

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Ships, tankers reaching 'senior status'

By JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

Lawmakers have warned the Navy that an aging fleet of transport ships — and no clear plan to replace them — means the military might not be able to get forces across oceans in the event of a fight with Russia or China.

The Pentagon now emphasizes the need to boost the combat readiness of its forces and modernize weaponry in an era of “great power competition.” But with the planes and ships that would be called upon in a crisis to help ferry equipment and troops to conflict zones in disrepair, it’s not clear the military could get to the fight, lawmakers said Thursday.

“With no recapitalization in place and only a distant hope

that Navy will find this a priority, I continue to be perplexed how the Army and the Marine Corps expects to get to the future battlefield on these aged ships,” said Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., the ranking member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces.

Among the concerns is a rapidly aging Ready Reserve Force of 46 transport ships, which have an average age of 44 years. The Navy’s plans for extending the service life of the ships, such as procuring used vessels and devising a new construction strategy, have all failed to deliver, Wittman said.

“The steel is rotting,” retired Rear Adm. Mark Buzby, administrator of the Marine Administration, testified during the hearing.

Gen. Stephen Lyons, head of U.S. Transportation Command, told lawmakers improving sea-lift capability is a top priority for his command.

But there also are similar problems facing the Air Force and its aging tanker fleet. While the service has accepted its first batch of new in-flight refuelers — the KC-46 — “technical deficiencies and other issues continue to plague the program as our existing tankers advance toward near senior citizen status,” said Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn.

Taken together, weaknesses in air and sea lift call into question the military’s ability to respond to a crisis against a well-armed and fast-moving adversary. In particular, concerns about a more aggressive Russia and China has put the

spotlight on the military’s logistical shortcomings.

Since the end of the Cold War, the military has not had to contend with an adversary capable of disrupting its global mobility plans, all of which were untested during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. During that time, investments in logistics capabilities declined.

The DOD’s Science Board assembled the task force of retired admirals and generals to examine the range of weaknesses in the military logistics network. After months of study, the group found “significant shortfalls that, if left unaddressed, will put at risk U.S. ability to project power and sustain the fight against a strategic competitor.”

## Driving restrictions lifted for III MEF Marines, sailors

By MATTHEW M. BURKE

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The top U.S. Marine in Japan has lifted driving restrictions for young Marines and sailors attached to the III Marine Expeditionary Force just three months after giving them an extra hour of off-base liberty.

Lt. Gen. Eric Smith, III Marine Expeditionary Force commander, signed the policy Feb. 26 and announced it to the fleet in a video message March 1.

Although individual commanders can continue to impose the driving restriction, Smith’s announcement is certain to mean more young Marines and sailors in Japan will be behind the wheel.

“If you have a license, you wish to drive, you have a good record, you’re a mature indi-

vidual — Marine or sailor, you should be allowed to drive,” Smith said in the video message. “You take your test, you get your insurance, you go through all of the training that is required by the government of Japan and you should have a license.”

The new order also solidified guidance in November that gave Marines an added hour of liberty. Sergeants and below now have a 1 a.m. curfew. Officers and staff noncommissioned officers do not have a curfew.

Drinking in bars and other public places for all III MEF Marines and sailors is prohibited after midnight.

Smith said the rules were changed to give Marines and sailors more time to enjoy their surroundings.

“I want you to enjoy the is-

land,” he said. “I want you to enjoy mainland Japan. But you have to conduct yourselves well.”

Liberty restrictions have typically followed in the wake of high-profile crimes committed by U.S. servicemembers in Okinawa. The restrictions are unpopular with servicemembers and are often one of the first complaints made by Marines and sailors about being stationed in the III MEF area of operations.

However, Americans stationed on the tiny island prefecture typically commit crimes at a lower rate than the civilian population.

Okinawa has a population of about 1.4 million, including approximately 50,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel and their families.

U.S. servicemembers com-

mitted about 2.75 crimes per 1,000 people on Okinawa between 1972 and 2016, according to a Stars and Stripes analysis of arrest record data in December 2016.

However, a comparison of drunken-driving arrests is more problematic for U.S. forces.

From approximately July 2014 to July 2016, Okinawa police made 3,811 drunken-driving arrests, police told Stars and Stripes. Of those, 136 were U.S. citizens in Japan under the status of forces agreement.

The number of drunken-driving crashes causing injury or death on Okinawa in that same period was approximately 4.2 per 10,000 people for SOFA personnel, compared with 2.2 per 10,000 locally.

# Iraq working to halt an ISIS resurgence

Los Angeles Times

MOSUL, Iraq — It was after dark Wednesday when three buses pulled out of Mosul and headed southeast on a desolate desert road. The passengers were government-backed paramilitary fighters.

The city lights were well behind them when the convoy came under attack. By the time the shooting stopped, six paramilitary members were dead and 31 were wounded.

Iraqi authorities quickly identified the culprit: Islamic State.

The attack, one of the deadliest since Iraq declared military victory over the extremist group in December 2017, was the clearest sign yet that the war isn't over.

It has merely shifted to a new phase. ISIS is trying to mount a comeback, and the Iraqi military is trying to root out sympathizers and sleeper cells still embedded in the extensive territory the group once controlled.

By many accounts, the government is failing to contain a budding insurgency, the sort of resilient, underground enemy

that has outlived governments around the world.

Stripped of its territory — which once encompassed a third of both Iraq and Syria — ISIS has reverted to its roots, using small, self-contained teams of operatives to conduct small-scale attacks and assassinations and to rebuild its smuggling and ransom operations.

“We’re not talking about the networks they used to have. Now it’s cells of five or six people,” said Shamkhi Mansour, a colonel in the intelligence branch of Iraq’s Counter-Terrorism Service.

Iraqi military officials, security experts and the U.S. government said that Iraq has failed to develop the extensive intelligence network that would offer the best chance of rooting out the militants.

“We had a victory in that we kicked out Daesh from cities, but we’ve failed in pursuing them in the rural areas and ferreting them out,” said Hisham Hashimi, a counterterrorism adviser to the government, using a derisive Arabic acronym for ISIS.

The Pentagon’s inspector general reported last month that Iraq lacked reconnais-

sance assets, intelligence personnel and surveillance capabilities needed to counteract the group, which advocates an extreme version of Sunni Islam.

Instead, Iraqi forces have resorted to rounding up large numbers of Sunnis and holding sham trials of ISIS suspects, a strategy that costs the Shiite-dominated government vital support and could increase support for the extremists.

A Mosul-based special forces colonel who spoke on the condition that he not be named blamed the issue on a lack of trust among the security services.

“In America, they combined databases and increased coordination over two buildings falling,” he said, referring to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. “We haven’t done this over whole cities falling.”

Perhaps most worrisome, ISIS has started operating more openly in rural areas southwest of Mosul, including Hatra, the Hamrin Mountains and the deserts of Anbar.

“We should be having military operations in those remote regions, but there aren’t even reconnaissance flights,” said Mansour, the colonel.

## SDF forces resume ISIS offensive in eastern Syria

Associated Press

BEIRUT — U.S.-backed Syrian fighters resumed their offensive on the last area held by Islamic State in eastern Syria on Sunday after days of calm that saw thousands of civilians leave the area.

Mustafa Bali, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, tweeted that operations began after the deadline for ISIS gunmen to surrender expired.

At about sunset, sniper fire was seen coming from ISIS positions as the SDF pounded the area held by the extremists. An SDF commander who identified himself as Bilal said Sunday’s fighting “was the heaviest clashes he’d seen since then.”

The fighting came a day after an SDF official said they could soon resume the offensive against ISIS, adding that the battle could last three days.

SDF official Aras Orkesh said on Saturday that about 2,500 fighters are ready for the battle in and around the eastern village of Baghouz, where ISIS fighters still have a presence.

Under the cover of heavy coalition bombing on March 1 and 2, SDF forces advanced on the besieged tent encampment, leaving a corridor for residents to leave.

Following that operation, thousands of residents and many fighters evacuated Baghouz over the next four days. But since Friday, only a small group has come out, raising speculation that a renewed military offensive is about to begin.

Bali, the SDF spokesman, tweeted Sunday that the decision to resume the offensive came after thousands of civilians left Baghouz, which is the last village held by ISIS.

## Afghan forces kill ISIS leader

BY PHILLIP WALTER  
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghan special forces have killed an Islamic State commander said to have organized a deadly attack last week on a private construction company in eastern Afghanistan.

The commander, known only as Subhan, was the target of a raid Saturday night in Nangarhar province, an ISIS stronghold where U.S. forces are based, according to provincial governor spokesman Attaullah Khogyani.

“Our special forces have conducted a raid in Momandara district last night and killed Subhan, who was the commander of a group of Daesh fighters and also the mastermind of the attack on the construction company,” Khogyani told Stars and Stripes on Sunday, using an Arabic name for ISIS. Several other suspects were arrested, and explosives were seized during the operation led by forces assigned

to the National Directorate of Security — Afghanistan’s top intelligence agency — Khogyani said.

Wednesday, a suicide bomber attacked the entrance of the EBE construction company in Nangarhar’s capital, Jalalabad. Four militants then stormed the building, shooting employees before engaging in an hourslong standoff with Afghan forces.

All the attackers were eventually killed, as were 16 employees, Khogyani said. ISIS claimed responsibility on their Amaq news website.

“Nangarhar was quiet in the last couple of months, but once again, Daesh suddenly showed up in the city and attacked this company,” said Salar Yousaf, a Nangarhar resident.

While direct talks between the U.S. and the Taliban aimed at ending the U.S.’ longest war continue, the Nangarhar attack was a reminder of the strength of other belligerents in the conflict.

# US aid for Puerto Rico still just trickles in

Bloomberg

Seventeen months after Hurricane Maria, the remote Puerto Rican island of Vieques is still waiting on federal money to rebuild its hospital.

It won't arrive in time to give Zuleima Nieves peace of mind.

She and Vieques' other 9,000 residents depend on a makeshift clinic in a former storm shelter and three trailers for dialysis, dentistry and basic care. But Nieves, 22, who has hyperthyroidism, is about six months into a high-risk pregnancy and must travel to San Juan every two weeks for checkups. When labor pains arrive, it's time to race to the "big island."

"If something happens here in Vieques, they won't be able to care for me," said Nieves, a lifelong resident of the former U.S. Navy outpost about 8 miles east of mainland Puerto Rico.

Diana Rivas, 60, a cancer patient in remission, said some fellow sufferers chose to die rather than spend days journeying for chemotherapy and radiation. Patients must wake at 4 a.m., take an hourlong ferry and then be driven two hours into San Juan.

The ferries can be unreliable; in early March, the break-

down of two vessels disrupted cargo transport, prompting the governor to activate the National Guard to deliver food and medicine.

"If you want to save your own life, you have to travel to the big island and pray that nothing happens on the way there," Rivas said.

Across the commonwealth, citizens are struggling as a projected \$55 billion in aid arrives at a trickle and the White House falters in its support of rebuilding.

Last week, President Donald Trump promised "the A Plus treatment" for residents of tornado-torn Alabama, a state where he enjoys strong support. But he has opposed future help for Puerto Rico and falsely claimed that the bankrupt island wanted to use aid to pay its more than \$70 billion debt. Recently, the White House even considered raiding recovery funds allocated by Congress to pay for a U.S.-Mexico border wall.

Maria killed an estimated 3,000 people in the months after its September 2017 landfall, which leveled homes and businesses and wiped out electricity. So far, the commonwealth has identified 7,505 rebuilding

sites and delivered 4,792 reports to the Federal Emergency Management Agency seeking major repairs. Only 67 projects are proceeding, according to Puerto Rico's government. In a similar period after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the last U.S. hurricane approaching Maria's magnitude, more than 9,000 were underway.

FEMA is sending \$2.95 billion to individual Puerto Ricans and has designated \$5.43 billion to so-called public assistance, rebuilding government infrastructure and services. But the lion's share of the latter was for help in the storm's immediate aftermath: \$4.24 billion on "emergency protective measures," an umbrella category led by \$1.89 billion to restore the rickety energy grid to minimal function.

Only \$371.3 million is going to what FEMA calls "permanent work" — restoring infrastructure and facilities to predisaster levels. Of that, only \$35 million has actually been disbursed, mostly for roads and bridges.

The commonwealth blames a requirement that FEMA control disbursements, unlike mainland jurisdictions where local officials do. The agency, led

by soon-to-depart Brock Long, says the system guards against misspending by a dysfunctional government.

"FEMA makes it very easy to get money," said Justo Hernandez, FEMA's deputy federal coordinating officer for Puerto Rico. But, he said, the agency is proceeding deliberately to ensure the commonwealth doesn't get in trouble. "FEMA gets blamed for everything."

Puerto Rico has been treated differently from the outset. A University of Michigan report in the *BMJ Global Health* journal studied critical periods after Maria, Hurricane Irma in Florida and Hurricane Harvey in Texas. The federal government took 30 times as long in Puerto Rico to achieve Florida's staffing rates, it found. And 30 days after Maria, only \$116.3 million federal dollars were in survivors' pockets, compared with \$1.09 billion in Texas and \$847 million in Florida.

"We need to go to the root cause, which is Puerto Rico is a colonial territory of the U.S.," Gov. Ricardo Rossello said in an interview last month in Washington. "It's always going to be a powerlessness issue."

## More US terrorism-related arrests domestic, data show

The Washington Post

Most people arrested as the result of FBI terrorism investigations are charged with non-terrorism offenses, and more domestic terrorism suspects were arrested last year than those allegedly inspired by international terrorist groups, according to internal FBI figures reviewed by The Washington Post.

As government officials and activists debate the best way to pursue violent extremists, the figures show how much of counterterrorism work goes undeclared and unnoticed. Thousands are investigated each year. Hundreds are charged with crimes. But the public and the media see only dozens.

The debate centers on

whether federal law and law enforcement are too focused on Islamic terrorism and not paying enough attention to the rise in far right-wing extremism. In fact, according to the data, more domestic terrorist targets are being charged, and in both categories, law enforcement often leverage simpler crimes, such as violations of gun or drug laws, to prevent violence.

"It's violence that we key in on," said a senior law enforcement official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive federal investigative work. "And sometimes, it's the violence that motivates someone more than any particular ideology."

The arrest last month of Coast Guard Lt. Christopher

Hasson, 49, is the latest example of this pattern. Prosecutors have alleged Hasson is a white nationalist inspired in part by mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik, who in 2011 unleashed two attacks in Norway that killed 77 people.

Hasson, who has been detained since his arrest, is accused of amassing weapons as part of a domestic terrorism plot targeting politicians and journalists. Authorities have highlighted a letter in which he allegedly wrote, "I am dreaming of a way to kill almost every last person on the earth."

But as with most people arrested in FBI counterterrorism investigations, Hasson does not yet face terrorism charges. Rather, he was indicted on charges of illegal possession of

firearm silencers, possession of firearms by a drug addict and unlawful user, and possession of a controlled substance.

According to FBI figures shared with The Post, in the 2017 budget year there were about 110 people arrested after being investigated for actions inspired by foreign terrorist groups such as Islamic State and al-Qaeda. Of those, about 30 faced terrorism charges. The rest faced gun, drug, fraud or immigration charges.

Last year, out of about 100 such arrests, only nine defendants faced terrorism charges — a drop-off owed in part to a decline in the number of people attempting to travel overseas to join ISIS, the senior law enforcement official said.

# Jetliner crashes in Ethiopia; 157 from 35 countries dead

Associated Press

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — A jetliner carrying 157 people crashed shortly after takeoff from the Ethiopian capital Sunday, killing everyone aboard, authorities said. At least 35 nationalities were among the dead.

It was not clear what caused the Ethiopian Airlines plane to go down in clear weather. But the accident was strikingly similar to last year's crash of a Lion Air jet that plunged into the Java Sea, killing 189 people. Both crashes involved the Boeing 737 Max 8, and both happened minutes after the jets became airborne.

The Ethiopian pilot sent out a distress call and was given clearance to return to the airport, the airline's CEO told reporters.

Worried families gathered at the flight's destination, the airport in Nairobi, the capital of neighboring Kenya.

Agnes Muilu said he came to pick up his brother. "I just pray that he is safe or he was not on it," he said.

Relatives were frustrated by the lack of information about

loved ones.

"Why are they taking us round and round. It is all over the news that the plane crashed," said Edwin Ong'undi, who was waiting for his sister. "All we are asking for is information to know about their fate."

The accident is likely to renew questions about the 737 Max, the newest version of Boeing's popular single-aisle airliner.

Indonesian investigators have not determined a cause for the October crash, but days after the accident, Boeing sent a notice to airlines that faulty information from a sensor could cause the plane to automatically point the nose down. The notice reminded pilots of the procedure for handling such a situation.

The Lion Air cockpit data recorder showed that the jet's airspeed indicator had malfunctioned on its last four flights, though the airline initially said problems with the aircraft had been fixed before it left the Indonesian capital of Jakarta.

Safety experts cautioned against drawing too many comparisons between the two crashes until more is known

about Sunday's disaster.

The Ethiopian Airlines CEO "stated there were no defects prior to the flight, so it is hard to see any parallels with the Lion Air crash yet," said Harro Ranter, founder of the Aviation Safety Network, which compiles information about accidents worldwide.

As sunset approached at the crash site, searchers and a bulldozer picked through the wreckage of the plane, which shattered into small pieces.

Photos from the scene showed multicolored pieces of the jet strewn across freshly churned earth. Red Cross teams and others were searching a large area for human remains. In one photo, teams could be seen loading black plastic bags into trucks.

The airline published a photo showing its CEO standing in the wreckage.

The Ethiopian plane was new, having been delivered to the airline in November.

State-owned Ethiopian Airlines is widely considered the best-managed airline in Africa and calls itself Africa's largest carrier.

## Turbulence injures many on flight from Istanbul to NY

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Severe turbulence tossed terrified passengers and crew around a Turkish Airlines plane cabin as it passed over Maine on Saturday, with 30 people suffering bumps, bruises, cuts and one a broken leg before the flight landed safely at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, officials said.

Dozens of ambulances lined up in front of a terminal to quickly treat the injured coming off the flight that left Istanbul for the 10-hour trip.

Spokesman Steve Coleman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey told The Associated Press that the injured were taken to local hospitals. A flight attendant suffered a broken leg, Coleman said.

Turkish Airlines Flight 1 hit the turbulence about 45 minutes before landing at JFK, said spokesman Steve Coleman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The crew declared an emergency while the Boeing 777 was still in the air, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

"Nobody announced it or anything like that so we figured out something was wrong," passenger Sead Nikaj told ABC News. "Then I see people start flying on the plane. Then seeing blood all over."

"I had one of the ladies next to me, she really fell down from her seat on the floor and all her back was completely bloody," Nikaj said.

"There was like one or two seconds when it was subtle, but then it really started to pick up," Passenger Amir Mehrbakhsh said. "... Just because the drop was so sudden, a lot of people got lifted up and hit their head either on the ceiling or on the side of the plane, and so there were a lot of injuries pretty quickly."

Turkish Airlines said in a statement it is "deeply saddened by this unfortunate experience, and closely monitors the health status of injured passengers, and is making resources available to them."

## Iran's president to make official visit to Iraq

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's president is making his first official visit to Iraq this week as he faces mounting pressure from hard-liners at home in the wake of the Trump administration's unraveling of the nuclear deal.

Hassan Rouhani's trip — billed as "historic and noble" by his foreign minister — is meant to solidify ties between Shiite power Iran and Iraq's Shiite-led government, a strong Tehran ally.

It is also Iran's response to President Donald Trump's

snap December trip to Iraq and the American president's comments that U.S. forces should stay in Iraq to keep an eye on neighboring Iran, with which Iraq shares an 870-mile border.

At the time, Trump slipped into Iraq at night without stopping in Baghdad to greet U.S. servicemembers at a base far from the Iraqi capital where he extolled the American troops' fight against Islamic State.

Rouhani later mocked Trump's visit, asserting that flying into Iraq under the cover of darkness meant "defeat" for

the U.S. in Iraq and asking the U.S. president why he didn't make an "open and official visit."

"You have to walk in the streets of Baghdad ... to find out how people will welcome you," Rouhani said at the time.

Rouhani's visit to Iraq will provide an opportunity for reaching "serious understandings" between the two neighbors, Iran's top diplomat, Mohammad Javad Zarif told the official IRNA news agency from Baghdad, where he was preparing for Rouhani's three-day visit that starts on Monday.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Police search for woman in attacks

**NY** NEW YORK — Police are looking for a woman who went on a rampage at two Manhattan subway stations, spraying people with a substance suspected to be mace.

The woman first targeted a station in Harlem at 125th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue on Friday around noon. One man was hit in his eye at close range.

Authorities said she then left the station and sprayed four more people on the street. Minutes later, a woman was sprayed in the station at West 96th Street and Broadway.

Police responded but were unable to catch up with the attacker.

## Crazy ants push fire ants out of sugar cane

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — Tawny crazy ants are pushing fire ants out of some Louisiana sugar cane fields — one of the few places people are happy to see fire ants. Entomologists worry that the new invaders could hurt the crop.

Fire ants chomp away at one of the crop's worst pests — a moth larva called the sugar cane borer. LSU AgCenter entomologist Blake Wilson said they do that without hurting the plant.

Wilson said tawny crazy ants eat those larvae but are also known to protect aphids and other small, sucking insects that damage crops.

He's planning studies to look at the crazy ants' effectiveness at keeping down sugar cane borer infestations and to look at their interactions with other insects.

## Intruder breaks in and cooks tortillas

**AZ** PHOENIX — Authorities said a man is accused of breaking into a Phoenix apartment and helping himself to tortillas and soup.

Court documents show Jerry Christopher Drane, 31, was arrested March 1 on suspicion of criminal trespassing.

According to charging documents, a female occupant smelled something burning. She found Drane in the kitchen cooking tortillas on a stove burner.

She yelled for her roommate and both women demanded Drane leave. They told police Drane then went onto the balcony and began eating a can of soup.

## Police: Bank robber wore graduation gown

**ND** FARGO — Fargo police are investigating a bank robbery by a man who was wearing a graduation robe.

Police said the male suspect walked into Alerus Financial about 8 a.m. Friday and produced a note that said "give me money or I'll shoot."

Authorities said the man did not show a weapon. He was wearing a maroon or red graduation gown and fled on foot with an undetermined amount of cash.

KFGO reported police were combing the neighborhood, parking lots and trash bins.

## Secretariat sculpture nears the finish line

**OK** NORMAN — A sculpture of renowned racehorse Secretariat is entering the final stretch of completion in Norman.

Secretariat won the Belmont Stakes by 31 lengths in 1973, setting the record time, and became the first Triple Crown champion in 25 years.

There are five known Secretariat sculptures, but wildlife sculptor Joecelyn Russell's piece will be the largest. Russell told The Oklahoman that the sculpture stands about 11 feet "hoof to helmet."

## Police seize 'Catnip Cocktail' during raid

**NJ** FAIRFIELD — Police raided a health and nutrition store and seized 61 bottles of "Catnip Cocktail," a cat sedative linked to bizarre behavior.

Authorities arrested the store manager of a Nutrition Zone in Fairfield on Thursday. John Sirico, of Tafton, Pa., is charged with multiple drug offenses and one weapons charge.

Fairfield Police Chief Anthony Manna said officers found one man dancing and yelling near the store in July 2018 and later stopped a man driving erratically on Route 46. Officers recovered bottles of Catnip Cocktail in both instances.

The drug is not linked to the catnip plant. Police said it is similar to the euphoric drug GHB when metabolized by humans.

## Man pulls record perch from reservoir

**NV** ELKO — An ice fisherman tied a 32-year-old record for the largest yellow perch caught in the state.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife said John Shorter III, of Sparks, landed the 13.5-inch perch weighing 24 ounces Feb. 16 at Elko County's Wildhorse Reservoir, 25 miles south of the Idaho line.

He tied the record Warren Goodale set in 1987 at Dufur-rena Pond north of the Black Rock Desert in northwest Nevada near the Oregon line.

## Man admits stealing cash, cards from mail

**NY** ROCHESTER — The last of three New York men accused of stealing cash and gift cards from the mail has admitted his guilt.

Federal prosecutors said Cordell James, 28, of Rochester pleaded guilty to conspiracy Friday and faces up to five years in prison.

Authorities said James was employed by a U.S. Postal Service contractor at the Greater Rochester International Airport in 2018 when he and two other men conspired to steal from the mail for their personal use.

## Deputy dragged by car following plow dispute

**SD** BLACK HAWK — Authorities said a Meade County deputy was dragged by a vehicle after he tried to intervene in a dispute between the vehicle's driver and the driver of a snowplow.

Meade County Sheriff Ron Merwin told KNBN-TV that Deputy Branden Torres responded to a call in Black Hawk that a man in a car was blocking the plow because the plow was making drifts in his driveway.

Merwin said the deputy was gathering information when the vehicle drove off with Torres holding onto it. He was taken to a hospital for evaluation and released.

The 24-year-old driver was taken to the Meade County Jail.

From wire reports

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# Source: Raiders get Brown

Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — The Oakland Raiders agreed on a deal Saturday night to acquire prolific but disgruntled receiver Antonio Brown from the Pittsburgh Steelers and will give him the lucrative new contract he wanted.

A person with direct knowledge of the trade told The Associated Press that the Raiders finalized the deal with the Steelers and will give Brown a new three-year contract worth \$50.125 million instead of the \$38.925 million he was owed by Pittsburgh. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal can't be completed until the new league year starts Wednesday.

Pro Football Talk first reported the deal and says Pittsburgh will get third and fifth-round draft picks from Oakland.

The trade makes final what became a very messy and very public divorce between Brown and the team that helped turn the sixth-round pick into arguably the greatest wide receiver of his generation.

It also gives the Raiders a high-profile addition for second-year coach Jon Gruden after trading away two of the team's biggest stars last year in edge rusher Khalil Mack and receiver Amari Cooper.

Oakland got extra first-round picks in those trades but didn't need to give up any of its four picks in the top 35 in the upcoming draft to acquire Brown, who has topped 100 receptions and 1,200 yards receiving in each of the past six seasons. The Raiders have had only one player reach those marks in a single season in franchise history, with Hall of Famer Tim Brown accomplishing the feat in 1997.

Brown now gives quarterback Derek Carr his biggest offensive weapon since entering the league in 2014 and the Raiders a legitimate star before they move to Las Vegas for the 2020 season.

The Raiders' top wide receiver last season was Jordy Nelson, who had just 63 catches for 739 yards.

Gruden has always admired Brown from his time as a broadcaster and had nothing but praise for the receiver before the teams played last December.

"He's the hardest working man, I think, in football," Gruden said. "Hardest working player I've ever seen practice. I've seen Jerry Rice, I've seen a lot of good ones, but I put Antonio Brown at the top. If there are any young wideouts out there, I'd go watch him practice. You figure out yourself why he's such a good player."

Brown was obviously pleased with the development, posting a picture of himself in a Raiders uniform and a video with Carr at

a Pro Bowl with the caption "Love at first sight" on his Twitter account.

Brown is no stranger to drawing headlines for both his prolific on-field production and his off-the-field antics, including livestreaming from the locker room after a playoff win over Kansas City in January 2017 and getting pulled over for doing 100 mph in the northern Pittsburgh suburbs last fall.

The sometimes tumultuous relationship between the only player in NFL history with six straight 100-catch seasons and the franchise that made him the highest-paid player at his position in the spring of 2017 reached a breaking point in late December.

Steelers coach Mike Tomlin benched Brown during the regular-season finale against Cincinnati after the wide receiver went radio silent in the final 48 hours before the game. Brown arrived in a fur coat, hung out for a half and then disappeared from view until well after his teammates had cleaned out their lockers following a 9-6-1 finish that left Pittsburgh on the outside of the playoffs for the first time since 2013.

When Brown did resurface, he began engaging in a series of increasingly antagonistic acts designed to expedite his departure. He went on Instagram with former Steelers linebacker James Harrison during Tomlin's season wrap-up press conference. He decried quarterback Ben Roethlisberger's "owner's mentality" and chastised Tomlin for disciplining him in Week 17, no matter that Tomlin and the rest of the organization had spent years downplaying Brown's off-the-field eccentricities.

Brown officially requested a trade last month, but not before photo-shopping his familiar No. 84 onto a San Francisco 49ers jersey or using his hyperactive social media feeds to indicate not only his displeasure with the Steelers but also his interest in signing a new deal with whomever should acquire his services.

Even with his benching in the finale, Brown caught 104 passes for 1,297 yards and a franchise-record and NFL-high 15 touchdowns. His last performance in a Pittsburgh uniform might have been one of his best, a 14-reception, 185-yard, two-touchdown masterpiece in a road loss to New Orleans.

A week later, the player who once said he wanted to retire a Steeler didn't even suit up against the Bengals. Just over two months later, he now finds himself heading to the second act of a career that's on a Hall of Fame trajectory and the Steelers have a hole at receiver and more than \$21 million in dead money on their salary cap.

# Teams seek changes to replay, OT

Associated Press

NFL teams proposed major changes to replay and overtime on Saturday after a season of consistent criticism of officiating and which plays can be challenged or automatically reviewed.

Among the proposals teams have made to the league's competition committee are an increase in the number of plays subject to video replay review and a change to the overtime format.

The idea of more or even unlimited coaches' challenges is not new, but could have stronger support now. Also, the league is reluctant to expand replays for officiating because it would slow games even further.

The competition committee will present teams' proposals and some of its own to the 32 owners at the league meetings March 24-27.

Washington wants any play to be subject to coaches' challenges or to automatic review by the officiating department in New York. The Redskins also suggested that all personal fouls be subject to review, while Kansas City added potential personal fouls that were not called on the field be looked at.

Philadelphia seeks scoring plays and turnovers negated by a penalty be immediately reviewed, and Denver suggests adding all fourth-down plays that are spotted short of a first down or the goal line, and all extra-point tries.

The Rams, Panthers, Seahawks and Eagles want to include reviews of designated player safety-related fouls whether called or not on the field.

Kansas City proposes that both teams possess the ball at least one time in overtime even if the first team with the ball scores a touchdown.

The Chiefs also want to eliminate overtime for the preseason, and get rid of the overtime coin toss so that the winner of the coin toss to begin the game may choose whether to kick or receive, or which goal to defend in OT.

Fans have vociferously expressed displeasure with the current system regarding coaches' challenges since a blown call late in the NFC championship game — officials missed a blatant pass interference penalty and a helmet-first hit by the Rams' Nickell Robey-Coleman deep in Los Angeles territory. The non-calls helped Los Angeles force overtime and eventually win the game to reach the Super Bowl.

## College basketball roundup

# No. 3 UNC stops No. 4 Duke

Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Third-ranked North Carolina handled every push fourth-ranked Duke could manage, both in building a big lead and then hanging onto what was left of its edge in the final minutes.

When it was over, the Tar Heels were ready to cut down nets, too.

Freshman Coby White scored 21 points and UNC took down its biggest rival again, beating the short-handed Blue Devils 79-70 to earn a share of the Atlantic Coast Conference regular-season championship.

**No. 2 Virginia 73, Louisville 68:** Ty Jerome scored 24 points, including the go-ahead free throw with 5:34 remaining, and the host Cavaliers held off the Cardinals to wrap up the top seed in the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament.

Virginia (28-2, 16-2) tied North Carolina for the regular-season title, but got the top seed by virtue of its victory at UNC on Feb. 11.

**Auburn 84, No. 5 Tennessee 80:** Jared Harper made four straight free throws over the final 31 seconds to help the host Tigers win in its regular-season finale.

Chuma Okeke led Auburn (22-9, 11-7 Southeastern Conference) with 22 points.

**No. 6 Kentucky 66, Florida 57:** Tyler Herro scored 16 points and led a big second-half run that helped the host Wildcats overcome the Gators.

Kentucky (26-5, 15-3 Southeastern Conference) went back and forth with Florida (17-14, 9-9) early in the second half and trailed 40-39 with 13:46 remaining. Herro had six points during a 15-2 spree, hitting a couple of shots in the lane and adding two free throws, to give the Wildcats a 54-42 advantage. Kentucky capped the seven-minute burst by scoring 10 straight points.

**No. 9 Michigan State 75, No. 7 Michigan 63:** Cassius Winston started slow and fin-

ished strong, scoring 23 points to help the host Spartans beat the Wolverines.

Michigan State (25-6, 16-4) earned a share of the Big Ten title and top seeding in the conference tournament.

**No. 8 Texas Tech 80, Iowa State 73:** Jarrett Culver scored a career-high 31 points, Davide Moretti added 20 and the Red Raiders won on the road to wrap a share of their first Big 12 regular-season title.

Texas Tech tied Kansas State for the title.

**No. 10 LSU 80, Vanderbilt 59:** Tremont Waters had 14 points and eight assists and the host Tigers won the Southeastern Conference regular-season title in LSU's first game without suspended head coach Will Wade.

Darius Days scored a season-high 15 points and Marshall Graves had a season-high 12 — all on three-pointers — for the Tigers (26-5, 16-2).

**No. 11 Purdue 70, Northwestern 57:** Carsen Edwards scored 21 points and the Boilermakers clinched a share of the Big Ten regular-season championship on the road.

Purdue (23-8, 16-4) secured the No. 2 seed in the conference tournament in Chicago and a share of its second regular-season title in three years. The Boilermakers tied with Michigan State, a winner over Michigan on Saturday night.

**No. 14 Florida State 65, Wake Forest 57:** Trent Forrest scored 11 points and the Seminoles reeled off 18 straight points in the second half for the road win.

FSU (25-6, 13-5 Atlantic Coast Conference) has won 12 of its last 13 games.

Brandon Childress scored 13 points for the Demon Deacons (11-19, 4-14).

**Georgetown 86, No. 16 Marquette 84:** James Akinjo scored 25 points, Mac McClung added 23 and the Hoyas won on the road to hand the Golden Eagles' their fourth straight loss

to close the regular season.

Jamorko Pickett and Jessie Govan each added 10 points for Georgetown (18-13, 9-9 Big East)

**No. 17 Nevada 81, San Diego State 53:** Caleb Martin scored 25 points and twin brother Cody added 14 to lead the host Wolfpack to a share of the Mountain West title with Utah State.

The Martin twins combined to shoot 12-for-19 and Nevada (28-3, 15-3 Mountain West) finished at 53.1 percent as a team.

**No. 18 Kansas State 68, Oklahoma 53:** Kamau Stokes scored 19 points and the host Wildcats beat the Sooners for a share of the Big 12 regular-season title.

Barry Brown added 15 points, Dean Wade had 11 and Kansas State (24-7, 14-4) finished atop the conference for the second time in 42 years.

**No. 22 Wofford 99, VMI 72:** Nathan Hoover scored 17 points and the Terriers extended their school-record winning streak to 18 games, beating the Keydets in the quarterfinals of the Southern Conference Tournament.

**Seton Hall 79, No. 23 Villanova 75:** Myles Powell scored 20 points, Myles Cale added 19 and the host Pirates upset the Wildcats, three days after knocking off No. 16 Marquette to revive Seton Hall's chances of getting into the NCAA Tournament.

**Temple 67, No. 25 Central Florida 62:** Shizz Alston Jr. scored 21 points, Justyn Hamilton tied a career high with 13 and the Owls won in Temple coach Fran Dunphy's final home game before he steps down at the end of the season.

**Boise State 80, Air Force 52:** Derrick Alston scored 22 points, Zach Haney added 20 points for the host Broncos.

Boise State took a 45-24 halftime lead by shooting 57 percent from the floor and making 7 of 16 three-pointers (39 percent).

## Murray State races into tourney bid

Associated Press

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — Murray State guard Ja Morant was determined to finish the job Saturday night.

With the Racers' NCAA Tournament hopes on the line, the sophomore standout came through in the second half in front of more than 10,000 fans at Ford Center.

Morant scored 22 of his 36 points after the break and made all nine of his free throws to give Murray State a 77-65 victory over Belmont in the Ohio Valley Conference championship game.

The Racers (27-4) earned the league's automatic bid into the NCAA Tournament — the first spot to be taken this year and the team's second consecutive berth under head coach Matt McMahon.

During Friday's semifinal win over Austin Peay, Morant missed five of his 15 free throws. That stuck with the 6-foot-3 point guard.

"I was a little frustrated with myself last night ... I mean, they're free," Morant said. "Tonight, I was just locked in and just followed through with all my shots and was able to make them."

Morant, the OVC Player of the Year, played the entire 40 minutes. He was 13-for-25 shooting and added seven rebounds and three assists.

He scored eight successive points down the stretch in the second half to help withstand a rally by Belmont (26-5), which saw its 15-game winning streak end. After his assist to Tevin Brown's three-pointer to put the Racers up by six with 56 seconds left, Darnell Cowart drew a charge on the next possession to essentially seal the win.

Murray State outscored the Bruins 11-0 over the final 2:25.

"We found a way to get it done in the second half," McMahon said. "I'm just so proud of our team."

## NBA roundup

## Irving leads Celtics past LeBron, Lakers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Kyrie Irving scored 30 points and Marcus Smart had 16 in the Boston Celtics' 120-107 victory over the short-handed Los Angeles Lakers on Saturday night in the latest edition of this storied NBA rivalry.

Marcus Morris had 16 points and seven rebounds, and Gordon Hayward added 15 points as the Celtics continued to gather momentum for the postseason with their third consecutive win on a four-game California trip that concludes Monday against the Clippers.

Boston was challenged while LeBron James put up his 80th career triple-double in a patchwork Lakers lineup missing three injured starters, but Irving hit a series of big shots down the stretch to seal it. After missing Wednesday's victory at Sacramento

with a bruised thigh, Irving added seven rebounds and seven assists against his famous teammate on the championship-winning Cleveland Cavaliers in 2016.

James had 30 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds in his seventh triple-double for the Lakers, who have lost five straight in a playoff chase that looks futile at this point.

The Lakers played without Brandon Ingram, Lonzo Ball and Kyle Kuzma after receiving another round of discouraging injury news before the game. Ingram was ruled out for the season with a blood clot in his upper body, a potentially serious problem.

**Bucks 131, Hornets 114:** Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points, 13 rebounds and six assists and host Milwaukee beat Charlotte for its NBA-best 50th victory.

**Trail Blazers 127, Suns 120:** CJ McCollum scored 26 points and Portland snapped visiting Phoenix's three-game winning

streak.

Damian Lillard had 18 points and nine assists, while Jusuf Nurkic added 14 points and nine rebounds.

**Nets 114, Hawks 112:** Spencer Dinwiddie scored 23 points, Jarrett Allen added 20 points and 12 rebounds and visiting Brooklyn held off Atlanta for its third straight victory.

The Nets moved into a tie for sixth place in the Eastern Conference despite missing a staggering 21 free throws.

**Timberwolves 135, Wizards 130 (OT):** Karl-Anthony Towns had 40 points and 16 rebounds before leaving in the final seconds of regulation with a knee injury in host Minnesota's overtime victory.

**Kings 102, Knicks 94:** De'Aaron Fox had 30 points and eight assists and Sacramento beat New York to open a four-game trip.

## NHL roundup

## Sharks take over West with OT defeat of Blues

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Kevin Labanc scored at 3:21 of overtime, Timo Meier had two goals and the San Jose Sharks beat the St. Louis Blues 3-2 on Saturday to take the Western Conference lead.

Labanc scored his 12th goal off assists from Logan Couture and Tomas Hertl.

Meier extended his goals streak to four games with his 25th and 26th to help San Jose win its fourth straight and move a point ahead of the idle Calgary Flames. The Sharks are 13-3-1 in their last 17 games.

**Bruins 3, Senators 2:** David Krejci tipped in the go-ahead goal with 44.7 seconds left and host Boston beat Ottawa to extend its NHL-best points streak to 19 games.

Danton Heinen skated into the slot and took a wrist shot that Krejci redirected past Senators goalie Craig Anderson, giving the Bruins their sixth straight victory overall

and 10th in a row at home.

**Lightning 3, Red Wings 2:** Nikita Kucherov scored twice while breaking host Tampa Bay's single-season record for points.

Kucherov has 33 goals and 77 assists for 110 points through 69 games. Vinny Lecavalier held the previous franchise record, finishing with 108 points with 52 goals and 56 assists in 2006-07.

**Flyers 5, Islanders 2:** James van Riemsdyk had a goal and an assist, helping Philadelphia win at New York.

Ryan Hartman, Sean Couturier, Nolan Patrick and Travis Konecny also scored for the Flyers, and Brian Elliott made 25 saves. Scott Mayfield and Nick Leddy scored for the Islanders.

**Avalanche 3, Sabres 0:** Nathan MacKinnon had a goal and two assists, Philipp Grubauer stopped 18 shots for his second shutout of the season and playoff-chasing Colorado beat visiting Buffalo.

Mikko Rantanen scored on

the power play and Gabriel Bourque added a full-length, empty-net goal for the Avalanche. They were missing captain Gabriel Landeskog with the All-Star forward sidelined four-to-six weeks due to an upper-body injury.

**Golden Knights 6, Canucks 2:** Mark Stone scored his first goal for Vegas, and the Golden Knights won at Vancouver for their sixth straight victory.

Paul Stastny, Alex Tuch, Tomas Nosek, Cody Eakin and Nate Schmidt also scored for Las Vegas. Marc-Andre Fleury had 29 saves for his 438th win, moving past Jacques Plante for eighth on the NHL's career list.

**Blue Jackets 4, Penguins 1:** Cam Atkinson had two goals, Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 28 shots and host Columbus broke an eight-game losing streak against Pittsburgh.

**Maple Leafs 3, Oilers 2:** John Tavares had a goal and two assists and Toronto won at Edmonton.

Morgan Rielly and Jake

Muzzin also scored and Frederik Andersen made 33 saves to help Toronto improve to 6-1-1 in its last eight.

**Coyotes 4, Kings 2:** Christian Dvorak and Michael Grabner each scored two goals and Darcy Kuemper made 33 saves to win for the ninth time in 10 starts, leading host Arizona.

**Blackhawks 2, Stars 1:** Alex DeBrincat and David Kampf scored on odd-man rushes in the first period and Chicago won at Dallas.

Corey Crawford and the Blackhawks shut out the Stars for the last 53:37 in the team's second straight victory.

**Hurricanes 5, Predators 3:** Nino Niederreiter scored twice in the first period and Carolina won at Nashville to sweep the season series.

**Rangers 4, Devils 2:** Vladislav Namestnikov snapped a tie in the third period and host New York beat New Jersey to stop a six-game slide.