Iran ‘appears to be standing down’ after attack on bases, Trump says

BY COREY DICKSTEIN and CAITLIN KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Iran “appears to be standing down” after launching a missile attack on bases used by Americans in Iraq.

The development “is a good thing for all parties concerned and a good thing for the world,” Trump said Wednesday, seeming to indicate the United States would not retaliate for the missile strike.

The president also said no American troops were injured or killed when Iran launched more than a dozen ballistic missiles in retaliation for the U.S. drone attack that killed one of Iran’s top military leaders.

“I am pleased to inform you, the American people should be extremely grateful and happy no Americans were harmed in last missile strike that Iran launched against Iraqi air bases housing U.S. troops,” Trump said.

US assessment is that Iranian reprisal deliberately missed American troops

BY JENNIFER JACOBS and GLEN CAREY
Bloomberg

Iran apparently intended to avoid U.S. casualties when it launched more than a dozen missiles at U.S.-Iraqi airbases in retaliation for an American airstrike that killed a top Iranian general, according to U.S. officials with knowledge of the matter.

U.S. assessments of the strikes indicate Iran may have been aiming at unpopulated areas of the sprawling al Asad Air Base, because precision guided missiles struck sandy areas, said one of the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the information wasn’t yet publicly announced. The absence of U.S. casualties could mitigate the potential for a dramatic escalation.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps claimed responsibility for the barrage, which the

Stepping back from the brink

RELATED
In Irbil, residents were warned to stay indoors ahead of strikes

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President Donald Trump addresses the nation Wednesday from the White House on the ballistic missile strike that Iran launched against Iraqi air bases housing U.S. troops.

Evan Vucci/AP

SEE ATTACK ON PAGE 6

SEE MISSED ON PAGE 7
Delta aims to make its app the latest travel concierge

By Mary Schlangenstein  
Bloomberg

Delta Air Lines Inc. is creating its own version of a “digital concierge” to tie customers more tightly to the carrier for travel needs ranging from navigating traffic to booking a hotel.

An improved mobile app will allow travelers to arrange rides to the airport, stay on top of traffic to booking a hotel.

Delta aims to make its app the latest travel concierge

The airline’s first step toward the digital concierge will extend its existing partnership with online ride sharing company Lyft Inc. The Fly Delta app will link customers’ Delta SkyMiles and Lyft accounts, making it easier to earn miles during trips, Bastian said. Other options being studied include a dedicated premium Delta-Lyft service at the busiest U.S. airports, and the option of paying for rides with SkyMiles.

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2nd Cavalry preparing for a return to Poland

By Immanuel Johnson
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — The 2nd Cavalry Regiment will take over NATO’s mission in northeastern Poland this month, in support of the alliance’s effort aimed at deterring Russian aggression.

The Vilseck, Germany-based unit will send one infantry squadron with elements from regimental engineering and support squadrons, 2nd Cavalry spokeswoman Capt. Ellen Brabo said.

Troops will be assigned to battle group Poland at the Bemowo Piskie Training Area in Orzysz, which is about 50 miles from the Russian military exclave of Kaliningrad. The six-month rotation will begin Jan. 20.

“This will give our soldiers a very unique and important perspective with regard to training and working alongside our allies,” said Capt. Michael Van Dyke, commander of 2nd Cavalry’s Iron Troop.

Russia “continues to foment instability in Europe” where it has “significant conventional and nuclear capabilities” and is a threat to the United States and its interests, the conservative Heritage Foundation said in an annual report published last year.

Since Russia’s 2014 military intervention in Ukraine, the U.S. Army Europe has been rebuilding its forces on the Continent. At the same time, NATO has made moves designed to strengthen its eastern flank.

A key part of that effort was launching multinational battle groups in the Baltic states and Poland, which started in 2017. The U.S. leads the force in Poland.

The 2nd Cavalry transferred responsibility for the mission to the 278th Tennessee National Guard in September 2018. After a respite, 2nd Cavalry is set for its fourth deployment and second command of the NATO mission in Poland.

“As a troop commander in this rotation, my focus will be keeping my troop at the highest level of readiness while building relationships with my NATO counterparts,” Van Dyke said.

The regiment is set for its fourth deployment and second command of the NATO mission in Poland.

While tensions with Iran have led to the rapid mobilization of several Army units for deployments to the Middle East, some 2nd Cavalry soldiers say they are happy to be heading to Poland.

“Other than leaving my wife behind, I feel pretty good about going to Poland,” Sgt. Devin McKenney, a team leader with the regiment. “It gives me the chance to get closer to my men because the bonds you make on deployments are the ones that are everlasting.”

Walmart to change policies after denying reservist a job

By Jennifer H. Svan
Stars and Stripes

Walmart will revise its hiring policies and pay an undisclosed amount of back wages to a Navy reservist who said the retailer refused to hire her three years ago because of her military duties.

The changes and back pay are part of a deal reached in August to settle a lawsuit brought by the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney’s Office on behalf of Petty Officer 3rd Class Lindsey Hunger, who said the retail giant refused to hire her at a store in Grand Junction, Colo., after she mentioned she would need time off for Navy duty.

Hunger said that when she applied in 2016 for a job, she told personnel coordinators Kathleen Kelsey in a phone interview that she would need two weeks off to complete mandatory annual training, the court complaint said.

Kelsey “responded that summer was a busy time at Walmart, the store needed someone who would be there, and that Walmart could not support Hunger’s absence for two weeks,” court documents stated.

Hunger was not hired and Walmart never called her back to discuss employment, the complaint said.

The lawsuit brought on Hunger’s behalf says Walmart violated the 1994 Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. As part of the settlement, Walmart will revise its hiring policies to prevent discrimination “based on their military service, military status (not limited to military training obligations) or membership in the uniformed services,” the Justice Department said.

The retail chain also said it would provide training “on employees’ and service members’ rights and obligations” under USEERRA to staff in the store where Hunger was refused a job.

“Walmart is one of the nation’s largest employers and scores of dedicated service members all across the United States will benefit from this settlement and Walmart’s agreement to update its employment and training practices,” said Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband, of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division.
Lockheed’s ’19 F-35 production exceeds goals, lowers costs

The Dallas Morning News

Lockheed Martin is making good on its commitments to the U.S. military and other customers, delivering more F-35 aircraft than originally planned, according to a release Monday.

The defense and aerospace company delivered its 134th F-35 aircraft of 2019 Monday, exceeding its joint government and industry commitment of 131 for the year. The 134 aircraft delivered in 2019 is a 47% increase over production in 2018, according to Lockheed Martin.

“We have met our annual delivery targets three years in a row and continue to increase production rates, improve efficiencies and reduce costs,” Lockheed Martin vice president and general manager of the F-35 program Greg Ulmer said in a statement. “We have achieved our annual goals, lowered costs, and continued to increase production in 2019. It is critical to our nation’s security that our military personnel have the latest capabilities available to them. Our team is proud to have contributed to this achievement.”

The jets — the company’s largest source of profit — are manufactured at Lockheed’s Fort Worth, Texas, assembly plant. The 134th aircraft is an F-35B, a variant that specializes in short takeoffs and vertical landings, that was delivered to the U.S. Marine Corps. The program has produced a total of 490 aircraft and surpassed 240,000 cumulative flight hours, according to Lockheed Martin.

The defense company says it lowered the cost of an F-35A to under $80 million a year early.

Lockheed Martin has been under pressure to increase the program’s efficiency since costs and complications began to raise concern at the start of the decade. The program is expected to cost taxpayers more than $1 trillion over its lifespan.

In 2019, Lockheed Martin delivered 81 of the fighter jets for the U.S., 30 for international partners and 23 for foreign military customers.

2 Afghan pilots killed in copter crash

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Afghan military helicopter crashed on Wednesday in the country’s western Farah province, killing the two pilots on board, a defense ministry official said.

The Mi-35 chopper crashed around 11 a.m. in the district of Pur Chaman, said Rohullah Ahmadzai, the ministry’s spokes-

man. The helicopter was on a mission to the provincial capital, the city of Farah, to the district headquarters when it went down, he said, adding that a technical problem caused the crash. An investigation was underway.

In November, two U.S. service members were killed when their helicopter crashed in eastern Logar province. The cause of the crash was the time was said to be technical.

Prosecutors: Ex-Marine bypassed checkpoint

Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — A Florida man who was dishonorably discharged from the U.S. Marine Corps for sex offenses was arrested Sunday after he lied to get past presidential checkpoints at Palm Beach International Airport an hour before President Donald Trump was set to depart, federal officials said.

Brand Mark Magnan, 37, of Naples, passed two checkpoints typically manned by U.S. Secret Service and Palm Beach County Sheriff’s deputies, according to a complaint filed in federal court. Magnan held parties at an off-base residence and provided alcohol to underage people. During the court-martial, three lance corporals testified that after falling asleep at Magnan’s house or a hotel room, they woke up to either find their pants had been removed or Magnan was sexually assaulting them. His convictions included abusive sexual conduct, wrongful sexual contact, forcible sodomy and assault. He is registered as a sex offender.

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In November, two U.S. service mem-
bers were killed when their heli-
copter crashed in eastern Logar province. The U.S. mili-
tary at the time said preliminary reports did not indicate it was caused by enemy fire, though the Taliban claimed to have shot down the helicopter — a claim the U.S military dismissed as false.

The month before, at least seven Afghan army personnel and crew died when their helicopter crashed in northern Balkh province. The cause of the crash at the time was said to be a technical problem.

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Civilian’s death in South Korea highlights challenges

By Kim Gamel and Yoo Kyong Chang
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — An Alabama couple was locked in a web of bureaucracy as they fought for a week to retrieve their son’s body after he died Jan. 2 in a South Korean hospital, leaving a $24,000 bill for his care.

Gregory Allen, 31, a civilian employee at the Child Development Center on the Army’s Yongsan Garrison, died during open-heart surgery after he arrived Dec. 30 at Soon Chun Hyang University hospital in Seoul in a disoriented state. Allen’s parents flew to Seoul as soon as they heard Gregory had fallen ill and found him Jan. 1 in the intensive care unit. The official cause of death was pulmonary embolism, his parents said.

“We were shocked,” said his father, Leroy Allen Jr., a retired Air Force chaplain. “We didn’t have the rest. Gregory before Gregory’s body would be the bill and demanded payment.

hospital officials handed them little time to grieve. They said

Gregory Allen was a civilian employee at the Child Development Center on the Army’s Yongsan Garrison, died during open-heart surgery after he arrived Dec. 30 at Soon Chun Hyang University hospital in Seoul in a disoriented state.

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“We were shocked,” said his father, Leroy Allen Jr., a retired Air Force chaplain. “We didn’t have the insurance money had been deposited and other issues had been resolved by Wednesday, he said.

The Defense Department’s mortuary affairs team confirmed it collected the body on Wednesday, although it was unclear when it would be flown home.

Gregory Allen was “groggy and semiconscious” when he showed up at the emergency room on Dec. 30, the hospital official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Allen also kept saying that he wanted to go to the U.S. military hospital but ended up at Soon Chun Hyang, which is near Yongsan. The hospital at Yongsan Garrison has been closed due to relocation of the base personnel.

South Koreans are usually covered by a national insurance plan, but foreigners without local coverage must pay up front, then file for reimbursement.

Military officials have held town-hall-style meetings and circulated telephone numbers to inform the Yongsan community about health care options, but confusion can still occur with translation issues and misunderstandings.

“A friend started a GoFundMe page that has raised more than $9,000 to help the Allen family with expenses. We’re overwhelmed with the amount of help that we’re getting with this financial burden that was thrown on us at the last minute,” his father said.

Gregory Allen was a child and youth program assistant at the child care facility on Yongsan, a sprawling Army base that is closing.

He had been connected to the base since his own childhood, having graduated from the now-defunct Seoul American High School while his father was stationed on Yongsan.

The family returned to the United States in 2014, but the younger Allen returned to South Korea to work at the Child Development Center in 2016.

“Greg was a big guy and he did a lot of weightlifting and things like that, but he was so gentle with the children,” said facility director Tamar Taylor. “Somehow he could gather all the children around and they would just come to him. Even the parents say that he was one of the best caregivers and teachers that they had.”

Gregory Allen was in South Korea under the status of forces agreement that governs the relationship between South Korea and U.S. forces, dependents and civilian employees stationed there.

But, his father said, he was a nonappropriated fund employee and didn’t enjoy the same benefits as soldiers.

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After missile scare, Irbil balances fear, hope

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

IRBIL, Iraq — The neighborhoods near the U.S. Consulate in Kurdistan's capital had some warning of danger, even if it wasn't yet clear that Iranian missiles were on their way.

Before the attack, from after midnight until about 1:30 a.m., a loudspeaker warned residents to stay indoors and away from their windows.

At about 2 a.m., a pair of blasts from Iranian ballistic missiles shook the windows of hotels near the international airport, after which many said they heard military helicopters flying over the city.

Five projectiles struck the Kurdish region, Iraq's security media cell reported Wednesday morning. Another fell on Al Asad Air Base in western Anbar province, including two that did not reach their target and fell near Irbil.

The streets of Irbil, a city of more than 1 million people, were noticeably empty throughout the day after the missiles struck. Residents were staying home out of fear of additional strikes, said a traffic official at the suburb of Ankawa, who declined to be named.

Some here believed Iran's strike was purposely weak and meant to be symbolic. Others suspected that Tehran intentionally sent duds to avoid significant bloodshed out of fear of the American response.

"Twenty-two rockets, nothing happened," said Lahib Gabbarah, a Baura native, whose wife was awake during the attack. Gabbarah thinks the U.S. military is stationed sustained minor damage.

"Iran appears to be standing down, which is a good thing for all parties concerned and a good thing for the world," Trump said.

"It's good because he opened the door for peace," Gabbarah said of the president's message. "Good for America, good for the Iranian people."

Residents in Irbil, the capital of Iraq's Kurdistan region, appeared to stay home Wednesday out of fear of additional Iranian missile strikes, said a traffic officer who declined to be named.

President Donald Trump arrives Wednesday to address the nation from the White House on the ballistic missile strike that Iran launched against Iraqi air bases housing U.S. troops. He is accompanied by Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley, center, and U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein.

Trump noted that an early warning system "worked very well" in anticipating the missile strikes.

"It's a game," said Gabbarah, explaining that each side knows the limits of how far they could push, and would go no further.

Though the U.S. could strike a crippling blow, that wouldn't be necessary, he argued.

Like Iraq, which has been gripped by reform-focused protests since October, Iran could be primed for social change driven by citizens tire of corruption and deprivation, Gabbarah said. And he thinks the president and his advisers knows that.

"Trump, he wants Iran to change with him," Gabbarah said.

Others expressed a mix of relief and worry.

Dhea Najm, 29, a security guard, said he was hopeful for de-escalation but feared that instability would dissuade foreign investment.

"Kurdistan is safe," Najm said. "[but] we don't know what is going to happen next."

Though ISIS was repelled from Kurdistan in late 2014, the region suffered economic woes during the conflict and a worse downturn after the Kurds approved a September referendum seeking independence from Iraq.Things have only recently started to improve, Gabbarah said.

Gabbarah and two of his friends drank tea and chatted about what they believed was an attempt by Iran to show strength to its citizens, after a brutal crackdown on protests there in recent months.

The three gray-haired men, who lived through their homeland's many recent conflicts, offered their thoughts into the latest standoff.

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Despite apparent measures the U.S. took to prepare.

President Donald Trump arrives Wednesday to address the nation from the White House on the ballistic missile strike that Iran launched against Iraqi air bases housing U.S. troops. He is accompanied by Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley, center, and U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Trump says more sanctions will be levied against Iran

FROM FRONT PAGE

Trump said Wednesday morning in a White House address, flanked by his top national security officials: "We suffered no casualties — all our soldiers are safe and only minimal damage was sustained at our bases."

Trump also said no Iraqis were injured or killed in the attacks.

Trump vowed Iran would not be allowed to pursue nuclear weapons, touting the strength of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a "powerhouse".

Trump condemned Iran's activity and called Qassem Soleimani, the Iranian general he ordered killed, the world's "top terrorist."

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General's killing risks gains on ISIS

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's national security team knew that killing Iran's most powerful general could hurt efforts to mop up and head off any revival of the Islamic State militant group — and that is just what happened.

Days after Gen. Qassem Soleimani was killed in a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad, the U.S. troops in Iraq to fight Islamic State were focused on their own defense, guarding American bases and the U.S. Embassy from the expected Iranian response. Iran struck back early Wednesday, shooting ballistic missiles at two military bases in Iraq housing American troops. The U.S. fight against the militants is now on hold, and a Trump foreign policy achievement is in doubt.

“When we looked at this operation we knew there would be consequences,” said Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “We knew there would be risk.” But he said the threat of attack on U.S. interests was too great to not act.

The Islamic State evolved in Syria after U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq in 2011; its fighters swept back across the border in 2014, captured wide swaths of western and northern Iraq and imposed brutal rule over a self-declared “caliphate.”

A U.S-led coalition finally ousted the group from the last of its territory in Syria in March 2019, but thousands of fighters scattered throughout the region and continued to pose a threat. Defense Secretary Mark Esper agreed on Tuesday that “the suspension of activities in Iraq” against ISIS was foreseen as a possible outcome of the killing of Soleimani.

Two days after a missile launched from a U.S. drone killed the general on Jan. 3, the U.S.-led military coalition in Iraq announced a pause in its years long cooperation with Iraqi forces against ISIS remnants.

The Iran campaign also has been sidetracked by recent civil unrest that diverted the attention of Iraqi security forces previously focused on ISIS.

In the aftermath of the Soleimani killing, the durability of the defeat of ISIS is in doubt, and the extremist group has new breathing room.

Although the U.S. military during the Obama administration developed and was executing the strategy that eventually eliminated the ISIS group’s hold on territory in eastern Syria and northern and western Iraq, Trump has insisted he deserves full credit for the territorial defeat. He has made it a feature of his reelection campaign, but national security experts say the group’s remnants in Syria as well as Iraq are still a threat and could stage a comeback.

In an address Wednesday, Trump seemed to indicate the United States would not retaliate for the missile strike.

The Pentagon said the three bases that were struck had already been on high alert, and Iraq said it had received prior warning from Iran of an assault. No U.S. or Iraqi casualties were reported.

Stocks dropped and oil rose, though crude later pared gains on the reassuring signals. Major tanker companies, however, including Petrobas Brasileiro and the National Shipping Co. of Saudi Arabia, suspended sailing through the Straits of Hormuz, a major oil waterway, Dow Jones reported.

The Pentagon said it received verbal notice of an impending strike before the missiles actually hit. The move came hours after the U.S. administration imposed new round of sanctions on Iran’s supreme leader and his minions.

“Some of our response had been expected to the killing last week of Qassem Soleimani, who ran Iran’s proxy operations across the Middle East and was killed in a drone strike near the airport in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad. While Tehran doesn’t want outright war with the U.S., there was growing pressure at home to react. The balancing act was to do so without tipping things into a conflict that no one has an appetite for.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khameini described the attacks on the bases as a “crushing response.”

“Last night, they got a slap in the face,” he said on state television. He again demanded that the U.S. presence in the region come to an end, a sign that Tehran’s ultimate goal remains to push the U.S. military out of Iraq.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif sounded more conciliatory.

The government “concluded proportionate measures in self-defense” after the Soleimani strike, he said on Twitter. “We do not seek escalation or war, but will defend ourselves against any aggression.”

Iran has for years operated a carefully calibrated strategy of attacks, often via proxies, in the Middle East, that preserves its influence without drawing major retaliation. Crippled by economic sanctions, it can ill afford an outright war.

Iran’s attack sent futures on the S&P 500 Index down as much as 1.7% before paring losses. Gold initially advanced to the highest since 2013, though those gains were trimmed along with an advance in oil, which at one point surged above $65 a barrel.

The attacks on the U.S. targets were expected to further strain already tense ties between the U.S. and Iran. The attacks followed a Dec. 27 rocket assault on an Iraqi base that killed an American contractor.

World leaders urged restraint, and Turkey indicated it’s willing to mediate between the U.S. and Iran. Ankara has cordial relations with both regional neighbors, and enjoys warm ties with Trump, despite severe strains with Congress over a Russian missile purchase.

Trump has shown restraint in previous attacks in the region blamed on Iran that didn’t kill any U.S. citizens.

Tensions between the U.S. and Iran soared following a Dec. 27 rocket assault on an Iraqi base that killed an American contractor.

The U.S. blamed Kataeb Hezbollah, an Iraqi militia closely associated with Iran.

On Dec. 29, U.S. aircraft struck five bases in Iraq and Syria used by Kataeb Hezbollah.

Two days later, dozens of Iraqi militiamen and their supporters stormed the U.S. Embassy complex in Baghdad.

The U.S. responded with the drone strike on Soleimani.
**NATION**

**McConnell says he has votes to set rules for trial**

**By Lisa Mascaro, Mary Clare Jalonick and Alan Fram**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he has the votes to start President Donald Trump’s impeachment trial as soon as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi releases the documents, winning support from GOP senators to postpone a decision on calling witnesses.

The announcement Tuesday was significant, enabling McConnell to bypass for now Democratic demands for new testimony as he launches the third impeachment trial in the nation’s history. It could begin this week if Pelosi sends the articles of impeachment to the Senate.

But Pelosi gave little indication of her next move. She cut short an impeachment discussion with her leadership team Tuesday night at the Capitol when an aide handed her a note about the crisis unfolding in the Middle East. She asked Democrats to “pray,” according to a lawmaker at the closed-door session.

Pelosi appears in no rush to transmit the articles of impeachment as Democrats push to hear from more witnesses but McConnell focuses Republicans on a strategy for speedy acquittal. The Senate can’t act on the proceedings until the charges against Trump are sent.

“We have the votes,” McConnell told reporters about his proposal that would set the rules for a trial and would be modeled after President Bill Clinton’s impeachment 20 years ago. He said the question of new witnesses and documents will be addressed later “and not before the trial begins.”

The contours of a Senate trial have been in dispute for weeks. Pelosi is delaying transmission of the articles of impeachment for testimony from former national security adviser John Bolton and other new witnesses.

“Sadly, Leader McConnell has made clear that his loyalty is to the President and not the Constitution,” Pelosi wrote to colleagues late Tuesday. She said the process is “not only unfair but designed to deprive Senators and the American people of crucial during my time testimony.”

In withholding the articles, Pelosi gave Democrats an opportunity to ramp up pressure on Republicans not to go along with McConnell’s proposal. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called McConnell’s plan a “trap” and a “cover-up.” He vowed to force votes anyway on Bolton and the others.

“Whoevery heard of a trial without witnesses and documents?” New York Democrat said. He asked Trump what he has to hide. “Witnesses and documents: cover-up.”

Republicans countered that Democrats rushed to impeach and then delayed the process. Pelosi has yet to choose House impeachment managers for the trial, a politically sensitive next step, with many lawmakers vying to be candidates. The House impeached the president last month on the two charges.

Trump faces charges that he abused the power of the presidency by pressuring Ukraine’s new leader to investigate Democrats, using as leverage $400 million in military assistance that is critical for the ally as it counters Russia at its border.

The funding for Ukraine was eventually released but only after Congress intervened.

**Cancer group finds biggest 1 year drop in death rate**

**By Mike Stobbe**

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Researchers on Wednesday reported the largest one-year decline in the U.S. cancer death rate, a drop they credited to advances in lung-tumor treatments.

The overall cancer death rate has been falling about 1.5% a year since 1991, fell 2.2% from 2016 to 2017, according to the new American Cancer Society report.

That’s the largest drop ever seen in national cancer statistics going back to 1930, said Rebecca Siegel, the lead author.

“It’s absolutely driven by lung cancer,” which accounts for about a quarter of all cancer deaths, she said. Lung cancer made up the most of the mix, and the 2017 rate drop is 1.4%, she added.

Government researchers previously reported a slightly lower drop in the cancer death rate for the same period. But the Cancer Society calculates the death rate differently, and Wednesday said the decline was larger — and record-setting.

Most lung cancer cases are tied to smoking, and decades of declining smoking rates led to falling rates of lung cancer illnesses and deaths.

But the drop in deaths seems to have been accelerated by recent lung cancer treatment advances, Siegel said.

Experts mainly credit advances in treatment. Topping the list are refinements in surgery, better diagnostic scanning, and more precise use of radiation.

They also celebrate the impact of newer drugs. Genetic testing can now identify specific cancer cell mutations, which allow more targeted therapy using newer pharmaceuticals that are a step beyond traditional chemotherapy.

Cancer Society researchers also found:

* The overall cancer death rate fell by nearly 30% from 1991 through 2017.
* Death rates from one type of skin cancer dropped even more dramatically than lung cancer — falling 7% a year recently.
* Declines in melanoma patients is attributed to drugs that came on the market about nine years ago.
* Declines in the death rates from prostate, breast and colon cancer are slowing, for a range of reasons.
* The rising liver cancer death rate seems to have leveled off somewhat. That may be related to better treatment of hepatitis C infections, which are tied to about 25% of liver cancer cases, Siegel said.

**GOP congressman Hunter resigns after corruption conviction**

**By Julie Watson**

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Republican U.S. Rep. Duncan D. Hunter submitted his resignation Tuesday, one month after pleading guilty to a corruption charge, leaving vacant one of the GOP’s few remaining House seats in heavily Democratic California.

Hunter’s departure effective Jan. 13 ends his family’s political dynasty in which he and his father, Duncan L. Hunter, represented the San Diego County district for nearly 30 years. The combat Marine veteran — a staunch supporter of President Donald Trump — served 11 years in Congress.

His two-page letter of resignation — one version addressed to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and another to California Gov. Gavin Newsom — lists his accomplishments and doesn’t mention his criminal conviction. Newsom has not said whether he will order a special election or leave the seat open until a successor emerges from the November general election.

Hunter, 43, gave no reason for resigning in his letter, instead offering a sweep of his achievements as a Marine who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and as a six-term congressman.

“During my time in Congress, I had the privilege of helping thousands of individuals in my district — from making sure veterans received the benefits they earned, to helping Social Security and Medicare recipients cut through red tape, to assisting immigrants seeking legal citizenship, and countless others going up against the IRS, ATF or other government agencies,” he wrote.

There is no clear Republican favorite to succeed the conservative, immigration hardliner — one of the few congressmen to be re-elected while indicted.

After claiming to be the victim of a political witch hunt for more than a year, Hunter pleaded guilty Dec. 3 to a single charge of conspiring with his wife to illegally spending at least $150,000 in campaign funds on personal expenses. Among the improper spending were a birthday gathering for his young daughter at a posh California hotel and social outing with friends at a French bistro in Washington.

He is scheduled to be sentenced March 17. The judge could impose the maximum sentence of five years, but prosecutors have said they will ask for no more than a year of jail time. His wife Margaret Hunter also pleaded guilty. She is scheduled to be sentenced in April.

An August 2018 indictment accused Hunter of using $200,000 in campaign money to fund family travel, school tuition, jewelry, groceries, gas etc. Prosecutors said he also spent the funds on extramarital affairs and flights for his family’s pet bunny. He tried to conceal the illegal spending by listing it in federal records as donations for military veterans and other campaign-related expenses, according to the indictment.
Fears of Sanders win grow among Dem establishment

**By Steve Peoples and Alexandra Jaffe**
Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Increasingly alarmed that Bernie Sanders could become their party’s presidential nominee, establishment-minded Democrats are warning primary voters that the self-described democratic socialist would struggle to defeat President Donald Trump and hurt the party’s chances in premier House, Senate and governors’ races.

The urgent warnings come as Sanders shows new signs of strength on the ground in the first two states on the presidential primary calendar, Iowa and New Hampshire, backed by a dominant fundraising operation.

The Vermont senator has largely escaped close scrutiny over the last year as his rivals doubted the quirky 78-year-old’s ability to win the nomination. But less than a month before Iowa’s kickoff caucuses, the doubters are being forced to take Sanders seriously.

Former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, previously a senior aide to President Barack Obama, warned Democrats that Sanders’ status as a democratic socialist and his uncompromising approach for “Medicare for All” won’t play well among swing voters in the states that matter most in 2020.

“You need a candidate with a message that can help us win swing voters in battleground states,” Emanuel said in an interview. “The degree of difficulty dramatically increases under a Bernie Sanders candidacy. It just gets a lot harder.”

The increasingly vocal concerns are coming from a number of political veterans tied to the Obama administration and the 2020 field’s moderate wing, including those backing former Vice President Joe Biden.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, the Mississippi conference of the NAACP, the Mississippi chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups made the request to the U.S. Department of Justice. The letter warns that “it is no exaggeration to say more lives will be lost absent immediate intervention.”

“The Mississippi prison system is in a state of acute and undeniable crises, with five deaths in just the last ten days, and a history of preventable deaths and injuries stretching back years,” the 23-page complaint states.

“Mississippi has acknowledged the danger presented by severe understaffing and horrific conditions, but has repeatedly failed to take appropriate action.”

U.S. Rep Bennie Thompson, Mississippi’s only Democrat in Congress, called Sunday for a federal investigation after inmates were killed by fellow prisoners across three prisons and an unknown number of inmates were injured. Mississippi prison officials, who called in state troopers and a Tennessee prison guard team to regain control, have said four of the deaths are related to violence among gangs.

Speakers at a Tuesday rally outside the Mississippi Capitol in Jackson demanded that lawmakers reduce the prison population and make inmates safer.

The deaths and riot since Christmas have focused attention on a prison system that fills only about half its guard posts. Prison leaders seek an additional $67 million to raise pay, hire 800 new guards and renovate a Parchman cell block that was a focus of unrest. But law enforcement experts said it will take $2 billion to fix the system.

“Mississippi has acknowledged the danger presented by severe understaffing and horrific conditions, but has repeatedly failed to take appropriate action.”

“People in establishment Washington are terrified of Bernie Sanders,” Emanuel said. “The truth of the matter is their centrist tacking over the years has led us to the place where someone like Donald Trump can get elected.”

Several Sanders critics noted the senator’s largely escaped intense scrutiny throughout the campaign, in part because some assumed that Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, another progressive firebrand, was a stronger candidate who would cannibalize his support. With Warren’s candidacy struggling to maintain momentum, however, those assumptions are now being questioned.

Sanders is also facing lingering questions about his age, having bypassed recent highlights that calls his age into question. Those assumptions are now being questioned.

“I think he would not just lose but would lose badly — and I don’t think the country can afford that,” Matz said, noting that McGovern generated large crowds and enthusiasm just as Sanders has.

**Legal group seeks inquiry into Miss. prisons**

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — Prisoner advocates are calling on the federal government to investigate Mississippi’s prison system for possible civil rights violations, saying the violence of recent days highlights deliberate violations of inmates’ constitutional right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment.

A formal letter and protest came Tuesday after they said they were unable to find permanent housing in the Bay Area, where high-paying tech workers have been illegally living in a vacant three-bedroom house since November, partly to protest rising rents.

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**Moms 4 Housing members Domini\inkle Walker, left, 34, activist and 2018 Oakland mayoral candidate Cat Brooks, right, and other activists outside a home in West Oakland, Calif. Walker and other homeless women took over the vacant house last November. They are awaiting a final ruling from a judge on whether they can stay.**

**Associated Press**

OAKLAND, Calif. — Some California lawmakers said they support a group of homeless women who have been illegally living in a vacant three-bedroom house since November, partly to protest real estate speculators who drive up housing costs in the pricey San Francisco Bay Area.

“I want to thank Moms 4 Housing for taking that house and for demonstrating that nowhere, nowhere should there be a vacant house anywhere in California when we have the housing crisis that we have,” said Democratic Sen. Nancy Skinner of Berkeley.

“And it was totally legitimate for that we have,” said Democratic Airlines of the Homelessness Union and other groups made the request to the U.S. Department of Justice. The letter warns that “it is no exaggeration to say more lives will be lost absent immediate intervention.”

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Woman accused of throwing human feces

A Florida woman tossed a bucket of human feces at her landlord and somehow ended up with dried excrement smeared all over her own face, authorities said.

Joanne Mercader, 59, initially told deputies that her landlord first assaulted her with excrement. Mercader eventually told deputies that she had intended to toss a bucket of water on the landlord but she got confused and threw the bucket of feces at her.

The landlord told deputies she was met with the bucket of feces when she opened the door after no one answered. She said she had prearranged the visit to Mercader’s home to look at several broken items.

Fake passports used to launder fraud money

earlier.

The money was then largely sent to open three additional accounts.

Accounts and a Beninese passport to facilitate a money laundering conspiracy involving nearly $1 million.

Federal officials said a Maryland man used fake passports to open five bank accounts and a Beninese passport to open five additional accounts.

The money was then largely sent to other entities involved in the schemes.

Squirrel wrecks home; insurance won’t fix it

ATLANTA — An Atlanta couple said they came home from a winter vacation to find their house had been ransacked by an unusual suspect: a squirrel.

A squirrel had fallen down their chimney and was trapped in the house, defecating and scratching at everything to get out. Eventually it made its way into the couple’s couch.

The couple’s home insurance provider, Mercury Insurance, told them it wouldn’t cover the damages because “a squirrel is a rodent,” which is not covered under the policy.

Officer sorry for faked expletive on coffee cup

A former Kansas police officer who made up a story that a McDonald’s employee wrote an expletive and the word “pig” on a coffee cup has apologized.

Heads or tails

Mount CLEMENS — Criminals on the run in Michigan on Monday.

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An exciting new podcast from our award-winning editorial team explores controversial topics impacting the US military community.

Available on Apple App Store, Google Play, Spotify, and SoundCloud at Stripes.com/podcasts
Weinstein facing new case in LA, drawn-out jury selection

Weinstein, 67, who shuffled into court on a walker after recent back surgery, is charged in New York with raping one woman in a hotel room in 2013 and forcibly performing a sex act on another in 2006, and could get life in prison if convicted. In the Los Angeles case, which will be tried later, he is accused of sexually assaulting two women on back-to-back nights in 2013.

The former studio boss behind The Aviator and sexual assault trial is likely to be a pain-in-the-neck for the man widely considered one of the most powerful moguls, cutting off Weinstein off the #MeToo movement.

Selecting the jury for the Hollywood mogul’s rape and sexual assault trial is likely to be a pain-in-the-neck for the man widely considered one of the most powerful moguls, cutting off Weinstein off the #MeToo movement.

In fact, one-third of the first 120 prospective jurors summoned for the case were permanently sent home after the judge asked if there was anyone who could not be impartial and about 40 hands went up. Weinstein’s lawyers unsuccessfully tried to delay jury selection to have him drawn-out jury selection to have him drawn-out jury selection.

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The prospective jurors were given questionnaires asking, among other things, if they could ignore media coverage and decide the case based only on evidence heard in court. They were also told the trial will last six weeks, which could weed out many parents, college students and others with pressing day-to-day obligations.

The couple was alone, lamenting that their caretaker had disappeared and was not answering their calls. Like many Puerto Ricans affected by the quake, they had children in the U.S. mainland who urged them to move there, at least until the earth stops shaking.

Weinstein’s lawyers asked the iPhone-clutching movie mogul to stop texting in the courtroom. The judge threatened to jail him for violating a court order.

The resignation of Maricopa County Assessor Paul Petersen came after leaders pressured him to resign after his arrest nearly three months ago. The county’s governing board voted in late December to start the process of moving Petersen, who also works as an immigration attorney.

He is accused of illegally paying women from the Pacific island nation to come to the U.S. to give up their babies in at least 70 adoption cases in Arizona, Utah and Arkansas over three years. Citizens of the Marshall Islands have been prohibited from traveling to the U.S. for adoption purposes since 2003.

In a statement released by his attorneys, Petersen proclaimed his innocence and said he never neglected his duties as assessor.

He is charged with human smuggling in Utah and Arkansas and defrauding Arizona’s Medicaid system of $800,000 by submitting false applications for the women to receive state-funded health coverage. Authorities say the women who went to Utah to give birth received little or no prenatal care. They also said Petersen and his associates took passports from the women while they were in the U.S. to assert more control over them.

Petersen has pleaded not guilty to the charges in Arizona and Arkansas. He hasn’t yet entered a plea in Utah.
Ukrainian plane crashes near Tehran, killing 176

Associated Press

SHAHEDSHAH, Iran — A Ukrainian passenger jet carrying 176 people crashed on Wednesday, just minutes after taking off from the Iranian capital's main airport, turning farmland on the outskirts of Tehran into fields of flaming debris and killing all on board.

The crash of Ukraine International Airlines came hours after Iran launched a ballistic missile attack on Iraqi bases housing U.S. soldiers, but Iranian officials said they suspected a mechanical issue brought down the 3½-year-old Boeing 737-800 aircraft. Ukrainian officials initially agreed, but later backed away and declined to offer a cause while the investigation is ongoing.

The plane carried 167 passengers and nine crew members from different nations. Ukraine’s foreign minister, Vadym Prystaiko, said that there were 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians and 11 Ukrainians on board — the Ukrainian nationals included two passengers and the nine crew. There were also 10 Swedish, four Afghan, three German and three British nationals, he said.

Airline officials said most of the passengers were en route to the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, transiting through there to other destinations. Staff at the Boryspil airport in Kyiv told The Associated Press that passengers on this flight are usually Iranian students returning to Ukraine after winter holidays.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskiy extended his condolences to the families of the victims. His office said he had cut his visit to Oman short and was returning to Kyiv because of the crash. The country’s Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk confirmed the casualty toll.

“Ukraine International Airlines said it had indefinitely suspended flights to Tehran after the crash. “It was one of the best planes we had, with an amazing, reliable crew,” Yevhen Dykhne, president of the Ukraine International Airlines, said at a briefing following the crash.

Zelenskiy ordered a sweeping inspection of all civil airplanes in the country, “no matter the conclusions about the crash in Iran.”

The plane had been delayed from taking off from Imam Khomeini International Airport by almost an hour. It took off to the west, but never made it above 8,000 feet, according to data from the flight-tracking website FlightRadar24.

Qassem Biniaz, a spokesman for Iran’s Road and Transporta-
tion Ministry, said it appeared a fire struck one of its engines. The pilot of the aircraft then lost control of the plane, sending it crashing into the ground, Biniaz said, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

Hassan Razaeifar, the head of air crash investigation committee, said it appeared the pilot couldn’t communicate with air-traffic controllers in Tehran in the last moments of the flight. He did not elaborate. Authorities later said they found the plane’s black boxes.

Body bags line the pathway as rescue workers carry a body of a Ukrainian plane crash victim Wednesday in Shahedshahr, Iran.
**Fired up for new gig**

Lowe excited to represent first responders in new television series ‘9-1-1: Lone Star’

**By Beth Harris**  
Associated Press

Rob Lowe knows a little something about the vital roles of first responders, and he’s bringing that to TV with his latest role.

He co-stars with Liv Tyler in “9-1-1: Lone Star” as a New York fire captain who relocates to Austin, Texas, to launch a firehouse from the ground up.

Lowe lives in Santa Barbara, Calif., which has endured wildfires and flooding in recent years. The actor has hosted and fed firefighters and police on his property.

“I was really interested in why these men and women do what they do, what does it mean to them, how do they go and sleep in the dirt for weeks on end if it comes to that and pull the kind of hours,” Lowe told a TV critics meeting Tuesday. “It was fortuitous that I had that in my own life leading up to this.”

Lowe said he already knew medical lingo from his time on “Code Black.” “9-1-1: Lone Star” marks his return to a starring role on U.S. TV for the first time since CBS series’ 2016-18 run; it’s Tyler’s first network series.

Lowe’s favorite part of the new show is “it’s the only network procedural you’ll see where the male hero is obsessed with men’s skin care.” There’s a keto diet joke in the pilot (Lowe promotes the Atkins eating plan and has his own skin care line in real life).

Ryan Murphy (“Nip/Tuck”), Brad Falchuk and Tim Minear co-created and co-executive produce the show.

“Let’s face it, I’m not a stranger to looking in the mirror,” Lowe said. “They knew how to write for me so any of that crazy stuff is probably coming from them knowing me as well as I know myself.”

Murphy once wrote a role in “Nip/Tuck” for Lowe, but his agents never passed it onto the actor even though he loved the show.

“It’s the humor, the weirdness, the randomness that we get to weave into this,” Lowe said. “There’s a lot of ‘Nip/Tuck’ tone in this.”

The series debuts Jan. 19 stateside after the NFC championship game, with a second episode airing Jan. 20 in its regular time slot.

In preparation for the role, Lowe trained with a Los Angeles Fire Department unit near Dodger Stadium. But his famous face posed a problem with real-life victims.

“People are like, ‘I don’t feel safe with Rob Lowe standing there. I don’t feel like the real experts showed up,’” he said, smiling.

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**Rascal Flatts announces farewell tour**

Country group Rascal Flatts will bless the broken road this year on their farewell tour on their 20th anniversary together.

The trio of Gary LeVox, Jay DeMarcus and Joe Don Rooney announced the tour on “CBS This Morning” on Tuesday, saying there were no plans for the band after their farewell tour on their 20th anniversary.

The band formed in 2000 and has had a number of No. 1 country hits, including crossover successes with songs like “Bless the Broken Road,” “Life Is a Highway” and “What Hurts The Most.”

Les Claypool of Primus, Trey Anastasio of Phish and Stewart Copeland of The Police.

**Lizzo to headline Bonnaroo**

After dominating 2019, singer-rapper Lizzo will be the first female act to headline the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival this June. Tame Impala will also headline the four-day festival.

The festival announced the lineup Tuesday for its 19th year. Bonnaroo will be held June 11-14 in Manchester, Tenn.

Miley Cyrus, Lana Del Rey, DaBaby, Megan Thee Stallion, Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit, the 1975, Vampire Weekend and others will also perform.

Returning to Bonnaroo will be Leon Bridges, Bassnecatt, Run The Jewels, as well as the group Oysterhead, featuring Les Claypool of Primus, Trey Anastasio of Phish and Stewart Copeland of The Police.

**Celebs donate millions to aid Australia wildfire efforts**

Elton John and Chris Hemsworth are among the celebrities donating big bucks to help aid the efforts for the engulfing wildfires in Australia.

Hemsworth, the Australian actor, took to social media on Monday to share that he will donate $1 million and asked his plethora of followers to show support as well. He said that “every penny counts.”

So far, the wildfires have scorched an area twice the size of Maryland. The blazes have killed 25 people and destroyed 2,000 homes.

The fires, fueled by drought and the country’s hottest and driest year on record, have been raging since September, months earlier than is typical for Australia’s annual wildfire season.

“Like you, I want to support the fight against the bushfires here in Australia,” he said in a video on Twitter. “Hopefully you guys can chip in too. Every penny counts, so whatever you can muster up is greatly appreciated.

In my bio I’ve added links to support the fire fighters, organisations and charities who are working flat out to provide support and relief during this devastating and challenging time.”

John announced during his Farewell Yelow Brick Road concert in Sydney, Australia, that he will also donate $1 million. The singer said he wanted to bring attention to the devastation that wildfires have caused, saying it has reached a “biblical scale.”

Hemsworth and John join a growing list of celebrities who have pledged to donate toward relief efforts including Nicole Kidman, Pink and Keith Urban.

From The Associated Press
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

ACROSS
1 Opening
4 Small statue
8 Recognized
12 Flamenco cry
13 Vow
14 Used a loom
15 Ancestry
17 Lacked
25 "Flame out"
26 Originally
18 "Selma" director
19 Victors
20 Napa business
24 Cartoonist Chast
25 "Guinness" Book's suffix
26 — Aviva
28 Twangy
30 Yale students
34 Misery
35 Rights org.
37 Prepares to travel
39 JFK's veep
41 Scooted
42 Sundial numeral
44 Danish explorer
46 Inflexible
50 Male turkey
51 Spanish greeting
52 Shared rumors
56 $ dispensers
57 Guesser's words
58 Before
59 Toucan feature
60 Nashville's st.
61 Apply cream

DOWN
1 Republicans
2 Pub pint
3 Nitpicking
4 "Key Largo" star
5 Former
6 Leftovers recipe
7 "A League" of — Own
8 Year-end celebration
9 "Uh-uh"
10 Always
11 Marries
16 " — had it!
20 Dijon denial
21 Sob
22 Madonna's "La — Bonita"
23 Evergreen tree
27 Texier's chuckle
29 Was frugal
30 Actor Cumming
31 Breathing organ
33 Aspen headwear
35 Flow out
38 "Chandelier" singer
40 George or Jane of cartoons
43 Gold mold
45 King in Cannes
46 Melville's obsessed captain
47 Lavish affection
(on)
53 Nine-digit ID
54 Mound stat
55 Society newbie

Answer to Previous Puzzle

CRYPTOQUIP

A W B R I Q Y R S W N D R Z W T Q S K R R T
A R H Q N I F L Z N Q N R T L W H Z N R
F W Z S L N R B I Q D S R A N K L
Q L Y L Z N D L Q: F D Q S R N L S K.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN WATER GRADUALLY OOZES ITS WAY THROUGH SOME BANDAGE MATERIAL, MIGHT THAT BE GAUZE-MOSES?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals T
We shouldn’t further risk GIs in Iraq, Syria

BY DANIEL L. DAVIS Special to Stars and Stripes

A n American contractor has been killed in Iraq. Several U.S. troops have been wounded. The terrorist organisation in Baghdad has been stormed by protesters and following the assassination of an Iranian general. The attack was a response to the assassination of Qassem Soleimani. The majority of Americans may have been shocked by the news, but the majority of Iraqis and Syrians have now come to expect such attacks. Moreover, the attacks have been ignored. There is little doubt that this action helped play a role in uniting otherwise competing political actors in Iraq who are now calling for the U.S. troops to be expelled from the country.

President Donald Trump should not wait to make a strategic departure from Iraq, but should instead begin planning for the orderly, professional withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel. Simply stated, there is nothing to be gained by American soldiers being killed in Iraq or Syria that necessitates a permanent and open-ended U.S. military presence.

As I have been arguing since early 2018, the only thing we accomplish by having troops in this region is to increase the risk we have for confrontation with Iran. We can be sure that this has been a common refrain over a longer conflict. Three times in an 18-month span, Trump said he would withdraw troops from Syria, yet they remain there, still at risk of attack.

There has long since been no rationale for our troops to remain in Iraq since ISIS was defeated. The issue of Afghan contractors being employed, there would not have been any Americans in Iraq to have been attacked, and the escalation with Iran would have been avoided. Further escalating this already tense conflict could eventually be the spark that turns the already turbulent region into a raging inferno.

Before we get to this stage, before one more American troop or contractor is killed, Trump’s administration should take an interest and withdraw all our troops from both Syria and Iraq. Allowing the situation to deteriorate further could have catastrophic results for our country.

Daniel L. Davis is a senior fellow for Defense Priorities and a former lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army who retired in 2015 after 21 years, including four combat deployments.

Making McConnell minority leader is a tall task

BY DAVID VON DREHLE The Washington Post

T he man who drives Democrats crazy lives in the White House, but the mood around the 73-year-old American of hurt is Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

He’s the kind of fellow such that he’s approaching Democratic Montana legend Mike Mansfield’s record as the longest-serving party leader in Senate history. In last year’s midterm elections, they held firm — McConnell’s then a man. In return, the leader has delivered victories for his team to run on. Notably, he served up a platter of GOP tax cuts in 2018 and marched a phalanx of conservatives on federal policy a three-year push that will assist American life for a generation.

No matter how queasy the president’s impulsive Twitter feed makes Senate Republicans (“thinking out loud with unverified facts” is the diplomatic description of them, he uses), McConnell’s grip on his caucus is ironclad. In recent memory, he has lost only one significant vote: the dramatic thumbs-down rendered by John McCain, R-Ariz., in 2017, when his own seat was in danger.

So Democrats are deluding themselves about wresting control of impeachment from McConnell’s bloodless grip. The only way to be rid of his nemesis is to win more seats. In the 100-member Senate, they need to grow their numbers from 47 (counting the two independents who caucus with them) to at least 50 or 51, depending on which party has the tie-breaking vice president. How likely is that?

If it happens, it will start in Colorado, where Democratic Sen. Cory Gardner is being assigned an approval rating south of 40%. Popular Democratic former Gov. John Hickenlooper, who presented a strong challenge, and donors pointed him toward the Senate instead. Like a lion on a limping gazelle, he has Gardner by the throat. One poll put him down 20 points. His security in America and the escalating tensions with Iran could already be avoided. Further escalating this already tense conflict could eventually be the spark that turns the already turbulent region into a raging inferno.

Before we get to this stage, before one more American troop or contractor is killed, Trump’s administration should take an interest and withdraw all our troops from both Syria and Iraq. Allowing the situation to deteriorate further could have catastrophic results for our country.

Daniel L. Davis is a senior fellow for Defense Priorities and a former lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army who retired in 2015 after 21 years, including four combat deployments.

And in Michigan, first-term incumbent Democrat Gary Peters has his hands full against Republican Sen. Gary Peters is a 2018, when polarizing conservative Kris Kobach narrowly won the party’s nomination. Democrats have cleared the way for state Sen. Thom Tillis in the Tarheel State. A popular general, Now Sessions wants the seat back, and he will be harder to beat than Jones’ previous opponent, creepy Roy Moore.

Meanwhile, McConnell has his eye on Monday that he won’t step aside for confrontation with Iran, told the majority leader on Monday that he won’t step down to defend the seat of retiring Sen. Pat Roberts.

Kansas Republicans had hoped Pompeo would save them from a possible replay of 2018, when polarizing conservative Kris Kobach narrowly won the party’s nomination. For GOP voters, he was always blown by reed Democrat Laura Kelly in the general election. Kobach is back to challenge the rather ho-hum Rep. Roger Marshall for the Senate nomination. Democrats have cleared the way for state Sen. Barbara Bollier, who is so centrists that she was a Republican until 2020.

Spurred by Pompeo, the stop-Kobach movement is likely to summon lobbyist Matt Borges, who is the chair of the American Conservative Union and a frequent face on Fox News, Southern Baptists and support from his former employers at Koch Industries. On the other hand, he’s a rookie.

In sum, it’s folly to make predictions in the age of Trump. But if Democrats are to free of McConnell, their most effective foe, they have a lot of work to do.

David Von Drehle is a Washington Post columnist. He is the author of ‘Rise to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln and America’s Most Perilous Year.”
**SPORTS**

**College football**

**Bowl schedule**
- *Friday, Dec. 20*
  - *Bowl at Miami Gardens, Fla.*
  - *Dolphins* vs. *49ers*

**Tuesday's scores**
- *No. 1 Michigan vs. No. 10 Iowa*
  - *Northwestern 14, Penn State 7*
  - *Illinois 19, Wisconsin 14*
  - *Maryland 17, Michigan State 16*
  - *Purdue 41, Ohio State 24*

**Cowboys' deals from finished 2018 season**
- *QB Dak Prescott*
  - *RT La'el Collins*
  - *WR Allen Hurns*
  - *WR Allen Barbre*
  - *DE Taco Charlton*

**College basketball**

**Eastern**
- *Boston College*
  - *11-14, 5-10 ACC*
- *Boston University*
  - *12-13, 7-9 AE*

**Midwest**
- *Miami (Ohio)*
  - *11-11, 6-6 MAC*
- *Ohio State*
  - *17-2, 8-0 Big Ten*

**SOUTHWEST**
- *New Mexico*
  - *11-11, 6-6 MWC*
- *Oklahoma State*
  - *12-10, 8-5 Big 12*

**Far West**
- *USC*
  - *12-4, 7-3 Pac-12*
- *Washington State*
  - *10-4, 6-3 Pac-12*

**Men's top 25 schedule**
- *No. 25 Virginia vs. No. 22 Texas Tech*
  - *ACC*

**Remaining free agents**

**Pro baseball**

**College basketball**

**Men's scores**
- *North Carolina vs. South Carolina*
  - *North Carolina 57, South Carolina 56*
- *Virginia vs. Virginia Tech*
  - *Virginia 71, Virginia Tech 66*

**Pro baseball**

**College basketball**

**Men's scores**
- *North Carolina vs. Duke*
  - *North Carolina 99, Duke 74*
- *Virginia vs. Boston College*
  - *Virginia 84, Boston College 62*

**College basketball**

**Tuesday's scores**
- *No. 24 Purdue vs. No. 21 Ohio State*
  - *Purdue 61, Ohio State 53*
- *Indiana vs. No. 15 Michigan State*
  - *Michigan State 57, Indiana 48*

**College basketball**

**Tuesday's scores**
- *Boston College vs. Virginia*
  - *Virginia 90, Boston College 71*
- *Virginia Tech vs. Syracuse*
  - *Virginia Tech 53, Syracuse 52*

**College basketball**

**Tuesday's scores**
- *No. 7 Virginia vs. No. 11 Duke*
  - *Virginia 62, Duke 48*
- *No. 13 North Carolina vs. No. 23 Virginia Tech*
  - *North Carolina 84, Virginia Tech 62*

**College basketball**

**Tuesday's scores**
- *No. 5 Virginia vs. No. 1 North Carolina*
  - *North Carolina 72, Virginia 65*
- *No. 11 Duke vs. No. 21 Boston College*
  - *Boston College 84, Duke 65*

**College basketball**

**Tuesday's scores**
- *No. 12 Duke vs. No. 15 North Carolina*
  - *North Carolina 80, Duke 66*
- *No. 5 Virginia vs. No. 4 Duke*
  - *Virginia 63, Duke 60*

**College basketball**

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**College basketball**
Lakers’ win over Knicks leaves Davis bruised

Associated Press

The Los Angeles Lakers gathered around Anthony Davis while the six-time All-Star winched in pain on the Staples Center floor. Another buzzy blowout win had just become much less fun for the Lakers and their superstar big man, although it’s too soon to say just how serious it will be for their championship dreams.

Davis left in the third quarter after bruising his lower back on a painful fall during the Lakers’ sixth straight victory, 117-87 over the New York Knicks on Tuesday night.

Davis bruised his sacrum — the bottom part of his spine above the tailbone — when he attempted to block a shot. He got knocked off balance and fell awkwardly to the court, landing hard on his back with 2:45 left in the third.

“We hope he’s all right,” Kenta- vious Caldwell-Pope said. “We’ve just hoping he’ll get better soon. We need him.”

James scored 31 points and Caldwell-Pope added 15 as the Lakers bounced back from a flagrant foul to his head by Bobby Portis, but Los Angeles (30-7) didn’t exactly celebrate becoming the sec- ond NBA team to win 30 games this season.

NBA

Roundup

Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis winces after hitting the court while trying to defend a shot by New York Knicks forward Julius Randle. Right, Davis left the game but the Lakers won 117-87.

F3FIJKLM Thursday, January 9, 2020

Los Angeles Lakers at New York Knicks

Los Angeles 117, New York 87 (OT):

Chris Paul scored 26 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter and overtime, leading Oklahoma City to a win at Brooklyn.

Juliette Morris

Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis winces after hitting the court while trying to defend a shot by New York Knicks forward Julius Randle. Right, Davis left the game but the Lakers won 117-87.

Jazz 114, Suns 103:

De’Aaron Fox scored 27 points, six rebounds, and five assists as the Sacramento Kings won their third straight.

Pistons 115, Cavaliers 113:

Derrick Rose hit a 15-footer with 27 seconds left and Detroit rallied to a win at Cleveland.

Rose, who scored 24 points, scored on a runner in the lane to give the Pistons a 114-113 lead and cap a comeback that began with the Pistons trailing 110-91 early in the fourth quarter.

Cavaliers set up for a go-ahead foul, but Collin Sexton was called for stepping on out of bounds with seven seconds left. The ruling was overturned, but Sexton’s shot in the lane didn’t hit the rim and Detroit was awarded possession on a shot-clock violation.

Andre Drummond finished with 23 points and 20 rebounds, the 38th time in his career he has hit the 20-mark in both categories.

Kevin Love matched a season-high with 30 points, but Cleveland lost its fifth straight and went win- less on its four-game homestand.

Thunder 111, Nets 103 (OT):

Russell Westbrook scored 20 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter and overtime, leading Oklahoma City to a win at Brooklyn.

Julius Randle, right, Davis left the game but the Lakers won 117-87.

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Lightning center Carter Verhaeghe receives congratulations from the bench after his third goal against the Vancouver Canucks during the third period of Tuesday's game in Tampa, Fla.

**Roundup**

**Bruins hammer Preds in Hynes’ debut as coach**

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — David Pastrnak scored for the third consecutive game, Tuukka Rask made 34 saves and the Boston Bruins beat the Nashville Predators 6-2 on Tuesday night.

Danton Heinen, Patrice Bergeron, Chris Wagner, David Krejci and Charlie Coyle also scored for the Bruins, who snapped a three-game losing streak.

“Anytime you get balanced scoring, it just takes so much pressure off of the other guys,” Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. “It turns a lot of those one-goal games into two or three goal wins if they can pitch in every night. That’s the goal.”

Filip Forsberg and Mikael Granlund tried to lift the Predators which has lost five of six. Pekka Rinne finished with 30 saves.

New NHL coach John Hynes lost his debut. Hynes replaced Lavello in overtime. He fired Monday after 5 ½ seasons as head coach.

Pastrnak scored the game’s first goal at 1:36 of the opening period. Pastrnak had three goals in three straight games and extended his point-scoring streak to 11.

**Blues 3, Sharks 2: Dallas Stars:**

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**Blues 3, Sharks 2: Dallas Stars:**

Dallas Stars coach Rick Bowness led the Stars to their second straight win after losing their previous three games.

The Stars, who had scored only two goals in their previous two games, got three goals from Roope Hintz and a goal and an assist from Denis Gurianov.

The Stars also got goals from Esa Lindell, Radek Faksa and Jamie Oleksiak.

**Wild 5, Hurricanes 1:**

The Minnesota Wild held off a late rally by the Carolina Hurricanes to win their second straight game.

The Wild scored four goals in the second period to take a 4-1 lead and held off a late surge by the Hurricanes to win 5-1.

The Wild went 4-0-0 in March and have won three straight games.

**NHL Power Rankings:**

1. **Tampa Bay Lightning:** The Lightning are on a five-game winning streak, with wins over the New Jersey Devils, New York Rangers and Philadelphia Flyers.

2. **Boston Bruins:** The Bruins have won three straight games, including a 6-2 win over the Nashville Predators.

3. **Edmonton Oilers:** The Oilers are on a three-game winning streak, with wins over the Los Angeles Kings, New York Islanders and San Jose Sharks.

4. **Pittsburgh Penguins:** The Penguins have won four straight games, including a 5-3 win over the New York Rangers.

5. **Los Angeles Kings:** The Kings have won three straight games, beating the Chicago Blackhawks, Vancouver Canucks and Arizona Coyotes.

**Western Conference Standings:**

1. **St. Louis Blues:** The Blues have won five straight games, including a 3-2 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks.

2. **Dallas Stars:** The Stars have won four straight games, including a 4-2 win over the Nashville Predators.

3. **New York Rangers:** The Rangers have won three straight games, including a 3-2 win over the Carolina Hurricanes.

4. **Florida Panthers:** The Panthers have won three straight games, beating the Vancouver Canucks, Anaheim Ducks and Buffalo Sabres.

5. **Los Angeles Kings:** The Kings have won three straight games, beating the Chicago Blackhawks, Vancouver Canucks and Arizona Coyotes.

**Eastern Conference Standings:**

1. **Washington Capitals:** The Capitals have won four straight games, including a 6-0 win over the New York Islanders.

2. **New York Islanders:** The Islanders have won three straight games, beating the Montreal Canadiens, Carolina Hurricanes and New Jersey Devils.

3. **Boston Bruins:** The Bruins have won three straight games, including a 6-2 win over the Nashville Predators.

4. **New York Rangers:** The Rangers have won three straight games, beating the St. Louis Blues, New York Islanders and Vancouver Canucks.

5. **Detroit Red Wings:** The Red Wings have won three straight games, beating the New Jersey Devils, New York Islanders and Pittsburgh Penguins.

**Scoreboard**

**Eastern Conference:**

1. **Washington Capitals** (49-16-7) - 106 points
2. **New York Islanders** (48-17-6) - 102 points
3. **Boston Bruins** (47-18-7) - 101 points
4. **New York Rangers** (46-19-6) - 98 points
5. **Washington Capitals** (45-18-8) - 98 points

**Western Conference:**

1. **St. Louis Blues** (41-18-11) - 93 points
2. **Dallas Stars** (40-17-14) - 94 points
3. **New York Rangers** (39-16-13) - 81 points
4. **Florida Panthers** (38-15-13) - 89 points
5. **Los Angeles Kings** (37-14-11) - 85 points

**NHL Today:**

- **NHL Power Rankings:**
  - The NHL has released its weekly power rankings, with the St. Louis Blues, Dallas Stars, New York Islanders, Boston Bruins and New York Rangers in the top five.

- **NHL Standings:**
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  - The Daily Rewind provides a round-up of the night’s games, including highlights of the day’s biggest matchups.

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Roles: Gilder, Woolridge critical to Zags’ success

FROM BACK PAGE

They’re part of a Texas trio playing big roles for the No. 1 team in the country. Woolridge, Gilder and backup forward Drew Timme all left the comforts of Texas — the Dallas area, to be specific — for the chance to play for an elite program.

So far, they’re giving Gonzaga exactly what it needs. Woolridge has started every game, leads the team in assists, is second in minutes played and is scoring 10.5 points per game. Gilder is right behind him at 10.2 per game. Timme is usually Gonzaga’s first post player off the bench and is averaging 9.2 points per game while shooting nearly 58% from the field. If Timme has a couple of big games scoring, the Zags could have an unheard of seven players averaging in double figures.

While Timme was Gonzaga-bound from the start, the additions of Gilder and Woolridge have become critical for the Zags.

The two guards immediately stepped into important roles for a team lacking depth in the backcourt. The graduation of Josh Perkins and the early departure of Zach Norvell Jr. for the NBA left the Bulldogs extremely thin at the guard spots, and while Gonzaga has guard help coming for the 2020-21 season, it needed to find a solution in the transfer market for this season.

“Gonzaga hit me up and I was like, ‘OK, well I’m gonna, I have to take a visit out there for sure,’” Woolridge said. “I was thinking I had taken two visits already, but I was like, I have to take one out there.”

Woolridge had always admired Gonzaga from afar even as he developed into a solid player at North Texas. Coming out of high school, Woolridge thought he was going to Texas to be a star for the Longhorns. A coaching change landed Woolridge at San Diego, but a family illness caused him to return to Texas before he ever played a game in California.

So North Texas became his option. As his career progressed, Woolridge thought there could be another opportunity out there once he finished his degree. Woolridge visited Arkansas and Oklahoma State, and was about to set up a trip to Arizona when Gonzaga reached out.

“At the beginning it was just kind of shocked, kind of star-struck I guess you could say, because I’ve always watched them on TV,” Woolridge said. “And then just being able to come here and step in these shoes is almost like a dream.”

Gilder was hoping just to play again. The former Texas state player of the year as a senior in high school should be done with his college career. Last year at Texas A&M was supposed to be the conclusion.

But he never played a minute for the Aggies in 2018-19 after three years of being a major contributor.

Gilder missed the start of the season due to a knee injury. He was then diagnosed with a blood clot. He missed his entire senior season with the Aggies and wasn’t cleared to resume basketball activities until after the season was over.

And when former Texas A&M coach Billy Kennedy was fired after the season, Gilder decided to move on as well.

“Just the situation, knowing what they had lost and what kind of position they were in and knowing I could come and fit right in,” Gilder said. “And it’s the way I’ve always wanted to play, up-tempo, fast, just get up and down the court and scoring.”

Gonzaga forward Drew Timme pivots to shoot against Portland on Jan. 2. Timme is one of three Dallas players on the team.

### Roundup

**Maryland tops Ohio St., stays unbeaten at home**

Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Anthony Cowan Jr. scored 20 points, and No. 12 Maryland used an unyielding defensive performance to defeat 11th-ranked Ohio State 67-55 Tuesday night and remain unbeaten at home.

Jalen Smith had 11 points and seven rebounds for the Terrapins (13-2, 3-1 Big Ten), who have won three straight. Maryland went up by 10 on a three-pointer by Cowan with 12:58 left and cruised to the finish.

The Buckeyes (11-4, 1-3) shot a miserable 31%, went 5-for-27 from three-point range and committed 14 turnovers.

**No. 4 Baylor 79, No. 22 Texas Tech 52:** Davion Mitchell scored 14 points, Mark Vital grabbed 13 rebounds and the visiting Bears stretched their winning streak to 11 games with a win over the Red Raiders.

Baylor (12-1, 2-0 Big 12) held on even though its last field goal came with 3:06 left.

Texas Tech (10-4, 1-1) lost at home for the first time in nearly a year. The Red Raiders had won 15 consecutive home games since a loss to Iowa State last Jan. 16, and are 58-6 at home under fourth-year coach Chris Beard.

**No. 13 Louisville 74, Miami 58:** Jordan Nwora scored 19 points, including a critical layup with 5:21 remaining, and Darius Perry and Ryan McMahon followed with key baskets down the stretch to help the host Cardinals pull away from the Hurricanes.

Louisville (12-3, 3-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) bounced back from consecutive losses to ranked foes, at Kentucky and at home to Florida State.

The Cardinals led by 20 midway through the first half before Miami got within 11 at the break.

**No. 14 Kentucky 78, Georgia 69:** Immanuel Quickley’s three-pointer gave his team its first lead of the second half and the visiting Wildcats overcame Anthony Edwards’ 23 points to beat the Bulldogs and continue their domination of the Southeastern Conference rivalry.

Kentucky (11-3, 2-0) trailed 37-31 at halftime before finally taking the lead on Quickley’s three with 8:06 remaining. Georgia (10-4, 0-1) never regained the lead.

**No. 16 Villanova 64, Creighton 59:** Collin Gillespie and Saddiq Bey made back-to-back three-pointers to give their team the lead for good in the final minutes, and the Wildcats ended a six-game Big East road losing streak by beating the Bluejays.

Villanova (11-3, 2-1 Big East) overcame another poor shooting performance to end Creighton’s 15-game home winning streak and deny Bluejays coach Greg McDermott his 500th career win. Creighton (12-4, 1-2) has lost two in a row, both to ranked opponents.

**Boston College 60, No. 18 Virginia 53:** Jared Hamilton hit a tiebreaking three-pointer with 37 seconds left and added a pair of free throws to clinch it as the host Eagles beat the Cavaliers and sent the defending national champions to their first Atlantic Coast Conference loss of the season.

Jay Heath scored 17 for Boston College (9-6, 3-1), which had not beaten Virginia since 2013. It was BC’s first win over a ranked team since a victory over No. 11 Florida State last January.

**Rutgers 72, No. 20 Penn State 61:** Ron Harper Jr. had 22 points to help the host Scarlet Knights beat the Nittany Lions.

Rutgers took a lead at 34-33 on a three-pointer by Myles Johnson with 17:53 to go. It was the Scarlet Knights’ first lead since 4:3, when Harper hit two foul shots from a flagrant foul on Jamari Wheeler. As Rutgers was trying to inbound, Wheel-er elbowed Harper in the chin.

**Air Force 79, Utah State 60:** Ryan Swan had a career-high 14 points for the Falcons as they won an upset over the Aggies.

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No. 7 Aztecs
San Diego's hottest ticket

BY BERNIE WILSON
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — San Diego State basketball is back to being the hottest ticket in town.

Viejas Arena is hopping again because the undefeated and seventh-ranked Aztecs are playing as well as they did during their two Sweet 16 seasons during the last decade, including the one led by Kawhi Leonard.

This team’s a trio of transfers — guards Malachi Flynn and KJ Feagin, and forward Yanni Wetzell — powering the Aztecs (15-0, 4-0 Mountain West Conference). SDSU and Auburn are the nation’s only undefeated teams.

Besides having the nation’s longest winning streak, the Aztecs are No. 1 in the latest NET (NCAA Evaluation Tool), which replaced RPI as the primary method for NCAA Tournament seeding.

In their third season under coach Brian Dutcher, the Aztecs have blown out BYU, beat Creighton and Iowa on consecutive nights in Las Vegas and beaten Utah of the Pac-12 at Staples Center in Los Angeles.

On Saturday night, SDSU claimed a big win at defending MWC champion Utah State.

SDSU had another tough trip Wednesday, when the Aztecs will face Wyoming at 7:22 p.m., before returning home to face Boise State.

“I say this is the best West Coast environment,” said Dutcher, who was an assistant when Steve Fisher elevated SDSU from a hoops backwater to national relevance.

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“One-time paring of Williams, Wozniacki reaches semis

By Kyle Hightower
Associated Press

BOSTON — Major League Baseball says it will investigate allegations the Boston Red Sox illegally used their video replay room to steal signs between opposing pitchers and catchers during their 2018 World Series championship season.

The claims were made Tuesday in a report by The Athletic. The website cited three anonymous sources it said were with the Red Sox during the 2018 season who said some players visited the replay room during games to get information on sign sequences.

Those sources told The Athletic that the Red Sox weren’t able to do it during the postseason because of in-person monitors used by MLB in those games.

“The Commissioner made clear in a September 15, 2017 memorandum to clubs how seriously he would take any future violation of the regulations regarding use of electronic equipment or the inappropriate use of the video replay room. Given these allegations, MLB will commence an investigation into this matter,” the league said in a statement.

The Red Sox said they will cooperate as MLB looks into the allegations.

“We were recently made aware of allegations suggesting the inappropriate use of our video replay room,” the team said in a statement.

“We take these allegations seriously and will fully cooperate with MLB as they investigate the matter.”

The incident that prompted MLB’s 2017 warning from Commissioner Rob Manfred to teams came after the Red Sox were fined an undisclosed sum for “sending electronic communications from their video replay room to an athletic trainer in the dugout” during an August 2017 series against the rival New York Yankees.

The New York Times reported that general manager Brian Cashman filed a complaint with the commissioner’s office regarding that incident which included video. The newspaper said it showed a member of Boston’s training staff looking at his Apple Watch in the dugout and relaying a message to players.

Manfred said at the time that future violations would be subject to more serious sanctions, including possible loss of draft picks. He said last month that he has the authority to levy even stiffer penalties.

The latest allegations against the Red Sox come after The Athletic reported last month that the Houston Astros allegedly stole signs during home games of their 2017 World Series championship season by using a camera positioned in center field.

Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora was the bench coach for that team and has spoken with MLB. He has declined further comment on the matter.
Source: Giants close to hiring Patriots’ Judge

By Tom Canavan
Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — New England Patriots assistant Joe Judge probably is going to have to wait another day before finalizing a contract to become the somewhat surprising choice as head coach of the four-time champion New York Giants.

The team and representatives for Judge worked most of Tuesday on a deal to bring the 38-year-old to the Meadowlands in New Jersey to revive a franchise that tumbled to the bottom of the NFL in recent years, a person familiar with the negotiations said.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity Tuesday because the deal is not done. The person did not expect the contract to be finalized until Wednesday at the earliest. The Bills said on their Twitter account that they had interviewed Judge.

Mentored by Bill Belichick and Nick Saban in a 15-year career, Judge would become a head coach for the first time. He would be one of the youngest NFL coaches, but still five years older than Sean McVay of the Los Angeles Rams, who at 33 is the league’s youngest.

Judge has won three Super Bowls with New England in eight years as an assistant on Belichick’s staff. He was the fifth candidate the Giants interviewed since Pat Shurmur on Dec. 30, but he was not considered among the front-runners until having an impressive interview on Monday.

The early leading candidates were Baylor coach Matt Rhule and former Packers coach Mike McCarthy.

McCarthy was interviewed on Friday, but he agreed Monday to become the Dallas Cowboys’ new coach. Rhule, who was supposed to interview with New York on Tuesday, signed a seven-year, $62 million contract with the Carolina Panthers on Tuesday, a person familiar with that deal told AP.

The third new coach tabbed for the NFC East in a week — Ron Rivera was hired by the Washington Redskins on Wednesday — Judge would take over a team that went 4-12 and 5-11 in Shurmur’s two seasons and has been to the playoffs only since winning the Super Bowl after the 2011 season.

By the numbers

Cumulative winning percentage for the three New York Giants head coaches since Tom Coughlin was fired in 2015.

.359

Cumulative winning percentage for the 12 former Bill Belichick assistants who became head coaches.

.420

Playoff collapse shows Bills there’s still work to be done

BUFFALO — Josh Allen finally is learning the importance of patience.

“Josh is learning the lessons he needs,” Buffalo Bills coach Sean McDermott said this is no time to rest on the modest accomplishments of this past season. The Bills had difficulty generating turnovers and their defensive line has yet to take off as it did in the 2017 season.

Allen followed a strong first half against the Texans by melting down over the final two quarters and overtime with a series of miscues. He lost one fumble and nearly another with an ill-timed lateral. He appeared to panic in being called for an intentional grounding penalty while trying to avoid a sack in the final two minutes on third-and-13 from Houston’s 28. On the following play, he was sacked for a 19-yard loss.

“I think it all comes back to, for Josh, trying to do too much,” McDermott said. “That’s been something we’ve talked about, something he has to continue to handle as he moves forward and as he continues to grow,” McDermott said.

“And I’m confident he’ll do that,” he added. “I think that’s the next step for Josh, is that awareness, that maturity, however you want to phrase it. It’s the understanding that I don’t have to do it all myself.”

Beane said he’d rather see Allen make mistakes when trying to force plays than be timid.

“I don’t think there’s a hump Josh can’t get over,” Beane said. “I have no doubt he’ll learn from it. I’m as convinced today as ever that Josh can be a better version of himself next year.”

BUFFALO BILLS CENTER MITCH MORSE WALKS OFF THE FIELD AFTER THE BILLS LOST 22-19 IN OVERTIME TO THE HOUSTON TEXANS IN A WILD-CARD PLAYOFF GAME SATURDAY.
Not really a rematch: Texans face new Chiefs

Five KC starters missed Week 6 loss to Houston

By DAVE SKEETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs will welcome the Houston Texans to Arrowhead Stadium on Sunday for the divisional round of the playoffs, a rematch in name only of their Week 6 nail-biter won by Houston on a fourth-quarter touchdown.

The Chiefs are so markedly different that their early October game is nearly meaningless.

The Chiefs were in the midst of a shaky 6-4 start to the season, their defense was still adjusting to Steve Spagnuolo’s new 4-3 scheme, and their injury list was about as long as the receipt at CVS. Five starters were missing because of injuries, including offensive linemen Eric Fisher and Andrew Wylie, and a handful of other key contributors were hobbled by ailments.

Among them was quarterback Patrick Mahomes, who was still dealing with a sore ankle. The league’s reigning MVP is back from his ankle sprain. Chris Jones is still adjusting to Steve Spagnuolo’s new 4-3 scheme, and their injury list was about as meaningless.

They’re not the same as we were at the beginning. They’re not the same as we were at the beginning. So here we go.”

The easiest change to parse out between the Chiefs of three months ago and the current bunch is in personnel.

Fisher is back from his groin injury and Wylie from his ankle sprain. Chris Jones is back from his groin injury, fellow defensive tackle Xavier Williams has returned from injured reserve and linebacker Anthony Hitchens — voted one of Kansas City’s personnel.

The Chiefs lost defensive end Alex Okafor to a torn pectoral muscle late in the season, and rookie safety Juan Thornhill Okafor to a torn pectoral muscle late in the season, shutting him down in the Chiefs’ Week 17 win over the Chargers. “That’s the No. 1 edge that a football player has: confidence. When you have a team that’s playing with swagger, and the head coach is encouraging that, that can help you in January in the playoffs.”

That swagger comes in part from a defense that has leaned on newcomers Frank Clark and All-Pro safety Tyrann Mathieu, the latter of whom played for the Texans last season. They put together a streak of 10 consecutive quarters without allowing a touchdown late in the season, shutting down Tom Brady and the Patriots along the way, and had become so dominant that one of the league’s best offenses was left playing little more than a supporting role.

It certainly isn’t the same hodgepodge bunch that was still picking up the scheme in Week 6, when Deshaun Watson ran for two scores and threw for another in leading the Texans to a 31-24 victory.

“We have some great momentum heading into this postseason,” Mathieu said. “I know my teammates feel the same.”

Reid said everybody participated in Monday’s workout, a good sign for a team that dealt with plenty of illnesses.

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By Tim Booth
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash.

Growing up in the Dallas area, Ryan Woolridge and Admon Gilder once played together on an AAU team as kids.

They are still not entirely sure what age they were — somewhere around 10 or 11 years old — and can barely recall how the other was as a player.

But for Gilder, there is one specific memory he has of Woolridge.

“(Ryan) had very long hair. He had hair down to his back. ... And he’s always been fast. Always,” Gilder recalled.

The pair followed a circuitous path after that to reunite in a place neither could have ever imagined playing basketball. Spokane, Wash., was never on either player’s radar until Gonzaga came calling after last season looking to replenish its depleted backcourt.

So the two guards made separate but equally important decisions to play their final year of college basketball for the Bulldogs.

SEE ROLES ON PAGE 20

Gonzaga’s Ryan Woolridge, above, and Admon Gilder, left, decided to depart the college programs in Texas where they were playing for an opportunity to play for an elite program in the Pacific Northwest.