

# STARS AND STRIPES<sup>®</sup>

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Mueller wraps up Russia-Trump probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General William Barr was reviewing the special counsel's confidential report on the Russia investigation Saturday to determine what should be made public after a nearly two-year probe that cast a dark shadow over Donald Trump's presidency.

The Justice Department was expected to release the main findings as soon as Saturday, and Barr was at the department's headquarters, going over Robert Mueller's report, said a person familiar with the process. The person requested anonymity to discuss Barr's work.

The attorney general ignored reporters' questions as he arrived at work.

Even with the details still under wraps, Friday's end to the 22-month probe without additional indictments by Mueller was welcome news to some in Trump's orbit who had feared a final round of charges could ensnare more Trump associates, including members of the president's family.

The report was accessible to only a handful of Justice officials while Barr prepared to summarize the "principal conclusions."

Trump, who relentlessly has criticized Mueller's investigation as a "witch hunt," was at his golf club in Florida on Saturday, and House Democrats were planning to gather by phone later in the day as they waited for Barr's summary.

Word of the report's delivery to Barr on Friday triggered

reactions across Washington, including Democrats' demands that it be quickly released to the public and Republicans' contentions that it ended two years of wasted time and money.

The next step was up to Barr, who declared he was committed to transparency and speed.

The White House sought to keep some distance, saying it had not seen or been briefed on the report. Trump, surrounded by advisers and political supporters at his resort in Florida, stayed uncharacteristically quiet on Twitter.

With no details released at this point, it was not known whether Mueller's report answers the core questions of his investigation: Did Trump's campaign collude with the Kremlin to sway the 2016 presidential election in favor of the

celebrity businessman? Also, did Trump take steps later, including by firing his FBI director, to obstruct the probe?

But the delivery of the report does mean the investigation has concluded without any public charges of a criminal conspiracy between the campaign and Russia or of obstruction by the president. A Justice Department official confirmed that Mueller was not recommending any further indictments.

That person, who described the document as "comprehensive," was not authorized to discuss the probe and asked for anonymity.

That was good news for a handful of Trump associates and family members dogged by speculation of possible wrongdoing.

## US-backed forces declare victory over ISIS militants

Associated Press

BAGHOUZ, Syria — U.S.-backed forces declared military victory over Islamic State militants in Syria on Saturday, after liberating the last pocket of territory held by ISIS in the country's east, marking the end of a brutal, self-styled caliphate the group carved out in large parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014.

After weeks of heavy fighting, the tent camp where the militants had made their final stand in the village of Baghouz was bombed to shreds. A field pitted with abandoned trenches and bomb craters and littered with scorched tents and the twisted metal carcasses of vehicles was all that remained. Half-buried in the dirt was a tattered shred of ISIS' notorious black flag, while a giant yellow

flag belonging to the Syrian Democratic Forces fluttered atop a shell-pocked building.

"Baghouz is free and the military victory against Daesh has been achieved," tweeted Mustafa Bali, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led SDF, referring to ISIS by its Arabic acronym.

The elimination of the last ISIS stronghold in Baghouz brings to a close a grueling final battle that stretched over several weeks and saw thousands of people flee the territory and surrender in desperation, and hundreds killed.

It spells the end of the militants' proto-state, which at its height four years ago was the size of Britain and home to some 8 million people. But the extremist group still maintains a scattered presence and there are sleeper cells across Syria

and Iraq. It's not known whether the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is still alive or where he might be hiding.

ISIS affiliates in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Afghanistan and other countries continue to pose a threat, and the group's ideology has inspired so-called lone wolf attacks that had little, if any, connection to its leadership.

The campaign to take back the territory by the U.S. and its partners has spanned nearly five years and two U.S. presidencies, unleashed more than 100,000 bombs and killed untold numbers of fighters and civilians.

But the weekend announcement, in a tweet, was anti-climactic, and on the ground, sporadic gunfire continued.

A day earlier, President Don-

ald Trump declared that ISIS militants no longer control any territory in Syria, a victory he had been teasing for days.

Associated Press journalists in Baghouz on Saturday reported hearing mortars and gunfire directed toward a cliff overlooking Baghouz, where U.S.-led coalition airstrikes were carried out a day earlier. SDF spokesman Kino Gabriel said Friday that there were ISIS fighters hiding in caves near Baghouz and that clearing operations were still underway.

On Saturday, journalists were taken to the encampment in Baghouz where the group had made its last stand — a wasteland of wrecked vehicles, torn tents and scorched trees. A few bodies could be seen, and the faint smell of rotting corpses hung in the air.

# Does climate change threaten US security?

Associated Press

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. — The Missouri River floodwater surging on to the air base housing the U.S. military's Strategic Command overwhelmed round-the-clock sandbagging by airmen and others. They had to scramble to save sensitive equipment, munitions and dozens of aircraft.

Days into the flooding, muddy water was still lapping at almost 80 flooded buildings at Nebraska's Offutt Air Force Base, some inundated by up to 7 feet of water. Piles of waterlogged corn cobs, husks and stalks lay heaped everywhere that the water had receded, swept onto the base from surrounding fields.

"In the end, obviously, the waters were just too much. It took over everything we put up," Col. David Norton, who is in charge of facilities at the base, told an Associated Press reporter on a tour of the damage. "The speed at which it came in was shocking."

Though the headquarters of Strategic Command, which plays a central role in detecting and striking at global threats, wasn't damaged, the flooding provided a dramatic example of how climate change poses a national security threat, even as the Trump administration plays down the issue.

It is also a reminder that the kind of weather extremes escalating with climate change aren't limited to the coasts, said retired Rear Adm. David W. Titley, founder of both the Navy's Task Force on Climate Change and the Center for Solutions to Weather and Climate Risk at Penn State University.

"We probably do need some walls — but they're probably levees," Titley said, in a reference to President Donald Trump's proposal to take money from the military construction budget to fund a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border. "I would say those are the kinds of walls we need."

**'We probably do need some walls — but they're probably levees. I would say those are the kinds of walls we need.'**

**Rear Adm. David W. Titley**

founder of the Navy's Task Force on Climate Change

## Late-winter floods

The late-winter floods that have swept over Plains states starting earlier this month — breaching levees, halting Amtrak trains and killing at least three people — are also the second major inundation in less than a decade to hit the air base outside Omaha.

It will take weeks or more for scientists to determine if the Plains flooding, or any weather disaster, was caused or worsened by climate change, which is occurring as emissions from coal, oil and gas alter the atmosphere. But federal agencies and scientists around the world agree that climate change already is making natural disasters more frequent, stronger and longer.

The military has warned in a series of reports under past administrations that climate change is a security threat on many fronts. That includes "through direct impacts on U.S. military infrastructure and by affecting factors, including food and water availability, that can exacerbate conflict outside U.S. borders," the federal government's grim climate report said last year.

But Trump has belittled his own government's warnings. During a January cold spell, he tweeted his wish for "a little of that good old fashioned Global Warming!" In response to security warnings on climate change, the Trump administration has allowed a physicist who rejects scientific consensus on man-made climate change to start organizing a White House panel to make its own determination.

Responding to an AP inquiry, the White House's National Se-

curity Council did not directly address whether the administration sees climate change as a national security threat but said it takes the issue of climate change seriously.

But the Trump White House's national security strategy mentions climate only in the context of "countering an anti-growth energy agenda" for fossil fuels.

Department of Defense spokeswoman Heather Babb said the department "works to ensure installations and infrastructure are resilient to a wide range of challenges, including climate."

"DOD will focus on ensuring it remains ready and able to adapt to a wide variety of threats — regardless of the source — to fulfill our mission to deter war and ensure our nation's security," Babb said.

Under the Trump administration, unlike in previous administrations, the Pentagon has offered little public comment on climate change as a security threat. The Pentagon's guiding star of defense planning, known as the National Defense Strategy, does not even mention climate change.

## Raising the alarm

That leaves it to former military leaders to raise the alarm about how climate change could affect national security. Retired Brig. Gen. Gerald Galloway said worsening bouts of weather — floods cutting off troops' way in and out of bases, high waves complicating landings, heat waves depriving aircraft of the lift they need to fly — are all problems the military could be dealing with.

Military bases are launch platforms, and you "can't fight

a war unless you've got a place to leave from," said Galloway, a member of the Center for Climate and Security's advisory board.

Titley predicted Offutt Air Force Base would be the latest military installation to have racked up \$1 billion or more in damage. Hurricanes struck North Carolina's Camp Lejeune in September and Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida in October.

The current political atmosphere discourages any big efforts building up base defenses against climate change, said Titley, who also served as chief operating officer of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Defense Department officials, "by and large, know what they need to do, but it's very hard for them to do. White House dynamics are the White House does not want to hear about it," he said. "The Pentagon is really between a rock and a hard spot here."

Earlier heavy flooding at Offutt has prompted the base to start raising its levee by 2 feet this year, said Maj. Meghan M. Liemburg-Archer, spokeswoman for Strategic Command.

Sandbagging had held back 2011 floods at the base. The flooding that poured in starting March 15 was worse, said Norton, the base's support group commander.

"It was all hands on deck," Norton said. "All through the night, we worked. It was thousands of people, in total, working to sandbag, move in huge Hesco barriers; a whole host of people clearing equipment out of facilities, moving munitions ... even crews doing things like disconnecting power. It was a massive effort."

More than 30 aircraft were towed to higher ground or flown to other locations. Crews hauled out loads of equipment, engines and tools.

By March 16, the flood had rolled over a third of the base, swamping more than 1.2 million square feet of buildings.

# President says no new N. Korea sanctions

Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump tweeted Friday that he has reversed his administration's decision to slap new sanctions on North Korea, with his press secretary explaining that the president "likes" leader Kim Jong Un and doesn't think they're necessary.

It's unclear, however, which sanctions the president was referencing in his tweet, which took Treasury officials by surprise.

"It was announced today by the U.S. Treasury that additional large scale Sanctions would be added to those already existing Sanctions on North Korea," Trump wrote from his private club in Palm Beach, Fla.

"I have today ordered the withdrawal of those additional Sanctions!"

The White House did not immediately respond to questions about which sanctions Trump was referring to or what large-scale sanctions were poised to be added to existing ones already imposed on North Korea.

On Thursday, his administration did sanction two Chinese shipping companies suspected of helping North Korea evade sanctions — the first targeted actions taken against Pyongyang since Trump and Kim met in Hanoi, Vietnam, last month for negotiations about North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

In addition to Trump's talks with North Korea, the U.S. is knee-deep in delicate

trade negotiations with China.

A person familiar with the action said Trump's tweet was not a reversal of existing sanctions but that the president was talking about not going forward with additional large-scale sanctions on North Korea at this time. The person was not authorized to discuss the president's comments and spoke on condition of anonymity.

It's unclear whether Trump's decision was related to North Korea's move on Friday to abruptly withdraw its staff from a liaison office with South Korea. The development is likely to put a damper on ties between the North and South and further complicate global diplomacy on North Korea's nuclear program.

## Cost rising as Midwest flooding continues

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds said Friday that recent flooding in the state has caused an estimated \$1.6 billion in damage, pushing the total costs from the devastating Midwest flooding to at least \$3 billion.

The ongoing flooding along the Missouri River has damaged thousands of homes and inundated vast swaths of agricultural land with water in Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri. The flooding, which followed heavy rains and snowmelt this month, has also been blamed for three deaths.

Reynolds said she sent a letter asking President Donald Trump to quickly issue

a disaster declaration for 57 counties in Iowa where businesses, homes and levees have been severely impacted by flooding, including along the Missouri River. More counties may be added to the list.

More than 1,200 homes in Iowa have been destroyed or extensively damaged, while another 23,540 have at least minor damage, she said. Cost estimates indicate the flooding has caused more than \$480 million in damage to homes, while businesses have suffered \$300 million in damage. Agriculture damage is estimated at \$214 million.

Flooding in Nebraska has caused an estimated \$1.4 billion in damage. The state received Trump's federal disaster assistance

approval on Thursday.

About 70 miles of levees in Iowa operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are damaged or destroyed, and the cost to repair them is estimated at \$350 million. About 175 miles of non-federal agriculture levees also need repair, at an additional cost of \$175 million.

"We're just beginning the season, so this isn't something we can think about for two years," Reynolds said. "We need to figure out a way to secure our communities and our farmland and start to repair the agricultural levees and focus on the Corps levees that have been compromised."

Missouri officials have not yet said how much flooding has likely the cost the state.

## Watchdog: FEMA wrongly released victims' data

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Emergency Management Agency wrongly released to a contractor the personal information of 2.3 million survivors of devastating 2017 hurricanes and wildfires, potentially exposing the victims to identity fraud and theft, a government watchdog reported Friday.

The Homeland Security Department's Office of Inspector General found the breach occurred when FEMA was working with a contractor that helps provide temporary housing to those affected by disasters. FEMA is one of Homeland Security's many agencies; the sprawling, 240,000-person department also includes immigration en-

forcement and the U.S. Secret Service.

FEMA officials said that since the discovery of the issue, the agency was no longer sharing unnecessary data with the contractor and has conducted a detailed review of the contractor's information system and has found no indication to suggest data have been compromised.

The agency said in a statement it is working with the contractor to remove the data from its system and has instructed staff to complete additional privacy training.

"FEMA's goal remains protecting and strengthening the integrity, effectiveness and security of our disaster programs that help people before, during and after disasters," FEMA press secretary Lizzie Litzow said in a statement.

Some information, like names, last four digits of a Social Security number and how many people live in a household are required to confirm eligibility and locate housing for victims. But FEMA also provided the contractor with bank names, electronic funds transfer numbers and bank transit numbers that were not required by the contractor.

There were 2.3 million people who lived through California wildfires and hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

The watchdog said FEMA violated both federal privacy laws and also Homeland Security policy by giving the extra data to the contractor, whose name was redacted in the report made public Friday.

# Aid efforts continue in wake of cyclone

BY CARA ANNA  
Associated Press

BEIRA, Mozambique — A second week has begun of efforts to find and help tens of thousands of people after Cyclone Idai devastated parts of southern Africa.

Members of the Indian and South African militaries are joining aid groups in flying over stretches of central Mozambique as they look for signs of life and people in need.

No one knows how many people are missing. More than 600 people are confirmed dead in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi. Aid workers say that number is certain to rise as flood waters recede.

The shattered Mozambican city of Beira and other communities are now home to crowded displacement camps, both organized and informal. With communications badly affected by the cyclone and some families separated in the chaos, a program aimed at reunification is now underway.

“Every day we discover that the destruction left by Cyclone Idai is worse than we imagined,” Hicham Mandoudi, the International Committee of the Red Cross’s head of sub-delegation in Beira, said in a statement. “We are deeply concerned about remote communities that are cut off by flooding and landslides and are yet to receive any humanitarian assistance. More rain is expected to come, which will

compound the suffering of people who have already lost everything.”

Mozambique’s government has formally requested assistance from the international community, the U.N. humanitarian office said, opening the door to further aid efforts.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday appealed for stepped up support for victims of Idai, saying the U.N. and its humanitarian partners are scaling up the response but “far greater international support is needed.”

The U.N. chief said in a statement that “with crops destroyed in the breadbasket of Mozambique more people are at risk of food insecurity in all three countries.”

## Cop’s acquittal angers family of slain teenager

BY RAMESH SANTANAM AND  
MARK SCOLFORO  
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The family of an unarmed black teenager fatally shot by a white police officer is expressing anger and sadness over a jury’s decision to acquit, and Pittsburgh braced for protests a day after the verdict.

Former East Pittsburgh police Officer Michael Rosfeld was charged with homicide for shooting Antwon Rose II in the back as the 17-year-old ran away from a high-stakes traffic stop last June. But Rosfeld walked out of the courtroom a free man Friday after jurors rejected the prosecution’s argument that he acted as Rose’s “judge, jury and executioner,” in the words of an assistant district attorney.

“I hope that man never sleeps at night,” Rose’s mother, Michelle Kenney, said of Rosfeld, according to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. “I hope he gets as much sleep as I do, which is none.”

The verdict leaves Rose’s family to pursue the federal civil rights lawsuit they filed last August against Rosfeld and

East Pittsburgh, a small municipality about 10 miles from downtown Pittsburgh.

Rose’s death — one of many high-profile killings of black men and teens by white police officers in recent years — spurred angry protests in the Pittsburgh area last year, including a late-night march that shut down a major highway.

The reaction was measured after Friday night’s verdict, with a small group of chanting protesters briefly blocking intersections and entering hotels. Pittsburgh police tweeted the “peaceful demonstration” had resulted in rolling, temporary road closures.

Rose was riding in an unlicensed taxi that had been involved in a drive-by shooting minutes earlier when Rosfeld pulled the car over and shot him in the back, arm and side of the face as he ran away.

The former officer told jurors he thought Rose or another suspect had a gun pointed at him, insisting he fired his weapon to protect himself and the community. Neither teen was holding one when Rosfeld opened fire, though two guns were later found in the car.

## Georgia Senate approves ‘heartbeat’ abortion ban

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Amid protests and a heavy police presence, the Georgia Senate on Friday passed a bill banning almost all abortions after a fetal heartbeat can be detected.

The bill, backed by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, passed on a 34-18 party-line vote and would be one of the nation’s strictest anti-abortion measures if it becomes law and is not blocked in court battles. It will now go back to the House to approve Senate changes, where it’s expected to pass again.

Women in Georgia can currently seek an abortion during the first 20 weeks of a pregnancy. A heartbeat can be detected in an embryo as early as six weeks into pregnancy, before many women know they’re pregnant.

Georgia lawmakers and GOP-led legislatures in several other states have pushed anti-abortion measures in hopes of getting a case before the U.S. Supreme Court to challenge its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling that legalized abortion nationwide. The push comes amid rising optimism among conservatives that the restrictions might prevail in the reconfigured high court that includes President Donald Trump appointees Neil

Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh.

Andrea Young, the executive director of the ACLU of Georgia, said in an interview Friday that the group would challenge the heartbeat abortion ban in court if it’s signed into law.

Young called the legislation “clearly unconstitutional” and said that it “flies in the face of 50 years of legal precedent.”

Several Republican senators, most of them men, spoke in favor of the bill, while several Democratic senators, most of them women, argued against it.

Many Republican lawmakers in favor of the legislation outlined their position in religious terms.

“There are many scriptures that make it clear to me that God knew us and had a plan for us when we were still in our mother’s womb,” said Republican Sen. Greg Kirk. “The word abortion is not going to be found in the Bible.”

Democratic Sen. Valencia Seay took issue with that line of reasoning, saying lawmakers were letting their “personal religious beliefs dictate everyone else’s ability to have a choice.”

Republican Sen. Greg Dolezal, speaking in favor of the legislation, said that every life is a miracle.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Dogs sniff out cocaine bricks worth \$38M

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — U.S. customs officials said drug dogs sniffed out Philadelphia's largest seizure of cocaine in more than two decades inside a shipping container.

Local, state and federal law enforcement officials said Thursday that 450 bricks of cocaine were found inside 13 duffel bags. Customs and Border Protection's Area Port Director for Philadelphia Joseph Martella said investigators seized more than 1,185 pounds of cocaine worth more than \$38 million inside the bags.

Martella said the ship was ported in Guatemala before stopping in the Bahamas and was destined for the Netherlands.

## Tribes fight display of tribal flag at sport event

**MT** GREAT FALLS — The Fort Peck Tribes filed a grievance with the Montana High School Association involving the presentation of tribal flags during pre-game ceremonies.

The Great Falls Tribune reported that a letter obtained by the newspaper from the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribal Executive Board said the MHSA did not allow a tribal flag to be positioned at center court during the national anthem before a Poplar boys' contest at the Class B State Tournament earlier this month in Belgrade.

The letter states the MHSA "violated the Montana Constitution, Montana law and the Tribes' rights as sovereign nations" as "two cheerleaders were forced to remain on the sidelines with the Tribal Flag" during pre-game ceremonies.

## Deputies break up brawl at middle school

**CA** MORENO VALLEY — A deputy had to use pepper balls to break up brawls among students at a Southern California middle school.

The Riverside County Sheriff's Department said a school resource officer requested assistance at Landmark Middle School in Moreno Valley because of fighting among a crowd of students.

The department said students ignored commands to stop fighting and failed to disperse after being told the school was on lockdown.

A deputy then deployed "indirect" pepper ball saturation rounds. That typically means they are fired into the ground to release the irritant.

## Bomb found in evidence at a sheriff's office

**AL** OZARK — Officers found a pipe bomb inside an Alabama sheriff's office while going through some evidence that had not been searched.

The device didn't go off and no one was hurt in the incident at the Dale County Sheriff's Office in south Alabama.

Sheriff Wally Olson told news outlets that officers found a duffel bag while conducting a search and brought it to the sheriff's department in Ozark without opening it.

## Teacher slammed door, severing girl's fingers

**MD** FORT MEADE — A Maryland middle school teacher is accused of slamming a door on a student's hand so hard that three of her fingers were severed.

The Capital reported a law-

suit filed by the child's father accuses the Ann Arundel County Board of Education and former teacher Steven Akers of negligence. Court documents filed this month in the 2018 lawsuit reveal new details about the girl's injuries, which they said left permanent discomfort and nerve damage despite surgery.

## Police seize 33 dogs, 12 birds from a home

**VA** LYNCHBURG. — Police in Virginia said that they seized 33 dogs and 12 birds from the property of a woman charged with animal cruelty.

The Lynchburg Police Department issued a news release saying officers performed a welfare check on the animals in a residential area. They obtained a search warrant for the property.

Officers seized the dogs and birds, and they were taken to the Lynchburg Humane Society.

The news release said Laura Wiegert, 53, of Lynchburg was charged with five counts of misdemeanor animal cruelty.

## Man steals unattended vehicle with girl inside

**NM** LAS CRUCES — Authorities said a 5-year-old girl is safe after a New Mexico man stole an unattended running car with the girl inside.

KVIA-TV in El Paso, Texas, reported Victor Castillo, 35, was arrested last week following an intense search for a stolen 2017 Chevy Cruze taken outside of Las Cruces.

According to investigators, the young girl's mother went back into her home early Thursday and left her car running with the girl inside. Police said when the mother returned the car was gone.

A New Mexico State Police officer later spotted the stolen vehicle heading east on Interstate 10 toward El Paso and Castillo was arrested after a short chase. The girl was not injured.

## Car hits home, knocks sleeping man from bed

**NJ** EMERSON — Authorities said a sleeping man was knocked from his bed after a vehicle struck in a crash was pushed into his northern New Jersey home.

Authorities said a car driven by a 37-year-old Teaneck woman hit a guardrail, the driver's side of a parked van and another vehicle before striking a utility pole. The impact sent the second vehicle into the home.

The home's resident, the driver and her 1-year-old son were all treated at a hospital for injuries that were not considered life-threatening.

## Family reunited with dog after 7 years

**SC** PICKENS — A South Carolina family was reunited with a dog they long thought was dead.

The Spartanburg Herald-Journal reported Bridget Scott and her family thought miniature schnauzer Shelby had been hit by a car one rainy morning in 2012. They found a dog around Shelby's size and color lying in the road.

But Monday, Scott received a call from Spartanburg County Environmental Enforcement saying Shelby had shown up on a doorstep in Landrum, more than 40 miles away.

Department director Jamie Nelson said they scanned the small stray's microchip.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

## East Region roundup

# Liberty gets 1st NCAA Tournament win

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Down by 10 points with less than seven minutes to play against a more accomplished opponent, Liberty didn't give in a bit. Instead, the Flames just kept getting the ball to Caleb Homesley.

Homesley scored 22 of his 30 points in the second half, and Lovell Cabbil hit a go-ahead three-pointer with 1:16 to play to send 12th-seeded Liberty to its first NCAA Tournament win, 80-76 over fifth-seeded Mississippi State on Friday night.

"Everybody on the team believed we were going to come back," Homesley said. "It was just a matter of time that we were going to make a run."

The Flames (29-6) were making their fourth tournament trip in school history, but lost twice as a No. 16 seed and once in a play-in game. This year's team had more respect, a higher seeding and capitalized on the opportunity. Liberty advanced to the second round of the East Region to play Virginia Tech — a West Coast meeting between two southwest Virginia schools 85 miles apart.

Homesley helped rally Liberty from a

10-point deficit in the second half by scoring 14 points in a span of less than five minutes.

"He took over. He's done that on occasion for us. He's had spurts," coach Ritchie McKay said. "When he starts to feel good about his shot, he's such a dangerous offensive player."

**Duke 85, North Dakota State 62:** At Columbia, S.C., Zion Williamson had an explosive NCAA Tournament debut with 25 points and a can't-miss second-half showcase to lead the top-seeded Blue Devils to a win over the Bison.

RJ Barrett led Duke with 26 points and 14 rebounds and combined with Williamson for a prolific showing for the freshman stars. But it was Williamson who could not be contained in the second half and he turned a tight early contest into a Duke runaway in the first round of the East Region.

Duke led just 31-27 at halftime but Williamson took over after the break. He opened the half by driving on two defenders for a layup that drew a foul. He missed the free throw but Williamson answered with a monster slam.

The highlight, though, came moments later on Williamson's breathtaking dribble-behind-his-back-after-chasing-down-his-own-steal layup.

The 6-foot-7, 285-pound freshman outran 5-foot-11 190-pound Vinnie Shahid of North Dakota State for the ball after he tipped it for a steal. Williamson then dribbled behind his back, briefly losing and regaining his balance with a hand on the floor. That cleared room for Williamson to get to the lane and go up and under for a layup.

Just like that, the Blue Devils were up 40-27 and cruising.

The Bison (19-16) never recovered.

**Virginia Tech 66, Saint Louis 52:** At San Jose, Calif., Nickeil Alexander-Walker scored 20 points, Kerry Blackshear added 15 and the fourth-seeded Hokies earned their first NCAA Tournament win in 12 years by beating the 13th-seeded Billikens.

**UCF 73, VCU 58:** At Columbia, S.C., Tacko Fall had 10 points, 18 rebounds and five blocks as the ninth-seeded Knights won their first NCAA Tournament game, over the eighth-seeded Rams.

## Midwest Region roundup

# Ohio St. upsets Iowa St.

Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. — Ohio State went from barely making the NCAA Tournament to a spot in the second round.

Kaleb Wesson had 21 points and 12 rebounds to lead the 11th-seeded Buckeyes to a 62-59 upset of sixth-seeded Iowa State in the Midwest Region on Friday night.

"You could say it validates the committee's decision, but we really felt like we had put forth together a really strong body of work and our guys earned it," Ohio State coach Chris Holtmann said. "You're always concerned when you're in a situation like you're on that cut line, but we really did feel like our guys earned it."

**North Carolina 88, Iona 73:** At Columbus, Ohio, the

Tar Heels completed a perfect first round for top seeds in this NCAA Tournament, but not before the Gaels became the latest No. 16 seed to show these matchups are no sure thing.

The Tar Heels (28-6), who came into the tournament as a top seed for a record 17th time. They're hoping to reach their 11th Final Four.

**Houston 84, Georgia State 55:** At Tulsa, Okla., Corey Davis scored 26 points to help the third-seeded Cougars beat Georgia State.

**Washington 78, Utah State 61:** At Columbus, Ohio, Noah Dickerson had 20 points and 12 rebounds, and the ninth-seeded Huskies made a successful return to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in eight years, beating the Aggies.

## South Region roundup

# UC Irvine beats K-State

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — When it comes to college basketball in California, UC Irvine is low on the totem pole.

Now the program that sometimes feels like a little brother to Pac-12 powers like UCLA and USC is the only school from the state still standing in the NCAA Tournament after pulling off a stunner.

The 13th-seeded Anteaters (31-5) earned the first tournament win in school history.

**Oklahoma 95, Mississippi 72:** At Columbia, S.C., Rashard Odomes and Christian James scored 20 points apiece, Kristian Doolittle had 19 points and matched a career-high with 15 rebounds and the Sooners blitzed Rebels.

**Virginia 71, Gardner-Webb**

**56:** At Columbia, S.C., the top-seeded Cavaliers this year avoided the biggest upset in tournament history, rallying from 14 points down to beat the Runnin' Bulldogs.

**Iowa 79, Cincinnati 72:** At Columbus, Ohio, Luka Garza scored 20 points, Jordan Bohannon made a three-point play during his team's closing surge, and the Hawkeyes rallied for to beat the Bearcats.

**Tennessee 77, Colgate 7:** At Columbus, Ohio, Admiral Schofield had 19 points and the Volunteers held off a second-half rally by the Raiders.

**Oregon 72, Wisconsin 54:** At San Jose, Calif., Payton Pritchard scored 19 points, Kenny Wooten protected the rim with four blocks and the Ducks extended their surprising March run.

## West Region roundup

# Buffalo has easy time with Arizona St.

Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. — Looking like a No. 6 seed no one wants to play, high-scoring Buffalo breezed into the second round of the NCAA Tournament for the second straight year.

Jeremy Harris and Nick Perkins each had 21 points and 10 rebounds, and Buffalo shrugged off 11th-seeded Arizona State 91-74 on Friday in the West Region.

Oats has pushed the Buffalo program to new heights since he took over for Bobby Hur-

ley, who now coaches the Sun Devils and was schooled by his former assistant. The Bulls (32-3), who earned the highest-ever seeding for a Mid-American Conference team, have won 13 straight and will face No. 3 seed Texas Tech on Sunday.

It was a bounce-back performance for Perkins, who had just five points in 22 minutes in the MAC Tournament final, an 87-73 win over Bowling Green.

Zylan Cheatham had 22 points and eight rebounds before fouling out with 2:06 remaining for Arizona State (23-11), which

defeated St. John's 74-65 on Wednesday in the First Four. Romello White and Luguentz Dort each scored 12.

**Texas Tech 72, Northern Kentucky 57:** At Tulsa, Okla., Jarrett Culver had 29 points, eight rebounds and seven assists to help the Red Raiders shake off a slow start and beat the Norse.

Tariq Owens scored 12 points and Davide Moretti had 10 for Texas Tech (27-6), which had won nine straight games to share the Big 12 regular-season title before losing to lowly West

Virginia in the Big 12 Tournament quarterfinals. That left it with an eight-day layoff.

It showed early on against Northern Kentucky (26-9), which got 23 points from Tyler Sharpe and 11 from Dantez Walton while giving the Red Raiders everything they could handle in the West Region.

The Norse were still within 34-31 on Sharpe's three foul shots with 18:06 left, despite leading scorer and Horizon League player of the year Drew McDonald unable to get on track.

## Women's NCAA Tournament

# Second-seeded Iowa holds off Mercer, avoids upset

Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Megan Gustafson scored 30 points with 16 rebounds and second-seeded Iowa narrowly avoided a monumental upset, holding off No. 15 Mercer 66-61 on Friday for its first NCAA Tournament win in four years.

No. 15 seed has ever won an NCAA Tournament game, going 0-103 now.

Makenzie Meyer added 16 for the Hawkeyes (27-6), who survived the opening round at home despite committing 24 turnovers.

Hannah Stewart hit three consecutive baskets after Iowa got down by two with 4:19 to go, putting the Hawkeyes ahead 64-61. Stewart missed a jumper with 21 seconds left, but the ball knocked off a Mercer player.

Iowa's Tania Davis then missed two free throws, but the Hawkeyes were bailed out of the ensuing scrum by the possession arrow.

**No. 4 South Carolina 74, No. 13 Belmont 52:** At Charlotte, N.C., Te'a Cooper scored 13 points, Alexis Jennings added 12 points and nine rebounds, and the Gamecocks shook off a

sluggish start to pull away from seed from the Bruins.

**No. 5 Florida State 70, No. 12 Bucknell 67:** At Charlotte, N.C., Kiah Gillespie had 17 points and 11 rebounds, and the Seminoles held on to beat the Bison.

**No. 7 Missouri 77, No. 10 Drake 76 (OT):** At Iowa City, Iowa, Jordan Roundtree hit a free throw after being fouled with 1.1 seconds left in overtime and the Tigers beat the Bulldogs.

### Albany Region

**No. 1 Louisville 69, No. 16 Robert Morris 34:** At Louisville, Ky., Asia Durr and Sam Fuehring each had 19 points, and the Cardinals scored 27 straight points in the first half to overwhelm the Colonials.

**No. 2 UConn 110, No. 15 Towson 61:** At Storrs, Conn., Napheesa Collier scored 23 points and the Huskies, in the unusual position of being a No. 2 seed, got off to their usual NCAA Tournament start with a rout of the Tigers.

**No. 8 Michigan 84, No. 9 Kansas State 54:** Louisville, Ky., Naz Hillmon scored 17 points off the bench, Nicole

Munger and Kayla Robbins each added 13 and the Wolverines shot a season-high 56 percent to run away from the Wildcats.

**No. 10 Buffalo 82, No. 7 Rutgers 71:** At Storrs, Conn., Summer Hemphill scored 23 points and Cierra Dillard added 20 as the Bulls upset the Scarlet Knights.

### Chicago Region

**No. 4 Texas A&M 84, No. 13 Wright State 61:** At College Station, Texas, Chennedy Carter scored 27 points in her return from injury, with 14 coming in her team's huge first quarter, to help the Aggies cruise to a win over the Raiders.

**No. 5 Marquette 58, No. 12 Rice 54 (OT):** At College Station, Texas, Natisha Hiedeman scored 13 points, Allazia Blockton had 12 and the Golden Eagles overcame a nine-point fourth quarter deficit to get a win over the Owls.

### Portland Region

**No. 1 Mississippi State 103, No. 16 Southern 46:** At Starkville, Miss., Anriel Howard scored 23 points, Teaira McCowan added 22 and

the Bulldogs rolled past the Jaguars.

**No. 2 Oregon 78, No. 15 Portland State 40:** At Eugene, Ore., Satou Sabally had 21 points and a career-high 16 rebounds to help the Ducks to an easy victory over the Vikings.

**No. 4 Miami 69, No. 13 Florida Gulf Coast 62:** At Coral Gables, Fla., Beatrice Mompremier scored 21 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, and the Hurricanes needed an 11-0 run in the fourth quarter to come from briefly being behind and beat the Eagles.

**No. 5 Arizona State 60, No. 12 UCF 45:** At Coral Gables, Fla., Courtney Ekmark scored 15 of her game-high 20 points in the second half, and the Sun Devils beat the Knights.

**No. 10 Indiana 69, No. 7 Texas 65:** At Eugene, Ore., Jaelynn Penn had 24 points and Bendu Yeany added 17 to help the Hoosiers surprise the Longhorns.

**No. 9 Clemson 79, No. 8 South Dakota 66:** At Starkville, Miss., Simone Westbrook scored 27 points, Danielle Edwards added 25 and the Tigers pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat the Coyotes.

## NBA roundup

# Harden's 61 points lift Rocket over Spurs

Associated Press

HOUSTON — James Harden matched his career high with 61 points, including 27 in the first quarter, to lead the Houston Rockets to a 111-105 victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Friday.

Harden hit three straight three-pointers to give the Rockets a 103-100 lead and scored all of Houston's points in a 13-2 run late in the fourth quarter.

Harden topped the 50-point mark for the eighth time this season, compared with 10 such performances from the rest of the league combined. He matched his career-best total set earlier this season against the Knicks at Madison Square Garden.

**Nets 111, Lakers 106:** Joe Harris scored 26 points, D'Angelo Russell added 21 points and 13 assists against

his former team, and Brooklyn eliminated host Los Angeles from playoff contention.

Los Angeles (31-41) will miss the playoffs for a franchise-record sixth straight season despite the arrival of LeBron James, who fell just short of his 81st career triple-double with 25 points, 14 assists and nine rebounds.

**Thunder 116, Raptors 109:** Paul George scored 28 points, Russell Westbrook had another triple-double, and visiting Oklahoma City beat Toronto.

Dennis Schroder came off the bench to score 26 points and Jerami Grant had 19 as the Thunder snapped a four-game losing streak and avenged Wednesday's 123-114 home defeat to Toronto.

**Bucks 116, Heat 87:** Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 27 points, had eight rebounds

and seven assists after missing two games with a sprained right ankle and helped NBA-leading Milwaukee over visiting Miami.

Khris Middleton added 18 points and 10 assists for a career-best three consecutive games with a double-double for Milwaukee, which improved to (29-6) for the second-best home record in the NBA behind the Denver Nuggets (30-6) and secure their most home victories since 2000-01.

**Nuggets 111, Knicks 93:** Nikola Jokic had 21 points and 17 rebounds, Jamal Murray scored 18 points, and visiting Denver beat New York for its sixth straight victory.

Gary Harris chipped in 14 points for Denver, which moved into a tie with defending champion Golden State for first place in the Western Conference with

11 games remaining for each team.

**Clippers 110, Cavaliers 108:** Danilo Gallinari scored 27 points and Los Angeles continued its torrid March, edging host Cleveland.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 16 points while Lou Williams had 15 for the Clippers, who are 9-1 this month and closing in on a playoff spot in the West.

**Magic 123, Grizzlies 119 (OT):** Terrence Ross scored 31 points and Evan Fournier had 27, including the game-clinching free throws, and Orlando rallied to beat visiting Memphis.

Nikola Vucevic added 25 points for the Magic, who came from 14 points behind in the fourth quarter to tie it in regulation and go on to win their fourth straight.

## NHL roundup

# Wild top Capitals, vault into second wild-card position

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Jordan Greenway pumped his fist, and Luke Kunin held out his arms waiting for teammates to join him.

They celebrated like kids after performing like seasoned veterans.

With the Minnesota Wild outside a playoff position with little margin for error, the kid line of Kunin, Greenway and Ryan Donato pumped in two crucial goals to beat the defending Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals 2-1 on Friday night. Minnesota snapped a two-game skid and leapfrogged the Arizona Coyotes and Colorado Avalanche to move into the second wild-card spot in a competitive Western Conference race.

"When we have the focus that we did tonight, the confidence,

the commitment, I think we can do a lot of good things, and we can beat anyone," Greenway said. "Whether it's Washington or whoever, I think we can beat them."

Minnesota fed off the confidence of the second line of 21- and 22-year-olds to hand the Capitals their second consecutive loss. Devan Dubnyk made 21 saves, but more impressive was the Wild holding Washington to 22 shots a game after it put up 58 on NHL-leading Tampa Bay.

"That was just a playoff game," Dubnyk said. "The focus was there."

Donato — acquired from Boston in February — was the best player on the ice for much of the night and assisted on Greenway's goal in the first period and Kunin's go-ahead goal with 7:35 left in the third. Coach Bruce Boudreau be-

lieves having three young players on a line together gets rid of the expectation to pass to a veteran, and this mix is working lately.

"We're learning from each other," Donato said. "I think we're starting to get each other's habits, where we're going to be on the ice, where the other guys are going to be, where they like to pass to. Being able to learn with each other, it makes you feel comfortable on the ice. You don't feel like you're doing anything wrong."

**Ducks 4, Sharks 3 (OT):** Jakob Silfverberg scored the winning goal 38 seconds into overtime to give host Anaheim a victory over San Jose.

Silfverberg, who had a goal and two assists, had his fifth multi-point game of the season and second against the Sharks. The goal, which beat San Jose's Aaron Dell on his stick side,

was his 23rd of the season.

Rickard Rakell scored two goals and assisted on the game-winner. Adam Henrique also scored a goal and Troy Terry had two assists. John Gibson stopped 23 shots.

Kevin Labanc, Timo Meier and Justin Braun scored for San Jose, which has lost five straight. Dell made 16 saves.

The Ducks opened the scoring at 7:58 of the first period when Rakell went top shelf on a snap shot just outside of the right faceoff circle. Silfverberg forced a turnover in the neutral zone, brought it into the Sharks zone and then fed a drop pass to Rakell.

Labanc evened it 2:29 into the second period with a wrist shot from just inside the left faceoff circle that Gibson was unable to get his glove on. The goal was Labanc's 14th, and his 50th point of the season.