

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

At Pendleton, a 1st for female Marines

The San Diego Union-Tribune

The first wave of female students landed Tuesday at Camp Pendleton's Marine Combat Training course, an influx expected to grow to 1,700 annually.

The recent graduates of Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., will be the first enlisted female students to learn basic battlefield skills at what's called "MCT-West," part of the California post's School of Infantry. The group is expected to grow to 40 women in the next few days.

In the past, they went to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, but the new Marine Corps policy will send all female boot camp grads recruited from

states west of the Mississippi River to Camp Pendleton.

Tuesday's arrivals were assigned to Golf Company, Marine Combat Training Battalion. They will be integrated fully with male Marines for the duration of the 29-day course, just like they are in North Carolina, according to Training Command spokesman Capt. Joshua J. Pena.

"Neither the course nor the training calendar will be altered at all because of this," Pena said.

The first woman to report to MCT-West was Pfc. Kira Kozik and the second was Pvt. Nathalie Lizama. They won't be the first Marines to arrive at the campus for infantry training.

When the Pentagon opened

up the infantry ranks in 2016, several women went through the School of Infantry's Infantry Training Battalion, a separate and grueling 59-day course for Marines chosen to serve in rifle squads or join machine gun, mortar, anti-tank weapon or Light Armored Vehicle-25 crews.

MCT is for noninfantry Marines. Their training includes learning the basics of combat marksmanship, how to react to roadside bombs, lifesaving medical care and other skills. With the credo "every Marine a rifleman," the Corps wants to ensure that men and women are training together because they might have to fight together, too.

"This initiative is part of

a Marine Corps effort to enhance the entry-level training program for all Marines and to better reflect how the Marine Corps is structured in the operating forces," Pena said.

The MCT innovation doesn't telegraph a switch in Corps policy toward Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, however. It's expected to remain closed to the 3,400 women enlisting annually.

Critics have argued that segregating boot camp by gender sends a bad message to both male and female Marines. It tells women that they're not as tough as the men and it teaches male recruits that female Marines can't hack it, they say.

House panel: Navy budget falls short on shipbuilding

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Leaders of a House Armed Services Committee subpanel Tuesday railed against a Navy budget that they say falls short of critical ship and submarine plans.

Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., chairman of the committee's subpanel on seapower and projection forces, said the 2019 budget proposal fails to meet benchmarks needed to reach a 30-year goal of 355 ships.

"Critical shortfalls in aircraft carriers, large-deck [amphibious ships] and attack submarines are debilitating to our national security and only serve to embolden potential adversaries," Wittman told a group of Navy and Marine Corps officials. "The Navy sometimes misses the strategic imperative and national urgency associated with the message our nation needs to send to the

world when an inadequate shipbuilding budget is proposed."

Wittman said the current shipbuilding plan, which directs for 342 ships by 2039, fails to send a message of resolve to U.S. adversaries. The plan falls short of the Navy's force structure assessment report, which was released in December 2016, he added.

Wittman said the plan also falls short on an annual basis, proposing \$21 billion for 10 ships. It should be \$26.2 billion for 13 ships, he said.

"Shipbuilding is a sign of our nation's resolve, and a weak shipbuilding request is carefully watched by our adversaries," Wittman said. "We need to significantly improve our Navy's shipbuilding."

The comments will likely play into the development of the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, which directs policy and spending plans for the Defense Department. But

whether additional funding is directed to additional ships and submarines remains to be seen. Last month, the Pentagon released a 2019 budget plan seeking a 10 percent hike in funding to \$686.1 billion to increase the size and might of the military, primarily in response to China and Russia's growing capabilities.

Lawmakers have yet to appropriate money for the 2018 and 2019 fiscal years, and will hit a critical funding deadline March 23 for those plans. However, military officials lauded Congress' additional funding support seen in the last year.

"Coming out of an era of shrinking resources and increasing operations that drove exceedingly difficult choices, we feel your efforts to put us on a course for readiness recovery and growing the fleet were substantial and significant. Thank you," said James Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy.

The Navy's 2019 budget proposes 54 battle force ships during the next five years, which is 11 more than planned in the budget a year earlier. But still, it doesn't reach 355 ships until 2048, said Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., the ranking Democrat of the subpanel.

The "budget request for seapower represents a move in the right direction," he said. "[But] this budget does not achieve the minimum Navy force size the Navy says it needs until the 2050s."

Another glaring missed opportunity in the budget proposal, Courtney said: plans for the undersea fleet. While the budget directs for construction of two Virginia-class submarines each year, it still would not achieve a 66-boat fleet called for in the force structure assessment until 2048.

The Navy should look at construction of three new submarines each year, Courtney said.

Navy officer pleads guilty in latest 'Fat Leonard' case

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — San Diego-based Capt. John F. Steinberger pleaded guilty Tuesday to taking bribes from an overseas Navy contractor and using the services of prostitutes that the contractor bought for him in Malaysia and the Philippines during a tour of the Western Pacific between 2011 and 2012.

Until his guilty plea at the court-martial in Virginia, the ex-commander of Destroyer Squadron One also was assigned to Navy Region Southwest's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program that helps the victims of rape and other sex crimes.

Navy Region Southwest officials said that no counselors reported to Steinberger and his primary duty was helping to make slides for briefings about data while his court-martial case percolated through the military's criminal justice system.

"He sat in an office by himself," said Navy Region Southwest spokesman Brian O'Rourke. "He handled analytics. He had nothing to do with the policy of the program, and he commanded nobody here."

Steinberger was caught up in the "Fat Leonard" scandal, named for Malaysian tycoon Leonard Glenn Francis of Glenn Defense Marine Asia, which provided port-based supplies and services to Navy ships.

Arrested in a San Diego sting operation in 2012,

Francis pleaded guilty three years later and awaits sentencing for bribing military officials to steer ships to his port services, defrauding the Navy of at least \$35 million in bogus fees and overcharges.

He routinely plied Navy commanders with cash, "Thai SEAL team" prostitutes, lavish feasts, resort stays, booze and other perks in exchange for spilling information about ship movements or the prices charged by rival companies vying for lucrative Navy resupply contracts at Pacific Ocean ports.

In a pretrial agreement, Steinberger, 52, pleaded guilty to willful dereliction of duty for the bribes that included resort stays, plus a count of "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman" for frequenting Leonard's prostitutes. Steinberger will be administratively discharged from the Navy at a lower rank, receive a punitive letter of reprimand upbraiding him for his misconduct and receive a \$10,000 fine.

Steinberger's co-defendant Tuesday, Cmdr. Jason Starmer, pleaded guilty to similar prostitution and dereliction of duty charges, plus adultery.

Assigned to the Navy Yard in Washington, Starmer is a former foreign area officer who helmed the Joint United States Military Advisory Group in Thailand in 2012.

He was sentenced to two months of restriction at a base in Washington, a punitive letter of reprimand and a \$3,000 fine.

Boeing to extend life of Navy fleet of Super Hornets

BY SCOTT WYLAND

Stars and Stripes

Boeing will modernize the Navy's fleet of F/A-18 Super Hornets to extend their life by at least a decade and improve cockpit, communication and fuel systems.

The Navy awarded Boeing a \$73 million contract to begin upgrading the Super Hornets. Boeing said it would overhaul four fighter jets next month in its St. Louis plant while it builds a new assembly line in San Antonio to modernize the entire fleet.

The full-scale overhaul of the Super Hornet fleet is expected to start in the early 2020s. The twin-engine fighter-bombers are widely used in airstrikes against the Islamic State in the Middle East.

"The initial focus of this program will extend the life of the fleet from 6,000 to 9,000 flight hours," Mark Sears, Boeing program manager, said in a statement last week. "Each of these jets will fly another 10 to 15 years, so making them next-generation aircraft is critical."

A key improvement will be "conformal" fuel tanks, which fit more closely to the aircraft's contour and allow the plane to carry less fuel while reducing drag.

Higher-tech datalink communication systems will be installed along with improved infrared tracking devices and an electronic cockpit touchscreen, said Aviation International News, a trade publication.

Boeing is overhauling the older planes as it begins producing 24 new Super Hornets as part of the proposed 2019 defense budget. Next year's proposed budget calls for an additional 110 Super Hornets to be built by 2023.

The 134 new planes will replace an estimated 140 early-model jets that the Navy aims to scrap because they are too worn to repair and upgrade, defense officials said. The Navy now has roughly 570 Super Hornets.

Pentagon audit delays draw senators' ire

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Senate panel took the Pentagon's comptroller to task Wednesday over years of delays in conducting the Department of Defense's first-ever financial audit.

DOD is the only federal agency that has escaped undergoing an overall audit since Congress began requiring such examinations in the 1990s.

Now, as the Pentagon's first audit is finally underway, the more-than-20-year delay wasn't lost on lawmakers during a Senate Budget Committee hearing on the matter.

"How in the world is it that in 2018, with all the massive capabilities the Pentagon has, this is the first time the Pentagon is

able to conduct an audit? What is going on with the culture? What's wrong?" Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., asked top defense officials, including the Pentagon's top financial chief. "We probably wasted hundreds of billions of dollars at the Pentagon through the years through poor management. Is that correct? That would be a low estimate would it not?"

The heated exchange marks the first Senate hearing on the Pentagon's inaugural audit following an earlier House Armed Services Committee hearing in January.

Pentagon Chief Financial Officer David Norquist, who was on hand to testify before the Senate committee Wednesday, has said the effort will mark a cultural shift for the Department of Defense. The audit, which is now re-

quired by law under the National Defense Authorization Act, is aimed for completion by the end of the year.

Today, military leaders, led by Congress, have a newfound focus on ensuring the audit is completed, he said.

The effort could cost nearly \$1 billion and will entail the work of an estimated 1,200 auditors who will dig into the count, location and condition of military equipment, real property and inventory. The audit will also examine security vulnerabilities in the Pentagon's business systems, validate the accuracy of personnel records and assess whether the department's books and records present a true and accurate picture of financial health.

Women, Dems score big in Texas vote

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Women running for Congress surged to big wins and Democrats smashed recent turnout levels in Texas' first-in-the-nation 2018 primary elections, giving Republicans a potential glimpse of what's ahead in the first midterms under President Donald Trump.

Energized and angry Democrats in Texas, where the GOP has dominated for decades, came out in force to surpass 1 million voters Tuesday — the first time the party has eclipsed that benchmark in a midterm primary since 2002.

Equally striking was the showing by women on the ballot. Of the nearly 50 women running for Congress in Texas,

more than half won their primaries outright or advanced to runoffs. What's more, at least three of those runoffs in May will feature women going head-to-head, including a key race for Democrats in their bid to take control of the U.S. House this fall.

"It's Trump. It's Trump," said Veronica Escobar, who won her Democratic primary and is now poised to become one of the first Hispanic women to represent Texas in Congress.

"I've spoken to innumerable senior citizens, retirees, parents of disabled children, people who understand what this administration means to their families. And they're afraid," she said.

Not all women fared so well. Kathaleen Wall, a Republican

megadonor in Houston who pumped \$6 million of her own money into her race for Congress, failed to survive a crowded nine-person field despite outspending all other candidates and having the backing of Republican Gov. Greg Abbott.

For all the talk of renewed Democratic energy heading into the 2018 midterms, Texas Republicans also set a new benchmark for turnout in a midterm election.

More than 1.5 million people voted Tuesday in the Republican primary for U.S. Senate, won by incumbent Ted Cruz. That beats the previous record of 1.48 million in 2010.

Democrats have their sights on flipping three GOP-controlled congressional seats in

Texas that backed Hillary Clinton over Trump in 2016.

For Republicans, the primary was a vivid exhibition of the Trump effect on GOP politics. George P. Bush, the Texas land commissioner, won a contested primary after he cozied up to a president who once called his dad, Jeb, a pathetic person.

Trump won Texas by 9 points in 2016. It was the smallest margin of victory by a Republican presidential candidate in Texas in 20 years, but Cruz dismissed talk of a Democratic takeover this fall.

"Left-wing rage may raise a bunch of money from people online, but I don't believe it reflects the views of a majority of Texans," he told reporters after winning the nomination.

Japan seeks information on F-15 antenna that fell

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND HANA KUSUMOTO

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japanese officials want the U.S. military to provide information about an antenna that fell from an Okinawa-based fighter jet late last month.

An F-15 from Kadena Air Base lost the part during a flight on Feb. 27, according to a spokesman from Japan's Defense Ministry. The antenna measured approximately 15 inches by 6 inches and weighed about 3 pounds.

When objects fall from Okinawa-based U.S. military aircraft, the U.S. usually informs the Defense Ministry through the prefecture's Defense Bureau, Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera told reporters Wednesday. That did not happen in this case until Monday — nearly a week later.

Japanese officials want to know where the part fell, whether it was recovered and if there were any damages.

"We have told the U.S. side to make sure to notify us," Onodera said, according to his spokesman.

U.S. Forces Japan told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday that the part likely landed in

the ocean and "posed no threat to people or property on the ground."

"USFJ is working with the unit to determine the reason for the delay in reporting," an emailed statement said. "Once the incident was reported to USFJ, we notified the Government of Japan in a timely manner."

A recent spate of aircraft mishaps, including three emergency landings by Marine helicopters in January, drew a rare rebuke from Tokyo officials, who sent Japan Ground Self-Defense Force aircraft maintenance specialists to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma last month for a briefing on the issues.

Australians seize drugs during Arabian Sea patrol

By JASON BEHNKE

Stars and Stripes

While conducting operations for U.S.-led Combined Task Force 150, a Royal Australian Navy frigate seized about 8 tons of hashish worth about \$400 million from a vessel, officials said Wednesday.

A Seahawk helicopter flying off the HMAS Warramunga spotted two suspicious boats in the Arabian Sea while conducting surveillance operations on

Saturday and Sunday.

A team from the Warramunga then boarded the vessels and discovered the drugs below the deck of one of the boats, the Australian navy said Wednesday.

The drugs were transferred to the Warramunga to be disposed of.

Since deploying in November 2017, Warramunga has seized 19.5 tons of hashish and 1.5 tons of heroin, worth more than

\$1.11 billion, officials said.

"This has been a high tempo deployment for HMAS Warramunga but we have been fortunate in seeing significant quantities of narcotics not reach their final destination as a result of the efforts of the crew and the CTF 150 team," Warramunga's commanding officer Cmdr. Dugald Clelland said in a statement.

Australia is part of the multinational CTF 150, one of three

task forces within the U.S.-led combined maritime forces. CTF 150 focuses on promoting maritime security to counter terrorism and illegal activity.

The Bahrain-based Combined Maritime Forces, which operates in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, has seized 12,700 kilograms of heroin and 53,000 kilograms of hashish since 2012.

2nd nor'easter for East Coast

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The second big, blustery storm to hit the Northeast in less than a week began bringing wet, heavy snow Wednesday to a corner of the country where tens of thousands of people were still waiting for the power to come back on from the first bout of wintry weather.

The nor'easter closed schools and government offices, grounded flights and raised fears of another round of fallen trees and electrical outages as it made its way up the East Coast.

"I don't think I'm ready for this to happen again," Caprice Dantzler, 32, said as she walked through Philadelphia's snowy, rainy Rittenhouse Square. She said many trees that crashed into cars and homes and blocked streets during the last storm have yet to be removed.

A mix of snow and light rain started falling before daybreak in many areas, but the precipitation was expected to turn to all snow in most areas and continue through the day.

The National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning through Thursday morning from the Philadelphia area through most of New England. Forecasters said areas west of the Interstate 95 corridor could easily get more than a foot of snow, with some places in northwestern New Jersey expected to receive up to 2 feet.

Flights across the region were canceled even before the first flakes fell, and the number was expected to climb as conditions deteriorated. More than 1,400 flights in the New York metro area were grounded.

Utility workers took advantage of milder temperatures and sunshine Tuesday in their scramble to restore electricity around the Northeast. More than 90,000 homes and businesses remained without power Wednesday, mostly in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York.

More than a foot of snow was expected in some interior areas. Forecasters said Pennsylvania's Poconos Mountains and parts of western Massachusetts could see up to 18 inches.

Justice Department sues Calif. over sanctuary laws

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions is taking the fight over the nation's immigration policy directly to California by suing to block state laws that extend protections to people living in the U.S. illegally.

He was expected to speak to law enforcement officials in the state's capital Wednesday, just hours after the U.S. Justice Department filed suit — the most aggressive move yet in the Trump administration's push to force so-called sanctuary cities and states to cooperate with immigration authorities.

The U.S. Justice Department is challenging three California laws that, among other things, bar police from asking people about their citizenship status or participating in federal immigration enforcement activities. The suit filed in federal court in Sacramento said the laws are unconstitutional and have

kept federal agents from doing their jobs.

"The Department of Justice and the Trump administration are going to fight these unjust, unfair and unconstitutional policies that have been imposed on you," Sessions said in prepared remarks. "I believe that we are going to win."

California officials remained defiant, with Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown mimicking President Donald Trump on Twitter as he criticized Sessions for coming to Sacramento "to further divide and polarize America. Jeff, these political stunts may be the norm in Washington, but they don't work here. SAD!!!"

Brown is named in the lawsuit along with Democratic Attorney General Xavier Becerra, who said the state is on firm legal footing.

The lawsuit is the latest salvo in an escalating feud between the Trump administration and California, which has resisted

the president on issues from taxes to marijuana policy and defiantly refuses to help federal agents detain and deport immigrants. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has said it will increase its presence in California, and Sessions wants to cut off funding to jurisdictions that won't cooperate.

Sessions, who has blamed sanctuary city policies for crime and gang violence, was scheduled to speak to groups representing police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys, narcotics investigators and the California Highway Patrol. Only the California State Sheriffs' Association actively opposed the so-called sanctuary law.

Becerra, who is up for election in November, said sanctuary policies increase public safety by promoting trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement while allowing police resources to be used to fight other crimes.

Porn star sues to clarify Trump affair

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A porn star who has said she had sex with Donald Trump filed a lawsuit seeking to invalidate a nondisclosure agreement and "set the record straight," her lawyer said Wednesday.

Adult film actress Stormy Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles County Superior Court on Tuesday. She alleges that the agreement she signed days before the 2016 presidential election, which prevented her from discussing the alleged sexual encounters, is "null and void and of no consequence" because Trump didn't personally sign it.

Her lawyer, Michael Avenatti, said on morning news shows

Wednesday that she wants "to set the record straight." He said on NBC there was "no question" Trump knew about the agreement, though he did not offer any proof.

Clifford alleges that she began an "intimate relationship" with Trump in 2006 and that it continued "well into the year 2007," according to the lawsuit. She said the relationship included encounters in Lake Tahoe, Nev., and Beverly Hills, Calif. Trump married his current wife, Melania Trump, in 2005.

Clifford claims she had sex with Trump once and then carried on a subsequent yearslong platonic relationship.

Previously, through a lawyer, Clifford denied the two had an affair, but Avenatti said

Wednesday that was to meet the terms of the nondisclosure agreement. Trump's attorney Michael Cohen has denied there was ever an affair. Cohen has said he paid the porn actress \$130,000 out of his own pocket as part of the agreement.

The lawsuit charges that the Oct. 28, 2016, "hush agreement" is legally invalid because it was signed only by Clifford and Cohen.

Clifford alleges that as recently as last week, Trump's attorney tried to initiate an arbitration proceeding against her.

Neither Cohen nor the White House immediately responded to requests for comment Tuesday evening.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Storm ruins 7K flags used in annual display

RI PROVIDENCE — More than 7,000 American flags used in an annual Memorial Day display in Rhode Island were destroyed by rain from last week's nor'easter.

The nonprofit group Operation Stand Down Rhode Island told WJAR-TV the flags were worth about \$4,000. They were damaged by water that leaked into the garage where they were being stored.

The flags are used in the group's "Boots on the Ground for Heroes Memorial" that honors servicemembers killed in action.

The group is hoping the public will donate new flags or money to buy replacements as they prepare for this year's display.

Woman tries to open door during flight

ID BOISE — Authorities said a woman was taken into custody after she attempted to open an aircraft door during a flight from San Francisco to Boise, Idaho.

The Idaho Statesman reported that Boise police took the woman into custody after SkyWest flight 5449 landed Monday morning.

Boise Airport officials said they contacted police after flight operators reported an "unruly passenger." SkyWest officials said the passenger was restrained on the flight, and police met the aircraft at the gate. All passengers safely left the plane.

City using dry ice to reduce rat population

NY NEW YORK — New York City is using dry

ice to reduce its rat population.

The Daily News said the program is in effect citywide after a successful 2016 pilot and the Environmental Protection Agency's approval of frozen carbon dioxide to kill rats.

The health department's pest control director, Ricky Simone, said dry ice is effective on rats but doesn't harm birds of prey.

On Monday, exterminators buried smoking dry ice in burrows in a park flower bed. The rats are trapped inside, suffocate and die within minutes. Some rats may escape, so an area is typically treated three times.

Man forces son to run to school in the rain

VA ROANOKE — A father in Virginia who said his son was kicked off the bus for three days for bullying made him run to school instead in the rain.

Bryan Thornhill's Facebook Live video, recorded while driving behind his son, picked up more than 1.6 million views. Thornhill said they joke that the boy will either be fast or obedient, but "so far, we're working on fast."

Thornhill also shared video of his son's second and third morning jogs, along with parenting advice. "If you get your panties in a wad seeing a kid jog, well, I feel sorry for you," he said. "You probably need a lap or two."

Official apologizes for basketball game rout

MA EAST BRIDGEWATER — A Massachusetts school superintendent has issued an apology after her high school basketball team beat another team in a playoff game by 86 points.

The East Bridgewater Lady Vikings met the Madison Park Vocational High School Cardinals at the Division III South Sectional playoff game. East Bridgewater ended the game with the final score of 93-7.

East Bridgewater Superintendent Elizabeth Legault called the game an "unfortunate situation" last week, saying it is not a reflection of their student body or athletic program.

Driver says sneeze was cause of crash

ME CASCO — The driver of a truck that rolled over into a power line and cut power to most of a Maine region said a sneeze caused the crash.

Casco police said the unidentified driver told them he was driving in Casco when he sneezed and lost control of his truck.

WGME-TV reported that the truck crashed and rolled over onto a utility pole, causing nearly 2,000 homes to lose power throughout Casco, Raymond and Naples.

The driver was not seriously hurt.

Photographer, nude model plead guilty

PA MONROEVILLE — A woman who posed nude at a suburban strip mall in Pennsylvania last year and the man who photographed her have pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct.

Court documents show Chelsea Guerra, 22, and Michael Warnock, 64, each entered their pleas Monday and were ordered to pay a \$300 fine.

Police said Guerra wore nothing but thigh-high stockings and high-heel shoes while posing in front of businesses at Miracle Mile shopping Center in Pitts-

burgh in April 2017. Guerra later told WTAE-TV she did not mean to offend anyone.

Church hands out cars to draw members

MD COLUMBIA — A Maryland church has given away cars to a handful of parishioners. The pastor said the free vehicles were used to demonstrate God's goodness — but also to attract members.

The Washington Post reported that Destiny Church in Columbia handed out five cars on Sunday. The free cars were the church's idea for increasing attendance at its new location. It was the first Sunday at a building in a strip mall.

Pastor Stephen Chandler said the predominantly black church normally draws up to 1,100 attendees. Last week, the church gave away 2,250 tickets in advance for three services. The church then added a fourth service, which meant it had to buy another car to give away.

Apples thought extinct are rediscovered

ID LEWISTON — Five types of apples, once thought to be extinct, have been rediscovered in northern Idaho and eastern Washington.

The Lewiston Tribune newspaper reported Monday that "apple detective" David Benscoter located the trees growing near Steptoe Butte on the rolling hills of the Palouse.

Benscoter worked with apple experts at the Temperate Orchard Conservancy in Oregon and Fedco Seeds in Maine to get positive identifications on the fruit. The apples were compared to written descriptions from old books and antique watercolor paintings.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Coaches on hot seat going into tourneys

Associated Press

Mark Fox might need an improbable run through the Southeastern Conference tournament to save his coaching job.

He's hardly alone on the college basketball hot seat.

From Georgia's Fox to Pittsburgh's Kevin Stallings to UConn's Kevin Ollie, numerous coaches went into conference tournaments knowing their jobs could be in jeopardy without a few more wins.

Excluding employment decisions that might be affected by myriad off-the-court issues, such as Auburn (Bruce Pearl) and Arizona (Sean Miller), here are some schools that might soon be looking for a new coach, if they haven't already started the process:

Georgia

In a year where Kentucky and Florida ceded their dominance at the top of the Southeastern Conference standings, the Bulldogs squandered an opportunity for a breakthrough.

It could mark the end of Fox's nine-year tenure, which has featured only two NCAA Tournament appearances (both of which were one-and-done).

While hardly a traditional powerhouse, Georgia certainly expected better from a team that featured Associated Press SEC player of the year Yante Maten. The Bulldogs are just 16-14 (7-11 SEC) heading into Wednesday's first-round matchup against Vanderbilt in the conference tournament.

After weather issues delayed his team's arrival in St. Louis by four hours, Fox said on a hastily assembled teleconference that there have been no discussions with athletic director Greg McGarity about his job status.

Ten years ago, in an SEC tournament remembered for a tornado striking the Georgia Dome, the Bulldogs pulled off a stunning SEC triumph after finishing last during the regular season. That performance saved Dennis Felton's job for the moment, but he didn't even make it through another full season.

Fox appears to be in a similar situation, requiring five wins in five days to even get a shot at Year 10.

Pittsburgh

The Panthers capped a historically awful season with a 67-64 loss to Notre Dame in the opening round of the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament Tuesday night.

Now the question is: Will Stallings return for a third year?

While it would be unusual to fire a coach after such a short tenure, these are dark times in Pittsburgh. Stallings' team lost all 19 games against ACC opponents this season and is just 24-41

overall since he arrived from Vanderbilt.

Also working against Stallings: He wasn't a popular choice from the outset, and the current athletic director, Heather Lyke, isn't the one who hired him.

Connecticut

Ollie has the 2014 national championship on his résumé, as well as an American Athletic Conference title from just two seasons ago. But the Huskies have taken a significant fall since then.

After slipping to 16-17 last season, UConn is just 14-17 — and 7-11 in the league — heading into its AAC tournament opener against SMU on Thursday.

Athletic director David Benedict plans to evaluate Ollie after the season, and it's clear the boss isn't happy with the state of the program, which is also facing an NCAA investigation. On the other hand, Ollie's lucrative contract would require a buyout of some \$10 million.

Iowa

Fran McCaffery brushed off questions about his job security, despite an unexpectedly dismal season that ended last week with an overtime loss to Michigan in the earlier-than-usual Big Ten Tournament.

While the overall body of work and a contract extension may give McCaffery some extra security, there's no doubt the Hawkeyes faithful are on edge after a 14-19 campaign that included just five wins in 20 games against conference opponents. More troubling, Iowa wasn't

even competitive at times, losing eight Big Ten games by double-digit margins and finishing last in the league in scoring defense.

The Hawkeyes could be headed for another long season if sophomore star Tyler Cook decides to leave.

Louisville

One of college basketball's most prestigious jobs could be opening up unless the Cardinals decide to remove the interim tag from David Padgett's title.

Padgett took over as coach after the firing of Rick Pitino, and any hope of keeping the job likely depends on at least making the NCAA Tournament.

Even then, there are other issues to consider.

All the uncertainty swirling around the NCAA coaching ranks because of an ongoing FBI probe could actually work in Padgett's favor, since some of the top potential candidates have been linked to the scandal. But being a former Pitino assistant could be a major strike against Padgett, especially if Louisville's new administration wants a totally clean reboot to the post-Pitino era.

The Cardinals' NCAA hopes took a blow last week when they lost to No. 1 Virginia on a buzzer-beating shot, so they've got some work to do in the ACC Tournament. Louisville (20-12, 10-9) beat Florida State (20-11, 9-10) on Wednesday, a contest that likely keeps the Cardinals in the NCAA mix for at least one more day.

No. 6 Gonzaga routs BYU to win WCC championship

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Gonzaga seemed headed for a dog fight with BYU to get a sixth straight West Coast Conference title. Once the Bulldogs started soaring, there was no stopping them.

Racing out for dunks and three-pointers in transition, No. 6 Gonzaga overwhelmed BYU during a massive run to blow out the Cougars 74-54 on Tuesday night for its sixth straight WCC tournament title.

"That's probably as good a run I've been a part of in 28 years at Gonzaga, definitely in 19 years as head coach," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "Fantastic defense that led to great offense. It was just a thing

of beauty to see."

Gonzaga (30-4), the regular-season champion, locked into a defensive battle with BYU (24-10) for most of the first half. The Zags revved it up at both ends and turned it into a title-game rout, reeling off a half-time-spanning 36-6 run to win their 17th WCC title.

Killian Tillie had 22 points, Zach Norvell Jr. added 17 and the Bulldogs held BYU to 35 percent shooting to win their 17th straight conference tournament game.

The dominant title performance should boost Gonzaga's chances for a high NCAA Tournament seed and possibly a go-out-on-top end to the Zags' dominance in the WCC — Gonzaga is in talks to join the Moun-

tain West Conference, possibly next season.

"Tonight, they were a handful for us," BYU coach Dave Rose said. "It's tough when things get that lopsided. It's really tough when they get it going like that."

Yoeli Childs had 20 points to cap a stellar tournament for BYU.

Heading into the tournament, Gonzaga appeared to be on course for another showdown with No. 20 Saint Mary's in the WCC title game.

The Zags, the tournament's top seed, did their part, beating Loyola Marymount and San Francisco to reach the title game for the 21st straight season.

BYU got in the way of the No.

2-seeded Gaels. The Cougars shot 61 percent and Childs had a career-high 33 points, lifting them to an 85-72 victory and into the title game for the first time since 2015.

Gonzaga won both meetings during the regular season, by eight in Spokane and 14 in Provo.

BYU was able to match Gonzaga shot for shot for most of a first half dominated by defense. The Zags found a little more room to operate offensively late in the half, closing on an 11-2 run to go up 38-29.

"For the first 17, 18 minutes, it was a real battle," said BYU's Payton Dasturp, who had 11 points. "They seemed to flip a switch and create some havoc."

Conference tournaments

Wright State wins Horizon League title

Associated Press

DETROIT — Grant Benzinger grew up watching the NCAA Tournament, looking up old highlights and locking in for “One Shining Moment,” with his dad, hoping to play in it someday.

His dream is about to come true.

Benzinger had 19 points and nine rebounds to help second-seeded Wright State beat eighth-seeded Cleveland State 74-57 on Tuesday night to win the Horizon League Tournament title and earn an NCAA Tournament bid.

“It’s great to be a part of it now,” he said.

The Raiders (25-9) will play in the NAAs for the third time in school history and the first since 2007.

“I’m sure we’ll probably have a pretty high seed and we’ll play one of the top nine or 12 teams in the country,” coach Scott Nagy said.

The Vikings (12-23) took their last lead with 7:36 left in the first half and seemed to wear down, playing their fourth

game in five days.

Wright State took control late in the first half with a 13-2 run, taking an eight-point lead at halftime. The Raiders outscored Cleveland State 10-2 early in the second half to pull away.

“There’s no excuse about being tired,” Cleveland State guard Kenny Carpenter said.

Loudon Love made his first field goal with 14:42 left to put the Raiders up 44-33. The 6-foot-9, 275-pound center finished with nine points and 12 rebounds, setting the school’s freshman scoring record and its single-season mark for rebounds. Wright State’s Cole Gentry and Jaylon Hall scored 11 points apiece.

“Love displaced us all game,” Cleveland State coach Dennis Felton said. “We did a very, very good job establishing position, but he was just very persistent and very physical.”

Colonial Athletic Association

College of Charleston 83, Northeastern 76 (OT): At North Charleston, S.C., Joe Chealey had 32 points and the

Cougars rallied from 17 points down in the second half to win the tournament championship and earn their first NCAA Tournament berth in 19 years.

Fans mobbed the floor when things ended, swarming a team that looked cooked about an hour earlier.

After rallying to tie, the Cougars caught fire in the extra period. They hit their first four shots, including a pair of three-pointers by Marquise Pointer to take a 75-69 lead. Northeastern (23-10) could not come back.

Northeast Conference

LIU Brooklyn 71, Wagner 61: At New York, Joel Hernandez had 32 points and seven rebounds, and the Blackbirds shocked the crosstown rival Seahawks to win the tournament title and earn their first NCAA Tournament bid in five years.

Raiquan Clark had 20 points and eight rebounds for fourth-seeded LIU Brooklyn (18-16), which handed top-seeded Wagner (23-9) its first loss this season on its Staten Island campus.

Romone Saunders had 17

points and Devin Liggeons had 14 points and 11 rebounds for Wagner.

Summit League

South Dakota State 97, South Dakota 87: At Sioux Falls, S.D., David Jenkins scored 29 points, Mike Daum had 25 points and 11 rebounds, and the Jackrabbits beat the Coyotes to win the tournament championship and clinch a third straight NCAA Tournament berth.

Reed Tellinghuisen added 18 points and 11 rebounds for South Dakota State (28-6), which has won 11 straight. The Jackrabbits shot 48 percent from the field, including 14-for-28 from the three-point line.

SDSU led by 20 in the second half before South Dakota mounted a challenge midway through the half. Tyler Hagedorn scored 11 of his 15 points in the second half for the Coyotes (26-8) to help fuel the run, which dwindled SDSU’s lead to six with just under three minutes to play.

Cougars’ loss gives Big Ten bubble teams a reprieve

Associated Press

No. 6 Gonzaga might have some new fans in Big Ten country.

A 74-54 win over BYU in the West Coast Conference Tournament title game Tuesday night gave the Bulldogs an automatic bid to the NAAs. Gonzaga would have made the NCAA Tournament regardless, so the Zags’ victory opened one more precious at-large berth for other contenders.

Nebraska and Penn State can breathe easy, at least for one more night.

The Big Ten’s bubble teams can only watch now while other schools get a chance to impress the selection committee.

It’s an excruciating wait until the bracket is announced this weekend because the Big Ten tourney ended Sunday after being moved up a week earlier than normal in order to play at Madison Square Garden in New York.

What can help the Cornhuskers and Nittany Lions is if the favorites win the automatic bids in the remaining conference tournaments in order to leave as many at-large berths open as possible.

Gonzaga did them a favor by blowing out BYU. The Cougars (24-10, 67 RPI) likely lost their only shot to get into the NAAs.

Elsewhere on the bubble, Notre Dame and Syracuse each

won on the first day of the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament to keep their hopes alive. The schedule picked up Wednesday with the Big East, Big 12 and Pac-12 joining the conference tourney fray. Schools like Marquette, Oklahoma and Arizona State get their first cracks at strengthening résumés and making post-season runs to stay fresh in the minds of the members of the selection committee.

All Nebraska and Penn State can do is wait.

On the rise

Notre Dame: The Irish (19-13, 69 RPI) had some nervous moments late in their three-point victory over 24-loss team Pittsburgh in the

first round of the ACC Tournament. But Notre Dame did get 19 points and 33 minutes from star forward Bonzie Colson in his third game back from injury. Next up: a chance to get to 20 wins on Wednesday against Virginia Tech (21-10, 51 RPI). Unlike the 80-75 loss to the Hokies in late January, the Irish should have Colson and Matt Farrell for this rematch. Farrell missed the first game with a bad ankle.

Syracuse: Finally, an ACC tourney win for the Orange (20-12, 39 RPI). The 73-64 victory over Wake Forest sets up an important matchup for Syracuse on Wednesday against No. 12 North Carolina (22-9, 6 RPI). The Orange could use a win over a Top 10 RPI team to strengthen their chance to get back into the NAAs after a one-year absence.

NBA roundup

Rockets roll to 16th straight victory

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Rockets are still rolling.

Chris Paul scored 25 points, James Harden had 23 points and 11 assists, and Houston beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 122-112 on Tuesday night for its 16th straight victory.

The Rockets matched Boston for the longest win streak in the league this season and are on the second-longest win streak in franchise history. Harden was blunt when asked what those things meant to him.

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing at all. We just want to play well. We want to play well and have each other's back, no matter what, on both ends of the floor. It doesn't matter. Wins and losses will come."

Trevor Ariza scored 15 points and Eric Gordon added 14 for the Rockets.

Russell Westbrook scored 32 points and Carmelo Anthony added 23 for Oklahoma City, which is in a logjam of teams trying to fight their way into third place in the West.

Oklahoma City had beaten

several of the league's top teams this season. The Thunder have two wins over Golden State, a victory over Toronto and a win over Cleveland this season. The Rockets avoided that fate by going 17 of 33 on 3-pointers and 29 of 34 on free throws.

"We're so good offensively that every single night, teams are going to throw different coverages at us," Harden said. "We've just got to figure out ways to attack them. Tonight was no different. Once we found something that we could go to, we used it. Guys got open shots and we just ride that wave out the entire game."

The Rockets led 54-45 at halftime as Harden posted 13 points, seven assists and five rebounds. Anthony had 19 points for the Thunder and Westbrook had 14, but All-Star Paul George went 1-for-7 from the field before the break.

"You just have to keep playing," Thunder guard Corey Brewer said. "They are going to make shots. You can't get down. You can't let their shot-making affect your game. I think tonight

we got a little bit down when they made tough shots but that's what they do."

Pelicans 121, Clippers 116: Anthony Davis scored 41 points despite a rib contusion and visiting New Orleans won its ninth straight.

Davis tied his career high with four three-pointers and had 13 rebounds.

Warriors 114, Nets 101: Stephen Curry scored 34 points with six three-pointers, and host Golden State won its sixth straight since the All-Star break.

Kevin Durant added 19 points and six rebounds for the defending champions, who are still trying to put together four steady quarters.

Trail Blazers 111, Knicks 87: Damian Lillard scored 37 points and made eight three-pointers, and host Portland won its eighth straight game.

CJ McCollum added 19 points for the Blazers, on their longest winning streak since winning nine in a row in 2014. They have moved into third place in the Western Confer-

ence standings.

Wizards 117, Heat 113 (OT): Bradley Beal scored 30 points on 12-of-16 shooting and Washington had its best three-point shooting night of the season to beat visiting Miami.

Beal went 6-for-7 from beyond the arc, leading a Washington team that finished 14-for-24 there while snapping its first three-game losing streak of the season.

Raptors 106, Hawks 90: DeMar DeRozan scored 25 points, Jonas Valanciunas had 15 and host Toronto beat Atlanta for its fifth straight win.

76ers 128, Hornets 114: Robert Covington scored 22 points, Ben Simmons flirted with a triple-double and Philadelphia handed host Charlotte its fourth straight loss.

Simmons had 16 points, 13 assists and eight rebounds.

Mavericks 118, Nuggets 107: Yogi Ferrell rode hot three-point shooting to a season-high 24 points, Dirk Nowitzki also was strong from long range to score 17 and host Dallas beat Denver.

NHL roundup

Point carries Lightning in overtime again

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Overtime has become Brayden Point's time to shine.

The Tampa Bay center scored his fourth overtime goal of the season on Tuesday to give the league-leading Lightning a 5-4 victory over Florida.

Point also has four game-deciding shootout goals.

"You've got to be out there and coaches trust me with that," said Point, who has 10 game-winning goals on the season, two shy of the franchise record. "It's a privilege to play overtime. We're just trying to

work hard, and guys are finding me. It's not only myself, but our team's been playing well in overtime."

Tampa Bay reached overtime for the sixth consecutive game, one shy of tying the NHL record set by Edmonton in 2004 and Toronto in 2009, according to Elias Sports Bureau.

Predators 2, Stars 0: Pekka Rinne stopped 26 shots, Ryan Hartman scored at 5:33 of the third period and host Nashville beat Dallas.

Bruins 6, Red Wings 5 (OT): Brad Marchand completed his hat trick 34 seconds into overtime and host Boston escaped

with the victory over Detroit after twice squandering a two-goal lead in regulation.

Ducks 4, Capitals 0: John Gibson made 36 saves for his 14th career shutout, Rickard Rakell scored for the fourth straight game and host Anaheim extended its home point streak to nine games.

Wild 6, Hurricanes 2: Eric Staal's second goal of the night capped a franchise-record flurry to start the second period, and host Minnesota cruised past Carolina.

Rangers 3, Jets 0: New York's Patrik Laine got his fourth hat trick and set a career

high with his 38th goal.

Devils 6, Canadiens 4: Taylor Hall extended his point-scoring streak to 19 games, Travis Zajac scored two power-play goals and host New Jersey beat Montreal.

Blue Jackets 4, Golden Knights 1: Joonas Korpihalo stopped 37 shots, Artemi Panarin and Pierre Luc-Dubois each had a goal and two assists for host Columbus.

Blackhawks 2, Avalanche 1 (OT): Jonathan Toews scored nine seconds into overtime and had an assist in regulation to lead host Chicago past Colorado.