

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Coalition shifts tactics on militants, civilians

BY TARA COPP

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — U.S.-led forces fighting the Islamic State are adjusting their tactics in Iraq and Syria based on evidence that the terrorist group lures airstrikes at buildings in which they have trapped civilians, a spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve said Thursday.

“What you see now is not the use of civilians as human shields. Now it is something much more sinister,” said Army Col. Joseph Scrocca, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition. “[The Islamic State] is smuggling civilians into buildings so we won’t see them, and trying to bait the coalition to attack.”

The terrorist group has held civilians hostage in buildings that would be targets for U.S. and coalition jets at least three times, Scrocca told reporters at the Pentagon.

He said the Islamic State had shifted to this tactic as an attempt to increase civilian casualties in order to “take advantage of the public outcry and deter action in the future.”

The coalition had suspected the terror-

ist group was employing this new tactic and had been looking for evidence, which it obtained through surveillance March 29, Scrocca said.

“For the first time, we caught this on video yesterday, as armed [Islamic State] fighters forced civilians into a building, killing one who resisted and then used that building as a fighting position against the [Iraq Counter Terrorism Service forces],” he said.

Scrocca also said the Defense Department was working to declassify the video and intends to release it publicly. In addition, U.S. and coalition jets have adjusted their tactics in response.

“Throughout the last couple of weeks we’ve suspected it, we’ve heard rumors of it,” Scrocca said. “Now we kind of know what it looks like ... we are looking for those signs. It has caused some adjustments to our procedures.”

However, he declined to specify Thursday how U.S. and coalition forces had adjusted tactics.

The announcement of video evidence follows reports that hundreds of civilians might have died as a result of U.S. airstrikes on March 17 in the battle for Mosul,

the last urban stronghold for the Islamic State in Iraq.

Army Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, the top commander for U.S. and coalition forces in the fight against the Islamic State, has also directed a formal, in-depth investigation, known as a 15-6, into the airstrikes, Scrocca said.

The airstrikes have led to questions about whether adjustments that the U.S. made to its rules of engagement in December to allow lower-ranking commanders in the field to direct airstrikes has resulted in the increased loss of civilian life.

Scrocca said the December adjustment allowed for specific U.S. field officers, in conjunction with their Iraqi counterparts, to direct dynamic airstrikes — ones that are in immediate reaction to an ongoing fight or a direct threat. More senior leadership at headquarters remains involved in planned strikes, ones using extended surveillance and not part of an ongoing fight.

He said most airstrikes in the fight against the Islamic State in Mosul are dynamic in nature and not planned, and that the strikes involved in the March 17 incident were likely dynamic.

## Air Force issues new rules on social media use

BY SETH ROBSON

*Stars and Stripes*

New Air Force social media rules issued in the wake of the Marines United nude photo-sharing scandal are warning airmen to avoid posting anything offensive or illegal online.

The March update to the Air Force’s “Public Web and Social Communication” regulation tells service personnel not to post “any defamatory, libelous, vulgar, obscene, abusive, profane, threatening, hateful, racially, ethnically or otherwise offensive or illegal information or material.”

Airmen also should not post information that would infringe

on the proprietary, privacy or personal rights of others and should not disguise, impersonate or otherwise misrepresent their identity or affiliation with any other person or identity online, the rules say.

The rules have received mixed reaction among those interested in Air Force issues.

Soon after the rules were updated, people began mocking them on an unofficial, Air Force-related Reddit page.

“I was about to write some defamatory, libelous, vulgar, obscene, abusive, profane, threatening, hateful, racially, ethnically, or otherwise offensive or illegal information or material in response to this, but then I read your post and

found out I’m not allowed to,” one user wrote.

The update came after Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller was grilled this month by the Senate Armed Service Committee over others’ sharing of nude photographs of female Marines on a secret Facebook group called Marines United.

Last week, Air Force Lt. Gen. Gina Grosso, the service’s deputy chief of staff for personnel, told lawmakers that an airman had been charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice for posting revenge porn, The Associated Press reported.

Revenge porn is when an intimate photo is taken and

shared willingly with a partner or spouse, but later distributed online by that partner without the subject’s permission, the report said. More than 30 states have revenge porn laws.

The Air Force did not immediately respond to Stars and Stripes questions about the rules.

However, the instruction says the service views personal websites and blogs positively and respects the rights of airmen to use them as a medium of self-expression.

Airmen should use their best judgment when posting online, says the instruction, which adds, “there are always consequences to what is written.”

# Group: Directive assaults religious freedom

BY ALEX HORTON

*Stars and Stripes*

SAN ANTONIO — A military religious freedom group blasted an Army directive mandating diversity training, saying it targets biblical beliefs about sexual orientation, the group said Tuesday.

The Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty, which advocates for freedom of religious expression in uniform, sent a letter dated Feb. 24 to acting Army Secretary Robert Speer criticizing an Army directive titled “Promoting Diversity and Inclusion.”

The group zeroed in on a section calling for the Army Training and Doctrine Command and the chief of staff to “develop a plan to expand training on implicit or unconscious bias” aimed at soldiers in senior leadership and management positions, recruitment

and other areas.

Ron Crews, a retired Army chaplain and executive director of the group, believes the training is meant to discourage troops with religious teachings from expressing their views, calling it an assault on soldiers who hold biblical beliefs that marriage and sexual relationships should only be between men and women.

The Army said Tuesday the memorandum is under review but declined to discuss policy implementation or training specifics.

The directive, signed by then-Army Secretary Eric Fanning on Jan. 18, ahead of the inauguration of President Donald Trump, was created as a means to diversify the pool of potential recruits and to remove barriers of advancement for qualified soldiers, Fanning told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday.

Fanning, the first openly gay Army secretary, waved off concerns that the directive in general or the unconscious bias section in particular was created with only sexual orientation in mind. The training was meant to encompass everything: gender, race, ethnicity, education, skill sets and other backgrounds, he said.

Implicit bias, often called unconscious bias, is judgment or behavior toward certain groups, like racism or sexism, that occurs below a conscious level, according to the National Center for State Courts, a non-profit that works on improving judicial administration.

The White House mandated training to recognize and combat implicit bias in the national security workforce in an October memorandum, Fanning said.

Fanning said the accusation

of setting political agendas was confusing.

“I don’t think opportunity and equality are political agendas. I think they’re important American values,” he said.

The letter came just weeks after a draft of an executive order by the Trump administration was obtained by media. “Establishing a Government-Wide Initiative to Respect Religious Freedom” proposed that “Americans and their religious organizations will not be coerced by the Federal Government into participating in activities that violate their conscience,” according to the draft order, cited by several news organizations. If officially signed, it would be considered a win for conservative Christians who favor religious freedom exemptions. The Trump administration did not comment on the draft order in February.

## Votel: Don’t hold up arms sales to Bahrain

*Bloomberg*

The commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East said foreign arms sales to allies shouldn’t be burdened with preconditions tied to human rights, citing the case of Bahrain.

Army Gen. Joseph Votel, who heads U.S. Central Command, told a congressional committee Wednesday the U.S.’s military-to-military relationship with the Gulf ally has been hurt by delays in a proposed sale of as many as 19 new F-16 fighter jets built by Lockheed Martin and upgrades for older ones in a deal totaling almost \$4 billion.

“While we have historically enjoyed a strong mil-to-mil relationship with our Bahraini counterparts, the slow progress on key FMS cases, specifically additional F-16 aircraft and upgrades to Bahrain’s existing F-16 fleet, due to concerns of potential human rights abuses in the country, continues to strain our relationship,” Votel said in prepared testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, referring to the Pentagon’s Foreign Military Sales program.

The Obama administration told Congress in September it wouldn’t complete approval of the sale until Bahrain demonstrated progress on human rights issues after its Sunni-dominated government suppressed nonviolent opposition and dissolved the main opposition group of the country’s Shiite majority.

The sale remains under active consideration

in the Trump administration, which has emphasized “hard power” over “soft power” goals such as encouraging democracy abroad.

Votel didn’t dismiss human rights concerns altogether. “We continue to urge the government of Bahrain to reverse steps it has taken over the past year to reduce the space for peaceful political expression in its Shia population and have encouraged the Bahrainis to implement needed political reforms while assuring them of our strong commitment,” he said.

Bahrain is an important U.S. partner, hosting the U.S. Navy 5th Fleet headquarters and the “Combined Maritime Forces” in Manama. Bahrain also has actively supported U.S.-led military operations against Islamic State terrorists in Syria since September 2014, primarily by allowing the U.S. continued use and access to its facilities.

Using military sales “to achieve changes in behavior has questionable effectiveness and can have unintended consequences,” Votel said. “We need to carefully balance these concerns against our desired outcomes for U.S. security assistance programs” and “we should avoid using the programs as a lever of influence or denial to our own detriment.”

Bruce Tanner, Lockheed’s chief financial officer, said in an interview last week that he remained “cautiously optimistic” the potential sale eventually would be approved by the U.S.

## Navy to christen USS Hudner

*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy will christen its newest guided-missile destroyer at the General Dynamics Bath Iron Works facility in Maine Saturday.

The USS Thomas Hudner is named after the last living Navy Medal of Honor recipient to have served in the Korean War, a Navy statement said.

Thomas Hudner Jr. received the honor for attempting to save the life of a squadron mate, Ensign Jessie L. Brown, during the Battle of Chosin Reservoir.

The Thomas Hudner is 509 feet long and has a waterline beam of 59 feet and a navigational draft of 31 feet. Four gas turbine engines will power the ship to speeds in excess of 35 mph, the statement said.

The ceremony, slated to begin at 11:30 a.m. Eastern time, will be live streamed.

# Kony aide surrenders as US plans drawdown

Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda — A rebel in charge of communications for warlord Joseph Kony has surrendered to Ugandan forces, the military said Thursday, shortly after the U.S. indicated it was pulling out of the international manhunt for one of Africa's most notorious fugitives.

Michael Omona's surrender to Ugandan forces in Central African Republic "shows the degraded capacity" of the Lord's Resistance Army rebel group, said Maj. Kiconco Tabaro, the Ugandan military's deputy spokesman.

The U.S. on Wednesday cited the weakening of the LRA for its decision to remove its military forces, which have included special forces, from the operation.

The U.S. will "transition to broader scope security and stability activities that continue the success of our African part-

ners," U.S. Africa Command said. The Americans were first deployed in 2011 as military advisers.

Kony is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity. One of his former commanders, Dominic Ongwen, is currently on trial at The Hague-based court.

The LRA began as a Ugandan rebel movement in the 1980s but at the peak of its powers was internationally known for its cruelty against civilians in Congo, Central African Republic and what is now South Sudan as well. In 2012, the U.S.-based advocacy group Invisible Children made a highly successful online video highlighting the LRA's alleged crimes, including the abduction of children for use as sex slaves or fighters.

But the LRA's active membership has shrunk under pressure and is now under

100, according to U.S. Africa Command.

Last week the U.S. Africa Command commander, Marine Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, declared the hunt for Kony largely over. Most of Kony's top lieutenants are now off the battlefield, leaving the leader "irrelevant" and in survival mode, he said.

The latest to surrender, Omona, had been abducted by the LRA in 1994 and later became a high-ranking rebel and served as "chief signaler" for Kony.

Ugandan military spokesman Brig. Richard Karemire said Thursday that Uganda is thankful for U.S. support over the years in efforts to defeat the LRA. Ugandan troops will not immediately pull out of the mission against the rebel group, he said.

Uganda currently has about 1,500 troops deployed under an African Union military mission to defeat the LRA. AU defense chiefs were meeting Thursday on the fate of the mission.

## Sailor hones magic on high seas

Kokomo (Ind.) Tribune

PERSIAN GULF — Six sailors stare at Petty Officer 2nd Class Bradley Dowden aboard the mess decks of the guided-missile destroyer USS Cole, waiting in anticipation for the big reveal.

This is the moment of truth — the moment these sailors might have to briefly forget about the dangers of working in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations. It is the moment when a magic trick becomes a reality.

Dowden, 31, flips the blue Bicycle playing card showing a king of diamonds. The sailors roar with disbelief.

Dowden has come a long way from learning magic with his cousin in Indiana. Now, he's performed in several countries thanks to his Navy deployment. These days, Dowden considers magic to be more than a hobby. It's an obsession.

"I think, in general, most people want to believe in magic," Dowden said in a Navy press release. "I think that most people want to believe something amazing is happening in front of them. Even if they know it's an illusion, they don't care. They love it."

Dowden started performing magic tricks when he was an adult, but it was his cousin who inspired him to give it a try. As a teenager, he witnessed his cousin perform some card tricks and wanted to try his hand at them.

So his cousin bought him the book "The World's Greatest Card Trick" by Bob Long one year for his birthday. The rest is

history.

"That's where it all started, and now I have a 200-card collection, with more cards ordered yesterday," Dowden said.

In 2015, Dowden decided to make his hobby viewable on a global scale. A friend suggested Dowden announce a world tour through social media sites and record and post magic tricks in different cities throughout his deployment.

Dowden said he considers himself an amateur street magician, but the Navy gave him an amazing opportunity to do his magic while on a world tour to Israel, Turkey, Greece and Croatia. During his deployment, he performed in Dracula's castle and a fort in Split, Croatia, where the TV show "Game of Thrones" was filmed.

"During deployments, it's easy to get into the work-sleep cycle routine," said Master Chief Petty Officer Dale Aitchison. "It's easy to get stuck in Groundhog Day, but everyone should try to have a hobby."

Now, Aitchison said he's also caught the magic bug and is taking magic lessons from Dowden.

"The biggest challenge, as a magician, is to be yourself," said Dowden. "You have to play to the crowd and still maintain your own kind of style."

Developing that style can lead to the defining moment of a magician's life — developing and creating tricks of their own. The moment Dowden took a step toward creating his own illusions was when the magic really started to happen, he said.

## AF pick draws flak at hearing

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's nominee for Air Force secretary came under scrutiny Thursday as Democrats questioned her work as a defense industry consultant and a conversation she had a decade ago with a federal prosecutor during a corruption probe.

During her confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Heather Wilson defended her performance, telling the panel she did nothing improper. To avoid any potential conflicts of interest, Wilson has committed to selling stocks she holds in more than a dozen companies that have Defense Department contracts.

Wilson is the first service secretary nominee selected by Trump to appear before the committee. The president's nominee to lead the Army, Vincent Viola, withdrew in early February because of financial entanglements, and about three weeks later, Philip B. Bilden, the Navy secretary nominee, withdrew for similar reasons.

After serving five terms in Congress from New Mexico, Wilson collected nearly half a million dollars in questionable payments from federally funded nuclear labs, the Energy Department's inspector general said in a 2013 report. Wilson failed to provide documentation for the consulting work she did to earn \$20,000 per month from the Los Alamos and Sandia national labs in New Mexico from January 2009 to March 2011, the report said.

## Senators focus on Russia in election meddling hearing

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers heading the Senate intelligence committee focused squarely on Russia as they opened a hearing Thursday on attempts at undermining the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

“Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a deliberate campaign carefully constructed to undermine our election,” said Virginia Democratic Sen. Mark Warner.

Earlier Thursday, Putin again dismissed what he called “endless and groundless” accusations of Russian meddling in the U.S. election, describing them as part of the U.S. domestic political struggle. He also said he is ready to meet with President Donald Trump at an upcoming arctic summit.

The hearing Thursday is to address how the Kremlin allegedly uses technology to spread disinformation in the U.S. and Europe. Warner and the panel’s chairman, Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., provided an update Wednesday of the committee’s investigation into activities Russia might have taken to alter or influence the 2016 elections and whether there were any campaign contacts with Russian government officials that might have interfered with the election process.

“There were upwards of 1,000 paid internet trolls working out of a facility in Russia, in effect, taking over series of computers, which is then called a botnet,” Warner told reporters on Capitol Hill Wednesday.

Warner said the committee is investigating to find out whether voters in key states, such as Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, might have been served up Russian-generated fake news and propaganda along with information from their traditional news outlets.

Burr added that Russians are trying to influence elections in Europe as well.

## N. Korea could be preparing for nuke test, images show

BY KIM GAMEL  
AND YOO KYONG CHANG

*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — Fresh satellite images show increased activity at North Korea’s main nuclear-testing site, raising concern the communist state may try to upstage next week’s summit between the U.S. and China.

South Korea’s military and other officials have said the North appears ready to conduct a sixth nuclear test at any time upon orders from leader Kim Jong Un.

The communist state also could be preparing for “a different type of nuclear test from the past,” military spokesman Col. Roh Jae-cheon said Thursday at a news briefing.

He didn’t elaborate, but experts said the North likely would want a bigger explosion to send a strong political message as it seeks to force the U.S. and allies to accept it as a nuclear power.

38 North, a website that monitors the North’s activities, said a vehicle and a group of 70 to 100 people “standing in formation or watching” in a courtyard were spotted in commercial imagery from the mountainous Punggye-ri site on Tuesday.

“Such a gathering hasn’t been seen since January 4, 2013, which was followed by a nuclear test on February 12,” said the analysis by experts Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Jack Liu.

38 North, which is run by the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University, recorded other signs of preparations, including water being pumped out of the north portal despite recent snowfall, “presumably to keep the tunnels dry for communications and monitoring equipment.”

The report posted Wednesday followed

earlier sightings of vehicles and other activity at the site. But the authors stressed it was impossible to determine whether the activity was preparation for another nuclear test or a ploy.

“The North Koreans know when commercial satellites are passing overhead and typically try to avoid activities during that time,” they said. “The fact these formations can be seen suggests that Pyongyang is sending a political message that the sixth nuclear test will be conducted soon. Alternatively, it may be engaged in a well-planned game of brinkmanship.”

North Korea has conducted five atomic tests — one in 2006, 2009 and 2013 and two last year. It also has stepped up its weapons program with the stated goal of developing a nuclear-tipped missile that could target the U.S. mainland.

Kim Tae-woo, a military studies professor at South Korea’s Konyang University, agreed that a sixth nuclear test likely would differ in scale and type.

“The size is likely to be bigger than those conducted in the past,” he said. “North Korea would like to get the United States to acknowledge it as a nuclear power, and it wants that recognition as soon as possible.”

Kim also said the North could try testing a boosted fission weapon that uses hydrogen fusion to produce smaller, lighter warheads — the type it would need to fit on a long-distance missile.

Yang Mu-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, agreed, noting Pyongyang needs to be careful not to threaten nearby China, its only major ally.

“This time it might be a boosted fission bomb because that’s in between atomic bomb level and hydrogen bomb level,” Yang said.

## McDonald’s to use fresh beef in Quarter Pounders

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Coming soon to McDonald’s: fresh beef.

The fast food giant said Thursday that it will swap frozen beef patties for fresh ones in its Quarter Pounder burgers by sometime next year at most of its U.S. locations. Employees will cook up the never-frozen beef on a grill when ordered.

That has been the biggest selling point at rival Wendy’s. Yet there are larger forces

at work that have prompted other menu changes at McDonald’s, known for decades more for the billions of people that it has served rather than its culinary choices.

The world’s largest hamburger chain for some time has been attempting to improve its image as more people shun processed foods. It has tinkered with its recipes, removed artificial preservatives from chicken McNuggets and removed high fructose corn syrup from its buns.

Earlier this month, McDonald’s acknowl-

edged that it lost 500 million customer transactions in the U.S. since 2012, mainly to other fast food rivals.

McDonald’s Corp., based in Oak Brook, Ill., tested the fresh beef Quarter Pounders at more than 400 restaurants in Dallas and Tulsa, Okla., for about a year before rolling out the changes nationally. By the middle of 2018, the fresh beef will come to most of its 14,000 U.S. locations except those in Alaska, Hawaii and some airport locations.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Border Patrol agent's murder case to go on

**AZ** TUCSON — The second-degree murder case against a Border Patrol agent accused of killing a Mexican teen in a cross-border shooting will move forward after a federal judge denied a motion to dismiss.

Judge Ranner Collins issued the ruling last week denying a claim by an attorney for Agent Lonnie Swartz that the federal government didn't have jurisdiction over the case.

Collins also agreed to suppress answers Swartz gave to a superior the day he fatally shot Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez, 16, saying Swartz was led to believe the answers couldn't be used to incriminate him.

Swartz is accused of firing through the border fence into Nogales, Mexico, and striking Elena Rodriguez about 10 times. He said Elena Rodriguez threw rocks at him, a claim the teen's family denies.

## Mandated 'In God We Trust' tags suspect

**TN** NASHVILLE — The state attorney general's office says a bill that would require all Tennessee license plates to bear the words "In God We Trust" is constitutionally suspect.

However, the legal opinion by Attorney General Herbert Slatery said that same license plate would be defensible if citizens were given the option of having one instead of being forced to get one.

A bill currently moving through the Legislature would require all Tennessee license plates to have the words "In God We Trust."

Slatery's opinion said that despite the phrase being steeped in U.S. history, it's also

one that has religious connotations and that's why it could be unconstitutional.

## Wife of accused cop barred from jail job

**IL** CHICAGO — The wife of a white Chicago police officer charged with murder after shooting a black teen 16 times has been told she shouldn't train for a job working in the Cook County jail.

Tiffany Van Dyke's husband, Jason Van Dyke, faces murder charges in Laquan McDonald's death. She told the Chicago Tribune she was to begin training last week to be a correctional officer. She said she'd already quit jobs and bought expensive uniforms and equipment to start the four-month training.

A top aide to Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart said Tiffany Van Dyke's start date was delayed over safety concerns she would face working in the jail due to her husband's high-profile case.

## Teen guilty of break-in, theft at trooper's home

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — Court records show a teenager was convicted of breaking into a Louisiana State Police trooper's home.

The Times-Picayune reported Sunday that St. Charles Parish court records state Dillyn Austin, 19, pleaded guilty and will serve about 11 months in prison. Authorities say Austin stole several firearms from the home of trooper Victor Taylor.

The St. Charles Herald-Guide reported Austin also stole a PlayStation 4, two small safes, a Super Bowl 47 State Police badge, a 50-year Commemorative State Police badge and money.

Austin was sentenced to six years in prison with all but 18

months suspended. He must pay \$2,412.53 to Taylor and must serve 80 hours of community service upon his release.

## Infant safe, 2 charged following Amber Alert

**AL** GORDO — An infant who was the subject of an Amber Alert is now in state custody.

Gordo Police Chief Todd Hall told local media that Blake Perkins, 19, and Tandra Goff, 18, the noncustodial parents of 11-month-old Christian Clay Perkins, are facing felony charges of interfering with custody.

Hall said Perkins and Goff took the baby from a foster home in Gordo during the early-morning hours Saturday.

Authorities issued an Amber Alert, and Hall said several phone calls and tips came in. Police located the baby safe Saturday evening and arrested Perkins and Goff.

Hall said the infant is in custody of the Alabama Department of Human Resources and is in good condition.

## Teen dies after log rolls on top of her on beach

**OR** BANDON — A 14-year-old girl playing on an Oregon coast beach near Bandon died when a log rolled on top of her.

Oregon State Police in a news release Sunday said the girl from Eugene was playing on the log during a strong receding tide about 4 p.m. Saturday when it rolled.

Police said other beachgoers got the girl out from under the log after several attempts. A responding Bandon police officer administered life-saving measures, as did paramedics.

The girl was pronounced dead at South Coos Hospital. Her name hasn't been

released.

## Woman convicted of assault, manslaughter

**PA** NORRISTOWN — A suburban Philadelphia woman was convicted of aggravated assault and involuntary manslaughter in the death of her elderly neighbor.

Jurors in Montgomery County deliberated for more than 12 hours before reaching a verdict last week in the case against Elisabeth Floyd, 35, of East Norriton.

Prosecutors had sought a third-degree murder conviction, saying the Feb. 19 death of Alfred Payne, 97, stemmed from a September 2015 assault. Payne told police that he had gone out to his driveway to get his newspaper when Floyd, who he had never met, attacked him.

Defense lawyer David Tonneta argued that Payne's injuries and death stemmed from a fall in his driveway. Floyd took the stand and denied attacking Payne, saying she saw him lying on his driveway and went to help.

## Decomposed, headless body is found in river

**WA** ASOTIN — An eastern Washington state sheriff says a decomposed body with no head found in the Snake River will be sent to Seattle.

Asotin County Sheriff John Hilderbrand told the Lewiston Tribune that the body found last week is possibly a male. The person's identity and cause of death are unknown.

The body was found Tuesday near Chief Timothy Park west of Clarkston.

From wire reports

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# Six teams trying to replicate Cubs' feat

Associated Press

**N**ow that the Cubs have broken baseball's oldest curse, who's next? From D.C. to Dodger Stadium, a lot of loaded teams are lurking, waiting for that elusive World Series victory.

New Cardinals leadoff man Dexter Fowler has a clue which club might break through.

"I guess Cleveland," he said.

Fowler got a close-up look last fall. He was part of the Cubs squad that ended a 108-year championship drought by denying the Indians their first title since 1948.

Carlos Correa, Jose Altuve and the Houston Astros seem ready to rocket into October orbit.

'Bout time for a team still searching for that first crown.

"I wouldn't mind taking us off that list," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said.

Been a while, too, since the U.S. capital was the baseball capital — 1924, to be exact.

"It would put the Nationals on the map," Washington manager Dusty Baker said. "Rightfully so, this is a Redskins town. They've been there a long time. They've got a his-

tory of success."

Let's look at who could be next to jettison the jinx:

## Just missed

The Royals' crowning achievement in 2015 came a year after they fell 90 feet short of catching Madison Bumgarner in Game 7. So, coming close can mean there's drama on deck.

The Indians hope so. Remember, they nearly won last November — they went into the bottom of the ninth in Game 7 tied with the Cubs, and had the top of their order up against a tiring Aroldis Chapman.

Cleveland boosted its chances during the winter by signing big bopper Edwin Encarnacion to a \$60 million deal, the most expensive free agent in team history.

## Blast off

Dallas Keuchel and the Astros are tired of waiting. It's certainly been a long one — Houston began play in 1962 and has reached the World Series only once, getting swept by the White Sox in 2005.

After losing 111 games a few years ago, the Astros quickly rebuilt their front office, roster and approach. That's a familiar formula — like the Cubs, Houston developed through the draft, made a couple of trades, then spent a lot for free agents.

Now, newcomers Carlos Beltran, Brian McCann and Josh Reddick could help bring that long overdue title to town.

"I'd like to be the first team in Texas

after growing up in Dallas," slugger Evan Gattis said. "I think we definitely have the ingredients."

## Lonesome Star State

The Cowboys, the Longhorns, the Mavericks and more — every major pro and college sports trophy has been won at least once by a Texas team. Except the World Series, that is.

The Rangers came the closest, just one strike away in 2011 before St. Louis rallied. With young stars, a healthy Yu Darvish and a winning culture, they could end a skid that started with their move from Washington for the 1972 season under manager Ted Williams.

## Window pains

We frequently hear that a team built to win right now is running out of time. But how often do those clubs jump through before the window closes? Uh, not many.

The Tigers (no title since 1984) and Toronto (last in 1993) both added ace David Price in recent years but lost in the playoffs.

That brings us to Washington, a city without a World Series winner in nearly a century. The current Nationals franchise dates to 1969 in Montreal, where the Expos never reached la Serie mondiale.

Bryce Harper is getting closer to free agency, Stephen Strasburg is hurt a lot, Ryan Zimmerman is wearing down. No wonder local fans worry their window could soon shut.

Baker is confident his team can stop the D.C. drought.

"I almost ended it in Chicago," he said. "It's OK, we'll end it here, too. We'll end it here for the whole city."

## Dodgeball

Can a crown be bought? Not yet in LA, not by Magic Johnson and his co-owners. They've been baseball's biggest spenders lately, forking over more than \$250 million a year in payroll, but there hasn't been a World Series game at Dodger Stadium since Orel Hershiser closed out Oakland's Bash Brothers in 1988.

Some people say it's a shame Clayton Kershaw hasn't pitched in the Fall Classic. Maybe harsh, but the great ace has been part of the problem — he's 4-7 (and one mighty save) in the postseason with a 4.55 ERA that's nearly double his regular-season mark.

## Operation Victory

The Mets were all set last season to make a pitch for their first championship since 1986. With young aces Matt Harvey, Jacob deGrom, Noah Syndergaard and Steven Matz leading the rotation, what could go wrong?

Instead, an amazin' string of injuries did surgery to the Mets' plans. Proving, again, there's no predicting the health of a ballclub — but it's a sure bet any team that spends more time in the doctor's office than on the diamond is sunk.

The Mets will get a great opportunity to assert themselves in the NL East. They start the season with a whopping 32 straight games against division opponents.

# More players trying to avoid hitting ground balls

Associated Press

Josh Donaldson and Reggie Jackson stood off to the third base side of the batting cage, a pair of former American League MVPs discussing their craft in spring training. When the Blue Jays star hopped in to take his swings, Mr. October pulled out his phone to shoot video, a visual aid for his job as a special adviser to the Yankees.

"Josh's swing, it's something new and different," the 70-year-old Jackson said. "I wanted him to interpret it for me."

Donaldson is an early adopter to a growing big league trend — hitters fixated on producing

fly balls. Or, as Donaldson put it recently on Twitter:

"Just say NO.... to ground balls."

Donaldson put his career on the upswing by, well, swinging up, and he's not alone. Toronto teammate Jose Bautista achieved stardom by adding some loft, and Chicago Cubs slugger Kris Bryant has prioritized hitting the ball in the air his entire career. Detroit's J.D. Martinez and the Dodgers' Justin Turner have made millions since deciding to shoot for the sky.

It doesn't take an aerospace degree to see why. On ground balls in 2016, big league hitters

had a .239 average and .258 slugging percentage. On line drives and fly balls combined, they hit .411 with a .785 slugging percentage.

For those who want to dig deeper, there's never been more to explore. Over the past two seasons, MLB.com posted data provided by Statcast, a tracking system that records the distance, speed and trajectory of batted balls.

The numbers make one thing clear — it's good to hit the ball hard, but it's better to hit it hard and high.

"I've done a lot of research," Donaldson said. "I'm confident in what I do and I believe in it."

Before the 2013 season, Don-

aldson re-engineered his swing with the help of Bobby Tewksbary, a hitting instructor whose playing career topped out in the independent Can-Am Association. The 33-year-old works out of a facility in Nashua, N.H., and has helped a number of major leaguers, including Chris Colabello, A.J. Pollock and Matt Joyce.

Tewksbary is on a mission to make hitters better by debunking the axiom against swinging up. He felt his own career was hindered by the hitting instruction he got as a young player — he was always told to "swing down" on the ball.

# Each Final Four team has an X-factor

Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — North Carolina's Luke Maye can't go to class without getting a standing ovation nor walk across campus without getting stopped by people requesting to take a photo with him.

All because of one shot — one that lifted the Tar Heels past Kentucky to reach the Final Four while turning the sophomore from rotation reserve to sudden star.

"He's big-time now," junior Justin Jackson said. "I feel like we need some security around campus."

Maye headlines a group of players that could emerge as X-factors in determining whether UNC, Gonzaga, Oregon or South Carolina wins the national championship. Don't sleep on Gonzaga's Zach Collins, Oregon's Jordan Bell or South Carolina's Rakym Felder.

"The entire year, [coach Roy Williams] has been putting me in the games, wanting me to make good plays," Maye said Tuesday. "Some games I hit a shot early, in other games I'd

just get a rebound or make a good pass. I'm just trying to go out there and help my team win as best I can."

The 6-foot-9 Maye entered last weekend as a player who has had some good moments — including 15 rebounds against Florida State, 13 points at rival North Carolina State — but generally played to spell starters Kennedy Meeks or Isaiah Hicks up front.

Yet he had shown a soft shooting touch and the ability to pull defending big men out to the perimeter. And when Hicks got in early foul trouble against Butler in the Sweet 16, Maye became much more than a sub for the Tar Heels (31-7).

The guy who came in averaging 5.1 points in 13.8 minutes per game went for 16 points and 12 rebounds in the win against the Bulldogs. Then, with Hicks struggling against the Wildcats in the Elite Eight, Maye scored 17 points — the last two coming on that jumper with 0.3 seconds left for the 75-73 win.

Maye made 12 of 19 shots and five of eight three-pointers — 63 percent in both cases

— during the two-game stop in Memphis, Tenn., to lift the region's No. 1 seed to a record 20th Final Four to face Oregon on Saturday.

"When he sets a screen, most of the time [defenders] are hedging long," Jackson said. "So whenever he pops, it's hard for them to find him. So that's huge. And then outside of that, because he's a stretch-4 there's much more room inside for the guards to drive. ... So when he's in there, I think that really helps us."

Here's a look at players who could emerge from the shadows this weekend in Phoenix:

**Gonzaga:** The West Regional's top seed has freshman Zach Collins, a 7-foot McDonald's All-American, coming off the bench behind center Przemek Karnowski. Collins is averaging 9.9 points and 5.7 rebounds while shooting 65.4 percent, and he's doing it in just 17.2 minutes per game entering the semifinals against South Carolina in a matchup of two first-time Final Four programs.

**Oregon:** On a team led by Dillon Brooks and Tyler Dors-

ey, 6-9 junior Jordan Bell is averaging 10.9 points and 8.6 rebounds. But after the Ducks lost shot-blocker Chris Boucher to a knee injury during the Pac-12 Tournament, Bell proved his ability to dominate inside by finishing with 11 points, 13 rebounds and eight blocks in the Midwest Regional final to help the Ducks beat No. 1 seed Kansas for their first Final Four since winning the 1939 NCAA title.

**South Carolina:** Rakym Felder is the "New York City point guard" coach Frank Martin says he wanted. The 5-foot-10 freshman has started just once all year and plays 14.5 minutes per game, but has had some key production in the NCAA Tournament — most notably by tallying 15 points, four rebounds and three assists in the upset of 2-seed Duke in the East Regional's second round. Felder is shooting a team-best 43 percent from three-point range while averaging 5.7 points entering the Gonzaga game.

## Miss. St. women gets another shot at UConn

Associated Press

STARKVILLE, Miss. — Mississippi State's run to its first women's Final Four in program history has generated more than a little excitement in Starkville the past few days.

Although there's a sobering memory percolating beneath all the jubilation. The Bulldogs have earned a rematch with UConn, which dealt them an embarrassing 60-point beatdown in the Sweet 16 last season.

Mississippi State coach Vic Schaefer doesn't mind saying it was one of the most disappointing moments in his career. And it's also the reason he's asking his team to push aside the well-wishers for the next few days and focus on the task at hand.

Mississippi State (33-4) gets its second shot at the Huskies

(36-0) on Friday in Dallas. UConn has won 111 straight games and is two games from a fifth straight championship. The Mississippi State-UConn winner will play the winner of Stanford (32-5) and South Carolina (31-4), who play in the other national semifinal.

"At some point you better get grounded in a hurry," Schaefer said. "You better get back to reality in a hurry. Because reality is coming on Friday night and if you're not ready, it won't be very much fun."

Almost all of Mississippi State's players know firsthand the reality Schaefer is talking about.

The Bulldogs' roster is nearly identical to last year, when the team's season ended with a 98-38 loss to UConn. The game was just as ugly as the score would indicate, with the Bulldogs fall-

ing behind 61-12 by halftime. It set a record for the margin of victory in the regional round and beyond.

"Embarrassing doesn't even cover it," Schaefer said.

The Bulldogs will certainly be the underdogs once again on Friday, but they're also on a mission to prove that last year's lopsided loss to UConn was an aberration.

"We've matured. We know how to handle different situations," Mississippi State senior forward Breanna Richardson said. "I feel like we'll handle this differently this year than we would have last year. With us, just getting another chance at UConn, we'll know what to expect."

Mississippi State is also playing some of its best basketball of the season. Schaefer surprisingly shook up the starting

lineup before the NCAA Tournament — starting role players like Blair Schaefer, Roshunda Johnson and Ketara Chapel instead of usual starters like Victoria Vivians, Dominique Dillingham and Chinwe Okorie — and it was just the jolt the Bulldogs needed.

Mississippi State has had different stars in every game of the NCAA Tournament, with Schaefer, Teaira McCowan and Morgan William all thriving at different moments. The 5-foot-5 William, who is averaging about 11 points per game this season, scored a career-high 41 points in Mississippi State's 94-85 overtime win over Baylor on Sunday.

Knocking off UConn will take another herculean effort from somebody. None of the Bulldogs are promising anything, but they're confident.

# Thunder rally from double-digit deficit

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — With as prolific a scorer as Russell Westbrook is, the Oklahoma City Thunder never feel as though any deficit is too much to overcome.

Oklahoma City stormed back from a 21-point deficit behind another eye-popping performance by Westbrook to upend Orlando 114-106 in overtime Wednesday night. Westbrook scored 36 of his 57 points — the most in a triple-double in NBA history — after halftime and had 13 rebounds and 11 assists to help the Thunder clinch a playoff spot in the Western Conference.

It was the largest comeback win in Oklahoma City history.

On Monday night, Westbrook had a 13-point outburst in the final three minutes to rally the Thunder past Dallas.

"I always say this about him, he never believes he is out of it

or we're out of it," said Thunder coach Billy Donovan, whose team improved to 43-31. "And he plays with an incredible competitive spirit. He plays with an unbelievable spirit. He always has a huge heart, he's always a huge competitor and he finds ways to make things happen."

**Warriors 110, Spurs 98:** Stephen Curry scored 29 points, Klay Thompson had 23 and visiting Golden State rallied from a 22-point deficit in the opening quarter to beat San Antonio for its ninth straight win.

The Warriors extended their lead over the Spurs to 3½ games for the league's best record, beating the Spurs for the first time in three meetings this season.

**Bucks 103, Celtics 100:** Giannis Antetokounmpo had 22 points and nine rebounds, and visiting Milwaukee knocked Boston out of first place in the Eastern Conference.

Malcolm Brogdon finished with 16 points and nine assists. He had six key points in the final 2:46 to help Milwaukee fend off a late Boston charge.

**Heat 105, Knicks 88:** Goran Dragic had 20 points, nine assists and seven rebounds, and visiting Miami breezed past New York.

Reserve James Johnson added 18 points for the Heat. Josh Richardson finished with 17 points as Miami (37-38) improved to 26-8 since an 11-30 start.

**Hornets 110, Raptors 106:** Marco Belinelli scored 21 points, Kemba Walker had 19 and visiting Charlotte beat Toronto.

Walker hit two big three-pointers in the final 2 minutes, helping the Hornets stop the Raptors' six-game winning streak.

**Hawks 99, 76ers 92:** Dwight Howard had 22 points and 20 rebounds to lead visiting

Atlanta over Philadelphia.

Atlanta is still in the fight for a fifth seed with Milwaukee, Indiana and Miami.

**Pelicans 121, Mavericks 118:** Anthony Davis had 30 points and 13 rebounds, DeMarcus Cousins added 29 points and 16 rebounds in his return from a two-game absence, and host New Orleans beat Dallas.

**Grizzlies 110, Pacers 97:** Mike Conley matched his career high with seven three-pointers on his way to 36 points, helping host Memphis top Indiana.

**Clippers 133, Wizards 124:** J.J. Redick scored a season-high 31 points and hit seven three-pointers, helping host Los Angeles beat Washington.

**Jazz 112, Kings 82:** Gordon Hayward scored 20 points, Rodney Hood had 18 and visiting Utah beat Sacramento for its third win in four games.

## 4-goal first period helps Blackhawks whip Penguins

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Artemi Panarin and Richard Panik started a four-goal first period for Chicago, and the Blackhawks moved closer to locking up the Central Division title with a 5-1 victory over the short-handed Pittsburgh Penguins on Wednesday night.

Marcus Kruger and Marian Hossa also scored during an explosive first period as the Blackhawks moved nine points clear of second-place Minnesota with five games left in the regular season. Tanner Kero added a breakaway goal in the third. Patrick Kane picked up two assists to move past Sidney Crosby and into second place in the NHL scoring race.

Corey Crawford stopped 31 shots for Chicago, which beat the Penguins in regulation on the road for the first time since 1997.

Marc-Andre Fleury finished with 31 saves but received little

help outside of Bryan Rust's third-period goal. The defending Stanley Cup champions saw their winless streak reach four games, and their chances to catch first-place Washington atop the Metropolitan Division took another hit.

**Kings 4, Flames 1:** Jarome Iginla scored his 100th game-winning goal, got an assist and drew blood in a fight during what might have been his Saddledome finale, helping visiting Los Angeles beat Calgary in a brutal game.

The animosity stemmed from a game March 19, when Calgary rookie Matthew Tkachuk elbowed Kings defenseman Drew Doughty in the face. Tkachuk, a 19-year-old rookie, was suspended two games.

Kyle Clifford approached Tkachuk near center ice before the game, and players from both teams gathered to exchange words. Tkachuk fought Braydon McNabb in the first period and was dropped by an

uppercut.

Iginla later fought Deryk Engelland, opening a cut on Engelland's forehead that left blood all over Iginla's white jersey.

With a clean sweater, Iginla scored late in the second period to put Los Angeles up 2-1. Trevor Lewis, Anze Kopitar and Jeff Carter also scored for the Kings.

**Capitals 5, Avalanche 3:** Marcus Johansson and Evgeny Kuznetsov each had a goal and an assist, Jay Beagle and John Carlson also scored and visiting Washington kept rolling with a victory over Colorado.

The Capitals have 110 points, five ahead of idle Columbus, and are on track to clinch the President's Trophy for most points in the league for the second straight season. They've won six straight games.

Alex Ovechkin didn't record a point and remained tied with Alexander Mogilny for second place in scoring among Rus-

sian-born players in the NHL. Both have 1,032 points, trailing Sergei Fedorov (1,179).

Kevin Shattenkirk had two assists and Philipp Grubauer stopped 32 shots in his first start in nine games for the Capitals. Lars Eller scored into an empty net.

**Blues 3, Coyotes 1:** Vladimir Tarasenko and Patrik Berglund scored, and Berglund added an assist in visiting St. Louis' victory over Arizona.

The Blues have won 11 of 13 games and have points in 12 of those.

St. Louis' Carter Hutton stopped 22 shots. He faced only 13 in the first two periods combined, then saved a breakaway attempt by Tobias Rieder early in the third period before Alex Goligoski scored a power-play goal at 14:37.

David Perron added an empty-net goal with 19 seconds left.