perfect day at the free-throw line, the upstart Rams answered every threat and ran right into the next round by stunning the cold-shooting Bluejays.

Kuran Iverson scored 17 points and Hassan Martin had 12 points and eight rebounds as 11th-seeded Rhode Island (25-9) earned its ninth straight victory. The program won an NCAA Tournament game for the first time since advancing to the Elite Eight and losing to Stanford in 1998.

Louisville 78, Jacksonville St. 63: At Indianapolis, Mangok Mathiang scored 18 points and Deng Adel added

16 to help the second-seeded Cardinals pull away from the Gamecocks.

Louisville (25-8) has won five straight opening-round games. The Cardinals were making their first postseason appearance since 2015 after sitting out last year because of a one-year, school-imposed postseason ban for alleged recruiting violations.

Kansas 100, UC Davis 62: At Tulsa, Okla., Frank Mason III scored 22 points and had eight assists as the top-seeded Jayhawks won their opening game for the 11th straight year with a rout of the Aggies.

Freshman Josh Jackson, making his return after a one-game suspension for an accumulation of embarrassing incidents, added 17 points on 8-for-12 shooting for Kansas (29-5).

Michigan State 78, Miami 58: At Tulsa, Okla., Nick Ward scored 19 points to help the Spartans atone for last

season's early NCAA Tournament disappointment with an opening-round victory over the Hurricanes.

Ninth-seeded Michigan State (20-14) trailed by as many 12 points in the first half before blitzing past stunned Miami (21-12) the rest of the way, using a 20-2 first half run to take control for good.

Oregon 93, Iona 77: At Sacramento, Calif., with star big man Chris Boucher cheering in a bulky knee brace from the sidelines, Tyler Dorsey scored 24 points to lead four players in double figures, and the No. 3 seed Ducks beat the 14th-seeded Gaels.

Oregon (30-5) showed it has depth and sheer athleticism to make a special March run, just as coach Dana Altman hoped this week when he challenged role players to make larger contributions in shot-blocker Boucher's absence.

Late 3-pointer lifts Southern Cal to upset of SMU

Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. — For the second straight NCAA Tournament game, Southern California overcame a double-digit deficit in the second half to win.

Elijah Stewart hit a late 3-pointer for No. 11 seed USC as the Trojans upset sixth-seeded SMU 66-65 on Friday in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

USC trailed SMU by 10 in the second half. The Trojans trailed Providence by 17 in the second half of their First Four game on Wednesday night before winning 75-71.

Apparently, they don't know how to quit.

"We just had to keep fighting back," Stewart said. "We've been in those positions before. So we're kind of seasoned to it. And you just can't stop. You just got to keep going."

Stewart had 22 points for the

Trojans (26-9), including the game-deciding three with 37 seconds to play.

"We ran the play previously before, and I was open," Stewart said. "And then we had the media timeout. We discussed it. We ran the same play again, and I was open, and I just let muscle memory take place."

Bennie Boatright and Chimezie Metu each added 14 points for USC, which advanced to play third-seeded Baylor in the second round of the East region on Sunday.

SMU's Shake Milton missed a floater at the buzzer that would have won it for the Mustangs.

Duke 87, Troy 65: At Greenville, S.C., Grayson Allen had 21 points off five three-pointers, Jayson Tatum had 18 points and 12 rebounds, and the second-seeded Blue Devils continued their perfect postseason with a victory over the Trojans.

Duke (29-7) became the first team to win four games on the

way to the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament crown last week. They kept up that pace in blowing past 15th-seeded Troy (22-15).

The Blue Devils improved to 34-7 all-time in openers.

South Carolina 93, Marquette 73: At Greenville, S.C., Sindarius Thornwell had 29 points and 11 rebounds to help the seventh-seeded Gamecocks win their first NCAA Tournament game in 44 years, a victory over the Golden Eagles.

If South Carolina (23-10) wants an NCAA winning streak, it will have to beat No. 2 seed Duke, which blew past Troy in an earlier game.

South Carolina last won a game in the NAAs when it topped Southwestern Louisiana 90-85 in a regional consolation game on March 17, 1973. Exactly 44 years later, the drought — the Gamecocks were one-and-done in their next five appearances — finally came to

end in front of a boisterous, South Carolina crowd who traveled the 2 hours north from Columbia to witness the end of an ugly run they couldn't have imagined would last this long.

Baylor 91, New Mexico State 73: At Tulsa, Okla., Al Freeman came off the bench to score 21 points, and the No. 3 seed Bears defeated the No. 14 seed Aggies.

Jo Lual-Acuil scored 16 points and Johnathan Motley added 15 points and 10 rebounds for Baylor (26-7), which was upset in the first round by Georgia State and Yale the previous two years.

Ian Baker and Braxton Huggins each scored 19 points for New Mexico State (28-6).

Huggins hit a three-pointer at the buzzer to give New Mexico State a 40-38 lead at the half. The Aggies made 6 of 14 three-pointers before the break to counter Baylor's 55 percent shooting.

No. 10 Shockers shut down Dayton

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Tournament flash: Wichita State can play a little defense, too. Just ask the stunned Flyers.

The Shockers' powerful offense stalled out until the closing minutes, but their defense carried them through to a 64-58 victory over Dayton on Friday night in the South Regional.

Make it 16 straight wins for the Shockers (31-4), who brought their reputation for piling up the points to Indianapolis, along with the feeling that they'd been slighted by their No. 10 seed.

They made the gritty plays in a game lacking style points.

"It was definitely something a little brand new to us from what we've seen in the Missouri Valley," said Zach Brown, who had 12 points, including a late three. "But I don't know — we've just grinded it out. It was a tough game."

And they were the tougher team.

Seventh-seeded Dayton (24-8) was held to a season low in points and shot a season-low 31 percent from the field. It was also out-rebounded 48-29 and had eight shots swatted away.

Arkansas 77, Seton Hall 71: At Greenville, S.C., Jaylen Barford hit the go-ahead layup with 57.8 seconds left to help the Razorbacks hold off the Pirates in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

Barford had 12 of his 20 points after half-time for Arkansas (26-9), the No. 8 seed in the South Region.

Kentucky 79, Northern Kentucky 70: At Indianapolis, Bam Adebayo had 15 points and 18 rebounds as the Wildcats showed the new kids on their block how it's done during tourney time, gritting out a tough win over the stubborn Norse.

The second-seeded Wildcats (30-5) won their 12th straight and got their first-game

jitters out of the way. They also wound up with a surprisingly close finish after pulling ahead by 18 points in the second half.

UCLA 97, Kent State 80: At Sacramento, Calif., TJ Leaf scored 23 points, Thomas Welsh added 16 and the Bruins pulled away late for a victory over the scrappy Golden Flashes.

Lonzo Ball and Aaron Holiday each had 15 points for UCLA, which will face No. 6 seed Cincinnati in the second round on Sunday.

North Carolina 103, Texas Southern 64: At Greenville, S.C., Justin Jackson broke out of a shooting slump with 21 points to help the top-seeded Tar Heels roll past the Tigers.

Kansas State 75, Cincinnati 61: At Sacramento, Calif., Troy Caupain scored 23 points, Kyle Washington added 16 and the defensive-minded Bearcats shot their way past the Wildcats.

No. 8 Arizona State puts away Spartans

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — After a season of not quite reaching expectations and dealing with injuries, Arizona State finally gave coach Charli Turner Thorne the kind of game she wanted.

Quinn Dornstauber scored 16 points hitting all six of her baskets from the field and all four of her free throws to lead the No. 8 seed Sun Devils to a 73-61 win over ninth-seeded Michigan State on Friday night.

Dornstauber's teammates helped out too, shooting 59 percent from the field in the first half to lead by 22 at the break.

"It was just a good day. We all shot very well. And we had a good offensive start," Dornstauber said.

Arizona State's also had its stingy defense. Without a 26-point fourth quarter, it would have been the lowest point total of the season for Michigan State (21-12).

Michigan State's Tori Jankoska, the nation's 10th leading scorer at 22.5 points a game scored 26 points, 15 of them in the fourth quarter. She only at-

tempted three shots in the first half.

"Everywhere I went there were two people on me," Jankoska said.

Stockton Region

Oregon State 56, Long Beach State 55: At Corvallis, Ore., Breanna Brown scored 12 points and the second-seeded Beavers held off the feisty No. 15 seed 49ers in the final minute to eke out a victory.

Creighton 76, Toledo 49: At Corvallis, Ore., Marissa Janing had 15 of her 19 points in the first quarter and the seventh-seeded Bluejays built an early lead and went on to rout the No. 10 seed Rockets.

South Carolina 90, UNC Asheville 50: At Columbia, S.C., Allisha Gray scored 22 points and had 12 rebounds to lead the top-seeded Gamecocks to an easy win over the No. 16 seed Bulldogs.

Lexington Region

Kentucky 73, Belmont 70: At Lexington, Ky., Maci Morris made seven of eight free throws in the final 37 seconds, including two with 3.2 seconds

remaining, to help the fourth-seeded Wildcats edge the 13th-seeded Bruins.

Ohio State 70, Western Kentucky 63: At Lexington, Ky., Kelsey Mitchell and Asia Doss each scored 15 points, Shayla Cooper grabbed a season-high 15 rebounds and the Buckeyes withstood a late charge from the Hilltoppers.

N.C. State 62, Auburn 48: At Austin, Texas, Dominique Wilson scored 23 points and Miah Spencer added 13 to help the No. 6-seed Wolfpack roll over the cold-shooting Tigers.

Texas 78, Central Arkansas 50: At Austin, Texas, Brooke McCarty scored 15 points and the No. 3 seed Longhorns overwhelmed the No. 14 Bears in the first half before cruising to a victory.

Notre Dame 79, Robert Morris 49: At South Bend, Ind., Marina Mabrey and Arike Ogunbowale scored 15 points each to help the top-seeded Fighting Irish beat the Colonels.

Purdue 74, Green Bay 62: At South Bend, Ind., Ashley Morrisette scored 20 points, Dominique Oden added 13 and

the ninth-seeded Boilermakers beat the No. 8 Phoenix.

Bridgeport Region

Maryland 103, Bucknell 61: At College Park, Md., Shatori Walker-Kimbrough scored 28 points, Brionna Jones had 25 points and 10 rebounds, and the Terrapins beat the Bison to earn their seventh consecutive trip to the second round.

West Virginia 75, Elon 62: At College Park, Md., Tynice Martin scored 26 points, Katrina Pardee made a pair of pivotal three-pointers and the Mountaineers pulled away to a victory over the 11th-seeded Phoenix.

Oklahoma City Region

Mississippi State 110, Troy 69: At Starkville, Miss., Blair Schaefer scored a career-high 21 points, Ameshya Williams added 15 and the Bulldogs beat the Trojans.

DePaul 88, Northern Iowa 67: At Starkville, Miss., Tanita Allen scored 25 points, Lauren Prochaska and Brooke Schulte each added 12 and the Blue Demons beat the Panthers.

Pelicans top Rockets without Cousins

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Solomon Hill scored a career-high 30 points to help the New Orleans Pelicans overcome the absence of All-Star DeMarcus Cousins in a 128-112 upset over the Houston Rockets in the NBA on Friday night.

James Harden had 41 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists, but that was not enough to prevent Houston's first loss in four games.

Cousins was sidelined by left knee and rib soreness. New Orleans is now 2-0 without Cousins and 3-7 when he's played since trading for him Feb. 19.

Pelicans rookie guard Wayne Selden scored 11 points in his third career NBA game.

Celtics 98, Nets 95: Jae Crowder scored nine of his 24 points late in the fourth quarter and Avery Bradley added 16 as visiting Boston edged Brooklyn.

Al Horford added 14 points and eight rebounds for the Celtics, who were playing without All-Star Isaiah Thomas. Boston's point guard sat out the first game of a two-game road trip. Thomas, second in the NBA in scoring with 29.2 points per game, bruised his right knee in Wednesday night's win over the Minnesota Timber-

wolves after a hard fall.

Heat 123, Timberwolves 105: Hassan Whiteside scored 23 points and grabbed 14 rebounds and Tyler Johnson scored 23 off the bench as host Miami downed Minnesota.

Bucks 107, Lakers 103: Khris Middleton scored 14 of his season-high 30 points in the fourth quarter and Greg Monroe added 12 points before his ejection as visiting Milwaukee kept up its furious playoff push with its eighth victory in nine games.

Wizards 112, Bulls 107: Bradley Beal scored 24 points and John Wall dished out a career-high 20 assists to go with

14 points as host Washington held on to defeat Chicago.

76ers 116, Mavericks 74: Justin Anderson tied his career high with 19 points and Robert Covington scored 12 of his 18 points in a dominant third quarter, helping Philadelphia rout visiting Dallas.

Raptors 87, Pistons 75: Serge Ibaka had 17 points and eight rebounds as Toronto used a fourth-quarter surge to beat host Detroit.

Magic 109, Suns 103: Evan Fournier scored 25 points as visiting Orlando ended a four-game losing streak with a win over Phoenix.

Barkov's two goals lift Panthers over Rangers in SO

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Aleksander Barkov and the Florida Panthers know they have a tough road if they want to make the playoffs for a second consecutive season.

Barkov helped them take a step in the right direction as he scored in the third period and added the winner in the shootout as the Panthers beat the New York Rangers 4-3 on Friday night.

"I didn't know what to do at first, but when I got closer to the net, I saw some space on the glove side and I tried to put it in there, but ... I'm happy that it worked," Barkov said of his shootout goal.

Jaromir Jagr had two assists and passed Hall of Famer Gordie Howe for the most points after turning 40 with 269 (104 goals, 165 assists).

Jonathan Huberdeau had a goal and assist and Jussi Jokinen also scored for Florida. James Reimer made 29 saves for the Panthers. Reimer made his seventh straight start with Roberto Luongo out because of a lower-body injury.

"They jumped on us. We weren't ready for it and it was tough for Reimer," Jagr said.

Florida has 73 points, five

behind Toronto, which is in the final playoff position in the Eastern Conference. The Panthers also trail the New York Islanders and Tampa Bay, both with 77 points.

The Panthers entered the game coming off a 2-1 loss to Columbus on Thursday and got off to a slow start against the Rangers and regrouped after taking an early timeout.

"We had a pretty bad start. We thought we were ready, but we were not because it's a tough building to play, but at the same time it's a fun building to play in," Barkov said.

"We took that timeout, and after that we started to play well, and we started to shoot the puck more and play in their zone."

Mats Zuccarello scored two goals and J.T. Miller also tallied for the Rangers, who were unable to hold an early 2-0 lead. Brendan Smith added two assists.

Antti Raanta made his fourth consecutive start in place of the injured Henrik Lundqvist and finished with 34 saves.

Penguins 6, Devils 4: Sidney Crosby scored twice to move into a tie for the NHL lead with 37 and Carter Rowney added the first goal of his NHL career as short-handed Pittsburgh

beat visiting New Jersey.

Crosby added an assist to give him 640 in his career and move him into a tie with Jaromir Jagr for the second-most in franchise history. Nick Bonino, Jake Guentzel and Phil Kessel also scored for Pittsburgh as the Penguins leapfrogged Columbus to move into second-place behind Washington in the Metropolitan Division.

Matt Murray stopped 32 shots for Pittsburgh.

Kyle Palmieri matched Crosby with two goals for New Jersey. Stefan Noesen and Beau Bennett also scored for the Devils. Keith Kinkaid finished with 37 saves.

Flames 3, Stars 1: Mark Giordano had a goal and two assists and Brian Elliott stopped 24 shots in his 10th straight win as host Calgary beat Dallas.

Matthew Tkachuk and Michael Frolik also scored to help Calgary bounce back from a loss to Boston two nights earlier — with Elliott home with the flu — that snapped the Flames' 10-game winning streak. Calgary, 12-1-1 in its last 14, jumped past Edmonton into third place in the Pacific Division.

Bidding for his third shut-out in four games, Elliott was finally beaten with 6:41 left in the third when TJ Brodie mis-

handled the puck in front of his net and Brett Ritchie whipped it past the surprised goaltender.

Kari Lehtonen finished with 21 saves for Dallas.

Sabres 2, Ducks 1 (SO): Zengus Girgensons scored in the 10th round of the shootout to lift visiting Buffalo over Anaheim.

Ryan O'Reilly and Rasmus Ristolainen also scored in the tiebreaker to help the Sabres end a seven-game skid in Southern California. Buffalo had not won in Anaheim or Los Angeles since a 2-0 win over the Ducks on Feb. 29, 2012.

O'Reilly also scored a bizarre goal for his 17th of the season and Anders Nilsson stopped 39 shots through overtime.

Rickard Rakell scored and Jonathan Bernier made 30 saves for the Ducks, who could not complete their first three-game winning streak since Jan. 10-14. Ryan Getzlaf and Brandon Montour had goals in the shootout.

Getzlaf and O'Reilly scored in the second round of the tiebreaker, and the Ristolainen and Montour converted in the ninth round. Nilsson then stopped Nick Ritchie before Girgensons won it.