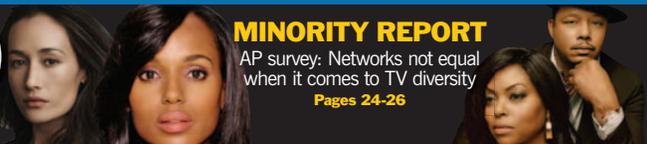


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Even opponents feeling bad for struggling Woods

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IS IT ENOUGH?

BRIAN WILLIAMS' APOLOGY FOR FALSE IRAQ STORY LEAVES OUT KEY DETAILS

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN ■ STARS AND STRIPES

WASHINGTON

Apologies by "NBC Nightly News" anchor Brian Williams Wednesday for his false claim of being on a helicopter forced down by Iraqi rocket fire in 2003 left out key details and made misleading claims about his proximity to the incident, according to soldiers who were there at the time.

Williams admitted on air that he was not on the Chinook that was struck by enemy fire, saying he was "instead on a following aircraft" and writing a Facebook apology to soldiers saying, "I was indeed on the Chinook behind the bird that took the RPG." But Army flight crews told Stars and Stripes the NBC anchor was actually flying with a different helicopter company altogether — in a different direction — and was linked to the attacked unit by radio only.

The wording appeared to be another example of the anchor muddling the facts or providing misleading details of the incident that he covered in the opening days of the Iraq invasion. Since the 2003 incident, he has written that he "came under fire" and implied that his Chinook was forced down due to an attack, while soldiers said it was landed amid deteriorating weather conditions during a sandstorm.

SEE WILLIAMS ON PAGE 11

Brian Williams poses with Command Sgt. Maj. Tim Terpack in a video screen grab from an "NBC Nightly News" report broadcast on Jan. 30.

NATO doubles rapid-reaction force in response to threats

By SLOBODAN LEKIC
Stars and Stripes

NATO defense ministers decided Thursday to significantly boost the size of the alliance's rapid-reaction force to deal with growing threats such as the war in Ukraine and Islamic radicalism along its southern flank.

"In Ukraine, violence is getting worse and the crisis is deepening. Russia continues to disregard international rules and to support the separatists," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said. "In North Africa and the Middle East, violent extremism is spreading, (fueling) terrorism in our own countries."

Outgoing Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel warned that those divergent concerns could cause a split in the alliance.

"I worry about the potential for division between our northern and southern allies," he said. He added that this was a time for unity and that the alliance would

have to address all challenges at the same time.

Stoltenberg said the alliance's 28 ministers had agreed to increase the NATO Reaction Force to about 30,000 troops — more than double its originally planned strength of 13,000.

SEE NATO ON PAGE 10

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Cannibalism has been outlawed in this country for a little while, so legally speaking, the zombie’s not allowed to eat you or consume any portion of you.”

— Rick Broida, executive producer of Detroit’s interactive theater show “Trapped in a Room with a Zombie”

See story on Page 14

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Shifting Gears

When it comes to auto safety, bigger is still better

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MILITARY

Carter likely to be confirmed next week

By JON HARPER
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee is aiming to get President Barack Obama’s defense secretary nominee confirmed next week.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., told Ashton Carter at the end of his confirmation hearing Wednesday that he wanted to get his nomination voted out of committee quickly and put on the floor for a full Senate vote by “early next week.”

“The week after that we’re in recess, so we’ll try and get it accomplished,” McCain said.

Carter’s standing on Capitol Hill going into his confirmation vote is much higher than Chuck Hagel’s was when he was tapped for the post two years ago. Hagel, the outgoing Pentagon chief, saw his nomination filibustered after a poor confirmation hearing performance. The former Republican senator had previously made controversial remarks about Israel and other issues, which drew fire from lawmakers.

When the final up-or-down vote took place in the Senate, Hagel made it through 58-41. The mostly party-line vote gave him the narrowest margin of approval of any defense secretary in history. Carter is a technocrat and

policy wonk without any political baggage. He has a long history at the Pentagon. From October 2011 to December 2013, he served as deputy secretary of defense. Prior to being the Pentagon’s No. 2 official, Carter served as under-secretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics, and oversaw the buying of the military’s newest weapon systems and technologies.

Carter has been widely praised by lawmakers from both parties, and his nomination is not expected to face any serious opposition.

At the start of the hearing, McCain praised Carter as “one of America’s most respected and experienced defense profession-

als,” adding, “We all look forward to having you as our partner once more.”

Citing Carter’s experience, Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said that the nominee is “uniquely qualified to lead the Department of Defense at a time when ... the United States has not faced a more diverse and complex array of crises since the end of the Second World War.”

During the hearing, Republicans and Democrats on the committee expressed confidence that Carter would be confirmed.

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Spangdahlem welcomes McFall back to fighter wing

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

SPANGDAHLEM AIR BASE, Germany — For the second time in seven months, airmen and community members packed into a hangar Thursday to welcome a new leader of the 52nd Fighter Wing.

This time, the man picked for the job was no stranger to many in the crowd.

Col. Joseph D. McFall, the 52nd vice wing commander from July 2012 to June 2013, took the reins at an assumption-of-command ceremony.

Spangdahlem’s previous wing commander, Col. Peter Bilodeau, was relieved of duties in late December, less than six months into the job. Air Force officials in Europe said Bilodeau was removed because of loss of faith and confidence in his leadership, not for any misconduct or wrongdoing.

Bilodeau’s name wasn’t mentioned Thursday. Vladimir Putin’s was.

In speaking about the many important tasks facing the wing, the ceremony’s presiding officer, 3rd Air Force Commander Lt. Gen. Darryl L. Roberson, alluded to the Russian president and the current political crisis in Ukraine.

“We have threats on the horizon,” Roberson said. “Mr. Putin has added some emphasis to what we do and why we do it, and so it’s really important that we continue to work together.”

McFall, a U.S. Air Force Academy graduate and an F-16 pilot with nearly 800 combat hours under his belt, last commanded the 435th Air Ground Operations Wing at Ramstein, about 80 miles southeast of Spangdahlem.

“It’s an awesome opportunity to serve with you again,” McFall said to Roberson, before adding, tongue in cheek to laughs from the



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Col. Joseph D. McFall, new commander of the 52nd Fighter Wing, talks to the media after his assumption-of-command ceremony at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, on Thursday.

audience, “It seems like only yesterday I was working for you in Ramstein.”

In an interview after the ceremony, McFall spoke about the challenges ahead. “There is a lot going on right now, with building partnership capacity to a renewed focus on having combat power in the theater to counter any threats that may pop up,” he said.

Spangdahlem and the wing are slated to grow. The base is scheduled to receive special operations aircraft and personnel from RAF Mildenhall in the United Kingdom as part of European Infrastructure Consolidation, or EIC, changes announced last month. Though

Air Force officials have said major moves are five to seven years down the road, McFall said construction projects to support the new mission are expected to start at Spangdahlem starting in summer 2016.

The timetable for when the 606th Air Control Squadron would relocate — another move called for by the EIC — is still not certain, McFall said. “Probably within the next one to two years they’ll be heading down towards Aviano (Italy),” he said. “That will free up space for the guys coming in.”

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Questions remain in death of former Marine, kids

By BRAD SCHRADE

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

ATLANTA — One aunt gets tearful as she ponders the devastating loss of Kisha Holmes and her children. Another expresses frustration at the VA's response both before and after the deaths of Holmes, a veteran with mental health problems, and her kids. And another wonders how the family will manage funerals for so many at once.

In the week since the Holmes family's tragic end in a Georgia apartment, people have struggled to understand why the 35-year-old former Marine would kill her three children and then herself. The authorities — from investigators to officials at the Department of Veterans Affairs — have offered few clues.

Holmes' three aunts, in town from New York and North Carolina, have faced a similar dearth of information as they've struggled to understand how Holmes, who moved to Atlanta more than four years ago with dreams of becoming a state trooper, drifted into depression and then tragedy.

"I just wish they could have caught this," said Gloria Williams, a paternal aunt from the New York borough of Brooklyn. "They (the VA) were aware of what she was going through. I think it could have been prevented. That's the sad thing about all this. Is that this could have been prevented. She could have been here and those children could have been here. That is what really disturbs me deeply."

The family questions whether the VA and its mental health officials did enough to help Holmes, a combat veteran who recently had become pregnant and was struggling with suicidal thoughts and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Holmes, her two sons — Justin, 10, and Kai, 4 — and her 9-month-old daughter, Faith, were discovered Jan. 27 by an apartment maintenance worker in Austell, west of Atlanta. Holmes had just completed a program for homeless veterans a year ago, and had been trying to get back on her feet through a housing voucher program for veterans that helped pay for her apartment. But she had missed a pair of mental health appointments in December and the VA had identified her as a high risk for suicide.

"If they knew something was wrong, why didn't they do something about it?" said Joanne Lumpkin, a paternal aunt in from North Carolina. "If she had missed two appointments. Why didn't they come looking for her? They knew she had three kids."

A more immediate and pressing concern for the family is how they will cover the funeral arrangements for Holmes and two of her children. Her oldest was buried Monday at a service in Virginia handled by his father. The other two children have different fathers.

As of Wednesday, the VA had not contacted the family, the aunts said, so they, themselves, reached out to the agency. The family met in the afternoon with Atlanta VA officials, but there was no resolution to their request for help with the funerals. The aunts thought the VA would cover the costs but they are not so sure now, accord-

ing to Stella Holmes-Hughes, a maternal aunt from Brooklyn.

"I'm less than happy with what I've heard," said Holmes-Hughes. "I'm not getting a definite anything. We don't know what to do. We are in a whirlpool of tragedy. We're doing what we can. We have our good moments and our not-so-good moments."

The Atlanta VA declined to comment Wednesday. In a statement last Friday, VA officials said

they were "deeply saddened" by the veteran's death and offered prayers for her family.

The aunts played a crucial role in Holmes' life growing up. Holmes' parents were never married and Holmes was put into foster care at age 6 after her mother, who has mental health issues, was unable to care for her. At different periods in her life, she lived with her aunts. As she grew up, they described her as a determined

and smart young woman who had high ambitions. She could also be hard on herself and didn't always take criticism well.

She graduated from Catholic school in Brooklyn and went into the Marines at age 18. She was a proud Marine and saw combat before being discharged in 2003 after about four or five years of service.

"She never spoke of parenting as a chore," said Holmes-Hughes.

"She was a splendid parent."

After Kai was born, she started to drift from the family, her aunts recall, and her phone calls became less frequent.

"I made a vow; I said, 'This year, I'm going to find Kisha. I have to find Kisha,'" said Williams, who had made it one of her New Year's resolutions. "And this is what came up. I didn't think it was going to be this."



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Toyota Tacoma	\$22,725	\$18,375	\$4,350	Ford Escape	\$22,800	\$19,800	\$3,000
Ford 150	\$26,175	\$22,900	\$3,275	BMW 335xi ^{Factory Warranty}	\$41,600	\$37,995	\$3,605
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MILITARY

Green Beret's Silver Star revoked

Special Forces officer stripped of medal after investigation of later incident

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Capt. Mathew Golsteyn was leading a Special Forces team in Afghanistan in 2010 when an 80-man mission he assembled to hunt insurgents snipers went awry. One of their five vehicles sunk into mud, a gunshot incapacitated an Afghan soldier fighting alongside the Americans, and insurgents maneuvered around them to rake the soggy fields with machine-gun fire.

Golsteyn, already a decorated Green Beret officer, responded with calm resolve and braved enemy fire repeatedly that day, according to an Army summary of his actions. He received the Silver Star for valor for his actions on Feb. 20, 2010, during a 2011 ceremony at Fort Bragg, N.C. Top Army officials later approved him for an upgrade to the prestigious Distinguished Service Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor in honoring heroism in combat by U.S. soldiers.

In a rare reversal, however, Golsteyn, now a major, no longer has that award. The Special Forces officer was later investigated for an undisclosed violation of the military's rules of engagement in combat for killing a known enemy fighter and bomber, according to officials familiar with the case. The investigation closed last year without Golsteyn being charged with any crime, but Army Secretary John McHugh decided to not only deny him the Distinguished Service Cross but to revoke his Silver Star, too.

McHugh cited a provision in Army regulations that state that if facts become known that would have prevented a medal from being awarded, it can be revoked. The Silver Star was approved by a top commander in Afghanistan — Gen. David Rodriguez, then the three-star deputy commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan — according to Golsteyn's lawyer, Phil Stackhouse.

Wednesday's belief that he had known about the derogatory information that was founded by the aforementioned investigation, he would have never awarded Major Golsteyn the Silver Star," McHugh said in a Nov. 17 letter to Rep. Duncan D. Hunter, R-Calif., who has advocated on Golsteyn's behalf. "Accordingly, I have decided to revoke the interim Silver Star that Major Golsteyn received for this action."

The decision is still shrouded in mystery due to the secretive nature of the Army's investigation into Golsteyn, who spent extensive time working with U.S. Marines in and around Marja in Helmand province. An online Defense Department database of top valor awards still included Golsteyn's Silver Star as of Wednesday afternoon and said the information was current as of Jan. 30.

A spokesman for McHugh's office declined to comment Wednesday and said the Army was preparing a response to



JAMES ROBINSON/The Fayetteville Observer

Then-Capt. Mathew Golsteyn at a Valor Awards Ceremony in 2011 at Fort Bragg, N.C.

questions posed by The Post on Tuesday.

Hunter, a former Marine officer and veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, alleged in the Daily Beast on Tuesday that the Army "went to extraordinary lengths" to investigate Golsteyn, threatening his fellow soldiers and offering them immunity. In a Dec. 4 letter to Army Human Resources Command, Hunter said the decision appears to be "retaliatory and vindictive."

"The Army has been unable to present substantial evidence while an overwhelming number of first-person accounts provided to Army investigators uphold Matt's record as a top-level operator," said Hunter's letter, which was released by the congressman's office to The Post.

Golsteyn's lawyer said the investigation into the Army officer's actions was launched in 2011, less than a year after he received the Silver Star. He remains assigned to Army Special Forces Command at Fort Bragg and is in the process of determining what to do with his future.

"In the summer of 2014, we were certainly under the impression that everything was done and complete," said Stackhouse. "The revocation of his valor awards came out of left field to us."

The decision also raises the question whether the military should strip troops of awards they have earned if they are found to do something wrong later.

On the day in question, Golsteyn assembled his unit after his base had come under sniper fire from a Dragunov rifle, according to an Army narrative of his actions. He directed his troops to launch an assault across 700 meters of open fields, but an armored truck known as a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle sank into

mud under gunfire after about 175 meters.

Under heavy machine-gun and sniper fire, Golsteyn ran about 150 meters to the trapped MRAP to retrieve a powerful 84mm Carl Gustav recoilless rifle, an anti-tank weapon. While moving under gunfire, he coordinated a medical evacuation for the wounded Afghan soldier and then opened fire with the Carl Gustav, said the Army narrative, obtained by The Post.

"Captain Golsteyn was alone running in the open through enemy gun fire that had over 80 men pinned down, and from the crew's next stop of [Forward Operating Base] McQueary, it looked like Captain Golsteyn was alone fighting 30 enemy fighters out in the poppy fields," the award narrative said.

Enemy reinforcements continued to arrive off the battlefield, so Golsteyn organized airstrikes by both a F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets and a Predator drone. No American or coalition troops were killed in the battle despite a barrage of enemy fire that lasted four hours, the narrative said.

Golsteyn has been critical of the mission he was assigned in the past. In the 2011 Bing West book "The Wrong War: Grit, Strategy and the Way Out of Afghanistan," he is quoted as saying that the Americans were considered insurgents in Afghanistan who were "selling a poor product called the Kabul government."

West later wrote in a review of a book about another Special Force soldier, Maj. Jim Gant, that the careers of Gant, Golsteyn and a third Green Beret, Dan McKone, were "terminated," assessing that the Army failed them without elaborating on Golsteyn's case. West could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Golsteyn wrote about his assignment in Afghanistan in a June 2014 academic paper for a class at Fayetteville State University. The paper, published online, covers his 2010 deployment and says that his team — known as a Special Forces Operational Detachment, Alpha or A-Team — operated in multiple two- and three-man teams across the area they were assigned. Over time, local tribesmen grew to trust them, especially after three weeks of fighting in Marja, he added.

"We enjoyed repeated interactions with the local populace because we lived with them, fighting for them as well as alongside them," Golsteyn wrote.



Courtesy of the U.S. Navy League

Former chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughed, left, poses with Leonard Glenn Francis, the man allegedly behind the ever-expanding Navy bribery scandal involving prostitutes and luxury travel. Roughed has not been implicated in the case.

Navy bribery figure may be helping investigators

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Navy's sex-for-secrets corruption scandal may have not yet gotten worse. Investigators' prized catch has started to squawk.

Leonard Glenn Francis, the Malaysian defense contractor who made a fortune by supplying Navy ships throughout Asia, has begun cooperating with federal investigators — and pointing the finger at new suspects, court records indicate.

According to an affidavit filed this week by federal investigators, a confidential witness who matches Francis' description detailed how a former senior U.S. contracting official accepted several hundred thousand dollars in bribes in exchange for driving Navy business to Francis' company.

The witness was not identified by name but was described in the affidavit as a person who has already pleaded guilty in the corruption investigation and who was separately convicted of firearms charges in a foreign country about 30 years ago.

Francis, known as "Fat Leonard" in Navy circles because of his girth, pleaded guilty Jan. 15 in San Diego. He admitted to bribing "scores" of Navy officials with cash, luxury travel and prostitutes for classified or inside information that benefited his firm, Glenn Defense Marine Asia. He also has a record of gun crimes in his native Malaysia dating to 1986. His attorneys did not respond Wednesday to emails seeking comment.

Based on fresh information from the witness, federal authorities in Virginia on Tuesday arrested Paul Simpkins, 60, a former contracting official with the Defense and Justice departments. He has been charged with conspiracy to commit bribery.

According to the affidavit, Francis began funneling bribes to Simpkins in 2006 when he was based in Singapore as a contracting officer for the Navy. The relationship continued until 2012, when Francis paid for Simpkins to travel from Washington to Singapore, put him up in a Hilton Hotel and provided him with prostitutes, the affidavit alleges.

"Can u set up some clean, disease free woman[en] when I am there?" Simpkins emailed Francis a few days prior to his trip in September 2012, according to court papers. As he left Washington, Simpkins followed up with another email, adding, "Whats the plan to meet up and maybe do some honey's?"

"Honeys and bunnys," Francis replied, according to the affidavit.

Over the years, Francis gave Simpkins about \$150,000 in cash bribes stuffed in envelopes and hundreds of thousands more dollars in wire transfers, federal investigators allege.

Simpkins is the ninth person charged in the scandal, the biggest corruption case to hit the Navy in recent memory. Seven defendants have pleaded guilty and federal authorities have said they are targeting other suspects.

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MILITARY

Pelosi expects deal on military action against militants

By ANDREW TAYLOR
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The top House Democrat said Thursday that talks with the Obama administration about a new authorization of military action against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria are focusing on a time frame of three years but there isn't any agreement yet on what geographic areas would be covered and what kind of force could be used.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told reporters that it will be a challenge for war-wary Democrats, the White House, and Republicans seeking a broader use of military force to forge an agreement, but that she ultimately expected one to be reached.

"I'm not saying anybody's come to an agreement on it," Pelosi said. "I think it's going to be a challenge, but we will have it."

GOP House Speaker John Boehner said he expected Obama to send lawmakers a request for an authorization of military action in a few days and said it'll be up to the president to build support for it among lawmakers and the public.

"His actions are going to be an important part of trying for us to

get the votes to actually pass an authorization," Boehner said. "This is not going to be an easy lift."

For her part, Pelosi also said she hoped Congress would repeal the 2002 congressional authorization for the war in Iraq but retain the 2001 authorization for military action in Afghanistan.

The negotiations come as the world is recoiling in horror after Islamic militants released a grisly video of the murder of a Jordanian

Air Force pilot by burning him alive. Pelosi also said that the U.S. should "move quickly" to steer military aid to Jordan, which has begun a stepped-up campaign against the militants, including a series of air strikes in Syria.

Republicans generally want a broader authorization of military action against the militants, who have overrun wide swaths of Iraq and Syria, than Democrats have been willing to consider. Presi-

dent Barack Obama has said he does not want U.S. "boots on the ground" in combat roles, while many Republicans believe that option ought to be available.

Separately, Pelosi said she plans to attend an address by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to a joint meeting of Congress next month. The address is controversial because Boehner extended it without consulting the White House.

Head of Iowa Guard gives status report

The Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Overseas service requirements for the Iowa National Guard continue to decline, the head of the unit said Thursday.

Maj. Gen. Timothy Orr addressed the Iowa General Assembly with the annual "Condition of the Guard" address. Orr said they currently have about 150 soldiers and airmen deployed around the world. Thousands have served in combat and combat support roles over the past 13 years in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Since the large brigade-level deployment in Iowa in 2010-2011, we've seen a significant decline in the demand for Iowa National Guard forces," Orr said. He said the current number deployed is "the lowest number of deployed servicemembers from the Iowa National Guard since the start of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom."

Orr said 18 Guard members who were wounded in service have received medical care over the past year, but just two are still receiving treatment.

The U.S. combat role in Afghanistan has ended after 13 years, though some troops remain in the country with the authorization to attack the Taliban if there is a threat to U.S. military personnel.

Orr said the Guard is focused on training to prepare for military duties and emergency response in the state.

That includes sending airmen to Air Force schools for technology training. While an F-16 fighter jet was removed from Des Moines in September, Orr said missions continue at the air base.

The state did not face many emergency situations in 2014, but Orr said the Guard used the time to "plan, prepare and exercise for potential disaster response support on a variety of scenarios." Those preparations included working on tornado response plans and recently on developing a response system for cybersecurity.



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MILITARY

Hundreds attend 'listening session' about Colo. base

By JENNIFER HLAID
Stars and Stripes

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo.—More than 300 people packed a county auditorium here Tuesday afternoon to support Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colo., and ask Army leaders to spare the post from future cuts.

The community listening session—No. 14 of 30 the Army is holding near bases across the country—allowed senior military officers the chance to hear from the community before deciding where and how to make personnel cuts.

The Army is in the process of reducing girth strength to 490,000 by 2017, but if sequestration is not repealed, the service will lose about \$95 billion over 10 years and will likely be forced to drop to 420,000 soldiers by 2019, said Col. Karl Konzelman, chief of the Army force management division.

That could include cutting up to 16,000 soldiers from Fort Carson, said Ed Anderson, a retired three-star general who moderated the session.

Anderson opened the meeting by stressing that it was "not a BRAC (Base Closure and Realign-

ment Commission) hearing," and Brig. Gen. Roger Cloutier Jr., the Army's director of force management, said "not a single decision has been made" about where cuts might be made. But the 3½ hours of presentations and support from the area's congressional delegation, the governor, regional leaders and the overflowing crowd suggested the community fears otherwise.

For the first two hours, the message of the Army received was clear: The region and the entire state stand united in support of Fort Carson.

Colorado has "a long, proud history of military here in the continental States," said Gov. John Hickenlooper, and the state provides "floor-to-ceiling, total support" to returning veterans.

Colorado Springs' "love affair with the Army" began 142 years ago, when a retired Civil War general came to the area and founded the town, said Mayor Steve Stives. "Honestly I think it's in our DNA" to love the Army, he said. "We are one family," with no separation between military and civilian.

The military "is part of our collective soul," said Bill Cadman, president of the Colorado state



JENNIFER HLAID/Stars and Stripes

From left, Col. Karl Konzelman, Brig. Gen. Roger Cloutier Jr. and Maj. Gen. Paul LaCamera listen to feedback from the community Tuesday in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Senate. "This is not about removing dollars from our pockets. This is about removing members from our families."

Still, cuts at the base would have a major economic impact on the community, said Andy Merritt, of the Colorado Springs Regional Business Alliance.

Cutting 16,000 soldiers would mean a loss of \$1.07 billion, he said, but even a cut of 3,500 soldiers—a brigade—would be significant.

Organizers asked the community to wear green to show support for the base, and showed photos of clubs and businesses full of green-clad employees on a screen above the Army representatives after the official presentations were over.

Despite the overflow crowd and sea of green clothing, not everyone stood in support of the base.

Several farmers and ranchers pointed out that land in the Piñon Canyon area was taken by the Army in the 1980s for a maneuver training facility, and they want it back.

A woman who identified herself as a member of the organization "Not One More Acre" said that for years her family lived in fear that their farm would be taken for the training facility.

"We are asking you to close Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site," she said.

Most community members expressed support.

A man who said he had served in the Army and was stationed at several bases told the panel he never felt like he was part of the community anywhere else, and chose to leave the Army in part

because he would have had to move back to Fort Bragg, N.C. in Colorado Springs, he said, he feels like part of a family.

A little more than 3½ hours after the session began, Cloutier closed it with reassurances that all the comments had been heard and would be taken back to the Pentagon. "For us and the senior leaders of the Army, this is not about numbers," he said. "We know it's about soldiers and families and hopes and dreams and lives."

The Army has not released a schedule of remaining listening sessions, but dates and times will be announced in each affected community. The sessions will continue through March.

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Screening for jurors in Chris Kyle case begins

By JAMIE STENGLE
The Associated Press

DALLAS—With a trial set to begin next week for the man accused in the fatal shootings of famed Navy SEAL sniper Chris Kyle and Kyle's friend, court officials in Texas are set to begin the process of screening potential jurors.

Candidates began reporting Thursday to district court in the small town of Stephenville, about 80 miles southwest of Fort Worth, Texas. They'll be deciding the case of former Marine Eddie Ray Routh, 27, who's charged with capital murder in the killings two years ago at a gun range outside Stephenville.

About 500 people are expected to report to court to get information on juror qualifications and potential exemptions on Thursday and Friday. Four sessions will be held over the course of the two days to accommodate all of the potential jurors.

Eraih County District Clerk Wanda Pringle said she does not yet know whether attorneys on those days will be asked to give potential jurors a questionnaire containing questions specifically

related to the Routh case. Jury selection is set for Monday and Tuesday. Opening statements are expected Wednesday.

Pringle said instead of a typical juror pool of 175, about 800 were summoned. Of them, about 300 have been eliminated.

The trial is expected to garner international attention. The court has already issued an extensive list of rules related to media coverage, and police have issued information on road closures when the trial starts.

The Oscar-nominated movie "American Sniper," based on Kyle's memoir of the same name and starring Bradley Cooper, was recently released. Kyle served four tours in Iraq before retiring from the military in 2009.

Routh, who struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder after leaving the Marines in 2010, had served as a small-arms technician in the Iraq War and was deployed to earthquake-ravaged Haiti on a relief mission. Kyle took Routh to the shooting range at a luxury resort in the rolling countryside outside Stephenville after Routh's mother asked if Kyle could help her son. Routh's attorney said he'll pursue an insanity defense.

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MILITARY

Compensation ideas draw bipartisan backing

By TOM PHILPOTT

There is rising confidence across the Senate and House armed services committees that 2015 will be the year Congress passes legislation to modernize military compensation, with an alternative to traditional 20-year retirement and perhaps replacement of the triple-option Tricare health program.

After decades of rejecting military compensation studies, whether from teams of Pentagon analysts or independent blue-ribbon panels, Congress this year appears to be embracing the clever weaving of proposals prepared by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., said it was "extraordinary" that nine commissioners endorse their proposals unanimously. So before her colleagues are "off to the races trying to politicize" them, she advised, they ought to "pause a moment and realize that you might just have gotten this right, and this might be exactly what we need to be doing."

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., new chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, pledged to keep the well-being of military members and families "foremost in our thoughts as we deliberate the commission recommendations. But upholding our sacred obligation to them does not mean resisting change at every turn. We must not shrink from the opportunity before us to create a modern system of compensation and retirement benefits that would provide greater value and choice."

The new chairman of the military personnel subcommittee, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., warned commission critics: "If you think they missed a mark, we will certainly listen to you. But we're not going to play the demagoguery game because change is afoot and it's necessary."

McCain and Graham have told staff they hope to include at least some commission recommendations in the fiscal 2016 defense authorization bill.

As military folks try to grasp the complex commission plans, Congress this week also received a fresh set of proposals from the Obama administration, part of its fiscal 2016 defense budget request, to continue to dampen growth in basic pay and allowances. The budget package asks Congress to consolidate Tricare options, to raise Tricare fees sharply on working-age retirees, to set a first-ever enrollment fee for new Medicare-eligible retirees using Tricare for Life, and to raise pharmacy copayments.

President Barack Obama wants the January 2016 military pay raise capped at 1.3 percent,

MILITARY UPDATE

a percentage point below wage growth in the private sector. His budget proposes a string of "limited" pay raises through 2020. It would continue to dampen annual adjustments to Basic Allowance for Housing until recipients pay 5 percent of rental and utility costs out of pocket.

The budget also proposes more cuts to annual subsidies for the Defense Commissary Agency, ensuring that base grocery store patrons see store operating days or hours cut, although not below five days per week.

Those budget changes would lower compensation costs by \$1.7 billion next year and by \$18 billion through 2020. They are separate from commission recommendations. Several, such as consolidating Tricare options, even conflict with commission plans. Commissioners want Tricare replaced with a menu of private-sector insurance options and two new Basic Allowance for Health Care, or BAHC. One part would cover full premiums of a midrange health insurance plan. A self-directed portion of BAHC covering copayments and deductibles could be windfall cash for families if they become discerning users of their health insurance benefit.

The most uncertain feature of the commission's health plan is its vision that private insurance plans would be required to include base medical staff and facilities in networks of providers, and that those care providers would see enough challenging cases to sustain wartime medical skills. To help in that regard, the commission proposes a new joint readiness command to oversee all aspects of readiness, including medical skills at base hospitals.

On retirement, current members could stay under their High-3 plan, which pays an immediate annuity after at least 20 years of service, or they could shift to the new plan mandated for new entrants. It would blend a reduced, defined benefit that pays 40 percent rather than 50 percent of basic pay as an immediate annuity after 20 years with a Thrift Savings Plan, or TSP, that has government matching member contributions up to 5 percent of basic pay. After two years, members would be fully vested in their TSP accounts to take with them if they separate short of 20 years.

The commission proposes using Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to protect force retention under the plan. The education benefit could be transferred to dependents after 10 years of service in exchange for serving two more years. At the 12-year mark, members could get lump-sum continuation pay equal to at least 2½ months' basic pay if they agree to serve four more years. At 20 years, they would be eligible for immediate annuity equal

to at least 40 percent of basic pay. They could opt for a reduced annuity and some retirement cash in a lump sum, or they could get a bigger lump sum and defer any annuity until they also are eligible for Social Security. That old-age annuity would equal what peers receive if they elected to accept full annuities at retirement.

The commission said computer modeling shows that more complex choice of benefits still would produce healthy retention rates, would save billions of dollars per year and would give the vast majority of members who leave service short of 20 years nest eggs equivalent to civilian employer 401(k) plans.

More than 90 percent of current first-termers likely would shift to the new retirement sys-

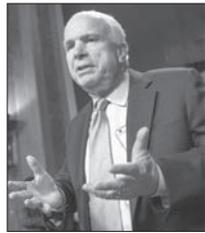
tem if given that option, commissioners testified.

Some lawmakers on the armed services committees gushed over the plan, calling it bold and thorough. Others were cautious but not critical.

The 70-year-old retirement system and a Tricare program launched in the mid-1990s "were appropriate for their time," said McCain. "But clearly, times have changed."

Still to be heard from are military associations and veterans groups who have criticized past plans to overhaul compensation as radical and risky, endangering the nation's defense.

Send comments to Military Update, P.O. Box 231111, Centerville, Va., 20120; email milupdate@milupdate.com; or writer Tom Philpott@Military_Update.



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., speaks Wednesday on Capitol Hill in Washington.



McCaskill

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WAR ON TERRORISM

US moves rescue crews closer to Iraq battlefield to shorten response time

By ROBERT BURNS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military has moved search-and-rescue crews to northern Iraq in recent days, following an uproar over the killing of a Jordanian pilot captured in Syria by Islamic State fighters, defense officials said Thursday.

The action is intended to shorten response times for search-and-rescue teams.

The U.S. officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak by name about a move that has not been announced.

The Islamic State militants have extremely limited air defenses, and the Syrian government has not challenged U.S. or coalition aircraft flying over its territory. Even so, combat pilots face the risk of going down behind enemy lines, and they are trained in coordinating with search-and-rescue crews.

U.S. pilots are flying missions over Syria daily from bases in the region. Partner nations, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, are flying less often. The United Arab Emirates suspended its participation in airstrikes in December after the Jordanian pilot was captured, but it may reconsider soon after getting extra training, two officials said.

Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, whose F-16 crashed over Syria in December, was captured by the Islamic State group and taken to an unknown location, where he was held until his captors killed him by burning him alive in a cage on Jan. 3.

U.S. officials have sought to play down the Emiratis' decision to stop launching airstrikes, and have focused instead on Jordan's determination to step up the fight against the Islamic State group. Jordan's military said Thursday that it had launched a new round of strikes against Islamic State targets in Syria.

Combat missions also are being flown daily over portions of Iraq, mainly in the north and west. The majority are flown by American pilots, though France, Belgium, Britain, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada and Denmark also are flying missions.

The U.S. typically keeps a tight lid on information about its combat search-and-rescue capabilities in a war zone in order to maximize the effectiveness.

The missions usually are led by the Air Force's pararescue jumpers, or PJs, who undergo extensive training to be able to find, rescue and provide medical treat-

ment to aircrew members behind enemy lines or at sea.

U.S. Central Command, which is responsible for the American part of the military campaign in Iraq and Syria, has not said publicly why it did not previously expand the search-and-rescue crews in northern Iraq.

Peter Mansoor, a retired Army colonel who served in Iraq, said Thursday the Iraqi government may have objected to having such teams based in the Kurdish north for political reasons.

"You want to be as close as possible to where a downed pilot could potentially be so that you could get to him quicker," Mansoor said in a telephone interview from an Ohio State University, where he teaches military history.

‘You want to be as close as possible to where a downed pilot could potentially be so that you could get to him quicker.’

Peter Mansoor, a retired Army colonel

area with its own defense forces, known as the peshmerga.

It's also possible that Gen. Lloyd Austin, the CENTCOM commander, believed that prior arrangements for search-and-rescue crews were adequate. The loss of the Jordanian pilot and the UAE suspension of combat flights may have changed that assessment.

"Maybe the military felt comfortable with what they had in place until recent events have shown how critical it is to have [rescue crews] really close," Mansoor said.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said this week that the U.S. has "taken the necessary precautions to do everything we can to try to make that very dangerous mission as safe as possible for American fighter pilots who are putting themselves in harm's way."

Administration officials have said pilots of coalition nations are afforded the same protections and resources as Americans.

"There is no risk coalition airmen are taking that American airmen aren't share," a State Department official said.



BIAL HUSSEIN/AP

Lebanese police officers light candles for slain Jordanian pilot Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, who was killed by the Islamic State group, during a candlelight vigil inside the Jordanian Embassy compound in Baabda, east of Beirut, on Thursday.

Jordan vows 'harsh' war

Airstrikes target Islamic State, aiming to avenge death of pilot

By KARIN LAUB
The Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — Jordanian warplanes bombed Islamic State targets on Thursday, state TV said, after the country's king vowed to wage a "harsh" war against the militants who control large areas of neighboring Syria and Iraq.

The military confirmed the airstrikes but did not provide details. Jordan TV, quoting military officials, reported that the strikes targeted Islamic State positions but did not say in which country.

Jordan is part of a U.S.-led military coalition that has bombed Islamic State targets in both countries since last fall, but until now Jordanian warplanes are known to have carried out raids only in Syria.

King Abdullah II pledged to step up the fight against the Islam-

ic State group after the militants burned a captive Jordanian pilot in a cage and released a video of the killing earlier this week. The images have sent waves of anger across the region.

On Thursday, warplanes roared overhead as the king paid a condolence visit to the family of the pilot, Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, in his village in southern Jordan. The king pointed upward, toward the planes, as he sat next to the pilot's father, Safi al-Kaseasbeh.

Al-Kaseasbeh told the assembled mourners that the planes had returned from strikes over Raqqa, the de facto capital of the militants' self-declared caliphate. His son had been captured near Raqqa when his F-16 fighter plane went down in December.

Earlier this week, the Islamic State group displayed the video of the killing of the pilot on outdoor

screens in Raqqa to chants of "God is Great" from some in the audience, according to another video posted by the militants.

Also Thursday, Jordan released an influential jehadi cleric, Abu Mohammed al-Maqdesi, who was detained in October after speaking out against Jordan's participation in the anti-Islamic State coalition, according to his lawyer, Moussa al-Abdallat.

Jordan's Islamic militants are split between supporters of the Islamic State group and the Nusra Front, the branch of al-Qaida in Syria.

Last year, al-Maqdesi had criticized Islamic State militants for attacking fellow Muslims. However, after Jordan joined the military coalition, he called on his website for Muslim unity against a "crusader war," a reference to coalition airstrikes.

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WAR ON TERRORISM

Pilot's death a turning point in Jordan's war policy

By **SLOBODAN LEKIC**
Stars and Stripes

An outpouring of public support after the grisly slaying of a Jordanian fighter pilot by the Islamic State likely will give the kingdom's pro-Western monarch a freer hand in fighting the radical group, analysts say.

King Abdullah II cut short a visit to Washington after the Islamic State posted a video Tuesday showing Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh being burned to death in a metal cage. The extremists followed the video with an audio statement offering cash bounties on other Jordanian pilots, listing their names, ranks and the neighborhoods where they live.

The king immediately appeared on national television, calling on all Jordanians to unite during this "very difficult time, which will only stiffen our resolve and determination" to fight Islamic State terrorists.

He also promised an "earth-shaking response." Early Wednesday the government announced it had executed two convicted terrorists who spent a decade on death row. They included Sajida al-Rishawi, a would-be suicide bomber arrested in connection with an attack on three luxury hotels in Amman in 2005 in which at least 57 people died.

President Barack Obama said though the pilot's slaying "will redouble the vigilance and determination of a global coalition to make sure they are degraded and ultimately defeated."

On Wednesday, hundreds of people gathered at Amman's international airport to welcome Abdullah and to express support for his policies.

"Our gathering should send a clear message to everyone that

Jordanians won't let their precious blood go in vain," said Ahmed Khazaleh, 29, an Amman clothing shop owner.

"Lt. Kaseasbeh is a martyr to all Arabs, not just Jordanians," said Yousef abu Taha, 32, a vegetable vendor. "We tell them we're all Muath al-Kaseasbeh."

The downing and capture of al-Kaseasbeh on Dec. 22 initially sparked angry protests over Jordan's participation in the U.S.-led military campaign, seen by many as a war that didn't affect their country. The demonstrations, including one in the southern city of Maan in which protesters carrying Islamic State banners set fire to government buildings, fueled fears that wider discontent could trigger a political crisis in the kingdom — a key U.S. ally in the Middle East and one of the few countries in the region not engulfed in armed conflict or political turmoil.

The protests raised pressure on the king, whose government last year cracked down on radical Islamists inside Jordan to forestall a potentially dangerous internal threat. At least 60 people suspected of jihadi sympathies were arrested under the country's recently expanded anti-terrorism laws, opposition activists said.

All that changed after the brutality of al-Kaseasbeh's death. Demonstrators in the pilot's hometown of Karak came out in their hundreds to show their support for the government, social media was flooded with calls for

captured Islamic State fighters to be executed in the same way as al-Kaseasbeh. Dozens of callers — including civil society representatives and members of Jordan's various tribal groups — to an open TV talk show, expressed rage at the killing and support for the king. Some even apologized for criticizing his policies in the past, saying the pilot's murder showed that this was indeed Jordan's war.

Jordanian political commentator Amer Sabayleh said al-Kaseasbeh's slaying was a "turning point" in Jordan's politics.

"It unified Jordanians of all political affiliations under the umbrella of the crown. This will help the king to maneuver politically and militarily within the international coalition to wipe out Daesh," he said using the Arabic acronym for Islamic State.

In an editorial titled "What kind of Islam is this?" the independent ad-Dustour daily called on all Jordanians to continue to support their monarch as he fights the Islamic State. "What is required of all Jordanians now is to remain vigilant against Daesh's terrorist agenda, to reject any side that would try to undermine the army and the king and to refrain from softening our determination to fight this criminal group," it said.

Even the pilot's father, Safi al-Kaseasbeh, who previously criticized Jordan's participation in the international coalition, urged the government to intensify its strikes on "these criminals."

On Wednesday, mosques across the kingdom held special sermons simultaneously, called the martyr's prayers, and in Amman's main mosque, a dummy draped in a white cloth symbolizing al-Kaseasbeh's body was brought in for the last rituals. Christian churches also announced services for the dead pilot.

"Daesh's heinous crimes will not scare us," Senator Yousef al-Jazi told Stars and Stripes. "To the contrary, it will stiffen our resolve and determination to bring these criminals to justice."

Jordan has long played an outsized role in Washington's policy in the region. The kingdom, which harbors 1.5 million refugees from the war in neighboring Syria and 450,000 from Iraq, will receive nearly \$1.3 billion in U.S. aid and loan guarantees in 2015, double the previous year's figure.

The U.S. military also has deployed a battery of Patriot anti-aircraft missiles, a squadron of F-16s to help defend Jordanian airspace, and several hundred trainers and advisers to the country. The number of U.S. service members currently in Jordan tops 1,600, said a senior Jordanian official who asked not to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Hundreds of Jordanian troops are trained in the United States each year, and in 2014 about 6,000 U.S. soldiers were deployed to Jordan to take part in the annual 22-nation Eager Lion exercises.

Jordan is also a key ally in the U.S.-led aerial onslaught against

Islamic State forces, which have made massive territorial gains in northeastern Syria and in Iraq since last year. Jordanian F-16s have bombed Islamic State positions regularly since the air campaign began on Sept. 22.

Jordan's mainstream Islamic groups have long criticized Amman's reliance on Washington because of America's close alliance with Israel. Although Israel and Jordan have had normal diplomatic ties for more than two decades, many in the kingdom — whose population is majority Palestinian — oppose the Jewish state's continuing occupation of Palestinian territory.

More than 2,000 Jordanian citizens have gone to Syria to fight alongside extremist groups, according to the International Center for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence. They account for about 10 percent of all foreigners who have joined jihadi groups in Syria, according to the London-based think tank.

"The rise of the Islamic State phenomenon is the result of young people in the Arab world losing hope, seeing that their regimes are not only weak in the face of Israel and America, but that they are actually collaborating with them," Jamil Abu Bakr, a senior official of the Muslim Brotherhood, said in an interview last month.

Lekic reported from Kaiserslautern, Germany. Jamil Halaby contributed to this story from Amman, Jordan. leki.slobodan@stripes.com



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SCAN WITH PHONE

EUROPE

France, Germany push east Ukraine peace plan

By **MATTHEW LEE**
and **SYLVIE CORRETT**
The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — In a new push for peace, the leaders of France and Germany headed Thursday to Kiev and Moscow with a proposal to end the fighting in eastern Ukraine. The surprise move appeared aimed at heading off U.S. considerations of giving Ukraine lethal weapons, something Europeans fear could spark even wider hostilities.

The flurry of high-level diplomacy comes as resurgent fighting in eastern Ukraine is threatening Europe's overall security.

In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin's aide welcomed the new European initiative and said the Kremlin was ready for a constructive discussion. NATO defense ministers in Brussels, however, were ready to boost the military alliance's forces in response to the fighting in Ukraine and Russia's increased military forcefulness.

Russia has vehemently denied backing the rebels with troops and weapons, while acknowledging that some Russians are fighting with the separatists. Western military experts scoff at the Russian denial. The top NATO commander, U.S. Air Force Gen. Philip Breedlove, said Thursday that Russia continues to supply the separatists with heavy, state-of-the-art weapons, air defenses and fighters.

Calling it a "very critical moment in our history," Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko warmly welcomed Secretary of State John Kerry to Kiev, the Ukrainian capital.

In comments to reporters after their talk Thursday, Kerry urged Russia to show its commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine by ceasing its military support for the separatists and bringing them to the negotiation table.

"Our choice is diplomacy," Kerry said, making no mention of providing Ukraine with lethal military aid.

At a later news conference



EVGENYI MALOLETKA/AP

A Ukrainian serviceman holds his position Thursday in an armored personnel carrier near Artemivsk, eastern Ukraine.

with Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Kerry said President Barack Obama "is reviewing all his options; among those options, obviously, is the possibility of providing defensive systems to Ukraine."

"We are not interested in a proxy war. Our objective is to change Russia's behavior," he said.

Fighting between Russia-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine surged in January, sending the death toll to more than 5,300 people killed since the conflict began in April.

At least three people were killed in overnight shelling in the rebel stronghold of Donetsk, local officials said, and a Ukrainian military spokesman reported five servicemen killed and 29 others wounded in the last 24 hours.

France and Germany were hoping this time they can come up with a peace deal that both Ukraine and Russia can agree upon. In a

sign of the importance of the initiative, this will be German Chancellor Angela Merkel's first trip to Moscow since Ukraine's conflict broke out a year ago.

French President Francois Hollande and Merkel traveled to Kiev and met with Poroshenko on Thursday evening. They plan to visit Moscow on Friday with a peace proposal "based on the territorial integrity of Ukraine."

"It will not be said that France and Germany together have not tried everything, undertaken everything, to preserve the peace," Hollande said earlier.

The French leader did not mention the U.S., saying the two European nations and Russia have special historic, cultural and economic ties. A senior French government official said the two leaders decided on the trip Wednesday night and did not consult American officials about it. The official was not authorized

to be named, according to French policy.

Kerry, however, sought to cast the new European initiative as part of unified Western efforts to support Ukraine.

He said the visit to Kiev by Merkel and Hollande "underscores that, together, the United States, France, Germany and the rest of our international partners stand united with Ukraine in calling on Russia to take the steps that I just outlined."

In Moscow, Putin adviser Yuri Ushakov said Russia was "ready for a constructive conversation" aimed at stabilizing the situation, establishing a dialogue between the Ukrainian government and the rebels and rebuilding economic ties between eastern Ukraine and Kiev. He said the Kremlin expects that Merkel and Hollande had taken Putin's own peace proposals into account.

Western diplomats said Putin

gave the French and Germans a nine-page peace plan, and that Hollande and Merkel were taking a repackaged version of that with them. The diplomats said the European version drops the most objectionable elements of the Russian plan to fit what Ukraine and the Europeans want, such as some autonomy for eastern Ukraine with special protections for language, culture and local taxes.

Kerry said the French and German foreign ministers had informed Washington about the Russian proposal but he did not have all the details.

Kerry brought \$16.4 million in new humanitarian aid to Ukraine as the Obama administration weighed sending arms to help the beleaguered Kiev government fight its heavily armed separatists. Obama has opposed sending weapons but sources in his administration say that position could change.

Germany and other European nations remain fiercely opposed to sending arms to Ukraine. Federica Mogherini, the European Union's foreign policy chief, backed the French-German peace effort, saying "there is no military solution to the crisis in Ukraine."

"By throwing more weapons on the bonfire, I don't believe, unfortunately, that we will solve the problems in Ukraine," Danish Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard said Tuesday, arguing more sanctions against Russia to force the rebels back into peace talks.

European Union foreign ministers will be talking Monday about increasing EU sanctions against Russia for its actions in Ukraine.

Breedlove, the top NATO commander, said Tuesday that any move to give Ukraine lethal defensive weapons "could trigger a more strident reaction from Russia."

Breedlove also emphasized it was important to make sure that Moscow and the separatists don't once again use a cease-fire to build up their forces and prepare for a new offensive to gain more territory.

NATO: Leader says moves show allies 'playing their part' to protect Europe

FROM FRONT PAGE

Stoltenberg said ministers also had agreed on the composition of a brigade-strength Spearhead Force, whose lead elements would be ready to move into trouble spots within 48 hours of being activated. France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and Britain had offered to provide the main elements of that force.

This is a strong signal of NATO solidarity," Stoltenberg said at the end of the one-day meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels. "And it shows that European allies are fully playing their part, taking the lead in protecting Europe."

The allies decided to immediately establish six multinational command-and-control centers

in eastern Europe. Those will be located in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. The centers will comprise up to 50 staff officers, half of them from the home nations, officials said.

"If a crisis arises, they will ensure that national and NATO forces from across the Alliance are able to act as one from the start. They will make rapid deployment easier," Stoltenberg said. "This is the biggest reinforcement of collective defense since the Cold War."

The NATO meeting came amid a flurry of diplomatic activity on Ukraine.

Secretary of State John Kerry met with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in Kiev on

Thursday. In a surprise peace initiative, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande were set to meet with Poroshenko on Thursday and with Russian leader Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Friday.

"We know there are now new initiatives undertaken by Hollande and Merkel, and we support those initiatives and we hope they will lead to concrete results," Stoltenberg said.

The defense ministers' meeting on Thursday was the first since NATO heads of state convened in September and decided to bolster the alliance's defenses in eastern Europe in response to Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula.

The nearly yearlong crisis has re-energized the Cold War alliance, which had been searching for a raison d'être since the scaling back of the war in Afghanistan. At the end of last year, NATO announced it was ending combat operations in Afghanistan. The alliance still maintains thousands of advisers and other troops in the country to help the Afghan army and police, who face threats from the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

In the meantime, NATO has established a more robust presence in Poland and the Baltic states, which lie on Russia's periphery. The United States has taken a lead role in the rotational presence and training in those states. Hagel said that in its initial

phase, the 66-year-old alliance focused on defending its members from Soviet aggression; after 1990, it adapted to the collapse of communism and the end of the East-West divide by conducting out-of-area operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere. "Now, in its third phase, the alliance must be prepared to address all these challenges at once," Hagel said.

Stoltenberg is scheduled to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the annual Munich Security Conference, which opens Friday. Although NATO suspended all practical cooperation with Russia last year, the alliance has kept channels open for political contacts.

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MILITARY

“On this broadcast last week, in an effort to honor and thank a veteran who protected me and so many others after a ground-fire incident in the desert during the Iraq War invasion, I made a mistake in recalling the events of 12 years ago. It did not take long to hear from some brave men and woman in the aircrews who were also in that desert — I want to apologize. I said I was traveling in an aircraft that was hit by RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) fire. I was instead in a following aircraft. We all landed after the ground-fire incident and spent two harrowing nights in a sandstorm in the Iraq desert. This was a bungled attempt by me to thank one special veteran and, by extension, our brave military men and women, veterans everywhere — those who have served while I did not. I hope they know they have my greatest respect and, also now, my apology.”

Brian Williams
“NBC Nightly News”



Justin Stephens/Courtesy of NBC

Williams: Some on the scene in Iraq believe apology was contrived

FROM FRONT PAGE

“I think it is misleading” for Williams to say his aircraft was following behind the Chinook hit by two rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire, said David Luke, a retired soldier from Texas who was a flight engineer with a company of the helicopters under the 159th Aviation Regiment, which was known as Hercules and based out of Savannah, Ga.

The company carrying NBC and the company that was attacked typically flew sorties one hour apart to supply forward positions as the U.S. pushed toward Baghdad, though they happened to pass in the air before the incident, he said.

Luke said his formation of three Chinooks was carrying Williams and his NBC crew back toward Kuwait when they spotted a white Iraqi pickup truck, which stopped to watch the aircraft. They flew past quickly and continued on.

Soon after, Luke’s formation passed another company of Chinooks based out of Germany known as Big Windy heading in the opposite direction toward Baghdad, he said.

Luke’s Hercules Chinooks carrying Williams and the NBC crew soon heard over the radio that the Big Windy company they

had passed came under fire from the pickup truck, he said.

Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Miller, who was a flight engineer on the Chinook carrying NBC, said the TV news crew placed a microphone in one of the helicopter’s headsets and later broadcast clips of the radio reports from the Chinook company that was attacked.

Luke’s unit then ran into an approaching sandstorm that forced them to change course and return north in an attempt to find a safe haven at the forward operating base Rams, a Spartan and hastily organized post to the south of Baghdad, Luke said.

The unit found the rocket-damaged Chinook parked at an airstrip just outside Rams. Crewmembers on that aircraft said Williams came off his helicopter and approached them to ask about the attack.

The damaged Chinook had been hit by two rockets and small-arms fire, including rounds that passed through the cockpit and ricocheted inside the cabin, giving one soldier a cheek wound.

Williams angered crew members last week when he claimed he had been aboard the attacked Chinook during NBC’s coverage of a public tribute for retired Command Sgt. Maj. Tim Terpak,

who had provided ground security for the parked helicopters.

“He would’ve told that war story until he was on his dying bed,”

David Luke
retired flight engineer

The anchor had taken Terpak to a Rangers hockey game at Madison Square Garden in New York.

In an interview with Stars and Stripes, Williams said he had misremembered the events and was sorry.

He issued an apology to the

Chinook soldiers on Facebook, writing that “I was indeed on the

Chinook behind the bird that took the RPG in the tail housing just above the ramp.”

Williams also corrected his earlier report during the “NBC Nightly News.” “I was instead in a following aircraft. We all landed after the ground-fire incident and spent two harrowing nights in a sandstorm in the Iraq desert,” he said.

The apology was met with some cynicism from those who were there.

“I have a feeling that he didn’t have a choice (but to apologize),” Luke said. “I don’t think it would ever have happened (otherwise). He would’ve told that war story until he was on his dying bed.”

Others were glad Williams apologized.

When reached Thursday, Mike O’Keefe, who was the door gunner on the Chinook hit by RPGs, said he was more or less satisfied with the apology and no longer wanted to press the issue by making public comments.

“I understand your interest and very much appreciate you getting the truth out there, but from my perspective, Mr. Williams has been outed and has enough to deal with,” O’Keefe wrote in a message to Stars and Stripes. “Guess I just don’t want to kick the guy when he is down. Though he wordsmithed his apology to downplay what he did, he did recant and I am satisfied.”

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MILITARY

Emails shed light on Petraeus trap

Jill Kelley correspondence depicts a striving Fla. socialite and a smitten military brass

By CRAIG WHITLOCK
The Washington Post

Judging from her emails, Jill Kelley was star-struck by the big-name military commanders rotating between the war zones in the Middle East and her home town of Tampa, Fla. And they were equally smitten with her.

"Everyone thinks you're a RockStar!" Kelley gushed in a 2012 email to Marine Gen. James Mattis, then commander of all U.S. military forces in the Middle East. "We agreed how amazing it must be that you're single-handedly re-writing history," she added, recalling how she had sung the general's praises to several foreign ambassadors at the Republican National Convention that August in Tampa.

After another social event, she wrote a similar mash note to Mattis's deputy, Vice Adm. Robert Harward. "What a Leader you were to these heads of State," she enthused. "YOU ROCK!!!"

Replied Harward: "YOU ROCK MORE!!!"

In late 2012, Kelley's talent as a Tampa hostess and her knack for charming men in uniform indirectly triggered one of the most embarrassing national security scandals of the past decade. Among other casualties, the fall-out led to the resignation of CIA Director David Petraeus — a former four-star Army general — and the early retirement of Marine Gen. John Allen, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Kelley's chumminess with Petraeus and the military brass had attracted the notice of the spy-master's biographer and mistress, Paula Broadwell. She had nudged Kelley in anonymous emails to military officials and others, according to federal investigators and a lawsuit filed by Kelley. The FBI got involved. Petraeus quit in disgrace. Allen retired.

The case still has not been entirely resolved. The Justice Department is deciding whether to charge Petraeus with leaking classified material to his lover. He has denied doing so.

Long after the scandal broke, it remains unclear what exactly prompted Broadwell to view Kelley as a rival. Kelley has said the trigger was a blizzard of correspondence with Kelley — between 20,000 and 30,000 pages of emails, according to some senior defense officials. Other officials have said that figure includes many duplicate notes and exaggerated the extent of their communications, adding that there

were only about 300 total emails. The Defense Department inspector general investigated and concluded in 2013 that Allen had not committed any wrongdoing. But it has kept its report and all of Allen's emails under lock and key.

Now, a glimpse into Kelley's relationship with military commanders has emerged from another, previously undisclosed batch of emails: her correspondence with Mattis, a legendary Marine, and Harward, a Navy SEAL, and when they served as the top two officers at U.S. Central Command headquarters in Tampa. The Washington Post requested the emails in November 2012 under the Freedom of Information Act. More than two years later, after numerous unexplained delays, the Pentagon released 238 pages of heavily censored documents.

The unredacted portions of the emails — from Mattis' and Harward's government accounts — contain no evidence of improper behavior. But taken together, the records depict two wartime commanders who were easy marks for the flattery of an exuberant socialite. "I wish that we could clone a couple thousand of you, but the land is likely not ready for that big an impact," Mattis told Kelley in a Jan. 31, 2012, email.

Mattis and Harward, who have since retired from the military, did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Kelley, 39, who still lives in Tampa, referred questions to her attorney, Alan Raul, of Washington. He released a statement that read, in part: "The latest set of emails made public by the government simply confirms that Jill Kelley is was a talented, civiced-minded woman doing productive work as Honorary Ambassador to Central Command in Tampa and as Honorary Consul for the Republic of Korea."

"Noneless," he added, "continued unauthorized government

The unredacted portions of the emails — from (Gen. James Mattis' and (Vice Adm. Robert) Harward's government email accounts — contain no evidence of improper behavior. But taken together, the records depict two wartime commanders who were easy marks for the flattery of an exuberant socialite.



Jill Kelley leaves her home in November 2012 in Tampa, Fla. Kelley is identified as the woman who allegedly received harassing emails from Gen. David Petraeus' paramour, Paula Broadwell.

release of the Kelleys' emails exposes them to further unjustified embarrassment and injury."

A relative newcomer on Tampa's social scene, Kelley and her husband, Scott, hosted events at their mansion for military officers from nearby MacDill Air Force Base, home of Central Command headquarters. The emails show how Kelley was eager to deepen and formalize the relationship, urging the brass to bestow on her the title of honorary ambassador for Central Command and the U.S.-led military coalition in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

"Soooooo..... Did you and Jim finally decide to make me your official CentCom ambassador????? Kelley asked Harward on Jan. 12, 2012. "Please! Please! Please! I always wanted to be an Ambassador, since I was made to be a 'catalyst' — that helps build or facilitate Foreign relations."

Harward gave a teasing reply: "We'll have to put you through the vetting process and interviews to ensure you have the right attributes!"

She passed muster soon enough. On April 19, Harward hosted an official recognition ceremony and reception in which Kelley was anointed "United States Central Command and Coalition Honorary Ambassador."

Mattis was tied up in Baghdad and couldn't attend. Kelley, who is of Lebanese descent, emailed him afterward with a narrative of the event. She described how she gave a speech, partly in Arabic, and did her best to make a good diplomatic impression with VIPs from Middle Eastern countries.

"I gave my commitment . . . as the Ambassador, to make it my priority to advance global trust, international exchange, and camaraderie within the Command," she wrote. "But most importantly I thanked Gen Mattis for his priceless support and glorious [sic] leadership. I said, without him, this would not be a reality!"

She added: "Harward also spoke — really flattering words about 'Madame Ambassador' He

explained why they decided to designate this new position — and why the CentCom unilaterally chose me. :) (which was very humbling to hear in front of a million guys)."

Kelley found her niche as a networker, volunteering her time to arrange dinners, charity functions and other events in Tampa and Washington. Her ebullient personality stood out in military and diplomatic circles, catching attention from some unexpected corners.

In January 2012, for example, the South Korean Embassy in Washington informed Kelley that she had been selected to become an honorary consul. Even though she knew little about the country, she accepted the title with gusto.

"YES!!!! Honorary Consul General. I'm soooooo excited about the humbling honor," she wrote to Mattis on Jan. 31 to inform him of her appointment. "It's ironic that I get the request from the state of Korea — which is NOT my expertise. However as a lover of International Politics/Foreign Affairs, I do find the Korean Statehood quite interesting. (I'm a lover of conflict problem solving, and have a keen sense of seeking opportunities in chaos.)"

While Kelley's appointments as ambassador and consul general were honorary positions, the emails indicate she was eager to become a diplomatic player.

In July and August 2012, she informed Harward in a series of notes that she had received an official invitation from the parliament of Afghanistan to visit Kabul. In correspondence with State Department officials, she emphasized that her planned visit to Kabul had the backing of Allen, the U.S. general in charge of military operations in Afghanistan. "I am honored by their petition of me, and would be humbled to serve the request to foster, promote and proliferate future relations and agreements with the Members of Parliament," Kelley wrote in an Aug. 27 email to an unidentified State Department of-

official, which was copied to Allen. "As I stated in our conversation, COMISAF John Allen is well aware of the invitation by Parliament, and is in support of my visit to Kabul." Kelley's attorney did not respond to a query about whether she went on the trip.

As she embraced her honorary roles, Kelley also became protective of her diplomatic turf. The tone of her cheery, solicitous emails changed abruptly in early July 2012 after an unidentified NATO official informed her matter-of-factly that three other coalition ambassadors had been appointed and would be attending a French-sponsored Bastille Day party.

"Bob," she emailed Harward minutes later. "WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT???? You never informed me of 3 other Honorary Ambassadors?????"

When Harward replied that he would check into the matter, Kelley fumed some more. "Please call . . . and make it very clear that you are NOT supporting this," she wrote. "These NATO guys manipulate passive behavior . . . Clearly, I'm offended, and not standing up for this . . . Please address this today, and kill this for once and for all."

Kelley's diplomatic career crumbled a few months later — not because of her perceived NATO rivals but because of the FBI's investigation into Broadwell's anonymous emails and the ripples from Petraeus' downfall.

Although Kelley was never accused of wrongdoing, her name and her unusual niche in the national security establishment were quickly publicized by the news media. In 2013, she sued the FBI and the Defense Department, asserting that her privacy rights had been violated by officials who leaked her name and personal information to reporters.

The federal government has sought to dismiss the case, but a judge has ruled that the lawsuit can proceed in U.S. District Court in Washington.

NATION

Probe centers on why SUV was on tracks

By JIM FITZGERALD
AND JENNIFER PELTZ
The Associated Press

VALHALLA, N.Y. — An investigation into what caused a fiery crash that killed a motorist and five rail riders is focusing on how a mother of three described by friends as safety conscious ended up between two crossing gates in her SUV as a commuter train barreled toward her.

"The big question everyone wants to know is, why was this vehicle in the crossing?" Robert Sumwalt, a National Transportation Safety Board vice chairman, told reporters in suburban New York a day after the deadliest accident in the 32-year history of Metro-North Railroad, one of the nation's busiest commuter railroads.

NTSB investigators were working Thursday to examine the tracks, interview the crew and

find out whether Ellen Brody's Mercedes SUV had a data recorder of its own.

Service on the Harlem Line resumed Thursday with delays, as trains slowed down through the crash site area.

Brody, 49, was driving home from her jewelry store job Tuesday night when a witness said she got out of her vehicle to check after a guardrail came down on top of it. She then got back into the car, driving forward onto the tracks just before she was struck by the train, motorist Rick Hope told The Journal News.

"She wasn't in a hurry at all, but she had to have known that a train was coming," Hope told the newspaper, adding he backed up and motioned for her to do the same.

The crash happened in the dark in an area where the tracks are straight but drivers exiting or entering the adjacent Taconic

Parkway had to turn and cross them. Traffic also was backed up because of an accident on the parkway.

Investigators had no evidence the crossing gates weren't working properly, but their examination was just beginning, Sumwalt said.

Brody was a mother of three grown daughters and was an active, outgoing member of her synagogue. She was "not risky when it came to her safety or others," said family friend Paul Feiner, the town supervisor in Greenburgh.

The crash was so powerful that the electrified third rail came up and pierced the train and the SUV, and the SUV was pushed about 1,000 feet, Sumwalt said. The blaze consumed the SUV and the train's first car.

Sumwalt said the NTSB also would examine the adequacy of the train's exits and the intensity

of the fire, which investigators believe was sparked by the SUV's gas tank.

In the first car, a man whose hands were burned allowed open the emergency exit latch, allowing some of the train's roughly 700 passengers to escape, passenger Christopher Gross said on ABC's "Good Morning America."

The train's engineer tried to rescue people until the smoke and flames got so severe that he had to escape, Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino said.

It was not the first deadly crash at the site. A Metro-North train hit a truck, killing its driver, at the same Commerce Street crossing in 1984, according to Federal Railroad Administration records.

Every day, trains travel across more than 212,000 highway-grade rail crossings in the U.S. There are an average of 230 to 250 deaths a year at such cross-

ings, down more than 50 percent from two decades ago, FRA figures show.

Risky driver behavior or poor judgment accounts for 94 percent of grade crossing accidents, according to a 2004 government report.

Metro-North is the nation's second-busiest commuter railroad, after the Long Island Rail Road, serving about 280,000 riders per day.

Late last year, the NTSB issued rulings on five Metro-North accidents in New York and Connecticut in 2013 and 2014, repeatedly finding fault with the railroad.

Among the accidents was a 2013 derailment in the Bronx that killed four people, the railroad's first passenger fatalities. The NTSB said the engineer had fallen asleep at the controls because of a severe, undiagnosed case of sleep apnea.



MARK LEHNHAR/AP

The Empire State Building and the Manhattan skyline are seen from the Rainbow Room in New York. An annual race up the stairs of the Empire State building was won by an Australian woman for the sixth time.

Australian wins race up Empire State Building a record 6th time

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — An Australian woman won the annual race up the Empire State Building's stairs for the sixth time, a record for the women's event.

Suzu Walsham dashed up 1,576 steps to the 86th-floor observatory in the Empire State Building Run-Up on Wednesday night in 12 minutes and 30 seconds.

The men's race was won by German runner Christian Riedel, a first-time winner who came in

at 10 minutes and 16 seconds.

The 38th annual tower climb was organized by NYCRUNS.

The participants came from around the world and were led by the elite women's and men's groups. The general field followed, with staggered, seconds-apart start times for racers to avoid a crush of people all trying to get into the stairwell at the same time.

Last year, Walsham won the women's event in 11 minutes and 57 seconds and Thorbjorn Lud-

vigen, of Norway, won the men's race in 10 minutes and 6 seconds.

The course records are 9 minutes and 33 seconds for the men, set by Australian Paul Craike in 2003, and 11 minutes and 23 seconds for the women, set by Austrian Andrea Mayr in 2006.

German Thomas Dold holds the record for most men's victories, with seven.

The Empire State Building Run-Up is one of the most well-known tower climbs in the world.

NY court asked to release chokehold death details

By TOM HAYS
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Two months after a grand jury declined to press criminal charges in the police killing of an unarmed New York City man, a state judge must decide whether to disclose details of the secret proceedings.

The New York Civil Liberties Union and other petitioners have gone to court on Staten Island to demand that Judge William Garnett open the record in the Eric Garner case — a position opposed by Richmond County District Attorney Daniel Donovan. Garnett was set to hear arguments at a hearing Thursday morning.

In court papers, the NYCLU cited the outcry over the grand jury's decision not to indict Daniel Pantaleo — the white New York Police Department officer seen on a widely watched video putting the unarmed black man in what the medical examiner called a fatal chokehold — as compelling reason to make an exception to the long-standing practice of keeping the process secret.

New rules proposed on Internet speeds

WASHINGTON — Declaring the Internet critical for the nation, a top U.S. regulator on Wednesday proposed an unprecedented extension of federal power to ensure providers don't block or slow Web traffic for America's countless users.

The proposal by Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler was a victory for advocates of "net neutrality," the idea that Internet providers must allow data to move across their networks without interference. The idea has been the

Disclosure is needed "to restore public confidence in our criminal justice system and to inform the current debate that has begun regarding the role of the grand jury as an instrument of justice or injustice," the NYCLU argues in the court papers.

In its reply, Donovan's office has argued that grand jury witnesses came forward and testified "with full assurances of secrecy." Making their testimony public, the papers argue, would bring an "inevitable" result of harassment or retaliation.

Pantaleo and other officers stopped Garner on the street on July 17 on suspicion of selling loose, untaxed cigarettes. A video shot by an onlooker and widely watched on the Internet shows Garner, 43, telling the officers to leave him alone and refusing to be handcuffed.

Pantaleo responded by wrapping his arm around Garner's neck. The heaviest Garner, who had asthma, is heard on the tape gasping, "I can't breathe." He later was pronounced dead at a hospital.

subject of heavy lobbying and millions of dollars in advertising in the past year.

Major Internet providers insist they have no plans to create such fast or slow lanes, but they strongly oppose the regulation, arguing that it could stifle innovation and investment. Open Internet rules had been in place but were recently knocked down by a federal court.

Wheeler's proposal attempts to erase any legal uncertainty by reclassifying the Internet as a telecommunications service and regulating it under the 1934 Communications Act.

From The Associated Press

NATION

A '2-way street'

Poll shows support of same-sex marriage comes with caveats

By EMILY SWANSON
AND BRADY MCCOMBS
The Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — While finding that Americans narrowly favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to legally marry, a new Associated Press-GfK poll also shows most believe wedding-related businesses should be allowed to deny service to same-sex couples for religious reasons.

Roughly half the country also thinks local officials and judges with religious objections ought to be exempt from any requirements that they issue marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples, according to the poll.

That view of the same-sex-marriage issue echoes that of the Mormon church. Last week, the church called on its members to pass new laws that protect gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from discrimination but also to protect the rights of those who assert their religious beliefs.

David Kenney, a self-employed Catholic from Novi, Mich., said he's fine with same-sex marriage being legal. He's among the 57 percent of Americans who said wedding-related businesses — such as florists — should be allowed to refuse service if they have an objection rooted in their religion.

"Why make an issue out of one florist when there are probably thousands of florists?" asked Kenney, 59. "The gay community wants people to understand their position, but at the same time, they don't want to understand other people's religious convictions. It's a two-way street."

Kenney isn't alone. About a quarter of those who favor legal same-sex marriage also favor religious exemptions for those who issue marriage licenses, the poll finds, and a third say wedding-related businesses should be allowed to refuse service.

Geri Rice, who lives near San Francisco and works in law firm management, strongly favors gay marriage. She's torn about whether a public official with religious objections should be exempt from issuing a license, but says she believes that business owners should be allowed to tell somebody no thanks.

The poll found that 44 percent of Americans favor and 39 percent oppose legal same-sex marriage in their own states, while 15 percent expressed no opinion.

The AP-GfK Panel of 1,045 adults was conducted online Jan. 29-Feb. 2 using a sample drawn from GfK's probability-based KnowledgePanel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.



PHOTOS BY CARLOS OSORIO/AP

A chained "zombie" reaches for participants as they play "Trapped in a Room with a Zombie," an interactive theater show combining puzzle-solving and a zombie threat, in Detroit.

Cities offer zombie-themed escapism

By MIKE HOUSEHOLDER
The Associated Press

DETROIT — An interactive theater show offered in more than a dozen cities across the U.S. encourages participants to channel their inner Sherlock Holmes in an end-of-the-world team game-building exercise.

It wouldn't hurt if they had a little Rick Grimes from "The Walking Dead" in them, either.

"Trapped in a Room with a Zombie" is a "room-escape" experience, versions of which are offered in Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle and other cities.

A version that recently opened in Detroit works like this: Up to a dozen people are ushered into a room at a downtown high-rise and locked inside for an hour alongside a blood-thirsty zombie (or at least an actor portraying one) who is chained to a wall. Every five minutes, a buzzer sounds, and the zombie is given another foot of chain, allowing the undead creature to scamper closer to its next meal.

If participants don't solve a series of puzzles and riddles, the zombie "eats" everyone.

Rick Broida, the Detroit show's executive producer, said it's "more 'fun scary' than 'scary fun.'"

"The zombie is there to add an adrenaline rush. Cannibalism has been outlawed in this country for a little while, so legally speaking, the zombie's not allowed to eat you or consume any portion of you," Broida said just before Audrey Poe and seven pals entered



Audrey Poe, center left, and Erika Sorensen, center, look over clues in "Trapped in a Room with a Zombie."

‘It always comes down to a race to the finish with the zombie nipping at your heels, and everybody’s trying to solve the last puzzle. It makes for a really exciting time.’

Rick Broida

executive producer of "Trapped in a Room with a Zombie"

the room and did their best to avoid becoming zombie fodder.

Poe, of suburban Waterford, Mich., "was trying to find something fun and interesting to do" for her 30th birthday when she read online about "Trapped in a Room with a Zombie."

Poe's group solved some clues, but not quickly enough to make it out "alive."

"We almost got out," she said, minutes after affixing her name

tag to a wall reserved for those who didn't survive.

About 30 percent of the groups that have taken part in the Detroit show have survived. The record time so far is 58 minutes, 21 seconds.

"It always comes down to a race to the finish with the zombie nipping at your heels, and everybody's trying to solve the last puzzle," Broida said. "It makes for a really exciting time."

Lawmakers aim to limit exemptions for vaccines

By FENIT NIRAPPIL
The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California lawmakers proposed legislation Wednesday that would require parents to vaccinate all schoolchildren unless a child's health is in danger, joining only two other states with such stringent restrictions.

Parents could no longer cite personal beliefs or religious reasons to send unvaccinated children to private and public schools under a proposal introduced after dozens of people have fallen ill from a measles outbreak that started at Disneyland in Anaheim, Mississippi and West Virginia are the only other states with such strict vaccine rules, though the California bill's chief author said he would consider including a religious exemption.

"People are starting to realize, 'I'm vulnerable, my children are vulnerable,'" said Sen. Richard Pan, a Democratic pediatrician from Sacramento. "We should not wait for more children to sicken or die before we act."

Childhood vaccine has become an emotionally charged topic amid a measles outbreak that has sickened more than 100 people across the U.S. and in Mexico. No deaths have been reported.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, California is among 20 states that allow for personal belief exemptions and 48 that allow for religious exemptions.

A Washington state lawmaker introduced a bill Wednesday that would remove the personal belief allowance for an exemption in that state.

Public health officials believe an immunization rate of at least 90 percent is critical to minimizing the potential for a disease outbreak. California's kindergarten-tenters met that threshold at the start of this school year, according to state statistics: 2 percent were exempt because of their parents' personal beliefs, and another half a percent were exempted because of their parent's religion.

Less than one-fifth of a percent of all students — about 1,000 — had a medical vaccine exemption that would be preserved under the bill.

Pan, who previously served in the assembly, was the author of another vaccination bill that took effect last year. It requires parents not to have their children vaccinated for nonreligious reasons to get a note from the doctor's office before enrolling their children in school.

A spokesman for Gov. Jerry Brown, who signed that bill, did not say if the governor would oppose efforts to end exemptions.

"The Governor believes that vaccinations are profoundly important and a major public health benefit and any bill that reaches his desk will be closely considered," spokesman Evan Westrup wrote in an email.

NATION



EVAN VUCCI/AP

President Barack Obama bows his head toward the Dalai Lama on Thursday as he was recognized during the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington.

Obama condemns those who seek to 'hijack religion'

By NEDRA PICKLER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama on Thursday condemned those who seek to use religion as a rationale for carrying out violence around the world, declaring that “no god condones terror.”

“We are summoned to push back against those who would distort our religion for their nihilistic ends,” Obama said during remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast. He singled out the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, calling the militants a “death cult,” as well as those responsible for last month’s terrorist attacks in Paris and deadly assault on a school in Pakistan.

Obama offered a special welcome to a “good friend,” the Dalai Lama, seated at a table in front of the dais among the audience of 3,600. Earlier Obama, seated at the head table, pressed his hands together in a prayer-like position and bowed his head toward the Dalai Lama, then gave him a wave and a broad smile.

It was the first time the president and the Tibetan Buddhist leader attended the same public event, with China objecting to foreign leaders meeting with the Dalai Lama because of his quest for greater Tibetan autonomy from Beijing. Obama’s three previous meetings with the Dalai Lama have been private because of the sensitivity of the situation.

In a show of White House sup-

port for the Dalai Lama, he was seated at a table with top Obama adviser Valerie Jarrett, Actor Richard Gere, a friend and follower of the Dalai Lama, also was nearby. Meanwhile, outside, hundreds of demonstrators banged drums and waved Tibetan flags under heavy police presence.

The Dalai Lama fled to exile in India after a failed 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule. Obama on Thursday called him “a powerful example of what it means to practice compassion and who inspires us to speak up for the freedom and dignity of all human beings.”

The president joked that it’s a rare event that can bring together the Dalai Lama and NASCAR, after retired driver and commentator Darrell Waltrip gave the keynote address. Waltrip told how he had accepted Jesus Christ as his savior after a 1993 crash left him wondering what would happen if he died.

“If you’ve never gotten on your knees and asked him to forgive you of your sins, you’re just a pretty good guy or a pretty good gal! You’re going to go to hell,” Waltrip said.

Obama had a more nondenominational message for the audience that also included prominent leaders of non-Christian faiths. The president said that while religion is a source for good around the world, people of all faiths have been willing to “hijack religion for their own murderous ends.”

Some in GOP eye tax credits as a health care alternative

By DAVID ESPO
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A small, influential group of Republicans, in search of a replacement health care law, will propose tax credits to help lower-income individuals and families purchase insurance, officials said Wednesday. The GOP lawmakers would jettison the controversial coverage requirement in the current “Obamacare” law.

The proposal is part of an outline that Sen. Orrin Hatch, Sen. Richard Burr and Rep. Fred Upton planned to make public Thursday. It’s an early marker among the competing recommendations likely to be floated in advance of an expected Supreme Court ruling in June on the constitutionality of a key part of President Barack Obama’s health insurance overhaul.

Hatch, from Utah, is chairman of the Senate Finance Committee,

which has jurisdiction over much of the current law. Burr, from North Carolina, is a member of the panel. Upton, a Michigan lawmaker, chairs the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, which has significant authority over the law in that chamber.

Aides to all three lawmakers declined comment. Upton also declined to provide any details of the plan, but he said Tuesday the effort is aimed at “being prepared to talk about something we could support” if the court strikes down a part of the law that provides subsidies for millions who purchase coverage under the current arrangement.

Like other alternatives expected to follow, the starting point for the three lawmakers is repeal of the current law, which Republicans voted against unanimously when it passed in 2010 and have tried repeatedly to uproot since then.

Officials familiar with the emerging proposal said it is based in large part on an outline that Hatch, Burr and former Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., outlined a year ago. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record before a formal announcement.

By repealing the Affordable Care Act, the plan would eliminate the government requirement for individuals to purchase coverage and the penalty for noncompliance — a key irritant to Republicans — and would get rid of a companion mandate for businesses to provide coverage for their workers. It also is expected to scrap a requirement for all plans to provide insurance in specific areas, including inpatient settings, hospitalization, maternal and newborn coverage, pediatric care and more.

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WORLD

Nigerian militants attack civilians in nearby Cameroon

By EDWIN KINDZEKA MOKI AND MICHELLE FAUL
The Associated Press

YAOUNDE, Cameroon — Nigerian Islamic extremists on the run from a massive, three-nation offensive took revenge Thursday on civilians in neighboring Cameroon, shooting and burning scores to death and razing mosques and churches. France's president warned that the world is not doing enough to end the wanton killings by Boko Haram.

Cameroonian officials said more than 500 wounded people are trapped in the town of Fotokol where fighting began Wednesday and continued Thursday. They said Boko Haram fighters are using civilians as shields.

While Boko Haram had previously carried out attacks in Cameroon, the latest bloodshed comes after the group warned other nations against uniting against it and said to be a result of Cameroon and Chad launching an offensive this week with aircraft and ground troops.

This new military involvement by other African nations in counterinsurgency campaigns in Nigeria stands to grow even bigger. African Union officials met here on Thursday to finalize details for a multinational force to attack Boko Haram, though deployment could be delayed by funding issues. African leaders last week authorized a 7,500-strong force to fight Boko Haram, with pledges for a battalion each from Nigeria and its four neighbors, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin.

"We consider Boko Haram to be a cancer, and if the international community does not focus its mind on this disease it will spread not only in Central Africa but other regions, all over the continent," Cameroonian Information Minister Issa Tchiroma Bakary said Thursday at the beginning of the three-day meeting in Yaounde, Cameroon's capital. Officials from the United States, France, Russia, Britain and the European Union are attending along with senior officials from the U.N. peacekeeping department.

Earlier, Bakary told The Associated Press that some 800 Boko Haram fighters were rampag-

ing through the Cameroonian border town of Fotokol, up in the thin northern panhandle of the West African nation. They have "burned churches, mosques and villages and slaughtered youth who resisted joining them," he said, adding that the insurgents from Nigeria also stole livestock and food. Schools also have been razed by the insurgents whose nickname, Boko Haram, means "Western education is forbidden" in the Hausa language.

Hundreds of insurgents were killed Wednesday, compared with the loss of 13 Chadian and six Cameroonian troops, Defense Minister Edgard Alain Mebe Ngo said. At least 91 civilians have been killed and most of the estimated 500 wounded cannot be immediately taken to the hospitals, he said. There was no way to immediately confirm the account independently.

The fighters are believed to have entered into Cameroon from nearby Gaborou, a Nigerian border town that had been an extremist stronghold since November. Gaborou was retaken earlier this week and the fighters driven out amid Chadian and Nigerian operations supported by Chadian ground troops.

French jets also are flying over the area to provide intelligence, French defense officials in Paris said. President Francois Hollande said France also is supporting the operations with logistics, including providing fuel and sometimes munitions. Hollande stopped short of saying whether France is participating in military action. France has a big air base at N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, which will lead the multinational force.

Hollande issued a stern call to other world powers. "France can't resolve all the conflicts in the world," he said. Addressing the world's largest countries, he added: "Do your work. Don't give lessons. Take action."

France previously took the forefront in attacking al-Qaida-linked militants that controlled northern Mali, France's former colony, in 2013 and ousting the insurgents from the main cities. Battle-hardened troops from Chad also took part in the operations against the Islamic militants.



Kim Jong Un, second left, in January executed an army general who expressed an opinion that differed from that of the North Korean leader, according to a South Korean official.

Kim executes general as purge continues

By SAM KIM
Bloomberg News

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un executed an army general last month in his latest purge of senior officials.

Gen. Pyon In Son, head of operations in the Korean People's Army, was killed for expressing an opinion different than that of Kim, a South Korean official told reporters in Seoul on Wednesday, speaking on condition of anonymity as per government policy. The official didn't say what they disagreed on.

Kim still mistrusts the military, the official said, adding that senior officers are growing increasingly uneasy. The "Supreme Leader" also removed Ma Won Chun, a National Defense Commission official overseeing construction design, from office in November for alleged corruption and a failure to follow orders.

Kim has relied on purges to consolidate his grip on power since he took over a country with a nuclear arms program and 1.2 million troops in 2011.

After killing his uncle and one-time deputy, Jang Song Thaek, in 2013, he executed about 50 officials last year on charges ranging from graft to watching South Korean soap operas.

‘The purge of (Gen.) Pyon (In Son) sends a message that helps to discipline the military.’

Kim Yong Hyun
Dongguk University

"The purge of Pyon sends a message that helps to discipline the military," said Kim Yong Hyun, a professor of North Korean studies at Dongguk University in Seoul. "The execution is a symbol that will help tighten loyalty."

Pyon was promoted to a four-star general in March last year

and then removed from office in November, according to the North Korea Leadership Watch blog. South Korea's Unification Ministry's website still identifies him as a general who oversees military operations.

Meanwhile, Kim's younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, may be married and even pregnant, the official said, saying she has a ring on her finger and has recently been seen wearing comfortable shoes in public.

Yonhap News said on Jan. 2 that she married a son of party Secretary Cho Yong Hae, citing two unidentified people in China. However, the official said it's unlikely she wed Cho's son because that would concentrate too much power in Choe.

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WORLD

'Mayday' call references 'flameout'

Pilot issued distress call moments before deadly Taiwan crash

By RALPH JENNINGS
The Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Moments before the TransAsia Airways propjet banked sharply and crashed into a river, one of its pilots said, "Mayday, mayday, engine flameout," according to a Taiwanese aviation official.

"Engine flameout" refers to flames being extinguished in the combustion chamber of the engine so it shuts down and no longer drives the propeller. Causes could include a lack of fuel or being struck by volcanic ash, a bird or some other object.

At least 32 people on board the ATR 72 were killed and 15 survivors were injured in the crash in Taiwan's capital, the latest in a series of aircraft disasters befalling Asian airlines. Divers were searching in the river for the remaining 11 people on board, including the two pilots. The plane's black boxes were found overnight.

Video images of Flight 235's final moments in the air captured on car dashboard cameras appear to show the left engine's propeller at a standstill as the aircraft turned sharply, its wings going vertical and clipping a highway bridge before plunging into the Keelung River in Taipei minutes



WALLY SANTANA/AP

A crane on Thursday lifts parts of the wreckage at the site of the commercial plane crash in Taipei, Taiwan.

after takeoff Wednesday.

An audio recording of the pilot's communications with the control tower at takeoff and during the brief, minutes-long flight were widely broadcast. A Taiwan Civil Aeronautical Administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity confirmed the distress call and its wording Thursday, but did not say how it might relate to a cause for the crash.

Among the injured was Huang Jin-sun, 72, a passenger who said he tried to help others struggling in the river outside the wreckage.

"I saw others are drowning," he told ETTV News from his bed at Tri Service General Hospital in Taipei. "If I did not move quick enough to help them, soon they would be dead."

He suspected trouble with the flight from



CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY/AP

Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou, left, meets with relatives of those aboard TransAsia Airways Flight 235 at a funeral home in Taipei on Thursday.

the start.

"I felt something was not right after the plane took off," he said. "I said to the woman next to me to buckle seatbelts, hold on to the seat and cover our heads. I (had) just finished saying it, and then plane went down."

About 10 Taipei fire agency divers were looking for any more bodies that may be at the cold river bottom. A crane was used to bring the rear section of the plane to the shore Wednesday night. The fuselage of the turbo-propeller jet was largely dismantled by hydraulic rescue tools and now lay alongside recovered luggage.

The pilots' actions in the flight's final moments have led to speculation that they attempted to avoid high-rise buildings by following the line of the river and then banked sharply in an attempt to bring it down in the water rather than crash on land.

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je praised pilot Liao Chien-tsung as a hero for having avoided crashing the plane into buildings or major infrastructure.

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PACIFIC

Is Japan held hostage by traditional views?

Some deem terror victims, Abe troublemakers

By MARI YAMAGUCHI
The Associated Press

TOKYO — In Japan, where conformity takes precedence over individuality, one of the most important values is to avoid "meiwaku" — causing trouble for others. And sympathy aside, the two Japanese purportedly slain by the Islamic State group are now widely viewed as troublemakers.

So is Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Many Japanese feel that if the hostages had not ignored warnings against travel to Syria, or if Abe had not showcased Tokyo's support for the multinational coalition against the Islamic State militants, Japan wouldn't have been exposed to this new sense of insecurity and unwelcome attention from Islamic extremists.

"To be honest, they caused tremendous trouble to the Japanese government and to the Japanese people. In the old days, their parents would have had to commit hara-kiri (ritual suicide) to apologize," said Taeko Sakamoto, a 64-year-old part-time worker, after first expressing sympathy over the death of Kenji Goto and Haruna Yukawa.

Sakamoto also sees Abe as part of the problem, for not being more mindful of the risks at a time when he had already been pushing to expand Japan's military reach, which is limited to its own self-defense under the U.S.-drafted pacifist constitution after its defeat in World War II.

"I don't want Mr. Abe to do anything else that may be seen as provocation, because that's what would put us at a greater risk," Sakamoto said.

Japan until recently had not been

come directly involved in the violence surrounding Islamic State militants, who now control about a third of Syria and neighboring Iraq. Days after Abe announced during a Middle East trip last month that Japan would give \$200 million in nonmilitary aid to support the fight against Islamic State, the militants demanded a \$200 million ransom for the two hostages.

The hostage crisis came to a grisly end with news Sunday that Goto, a journalist, had been beheaded by the extremists. The killing of Yukawa was announced earlier.

In the video posted on militant websites that purportedly shows Goto's slaying, a man says, "Abe, because of your reckless decision to take part in an unwinnable war, this knife will not only slaughter Kenji, but will also carry on and cause carnage wherever your people are found. So let the nightmare for Japan begin."

Abe has been adamant about his commitment to fight terrorism as part of an international effort. On Thursday, Japan's lower house, the more powerful of the two parliamentary chambers, unanimously endorsed a resolution condemning the Islamic State group's "beyond dastardly act of terrorism" against the two Japanese nationals.

In the resolution, Japan also vowed to expand humanitarian support for the Middle East and Africa, and to strengthen anti-terrorism efforts with the international community.

Japan's tensions with other countries have been largely limited to its neighbors China and South Korea. The Middle East is an unfamiliar, distant, dangerous



Protesters with a sign stating: "No War!" rally outside Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's office in Tokyo in July, in anticipation of his government reinterpreting the constitution to allow the military a larger international role. Some in Japan see that decision as increasing the threat from terrorists.

place. "That's where the two men dared to go and that's probably why many people see them as causing trouble," said Koichi Nakano, international politics professor at Sophia University in Tokyo.

The public's response to the hostages was chilly from the beginning. Few seemed to sympathize with Yukawa, a 42-year-old gun aficionado and adventurer who was taken hostage in August. Media attention toward his case quickly faded and he was largely forgotten until Jan. 20, when militants made their ransom demand in a video that showed Yukawa and Goto in orange gowns and kneeling beside a masked militant.

Goto's reputation as a veteran journalist whose reports fo-

ocused on children and refugees in war-torn areas won him more sympathy and small rallies by his friends and other supporters. According to his wife and others who had spoken with him, Goto had gone to Syria late last year to try to save Yukawa.

Still, to address the "meiwaku" problem, both victims' families apologized repeatedly to the government and the cause for "the trouble" their sons caused, even after they died.

While Abe, his party's lawmakers and other nationalists say the terrorist threat justifies Abe's push for a tougher military posture, others say it is exactly that sort of policy that is putting Japan at greater risk of attack.

"The hostage crisis is causing a tremendous impact on Japanese

society, and has polarized views about which direction Japan should go in terms of national security," said Nakano, the professor. "In a way, people saw what could happen under Abe's security policy."

Some Japanese, like Toshihiko Ozeki, a 67-year-old pensioner, say Japan should be strong enough to defend itself, and that he supports Abe's push to expand Japan's defense role.

"Mr. Abe has gone a bit too far, trying to make Japan look tough," said a 55-year-old man who would provide only his family name, Arai, because he is afraid of being targeted by the Islamic militants. "We don't want to be seen in that image, and we don't want to have anything to do with combat."

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP



ELAINE THOMPSON/AP

Supersad Seahawks fans

A pedestrian walks past a large photo of a cheering Seattle Seahawks fan outside the team's NFL football stadium in Seattle on Tuesday. The grief, anger and bewilderment felt by many Seahawks fans after the team's loss to the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl on Sunday showed little sign of abating even days later.

Police hire company to clear rats from station

PA PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh police have hired a pest-control company to set traps for rats that have infested one of the city's zone stations.

Police spokeswoman Sonya Toler told the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review that a hole in a large outdoor trash container reportedly attracted the rodents.

A pest-control firm is baiting traps to catch the vermin.

Officer Howard McQuillan, president of the city's police union, said he's concerned about rat droppings making workers sick.

Groom-to-be killed as car hits him, fiancée

MD MARYLAND CITY — The U.S. Park Police said a Washington, D.C., couple engaged to be married were hit by a car as they changed a tire, killing the groom-to-be.

Sgt. Lelani Woods said a car hit Rick Warrick, 38, and his fiancée, Julia Pearce, 28, about 9:15 p.m. Sunday as they changed a tire on the Baltimore Washington Parkway in Anne Arundel County.

The man was killed. His fiancée was taken to Baltimore's Shock Trauma Center with non-life-threatening injuries.

Woods said the couple were completely on the shoulder of the roadway when they were hit. The driver who hit them fled.

Woods said the survivor didn't get a good look at the car, and no witnesses have reported seeing

THE CENSUS

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The number of miles that a Detroit man walks to and from work each day. James Robertson, right, told the Detroit Free Press that "Detroit is the real city of angels." Robertson, 56, is offering thanks for a flood of donations and support after the newspaper wrote about his situation over the weekend. People started crowd-funding efforts to help him buy a car and get insurance. Some offered to drive him, and others offered to buy or give him cars. As of early Wednesday, more than \$270,000 had been pledged.

the crash.

Deputy injured when driver rams his car

FL ORLANDO — Authorities said an Orange County sheriff's deputy was injured when a man rammed his vehicle into the officer's patrol car.

The incident happened Sunday night as the deputies were trying to stop the vehicle for a traffic violation. Deputies said the car sped away from them, then turned around and drove quickly back toward the patrol vehicle. One deputy was pinned between the vehicles.

The Orlando Sentinel reported that the deputy and his partner fired at the car, injuring the driver and his passenger. The injured deputy and the two suspects were taken to the hospital.

Murder suspect held in slaying of 5 people

GA LAGRANGE — A Georgia man charged in the deaths of his wife, three of her family members and a friend was arrested at a bus station in Tupelo, Miss., authorities said Monday.

Investigators suspect the victims had been dead for three days when deputies found them late

Saturday, Troup County Sheriff James Woodruff said.

Thomas J. Lee, 26, was arrested after telling a Mississippi pastor that he was having car trouble and needed to get to Opelika, Ala., Woodruff said. The pastor helped get Lee a bus ticket, but called police later when he realized authorities were searching for him.

Lee is facing five counts of malice murder in the slayings.

The dead include Lee's wife, Christie Lee, 33; her daughter, Bailey Burton, 16; the slain woman's parents, William Burton, 69, and Sheila Burton, 68; and a family friend, Iionna Green, 18, who authorities said had been living with the family.

Landmark black willow tree felled by mistake

TX DALLAS — The largest black willow tree in the state of Texas has been accidentally cut down in the White Rock Lake area of Dallas.

Dallas Parks and Recreation Department official Oscar Carmona said the 170-year-old black willow was mistakenly cut down by a Missouri-based contract crew grinding tree stumps. He told The Dallas Morning News that "they made that decision without consulting us or getting any authorization whatsoever."

The black willow was designated the species' champion by the Texas Registry four years ago.

Parents leave toddlers in car for wine-tasting

DC WASHINGTON — District of Columbia police said a couple left their two toddlers alone in a cold car as they attended a wine-tasting at an upscale restaurant.

Christopher Lucas and Jennie Chang have been charged with cruelty after police found their 1- and 2-year-old children in a locked vehicle Saturday afternoon in northwest Washington. The couple pleaded not guilty Monday to reduced charges of child neglect.

The couple's children are with family services, and their parents have been ordered to stay away from them.

Police said a restaurant manager said the couple was inside for more than an hour.

Bill seeks to make gold and silver legal tender

AZ PHOENIX — A House committee has passed a bill that would make Arizona the third state behind Utah and Oklahoma to recognize gold and silver

as legal tender.

The Federalism and States' Rights committee passed House Bill 2173 on a 5-3 vote Wednesday. Proponents said the revised bill would protect the rights of consumers to use gold, silver and platinum as currency, and protect the state's buying power.

Gov. Jan Brewer vetoed similar legislation in 2013 over concerns that it might exempt the state from collecting income taxes on transactions involving precious metals.

Officer acquitted in WWII veteran's death

IL MARKHAM — A suburban Chicago police officer was acquitted Wednesday of felony reckless conduct in the killing of a World War II veteran by shooting him with a beanbag gun at close range.

Park Forest Police Officer Craig Taylor was charged with reckless misconduct in the July 2013 incident that led to the death of John Wrana, 95.

The basic disagreement in the case was whether Taylor was justified in firing a weapon at close range that prosecutors said fired beanbags at 190 mph. The beanbags caused internal bleeding that led to Wrana's death.

From wire reports

FAITH

"I don't want my ancestors to be forgotten."



LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

Ernest Marquez, 90, stands in the backyard of his West Hills, Calif., home. Marquez has been crafting the concrete crosses adorned with seashells, rocks, plants and Mexican tiles to mark graves in the historic Marquez Family Cemetery, which has fallen into disrepair.

By MARTHA GROVES
Los Angeles Times

An unusual crop is sprouting in Ernest Marquez's backyard in West Hills, Calif.: nearly two dozen 2-foot-high concrete crosses.

The 90-year-old graphic designer wants to fulfill his long-held dream of creating nearly three dozen grave markers for his family's 19th-century burial ground in Santa Monica Canyon.

"Some time in the past, all the markers were taken or destroyed," Marquez said. With the exception of stones the family erected to mark the graves of his grandfather and grandmother, "the cemetery has remained empty of any identification of where a grave might be."

Once part of a large cattle ranch, the Pascual Marquez Family Cemetery stands amid stately trees and pricey houses on winding San Lorenzo Street. The city of Los Angeles has deemed it "extremely historic" for its connection to the region's early history.

In 1839 the Mexican government granted the area, known as the Rancho Boca de Santa Monica, to two Mexican citizens, Francisco Marquez and Ysidro Reyes. The rancho eventually became parts of Santa Monica and Pacific Palisades.

Not long after Francisco Marquez and his wife, Maria, moved to the canyon, two of their children died in infancy. Marquez buried them in the 1840s within view of the family's adobe home on what was then a wide-open upper mesa.

In succeeding decades, more people were buried — perhaps 30 other family members, Native American servants and friends, including a dozen people who died of botulism after eating home-canned peaches at a New Year's Eve gathering to

Leaving his mark

Descendant seeks to restore family's 19th-century graveyard

usher in 1910.

A photo from the 1890s shows a few wooden crosses, all of them long gone now. Ernest Marquez's grandfather Pascual was the last to be buried there, in 1916. Pascual's wife, Micaela, preceded him in death.

During Pascual's life, the canyon evolved from wilderness into a popular resort. In the mid-1920s, the Marquez and Reyes families sold the land to Santa Monica Land & Water Co., owned by Robert Gillis. Dorothy Gillis Loomis, his daughter, urged him to protect the cemetery. She commissioned noted architect John Byers to design an adobe wall to surround the burial ground.

Once the parcels were subdivided for houses, the cemetery became landlocked.

Marquez family members used a 4-foot-wide easement to gain access.

Marquez, a self-taught historian who has written books about the rancho era, spent several years in court battling neighbors who contended that the easement had been terminated by non-use. In 2005, a Los Angeles County Superior Court judge decided in Marquez's favor, allowing him to use the easement and maintain the cemetery.

In 2011, neighbors agreed to sell a portion of the land in front of the burial ground at a greatly reduced price. It is now a beautifully landscaped entry to the burial ground, which lies behind a locked gate.

Because burial records were lost or are incomplete, cemetery supporters in 2009 covered the cost of researching

the cemetery's boundaries. Scientists used ground-penetrating radar imaging equipment to find burial sites. Dogs trained to sniff out remains also identified likely locations.

Marquez and his son, Ernesto, are mapping the cemetery based on the data to pinpoint the grave sites so that they can put a 40-pound cross over each one.

"Our historian's crosses honor the tradition of decorating coastal graves with pottery shards as well as wooden markers," said Patricia Nettleship, director of La Senora Research Institute, a canyon nonprofit foundation that raised money to preserve the cemetery. "It will be an extraordinary blessing to have the cemetery marked again with the creations of a rancho descendant."

To make each cross, Marquez pours concrete into a handmade wooden mold. He then decorates the still malleable cross with items that could be associated in some way with his ancestors' rancho. He has used Mexican tiles, including some made by the famed Malibu Potteries, bought on eBay or supplied by friends. He has scavenged for tree bark. Friends have brought him clam shells from the coast and pebbles from Santa Monica Creek.

One cross shows the imprint of three cattails plucked from the creek. Four rusty horseshoes form a pattern on another.

"I don't want these to look like they came from a manufacturer," Marquez said while showing visitors around his backyard.

After almost a century of living, Marquez is content to move at his own pace. But he is determined to finish the job — before the time comes for his children to scatter his own cremated remains in the cemetery. "There's no evidence that the rancho period ever existed," he said. "There's nothing left that you can look at or touch to remind you. I don't want my ancestors to be forgotten."

WEEKEND

Bob Dylan
does Sinatra

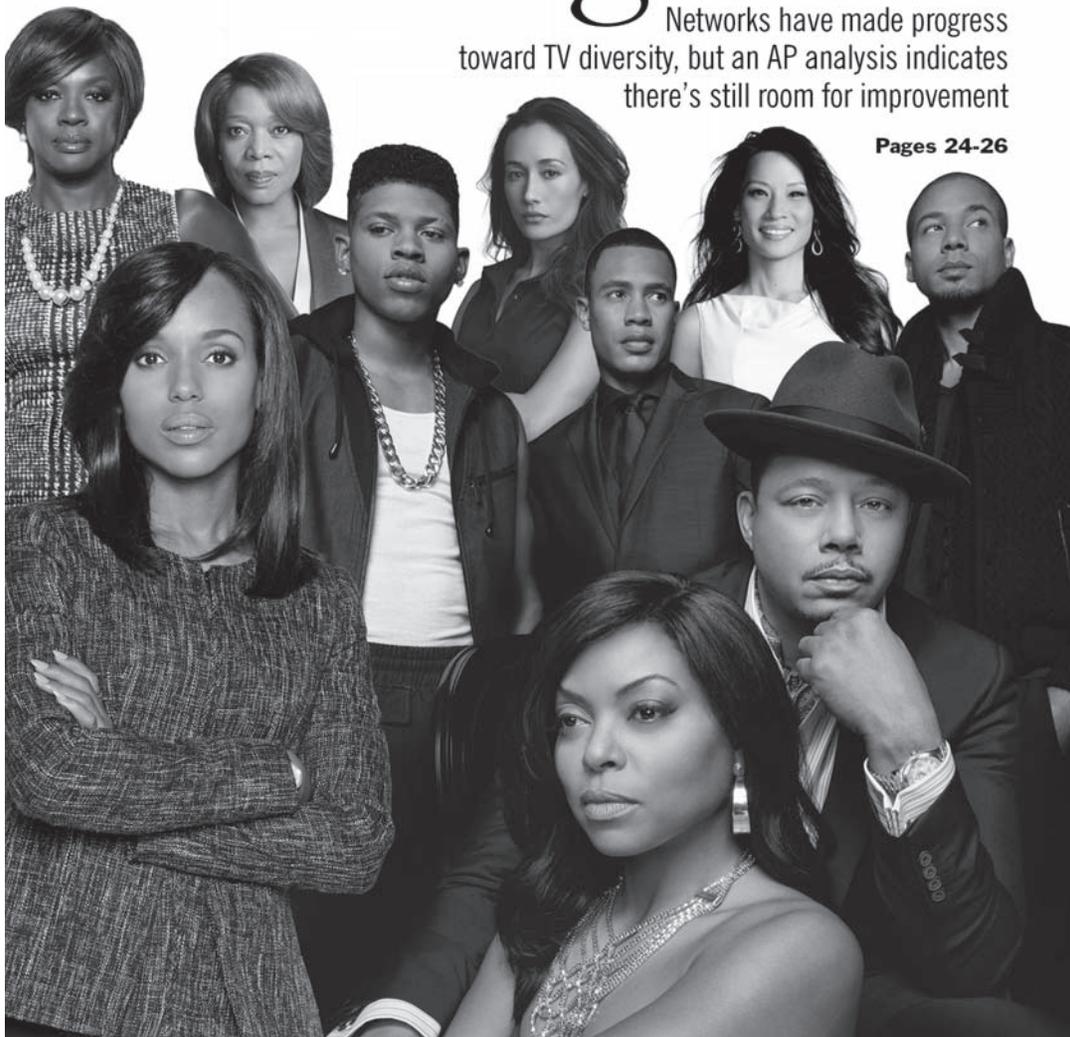
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In living color

Networks have made progress
toward TV diversity, but an AP analysis indicates
there's still room for improvement

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Europe travel – 27-31

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WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS

New phone? Download these apps now

A flood of new smartphones are off the shelves and being used to get into the second month of 2015. For some, it is their first phone with all the powerful capabilities. We've broken down how apps you should download immediately to get started with your iPhone or Android device. Enjoy your first smartphone, as well as Netflix, The Weather Channel, Spotify, and more.

Evernote: Write notes of all types, from short lists to lengthy research, and access them on any device. Also, collect Web articles, handwritten notes and photos to keep all the details in one place.

Netflix: Netflix is a popular subscription service for watching TV series and movies, including the new Netflix mobile app. The Netflix mobile app delivers the best experience anywhere, anytime. Get the free app as a part of your Netflix membership, and you can instantly watch thousands of TV episodes and movies on your phone.

Longform Stories: A solid app that features free longform articles, magazine articles, feature stories and more.

Waze: Waze is a community-based traffic and navigation app. Join drivers in your area who share real-time traffic and road info to save time and gas money and improve daily commuting for all. It's free.

2048: The fun and addictive math-puzzle game is simple to use and will challenge your abilities. Swipe to move the tiles, when they merge into one. When a 2048 tile is created, the player wins. Before you know it, you'll be muttering 8, 16, 32, 64, 128 around the house.

Spotify: With Spotify, you have access to artists and albums, or you can create a playlist of your favorite songs. Want to discover new music? Choose a ready-made playlist that suits your mood or get personalized recommendations. Listen for free on mobile, or use the subscription service to listen to any song available on Spotify, anytime.

Star Walk: This app costs \$2.99 in the iTunes or Google Play store, but it turns your new phone into a mini planetarium. It's an interactive star chart in the night sky, following your movement in real time. Go outside, point the phone in the direction of your view, and be prepared to be amazed. Isn't science fun?

The Weather Channel: The simple-to-use and popular app allows you to check today's forecast, or take a look at the long-term forecast. The app is free in the Google Play and iTunes stores.

Google Maps: The Google Maps app has comprehensive maps in more than 200 countries and includes a voice-guided GPS navigation and live traffic conditions. It's free in the iTunes and Google Play stores.

Kindle App: Turn your smartphone into a Kindle by downloading this app. Any book or magazine you've purchased on a Kindle will now be in your pocket.

Shazam: Shazam is a great way to identify songs and other entertainment. In

seconds you'll know the name of any song, or more about what you're watching — tap Shazam to start your journey. Never again will you think, "I wish I knew the name of that song."

Hulu: Many popular shows are available the day after they air with the Hulu app. If you subscribe to Hulu Plus, you can watch more than 100,000 TV episodes, including current episodes and full seasons. Also, enjoy current and previous seasons of reality shows such as Top Chef.

Yelp: Whether you are looking for an open pizzeria or a coffee shop nearby, Yelp is your local guide to finding just the place to eat, shop, drink, relax and play. You can discover local businesses, search for nearby restaurants, shops and services, and filter results by neighborhood, distance, rating, price and what's open now.

YouTube: Get the official YouTube app for Android and Apple phones and tablets. See what the world is watching, subscribe to channels, share with friends and watch on any device.

Find my iPhone: This Mac and iOS app is a solid safety blanket. If you misplace your iPhone, iPod touch or iPad, iCloud can help you figure out where it is.

Words with Friends: New Words With Friends is a free social word game where your skills are tested. Find the best opponent for you, by browsing players' profiles in Community Match, or sharpen your skills anytime and anywhere with offline Solo Play.

MLB.com At Bat: It's the offseason, but stay connected to the latest Hot Stove breaking news or relive the excitement from 2014 with what many call the top sports app of all time. If you're not a baseball fan, download it anyway, just to see how a sports super app should work.

Map My Run: Track pace, distance, calories and time with audio alerts. For a runner, this is a key app.

Flappy Nyan! Wondering if it's possible to play games on your new phone? Of course it is, but start with something easy. Flappy Nyan asks, "Do you think that only a bird can flap its wings and fly? Ask Nyan Cat for the answer in her newest adventure in 'Flappy Nyan!'" It's a free, fun, simple game in the iTunes and Google Play stores. Have fun. Before you know it, your entire phone will be filled with games.

Sudoku: If math puzzles are your thing — of course they are — there are a few worthwhile free Sudoku games, including Super Sudoku. Take a look at the iTunes or Google Play stores to see which one you like best.

Minicraft — Pocket Edition: This is a more complex game, and it may be a bit much for most new smartphone users. But if you have kids, this app, which costs \$6.99, will keep them busy for hours. The Pocket Edition includes survival and creative modes.

— David Reich-Hale/Newsday

ON THE COVER: A selection of current characters shows that network television is, as a rule, more racially diverse than it was 15 years ago.

Photos courtesy of ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox

GADGET WATCH

Tiny heater packs plenty of power

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Honeywell's tiny Heat Bud HCE100 personal heater is the perfect gadget for most of the country this time of year.

First, it's built with a great safety feature: If it's not on a flat surface or gets knocked over, it turns off.

The ceramic heater doesn't have a lot of bells and whistles; just turn it on to high or low settings to warm yourself.

At just 5-by-4-by-7.8-inches, you'll be amazed at how little gya can sit under a desk and — using only 250 watts of energy at the high setting — warm you all over.

It's built with ceramic technology, which I had to look up for its significance. What I found from thermospace.com in summary is "Ceramic heaters are coil-based units that utilize a fan to draw air through a special conducting ceramic element and then direct it outward. Because the ceramic core is larger than the heating coils, it can operate at a lower temperature, continuously releasing the same amount of energy over a larger area."

If a bigger heater is needed, Honeywell has plenty to choose from.

Online: honeywell.com; \$24.95

How many times have you seen something you might like, but thought "Nah, I don't need it but then again it would be really handy if you had it." The MOS, Magnetic Organization System, is just that item.

It's pretty simple. Just open the box and put it on your desk, the setup is complete.

The system magnetically keeps your charging cables organized and accessible by holding onto the connectors. But the most important design element for me is it keeps the cables from falling behind the desk when not in use.

It won't slide on the table (earthquake aside) since it has a slide-proof pad built into the triangle-shaped device.

If by chance you're using a non-magnetic charging cable such as the original Apple 4-in-1 cable — I still keep one on my desk (even though it's never used) — not a problem. The system comes with magnetic cable ties to attach them.

What makes it a complete system is the included wall-mount adhesive to

complement the triangle device available in anodized aluminum (\$39.95), black and white polycarbonate finishes (\$19.95)
Online: mosorganizer.com

Backfire's compact Clamlight Backpack is the latest addition to the company's innovative flashlight line.

It uses Clamlight technology, which frees your hands if you're using it in an active or adventurous environment.

If you're wearing a backpack, just clip it on or attach it to a belt loop, tent or whatever will hold it securely. Once clipped, it rotates and pivots to enable it to shine in most any direction; use it in flashlight, lantern or strobe mode with the push of a button.

The exterior has a rubberized finish fused with stainless fittings along with hi-impact ABS plastic to give it a rugged feel.

The light gives up to 125 lumens in high mode; 65 lumens in low mode, and the flashlight uses up to 75 lumens of light. It meets IPX4 international weather standards and even floats.

Three AAA batteries keep it shining bright up to 28 hours, depending on the mode it's used in.
Online: blackfire-usa.com; \$34.99

Ballistic Case Co.'s protective case for the iPhone 6 is designed to keep your device protected and gives you access to all the smartphone's functions.

The reason I like this case for supreme protection is that it does the hardcore work without the hard-core looks and bulk many similar cases have.

You have your choice of six models, each offering a different amount of protection.

The Hard Core (\$39.99) is just that. You can drop it from up to 12 feet and expect the smartphone to be safe. All four corners have extra protection for the drops and bangs as well as a built-in screen protection layer.

The Jewel (\$19.99) is much better looking and can only be dropped from 6 feet and keeps your screen exposed, but that's where the tempered glass screen protector (sold separately) comes in.
Online: globallisticcase.com

Honeywell's Heat Bud HCE100 personal heater can warm you up using only 250 watts of energy at the high setting.

TNS

ITUNES MUSIC

Top 10 songs on the iTunes Store for Feb. 4:

1. "Uptown Funk (feat. Bruno Mars)," Mark Ronson
2. "Thinking Out Loud," Ed Sheeran
3. "Sugar," Maroon 5
4. "FourFiveSeconds," Rihanna, Kanye West and Paul McCartney
5. "Take Me to Church," Hozier
6. "Love Me Like You Do," Ellie Goulding
7. "Blank Space," Taylor Swift
8. "Lips Are Movin'," Machine Gun Trainor
9. "Centuries," Fall Out Boy
10. "Time of Our Lives," Pitbull and Ne-Yo

— Compiled by TNS

SPOTIFY MUSIC

The most streamed tracks on Spotify for Jan. 26-Feb. 1:

1. Mark Ronson, "Uptown Funk"
2. Ed Sheeran, "Thinking Out Loud"
3. Hozier, "Take Me to Church"
4. Maroon 5, "Sugar"
5. Ellie Goulding, "Love Me Like You Do"
6. Drake, "Energy" (feat. Lil Yachty)
7. "Dancing Queen" (feat. Sade)
8. Flo Rida, "GDFR" (feat. Sage The Gemini and Lookas)
9. The Weeknd, "Earned It" (feat. The Weeknd)
10. "Shades Of Grey" soundtrack
11. Sam Smith, "I'm Not The Only One"
12. Nicki Minaj, "Only"
13. Big Sean, "I Don't F--- With You"

— Compiled by The Associated Press

ITUNES MOVIES

Top 10 movies downloaded from the iTunes Store for Feb. 4:

1. "John Wick"
2. "Fury"
3. "Birdman"
4. "The Judge"
5. "Dracula Untold"
6. "The Divergent Series: Insurgent"
7. "Gone Girl"
8. "Lucy"
9. "The Giver"
10. "The Homesman"

— Compiled by TNS

VIDEO GAMES

The Editors Game Informer rank the Top 10 games for February:

1. "Evolve," PS4, Xbox One, PC
2. "Dying Light," PS4, Xbox One, PC
3. "The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D," 3DS
4. "Life Is Strange: Episode One — Chrysalis," PS4, Xbox One, PS3, 360, PC
5. "The Talos Principle," PC
6. "Resident Evil HD Remaster," PS4, Xbox One, PS3, 360, PC
7. "#IDARB," Xbox One
8. "Hand of Fate," PC
9. "Saints Row: Gat out of Hell," PS4, Xbox One, PS3, 360, PC
10. "Grim Fandango Remastered," PS4, PC, Vita

— Compiled by TNS

APPS

Top 5 new free apps for Feb. 4:

- CROSSROAD
1. Android
 2. Big Win Football 2015
 3. Bingo Fever-Valentine's Day
 4. Texas Holdem - Live Poker 2
 5. GO Keyboard - Emoji, Emoticons

Top 5 free apps for Feb. 4:

- APPLE
1. Trivia Crack
 2. Facebook Messenger
 3. Facebook
 4. Instagram
 5. Snapchat

— Compiled by TNS

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

1

Tune in to the 57th Grammy Awards

Seasoned Grammy Awards viewers know that wacky things can (and often do) happen when the Recording Academy honors the best albums, songs and artists of the year in a multitude of genres. That said, this year's ceremony is shaping up as a battle between Beyonce, who turned the industry on its head with the surprise release of her album, "Beyonce," and newcomer Sam Smith, whose song "Stay With Me" was everywhere in 2014. Both are nominated for six awards, as is Super Producer Pharrell. Unfortunately for the man with the famous hat, he has multiple nominations for his production work in the album of the year category. Since he's competing with himself, he can only win a maximum of four Grammys.

- The Grammys will air on AFN-Pacific on Feb. 9. Check local listings at myafn.net.



TNS

2

Watch Jimmy Fallon's 'Saved by the Bell' reunion

Hey, remember the '80s? 'Tonight Show' host Jimmy Fallon sure does, and on Wednesday night he took a trip down memory lane, all the way to Bayside High, the fictional school featured in the cult classic TV series "Saved by the Bell." The sketch is predictably silly. But was there a Screech sighting? Find out at tinyurl.com/pe2167b.

3

Read an in-depth Q&A with Bob Dylan

Bob Dylan has never been called a classic crooner. So why did he tackle standards recorded by iconic singer Frank Sinatra on his new album, "Shadows in the Night"? Dylan explains why, and talks about his creative process, in an extensive, exclusive interview with AARP The Magazine. AARP has posted an abridged version of the sit-down as well as the complete interview, for all you Dylanologists out there.

- Read the story at tinyurl.com/n8zlyp6.
- 'Shadows in the Night' review, Page 38.

4

Participate in our online war movie poll

We know "American Sniper" has been smashing box office records. Now we want to know if it ranks among the best-ever war movies, so we're taking a poll.

- Vote now at stripes.com/go.warmovies.



WEEKEND: TELEVISION

By DAVID BAUDER,
LYNN ELBER
AND FRAZIER MOORE
The Associated Press

Kenya Barris, creator of ABC's "black-ish," was motivated to write the comedy about an African-American family's efforts to honor its heritage in part by the unreality of what he grew up watching on television.

"I saw 'Friends' and 'Seinfeld' and thought, 'What part of New York is this?'" recalled Barris, who is black. "It's not about being diverse. It's about being true to the world."

His show comes 15 years after civil rights groups, galvanized by a lineup of new network series almost entirely devoid of minority characters, sought and ultimately won agreements from major broadcasters to put programs on the air that better reflect the nation's population.

An AP analysis of regular cast members of prime-time comedies and dramas on ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox found progress since then in hiring black actors, but slighted other minorities. Casts of three of the four networks are still whiter than the nation as a whole.

That's in contrast to a fall season that seemed to signal broad change. Besides "black-ish" and a trio of shows from black megaproducer Shonda Rhimes, it offered Asian-American crime fighters and Latino families.

Among the key findings of the AP analysis:

• ABC, NBC and Fox now have a high percentage of blacks in prime time than there is in the general population — a significant change over 1999. The difference is most dramatic at Fox: 6.5 percent of characters in lead or supporting roles were black in 1999 to 21 percent black this past fall, a number that notched up again with January's premiere of the black drama "Empire."

• Other ethnic groups don't do nearly as well. While Latinos are the nation's largest minority group at more than 17 percent of the population, only Fox and ABC have Latino representation of as much as 10 percent.

• CBS, the nation's most popular network, had the most diversity 15 years ago and now has the least. CBS programs are whiter now than they were then.

Time has not made broadcast's role moot. Network fare remains dominant for most consumers despite the broad array of alternatives. What Americans see — or fail to see — has a powerful impact on how individuals regard themselves as part of the nation's mosaic.

Gina Rodriguez, the Golden Globe-winning star of the CW's new telenovela-inspired comedy, "Jane the Virgin," knows what it's like to be left out of the TV picture.

"Ten years ago, when I was looking at that screen and didn't see myself at all, I knew there was no place (for me)," she said.

TV history contains minority success stories. Desi Arnaz loved Lucy in the 1950s; the "Roots" miniseries set viewer-ship records in the 1970s; and Bill Cosby was TV's father figure in the 1980s. But by the fall of



MINORITY REPORT

Networks make unequal progress toward TV diversity



1999, ABC, NBC and Fox each had prime-time casts that were 86 percent white — at a time the U.S. Census put the non-Latino white population at 71.9 percent.

In fall 2014, with the non-Latino white population estimated at 62.6 percent, CBS' series cast and characters were 79.2 percent white; ABC's were 72.7 percent; and NBC's were 69.7 percent. In contrast, Fox's slate stands at 60 percent white.

The Census Bureau counts blacks as 13.2 percent of the U.S. population. Blacks make up 19 percent of cast members in fall shows on Fox and 15 percent on ABC and NBC.

Although CBS pledged improvement in 1999, the number of white characters on its fall 2014 series was up and black representation had slipped to just under 7 percent, less than half what it was in 1999, according to the AP's tally from the network's own cast lists.

"We are victims of our own success to a certain extent," CBS Entertainment President Nina Tassler said. The network has been the most-watched in prime time for much of the past decade and, as a result, has had less programming churn.

CBS, which does have prominent minority stars including Asian actresses Maggie Q in the lead role on "Stalker" and Lucy Liu on "Elementary," is not complacent about the issue, said Tassler, who is Latina.

Jennifer Salze, NBC's entertainment president, says shows with all-white casts "would just never fly" at NBC: All 13 of the network's scripted shows this fall had at least one minority cast member.

None of the minority cast members on those shows, however, enjoy marquee status: Alfre Woodard is the U.S. president on "State of Affairs," but the show's star is Katherine Heigl. On ABC, which has a nearly identical percentage of blacks on the air as NBC, Kerry Washington of "Scandal" and Viola Davis of "How to Get Away With Murder" are the leads.

People who follow the issue say a key way to boost a minority presence on screen is to step it up off screen. But too often that isn't part of the equation. Recent studies have shown the extent to which whites are dominant as writers and directors.

Still, Jason George, an actor who works on diversity issues for the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, said he's seen progress with minority actors getting more well-rounded roles.

"You're suddenly a person and not just a representative of a culture," he said. "As an actor, that's what you want."

Clockwise from top: Anthony Anderson, left, and Tracee Ellis Ross star in ABC's "black-ish"; Kerry Washington stars in ABC's "Scandal"; Viola Davis, center, stars in ABC's "How to Get Away With Murder"; Lucy Liu, left, and Jonny Lee Miller star in CBS' "Elementary"; Lucille Ball, left, and Desi Arnaz starred in "I Love Lucy," which aired on CBS from 1951-57.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Fair representation on TV a long struggle for blacks

By FRAZIER MOORE
The Associated Press

More than 60 years ago, a new comedy boasted an all-black cast populating a Harlem community with characters that included an attorney, a small businessman and a civic-club president.

"Amos 'n' Andy" was an instant hit in June 1951, when it made the leap to television after decades on radio.

But not everyone loved it. It was blasted by the NAACP for perpetuating black stereotypes with what, at best, were broad characterizations — particularly Kingfish Stevens, its underhanded mastermind, whose mission in life was avoiding work while cooking up ways to fleece Andy, his dim-witted chum.

For two years, "Amos 'n' Andy" remained a fixture on CBS. Its episodes then went into syndication for a successful run that didn't end until the mid-1960s, when CBS finally yielded to detractors, including the NAACP with its continued pressure, and yanked the reruns from the air.

Even today, the show is vilified by some as a display of racism. But "Amos 'n' Andy" also stands as TV's first all-black series, indeed the only one until "Sanford and Son" was introduced by Norman Lear in 1972 during a renaissance of black-oriented sitcoms.

Since TV's infancy, the march toward fair representation for various races and ethnicities has been circuitous and rocky. Most minorities remain underrepresented, while African-Americans found their place in TV's version of the world routinely shortchanged or disparaged by producers, networks and sponsors. Consider singer Nat King Cole, who in 1956 became the first prominent black performer to



Sitcoms such as "Amos 'n' Andy," above, "Good Times," below, and "The Cosby Show," top, helped pave the way for black actors on the small screen.



host a network variety series. Even with the impressively loyal support of NBC (and big-name guest stars, black and white, rallying to join him), Cole got little love from skittish advertisers. "The Nat King Cole Show" lasted only a year.

Comedian Flip Wilson got a much warmer reception in 1970 when his NBC comedy-variety show scored as that season's second-highest-rated series. It ran for four years.

Shortly after, Lear unveiled a slate of hit sitcoms that addressed hot-button issues of the day, particularly racial equality as depicted in "Sanford and Son" as well as CBS' "Good Times" and "The Jeffersons."

Bill Cosby also helped pave the way. His legacy as a TV trailblazer is taking a beating with the recent surge of sexual abuse allegations. But through the decades, he repeatedly punctured TV's color barrier.

Back in 1965, he made history co-starring with a white man (Robert Culp) on NBC's "I Spy," the pioneering buddy drama about two fast-talking spies who masqueraded as a tennis pro and his trainer.

And, from 1984-92, he starred in "The Cosby Show," a smash hit for NBC where he played an upscale family man and obstetrician. Cosby's eight seasons as Dr. Cliff Huxtable clinched his identity as "America's Dad."

But there was no denying the distance traveled in the portrayal of black characters on TV. The first comedy to star a black woman (ABC's "Beulah" in 1950) set its leading lady in the home of a white middle-class family, where she jovially toiled as their maid. But in 2014, the NBC drama "State of Affairs" premiered with a black woman as president of the United States.

Non-black minority actors face even larger challenges

While minority actors have made on-again, off-again progress through the years, advances on TV aren't the same among all groups seeking greater representation.

ABC Fox and NBC can claim a higher percentage of blacks on scripted prime-time shows than there are in the general population, but black characters outnumber Latinos on those networks as well as on CBS — despite there being more Latinos (7.1 percent, according to 2013 U.S. Census Bureau figures) than blacks (13.2 percent) in the United States.

"What I found over the years is that networks are so committed to developing diversity, but they're very, very scared about actually programming it," said Mexican-American actress Eva Longoria, the "Desperate Housewives" star who is producing "Devious Maids" for Lifetime and will star in the upcoming sitcom "Telenovela" for NBC.

When Fox and the now-defunct UPN started, they aired a handful of series with all-black casts in the hope of gaining a foothold with that audience before broadening their appeal. While many of those shows didn't survive, they introduced new talent to the industry.

For Latinos, there was no similar pipeline, said Adam Moore, SAG's national director of affirmative action. Moreover, outsiders have difficulty navigating differences within the Latino community; the experiences of people with different ancestry are markedly different. And while the CW's "Jane The Virgin" won its star, Gina Rodriguez, a Golden Globe, another freshman series that appeared to represent a breakthrough, the ABC comedy "Cristela" (which centers on an ambitious Latina and her family life, was slammed by some critics as perpetuating

stereotypes.

Asian-Americans, who make up 5.3 percent of the U.S. population, have fallen short with TV networks as well: Except for CBS, which matches that Census figure, the other networks' fall lineups included no more than 2.6 percent Asian-American characters.

Their status has improved since 1999, when the numbers fell under 1 percent at two networks, and there is excitement about ABC's upcoming family comedy "Fresh Off the Boat," which stars a Taiwanese family, said Daniel Mayeda, co-chairman of the Asian Pacific American Media Coalition.

A low point was Fox's short-lived melodrama "North Shore," which was set in Hawaii with only whites as its stars. When Mayeda asked a casting person why, he said, he was told the best person was hired for each part, and many of them had to appear in bikinis for beach scenes.

Mayeda was flummoxed. "Asian-American women can get breast implants just as well as white women can," he observed. "It was astonishing." Even more slighted: Native Americans and Alaska natives, who the Census Bureau in 2013 put at about 1.2 percent of the population but who, year after year, are rarely seen on TV, said Sonny Skyhawk, an actor and founder of American Indians in Film and Television.

His exchanges with industry members are routinely frustrating as well, he said.

"You're going to tell me that after thousands of programming hours, after thousands of roles, that you can't find one small role, whether a judge or a cabdriver or even a homeless person that could be a Native American?" he recalls asking. "They give me the boilerplate: 'We're color blind, and skin and color and race doesn't make a difference in casting,'" Skyhawk said.

— The Associated Press



LIFETIME TELEVISION/AP

From left, Roselyn Sanchez, Edy Ganem, Ana Ortiz, Dania Ramirez and Judy Reyes star in "Devious Maids," a new series about the lives of domestic workers and their wealthy bosses.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION/DVD

NEW ON DVD



Melissa Fumero, left, and Stephanie Beatriz star in the TV comedy series, "Brooklyn Nine-Nine."

Fox/AP

"John Wick": Keanu Reeves turns in one of his most intense performances playing the retired contract killer. Once he's forced back to work, the only thing that can stop him from getting total revenge is running out of bullets. Reeves brings just the right amount of killing tenacity, tempered by a five-year absence from the job, to make Wick formidable yet vulnerable. The screenplay by Derek Kolstad is loaded with leaps of logic. They aren't in blatant because director Chad Stahelski never lets the action slow down. This is a film built on body counts.



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

Luke Evans appears in a scene from the recent DVD release "Dracula Untold."

"Dracula Untold": The film is entertaining, just not memorable. It eventually will become the kind of heavily repeated feature film that cable channels use to fill weekend afternoons when there's nothing original to air. Since the direction is so mundane, the film needed its actors to turn in compelling performances. Luke Evans has neither the charisma nor the muscle to make Vlad the same kind of captivating character that Dracula has been in past productions. Sarah Gadon's work as Vlad's wife is so colorless that she often blends into the scenery.

"Dear White People": Director and writer Justin Simien looks at race issues on an Ivy League college campus during the Obama era. Despite the tendency to want to believe that society is crawling out from under the ugly shadow of bigotry, "Dear White People" offers a reminder that in many ways racism has become more abhorrent because it's done in such a subversive manner.

"The Best of Me": A pair of former high school sweethearts reunite after many years when they return to visit their small hometown. No one has ever accused Nicholas Sparks of being subtle when it comes to oozing on the emotion al levels in his writing. That's fine as long as the sentimentality doesn't become so heavy it becomes crushing. "The Best of Me" suffers that fate.

"Ouija": The scariest thing about the horror film is that you might get crushed under its pile of clichés on fall out of your seat from boredom. From the blonde who becomes the first fodder for the creature in a cursed house to the insistence all efforts to stop the spirit can only be done in the dead of night, the makers of this release wouldn't recognize an original idea if it was spelled out on a Ouija board. Should you go see this movie? Move the placchette to NO.

Also on DVD: "Wonder Years Season 2." "Richard Pryor: Omit the Logic": Documentary that examines the legacy of the comedian.

"Demon's Rock": Residents of a quiet town must deal with an evil that comes through a portal.

"Coffee Town": Efforts are made to save a favorite coffee shop.

"Hector and the Search for Happiness": Psychiatrist is frustrated he can't give his patients real happiness. Simon Pegg stars.

—Rick Bentley The Fresno Bee

REALITY CHECK

Producers made sure 'Brooklyn Nine-Nine' reflected real world

By LYNN ELBER
The Associated Press

Stephanie Beatriz was preparing for her second-round audition for "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" when she heard that another Latina actress, Melissa Fumero, had won a role in the Fox sitcom. Beatriz's heart sank.

"I thought, 'That's it. The network is not going to allow there to be two Latinas in one show,'" Beatriz said. "I was so used to, 'There's only room for one.'"

Beatriz was wrong. The "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" cast includes both of the actresses, along with two African-Americans and five whites.

Making sure "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" reflected the melting-pot world it's drawn from was key for Daniel J. Goor and Michael Schur. The veteran writers and producers, whose credits include "Parks and Recreation," were mulling a joint project when they quickly settled on a New York-based police comedy.

"Police deal with people of all types: races, genders, sexualities, which allows for an unbelievable number of stories," Goor said. "And when you look at the NYPD itself, it's an incredibly diverse police force."

Added Schur: "It seemed like the more diverse, interesting-looking group of people you had, the more fun the show would be."

The payoff for "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" so far includes a 2014 Golden Globe best comedy series trophy and solid ratings that earned it a sophomore season.

Diversity also provided more than a wealth of lively material for the show's nine-member writing staff, which includes black, Indian-American and gay writers, along with Goor and Schur,

both of whom are white. "From a practical point, it meant we could open up the casting process really to anyone, which is a tremendous advantage," Goor said. "We could say to the casting director (Allison Jones), we want to have two male cops and two female cops of this age, and we can audition anyone."

Word of Andy Samberg's decision to leave "Saturday Night Live" came after Goor and Schur had a deal in place with Fox, and they pursued him for the role of freeheeling police detective Jake Peralta.

Terry Crews, the NFL player turned actor, was hired shortly after to play Sgt. Terry Jeffords. Crews' audition was so impressive that "we came up with a character named Terry, which was really a bad negotiating tactic," Goor joked.

Andre Braugher was brought on as stern precinct Capt. Ray Holt, a move notable for the multiple Emmy Award-winning actor's shift from drama to comedy. Tough black bosses are a TV staple, often limited to nothing more than barking orders, but Holt's personal life comes into play on "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" and Braugher is far from marginalized.

Other top roles went to Joe Lo Truglio, Dirk Blocker and Joel McKinnon Miller as, respectively, white detectives Boyle, Hitchcock and Scully, and Chelsea Peretti as an administrator and assistant to Holt.

Then came a rare move for a network series, with two of the three major female roles going to Fumero (Detective Amy Santiago) and Beatriz (Detective Rosa Diaz).

"Again, we were searching for the best (people)," Goor said.

Added Schur: "When we told the network of our choices, the reaction was, 'That's good, let's move on.'"

Painting the world of such a police department as "having all white faces would be ridiculous," said Dana Walden, chairman and CEO of the Fox Television Group.

Beatriz considers the fact that she and Fumero were cast together to be "incredible," adding that the two "still look at each other sometimes and go, 'This is crazy!'"

The actors not only measure up to their real-life NYPD counterparts, part of a force that's more than half minority officers: They have been recognized by their industry peers with a 2015 Screen Actors Guild Award nomination for best TV comedy ensemble.

While none of the show's characters is window dressing, they also are not treated as fodder for jokes or stereotypes about race or, in the case of the gay Holt, sexual orientation, Goor and Schur said.

When he considers his own colleagues, Goor said, the basis for their contributions to the workplace "isn't their background. It's an influence of it, but it's not the starting point of every sentence they say or every thought they have. That's what I like about how we write Capt. Holt: He wants to have the best precinct there is. That's his goal and where he comes from."

And that's where producers aim to start and end as well, making Holt — as with the other characters — a man who's the sum of all his parts.

"You don't reduce people to one thing in the modern age. That's our No. 1 rule of writing," Schur said.

WEEKEND

Europe

THE EUROPE EXPERIENCE



MARK-JOSEF HILDENBRAND, DP/AF

Neuschwanstein stands surrounded by snow-covered mountains above the village of Hohenschwangau near Füssen in southwest Bavaria. The castle was built between 1869 and 1886 by King Ludwig II of Bavaria. It inspired Walt Disney's Cinderella Castle.

DO THIS:
See a famous castle

Talk about a fairy-tale destination. Neuschwanstein castle, near Füssen in Germany's Bavaria region, was the inspiration for Walt Disney's Cinderella Castle. It was built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria, known as the "Fairytale King" and, to many, as "Mad" King Ludwig for his quirks. One of the biggest ironies of this castle is that he intended it to be a private refuge, "sacred and out of reach"—and yet today, it hosts as many as six thousand tourists a day in the summer.

Another great irony is that the king built it to honor Richard Wagner, the world-renowned composer, and many of its rooms were inspired by Wagner's characters. Yet Wagner never set foot in it. Neuschwanstein literally means "New Swan Castle," referencing "the Swan Knight," one of Wagner's characters.

The castle is about an hour's drive from Garmisch, depending on traffic. The only place to buy entrance tickets is at the Ticket-Center Hohenschwangau in the village below the castle. The guided tour only visits a few rooms, but most visitors feel it is worth seeing the interior.

According to the castle's website, neuschwanstein.de/englisch/tourist/index.htm, the path from the castle to the Marienbrücke, the bridge over the Pollät Gorge, is not accessible when there is ice or snow or a danger of snow falling from the castle roof. Please contact the Ticket-Center Hohenschwangau, ticket-center-hohenschwangau.de, for information when you plan to visit.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

German-Venetian flair

On Sunday, the former free imperial city of Schwäbisch Hall in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, hosts festivities inspired by the mystery and elegance of Venice's costumed characters at Carnival time.

About 100 masked figures in elaborate dress will make their way through the town's streets and alleys, stopping at the marketplace, the steps of St. Michael Church and other public spaces to allow onlookers to admire their finery. Much of what these fanciful and mute characters will be wearing has been lovingly created by their own hands.

The characters begin to appear at about noon. From 2 p.m., a procession to the sounds of Venetian music makes its way through the old city. At 3:30, participants gather near the stairs in the Kocherquartier. Organizers note that in contrast to the rather wild Carnival celebrations that will take place elsewhere throughout Germany in the week to come, the tenor of this event is calm and restrained. For more, see hallia-venezia.eu/en.

Chocolate cities

Craving a chocolate treat? Either of two great European cities, Brussels and Florence, might offer a fix for that.



Karen Bradbury

See the Europe Traveler blog at stripes.com/travel/europe-travel



Florence's Artisanal Chocolate Fair is an annual event that takes over the city's Piazza Santa Maria Novella for 10 days. Opening Friday and running daily through Feb. 15, the fair features chocolatiers from throughout Italy and beyond sharing tastes and wisdom about their products. Workshops, exhibitions and tastings also are on the program.

The event runs daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and entry is free. Find details at <http://tinyurl.com/knc9u9v>.

Retro vehicles in Paris

Classic automobiles continue to thrill audiences of all ages, and over 100,000 fans are expected to descend upon Retromobile, an event showcasing unique vehicles through Sunday in Paris.

Over 500 timeless models will be on display, including three Bugatti Royales, the short-lived Spanish model Pegaso, the winning Porsche 936 from the 1977 24 Hours of Le Mans Race, many Matras,

a Mercedes 540 K Streamliner and other seldom-seen beauties. The Corrado Lopresto collection includes the prototypes of the Lancia Florida and the Giulietta by Bertone and Pininfarina and other rarities. Other makers represented at the show include prestigious names such as Alfa Romeo, Bentley and Ferrari.

For something different, visitors can check out the powerful and destructive German tank

known as the Royal Tiger, as well as see a working demonstration of a French AMX 30 tank.

The fair takes place at Pavilion 1 of the Porte de Versailles. It opens daily from 10 a.m., closing at 10 p.m. Friday and 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Adult tickets cost 16 euros (about \$18.20) at the gate, while those under age 12 enter free.

Learn more at <http://en.retromobile.com>.



Courtesy of Zintov Communication

Visitors to Retromobile in Paris can check out the powerful and destructive WWI German tank known as the Royal Tiger.



Looking for even more to do? For additional events, concerts and activities, go to stripes.com/military-life

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

Cast your eyes on Salisbury

English town's cathedral and castle ruins deserve a look

By ADAM L. MATHIS
Stars and Stripes

Salisbury is easy to overlook on the tourist trails of England, overshadowed in the east by Stonehenge, to the north by Bristol and Bath and to the south by Portsmouth.

Historically, the area was famous for lace (Downton lace) and a style of church service (the Sarum Rite), neither of which draws a lot of tourist dollars today.

But Salisbury has its own story, and the narrative starts just outside town on the hill of Old Sarum, where ruins of a castle dating back about nine centuries are worth a look.

The hill on which the castle ruins are situated was home to Romans, Saxons and Normans, who became the rulers of England. The Normans used the site as an administrative center, but within approximately 200 years of their arrival in 1066, the site started to lose some of its influence and was torn down in 1500. Now, only bits of walls crown the hill, and those are stripped of their smooth outer stone, leaving only rough cores to form shapes that would confuse the modern visitor if not for helpful placards that describe the former building.

Perhaps part of the reason the castle was allowed to fall into disrepair is because the future of the area was moving to the site of present-day Salisbury. Church leaders decided to move the cathedral from Old Sarum to its current location, and most of the construction was done in the 1200s.

Built in early English Gothic style, the cathedral's interior is notable for its simplicity. Few decorations mark the vault of the roof and few carvings decorate the interior, though the outside of the church has numerous statues. Stained glass behind the altar and in other parts of the church draw the eye. The church also boasts one of the oldest clocks in the world, made during the 1300s.

Giving all of this more context is the city's museum. The displays cover a broad time span, with Roman artifacts to more modern displays of lace produced nearby.

To finish the historical tour and return to the bustle of modern life, leave the cathedral grounds and head for Salisbury's shopping district, which includes a market and numerous storefronts.

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A stone head used as decoration in an ancient structure is on display at the city museum.



PHOTOS BY ADAM L. MATHIS/Stars and Stripes

Built in the English Gothic style, Salisbury Cathedral in the center of the city boasts Britain's tallest spire.



Stained glass windows in Salisbury Cathedral.



Visitors walk at Old Sarum, a hill just outside Salisbury and once the site of a castle and cathedral. Only ruins remain of both.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Salisbury is west of London and can be reached by taking the M3 to the A303.

TIMES

The cathedral is open most days from 9 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m. Salisbury Museum has similar closing times but opens most days at 10 a.m. Old Sarum's hours are seasonal but currently open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. throughout the week.

COSTS

Salisbury Cathedral asks for donations of 6.5 pounds for adults (about \$10). Entry to Salisbury Museum costs 8 pounds for adults, but discounts are available for members of the U.S. military. Entry to Old Sarum costs about 4 pounds.

FOOD

Numerous restaurants, including coffee shops and pubs, are in the area.

INFORMATION

- Salisbury Cathedral: salisburycathedral.org.uk
- Salisbury Museum: salisburymuseum.org.uk



NOVA AM/RAW/Stars and Stripes

• Old Sarum: english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/old-sarum

OF SPECIAL NOTE

Salisbury was recently named one of Lonely Planet's Top 10 Cities in Best in Travel for 2015. There will be a lot of focus this year on the Magna Carta, which celebrates its 800th anniversary. Magna Carta celebrations will be centered at Salisbury Cathedral, which houses one of the best preserved copies of the document within its Chapter House.

Magna Carta 2015 events will include a new exhibition and a Magna Flora Flower Festival. Find events at visitwiltshire.co.uk/whats-on/magna-carta-2015.

— Adam L. Mathis

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL S. DARNELL/Stars and Stripes

Schwarz-Kocher's steak offerings range from the more traditional to the slightly more adventurous. Purists and novelty seekers alike can find something to enjoy here, such as this garlic-crusted steak.

After Hours: Germany

BY MICHAEL S. DARNELL
Stars and Stripes

Finding the greatest steakhouse in Bavaria has become somewhat of an obsession of mine.

I have visited some terrible places and some mediocre, but only a few great restaurants. To that list, I am happy to add Schwarz-Kocher in the beautiful hamlet of Amberg, south of Grafenwöhr.

Located near the theater district, Schwarz is impossible to miss, with its inviting archway and German/English signs.

Schwarz's German/English menu offers not only a reprieve from the normal German fare, but also innovative interpretations of the oft-overlooked steak accoutrement, the normally dull potato.

The menu is replete with a variety of potato dishes. There is an absolutely sublime garlic and potato cream soup (not to be eaten on a first date), potato crepes (both savory and sweet), potato gnocchi and a handful of roast potato plates.

Of course, as much as Schwarz's chef would like the potato to be the star of the restaurant, I came for steak. Tenderloin filet and rump steak are the main cuts available at Schwarz, with a variety of preparations. I chose a garlic-crusted filet, medium rare. With steakhouses, the line between good and "I'm never coming back" depends almost entirely on the quality of the beef and the skill of the chef. A great piece of meat can be ruined by the wrong trimming or cooking.

At Schwarz's the steak was trimmed perfectly and served actually medium rare, which is harder to get at most steakhouses than one might imagine. It was easily the best steak I've had in

SCHWARZ-KOCHER

Address: Georgenstrasse 65, 92224 Amberg, Germany
Hours: 5 p.m.-midnight Tuesday through Sunday; closed Monday.

Prices: Appetizers begin at about 4 euros, with the higher end topping off at about 8 euros. There is a nice selection of largely potato-based vegetarian dishes that hover

around the 10-euro range, and the carnivorous offerings range from 14 euros to 20 euros.

Attire: Business casual
Menu: English and German
Information: Telephone: (+49) (0)9621 91420. No website or email.

— Michael S. Darnell



The garlic and potato cream soup at Schwarz-Kocher, a restaurant near the main theater district of Amberg, Germany.

months. My only quibble was that the food was served on cool plates.

If I had stopped at the main course, my experience at Schwarz would have been perfect. However, we sampled desserts, which I would suggest avoiding if you go. And you should go, but be advised that sweets are not their strong suit.

A sweetened potato crepe filled with ice cream used the same batter as for the appetizer and

was unimaginative. The apple strudel was undercooked, doughy and bland. In short, the desserts simply weren't worth the price.

Luckily, everything else is. Schwarz is perhaps not a place one can afford to go to every week, but a romantic holiday coming up would be a perfect occasion to splurge a little on a quality meal. I don't know if it's the best steakhouse in Bavaria, but it's certainly in the running.

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One day, kitchens will think for us

BY MICHELE KAYAL
The Associated Press

While apps have commandeered so many aspects of our lives — tracking our fitness, our sleep, our banking, our navigation — they have been slow to take over our kitchens.

"They haven't blown up yet," says Harrison Weber, news editor at VentureBeat.com, an online magazine that covers technology innovation. "It hasn't hit a tipping point in terms of usefulness and market need."

Digital cookbooks have notoriously failed in the publishing world and

account for a minuscule percentage of total cookbook sales.

But developers argue that apps are not just another platform for digital recipes. Apps, they say, offer convenience, portability and a new way of interacting with the information.

Some of the earliest cooking apps were extensions of cookbooks. In 2011, baking expert Dorie Greenspan helped create a companion app to her book "Baking with Dorie" that used video to walk users through the recipes.

Portland, Ore.-based app developer Culinate offers similarly interactive apps for books such as Mark Bittman's "How to Cook Everything."

The most popular apps today are the ones that build on trends, such as gluten-free or vegan recipes, says Fiona O'Donnell, a lifestyles analyst at Chicago-based market research firm Mintel, or on products that already have a large following, such as Allrecipes.com and Epicurious.com. The Food Network's "In the Kitchen" app, which features recipes and videos from the network's celebrity chefs, boasts more than 5 million downloads.

Many cooking and other apps also follow the principles of "gamification," applying the social media, build-your-own environment and other principles of video games. Kevin Yu, a former executive with the game World of Warcraft, says his SideChef, a cooking app that supplements recipes with social media, will offer the aspect of community.

But apps won't change the

way we shop, cook and eat, say analysts and app developers, until they integrate every step of the process, from deciding what to make to delivering a recipe, its ingredients and "smart" appliances with which to cook it.

"People want to integrate everything in their lives," says Mintel's O'Donnell. "In the smart home you have your refrigerator that tells you what food you have, when your milk is going to expire. The next evolution will be a cooking app that can integrate with your other household appliances or neighborhood. Here's a great recipe, and here's where you can get the ingredients."

Such change is already beginning. The recipe website Yummly.com has connected its app with the online grocery delivery service Instacart to allow consumers to choose a recipe and have the ingredients delivered to them in an hour or less.

Other apps have begun syncing with individual appliances. The Prep Pad, a Bluetooth-enabled scale by Orange Chef Co.,

links to an app that displays the calories and other nutritional information of every item you're loading onto your plate.

"A lot of the food-tracking apps are generic," says Taimoor Dar, co-founder of San Francisco-based Orange Chef. "We give you component by component. And you can be like 'Maybe this is too much fat' or 'Maybe there's not enough protein.' That's our focus, to give you real-time insight into your food. ... It's not just about the tracking aspect. It's about how can you make a change right away."

App developers say apps will come into their own as smart kitchens become as commonplace as smart TVs.

"Every major appliance maker is probably thinking about smart kitchens already," says VentureBeat's Weber. "It's like the driverless car. We have the technology already for the immediate things we'd build. But making that interface work just right, making it beautiful, affordable and integrating it with the rest of your life, no one's figured out how to do that."

Yet.



TNS

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes



Top: A dancer in the 2014 Cologne Rose Monday parade tosses candy to the crowd.

Right: A dancer rides on the shoulders of a Carnival club mate.

Far right: A piper adds to the festive sounds of the day.

'Alaaf!'

Greeting fills the air at Cologne's Carnival parade

By MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

"Kamellet!" the costumed people crowding the streets yell, as candy rains down from the floats passing by.

"Kölle!" those on the floats cry out. "Alaaf!" the spectators call back.

The ritual is repeated time and again as floats, marching bands and dance groups pass the throngs lining the streets.

It is Carnival time in Kölle, or Cologne, and the German city's Rosenmontag parade is in full swing.

There are many traditions to Cologne Carnival, and the throwing of candy — the *Kamellet* — and the carnival greeting — "Alaaf" — are two of them.

Carnival is that crazy fever that sweeps through much of Europe at this time of year. A fifth season, so to speak,

of wacky costumes, parties, balls and parades.

It is celebrated in one way or another across much of Europe, and along the Rhine River around two million people line the streets of Cologne, Düsseldorf and Mainz for their giant Rose Monday parades, which are the climax of their Carnival celebrations.

Kölsch, the local beer, flows as the partygoers sing along and dance to the music played by the passing bands and wafting from the floats as they roll by. Guards of the Carnival clubs, dressed in 19th-century-style uniforms, march along the nearly five-mile route or ride horses.

In Cologne the Carnival season starts at 11:11 a.m. on 11/11, but things don't really get underway until the so-called *Heisse Phase* — the hot phase — that starts on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday with *Weiberfastnacht*, or women's Carnival, when women take over the town hall, party in the streets and cut off men's ties.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

More Carnival at stripes.com

Michael Abrams shares the manic merriment of Carnival in Germany with more photos of Cologne's Rosenmontag parade and a video capturing the sights and sounds of the silly season. See them at stripes.com/carnival.



KNOW & GO

- **Times:** The Rose Monday parade in Cologne, Germany, starts at 10:30 a.m. on Feb. 16, President's Day. It takes about three hours for it to pass by. Plan to get there early to get a good view, as it gets very crowded.
- **Getting there:** It's best to take the train to Cologne, as the city's main train station is close to the parade route. If you do drive, it's best to park across the river in Köln-Deutz and walk or take the tram across the river to the city center.
- **Attire:** Dress for the occasion; it can get quite cold standing outside for hours in February. Wear comfortable but sturdy shoes, because by the end of the day there is unfortunately a lot of broken glass on the ground. You do not need to wear a costume, but you probably will have more fun if you do.
- **Information:** Go to cologne.de for more information about Carnival in Cologne and the city. Information on some other Carnival events in Germany can be found at: karneval.com/kalender/seite/1#termine_2015_2016

— Michael Abrams

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

A participant marches down the parade route at the 2014 Cologne Rose Monday parade.

FROM PAGE 30

Smaller parades take place on Saturday and Sunday with the big shebang on Rose Monday, two days before Ash Wednesday, when the celebrations traditionally end.

Savvy spectators arrive early to get a good viewing spot. But children are always pushed to the front row so they can see better and catch the candy thrown from the floats — an estimated 300 tons.

The first Rose Monday parade in Cologne took place in 1823. The Roten Funken, a Carnival association descended from the former soldiers who manned the city gates, were part of that procession, and today its members are still among the close to 12,000 people who participate. Floats carry dignitaries, celebrities and the officers of the Cologne Carnival clubs and associations; some sport topical themes. Carnival can be a

satirical affair where nothing is sacred and the high and mighty often are skewered. Last year, President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel were among those spoofed. Bets are that they will be back for an encore.

Dancing groups, another parade tradition, perform amazing stunts, with men throwing women high into the air and catching them.

The partying doesn't stop when the parade is over. On the squares, in pubs and in the old town, along the banks of the Rhine, celebrations continue into the wee hours of the morning.

By the way, another tradition is the "Bützeje," a kiss made with pursed lips on the cheek. It's nothing but a meaningless peck, but like marching bands and costumes and *Kamelle* and *Kölsch*, it's an essential part of Carnival in "Köln."

Alanna
 Abrams.mike@stripes.com

Restaurant Directory

GERMANY

<p>Kaiserslautern area</p> <p>QUACK Gasthaus & Biergarten Inh. Sascha Gärtner Entenweiherstraße 74 67687 Kaiserslautern www.Quack-kl.de Tel. 0631/42828</p>	<p>Mainz / Wiesbaden area</p> <p>Saytouné Cuisine Oriental Wilhelm Strasse 52 65183 Wiesbaden 0611-3086110</p>	<p>Mainz / Wiesbaden area</p> <p>PAPPELHAUS Steinerstrasse 2, 55252 Mainz-Kastel 06134-964969 Get our Juicy Irish Angus Burger!</p>
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<p>Holzofen Pizzeria Am Seewog Waldstr. 40, 66877, Ramstein-Miesenbach Tel: 063719522955 Fax: 063719522944 www.seewoopizzeria.de</p>	<p>Gabriel Ristorantino Original Mediterranean Küche Erich-Ollenhauer-Strasse 106 65199 Wiesbaden • Tel. 0611-85834 www.gabriels-restaurant.de</p>	<p>Villa im Tal Fine Dining - Events - Catering Adamtal 4 65195 Wiesbaden Tel. 0611-2386228 www.villaimtal.de</p>
<p>Trattoria Da Salvatore Restaurant/Biergarten Daily Lunch Specials Fleischcharakterhoch 1 66649 Landstuhl Tel. 06371 - 2497 pizzeria-salvatore.com</p>	<p>Café Temptation *reservations recommended Walter-Hallstein-Strasse 5-7 65197 Wiesbaden (5 minutes from the Haarenberg/PX area) Tel. 0611-6091230 Email: info@cafe-temptation.de www.cafe-temptation.de</p>	<p>SmokeTire Nessaustraße 6-8 65719 Huthheim-Vallau 06122-4022 www.smoketirebbq.com</p>

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WEEKEND

Pacific

THE PACIFIC EXPERIENCE

IN CONCERT

IN LIGHTS: Nagasaki Lantern Festival

Nagasaki was the only port in Japan opened to foreign trade in Japan during the Edo Period. The island of Dejima, constructed in Nagasaki Bay, was the only port given to Westerners to stay and trade. Chinese people were confined in an area called Tojin Yashiki and it developed into Chinatown in Nagasaki after the Meiji Restoration. Chinese New Year celebrations in Nagasaki — Feb. 19 to March 5 — take place at seven locations in the city including Shinchimachi, Nagasaki's Chinatown, Minato Koen (main stage). A myriad of glowing lanterns, as well as spectacular lion and dragon dances, are among the attractions.



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Meghan Trainor will perform April 18 at Laforet Museum in Tokyo. For more: tinyurl.com/pbbgzod.

PAUL A. HEBERT, INVISION/AP



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Calendar grid showing dates for February, March, and April with reservation status indicators.

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Valentine EscOFFier Dinners advertisement for Feb 13, Fri, featuring a red rose and details about the dinner and reservations.

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MARUARA WATANABE advertisement featuring a kimono image, list of products like GETA and SAMURAI-KIMONO, and contact information.

Temple University Japan Campus advertisement with the text 'Use Your GI Bill to Earn an American Degree in Tokyo' and contact details for the Admissions Counseling Office.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pacific

PLUM BLOSSOM FESTIVALS IN JAPAN

KOISHIKAWA KORAKUEN PLUM BLOSSOMS

FESTIVAL (Tokyo): Feb. 7-March 1, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; 90 plum trees (a Japanese apricot) in 30 varieties blossoming at the foot of a mountain in early February; performances Feb. 15, 22 & March 1; two-minute walk from Iidabashi Station on Oedo-Line or an eight-minute walk from Iidabashi Station on Sobu-Line; 300 yen; tinyurl.com/cdsgz5.

MUKOUJIMA HYAKKA-EN PLUM BLOSSOM

FESTIVAL (Tokyo): Feb. 7-March 8, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; 360 plum trees in 20 varieties planted in mid-19th century, blooming early February; festival with street performances at 11:30 a.m., 1:30 & 3 p.m. Feb. 15 & March 7; 3-18-3 Higashi-Mukoujima, Sumidoku, eight-minute walk from Higashi-Mukoujima Station, Tabu Isazaki Line; 150 yen admission; tinyurl.com/qa8bn8w.

TANOURA PLUM BLOSSOMS FESTIVAL

(Kanagawa prefecture): Feb. 7-March 15, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; 2,700 plum trees in red and white varieties, and a kite-flying contest 1-2 p.m. Feb. 8; Tanoura Umenosato; free; 046-861-4181.

FUCHU KYODO-NO MORI PLUM BLOSSOMS

FESTIVAL (Tokyo): Feb. 7-March 15, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., closed Mon.; 1,100 plum trees in 60 varieties start blooming early February at this museum, a 10-minute ride from Kunitachi Fuchu I.C. on Chuo-Express or 20-minute walk from Fuchu Honmachi Station on Musashino/Nambu-Lines; 200 yen adults, 100 yen kids.

YUSHIMA TENJIN PLUM BLOSSOMS FESTIVAL

(Tokyo): Feb. 8-March 8, 8 a.m.-7:30 p.m.; 300 white and red plum blossoms trees, open-air tea service (500 yen) 11 a.m. Feb. 15 & 22 and March 1 & 8; free; Yushima station on Chiyoda subway line; 03-3836-0753.

JINDAI BOTANICAL GARDEN PLUM BLOSSOMS

FESTIVAL (Tokyo): Feb. 9-24, 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.; 180 plum trees in 72 varieties in the Plum Garden; 5:31-10 Jindaiji Matomachi, Chofu City, bus from Mitaka Station, JR Chuo Line, or Chofu Station, Keio Line, Jindaiji Shokubutsu Koen Mae bus stop; 500 yen for garden entrance; tokyo-park.or.jp/english.

KOGANEI PARK PLUM BLOSSOMS FESTIVAL:

Feb. 14-22; about 50 white and more than 100 red plum

blossom trees (a Japanese apricot) at Koganei Park, one of the largest public parks in Tokyo; tours 11:30 a.m., 1:30 & 2:30 p.m., open-air tea service (500 yen) 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m. and also koto concerts 1, 2 & 3 p.m. Feb. 21-22; 10-minute bus ride from JR Musashi Koganei Station and get off at Koganei Koen Nishiguchi; 042-385-5611.

SANKEIEN GARDEN - PLUM BLOSSOMS VIEWING

(Yokohama): Feb. 14-March 8, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. weekends & holidays; Sankeien Garden, opened to the public in 1906, features historic buildings and seasonal flowers, including 600 red and white plum blossom trees; 10-minute bus ride from JR Negishi Station; 500 yen; 045-621-0634/5; sankeien.or.jp/pdf/guidemap_english.pdf.

HACHINOHE ENBURI FESTIVAL (Aomori

prefecture): Feb. 17-20; Hachinohe Enburi Festival was held over 800 years ago in Hachinohe city to welcome the coming of spring and pray for an abundant harvest and about 40 groups of enburi, wearing happi coats and footwear made of straw, gather at Chojozan Shinra Shrine, and parade in Hachinohe city; seven-minute walk from Hachinohe City Hall; 0178-41-1661.

MITO KAIRAKUEN PLUM BLOSSOMS FESTIVAL

(Ibaraki prefecture): Feb. 20-March 31, 6 a.m.-7 p.m.; Mito Kairakuen, built by Nariaki Tokugawa in 1842, is among the most popular gardens in Japan to appreciate the plum blossoms, with 3,000 trees with white and red blossoms, open-air tea ceremony Sundays along with live concerts and more; night illumination until 9 p.m. March 6-22; JR Mito station on Joban-Line or 20-minute ride from Mito I.C. on Joban Express; free.

NARITA PLUM BLOSSOMS FESTIVAL (Chiba

prefecture): Feb. 21-March 8, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; in Naritans Koen and at Narita-san Shinshoji Temple, plus koto performance, open-air tea services and more; 15-minute walk from JR Narita Station; nrk.jp.

ATAMI PLUM BLOSSOMS FESTIVAL (Kanagawa

prefecture): Through March 8; these are the earliest plum blossoms in Japan and the festival is a celebration of the plum blossoms at the Atami Baien Koen (Plum Garden) in Atami city - a resort town near Tokyo; 0557-85-2222.

For more blossoms in Tokyo: tinyurl.com/mtpwxc.



© Ibaraki Kankou Bussan Kyokai and © JNTO

Plum blossoms bloom at Kairakuen Garden Flower in Mito, Ibaraki prefecture, Japan. The free Mito Kairakuen Plum Blossoms Festival is Feb. 20 to March 31.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pacific

A slippery slope

Snail mucus facials gain popularity, but is the 'ick factor' too much?

BY DENIS D. GRAY
The Associated Press

The last time I encountered escargots, they were served sizzling in garlic and herb butter by a French waiter. Now, one is slithering up the bridge of my nose while five others are being stuck onto other parts of my face by a Thai beautician, all secreting small slime to, we hope, smooth out some wrinkles and give me a younger look.

That this latest addition to the global beauty and wellness craze — snail facials — should surface in the hills of northern Thailand is only natural. This Southeast Asian country ranks among the world's top spa destinations, with massage treatments of every description offered around just about every corner. Other members of the animal kingdom are also enlisted, including flesh-nibbling fish at some 4,000 pedicure spas.

So, is snail massage merely another marketing ploy or an effective way to plump up skin in need of repair or rejuvenation? Experts' opinions differ. The two young Thai women reclining next to me at Chiang Mai's Snail Spa sang the praises of *helix aspersa muller glycoconjungates* — or snail mucus, for short.

When I returned home, my wife described my face as "different" but declined to go into detail.

Appropriately, given the French passion for these gastropods, the spa was started last year by two Frenchmen who had imported 100 of them from home. The colony now boasts more than 30,000 snails munching on chemically free carrots, cabbage and aloe on a certified organic farm.

"We take care of the snails as if they were our family, our babies," said Luc Champeyroux, one of the partners, gently applying one to his forehead. "You can see they look very good."

Champeyroux, who does confess to eating escargots ("but not mine"), plans to breed some for the table and is currently experimenting to produce "the perfect snail caviar."

A chosen few get plucked from the farm for duty at the spa, where I opted for the 45-minute Snail Spa Celebrity Course. For \$30, it's a bargain compared with the \$200 customers must shell out at Tokyo's Ciz.Labo, a beauty salon where snail massage made its debut in 2013. Spas have also opened in China and London, and the French duo are expanding to Bangkok next month.

Given the treatment's novelty, Chiang Mai public health inspectors last month descended on the spa to determine whether it was safe and if imported snails



PHOTOS BY DENIS GRAY/AP

"We take care of the snails as if they were our family, our babies. You can see they look very good."

Luc Champeyroux
Chiang Mai's Snail Spa

— officially classified as "alien creatures" — might prove harmful to local species. Results of the investigation have not been released.

While the facials are new, concoctions made from snail mucus are said to date to ancient Greece, when the great physician Hippocrates reportedly crushed snails and sour milk as a cure for skin inflammations. In recent times, the French have turned this essence of escargot into assorted creams and lotions.

The fluid, exuded by snails when under stress, is known to contain beneficial nutrients and antioxidants, but Bangkok-based Dr. Dissapong Panithaporn and other dermatologists say there has been no significant scientific research on how these work when applied to the skin.

Champeyroux, a manager in France's nuclear power sec-

tor before falling in love with Chiang Mai some years ago, said his all-natural line of snail products, Coquille, acts against burns, acne, stretch marks, scars and aging. The two women next to me concurred.

Takesophan na Pohn, 22, a recent university graduate, said she had earlier tried laser and other treatment techniques, but after some research she decided that "natural therapy" was better. She said snails helped clear her acne when she was stressed during her studies. "My face is firmer and softer," she said. "But you don't get immediate results.

Right: Snails crawl on vegetables at a snail farm in Thailand's Chiang Mai province.

Top: A customer receives a snail slime facial at the farm.



ing particular liking to my nose since snails are fond of climbing.

Opening my eyes, I got a macro-lens view of one critter perched on my nose. Its twin, antennae-like feelers were waving about, possibly seeking an escape route with its tiny eyes. The snail's 14,000 microscopic teeth produced a slight, not unpleasant, scratching when it slid toward my nostrils.

So I sort of missed my harmless, sensuous sextet when they were dislodged from clinging to my skin with their gentle suction.

Maybe I'll give up eating escargot.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific



PHOTOS BY AUDREA HUFF/Stars and Stripes

The green noodles of Chabuton's Vege-Ramen are made of spirulina, a blue-green algae.

After Hours: Japan

BY AUDREA HUFF
Stars and Stripes

Let's be honest: Despite its celebrated food culture, Japan has a thing against vegetarians.

Walk down any street in Tokyo and it's impossible to escape the onslaught of inexpensive sushi, yakitori (chicken skewers) and katsu (breaded chicken or pork) displayed in store windows, from the corner convenience store to the numerous Michelin-starred restaurants. That doesn't even include the famed Kobe beef.

Yet given the mind-boggling number of places to eat, the restaurants serving strictly meatless meals are relatively few. Even the soups and noodle bowls typically are made with a meat- or fish-based broth. Hungry vegetarians often have to seek out Taiwanese, Chinese or Indian restaurants for a clear conscience.

Although most dishes at Japanese restaurants will include

CHABUTON

Directions: The Shimokitazawa location in Tokyo is just outside Shimokitazawa station (on Keio Inokashira and Odakyu train lines, west of Shibuya). Leave the south exit of the station, make a left and walk less than a minute. The shop will

be on the right. **Pricing:** Inexpensive. Accepts cash only. **Phone:** 03-5454-1559. (No reservations.) **Website:** chabuton.com, in Japanese.

— Audrea Huff

meat or fish, a few eateries, such as Chabuton, advertise a vegetarian meal along with its standard fare.

Chabuton is a standard Japanese noodle shop in which diners order and pay at a ticket machine near the entrance, hand the ticket to the cook and find a seat at the counter (think of it as the Japanese version of "fast casual"). The food is prepared to order and comes out piecemeal.

Most of the Chabuton's menu items on the machine include

meat, but the restaurant offers a vegan "Vege-Ramen" bowl as well as vegetable gyoza (fried dumplings, or "potstickers").

The vegetable ramen (820 yen, or about \$7) is surprisingly good, but don't order it expecting it to be a veggie knockoff trying to masquerade as a standard bowl of wheat noodles or *udon* — it's a unique take on ramen.

The noodles are dark green and made from spirulina; they're more like thick spaghetti than ramen noodles. The soup has a strong onion flavor and is brimming with carrots, daikon, red peppers, mushrooms and greens, topped with dried onion flakes.

The serving size is large enough even for a hungry American.

If the large bowl of ramen still isn't enough, add a five-piece order of vegetable gyoza (300 yen, or about \$2.55). Typically, gyoza are filled with beef, pork or chicken, but Chabuton stuffs its *yasai gyoza* — made with thick green wontons — with a soft mixture of cellophane noodles, garlic and greens. Its *yasai gyoza* are softer than meat gyoza but are similarly oily and come with the same tangy brown sauce.

Japanese vegetarian isn't easy to find, but it can be worth the journey.

huff.audrea@stripes.com
Twitter: @audreaehuff

Sheet-pan suppers cook it all at once

BY ANDREA WEIGL
The News & Observer
(Raleigh, N.C.)

Today's version of a one-pot meal is the sheet-pan supper: all the ingredients are placed together on a sturdy, rimmed baking sheet, put in the oven, and a short time later, dinner is served. Later: clean-up is easy. Important note: A rimmed jelly roll pan or cookie sheet is not the same as a sturdy half sheet pan, which can be found at kitchenware stores for as low as \$8 each.

Here are two recipes to get you started:

QUICK CHICKEN AND BROCCOLI WITH SPICY PEANUT SAUCE

If you cannot find thin-cut chicken breasts, cut breasts into two pieces and pound thin with a meat mallet between two pieces of wax paper or plastic. All the chicken pieces should be about the same thickness.

Ingredients:

Olive oil cooking spray (optional)
1 tablespoon dark brown sugar
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
¼ cup low-sodium soy sauce
1 tablespoon sriracha sauce
1 tablespoon rice vinegar
¼ cup warm water
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lime juice
2 large crowns of broccoli, cut into thin pieces
4 to 6 thin-cut boneless, skinless chicken breasts or cutlets (1 to 1½ pounds total)
Directions:
Preheat oven to broil, with a rack 4 inches from the heat. Line a sheet pan with aluminum foil or mist it with cooking spray.
Use a food processor or whisk together in a medium bowl to combine the brown sugar, peanut butter, sesame oil, soy sauce, sriracha, vinegar, water and lime juice.

Once smooth, set aside ¼ cup of peanut sauce for serving.

Toss broccoli and chicken with remaining peanut sauce in a large bowl until thickly coated. Arrange in a tight single layer on the prepared pan. Broil, keeping a close eye to prevent burning, and flipping the chicken halfway through, until it is just cooked through, the broccoli is well charred and the sauce is bubbly and deeply browned, 10 to 12 minutes.

Serve chicken and broccoli hot from the oven with the reserved dipping sauce alongside.

Yield: 4 servings.

ROASTED PORK CHOPS WITH GREEN BEANS AND POTATOES

Ingredients:

6 tablespoons olive oil, divided
Juice of 1 lemon, about 3 tablespoons
2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
4 cloves garlic, grated or pated
Salt and pepper, to taste
4 bone-in pork chops, about 1-inch thick
1 (8-ounce) bag trimmed French green beans
4 medium Yukon Gold potatoes (about 1½ pounds), cut into wedges
1 jar roasted red bell pepper, coarsely chopped
Directions:
Preheat oven to 475 degrees. Mix 3 tablespoons olive oil, lemon juice, thyme, paprika and garlic in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Add pork chops and turn to coat.

Toss green beans, potatoes and red pepper with the remaining 3 tablespoons olive oil on a large rimmed baking sheet. Spread in an even layer. Nestle pork chops among the vegetables.

Roast, turning pork chops once, until vegetables are tender and the chops are just cooked through, about 25 minutes.

Yield: 4 servings.



Chabuton's chicken "gyoza," left, and vegetarian "gyoza" — fried dumplings — are chewy but crispy around the edges.



JULI LEONARD, RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER/TNS

Roasted Pork Chops with Green Beans and Potatoes takes 25 minutes to cook and uses one half sheet pan.

WEEKEND: MOVIES



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

A genetically enhanced warrior (Channing Tatum) comes to Earth to find and protect Jupiter Jones (Mila Kunis), who's destined to inherit a powerful alien empire, in "Jupiter Ascending."

A soupy cosmic fairy tale

'Jupiter Ascending' unfolds as an entertaining mess

By JAKE COYLE
The Associated Press

Within the warped wardrobe of the Wachowskis' latest sci-fi extravaganza, "Jupiter Ascending," there are some fantastical feasts of intergalactic ridiculousness. Channing Tatum as a combination elf and speed skater. Space dinosaurs in leather jackets. A robbed Eddie Redmayne as the universe's overload, who so gravely whispers his lines that you fear he is, for the length of the movie, being castrated just off camera. That, at least, would explain his sporadic shriekings.

Redmayne is the best and worst thing in a movie that rides the campy line of simultaneously great and terrible with intermittent success. For more than a decade now, writer-directors Lana and Andy Wachowski have capitalized on their "Matrix" fame to conjure up mystical blockbusters of grandiose, garish style ("Cloud Atlas"), luring moviegoers who like bananas with their popcorn. Did I mention the space dinosaurs in leather jackets?

"Jupiter Ascending" begins with the birth of a girl, Jupiter Jones (Mila Kunis), to Russian immigrants while midway across the Atlantic. Looking back from later on, she narrates that she was born an illegal alien, betwixt worlds. As the film stretches out into the cosmos, it fills its adventure with mutants and "splices" who have genes of mixed species.

Tatum's Caine Wise is one such fusion. He's an elite soldier whose (literal) wings were clipped for a mysterious past incident. Made with part wolf blood, he has pointed ears and a blond goatee, neither of which makes him particularly easy to take seriously as a hero.

Jupiter lives as a cleaning lady with her humble family in Chicago, a regular existence shattered when spindly aliens show up and try to kill her. Caine comes to the rescue, an unfortunately repetitive occurrence in "Jupiter Ascending," in which Kunis' character is always in need of being swooped out of danger by her hulking werewolf man. And after a lengthy chase above the Chicago skyline, she's introduced to a wider universe ruled by the Abrasax dynasty and teaming with sci-fi tropes.

The full picture of the plot of "Jupiter Ascending" takes a long time to clear up, as it flashes

New on base

"Jupiter Ascending" is playing at the following military facilities:

Europe

Lakenheath, Mildenhall, Ansbach, Baumholder, Grafenwöhr, Hohenfels, Ramstein, Spangdahlem, Stuttgart, Vileck, Wiesbaden, Aviano and Vicenza.

Pacific

Misawa, Yokota, Zama, Yongsan South Post No. 1, Casey, Henry, Humphreys, Kunsan, Osan, Carroll, Foster, Futenna, Hansen, Kadena, Kinsler, Schwab and Courtney.

Online: jupiterascending.com

between different worlds, spaceships fly this way and that, and various bounty hunters (Sean Bean is one) cloud the allegiances. Character and story get washed out in the relentlessly ornate 3-D imagery, a blend of grandiose space-scapes and gaudy metallic machinery.

Though you isn't quite evident, Jupiter turns out to be a galactic queen fiercely sought by the ruling royalty. The Abrasax family are led by a trio of handsome Brits: Balem (Redmayne), Kalgine (Tuppence Middleton) and Titus (Douglas Booth), who, we learn, use planets like Earth to harvest human DNA to create youth-preserving genes. Somewhere here is a capitalism critique.

Kunis does an admirable job even if never given much of a chance to be the prime mover in her fairy tale. Tatum, as game as they come, is understandably undone by his get-up, painted ears and flying boots will do that. But no one fares as poorly as Redmayne, who quivers with such hushed ferocity that he wins the most giggles in a blatantly silly movie.

"Jupiter Ascending" unfolds as a mostly entertaining mess, a cosmic soup of baroque grandeur that the Wachowskis swim happily through, even if few others will. They seem increasingly adrift in their own sci-fi seas, a quixotic pluck that would be more admirable if the waters weren't so familiar.

"Jupiter Ascending" is rated PG-13 for sci-fi action, some violence and partial nudity. Running time: 127 minutes.



PARAMOUNT PICTURES AND NICKELODEON MOVIES/AP

SpongeBob SquarePants comes ashore for his most super-heroic adventure yet in "The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water."

Gags and puns skew young in 'The SpongeBob Movie'

By ROGER MOORE
Tribune News Service

SpongeBob SquarePants goes where Homer Simpson and others have gone before, an animated character who steps out of his colorful 2-D world and into our 3-D one, in "The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water." But what his movie lacks in originality or freshness it compensates for in loquaciousness.

A battle to defend The Krabby Patty burger shack is fought "with relish." And french fries. And ketchup and mustard.

Bubbles, a pan-dimensional dolphin that monitors the Earth and protects it from mid-space collisions, takes a potty break, and comes back with toilet paper stuck to his tail.

And that pirate who sings the title tune? He becomes Burger-Beard, who pirates the Krabby Patty secret sauce recipe, and is played by high-camp counselor Antonio Banderas.

First, SpongeBob (the voice of Tom Kenny) and pal Patrick (Bill Fagerbakke) must fend off their one-eyed nemesis, Plankton (Mr. Lawrence), who wants that secret sauce to save his Chum Bucket eatery from Bikini Bottom bankruptcy. As usual, then, when that recipe vanishes into this sea water, the three rivals must team up to recover it from a different reality, a 3-D world that looks a bit like Venice Beach, Calif. (actually Georgia).

Squidward squirts a little ink, seagulls sing and poop, and Mr. Krabby (Clancy Brown) frets about all the cash he'll lose if he loses his recipe and his legendary burger flipper SpongeBob. "You were like an underpaid SON to me!"

Halfway into the film, SpongeBob and Patrick cross over and things turn a tad trippy. A visit inside SpongeBob's cotton candy-necked skull is only half of it. Ideas borrowed from "The Simpsons" and "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" pop up, not that kids will pick up on that.

The gags, puns mostly skew quite young. And those things SpongeBob does that drive his onscreen castmates nuts — the shrieks and giggles and songs

New on base

"The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water" is playing at the following military facilities:

Europe

Lakenheath, Mildenhall, Ansbach, Baumholder, Grafenwöhr, Hohenfels, Ramstein, Spangdahlem, Stuttgart, Vileck, Wiesbaden, Aviano and Vicenza.

Pacific

Atsugi, Misawa, Benny Decker, Yokota, Zama, Yongsan South Post No. 2, Casey, Henry, Humphreys, Kunsan, Osan, Carroll, Foster, Kadena, Kinsler and Courtney.

Online: spongebobmovie.com

— are pitched to be a lot more irritating to adults than to small fry.

"The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water" is rated PG for mild action and rude humor. Running time: 98 minutes.

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In 3D: The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water (PG): Fri 16:00, 18:00, Sat 13:30, 15:45, 18:00, Mon - Wed 16:00, 18:00
American Sniper (R): Thur 20:30, Fri 18:00, 22:30, Sat 13:30, 20:00, 22:30, Sun 13:30, 20:00, Mon - Wed 20:30
In 2D: Jupiter Ascending (PG-13): Thur 16:00, 18:15, Fri 15:30, 17:45, 20:00, Sat 15:15, 17:30, 20:00, Sun 15:15, 17:30, Mon - Wed 16:00, 18:15
Paddington (PG): Sat & Sun 13:30
Perkins From Madagascar (PG): Sat 13:30
Project Almanac (PG-13): Thur 16:00, Fri 15:45, Sat 15:15, Mon - Wed 16:00
The Interview (R): Fri 22:30, Sat & Mon 18:00
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WEEKEND: MUSIC

WHO WILL REIGN SUPREME?

Sam Smith is an unlikely Grammy favorite

By GLENN GAMBOA
Newsday

Leave it to Howard Stern to cut to the chase about Sam Smith and this year's Grammy race.

"That's how good that song is," Stern said recently about Smith's "I'm Not the Only One" — "He's fat and he's gay, and little girls worship him. That's when you know you have a good song, and you have a good voice."

The British soul singer is an unlikely underdog turned Grammy favorite. He has managed the rare feat of being nominated in all four top categories, securing six nominations total to tie him with Beyoncé and Pharrell for the lead going into Sunday's ceremonies.

Smith's accomplishment is even more remarkable, considering this year's crop of surprisingly pop-oriented nominations, where the Recording Academy's push for relevance seemingly has them valuing popularity over artistry.

For decades, the Grammys generally saved some top nominations to introduce new artists to the public or highlight works of high artistic merit as new converts rushed to support artists they saw on the show. This year, all the album of the year nominees debuted in the Top 3, including Beyoncé's "Beyoncé" and Ed Sheeran's "X" that reached No. 1.

The Recording Academy took an even more pop-oriented turn in the record and song of the year categories, where all the nominees were Top 10 hits. That's a far cry from the 2012 Grammys, when Bon Iver's "Holocene" was nominated for both record and song of the year without charting in the Billboard Hot 100.

Does the Recording Academy really believe there was no other more worthy nominee than Iggy Azalea's popular but lightweight "Fancy"? Or is it more interested in keeping up ratings for the awards show and the interest of young music fans?

There really is a world of difference between Smith and Azalea, who will compete for record of the year and for best new artist. Azalea is more of a traditional pop star, while Smith, 22, is the kind of artist the Grammys like to champion, a young singer

who embraces older musical styles.

For that reason, many think Smith has a chance at a sweep of the top four categories — which hasn't been done since Christopher Cross did it in 1981.

However, Smith doesn't think it will happen. In fact, Smith is actually rooting against a sweep, telling Rolling Stone recently that Beyoncé's surprise album "Beyoncé" should win album of the year.

Beyoncé's album changed the way record labels looked at their release plans, as she rolled out "Beyoncé" with no pre-release fanfare, no introductory single or video. Its sound was equally forward-thinking, stretching the definition of today's R&B as she included spoken-word elements, dance rhythms and her own rapping.

Although Beyoncé is the woman with the most Grammy nominations ever and has 17 wins under her belt, she may not have widespread Academy support this year.

The other leader of the night, Pharrell, has an odd Grammy year, as he is up for three of the album of the year nominations for his work as a producer on "Beyoncé" and Sheeran's "X," as well as his own "Girl" album. That means that even if he sweeps his other categories for best music video, best pop solo performance and best urban contemporary album, he can only win four awards.

So who will end up the night's big winner? Well, Beyoncé will likely have a tough fight in the best music film category against the Oscar-winning documentary "20 Feet From Stardom," making it likely that she and Smith will tie, if she takes the album of the year Grammy over Smith.

But given the boost Smith will get from the awards and live performance, he will be the night's big winner, regardless of how the awards turn out.



Beyoncé



Sam Smith

Invision/AP photos

CRITIC GLENN GAMBOA'S GRAMMY PREDICTIONS

RECORD OF THE YEAR

"Fancy," Iggy Azalea feat. Charli XCX
"Chandelier," Sia

"Stay With Me (Darkchild Version)," Sam Smith
"Shake It Off," Taylor Swift

"All About That Bass," Meghan Trainor
Should win: "All About That Bass." Trainor's anthem was part of 2014's zeitgeist, touching on self-empowerment and body issues, while also mashing up hip-hop and girl groups in the most memorable way.

Will win: "Stay With Me." It's the sweetest ode to a one-night stand that most Grammy voters have ever heard.

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

"Morning Phase," Beck
"Beyoncé," Beyoncé

"X," Ed Sheeran
"In the Lonely Hour," Sam Smith

"Girl," Pharrell Williams
Should win: "Beyoncé." Not only did the album change the way the industry thinks of new release rollouts, it brought spoken-word performance and varied song structures into R&B, while still rolling out future classics like "XO."
Will win: "Beyoncé."

SONG OF THE YEAR

"All About That Bass," Meghan Trainor
"Chandelier," Sia

"Shake It Off," Taylor Swift
"Stay With Me (Darkchild Version)," Sam Smith

"Take Me to Church," Hozier

Should win: "Stay With Me." This songwriter's award should go to Smith for crafting such a raw, honestly emotional plea for companionship, cloaked in old-fashioned soul.

Will win: "Stay With Me." However, Hozier's "Take Me to Church" could be a dark horse winner.

BEST NEW ARTIST

Iggy Azalea
Bastille

Brandy Clark
Haim

Sam Smith

Should win: Sam Smith. This is the closest thing to a lock that Smith has among his nominations.

Will win: Sam Smith.

BEST POP VOCAL ALBUM

"Ghost Stories," Coldplay
"Bangor," Miley Cyrus

"My Everything," Ariana Grande
"Prism," Katy Perry

"X," Ed Sheeran

"In the Lonely Hour," Sam Smith

Should win: "X." Ed Sheeran maintains his charm during his move into more complicated, more pop-oriented songs.

Will win: "In the Lonely Hour." Sam Smith's soulful songs balance new and old just the way Grammy voters like them.

BEST ROCK ALBUM

"Ryan Adams," Ryan Adams
"Morning Phase," Beck

"Turn Blue," Black Keys

"Hypnotic Eye," Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers

"Songs of Innocence," U2

Should win: "Hypnotic Eye." Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers strike an angry, populist tone and back that up with the rock sound that has made them legends.

Will win: "Turn Blue." The Black Keys have deservedly become Grammy favorites and this solid record won't shake that bond.

BEST ALTERNATIVE MUSIC ALBUM

"This Is All Yours," Alt-J

"Reflektor," Arcade Fire

"Melodrama," Cage the Elephant

"St. Vincent," St. Vincent

"Lazaretto," Jack White

Should win: "Reflektor." Arcade Fire's decade album showed how it is possible to create songs that can move the soul and the feet.

Will win: "Lazaretto." Jack White's wild rock blends country, indie-rock, hip-hop and blues. How alternative is that?

BEST COUNTRY ALBUM

"Riser," Dierks Bentley

"The Outsiders," Eric Church

"12 Stories," Brandy Clark

"Platinum," Miranda Lambert

"The Way I'm Livin'," Lee Ann Womack

Should win: "Platinum." Miranda Lambert deserved an album of the year nomination for this well-crafted country masterpiece. She'll take this home instead.

Will win: "Platinum." Sorry, Eric Church.

BEST URBAN CONTEMPORARY ALBUM

"X," Chris Brown

"Beyoncé," Beyoncé

"Mali Is...," Mali Music

"Girl," Pharrell

Should win: "Beyoncé." The album defines what urban contemporary music can really accomplish.

Will win: "Beyoncé." There's no real competition here aside from Pharrell.

BEST RAP ALBUM

"The New Classic," Iggy Azalea

"Because the Internet," Childish Gambino

"Nobdy's Smiling," Common

"The Marshall Mathers LP 2," Eminem

"Oxymoron," Schoolboy Q

"Black Hollywood," Wiz Khalifa
Should win: "Nobdy's Smiling." Common shows how hip-hop can be a teaching tool as well as entertainment.

Will win: "The Marshall Mathers LP 2." Eminem has already won this category five times. No reason why this shouldn't be No. 6, though if Iggy Azalea somehow pulls it out, it will blow up into the night's biggest controversy.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

FRANKLY,
IT WORKS

Dylan gets tangled up in Ol' Blue Eyes on new collection of standards

Bob Dylan

Shadows in the Night (Columbia)

Bob Dylan has never called "Shadows in the Night" a Frank Sinatra tribute album. The idea seems nuts: one of the last century's greatest songwriters challenging perhaps its greatest voice, on Sinatra's turf. No wonder it was the butt of jokes before anyone heard a note.

The fact remains that each of the 10 standards here, written between 1923 and 1963, was recorded by Sinatra. Some, like "Some Enchanted Evening" or "That Lucky Old Sun," are fairly well known, others more obscure. Dylan closed his past few concerts with one of them, "Stay With Me."

The precise, and even more intimidating, comparison is Sinatra's superb 1955 concept disc, "In the Wee Small Hours." For these are all songs that come to mind when the night gets long, when missed opportunities, regrets and lost loves come to mind. They're the songs you'd expect the 73-year-old man sitting at the end of the bar to request. Here they are performed in muted fashion, not with an orchestra, but with Dylan's band, supplemented by a mournful pedal steel guitar and the occasional subtle horn.

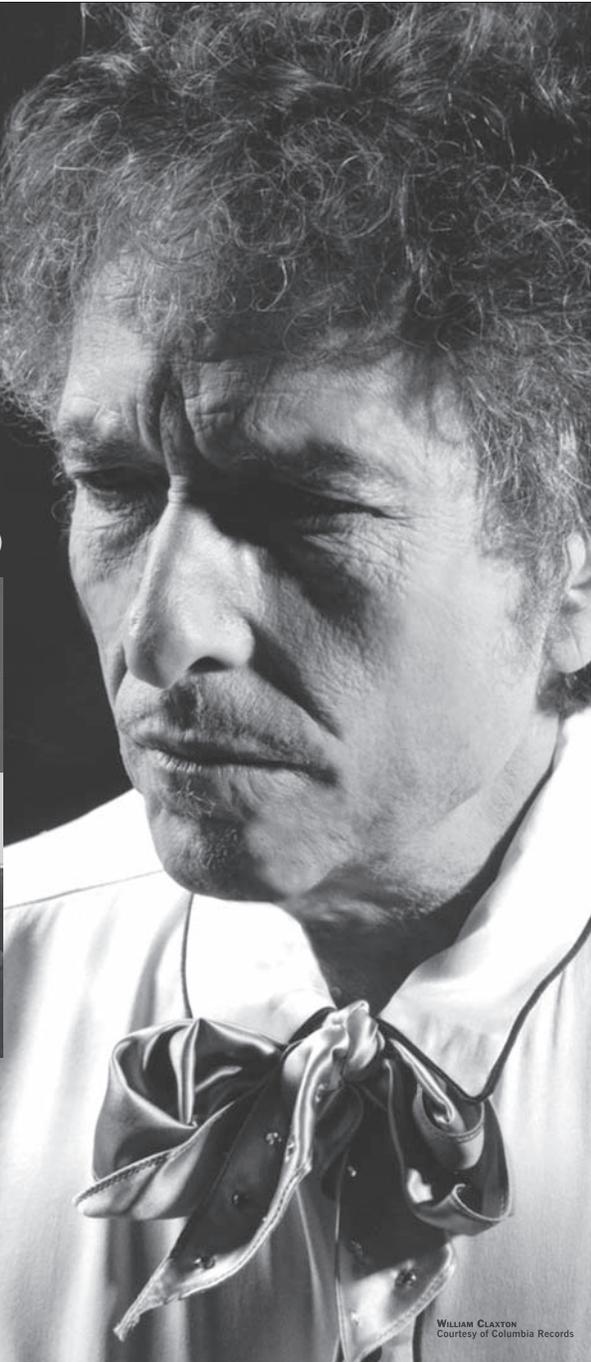
The hushed arrangements put even more emphasis on a voice that, let's face it, was never considered classic even before being ravaged by age. The remarkable thing is that he pulls it off, with crooning you've never heard from Dylan before. Unlike his holiday album from a few years back, where his croak played like unintentional comedy at times, he works hard to do justice to the songs and setting. Don't toss your Sinatra discs aside. By the time Dylan reaches for the last line in album closer, "That Lucky Old Sun," you're rooting for him to nail it. He does.

The disc is consistent with Dylan's later-period emphasis on classic American songcraft and material that evokes mortality. It is very specific in its appeal. Yet when it's time to turn down the lights and pick up a tumbler, you could do far worse.

— David Bauder
The Associated Press



Bob Dylan's new album evokes Frank Sinatra's 1955 concept album, "In the Wee Small Hours."



WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



BE AFRAID, BE VERY AFRAID

'Alien: Isolation' involves more cowering than killing

By Christopher Byrd
The Washington Post

“You look like hell,” a friend of mine said when she visited me on the day I finished “Alien: Isolation.” I didn’t bother to contradict her since I’d spent the past few days walled up in my apartment with the curtains drawn against the inviting sunshine. In that state of suspended twilight, vanity washed away and I found myself doing things at odd hours, like shaving at 3 a.m. Over the course of the 30 or so hours that I spent with the game, I also missed phone calls and texts because of the earphones clamped on my head.

Those earphones were my best defense against the aliens, robots, and terrified humans caught in between them, all of whom wanted to do me harm. Judging by my frayed nerves, I’d say that *The Creative Assembly’s* homage to “Alien” — the 1979 film directed by Ridley Scott — is, on a visceral level, a success.



“Alien: Isolation” is a powerful nostalgia stimulator. The game’s ’70s-era environmental details — like the metal coil of a public phone, or the chunky plastic buttons of a boombox, or the fiddly nature of an analogue tuner that’s constantly losing its signal — might waft you into your own private reverie.

Apart from these material details, the game also lifts from the maternal themes present throughout the movies. In the game, you play as the daughter of the iconic Ellen Ripley, immortalized in the films by Sigourney Weaver, who graces the game with her vocal talents.

Amanda serves as an engineer at Weyland-Yutani, the same company for which her mother worked as a warrant officer. She chose her employment because it placed her near to where Ellen’s ship, the USSC *Nostromo*, went missing. During the game’s opening cutscene, Samuels, a well-means synthetic — a human-looking android — interrupts Amanda’s manual labor. She is aloof to his presence until he tells her that a ship recovered the flight recorder from the commercial vessel where her mother was a member of the crew. For 15 years — the game is set in 2137 — Amanda has waited for news of her mother’s fate. So she signs on with the tiny delegation assigned to retrieve the flight recorder from Sevastopol, the decommissioned space station where it’s being housed.

When Amanda and two co-workers try to board Sevastopol, an accident occurs that separates her from her companions. As Amanda begins exploring the station, searching a way to reconnect with her group, she passes along graffiti-streaked walls that bespeak a climate of upheaval. Evidently, the employees at Sevastopol were not happy about being made redundant; however, the slogans decorating the walls also hint at a threat besides a jobless future.

A general supposition of mine is that you can predict the quality of almost any horror-driven narrative by measuring how long the monster is withheld from view. “Alien: Isolation” fared well on this litmus test by devoting a good amount of time to inculcating a sense of foreboding. You get your first full sense that something has gone terribly awry after Amanda comes upon a common area where row after row of body bags line the floor. Listening to the squelch of the bags’ plastic beneath her feet establishes a mood as effective as any line of dialogue.

When the monster eventually appears, your best option

is to slink away as quietly as possible. “Alien: Isolation” conforms to the survival-horror genre by accenting its protagonist’s vulnerability. Know that if and when you slip up, Amanda’s demise usually transpires with quick, no-frills brutality. Thus, the most sensible way to approach the game is to avoid conflict whenever possible. Adapting myself to the needs of this logic, I spent most of the game cowering under desks and hospital beds and in lockers so as to wait out any menaces nearby. With respect to these situations, I must say that I’ve never empathized with another video game character’s bated breath to a similar degree. This game modulated my breathing patterns with startling frequency.

Ultimately, the premise is simple: Retrieve the recorder and get off of Sevastopol. Between Amanda’s separation from her co-workers and her escape, one is led through many blind alleys and through numerous tasks that do not result in forward momentum. Still, these fruitless adventures, though exhausting, are worth taking.

Sound design is crucial in horror and science-fiction creations like this because it coaxes the viewer to imagine their own gallery of nightmares. With that in mind, I would advise against any but the most skilled or masochistic players from setting the game on hard, the recommended difficulty level. The game shines most brightly when you’re dodging between temporary havens, catching glimpses of what might kill you. Conversely, dying repeatedly in the same spot can numb you to the shock of such an eventuality.

Revisiting the Scott film, one is stuck by the crew’s ongoing debates about their responsibilities and compensation. The movie can be read as an allegory about the importance of work in our lives. Viewed from this angle, the game’s seemingly endless quests acquire a symbolic resonance. Sure they’re tedious but they also subvert the notion that what you’re playing is a game that exists solely to give you a fun, easily manageable adventure. The frisson generated from an exciting new occupation buckles beneath the tedium of the work involved. And by golly, you will ache to get off that damned space station as much as any of the other souls stuck on it.

If you’re the sort that believes that there is nothing strange about art making impractical demands of its audience, “Alien: Isolation” offers a grueling experience that might sap you in all of the right ways.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

For the LOVE of hiking

Consider type of activity, terrain, season when choosing footwear

BY LEANNE ITALIE
The Associated Press

A big, bad pair of hiking boots and the bloody hurt they inflicted on Cheryl Strayed's feet were co-stars in her book "Wild," as they were for Reese Witherspoon in the popular movie adaptation that earned the actress an Oscar nomination.

Toenails were taken by the too-small monsters, and both of the wounds up at the bottom of a cliff on the Pacific Crest Trail in the opening scene, to be replaced later with a brand-new perforating pair at her next rest stop.

A newbie to thru-hiking, Strayed's story of her 1,100-mile trek has not only boosted her profile but also reinforced the importance to novices of protecting and supporting their feet.

Danner Boots in Portland, Ore., created the "Wild" boots for Witherspoon, though the company didn't make the kind Strayed actually wore. That honor goes to Raichle, later rebranded as Mammut. Danner certainly is reaping the benefits. Its Mountain Light Cascade style for women, the official name, has enjoyed a sales boost, said company spokesman Will Pennartz.

But uninitiated thru-hikers should tread lightly when it comes to footwear; shoes instead of boots might be a better choice.

"These days, footwear options fit and break-in period are two of the most important aspects of finding the right pair of hiking boots. We hope newbie hikers not only take inspiration from Cheryl's story, but also learn from her initial mistakes," Pennartz said.

"These days, footwear options for long-distance hikers abound. When choosing, consider that your feet are not those of Strayed, Witherspoon or your best friend who raved about a certain brand or style.

"It was painful to watch those scenes with her feet," said Austin Williams, who hiked 1,600 miles



Reese Witherspoon portrays Cheryl Strayed in "Wild." Strayed, a novice hiker, began her 1,100-mile trek with a massive amount of unnecessary gear and ill-fitting shoes.

of the PCT in 2008 wearing an ultralight pack and running shoes.

Key to choosing the right footwear, Williams and others advise, is to try on as many different kinds as possible and to be open to changing them up for a different size or type as you go along.

Denise Friend, a footwear expert and merchandising manager for the outdoor retail supplier REI, said a common mistake among newbies is not choosing the right footwear for the right activity: short hike versus backpacking trip, for instance, along with incline, season and terrain.

"Classic and traditional



PHOTOS BY RICK BOWMER/AP

These days, footwear options for long-distance hikers abound. When trying on footwear, take a stroll through the store. Walk up and down stairs and on an inclined surface to determine whether or not the shoe will work for you, according to REI.com, an outdoor retail supplier.

styles still sell well, but the next generation of boots offer better comfort, lighter weight and flexibility," she said from company headquarters in Kent, Wash. "These new styles require less break-in time and are trail-ready out of the box."

Williams put up lots of advice for the feet on his PlanYourHike.com after he completed his nearly three-month trek.

"The classic hiking footwear has always been hiking boots. If you have a heavier pack and you roll your ankle and you're not wearing boots, you're screwed," he said from Mendocino, Calif. "But if you're wearing a really light pack, a lot of people are finding you don't really need boots if you're on a trail. If you're going off trail it's still good to wear boots."

Gear tests for footwear abound if you're in search of recommendations. A few things to keep in mind:

Weight: What you have on

your feet makes a huge difference when you're hiking 20 to 30 miles a day, Williams said. Lightweight trail shoes, running shoes or ultralight boots will not sap energy nearly as fast as full-blown, clunky hiking boots.

Time: Footwear rarely lasts for more than 500 miles. You could go through six or seven pairs by the end of a thru-hike. Budget accordingly.

Swelling: This is inevitable when you hike for 10-plus hours a day nearly every day, week after week, Williams said. The growth can be from a half size to one-and-a-half sizes, especially in desert areas. If you plan to buy all your footwear at once for resupply boxes sent to you along the way, buy a size bigger than your foot no matter what the salesperson tells you, he said.

Adjusting sizes: Wiser than buying all footwear at once is leaving support people with money and telling them the exact kind you like. When it's time for

replacements you can tell them what size to include in your next resupply box.

Socks: They fall apart fast, Williams said. Every single resupply box should have at least one pair of new socks. Two or three pairs in each box would be great. Most hikers carry three or four pairs of reasonably fast-drying socks. Change socks at least once a day to let feet dry and help prevent blisters. Cotton takes forever to dry and more technical smart wool socks are pricey.

Shoes versus boots: Shoes are better than boots when your base pack weight is less than 25 pounds, you're hiking a maintained trail and you don't require mega-ankle support, Williams said.

Gaiters: These coverings that attach to footwear come in waterproof, lightweight versions. Williams is a huge proponent of gaiters as a way to keep feet dry and debris out of your shoes.

WEEKEND: FAMILY



JULIAN H. GONZALEZ, DETROIT FREE PRESS/TNS

Fair game? Pay-to-play keeping kids on the sideline

By ROBIN ERB
Detroit Free Press

Having to pay to play school sports might have long-reaching health effects, according to a newly released University of Michigan survey that may reinforce a link between income and health.

The survey found that while 51 percent of families earning more than \$60,000 per year reported having a child in sports, only 30 percent of lower-income families had a child playing school sports.

Those income disparities are worrisome for several reasons, said Sarah Clark, an associate research scientist at U-M's Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit.

"Sports is one way that kids can be physically active in an enjoyable way. They're with their buddies. They're learning teamwork," Clark said.

That engagement extended far beyond what can be measured in pounds or body-mass index. Clark said school-based activities such as sports or music programs help kids stay in school.

"So if we're decreasing opportunities for lower-income kids to participate in sports, we're taking away one of our weapons in the fight against obesity and in the fight against drop out (rates)," she said.

The survey, conducted in June, was done by U-M's C.S. Mott Children's Hospital.

Referred to as the National Poll on Children's Health, it found that 1 in 7 parents whose children were not in sports cited cost as a reason. And that factor also might be increasingly important.

Sports participation among lower-income students decreased by 10 percent compared to the May 2012 poll on the same subject. Even among parents in higher-income households, nearly 1 in 10 parents said their child had decreased sports participation because of cost — twice as high as reported in 2012.

Other factors — playing in community leagues rather than school teams, for example — may also play a role in a family's decision to participate in school sports, Clark said.

But overall, the results are troubling. Schools and parent groups try to help reduce costs for low-income students who demonstrate a desire to play sports, she said. Yet they may fail to consider students who never bother to try out for a team because they know cost will be an obstacle.

The poll found the average school sports participation fee was \$126 per child, but some parents — especially when they included costs for equipment and travel — paid more than \$400 for their children's participation.

Clark, a mother of two boys who played multiple high school sports, knows about the cost firsthand, she said.

One year, she said, "I remember I hit \$1,000 in fees before Christmas."

A new survey shows that low-income students who cannot afford pay-to-play sports can suffer health consequences, including obesity.

ILLUSTRATION BY BEV SCHILLING/Stars and Stripes

SPOUSE CALLS

Concerns over pension, military pay reform

"It's been said that our military has basically become a pension, benefit, health-care company that occasionally fights a war," Jason Grumet commented this week on C-SPAN, discussing the newly released report from the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

Actually, that has not been said — until Grumet, the president of the Bipartisan Policy Center, said it, misquoting retired combat veteran Arnold Punaro. What Punaro, now a Pentagon consultant and advocate of military reform, has said in various interviews is this: "If we allow the current trend to continue, we're going to turn the Department of Defense into a benefits company that occasionally kills a terrorist."

Punaro's comment is not a statement about what is, but a warning about what could be. He's also said that reforms to military compensation should not reduce benefits of troops who are currently serving.

The results of the MCRM, a nine-member panel created by Congress, are being discussed this week on social media, around military family tables and on Capitol Hill.

Also released this week was the president's budget, with different ideas about how to reform military benefits and maintain readiness. All the recommendations, for now, are only recommendations.

My initial reaction to the MCRM's findings was positive. Most of their conclusions speak to my experiences, either in my own military life or as an observer and reporter of this way of life. The recommendations include changes to military pensions and active-duty health care, consolidating exchanges and commissaries, streamlining various options for offering more options for survivor benefits and Space-A travel. Current active-duty pay structures would be left intact.

The panel suggests a new retirement structure that would include individual investment and portability, as well as federal contributions.

If the MCRM's recommendations become reality, active-duty military families would choose their health-care coverage and providers based on the needs of their own families, rather than the dictates of Tricare. Active-duty members would receive a basic allowance for health care to cover premiums and some out-of-pocket costs.

The president's budget proposal has a very different vision, one which includes Tricare in an altered state and would also require more out-of-pocket costs for military families and retirees.

The commission's purpose was to suggest benefit reforms that would aid recruitment and retention in the military, not to cut costs. However, the panel estimates their 15 recommendations could save the government \$5 billion next year, possibly \$10 billion a year by 2020.

Some of the recommendations do seem more likely to save money for the government than for military families, notably the changes to retiree health care. While the MCRM's new pension plan includes a grandfather clause for military members who are currently serving and retirees, the health care changes do not.

Retirees under 65 would pay incrementally increasing premiums to the MCRM plan. The present would require increased premiums, as well as copays, even for using military treatment facilities.

Our leaders say they want reforms that aid recruitment and retention. Perhaps they don't consider treatment of retirees essential to that purpose, but it is. Reducing benefits for those who have already served sends a clear message to present and future military members, that promises were made and broken.

As our leaders consider these recommendations, they should remember those who have already borne the battle. If the way forward for military compensation involves breaking promises to those who've already given a lifetime of service, it will certainly discourage new recruits from trusting their future and their families to a shiny new set of promises.

Terri Barnes is the author of "Spouse Calls: Messages From a Military Life." Contact her at spousecalls@aol.com or at stripes.com/go/spousecalls.



Terri Barnes

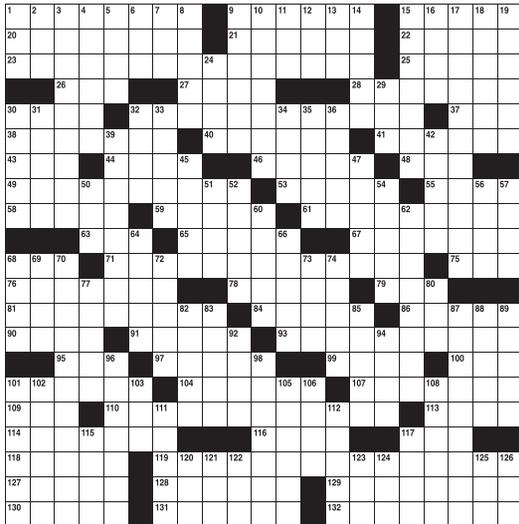
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

THIS N' THAT

BY DAVID STEINBERG / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

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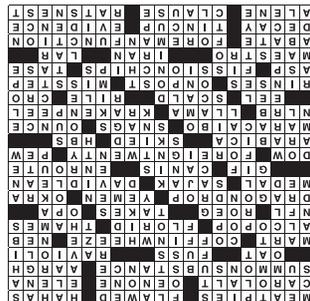


GUNSTON STREET CLASSIC



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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FACES

Found in adaptation

Leading ladies triumph on television series based on telenovelas

By E. J. TAMARA
The Associated Press

Gina Rodriguez and America Ferrera have more in common than being the only Latina women to have won Golden Globes, a TV actress: Both of their series' were originally Latin American telenovelas.

"Jane The Virgin," adapted from a Venezuelan telenovela, and "Ugly Betty," from Colombia, were adapted from the daily hour-long shows in Spanish to hour-a-week programs suited to American sitcom formats.

Ben Silverman, who has worked with other adapted series like "The Office" which appeared in Great Britain before it became a prime-time U.S. show, was the production architect of the two telenovelas.

"Jane The Virgin" is the next evolution of what we did with "Ugly Betty," the next step forward," said Silverman, who founded Electus, a TV content and distribution company. The CW series, which debuted in 2014, tells the story of a young, devout woman who discovers she is pregnant after being accidentally artificially inseminated. The CW already has announced a second season.

"Ugly Betty," produced by Mexican actress Salma Hayek (who also starred in telenovelas) and aired by ABC from 2006 to 2010, helped launch the career of Ferrera, who won her Golden Globe in 2007, and Silverman hopes the "Jane" launches Rodriguez' career, who was honored by the Globes last month.

"America and Gina are brilliant actors and super talented, and there are not as many opportunities as it should be for actors like them, so I'm so excited that these shows gave them a platform and were recognized by the Globes. Also, the Golden Globes has people from all over the world that like to see people who they recognize," he said.

A recent Associated Press survey found that Latino actors remain underrepresented on prime-time scripted shows on network television: While Latinos are the nation's largest minority group at more than 17 percent of the population, only Fox and ABC had Latino representation of as much as 10 percent in their Fall 2014 lineups.

The adaptations have been successful — in spite of touching sensitive themes like immigration reform and sexuality.

"We really never thought we'd have an issue by being that truthful," said Silverman. "The more specific we are and the more we use real things, like Spanish language or real references that come from Latin culture like the quinceañera, the better the show will be."

Silverman's not saying whether more telenovela adaptations are in the works. "Stay tuned!" he said. "Call me in a year or two and I'll tell you."



America Ferrera played the title character in "Ugly Betty."

Golden Globe winner Gina Rodriguez is Jane on "Jane The Virgin." The show airs Thursdays on AFN-Family.

The CW

Bruce Jenner's mom talks about his gender journey

By LEANNE ITALIE
The Associated Press

With speculation flying, Bruce Jenner's mother opened up Wednesday about his gender journey.

Esther Jenner, 88, has been besieged by calls from the media in recent days, but the widow in Lewiston, Idaho, isn't interested in fueling gossip. Instead, in a wide-ranging, nearly hour-long phone interview, she praised her Olympian son for his courage, stopping short of some details that have been flooded by unnamed sources online and in tabloids.

Bruce Jenner, who won gold as a decathlete in the 1976 Summer Games, has not publicly spoken about transitioning to a woman. A publicist for the 65-year-old Jenner would not comment about his mother's remarks. Nor would E! Entertainment on word that Jenner will appear in a reality series about his journey.

Highlights from Esther Jenner's conversation with The Associated Press:

The Associated Press: Have you spoken to Bruce recently about his transition?

Jenner: It was brief and I said I was proud of him and that I'll always love him. I never thought I could be more proud of Bruce when he reached his goal in 1976, but I'm more proud of him now. It takes a lot of courage to do what he's doing.

He has opened up in terms of his gender identity, which he is now owning, as opposed to hiding like so many transgender people have to do? Is that right?

That's absolutely right. He said, "Mom, I'm still the same person." He said, "I'm still going to race cars, I'm still going to fly airplanes and I'm going to get my helicopter license."

How did it feel for him to come to you and explain?

When I first learned about it, yes, of course it was a surprise.

In a lot of cases, families really suffer from that kind of announcement.

The family is close and very supportive of Bruce and we're supportive of each other.

Was it a shock?

It was a shock. It's hard to wrap your mind around it.

How did he explain it to you?

He said, "I want to be honest about my identity and I know this is coming out in the press." He started by saying, "We need to have a long, serious talk." I am at peace with what he is and what he's doing.

Other news

■ Spike Lee is going to be directing to the likes of Kevin Hart, Common, Anthony Anderson and Mo'Nique Davis — but instead of on a movie set, it will be on the basketball court. The filmmaker is to coach the Sprint NBA All-Star Celebrity Game, which will kick off festivities for the All-Star weekend Feb. 13-15. Lee, a New York Knicks fan, will coach with Knicks star Carmelo Anthony and ESPN Radio's Mike Golic and Mike Greenberg. The event will be at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

■ Netflix is expanding into Japan this fall, marking the first time that the Internet video service will be available in Asia. The move announced late Wednesday marks another step toward reaching Netflix's goal to stream video on Internet-connected TVs, phones, tablets and computer throughout the world.

■ Glu Mobile, the developer of the popular "Kim Kardashian: Hollywood" game, says it will develop a new mobile game with singer Katy Perry. The San Francisco company says the game will include Perry's voice and likeness. It plans to launch the game in late 2015 on Apple and Android devices.

Correction

■ In a story Feb. 2 about singers Diarks Bentley and Mresla Lambert, The Associated Press reported erroneously that the pair are childhood friends. Bentley and Lambert are longtime friends, but did not grow up together.

From The Associated Press

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OPINION

Homeownership's diminishing returns

By CHARLES LANE
 The Washington Post

It's official: Over the past couple of decades, the United States spent vast amounts of time, energy and, above all, money — both private and public — to raise the national rate of homeownership, with exacting results to show for it. The Wall Street Journal reports that 63.9 percent of U.S. households owned their residences in the fourth quarter of 2014, precisely the same percentage as in the third quarter of 1994. In fact, the current homeownership rate is a mere 1 percent higher than it was 50 years ago, census data show.

The 1994 data is significant because, as the Journal pointed out, it was just a few months before President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, announced a “national homeownership strategy” in “June 1995, with an explicit goal of 67.5 percent homeownership by 2000. The next president, Republican George W. Bush, declared his vision of an “ownership society” with a target of 5.5 million new minority homeowners by 2010.

With successive administrations from both parties pushing federal agencies so hard in the same direction, it's not surprising that the homeownership rate did, indeed, hit an all-time high of 69.1 percent in early 2005.

Given the financial carnage that were cut to pump up the rate, it's also no surprise that the figure has retraced its statistical steps: since the housing market began to tank in 2007.

Whether you blame Wall Street, Washington or some combination of the two, the simple fact is that government and business sold millions of people an American Dream that could not survive a sour economy, with nightmare results for them and for the country.

The big lesson here is equally straightforward: Central planning does not work.

The low-down-payment loans many people were encouraged to take during the boom were not much different from leases, in economic terms.

There is no “right” level of homeownership, and it's folly to pursue one, much less to pretend that boosting homeownership represents a risk-free way for government to achieve various social goals without directly paying for them.

Yet that is precisely what Clinton and Bush did, arguing that homeownership would be a path to wealth for individual families, particularly minorities long denied a piece of the American rock, as well as a kind of bonding agent for the neighborhoods and local communities upon which a strong democracy supposedly rests.

In truth, the low-down-payment loans many people were encouraged to take during the boom were not much different from leases, in economic terms. They were wealth-building tools only in the speculative sense that, yes, you could convert a tiny equity stake into massive gains — if housing prices never ceased rising.

Far from being a no-foreside investment, a typical 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage places a highly leveraged, illiquid bet on a single asset class, real estate — in violation of the first principle of investing, which is to diversify risk.

Even now, after the housing market has largely healed, a tenth of America's 50 million mortgaged residential properties have negative equity, according to the latest survey by CoreLogic, a leading real estate information firm. About 19 percent lack the recommended 20 percent equity cushion.

Obama could take such steps on his own, but to achieve larger reforms and savings, he would need to enlist Republicans. Instead, however, he is asking them to layer a costly new benefit onto a broken personnel system.

Obama could take such steps on his own, but to achieve larger reforms and savings, he would need to enlist Republicans. Instead, however, he is asking them to layer a costly new benefit onto a broken personnel system.

By doing so, he is acting more as a union leader than an executive who oversees a civilian workforce of about 2.5 million people — or as a president who needs Republican support to pass his plan. That's a shame, because there was a deal to be had with Republicans, who are generally in favor of sweeping away arcane regulations.

And it's not too late to strike that deal. There is no shortage of areas where cooperation is possible.

■ The 1949 salary schedule and job classification system should be streamlined and updated to reflect a workforce that is now largely professional, not clerical.

As for community-building, the homeownership-rate roller coaster of the past 20 years arguably destabilized communities.

It was never really the case that the quality of our democracy hinged on a particular rate of homeownership, as long as people are generally free to own their own homes, of course. Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands are still among the strongest economies; all have lower rates of homeownership than the United States, according to data compiled by San Diego State University economist Michael Lea.

For all its professed free-market principles, the United States is unique in the industrialized world in the degree to which its national ethos stigmatizes renting and its national government subsidizes mortgages, through the tax deduction for mortgage interest and Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac guarantees for securities backed by 30-year mortgages.

It's time for an overhaul, but Congress remains deadlocked as lobbyists from all the interest groups that benefited from the old system — mortgage bankers, builders, real estate agents, low-income housing advocates — seek to preserve, or resurrect, the parts that advantage them.

Generalized emphasis on market mechanics of the old central-planning mentality, and apply the lessons of the past two decades, as well as experience in countries such as Australia and Canada with more homeownership rates comparable with, or better than, those in the United States. Both put much greater emphasis on market mechanisms, especially shorter-term mortgage products that require large down payments and share the risk of interest-rate volatility between borrowers and lenders.

Under those conditions, people are more likely to have a truly sustainable stake in their property and homeownership is more than just a political chaphrase.

Charles Lane is a member of The Washington Post's editorial board.

Obama missed a chance on parental leave

achieved through executive action. For instance, there is a probationary period for all federal employees that expires automatically after 12 months. It would be far better to require managers to affirm that employees have earned the right to stay on the job before they receive job protections that few workers in the private sector enjoy.

In New York City, changing teacher tenure from a default policy to an affirmative decision (and giving principals the ability to lengthen the probation period) cut the percentage of eligible teachers earning tenure from 94 percent to 56 percent, as principals opted to extend teachers' probationary status.

Obama could take such steps on his own, but to achieve larger reforms and savings, he would need to enlist Republicans. Instead, however, he is asking them to layer a costly new benefit onto a broken personnel system.

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And it's not too late to strike that deal. There is no shortage of areas where cooperation is possible.

■ The 1949 salary schedule and job classification system should be streamlined and updated to reflect a workforce that is now largely professional, not clerical.

Workers should have more opportunities to earn raises based on performance, rather than seniority or the number of employees they supervise.

Agencies should be granted greater discretion over hiring, a process that the Partnership for Public Service calls “so slow, complex, opaque, and imprecise in its ability to identify the best candidates that it is more likely to impede than facilitate the government's ability to hire well.”

Obama writes in his latest book, “The Rule of Nobody” — should be lifted.

Obama would have been wise to use the prospect of paid parental leave as a carrot to entice union leaders to endorse reform legislation, which would have made it easier for Democrats (and even some Republicans) to vote for it. Having forgone that option, if Obama still hopes to secure a paid leave law, he will need to present his executive management committee — the Republicans who control Congress — with a more attractive offer.

Francis Barry writes editorials on politics and domestic policy. He previously served as director of public affairs and chief speechwriter for former New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editors are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Middle class on parties' radar

The Miami Herald

Despite the volley of partisan rhetoric hurled from Capitol Hill to the White House over President Barack Obama's proposed federal budget, it's possible to discern the sounds of political harmony beneath the thunder.

It's no surprise that Obama's \$4 trillion fiscal year 2016 budget was derided by leading Republicans as "dead on arrival," and worse. We've come to expect that as politics as usual. The president's reliance on large tax increases on corporations and the wealthy to finance efforts to help the middle class and create more jobs was a sure bet to be greeted with instant rejection.

But there's something else — something more important, we hope — going on in the larger political discourse underway in the country as candidates gear up for the 2016 election. The most striking evidence is that even Mitt Romney — he of the "47 percent" — made it a point before he bowed out of the upcoming race to promise that he would "end the scourge of poverty" if he ran. Similarly, Jeb Bush said in his non-declaration of a candidacy that "While in the last eight years I've been pretty good at paying top earners, they've been a lost decade for the rest of America."

In other words, income inequality, long a fundamental concern of Democrats that Obama has seized as his current theme, is being recognized by some GOP leaders as a major national issue that deserves attention. And not a minute too soon. For the last 15 years or so, the middle-class share of households has continued to shrink as more Americans fall to the bottom. The Great Recession worsened the trend because the economy lost a lot of middle-income jobs, which have been replaced by a painful slow recovery by lower-paying jobs.

Given that the middle class is where the great mass of voters are, it makes sense that politicians of all stripes would sooner or later wise up. No one should harbor any illusions about the political difficulty of implementing a policy to address the problem, but agreeing that, in fact, there is a problem represents a hopeful moment that must not be wasted. ...

Rep. Paul Ryan, of Wisconsin, is among the GOP leaders in Congress who think there may be something in the president's plan to use a refundable credit for the earned-income credit to childless adults and a public works bill that can generate jobs.

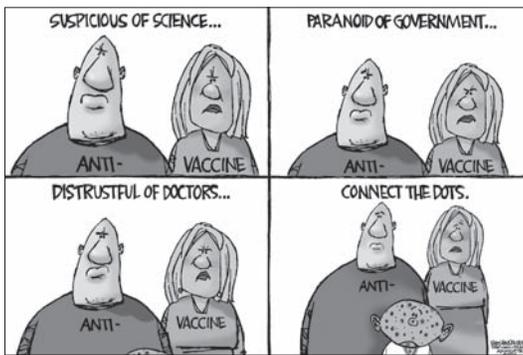
The sticking point comes in how the spending is paid for. Reaching agreement won't be easy, but both sides must realize that the only way to get the job done is if the nation's leaders can agree on the goal — helping the middle class — they should surely be able to reach consensus on how to get there.

Obama wants big government

The Oklahoman

Polling done just after the State of the Union speech found "crosscurrents that signal a complex political terrain" for Congress. The White House and 2016 presidential candidates, according to a report in USA Today, which co-sponsored the poll.

President Barack Obama has seen improved favorability ratings as signs of an economic upturn emerged, but the poll found that many Americans believe only a startup elite will benefit — another sign that Obama's class warfare strategy has



diverted attention from the fact he's been president for six years of "the rich getting richer."

Gains in wealth are largely attributable to the stock market; gains in the stock market are largely attributable to federal monetary policy. The market has been a magnet for investment and that's paid off for investors, including middle-class citizens with positions in mutual funds, IRAs, 401(k) plans and other instruments.

Obama has been deft in distancing himself from the agonizingly slow economic recovery during his entire presidency. At first he blamed the previous administration, while doing little to stimulate private-sector growth. But now that the economy appears in a growth mode, Obama is all over the news with self-congratulatory rhetoric expressed in the State of the State speech and elsewhere. In other words, this president didn't "own" the economy until the news improved. Perhaps he was just renting it.

The USA Today/Suffolk University poll points to trouble ahead for Republicans because Americans are convinced things are getting better only if we're not. Obama tapped this unrest with his storied pivot to the middle class and his continued class warfare strategy to soak the rich yet again.

The poll shows widespread skepticism that Obama's agenda is anything more than political insurance. Americans don't believe Republicans will accept the agenda — which is part of the Democratic Party's strategy to demonize the GOP and part of Obama's strategy to lock his successor (if the Democrat wins) into continuing his worldview.

When asked how many of Obama's proposals will make it into law, 45 percent of those polled said only a few items; 22 percent said none of it would make it. Thus, 67 percent believe the president's agenda is dead in the water.

Not to worry if you're a White House staffer. Obama's cynical approach to governance is ratified by these results. He can say he tried and that the Republicans, interested only in enriching the rich, shot it down. Yet one of his key proposals — taxing college savings plan accounts — met widespread opposition from Democrats and Republicans. It was gone within the first week after the State of the Union.

Obama's middle-class pivot is designed to build on his base with programs that mostly involve the transfer of wealth and passing money through government agencies. ...

Republicans need a unifying strategy to counter the Great Divider. That might include no tax increases for the wealthy but also tax cuts for the middle class.

Our view, cynical as it may seem, is that Obama has no genuine concern for average people who work and pay taxes. His concern is for expanding government with programs that benefit Americans who pay little or no income taxes and throwing a

sop to the middle class, which will cover much of the expense.

Lack of trust can be deadly

Anniston (Ala.) Star

A full month into 2015, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 102 cases of measles, a pace surpassing the typical year. Disneyland in California is believed to be Ground Zero for this outbreak, which may have exposed 1,000 people to measles. In 2014, 644 cases of measles were reported in 27 states, the CDC reports.

These new infections are a shock to most medical professionals, who could rightly point to a steady decline in cases that culminated with a record low of 86 reported U.S. cases 15 years ago. The hero in this drop was widespread acceptance of vaccine nations among U.S. parents.

The villain blamed for today's alarming rise in measles cases is a small group of parents who are foregoing having their children immunized. Trustworthy health organizations — the CDC, the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, for example — promote the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine, which is 97 percent effective in preventing measles.

Yet the dissenting parents cite unproven medical quackery in justifying their decision to reject vaccinations for children, a practice that endangers their children as well as many others.

What's playing out is the consequence of a serious national problem — the lack of trust. For some Americans, healthy skepticism has turned into widespread paranoia. The president's ideological opponents tell us he is more than wrong; he is a secret Muslim and a non-U.S. citizen. A basic outline of public school coursework promoted by the states' Common Core is believed by some to be a conspiracy to indoctrinate children. And dangerous vaccines are foisted on an unsuspecting public, according to some parents who withdraw their children from immunization shots.

The dangers of these illogical beliefs are clear. Until this mistrust is bridged, the nation will suffer the consequences.

Reclassify broadband as utility

The Seattle Times

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler finally confirmed Wednesday his proposal to protect high-speed Internet service for all Americans. He will ask the commission to reclassify it as a public utility under Title II of the Communications Act.

This regulatory change is the best way to preserve the Internet as a place where users can access the information they want, when they want it. A place where businesses — established companies and startups alike — can compete on a level playing field.

Adopting the concept of "net neutrality" means the handful of existing, but powerful, Internet service providers such as Comcast, Verizon and AT&T would be prohibited from charging websters a premium fee for faster access to consumers, while relegating all other sites to a slow lane. Such a two-tiered system could stifle innovation.

The five-member FCC is scheduled to vote on a final proposal by Feb. 26.

So get ready. The fight to preserve net neutrality is winnable, but citizens must continue to make their voices heard. More than 3 million Americans flooded the FCC's website last summer and fall.

President Barack Obama could not ignore this outcry. Years after promising as a candidate that he would protect an open Internet, Obama finally called on FCC commissioners (whom he appoints) to "implement the strongest possible rules to protect net neutrality."

The FCC's best option is to reclassify broadband as a utility, as it does the telephone industry. Of course, deep-pocketed cable-industry lobbyists claim regulations would hamper their investments in broadband expansion and harm customers. Really, they just do not want oversight.

Bring back full SIGAR reports

Los Angeles Times

For six years, the office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, which audits U.S. spending in the war-ravaged country, has submitted quarterly public reports to Congress drawn from records provided by the U.S.-led coalition supporting the still-shaky Afghan government. The reports are a crucial component of public accountability, both in terms of informing Americans how taxpayer dollars are being spent and as a backstop against inefficiency, mismanagement, fraud and corruption.

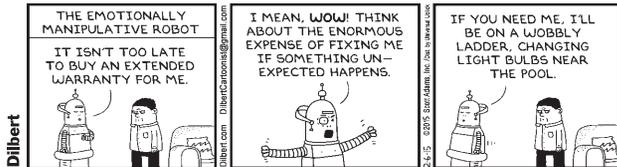
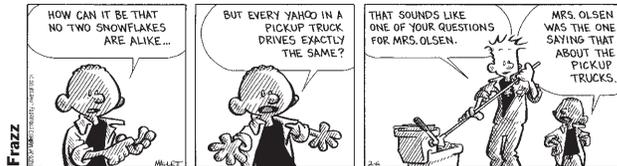
But in a curious policy change, the coalition now declines to provide a wide range of information it formerly provided openly to the inspector general. The quarterly assessments continue to be delivered to Congress — the most recent was released last week — but the now-secret details are included in a separate section that will not be released to the American public.

The inspector general, John Sopko, described the sudden secrecy as "unprecedented" and said that it has rendered his office "unable to report on most of the U.S. taxpayer-funded efforts to build, train, equip and sustain Afghanistan's military and police forces. So what is this information that now needs to be kept out of public view? It includes assessments of troop strength and readiness, Afghan police officials' salaries and the names of contractors offering literacy courses and operating other U.S.-funded programs. In other words, the public is kept in the dark to measure whether the government's efforts in Afghanistan are actually working.

In a letter to Sopko, Gen. John Campbell, who oversees coalition forces in Afghanistan, said he didn't know why the information was being withheld in the first place. Now that the Afghan forces are responsible for their own defense, he wrote, "I have directed that sensitive operational information or related materials that could be used" by combat enemies be "classified at an appropriate level.

But there was no security risk over the last six years, it's hard to envision a fresh scenario in which much of this information could create trouble now. American taxpayers have a right to a public accounting of how billions of their dollars are being spent. While it makes sense to keep the public out of the details of deployed and other strategic details, less compelling is the decision to hide information on salaries, contractors and, in one absurd example, whether a local agency still exists.

Unless coalition officials can come up with a practical rationale, the government should opt for openness.



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15				16					17			
			18						19			
20	21						22	23				
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					35						36	
37	38	39						40				
41						42	43				44	45
46						47					48	
49						50					51	

- ACROSS**
- 1 Piercing tool
 - 4 Couple, in a gossip column
 - 8 Depletes of strength
 - 12 Miss Piggy's pronoun
 - 13 "Finding —"
 - 14 Earthenware pot
 - 15 Clock part
 - 17 Lunch hour
 - 18 Heal
 - 19 Alternative to glossy
 - 20 Western resort lake
 - 22 Revue segment
 - 24 Jungfrau's range
 - 25 Defense headquarters
 - 29 Marseilles monarch
 - 30 Specialized vocabulary
 - 31 Raw rock
 - 32 Proclivity
 - 34 Make tea
 - 35 Vacillate
 - 36 Company emblems
 - 37 Hardly snug
 - 40 Foot part
 - 41 Press
 - 42 Wife of Odysseus
 - 46 Anger
 - 47 Acknowledge
 - 48 Coffee shop vessel
 - 49 Crazy
- DOWN**
- 50 Playwright David
 - 51 Turf
 - 21 Pump up the volume
 - 2 Implore
 - 23 Granny —
 - 25 Ravish
 - 26 Sandwich treat
 - 28 Information
 - 30 "Hi, sailor!"
 - 33 Young swan
 - 34 Weevil's target
 - 36 Lerner's collaborator
 - 37 Charlie Parker's nickname
 - 38 Met melody
 - 39 Type of club
 - 40 Uppy sort
 - 42 Standard
 - 43 Ms. Mendes rival
 - 44 Expert
 - 45 Wrap up line

Answer to Previous Puzzle

E	P	I	C	S	A	P	S	M	O	G
Z	E	T	A	A	W	L	C	U	B	A
R	E	E	L	Y	E	A	A	R	I	D
A	R	M	J	E	S	T	A	N	K	
A	L	P	H	A	E	A	T	E	G	O
T	A	O	S	E	M	U	I	S	L	E
O	I	L	P	E	M	H	O	T	E	L
P	R	O	J	E	C	T	I	O	N	
A	S	I	F	R	H	O	Z	E	R	O
P	O	U	F	E	A	R	E	V	I	L
B	U	S	Y	S	T	Y	S	I	N	E

2-6

CRYPTOQUIP

RSMCY HTUACY HTGGH ARPC
M Z C E Q G T K C Q S S T K C Y
B C N T K T U C , B R U D Z C R N G T U C H
Y C R N "X C P C Y G D Z C R G H K Q E ."
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHENEVER A DEVIL USES SOME DEVICE AS A MEMORY AID, WOULD YOU CALL THAT A DEMONIC MNEMONIC?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals T

INDEPENDENT NEWS FOR THE U.S. MILITARY COMMUNITY

Whenever They Fight and Wherever They Live

The first Stars and Stripes was printed during the Civil War, when a band of Union soldiers published a handful of editions.

During World War I, Stars and Stripes reappeared in Paris on February 8, 1918, to serve the doughboys of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), by order of General of the Armies John J. Pershing. An all-military staff produced it weekly until the war's end.

A second renaissance began on April 18, 1942, when a small group of servicemen began publishing a four-page weekly Stars and Stripes in London. They sold each copy for "tuppence" (about 5 cents) and in no time doubled their page count to eight pages, printing daily instead of weekly.

The first World War II edition of Stars and Stripes featured an interview with Gen. George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff. Marshall quoted Gen. Pershing, World War I Commander of the AEF, who described Stripes as a major factor in sustaining morale. Stars and Stripes later found a champion and protector in Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander and later president of the United States.

Eisenhower enforced a hands-off policy in regard to Stars and Stripes that continues to the present day.

Operations expanded, following GIs to the battlefield to bring them the news. During the war, Stars and Stripes published over 30

separate editions, running up to 24 pages per issue.

At one time, Stars and Stripes had some 25 printing locations in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific. The Pacific edition was launched a week after VE day (Victory in Europe, May 8, 1945).

The war ended—but Stars and Stripes kept going. Its reporters and photographers continued to join American troops in the field, throughout the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, during the 1990s Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and in Bosnia and Kosovo.

From the 2003 outset of Operation Enduring Freedom, Stars and Stripes was there to report first-hand. The war in Afghanistan continues to receive steady coverage. And during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Stripes reporters embedded with military units in Kuwait and Iraq, as well as on Navy ships in the region.

Stars and Stripes today is a multimedia news organization. The majority of Stars and Stripes unique reporting efforts is read now in digital form, either online at stripes.com or via mobile offerings for iPhone, Android and iPad, in over 200 countries around the world.

The print newspaper is still available for servicemembers, government civilians and their families in



Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific—and in contingency areas. Washington, D.C., hosts the Central office, where daily editions are transported to printers in Afghanistan, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Djibouti, as well as in Germany, Italy, UK, Japan, and South Korea. Stars and Stripes also publishes several weeklies (Stripes Guam, Japan, Korea and Okinawa), designed to serve the

needs of their respective military communities.

A U.S. edition comprised exclusively of Stars and Stripes reports from around the world now serves stateside forces and veterans. The U.S. edition is published in partnership with commercial newspaper publishers who serve communities with large military populations.

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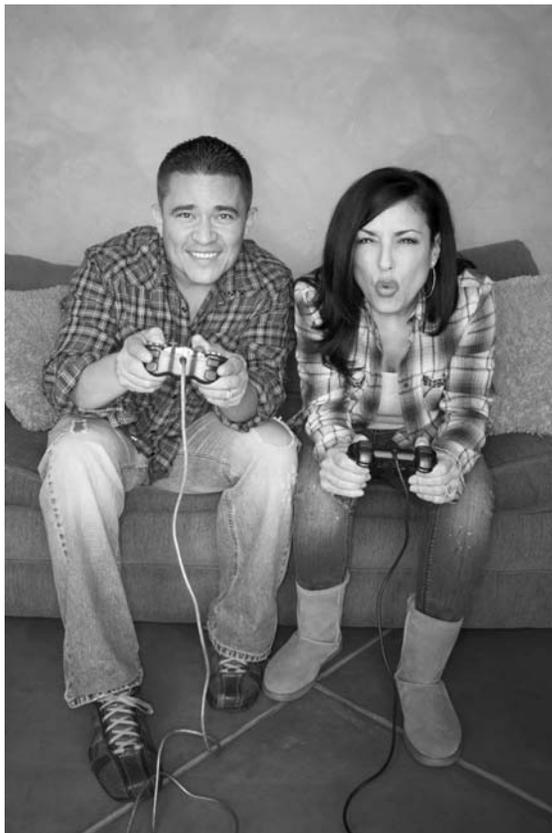
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AT

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SKIING

At 41, Rahlves takes course as forerunner

As a two-time winner, former US skier knows how to get most speed

By PAT GRAHAM
The Associated Press

BEAVER CREEK, Colo. — At 41 and almost a decade removed from his last World Cup downhill race, Daron Rahlves wants one last crack at a demanding Birds of Prey course he knows so well.

Don't worry, the former U.S. skier promises to take it easy.

He's out for video, not a victory. Rahlves will serve as an honorary forerunner before the men's downhill race Saturday, capturing images with cameras mounted on his ski boot and helmet. He said he will only fly down the steep course filled with big jumps at about 60 percent of what he's capable. He will leave the real racing to Bode Miller, Kjetil Jansrud and the rest of the world's top speedsters.

But Rahlves reserves the right to change his mind. After all, Rahlves knows the nuances of this course and where to find hidden speed about as well as anyone. He's won twice at Beaver Creek, including in 2003 when he turned in a fast and furious run.

So fast and furious, even, that U.S. men's coach Sasha Rearick recently asked Rahlves to bring the video over to show the team.

"It's the fastest run down the mountain still," said Rahlves, who hasn't raced a World Cup speed event at this venue since 2005, when he won the downhill.

Not all that surprising, since he was once king of speed on the U.S. team before Miller's rise to prominence. Rahlves competed at three Olympics with the ski team, won 12 World Cup races and captured a world championship super-G title in 2001. He then switched over to the U.S. freestyle squad and competed in ski cross at the 2010 Vancouver Games.

"That's why I'm reliving it in a way," said Rahlves, who lives in Truckee, Calif. "I can't race down the mountain, but I can at least ski down the mountain with some downhill skis on and a (speed) suit. I'm excited."

Could he still race?

"With no training? And off the couch like I am right now?" Rahlves said. "I know how much work goes in to get yourself ready to race. I'm not even close to that level."

He likes the chances of the 37-year-old Miller, who had back surgery to fix a herniated disk in November.

"Bode knows this hill. He's a winner on this hill," Rahlves said. "He's got nothing to lose. He's got the talent and the skills and if his head is there, which I think it is, I would not be surprised if he comes down with the fastest time here."

Same with Aksel Lund Svindal, the 32-



JOHN LOCHER/AP

The United States' Bode Miller races down the course Tuesday during a training run for the men's downhill at the alpine world championships in Beaver Creek, Colo. The men's downhill is scheduled to take place Saturday.

year-old Norwegian who tore his left Achilles in October.

"He's got a good shot as well," Rahlves said. There's a bunch of guys (who can win). That's what makes racing fun."

Here are things to know about the course:

Snow fun: Kjetil Jansrud of Norway says the snow conditions have changed quite a bit since he won a downhill race at Beaver Creek in December. "The snow feels softer," Jansrud said. "Still, I like the hill."

Tiger & Lindsey: Asked how much it meant to her to have boyfriend Tiger Woods cheering her on in the finish area Wednesday when she finished with the bronze medal, Lindsey Vonn said: "Of course I'm happy he's supporting me."

Champions: American Ted Ligety won the super-G world title two years ago in Austria and Christof Innerhofer of Italy captured the title in 2011 at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. "Take all the risk, cross the finish line and say I cannot give more. This is my goal," Innerhofer said.



MARCO TROVATI/AP

Tiger Woods, center, arrives to watch his girlfriend Lindsey Vonn compete in the women's super-G on Tuesday. Vonn finished third in the race.

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MLB

Martin takes long road to the big leagues



Above: New York Yankees pitcher Chris Martin tosses a baseball.

Left: Martin with his high school buddy Jordan Bostick at the Texas Appliance store warehouse where they used to work together and play catch in Arlington, Texas. The pair started throwing a baseball during down time. Soon Martin realized his shoulder felt good and he began his return to pitching.

PHOTOS BY LM OTERO/AP

Pitcher goes from warehouse worker to wearing Yankee pinstripes

By RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Chris Martin was as far from the bright lights of the major leagues as could be five years ago, working in a warehouse off Interstate 20 in Arlington, Texas, pushing 650-pound Sub-Zero refrigerators onto dollies for deliveries.

Drafted twice but never signed, he hurt his arm while pitching for a community college, didn't respond to surgery and finished school without a degree.

But at least he was down to one job. He worked his own unique day-night doubleheader for a stretch, from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the lawn-and-garden section at Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse and from 5:30-11 p.m. loading 53-foot trailers for UPS at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. Not anymore.

Come Feb. 21, the 28-year-old will be wearing No. 61 for the New York Yankees at spring training, a throwback to an era a half-century ago when all but stars worked odd jobs to make ends meet.

"Oh man, I'm pumped. I'm ready to go. Wish it started today," the 6-foot-8 right-hander said. Martin had given up on a baseball career in 2008, when he wasn't able to make a single toss without sharp pain.

An unexpected encounter in a bar with a high school buddy set off a chain of events that started with a fortuitous game of catch and led to a tryout at his own expense, stops with six minor league teams and his major league debut with Colorado last April. The Yankees purchased him last month for \$75,000.

"It's just an amazing story, how a guy like this completely gets lost in the shuffle," said Pete Incaviglia, the former slugger who signed Martin to his first professional contract with the Grand Prairie Airhogs, an independent team in Texas.

A 2004 graduate of Arlington High School, Martin was drafted by Detroit in the 18th round with the 523rd pick. He chose to attend McLennan Community College in Waco and stayed there when Colorado drafted him in the 21st round in June 2005.

Martin, however, hurt his shoulder in a game at Navarro Junior College that fall. He tried rest and rehab at the advice of Dr. Keith Meister, the Texas Rangers' team physician, but that didn't help. Meister operated in August 2007 to repair the labrum and release

the shoulder capsule. When he healed, Martin tried out for the Fort Worth Cats of United League Baseball.

"The shoulder still felt the same, so that's when I decided to hang it up," Martin said.

He went to work at Lowe's. Plus, he added the night job, primarily for UPS's health insurance.

That was his life for about a year, until he went to J. Gilligan's Bar & Grill and came across Jordan Bostick, who was a year behind him in high school. Bostick was a warehouse manager at Texas Appliance in Arlington, and he suggested Martin work for him.

One day in June 2010, Bostick broke out a left-handed catcher's mitt at the warehouse. Martin hadn't picked up a baseball in three years.

Martin's shoulder, surprisingly, felt OK.

Martin joined a friend on a league team, pitched a few times and remained pain free.

‘It reminds me how fast baseball can be taken away and it makes me not take things for granted anymore. I don't want to go back to where I was.’

Chris Martin
Yankees pitcher

A series of texts and calls between former McLennan players landed Martin a tryout with Incaviglia's team.

"Out of the corner of my eye, I see my bullpen catcher waving me over, and so I go over there and kind of stand behind the catcher and look at my gun: 94, 94, 95," Incaviglia said.

Martin signed for \$800 a month and went 4-0 with a 1.95 ERA in 13 games. Incaviglia called Red Sox scout Jaymie Bane.

"I said: Just bring him to your tryout and call me and say thank you," Incaviglia remembered.

After the season, Bane had Martin throw for another Red Sox scout. Then Martin went to Fort Myers with his dad and pitched batting practice at Boston's minor league complex for Bane and Red Sox officials Alard Baird and Jared Porter.

Boston asked Martin to come back two days later for a bullpen session, to make sure his arm bounced back. The Red Sox signed him for \$1,100 a month.

Martin was traded to the Rockies in December 2013.

He made his big league debut last April 26 at Dodger Stadium.

The Yankees like his fastball, which averages 95 mph. And Martin's height — he wears a size 50 jersey.

When Martin struggles in games, he thinks about his long journey to the big leagues.

"It reminds me how fast baseball can be taken away and it makes me not take things for granted anymore," he said. "I don't want to go back to where I was."

MLB



PHOTOS BY RICARDO ARDUENO/AP

Cuba second baseman Yulieski Gurriel is congratulated by his teammates after scoring a run in a Caribbean Series game against Mexico, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Monday. The U.S. move to normalize relations with Cuba has fans and pro scouts hoping the move means more Cuban players will join Major League Baseball.

Diplomatic thaw brings Cubans exposure

Pro scouts eager for more opportunities to assess island's talent

By DANICA COTO
The Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Major league baseball scouts leaned forward as they steadied their radar guns and trained their video cameras on Cuban players who prepared to bat and pitch during Tuesday's Caribbean Series in Puerto Rico.

It is the first time that top Cuban players are competing in the U.S. territory since Cuba and the U.S. moved to normalize relations, opening up the possibility that a greater number could eventually reach the big leagues. Dozens of scouts traveled to the Caribbean Series almost exclusively to assess Cuban talent, jotting down page after page of statistics and observations on players including star second baseman Yulieski Gurriel.

"We're all excited about the possibility of having the ability to acquire Cuban players more easily now," Matt Slater, director of player personnel for the St. Louis Cardinals, told The Associated Press. "The potential is certainly going to increase the talent level of baseball. It's good for the teams, it's good for the fans and the industry in general."

Cuba returned to the round-robin tournament last year for the first time in 53 years, when it was held in Venezuela. Cuban players had won the series seven times when it was held from 1949 to 1960 — before they were barred in 1961 from playing profes-

sionally overseas. In September 2013, Cuba revised the five-decade ban to allow players to sign off-season contracts with leagues in countries including Japan and Mexico, as long as they return home.

Now, the possibility of being able to play in the major leagues excites many, including Gurriel.

"Of course I would like to play where the best baseball is played," Gurriel said. "As long as we have permission, we would always be willing."

More than 80 Cuban players have defected since the 1980s, typically to countries other than the U.S. so they can become free agents.

Two more players apparently defected from the team on Tuesday after losses earlier in the week to the Dominican Republic and Mexico. The missing players were identified as 19-year-old pitcher Vladimir Gutierrez and 29-year-old shortstop Dainer Moreira. Gutierrez had not yet played in the series. Moreira drove in Cuba's only run against the Dominican Republic.

In 2014, 25 Cuban-born players played in the majors, according to STATS, and since 1995, 59 Cuban-born players have made it to the big leagues.

Fans and scouts alike hope to see the number of players increase as relations thaw between the U.S. and Cuba.

"This is the best thing that has happened," said baseball fan Joaquin Rodriguez, a 58-year-old elevator repairman

from Cuba who lives in Puerto Rico. "Players from the Dominican Republic pretty much dominate the major leagues."

It's too early to say what kind of opportunities could open up for Cuban players, but some changes have already taken place. The MLB on Tuesday eliminated its requirement that Cuban players obtain a license from the U.S. government before they are eligible to sign with big league teams.

Cuba team manager Alfonso Orquiuola said he hopes more negotiations will take place.

"This will be beneficial to us in all areas, not just baseball," he told the AP.

U.S. Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said in an interview last week that there is great interest in Cuban talent even though he wasn't sure clubs were seeking to build more academies in yet another country.

Currently, contracts for six of the top-earning Cuban major league players total close to \$280 million.

"Cuba has a great baseball tradition. It's a great source of talent," Manfred said. "Obviously the president has announced an important policy change. What that means at the nuts-and-bolts level that we operate, we're just not sure yet."

Some fans, including 45-year-old Roberto Tellez, hope that improved relations between the U.S. and Cuba could mean that Cuban athletes might get the opportunity



Cuba second baseman Yulieski Gurriel fields a ground ball during a Caribbean Series game Wednesday against Puerto Rico in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Cuba won 3-2, its first victory in the series.

to participate in tournaments other than those played in Latin America. Cuban-born Tellez lives in Miami but traveled to Puerto Rico with his wife to cheer for Cuba.

He said his dream is to see both Cuban players who live on the island and in the U.S. form one team for the next baseball classic.

"That would be so exciting, for them to represent the country and not politics," he said.

HIGH SCHOOL: DODDS-EUROPE



MICHAEL S. DARNELL/Stars and Stripes

Vilesek's **Mikhael Ragay** lost this match against **Matthew Bolduc**, Patch's star wrestler and defending DODDS-Europe champion, by pin on Jan. 24. This weekend's regional tournaments will determine how many wrestlers from each squad will earn a berth in next weekend's DODDS-Europe championships.

Weekend peek

Wrestlers try to qualify for championship meet

By **GREGORY BROOME**
Stars and Stripes

Next weekend's DODDS-Europe wrestling championship meet is where individual stars will claim their titles. But at this weekend's sectional qualifiers, it's all about the numbers.

As it did last year, the first week of the European wrestling post-season includes three meets, to be held this time at Aviano, Brussels and Kaiserslautern. The top three finishers in each of the 14 weight classes at each sectional, assuming that weight class has more than three competitors, will advance directly to the European tournament, set for Feb. 13 and 14 at Wiesbaden.

Next week, a DODDS-Europe selection committee will round out the field for each weight class from the near-misses at this weekend's sectional meets.

The three meets, while based largely on geography, are well-balanced in terms of the number of wrestlers competing and the size of the participating schools.

The overall fields range from a low of 91 at Aviano to a high of 97 at Brussels, with Kaiserslautern's field in between at 95.

With the exception of the 220 and 285-pound brackets at Aviano and the heavyweights at Kaiserslautern, every weight class at each meet has at least four entries, with no more than 11 in any one bracket. Each of the three meets holds three of DODDS-Europe's nine Division I-level wrestling teams.

At Aviano, the 14-man Saints will again host weekly Italian rivals Naples, with a robust 21 wrestlers; Vicenza, with 11 entries; and a single contender from Sigonella; Division I Vilesek will travel with 23, while Bavarian neighbors Hohenfels (14) and Ansbach (seven) help beef up the brackets.

Three hefty Division I programs dominate the meet at Kaiserslautern, including 26-man

teams from Wiesbaden and defending champion Patch and 21 homestanding Raiders. Baumholder will field 12, Black Forest Academy offers six and Incirlik will fly in a four-man squad from Turkey.

At Brussels, Ramstein's roster of 28 and Lakenheath's group of 21 make up the brunt of the meet, with double-digit squads from SHAPE and Brussels, small but promising teams from Alconbury and Bitburg and a handful of hopefuls from APNORTH and Rota rounding out the field.

While team scores are incidental to the sectional meet, schools are hoping to qualify as many wrestlers as possible to increase their potential for team points at the European championships, where divisional team titles will be awarded.

broome.gregory@stripes.com
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Game of the week

Boys basketball: Patch at Ramstein Friday

Less than two weeks away from the European tournament, the Patch Panthers are the Division I team to beat. The Ramstein Royals might be the team with the best chance to do it.

Only Patch and Ramstein have beaten every team they've played this season. Patch has done it in conventional undefeated fashion; Ramstein did it by taking a single setback, a last-second 47-46 loss to archrival Kaiserslautern, and quickly avenging it with a 46-39 win over the Raiders a week later.

While it's a good matchup on paper, it might be even better on the hardwood. Both teams hardly resemble last year's strong squads, but the rebuilt versions meet or exceed their predecessors.

The Panthers are seeking their third straight Division I title on the strength of a prototype five-man lineup, a squad that features playmaking and shot-mak-

ing guards in Pablo Paradis and Alec Basgali, a do-everything wing in Holten Sparing and a pair of sure-handed, athletic bigs in Robert Braswell and Colin Whitten.

The Royals are in pursuit of their first title since 2010, and they might have the tools to pull it off. Ramstein deploys perhaps the only frontcourt able to hold its own with Patch's Braswell-Whitten duo in Jesse Gray and Trey Bailey, both of whom challenge interior shots, rebound vigorously and score when the opportunity arises. Seniors Xavier Harper and Spencer Wright, meanwhile, capably steer the Ramstein ship from the backcourt.

The Panthers and Royals are likely to meet again, and with much higher stakes, in a short while. Friday's initial meeting will set that stage.

—Stars and Stripes

Another key matchup

Girls basketball Vicenza at Naples Friday-Saturday

The platform has shifted for the classic DODDS-Europe rivalry between the Cougars and Wildcats. With the recent realignment, the longstanding Division II feud is now a Division I clash. The battle has always carried major post-season implications, and it appears this season will be no different.

Both teams enter this weekend's doubleheader at 9-1, ostensibly placing them firmly in the Division I championship picture alongside undefeated defending champion Wiesbaden. But there are serious caveats. A brief January foray into divisional play against German teams cost each their only

loss of the season and tempered title expectations.

Vicenza took a 50-30 loss to Patch, a middle-of-the-pack Division I squad, and nipped winless Vilesek 27-26. Naples' fortunes were nearly identical: the Wildcats endured a 37-29 loss to Patch and edged Vilesek 31-29. The rest of the sterling overall records carried by Naples and Vicenza have been inflated by lower-division competition in Italy.

If either Italian team is to launch a serious title bid at the approaching European tournament, it can start this weekend by dispatching the other one.

Schedule

Basketball

Friday
SHAPE at APNORTH
Menwith Hill at Brussels
Bitburg at Hohenfels
Baumholder at BFA
Wiesbaden at Kaiserslautern

Saturday
Patch at Ramstein
Vilesek at Ansbach
Aviano at Sigonella
Vicenza at Naples
Florence at Marymount

Tuesday
International School of Brussels at Brussels
Marymount at American Overseas

School of Rome
Wednesday
Marymount at American Overseas
School of Rome

Wrestling

Saturday
Sectional qualifying tournaments at Aviano, Brussels, Kaiserslautern

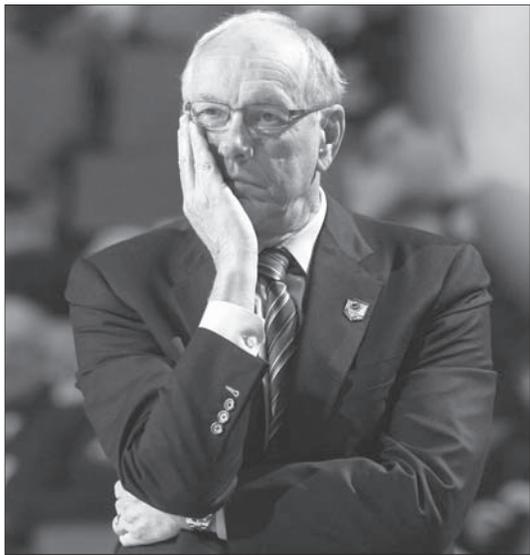


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COLLEGE BASKETBALL/HIGH SCHOOL: DODDS-PACIFIC

Syracuse self-imposes postseason ban



BILL WIPPET/AP

Syracuse head coach Jim Boeheim said he was disappointed, but supports the university's decision to self-impose a postseason ban pending an NCAA case.

By JOHN KEKIS
The Associated Press

Syracuse University announced Wednesday that it has instituted a self-imposed postseason ban for the current men's basketball season as part of its case pending before the NCAA Committee on Infractions.

The school initiated the case, which includes academics, when it self-reported potential athletic department violations to the NCAA in 2007. School officials said Wednesday none of the conduct occurred after 2012 and no current student-athlete is involved.

The ban also includes the ACC tournament. After Syracuse's announcement, the conference released an updated bracket for a tournament shortened by one game.

Coach Jim Boeheim says he's disappointed, especially for senior Raakeem Christmas, but supports the decision.

"I believe the university is doing the right thing by acknowledging that past mistakes occurred," Boeheim said in a statement.

In 2012, Syracuse declared former center Fab Melo ineligible for the NCAA tournament days before it started. Melo also missed three Big East games during the season because of an academic issue. Early in the 2012-13 season, former forward James Southland sat out six games for an academic issue but helped lead the Orange to the Final Four.

In March 2012, school officials said the university had self-reported possible violations of its internal drug policy by former members of the team and that the NCAA was investigating. None of the members of that team were involved.

The school also acknowledged the NCAA

had inquired into old allegations that players were allowed to practice and play despite being in violation of the school's drug policy.

"We are fully supportive of Syracuse and its decision to self-impose sanctions by removing themselves from any men's basketball postseason opportunities," ACC Commissioner John Swofford said.

The probe also involves issues with football. Syracuse completed a two-day hearing before the Committee on Infractions in October, and among those who attended were Boeheim and football coach Scott Shafer.

"While this is a tough decision for the university and its students, faculty, staff and fans, it helps to close this particular chapter and allows us to focus on the future," said newly appointed faculty athletics representative Rick Burton.

Plagued by injuries, Syracuse has struggled to a 15-7 mark this season and was a longshot to make the NCAA tournament or NIT. Still, the announcement was difficult for the players to accept.

"We are all tremendously disappointed that we are going to miss out on playing in the postseason based on issues that do not involve us," Christmas, Trevor Cooney and Michael Gbinije said in a joint statement.

While the Orange have only eight scholarship players currently available to play due to injuries, Boeheim has the top recruiting class in his 39 years as head coach inked for next year and big things are expected as he nears 1,000 career victories. If the NCAA agrees a one-year postseason ban is sufficient, the new recruits won't be affected.

High school scoreboard

Basketball

South Korea
Korean-American Interscholastic Activities Conference Blue Division Tournament

Friday at Yongsan Garrison
Yongsan vs. Humphreys, 3 a.m.
Seoul Foreign vs. Taejon Christian, 11 a.m.
Osan vs. Daegu, 1 p.m.

Semifinals
Seoul American vs. Yongsan-Humphreys winner, 3 p.m.
Seoul Foreign-Taejon Christian winner vs. Osan-Daegu winner, 5 p.m.

Saturday's games
TBD, loser finishes seventh, 9 a.m.
TBD, fifth and sixth place, 1 p.m.
TBD, third and fourth place, 11 a.m.

Championship
Semifinals winners, 3 p.m.

Japan
DODDS-Japan Tournament Thursday at Yokota Air Base

Pool A
Yokota 77, Robert D. Edgren 50
Yokota 65, E.J. King 46

Friday's game
Edgren vs. King, 9:15 a.m.

Pool B
Zama 63, Nile C. Kinnick 43
Matthew C. Perry 74, Kinnick 43

Friday's game
Perry vs. Zama, 9:15 a.m.

Friday's games
B2 vs. A3, 2:15 p.m.
A2 vs. B3, 2:15 p.m.

Semifinals
A1 vs. Game 1 winner, 6 p.m.
B1 vs. Game 2 winner, 7:15 p.m.

Saturday's games
TBD, fifth and sixth place, 10:15 a.m.
TBD, third and fourth place, 10:15 a.m.

Championship
Semifinal winners, 12:45 p.m.

Girls
South Korea
Korean-American Interscholastic Activities Conference Blue Division Tournament

Friday at Seoul
Yongsan vs. Osan, 9 a.m.
Seoul Foreign vs. Humphreys, 11 a.m.
Taejon Christian vs. Daegu, 1 p.m.

Semifinals
Seoul American vs. Yongsan-Osan winner, 3 p.m.

Taejon Christian-Daegu winner vs. Seoul Foreign-Humphreys winner, 5 p.m.

Saturday's games
TBD, loser finishes seventh, 9 a.m.
TBD, fifth and sixth place, 1 p.m.
TBD, third and fourth place, 11 a.m.

Championship
Semifinal winners, 3 p.m.

DODDS-Japan Tournament Thursday at Yokota Air Base

Pool A
Edgren 41, Zama 30
Edgren 44, King 6

Friday's game
Zama vs. King, 8 a.m.

Pool B
Yokota 43, Kinnick 36
Yokota 51, Perry 12

Friday's game
Kinnick vs. Perry, 8 a.m.

Playoffs
Friday's games

Semifinals
B2 vs. A3, 1 p.m.
A2 vs. B3, 1 p.m.

Semifinals
A1 vs. Game 1 winner, 3:30 p.m.
B1 vs. Game 2 winner, 4:45 p.m.

Saturday's games
TBD, fifth and sixth place, 9 a.m.
TBD, third and fourth place, 9 a.m.

Championship
Semifinal winners, 11:30 a.m.



Dave Ormauer

Pacific sportsblog
Check in for frequent updates
stripes.com/pacblog



JAMES KIMBER/Stars and Stripes

Soaring into the playoffs

M.C. Perry's Jon Cadavos drives past Nile C. Kinnick defenders Josiah Ferguson (32) and Tarik Deadman (11) as teammate David Lawrence watches during pool play of the DODDS-Japan Tournament at Yokota Air Base on Thursday. Perry defeated Kinnick 74-43. The tournament ends Saturday, but teams in Japan still have a few more regular-season games to play. Postseason play begins Friday in Korea and ends with the Far East championships starting Feb. 16.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Mountaineers struggle in the week's first test

No. 15 West Virginia got off to a rough start when team was routed by No. 21 Oklahoma

By JOHN MARSHALL
The Associated Press

The ACC is set for another showdown in men's college basketball while West Virginia began a tough week with a thud.

The big game will be on Saturday when No. 3 Virginia plays at No. 8 Louisville.

The Cavaliers (19-1) dropped to No. 3 in the latest AP poll, behind top-ranked Kentucky and Gonzaga after suffering their first loss of the season, 69-63 to Duke over the weekend.

Virginia bounced back with a strong defensive effort to beat No. 12 North Carolina 75-64 in Chapel Hill on Monday night. That gives the Cavaliers four days off to prepare for Louisville (19-3), which beat Miami on Tuesday night. The Cardinals' only losses this season have come to Kentucky, North Carolina and Duke.

As is usually the case, there's more than one big game in the ACC this week.

No. 4 Duke (18-3) gets a rematch against No. 10 Notre Dame (20-3) on Saturday, less than two weeks after losing to the Irish on Jan. 28. The Blue Devils handed Virginia its first loss last week, but finished a spot behind the Cavaliers in the AP poll.

West Virginia moved up to No. 15 in the Top 25 this week, but got off to a rough start as the Mountaineers were blown out by No. 21 Oklahoma on Tuesday night. They host No. 19 Baylor on Saturday.

Unlike the first meeting with Oklahoma when West Virginia won by 20 points on Jan. 13, the Mountaineers (18-4, 6-3 Big

12) lost 71-52 on Tuesday.

"They were very good," coach Bob Huggins said. "They were very, very good. As I have said a thousand times and I continue to say, I'm just an old coach, so it's not like I'm going to outsmart a lot of people in this league. We have to execute and we didn't execute."

The Mountaineers have forced teams into mistakes all season, leading the nation by forcing 22.3 turnovers per game. They also have 261 steals, already more than Oklahoma State had while leading the conference last season.

"If you were walking down the street and somebody just got in your face about three inches away for a few blocks, would that bother you?" Huggins said. "No one wants to play against that. No one wants that in their life. It's uncomfortable. People just want to slap you."

When West Virginia beat Oklahoma in January, it scored 27 points off 22 turnovers. On Tuesday they forced 13 turnovers which they converted to only eight points. The Mountaineers have yet to face Baylor (16-5), which beat then-No. 19 Texas in its last game.

In the Big East, No. 7 Villanova (19-2) has what should be an easy game, followed by what will almost certainly be a tough one.

The Wildcats first play at home on Wednesday against Marquette, which is near the bottom of the conference at 10-11. After that, Villanova hosts No. 24 Georgetown on Saturday.



RAYMOND THOMPSON/AP



‘If you were walking down the street and somebody just got in your face about three inches away for a few blocks, would that bother you? No one wants to play against that. No one wants that in their life. It’s uncomfortable. People just want to slap you.’

Bob Huggins West Virginia coach on how the Mountaineers have forced teams into mistakes

West Virginia guard Dexter Miles Jr., left, out runs Texas Tech guard Todrick Gotcher on a fast break last week in Morgantown, W.Va. The Mountaineers' week started with a loss to Oklahoma. West Virginia will host Baylor on Saturday.

Games on AFN



Baylor at West Virginia
AFN-Atlantic
6 p.m. Saturday CET
2 a.m. Sunday JKT

Kansas at Oklahoma State
AFN-Atlantic
8 p.m. Saturday CET
4 a.m. Sunday JKT

Army at Navy
AFN-Sports
8 p.m. Saturday CET
4 a.m. Sunday JKT

Louisville at Virginia
AFN-Sports
1 a.m. Sunday CET
9 a.m. Sunday JKT

Kentucky at Florida
AFN-Sports
3 a.m. Sunday CET
11 a.m. Sunday JKT

NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	33	17	.660	—
Brooklyn	20	28	.417	12
Boston	18	30	.375	14
Philadelphia	11	39	.220	22
New York	0	39	.204	22½

Southeast Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	41	9	.820	—
Washington	31	19	.620	10
Charlotte	21	27	.438	19
Miami	22	26	.423	19½
Orlando	15	37	.288	27

Central Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	30	20	.600	—
Chicago	30	20	.600	—
Milwaukee	27	22	.551	2½
Detroit	19	31	.380	11
Indiana	18	32	.360	12

Western Conference

Southwest Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	37	12	.755	—
Houston	34	15	.694	3
Dallas	33	18	.647	6
San Antonio	31	18	.633	6
New Orleans	25	23	.511	11

Northwest Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Portland	33	16	.673	—
Oklahoma City	25	24	.510	8
Denver	19	31	.380	14½
Utah	17	32	.347	16
Minnesota	9	40	.184	24

Pacific Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	33	8	.830	—
L.A. Clippers	31	16	.673	7
Phoenix	28	22	.560	12½
Sacramento	17	30	.362	22
L.A. Lakers	13	36	.265	27

Tuesday's games

Philadelphia 105, Denver 98
 Detroit 108, Miami 91
 Boston 108, New York 97
 Portland 105, Utah 92
 Golden State 121, Sacramento 96

Wednesday's games

Indiana 114, Detroit 109
 Atlanta 105, Washington 96
 Brooklyn 109, Toronto 93
 Boston 104, Denver 100
 Oklahoma City 102, New Orleans 91
 Houston 101, Chicago 90
 Milwaukee 113, L.A. Lakers 105, OT
 Minnesota 102, Miami 101
 San Antonio 110, Orlando 103
 Memphis 100, Utah 90
 Golden State 128, Dallas 114

Thursday's games

Washington at Charlotte
 L.A. Clippers at Cleveland
 Dallas at Sacramento
 Phoenix at Portland

Friday's games

L.A. Clippers at Toronto
 L.A. Lakers at Orlando
 Cleveland at Indiana
 New York at Brooklyn
 Golden State at Boston
 Denver at Detroit
 Philadelphia at Atlanta
 New Orleans at Oklahoma City
 Milwaukee at Houston
 Memphis at Minnesota
 Utah at Phoenix
 Miami at San Antonio

Saturday's games

Chicago at New Orleans
 Brooklyn at Washington
 Charlotte at Philadelphia
 Golden State at New York
 Portland at Dallas
 Boston at Milwaukee
 Sacramento at Utah

Sunday's games

L.A. Clippers at Oklahoma City
 L.A. Lakers at Cleveland
 Atlanta at Memphis
 Indiana at Charlotte
 Minnesota at Detroit
 Chicago at Orlando
 Portland at Houston
 San Antonio at Toronto
 Phoenix at Sacramento

Leaders

Scoring

Player	G	Fg	FT	PTS	AVG
Harden, HOU	45	364	324	27.0	—
James, CLE	40	368	245	1048	26.2
Westbrook, OKC	35	210	238	890	25.4
Davis, NOR	44	417	246	1380	24.5
Anthony, NYK	38	343	176	919	24.2
Aldridge, POR	43	403	191	1022	23.8
Cousins, SAC	35	289	250	829	23.7
Curry, GOLD	47	386	191	1110	23.6
Griffin, LAC	49	432	235	1107	22.6
Thompson, GOLD	46	372	143	1032	22.4

Rebounds

Player	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Jordan, LAC	49	218	449	667	13.6
Drummond, DET	50	250	398	648	13.0
Cousins, SAC	35	109	293	438	12.5
Randolph, MEM	40	158	325	483	12.1
Chandler, DAL	49	139	389	527	12.0
Gasol, CHI	47	140	423	563	12.0
Vucetic, ORL	46	148	371	519	11.3
Low, CLE	48	133	398	506	10.5
Davis, NOR	44	119	340	459	10.4
Aldridge, POR	41	115	327	442	10.3

Assists

Player	G	AST	AVG
Wall, WAS	50	508	10.2
Lawson, DEN	48	479	10.0
Paul, LAC	49	468	9.6
Rondo, DAL	43	374	8.7
Curry, GOLD	47	379	8.1
Teague, ATL	46	347	7.5
Westbrook, OKC	36	264	7.5
James, CLE	48	295	7.4
Carter-Williams, PHO	41	302	7.4
Lowry, TOR	50	368	7.4

Defensive-minded Hornets on roll

Charlotte has NBA's top scoring defense in 2015

By STEVE REED
 The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Charlotte Hornets have had the No. 1 scoring defense in the NBA since Jan. 1, a dramatic improvement that has led them on a charge up the Eastern Conference standings.

It has allowed them to go 11-4 in 2015 despite injuries that have kept top players Kemba Walker and Al Jefferson and key reserves Bismack Biyombo and Marvin Williams out of games.

The Hornets are limiting opponents to a league-low 89.4 points per game and 39.7 percent field-goal shooting during that span.

Second-year coach Steve Clifford attributes that to a team defense that is "more tied together" and playing with more discipline in recent weeks.

"As a group we have realized that is our way to win," Clifford said.

Scheduling also could easily be attributed as a factor.

The early part of Charlotte's schedule was loaded with tough Western Conference opponents, while the Hornets have been feasting on some easier Eastern foes in recent weeks.

But there have also been several games where the Hornets have bowed up against tough foes, including a 92-88 win over the Washington Wizards on Monday.

Clifford concedes that the early stretch was tough but it was compounded by the Hornets simply not playing well.

However, that has changed for the Hornets, who have the seventh-best record in the East after a 10-23 start.

"It's a tribute to our group that they have slowly embraced the fact that to win in this league you have to be good at something — and our chance is to be good at defending and rebounding," Clifford said. "And then, how far the offense can go will determine how good we get."

The Hornets are a surprising 5-1 without Walker, their leading scorer who is out at least six weeks with a torn lateral meniscus in his left knee. Jefferson is just now rounding back into form after a groin injury.

Still, the defense has steadily improved.

The Hornets were 20th in the league in points allowed (100.4) and 24th in opponent's field-goal percentage (46.1) in the first 33 games this season.

The three-point defense, in particular, has been a factor. A team that was allowing opponents to make nearly 37 percent from beyond the arc in 2014 has limited that to 31.9 percent since the turn of the new year.

Forward Michael Kidd-Gilchrist,



PHOTOS BY DAVID ZALUBOWSKI, TOP, AND ALEX BRANDON, LEFT/AF

Above, Charlotte forwards Michael Kidd-Gilchrist, back, and Cody Zeller harass Denver Nuggets guard Randy Foye in Denver. At left, Washington Wizards guard Bradley Beal passes around Kidd-Gilchrist. The Hornets have had the top scoring defense in the NBA since Jan. 1, allowing them to go 11-4 in 2015 despite injuries to some of their top players.

christ, one of the team's top defenders, attributed Charlotte's turnaround to a "trust factor" in Clifford's system.

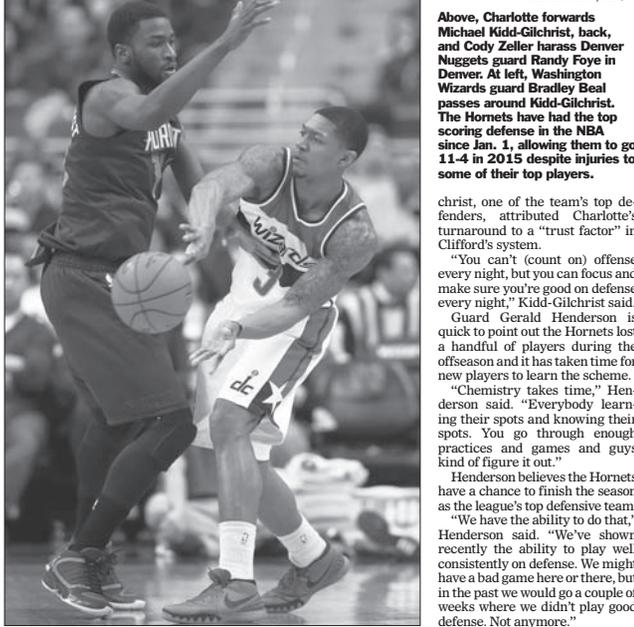
"You can't count on offense every night, but you can focus and make sure you're good on defense every night," Kidd-Gilchrist said.

Guard Gerald Henderson is quick to point out the Hornets lost a handful of players during the offseason and it has taken time for new players to learn the scheme.

"Chemistry takes time," Henderson said. "Everybody learning their spots and knowing their spots. You go through enough practices and games and guys kind of figure it out."

Henderson believes the Hornets have a chance to finish the season as the league's top defensive team.

"We have the ability to do that," Henderson said. "We've shown recently the ability to play well consistently on defense. We might have a bad game here or there, but in the past we would go a couple of weeks where we didn't play good defense. Not anymore."



OLYMPICS



DMITRY LOVETSKY/AP

Two cormorants fly over the coast in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Russia on Jan. 15. A year after Russia hosted the Winter Olympics, most of the venues stand empty.

Russian taxpayers footing the bill

Oligarchs secretly dumping toxic assets a year after Sochi Games

By NATALIYA VASILYEVA
The Associated Press

The ski jump sits shrouded in mist, its coat of snow undisturbed by any athletes hurtling down the ramp to take off into the air.

A year ago, the jump bustled with activity at the Sochi Olympics as the world's best ski jumpers — including women, for the first time — competed for gold. But it made some unwanted history as well, becoming a stark symbol of how some of the plans for President Vladimir Putin's \$51 billion Winter Games went terribly wrong.

The cost of the facility soared during construction from \$40 million to nearly \$300 million. The overrun embarrassed the Kremlin, which publicly shamed the businessman involved, and he fled the country in the face of a corruption investigation.

Russia had vowed to pay for what became the most expensive Olympics of all time by getting super-rich private investors to take the cost from the state. Instead, as the first anniversary of those games approaches,

at least two of those oligarchs are quietly dumping their increasingly toxic assets on the state — forcing Russian taxpayers to pick up the bill.

For the oligarchs, it's a way to recoup billions of dollars as they struggle in an economy battered by plunging oil prices and Western sanctions. For Putin's critics, it's evidence of the crony capitalism that shields Russia's rich and powerful businessmen from economic pain.

Two key investors have unloaded properties built for the Olympics at a combined cost of \$3 billion, a spokesman to Russia's deputy prime minister confirmed to The Associated Press. The issue is a major headache for Putin, who needs to pay off the oligarchs to keep them happy, while preventing the murky deals from triggering a wave of popular unrest.

The risks for Putin are magnified as the country enters recession and its rainy-day funds dwindle, even as Russia prepares for staging yet another major international sports event: the 2018 World Cup.

In addition, other oligarchs may now be waiting for the right moment to demand



DMITRY LOVETSKY/AP

A woman chooses a T-shirt in a souvenir shop on Jan. 12 in Sochi, Russia. The promised economic boom hasn't appeared a year after the Winter Olympics.

their reward or compensation for coming to the government's rescue by taking on what became unprofitable Sochi projects.

"They don't have any good options here," Sam Greene, director of King's Russia Institute at King's College London, said of the Kremlin. "They either have to take the public hit, or they have to take the opposition of the oligarchs."

For now, Greene said it appears that Putin is opting for coddling the oligarchs.

Meanwhile, residents of Sochi — long a resort destination for Russian vacationers — have seen few economic benefits from hosting the Olympics. Promises that the games would solve perennial problems such as poor transportation and electricity remain unfulfilled one year afterward.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL/GOLF

Big signing day in Happy Valley

Franklin, Penn State celebrate as scholarships are restored

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
The Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — The cheerleaders arrived at Penn State's football offices just as the sun was starting to peek from behind Mount Nittany.

Blue and white balloons were everywhere and pop music pumped loudly into a room that was filling quickly with Penn State supporters, administrators and coaches from all sports.

James Franklin sat at a table with his head buried in a stack of papers, looking like the only guy at the party trying to study — but this was undeniably his show. The Penn State coach has turned signing day into an event in Happy Valley and this one was particularly significant.

For the first time since the program was slammed by the NCAA after the Jerry Sandusky scandal, the Nittany Lions are not burdened by sanctions. Their scholarships have been restored, along with their vacated wins. And they made a victorious return to the postseason.

The school also has a new president and a new athletic director. Both were in attendance Wednesday morning to welcome the latest Nittany Lions, a group that comes to State College knowing from the moment they step on campus there are no limits.

"With our staff this is how it's been since Day 1," Franklin told The Associated Press. "But I think every day and every time something changes from a positive perspective about this university, with the community and with the football program specifically, it helps. There are just a

lot of things falling into place for us right now. Every time another domino falls, it's restoring hope. Hope is a powerful thing."

Franklin had a monitor on his table with a camera to make video calls. When his staff was able to connect with a commit by Skype or FaceTime, he congratulated them and told them he loved them. He told the moms the coaches were going to "Take care of your baby." Franklin would call out "We are!" and most of the time the player or someone in his family answered, "Penn State."

Franklin's young daughters, Shola and Addy, dressed in No. 1 Penn State jerseys, were in charge of putting the magnetic name plates on the draft board, occasionally with a boost from their father.

A couple of horn players from the marching band played the fight song.

How times have changed at Penn State.

Even as signing day became a news event around the country, under Joe Paterno it was just another day at Penn State. In two years under Bill O'Brien, Nittany Lions signing day moved into the 21st century.

Franklin came in last year and turned signing day into a celebration, the way he did when he was trying to drum up enthusiasm during three seasons at Vanderbilt.

"It's also an opportunity to open our doors and allow people from the campus and the community to kind of see how this place works behind the scenes," he said.



CHRIS DUNN, YORK DAILY RECORD/AP

Penn State head coach James Franklin speaks to the media about the team's 25 new recruits during national signing day on Wednesday in State College, Pa.



LENNY IONELZI/AP

Tiger Woods reacts after hitting an errant drive off the second tee during the pro-am at the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines on Wednesday in San Diego. Woods will enter this weekend's PGA tournament as a 50-to-1 underdog, despite playing on a Torrey Pines course he has dominated like no other, winning eight times there over the course of his 19-year professional career.

Woods: Can Tiger ever recover?

FROM BACK PAGE

The biggest break for Woods during his second round at the TPC Scottsdale was on the 17th hole, when Woods and Jordan Spieth drove it just short of the green. The hole was back and to the right, requiring a pitch that had to be struck close to perfect.

Woods had no chance. His golf ball was partially sunken in a divot, a shot so impossible that he stood over it for nearly a minute with his hands on his hips instead of around a club, probably because he had no idea what club could get him out of this trouble. He opted for a 4-iron, which didn't have enough pace and fell off the side of the green.

Why was that a break?

Because if he had a clean lie, Spieth would have exposed him even more. Spieth has one of the best short games on tour.

Woods does not.

And the rest of his game is not much better. The talk at Isleworth two months ago, when Woods returned from a four-month break to let his back heal fully from surgery and to regain strength, was that there was more freedom in his swing. In Phoenix, he was back to rehearsing his shot, over and over, before every swing.

Is this a low point? Woods can only hope so, but the rehearsals would indicate he has a lot of work and a long road ahead of him. But what Harrington said touches on a sad truth about a guy who dominated the sport unlike any other.

For so many years, Woods was associated with words like mystique, intimidation and ruthlessness. Now he evokes sympathy.

No player wants to see Woods like this, and the odds would be greater than 50-to-1 they'll ever get the old Woods back.

"I want to see him back on top of his game again," Pat Perez said. "He is golf. I don't care where he is. If he finishes last or first or whatever, he is the game of golf. And until he leaves, he will be that guy. Everybody is always going to question him and go after him. I don't want the Golf Channel, but I'm sure they have all the answers for him. I hope he turns it around."

Rory McIlroy got grief last year for saying that

Woods was on the back nine of his career. Now you might as well try to guess which hole he is on.

That's the mood on the PGA Tour. It's sad to watch.

The two nastiest words in golf are "choke" and "yips," and the latter is coming up quite frequently in any conversation about Woods. How else to explain a guy who hits one chip 3 feet and the next one 30 yards?

Justin Thomas, a 21-year-old rookie, grew up watching and idolizing Woods. Just like any other kid, he dreamed about winning a major, and it was usually going head-to-head with Woods on the back nine Sunday.

Thomas has played in three tournaments with Woods, and Woods has missed the cut in two of them. The other was at Torrey Pines, where Woods missed the 54-hole cut. When he shot his 82 last Friday, Thomas said it was "disheartening to see."

After the first round of the Phoenix Open, someone pointed out to Spieth that in the six times they had been paired together, Spieth already was 23 shots ahead. "I don't think I've caught him on a good day," he said politely.

These kids don't know the Tiger Woods that Perez and Harrington grew up with. They might never.

"They didn't have to compete against him week in and week out, when you knew you couldn't beat him," Perez said. "There was nothing you could do about it. But it's just ... it's just different now."

Along with the analysis — is it in his head or does he have the yips or is it both? — are the predictions.

The end of Tiger Woods.

To see how lost he looked in Phoenix, and realizing that he is 39 with five surgeries behind him, make clear that it will take an extraordinary effort for Woods to get back to the top of his game.

Then again, he was nothing short of extraordinary leading up to this point.

It's easy to forget he won five times and was PGA Tour player of the year just two years ago. That's what Thomas is banking on.

"It (stinks)," he said of how Woods is playing. "But he'll get it back. He wasn't the best player by coincidence."

SPORTS



Buzzy bodies

Hornets' tenacious defense helping team ride out injury woes » **Page 61**



Tiger Woods grimaces during the Phoenix Open last Friday in Scottsdale, Ariz. Woods posted an 82 — the worst score of his professional career — while missing the cut by 12 strokes, prompting some of the same golfers he once dominated to express sympathy for his current struggles.

RICK SCUTERI/AP

Subject of sympathy

Struggling Woods facing longest odds of storied career

By DOUG FERGUSON
The Associated Press

NO one can recall these kinds of odds for Tiger Woods at any tournament, certainly not one at Torrey Pines. He is listed at 50-to-1, which prompted a question that was even more shocking than the odds.

Was that to win? Or to make the

“Did you ever think you would hear a professional golfer genuinely and sincerely say, ‘I hope Tiger Woods plays better.’”

Padraig Harrington
Three-time major champion

cut?

Perhaps even more telling was an observation from Padraig Harrington.

“Did you ever think you would

hear a professional golfer genuinely and sincerely say, ‘I hope Tiger Woods plays better,’” Harrington said over the weekend.

No one ever imagined him

playing worse.

Woods didn't just miss the cut in the Phoenix Open last week. He missed it by 12 shots. More than posting an 82 — the highest score of his professional career — was how lost he looked, especially around the greens.

Yes, this was a really bad day at the office. But this was Tiger Woods, the guy with a short game that had no rival.

SEE WOODS ON PAGE 63

