

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Navy's F-35C declared 'mission ready'

BY CAITLIN KENNEY

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Navy on Thursday declared their carrier-based F-35C Lightning II “mission ready,” the last version of the Joint Strike Fighter to be equipped for combat.

“The F-35C is ready for operations, ready for combat and ready to win,” Vice Adm. De-Wolfe Miller, commander of U.S. Naval Air Forces, said in a statement. “We are adding an incredible weapon system into the arsenal of our Carrier Strike Groups that significantly enhances the capability of the joint force.”

The “Initial Operational Capability” declaration came after the Navy’s first opera-

tional F-35C squadron, the Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 147, completed aircraft carrier qualifications aboard the USS Carl Vinson and received their “Safe-For-Flight Operations Certification,” according to the Navy. The qualifications were done last December, according to Lt. Travis Callaghan, a U.S. Naval Air Forces spokesman.

To become mission ready, the squadron had to be “properly manned, trained and equipped to conduct assigned missions in support of fleet operations,” the Navy said.

Also, the ship that supports the squadron has to have the “proper infrastructure, qualifications and certifications,” according to the Navy. Callaghan

would not name the ship that will get the fighter jets because the Navy does not comment on future deployments. The F-35Cs have been tested on the USS Carl Vinson, the USS Abraham Lincoln, and the USS Nimitz.

The F-35 is the most expensive weapon in U.S. military history, but the program has been marred by delays and cost overruns and other mechanical issues.

“This accomplishment represents years of hard work on the part of the F-35 Joint Program Office and Naval Aviation Enterprise,” Rear Adm. Dale Horan, director of US Navy F-35C Fleet Integration Office, said in the Navy statement.

“Our focus has now shifted to applying lessons learned from this process to future squadron transitions, and preparing [Strike Fighter Squadron] VFA-147 for their first overseas deployment.”

The Navy has 23 F-35C Lightning II aircrafts, according to Callaghan.

The wings on the F-35C are larger and its landing gear is stronger than the other variants due to catapult launches and arrested landings with tailhooks on the aircraft carriers, according to Lockheed Martin’s F-35 program website.

It can also fold its wing tips to create more space on the carrier’s deck when it is deployed and it has more internal fuel capacity than the other F-35s.

## Pentagon: \$2B for Space Force, 15,000 personnel

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon wants \$2 billion for the next five years to establish President Donald Trump’s proposed Space Force, a sixth military service that would be built from the other services’ existing space-focused enterprises, according to a proposal sent to Capitol Hill this week.

The plan delivered to lawmakers on Wednesday asks Congress to provide \$72 million in fiscal year 2020 to establish Space Force’s Pentagon headquarters, which would consist initially of about 200 people, a combination of uniformed servicemembers and civilians, according to the documents released Friday by the Pentagon. Troops would come from each of the existing military services, including a four-star gen-

eral who would sit on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and be charged with preparing the new force to receive operational units in stages through the following four years, the 11-page document states.

Congress would have to approve any steps that the Pentagon could take to establish a Space Force, and top Defense Department officials hope lawmakers will include such authorities in its annual defense appropriations bill due later this year. It is unclear precisely how much appetite Congress has for establishing a Space Force.

Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan called the proposal a “historic moment for our nation,” in a statement released Friday.

The proposal follows Trump’s directive last month to place the Space Force inside the De-

partment of the Air Force, a relationship similar to how the Marine Corps is within the Department of the Navy.

Building Space Force within the Department of the Air Force is designed to save overhead costs, according to five senior defense officials, who spoke with reporters Friday about the proposal on the condition they not be identified by name. That means the force would consist only of personnel directly focused on the space mission and would not include support troops such as medics, chaplains or cooks.

For now, the Pentagon is pitching Space Force as a small, specialized service aimed solely at operating and protecting the U.S. military’s vast space enterprise, which includes more than 100 satellites and is critical in its ability to communicate worldwide as

well as to direct its forces and aim its weapons.

The proposal outlines a force that once built by the end of fiscal year 2024 would consist of some 15,000 personnel, making it by far the smallest of the military services. That force would include enlisted troops, commissioned officers and civilian officials.

Space Force would include elements focused on space operations, acquisition and systems development, and training and education, according to the documents.

The officials said at some point the Pentagon would likely propose establishing a Space Force Department, separating it completely from the Air Force. Any such proposal would be years away, according to the senior defense officials.

# Taliban attack base housing US advisers

BY J.P. LAWRENCE

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — A Taliban squad attacked a key base that houses U.S. military advisers and soldiers in southern Afghanistan early Friday, killing a top Afghan commander, before being repelled by Afghan forces and U.S. Marines, officials said.

The complex attack on Camp Shorab in the largely insurgent-controlled Helmand province occurred during a pause in peace talks in Doha, which could bring an eventual end to U.S. military involvement in the country.

Reports suggest the attackers were able to enter the base and that U.S. forces were involved in repelling the assault, though there are conflicting reports.

The attack began before dawn on Friday and clearance operations were said to be ongoing into the late afternoon. At least five Afghan troops were killed and 12 more injured, the provincial governor's office said in a statement.

Among the dead was the Afghan army garrison commander, a security forces official told Stars and Stripes, speaking on condition of anonymity.

At least 20 attackers, including three suicide bombers, were killed, the statement said.

There were no American or coalition casualties in the attack, Col. Dave Butler, spokesman for the Resolute Support mission, said on Twitter.

Citing reports, Butler told reporters that the attackers managed to gain access to the base, but were stopped by Afghan

forces. Marines had "mitigated the threat" of a smaller attack on base while Afghans responded to a larger one, Butler told some reporters.

Omar Zwak, a spokesman for the provincial governor said the militants were unable to breach the compound. Their attack ended in a parking lot, he said.

Shorab, once a sprawling U.S. Marine base known as Camp Leatherneck for much of the war, is home to a contingent of hundreds of U.S. troops, mostly Marines, training the security forces.

The Taliban immediately claimed credit for the assault, saying in a statement that the fighting was ongoing and that there were a large number of casualties among the coalition forces. The militant group often

embellishes its claims.

The attack comes a day after the U.S. envoy leading the Doha talks said the negotiations had been put on hold until this weekend.

"Both sides will take the next two days for internal deliberations, with plans to regroup on Saturday," Zalmay Khalilzad wrote Thursday on Twitter.

Past rounds of talks with the Taliban focused on American troop withdrawal in exchange for guarantees of no attacks against the U.S., but it was unclear how close Khalilzad was on a deal on those issues. The envoy was also expected to press the Taliban to hold direct talks with the Kabul government, which the U.S. has long urged but the militants have so far refused.

## Trump says ISIS beaten; others say they're not

*The Washington Post*

BEIRUT — President Donald Trump's surprise announcement Thursday that "we just took over" the last Islamic State-controlled territory in Syria came as news to U.S.-backed forces leading the fight on the ground, spokesmen said.

Fighters and civilians have streamed out of the Syrian hamlet of Baghouz in recent weeks, surrendering to U.S.-backed troops as the battle to rid ISIS of its territory grinds to an end.

"You kept hearing it was 90 percent, 92 percent, the caliphate in Syria. Now it's 100 percent. We just took over," Trump told U.S. troops during a refueling stop in Alaska on Thursday. "That means the area, the land, we have 100 percent, so that's good."

More than 5,000 miles away in Syria, however, members of the U.S.-backed ground forc-

es said they were surprised. The "final decision" is yet to be made, said Adnan Afrin, a spokesman for the Syrian Democratic Forces.

"It's not true, it's not true, it's not true," said Rami Abdulrahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the most prominent group monitoring Syria's seven-year war.

And a spokesman for the YPG, a Kurdish militia that forms the majority of the U.S.-backed force, predicted that the fight would not end for at least a week.

"ISIS is not simply laying down arms and surrendering," Zana Amedi tweeted. "Instead, they're preparing to make a last stand."

It was unclear Thursday whether the president's comments had been intended in general terms or reflected a different understanding of the situation on the ground.

## Officials: Trump overstated Kim's demands on sanctions

*Associated Press*

HANOI, Vietnam — President Donald Trump said he walked away from his second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un because Kim demanded the U.S. lift all of its sanctions, a claim that North Korea's delegation called a rare news conference in the middle of the night to deny.

So who's telling the truth? In this case, it seems that the North Koreans are. And it's a demand they have been pushing for weeks in lower-level talks.

Trump's much-anticipated meeting with Kim, held in the Vietnamese capital Wednesday and Thursday, ended abruptly and without the two leaders signing any agreements. Trump spoke with reporters soon after the talks broke down and said the dispute over sanctions was the deal breaker.

"Basically, they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entire-

ty, and we couldn't do that," he said.

Hours later, two senior members of the North's delegation told reporters that was not what Kim had demanded. They insisted Kim had asked only for partial sanctions relief in exchange for shutting down the North's main nuclear complex. Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho said the North was also ready to offer in writing a permanent halt of the country's nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests.

The State Department then clarified the U.S. position.

According to a senior official who briefed the media on condition he not be named because he was not authorized to discuss the negotiations publicly, the North Koreans "basically asked for the lifting of all sanctions." What Pyongyang was seeking, he said, was the lifting of sanctions that impede the civilian economy and the people's livelihood — as Ri had claimed.

# Family of fallen Navy linguist keeps up fight

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Even as fallen Senior Chief Petty Officer Shannon Kent received another military honor Thursday, the family and friends of the Navy linguist said her work is far from done.

Kent, 35, a mother of two, was killed by a suicide bomber Jan. 16 at a restaurant in the Syrian city of Manbij. It was her fifth combat tour.

In the weeks since her death, family and friends have delivered thousands of messages to Capitol Hill members in the form of letters, emails and calls to overturn a Defense Department rule that led to Kent's deployment.

They've also collected more than 800 signatures for a MoveOn.org petition in support of the plan.

"It is disheartening to have a group of people reach out this many times and have it fall on deaf ears. It speaks to the bureaucracy we are working against to make this change,"

said Sharron Kearney, Kent's cousin and a New York City lawyer who is helping spearhead the efforts. "Shannon would have never let this go, so I owe it to her. It's the right thing to do."

Last fall, Kent was slated to attend a clinical psychology doctoral program in lieu of her deployment. But the Navy reversed the plan because she previously had thyroid cancer. So her waiver applications were rejected and she received orders to deploy to Syria instead.

Kent was killed less than two months later.

Earlier this month, the Navy revised its waiver process that led to Kent's deployment. But a Defense Department rule remains in place that forced Kent to meet requirements for new military entrants versus ones set for retention of active servicemembers. As a result, Kent was disqualified from her studies because of her previous cancer, despite having been cured of the ailment years earlier.

The Feb. 1 change will allow Navy officials to give the highest waiver consideration to deployed

sailors, establish a standardized appeal process with an option of seeking a second medical opinion, require peer review of waivers to boost quality assurance and consistency and require all medical authorities operate on the same software system to ensure continuity.

Those new rules are now reflected within provisions of Chapter 15 of the Navy's Manual of Medical Department, which covers physical standards for medical examinations, and lists several health conditions, including cancer, that can disqualify servicemembers from receiving a commission.

But Kearney argued the Navy wouldn't have had to make the changes if the Defense Department rule wasn't in place.

"It's not good enough," Kearney, 44, said of the Navy changes. "We feel it's a common-sense position that if someone is deemed medically fit to be sent to a war zone that they should be deemed medically fit to sit in a classroom to be a Navy psychologist. We see that as a soul-crushing obstacle."

Kent, a Pine Plains, N.Y., native, was one of 19 people, including another U.S. servicemember, a Defense Intelligence Agency civilian and a Defense Department contractor, killed in the Jan. 16 blast in Syria.

On Thursday, Kent became the third woman honored on a memorial wall inside the National Security Agency headquarters in Fort Meade, Md. The National Cryptologic Memorial lists 176 military and civilian cryptologists — the code-makers and code-breakers that protect U.S. communications and crack adversaries' systems — who have been killed in the line of duty since World War II.

Kent was part of a small, secretive cryptologic intelligence community. She was based out of Fort Meade and part of the Navy's Cryptologic Warfare Activity 66, a unit within Cryptologic Warfare Group 6 that focuses on national, strategic and tactical level intelligence, military officials have said.

## Bagram air wing scores poorly on sex assault response

BY J.P. LAWRENCE

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Air Force combat wing at Bagram Air Field has received poor reviews in how it responded to sexual assault among deployed airmen last year, which some advocates said was a troubling issue at the U.S. military's largest base in Afghanistan.

The 455th Air Expeditionary Wing did not effectively manage its Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program, according to an audit completed last July by the Air Force Auditing Agency and obtained via a records request.

"Inadequate program oversight" led to the response coordinator for the 455th AEW not properly documenting sexual assault reports and the wing not informing newcomers to the base about resources avail-

able to them, the audit found.

Brig. Gen. David Lyons, the wing's current commander, agreed with the findings, which covered a timeframe before he assumed command of the unit. A wing spokeswoman provided Stars and Stripes a list of changes the wing made to fix deficiencies found by the audit.

Another air wing in the Middle East audited last year, the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing, mostly complied with military guidelines on handling sexual assault reports, though it also had a few deficiencies, such as some responders not completing required training.

It's unclear when programs at the other four wings in the Air Force's Middle East command were last reviewed.

The results of the two audits were particularly disappointing, as women deployed to combat zones are more likely

to be sexually assaulted than at their home station, said Don Christensen, president of the advocacy group Protect Our Defenders.

"It should be a top priority for commanders to ensure all required training is completed and all services are available to survivors," said Christensen, a former chief prosecutor of the Air Force.

The audit results come amid efforts by the Pentagon to prevent sexual assault within its ranks.

Two-thirds of women in the U.S. military say they have been sexually harassed or assaulted in the service, according to a recent poll by Smithsonian Magazine in conjunction with Stars and Stripes and the Schar School at George Mason University.

The military received 6,769 reports of sexual assault involving servicemembers as

either victims or subjects in fiscal year 2017, the latest year there is an official report.

The 455th AEW, which trains and assists the Afghan air force, received three reported sexual assault cases in fiscal year 2017 but did not maintain required paperwork for two of them, the audit found.

"The extremely low report numbers tell me survivors do not know their options and do not have faith in their deployed leadership," Christensen said.

Also, personnel are required to hold monthly meetings about the status of victims and their cases. It is unclear if the Bagram-based wing conducted these meetings, as nothing was recorded in the official database as required.

Incorrect contact information for the program coordinator was posted at seven out of 10 locations observed, auditors found.

# Dems eye new inquiries amid Cohen fallout

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After three days of grilling Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's former lawyer, Democrats are quickly using his words as a road map to open new lines of investigation into the president's ties to Russia and summon additional witnesses.

Cohen completed a third day of testimony on Capitol Hill Thursday, one day after publicly branding his former boss a racist and a con man who lied about business dealings in Russia and directed him to conceal extramarital relationships. He was interviewed behind closed doors by the House Intelligence Committee for more than eight hours.

As he left the House intelligence interview, Cohen said he would be returning to

Capitol Hill on March 6 for another round of questioning with that panel.

The weeklong gauntlet of interviews with Cohen launched what is expected to be months of investigations of Trump and those connected to him. Multiple Democrat-led House committees are pledging to investigate not only Trump's campaign's ties to Russia, which are also the subject of special counsel Robert Mueller's probe, but presidential conflicts of interest, possible money laundering and other oversight matters that Democrats say were ignored under GOP control.

House Intelligence Chairman Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., called the closed-door session with Cohen productive and said lawmakers were able to "drill down in great detail" on issues they are investigating. An-

other Democratic committee member, California Rep. Eric Swalwell, said Cohen "has been asked, based on a lot of new evidence we learned today, to bring corroborating materials that he believes he has."

Schiff said the committee will hear from Felix Sater, a Russia-born executive who worked with Cohen on an ultimately unsuccessful deal to build a Trump Tower in Moscow, in an open hearing March 14.

In addition, a committee aide said the panel also anticipates inviting Trump Organization Chief Financial Officer Allen Weisselberg to testify. Cohen mentioned Weisselberg several times in his public House Oversight testimony, linking him to hush money payments to porn actress Stormy Daniels, who alleged she had an affair with Trump. He denies the affair.

## Border emergency opponents close to votes needed

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate opponents of President Donald Trump's declaration of a national emergency at the Mexican border have moved close to having enough votes to prevail, and one Republican suggested the president risks a rebuff by the GOP-led chamber if he doesn't change course.

Trump's move would "turn a border crisis into a constitutional crisis," veteran Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., said on the Senate floor Thursday. But he stopped just short of saying he'd support a resolu-

tion blocking the president's move. Had Alexander pledged his vote, it would probably be enough for the Senate to pass a measure repealing the emergency declaration.

Speaking later to reporters, Alexander warned what might happen if Trump doesn't settle for using other money he can access without declaring an emergency.

"He can build a wall and avoid a dangerous precedent, and I hope he'll do that," Alexander said. "So that would change the voting situation if he would agree to do that."

The Democratic-led House voted Tues-

day to upend Trump's declaration, which he declared to circumvent Congress and funnel billions of extra dollars to erecting his proposed wall.

Trump has promised to veto the effort to thwart him, and Congress seems all but certain to lack the two-thirds majorities in each chamber that would be needed to override his veto. But the showdown puts GOP lawmakers in a ticklish spot that party leaders are hoping to ease.

Republicans say a Senate vote is likely in two weeks, but exactly what the Senate will vote on remains unclear.

## Report: Trump ordered Kushner's security clearance

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump last year ordered officials to grant top-secret security clearance to his son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner, according to a report published Thursday by The New York Times.

Kushner was granted the high-level clearance last May after a lengthy background check.

The Times, citing anonymous sources, said Trump demanded Kushner's clearance despite the concerns of intelligence officials, then-Chief of Staff John Kelly and then-White House counsel Don McGahn.

The newspaper said Kelly wrote in an internal memo that he had been "ordered" to give top-secret clearance to Kushner. McGahn wrote a memo in which he advised against such clearance.

Peter Mirijanian, a spokesman for Kushner lawyer Abbe Lowell, responded Thursday to the Times story with a statement, saying: "In 2018, White House and security clearance officials affirmed that Mr. Kushner's security clearance was handled in the regular process with no pressure from anyone. That was conveyed to the media at the time, and new stories, if accurate, do not change what was affirmed at the time."

White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders declined to comment on the Times story.

Rep. Elijah Cummings, chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, said Thursday that the Times report "indicates that President Trump may have granted access to our country's most sensitive classified information to his son-in-law against the advice of career staff directly contradicting the president's public deni-

als that he played any role."

Trump told Times reporters in January that he "was never involved" with Kushner's security clearance.

Cummings, D-Md., noted that his committee has launched an investigation into the security clearance process and requested documents and interviews relating to Kushner's clearance.

"To date, the White House has not produced a single document or scheduled a single interview," Cummings said in a statement. "The Committee expects full compliance with its requests as soon as possible, or it may become necessary to consider alternative means to compel compliance."

Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and Kushner's wife, said in February that the president did not play a role in granting security clearances to her or Kushner.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Missing 's' added to carving of Douglass

**NY** ALBANY — A more than 100-year-old mistake in the spelling of 19th century abolitionist Frederick Douglass' last name on his stone carving at the New York state Capitol has been corrected.

His face is among the faces of 77 famous people carved into the ornate interior stonework of the "Million Dollar Staircase" from 1884 to 1898.

The Douglass face includes his name spelled "Fred. Douglas." A stone carver hired by the state added the second "s" on Wednesday.

## Man gets probation for stealing pigs

**IA** FOREST CITY — One of two men accused of stealing around 150 pigs in northern Iowa has been sentenced.

Winnebago County District Court records say Robert Morales, 21, of Thompson, Iowa, on Tuesday was given 10 years in prison, suspended, and five years of probation and fined \$1,000. He also was ordered to make restitution of nearly \$22,000.

The pigs were reported stolen Nov. 4, 2017, from a Christensen Farms operation near Lake Mills.

The other man charged, David Cortez Jr., 35, has pleaded not guilty to theft and burglary. His trial is scheduled to begin April 10.

## Police: Standoff ends after promise of pizza

**FL** PENSACOLA — Authorities said a Florida man accused of threatening his family ended a four-hour standoff with police after he was promised a slice of pizza.

The Pensacola News Journal reported that Evan Charles McLemore, 33, was arrested Tuesday and charged with resisting an officer and aggravated stalking.

Police said officers responded to a report of a possible battery at the Pensacola home and found McLemore had barricaded himself in a room. Officers said McLemore claimed to have a gun, so they brought in a SWAT team. Crisis negotiators eventually managed to coax McLemore out with the promise of pizza. It wasn't clear if he actually received a slice.

## Officer fleeing rabid fox shoots himself

**NY** WAWARSING — Police said an officer running away from a rabid fox in a Hudson Valley village accidentally shot himself in the chest.

Authorities said Ellenville police Officer Harold Nunuvero, 24, was struck while responding to a report about the fox Tuesday morning. Village police Chief Philip Mattracion said the animal charged at Nunuvero and he tried to jump over a nearby fence. But his foot got caught and he flipped over. Nunuvero's gun went off as he landed and struck the officer's bulletproof vest.

Another officer shot and killed the fox while Nunuvero was on the ground. Nunuvero was later taken to a hospital for treatment and released.

## Potential juror jailed after 'guilty' outburst

**HI** HONOLULU — Lawyers said a man called for possible jury duty in Hawaii shouted, "He is guilty! He is guilty!" outside a courtroom and ended up in jail himself.

The lawyer representing Jacob Maldonado said his cli-

ent had had a bad day when he made the outburst on Tuesday.

Attorney Jason Burks said Maldonado took a "very improper approach" in an effort to get out of jury duty. Maldonado spent the night in jail, apologized to the judge and was not charged or fined.

## Town bans use of phones while driving

**AZ** FLORENCE — A town in central Arizona has banned the use of phones while driving beginning in March.

The Casa Grande Dispatch reported Thursday that the Florence Town Council passed an ordinance on Feb. 19 prohibiting the use of "portable wireless communication devices" while behind the wheel. The ordinance takes effect 30 days after the vote.

Law enforcement officials, public safety personnel and drivers making calls to emergency services are exempt.

## City balks at renaming street after sheriff

**NM** LAS CRUCES — A New Mexico city is balking at the idea of renaming a street after an Old West sheriff who shot and killed outlaw Billy the Kid.

The Las Cruces Sun-News reported that Las Cruces city councilors appeared reluctant to endorse a plan to rename Motel Boulevard for former Dona Ana County Sheriff Pat Garrett. Councilors expressed concern about the cost for the name change and the image of Garrett. The reluctance angered a group that has worked for two years to promote the street name change.

The Dona County Commission endorsed the name change in 2017, but the change requires city approval because the street is entirely within the city lim-

its. Garrett is best known as the lawman who killed Billy the Kid, but he was also twice the sheriff of Dona Ana County.

## 2 arrested in buffet brawl over crab legs

**AL** HUNTSVILLE — Alabama police said a dispute over crab legs at a dinner buffet ended in a brawl that left two people facing misdemeanor charges.

Huntsville police Officer Gerald Johnson said he was eating at Meteor Buffet when a fight broke out. Johnson told WHNT-TV that diners were using service tongs like fencing swords and plates were shattering, and a woman was beating a man. Johnson said diners had been waiting in line for crab legs for more than 10 minutes and they lost their tempers once the food came out.

The station reported Chequita Jenkins is charged with assaulting John Chapman, who is charged with disorderly conduct.

## Zookeeper hurt by rhino out of hospital

**FL** JACKSONVILLE — A Florida zookeeper has returned home after being injured by a white rhinoceros in its zoo enclosure.

Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens Executive Director Tony Vecchio said the woman was released from a hospital Wednesday morning.

In a Jacksonville Times-Union report, Vecchio said the 4,000-pound rhino named Archie "bumped her with his horn" during a routine training session Tuesday morning.

Zoo officials said Archie remains on exhibit with other rhinos. Archie was born in 1969 and has been at the Jacksonville zoo since 1975.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Harper, Phillies reach record agreement

By RONALD BLUM  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — It took a long time and a lot of money, but the Philadelphia Phillies finally landed Bryce Harper with a record contract.

The young star outfielder and the Phillies agreed Thursday to a \$330 million, 13-year contract, the largest deal in baseball history.

Harper's agent, California-based Scott Boras, said the deal was agreed to at 10:34 a.m. PST, subject to a successful physical.

Phillies manager Gabe Kapler and his players learned of the agreement from fans behind Philadelphia's dugout who saw media reports on their mobile devices during a spring training game in Clearwater, Fla.

"If the reports are true, it's a huge moment for our baseball team," Kapler said. "Certainly I think that the city of Philadelphia would embrace Bryce Harper. I think he would be very happy in this city because our fans care deeply about winning."

A 26-year-old All-Star who had spent his entire big league career with the Washington Nationals, Harper topped the \$325 million, 13-year agreement outfielder Giancarlo Stanton reached before the 2015 season with the Miami Marlins.

"Harper's goal was he wanted the largest contract and he wanted his value," Boras

said. "He wanted the largest length he could get because he really wanted to stay in one city and one uniform, wanted to get a ballpark he hit well in, saw the ball well."

Harper has a .279 career average with 184 homers and 521 RBIs, including a .268 average with 14 homers, 32 RBIs and a .930 OPS in 47 games at Citizens Bank Park. He likely would hit third or fourth, according to Kapler.

"We get a whole lot better on the field," the manager said. "Bryce Harper is a sensational teammate."

Harper's agreement surpasses the previous high for a free agent, set last week when infielder Manny Machado signed a \$300 million, 10-year deal with the San Diego Padres. Harper's average annual value of \$25.4 million ranks 14th in baseball history, well below the high of \$34.1 million set by Arizona pitcher Zack Greinke as part of a \$206.5 million, six-year contract that started in 2016.

Harper gets a \$20 million signing bonus in equal installments this June 1 and Nov. 1, a \$10 million salary this year, \$26 million in each of the following nine seasons and \$22 million in each of the last three years. None of the money is deferred, and he gets a full no-trade provision.

Philadelphia will forfeit its second-highest draft selection, currently No. 55, and \$500,000 of its 2019-20 international signing bonus pool allotment. Because Wash-

ington paid luxury tax last season, its compensation pick will be after the fourth round, about 140th.

Following a slow offseason of negotiations that sparked outrage from the players' association, three players in a 10-day span agreed to deals guaranteeing a total of \$890 million. Colorado third baseman Nolan Arenado, who would have been eligible for free agency next offseason, signed a \$260 million, eight-year deal this week.

"We want our best players to sign the biggest, longest contracts," said Milwaukee Brewers star Ryan Braun, the 2012 NL MVP. "Overall, it's a good day for all baseball players to see him get properly compensated."

Philadelphia has been among the most active teams this offseason, adding outfielder Andrew McCutchen for \$50 million over three years and reliever David Robertson for \$23 million over two years, and acquiring catcher J.T. Realmuto and shortstop Jean Segura.

After leading their division in early August, the Phillies went 16-33 over the final 49 games of last season and at 80-82 finished with a losing record for the sixth straight season. Harper will return to his old home in the season's second week, when the Phillies play at the Nationals.

## 2 players with checkered pasts get combine chance

By MICHAEL MAROT  
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Louisiana Tech defensive end Jaylon Ferguson and Colorado State wide receiver Preston Williams have already completed their work in Indianapolis.

They didn't lift weights, didn't get clocked in the 40-yard dash, didn't even appear on the NFL telecast. Instead, they took medical tests and tried explaining to team officials why they couldn't work out with everyone else at the league's annual scouting combine.

The opportunity was a crucial, minor victory for two potentially high draft picks with checkered pasts — and a major win for the 32 teams debating where Ferguson and Williams belong on their draft boards.

"The hardest thing for us to

do is the medical, physical and interview process," Los Angeles Chargers general manager Tom Telesco said Thursday. "It's hard to fly a prospect to 32 different cities, which is why the combine started in the first place. We bring them to one central location. We all bring our doctors here. We get the medical evaluation done. It would be very difficult to do it if they weren't here. So, the fact that they're here for a physical and limited interviews, it does help us."

Ferguson and Williams would not have gotten this chance just two years ago when league officials disallowed running back Joe Mixon and receiver Ishmael Zamora from attending the combine because of prior criminal convictions.

Last year, the NFL changed its rules by allowing players

with similar histories to go through the medical checks.

This year, it permitted Ferguson, Williams and Mississippi State defensive tackle Jeffery Simmons to also interview with teams despite failing background checks. Simmons did not attend after suffering a torn ACL while training for the combine.

Ferguson and Williams took full advantage of the chance to tell their stories.

"I explained that was at a different point in my life. I was 18, and I'm not really a bad guy," Ferguson told The Associated Press when asked about his conviction on a simple battery charge stemming from a fight during his freshman year at college. "As I explained the story, I think a lot of people understood."

Athletically, there's little

doubt the three belong in town with more than 300 other college prospects.

Ferguson led the Football Bowl Subdivision with 17½ sacks last season and was Conference USA's top defender. The 6-foot-5, 269-pound star finished his career with an FBS-record 45 sacks, breaking Terrell Suggs' record.

Simmons was considered a disruptive inside force at 6-foot-4 and 310 pounds before the injury. The two-time all-SEC lineman had 163 tackles, seven sacks, three blocked kicks and two touchdowns in three seasons at Mississippi State.

Williams used his 6-4, 210-pound frame to catch 96 passes for 1,345 yards and 14 TDs last year in his only season at Colorado State.

# Askren, 34, ready to make UFC debut

Associated Press

Ben Askren retired nearly 18 months ago. He was content to end his mixed martial arts career as one of the best fighters never to compete in the UFC.

Although the unbeaten former collegiate wrestling star had dominated competition around the world for nearly a decade, his tactical fighting style and his personal beefs with UFC President Dana White had kept him off the sport's biggest stage — and Askren insists he was at peace with it all.

"I can only control things I can control," Askren said. "There was a guy who didn't like me, and I can't control that, and that was the reason I didn't fight the better guys."

And then the UFC finally called last year. The 34-year-

old Askren decided to answer.

After winning belts in the Bellator and One Championship promotions, Askren (18-0) finally makes his UFC debut Saturday night against former champion Robbie Lawler. Instead of enjoying retirement, Askren will be locked in the T-Mobile Arena cage at UFC 235 for a perilous matchup with an inveterate brawler.

Askren is at peace with this development, too.

"I was retired," he said. "I was happy. I was doing exactly what I wanted to do in life. But I said, 'This opportunity is too good to pass up. I'm going to take it.' I'm here to compete, and that's it."

Askren traveled a long way from suburban Milwaukee to the Vegas lights. He hasn't

fought in the U.S. in nearly six years during an MMA career that began shortly after he competed in freestyle wrestling in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The two-time NCAA wrestling champion at Missouri won the Bellator welterweight title in just his seventh pro bout in 2010, but he wasn't offered a UFC contract when he became a free agent in 2013. He moved to the Singapore-based One Championship and won another title, defending that belt four times while fighting in China, the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates. Askren never betrayed much dissatisfaction with his situation, praising the promotions that employed him while the UFC ignored him.

Askren claims he really thought he was done with the

sport when he retired in September 2017, convinced he would never have the right opportunity to join the UFC — and not even sure if he wanted it, given his online history with the company. He has sparred repeatedly on social media with White, who derided Askren as "the most boring fighter in MMA history" and an "absolute moron" before blocking Askren on Twitter.

Everything changed last year when White and One Championship boss Chatri Sityodtong put together an unprecedented MMA trade. The UFC shipped former flyweight champion Demetrious "Mighty Mouse" Johnson to One in exchange for Askren, and both fighters eagerly jumped at the opportunity.

## College basketball roundup

### No. 1 Gonzaga stretches winning streak to 19 games

Associated Press

STOCKTON, Calif. — A renewed focus on defense helped Gonzaga get back to the No. 1 ranking it held for three weeks earlier this season.

Brandon Clarke, one of the anchors of that defense, is determined to keep the Bulldogs there this time.

Clarke had 21 points, 13 rebounds and four blocks, and Gonzaga extended the nation's longest winning streak to 19 games, thumping Pacific 86-66 on Thursday night.

Rui Hachimura added 27 points and Zach Norvell Jr. scored 12 for the Bulldogs (28-2, 15-0 West Coast Conference).

"We just really worked on our defense a lot, our focus on the scouting report every game and having that overall focus," Clarke said. "People say that defense is the best offense, so I really feel like that's true when I can block shots."

Back atop the rankings for the first time since December, the

Zags had little trouble against the Tigers and inched closer to a fifth unbeaten conference record in 20 seasons under coach Mark Few. The Bulldogs close out the WCC schedule Saturday at Saint Mary's.

Gonzaga was held to a season-low 67 points by Pacific when the teams played earlier this season in Spokane, Wash. After a slow start this time, the Bulldogs pulled away by halftime and led by 26 while silencing a near-capacity crowd at Spanos Center.

**No. 9 Michigan 82, Nebraska 53:** Jon Teske scored a career-high 22 points, and the host Wolverines easily rebounded from their loss to Michigan State with a convincing victory over the Cornhuskers.

Michigan (25-4, 14-4 Big Ten) was without Charles Matthews, out with a right ankle injury, but it raced out to a 22-point halftime lead behind Teske and Iggy Brazdeikis. It was the last home game for Michigan, which finishes the regular sea-

son with trips to Maryland and Michigan State.

The Wolverines lost only once at home in 2018-19 — 77-70 to Michigan State on Sunday.

Nana Akenten scored 11 points for Nebraska (15-14, 5-13) but took a hard fall in the second half near the basket.

**No. 24 Wofford 80, Chattanooga 54:** Fletcher Magee scored 18 points and the visiting Terriers made a successful debut as a Top 25 team by beating the Mocs for their 16th consecutive victory.

Wofford, a private liberal arts college in Spartanburg, S.C., with fewer than 1,600 students, moved into the Top 25 for the first time in school history Monday.

The Terriers (25-4, 17-0 Southern Conference) haven't lost since falling 98-87 at Mississippi State on Dec. 19.

Donovann Toatley scored 16 and David Jean-Baptiste and Ramon Vila each had 10 for Chattanooga (12-18, 7-10).

**California 76, No. 25 Wash-**

**ington 73:** Darius McNeill scored 19 points and Connor Vanover added 18 to help the host Golden Bears snap a 23-game losing streak in Pac-12 play by beating the Huskies.

Cal (6-22, 1-15) had lost 16 straight games overall and hadn't won a conference game since beating Oregon State on Feb. 3, 2018, including a loss in the Pac-12 Tournament last March.

This was by far the biggest win in coach Wyking Jones' two years at Cal and could quiet calls for him to lose his job at least for a bit.

The Huskies (22-6, 13-2) had won 15 of 16 games coming into this matchup and still ended up earning the outright regular season conference title when both Oregon State and Arizona State lost.

David Crisp scored 32 points to lead Washington, but missed a potential game-tying 3-pointer at the buzzer to set off a rare celebration at Haas Pavilion.

## NBA roundup

# Harden's 58 points lead Rockets over Heat

Associated Press

HOUSTON — James Harden had 58 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds and the Houston Rockets overcame a 21-point third-quarter deficit to beat the Miami Heat 121-118 on Thursday night.

Harden made 8 of 18 three-pointers and was 16-for-32 overall from the field and 18-for-18 on free throws. He fell three points short of his career high set at New York on Jan. 23, and had the most points ever against the Heat — breaking Willie Burton's mark of 53 for

Philadelphia on Dec. 13, 1994.

"We were lackadaisical on defense, especially in that second quarter," Harden said. "They gained confidence and knocked down shots. They were just too comfortable, so we had to pick the pressure up in the second half, create some turnovers and energy with our defense."

Austin Rivers scored 17 points, and Chris Paul and Gary Clark each had 14 to help Houston win its fourth straight game. The Rockets shot 49 percent, including 19-for-46 on

three-pointers..

**76ers 108, Thunder 104:** Tobias Harris scored 32 points and Ben Simmons had a triple-double to help Philadelphia win at Oklahoma City.

**Magic 103, Warriors 96:** Aaron Gordon had 22 points and 15 rebounds, Terrence Ross added 16 points and host Orlando rallied in the final three minutes to beat Golden State.

**Jazz 111, Nuggets 104:** Donovan Mitchell scored 24 points, including six in the final two minutes, and short-handed

Utah ended Denver's nine-game home winning streak.

**Pacers 122, Timberwolves 115:** Bojan Bogdanovic scored a season-high 35 points and host Indiana overcame Karl-Anthony Towns' big night for Minnesota. Towns had 42 points and 17 rebounds.

**Cavaliers 125, Knicks 118:** Kevin Love scored 26 points, Jordan Clarkson and Collin Sexton each had 22 and Cleveland overcame a 14-point deficit in the fourth quarter to win at New York. Allonzo Trier scored 22 points for the Knicks.

## NHL roundup

# Isles rout Maple Leafs, spoil Tavares' return to arena

Associated Press

UNIONDALE, N.Y. — Casey Cizikas scored twice and the New York Islanders beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 6-1 Thursday night in former captain John Tavares' first time back as a visiting player.

Anthony Beauvillier, Anders Lee and Valteri Filppula also scored for the Islanders, who had lost three of their last four. Robin Lehner stopped 34 shots to help New York move two points ahead of Washington atop the Metropolitan Division one night before hosting the Capitals. The Islanders' 81 points are one more than they had all of last season.

Islanders fans, vocal on social media about their lingering displeasure with Tavares' departure via free agency last summer after he repeatedly said he wanted to stay, booed loudly when Tavares and the Maple Leafs hit the ice for pre-game warmups, and when they came back out for the start of each period. They also serenaded the No. 1 overall pick in 2009 with choruses of "We Don't Need You!" and other derisive chants throughout the

game, including around a video tribute midway through the first period.

**Bruins 4, Lightning 1:** Host Boston scored three times in less than three minutes in the third period and snapped Eastern Conference-leading Tampa Bay's franchise-best 10-game winning streak.

Jake DeBrusk, Noel Acciari, Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand had goals for Boston (38-17-9), which has won nine of its last 10 games and earned at least one point in 15 straight.

**Coyotes 5, Canucks 2:** Brad Richardson scored four goals to power host Arizona to its fifth straight victory.

Alex Galchenyuk also scored for the Coyotes, who completed a four-game season sweep of Vancouver. Vinnie Hinostroza and Richard Panik had three assists apiece — all on goals by Richardson — and Oliver Ekman-Larsson had two assists.

Richardson, who has a single-season career-high 16 goals, scored twice in the first period and completed his second career hat trick in the second period after a deft drop pass from Panik.

**Blue Jackets 4, Flyers 3 (OT):** Seth Jones scored 4:27 into overtime, lifting host Columbus.

As the back-and-forth extra period wound down, Artemi Panarin wove his way through the defense and fed Jones, who knocked the winner past Philadelphia's Brian Elliott. Jones got his third overtime goal this season and set a franchise record with the seventh of his Blue Jackets career.

Panarin, Oliver Bjorkstrand and Scott Harrington also scored for Columbus.

**Oilers 4, Senators 2:** Connor McDavid scored a slick goal, Mikko Koskinen made 35 saves and Edmonton won at league-worst Ottawa.

Sam Gagner, Colby Cave and Zack Kassian also scored for the Oilers, who stopped a two-game skid.

Chris Tierney and Mark Borowiecki scored for the Senators, who lost their sixth straight, and Craig Anderson stopped 22 shots in his ninth straight defeat.

**Stars 4, Kings 3 (OT):** Roope Hintz scored 3:19 into overtime and Dallas moved into a wild-card spot in the Western

Conference with a win at Los Angeles.

Hintz scored in a mad scramble in front of the net after Alexander Radulov's shot bounced off Kings goalie Jonathan Quick. Tyler Seguin, Mattias Janmark and Radek Faksa also scored for the Stars, while Ben Lovejoy and Blake Comeau each had two assists. Anton Khudobin made 27 saves.

Anze Kopitar scored two goals and had an assist for Los Angeles, which has dropped 10 straight — the second-longest losing streak in franchise history. Brendan Leipsic had a goal and Quick stopped 29 shots.

**Golden Knights 6, Panthers 5 (SO):** Shea Theodore's goal in the second round of the shootout lifted host Vegas.

Malcolm Subban, who made 32 saves, stopped all three of Florida's attempts in the shootout.

Reilly Smith scored twice and Paul Stastny, Jon Merrill and Colin Miller scored for the Golden Knights. Mike Hoffman scored two goals for the Panthers, with Aaron Ekblad, Aleksander Barkov and Jonathan Huberdeau also scoring for Florida.