

STARS AND STRIPES®

Thursday, March 15, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

EUCOM chief: Russian sub activity surging

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Russia submarine activity is at its highest levels since the 1980s as Moscow continues to invest heavily in its maritime capabilities, the top military commander in Europe said Thursday.

“They are deploying more and they are deploying at a higher rate,” said Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti, adding that the Russian navy is maneuvering regularly from the Arctic to the Mediterranean. “The forces they are deploying are being modernized, particularly with their weapons systems.”

While the U.S. remains dominant under the sea, more investment will be needed to keep that edge, Scaparrotti told the House Armed Services Committee.

The Navy’s fleet of fast-attack submarines is scheduled to drop from 52 to 42 by 2028, according to the Congressional Research Service, as Cold War-era boats reach their decommissioning dates.

The number wouldn’t rise back to 52 until the 2030s under current estimates,

even as the Navy plans to order two new Virginia-class submarines annually and considers extending the lives of some of its aging Los Angeles-class subs.

In Europe, a more aggressive Russia is challenging the U.S. and its allies in conventional military ways that recall the Cold War, as well as with newer electronic methods.

For U.S. European Command, much of the focus has centered on deterring traditional threats.

U.S. patrols in the Black Sea have doubled, brigades are rotating regularly along NATO’s eastern flank and efforts are underway to ensure the faster movement of forces in Europe, Scaparrotti said.

EUCOM would benefit from more permanently based forces to deter Russia, such as a fires and aviation brigade, Scaparrotti said.

Still, much of the challenge lies outside traditional military areas of operation, such as Russian information operations that seek to undermine the West and NATO, the general said.

EUCOM has a relatively new command

group focused on disinformation, but more coordination across the U.S. government is needed to deal with the threat, Scaparrotti said.

While Russia poses a conventional military threat, “the one big area where they are acting on a consistent basis is their disinformation, cyber campaign,” Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., said. “We are barely on the playing field at this point.”

“We need a more robust effort,” Scaparrotti said regarding a cyberoperations campaign, but added that such an effort would be led by the State Department.

“Right now, the State Department is not in a good place,” Smith replied.

Meanwhile, it is too early to tell if the recent U.S. decision to provide lethal arms to Ukraine is altering Russia’s calculus when it comes to backing separatists in the country’s east.

“Ukraine is in what I would consider a hot fight right now, not a frozen conflict,” Scaparrotti said. “It is not my belief Russia wants to resolve this conflict at this point.”

vandiver.john@stripes.com
Twitter: @john_vandiver

Harris: Kim wins if US troops leave S. Korea

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A day after President Donald Trump reportedly hinted at a withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea, the admiral in charge of Pacific Command warned Thursday such a move would be viewed as a win for North Korea.

“I believe [regime leader Kim Jong Un] would do a victory dance,” said Adm. Harry Harris, who is slated to retire this year and is Trump’s pick to be the next ambassador to Australia. “I think he’d be a happy man if we abdicated our alliance with South Korea and with Japan.”

The comments by Harris were part of a wide-ranging conversation with the Senate Armed Services Committee during a hearing to examine the military posture and security challenges in the Pacific region.

A day earlier, Trump told donors during a fundraiser in St. Louis that he wanted to be a smart trader and the U.S. is losing

money in its trade relationship with South Korea, The Washington Post reported.

During the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing Thursday, Harris also addressed talk of a controversial “bloody nose” strike against North Korea, saying no such plan for a limited, pre-emptive strike is in the works.

Media reports have pointed to support from some officials in the White House for such an attack against North Korea.

Harris said the U.S. must be ready to “do the whole thing” rather than a limited strike if there is a conflict. He estimated a conflict on the Korean Peninsula could result in thousands of casualties.

“We have no bloody nose strategy. I don’t know what that is ...,” he said. “I am ready to execute whatever the president and the National Command Authority directs me to do, but a bloody nose strategy is not contemplated.”

Chaos at the State Department and the

White House has some defense hawks on Capitol Hill worried about the impact on potential talks with North Korea. On Tuesday, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was dismissed from his position as a wave of vacancies still dominate key diplomatic posts.

Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., the ranking Democrat on the committee, said the vacancies add to a long to-do list for the U.S. before successful talks with North Korea can take place.

“I am concerned that there is a very short window of time for all of this work to take place,” Reed said.

The Senate hearing also covered a scope of issues facing the military in the Pacific region, from a crucial need for hypersonic weapons to growing threats from Russia and China, which were highlighted as the new, major adversaries in the National Defense Strategy.

grisales.claudia@stripes.com
Twitter: @cgrisales

US, Nigerien troops killed 11 militants in previously undisclosed 2017 mission

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. forces and partner troops killed 11 Islamic State militants in Niger during a firefight that occurred two months after a deadly ambush as part of a mission that only now is coming to light.

U.S. Africa Command confirmed Thursday that U.S. troops and Nigerien government forces were on a Dec. 6 mission in the country's Lake Chad Basin region when they came under fire from "a formation of violent extremists."

"The purpose of this mission was to set the conditions for future partner-led operations against violent extremist organizations in the region, and based on currently available information, we assessed this attack was launched by ISIS-West Africa," AFRICOM

spokeswoman Samantha Reho said in a statement.

No U.S. or Nigerien forces were killed or injured in the attack, which included the deaths of two enemy fighters who wore suicide vests. A weapons cache also was destroyed during the mission, Reho said.

The fight came to light after The New York Times obtained a government document that made vague reference to the attack and the need for U.S. troops to defend themselves.

U.S. special operations forces have been operating in Niger and western Africa for years, away from the public eye and scrutiny but not without risks.

Shortly after the Oct. 4 ambush that killed four U.S. soldiers, the former head of special operations missions in Africa told Stars and Stripes that there had been numerous firefights in Niger during his time in command.

F/A-18 crash off Fla. kills 2 Navy aviators

The (Norfolk) Virginian-Pilot

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — Two Navy aviators from the Naval Air Station Oceana-based Strike Fighter Squadron 213 died Wednesday after their F/A-18 Super Hornet crashed off the coast of Florida, Naval Air Force Atlantic spokesman Cmdr. Dave Hecht said.

The fighter jet crashed about a mile off the coast around 4:30 p.m. as it was returning from a training mission, Hecht said. Both crewmembers ejected and were recovered from the water and taken by ambulance to Lower Keys Medical Center.

Hecht did not know if the crewmembers, a pilot and a weapons systems officer, died at the scene or later.

The Navy said late Wednesday that it is withholding the aviators' identities for 24

hours pending next-of-kin notification.

The jet flew out of Naval Air Station Key West, on Boca Chica Key. A detachment of the squadron, known as the Fighting Blacklions, is in Florida for training.

Barbie Wilson said she was returning to her home on the backside of the air station from running errands Wednesday when she saw the jet approaching. She stopped to watch, as she often does, when suddenly "the wings went vertical," she said in a phone call Wednesday night.

"There was a fireball and it literally dropped out of the sky," Wilson said.

Wilson said she called 911. She said it appeared the jet landed upside-down in shallow water near a mangrove and the fuel tank floated away.

7th Fleet goes Down Under to celebrate 75 years in Pacific

By TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

The Navy's 7th Fleet celebrated its 75th anniversary this week at its birthplace Down Under.

The festivities kicked off Monday in Brisbane, Australia, with a series of performances by the 7th Fleet band at high schools around the city. On Wednesday, the fleet's commander, Vice Adm. Phil Sawyer, laid a wreath at Submariner's Heritage Trail, the former site of Navy submarines in Australia during World War II and a memorial to submariners of all nations who lost their lives in defense of Australia. He also visited Gen. Douglas MacArthur's former office and sat in his chair.

The fleet's history stretches back to March 15, 1943, a year and three months after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. It was

placed under the command of MacArthur, who was tasked with assembling allied forces to push back against the rapidly advancing Japanese military in the Pacific.

"One message generated 7th Fleet," Sawyer told Stars and Stripes in an interview last week. "It really was an outcome of what was ongoing during World War II. It provided geographic support to Gen. MacArthur and what he was doing down south."

The fleet participated in major operations that liberated the Philippines from Japan. After the end of the war, it shifted its headquarters to Qingdao, China, where it was based from 1946 to 1949.

The 7th Fleet left China following the country's takeover by the communist forces and relocated to Subic Bay, Philippines, and then later to Japan.

In the decades after World

War II, the fleet participated in both the Korean War — in which it conducted landings at Inchon that helped turn the tide during the conflict — and the Vietnam War.

Changing politics and alliances in the Pacific late found the U.S. partnering with former enemies Japan and Vietnam. Japan has hosted U.S. forces in the Pacific since the 1950s, and today the 7th Fleet is headquartered at Yokosuka Naval Base.

Vietnam, threatened by aggressive Chinese territorial claims in the region, has slowly increased relations with its former enemy — efforts spearheaded by naval forces in the region. Earlier this month, the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson conducted a four-day port call in Danang, becoming the first U.S. carrier to visit Vietnam since the war.

"If you would've put yourself back in time 40 years ago

and said, 'Are we ever gonna be standing in Danang, singing each other's national anthems on board an aircraft carrier, having a big-top reception and toasting each other?' There [are] not many people that would've taken that bet and said, 'That's what we're gonna do,'" Sawyer told Stars and Stripes.

Although the fleet hasn't participated in a major Pacific conflict in decades, threats remain that keep its sailors busy. Those include North Korea and an increasingly assertive China.

"The common theme from 1943 to now is we're operating in and around the Indo-Pacific region," he said. "Back then, our job was working with like-minded countries and navies to provide security and stability to the region. That's what forward-deployed forces are for. We're here to provide security."

NATO backs UK on nerve agent attack

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Russia's nerve agent attack in the United Kingdom demands a response, NATO's top official said Thursday, but the alliance has not been asked to provide direct support as Britain continues its investigation.

"I am absolutely certain the U.K. will respond, and is responding, in a measured way," Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said during a news conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels. "I fully support that there is a need for a response. There has to be consequences."

Britain has blamed Moscow for the March 4 attack in Salisbury, where a military grade

nerve agent was used in an attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter. The two remain in critical condition. In the two weeks since the attack, tensions have ratcheted up, sparking fears of a potentially dangerous escalation between Russia and U.S. ally Britain.

Washington stands "in absolute solidarity with Great Britain" and believes Russia was responsible for the attack, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley told a U.N. Security Council emergency session Wednesday.

London expelled 23 Russian diplomats it identified as undeclared intelligence officers on Wednesday. Moscow has denied any involvement and has

warned against any retaliatory measures.

"One should not threaten a nuclear power," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters earlier this week.

On Monday, British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson will arrive at NATO headquarters for a special meeting on the matter.

"This is the first offensive use of a nerve agent on alliance territory since NATO's foundation," Stoltenberg said. "All allies agree that the attack was a clear breach of international norms and agreements. This is unacceptable."

For now, NATO's support of its ally is largely political and symbolic. Stoltenberg said allies have offered "practical

support," but stopped short of detailing what that amounted to.

So far, London has not sought to invoke Article 5, the NATO provision that an attack on one member state requires a collective response from all.

The only time Article 5 has been invoked was in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the U.S.

However, it remains a possibility that London could call for a rare Article 4 meeting, which is when a member calls for a special session of NATO's highest decision-making committee to discuss a concern.

Stoltenberg's comments Thursday came as he delivered his annual report on the state of NATO.

US accuses Russia of hacking energy grid

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration accused Russia on Thursday of a concerted, ongoing operation to hack and spy on the U.S. energy grid and other critical infrastructure, and separately imposed sanctions on Russian officials for alleged high-tech interference in the 2016 American presidential election.

U.S. national security officials said the FBI, the Homeland Security Department and American intelligence agencies determined that Russian intelligence and others were behind the attacks on the energy sector.

The officials said the Russians deliberately chose U.S. energy industry targets, obtaining access to computer systems and then conducting "network reconnaissance" of industrial control systems that run American factories and the electricity grid.

The U.S. government has

helped energy businesses kick out the Russians from all systems currently known to have been penetrated, according to the officials.

The officials, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive national security information, left open the possibility of discovering more breaches, and said the federal government was issuing an alert to the energy industry to raise awareness about the threat and improve preparation.

The accusations and accompanying sanctions are some of the strongest actions to date by the administration to punish Russia for hacking and other efforts to sow discord in the American democracy.

Also Thursday, the U.S. joined Britain, France and Germany in a joint statement blaming Moscow for the poisoning of an ex-Russian spy who was living in England.

US sanctions 19 Russians over election interference

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Thursday imposed sanctions on 19 Russians for alleged interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, including 13 indicted by special counsel Robert Mueller as part of his Russia-related investigation.

Also targeted were five Russian companies, including the Internet Research Agency, which is accused of orchestrating a mass online disinformation campaign to affect the election that Republican Donald Trump won over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

The Treasury Department announced the sanctions amid withering criticism of Trump and his administration for failing to use the congressionally mandated authority to punish Russia for the election interference. Trump himself has been skeptical of the allegations.

The sanctions are the first use of the powers that Congress passed last year in retaliation for Moscow's meddling. The targets include officials working for the Russian military intelligence

agency, GRU. Thursday's action freezes any assets the individuals and entities may have in the United States and bars Americans from doing business with them.

The department said in a statement that the GRU and Russia's military interfered in the 2016 election and were "directly responsible" for the NotPetya cyberattack that hit businesses across Europe in June 2017.

Among those penalized was Yevgeny Prigozhin, who is known as Russian President Vladimir Putin's "chef" and who ran the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency, and 12 of the agency's employees. They were included in Mueller's indictment last month.

The sanctions also affect the Russian Federal Security Service, or FSB, and six of its employees, for cyberattacks more broadly, including those targeting Russian journalists, opposition figures, foreign politicians and U.S. officials.

The Americans include members of the diplomatic corps, the military and White House staffers.

DeCA blamed for produce costs

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Defense Commissary Agency has saved tens of millions of dollars shipping produce to the Pacific since 2015. However, a recent inspector general report says the agency failed to provide effective oversight of its new contracts, leaving customers paying significantly more for fresh fruits and vegetables.

In the past, DeCA subsidized contractors' produce shipments to commissaries in Japan and South Korea, costing the agency about \$114.6 million from 2013 to 2015, the IG report said. When contracts were renegotiated in 2015, DeCA stopped paying for shipping, instead aiming to purchase more locally grown produce and having suppliers foot those costs.

Since then, DeCA has saved about \$38 million per year.

After the deal was made, prices for fresh produce climbed at Pacific commissaries. Between November 2015 and April 2017, customers in mainland Japan

paid 20.9 percent more for produce. During the same period, Okinawa customers saw an increase of 23.6 percent while those in South Korea paid 31.5 percent more.

The report's findings were based on a review of prices for 239 unique fresh produce items in mainland Japan, 237 in Okinawa and 231 in South Korea.

The 2015 contract's aim was to keep the quality and cost of produce on base comparable to what they were before the contract, but the IG report says those expectations were not met. It blamed DeCA for the price increase, saying the agency's "market research did not adequately evaluate the feasibility of obtaining fresh produce items from in-country for DeCA commissaries in the Pacific theater."

DeCA spokesman Kevin Robinson likened the price increases to berries in the U.S., where they are cheaper in summer and more expensive in winter when they must be sourced from other countries.

The Pacific model is based

on one used to "successfully" supply produce to Europe commissaries since 2007, Robinson said. "These contracts hold the contractors responsible for the product's freshness and quality until it is received and accepted by our commissaries," he said.

The IG report also mentioned that Cost of Living Allowances were minimally affected by the higher prices because produce accounts for only about 2 percent of purchases reported in surveys analyzed to set COLA amounts.

To avoid high produce prices at the commissaries, some customers in the Pacific say they are going off base more often for fresh fruits and vegetables.

But going off base for cheaper produce isn't always feasible, said Aimee Palmer, of Yokosuka. "We have been here since January 2014, [and] my kids do not eat nearly as much fresh produce as I would like," she said. "I just don't make enough time in my week to go out in town and buy all the apples, bananas, grapes, oranges or strawberries my kids love to eat."

GOP may challenge Pa. election

Associated Press

CANONSBURG, Pa. — Republicans eyed a recount and a lawsuit over perceived irregularities in a closely watched U.S. House race in Pennsylvania where Democrat Conor Lamb clung to a slender lead Wednesday in the longtime GOP stronghold friendly to President Donald Trump.

With the last batch of absentee ballots counted, Lamb, 33, a former Marine and prosecutor and first-time candidate, saw his edge over Republican Rick Saccone, who served in the Air Force, shrink slightly, to 627 votes out of more than 224,000 cast, according to unofficial results.

The four counties in the Pittsburgh-area district reported they had about 375 uncounted provisional, military and overseas ballots. They have seven days to count the provisional ballots, and the deadline to receive military and overseas ballots is next Tuesday.

With the margin so close, supporters of either candidate can ask for a recount. The GOP is considering lodging a recount request, and county officials reported receiving a letter from a law firm requesting that they preserve their records, something the counties say they do anyway under state law.

Separately, Republicans mulled legal action, according to a person familiar with the deliberations who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal planning. Complaints could include that party lawyers were prevented from observing the counting of some absentee ballots, voting machines erroneously recorded votes from Lamb, and voters were confused by some information from the state elections website.

Officials in Allegheny County, the most populous and Democratic-leaning county in the district, pushed back on Republican claims Wednesday, saying the lawyers had lacked written authorization from the GOP and they had received no reports Tuesday of malfunctioning voting machines.

Navy, allies train in Mediterranean

BY SCOTT WYLAND

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Ten allied navies have converged in the Mediterranean Sea this month to practice fighting submarines and surface warships as a resurgent Russia expands its naval presence in the region.

Dynamic Manta is an annual, 11-day NATO exercise meant to improve coordination between participating navies. The exercise off the coast of Sicily ends Friday.

Linking technologies, crews and vessels in submarine warfare is a complex, crucial challenge within the vast area that NATO patrols, said Rear Adm. Andrew Lennon, the NATO submarines commander.

"Locating just one submarine typically requires coordination among several ships and aircraft," Lennon said.

About 5,000 sailors from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the U.S. took part in the drills.

In all, six submarines, two destroyers seven frigates, 10 maritime patrol aircraft and nine helicopters engaged in the exercise. The U.S. Navy provided two P-8A Poseidons, a P-3 Orion, a submarine and the destroyer USS Laboon.

Exercises like these sharpen tactical proficiency and signal to Moscow that NATO can track and defeat Russia's naval forces, said Michael Petersen, director of the Naval War College's Russia Maritime Studies Institute.

"So there is a deterrence message baked into these exercises," Petersen said.

Russia is deploying more submarines in the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, Petersen said. Re-

cently, it added six guided-missile boats to its Black Sea fleet, giving it a total of seven submarines cruising those waters, he said.

Given how stretched the Navy is due to its global responsibilities, it's essential that it work closely with its NATO partners in combating Russian submarines, Petersen said.

In a multinational effort, the navies must have compatible, secure communications and tracking systems to avoid losing contact with enemy submarines, Lennon said.

Putting more high-tech sonar systems into the water creates a more encompassing picture of undersea activities, he said.

"Finding quiet submarines in a noisy ocean is tremendously difficult," Lennon said. "Old technology won't work against new submarines."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Family finds an 8th valuable baseball card

CA LOS ANGELES — What could be better than becoming a millionaire after finding seven vintage baseball cards while cleaning out your late great-grandfather's house?

How about finding an eighth?

The anonymous family that two years ago made one of the greatest finds in sports collectibles history when they found seven Ty Cobb baseball cards printed between 1909 and 1911 have now found one more in the matching set.

Those first seven sold for about \$3 million.

They intend to hang on to the eighth, which was verified by Professional Sports Authenticator of Newport Beach, Calif., and valued at \$250,000.

Couple takes 165 poor kids to see movie

MD BALTIMORE — A Baltimore couple took 165 kids from across the area — and their chaperones — to see "Black Panther."

The Baltimore Sun reported the philanthropists Gloria Mayfield Banks and husband Kenneth Banks were inspired by similar tales and answered the call by several black actors and sports stars who challenged people to take poor kids to see the film.

The Bankses and all 165 kids, each armed with a soda and popcorn, packed in to a Towson Cinemark theater on March 9.

Police to get cat after Twitter campaign

MI TROY — An eastern Michigan police department will get a police cat following a successful social

media campaign.

The Troy Police Department launched an initiative March 6 to reach 10,000 Twitter followers by April, with the incentive of adding a furry feline to their team. The department had just over 4,000 followers when the campaign began.

The #WeWantAPoliceCat movement took just eight days to reach the goal.

Sgt. Meghan Lehman said the department will work with the Humane Society to bring in a cat. The animal will be used for therapeutic purposes.

Man gives wife kidney for 23rd anniversary

FL HOLLYWOOD — For their 23rd wedding anniversary, Cesar Calle gave his wife, Monica, a kidney.

The couple from Weston spoke to reporters Tuesday about their Feb. 19 surgeries at Memorial Regional Hospital. It was the first successful live donor kidney transplant at the Hollywood hospital where Monica Calle works.

Medical team leader Dr. Juan Arenas said it's unusual to find a match between spouses.

It took 30 health care workers to get the couple through the process and they went home from the hospital early.

Meteorologist is the candidate's name

PA LANCASTER — A former television weatherman who legally changed his name to Meteorologist Drew Anderson said there's a 100 percent chance of politics: He's pursuing a run for Congress in Pennsylvania under the new moniker.

LNP reported Anderson is collecting signatures to get on the Republican primary ballot for a run against U.S. Rep.

Lloyd Smucker. Anderson said he's looking for a climate change in Washington.

LNP said the weatherman changed his name from Drew Anderson last year and left his job at WMPT-TV Fox 43 two weeks ago.

800 tons of trash taken from property

WA CENTRALIA — Lewis County crews finished cleaning up a hoarder property after nearly a month.

The Chronicle reported that Steve Skinner, leader of the solid waste division of Lewis County Public Works, said that nearly 800 tons of assorted trash was removed from the Centralia property, costing the county about \$98,000.

Crews removed the most hazardous material — more than 80 junk vehicles and gallons of used cooking oil — last fall. Contractors tore down six buildings on the property.

Eatery: Reservations must be by postcard

ME FREEDOM — A nationally acclaimed restaurant in small-town Maine is asking diners to send postcards to reserve a table.

The Portland Press Herald reported The Lost Kitchen in Freedom is taking postcards for its 2018 reservation requests. The change comes after owner Erin French received 10,000 phone calls from eager diners last year. Word of mouth, magazine mentions and a Tastemade video that got 2 million views put the 40-seat restaurant in Freedom on the map.

The restaurant is accepting reservations for its May to October seating between April 1 and April 10. French and her staff will hold a drawing until all seats are claimed.

Elaborate sandcastle damaged by vandals

TX SOUTH PADRE ISLAND — Police say vandals damaged an elaborate sandcastle located in front of the South Padre Island Visitors Center.

South Padre Island police are seeking four men in connection with the \$24,000 in vandalism discovered during spring break. Authorities believe one of the suspects also climbed a flagpole and stole the South Padre Island flag.

The sandcastle featured 2018 "Welcome" and "Happy Easter" greetings, along with stylish sand renderings of structures and animals.

South Padre Island police are checking security video for further clues in locating the suspects, who could face criminal mischief and theft charges.

Woman arrested after meth found in bra

SC SPARTANBURG — A South Carolina woman was arrested after officers found methamphetamine in her bra at a county jail.

The Herald-Journal of Spartanburg reported Allison Nicole Bridgeman, 38, of Landrum was charged Monday with possession of meth and contraband when the drug was found at the Spartanburg County jail.

A police report said Bridgeman was in a vehicle with an incorrect license plate and was stopped by sheriff's deputies. She handed the deputy a small container of meth at the time.

She was taken to the county jail where a search revealed another bag of meth in her bra.

From wire reports

On a mission to provide objective reporting to America's military, wherever they serve.
Read us online at www.stripes.com.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Lowe's dropping Johnson

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Lowe's said Wednesday it will end its sponsorship of seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson at the end of the season and leave NASCAR.

Johnson made his Cup debut in 2001 with Lowe's and he's never had any other company as his primary sponsor. Through 18 years Johnson has won a record-tying seven titles, 83 races and built a Hall of Fame career representing the Lowe's brand.

"The No. 48 team is a valuable property and has been an integral part of building the Lowe's brand, which makes today's decision difficult as we now look to invest in other strategic initiatives," Lowe's chief customer officer Michael P. McDermott said in a statement.

Lowe's probably stayed in the sport longer than expected because rival Home Depot left NASCAR after the 2014 season. Menards is still in NASCAR, and while the Lowe's funding helped Johnson and Hendrick Motorsports find success, there is not much of a rivalry in the marketing space.

This is the first time since Rick Hendrick inked the Lowe's deal in 2001 that he has Johnson available to shop to sponsors. The car has almost never had open inventory available for a company to attach its name to the greatest driver of his generation.

Johnson won the pole as a rookie for his first Daytona 500, and was a winner by race 10. In 2002 he won three times, finished fifth in the standings and was well on his way to stardom.

Johnson's first of five consecutive titles came in 2006, and he quickly surpassed teammate Jeff Gordon as the most dominant driver of the decade.

At UVA, upperclassmen are crucial to Bennett's success

Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Virginia men's basketball coach Tony Bennett has built the Cavaliers into one of the nation's elite programs.

The Cavaliers are enjoying arguably the most successful stretch in school history. Their No. 1 ranking is the program's first since the Ralph Sampson era ended 35 years ago.

They are also the top overall seed in the NCAA Tournament and have won 30 or more games three of the last five years.

Virginia's style of play receives the majority of headlines — the Cavaliers are essentially a slow-down team, committed to the idea that they can not only find a high-percentage shot before the shot clock runs out, but prevent less-disciplined teams from doing so. Their Pack-Line defense has routinely been ranked among the most effective in the nation.

One of the main reasons the system works so well is Bennett's roster usually features upperclassmen with NBA talent, from Joe Harris to Malcolm Brogdon to London Perrantes. Bennett, the 2018 ACC coach of the year, has been able to find — and recruit — players committed to not only buying into his system, but staying in school.

"There are certain programs that are upperclassmen programs where the guys improve. Unless you can recruit all the top 10, top 20 players, you need guys ... that will be patient, see a little success and get better and better," Bennett said, listing Brogdon, Harris, Perrantes, Mike Tobey and Devon Hall as examples.

The Cavaliers' outright Atlantic Coast Conference title this season was their third in five years, something even Sampson, a three-time national player of the year, didn't achieve. They rolled through the ACC's regular season, including victories at home against North Carolina and on the road at Duke — Virginia's first win in Durham in 23 years. Then they captured the ACC Tournament title in New York, finishing 20-1 against league competition.

Bennett, who is 219-85 in nine seasons at Virginia, credits experience with making that success possible.

Perrantes, a four-year starter at Virginia, has a two-way contract with the Cleveland Cavaliers. He has appeared in only three games with Cleveland and has spent most of his time with the Canton Charge of the NBA G League.

Part of what has made Virginia successful, Perrantes said, is that Bennett knows the kind of player he wants.

"Yeah, he's definitely trying to find the guys who are going to fit in," Perrantes said. "Obviously, he wants to get good recruits, high-level players, but he wants to make sure that they fit into his program."

Harris, with the Brooklyn Nets, followed Bennett to Virginia when the school hired him away from Washington State. He's the first of Bennett's recruits that stayed at least four years and then made it to the NBA.

Harris also helped set a leadership tone for upperclassmen that has carried on since his departure.

"They've seen it, they've been through it, they know what matters," Bennett said. "It takes a while and I don't want to say it's re-created itself, but ... Malcolm watched Joe, and then those guys watched Malcolm."

Brogdon, the ACC player of the year and defensive player of the year as a senior, was drafted in the second round by the Milwaukee Bucks in 2016 and was named the NBA's Rookie of the Year.

Tobey was undrafted, but signed a couple of 10-day contracts with the Charlotte Hornets after signing with their G-League affiliate. And Mike Scott, currently with the Washington Wizards, is a player that was already on the roster when Bennett was hired. He's a six-year NBA veteran who spent five years at Virginia after a medical redshirt.

Hall, a second team All-ACC selection this year, is one of the leaders this season at Virginia, along with fellow senior Isaiah Wilkins, the ACC's defensive player of the year. Wilkins is the Cavaliers' best defensive player and rebounder, and said leadership is something he's learned as he's gone along.

"You pick up little things from every single person," he said.

Hall is something of a poster child for the patience Bennett looks for in players. Hall opted to redshirt his first season when it seemed playing time would be scarce and has developed steadily ever since. He said at the time redshirting was disappointing, but now, he appreciates what an extra year has given him.

"I think it's a matter of growing and that year really helped me do that," he said. "I learned and I got better just working on my game."

Hall's route is the same one De'Andre Hunter, the ACC's sixth man of the year, has followed. He's averaging 9.2 points on 48.8 percent shooting and has led the team in scoring six times with a high of 23.

Advice from Hall helped Hunter come to terms with his disappointment over spending his first season practicing with the team, but having to watch from the bench during games.

"He just told me to be confident and work on my game. That's what he did," Hunter said. "He worked on his game and got better for the next season and as you can see, he just gets better and better every year."

Just like the rest of the Cavaliers.

Syracuse rallies past Arizona State

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — The last team to make the NCAA Tournament gets to play at least one more. Credit Syracuse's fabulous freshman forward and its legendary zone defense for getting a cringe-worthy win.

Freshman Oshae Brissett had his 13th double-double while leading Syracuse's second-half comeback, and the Orange — the last team to make the NCAA Tournament — held on for a 60-56 victory over Arizona State on Wednesday night in the First Four.

The 11th-seeded Orange play No. 6 seed TCU (21-11) on Friday in Detroit in the Midwest Region.

Syracuse (21-13) had to sweat out Selection Sunday and wound up as the last one to make the bracket, relegated to the First Four. The Orange prevailed in a matchup of teams that started fast and then faded onto the tournament bubble.

"Our offense struggles," coach Jim Boeheim said. "But I thought our defense has been good all year and that's where we hang our hats, on the defen-

sive end."

Arizona State (20-12) opened the season with 12 wins, including victories over tournament No. 1 seeds Xavier and Kansas. The Sun Devils went 8-12 the rest of the way, and their high-powered offense got shut down in their biggest game.

Arizona State scored a season low in points — only the third time it's been held under 70 all season. The Sun Devils' previous low was 64 points.

"Usually we're scoring 56 in a half, and we ended up with 56," coach Bobby Hurley said. "So there were limited possessions. It was a rock fight, and we just didn't make enough shots."

Brissett overcame a hard fall in the first half, scored 23 points and had 12 rebounds. He had a three-point play and a step-back jumper as the Orange overcame a seven-point deficit with 7 minutes left.

"I knew he was going to get back up," said Tyus Battle, whose three-pointer put Syracuse ahead to stay. "He's hit some huge shots. He's done that countless times this year."

With a chance to take the lead,

Arizona State's Shannon Evans II missed a three-pointer with 2 seconds to go. Frank Howard got the rebound, was fouled and made both free throws to clinch it. Kodi Justice had 15 points for Arizona State, which hasn't won an NCAA Tournament game since 2009.

Big picture: Syracuse: The Orange uses only seven players and had concerns about Howard, who had a throat ailment the last few days. He hit a pair of threes and had a steal and layup as the Orange opened with a 10-7 run. He finished with 12 points, including the clinching free throws.

Arizona State: The Sun Devils struggled against zone defenses during conference play and were facing one of the most fabled in the country. They missed five straight open shots as Syracuse went ahead. The Sun Devils finished 11-for-32 from beyond the arc.

"There wasn't a real issue with our offense," Hurley said. "Syracuse dragged us through possessions and went deep in the (shot) clock."

Moving up: Boeheim got his

54th NCAA Tournament victory, tying Rick Pitino for fourth on the all-time list.

Ending the fade: Like Arizona State, the Orange also did a fade during the season. Syracuse won 10 of its first 11 games, then went 10-12 to fall onto the tournament bubble for the third year in a row.

Not this time: The Sun Devils often were at their best in the second half, averaging 44.5 points. They put up 60 in the second half against Longwood, 58 against both Xavier and Kansas, 57 against Pacific and 56 against San Diego State. This time, they were held to 28.

Ouch!: Brissett landed hard after he was fouled while shooting and stayed down for a couple of minutes. He limped on his right leg as he headed to the bench to get checked out during a timeout, then went back in the game and missed both free throws.

Full house: The game attracted a capacity crowd of 12,732 to University of Dayton Arena, a First Four record.

Texas Southern earns spot against Xavier

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Damontrae Jefferson did a lot of everything Wednesday night, hitting layups and 3-pointers, grabbing rebounds, playing defense and making his teammates look good. The slippery-quick 5-foot-7 guard also helped Texas Southern make history.

Playing all but the last minute or so of the game, the sophomore dynamo scored 25 points, pulled down eight rebounds, flexed and crowed as Texas Southern got its first ever NCAA Tournament win, a 64-46 rout of North Carolina Central in a First Four game at University of Dayton Arena.

No. 16 seed Texas Southern (16-19) also became the first team with a losing record to win a tournament game. The Tigers started the season 0-13 against a big-boy schedule — the worst start for a tournament team in NCAA history — and didn't win a game until Jan. 1. Now they're moving on to face No. 1 seed Xavier on Friday.

"It was for the university," Jefferson

said. "We actually made history today for the university, and we kind of knew that coming into this game."

Donte Clark had 18 points and Trayvon Reed added 10 points and eight boards for Texas Southern, a historically black college in Houston. The Tigers slipped into the First Four by getting hot and winning the Southwest Athletic College Tournament, only to be paired with Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Tournament winner N.C. Central, another historically black school that was making its second straight appearance in Dayton for a play-in game.

Both the conferences get an automatic bid every year but rarely have to play each other.

N.C. Central (19-16) was led by Raasean Davis with 19 points, part of a starting five that included a pair of true freshmen guards and a walk-on.

Texas Southern led by 10 at the half on Jefferson's 17 points. The sophomore, who along with Miami's Chris Lykes is

the shortest player in the tournament, tied the score at 10 with a jumper, then fed an alley-oop pass to Reed for a monster dunk and followed with a layup to cap an 8-0 run. The Tigers wouldn't relinquish the lead.

Brick city: The Eagles hurt themselves with terrible shooting, especially in the second half. They shot just 30.4 percent for the game — including 0-for-14 from three-point range.

"We didn't give our best shot," N.C. Central coach Levelle Moton said. "We knew our freshmen would have to play like seniors and our walk-on would have to play like a scholarship junior. We fell short tonight. We were outplayed, outcoached, outtoughed. And they've been here before."

Big picture: N.C. Central: Eagles got back to the First Four again despite losing all of last year's starters. But they couldn't keep up with Jefferson and his mates in what was considered to be this year's national championship of historically black college basketball.

NBA roundup

Wizards outlast Celtics in double OT

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Washington Wizards came back from a big deficit to force one overtime, then outlasted the Boston Celtics in the second OT.

Bradley Beal scored 34 points, including four in the second extra period, and the Wizards rallied from 20 points down to beat the short-handed Celtics 125-124 on Wednesday night.

"It tested who we were as a team," Beal said. "They came out and played a lot harder than we did the first half. I definitely credit my teammates. We did a good job of staying poised and battling."

Jayson Tatum missed a three-pointer just before the buzzer that could have won it for the Celtics, who were without six players and missed several opportunities to put away the Wizards.

"It was definitely a roller-coaster ride. It was like two games," Washington coach Scott Brooks said. "Give them credit, they came out and clawed and scratched and made a bunch of shots."

Otto Porter Jr. finished with 18 points and 11 rebounds. Markieff Morris scored 20 points, Ian Mahinmi added 14 and Tomas Satoransky had 10 points for Washington, which played the night before but still had enough energy at the end to rally past the weary Celtics.

Boston patched together a lineup without All-Star point guard Kyrie Irving (knee) and center Al Horford (illness), two of the four regulars who were sidelined.

"It's tough, going into double overtime and coming up short. I feel like there were times we should have pulled away with it," said Terry Rozier, who had

21 points and nine assists for Boston.

Marcus Morris led Boston with 31 points and pulled down nine rebounds, but made a costly defensive error in the closing seconds of regulation. Tatum scored 19 points for the Celtics.

Tatum drew a foul on a layup to tie it at 115 with 3.1 seconds left in the first overtime, but missed the foul shot.

Warriors 117, Lakers 106: Kevin Durant scored 26 points and injury-plagued Golden State pulled away in the fourth quarter while missing Stephen Curry on his 30th birthday and their two other All-Stars.

Zaza Pachulia returned to the starting lineup for the first time since the All-Star break and had 10 points, 12 rebounds and five assists for the banged-up defending champions, who already had clinched a sixth

straight playoff berth this week without playing.

Magic 126, Bucks 117: Jonathon Simmons scored a career-high 35 points, D.J. Augustin added 32 and host Orlando bounced back from an embarrassing defeat to beat Milwaukee.

Simmons was 7-for-12 from three-point range and Augustin hit 6 of 9, three of them in the fourth quarter to help Orlando pull away.

Kings 123, Heat 119 (OT): De'Aaron Fox made a layup at the buzzer to force overtime, Zach Randolph scored the first three points of the extra period and finished with 22, and Sacramento recovered after blowing a 16-point lead in the fourth quarter to beat Miami.

Randolph added a key block on Justise Winslow with 1:19 remaining in OT as Sacramento swept Miami for the first time since 2001-02.

NHL roundup

Van Riemsdyk hat trick helps Leafs rally past Stars

Associated Press

TORONTO — James van Riemsdyk had his third career hat trick and Mitch Marner scored the winning goal in a shootout to lift Toronto over the Dallas Stars 6-5 on Wednesday night, extending the Maple Leafs' franchise-record home winning streak to 11 games.

Marner beat Kari Lehtonen in the third round of the shootout, completing Toronto's comebacks from 4-2 and 5-4 deficits in the third period.

Nazem Kadri and Patrick Marleau also scored in regulation for the Maple Leafs. Frederik Andersen allowed three goals on 20 shots before getting lifted just past the game's midway point with an upper-body injury.

Curtis McElhinney came on and stopped 13 shots — in-

cluding two big saves on Jamie Benn during a power play in overtime — the rest of the way to help Toronto improve to 3-2-2 since star center Auston Matthews went down with a shoulder injury on Feb. 22.

Tyler Bozak, who also scored in the shootout, and Marner each added two assists to keep the Maple Leafs perfect at home since losing to Colorado on Jan. 22.

Tyler Seguin had a goal and two assists, Benn added a goal and an assist, and Radek Faksa, Remi Elie and Brett Ritchie also scored in regulation for Dallas. Lehtonen made 26 stops through overtime.

Rangers 4, Penguins 3 (OT): Mika Zibanejad scored the tying goal late in the third period and the winner 2:53 into overtime to rally host New York past Pittsburgh.

Chris Kreider had a goal and three assists for his first career four-point game, and Jesper Fast also scored to help the Rangers win their second straight after a three-game skid.

Devils 8, Golden Knights 3: Blake Coleman scored twice, Michael Grabner and Nico Hischier each had a goal and an assist, and visiting New Jersey routed Vegas.

Taylor Hall, Travis Zajac, Stefan Noesen and Kyle Palmieri also scored for the Devils, who moved one point ahead of idle Columbus for the top wild card in the Eastern Conference. Keith Kinkaid stopped 39 shots.

Sharks 4, Oilers 3 (OT): Tomas Hertl had two goals, including the game-winner 2:40 into overtime, and visiting San Jose pulled out a win over

Edmonton.

Logan Couture and Brenden Dillon also scored for the Sharks, who have won two straight. San Jose is in second place in the Pacific Division, three points ahead of Los Angeles and Anaheim with 12 games remaining.

Ducks 3, Canucks 0: Jason Chimera got his first goal and assist with his new team, and defenseman Brandon Montour scored twice as host Anaheim extended Vancouver's scoreless streak to 10 periods.

The victory left the Ducks tied with Los Angeles for third place in the Pacific Division at 82 points. Anaheim has played one more game than the Kings.

The 38-year-old Chimera came to the Ducks in a Feb. 26 trade with the New York Islanders.