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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

ISIS releases video of deadly Niger ambush

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — Islamic State militants have released a video that purportedly shows scenes from an October ambush in Niger in which four U.S. soldiers were killed.

The video, circulated on social media Sunday, shows a small team of U.S. troops under heavy gunfire. Overlaid with music and propaganda messages, it opens with militants appearing to assemble before the ambush.

The nine-minute video then cuts to the view from a U.S. soldier's helmet, seized by the militants after the attack, which shows the ambush in graphic detail. This part of the video suggests the troops were heavily outgunned, with the sound of fire pouring in from several directions.

The military said it was aware of the ISIS propaganda video and asked that the imagery not be released.

A portion of the video shows the Americans crouching behind their Toyota Land Cruiser and a truck. The soldiers fired smoke grenades, which could have been used to shroud their position and to guide

in airstrikes.

U.S. officials have said French air support didn't arrive until two hours after the attack.

U.S. troops didn't call in for air support until about one hour after the assault, military officials have said. The apparent delay could have been a result of radio communication problems.

With no place to take cover, two soldiers broke into a sprint, the video shows. One soldier fell after being shot. Moments later, helmet cam video shows the soldier shot again at close range as masked militants appear around him.

Killed in the ambush were Sgt. La David Johnson and Staff Sgts. Bryan C. Black, Jeremiah W. Johnson and Dustin M. Wright.

The roughly 40-person U.S.-Nigerien patrol, which included 12 U.S. soldiers, came under attack on the morning of Oct. 4 by about 50 ISIS fighters as the unit was returning to its camp. The propaganda video showed only a small group of U.S. soldiers, who appear to have been separated from the rest of their team.

The patrol had left the Nigerien capital of Niamey on Oct. 3 to meet with local leaders near the village of Tongo Tongo, about

53 miles to the north.

U.S. Africa Command continues to investigate the attack and whether U.S. troops had sufficient resources to carry out patrols where different militant groups operate. The military says its forces are deployed as advisers to local troops.

In the wake of the ambush, some lawmakers are questioning the wisdom of the Niger mission.

"We don't know exactly where we're at in the world militarily and what we're doing," Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said on NBC's "Meet the Press" after the attack. There are about 800 American troops in Niger.

AFRICOM, expected to wrap up its investigation in the coming weeks, condemned the video.

"The release of these materials demonstrates the depravity of the enemy we are fighting," AFRICOM said in a statement.

"We encourage the news media to deny ISIS a propaganda success by not purchasing, showing or bringing undue attention to these images as it re-victimizes the affected families, amplifies IS atrocities and aids in their recruiting."

US aircraft carrier arrives in Vietnam for historic visit

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

The USS Carl Vinson pulled into Danang Bay on Monday, becoming the first American aircraft carrier to visit Vietnam since the war there ended more than four decades ago.

The four-day port call — which U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Dan Kritenbrink called an "enormously significant milestone" that shows "U.S. support for a strong, prosperous, and independent Vietnam" — will include more than 5,000 sailors from the Carl Vinson, the guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain and the guided-missile destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer.

Servicemembers will participate in cultural and professional exchanges during community service projects, sports competitions and receptions, a Navy statement said. The 7th Fleet band will perform free

concerts.

Sailors also will visit a center for victims of Agent Orange, a defoliant used by the U.S. military during the war, according to a report in The New York Times. The chemical has caused major health problems for many individuals who were exposed.

"Through hard work, mutual respect, and by continuing to address the past while we work toward a better future, we have gone from former enemies to close partners," Kritenbrink said in the Navy statement.

The U.S. normalized relations with Vietnam in 1995 and lifted an arms embargo in 2016, and the two former adversaries steadily have improved bilateral relations in all areas, including trade, investment and security.

The Navy now makes regular, small-scale visits to Vietnam that the service calls "Naval Engagement Activities." Those events usually involve subject-matter ex-

changes in topics such as diving, salvage, undersea medicine and medical evacuations. The service also has used Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay to conduct maintenance on its ships.

The hospital ship USNS Mercy is slated to stop in Vietnam in the coming months as part of the annual Pacific Partnership exercise, which focuses on humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief preparedness.

"Our nations' relationship has reached new heights the past few years, and USS Carl Vinson's port visit to Vietnam is a reflection of that," Pacific Fleet commander Adm. Scott Swift said in the statement. "I am confident that engagements like this will further expand the comprehensive partnership between the United States and Vietnam."

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

Sailor loses appeal, to be discharged for dealing drugs

The San Diego Union-Tribune

A drug-dealing sailor from Naval Air Station Lemoore, Calif., lost her appeal and will be dishonorably discharged from the military. The woman said she cleaned up her act in jail, but military appellate judges were not swayed.

In a decision issued last Monday, the Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals in Washington upheld the sentence meted out to Aviation Structural Mechanic Airman Jasmine N. McClendon on May 11 after her court-martial in San Diego.

As part of a plea deal with Navy prosecutors that capped her prison sentence at 14 months, McClendon admitted to distributing narcotics at Lemoore, near Fresno, violating the terms of a previous administrative punishment and multiple drug abuse charges.

The military judge ordered her reduced to the Navy's lowest rank and removed from the service on a dishonorable discharge.

A dishonorable discharge triggers a wide range of other sanctions, including the loss of veterans' benefits and the right to possess firearms.

McClendon's attorneys argued that the discharge was too severe and cited her struggles with addiction, difficulty adjusting to Navy life after enlisting at age 17, her rehabilitation efforts during 127 days of pre-trial confinement and later helping Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents crack down on illicit drug sales.

While incarcerated, McClendon began to study Buddhism, took courses to control her addiction and stayed sober. Her attorneys requested a less-severe bad-conduct discharge, but the tribunal unanimously disagreed.

Writing for the panel, Navy Senior Judge Capt. Frank D. Hutchison pointed out that McClendon committed her crimes while serving 60 days of restriction following nonjudicial punishment for abusing cocaine.

Termed a "Captain's Mast" in the Navy, this punishment typically involves restricting servicemembers to quarters, imposing extra duties and cellphone confiscation, plus other forms of discipline designed to correct misconduct instead of sending a sailor to a court-martial trial.

While living in a restricted barracks, however, McClendon kept drug paraphernalia and introduced cocaine, methamphetamines, psilocybin mushrooms, LSD and marijuana products to fellow sailors there, using her banned cellphone to facilitate the delivery of the drugs, court records show.

US, South Korea to open cost-sharing negotiations

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States and South Korea will begin negotiations this week on sharing the cost of stationing about 28,500 American troops on the divided peninsula, the Foreign Ministry said Monday.

Talks about shouldering the burden between the two allies have often been bumpy, but they're expected to be more contentious this year as President Donald Trump has signaled he may press for the South to increase its contribution.

The countries also face concerns about a possible rift as South Korea presses ahead with efforts to engage with the North despite Washington's hard line over the communist state's nuclear weapons program.

The current special measures agreement, which was reached in 2014 and has South Korea paying about \$890 million this year, or just under half of the total, expires Dec. 31.

The first round of talks on the 10th SMA will be held from Wednesday to Friday in Honolulu with veteran diplomat Chang Won-sam leading the South Korean side and State Department official Timothy

Betts leading the U.S. delegation, according to a press release.

It didn't say how long the talks were expected to last, but the final deal must be ratified by South Korean legislators. The 2014 agreement took months to gain approval amid South Korean concerns over a lack of transparency about how the funds are spent by the U.S. side.

South Korea has seen its share of the nonpersonnel costs for U.S. forces in South Korea rise to around 960 billion won this year from 150 billion won in 1991, the first year the SMA was implemented. Most of the money is used to pay for South Korean labor, rent, utilities and the construction of barracks and other military facilities.

South Korea may take a more confrontational stance than usual because of Trump's trade politics, including his recent proposal to impose stiff tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, said Van Jackson, an international relations expert at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.

"The traditional thinking for South Korea is that the alliance comes first, so any disagreement about how to distribute the costs of the alliance were subordinate to the priority of maintaining the alliance," Jackson said in an email.

USS Wasp leaves Sasebo for patrol

BY JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

The USS Wasp has left Sasebo Naval Base for the first time since arriving at its new homeport in Japan earlier this year.

The amphibious assault ship — which some have dubbed a miniature aircraft carrier because of upgrades that allow it to host the next-generation F-35B Lightning II stealth fighter — steamed away Saturday and was scheduled to undergo a "ready-for-sea assessment" before heading out on a routine patrol of the region.

One of the patrol's goals is to "advance U.S. Pacific Fleet's Up-Gunned (Expeditionary Strike Group) concept," Lt. Cmdr. Adam Cole, a Task Force 76 spokesman, told Stars and Stripes in an email. Up-Gunned ESG pairs troop-carrying amphibious ships with surface vessels like guided-missile destroyers.

The Wasp is part of the Defense Depart-

ment's effort to put its most advanced capabilities in the region, an Amphibious Force 7th Fleet statement said.

F-35Bs, which are capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings, were to embark on the ship during this patrol, the Navy said earlier this year. The stealth jets are flown by Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, which arrived last year at nearby Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

The Wasp can host more than 1,600 Marines. The 844-foot flattop ship employs 31 aircraft, as well as Marine amphibious craft out of its well deck.

"What the crew of this ship has accomplished given the rigorous schedule of the ship is really amazing," Command Master Chief Rudy Johnson II said in a Navy statement. "I am incredibly proud of the consistent 'can-do' attitude which emanates from these Sailors, and am very excited about the upcoming successes of this patrol."

Turkey holds 4 ISIS suspects over threat to US Embassy

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish police detained four Islamic State suspects as part of an investigation into a possible attack on the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, the country's state-run news agency reported Monday.

The arrests came as the embassy was closed Monday over an unspecified security threat.

The Anadolu Agency said police detained four Iraqi nationals in connection with the threat against the embassy. Two of them were detained on a bus at a security check on a highway linking the Black Sea city of Samsun to Ankara. Two others were detained in Samsun by police acting on information they provided, the report said.

The agency identified the suspects by their first names only.

Security was high outside the U.S. Embassy on Monday, and police searched pedestrians before allowing them to enter the street where the embassy and other buildings are located.

The U.S. Embassy said on its web page late Sunday that the mission would be closed due to a security threat and urged U.S. citizens to avoid the embassy as well as large crowds. It also advised citizens to “keep a low profile.”

Embassy spokesman David Gainer said the mission would open Tuesday but would not pro-

vide visa services or services to American citizens — in an apparent measure aimed at limiting visits and minimizing risks to the public.

“We appreciate the continuing strong support we receive from the Turkish National Police and Turkish security services in making our facilities as safe as possible,” Gainer said.

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag said the U.S. Embassy had shared intelligence with Turkey's intelligence and security authorities, leading to “important results.” He said the U.S. diplomatic missions in Istanbul and the southern city of Adana remained open for business.

The Ankara governor's office said authorities had reviewed security in the capital and had taken additional measures, following intelligence provided by U.S. “sources” about possible attacks against the embassy or where Americans are staying.

Earlier Monday, police detained 12 ISIS suspects in Ankara and were searching for eight others, Anadolu reported, although it was not clear if those arrests were linked to the threat against the U.S. Embassy.

The Ankara chief prosecutor's office said in a statement that all of the suspects captured in the police operation were foreign nationals who were trying to recruit members for ISIS.

Trump offers rare direct criticism of Putin

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — In a rare move, the White House criticized the Russian government and Vladimir Putin directly on Monday over its backing of the Syrian government's military actions and the Russian president's recent comments about his nuclear arsenal.

In a Sunday telephone conversation with U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May, President Donald Trump “agreed that Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent statements on nuclear weapons development were irresponsible,” the White House said in a statement summarizing the call.

Last week, Putin said Russia has developed new, strategic, nuclear weapons that would leave U.S. missile defense systems “useless.” His comments were accompanied by a video showing Russian nuclear weapons headed for Florida, where Trump often spends weekends and vacations at his Mar-a-Lago resort.

Trump has withheld any critical words for Putin and only recently acknowledged Russia meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. He still hopes to thaw relations between the former Cold War foes, but there is little evidence he is moving close to that goal.

The criticism of Putin comes as special counsel Robert Mueller continues looking into whether Trump and his campaign associates worked with Russia to disrupt the 2016 election — and whether the president obstructed justice in response to the probe.

The White House also panned the Kremlin for backing Syrian President Bashar Assad's military offensive in eastern Ghouta, which is controlled by opposition forces as that country's yearslong conflict continues.

Trump-Netanyahu meeting comes amid legal distractions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — There was much to celebrate but plenty of cause for trepidation, too, as President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Monday at the White House.

For all his talk about brokering the “ultimate deal” between Israelis and Palestinians, Trump's long-awaited peace plan has yet to arrive, even as Palestinians and other critics insist it will be dead on arrival. And although Israel's government is overjoyed by Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital — with a U.S. embassy set to open in the holy city in May — misgivings are percolating under the surface over Iran, where Israel sees

Trump's efforts so far to crack down on Israel's arch-enemy as lacking.

Swirling legal investigations distracting both leaders at home, and a stunning fall from grace for Trump's son-in-law and would-be peace negotiator, Jared Kushner, have added to the mix of politics, personalities and historical grievances that have always hindered Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts.

Netanyahu arrived in the United States over the weekend as Washington was gearing up for the annual conference of AIPAC, the powerful pro-Israel lobby. He held a meeting and working lunch with Trump on Monday and planned to speak at the conference later in the week. Top-ranking U.S. officials

including Vice President Mike Pence and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley will also address the conference.

In a pointed reminder of his troubles at home, Netanyahu and his wife were questioned separately by police for hours on Friday. Those interviews were part of an investigation into a corruption case involving the country's telecom giant, and police have recommended indicting Netanyahu on corruption charges in two other cases, as well.

The Trump family has legal problems of its own. Kushner, Trump's point man for the Middle East, is under intense scrutiny over his business dealings as special counsel Robert Mueller barrels forward with his Russia probe.

President: N. Korea, US 'will be meeting'

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump expressed new openness to talks with North Korea over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, saying “we will be meeting” as he delivered what was supposed to be a comedic speech at a lighthearted annual gala dinner hosted by Washington journalists.

Officials said later that no meeting has been scheduled, but Trump’s apparently unscripted aside seemed to indicate a willingness to negotiate with the government of Kim Jong Un, who Trump has taunted as “little Rocket Man” and threatened with “fire and fury like the world has never seen.”

Trump delivered a self-deprecating punchline during a rambling speech Saturday night in front of more than 600 journalists and guests at the Gridiron Dinner at the Renaissance Washington Hotel saying: “I won’t rule out direct talks with Kim Jong Un; I just won’t. As far as the risk of dealing with a madman is concerned, that’s his problem, not mine.”

But then he appeared to depart from his written remarks to describe an overture that Pyongyang has extended to Washington, apparently through the government in South Korea.

“By the way, a couple days ago they said, ‘We would like to talk,’ and I said, ‘So would we, but you have to de-nuke, you

have to de-nuke,’” Trump said.

The Trump administration has publicly insisted that North Korea give up its nuclear weapons program before talks could begin, a demand Pyongyang on Sunday dismissed as “preposterous.”

In his comments, however, Trump hinted he may be considering other options, saying “maybe positive things are happening” and “we will be meeting, and we’ll see if anything positive happens.”

A U.S. official said Washington would insist that any talks should focus on denuclearization, but that it would not demand Pyongyang disarm first or set other preconditions to meet. For its part, North Korea

wants international recognition of its role as a nuclear power, a position the U.S. and its allies say they cannot accept.

But some progress appeared in sight. On Sunday, North Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs dismissed U.S. demands that it give up its nuclear arsenal. But it also said dialogue with Washington was possible and that it hopes to find a “diplomatic and peaceful solution” to the conflict.

Trump believes his “maximum pressure” campaign to isolate North Korea from the world economy through trade, banking and shipping restrictions has made Kim more willing to engage with South Korea, and ultimately with Washington.

Ohio race shows how NRA flexes political muscle

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The National Rifle Association pounced when former Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland, a Democrat running for the U.S. Senate, declared at an AFL-CIO event in Cleveland that the death of conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia “happened at a good time.”

Scalia remains a hero to many gun owners, and the NRA alerted its members to Strickland’s disrespect. It was part of a barrage by the group to portray its one-time ally as

an anti-gun politician interested only in money and power.

The successful anti-Strickland campaign in the battleground state of Ohio two years ago is a window into how the gun rights group wields its political muscle. That clout will be on display heading into the 2018 midterm elections as gun control advocates demand swift action following the Feb. 14 shooting at a high school in Florida.

The NRA’s deep pockets and bare-knuckled approach leave the impression it effectively purchases loyalty from

lawmakers. But the NRA actually donates small amounts of money to candidates when compared with the large sums it spends on potent get-out-the-vote operations and ad campaigns. NRA-funded advertisements on cable networks and the internet during the months and weeks before an election are carefully crafted to warn members of candidates that, if elected, it claims will come for their guns. The NRA’s political action committee, the Political Victory Fund, grades elected officials on an A to F scale that steers members to

pro-gun candidates.

The Political Victory Fund and the NRA’s lobbying arm spent about \$52.5 million during the 2016 elections on “independent expenditures,” according to OpenSecrets.org.

Nearly 70 percent of the NRA’s 2016 budget was used to target Democrats, with Hillary Clinton topping the list of candidates the group sought to defeat. The rest went to backing Donald Trump and congressional Republicans who’ve consistently shot down attempts by Democrats to approve gun control measures.

Cosby goes to court in effort to stop accusers from testifying

Associated Press

NORRISTOWN, Pa. — Bill Cosby went to court on Monday to stop some of his dozens of accusers from testifying at his April 2 sexual assault retrial.

Cosby’s retooled defense team, led by former Michael Jackson lawyer Tom Mesereau, is due to clash with prosecutors over the potential witnesses at a pretrial hearing.

Cosby, 80, walked into the

courthouse in suburban Philadelphia Monday morning on the arm of his spokesman.

Judge Steven O’Neill spoke briefly from the bench before adjourning into chambers for a conference with prosecutors and Cosby’s lawyers.

O’Neill outlined the matters that need to be resolved, including whether as many as 19 women can testify against Cosby and if his lawyers can discuss his civil settlement with

accuser Andrea Constand.

O’Neill noted that since this is a new trial, none of his rulings on issues from the first trial will carry over. He didn’t express confidence that they’ll resolve everything in the two days allotted for the pretrial hearing, “but we can certainly try.”

Prosecutors raised the prospect of calling as many as 19 women to the witness stand, including model Janice Dickinson, in an attempt to show that

an alleged 2004 assault that led to Cosby’s only criminal charges was actually part of a five-decade pattern of him drugging and harming women.

Jurors did not have that context when they ended Cosby’s first trial last year in a deadlock. A judge allowed just one other accuser’s testimony but barred any mention of about 60 others who have come forward.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman wins conch contest, gets proposal

FL KEY WEST — A Florida retiree won the women's division victory in Key West's annual Conch Shell Blowing Contest — and a marriage proposal from a fellow competitor.

Mary Lou Smith impressed the judges Saturday with long blasts on the fluted, pink-lined shell, which she followed with a joyous, accepting duet with Rick Race after his onstage proposal.

Judges evaluated entrants from children to seniors on the quality, novelty, duration and loudness of sounds they produced.

Man dons bulletproof vest, is fatally shot

TX HOUSTON — Houston police said a man who put on a bulletproof vest at a party was killed when another man attending the party fired a shot at him.

Police are searching for the man who fired the fatal shot early Sunday. Investigators said forensics tests will determine if the gunshot went through the vest or struck an uncovered area.

Police believe six to eight people were attending the party.

Drug seller's text is sent to deputy

SC SUMTER — Authorities said a man wanting to sell drugs got himself and two of his friends arrested by accidentally texting a police officer instead of a customer.

Sumter County deputies said the officer received a text about 2 p.m. Thursday offering to sell marijuana. Authorities said the deputy texted back and ar-

ranged the sale in less than three hours.

Deputies said in a statement they stopped the drug dealer's car on the way to the sale and found several bags of marijuana and scales. They arrested three of four people in the car on marijuana charges.

Crossing guard charged in pot sales

PA SELINGSGROVE — A Pennsylvania crossing guard has been charged with selling marijuana at her post.

Kathryn Miller, 31, was arrested March 27 while working at an intersection near Selingsgrove Area High School.

Police alleged she sold marijuana to an informant four times last month, including twice while at her job.

Selingsgrove Area Superintendent Chad Cohrs told WNEP-TV that Miller has been suspended. He said she has worked as a crossing guard since 2012.

Miller was jailed on charges including delivery of a controlled substance.

Man hit by lightning: Memory 'got erased'

UT LAS VEGAS — A Utah man who was struck by lightning while playing golf said the time between being hit and waking up was a blur.

KSL-TV reported that Justin Hofer, 38, a father of five, was taken to a burn trauma center in Las Vegas after he was struck Friday afternoon.

Hofer said he remembers teeing off on the first hole and then waking up Sunday at the hospital. He said it's like his "memory just got erased."

Hofer suffered burns on 20 percent of his body and will need skin grafts on his legs but said he is going to be home in St. George relatively quickly.

Trump name taken off impeachment class

CA SAN DIEGO — San Diego State University is changing the name of a class that sparked public criticism.

The name of the course? "Trump: Impeachment, Removal or Conviction?"

The university announced Wednesday that it was dropping Trump's name from the title.

The course covers the history, procedures and constitutional grounds for removing presidents as well as presidential immunity. It also reviews all 19 impeachments in U.S. history.

The one-unit weekend class began Friday. It's offered to the public through the university's extended studies program.

Friars close bakery, will open a brewery

ME BUCKSPORT — Two Maine friars say they are closing down their iconic bakery to open up a brewery.

The Bangor Daily News reported Friar's Bakehouse in Bangor would close Friday after more than 18 years in operation. Franciscan Brothers Donald Paul and Kenneth Leo said they plan to open their new venture, the Friar's Brewhouse Tap Room, this month.

The brew house will be located in Bucksport, much closer to the brothers' monastery.

City's last drive-thru wedding chapel closes

NV RENO — The last drive-thru wedding chapel in Reno has heard its final vows.

The Reno Gazette-Journal reported George Flint, 83, opened the Chapel of the Bells in 1962, and he closed its doors for good Wednesday.

His daughter, Margaret Flint,

said she doesn't think there's a "novelty for the stereotypical chapel wedding anymore."

The wedding industry in western Nevada has declined. Washoe County in 1978 issued more than 36,000 marriage licenses. The county issued fewer than 8,000 last year.

Python weighs less than deer it ate

FL NAPLES — Researchers in Florida said they found an 11-foot-long, invasive Burmese python that had consumed a deer that weighed more than the snake.

The Naples Daily News reported that wildlife biologists tracking the slithery creatures in southwest Florida found one of them had eaten a white-tailed deer fawn.

Biologist Ian Bartoszek said the fawn weighed 35 pounds; the snake weighed 31.5 pounds.

Bartoszek said it was the largest python-to-prey weight difference he had measured.

Man injured in jump inside Atlanta airport

GA ATLANTA — Authorities said a man who jumped over an upper-floor railing in an Atlanta airport was hospitalized with serious injuries.

WXIA-TV reported Wednesday that the man's jump from the second story was recorded on social media. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport Policy and Communications Director Reese McCranie said two passengers had been arguing when one became "visibly irate and belligerent."

Atlanta police spokeswoman Stephanie Brown said the man was "alert, conscious and breathing" when medical staff took him away.

From wire reports

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Reporting
World, National
and Military News

College basketball roundup

Michigan repeats as Big Ten Tourney champs

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Xavier Simpson was a catalyst on both ends of the floor, running Michigan's efficient offense and leading its lock-down defense, and the No. 15 Wolverines beat No. 8 Purdue 75-66 on Sunday to repeat as Big Ten Tournament champion.

Back-up big man Jon Teske scored 14 points to help fifth-seeded Michigan (28-7) become the first team to repeat since Ohio State in 2010 and '11.

Simpson finished with 10 points, five assists and five rebounds, and Moe Wagner led Michigan with 17 points, despite playing only 17 minutes because of foul trouble.

Isaac Haas led Purdue (28-6) with 23 points.

No. 10 Cincinnati 62, No. 11 Wichita State 61: Jacob Evans scored 19 points and the visiting Bearcats beat the Shockers to wrap up the American Athletic Conference title.

Cincinnati (27-4, 16-2) survived a slugfest of a second half as the teams combined for just two baskets in the final five minutes.

Wichita State needed a victory to share the conference title and earn the top seed in the tournament after beating Cincinnati earlier this season.

Landry Shamet and Shaquille Morris each scored 16 points for Wichita State (24-6, 14-4).

No. 25 Houston 81, UConn 71: Rob Gray scored 30 points, Corey Davis Jr. had 17 and the host Cougars held off UConn.

Gray was 10-for-15 from the floor for Houston (24-6, 14-4 American Athletic Conference).

Jalen Adams had 22 points and six assists for UConn (14-17, 7-11).

Conference championships

Lipscomb 108, Florida Gulf Coast 96: Madness. That's the only way to explain this.

Lipscomb (23-9) led by 29 points at half-time, went up by 32 in the second half, then saw the lead get shredded down to five — on the road against a Florida Gulf Coast program that has squeezed the utmost from nearly every opportunity it has gotten in March since becoming the "Dunk City" NCAA darlings five years ago.

"We've experienced every emotion imaginable," Lipscomb coach Casey Alexander said.

With that, it's time to experience another: The Bisons are going to the NCAA Tournament for the first time.

Garrison Mathews scored 33 points and the second-seeded Bisons — once on the

brink of all-out collapse — recovered just well enough in the final minutes to beat top-seeded FGCU in the Atlantic Sun Conference title game on Sunday and win the league's automatic berth into the field of 68.

Radford 55, Liberty 52: Carlik Jones had clear instructions: Take the final shot of regulation and leave no time on the clock for Liberty to counter.

The freshman did just that, and swished a three-pointer at the buzzer on Sunday, giving Radford (22-12) a 55-52 victory in the Big South championship and its first NCAA Tournament berth since 2009.

Loyola-Chicago 65, Illinois State 49: Step aside, Northwestern. Take a seat, DePaul. For now, Loyola-Chicago is the king of Windy City basketball.

The Ramblers earned their first NCAA Tournament appearance in 33 years with a 65-49 win over Illinois State in the Missouri Valley Conference championship game on Sunday in St. Louis.

Donte Ingram scored 18 points and Cameron Krutwig added 11 points and nine rebounds for Loyola-Chicago (28-5), which reached the Sweet 16 in its last NCAA tournament appearance, in 1985.

Alabama's Fitzpatrick has unique skill set

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Minkah Fitzpatrick understands the value of his skill set.

At 6-foot-1, 201 pounds, he hits like a safety. His speed, hip movement and feet might make him more tailored to cornerback.

So the Alabama star is spending this weekend explaining to NFL scouts he can excel at either, both, or some combination of the positions.

"It's a different kind of position, kind of like a combination between safety and corner," said Fitzpatrick, describing the slot corner spot he played in college. "I like to play both safety and corner, so I think slot corner is optimal for my abilities."

If true, Fitzpatrick would be one of the rarest commodities in football — a tweener with an actual fit.

Traditionally when players at the NFL's annual scouting combine are explaining what position suits them best, it's because team executives aren't sure where they should play and the player's draft stock sinks.

But Fitzpatrick's physical gifts could make him a trendsetter in a league that has become increasingly more pass-happy and places a premium on versatility.

He was recruited as a true cornerback, moved to slot corner before the 2015 season, won the starting job and never relinquished it. Coach Nick Saban was so impressed

he usually paired Fitzpatrick on the opponent's top receiver, one-on-one.

It didn't take long for Fitzpatrick to make an impact.

After being selected to the SEC's all-freshman team in 2015, he earned first-team All-American honors in 2016 and 2017.

Now he's off to the NFL, where teams are trying to figure out what Saban once did — the best place for Fitzpatrick to play.

"I think he could play all six defensive back positions. Both corners, both safeties, nickel and dime linebacker," NFL Network draft analyst Mike Mayock said Saturday. "He's the only guy I can say that about. Now, is that a good thing or a bad thing? I've had a cou-

ple of coaches say to me, 'Hey, is he a difference-maker? Is he a nickel? Where's his ball production?' He had six picks two years ago, but only had one this year. But I look at [his versatility] as a positive."

Mayock's sentiment may explain why Fitzpatrick appears to have a slight edge on his competition right now. He's projected to be a top-five pick.

Some expect Ohio State's Denzel Ward, a true cornerback, to be selected in the top 10 with Florida State safety Derwin James the only other defensive back tabbed for the top 20.

The workouts in Indianapolis, which conclude Monday, will help determine the actual pecking order in April.

Harvick dominates Cup race in Sin City

BY GREG BEACHAM

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — From his dynamic opening laps to his comfortable cruise to the checkered flag, Kevin Harvick was the safest bet in Sin City this weekend.

Harvick's air of inevitability increased with each lap around the Las Vegas Motor Speedway on Sunday, and the rest of the NASCAR Cup field must be a bit worried about how they're going to catch up this year.

Harvick raced to his second straight NASCAR Cup win with a dominant performance in Vegas on Sunday, earning his 100th career win across the three national series.

"There was no catching that 4 (car)," second-place finisher Kyle Busch said. "He was on rails, and lights out."

Harvick followed up his stellar performance last weekend in Atlanta with another victory in his Stewart-Haas Racing Ford. He led a track-record 214 of the 267 laps, won all three stages and capably held off Busch's late hometown charge to win in Vegas for the second time in four years.

"These last two weeks, we've just hit on everything we needed to," said Harvick,

who cruised home 2.9 seconds ahead of Busch. "My (team has) done their homework on a number of things. Just really proud of everybody."

Busch got close to his second career victory in his hometown with his Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota, but couldn't overcome the dominant leader. Kyle Larson finished third after winning the Xfinity Series race on Saturday, while defending champion Martin Truex Jr. was in fourth.

Harvick has already matched his Cup win total from last season in three races — and he's headed to Phoenix, where he has won five times since 2012.

Harvick also took a moment to savor a milestone. Only Richard Petty, Kyle Busch and David Pearson have won more races across the three national circuits than Harvick, the 42-year-old Californian with plenty of good years left on his tires.

"It's been a lot of years accumulated with a lot of great race teams and people and situations," Harvick said. "When you tag that triple-digit number to it, it really lets you realize that you've been fortunate to accomplish a lot of things."

Not many wins are more emphatic than Harvick's 100th.

Harvick led 144 of the first

160 laps and comfortably won the first two stages. He was fourth out of the end-of-stage caution after Stage 2, with Joey Logano getting in front with an exceptional pit stop.

But Harvick reclaimed the lead off another restart with 73 laps to go after Kurt Busch wrecked along with Chase Elliott. Harvick emerged from his last pit stop with a three-second lead on Brad Keselowski, and Busch couldn't catch up.

Here are more things to know about the race on the Strip:

Doing recon: For the first time, NASCAR is returning to Vegas in the fall for a second race, which will also be the playoff opener. Teams used this trip to gather data and information for the return trip in September, although the temperature could easily be 50 degrees higher than the balmy 53 degrees at Sunday's race. "The adjustments we made today are going to help in the fall," Kyle Busch said. "(Although) I think the track is going to be a lot slower with the heat."

Kubu can't do: Kurt Busch's career-long victory drought in his hometown continues. Busch lost control and ran Elliott into the wall shortly after a restart early in the final stage. The crash necessitated a long cau-

tion for fluid cleanup. The 39-year-old Busch has never won at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, which was built while he grew up in town. Kurt Busch failed to win the Cup race in Vegas for the 17th time. He has started on the pole twice, but has only one top-five finish here despite calling it a top priority in his career.

Winning big: Harvick was even more dominant in Vegas than Truex was last year. Truex led all three stages and 150 laps last year on his way to a victory that propelled him into his championship season.

Three strikes: The car chiefs for Jimmie Johnson and Ross Chastain were ejected after their cars failed inspection three times during the pre-race checks. Johnson had to start at the back after his chief, Jesse Saunders, got the gate. Johnson also will have practice time taken away next week in Phoenix. The seven-time champion still rallied to finish 12th.

Comeback story: Josh Frankos, the tire-changer on Darrell Wallace Jr.'s Richard Petty Motorsports team, injured his hand while preparing for the Vegas race and was sent to a hospital on Sunday morning. He returned to the track for the race.

Mickelson tops Thomas in Mexico playoff

BY DOUG FERGUSON

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — Phil Mickelson knew this was coming, even when he had so little to show for it.

Mickelson had gone 101 tournaments around the world since he last won at Muirfield in the 2013 British Open, which moved him to No. 2 in the world and gave him the third leg of the career Grand Slam. In more than two decades on the PGA Tour, he had gone only two seasons without winning.

And then it was up to four straight years and counting.

There was more frustration than self-doubt. And with Mick-

elson, even at age 47, there was never a loss of confidence.

"I knew that wasn't going to be my last one, no," he said. "And this isn't either."

The most recent one came in the high altitude of the Mexico Championship, and it was another pulsating performance, as often is the case with Mickelson.

Five birdies in the opening 10 holes gave him the lead. Right when he was on the verge of taking control, he went for the green on the par-5 11th hole only for the shot to carom off a tree and into the bushes near the edge of Chapultepec Golf Club. Deep in the bushes, he blasted out and hit the crowd. He wound

up making bogey. Then came another wild drive that bounced along the cart path, forcing him to scramble for par.

Three groups ahead of him, Justin Thomas delivered the shot of the tournament. Eleven shots behind going into the weekend and suddenly tied for the lead, Thomas holed out from 119 yards on the final hole for eagle to cap off a 62-64 weekend as he went for his second straight victory.

Mickelson closed with a 66 and headed to sudden-death with Thomas, a duel between players separated by 23 years of age. The playoff ended quickly. Thomas went long with a gap wedge to the par-3 17th and

chipped to 10 feet short of the hole. Mickelson hit the green, narrowly missed the birdie putt and walked off a winner when Thomas — the PGA Tour player of the year last season and already a two-time winner this season — missed his putt.

Mickelson, who captured his third World Golf Championship, now has 43 victories on the PGA Tour. The first was in 1991 — before Thomas, Spieth and Rahm were even born — when he was an amateur. He has long said he wants to get to 50.

"Oh, I will," Mickelson said about reaching 50 titles. "I'll get there."

NHL roundup

Forsberg lifts Predators past Avs in OT

Associated Press

DENVER — Nashville pulled off another comeback victory to remain the NHL's hottest team.

Filip Forsberg scored at 1:07 of overtime and the Predators matched the franchise record with their eighth straight victory, beating the Colorado Avalanche 4-3 on Sunday. They completed a 4-0 trip, winning the last two in overtime.

"We've proven to ourselves that we can come back," Forsberg said. "Getting four out of four wins on the road is ridiculous right now. But at the same time we can't get too high. We have to keep grinding and winning the games."

Nashville has won nine straight against Colorado, including three this season.

But Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said he still liked a lot of what he saw from his players in their latest effort against the Predators.

"I liked the way we played," Bednar said. "I thought we got a little better as the game went on. It was a pretty good all-around effort from our group. Pretty tight contest. They catch a break at the end and tie it up and end up getting the extra point."

Nashville's Ryan Ellis tied it with 1:06 left in regulation with goalie Pekka Rinne off for an extra attacker.

The Predators carried the momentum into overtime, when Forsberg charged

down the ice and put in the winner with a shot from the side that got past goalie Semyon Varlamov.

Ducks 6, Blackhawks 3: Jakob Silfverberg and Corey Perry each scored twice and Anaheim earned points at home for the eighth game in a row, beating Chicago.

Rickard Rakell scored for the third straight game, Marcus Pettersson had his first career goal, and John Gibson made 37 saves. The Ducks moved into third place in the Pacific Division, a point ahead of Los Angeles. They improved to 6-0-2 in their last eight games at home.

Panthers 4, Flyers 1: Evgenii Dadonov scored twice, Roberto Luongo made 39 saves and Florida beat Philadelphia for its season-best sixth straight victory — all at home.

Aleksander Barkov scored his 25th goal of the season and had an assist, and Jonathan Huberdeau added a goal. The Panthers are a point shy of the final Eastern Conference playoff position.

Golden Knights 3, Devils 2: Trading deadline acquisition Tomas Tatar scored his first goal with Vegas and the Golden Knights beat host New Jersey to avoid their first four-game losing streak.

Marc-Andre Fleury, who stopped a half-dozen excellent chances in the first period, made 33 saves, including a last-second shot by Kyle Palmieri to win for the 22nd time in 33 games.

Jets 3, Hurricanes 2: Patrik Laine scored twice for the second straight game and extended his points streak to eight in visiting Winnipeg's victory over Carolina.

Laine had his third multi-goal game in the last four games and has seven multi-point nights during his streak. He has 10 goals and six assists in the eight-game stretch, and 35 goals overall.

Paul Stastny had a goal and an assist, and Connor Hellebuyck stopped 33 shots for the Jets.

Blue Jackets 4, Sharks 2: Artemi Panarin scored two goals and Columbus ended its California swing with the victory over San Jose.

Nick Foligno and Sonny Milano got Columbus started with first-period goals and Sergei Bobrovsky made 34 saves to help the Blue Jackets salvage the final game of their three-game trip. They remained a point ahead of Florida for the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

Wild 4, Red Wings 1: Eric Staal and Zach Parise scored in the second period, Jason Zucker added two late goals and host Minnesota beat Detroit.

Devan Dubnyk made 28 saves to help Minnesota rebounds from consecutive road losses at Arizona and Colorado. Staal and Parise scored in a 2:57 span to erase a 1-0 deficit. The goals came shortly after rookie Nick Seeler traded punches with Detroit's Luke Witkowski on a delayed penalty.

NBA roundup

Raptors top Hornets for 11th win in 12 games

Associated Press

TORONTO — DeMar DeRozan scored 19 points, Jonas Valanciunas had 18 points and 13 rebounds and Toronto beat the Charlotte Hornets 103-98 on Sunday night, the Raptors' 11th victory in 12 games.

Serge Ibaka scored 17 points, and Kyle Lowry had 14 to help the Eastern Conference-leading Raptors complete their first season sweep of Charlotte since 2006-07. Toronto improved to 26-5 at Air Canada Centre, the best home record in the NBA.

Kemba Walker scored 27

points for Charlotte.

Pacers 98, Wizards 95: Victor Oladipo scored 33 points, Bojan Bogdanovic added 20 and visiting Indiana beat Washington to overtake the Wizards by a half-game for fourth place in the Eastern Conference.

Myles Turner added 12 points and 13 rebounds for Indiana, which almost gave away a 17-point lead but never trailed. Bradley Beal scored 22 points and had a career-high 11 assists for Washington.

Pelicans 126, Mavericks 109: Jrue Holiday scored 30 points, Nikola Mirotic added 24

in a rare start and New Orleans won its eighth in a row, beating host Dallas.

Anthony Davis had 23 points and 13 rebounds, scoring most of his points from inside 5 feet.

Bucks 118, 76ers 110: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 35 points and Milwaukee snapped a four-game losing streak, scoring 36 points off visiting Philadelphia's season-high 26 turnovers.

Eric Bledsoe added 22 points, and Jabari Parker had 13 to keep Milwaukee in seventh place in the Eastern Conference — a half-game game be-

hind the sixth-place 76ers.

Hawks 113, Suns 112: Taurean Prince hit the go-ahead three-pointer with 7.6 seconds remaining and finished with 22 points in host Atlanta's victory over Phoenix.

Kings 102, Knicks 99: Skal Labissiere made a three-pointer with 1.6 seconds left and Sacramento beat visiting New York after blowing a 19-point lead in the fourth quarter.

Clippers 123, Nets 120: Austin Rivers scored 27 points, Tobias Harris added 26 as host Los Angeles handed Brooklyn its ninth consecutive road loss.