

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## US expands goals, to remain in Syria

*The Washington Post*

The Trump administration is expanding its goals in Syria beyond routing Islamic State to include a political settlement of the country's civil war, a daunting and potentially open-ended commitment that could draw the U.S. into conflict with both Syria and Iran.

With forces loyal to President Bashar Assad and his Russian and Iranian allies now bearing down on the last militant-controlled towns, the defeat of ISIS militants in Syria could be imminent along with an end to U.S. justification for being there.

U.S. officials say they are hoping to use the ongoing presence of American troops in northern Syria in support of the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces to pressure Assad to make concessions at United Nations-brokered peace talks in Geneva. The negotiations there are set to resume at the end of November after having sputtered along for more than three years without result.

Assad's forces, with crucial aid from Iran-sponsored militias, have regained control over much of the rest of the country in their separate war with Syrian rebels fighting to end his autocratic rule.

An abrupt U.S. withdrawal could complete Assad's sweep of Syrian territory and help guarantee his political survival — an outcome that would constitute a win for Iran, his close ally.

To avoid that outcome, U.S. officials say they plan to maintain a U.S. troop presence in northern Syria — where the Americans have trained and assisted the SDF against ISIS — and to establish new local governance apart from the Assad government, in those areas.

When political negotiations began in Geneva more than three years ago, the rebels — with some assistance from Western and Sunni Arab backers — controlled a hefty amount of Syria and were in a far better position to demand Assad's removal as part of a settlement.

Russian air power and Iran-allied ground forces, however, have turned the tables sharply to Assad's advantage both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. Both Russia and Iran also have indicated they plan to stay.

In addition to extending its presence in Syria, the administration also is seeking new cooperation with Russia. Earlier this month, President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a joint

statement backing the Geneva process. The two leaders spoke again by telephone Tuesday, just hours after Putin was photographed embracing Assad when the two met in the Russian resort of Sochi.

Russia, together with Iran and Turkey, also is hosting its own political conference this week on Syria, a gathering that could lock in positions that would make U.S. objectives in Syria harder to achieve.

U.S. officials emphasized that an ongoing U.S. military presence in Syria is necessary to ensure that remnants of ISIS are mopped up, and that repopulated communities are stabilized under local governance. "The fight with ISIS is not over," one official said.

But the official, one of several who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing planning and initiatives, described the indefinite mission of U.S. forces as "twofold."

ISIS' original expansion was enabled by the vacuum of authority left by the Syrian civil war, the official said. "That vacuum was created by the lack of a legitimate political process," and the militant group, or its successors, will fill it again if the "political aspect" is not resolved.

Asked last week how long U.S. troops would stay in Syria, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said, "We're not just going to walk away right now" before a political settlement is reached between Assad and the Syrian opposition. "We're going to make sure we set the conditions for a diplomatic solution. ... Not just, you know, fight the military part of it and then say 'good luck' on the rest of it."

The official number of U.S. troops currently deployed to Syria to train and assist the SDF is 503. The actual number is believed to be far higher, including hundreds of additional special operations forces, forward air controllers, artillery crews and others sent for monthslong, temporary deployments.

Mattis said there has been no decision on how many troops will remain. They will wait until "the Geneva process has cracked," he said. "That doesn't mean everyone stays there. That doesn't mean ... certain troops are leaving."

Plans for a continuing troop presence indicate a shift in mission from defeating ISIS to a broader White House strategy aimed at countering Iranian influence, said Nicholas Heras, of the Washington-based Center for a New American Security.

## Air Force identifies pilots in fatal Texas crash

BY STEPHEN CARLSON

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Air Force on Wednesday released the names of the pilots involved in the deadly T-38 Talon training crash Nov. 20 at Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas.

Capt. Paul J. Barbour, 32, of Van Nuys, Calif., was killed in the crash. He was the aircrew

flight equipment flight commander with the 47th Operations Support Squadron and an instructor pilot with the 87th Flying Training Squadron.

Capt. Joshua Hammervold, an instructor pilot with the 87th squadron, was injured after he ejected from the aircraft. He was treated at Val Verde Regional Medical Center and was released Tuesday in good condi-

tion, according to an Air Force statement.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.

All flights at the base have been suspended through Thanksgiving weekend.

Laughlin is the Air Force's largest pilot training center, where pilots learn to fly combat jets by training on the T-38. The twin-engine, supersonic jet

has been in service with the Air Force since the 1960s.

"Every day, our pilots take a risk as they step into the cockpit, and every day they operate with the utmost skill, professionalism and dedication to train the next generation of flying airmen and to ensure the safety of this great nation," 47th Flying Training Wing commander Col. Charlie Velino said in the statement.

# Pro-Roy Moore group touts Trump 'support'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A political action committee supporting Senate candidate Roy Moore is fundraising off President Donald Trump's near-endorsement of the Alabama Republican, who is facing new allegations of decades-old sexual misconduct in the closing weeks of the campaign.

A Thanksgiving-themed email with the subject line "Giving thanks for YOU and OUR PRESIDENT!" applauds Trump, who on Tuesday discounted the sexual assault allegations against Moore and said voters must not support his "liberal" rival.

After staying silent for more than a week, Trump all but endorsed Moore as he departed Washington on Tuesday, telling reporters, "We don't need a liberal person in there."

Two women have accused Moore, 70, of sexually assaulting or molesting them decades ago, when he was in his 30s and they were 14 and 16. At least seven others have said he pursued romantic relationships when they were teenagers and he was a prosecutor. He has denied the allegations vehemently.

The president also said he would announce next week whether he will campaign for Moore, who faces Democrat Doug Jones in a Dec. 12 special election to fill the seat once held by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a Republican.

Jones released a campaign ad Wednesday spotlighting Moore's accusers.

Moore's campaign announced Wednesday that his communications director, John Rogers, had resigned. The campaign characterized the departure as part of the normal turnover that occurs in political campaigns.

Trump, who won despite facing more than a dozen accusations of sexual misconduct of his own, dismissed questions from reporters about backing a Republican accused of sexual assault over a Democrat. Trump pointed to Moore's assertions that he did nothing wrong.

"Roy Moore denies it; that's all I can say," Trump said Tuesday.

He also noted the allegations came from behavior alleged to have happened decades ago.

"Forty years is a long time," Trump said, questioning why it took so long for Moore's accusers to come forward.

# Report: Congressman made threat over photos

Associated Press

DALLAS — U.S. Rep. Joe Barton told a woman that he would complain to U.S. Capitol Police if sexually explicit photographs of him and other material from their relationship were to be exposed publicly, according to a published report.

The Washington Post reported the threat Wednesday after Barton, a North Texas Republican, apologized for a nude photo of him that circulated on social media.

The photo of Barton appeared on an anonymous Twitter account. It was not immediately known who posted the photo or when it was taken.

Barton issued a statement saying that while separated from his second wife, prior to their divorce in 2015, he had sexual relationships "with other mature adult women." The 68-year-old Republican said each relationship was consensual and has since ended.

"I am sorry I did not use better judgment during those days. I am sorry that I let my constituents down," said Barton, the longest-serving member of Congress from Texas.

However, a woman whom the Post did not identify told the newspaper of Barton's threat over the sexually explicit photographs, videos and messages he

had sent to her. The woman described sexual encounters and contact extending over five years, beginning with her posting of a message on Barton's Facebook page in 2011.

She also shared with the Post a secretly recorded telephone conversation with Barton in 2015 in which he warned her against using the material "in a way that would negatively affect my career."

The Post reported the woman, who is not married, spoke on the condition of anonymity to protect her privacy.

A message left by The Associated Press at Barton's district office in Arlington, Texas, was not returned. The voicemail for his office in Washington was full.

In a statement to the Post, Barton said a transcript of the telephone conversation provided by the newspaper may be "evidence" of a "potential crime against me." He also said that Capitol Police had informed him Wednesday that they were opening an inquiry.

Barton, a member of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, announced his re-election bid this month. His district includes several counties in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Barton was a consultant in the oil and gas industry before he joined the U.S. House in 1985.

# Conyers faces ethics probe after harassment allegations

Associated Press

DETROIT — John Conyers has dealt with various ethics investigations and a public corruption case that landed his wife in prison during a U.S. House career spanning more than five decades — longer than any other current member.

Allegations that the Michigan Democrat sexually harassed female staff members may be the toughest challenge yet for the party's top member on the House Judiciary Committee.

"He's not as sharp as he used to be," said Adolph Mongo, a longtime follower of Detroit politics who has worked on mayoral campaigns. "This is a young person's game

now. You hate to see somebody who has put in 50 years ... go out like this."

Leaders of the House Ethics Committee announced Tuesday that the panel had begun an investigation into Conyers, 88, after receiving allegations of sexual harassment and age discrimination involving staff members as well as using "official resources for impermissible personal purposes."

Conyers said he would cooperate fully.

BuzzFeed reported Monday night that Conyers' office paid a woman more than \$27,000 under a confidentiality agreement to settle a complaint in 2015 that she was fired from his Washington staff because she rejected his sexual advances.

BuzzFeed also published affidavits from former staff members who said they had witnessed Conyers touching female staffers inappropriately — rubbing their legs and backs — or requesting sexual favors. One former staffer said one of her duties was "to keep a list of women that I assumed he was having affairs with and call them at his request and, if necessary, have them flown in using Congressional resources."

When questioned at his home Tuesday morning by The Associated Press, Conyers denied settling any harassment complaint and other allegations of inappropriate touching of staffers. The reporter repeated to Conyers the claims made in the BuzzFeed report.



# Democrats juggle politics of misconduct

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats have been quick to support the “me too” chorus of women — and some men — who have stepped up to allege sexual misconduct and to name names. But now “me too” stains the

**ANALYSIS** Democrats, too, putting them in an awkward place as they calibrate how forcefully to respond.

Allegations against Sen. Al Franken, of Minnesota, and Rep. John Conyers, of Michigan, are part of the newest chapter in the hot-potato politics of sexual predation for the party, which has its own fraught history on the subject.

The latest revelations have prompted a hard look back at the way Democrats and their allies once circled the wagons around President Bill Clinton, dismissing allegations that extended to serious assault as mere dalliances or the tales of “looney” women.

Franken’s prankish photo of his hands over a napping woman’s breasts on a military plane, combined with her allegations that he kissed her forcibly on another occasion, prompted swift condemnation from throughout the party’s ranks and inspired calls for an ethics investigation that the senator-in-hiding supported, too. Then a second woman came forward, alleging Franken grabbed her buttocks during a photo op at a state fair.

Now BuzzFeed has published affidavits from former employees of Conyers who said they saw the Democrat inappropriately touching women who worked for him and asking them for sexual favors.

Democrats, predictably, have spoken fiercely and with one voice against Roy Moore, the Republican Senate candidate in Alabama who is accused of disrobing a 14-year-old girl in his house when in his 30s.

Some Republicans have de-

manded Moore quit his candidacy “if” his accusers have told the truth about his approaching teenage girls. Others have concluded the accusations are more credible than his denials.

A few, like Alabama’s GOP governor, have suggested that even if he did prey on a 14-year-old girl decades ago, the need to protect the Senate’s Republican majority is a higher priority. President Donald Trump repeatedly noted on Wednesday that Moore has denied the allegations and insisted that Alabama must not elect the Republican’s “liberal” opponent in a Dec. 12 special election.

In this sexual misconduct frenzy of unmasking figures in entertainment, media, sports and politics (#MeToo on Twitter), all sorts of episodes on the spectrum of misbehavior are being lumped together, from the boorish and juvenile to the allegedly criminal.

Grabbing a woman’s behind at the state fair isn’t in the same league as molesting a child.

Still, the Democrats have a predicament.

“They don’t want to look tolerant on this issue by saying, ‘He wasn’t as bad as so and so,’” said Dan Lublin, a political science professor at American University.

Kathleen Dolan, chair of the political science department at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, said the party’s history with this issue is important to remember.

“Certainly, Democrats, from an ideological perspective, and on gender egalitarianism, should be the party or people we’d expect to be taking the lead on awareness of the decades-old problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault,” she said. “That’s complicated in part by the history of the party debate when Bill Clinton was in the thick of his stuff. ... There’s evolution, because the Democrats could perhaps with some accuracy say in the ’90s we tolerated so much of what we shouldn’t have.”

## Some politicians resort to hiding out in the face of allegations

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Faced with a wide range of personal or ethical questions, some politicians are trying out an old strategy that has long been considered obsolete: hiding out.

Rather than publicly confronting the issues, they have had aides issue statements — sometimes denying allegations, sometimes apologizing — and then have simply declined to talk much further about the issues.

The strategy appears designed in part to avoid saying something that could be contradicted by others, but there is also an underlying sense that voters cannot pay attention to one thing for long in the nonstop-news era of President Donald Trump — that if they just keep their heads down, particularly over the holiday weekend, people will forget about the unanswered questions.

There’s Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., who felt compelled to apologize when two women accused him of inappropriate sexual conduct. Franken was last

seen in public on the morning of Nov. 16 at a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee, on which he sits. He disappeared before the hearing began, just before the first allegation against him appeared online.

Franken’s apologies have included suggestions that he remembers the incidents differently, but he has declined to explain his side of things. He is holed up in his family’s home in Washington’s Tenleytown neighborhood this week, even though Congress is not in session.

Alabama Republican Senate nominee Roy Moore has issued repeated denials since The Washington Post published a story two weeks ago in which four women said he pursued them romantically when they were teenagers and Moore was in his 30s. Several similar allegations have surfaced since, but Moore has submitted to only one detailed interview about the allegations, on Sean Hannity’s radio show. It went poorly, leading most top Republicans in Washington to declare that they believe Moore’s

accusers and to ask him to withdraw from the race.

This approach has confounded some in the capital.

“Sen. Al Franken crisis strategy: hide out in DC for Thanksgiving, hoping this blows over and people quickly forget. Better to hold a Minnesota news conference before Turkey Day and apologize to voters who elected you,” Ron Bonjean, a Republican crisis communications expert, tweeted Sunday.

Bonjean has experienced these matters firsthand. Fifteen years ago, he served as a top adviser to Trent Lott, R-Miss., who was poised to reclaim the post of Senate majority leader after the GOP’s successful 2002 midterms. But Lott made a racially insensitive joke at a celebration of Sen. Strom Thurmond’s 100th birthday in early December, leading to a re-evaluation of Lott’s previous statements on civil rights.

Rather than quickly making a public appearance to explain himself, Lott chose to issue a few prepared statements, then went on a private trip to Florida.

Bonjean believes the old rules still apply, particularly in the prevailing charged environment in which allegations of sexual misconduct by powerful men are roiling industries from Hollywood to Washington. By not addressing these issues, the lawmakers create the impression they are hiding something.

The prototype for handling controversy may be the case of Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, who was arrested for drunken driving in Alexandria, Va., in December 2012. He went on what his aides called an “apology tour.”

Crapo is a Mormon who had said he does not drink alcohol, and his standing could have fallen apart under perceptions of hypocrisy. His voters accepted his full-fledged apology.

Last year, his opponent raised questions about the arrest. The senator obtained the police report and gave it to the media, leading to more stories about the most embarrassing night of his political career. He apologized again.

He then won re-election by more than 35 percentage points.

# Detective shot with own gun

*The Washington Post*

A Baltimore police detective was shot in the head with his own gun at close range while struggling with a man and died with his radio still clutched in his left hand, the city's top law enforcement official said Wednesday.

Detective Sean Suiter's death came a day before he was set to testify before a grand jury in a federal investigation of police corruption and drug shake-downs by an elite gun recovery unit.

Police Commissioner Kevin Davis said he was assured by prosecutors and the FBI that Suiter, an 18-year veteran of the force, was not a target of the investigation that has led to the indictments of eight current and one former officers. Four have pleaded guilty to racketeering charges.

Davis said Suiter's testimony was to have been about an incident several years ago involving some of the indicted officers. The commissioner sought to dispel notions Suiter was targeted on Nov. 15 and said evidence gathered so far refutes

the notion of a conspiracy.

"The encounter with a man was a spontaneous observation of a man behaving suspiciously and a spontaneous decision to investigate his conduct," Davis said.

Suiter and his partner were in the Harlem Park neighborhood canvassing about a December 2016 triple killing when they happened to twice notice a man acting suspiciously within a span of about 20 minutes, Davis said.

The department's chief spokesman said Suiter, 43, a married father of five, was not lured to Bennett Place, where he was shot, and that he had no appointment set there.

The mystery surrounding Suiter's death continues after a week with no arrests, no detailed description of the shooter and the fact that it appears only one gun was involved. A funeral for Suiter, who is originally from the District of Columbia, is scheduled for Wednesday.

Davis said there was evidence found on Suiter's shirt that indicated a struggle he called "brief and violent" and

lasted mere seconds. Suiter made a radio transmission before he was killed that included what Davis said he believes are gunshots in the background.

Authorities have previously stated that investigators found three shell casings that matched Suiter's weapon, which was recovered at the scene. An autopsy Sunday ruled the death a homicide, Davis said, and also provided information about the trajectory of the bullet that caused police to return to the crime scene for another search. That repeat search recovered the bullet that killed Suiter, Davis said Wednesday.

Suiter's partner, who has not been named publicly by the department and is considered a police witness in the shooting, Davis has said, took cover at the sound of gunfire and called in the shooting on his cellphone.

The partner has been talking with detectives, Davis said, and provided the spare description police said they have of the suspect as a black male wearing a black coat with a white stripe.

A reward for information leading to Suiter's killer has reached \$215,000.

## Agencies to review background check system

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Wednesday ordered a far-ranging review of the FBI database used to check the backgrounds of prospective gun buyers, after the Air Force failed to report the criminal history of the gunman who slaughtered more than two dozen people at a Texas church.

The failure enabled him to buy weapons, purchases his domestic violence conviction should have barred.

Sessions directed the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to determine if other government agencies are failing to report information to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. He also wants a report detailing the number of times the agencies investigate and prosecute people for lying on their gun purchase applications and a closer look at the application format.

The Pentagon's inspector general launched a separate review of the Texas gunman, Devin P. Kelley, after the Air Force revealed it had failed to submit his domestic abuse case to the database. Kelley was able to buy four guns despite the conviction. He used a Ruger AR rifle with a 30-round magazine during the Nov. 6 shooting, going from aisle to aisle as he shot parishioners.

Sessions said the revelation was "alarming." But the Pentagon has long known about failures to give military criminal history information to the FBI.

Sessions ordered the FBI and ATF to work with the Defense Department on its review and to identify other obstacles agencies face in sharing information with the database.

The problem has also caught the attention Republican and Democratic lawmakers, who joined forces on legislation that aims to strengthen the database by ensuring federal agencies and states accurately report relevant criminal information to the FBI.

## Argentine navy: Sound heard in search for sub could be explosion

*Associated Press*

MAR DEL PLATA, Argentina — Argentina's navy announced Thursday that a sound detected during the search for a missing submarine is consistent with that of an explosion — an ominous development in the hunt for the vessel and its 44 crewmembers.

Navy spokesman Enrique Balbi said the relatives of the crew have been informed and that the search will continue until there is full certainty about the fate of the ARA San Juan. He said there was no sign the explosion might be linked to any attack on the sub.

Ships and planes returned Wednesday to a search area to check on the noise that experts said could provide a clue to the vessel's location.

U.S. and specialist agencies said the "hydro-acoustic anomaly" was produced just hours after the navy lost contact with the submarine on Nov. 15. Experts worry that even if the ARA San Juan is intact, its crew might have only enough oxygen

to last seven to 10 days.

Balbi said Wednesday that Argentine navy ships as well as a U.S. P-8 Poseidon aircraft and a Brazilian air force plane would return to the area to check out the sound, which originated about 30 miles north of the submarine's last registered position.

U.S. Navy Lt. Lily Hinz later said the unusual sound detected underwater could not be attributed to marine life or naturally occurring noise in the ocean.

The San Juan, a German-built diesel-electric sub, went missing as it was sailing from the extreme southern port of Ushuaia to the city of Mar del Plata, about 250 miles southeast of Buenos Aires.

More than a dozen airplanes and ships are participating in the multinational search despite stormy weather that has caused waves of more than 20 feet. Search teams are combing an area of some 185,000 square miles, which is roughly the size of Spain.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Nitro the police dog stars in workout video

**AL** GULF SHORES — An Alabama police dog shown on video doing push-ups with two officers is a big hit on the internet — and it's also intended as a public safety reminder.

Al.com reported that Nitro is a 2-year-old Dutch Shepherd who joined the Gulf Shores Police Department's canine unit in February. In a video police posted to social media, the dog raises up and down as the song "Eye of the Tiger" plays in the background.

Gulf Shores police Cpl. Josh Coleman said the seven-second video is part of a social media trend — #9PMRoutine — begun by the Pasco County Sheriff's Department in Florida. Coleman said the 9 p.m. routine is one way law enforcement agencies are reminding people to remove valuables from cars and lock up at the end of the day.

## Police: Prostitution ring at senior facility

**MA** PITTSFIELD — Police in Massachusetts have arrested two men they say ran a prostitution ring out of an apartment at a senior living facility.

Pittsfield police said Joseph Van Wert, 65, and Randy Lambach, 45, have been held without bail pending a dangerousness hearing scheduled for Nov. 29.

Authorities allege Lambach recruited drug addicts from Pittsfield, took photos of them, and posted ads on adult websites. Police said he scheduled and drove them to and from meetings with men, kept most of the proceeds, and paid the women in drugs.

Police allege Van Wert used his apartment at a senior living facility as a place to conduct the prostitution.

## Man crashes to stress intersection issue

**FL** CLERMONT — Authorities said a man angered over people driving dangerously through a busy intersection appeared to intentionally cause a crash there to highlight the problem.

The Daily Commercial reported Bruce John Homer, 61, told Lake County Sheriff's Office deputies who responded to the Sunday afternoon accident that he was frustrated law enforcement wouldn't crack down on people running through a stop sign at the intersection.

The driver of the SUV that was hit says Homer pulled out in front of him as he was going through the intersection.

## Police: 86-year-old tries to rob bank

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — Police say an 86-year-old woman tried to rob a bank in Philadelphia.

WTXF-TV reported the woman pushed her walker into TD Bank on Tuesday afternoon, brandished a revolver and demanded \$400. Police arrived at the scene and quickly arrested her.

Authorities say the woman's .38 caliber revolver was not loaded, but she had bullets in her purse.

Police have not said what charges, if any, they plan to file.

## Officer injured when teen throws bleach

**MD** COLUMBIA — Police in Maryland

said a 15-year-old girl has been charged with assault after she threw bleach into the eyes of a police officer who was breaking up a fight between groups of teenagers.

Media outlets reported that Howard County police said the altercation was reported about noon Sunday in Columbia. Officers began separating the groups, authorities said, when a girl began running toward a group of people near some officers.

Police said the girl threw bleach that was in a cup at an officer and people standing nearby.

The department said Officer 1st Class Harold Tolbert, a 16-year-veteran of the force, got bleach in his eye. He was treated at a hospital and released but remains on medical leave.

The 15-year-old girl was charged as a juvenile with assault.

## Mexican man set for 5th deportation

**TX** BROWNSVILLE — A 44-year-old Mexican man is set for deportation for a fifth time but first must serve more than 11 years in prison for being in the U.S. illegally and for possession with intent to distribute 4.4 pounds of methamphetamine.

Brownsville-based U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen added 12 months to Juan Francisco Lopez-Hernandez's sentence Tuesday for committing the most recent offenses while on probation for a previous conviction of being in the U.S. illegally.

Lopez-Hernandez pleaded guilty in August 2016. He was arrested in April 2016 after prosecutors say he sped away from a traffic stop in Brownsville, crashed his vehicle and tried to run off. Hidalgo Coun-

ty deputies found the methamphetamine in his wrecked vehicle. He had previous convictions in 2001, 2003, 2007 and 2011.

## Man seeks service for gun; mall locked down

**MN** EDEN PRAIRIE — A lockdown of a suburban Minneapolis mall apparently resulted from a man who carried a gun case into a sporting goods store in search of service on his gun.

Eden Prairie Center was locked down around midday Tuesday. Police said a mall employee told them during the lockdown that the man with the gun case had entered the Scheels sporting goods store to have his gun serviced.

Police said that when the man was told that location had no gun services, he left the mall.

## Police: Ex-employee swiped airline miles

**NH** MERRIMACK — Police in New Hampshire have accused a woman of stealing more than \$300,000 worth of airline miles from a former employer's account.

Tiffany Tomaselli, 36, of Manchester was charged with theft by unauthorized taking and other offenses after she turned herself in to police. Tomaselli was released on \$5,000 bond.

Police said executives at the Merrimack-based retailer Brookstone discovered Tomaselli used company airline miles after leaving her position as an executive assistant in 2013. A company audit said Tomaselli used more than 2 million points on trips to multiple countries.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Bama's title path runs through Auburn

Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — No. 1 Alabama's path to the Southeastern Conference championship and an assured spot in the playoff is clear but awfully treacherous.

The Crimson Tide (11-0, 7-0 SEC, No. 1 CFP) can secure a spot in the league title game with a road win at No. 6 Auburn (9-2, 6-1) on Saturday.

Even coach Nick Saban, who has a noted distaste for hype-fueled distractions, had to admit that the Iron Bowl has "got lots of ramifications this year."

Lose and Alabama's run of three straight SEC titles comes to an end, and a fourth-consecutive playoff berth isn't a sure bet.

Win and the Tide get another big task against No. 7 Georgia in Atlanta. It's a big change from the past three years when neither Auburn nor the SEC East champion was ranked in the top 10.

This is only the eighth Iron Bowl in which both in-state rivals were top 10 teams.

But Alabama is used to big games with high stakes and loads of national attention. Safety Minkah Fitzpatrick boiled down the stakes to their most essential element.

"You go into the game trying to get a win. That's it," Fitzpatrick said Monday. "That's the only thing at stake is the win."

The Tide is a slender four-point favorite to do just that. Alabama is trying to extend its Iron Bowl winning streak to four. Alabama senior linebacker Rashaan Evans would like to end his career perfect against his hometown team but is trying not to dwell on it.

"It's something you really want to be able to kind of maintain, but at the same time, you can't pay too much attention to the record," said Evans, who is from Auburn. "Understand that any team can be beaten at any time, regardless of how good you are, so for us we're just going to go in there with a clear mind and really just play our game."

Alabama still has some injury question marks going into the game. That group includes Fitzpatrick, who sat out the Mercer game to rest an injured hamstring.

The Bednarik Award finalist upgraded his status after Saban's more cautious prognosis.

"I'm good. I'm going to go out there and practice," Fitzpatrick said. "Coach said I'm day to day, but I'm 100 percent right now."

Guard Ross Pierschbacher (high ankle sprain) and kicker Andy Pappanastos (pulled muscle) are also day to day after missing the Mercer game, according to Saban.

Saban didn't rule out three injured linebackers, though he said they haven't been medically cleared to play so far: Mack Wilson (foot), Terrell Lewis (elbow) and Christian Miller (biceps). Lewis and Miller were hurt in the opener against Florida State and haven't played since.

If one or more of those players can return, it would be a big boost for a defense that has played virtually all season short-handed at linebacker.

"I'm not saying that those guys are out for the game, and I'm not able to say whether they'll be able to play in the

game," Saban said.

The Tide will be facing an offense averaging league-bests 43 points and 503 total yards per game. Coach Gus Malzahn's Tigers have won their last four games, including knocking off previous playoff No. 1 Georgia 40-17.

"Gus has done a phenomenal job, in my opinion," Saban said. "His team has improved throughout the course of the year and is playing as well as probably anybody in the country right now."

## Key matchup

**Auburn RB Kerryon Johnson against Alabama's run defense.** Johnson is leading the SEC with 1,172 rushing yards and 16 touchdowns in nine games. The Tide ranks second in the nation in run defense, giving up just 87.4 rushing yards and six touchdowns. The front is led by DT Da'Ron Payne and DE Raekwon Davis.

## Players to watch

**Alabama.** S Minkah Fitzpatrick is a finalist for defensive player of the year honors nationally. He plays a number of different positions depending on the situation and has 44 tackles, six pass breakups and three quarterback hurries.

**Auburn.** QB Jarrett Stidham has made big strides since early struggles against Clemson and LSU, passing for three touchdowns against Georgia. While Johnson is the team's biggest playmaker, teams don't typically beat Alabama with one-dimensional offenses.

# Cougars return from bye week to seek Apple Cup

Associated Press

No. 14 Washington State is rested and ready for the Apple Cup after returning from a very late bye week.

Washington State faces archrival No. 15 Washington in Seattle on Saturday with a berth in the Pac-12 title game on the line for the Cougars. A victory would give Washington State the Pac-12 North title. If the Huskies win, Stanford claims the Pac-12 North and advances to the league championship game against Southern California.

Coach Mike Leach said Monday that he was worried about

his team maintaining focus on the Apple Cup during last week's bye week, which came after 11 consecutive games to open the season. But he said the Cougars (9-2, 6-2 Pac-12) have responded well since practices resumed over the weekend.

"Coaches get paranoid about off weeks," Leach said. "You always wonder about that."

Leach said he has watched film of the dramatic last-minute victory by the Huskies (9-2, 6-2) over Utah last weekend. He said that game was similar to the Cougars' own game against the Utes.

"It was an in-the-trenches

game," Leach said. "Not one of those splattered all over the field games. It was a real slugfest at the line."

Leach said the Apple Cup is "a great opportunity to play a great game against a great opponent."

But he declined to attach a lot of extra significance to rivalry games. Leach said he expected his players to give their all in every contest.

"There is not some extra private reserve in the cellar of the bank we are able to draw from because all of a sudden this game gets a lot of attention around here," Leach said. "There is no special extra

stuff."

The coach was also critical of the four-team College Football Playoff system, saying it was not really a playoff because so many teams were excluded.

Leach believes the playoffs should be expanded to 16, 32 or even 64 teams, to better identify the true national champion.

He said the Pac-12 is at a disadvantage in competing for a national title because it plays nine conference games, when other major leagues play just eight. Late game times on the West Coast also hurt the league's visibility in other parts of the country, Leach said.



# Beverly, NC State Pack upset Arizona

Associated Press

PARADISE ISLAND, Bahamas — Freshman Braxton Beverly scored a season-high 20 points and sparked the decisive late run that helped North Carolina State upset No. 2 Arizona 90-84 in Wednesday's first round at the Battle 4 Atlantis.

Allerik Freeman scored 24 points to lead the Wolfpack (5-0).

Beverly hit the go-ahead three-pointer with 4:19 left, part of a stunning 13-1 run that put the Wolfpack up 86-76 with 1:48 left. He also hit six free throws and assisted on another basket during the spurt.

Allonzo Trier scored 24 of his 27 points after halftime for the Wildcats (3-1), while freshman Deandre Ayton had 27 points and 14 rebounds.

**No. 5 Villanova 66, Western Kentucky 58:** Jalen Brunson scored 18 points for Villanova in the opening round of the Battle 4 Atlantis.

The Wildcats (4-0) found themselves in a close game until early in the second half. That's when they ran off a 13-2 burst to push ahead by double figures.

**No. 13 Notre Dame 67, No. 6 Wichita St. 66:** Martin Geben hit two free throws with 2.3 seconds left and Notre Dame rallied from a 16-point deficit to win the Maui Invitational at Lahaina, Hawaii.

Notre Dame (6-0) trailed most of the game, but clawed its way back, by slowing the high-scoring Shockers (4-1) and working the ball inside on offense.

Notre Dame pulled within one, but Landry Shamet, having a quiet scoring night, put the Shockers up 64-61 with a running jumper with 1:24 left.

Bonzie Colson, Notre Dame's preseason All-America, cut it back to one on a jumper in the lane. Again, Shamet answered, on a pull-up jumper in the lane and Colson airballed a three-

pointer, but scored on a layup after Matt Farrell stole the inbounds pass.

Zach Brown blocked Farrell's layup, but the Irish got the ball on an baseline inbounds play. Geben cut to the basket and was fouled by Shaquille Morris. He hit both free throws and Wichita State fumbled away its last possession.

**No. 8 Kentucky 86, Fort Wayne 67:** Nick Richards had career highs of 25 points and 15 rebounds, and the host Wildcats shot 70 percent in the first half.

**No. 10 Southern California 88, Lehigh 63:** Jonah Mathews scored 18 points, making four of USC's season-high-tying 12 three-pointers, and the host Trojans earned their 21st straight non-conference victory.

**No. 11 Miami 57, La Salle 46:** Prized freshman Lonnie Walker IV struggled in his return home, but Dewan Huell scored 16 points and the Hur-

ricanes remained unbeaten.

Part of Miami's recruiting pitch for the projected NBA lottery pick was a game in his hometown of Reading, Pa. Walker was held to five points and 2-for-8 shooting, and his woes were contagious. Miami (4-0) shot 37 percent from the field and the Explorers were 0-for-15 from three-point range.

**No. 12 Cincinnati 78, Wyoming 53:** Gary Clark scored 17 points and Kyle Washington had 16 points and 11 rebounds as the Bearcats won the inaugural Cayman Islands Classic.

Clark was named the MVP of the three-game event with 49 points, 28 boards and seven assists.

**Tennessee 78, No. 18 Purdue 75 (OT):** Grant Williams scored all 22 of his points after halftime and hit the go-ahead shot with 14.5 seconds left in overtime to lift Tennessee in the opening round of the Battle 4 Atlantis in Paradise Island, Bahamas.

## US sliders relieved by IOC's stance against Russia

Associated Press

Katie Uhlaender has shed plenty of tears over the years about how she was so close to an Olympic medal, so close to standing on that podium and watching the American flag get raised in her honor.

She cried again Wednesday. Those tears were happy ones.

The long-awaited word has come down: Uhlaender is about to be an Olympic bronze medalist. The International Olympic Committee disqualified four Russian skeleton athletes from the 2014 Sochi Games, including men's gold medalist Aleksandr Tretiakov and women's bronze medalist Elena Nikitina, for doping violations and further banned them from the games going forward.

"I understand that it was a difference of culture and that the Russians don't believe they did anything wrong," Uhlaender said. "But this was the only way to fix it."

Tretiakov's disqualification means Latvia's Martins Dukurs will be promoted to gold, Matt Antoine, of the U.S., to silver and Latvia's Tomass Dukurs, Martins' brother, to bronze. In the women's race, Uhlaender moves up one spot from fourth, placing her alongside gold medalist Lizzy Yarnold, of Britain, and silver medalist Noelle Pikus-Pace, of the U.S.

"Changing medals, it's good, it's great, but it's not life-changing for me to go from bronze to silver," Antoine said. "For me, the biggest thing right now is justice. It feels like finally the people who didn't play fairly, didn't compete fairly, are getting what they deserved."

The Russian doping saga has dragged on for years, and still isn't over. There are other medalists, including double gold winner Alexander Zubkov — now the president of the Russian Bobsleigh Federation — who remain under investiga-

tion related to the state-sponsored doping scandal that could keep Russia out of this winter's Pyeongchang Games entirely.

No one is sure what exactly happens next. The IOC asked the International Bobsled and Skeleton Federation to modify the Olympic results, which is a formality. Antoine likely will have to surrender his bronze medal since it'll apparently be going to Tomass Dukurs, though he's gotten no instructions regarding when or how to do that.

Uhlaender also hasn't been told when she will get her medal. The IBSF said more information can be expected "within days."

"The IOC taking a stand like this and doing the right thing has restored my faith in the system and the sport," Uhlaender said. "I'm just even more motivated and honored to be a part of this movement and I want to be on that podium in Korea and

prove it was not a fluke. I'm just overwhelmed right now. But this has definitely added fuel to my fire."

The sliders got the news while in Whistler, British Columbia, where the World Cup tour is this weekend. Antoine said he woke up to about 40 text messages and 10 emails; Uhlaender was getting calls, texts and emails from around the world starting at 5 a.m. and couldn't figure out why. Tretiakov and Nikitina were both in Whistler as well, and Russian officials said appeals will be filed.

In an interview with The Associated Press earlier this season, Yarnold said she believes any athlete caught doping should be given "the harshest sanctions possible."

"The saddest thing is to know that athletes potentially missed their moments of being on the podium, receiving the medals that they deserved," Yarnold said. "That has really upset me."

## NBA roundup

# Heat end Celtics' 16-game winning streak

Associated Press

MIAMI — Goran Dragic scored 27 points, Dion Waiters had 26 with a pair of big 3-pointers in the final minutes and the Miami Heat held on to beat Boston 104-98 on Wednesday night, snapping the Celtics' 16-game winning streak.

Tyler Johnson scored 16 points for Miami, which had an 18-point lead cut to one in the final moments. The Heat shot 49 percent and outrebounded the Celtics 48-37.

Kyrie Irving scored 23 points for Boston. Jayson Tatum added 18, and Jaylen Brown and Marcus Morris each had 14.

The Celtics got down by 18 in the first half, which has been a very comfortable place for Boston this season. Boston had overcome 18-point deficits against

Oklahoma City and Charlotte, a 17-point hole against Golden State, a 16-pointer against Atlanta and rallied from 13 down to win in Dallas this week.

**Thunder 108, Warriors 91:** Russell Westbrook scored a season-high 34 points and added 10 rebounds and nine assists to help Oklahoma City roll past Golden State.

**Cavaliers 119, Nets 109:** LeBron James shook off a blow to the face and scored 23 points in the fourth quarter and the Cavs beat Brooklyn for their sixth straight win.

**Bucks 113, Suns 107 (OT):** Khris Middleton scored 40 points and Eric Bledsoe added 30 in his return to Phoenix, leading short-handed Milwaukee.

**Rockets 125, Nuggets 95:** Trevor Ariza had a season-high

25 points in Houston's victory over visiting Denver.

**76ers 101, Trail Blazers 81:** Joel Embiid had 28 points, 12 rebounds and two blocks and host Philadelphia handled Portland with ease.

**Hornets 129, Wizards 124 (OT):** Dwight Howard had 26 points and 13 rebounds to help Charlotte beat visiting Washington.

**Clippers 116, Hawks 103:** Blake Griffin had 26 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists, Wesley Johnson scored a season-high 24 points and Los Angeles beat host Atlanta to snapped a nine-game skid.

**Pelicans 107, Spurs 90:** Anthony Davis had 29 points and 11 rebounds, Demarcus Cousins added 24 points and 15 rebounds, and New Orleans beat visiting San Antonio.

**Mavericks 95, Grizzlies 94:** Harrison Barnes banked in a 30-footer at the buzzer to lift Dallas past host Memphis.

**Timberwolves 124, Magic 118:** Jimmy Butler tied a season high with 26 points, Taj Gibson scored a season-high 24, and Minnesota held off visiting Orlando.

**Knicks 108, Raptors 100:** Tim Hardaway Jr. scored a career-high 38 points, including 12 during a 28-0 third-quarter run that sent host New York past Toronto.

**Kings 113, Lakers 102:** Zach Randolph had 22 points, seven rebounds and seven assists as Sacramento beat visiting Los Angeles.

**Jazz 110, Bulls 80:** Derrick Favors scored 23 points, reserve Rodney Hood added 19 and host Utah beat Chicago.

## NHL roundup

# Anderson's OT goal helps Jackets win fifth straight

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Josh Anderson scored two minutes into overtime to give the Columbus Blue Jackets their fifth straight win, 1-0 over the Calgary Flames on Wednesday night.

Sergei Bobrovsky had 22 saves for Columbus in his third shutout this season and 22nd of his career. Mike Smith turned away 40 shots for Calgary.

It was the first time this season that either team ended regulation scoreless.

The Jackets outshot Calgary 2-1 for much of the game.

The Flames, however, dominated puck possession in the first 90 seconds of overtime before the Jackets pushed into the offensive zone.

Calgary's T.J. Brodie sought to set up play from behind his own net, but the puck rolled off onto the stick of Nick Foligno,

who sent it to Anderson for the game-winner.

**Predators 3, Canadiens 2 (SO):** Filip Forsberg scored a pair of power-play goals and Kyle Turris had the only goal in a shootout to lead host Nashville over struggling Montreal.

Pekka Rinne made 27 saves in regulation and overtime, then denied all three Montreal shootout attempts as Nashville won for the eighth time in nine games.

**Lightning 3, Blackhawks 2 (OT):** Brayden Point scored a power-play goal 3:25 into overtime, and host Tampa Bay rallied again to beat Chicago.

**Capitals 5, Senators 2:** Alex Ovechkin scored his first goal in seven games and Jakub Vrana had two goals for the first time in his career for host Washington.

**Bruins 3, Devils 2 (SO):** Charlie McAvoy scored in the 11th round of the shootout to lift

Boston over host New Jersey.

**Rangers 6, Hurricanes 1:** Chris Kreider and Jesper Fast scored two goals apiece, including Kreider's first just 52 seconds into the game, and New York rolled to victory over host Carolina.

**Panthers 2, Maple Leafs 1 (SO):** Nick Bjugstad scored his team's only goal in regulation and the game-winning goal in a shootout as host Florida topped Toronto.

**Canucks 5, Penguins 2:** Rookie Brock Boeser scored two more goals to lead Vancouver over host Pittsburgh.

**Islanders 4, Flyers 3 (OT):** Josh Bailey scored 32 seconds into overtime to give New York the victory and extending visiting Philadelphia's losing streak to six games.

**Oilers 6, Red Wings 2:** Juhar Khaira scored to break a 2-2 tie in the second period, and

Edmonton went on to beat host Detroit.

**Wild 5, Sabres 4:** Nino Niederreiter and Mikael Granlund each scored two goals to lead Minnesota over host Buffalo.

**Jets 2, Kings 1:** Adam Lowry and Patrik Laine scored for Winnipeg, which edged slumping host Los Angeles for its fifth victory in six games.

**Golden Knights 4, Ducks 2:** Jonathan Marchessault had a goal and two assists, rallying Vegas from a two-goal deficit to a victory over host Anaheim.

**Avalanche 3, Stars 0:** Nathan MacKinnon had three assists, including one off a faceoff with a second remaining in the second period, and Colorado blanked Dallas to remain nearly unbeatable at home.

**Sharks 3, Coyotes 1:** Logan Couture scored his team-best 11th goal to help San Jose beat host Arizona.