

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, March 28, 2017

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Navy scales back sailors' online training

BY TYLER HLAVAC

*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy has deep-sixed most of its annual online General Military Training in response to sailors' pleas.

Sailors will no longer be required to complete several hours of annual online courses, other than the Cyber Awareness Challenge, Vice Adm. Robert Burke, chief of naval personnel, announced Monday in a message to the fleet.

"Bottom line — we heard you; we fixed it," Burke said in the message.

Local commands will conduct face-to-face training in small units on topics such as suicide awareness, sexual assault pre-

vention and equal opportunity regulations, according to the new guidance.

"It puts training back in the hands of sailors; eliminates passive, impersonal and ineffective approaches to training; and enables a powerful and personal focus on integrity, accountability and character through an interactive learning dialogue," Burke said.

Topics like records management and operation security can be conducted at all-hands calls and divisional training times until leaders are satisfied that sailors understand the objectives, the statement said.

Online courses will still be available to serve as a guide

for commands looking to create their own training programs. However leaders will not be required to re-create the online training material, the statement said.

"There is no doubt this approach will yield an even greater competitive edge for the Navy ... now let us get after it," Burke said.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Tifani Baker, a quartermaster aboard the USS Benfold, welcomed the elimination of online training, saying that completing the training aboard ships is challenging because of lack of computer access or spotty internet.

"I found training online frus-

trating as the website was always down or slow," she said. "We only have so many computers on the ship. I would have to go to the USO, [Fleet Recreation Center] or the library."

Petty Officer 3rd Class Trevor Reese, a fire controlman aboard the Benfold, also welcomed the change but said assembling many sailors in one place for face-to-face training could be a challenge.

"If training is being held and they gather everyone together, but a third of the command is [on temporary additional duty] or at school or something, they would have to coordinate to make sure that everyone has the proper training," he said.

## Pentagon works to combat autonomous suicide drones

*The Washington Post*

The Pentagon, concerned about the danger that small, armed drones pose to U.S. troops, is moving forward with a project that looks beyond remote-control aircraft used by the Islamic State group to an even more complex problem: an aerial raid of autonomous suicide bombers.

The unmanned bombers have not yet appeared in combat, but defense officials already are researching how to stop them. Laden with explosives or other dangerous materials, they would operate by crashing into U.S. troops in a combat zone and would not be as easy to detect as existing drones used by the Islamic State group because they would not rely on radio frequencies for remote controlling. Instead, they would be programmed to carry out a specific mission, making them hard to see coming.

The effort to stop the air-

craft is known as the Mobile Force Protection Program and is overseen by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which examines ways that technology can help the U.S. military. DARPA anticipates awarding contracts within weeks for the first of three phases of testing and research, said J.C. Lede, who oversees the program.

"Right now, the best way of detecting that there is an unmanned airplane is by listening for that radio signal," Lede said. "Once they stop emitting that radio signal, they're going to get a lot harder to find."

Early stages of the research were launched in October with a solicitation to industry, and final proposals for the first phase are due in January, according to DARPA documents. The program is focused specifically on going beyond using electronic jamming to stop unmanned planes and helicopters of up to 200 pounds. Each

company picked is expected to get about \$3 million in the first phase, with the possibility of continuing on to two subsequent phases of work that are longer and more lucrative.

Lede said he and his team focused on defending a convoy with important cargo aboard because it is more complicated than defending a stationary target and because what is learned will apply in other circumstances. Unmanned aircraft are now "sufficiently inexpensive" that the U.S. military must anticipate some of them may be flown directly into U.S. troops or vehicles as part of an attack, he said.

"If you are going to attack a high-value convoy, I think they would be willing to commit the hardware to it," he said. "At most, it's a few thousand dollars' worth of hardware for a UAV."

The effort comes as the U.S. military more broadly examines an array of ways to take

out potential enemy drones. Marine Lt. Col. Dave Sousa, who examines the problem for his service, said shotguns, sniper rifles, water cannons, mini-rockets and lasers all have been considered, and the services increasingly are working together on the problem.

"When you're more than a couple hundred meters out, you can't tell what that thing is carrying," Sousa said of unmanned aircraft. "You can't tell if it has a GoPro camera. ... You don't know what it is. So you've got to detect, track and ID, and then there's how you're going to deal with that threat."

In Iraq and Syria, Islamic State militants have loaded grenades on small drones and used them to attack civilians and local forces working to drive them out. The U.S. sent Ukraine some mini-drones last year, but Russia-backed separatists were able to easily jam them, rendering them relatively useless, Reuters reported.

# General: US likely had role in deadly attack

BY TARA COPP  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. likely had a role in a strike against a building in Islamic State-controlled West Mosul that might have led to the death of scores of civilians, the top U.S. commander in the fight against the terrorist group said Tuesday.

On March 17, during multiple U.S. and coalition airstrikes against Islamic State fighters and equipment, a building was destroyed. It was later reported to contain as many as 200 civilians. CNN reported that 112 bodies had been discovered as of Tuesday.

Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, who heads the U.S.-led coalition, told reporters at the Pentagon on Tuesday that based on initial investigations of the airstrikes in the area, “we probably had a role in these casualties.”

“If we did it — and I’d say there’s at least a fair chance that we did — it was an unin-

tentional accident of war,” Townsend said.

He said that Air Force Brig. Gen. Matthew Isler had been appointed to lead the Mosul airstrike investigation, and that a team of U.S. and Iraqi investigators was able to reach the site Monday.

Townsend said the building that was hit had been under surveillance, and that questions remained as to whether the Islamic State group had lured U.S. airpower to the target and trapped civilians inside.

Before the strike, there were Islamic State members “fighting from that position, from that building,” Townsend said. “There were people you can’t really account for being there, unless they were forced there.”

Townsend said Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service forces reported having discovered two other buildings that were rigged to explode. The service rescued 45 hostages in one and 25 hostages in another, he said.

Townsend said the munitions that were fired by U.S. forces were not large enough

to bring down the building, which suggests to him there could have been another explosion, such as the building being rigged to explode or a follow-up bomb. He did not specify which munitions were used.

“It could have been a combination of these events,” he said.

The reports of civilian casualties come as the U.S. is considering options to accelerate the military campaign against the Islamic State group, including loosening the rules of engagement that determine when U.S. forces can fire a munition.

Townsend told reporters that there have been some “minor adjustments” to the rules of engagement since August. He would not specify what the changes were, saying that was classified. He said those changes did not have a role in the March 17 strike.

Since December, however, the U.S. has lowered the rank required for an officer to approve an airstrike, effectively allowing those decisions to be made at a more tactical level by ground commanders.

## Mosul airstrike’s civilian toll among worst in decades

*The Washington Post*

Even though Iraqi civil defense workers are still sorting through the rubble, the March 17 U.S. airstrike in West Mosul, if confirmed, could potentially rank among one of the most devastating attacks on civilians by American forces in more than two decades.

Residents from the neighborhood where the strike occurred said that 137 civilians were killed, while Iraqi officials have said that upward of 80 people had been pulled from the rubble. Chris Woods, the director of the monitoring group Airwars.org, said the range of dead have been reported from 101 to 511, though the likely numbers are somewhere between 130 and 230.

On Monday, Col. John Thomas, the spokesman for the U.S. command that oversees the wars in Iraq and Syria, said the U.S. military was investigating the March 17 bombing in addition to a number of other strikes that happened during the same time in roughly the same area.

The battle for West Mosul, which began earlier this year, has been marked by heavy

fighting in dense urban terrain. Islamic State fighters have used residents as human shields around their defensive positions and relied heavily on booby traps, roadside bombs and suicide vehicles to delay the U.S.-backed Iraqi advance. Even before Iraqi forces moved into the western part of Mosul, there were multiple allegations of civilian casualties during the four months it took to take the eastern side of the city.

There have been numerous U.S. air attacks that have killed dozens since the Gulf War. These include two potential strikes in Syria just this month, the 2015 Kunduz Hospital strike in Afghanistan and roughly a dozen errant wedding party strikes in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen over the years. Yet there are only a handful of U.S.-aerial bombardments that have killed more than a hundred civilians in a single event.

Some of these strikes include: ■Kunduz Province, Afghanistan. Sept. 4, 2009.

At the direction of German ground forces, U.S. F-15 multi-role fighters bombed a column of suspected Taliban tanker

trucks, killing anywhere between 91 and 172 civilians. Fearing an attack from the aircraft, the Taliban had abandoned the trucks in a river bed before the bombs struck. Instead of striking a large number of Taliban fighters, U.S. aircraft targeted locals that were siphoning off gas from the trucks.

■Farah Province, Afghanistan. May 4, 2009.

After a firefight with Afghan soldiers, policemen and American troops, a group of Taliban retreated into the village of Granai. The U.S. forces called for air support, and soon after, a combination of fighters and bombers, including what was believed to be a B-1 strategic bomber, dropped thousands of pounds of bombs on the village, killing an estimated 140. According to a Reuters article from the time, the Afghan investigation into the strike found that of the 140 victims, 93 were children and only 22 were adult males. Pentagon estimates put the civilian dead at much lower, saying the majority of those killed were insurgents.

■Baghdad. Feb. 13, 1991.

The attack on the Amiriyah

air-raid shelter during the Gulf War by U.S. stealth aircraft resulted in the loss of anywhere between 200 and 300 civilians, according to a Human Rights Watch report from 1991. Later news reports said that more than 400 had been killed. The shelter was packed with civilians when bunker busting bombs penetrated the roof at around 5 a.m. According to the report, the Pentagon said it had intercepted military communications from the building and that military personnel were stationed near it. The U.S. military, however, also knew the building had been used as a shelter during the Iran-Iraq war. Lawyers in Belgium accused former President George H.W. Bush, former Vice President Dick Cheney and Colin Powell of war crimes because of the Amiriyah strike, but in 2003 the country’s highest court dismissed the complaints.

Around the same time, in February 1991, British bombers struck multiple bridges in southern and western Iraq, killing more than 100 in each attack, according to local reports.



# EUCOM chief: US should provide weapons to Ukraine

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The United States should provide weapons to the Ukrainian military to support its fight against Russia-backed rebels, the top American general in Europe told lawmakers Tuesday.

“I personally believe that we need to consider lethal defensive weapons for Ukraine,” Army Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti said in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee.

The United States already has the authorization to provide such weaponry to Ukraine, which has been fighting a Russian proxy force in the eastern regions of its country since 2014. Congress included the provision in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act as part of a more than \$150 million package to aid Ukraine, but President Barack Obama’s administration declined to provide any lethal weapons.

Instead, the U.S. military has provided American troops to train Ukrainians and nonlethal equipment including Humvees.

Ukraine is not a member of NATO, but the United States and other NATO allies have backed the nation as it has faced near-constant fighting since Russia-backed separatist forces annexed Crimea. The United States has accused Russia of supplying its own forces and modern weapons in the ongoing war that has killed nearly 10,000 people.

Scaparrotti has visited Ukraine twice since he became the chief of U.S. European Command in May 2016. He said Tuesday that the Ukrainian military would welcome additional American support in its fight against “a very lethal, tough enemy.”

“I am very impressed with [Ukraine’s] military and its discipline,” he said. “What we have provided them ... is being well used, and they are very eager in terms of their ability to learn more.”

President Donald Trump’s administration has not presented a clear policy on the conflict in Ukraine. On the campaign trail, Trump, who has said he supports closer ties to Russia, called the conflict in Ukraine a European problem that America should avoid.

Scaparrotti said Tuesday that he had yet to speak directly with Trump.

The general said Russia has used Ukraine, like Syria, as a testing ground for its latest military equipment. Among systems that Russia has tested there are drones that guide artillery fire.

Critics of arming Ukraine, including some in Obama’s administration, cite concerns that additional weapons in the region could further inflame the conflict.

Under the NDAA, the United States is authorized to provide anti-armor weapons, mortars, grenade launchers and small arms to Ukraine.

## New decoder necessary for AFN’s switch to HD

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — After years of delay, American Forces Network is poised to go completely digital, a change that will require thousands of off-base AFN viewers to purchase new decoders to keep the service.

The American Forces Radio and Television Service, AFN’s parent organization, plans to convert all of AFN’s programming to high definition by the end of the year, said Col. Dave Honchul, AFRTS director.

“We’re fulfilling the promise that we made,” he said. “We’ve been hearing from the viewers and we’ve been working this for a while.”

The switch to high definition was originally planned for fiscal 2012, but full conversion was delayed by budget constraints, contracting problems and other issues.

In anticipation of the conversion, many overseas viewers purchased a more expensive HD decoder — the Cisco D9865.

The Cisco decoder at the Exchange on Ramstein Air Base can be purchased for \$369 or leased for \$18 a month. The new devices are expected to cost at least \$100 less than the current decoders, Honchul said.

About two-thirds of the 70,000 AFN decoders in use are the Cisco D9865 and are HD-compatible. When AFN upgrades its satellite signal, those decoders will still work with some setting changes, Honchul said.

But an estimated 20,000 older decoders are still in use, and those will have to be replaced or “you will not get anything,” once the signal is upgraded, Honchul said.

The new decoders are in the contracting and production phase and will be available for purchase online and at Exchange stores in the coming months.

## Guard hopes to resolve bonus issues

*Los Angeles Times*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A top official for the California National Guard told state legislators Monday that he hopes lingering issues from the soldiers being forced to repay enlistment bonuses will be resolved by midsummer.

A Los Angeles Times investigation last year found that the Pentagon demanded thousands of soldiers repay enlistment bonuses up to a decade after going to war in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The claw-back came after audits revealed vast overpayments of bonuses, due in part to mismanagement and pressure to hit enlistment targets. The

Times story prompted outcry that soldiers, who were not at fault for accepting the bonuses, were now facing financial hardship.

Matthew Beevers, the deputy adjutant for the California National Guard, told a joint hearing of the Senate and Assembly Veterans Affairs’ committees that just over 1,000 soldiers currently hold debt due to the bonus recoupment.

Soldiers who are affected by the repayment demand must go through a federal waiver adjudication process, which Beevers described as “unnecessarily long, complex and resource-intensive.”

He said the state-run Soldier

Incentives Assistance Center was working with those who need to navigate the complex process to get those debts waived.

“[If] you got a bonus and you completed your obligation and for some reason you weren’t entitled to it, we’ve done everything we can do ensure that those soldiers get to keep those bonuses and we continue to do that today,” Beevers said.

Beevers said the state is trying to locate all soldiers who may be carrying debts due to the enlistment bonus. For those who complete the federal adjudication process, around 50 percent get their debts waived, he said.

## Administration eyes \$18B in cuts to social programs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House is following up its long-shot roster of budget cuts with a wish list of \$18 billion worth of immediate reductions, including cuts to medical research, infrastructure and community development grants.

Like President Donald Trump's 2018 budget, which was panned by both Democrats and Republicans earlier this month, the proposals have little chance to be enacted.

Unlike the budget document itself, the roster of cuts do not represent official administration proposals. Instead, they were sent to Capitol Hill as a set of "options" for GOP staff aides and lawmakers crafting a catchall spending bill for the ongoing budget year, which ends Sept. 30.

The documents arrived as negotiations over a catchall spending package continued Tuesday with the aim of averting a partial government shutdown at the end of next month. The package would wrap up \$1.1 trillion in unfinished spending bills and address the administration's request for an immediate \$30 billion in additional Pentagon spending.

Those talks are intensifying, but Senate Republicans are considering backing away from a showdown with Democrats over whether to fund Trump's

request for immediate funding to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Senate Democrats have threatened to filibuster any language providing money for the wall. Asked about including Southern border wall financing in the broader spending package, Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., a key negotiator, said, "They will not pass together. That's just my view."

The government would shut down except for some functions on April 29 without successful action on spending. GOP leaders are eager to avoid a politically damaging shutdown, especially in the wake of last week's embarrassing failure to pass the Trump-pushed bill to "repeal and replace" former President Barack Obama's landmark health care law and Trump's decision to abandon the effort.

Negotiators have made progress on the core elements of a dozen must-do funding bills but have ignored the White House's list of cuts in doing so.

The White House badly wants funding for the Mexico wall and hasn't fully engaged in the Hill negotiations. Pitfalls and land mines lay ahead in the talks, and the situation is especially fragile because of divisions among GOP ranks and uncertainty over who's playing the lead role at the White House on the particulars of budget work.

## Trump set to sign order ending rules on global warming

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump was expected to sign an executive order Tuesday aimed at moving forward on his campaign pledge to unravel former President Barack Obama's plan to curb global warming.

The order will suspend, rescind or flag for review more than a half-dozen measures in an effort to boost domestic energy production in the form of fossil fuels.

As part of the roll-back, Trump will initiate a review of the Clean Power Plan, which restricts greenhouse gas emissions at coal-fired power plants. The regulation, which was the former president's signature effort to curb carbon emissions, has been the subject of long-running legal challenges by Republican-led states and those who profit from burning oil, coal and gas.

Trump, who has called global warming a "hoax" invented by the Chinese, has repeatedly criticized the power

plant rule and others as an attack on American workers and the struggling U.S. coal industry. The contents of the order were outlined to reporters in a sometimes tense briefing with a senior White House official, whom aides insisted speak without attribution despite Trump's criticism of the use of unnamed sources in the news media. The official at one point appeared to break with mainstream climate science, denying familiarity with widely publicized concerns about the potential adverse economic impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and more extreme weather.

In addition to pulling back from the Clean Power Plan, the administration will also lift a 14-month-old moratorium on new coal leases on federal lands. The Obama administration had imposed a three-year moratorium, arguing that the \$1 billion-a-year program must be modernized to ensure a fair financial return to taxpayers and address climate change.

## 3 intruders killed by Okla. man in act of self-defense

The Washington Post

Gunfire rang out Monday afternoon in a home in Broken Arrow, an Oklahoma city 15 miles southeast of Tulsa. Three intruders were killed after the son of the homeowner fired a semiautomatic rifle in what local law enforcement officers later described as an act of self-defense, though their investigation remains open.

The intruders — a 16-year-old, a 17-year-old and a man thought to be 18 or 19 — had smashed open the back door of the house, the Wagoner County

Sheriff's Office said in a statement posted to Facebook. Their plan was burglary, authorities said.

They wore gloves, masks and all-black clothes, Wagoner County Deputy Nick Mahoney told Tulsa World. Two of the teenagers were armed, one with a knife and the other with brass knuckles.

The trioreportedly exchanged words with the 23-year-old son of the homeowner, whose name has not been released. He fired on them with an AR-15, a popular semiautomatic rifle, officials

told Fox 23.

"Upon making entry to the home, one of the residents fired a rifle striking all three of the suspects," the sheriff's office said.

Two of the intruders died inside in the kitchen. The other "was able to run to the driveway before succumbing to his injuries," the statement said.

The homeowner and his son gave formal statements at the sheriff's office.

Authorities later said the suspected getaway driver, Elizabeth Rodriguez, turned herself

in at the Broken Arrow Police Department, the Tulsa World reported. The 21-year-old was arrested on charges of first degree murder, three counts, as well as three counts of burglary.

"A person who is committing a felony when a death occurs can be charged with felony murder," Tulsa World explained.

Several nearby homes had been burglarized in recent weeks, neighbor Leon Simmons told KOTV-TV. Authorities said they could not speculate as to whether this incident was related to the others.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Police: Man on crack crashes into cars

**PA** EIGHTY FOUR — Pennsylvania State Police said a man on crack cocaine was jailed on charges he crashed into other cars he thought were trying to box him in on Interstate 70.

Sedrick Holman, 44, of Connellsville, remained in the Washington County jail Monday on charges including driving under the influence, reckless endangerment and risking a catastrophe.

Police said he drove too fast, weaved in and out of traffic and smashed into at least four other vehicles about 7:45 p.m. Saturday in Somerset Township.

Police say Holman acknowledged smoking crack and told them he was “trying to get away from people who were trying to hurt him.”

## Chapel floor removed in search for graves

**TX** AUSTIN — Crews have removed the floor of the historic Oakwood Cemetery chapel in Austin in what's expected to be part of an effort to identify buried remains discovered last fall.

The Austin American-Statesman reported about 50 people attended a meeting on how to proceed, such as contacting relatives when the deceased are identified.

The chapel was built in 1914 on what was then the nonwhite part of the segregated cemetery. A restoration project was halted in November when archaeologists working with contractors discovered human remains under the chapel.

An Austin Parks and Recreation Department official said 20 shaft stains have been discovered and 13 gravesites have been observed.

## Parents leave 3 kids in mall while working

**NY** VICTOR — Authorities said a couple left their three young children, including an infant, alone in a suburban Rochester mall while the parents went to work inside the shopping center.

The Ontario County Sheriff's Office said a 39-year-old man and a 36-year-old woman, both from Rochester, brought the children ages 8, 6 and 1 month to the Eastview Mall in Victor last weekend. Deputies said the parents left the children unsupervised for six hours while they went to their jobs as maintenance workers in the mall.

Both parents were issued court appearance tickets for endangering the welfare of a child. Deputies said the incident was reported to county Child Protective Services.

## Bale of marijuana washes up on beach

**FL** DAYTONA BEACH — Authorities say a 52-year-old man called 911 after finding a bale of marijuana that had washed up on a Florida beach.

Jeff Stolorow told local news outlets he was walking on Daytona Beach on Saturday morning when he spotted the object, which was shaped like a giant cigar. As he got closer, he saw a ripped edge and what appeared to be blood. That's when he called for help.

Volusia County Beach Safety Capt. Mike Berard said narcotics sometimes wash ashore when the surf kicks up.

## 10 dolphins safe after being stranded on shore

**MA** DUXBURY — Animal rescuers have saved 10 of 12 dolphins that

were stranded along the Massachusetts shoreline.

The stranding in Duxbury was reported around 5 p.m. Sunday, according to The Boston Globe. Six dolphins were able to get back into the water as the tide rose. Rescuers managed to help two others return to deeper water, but two died.

A spokesman for the New England Aquarium said rescuers didn't have time to examine the animals because of the urgency required to get them back into the water.

International Fund for Animal Welfare officials said a team collected and released another two dolphins found stranded in Barnstable around 4:30 p.m.

## Officials: Wolves kill chickens and a goose

**OR** FLORA — Wildlife officials say a wolf pack killed at least eight chickens and a goose in eastern Oregon.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife told the Capital Press that a GPS tracking collar on a wolf showed its location about 300 yards from the attack site. The flock owners said they heard wolves howling at 4 a.m. Thursday, and later discovered 16 chickens and seven geese missing.

## No charges for business owner in shooting

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — Authorities in Philadelphia said no charges will be filed against a business owner who shot a robbery suspect and a bystander.

Police said a 40-year-old man armed with a knife entered a north Philadelphia laundromat about 4 p.m. Sunday and demanded \$2,000 from the owner. Authorities said the owner handed over the money

but chased the suspect as he fled. Police said the owner shot the suspect twice in the chest, and also struck a 52-year-old woman twice in the hand. The suspect is in critical condition and the bystander is in stable condition. Authorities called the shooting of the suspect self-defense and the bystander an accident. They say the owner had a permit for the weapon.

## Injured police dogs will get ambulance rides

**IL** CHAMPAIGN — Police dogs hurt on the job in the Champaign area will soon be able to get an ambulance ride to a hospital along with emergency care on the way.

The News-Gazette reported that Arrow Ambulance and the University of Illinois are teaming up to provide the ambulance ride to the University of Illinois Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Dr. Michael Smith, medical director of Carle Regional EMS and Arrow Ambulance, said University of Illinois veterinarians will train crewmembers in the basics of dog emergency medical response. Arrow Ambulance will then offer care and transport of dogs for free.

## 6-foot snake removed from woman's home

**FL** LAKE WALES — Deputies in central Florida removed a nearly 6-foot-long banded water snake from the home of an elderly woman Friday.

The Orlando Sentinel reported that after a photo of the snake with deputies was posted on Facebook and went viral, the Marion County Sheriff's Office took to social media to ask if the Polk County Sheriff's Office could help them find a missing cobra. The cobra escaped its pen in Ocala two weeks ago.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

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

Mobile apps available: [www.stripes.com/apps](http://www.stripes.com/apps).

# Raiders' move to Vegas gets approval

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Sometime in the not too distant future, they will become the Las Vegas Raiders.

Until then — likely in 2020 — Mark Davis' team belongs to Oakland. Well, sort of.

NFL owners approved the Raiders' move to Las Vegas 31-1 at the league meetings Monday. Miami was the lone dissenter. Davis insisted the club his father, Hall of Fame owner Al Davis, built into a champion — in Oakland and Los Angeles — should still be considered a part of the Bay Area community.

"I wouldn't use the term lame duck," Davis insisted. "We're still the Raiders and we represent Raider Nation."

"There will be disappointed fans, and it's important for me to talk to them to explain why and how."

As he does so, he also can address what is ahead for a team that, on the field, clearly is on the rise. Yet, questions abound how much support the Raiders can possibly retain in what is now a temporary home.

"My emotions are mixed," said coach Jack Del Rio, a Bay Area native. "While I'm sad for

family and friends and fans in the Oakland area, I also recognize the tremendous opportunity going forward for our organization. That being said, my mission remains the same: to lead this team here and now. Players and coaches need to understand their defined roles. We all need to bring positive energy everyday as we focus on things that we can control."

What they can't control is community reaction in a place where devotion to the Raiders during their Oakland years — they spent 1982-94 in Los Angeles — has been admirable. Even during all the losing between their last Super Bowl appearance, for the 2002 season, and their next winning record, which came last year, the Black Hole gang has been dedicated.

"All the Raiders fans my age, no way you can do it," said Ivan Davis, a fan of the team for a half-century. "Anyone who lived through the first one will not support them. The older Raiders fans, you lost them forever. The ones who gave their life blood to you, you lost them forever."

There will be new fans, of course, in a new locale, a place no one imagined the NFL ven-

turing to just a few years ago. But with their \$1.7 billion stadium not to be completed before 2020, the Raiders have three seasons to fill playing elsewhere.

"We have two more years of lease options for Oakland right now," Davis said. "If the fans would like us to stay there, we'd love to be there for that and possibly talk to them about extending it for maybe 2019 as well, and try to bring a championship back to Oakland."

The likelihood of the East Bay welcoming the Raiders for a third season at the aging Coliseum they share with the Athletics — the only such NFL/MLB arrangement remaining — isn't high. Mayor Libby Schaaf has accused Davis and the league of not "manning up," and other legislators have mentioned finding ways to void the two years of stadium options the Raiders have negotiated.

Davis said any season ticket holders who have already paid for next season will get full refunds if they seek them.

While 2019 is not nearly upon us, Davis needs a concrete plan for that season, including finding a training facility as well as a stadium.

There are other potential hang-ups that could slow construction of the Las Vegas stadium, which doesn't have a definite site yet.

Las Vegas stepped up with \$750 million in public money, and Bank of America is giving Davis a \$650 million loan. It's conceivable, if highly improbable, that snags will hit in those areas.

Interestingly, one segment that will profit from the move: Raiders employees. There is no income tax in Nevada, while California's is among the highest in the nation.

Meanwhile, league reservations about relocating a franchise to a city built on gambling have disappeared.

"The existing size of Las Vegas, the diversification and the growth that it has undergone over the last 20 years, combine to make it a mid-sized market today," said league executive Eric Grubman, the NFL's point man on stadium projects, "but one that is exhibiting significantly above-average growth. Those things in combination, its current size with its above average growth, combined to give the rest of the ownership confidence."

## Oakland fans: 'We're sick and tired of just being pawns'

Associated Press

SAN LEANDRO, Calif. — Ivan Davis stared stone-faced at the television as the news came down that the Oakland Raiders would be moving to Las Vegas and was asked if he was a fan of the team.

"I used to be," he responded.

Davis has been a Raiders fan for about a half-century, celebrating Super Bowl titles, enduring long stretches of losing and sticking by them even during a 13-year move to Los Angeles. But the NFL's 31-1 vote Monday to approve owner Mark Davis' application to move the team to Las Vegas will be the final straw that ends his support.

"All the Raiders fans my age, no way you can do it," he said. "Anyone who lived through the first one will not support them. The older Raiders fans, you lost them forever. The ones who gave their life blood to you, you lost them forever."

Ivan Davis was one of a handful of fans that showed up at the team's unofficial sports bar, Ricky's Sports Theatre and Grill, where the walls are decorated with memorabilia honoring the team.

A few other fans showed up at the team's facility in Alameda but there were no big protests. That didn't lessen the emotions of the team's dedicated fans in the East Bay who

regularly came to games in costumes even during a stretch of 13 straight seasons without a playoff berth that ended this past season.

"We're sick and tired of just being pawns," said Rob Rivera, the president of the Black Hole fan club. "Putting up with 13 years of bad football, embarrassing football and we stayed loyal to this team. When they needed something to hang their hat on, it was us who was there. For the team now to turn the corner and look to skip town, it's just devastating. For Mark Davis to look us in the eye and say he wanted to stay in Oakland, his heart is in Oakland, it's a bunch of bull."

The fans at Ricky's gave more blame to Mark Davis for refusing to negotiate with Oakland than to current Mayor Libby Schaaf, who put together a plan with NFL Hall of Famer Ronnie Lott and the Fortress Investment Group for a \$1.3 billion stadium.

She had asked the NFL to delay a vote to allow negotiations for a deal to keep the Raiders but Davis was committed to Las Vegas after years of struggles to get anything done in Oakland.

"I do think that the manly thing for him to do is at least admit that we had a viable plan and he made a choice," Schaaf said.



# South Carolina women get past Fla. St.

Associated Press

STOCKTON, Calif. — Before they climbed the ladder to take their turn cutting the nets, Kaela Davis and A'ja Wilson started dancing. And dancing. The band blared inches away, and they danced some more.

A spectacular, spontaneous moment for South Carolina's two biggest stars: one headed to her first Final Four, and the other going back to chase the school's first NCAA championship.

"It was just one of those in-the-moment things, having fun. We love our band," Davis said.

Moments before tipoff, Wilson pulled Bianca Cuevas-Moore into a quick embrace, then South Carolina's 6-foot-5 center began the night by winning the opening jump and the Gamecocks were on their way to the Final Four, holding off Florida State 71-64 on Monday to win the Stockton Regional.

Most Outstanding Player Davis scored immediately off the tip and again with a timely left-handed drive with 1:42 to

go on the way to 23 points. Wilson finished with 16 despite foul trouble and Allisha Gray acrobatically drove her way to 11 points for top-seeded South Carolina (31-4). Dawn Staley's Gamecocks are back in the Final Four for the first time since 2015 determined to bring home a title.

And — wow! — South Carolina is hoops country for the moment. The men's program reached its first Final Four with a victory against Florida on Sunday that sent the women screaming in delight at Stockton Arena all the way across the country from the victory at Madison Square Garden.

"We'd also like to congratulate our men's basketball team, because we're coming to join you!" Staley told the crowd, then later pulled down the net and showed it off to both sides of the arena.

Leticia Romero cut the South Carolina lead to five on a driving jumper with 3:51 left. Then Brittany Brown's steal and layup at 3:25 made it 65-62, but the rally fizzled from there

for the third-seeded Seminoles (28-7).

After the buzzer sounded, the Gamecocks hustled together for a team hug, and then danced at midcourt sporting fresh "CUT THE NET" T-shirts and Final Four hats.

Tyasha Harris added 16 points for South Carolina, which made things uncomfortable all game for Romero. The Spanish star had 16 points on 6-for-23 shooting as Florida State fell short once more of the program's first Final Four.

The Seminoles shot 36.6 percent (26-for-71).

"We just didn't hit shots. That was the big bottom line," coach Sue Semrau said. "You have to put the ball in the basket."

Davis, daughter of former NBA player Antonio Davis, delivered on both ends. She shot 10-for-15 and is headed to her Final Four debut on Friday against Stanford. She transferred from Georgia Tech for the chance to do something special.

"The end goal is just to get to the Final Four," she said. "It makes it 10 times better to say

you want to do something and accomplish it."

Two power programs from the South that scrimmaged together the past two preseasons faced off way out West in Northern California, a rematch of South Carolina's six-point Elite Eight win against the Seminoles two years ago in Greensboro, N.C.

This one was plenty entertaining, too — from big plays to a nail-biting final few minutes.

**Big picture: Florida State:** Florida State forced 23 turnovers two days earlier and 18 more Monday. ... It again played strong perimeter defense with the Gamecocks going 3-for-10 on threes after the Seminoles held Oregon State to 2-for-17 on three-pointers. ... No women's team from Florida has reached the Final Four.

**South Carolina:** Wilson got her fourth foul with 5:16 left and stayed in the game. ... South Carolina made 16 of 20 free throws after converting 18 of 19 from the line in a 100-58 rout of 12 seed Quinnipiac on Saturday.

## UConn advances to 10th straight Final Four

Associated Press

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — Everything UConn lost to graduation made another Final Four even more special for Geno Auriemma and his Huskies.

Napheesa Collier scored 28 points, Gabby Williams had 25 and the Huskies advanced to the national semifinals for the 10th straight year with a 90-52 victory against Oregon on Monday night.

"There were a lot of question marks going into the season and maybe they didn't have any in their own minds," Auriemma said. "They seemed to answer every single one of those questions. They deserve to be in the Final Four. They earned it."

The Huskies' 111th consecutive victory moved Auriemma past Pat Summitt for the most NCAA Tournament wins.

Auriemma now has 113 and counting.

Next up for top-seeded UConn (36-0) is Mississippi State on Friday night in Dallas. It is just two wins away from a fifth consecutive title and 12th overall.

"It means a whole lot, especially with this group because no one thought we'd be here and we worked so hard this year," said Collier, who earned most outstanding player of the region honors.

The Huskies jumped all over 10th-seeded Oregon (23-14), stopping its impressive run through the tourney.

Leading 6-4, UConn scored 17 straight points. Saniya Chong got the game-changing burst started with consecutive three-pointers. Nearly 4½ minutes later she capped the burst with a layup that made it 23-4.

Oregon closed to 34-21 mid-

way through the second quarter, but UConn put the game away by scoring 15 of the final 18 points of the half.

"They've owned the whole month of March, they weren't just along for the ride," Auriemma said. "It's theirs and that's a huge step. That's a big step to go from riding in the backseat on a trip you're going to, to all of a sudden you're in charge of driving the bus you're responsible for getting us there."

With Breanna Stewart, Morgan Tuck and Moriah Jefferson gone to the WNBA, UConn has a new trio leading the way. Collier and fellow sophomore Katie Lou Samuelson were honored as AP All-Americans on Monday, with Williams, a junior, making the second team.

Oregon also has a bright future. Coach Kelly Graves' team is led by outstanding freshmen

Sabrina Ionescu, Ruthy Hebard and Mallory McGwire. The trio averaged 36.8 points combined this season. Ionescu led the way against UConn with 15 points.

The Ducklings upset seventh-seeded Temple, No. 2 Duke and No. 3 Maryland to get to the Elite Eight for the first time in program history.

"I just think all of it is part of the process," Graves said. "A run like this will make it easier to motivate our team in the off-season. Our goal is to host the first and second round and not to make two trips across the country. Those things will really help us and give these guys confidence that they can win in the tournament."

**Sellout:** While attendance struggled at the three other regional sites, Bridgeport sold out the arena on both Saturday and Monday.

# Hot Spurs overwhelm ailing Cavaliers

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The Cavaliers acknowledged having heavy legs, yet there is something far weightier on the minds of the defending NBA champions.

Cleveland is in the midst of one of its worst stretches this season and there is little time to fix it.

Kawhi Leonard scored 25 points and the San Antonio Spurs dismantled the ailing Cavs 103-74 on Monday night in a much-anticipated showdown that turned into a major letdown for Cleveland.

"The way we've been struggling, [the Spurs are] the last team that you want to play," said LeBron James, who was fine after taking an elbow to the neck. "A well-oiled machine like this, they exploit everything that you're not doing well at that point in time of the season and right now we're not playing good basketball."

James, who finished with 17 points, eight rebounds and eight assists in 29 minutes, said he will play Thursday at Chicago.

Cleveland (47-26) dropped its second in a row, set a season low for points and fell a half-game behind Boston (48-26) for the top seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs. The Cavaliers have nine games remaining, all against teams in the East, including a visit to Boston on April 5.

James said the standings "always matter," but playing more consistently is far more important and he refused to blame injuries or an arduous schedule for the team's troubles.

San Antonio (57-16) is two games behind Golden State (59-14) for the league's best record entering a home game against the Warriors on Wednesday.

The Spurs have won five straight and eight of 10 after sweeping the season series with the Cavaliers.

"It was a big game, but in the

end, it's just one game, and one win," San Antonio guard Tony Parker said. "We're trying to be consistent. We're trying to play the same way every game. It was definitely surprising. Coming off a loss, I thought they would play with a lot more energy, but it can happen. It's a long season. It's just one game and I'm sure they're going to bounce back and use this game as motivation."

**Thunder 92, Mavericks 91:** Russell Westbrook hit a pull-up jumper with seven seconds left as Oklahoma City erased a 13-point deficit in the final four minutes to beat host Dallas.

Westbrook scored 37 points, including 16 in the fourth quarter, with 13 rebounds and 10 assists for his third straight triple-double and 37th of the season.

**Knicks 109, Pistons 95:** Derrick Rose scored 27 points and Kristaps Porzingis had 25 as host New York handed Detroit another damaging defeat.

Carmelo Anthony added 21 points for the Knicks after missing two games with a sore left knee. New York snapped a five-game losing streak and avoided playoff elimination.

**Raptors 131, Magic 112:** DeMar DeRozan scored 36 points and Cory Joseph had 15 points and 13 assists as host Toronto defeated Orlando for its sixth straight victory.

**Kings 91, Grizzlies 90:** Darren Collison scored 23 points and made two crucial free throws in the closing seconds to help Sacramento hand slumping Memphis its fourth consecutive loss.

**Jazz 108, Pelicans 100:** Rudy Gobert had 20 points, 19 rebounds and five blocks to lead host Utah over New Orleans.

Rodney Hood scored 20 points, Joe Ingles added 19 and George Hill chipped in with 17 as that Jazz trio combined to make a dozen three-pointers.

## Lack leaves on stretcher as Wings win in OT

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Andreas Athanasiou chased down the puck in overtime and skated hard toward Carolina goalie Eddie Lack.

As Athanasiou scored the winning goal, he crashed into the goaltender — and Lack didn't get up.

In a frightening end to the Detroit Red Wings' 4-3 victory over Carolina on Monday night, Lack remained down on the ice for several minutes before he was taken off on a stretcher.

Both teams remained on the ice and formed a semicircle to watch him. Lack flashed a thumbs up as he was wheeled away, and the team released a statement saying Lack has "full feeling in his extremities" but was taken to a hospital for tests.

Lack said via his verified Twitter account shortly before midnight that he would be discharged from the hospital overnight and that "everything looks alright."

"We're not going to try to regroup. We are going to regroup," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said. "We're going to come back with the right answer tomorrow, and right

now, I think everyone's thinking about their teammate, and that's kind of where our thoughts are.

"And then we'll come in (Tuesday) and we'll know more about that situation and we'll refocus on hockey."

An official review determined the puck was in the net before Athanasiou made contact with Lack. Replays indicated that Carolina's Victor Rask hit Athanasiou just before the Detroit center collided with Lack.

"I had no idea I hit him," Athanasiou said. "I just tried driving the net, and I felt [Rask's] stick on my back. He hit me pretty hard. I just tried to put the puck in the net, and even after, I had no idea I came in contact with him. I didn't know if it was me or [Rask]."

Lack finished with 23 saves.

Athanasiou's goal was his second OT winner in as many days. He beat Minnesota's Devan Dubnyk on Sunday.

"Sometimes the puck just kind of finds you and gets you in the right spot," Athanasiou said.

**Lightning 5, Blackhawks 4 (OT):** Yanni Gourde had a breakaway goal 4:25 into overtime as host Tampa Bay rallied from a

three-goal deficit to beat Chicago.

Tampa Bay, which trails Boston by a point for the second Eastern Conference wild card, got two goals from Jonathan Drouin. Ondrej Palat and Anton Stralman also scored.

**Predators 3, Islanders 1:** Viktor Arvidsson scored early in the second period and Jusse Saros stopped 24 shots as visiting Nashville held on to beat New York for its fourth straight win. Kevin Fiala and Ryan Johansen also scored to help the surging Predators win for the seventh time in eight games and remain in control of third place in the Central Division.

**Blues 4, Coyotes 1:** Jaden Schwartz scored twice and Jake Allen made 21 saves to help host St. Louis continue its mastery over Arizona. St. Louis has won 10 straight games against Arizona.

**Sabres 4, Panthers 2:** Brian Gionta scored while playing his 1,000th career game to help host Buffalo beat Florida.

**Flames 4, Avalanche 2:** Sean Monahan scored his team-leading 26th goal and added three assists as host Calgary inched closer to clinching a playoff spot with a victory over Colorado.