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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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DOJ pressed to release Russia report

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Special counsel Robert Mueller did not find evidence that President Donald Trump's campaign "conspired or coordinated" with Russia to influence the 2016 presidential election but reached no conclusion on whether Trump obstructed justice, Attorney General William Barr declared. That brought a hearty claim of vindication from Trump but set the stage for new rounds of political and legal fighting.

Trump cheered the Sunday outcome but also laid bare his resentment after two years of investigations that have shadowed his administration. "It's a shame that our country has had to go through this. To be honest, it's a shame that your president has had to go through this," he said.

Democrats said that Mueller found evidence for and against obstruction and demanded to see his full report. They insisted that even the summary by the president's attorney general hardly put him in the clear. Trump indicated Monday he would be open to the release of the report.

Mueller's conclusions, summarized by Barr in a four-page letter to Congress, represented a victory for Trump on a key question that has hung over his presidency from the start: Did his campaign work with Russia to defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton? That was further good news for the president on top of the Justice Department's earlier announcement that Mueller had wrapped his investigation without new indictments.

The resolution also could deflate the hopes of Democrats in Congress and on the 2020 campaign trail that incriminating findings from Mueller would hobble the president's

Mueller's findings will be Trump's campaign weapon

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For President Donald Trump, the fight over the "witch hunt" is only just beginning.

Now that special counsel Robert Mueller's two-year investigation into Trump's campaign is over, it's being transformed into a rallying cry and a weapon for the president's re-election campaign.

The pall of the two-year probe lifted Sunday when Attorney General William Barr released a summary of Mueller's findings that said the wide-ranging investigation found no evidence of collusion by Trump's 2016 campaign with the Russian government. Barr's four-page letter was immediately seized upon by the Republican president and his allies as a weapon to use against Democrats, the so-called Deep State and the media.

Even before Mueller's conclusions were revealed, it was clear that Trump saw the end of the investigation as a political opportunity.

As the president's lawyers debated legal strategy, Trump aides and political allies developed a plan to turn the end of the probe into the launching pad for a new round of attacks on the president's foes and a moment to reinvigorate his supporters in the run-up to the

2020 campaign. With pre-written tweets and talking points, Trump surrogates rushed to claim victory and rub the results in the face of Democrats, many of whom had spent months promising that Mueller would turn up more.

"Democrats and their liberal media allies for two years slandered President @realDonaldTrump for 'conspiring with Russia,'" press secretary Sarah Sanders tweeted. "It was all a malicious, preposterous lie given wall to wall media coverage despite zero evidence. This should never again happen to an American President."

Breaking a 48-hour stretch of lawyer-imposed silence on Twitter, Trump stood on the tarmac beside Air Force One on Sunday and jubilantly hailed the results, exaggerating the findings as a total exoneration. He also seethed that those behind the probe, which he compared to a failed coup, should be held responsible.

"You've made a great victim of Donald Trump here," Trump counselor Kellyanne Conway said on Monday morning.

Trump's campaign moved quickly to raise money off the Mueller news, with a text message to supporters stating, "Dems raised millions off a lie. Now we FIGHT BACK!"

spect on presidential obstruction of justice. Despite Trump's claim of total exoneration, Mueller did not draw a conclusion one way or the other on whether he sought to stifle the Russia investigation through his actions including the firing of former FBI director James Comey.

According to Barr's summary, Mueller set out "evidence on both sides of the question" and stated that "while this report does not conclude the president committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him."

Barr, who was nominated by Trump in December, and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who appointed Mueller in May 2017 and oversaw much of his work, went farther in Trump's favor.

The attorney general said he and Rosenstein had determined that Mueller's evidence was insufficient to prove in court that Trump had committed obstruction of justice to hamper the probe. Barr has previously voiced a broad view of presidential powers, and in an unsolicited memo last June he cast doubt on whether the president could have obstructed justice through acts — like firing his FBI director — that he was legally empowered to take.

Barr said their decision was based on the evidence uncovered by Mueller and not affected by Justice Department legal opinions that say a sitting president cannot be indicted.

Mueller's team examined a series of actions by the president in the last two years to determine if he intended obstruction. Those include his firing of Comey one week before Mueller's appointment and his public and private haranguing of then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions for recusing himself from the Russia investigation.

agenda and re-election bid.

But while Mueller was cat-

egorical in ruling out criminal collusion, he was more circum-

US once again sails through Taiwan Strait

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy has sailed a destroyer between mainland China and Taiwan for the third month in a row, contentious passages meant to ensure vessels can freely navigate there.

The USS Curtis Wilbur and U.S. Coast Guard cutter Bertholf passed through the Taiwan Strait overnight Sunday into Monday “in accordance with international law,” said 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Joe Keiley.

China protests U.S. warships sailing through the approximately 100-mile-wide strait without first seeking its permission; however, the U.S. insists the strait is an international waterway.

This week’s passage was the fifth time in six months that U.S. warships have made the journey.

The USS Stethem and cargo ship USNS

Cesar Chavez passed through last month. The USS McCampbell and fleet replenishment oiler USNS Walter S. Diehl sailed there in January. The USS Stockdale and replenishment oiler USNS Pecos passed through in November, and the USS Curtis Wilbur and USS Antietam sailed the strait in October.

Before October, there had been only one Taiwan Strait transit reported in more than a year.

“The ships’ transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific,” Keiley said. “The U.S. will continue to fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows.”

Beijing’s reunification with Taiwan “has served as the primary driver for China’s military modernization,” concluded a January Defense Intelligence Agency report on China’s military power.

The report detailed the Chinese mili-

tary’s technological advances and said the country’s “anticipation that foreign forces would intervene in a Taiwan scenario led the [Chinese military] to develop a range of systems to deter and deny foreign regional force projection.”

In January, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson told Chinese Gen. Li Zuocheng, chief of the military’s Joint Staff Department, that the U.S. is committed to the One China policy acknowledging Taiwan is part of China.

However, Beijing has expressed skepticism.

“If anyone wants to separate Taiwan from China, the Chinese military will safeguard the national unity at all costs, so as to protect China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity,” Li said during their meeting, according to the South China Morning Post.

Intruder breaks into base, detonates gas canisters

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japanese police and U.S. military officials are investigating after someone broke into a Marine Corps base and detonated a pair of small gas canisters outside a building that houses Japanese government officials.

The incident happened about 6 p.m. Sunday at Camp Foster’s Okinawa Defense Bureau office, a bureau spokesman told Stars and Stripes. The office is

in a remote compound across a road from the main base.

It’s unclear if anyone was inside at the time.

There were no injuries, but the perpetrator apparently cut a fence to gain entry, said the spokesman for the bureau, which represents Japan’s Ministry of Defense on the island.

Bureau and Marine officials declined to provide details on damages or suspects. A photo released by the defense bureau showed two small gas canisters like those used in camp-

ing stoves and a burnt piece of cardboard.

“This incident is currently under investigation by both the USMC Criminal Investigation Division, and the Okinawa Prefectural Police,” Marine Corps Installations Pacific spokesman Maj. Andrew Aranda told Stars and Stripes in an email. “It would be premature to comment on any details at this time.”

The incident happened just days after Japanese Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya an-

nounced that new landfill work would begin Monday for a controversial runway at Camp Schwab in the northern part of the island. The runway being built into Oura Bay will one day allow for the closure of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and the relocation of Marine air assets to Schwab.

The issue has been contentious for more than a decade as Tokyo pushes ahead with construction despite opposition from a majority of Okinawan voters.

New class of destroyer visits Alaska port in rare visit

Associated Press

KETCHIKAN, Alaska — One of the U.S. Navy’s newest class of warships has docked at an Alaska port for a rare visit.

The USS Zumwalt docked in Ketchikan on Saturday for a weekend stay, the Juneau Empire reported. The 610-foot-long destroyer launched in October 2013 is based in San Diego.

Steve Corporon, Ketchikan’s port and harbors director, said bigger fenders were needed to make sure the ship would fit without damaging the vessel or the dock.

Navy Commander Brandon Raile said the last Navy visit to Ketchikan was by the USS Ogden in 2005, while the USS O’Kane destroyer stopped in

Juneau nearly 300 miles farther north in May 2017.

The 15-year time gap and strategic reasons were behind the Alaska stop, according to Raile, who explained that receding ice in the Arctic is creating waterways that previously did not exist. He added that “everybody is more interested in the area for trade and other purposes.”

“It’s important that the Navy does more and more exercise up in this part of the world,” Raile said. “We have the opportunity of a ship that needs something to do and something that needs to be done. It works out pretty well.”

The ship will continue to undisclosed locations after leaving Ketchikan, Raile said.

Student tragedies highlight need for mental health help

(Fort Lauderdale, Fla.)
Sun-Sentinel

CORAL SPRINGS, Fla. — The apparent suicides of two Parkland school shooting survivors in one week underscore the need for increased mental health resources to help those still traumatized by the tragedy.

News of both deaths spread quickly on social media, sending shock waves through a community that is still healing.

"It's just been unfortunate that we lost another one," said Ryan Petty, whose 14-year-old daughter, Alaina, was one of the 17 killed last year at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

Parents, students, school officials and other members of the Stoneman Douglas community met Sunday evening, Petty said. The group discussed the need for awareness and brainstormed what to ask their family and friends who are struggling and where to go for help.

"We have students and staff that are still at risk," Petty said.

The group also adopted the

Columbia Protocol, Petty said, which is a framework for checking whether a family member or friend is in crisis.

After his daughter's death, Petty launched the Walk Up Foundation to help prevent suicide.

"We have to recognize after an event like this, there is trauma, anxiety and depression," Petty said. "We have to educate parents and teachers to recognize the signs and ask the right questions."

School district spokeswoman Kathy Koch did not respond to questions Sunday.

Teens who notice their friends might be suicidal are encouraged to report it by calling 211 in Broward County, Petty said.

It's important to look out for warning signs, said Jackie Rosen, who founded Florida Initiative for Suicide Prevention after her son killed himself 31 years ago.

Warning signs include changes in appetite and behavior; sleeping too much or not at all; apathy and fatigue; trouble concentrating or being indeci-

sive; withdrawing from family, friends and social activities; and giving away prized possessions and saying goodbye to friends.

Jared Moskowitz, the state's emergency management director and former representative from Parkland, urged the Legislature to fund more mental health resources for the Stoneman Douglas community.

"Now is the time for the Florida Legislature to help," he tweeted. "Mental health is a bipartisan issue."

Sydney Aiello, a senior at Stoneman Douglas last year, battled post-traumatic stress disorder after the shooting. She died from suicide March 17. Her funeral was on Friday.

The second student from Stoneman Douglas died Saturday night in what police are calling an apparent suicide. He was a 17-year-old sophomore at the school, Petty said.

Police did not release the identity of the student Sunday but confirmed that he attended Stoneman Douglas.

Boeing 737 Max planes still grounded

Associated Press

NEW YORK — American Airlines is extending cancellations of flights through April 24 due to the grounding of Boeing 737 Max aircraft, as federal regulators continue to investigate two deadly crashes involving the plane model. Southwest Airlines is also continuing to make cancellations.

American has 24 Boeing 737 Max aircraft in its fleet and said Sunday that it will be canceling about 90 flights a day. Not every flight that was previously scheduled to be on a Max aircraft will be canceled, and some flights scheduled to fly on other aircraft types may ultimately be canceled. The airline said it will contact affected flyers directly.

Southwest, which has 34 Max aircraft, is making cancellations five days in advance, with an average of 130 daily cancellations.

Aviation authorities around the world grounded Boeing 737 Max aircraft earlier this month following deadly crashes involving the plane model in Ethiopia and off the coast of Indonesia which occurred within five months of each other.

Syrian group urges international tribunal for ISIS detainees

Associated Press

BEIRUT — The U.S.-backed Syrian fighters who drove Islamic State from its last strongholds called Monday for an international tribunal to prosecute hundreds of foreigners rounded up in the nearly five-year campaign against the extremist group.

The administration affiliated with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said such a tribunal is needed "for justice to take its course," particularly after countries have refused to bring home their detained nationals. The SDF has captured more than 1,000 foreign fighters, including many from West-

ern countries.

"We don't have other options," Abdulkarim Umer, a foreign affairs official in the Kurdish-led administration, told The Associated Press. "No one wanted to take the responsibility (of repatriating their nationals). We can't put up with this burden alone."

Western countries have largely refused to take back their detained citizens, fearing they would not be able to convict them in civilian courts and that they could pose a security risk. The problem has grown more urgent since President Donald Trump announced his intention to reduce the U.S. military presence in Syria, where

American forces are fighting alongside the SDF.

"It is an exceptional situation and we are looking at an exceptional framework," said Ilham Ahmed, the head of the political arm of the SDF, told the AP. "We are dealing with a failed state. In this case we can treat the (Kurdish-administered) region as an exception."

Umer said foreign fighters should be tried where their crimes occurred and where they were detained. "The international community has evaded its responsibility, so we ask that they help us set up the court here," he said.

The SDF has been fighting ISIS since 2014 and has re-

taken large areas in northern and eastern Syria. Its administration is not recognized internationally or by the Syrian government, which has vowed to bring all the country's territory back under its control.

The Kurdish-led administration has asked the government to grant it autonomy in a new constitution, something Damascus has roundly rejected.

Nadim Houry, the director of the counterterrorism program at Human Rights Watch, said "it is hard to imagine" setting up an international tribunal on sovereign territory without that country's approval.

Militia head denies link to massacre in Mali

Associated Press

BAMAKO, Mali — The head of an ethnic Dogon militia blamed for a massacre in central Mali denied Monday that his fighters had been involved in the gruesome attack that left 154 dead in an ethnic Peuhl village.

Youssef Toloba also dismissed the Malian president's vow to eliminate the group, saying "he isn't the one who created it."

Human Rights Watch has said that Toloba's ethnic militia known as Dan Na Ambassagou has been implicated in scores of deadly attacks over the past year. The militia has accused ethnic Peuhl of collaborating with Islamic extremists increasingly operating in central Mali.

Suspicion immediately fell on the group after Saturday's massacre in Ogossagou, an ethnic Peuhl village in central Mali. Graphic video after the attack showed bodies burned inside homes with some wreckage still on fire. At one point the body of a young boy in a football jersey can be seen.

Toloba maintained Monday that his fighters were not responsible. He defended his militia, saying it was necessary because the Malian military was failing to respond to violence in Dogon villages.

"We had signed a cease-fire agreement and the government promised to secure Dogon country but then nothing was done," he said.

"If the government and the international community want this war to stop, I invite them to hold an intercommunal dialogue during which all the armed groups in central Mali can discuss it," he continued. "It's the only way to bring peace back to the region."

While Toloba insists his militia fighters are protecting Dogon villages, they are believed to have access to semi-autonomous weapons.

Netanyahu, Trump meet as Israeli troops target Hamas

Associated Press

President Donald Trump signed a proclamation on Monday recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, reversing more than a half-century of U.S. policy.

Standing alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House, Trump made formal a move he announced in a tweet last week. The president said it was time for the U.S. to take the step after 52 years of Israeli control of the strategic highlands on the border with Syria.

Netanyahu had pressed for such recognition for months. Trump's action gives him a political boost weeks before what's expected to be a close Israeli election.

Israel captured the Golan from Syria in the 1967 Mid-

east War, but its sovereignty over the territory is not recognized by the international community.

The two leaders met as the Israeli military was striking Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip in response to a rocket that hit a house north of Tel Aviv and wounded seven people.

"Israel is responding forcefully to this wanton aggression," said Netanyahu, who planned to return to Israel to manage the attack following his meeting with Trump and other U.S. officials, including Vice President Mike Pence.

He added: "Israel will not tolerate this. I will not tolerate it."

In a speech earlier Monday, Pence said the rocket attack "proves that Hamas is not a

partner for peace." Pence told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that "Hamas is a terrorist organization that seeks the destruction of Israel, and the United States will never negotiate with terrorist Hamas."

The rocket destroyed a residential home in the farming community of Mishmeret, north of the city of Kfar Saba. The sounds of air raid sirens jolted residents of the Sharon area, northeast of Tel Aviv, from their sleep shortly after 5 a.m., sending them scurrying to bomb shelters.

A strong sound of an explosion followed. The Israeli military quickly mobilized troops and called up reserves, setting the stage for a potential major conflagration shortly before Israel's upcoming elections.

UN: US bombs killed 10 Afghan children

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Thirteen civilians, including 10 children, have been killed by a coalition airstrike in Afghanistan's Kunduz province, according to a preliminary report from the United Nations released Monday.

The Saturday morning airstrike, near the provincial capital of the same name, also injured several civilians, the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said in a statement.

"The Mission expresses serious concern that initial fact-finding indicates that 10 of those killed were children, part of the same extended family," it said.

The U.S. is the only member of the international coalition known to conduct airstrikes in the country, though Afghan forces also conduct strikes.

Last month, the UNAMA reported a sharp increase in civil-

ian casualties from airstrikes in 2018, compared with the year before. In its latest annual report on civilian casualties in the country, the mission expressed particular concern about child casualties from airstrikes, which it said have been increasing every year since 2014.

The United States dropped more bombs and other munitions in Afghanistan last year than in any other full year since documentation began in 2006, according to Air Force data. The trend appears to be continuing this year, with the number of weapons released in January surpassing the highest tally for that particular month.

A spokeswoman for U.S. Forces — Afghanistan, which routinely disputes the number of civilian casualties attributed to its strikes by the UNAMA, told several news agencies over the weekend that the U.S. had conducted a strike in the Kunduz area on Saturday, which

was reportedly part of a 30-hour battle. When asked Monday, however, Sgt. 1st Class Debra Richardson, the spokeswoman, did not answer questions about the incident, saying the military had "no new information to release" because it was investigating.

Operations against the Taliban in Kunduz began last week, local officials said, but have since been stalled.

"After the incident in which civilians were killed, the military operations were halted," provincial council member Aminullah Ayedin told Stars and Stripes on Monday. The civilian deaths prompted demonstrations on Saturday, he said.

"People in the province are still angry about the deaths, but the security situation in Kunduz is also worrying," Ayedin said. "We want military operations to fight the Taliban, but the airstrikes need to be more accurate."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Homicide case against baby sitter to proceed

WI WAUSAU — A judge has refused to throw out the case against a Wisconsin baby sitter accused of killing a 2-month-old boy and then pretending he was alive when she gave the baby back to his mother.

Marathon County Circuit Court Judge LaMont Jacobson ruled Friday there was enough evidence to proceed with the case against Marissa Tietsort, 28, of Wausau.

A criminal complaint alleges Tietsort caused the baby's death in October, then put him in a snowsuit and car seat and returned him to his mother — without telling her the child was dead.

Tietsort is charged with first-degree intentional homicide. She remains in the Marathon County Jail on a \$500,000 cash bond.

Driver, 91, rolls car while using phone

IN PENDLETON — Police said a woman, 91, rolled her car while trying to answer her cellphone.

The Madison County Sheriff's Department said the woman had cuts on an arm and hand and pain in her back.

The Herald Bulletin reported that she was driving west on U.S. 36 Friday when her Honda Civic left the road, went into a ditch and struck an embankment.

The car landed on its top.

Man takes plea deal in death of his wife

NJ WOODBURY — A New Jersey man accused of killing his wife, dumping her body in their backyard swim-

ming pool and then driving to a local restaurant to get takeout in an attempt to cover up the killing has reportedly accepted a plea deal calling for a 15-year prison term

NJ.com reported that Norman Long, 53, pleaded guilty earlier this month to an amended charge of first-degree aggravated manslaughter, according to a copy of the plea agreement. He is to be sentenced May 3.

Prosecutors, who declined to comment Friday, said Long told first responders in June 2017 that Michelle Long, 47, drowned in the pool, but an autopsy found the cause of death was blunt force trauma.

Officer allegedly breaks into home

SC SUMMERVILLE — A Summerville police lieutenant was arrested after authorities say he forced his way into a woman's home.

The Post and Courier reported Lt. Nicholas Morella, 47, is being held on one count of first-degree burglary. On Friday he was placed on administrative leave without pay.

Summerville police were called about 3 a.m. Friday by a woman, 41, who reported that Morella was trying to break into her home. An arrest warrant says Morella contacted the woman numerous times but she didn't initially respond.

Investigators say she ultimately told him if he came over she would call police. He came anyway, and police said the woman, armed with a firearm, hid in a closet until they arrived.

People warned about trooper benefit scams

MT MISSOULA — The Montana Highway Patrol is advising people to

beware of scams targeting those who want to help a trooper wounded this month in a shooting.

The Daily Inter Lake reported that the patrol on Friday warned people of a fraudulent GoFundMe account and a phone scam targeting people seeking to make a donation to benefit Trooper Wade Palmer.

Early on March 15, Palmer was shot three times inside his patrol vehicle north of Missoula while investigating a fatal shooting. He's being treated at a hospital in Utah where he's in critical condition. Police have a suspect in custody.

Newspaper posts video of accident

FL SARASOTA — A Florida newspaper has posted video of a 2017 high-wire accident that sent five performers in tightrope-walking star Nik Wallenda's troupe tumbling more than 30 feet to the ground.

The Sarasota Herald-Tribune obtained the video from the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office.

Wallenda was among eight performers rehearsing in pyramid formation when one began to wobble. The video shows five performers plummeting to the ground, while Wallenda and two others catch themselves on a wire and Circus Sarasota staff rush to help.

No one died. One of Wallenda's injured relatives has pending litigation related to her injuries.

Body left for months in impounded vehicle

TN MEMPHIS — Eight Memphis police officers and an attendant are facing punishment after they failed to see that a vehicle brought to a

police impound lot in 2017 contained a victim's body for almost two months.

According to local news reports, Memphis police Director Michael Rallings said Friday that lot attendant John Powell was fired and Sgt. Lee Allison was demoted to patrol officer in the incident that left the body of Mexican immigrant Bardoniano Perez Hernandez, 33, inside a van at the impound lot.

Others faced suspensions and lesser punishments.

Authorities didn't notice Hernandez's body in the van after answering an attempted robbery call in December 2017. The body remained behind the front seat of the van until February, when the vehicle's owner went to the impound lot to reclaim his van.

Kodak says beer can develop Super 8 film

NY ROCHESTER — Kodak says a new beer hitting the market can be used to develop its Super 8 movie film.

Dogfish Head Craft Brewery of Delaware created its Super-Eight beer after a conversation with people at Kodak, the upstate New York technology company most famous for its photographic roots.

Dogfish Head learned from Kodak that heightened levels of acidity and vitamin C in certain beers could make them a processing agent for film. That inspired the brewery to design such a beer. Kodak helped by testing it.

Dogfish Head founder Sam Calagione said he'll document his summer travels on Super 8 film that will be developed in SuperEight beer and turned into a short film.

The beer is set for national distribution next month.

From wire reports

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Williamson, Duke edge Central Florida

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Zion Williamson took on 7-foot-6 Tacko Fall at the end and won. So did top-seeded Duke — barely — when two last-ditch shots by UCF rolled off the rim.

Williamson had 32 points and helped rally the Blue Devils from behind in the final minute for a 77-76 victory Sunday to reach the Sweet 16.

Aubrey Dawkins finished with 32 points for the Knights, but his tip-in try just missed in the final seconds.

Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski “talks a lot about the basketball gods,” a happy Williamson said. “They had our backs today.”

Williamson was key to the rally. He made

a layup over Fall with 14.4 seconds left to draw Duke within a point as Fall fouled out on the play. Williamson missed the free throw, but RJ Barrett scored on a putback to put the Blue Devils (31-5) ahead.

Barrett said he had watched plenty of NCAA Tournament games where players missed foul shots and an offensive rebound could have made the difference.

“I was going to do whatever I can to get this rebound,” he said.

Ninth-seeded UCF (24-9) had a final chance. Two of them, actually, from in close. B.J. Taylor missed a short jumper, and Dawkins failed on his tip attempt with less than two seconds left, the ball spinning off the rim. Duke got the rebound, ran out

the clock and moved on to the Sweet 16 for 27th time and fourth time in the past five years.

“It was up there forever, I felt like, in slow motion,” Dawkins said.

Dawkins cringed at the miss. His father, Johnny, is the UCF coach and was a former Duke star and longtime assistant under Krzyzewski. The two coaches shared a long embrace at midcourt after it was over.

“It’s tough,” the elder Dawkins said. “I love that man. Without him, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

Barrett finished with 16 points.

Duke will face fourth-seeded Virginia Tech in Washington, D.C., on Friday night for a spot in the Elite Eight.

Oregon gets past UC Irvine

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Ehab Amin started the second half by cheering on his Oregon teammates from the bench during a scoring drought that seemed like it would never end.

When the fifth-year senior got into the game, he provided a jolt of energy that carried Oregon to the Sweet 16.

Amin’s three-pointer ended a run of 14 straight points for UC Irvine and provided the pivotal spark that helped the Ducks become the lone double-digit seed to advance to next weekend by beating UC Irvine 73-54 on Sunday night.

“Once we got a couple of baskets, our energy level went way up,” coach Dana Altman said. “Ehab had some key steals and then we just started bouncing around again.”

Payton Pritchard led 12th-seeded Oregon (25-12) with 18 points, Louis King added 16 and Amin had 12 points and three steals. The Ducks have won 10 straight after a lackluster start to the season and will play top-seeded Virginia on Thursday.

NCAA Tournament roundup

No. 1 UVA gets easy win over Oklahoma

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Virginia coach Tony Bennett made a last-minute change in his starting lineup and the top-seeded Cavaliers finally breezed through an NCAA Tournament game to make their first Sweet 16 in three years.

Bennett opted for Mamadi Diakite to start instead of Jack Salt against Oklahoma and the junior scored 14 points and had nine rebounds to lead the Cavaliers to a 63-51 win on Sunday night.

Virginia (31-3) has spent most of this season focused on improving from last year’s NCAA Tournament bust. The Cavaliers last season became the first overall No. 1 seed to lose to a No. 16 against UMBC, prompting motivational speeches from Bennett, who told them the pain of the unprecedented defeat was simply setting them up for amazing success down the road.

Tennessee 83, Iowa 77: Two-time SEC player of the year Grant Williams scored six points in overtime and the Vols held off the Hawkeyes to reach the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2014.

Williams had a pair of free throws, two jumpers, and a strip

in overtime that helped Tennessee (31-5) pull it out and match the school record for wins in a season. He finished with 19 points and seven rebounds.

Tenth-seeded Iowa (23-12) fell behind by 25 points and nearly pulled off a monumental upset, sending it to overtime tied at 71, the first overtime game in this year’s tournament.

Jordan Bohannon scored 18 for Iowa, which never led but managed to tie it twice after falling so far behind.

East Regional

Virginia Tech 67, Liberty 58: At San Jose, Calif., Kerry Blackshear had 19 points and nine rebounds as the fourth-seeded Hokies advanced to the Sweet 16 for the first time in 52 years.

Ahmed Hill added 14 points and Justin Robinson scored 13 to help Virginia Tech (25-8) beat an in-state rival and advance to a matchup with top-seeded Duke.

Midwest Regional

Houston 74, Ohio State 59: At Tulsa, Okla., Corey Davis scored 21 points to help Houston defeat Ohio State.

It marked the Cougars’ 33rd win of the season — breaking the record set by the 1983-84

team for the most wins in a season. That squad was the last to reach the Sweet 16 and advanced to the national final.

Galen Robinson added 13 points for Houston (33-3), which will face Kentucky.

North Carolina 81, Washington 59: At Columbus, Ohio, Luke Maye and Nassir Little each scored 20 points and the top-seeded Tar Heels breezed past the Huskies.

North Carolina (29-6) never trailed and move on to face fifth-seeded Auburn on Friday in a regional semifinal.

Pac-12 player of the year Jaylen Nowell paced Washington (28-8) with 12 points.

West Regional

Texas Tech 78, Buffalo 58: At Tulsa, Okla., Jarrett Culver had 16 points, 10 rebounds and five assists in the third-seeded Red Raiders’ rout of the Bulls.

Norensse Odiase contributed a season-high 14 points and 15 rebounds for Texas Tech (28-6), which has won 11 of its past 12 contests and reached the Sweet 16 for the second straight year.

Nick Perkins had 17 points and 10 rebounds for Buffalo (32-4), which had won 13 consecutive games.

Patriots' TE Gronkowski retires at 29

Associated Press

BOSTON — The party's over for Rob Gronkowski. Then again, it might just be getting started.

The New England Patriots' fun-loving, touchdown-spiking tight end announced Sunday that he is retiring from the NFL after nine mostly dominant, Super Bowl-filled seasons.

The four-time All-Pro posted his decision on Instagram, saying that a few months shy of his 30th birthday "it's time to move forward and move forward with a big smile."

"It all started at 20 years old on stage at the NFL Draft when my dream came true, and now here I am about to turn 30 in a few months with a decision I feel is the biggest of my life so far," Gronkowski wrote in his post. "I will be retiring from the game of football today."

Drew Rosenhaus, Gronkowski's agent, confirmed his client's decision to retire.

The playmaking tight end, who turns 30 in May, leaves as a three-time Super Bowl champion who established himself as one of the most dominant players at his position and one of Tom Brady's favorite targets.

"In the nine years that I have known Rob Gronkowski, I have never known him to have a bad day," Patriots owner Robert Kraft said in a statement. "He always has a youthful exuberance about him and is a joy to be around."

But Gronkowski has been dogged in recent seasons by back, knee, ankle and arm

injuries that have limited his ability to stay on the field.

It led him to hint at retirement following New England's Super Bowl loss to the Philadelphia Eagles to end the 2017 season and again last month after the Patriots' Super Bowl win over the Los Angeles Rams.

In his Instagram post, Gronkowski thanked the Patriots organization, coach Bill Belichick and New England's fans for their support during his nine NFL seasons.

"Thank you for everyone accepting who I am and the dedication I have put into my work to be the best player I could be," Gronkowski wrote.

Belichick said Gronkowski was a major reason the Patriots won championships.

"His production spoke for itself, but his daily attitude, unmistakably positive energy wherever he went and toward whoever he touched will never be forgotten," Belichick said in a statement.

Gronkowski's teammates also almost immediately began to flood social media with well-wishes.

"Love you man!!" Brady wrote on Instagram, along with an emoji of a goat to refer to Gronkowski as the greatest of all-time. "Couldn't be a better person or teammate!!!!"

Though he won't have the longevity of some of his contemporaries at tight end, Gronkowski is expected to get strong consideration for the Pro Football Hall of Fame when eligible.

Gronkowski, a second-round pick in the 2010 draft, had his fourth career 1,000-yard receiving season in 2017 and was an All-Pro for the fourth time that season.

But at times he looked like a shell of himself during the Patriots' Super Bowl run this past season. Gronkowski finished the 2018 regular season with just 47 catches for 682 yards and three touchdowns.

He had one of his best games of the season in the Patriots' Super Bowl win over the Rams, hauling in six catches for 87 yards, including two receptions on New England's only touchdown drive during their 13-3 victory.

A fan favorite in New England for his gregarious and playful persona, Gronkowski was one of the most dominant tight ends of his era.

His 12 career postseason touchdown receptions are the most by a tight end in NFL playoff history. His 81 career postseason catches are also best among tight ends.

He'll also retire with 79 career TD catches which is third all-time by a tight end behind only Antonio Gates (116) and Tony Gonzalez (111).

Brady and Gronkowski connected on 78 TD passes. It is the second-most scoring connections between a quarterback and a tight end in NFL history behind only Philip Rivers and Gates (89) and is fifth overall between quarterbacks and all pass-catchers.

UConn, ASU women advance to Sweet 16

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Eight invitations to the Sweet 16 have been delivered and the other eight were to be determined Monday night.

UConn's back in the regional semifinals for the 26th consecutive year. The Huskies had to work for it as pesky Buffalo rallied from a 24-point, third-quarter deficit to get within eight in the fourth before the Huskies won by 12. It was UConn's closest game in the second round since a two-point victory over Xavier in 1999. The next-closest was a 15-point win over TCU in 2003.

"It's been kind of that type of year for us, where things just don't naturally happen the

way they have before, and for us that's good preparation," UConn senior Katie Lou Samuelson said. "That shows that when things go wrong, when things happen, we can always pick up what we need to do and pick up from the next person down."

While reaching the Sweet 16 seems to be a rite of spring for the Huskies, other teams will be trying to make it there for the first time in a long time. The last time Missouri State advanced to the regional semifinals, assistant coach Jackie Stiles was leading the Lady Bears to an incredible Final Four run in 2001. For the team to get to the next round, they'll have to contend with Iowa State and a rowdy crowd at ISU's

Hilton Coliseum.

Arizona State and Texas A&M needed big plays in the final few seconds to reach the next round in wins over Miami and Marquette, respectively.

Oregon had a little easier time advancing to its third consecutive Sweet 16. Sabrina Ionescu was a big reason why, getting her 18th career triple-double and second in the NCAAs. She became the second player to do it multiple times in the tournament, joining former Stanford great Nicole Powell.

Ionescu got her 10th rebound to reach the stat milestone in the final few minutes when she rebounded her own miss.

"I knew exactly where it was going to go," she said. "Let me add a little more rotation on this

shot so I can get it back."

Still unbeaten

The Pac-12 has yet to lose in the postseason, improving to 8-0 after wins by Arizona State and Oregon. Throw in two victories by Arizona in the WNIT and the conference is unblemished.

"I was able to tell the team yesterday, there's nothing that this team can show us that we haven't seen and the conference hasn't prepared you for this. How many close games has this group been in down the stretch of the year?" Oregon State coach Scott Rueck said. "You have the confidence to get the stops and to score and to execute."

NBA roundup

Lamb's half-court 3 sinks the Raptors

Associated Press

TORONTO — Jeremy Lamb banked home a half-court three-pointer at the buzzer and the Charlotte Hornets beat the Toronto Raptors 115-114 on Sunday night for their third straight win.

Toronto looked to have won the game after Kawhi Leonard hit the go-ahead basket with 44 seconds left, then blocked Kemba Walker at the other end.

Charlotte got one final chance after Leonard missed a jumper with 5.8 seconds to go. Pascal Siakam knocked the inbounds pass away from Lamb, who chased the ball into the backcourt before launching the winning shot.

"We fought so hard the whole game," Lamb said. "Everybody who came in contributed and played well. They made a big run late. It just feels good to

get that win and cap it off like that."

"I know he threw up a prayer," Kemba Walker said of Lamb's long heave. "I guess the basketball gods were on our side tonight. That was an unbelievable shot."

Charlotte began the day 2½ games behind eighth-place Miami and 1½ games behind ninth-place Orlando in the Eastern Conference playoff race.

Bucks 127, Cavaliers 105: Giannis Antetokounmpo showed few signs he was bothered by an ailing right ankle, getting 26 points and 10 rebounds to lift Milwaukee over visiting Cleveland.

Antetokounmpo was listed as questionable after missing two of the three previous games with an ankle sprain. He made 11 of 16 shots with seven assists in 32 minutes.

Warriors 121, Pistons 114: Stephen Curry had 26 points, Klay Thompson added 24 and host Golden State rebounded a night after a blowout loss.

The win moved the Warriors (50-23) back into the first seed in the Western Conference by a half-game over the Nuggets (49-23). The Pistons slipped to seventh in the Eastern Conference with the loss.

Rockets 113, Pelicans 90: James Harden scored 28 points in a little less than 29 minutes, and visiting Houston downed New Orleans.

The Rockets hit 21 threes in winning for the fifth time in six games to move a game ahead of Portland for the third seed in the Western Conference.

Spurs 115, Celtics 96: LaMarcus Aldridge had 48 points and 13 rebounds, and San Antonio gave short-handed host Boston its fourth straight loss.

The Spurs have won 10 of 12 to strengthen their grip on a Western Conference playoff spot.

Pacers 124, Nuggets 88: Bojan Bogdanovic scored 26 of his 35 points in the first half to lead Indiana over visiting Denver.

Nikola Jokic had 19 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Nuggets, who lost for the first time after winning six straight.

Clippers 124, Knicks 113: Danilo Gallinari scored 26 points to extend the best scoring streak of his career, and Los Angeles beat host New York for its fifth straight victory.

Lakers 111, Kings 106: Kyle Kuzma scored 21 of his 29 points in the third quarter, LeBron James had 29 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists and the Lakers ended a five-game losing streak.

NHL roundup

Svechnikov's goal keeps Carolina above Habs

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Carolina Hurricanes struggled to beat Montreal goaltender Carey Price for 54 minutes.

Price turned away shot after shot, to the point that even Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour thought there was no way his team was going to find the net.

Then, everything changed.

Andrei Svechnikov scored with 1:45 left in overtime as the Hurricanes rallied to beat the Canadiens 2-1 in a matchup with Eastern Conference playoff implications.

Carolina's Trevor van Riemsdyk scored the tying goal with 5:39 remaining, and Svechnikov ended it with a wrist shot through Price's legs in the extra session.

After Price stopped Carolina's first 36 shots, he allowed two goals on the final four shots he faced.

"It didn't look like it was going to happen," Brind'Amour said. "You're hoping for one or two or three Grade-A chances in the third and we had more than that. So it was

like, if those aren't going in, what's going to go in?"

What went in was van Riemsdyk's wrist shot from the point through traffic that clipped the skate of Montreal defenseman Jordie Benn and found the bottom left corner of the net.

It was a critical goal from an improbable source in van Riemsdyk, who scored for just the third time this season.

"Obviously, you know you're playing one of the best goalies in the world, if not the best goalie in the world, so it's going to take some something a little uglier to beat him," van Riemsdyk said. "You just gotta stick with it. You can't get frustrated. We just kept trudging away."

Islanders 2, Coyotes 0: Jordan Eberle and Brock Nelson scored to back Robin Lehner's fifth shutout of the season as host New York beat Arizona.

Lehner stopped 31 shots to help the Islanders win for the second time in two days and keep pace with first place Washington in the Metropolitan Division.

Capitals 3, Flyers 1: Braden Holtby made 35 saves and host Washington beat Philadelphia to snap a two-game skid.

Holtby helped Washington kill off three of four Philadelphia power plays, and that allowed the Capitals to avoid what would have been their first three-game losing streak since January.

Blackhawks 2, Avalanche 1 (OT): Duncan Keith scored 1:23 into overtime to give host Chicago the win over Colorado.

Blue Jackets 5, Canucks 0: Pierre-Luc Dubois ended a 13-game scoreless slump and finished with a goal and an assist, and Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 21 shots for his seventh shutout of the season as visiting Columbus improved its playoff chances with a victory over Vancouver.

Josh Anderson had two goals and an assist, and Ryan Dzingel and Oliver Bjorkstrand also scored for the Blue Jackets, who moved within two points of Montreal for the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.