

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US acknowledges deadly Mosul airstrike

Tribune Washington Bureau

MOSUL, Iraq — An initial investigation of a recent airstrike believed to have killed more than 200 civilians in Mosul found it was conducted by the U.S.-led coalition at the request of Iraqi security forces, the Pentagon said Saturday.

Witnesses said the airstrike killed hundreds of residents on Baghdad Street in west Mosul's Aghawat Jadidah neighborhood March 17, including many women and young children. On Friday, in an area where apartment blocks were reduced to rubble, at least 50 bodies could be seen, including those of pregnant women, children and newborns.

On Saturday, a day after announcing that the incident was under investigation, Pentagon officials released a statement saying the coalition had targeted Islamic State fighters and equipment in the area March 17 "at the location corresponding to allegations of civilian casualties."

The coalition said it takes allegations of civilian casualties seriously and that a formal Civilian Casualty Credibility Assessment of the airstrike and the civilian toll is underway.

"The coalition respects human life, which is why we are assisting our Iraqi partner forces in their effort to liberate their lands from ISIS brutality," the statement said,

using an acronym for Islamic State.

The airstrike, if found to be responsible for the fatalities, would mark the deadliest civilian casualty incident by far since the U.S. military began its involvement in mid-2014. The credibility assessment, in which the military gathers and analyzes an array of information that is classified and public, is expected to take two to three weeks.

The focus of the inquiry will be whether the coalition airstrike hit civilian buildings; whether an accumulation of airstrikes in the area degraded the structural integrity of buildings before they fell; or whether Islamic State detonated an explosion after the airstrike to bring structures down, according to Col. John Thomas, Central Command spokesman.

"This sort of assessment is really complex," Thomas said. "It gets especially difficult to determine what happened in certain areas of the city where the streets are so narrow that large vehicles cannot get through."

Another likely possibility is that an airstrike hit or triggered an Islamic State suicide car bomb. Militants have deployed the mobile bombs, in which a driver will blow himself up in the face of advancing Iraqi forces. Witnesses said militants parked a truck packed with explosives on their block days before the airstrike, then forced fami-

lies inside their homes as they lingered outside, sniping from roofs.

Some saw militants shooting at aircraft before the strike, then saw the truck explode during the attack. United Nations officials said they were "profoundly concerned" by the allegations surrounding the airstrike.

"We're incredibly worried about what is happening in western Mosul. It's much, much, much worse than the east for civilians," Lise Grande, the U.N.'s humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, said Saturday.

The military is investigating at least a dozen other reports of civilian casualties in Mosul.

The Pentagon has acknowledged 220 civilian deaths from coalition airstrikes in Iraq and Syria since the U.S. campaign against the Islamic State group began in 2014. Independent monitoring groups such as the London-based nonprofit Airwars put the casualty figures much higher, at about 2,700 civilians killed in airstrikes in both countries during that time.

"Our goal has always been for zero civilian casualties," the Pentagon said Saturday. "But the coalition will not abandon our commitment to our Iraqi partners because of ISIS' inhuman tactics terrorizing civilians, using human shields and fighting from protected sites such as schools, hospitals, religious sites and civilian neighborhoods."

Syrian forces battle for militant-held air base

Associated Press

BEIRUT — U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces began their assault on an Islamic State-held air base in northern Syria on Sunday, activists said, as reports circulated that residents were evacuating the nearby city of Raqqa, the militants' de facto capital.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have ratcheted up the pressure on the Islamic State group in Syria since the U.S. airlifted hundreds of SDF fighters, U.S. military advisers and U.S. artillery behind

Islamic State lines March 21.

SDF fighters reached the limits of the Tabqa air base Sunday and began firing on militants inside, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group reported, while the activist-run Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently said the SDF now "controlled" several parts of the air base.

The two groups rely on local contacts to smuggle information out of Islamic State-held territory.

The media arm for the Kurdish PYD political party, which is aligned with the SDF, said

fighters have seized a village 0.6 miles away from the air base.

The air base lies 28 miles west of Raqqa. Other SDF forces are within 6 miles of the city, approaching from the north.

Meanwhile there were conflicting reports over whether civilians had begun evacuating Raqqa due to concerns over the stability of the nearby Tabqa Dam.

The militants said U.S.-led coalition airstrikes had locked up the dam's gates, causing the water level behind it to rise. Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Si-

lently reported that the Islamic State group had ordered Raqqa residents to evacuate, though without their furniture. Tabqa Dam is 25 miles upstream of Raqqa on the Euphrates River.

The coalition could not immediately be reached for comment.

But the Observatory said there were no evacuations happening, as did the activist-run Raqqa 24 media center.

Raqqa 24 said engineers employed by the militants had restored power to the dam's gates and said the structure was functioning normally.

Group wants probe of VA research facility

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—An animal rights group is using reports of animal welfare violations at a Veterans Affairs Department research facility to strengthen its case against animal testing in government research.

The group, the White Coat Waste Project, which frames animal rights as a conservative issue by linking it to the waste of taxpayer dollars. Late last year, the group issued a report, about dogs used in federal research, contending several agencies — including the VA — weren't accurately reporting how they were using the dogs, the cost of the research and whether it was necessary.

Now, the group is using the VA as an example of wrongdoing.

White Coat Waste Project obtained reports through the Freedom of Information Act that show three instances of violations in the research program at the Hunter Holmes

McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va.

An Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee determined researchers at the McGuire VA failed to comply with federal humane care regulations, leading to the deaths of three dogs during experiments in 2016.

Besides alleging the reports were evidence of botched experiments — which the White Coat Waste Project claims is a waste of money — the group also said they found misreporting at the agency.

The Government Accountability Office already has undertaken a broader review into animal research at the VA and other federal agencies. Prompted by the “Spending to Death” report last year, a bipartisan group of 13 lawmakers wrote the GAO, asking it address “abuse, waste and accountability gaps” in animal testing programs.

They asked specifically for the government watchdog to

find data on how much money each agency spent on animal testing, and to look into how the agencies inform Congress and the public about the costs and outcomes.

For its “Spending to Death” report, the White Coat Waste Project searched through annual reports about animal testing that federal agencies are required to file with the USDA. They found 1,183 dogs reportedly were used in government laboratories in 2015. Of those, 104 were used by VA researchers, the report states.

According to the VA, rats and mice are used for 99 percent of its experiments that require animals. It uses dogs in some instances, including to study lung infections in those with spinal cord injuries; to understand brain circuits that control breathing; to develop glucose sensors for diabetic patients; and to gain insights into narcolepsy.

In its statement Thursday, the VA touted its innovations,

such as the cardiac pacemaker, saying the department's research has “far-reaching and lasting impact.”

The VA said its animal research program is under strict oversight by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, as well as its own office of research oversight. Its animal testing also must meet accreditation standards set by the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Animal and Laboratory Animal Care International.

The statement went on to say the VA must comply “with the same regulations and standards that university programs, state, private, military or civilian organizations employ.”

In addition to the review by the Government Accountability Office — and White Coat's new effort to elicit an inspector general investigation into the VA — one congressman has introduced legislation to tighten controls on government animal testing.

Child returned to her mother on Okinawa

BY CHIYOMI SUMIDA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A 20-month-old girl returned to her Okinawa home from the United States last week — the island's first child-return case under the Hague Convention on cross-border parental kidnapping since Japan joined the treaty in 2014.

In February, the U.S. Middle District Court in Florida ordered the child's father — a Maryland-based U.S. soldier — to return the child to her mother on Okinawa, which the court acknowledged as the girl's “habitual residence,” said attorney Masanori Takeda.

In this case, a judge ultimately determined that a soldier had unlawfully kept his child from the mother.

The couple “had very limited language communications” when they married in 2014 and lived with the woman's teenage son, according to a Florida court complaint filed by the woman.

In March 2015, the woman, then pregnant, and her son moved with the soldier to their new post in Maryland, Takeda said.

After the woman reported domestic and sexual abuse, the Army Family Advocacy Program helped her and her son return to Okinawa, where the child was born.

That October, the woman was asked by her estranged husband to attend his brother's wedding in Florida, said Takeda, who added the man yanked the baby from her arms during the visit.

She was eventually sent to a women's shelter after the Florida Department of Children and Families acknowledged she was a victim of domestic violence.

A social worker observed a 4-by-2-inch bruise on her neck and a “silver dollar sized” bruise on her thigh, according to the court complaint. The mother said her husband had “choked her and again forced her to have sex against her will,” according to the complaint.

The soldier argued his wife returned to

the U.S. to join him to live, not just to visit.

The premise that she and the infant intended to remain in the United States was part of the reasoning that convinced a Florida court to grant the soldier custody, according to court documents.

Mari Kitada, a lecturer at Tokyo's Kyo-rin University who's an expert on the international parental child abduction treaty, said she believed the Hague Convention ruling was appropriate and consistent with the spirit of the treaty.

According to the Hague Convention Affairs Office at Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 233 petitions for both child returns and visitation arrangements have been filed between April 1, 2014 and March 1, 2017.

Of those, 121 were requests for children to be returned to their habitual residence. Twenty-four of the cases involved parents from the U.S., a ministry spokesman said.

The other 112 petitions — 46 involving Americans — were for parents to have access to their children.

1 killed in Cincinnati shooting

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Gunfire erupted early Sunday inside a crowded Cincinnati nightclub after a dispute broke out among several men. One man was killed and 15 people were wounded, authorities said.

No suspect was in custody by the afternoon, and police did not think the shooting at the Cameo Club was terrorism-related. They said the nightclub has a history of gun violence.

Cincinnati Police Chief Eliot Isaac said one of the wounded was in “extremely critical condition.” A hospital spokeswoman said two victims were listed in critical condition, but she had no other details.

Isaac identified the deceased as O’Byran Spikes, 27, and said 15 others were injured, with some already treated at hospitals and released.

Police began receiving calls at 1:30 a.m. about gunshots at the club, which is near the Ohio River east of downtown Cincinnati. Isaac said some 200 people were inside the club.

“What we know at this point

in the investigation is that several local men got into some type of dispute inside the bar, and it escalated into shots being fired from several individuals,” Isaac said. It wasn’t clear how many people fired shots.

He said the club has its own internal security that uses detection wands and pat-downs, but that police believe several firearms got inside. Police said four officers were working security in the club’s parking lot, and some tried unsuccessfully to revive the man who died.

Cameo’s Facebook profile said it caters to college students on Friday nights, when anyone over 18 is allowed in, while Saturdays are “grown and sexy night” for ages 21 and older.

The club has a history of gun violence, including a shooting inside the club on New Year’s Day in 2015 and one in the parking lot that September, City Manager Harry Black said.

A phone call to the club Sunday morning by The Associated Press went unanswered.

Police Capt. Kim Williams said there was “just a lot of chaos, obviously, when shots

were fired.”

“Saturday night, it is a very young crowd. We have had incidents here in the past, but this is by far the worst,” she said.

Referring to initial speculation about possible terrorism, Mayor John Cranley said: “What difference does that make to the victims? Innocent people were shot.”

He called the shootings “unacceptable” and said authorities would work to find ways to prevent such violence.

A single body was removed by the coroner shortly after 6 a.m. The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives also was at the scene.

Among the injured, five were treated at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center and released, hospital spokeswoman Kelly Martin said. She said two people were in critical condition and another two were listed in stable condition. She had no details on the types of injuries or the ages of the victims. The other people injured at the club were taken or drove themselves to other hospitals.

Gunman shoots dead 1 on bus in Las Vegas

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A man riding on a double-decker bus on the Las Vegas Strip pulled a gun and started shooting, killing one person and wounding another before barricading himself inside in a standoff that lasted hours before he finally surrendered.

The standoff began about 11 a.m. Saturday on the bus when it was stopped on Las Vegas Boulevard near the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas hotel and casino.

“He was on the bus,” Clark County Assistant Sheriff Tom Roberts said. “He was shooting people on the bus. He was just contained to that location. He never exited the bus.”

Two people were taken to the hospital after the shooting, University Medical Center spokeswoman Danita Cohen said. One died, and the other was in fair condition.

For hours, crisis negotiators, robots and armored vehicles surrounded the bus, with authorities uncertain if there were any more victims inside. Meanwhile, officers swept into the casinos to warn tourists to hunker down until further notice, leaving these normally bustling pedestrian areas and a road notorious for taxi-to-taxi traffic completely empty. The Strip, normally crowded with cars and people, was shut down for blocks in both directions.

Some in the Cosmopolitan — hotel guests out over their balconies, party people on the pool deck — saw the tense situation unfold below.

Former NBA player Scot Pollard, who is staying at the Cosmopolitan, told The Associated Press by phone that he was at a bar at the casino about 11 a.m. when he saw several people, including staff, running through the area toward the casino and repeatedly screaming, “Get out of the way!”

By 4 p.m., Las Vegas Boulevard had reopened.

Trump attacks Freedom Caucus over health bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Sunday attacked conservative lawmakers for the failure of the Republican bill to replace former President Barack Obama’s health care law as his aides pledged to court moderate Democrats on initiatives from health care to tax cuts.

On Twitter on Sunday, Trump warned, “Democrats are smiling in D.C. that the Freedom Caucus, with the help of Club For Growth and Heritage, have saved Planned Parenthood & Ocare!”

The Freedom Caucus is a hard-right group of House members who were largely responsible for blocking the bill to undo the Affordable Care Act, or “Obamacare.” The bill was

pulled from the House floor Friday in a humiliating political defeat for Trump.

Trump initially focused his blame on Democrats for the failure and predicted a dire future for the current law.

But speaking on “Fox News Sunday,” White House chief of staff Reince Priebus made clear that Trump would be seeking support from moderate Democrats for upcoming legislative battles, leaving open the possibility that the president could still revisit health care legislation. Priebus scolded conservative Republicans, explaining that Trump had felt “disappointed” that a “number of people he thought were loyal to him that weren’t.”

“It’s time for the party to start governing,” Priebus said. “I think it’s time for our folks to

come together, and I also think it’s time to potentially get a few moderate Democrats on board as well.”

Priebus said Trump was looking ahead for now at upcoming congressional debate over the budget and Trump’s tax plan, which Priebus said will include a border tax and middle-class tax cuts.

“It’s more or less a warning shot that we are willing to talk to anyone; we always have been,” he said.

“I think more so now than ever, it’s time for both parties to come together and get to real reforms in this country whether it be taxes, whether it’d be health care, whether it’d be immigration, whether it’d be infrastructure; this president is ready to lead,” Priebus said.

US pilot drops fuel tanks into S. Korea lake

By **KIM GAMEL**

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — A U.S. fighter jet jettisoned its auxiliary fuel tanks into a lake near Kunsan Air Base after suffering an in-flight emergency during a training mission.

The pilot of the F-16, which was assigned to the 8th Fighter Wing, released the drop tanks Wednesday after receiving an indication of an oil system malfunction, a spokeswoman said.

“The pilot safely executed the established emergency procedures, which included releasing the fuel tanks before landing unharmed,” Lt. Col. Michal Kloeffler-Howard said Friday in an email.

The tanks fell into a lake in an area

owned by the Saemangeum Regional Environmental Office under the Ministry of Environment, about 2 miles west of Kunsan Air Base, the 7th Air Force public affairs officer said.

Saemangeum, on the peninsula’s southwestern coast, is the site of a controversial South Korean land reclamation project that involved building a 21-mile dike to separate the Yellow Sea from a former estuary.

Search crews from the 8th Fighter Wing and local agencies tried but failed to find the tanks.

“The recovery efforts have been halted due to the low likelihood of finding the tanks, as many areas within this body of water exceed 60-foot depths,” Kloeffler-Howard said.

Addressing environmental concerns, she said the tanks contained an estimated 600 gallons of fuel, but it was impossible to accurately determine how much may have been spilled.

She added that an analysis by environmental experts from the 8th Fighter Wing and the Air Force Civil Engineering Center suggested any impact would be minimal.

“Considering the large area of water and the naturally occurring bacteria that will break down the gasoline in a matter of days, there is no further action being taken at this time,” she said.

She added that the 8th Fighter Wing would continue to work with local agencies to ensure that environmental safeguarding procedures were being followed.

UK: WhatsApp message sent by attacker before rampage

Associated Press

LONDON — Westminster Bridge attacker Khalid Masood sent a WhatsApp message that cannot be accessed because it was encrypted by the popular messaging service, a top British security official said Sunday.

British news reports suggest Masood used the easily available messaging service just minutes before starting a rampage Wednesday that left three pedestrians and one police officer dead and dozens more wounded, including some with catastrophic injuries.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd used appearances on BBC and Sky News to urge WhatsApp and other encrypted services to make their platforms accessible to intelligence services and police trying to carry out lawful eavesdropping.

“We need to make sure that organizations like WhatsApp — and there are plenty of others like that — don’t provide a secret place for terrorists to communicate with each other,” she said.

Rudd did not provide any details about Masood’s use of WhatsApp, saying only, “This terrorist sent a WhatsApp message and it can’t be accessed.”

Her call for a “backdoor” system to allow authorities to access information is likely to be met with resistance throughout the industry. In the U.S., Apple fought the FBI’s request for the passcodes needed to unlock an iPhone that had been used by one of the perpetrators in the 2015 extremist attack in San Bernardino, Calif.

Masood drove a rented SUV into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge before smashing it into Parliament’s gates and rushing onto the grounds, where he stabbed a policeman to death before he was shot dead. A detailed police reconstruction has found the entire attack lasted 82 seconds.

Police say he acted alone but they are trying to pinpoint his motive and to identify any possible accomplices, making the WhatsApp message a potential clue to his state of mind and his social media contacts.

Rudd said attacks like Masood’s would be easier to prevent if authorities could penetrate encrypted services after obtaining warrants similar to the ones used to listen in on telephone calls or — in snail mail days — to steam open letters to read their contents.

Anti-corruption figure held as protests sweep Russia

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Thousands of people crowded into Moscow’s Pushkin Square on Sunday for an unsanctioned protest against the Russian government, the biggest gathering in a wave of nationwide protests that were the most extensive show of defiance in years.

Alexei Navalny, the anti-corruption campaigner who is leading the opposition to President Vladimir Putin, was arrested while walking from a nearby subway station to the demonstration at Moscow’s iconic Pushkin Square.

Navalny and his Foundation for Fighting Corruption had called for the protests, which attracted hundreds or thousands in most sizable Russian cities, from the Far East port of Vladivostok to the European heartland, including St. Petersburg.

The protests were the largest coordinated outpourings of dissatisfaction in Russia since the massive 2011-12 demonstrations that followed a fraudulent parliamentary election.

Police estimated the Moscow crowd at about 7,000, but it could have been larger. The 2.5-acre Pushkin Square was densely crowded, as were sidewalks on the adjacent Tverskaya Street.

State news agency Tass cited Moscow police as saying about 200 people were arrested.

Russia’s beleaguered opposition is often seen as primarily a phenomenon of a Westernized urban elite, but Sunday’s protests included gatherings in places far from cosmopolitan centers, such as Siberia’s Chita and Barnaul.

“Navalny has united people who think the same; that people don’t agree with the authorities is obvious from what is going on in the country today,” Anna Ivanova, 19, said at the Moscow demonstration. “I am a bit scared.”

Scuffles with police erupted sporadically. The arrested demonstrators included a gray-haired man who was dragged along the pavement by police.

Police cleared the square after about three hours and began herding demonstrators down side streets.

The protests Sunday focused on reports by Navalny’s group claiming that Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has amassed a collection of mansions, yachts and vineyards. The alleged luxuries include a house for raising ducks, so many placards in Sunday’s protests featured mocking images of yellow duck toys.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man held in sharing of pot-laced cookies

FL PORT ORANGE — A Florida man was arrested after giving an acquaintance a cookie without telling her that it was laced with marijuana.

William Van Arsdale was charged Wednesday with three felonies, including possession and reckless tampering, as well as a misdemeanor. The Daytona Beach News-Journal reported that he was booked into jail and was released on his own recognizance.

Police in Port Orange said Van Arsdale offered Renee Holloway peanut butter cookies without telling her about the marijuana.

According to a police report, Van Arsdale, 70, said he didn't tell her about the drug because the amount was so small he didn't think it would affect her.

Cop panned in car theft case immune to lawsuit

MI FARMINGTON HILLS — A federal appeals court has some very tough criticism for a suburban Detroit police officer. But it won't help an attorney in a lawsuit over his stolen car.

The court said Nicole Tomasovich-Morton has immunity in the lawsuit. Thomas Noonan was charged with falsely reporting the car theft in 2010, but the case was dropped by prosecutors.

Noonan later sued Tomasovich-Morton, saying the Farmington Hills officer violated his rights. The officer admits she interviewed Noonan about the loss of his 2001 Grand Prix but never did any further investigation.

Appeals court judges said they "condemn" the officer's conduct "in almost every as-

pect." But the court said Friday that she has immunity in the lawsuit because Noonan was never arrested or jailed.

Sixth-grader ordered to stop trespassing

MA WEST HARWICH — Police in Massachusetts served a sixth-grader with no-trespass orders after neighbors grew wary of the girl cutting through their properties to get to and from her school bus stop.

The mother of Autumn Blanchard, 11, told the Cape Cod Times her daughter received three pink no-trespass notices from the Harwich Police Department on March 2.

Krystal Blanchard said she was unaware neighbors had an issue until the police arrived at her door. She questioned why she wasn't informed by the neighbors.

One neighbor said she was previously sued because a girl fell in her yard and became concerned when she saw Autumn climbing over debris from a fallen tree.

Body found in car reeking of chemicals

FL JACKSONVILLE — A bomb squad in Jacksonville responded to a car in which a body was found and a sign was posted to the vehicle saying "hazmat needed."

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office said the bomb squad responded to the car parked in front of a house on Saturday.

The sheriff's office said in a statement that there was a strong chemical smell around the car.

The car had a sign on it that read, "Danger, stay back hazmat needed."

The fire department said no evacuation was needed in the neighborhood.

Man who secretly taped sex trysts jailed

NJ MORRISTOWN — A New Jersey man who secretly videotaped six women with his iPhone while he had consensual sex with them will now spend some time behind bars.

Philip Johnson, 29, received a 364-day jail sentence on Friday. He also must serve four years of probation and must undergo mental health counseling.

The Mount Olive man had pleaded guilty in January to six counts of invasion of privacy.

Authorities said Johnson filmed the encounters at his apartment between January 2012 and July 2015 and stored the videos on his computer's hard drive.

Man gored by deer he and wife had raised

VA ROANOKE — Virginia wildlife officials say a member of the Giles County Board of Supervisors was hospitalized after being attacked by a deer.

Department of Game and Inland Fisheries spokesman Lee Walker said Paul "Chappy" Baker was attacked by a nine-point buck last week.

The buck gored Baker's lower legs and arms and caused bruises, cuts and lacerations. Walker said the attack, which lasted about 10 minutes, ended when Baker's wife shot and killed the deer with a pistol.

Walker said the Bakers had raised the buck since it was around the home for four years.

Agency: To avoid bears, remove bird feeders

VT MONTPELIER — State officials are recommending that Vermonters

take down their bird feeders on April 1 to avoid attracting bears.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department says warm spring weather and melting snow mean bears will be coming out of their winter dens in search of food.

Purposely feeding bears is illegal.

Man sentenced for taping dog's muzzle

SC CHARLESTON — A South Carolina man who wrapped electrical tape around a dog's muzzle to stop her from barking has been sentenced to five years in prison.

Media outlets reported William Dodson's sentence Friday was the state's maximum for animal cruelty. It will run simultaneously with a 15-year sentence on a federal gun charge.

The dog, Caitlyn, was found in critical condition because the tape cut off blood flow to her tongue.

Stolen Guard Humvee found at vacant home

OH STOW — State troopers in Ohio said a Humvee stolen from an Ohio National Guard Armory has been found in a garage at a vacant home.

The State Highway Patrol said it found the sand-colored military vehicle Friday night after getting tips on its whereabouts.

A patrol spokesman said no arrests have been made.

The patrol said the Humvee was found in neighboring Trumbull County. Troopers said the Humvee was secured at the time it was stolen but someone managed to disable its locking mechanism.

From wire reports

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No. 3 Oregon knocks off No. 1 Jayhawks

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Oregon lost one of its best players to an injury just before the NCAA Tournament, had to survive two nail-biters to reach the Midwest Regional final, and then faced a top-seeded Kansas team that had romped to the brink of the Final Four.

Of course, the Ducks would rise to the occasion.

With swagger and verve and downright prolific shooting, the plucky team that everybody wanted to count out rolled to a 74-60 victory over the Jayhawks on Saturday night, earning the Ducks their first trip to the national semifinals in nearly 80 years.

“You feel so good for so many people,” said Ducks coach Dana Altman, who is headed to his first Final Four after 13 trips to the NCAA Tournament. “It’s a team effort. You feel good for a lot of people.”

Indeed, a whole lot of people had a hand in it.

Tyler Dorsey hit six threes and poured in 27 points, Dillon Brooks added 17 and Jordan Bell finished with 11 points, 13 rebounds and eight blocks in a virtuoso performance for the Ducks (33-5), who seized the lead with 16 minutes left in the first half and never trailed the rest of the way.

Now, they’ll face the winner of Sunday’s

game between North Carolina and Kentucky in the Final Four in Glendale, Ariz. It will be their first trip since 1939, when the Tall Firs won it all.

Player of the year candidate Frank Mason III had 21 points in his final game for the Jayhawks (31-5), but the offensive fireworks and steady poise that had carried them to a 13th straight Big 12 title fizzled just 40 minutes from campus on a night where very little went right.

Star freshman Josh Jackson was mired in early foul trouble. Sharpshooting guard Devonte Graham never got on track. And the swagger the Jayhawks showed in humiliating Purdue in the Sweet 16 simply evaporated for a team that rolled to the Elite Eight by an average margin of 30 points.

“I’m disappointed for them more than I am for me,” said Kansas coach Bill Self, who fell to 2-7 in Elite Eight games, including four defeats as a No. 1 seed. “But the one thing that happened today, and it’s hard to admit, the best team did win today.”

Foul trouble sent Jackson to the bench for much of the first half, allowing the Ducks carve to out a comfortable lead. Then Dorsey finished the half with back-to-back 3s, including a deep bank shot at the buzzer, as the Ducks pranced to their locker room

relishing in a 44-33 advantage.

“When you play hard throughout the whole game,” Brooks said, “you catch some breaks.”

The Ducks kept dancing in the second half, beating the Jayhawks at their own game: Getting into transition, passing up good shots for better ones and knocking down three-pointers.

The Ducks’ lead swelled to 55-37 when Brooks drilled another shot from the perimeter, and frustration began to creep into the Kansas bench. It was only compounded every time Jackson or Graham tossed up a shot that clanked hollowly off the iron, the Jayhawks’ sense of desperation slowly growing.

“The seven years we’ve been at Oregon, we’ve had great guys to work with,” Altman said, “but I also feel good for all the other players, the ex-players, who have built Oregon basketball. Like we said, 1939 is a long drought, but we owe all the ex-players.”

Jackson didn’t score until midway through the second half, and said later he’d “never been in such a tough position.” Graham was 0-for-7 from the field, missing all six of his threes.

The Jayhawks lost in the Elite Eight for the second straight year, while Self also lost for the seventh time as a No. 1 seed.

Top-seeded Gonzaga reaches first Final Four

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — The criticism dogged Gonzaga wherever it went, no matter how much it won.

The Zags run up their record by beating up on teams in a weak conference, then always seemed to come up short as the calendar went deep into March. Few outside of Spokane believed the program Mark Few helped build from scratch belonged in the national powerhouse conversation.

Overrated no more, Gonzaga is finally headed to the Final Four.

The Zags took the pressure of history head on with a performance worthy of their No. 1 seed, rolling to a dominating 83-59 win over Xavier in the West Regional final on Saturday that should silence those critics.

“Just an incredible feeling of elation and satisfaction,” Few said. “It’s been a long, hard

journey to get this program here.”

Few and the Zags have won the West Coast Conference Tournament 16 times, been regulars in the NCAA Tournament since 1999, reached the Sweet 16 eight times.

The Final Four was the only missing piece to their resume.

The Zags (36-1) claimed their spot in Arizona and history with a superb all-around game, showing off their usual offensive efficiency while flexing the smothering type of defense that had previously been the chink in their armor.

Gonzaga made 12 of 24 shots from three-point range after struggling the first three NCAA Tournament games. The Zags were No. 1 in defensive efficiency during the regular season and shut down the underdog and 11th-seeded Musketeers (24-14) to become the first WCC team to reach the

Final Four in 60 years.

Nigel Williams-Goss scored 23 points while orchestrating Gonzaga’s efficient offense after struggling against West Virginia. Johnathan Williams added 19 points and center Przemek Karnowski, who was still recovering from back surgery a year ago, created open perimeter looks with his deft passing out of the post.

Now the Zags are headed to the desert, where they’ll play the winner between South Carolina and Florida in next week’s Final Four.

“The Final Four doesn’t validate or discredit a season. It’s not an end-all, be-all,” Williams said. “Gonzaga has been a great program and we’re just happy to keep carrying the torch.”

The Musketeers brought their turn-the-page jar of ashes to the NCAA Tournament, where they burned through a string of upsets to reach their

third Elite Eight and first since 2008.

Their bid for the program’s first Final Four ran into a buzz saw.

Xavier played well offensively early to hang with the Zags, giving super fan Bill Murray and the rest of their supporters a glimmer of hope. Once Gonzaga got rolling, the Musketeers had no answer.

“They’re really good. Sometimes you just lose to a better team,” Xavier coach Chris Mack said. “They’ve proven it all year long.”

The Zags struggled to find an offensive rhythm against West Virginia in the regional semifinals — who doesn’t? — but had it flowing against Xavier.

“They were just locked in,” said Xavier’s Trevon Bluiett, who had 10 points. “They were a discipline type of team and we just didn’t execute well enough.”

No. 10 seed Oregon upsets Maryland

Associated Press

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — Oregon's young players say they feel excited and loose. They play that way, too.

Sabrina Ionescu scored 21 points, fellow freshman Ruthy Hebard had 16 and the 10th-seeded Ducks continued their improbable run through the NCAA Tournament with a 77-63 victory over Maryland on Saturday.

Oregon (23-13) put five players in double figures on its way to the first regional final in program history. It will play No. 1 seed UConn in the next round on Monday.

"We're just excited about everything," Ionescu said. "None of our kids have experienced anything like this. So, I think we're just excited to advance and be able play another day and see where that takes us."

Brionna Jones and Shatori Walker-Kimbrough each had 16 points for third-seeded Maryland, which finishes the season at 32-3.

The Terps, who average more than 90 points a game to lead the nation, were held to their lowest point total this season. They turned the ball over

21 times, leading to 18 Oregon points.

"I just think it was just one of those days," said guard Destiny Slocum, who finished with nine points and five turnovers. "We kind of lost our game, and I think, even though this was a low-scoring game, we were trying our best, doing anything we could do. I don't think there's really an answer for it."

Oregon coach Kelly Graves said before the game that his young team that starts three freshmen may not know it's not supposed to be winning. The Ducks became the second No. 10 seed to advance to a regional final, joining the 1991 Lamar team.

"They just continue to show great poise," Graves said.

Maite Cazorla scored 15 points for Oregon, and reserve Oti Gildon had 11. Lexi Bando finished with 10 points.

Oregon led by nine at half-time and made seven straight shots late in the third quarter to extend its advantage to 59-45.

The Terps, who average more than six three-pointers a game, were 0-for-6 from behind the arc.

"They took the air out of the ball, which was a really

smart move by them," Maryland coach Brenda Frese said. "We've seen that in the past. But we didn't handle it well at all. Then it felt like every time we would get it to within six points, we would have some sort of breakdown, whether it was off of an (offensive) board, whether it was a defensive stop, and then they would break it back open."

UConn 86, UCLA 71: Napheesa Collier had 27 points and 14 rebounds to put the Huskies in the Bridgeport Regional final.

The victory was the 110th straight for the No. 1 Huskies, who will face 10th-seeded Oregon on Monday night.

Stockton Regional

Florida State 66, Oregon State 53: Ivey Slaughter started swiping to help Florida State discover its best defense from all angles, and the third-seeded Seminoles erased a daunting deficit and ran right into the Stockton Regional final with a 66-53 win over second-seeded Oregon State on Saturday.

Slick-handed Slaughter had a career-high nine steals, a school record in the NCAA Tournament. Florida State

had 16 steals total, and Slaughter also contributed 11 points and eight rebounds. Slaughter made 1 of 2 free throws with 3:41 left before Sydney Wiese missed yet another 3-point try on the other end during a tough day from deep, and Slaughter scored again to help extend her special senior season.

South Carolina 100, Quinnipiac 58: Kaela Davis, A'ja Wilson and top-seeded South Carolina overpowered NCAA Tournament surprise Quinnipiac from the opening tip, scoring the first 16 points and advancing to the Stockton Regional final.

Davis scored 28 with five three-pointers, Wilson added 24 and South Carolina's athleticism and smothering, swarming defense was just too much for No. 12 seed Quinnipiac on the Sweet 16 stage. The Bobcats started out 0-for-10 and took more than seven minutes to score as they struggled to get shots off, let alone establish their typically prolific perimeter game.

South Carolina (30-4) won its eighth in a row, putting coach Dawn Staley's team in the Elite Eight for the second time in three years.

Vettel opens F1 season with win for Ferrari

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Sebastian Vettel jumped onto the podium at the Australian Grand Prix and held up his right index finger, celebrating the end of Ferrari's Formula One drought and a break in the Mercedes dominance.

It was back to No. 1 for Ferrari, at least after one race to open the season.

Ferrari hadn't won an F1 GP since Vettel's victory in Singapore in September 2015, and so his unrestrained joy on Sunday signaled renewed confidence from him.

"For now, we're just over the moon," four-time world champion Vettel said after holding off Mercedes teammates Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas. "It's been a great day for us. The team has been working so hard at the track as much as back at

the factory. It's a great feeling."

"Grazie mille," he added, a nod to the Italian manufacturer, "you can't say much more."

With regulations designed to make the 2017 F1 cars faster — wider tires, greater aerodynamics, bigger fuel loads and increased downforce — Vettel proved Ferrari's extra pace in pre-season testing was genuine.

"It's good to know we have a great car but it's just the beginning ... with new regulations, a new generation of cars," Vettel said. "Mercedes have a great engine and a great car the last couple of years — we're the ones who've had to catch up. Whatever happens this year, the race today doesn't hurt."

Vettel finished in 1 hour, 24 minutes and 11.672 seconds, almost 10 seconds clear of Hamilton, to give Ferrari its first win in

Australia since Kimi Raikkonen took the title in 2007. Raikkonen, in the second Ferrari, finished fourth this year.

Larson wins Xfinity race

FONTANA, Calif. — Kyle Larson held off Joey Logano on the final lap to win the NASCAR Xfinity race at Auto Club Speedway on Saturday.

Larson thrived out of a late restart with smart moves and a clever lane choice on Fontana's five-wide asphalt. The native Californian won the Xfinity race at Fontana for the second time.

Kyle Busch was third, with Erik Jones in fourth and rookie William Byron in fifth.

Cup regulars Larson, Busch and Logano dominated the Xfinity race on a cloudy day at Fontana. Logano twice rallied from far back in the pack to challenge the leaders.

Wall lifts Wizards over Cavaliers 127-115

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — John Wall scored 37 points and Bradley Beal added 27 as the Washington Wizards began a challenging road trip by beating LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers 127-115 on Saturday night.

Wall scored 18 in the first quarter, when the Wizards shot 82 percent, and Washington held on down the stretch to avenge an overtime loss to the NBA champions last month.

“You don’t want to go into the playoffs knowing you have to face those guys and you never won against them in the regular season,” Wall said. “To come here and win in a tough place, it’s definitely a boost.”

James, who briefly wore goggles to protect an eye injury sustained Friday night, scored 24 and added 11 rebounds and eight assists. Kyrie Irving added 23 points and Kevin Love 17 for Cleveland, playing at home for the only time in a seven-game

stretch.

Washington’s victory cut Cleveland’s lead in the Eastern Conference to a half-game over idle Boston.

Spurs 106, Knicks 98: Kawhi Leonard scored 29 points while LaMarcus Aldridge added 19 points and 10 rebounds to help San Antonio beat visiting New York.

San Antonio has won four straight heading into home games against Cleveland on Monday and Golden State on Wednesday. The Spurs (56-16) are two games behind the Warriors (58-14) for the league’s best record.

Raptors 94, Mavericks 86: DeMar DeRozan and Serge Ibaka scored 18 points apiece as Toronto beat host Dallas for its fifth straight victory.

The Raptors, who came back from 15-point deficits to win each of their last two games, made it a little easier on themselves Saturday.

Toronto scored the game’s first seven points and never trailed in dealing the Mav-

ericks’ playoff hopes a damaging blow.

The Mavericks fell four games behind Denver for the final playoff spot in the West.

Trail Blazers 112, Timberwolves 100: CJ McCollum scored 32 points as Portland continued its push for the playoffs with a victory over visiting Minnesota.

Damian Lillard added 21 points for the Blazers, who have won 10 of their last 13 games. Portland has seven of its last 10 games at home.

The Blazers pulled within a game of the Denver Nuggets for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Clippers 108, Jazz 95: Jamal Crawford scored 28 points off the bench, and host Los Angeles beat Utah to clinch a playoff berth for the sixth straight year.

The Clippers trail the Jazz by a half-game in their race for the No. 4 playoff seed in the West.

Nash helps Bruins snap four-game skid

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Boston Bruins badly needed a win and the scoring support came from an unexpected source in Riley Nash.

Nash scored twice and back-up goalie Anton Khudobin made 18 saves as the Bruins beat the New York Islanders 2-1 Saturday night, snapping a four-game losing streak.

Nash broke a 1-1 tie with his second goal of the contest at 4:12 of the third period, beating Islanders goalie Thomas Greiss from the slot for his seventh goal of the season. Dominic Moore assisted on the decisive goal, which moved Boston two points ahead of the Islanders for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference.

“That was quite the output for me,” said the 27-year-old Nash, who had five goals in 73 games coming in. “I’ll take it.”

The Bruins collectively could say the same, ending their skid and moving one point back of Toronto for third place in the Atlantic Division.

“It feels good to win again,” veteran forward David Backes

said.

Capitals 4, Coyotes 1: Alex Ovechkin recorded his 30th goal of the season and Daniel Winnik scored two goals, including the game-winner late in the third period, as host Washington overcame listless stretches to beat lowly Arizona.

Ovechkin became the third player in league history to score 30-plus goals in each of his first 12 seasons, joining Mike Gartner (15) and Wayne Gretzky (13).

Oilers 4, Avalanche 1: Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Drake Caggiola each had a goal and an assist and host Edmonton moved into a three-way tie atop the Pacific Division with a victory.

Benoit Pouliot and Leon Draisaitl also scored for the Oilers, who have won six of their last seven games and are now tied with San Jose and Anaheim at 91 points.

Canadiens 3, Senators 1: Andrei Markov scored two goals and set up another as host Montreal beat Ottawa to retain first place in the Atlantic

Division.

Shea Weber also scored for Montreal, which leads Ottawa by three points, although the Senators have a game in hand.

Panthers 7, Blackhawks 0: Jonathan Marchessault scored his first career hat trick while James Reimer stopped 25 shots for his first shutout of the season to help host Florida rout Chicago.

Jonathan Huberdeau had a goal and three assists, and Aleksander Barkov added a goal and two assists for Florida. Reilly Smith and Nick Bjugstad also scored to give the Panthers their largest margin of victory since an 8-0 win over Toronto on Feb. 5, 2008.

Sabres 5, Maple Leafs 2: Jack Eichel scored twice and set up another goal in host Buffalo’s win that slowed youth-laden Toronto’s late-season surge to clinch a playoff berth.

Ryan O’Reilly and Dmitry Kulikov each had a goal and an assist, and Evander Kane also scored in a game the Sabres took control of by scoring three successive goals in the second period. Robin Lehner stopped

32 shots, and the Sabres continued their home dominance over their cross-border rivals by improving to 18-2-1 against Toronto in their last 21 games at Buffalo.

Blue Jackets 1, Flyers 0: Sergei Bobrovsky made 36 saves in his seventh shutout of the season, helping host Columbus.

Bobrovsky was terrific in his NHL-leading 40th win, and Alexander Wennberg tipped in the game’s only goal in the second period. The gritty victory in front of a sellout crowd broke a two-game losing streak for the playoff-bound Blue Jackets.

Hurricanes 3, Devils 1: Jeff Skinner scored the go-ahead goal on a breakaway with 10:26 left and surging Carolina stretched its point streak to 10 games with a victory that eliminated host New Jersey from playoff contention for the fifth straight year.

Sebastian Aho scored twice and Eddie Lack made 26 saves for the Hurricanes, who are 7-0-3 in their last 10. They remained five points out of a playoff spot.