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Volume 73, No. 188

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2015

平成27年4月8日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊(土日除く)
発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価 ¥50

50¢/Free to Deployed Areas

FBI: Doctor, shooter killed at Fort Bliss VA facility

BY RUSSELL CONTRERAS
AND SETH ROBBINS
The Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas — A doctor was fatally shot at a West Texas veterans' clinic in an attack that also left the suspected gunman dead, the FBI said Wednesday.

Special Agent Mike Martinez declined to identify the doctor or the gunman who died Tuesday afternoon at the El Paso Veterans Affairs Health Care System clinic at Fort Bliss.

The FBI was questioning hundreds of patients, staffers and others who might have witnessed the shooting. The agency is leading the investigation because the shooting occurred on federal property, Martinez said.

Investigators haven't said whether the gunman killed himself or was killed by someone else. They also have not indicated a motive for the shooting.

"We're trying to expeditiously get through those hundreds of witnesses to find out details about this incident," said Douglas Lindquist, FBI special agent in charge of the El Paso office.

Sutton Smith, a worker at the VA clinic, said Wednesday that a "code white" was issued over the intercom system indicating an active shooter and ordering people to seek shelter.

Smith said he hid with about a dozen people in a locked room with the lights off for some two hours. Apart from the initial alert and some communication among managers via cellphone, no official updates were provided during the lockdown, he said.

The El Paso clinic came under scrutiny last year after a federal audit showed it had some of the nation's longest wait times for veterans trying to see a doctor for the first time.

The VA said in a statement that it "is deeply saddened by the tragic situation that has occurred in El Paso, and we are actively working with our partners at Fort Bliss to investigate this matter."



Attack shocks France

- 12 dead in terrorist attack on Paris paper; gunmen escape
- Targeted publication has history of pushing boundaries

Page 11

Above: An injured person is evacuated outside the office of the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris on Wednesday. French President Francois Hollande called the shooting spree "a terrorist attack without a doubt."

TRIBALTY CAMUS/AP

QUOTE
OF THE DAY

"I will eat McNuggets. I will feed McNuggets to my children. I have no doubts."

— Takehiko Aoki, a senior executive with McDonald's Corp. in Japan, vouching for the safety of its food after the company apologized for foreign objects found in some of its servings

See story on Page 18

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3. El Paso VA shooting: 2 dead, including gunman, Fort Bliss official says
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COMING
SOON



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Best recent titles for kids

TODAY
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MILITARY

Kony lieutenant is in US custody

Rebel deputy turns himself in to troops

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

U.S. forces in Africa have taken custody of a man calling himself a top rebel commander in the notorious Lord's Resistance Army, a small but resilient group that has terrorized parts of central Africa for two decades.

U.S. officials on Tuesday said a man calling himself Dominic Ongwen — widely believed to be a top deputy to LRA leader Joseph Kony — turned himself in to U.S. troops stationed in the Central African Republic.

"Efforts to establish full and positive identification continue, so I don't have confirmation of that at this point," Jen Psaki, State Department spokeswoman, told reporters. "If the individual proves to be Ongwen, his defection would represent a historic blow to the LRA's command structure."

On Wednesday, Ugandan officials said a positive identification had been made.

"I can confirm that he is the one," Lt. Col. Paddy Ankunda, a spokesman for the Ugandan army, told The Associated Press. "We have duly identified him. There is no doubt about his identity."

In 2011, President Barack Obama ordered 100 U.S. special operations forces into central Africa to work alongside African Union troops who are leading the hunt for Kony and other LRA members. Much of the support has focused on intelligence, training and logistical support.

However, another key part of the effort also has centered on encouraging members of the rebel group to abandon Kony and turn them-



Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, talks to journalists in southern Sudan in 2006. The Obama administration said Tuesday that it has taken into custody a man claiming to be Dominic Ongwen, a top member of Kony's army.

selves over to international authorities. The U.S. military, along with nongovernmental groups such as Invisible Children, have engaged in various campaigns, including mass leaflet drops, to encourage defections in the LRA ranks.

In 2012 there were 33 defectors, many of whom cited the leaflets and loudspeaker messages as influencing their decision, U.S. Special Operations Command Africa officials said in early 2013.

U.S. Africa Command on Wednesday declined to comment on the latest developments.

At its peak, the LRA had about 2,000 fighters but is now believed to be a force of about 250, operating in remote parts of Central Afri-

can Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. The group, which is known to fill its ranks with abducted children to serve as slaves and soldiers, has been on the run in recent years.

Ongwen, according to various media reports, was abducted as a 10-year-old on his way to school in northern Uganda. He subsequently rose through the LRA ranks and is today wanted, along with Kony, by the International Criminal Court.

"It is clear that despite the regional challenge, the AU regional task force continues to make great strides toward ending the LRA threat," Psaki said.

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Carter nomination hearing is delayed

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate has decided to delay consideration of Ashton Carter as the new secretary of defense until next month.

The new chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, John McCain, R-Ariz., had said he hoped to hear and vote on the nomination as soon as possible this month. The hearing was pushed to February at the request of Carter, who is recovering from back surgery last month, according to a

Senate aide.

Carter is the former second-in-command at the Pentagon and the White House pick to replace Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, who announced his resignation in November and agreed to stay on until his successor is chosen. High-level administrative nominees including the defense secretary must be approved by the Senate before taking office.

A date for the hearing was not yet set but more details on scheduling were expected next week,

the aide said.

There is no indication so far that Carter will face opposition from the committee, which is now under Republican majority control in the new session of Congress.

McCain has called him a "highly competent, experienced, hard-working and committed public servant."

Carter worked under prior presidential administrations and was the deputy defense secretary from 2011 to 2013 and left the department after being passed over

for the top spot. Unlike the current defense secretary, he has no experience in Congress or the uniformed military.

Hagel is a former senator and Vietnam veteran who has been a loyal backer of the administration's military strategies. He decided to bow out under pressure from the Obama administration after the U.S. began its offensive against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in August.

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WAR ON TERRORISM



Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles sit on Forward Operating Base Tagab in Kapisa province, Afghanistan, in 2013.

US gives 250 MRAPs to Iraqi forces, Kurds

By JON HARPER
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government has donated 250 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles to Iraqi security forces to protect them from the Islamic State group, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad announced Tuesday.

During the 2003-11 Iraq War, insurgents used roadside and vehicle-borne bombs to inflict massive casualties on coalition troops. In response, the Pentagon built thousands of MRAPs to protect servicemembers from improvised explosive devices. The vehicles

are credited with saving American lives.

The Islamic State group has adopted similar IED tactics as Iraqi soldiers try to recapture territory taken by the militants last year. In a news release, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Stuart Jones described those weapons as “the number one threat” to the Iraqi security forces.

The delivery of the MRAPs was completed Sunday, according to the Pentagon. Of the 250 vehicles, 25 went to the Kurdish peshmerga and the rest were given to Iraqi security forces.

“These MRAP vehicles provide increased ballistic and counter mine protection for Iraqi security forces,” Jones

said. “These vehicles will save Iraqi lives and enable Iraqi security forces to win the fight” against the Islamic State.

The donated vehicles were sent from Kuwait, where they had been sitting since the U.S. pulled most of its remaining troops and equipment out of Iraq in 2011. The U.S. military has a large surplus of MRAPs, which the Pentagon has been giving away under the Excess Defense Articles program.

The U.S. government paid approximately \$500,000 per MRAP, according to a Pentagon spokesman.

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Civilian deaths from airstrikes investigated

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military is investigating credible reports of civilian casualties in the campaign against Islamic State militants, the Pentagon press secretary said Tuesday, a shift after months in which defense officials said they were aware of none.

Rear Adm. John Kirby disclosed the investigations Tuesday, telling reporters at the Pentagon that the U.S. Central Command is leading the review. Centcom officials said they have investigated the credibility of 18 separate allegations of coalition airstrikes resulting in civilian casualties between Aug. 8 and Dec. 30, and they determined 13 were not credible.

Five more remain under review, including two described as credible that began as “the direct result of our own internal review process,” Army Maj. Curtis Kellogg, a Centcom spokesman, said in a statement. The review of the other three allegations are still in initial phases, he added.

While the military had previously acknowledged reviewing reports of civilian casualties from airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, the elevation of two of those incidents — one in Iraq and one in Syria — into formal investigations had not previously been disclosed.

“The key to any allegation is whether sufficient verifiable information is available to make a determination,” Kellogg said. “A source is generally deemed to be credible if the source provides verifiable information, such as corroborating statements, photographs or documentation that can help us determine whether an allegation is founded.”

The U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group has carried out about 1,400 airstrikes since they began Aug. 8, including some in urban areas. The 18 reports of civilian casualties came from sources that include internal reviews, unit self-reporting, media reports, nongovernmental organizations and other U.S. government agencies such as the State Department, Kellogg said. Nine were reported in Syria, and nine were reported in Iraq, Kellogg said.

Army Lt. Gen. James Terry, the top commander of the task force overseeing operations in Iraq and Syria, told reporters Dec. 18 at the Pentagon that he was unaware of any civilian casualties.

Terry said then that the United States is able to carry out airstrikes without American troops on the ground because of coordination with the Iraqi military and U.S. surveillance capabilities.

In Iraq, the United States has relied on communication with Iraqi troops and U.S. troops directing coalition pilots from joint operations centers in Baghdad and the northern city of Irbil. Traditionally, joint teams with the controllers, who coordinate strikes, work alongside infantrymen and other combat troops on the ground to guide pilots’ bombs on target.

In Syria, the U.S. military has even less intelligence to work with, other than in the northern part of the country where it coordinates with Kurdish peshmerga militias that have defied and the town of Kobani and surrounding areas.

Inspectors confident chlorine gas used in Syrian villages

The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Chemical weapons investigators concluded “with a high degree of confidence” that chlorine gas was used as a weapon against three opposition-controlled villages in Syria last year, affecting between 350 and 500 people and killing 13, according to a report obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press.

The third report by a fact-finding mission from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons didn’t apportion blame but said 32 of the 37 people interviewed “saw or heard the sound of a helicopter over the village at the time of the attack with barrel bombs containing toxic chemicals.”

The investigators said 26 people heard the distinctive “whistling” sound of the falling barrel bombs containing toxic chemicals and 16 visited the impact sites and saw the bombs or their remnants. They said 29 people smelled “the distinctive odor of the gas cloud” released after the bombs hit the ground, mainly describing it “as intense, chlorine-like, similar to cleaning material used to clean toilets, but much stronger.”

The report includes a description of 142 videos and 189 pieces of material obtained by the investigators as well as photos of im-

port sites and the inner chlorine cylinder from a barrel bomb.

The mission was established by the OPCW on April 29 to establish the facts surrounding allegations of the use of chlorine “for hostile purposes” in Syria. Chlorine gas is readily available and is used in industries around the world, but can also be used as a weapon.

The U.N. Security Council has been intensely involved in the issue of alleged chemical weapons use in Syria. After an August 2013 sarin gas attack near Damascus in which the U.S. says more than 1,400 people were killed, the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution backed by the U.S. and Russia on Sept. 27, 2013, ordering Syria’s chemical weapons stockpile to be destroyed. U.N. investigators could not find enough evidence to assess blame for the sarin attack.

Syria’s declared chemical weapons stockpiles have since been destroyed under international supervision, but questions remain about whether it may still be hiding deadly chemical agents.

Chlorine gas is not listed as a chemical weapon. But eight council members, including the U.S., said in a Dec. 30 letter accompanying the OPCW report that the 2013 resolution also states any use of chem-

ical weapons threatens international peace and security and must be condemned.

The 15 council members discussed the fact-finding mission’s report behind closed doors Tuesday, and diplomats said the U.S. and other Western nations who signed the letter along with Jordan urged Security Council action in response to the findings. But Russia, Syria’s closest ally, insisted that the report on chlorine attacks was an issue for the OPCW, which polices the Chemical Weapons Convention, the diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity because consultations were private.

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faysal Mekdad told an OPCW meeting on Dec. 1 that his government has never used chemical weapons or chlorine gas during the country’s four-year civil war, which has claimed more than 200,000 lives and displaced one third of the country’s population. He said terrorist groups “have used chlorine gas in several of the regions of Syria and Iraq.”

But U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power tweeted that “only Syrian regime uses (helicopters).” She also tweeted that the Syrian “Regime must be shown it is not enough to destroy declared CW (chemical weapons); must stop dropping chemical-laden explosives on civilians.”

WAR/MILITARY

Poll: Majority in US back mission to train Afghans

By SCOTT CLEMENT
The Washington Post

After falling to record lows, support for the Afghanistan War has risen since 2013, according to a Washington Post-ABC News poll that also finds majority support for a plan to keep thousands of troops in the country in the coming year.

Overall, Americans remain downbeat over the war at the end of NATO's 13-year combat mission. A 56 percent majority says it has not been worth fighting, continuing a negative streak that dates to 2010 in Post-ABC polls. But 38 percent in the new survey say the war was worth the costs, up eight points from December 2013 and 10 points from a record low that July (28 percent).

The bounce-back in positive views is driven by a dramatic reversal of opinion among Republicans. Only 39 percent of Republicans said the war was worth fighting in late 2013, but 56 percent believe so today, marking an end to a massive downward slide

since 2009. In the early months of Barack Obama's presidency, as many as 77 percent of Republicans said the war was worth fighting.

Support for the war also increased among political independents in the past year, from 26 percent to 35 percent, though roughly 6 in 10 independents and Democrats alike continue to say the war was not worth it.

Despite the overall negative appraisal, more than half of Americans (54 percent) favor keeping U.S. troops in the country to help Afghan forces train and perform counterinsurgency roles. The residual force garners rare cross-partisan support, including at least half of Republicans (66 percent), Democrats (52 percent) and independents (51 percent).

At peak levels, in 2010 and 2011, the U.S. had 100,000 troops in Afghanistan. That number has fallen dramatically since then and will drop to 10,000 this year and half that by 2016. With the U.S.-led NATO combat mission officially over, about half of the

American troops remaining are expected to serve in a new NATO operation advising and training Afghan security forces and half will serve in a separate U.S.-only contingent focused on force protection, logistical support and counterterrorism.

Americans are split down the middle on the question of whether the Afghanistan War, launched in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, has made the U.S. more secure. Forty-eight percent say it has made the U.S. more secure while 47 percent say otherwise, marking a modest improvement from 2013, when 50 percent doubted the impact of the fight on U.S. security. Few see major benefits, however, with 19 percent saying the war has contributed "a great deal" to national security.

The Post-ABC poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 11-14 among a random national sample of 1,000 adults. The poll had a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points.

Children among 9 killed in Taliban-claimed attacks

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — At least nine people were killed across Afghanistan on Wednesday, including two children who were struck by a bomb blast while gathering firewood, officials said.

The fatal blast took place in the Zhari district of Kandahar province. A separate bomb blast in the Shahwali Kot district of Kandahar wounded another 10 children, leaving seven in critical condition, said Samim Khojalwaq, the spokesman for Kandahar's governor.

"Our children were there to collect wood to burn when they were hit by this bomb," said Bismillah Jan, the father of one of the wounded children. "The government should have cleared the area. It their duty to protect us."

Afghanistan is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, and children are often killed or wounded while playing, collecting firewood or tending animals.

In the eastern Nangarhar province bordering Pakistan, a bomb blast killed Judge Mohammad-ul Hassan and wounded two of his daughters in the provincial capital Jalalabad, police spokesman Hazrat Hussain Mashregiwal said. The judge served in neigh-

boring Laghman province.

In another attack, insurgents killed six people working on a road project, including the head of a construction company, in northern Baghlan province, police spokesman Jawed Basharat said, adding that the attack wounded another person and left two missing.

In the eastern Khost province, three suicide bombers attacked a police academy, with one blowing himself up in a car and the other two shot by police, the provincial governor's office said. It said three police officers were wounded.

The Taliban claimed the attacks in Nangarhar and Khost.

In the southern Helmand province, police spokesman Fareed Ahmad Obaid said a rocket fired by the Taliban killed three members of the same family — it man, woman and child — when it hit a house in the Nawzad district late Tuesday.

Two other children, members of the same family, were wounded, he said.

Taliban insurgents have stepped up attacks on Afghan soldiers and police in recent months. U.S. and NATO forces concluded their combat mission at the end of last year and Afghan troops took charge Jan. 1.

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THE NEW SANNO

MILITARY

Court-martial in slaying of AFN broadcaster to start

By MATT MILLHAM
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — An airman accused of killing a co-worker is to go on trial Monday, more than a year after he was found driving through Kaiserslautern with the dead man in the passenger seat of his car.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Sean M. Oliver faces several charges related to the 2013 death of Petty Officer 2nd Class Dmitry Chepusov, whose wife has admitted to having a relationship with the airman. Oliver, a broadcast technician, and Chepusov, a Navy broadcaster, worked for the American Forces Network at Ramstein Air Base in Germany.

The most serious charge against Oliver — premeditated murder — carries a sentence of up to life in prison without parole. Air Force officials earlier took the death penalty off the table.

The divorced father of three is also charged with making a false official statement, obstructing justice, obstructing proceedings and assaulting another person in an incident in the U.S. in early 2012.

German authorities held on to some key evidence in the case

for months after handing Oliver over to U.S. custody, arguing that they would not participate in what could have been a death penalty case. The Germans released the evidence, including portions of Chepusov's throat, after the Air Force moved it forward as a non-capital punishment case.

The Air Force has blocked off two weeks for the court-martial, but it could go longer because of the number of witnesses expected to testify, the Air Force judge in the case said at an October hearing. At that time, the judge ruled that incriminating statements Oliver made to investigators could be presented at trial.

Among those expected to take the stand against Oliver is Pvt. Cody Kramer, an AFN colleague, who was court-martialed last year and served time in prison after pleading guilty to lying to officials investigating Chepusov's slaying. Kramer was at the scene the night of the killing, and his plea agreement requires that he testify against Oliver.

In earlier hearings, witnesses testified that Kramer, Oliver and Chepusov had gone out drinking with two other AFN colleagues

— Staff Sgt. Thomas Skinkle and Staff Sgt. Shao-Ling Ping — the night Chepusov was killed. According to most accounts, all five ended up at Skinkle's apartment, where Oliver is alleged to have strangled Chepusov.

Oliver, who was pulled over by German police for driving erratically early Dec. 14, 2013, allegedly told police that he'd found Chepusov walking drunk around downtown Kaiserslautern with a towel and a bath mat just moments before the traffic stop. At the hearing in October, the Air Force's lead investigator on the case said he thought that version of events was implausible, based on blood and other evidence found at Skinkle's apartment.

At his own court-martial in October, Kramer testified that Oliver "committed the murder," and solicited Kramer's help in covering it up.

The aggravated assault charge against Oliver stems from a separate incident in early 2012 in which Oliver allegedly choked a man he found in bed with his then-wife.

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Congress again denies Va. SEALs performance center

By MIKE HIXENBAUGH
The Virginian-Pilot

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — For the second year in a row, Congress declined to pay for a couple of "Human Performance Centers" for Navy SEALs based in Hampton Roads.

The SEALs say they need the centers to stay healthy. The Pentagon says it needs them to protect its financial investment. Some lawmakers, apparently, are wondering why commandos can't just go to a gym like anyone else.

Which raises the question: What is a human performance center? Lt. Cmdr. Li Cohen, a spokeswoman for U.S. Special Forces Command, attempted to explain via email:

"Gyms are self-service, one-dimensional facilities staffed with enough people to maintain and manage the facility," Cohen wrote. "A Human Performance Center is equipped and staffed with specialists from different fields who take a holistic approach by combining physical and psychological performance with nutrition and rehabilitative conditioning to ensure special operators reach and maintain peak levels of physical and mental performance."

Last year, the service asked for about \$11 million to build a human performance center at

Dam Neck Annex, home to the Naval Special Warfare Development Group, better known as SEAL Team 6. This year, it asked for roughly the same amount to build a second center at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek, home to four other SEAL teams. Congress hasn't approved money for either project.

It seems there's been some confusion about the requests. The Internet buzzed last year after a national media outlet reported on the first denial, with some bloggers wondering what was wrong with the existing facilities.

Cohen explained the funding requests in business terms: The Pentagon spends roughly \$500,000 over five years to train one special operator. Then the servicemember is put through a wringer of constant combat deployments, which often leads to chronic physical and mental injuries.

A human performance center would protect that financial investment by connecting SEALs with specialists who can help "prevent injuries, increase the speed of recovery and ultimately extend the operational life of the force," Cohen wrote.

Operators at Little Creek and Dam Neck already receive that sort of care and training, but they have to shuttle among several facilities, Cohen wrote.

CELEBRATE THE WEEK WITH YOKOSUKA MWR



Officers' Club 243-5030

Adjusted Hours of Operation
From January 2 through April 30, the Deli, Kosano Dining Room and Warehouse Restaurant will be closed due to renovations. During this time, the Kurofune Lounge, Cash Cage and Slot Machine Room will be operating on adjusted hours: Kurofune Lounge - Sunday through Thursday from 1600 to 2300 and Saturday & Sunday from 1600 to 0100. Cash Cage & Slot Machine Room - Open daily from 1000 to 2300.

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Chef's Special Menu
Thursdays from 1700 to 2100
If food is an experience for you, try our Chef Special Recipe each week prepared by our very own Chef Aikawa and Chef Miura.

MLK Dinner
Sunday, January 18 from 1700 to 2000
Join us as we prepare and serve a special buffet dinner to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King. Reservations are requested.

Club Alliance 243-3000

Garlic Night
Saturday, January 10 from 1700 to 2045
This special menu features pizza, salads and entrees that pack a garlic punch.
Girls Night Out with Wine Tasting & Girly Games
Friday, January 23 from 1900 to 2200 in 3rd Floor Ballroom
Get your tickets early! Ladies only and all welcome. Tickets available on-site at the Cash Cage on the 2nd floor.
Super Bowl Texas Hold'em Tournament
Saturday, January 31 at 1900 in 3rd Floor Sports Bar
\$500 Guaranteed jackpot in NEX gift card. Complimentary Happy Hour, buffet and cash bar. 15 players minimum. \$50 buy in or extra chips are allowed for the first 30 minutes only; \$25 for \$2500 in chips. House rules in place.
January Pizza of the Month: Creamy Crab & Shrimp
This pizza is made with a creamy crab sauce and topped with shrimp and our house blend of Mozzarella and

Provolone cheeses. Watch it bubble while it cooks in front of you in our brick oven. Small \$5.95 | Medium \$10.95 | Large \$16.95

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Daily in January
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Complimentary Milk for Kids
Sunday, January 11
In celebration of National Milk Day, kids 11 years and younger will receive a complimentary glass of milk with a brunch or dinner order. Milk-themed coloring pages will be available to stress the importance of milk and dairy in their diet.
"I Have a Dream" Brunch
Sunday, January 18
In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Club T will offer some of the American icon's southern favorites! Our menu will consist of country fried chicken, baked sweet potato fries, seasoned squash, collard greens, biscuits and gravy, and much more! \$13.95 for adults, \$5.95 for kids age 11 years and younger.

MILITARY



ERIC S. GARST/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

The guided-missile frigate USS Kauffman travels the Hudson River during the Fleet Week 2011 parade of ships. When the Kauffman returns to its homeport after its latest deployment, it will be the last frigate to be decommissioned.

Kauffman is final frigate to deploy

The Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. — The USS Kauffman is about to become the last of its breed.

When the ship leaves Naval Station Norfolk on Thursday for a six-month deployment to the waters off Central America, it will mark the final deployment of a Navy frigate. The Kauffman will be part of a multinational, counterterrorism operation known as Operation Martillo.

When the warship returns, it will be the last frigate in the Navy's inventory to be decommissioned later this fall. The Navy built 51 of the ships, with the first going into service in 1977. Several

frigates — vessels smaller than a destroyer, used chiefly for escort duty — were recently decommissioned and designated for sale to foreign militaries.

"A lot of sailors have served on this platform, so it's very humbling to be the last sitting CO of the last frigate that's going to be in commission," said Cmdr. Michael Concannon, the Kauffman's commanding officer. "The crew's very proud."

The Oliver Hazard Perry-class of frigates were designed during the Cold War to protect ships at sea and conduct anti-submarine warfare. Over time, their mission evolved to include mine warfare, counterpiracy and counternar-

cotics operations.

Naval Surface Atlantic said it has five East Coast-based frigates awaiting decommissioning ceremonies, which begin this month. Figures were not immediately available Tuesday for West Coast-based frigates.

The Navy plans to use littoral combat ships, joint high-speed vessels and afloat forward staging bases to replace some of the frigate's capabilities. Littoral combat ships are designed to travel in the shallow, littoral area close to shore.

The Navy is also designing a new small surface combatant ship after problems arose with the littoral combat ship.

Bike gang members speed onto Japan base

By MATTHEW M. BURKE AND CHIYOMI SUMIDA

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Two members of a local Okinawan motorcycle gang were taken into custody early Monday morning after illegally entering and hiding out on Camp Kinser, Japanese police officials said.

The two teenage males were trying to evade police after driving without a license plate on Highway 58 in Urasoe when they sped past a guard at Kinser's Gate 4 about 2:15 a.m., according to Okinawa prefectural police in

Urasoe City, where Camp Kinser is located. The pair dropped their motorcycle just inside the gate and fled on foot.

Security officials gave chase immediately. However, the men separated, making capture more difficult, police said. The two were taken into military police custody nearly two hours later then handed over to local authorities.

Police declined to release the names of the 18-year-old motorcycle operator and his 17-year-old passenger because they are juveniles. In Japan, all teenagers are considered juveniles.

Marine officials do not consider the incident a major breach of security, saying the pair were apprehended close to the gate.

Marine officials said that no escalation-of-force measures were required.

Packs of teenagers on loud, souped-up motorcycles and mopeds are a common sight on Okinawan streets, especially at night when they cruise the main roads. Besides minor incidents, the teenagers do not generally pose a threat.

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Ex-naval officer pleads guilty in bribery scheme

By ERIC SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A former Yokosuka naval officer pleaded guilty to bribery charges in San Diego federal court Tuesday, making him the fifth person to cut a deal in a wide-ranging scheme that prosecutors allege traded luxury travel, cash and prostitutes for confidential information.

Cmdr. Jose Luis Sanchez, 42, confirmed the accuracy of a 24-page plea agreement Tuesday that detailed his dealings with a Singapore-based military contractor that provided services to ships in ports, according to The Associated Press.

Sanchez served as the executive officer for Fleet Logistics Center Yokosuka until April 2013. He accepted more than \$100,000, along with travel expenses and services from prostitutes, in exchange for providing internal Navy information to contractor Glenn Defense Marine Asia, according to the federal court complaint.

Robert Hui, an assistant U.S. attorney, told reporters that Sanchez admitted to taking the bribes for more than four years, according to the AP.

U.S. Magistrate Judge David Bartick agreed to let Sanchez remove a GPS monitor while free on bond and allowed him to back the bond with assets held by his mother and sister instead of his own property, according to the AP.

Sanchez began sending classified ship schedules to GDMA in 2009 to Leonard Glenn Francis, known alternately as "Fat Leonard" and the "Lion King" in email traffic between the two, according to court documents.

Francis, a Malaysian national who was arrested in 2013, has pleaded not guilty to bribery and conspiracy charges.

Sanchez was working as director of operations at Navy Fleet Logistics Center Singapore when he first began accepting bribes from GDMA, according to court documents.

GDMA and Navy officials con-

spired to steer 7th Fleet ships to ports where GDMA could overcharge the Navy for refueling, water, electricity and other pier-side services. Department of Justice officials estimate the scheme cost the Navy more than \$20 million.

Sanchez also sent messages in 2009 alerting Francis to Navy concerns that GDMA overcharged an aircraft carrier for a visit to Port Klang, Malaysia.

The concerns apparently had no effect. In 2011, Naval Supply Systems Command awarded GDMA three regional contracts to support ships throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The Southeast Asia contract alone was valued at \$25 million annually, with an option to extend for four years.

Sanchez joins Petty Officer 1st Class Dan Layug and former Naval Criminal Investigative Service agent John Bertrاند Bellevue II as Navy officials who have pleaded guilty as part of the case.

Edmond A. Aruffo, who retired in 2007 as a lieutenant commander and went to work for GDMA, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to defraud the U.S. government in July. Francis' cousin, Alex Wisidagama, has also pleaded guilty.

Cmdr. Michael Vannak Khem Misievich, a captain-seelye, who commanded the USS Mustin and later served as deputy operations officer aboard the USS Blue Ridge, was the first Navy officer arrested for his alleged role in the bribery ring. He has pleaded not guilty.

Vice Adm. Ted Branch, Rear Adm. Bruce Loyless and former US Bonhomme Richard commander Capt. Daniel Dusek have all been under investigation in relation to the scandal but not charged, Navy officials have stated.

Branch, the Navy's director of intelligence, has not been able to view classified material since November 2013.

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MILITARY

Veterans suicide prevention bill to get second chance

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A bill to overhaul veteran suicide prevention programs is getting another chance in Congress after being scuttled last month by a retiring Senate budget hawk.

The Clay Hunt SAV Act, named after a Marine veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder who committed suicide, was reintroduced Wednesday by a group of House lawmakers and was expected to be filed in the Senate soon.

It calls for a one-stop website with suicide prevention resources for veterans, more Department of Veterans Affairs psychiatrists and an independent review of current department programs to determine which are effective.

Veterans groups have lauded the bill, and Hunt's parents repeatedly lobbied for it in Capitol Hill. The VA struggles with veterans suicides, estimated at 22 per day.

The House unanimously passed the bill last year and the Senate was poised to do the same, but in the final hours of the 2014 session Tom Coburn, a GOP senator from Oklahoma, blocked a vote, saying the VA could improve services without a new law and budget cuts were needed to pay the \$22 million price tag.

"Solutions to this horrific problem will only come from comprehensive, new ideas that improve the accessibility and effectiveness of mental health care available to our veterans," Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., said in a statement released Wednesday.

Miller, who chairs the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said it includes "crucial independent, third-party oversight" and requires greater VA accountability for its suicide prevention programs.

Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., and Rep. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., also co-sponsored the bill.

"We must take action and I continue to believe that this bipartisan bill is a step in the right direction," Walz said in a news release. "We can and must work urgently to send this bill to the president's desk without delay."

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., will

also re-introduce the legislation in the Senate, according to an aide. He filed the bill last year and had 21 co-sponsors.

Another of the bill's allies in the upper chamber of Congress, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., this week was publicly supporting another attempt to pass the bill.

Blumenthal, who is now the ranking member on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, went head-to-head with Coburn last month, urging the Republican to release his hold on the legislation and allow a Senate vote, though the pressure ultimately failed. Coburn was known for his harsh criticisms of government spending and his annual publication the Wastebook, which listed what he considered the most egregious cases.

Coburn argued that a massive overhaul of the VA passed last summer already pumped billions of dollars into fixing its programs and said that Congress should spend this year pressing the department for results on suicide prevention.

"Don't pass another bill; hold the VA accountable," he said in a Dec. 15 floor speech.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, a veterans' service group, has vigorously supported the Clay Hunt bill and says it agrees the VA oversight is needed but that it must be coupled with specific changes to the suicide prevention programs.

For example, the bill creates new incentives for hiring more psychiatrists and would force the VA to address a critical lack of staff, according to the group.

But it is unlikely the bill will need to survive the same staunch opposition or criticism in the Senate, said Alex Nicholson, the IAVA legislative director.

Coburn was virtually the sole opponent and nearly all other Senators from the prior session appeared on board. The group is still feeling out some freshmen lawmakers.

"We expect the House to move a lot quicker and most likely the Senate will take up the House-passed version on the floor in February," Nicholson said.

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Aviation brigade ready to take on new mission

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. — Joint Base Lewis-McChord's combat aviation brigade is about to turn its attention to the imposing peaks of Afghanistan to the "vastness of the Pacific."

Its helicopter battalions held a ceremony Tuesday marking the official close of an eight-month mission in Afghanistan that ended in early December.

The event signaled that its

1,700 soldiers are home from war and ready to train for new assignments.

They have a busy year ahead, their commander said, as they prepare for the addition of an Apache helicopter unit and a squadron of assignments that should have them flying over the Pacific Ocean for the first time.

"No slacking off, no resting on our laurels. We have to be trustworthy in everything we do," Col. Paul Mele told his troops.

From The Associated Press



Scott Losey, former Calhoun County Veterans Affairs director, resigned after evidence surfaced that he demanded money and favors of veterans in exchange for helping them with their benefits. WOODYTV.Com

Mich. VA official quits over demands for cash from vets

Stars and Stripes

A county Veterans Affairs director in Michigan resigned after emails were published in which he is shown to be demanding payment or other favors of veterans he had been helping with their health benefits.

In emails obtained by media outlets, former Calhoun County Veterans Affairs Office Director Scott Losey asked for "a few dead presidents," "Christmas presents" and other gifts from those seeking the department's help.

In one of the emails, dated Oct. 20, 2011, Losey wrote about the hard work he'd done at his own home for one veteran.

"We will discuss a gentleman's agreement to compensate for my personal time," Losey wrote. "I have worked cases for veterans who reside outside Calhoun County over the past couple of years with the same kind of agreement. I will not gouge you like your Social Security lawyer. Perhaps 7 to 10 percent is typically the agreement. I have had veterans screw me over big time as well. Does this sound cool?"

"Also, where is my Christmas present," Losey wrote in all capital letters in one email in December 2009. "Just so you know, my wife and I like to go out every once in a while for dinner."

Losey also said in one of the emails to a veteran that "a few pain meds from your stash will suffice for now," and in another that "I suppose now is as good as any to request one month truck payment as a confidential gentleman's agreement for a job well done."

Losey, director of the office for 15 years with an annual salary of \$64,351, resigned after a veteran's widow claimed he had shaken her down for \$200 for the work he'd done on her husband's claim.

Calhoun County Administrator Kelli Scott told local outlet 24 Hour News 8 the case has been

turned over to the federal government for investigation. A county attorney, Richard Lindsey, said the county has also opened up an investigation.

"The emails that you got copies of were disappointing, to say the least," Scott said. "Accepting gifts on behalf of service performed in his official duty as a county employee absolutely would not be

acceptable."

The emails were sent out as requested by December.

"When the decision comes back as a winner and you receive that big fat retroactive check," he wrote in an email dated May 22, 2014, "I need an \$1,600 to repair my transmission and YOU are going to help me out. DEAL?"

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NATION

House sets stage for Social Security fight

By **STEPHEN OHLEMACHER**
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Buried in new rules that will govern the House for the next two years is a provision that could force an explosive battle over Social Security's finances on the eve of the 2016 presidential election.

Social Security's disability program has been swamped by aging baby boomers, and unless Congress acts, the trust fund that supports it is projected to run dry in late 2016. At that point, the program will collect only enough payroll taxes to pay 81 percent of benefits, according to the trustees who oversee Social Security.

To shore up the disability program, Congress could redirect

payroll taxes from Social Security to fund a larger retirement fund — as it has done in the past. However, the House adopted a rule Tuesday blocking such a move, unless it is part of a larger plan to improve Social Security's finances, by either cutting benefits or raising taxes.

Long the third rail of American politics, tinkering with Social Security has never been easy. Throw in election-year politics and finding votes in Congress to cut benefits or raise taxes could be especially difficult.

But if Congress doesn't act, benefits for 11 million disabled workers, spouses and children would be automatically cut by 19 percent. The average monthly payment for a disabled worker is \$1,146, or a

little less than \$14,000 a year.

Rep. Tom Reed, R-N.Y., said he sponsored the provision in an effort to force Congress to find a long-term solution to the disability program's financial problems.

"By putting this rule into effect, we are sending a clear indication that we're not just going to allow the raid of retirement Social Security to be used to bail out the disability trust fund," Reed said. "We need real reform. This makes that real reform that much more likely."

Advocates for older Americans are warning that the rule could be used to help push through benefit cuts, especially since House Republicans have opposed raising taxes.

"It is difficult to believe that

there is any purpose to this unprecedented change to House rules other than to cut benefits for Americans who have worked hard all their lives, and rely on Social Security, and put into Social Security benefits, including disability, in order to survive," said Max Richtman, president of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

David Certner, of AARP, said it would be a mistake to eliminate the option of redirecting money from the retirement fund, which Congress has done in the past.

"Otherwise, we could be facing a deadline, and certainly over the last couple of years we've seen Congress seemingly unable to pass bills, even with deadlines in front of them," Certner said.

Tuesday started off as a day of pomp and ceremony on Capitol Hill, the first day of a new Congress. Republicans assumed control of the Senate for the first time in eight years, making Sen. Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky, the majority leader.

Republican John Boehner, of Ohio, was re-elected speaker of the House. Relatives filled the public galleries and small children dotted the House chamber as their parents were sworn in as members of the 114th Congress.

The partisan rancor that has dogged Congress for years returned when the House debated its new rules. The 36-page set of rules passed by a vote of 234-172, with all Democrats opposed and almost every Republican in favor.

Obama will seek to sustain momentum

By **JULIE PACE**
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama's approval rating is creeping upward. The U.S. economy is growing. A flurry of aggressive executive actions on domestic and foreign policy have energized the West Wing.

Obama's challenge now is to figure out how to prevent this burst of momentum from being more than just a blip on the radar of his presidency's final years.

To the White House, the immediate answer lies outside of Washington. On Wednesday, Obama started three days of travel to Michigan, Arizona and Tennessee to preview manufacturing, housing and education proposals that will be part of his Jan. 20 State of the Union address.

Not on Obama's schedule during his first work week of the new year: a meeting with the leaders of the Republican-led Congress, which officially began Tuesday. That won't happen until early next week.

"I'm confident there are going to be areas where we disagree and there will be some pitched battles," Obama said of the new Republican leadership, but he said he was hopeful for a "productive 2015."

The contours of the first fight were set within hours of the new Congress being gavelled into session. Republicans moved forward with plans to advance legislation approving the Keystone XL oil pipeline — and the White House vowed to veto the measure.

Shea Mitchell McConnell, the Kentucky lawmaker who will now serve as Senate majority leader, suggested the veto threat showed the president hadn't learned the lessons of Democrats' drubbing in the midterm elections.

"But we can't afford to give up on him because he's going to be there until January 2017," McConnell told *The Associated Press*

in an interview.

The Republican priority list for 2015 also includes making changes to Obama's signature health care law, seeking to block his executive actions on immigration and rolling back environmental regulations favored by the White House.

Escaping Washington has long been the Obama White House's go-to strategy for generating momentum during tough stretches of his presidency. White House aides say one of the president's biggest frustrations last year was his inability to travel around the country in support of Democratic candidates, given his party's wariness of his deepening unpopularity.

In something of a surprise shift, the president heads out on this week's fly-around with his approval rating showing some signs of strengthening. After dropping to 40 percent in the Gallup daily tracking poll around Election Day, the latest survey shows 46 percent of Americans approve of the president's job performance. The percentage of people who disapprove of the president has also fallen below 50 percent.

The slightly improving environment for the president comes amid a surge in economic growth that's been fueled by hiring gains, cheaper gas prices and rising consumer confidence.

The president's team also attributes some of his improved standing to his willingness to wield his executive powers. He angered many Republicans by unveiling plans to allow more than 4 million people living in the U.S. illegally to stay in the country. That action was followed by a surprise decision to normalize diplomatic relations with Cuba.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said that while the president wasn't completely turning his back on the new Congress, he would continue to seek out areas to act on his own.



STEVE HELBER/AP

Former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell hugs his daughters Cailin Young, left, and Jeanine McDonnell Zubovsky, right, outside federal court in Richmond, Va., on Tuesday after he was sentenced to two years in prison in his corruption case.

Former Va. governor gets 2 years in jail

The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell asked a judge for mercy for his wife, as well as himself, before being sentenced to two years in prison for public corruption.

Tuesday's sentence was much lighter than what prosecutors wanted and likely foreshadows similar treatment for Maureen McDonnell when she is sentenced next month for her role in the bribery scandal, legal experts say.

"Her circumstances will be considered individually and I would expect her sentence to be somewhat lower than the ex-governor since she did not breach the public's trust to the degree that her husband did," said Jeff Bellin, a professor at the College of William and Mary Law School and a former federal prosecutor.

Another good sign for Maureen

McDonnell was that U.S. District Judge James Spencer tossed out one of her convictions last year, leaving only eight — three less than her husband.

"This all adds up to what's likely to be a fairly minimal sentence for her," said Scott Fredericksen, another former federal prosecutor and now a defense attorney.

A jury in September convicted the McDonnells of corruption for taking more than \$165,000 in gifts and loans from wealthy vitamin entrepreneur Jonnie Williams in exchange for promoting his products.

Prosecutors originally sought a sentence of more than 10 years for Bob McDonnell, whose lawyers recommended three years of community service.

Family members and friends who packed the courtroom wept softly as the former governor, once on the short list for Mitt Romney's

running mate, told Spencer in a strong but somber voice that he couldn't "fathom any deeper humiliation" than standing before him convicted of felonies.

The judge noted the outpouring of support McDonnell received from more than 400 people who wrote letters pleading for leniency. He said McDonnell "is a good and decent man who has done a lot of good in the public arena" but that his crimes warranted prison time.

"It breaks my heart, but I have a duty I can't avoid," the judge said.

McDonnell, who held his head in his hands and sobbed when he was convicted four months ago, was stoic as Spencer handed down the sentence. Some of the supporters' tears quickly turned to smiles.

"We certainly came in thinking we could be facing a whole lot worse," the former governor's sister, also named Maureen McDonnell, later told reporters.

NATION



PHOTOS BY STEVEN SEME/AP

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston head of objects conservation Pam Hatchfield removes a metal lid from a time capsule at the museum Tuesday. The original capsule was believed to have been embedded when construction on the Massachusetts Capitol began in 1795.

Coin from 1652 among items found in Boston Capitol's time capsule

By STEVE LEBLANC
The Associated Press



The oldest coin in the box was this 1652 "Pine Tree Schilling."

BOSTON — Boston residents in the newly formed United States valued a robust press as much as their history and currency if the contents of a time capsule dating back to a decade after the Revolutionary War are any guide.

When conservators at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston gingerly removed items from the box Tuesday, they found five tightly folded newspapers, a medal depicting George Washington, a silver plaque, two dozen coins, including one dating to 1652, and the seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

While some of the coins appeared corroded, other items were in good condition and fingerprints could be seen on the silver plaque.

The capsule was embedded in a cornerstone of the Massachusetts Statehouse when construction began in 1795. It was placed there by Revolutionary era luminaries including Paul Revere and Samuel Adams, governor of Massachusetts at the time.

The contents were shifted to what was believed to be a copper box in 1855 and placed back into the foundation of the Statehouse. The box remained there until it was rediscovered last year during an ongoing water filtration project at the building. The box was actually brass, according to conservators.

The oldest coin in the box was a 1652 "Pine Tree Schilling," made at a time when the colony didn't have royal authority to create its own currency. Pine trees were a valuable commodity at the time. The trees were used as ship

masts. Michael Comeau, executive director of the Massachusetts Archives and Commonwealth Museum, said he has seen the coins offered for as much as \$75,000, although given the context of this particular coin and the association with Paul Revere and Samuel Adams, the value would likely be much higher.

The newspapers were folded in such a way that the names of the publications weren't always visible, but one might have been a copy of the Boston Evening Traveller — a newspaper operation that was eventually absorbed into the current Boston Herald. A portion of one of the papers that was visible showed a listing of the arrivals of whaling ships from various ports to Boston. Conservators didn't try to unfold the papers.

Pam Hatchfield, the head of objects conservation for the museum, removed each item using a slew of tools including her grandfather's dental tool. Hatchfield said the paper in the box was in "amazingly good condition."

Massachusetts state Secretary William Galvin said he expects the items will be on display at the museum for a period of time, but that eventually they will again be returned to the foundation to be discovered by a future generation of Bay State residents.

Bitterly cold air stretches from Dakotas to Alabama

The Associated Press

Frigid air is blowing across the United States, dropping temperatures in many areas into the single digits and leading weather monitors to issue wind chill advisories and politicians to plead with residents to check on their neighbors.

A National Weather Service wind chill advisory for much of the Northeast for Wednesday into Thursday warns of "dangerously cold air" with strong winds that could result in frostbite if people don't put on their scarves, hats and gloves.

Here's a look at how the winter weather plaguing almost two-thirds of the country is playing out and what's to come.

Openings and closings: A stretch of the Thruway in western New York reopened after being shut down in both directions for more than three hours Tuesday night into Wednesday morning because of severe lake-effect storms near Lake Erie.

A 40-mile section of Interstate 90's eastbound lanes closed shortly before midnight Tuesday. A 50-mile stretch of the highway's westbound lanes closed around the same time. The Thruway reopened in both directions around 3:15 a.m. Wednesday.

Tuesday's lake-effect storms along the eastern shore of Lake Ontario dumped about a foot of snow on areas south of Buffalo.

The blast of arctic air that's blanketing most of the country prompted schools to close or delay openings from Alabama to the Dakotas.

Wind chill advisories and warnings for North Dakota and South Dakota, with the combination of arctic air and wind pushing wind chills into the minus 20s and 30s led to dozens of schools either closing or delaying their opening. The weather service has posted blizzard watches for southeastern South Dakota and northeastern North Dakota on Thursday.

Schools pushed back their starting times across Central and north Alabama because of the bitterly cold weather. In Tennessee, some schools that closed Wednesday planned to remain shut down on Thursday.

Dozens of school districts in Illinois, including Chicago Public Schools, canceled Wednesday classes due to subzero temperatures.

Northeast, bundle up! Residents across the Northeast have been warned: It's brutally cold and getting colder.

The National Weather Service said already cold temperatures in the region dropped to the mid-teens early Wednesday and were expected to fall to the single digits before the morning commute. It said an arctic front moving in from the north and west had a chance of producing wind gusts up to 40 mph by afternoon.

Nighttime? Even colder, with wind chills of about 15 degrees below zero in the New York metro area and 20 below farther north.

In Connecticut, a cold-weather protocol activated by Gov. Dannel Malloy directs state agencies to coordinate with the 211 hotline and the network of shelters to make sure the state's most vulnerable residents are protected from the cold.

Move over, snow; welcome, cold: Ohio residents who sighed with relief as snowfall that caused hazardous road conditions moved out of the state were warned to prepare for single-digit tempera-

tures and wind chills below zero. Early snowfall Tuesday led to slow morning commutes and numerous traffic accidents across the state. A Highway Patrol trooper was among four people injured when a woman lost control of her car on a slick highway in Clermont County and struck a police cruiser.

... and in California: A Central and Southern California winter heat wave has set records with highs topping 80 degrees.

Santa Barbara's airport hit 82 degrees, well above the 78 recorded in 1964.

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NATION



T.J. FULLER/AP

A cat named Maxie plays "Game for Cats" on an iPad in Valencia, Calif. T.J. Fuller's and Nate Murray's company, Hiccup, created "Game for Cats," "Paint for Cats" and "Catzilla."

Apps let cats catch critters in cyberspace

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — When Laura Fritz's felines play with her iPad, her fat cat loses the urge to eat, her scaredy-cat loses his fear and her youngest just loses interest.

If you've had enough time to play with the tablet you got for the holidays, try turning the device over to your tech-savvy cat. Every cat app, no matter the maker, has something for felines to electronically track, stalk or hunt, such as mice, bugs or laser dots.

"Cats are attracted to things that move, and that is the 'magic' for most of the apps," said Dr. Bonnie Beaver, a professor at Texas A&M University's College of Veterinary Medicine and executive director of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists.

"The motion in most apps is jerky and quick, much like an insect," she said, adding that any sound component would quickly be eclipsed by the draw of movement.

Every cat is different, but if they are like two of Fritz's, they will love pawing the screen to catch critters, which breaks anxious Maxie out of his shell and gives hefty Mr. Brutus a way to exercise, said Fritz, of Waltham, Mass. But they may be like her youngest, Pansy

Maxie is scared of everything that moves. But when he's painting, he becomes a different cat.

Laura Fritz cat owner

Rose, who couldn't care less.

Maxie and Brutus work together on the app "Paint for Cats," chasing a mouse and leaving a trail of splattered paint where they have pawed, rubbed, jumped or made other marks with their movements. Many cat owners see the results as art worthy of sharing on social media, so the app allows people to email the creations.

It is among three popular apps created by T.J. Fuller and Nate Murray's Los Angeles company Hiccup. The company also features a mouse chasing game called "Game for Cats" and a monster-crushing game dubbed "Catzilla."

There are several cat apps on the market. "Pocket Pond" for Android tablets allows cats to follow fish or dragonflies with their paws. Friskies' "Cat Fishing" also taps into the fish theme for Android and Apple devices.

Some people worry about damage to the devices, but claws won't hurt the screen, said Fuller, who

ran many tests. But nobody has tested for teeth, and Karen Ritmuller, of Salem, Mass., found a problem with a bite.

Even cats at shelters are joining the tech trend.

When the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles received a couple of used tablets two years ago, the shelter decided to see if any of their homeless cats were hiding inner artists.

Two of them, dubbed Pablo Picasso and Frida Catlo, created abstract art that looked like fuzzy circles, and the organization turned it into sellable notecards.

Back at the Fritz house, the cats work out their problems with the tablet. The 21-pound Brutus is motivated only by food and refuses to exercise, so "Paint for Cats" gets him to move, Fritz said.

"Maxie is scared of everything that moves. But when he's painting, he becomes a different cat ... and really gets into it," she said.

Work begins on Calif. bullet train

The Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. — California broke ground Tuesday on its \$68 billion high-speed rail system, promising to combat global warming while whisking travelers between Los Angeles and San Francisco in less than three hours.

The bullet train project, the first in the U.S. to get underway, faces challenges from Republican cost-cutters in Congress and Central Valley farmers suing to keep the rails off their fields. Others doubt the state can deliver the sleek system as designed, and worry it will become an expensive failure.

But Gov. Jerry Brown said high-speed rail is essential to meeting his goal of encouraging the most populous U.S. state to get half its power from renewable energy by 2030.

"It's not that expensive," Brown said before signing a symbolic section of rail. "We can afford it. In fact, we cannot not afford it. All these projects are a little touch and go. You'll have these critics say 'why spend all this money?'"

"On the other hand I like trains; I like clean air," Brown said. "And I like to enjoy the comfort of trains. I like to get up and walk around and shake hands. You can't do that in your little car as you look in your rearview mirror."

One of the biggest public works endeavors in the country, California's high-speed rail is a signature project for Brown's political lega-

cy, and supporters say it promises to boost the state's economy with thousands of jobs, including many in the Central Valley, which has been hard-hit by recession and drought.

Zooming through the Central Valley at 200 mph, the trains could unite northern and southern California like never before. The high-speed train tickets will be similar to the cost of air travel, promoters say, and deliver people to downtown stations, saving more time and money. Riding Amtrak from San Francisco Bay to Los Angeles now takes 11 to 19 hours.

By car, the journey takes at least 6½ hours in the best traffic.

Gina McCarthy, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said the all-electric trains, running on renewable energy, will take cars off highways and provide an effective alternative to flying on jet fuel, which pumps far more greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.

The system will initially share existing rails with freight trains but eventually will travel at higher speeds on dedicated rails, California High-Speed Rail Authority chairman Dan Richard said.

Californians approved a nearly \$10 billion bond for the train in 2008, and in 2012 the Obama administration dedicated \$3.3 billion in stimulus funds. Part of the greenhouse gas fees to be collected under the state's cap-and-trade program also will go to the train.

Police: Sisters involved in brother's death

The Associated Press

WHITE SPRINGS, Fla. — With help from her younger sister, a 15-year-old girl fatally shot her older brother, authorities in Florida said Wednesday.

Law enforcement officials said they discovered the body of the 16-year-old brother late Monday night at the family's single-story home in rural White Springs in north Florida.

The 15-year-old's sister, age 11, assisted in the shooting, sheriff's spokesman Murray Smith said. The older girl got the gun from a room that her parents had locked, he said.

A motive for the shooting, in a town of fewer than 800 people, remained unclear Tuesday.

"There's no real rhyme or reason to it," Smith told The Gainesville Sun.

White Springs police said they began looking for the girls late Monday night after a tip from the mother of a friend of the younger sister. The friend had received a "weird phone call" from the girl, saying she had run away and needed someone to pick her up from a Dollar General store, according to a police report. When the woman arrived, she found the older sister there, too.

The older girl remarked that something might have been wrong with another sibling at home, police noted in their report. The teen told officers that her parents weren't expected home until 5 a.m. Tuesday.

As she spoke, she applied makeup and "would not maintain eye contact and appeared emotionless," the officers wrote. But she soon started crying and told the officers that her brother had beaten her, thrown her into her bedroom, and locked the door. She told officers that when he went to sleep, her younger sister unlocked the door. The teen said she then shot her brother.

A younger sibling, age 3, also was in the home at the time and was in state custody Wednesday.

The parents were charged with child neglect, Smith said.

Because of the suspects' ages, The Associated Press is not naming them or their family members.



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WORLD

Attack targets satirical newspaper

BY JAMEY KEATEN
AND LORI HINNANT
The Associated Press

PARIS — Masked gunmen stormed the Paris offices of a weekly newspaper that caricatured the Prophet Muhammad, methodically killing 12 people Wednesday, including the editor, before escaping in a car. It was France's deadliest terrorist attack since World War II.

Shouting "Allahu akbar!" as they fired, the men also spoke flawless, unaccented French in the military-style noon-time attack on Charlie Hebdo, near Paris' Bastille monument. The publication's depictions of Islam have drawn condemnation and threats before — it was firebombed in 2011 — although it also satirized other religions and political figures.

President Francois Hollande called the slayings "a terrorist attack without a doubt," and said several other attacks have been thwarted in France in recent weeks. Fears have been running high in France and elsewhere in Europe that jihadis returning from conflicts in Syria and Iraq will stage attacks at home.

France raised its security alert to the highest level and reinforced protective measures at houses of worship, stores, media offices and transportation. Schools closed across Paris, although thousands of people jammed Republique Square near the site of the shooting to honor the victims, holding up pens and papers reading "Je suis Charlie" — "I am Charlie."

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which also left at least four people critically wounded, and was condemned by world leaders as an attack on freedom of expression, but praised by supporters of the militant Islamic State group.

Clad all in black with hoods and carrying machine guns, the attackers forced one of the cartoonists arriving at the office building with her young daughter to open the door with a security code.

The staff was in an editorial meeting and the gunmen headed straight for the paper's editor, Stephane Charbonnier — widely known by his pen name Charb — killing him and his police bodyguard first, said Christophe Crepin, a police union spokesman. Minutes later, a man stroved out to a black car waiting below, calmly firing on a police officer, with one gunman shooting him in the head as he writhed on the ground, according to video and a man who watched in fear from his home across the street.

Two witnesses, who refused to allow his name to be used because he feared for his safety, said the attackers were so methodical the first mistook them for France's elite anti-terrorism forces. Then they fired on the officer.

"They knew exactly what they had to do and exactly where to shoot. While one kept watch and checked that the traffic was good

for them, the other one delivered the final coup de grace," he said. "They ran back to the car. The moment they got in, the car drove off almost casually."

The witness added: "I think they were extremely well-trained, and they knew exactly down to the centimeter and even to the second what they had to do."

Eight journalists, a guest and two police officers were killed, said Paris prosecutor Francois Molins.

Among the dead were Bernard Maris, an economist who contributed to the newspaper and was heard regularly on French radio, and cartoonists Georges Wolinski and Berhard Verliac, better known as Tignous.

"Hey! We avenged the Prophet Muhammad! We killed Charlie Hebdo," one of the men shouted in French, according to a video shot from a nearby building and broadcast on French TV. Other video showed two gunmen in black at a crossroads who appeared to fire down one of the streets. A cry of "Allahu akbar!" — Arabic for "God is great" — could be heard among the gunshots.

The video showed the killers moving deliberately and calmly. One even bent over to toss a fallen shoe back into the small black car before it sped off. The car was later found abandoned in northern Paris, the prosecutor said, and they hijacked a Renault Clio. There were conflicting accounts of whether the manhunt was for two or three attackers.

Corinne Rey, the cartoonist who said she was forced to let the gunmen in, said the men spoke fluent French and claimed to be from al-Qaida. In an interview with the newspaper l'Humanite, she said the entire shooting lasted perhaps five minutes, and she hid under a desk.

The security analyst group Stratfor said the gunmen appeared to be well-trained, "from the way they handled their weapons, moved and shot. These attackers conducted a successful attack, using what they knew."

Both al-Qaida and the Islamic State group have repeatedly threatened to attack France. Just minutes before the attack, Charlie Hebdo had tweeted a satirical cartoon of the Islamic State's leader giving New Year's wishes.

Charlie Hebdo has been repeatedly threatened for its caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad and other sketches. Its offices were firebombed in 2011 after an issue featured a caricature of the prophet on its cover. Nearly a year later, the publication again published Muhammad caricatures, drawing denunciations from the Muslim world because Islam prohibits the publication of drawings of its founder.

Another cartoon, released in this week's issue and entitled "Still No Attacks in France," had a caricature of a jihadi fighter saying "Just wait — we have until the end of January to present our New Year's wishes." Charb was the artist.

In the winter 2014 edition of the



CHRISTOPHE ENA/AP

French riot police patrol at the Eiffel Tower after a shooting Wednesday at a satirical newspaper in Paris. France reinforced security after masked gunmen stormed the offices of French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, killing at least 12 people before escaping, police and a witness said.

Publication has poked fun at all major religions

From wire reports

PARIS — Charlie Hebdo, the satirical magazine where shootings Wednesday left at least 12 people dead, has a long history of pushing the limits of expression — and sometimes good taste.

In 2011 Charlie Hebdo published a special edition called "Charia Hebdo" featuring Muhammad as a "guest editor." The cover depicted the prophet threatening readers with "100 lashes if you don't die of laughter." Shortly thereafter, Charlie

Hebdo's Paris offices were firebombed in an overnight attack.

Just before Wednesday's attack the magazine's official Twitter and Facebook accounts published a cartoon of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi offering wishes of good health for the New Year. The current cover is on "Submission," a book released Wednesday about a future in which an Islamic France is led by a Muslim president who bans women from the workplace.

Founded in its current incarnation in 1992, the magazine has

skewered politicians, pop stars, and religious fundamentalists of all stripes in its weekly installments of caricatures, interviews, and opinionated essays.

Before Christmas last year, the cover depicted Charlie's take on a traditional nativity scene — a spread-eagled Mary giving birth to baby Jesus. That image currently decorates the magazine's official Twitter profile.

In 2006, it printed cartoons of Muhammad originally published by a Danish newspaper, which had prompted sometimes-violent protests.

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WORLD

Divers find tail of wrecked jet

By AHMAD IBRAHIM
The Associated Press

PANGKALAN BUN, Indonesia — Divers and an unmanned underwater vehicle on Wednesday spotted the tail of the AirAsia plane that crashed into the Java Sea with 162 people on board, an important finding because the jet's all-important black boxes are located in that part of the aircraft.

Powerful currents and murky water continue to hinder the operation, but searchers managed to get a photograph of the debris — nearly 6 miles from where Flight 8501 last contact Dec. 28 — after it was detected by an Indonesian survey ship. National Search and Rescue chief Henry Bambang Soelistyo told reporters.

One released image appeared to show an upside down "A" painted on a piece of metal, while another grainy shot depicted some mechanical parts.

"Today we successfully discovered the part of the plane that

became the main aim since yesterday," Soelistyo said. "I can ensure that this is part of the tail with the AirAsia mark on it."

Tony Fernandes, AirAsia's chief executive officer, welcomed the news. If it is the right part of the tail section, he tweeted, then the cockpit voice and flight data recorders, or black boxes, "should be there." He said the airline's priority still is to recover all the bodies "to ease the pain of our families."

The carrier, meanwhile, said families of those killed would be compensated in accordance with Indonesian laws. Each will receive \$100,000, Sunu Widyatmoko, president of AirAsia Indonesia, told reporters in Surabaya.

So far, 40 corpses have been found, including an additional one announced Wednesday, but time is running out.

At two weeks, most corpses will sink, said Anton Castilani, head of Indonesia's disaster identification victim unit, and there are already signs of serious decomposition.

Officials hope many of the more than 122 bodies still unaccounted for will be found inside the fuselage, which is believed to be lying near the tail.

The Airbus A320 went down halfway through a two-hour flight between Indonesia's second-largest city of Surabaya and Singapore, killing everyone on board. It is not clear what caused the crash, but bad weather is believed to be a contributing factor.

The search area for bodies and debris was expanded this week to allow for the strong currents that have been pushing debris around, said Indonesian search-and-rescue operation coordinator Tatang Zaitudin.

The water in the Java Sea is relatively shallow at about 100 feet deep, but this is the worst time of year for a recovery operation because of monsoon rains and wind.

But in some ways, it is easier to find a missing plane compared with the extreme depths of the Indian Ocean, where searchers con-



BASARNAS/AP photo

Wreckage that Indonesia's National Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS) identified as part of AirAsia Flight 8501 is seen in the waters of the Java Sea, Indonesia.

tinue to hunt for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which disappeared last March with 239 people aboard.

The area was land mass during the last Ice Age just 20,000 years ago, said Erik van Sebille, an oceanographer at the Univer-

sity of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, meaning the ocean floor is likely to be relatively flat and still covered by a lot of organic material. "This was just forest," he said. "Monkeys used to walk around here."

Bombing in Yemen kills at least 50

By Los Angeles Times

SANA, Yemen — An explosives-laden vehicle driven by a suicide bomber blew up Wednesday at the gates of a police academy in the capital, killing more than 50 people, injuring dozens of others and leaving a trail of mangled bodies and twisted wreckage, medical officials and witnesses said.

The thunderous explosion in the heart of Sana, which echoed across the city and sent a plume of dark smoke skyward, came as large groups of cadets and would-be recruits from across the country were clustered outside the gates of the academy, which was in the midst of a recruitment drive.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the attack bore hallmarks of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, which is consistently one of the most dangerous offshoots of the terror network.

Last month, American commandos made a failed attempt to rescue an American journalist, Luke Somers, who militants were holding captive in a remote part of the country. Somers was killed by his captors as the special operations forces closed in.

The latest blast came in a well-fortified part of the capital, close to sensitive installations including the Central Bank, the defense ministry and the Saudi embassy. The attacker struck as students — bundled up against the bitter winter cold — waited just before 7 a.m. for the academy to open. The powerful explosion blew out windows in shops and nearby homes, wrecking cars parked nearby.



HUSSEIN MALLA/AP

Syrians throw snow at each other Wednesday at a refugee camp in Deir Zannoun village in the Bekaa valley, east Lebanon. The storm dumped rain and hail on Lebanon's coast and heavy snow in the mountains and central Bekaa Valley.

Winter storm dumps snow across Mideast

The Associated Press

ANJAR, Lebanon — Snow fell in the Middle East on Wednesday as a powerful winter storm swept through the region, killing two Syrian refugees in Lebanon and forcing thousands of others who have fled their country's civil war to huddle for warmth in refugee camps.

In Syria, the guns fell silent as snow fell in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo and government warplanes remained on the ground because of bad visibility.

The storm dumped rain and hail on Lebanon's coast and heavy snows in the mountains and central Bekaa Valley, where gas stations, banks, schools and most shops closed.

While the storm disrupted life for everyone, it proved particularly trying for the hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees who live

in tents and makeshift shelters in the Bekaa.

In eastern Lebanon, security officials said a Syrian shepherd, Ammar Kameil, 30, and a 7-year-old boy, Majed Badawi, died in the storm Wednesday as they made the dangerous trek in rugged mountains covered with snow from Syria to the Lebanese border town of Chebaa.

Near the town of Anjar, men used brooms and sticks to try to clear the heavy snow from the tops of refugee tents, fearing the weight might cause the shelters to collapse. Inside the tents, adults could be seen huddling around wood-burning stoves to try to keep warm.

Elsewhere, Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip declared a state of emergency over the storm. An 8-month-old Palestinian infant in the Tulkarim refugee camp died in a fire

caused by a heating stove, said Palestinian Civil Defense Ministry spokesman Loae Bani Odeh.

Snow also accumulated in the Golan Heights and northern Israel. Schools across Jerusalem closed ahead of a forecast warning of 10 inches of snowfall.

In Egypt, a sandstorm engulfed the capital, Cairo, for a second day, and in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria, gusty winds toppled a minaret. The state MENA news agency reported no casualties.

In Syria, snow blanketed Qassios Mountain, which overlooks Damascus. The snowfall also brought traffic to a near-standstill in the city and prompted the Education Ministry to shutter schools and universities for two days.

Heavy fog also blanketed parts of Pakistan on Wednesday morning.

Former exec faces charges for 'nut rage'

The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korean prosecutors on Wednesday charged the former Korean Air Lines executive who achieved worldwide notoriety by kicking a crew member off a flight with violating the aviation security law and hindering a government investigation.

Cho Hyun-ah, who is the daughter of the airline's chairman, ordered a senior crew member off a Dec. 5 flight after being offered macadamia nuts in a bag instead of on a dish. The plane returned to the gate at John F. Kennedy airport to disembark the flight attendant.

Cho's actions amounted to "threatening the safety of the flight and causing confusion in law and order," prosecutor Kim Chang-hee said during a briefing that was broadcast live by local television networks.

She could face up to 15 years in prison if found guilty of all four charges she faces, according to attorney Park Jin Nyoung, spokesman for the Korean Bar Association. Prosecutors accused her of forcing a flight to change its normal route, which Park said was the most serious charge, with a maximum prison sentence of 10 years. The three other charges she faces are the use of violence against flight crew, hindering a government probe and forcing the flight's pursuer off the plane.

Separately, prosecutors have widened their investigation into the incident to examine the ties between the airline and the transport ministry after it was criticized for going too easy on the airline.

NATION



San Diego Gas & Electric unmanned aircraft operator Teena Deering prepares a drone for takeoff near Boulevard, Calif.

GREGORY BULL/AP

The revolution approaches

As commercial drone use draws near, big obstacles remain

By SCOTT MAYEROWITZ
The Associated Press

BOULEVARD, Calif. — The drones are coming.

Not as flying deliverymen that bring diapers, books or soup cans to your home, a vision put forth by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos to much fanfare a little more than a year ago.

Instead, drones will help spray crops, inspect high-voltage power lines and hover over movie sets to provide directors with new vantage points. They will also work for insurance companies, real estate agencies, ski resorts and dozens of other businesses.

Eventually, for now, this all remains theoretical. Except for a few locations, U.S. airspace is closed to commercial drones. Regulators say the danger is too great, and they want to go slow easing unmanned aircraft into the already crowded skies.

Advocates of the young drone industry complain that the long wait is keeping them grounded. Big-money investors are generally staying away, waiting for clear government guidelines. And the blanket flight prohibition has prevented companies from experimenting and advancing the technology. That includes developing sophisticated collision-avoidance systems or finding ways for the aircraft to navigate without human help.

“Most of these drones have very limited safety features,” said Maryanna Saenko, an analyst with science and technology consultancy Lux Research. If one crashes, “it’s a four- or five-pound brick coming out of the sky.”

If safety and regulatory obstacles can be overcome, within the next three years drones and the companies that support them could generate \$13.7 billion worth of economic activity in the U.S. and create 70,000 new jobs, according to the industry’s trade group, the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International.

The Federal Aviation Administration plans to release guidelines soon about who can fly drones weighing less than 55 pounds and under what conditions. They might include the extremely stringent — and costly — requirement that operators have a pilot’s license.

The first adopters

To see the potential of drones, go to a plateau in the Southern California desert covered with cacti and brush. There, Teena Deering, a former Navy helicopter pilot who later taught drone warfare, is testing the idea of using unmanned aircraft to inspect power lines.

A generation ago, military pilots would retire and fly for airlines. Today, they are working on drones.

“It’s just the way of the future,” Deering said.

Normally, the remote lines are inspected by helicopter, a difficult job that costs \$1,200 an hour. But San Diego Gas and Electric thinks that drones might be a cheaper, faster way.

Farmer drone

Perhaps the biggest industry ripe for drone use is farming. With the help of GPS mapping, drones can survey an entire farm, find bugs or soil that is too dry or too low in nutrients and then send the exact coordinates back to a tractor that will apply pesticide, water or fertilizer only to areas in need.

Taking it a step further, there are 2,500 unmanned miniature helicopters currently used by farmers in Japan to spray pesticides in hilly areas where tractors might roll over. Similar drones are operating in South Korea and Australia. In the U.S., the \$150,000 helicopters are being considered for the steep slopes of California vineyards.



RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP

The Yamaha RMax unmanned helicopter sprays water over grapevines at the University of California, Davis’ Oakville Station test vineyard.

Industry vs. regulators

The FAA estimates that 7,500 drones will be flying in the U.S. within five years. The industry puts the number in the hundreds of thousands. Compare that with the four largest U.S. airlines, with their combined fleet of 4,728 planes.

FAA Administrator Michael Huerta says drone technology is promising but needs to be phased in responsibly.

“We have a duty to protect people in the air and on the ground,” Huerta said.

Some of the greatest danger is close to airports, where hundreds of airline passengers could be at risk from errant drones. The FAA has reports of nearly 200 cases in the past 10 months where drones got too close for comfort to manned airplanes.

Hobbyists

While companies wait, more and more hobbyists are putting drones in the skies. Many can be operated with an iPhone or Android smartphone. Some cost just \$300. French company Parrot has sold 670,000 drones worldwide in just the past four years.

The problem is that today’s aircraft lack brains. They must either be controlled remotely by a pilot or fly a predetermined route from one coordinate to another.

Technology that senses obstacles and avoids them isn’t proven. Battery life is limited. And questions remain about hackers or terrorists intercepting and controlling drones.

Delivery by drone

Amazon says its drone delivery service could someday get packages to customers in 30 minutes or less.

Through its Prime Air service, Amazon aims to have drones flying 50 mph and capable of carrying up to 5 pounds.

“They will become as normal as seeing delivery trucks driving down the street,” said Paul Misner, Amazon’s global vice president of public policy.

20 uses for drones

NEW YORK — Most people think of drones as instruments of warfare, but as the Federal Aviation Administration slowly opens U.S. airspace to commercial use of unmanned aircraft, they are going to become more commonplace.

The first uses are likely to be in remote, sparsely populated areas. Some of the proposed commercial applications for drones include:

TACKLING DANGEROUS JOBS

- Searching places that aren’t safe for humans, such as instruments of warfare, but as the Federal Aviation Administration slowly opens U.S. airspace to commercial use of unmanned aircraft, they are going to become more commonplace.

- Helping firefighters battling forest blazes by watching where flames are popping up without risking lives. Helicopters often can’t be used because their powerful rotors threaten to spread the fire.

- Helping scientists conduct research inside volcanic ash clouds, hurricanes, tornados or other spots that are not safe for humans.

- Inspecting icy, wind-swept chalet towers at ski resorts, reducing employee risk and worker-compensation insurance costs.

- Assessing damage for insurance companies after natural disasters, letting them process claims faster. It often takes days until people are allowed into a disaster zone.

- Visually inspecting oil refinery flare stacks, tall towers used to burn off gas when pressure builds too much. The flames give off so much heat that people often can’t stand on the ground below, let alone climb the tower unless there is a lengthy and costly production shut down.

SURVEYING LARGE INDUSTRY

- Inspecting miles of remote power lines quickly and at less cost.

- Surveying farmers’ land, finding bugs or soil that is too dry or lacking nutrients, and then sending the exact GPS coordinates back to a tractor which will apply pesticide, water or fertilizer only to areas in need. Drones could also be used to treat hilly farms or vineyards where tractors often roll over.

- Performing safety checks of remote railroad bridges.

- Inspecting highway overpasses without shutting down lanes of traffic.

BETTER VANTAGE POINTS

- Creating that perfect shot for movie directors.

- Letting media find new ways to cover news and sports. Drones provide aerial surveillance of an airboard and ski jump competitors at the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics.

- Showing off homes and the surrounding neighborhoods for real estate agents looking to set their listings apart.

- Providing football teams with unique video angles of their practices to see what is and isn’t working.
- Mapping coastal erosion, forest land, archaeological sites or to conduct geological surveys.

SOLVING UNIQUE CHALLENGES

- Protecting endangered animals by sending real-time video and thermal images of animals and poachers to wildlife rangers.

- Temporarily expanding cellphone reception at special events like the Super Bowl.

- Searching dense forests or remote mountains for missing hikers.

- Delivering packages might be years away but German delivery company Deutsche Post DHL is testing limited, urgent deliveries of medicine on a remote island in the North Sea.

SOURCE: The Associated Press

WIRED WORLD

Privacy must be priority for industry, FTC says

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — While gadget companies are celebrating a coming bonanza of health trackers, connected cars and “smart” home appliances, the head of the Federal Trade Commission is pressing the tech industry to protect consumer privacy.

Powerful networks of data sensors and connected devices, dubbed the “Internet of Things,” will collect a vast trove of user information that represents “a deeply personal and startlingly complete picture of each of us” — including our finances, health and even religious leanings, Edith Ramirez, the chairwoman of the Federal Trade Commission, said in prepared remarks

Tuesday for the big consumer electronics trade show known as International CES.

Connected consumer devices represent a growing market worth billions of dollars. A host of “smart” TVs, health monitors and other gadgets are on display during the weeklong show in Las Vegas.

Ramirez urged the global electronics companies, Internet giants and tech startups at CES to make data security a priority as they launch new products. She also called on companies to give consumers more control over how their data is used, and to collect only the data that’s necessary for a product to perform its function.

“The boom in connected devices has the potential to improve health and provide other benefits, Ramirez said. But it also allows companies “to digitally monitor our otherwise private activities,” and the “sheer volume of granular data” will allow them to compile more detailed profiles of consumers.

“Your smart TV and tablet may track whether you watch the History Channel or reality television,” she said, “but will your TV-viewing habits be shared with prospective employers or universities? And your credit information be used to paint a picture of you that you won’t see but that others will — people who might make decisions about whether you are shown ads for organic food or junk food, where your call to customer service is routed, and what offers, coupons and other products you receive?”



The ATIV One 7 Curved computer is displayed at the Samsung booth during the International CES trade show in Las Vegas on Tuesday.

JOHN LOCHER/AP

‘Will this information be used to paint a picture of you that you won’t see but that others will?’

Edith Ramirez
Federal Trade Commission
chairwoman

Manufacturers: The PC is not dead

Companies roll out new features to compete with mobile devices

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A year ago, pundits were declaring the personal computer dead. Smartphones and tablets were cannibalizing sales, and the once-revolutionary PC seemed unnecessary — and boring.

Sure, a smartphone is great for checking emails, snapping photos and playing games. Tablets are perfect for watching videos and shopping online. But don’t count the PC out just yet. Manufacturers are crafting high-resolution, curved screens for desktops and other new features you can’t get in a handheld device, while trying new laptop designs that mimic the tablet’s appeal.

“For the last couple of years, mobile devices have been the hot commodity,” said Dell executive Neil Hand. “But we’re seeing a re-emergence of innovation in the PC space.”

For years, PC innovation consisted mostly of putting faster processors or a bigger hard drive inside the same basic box. That didn’t really matter when the personal computer was a mostly unchallenged commodity. Global PC shipments peaked at more than 365 million units in 2011.

Sales fell off dramatically as tablets stole hearts and wallets. PC sales plunged 10 percent in 2013, according to research firm Gartner Inc., marking the worst annual decline in the industry’s history. They slipped a little further last year, to about 314 million units. PC makers say they understand the need to evolve, and at the annual gadget show International CES in Las Vegas this week they are showing off many new features aimed at wooing back consumers.

Depth-sensing cameras, for example, are popping up in high-end desktops and laptops. Intel vice president Navin Shenoy said his company’s “RealSense” camera can recognize its owner’s face and unlock a PC without requiring a typed password. Intel is also

promoting software that uses the camera in games that respond to a player’s head or hand movements.

PC makers are borrowing ideas from tablets, with laptops that are increasingly thin and lightweight, with longer battery life. Dell’s new XPS 13 notebook has a screen that extends nearly to the edge of the frame, like the screen on many tablets. By eliminating wider borders, Dell says it can fit a larger screen into a smaller frame.

Several companies have hybrid or convertible devices that resemble a tablet with a physical keyboard attached. Lenovo, the Chinese company that has become the world’s biggest seller of PCs, is rolling out several new models of its Yoga hybrid, first introduced last year, with a keyboard that fully folds back so you can hold the display like a tablet.

Lenovo CEO Yang Yuanqing told The Associated Press in an interview that the new “convertible” hybrids will eventually replace the laptop computer for most people, because they are lighter and have longer battery life.

“Now it’s only a cost issue,” he said. Many of the new hybrids are priced well above \$500, while cheaper laptops are available. “We definitely should bring the cost down,” he added.

ASUS on Monday announced a new series called the Transformer Book Chi, with lightweight keyboards that can detach completely by unsnapping a magnetic hinge. “Our Chi is thinner than Air,” quipped ASUS CEO Jonney Shih, boasting that at 1.65 centimeters, the Chi T300 is slimmer than a MacBook Air laptop. The Transformer uses efficient new Intel processors that don’t require a cooling fan, which allows for a skinnier profile.

Manufacturers are experimenting with new shapes. Samsung is showing off a new all-in-one model, the ATIV One 7, with a slightly concaved, 27-inch screen that’s designed to



Sam Burd, vice president of Dell’s PC product group, announces the new XPS 13 laptop computer during a news conference at the International CES show on Tuesday.

ISAAC BREKKE/AP

provide a more immersive experience for watching videos or playing games. Dell and HP are introducing new curved display monitors for desktops, too.

Of course, fancy features don’t come cheap. Apple’s new iMac, unveiled last fall, comes with a huge, ultra-high resolution, 27-inch Retina screen and equally big \$2,500 price tag, for example. For about \$1,900, you can control Hewlett-Packard’s specialized machine Sprout with a touch-sensitive mat instead of a keyboard and use its sophisticated camera to scan physical objects and project the resulting image back onto the mat to incorporate into 3-D printing designs.

“We don’t think of it as a desktop. We think of it as a purely new category,” said HP executive Ron Coughlin.

Analysts say both the new iMac and the Sprout are probably best suited for artists and designers, but some high-end features could find their way into mass-market PCs eventually.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Judge approves casino sale for \$95.4M

PA PHILADELPHIA — A bankruptcy judge in Camden, N.J., on Monday said she will approve the sale of Revel AC Inc., the operator of the Revel hotel and casino in Atlantic City, for \$95.4 million to Florida investor Glenn Straub, rejecting Straub's effort to pay only \$87 million.

The next step is a sale order, which must be signed by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Gloria M. Burns, but negotiations over the terms of that order — particularly how concerns of tenants and others will be handled — bogged down during a break.

Burns asked attorneys for Revel, Straub and other parties to work on a sales order to be filed this week in time to be considered at a Revel hearing scheduled for Thursday.

Once a sale order is signed, the sale of the property built at a cost of \$2.4 billion is expected to close within 30 days, according to the asset purchase agreement.

Doe attacks man after being shot with arrow

WI FOND DU LAC — Authorities said a deer wounded by an arrow in eastern Wisconsin turned on the bow hunter in an attack that sent the 72-year-old man to a hospital.

Fond du Lac County sheriff's officer Jeff Bonack said the hunter was tracking the wounded doe through thick brush in Taycheedah when she leaped out and struck him in the leg with her head Friday evening.

Taycheedah is 70 miles northwest of Milwaukee.

Bonack told Action Reporter Media the man was taken to a hospital with unknown injuries.

He said the deer apparently got away.

Woman sues over her likeness on flask

NM SANTA FE — A New Mexico woman is suing a novelty products maker over a flask that includes her likeness and the phrase, "I'm going to be the most popular girl in rehab."

The Santa Fe New Mexican reported Veronica Vigil's lawsuit in federal court said Anne Taintor Inc. obtained and used her high school graduation picture from 1970 without her permission. The lawsuit says the Brooklyn, N.Y.-based company then defamed her by linking her image to a product that makes light of substance abuse.

Court documents say the Chiriquito, N.M., resident is an active church member and does not consume alcohol or drugs.

Sheriff's department to sell Tommy gun

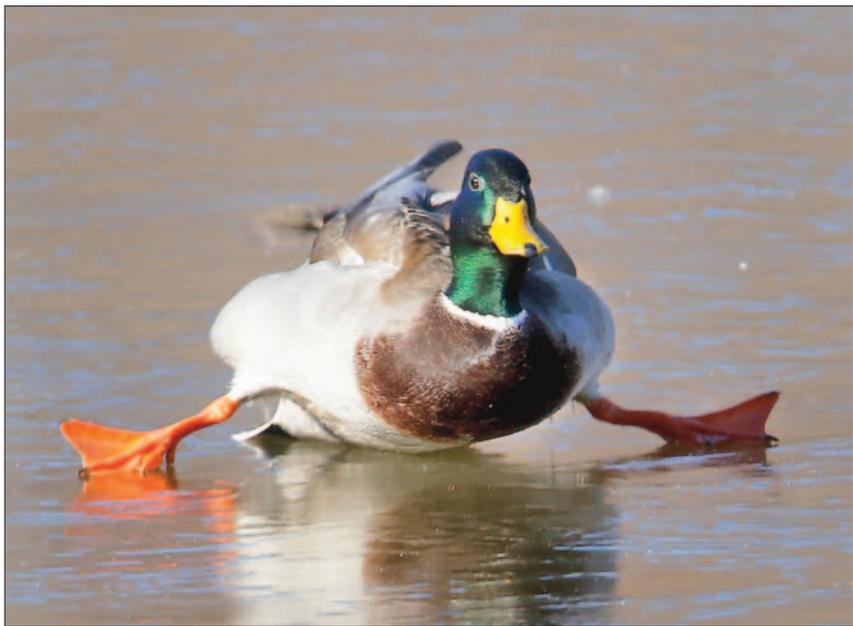
MS WEST POINT — A 45-caliber Thompson submachine gun donated to the Clay County Sheriff's Department in 1945 is up for sale.

Sheriff Eddie Scott said that

THE CENSUS

690

The number of used cars estimated to have been sold with adjusted odometers by siblings Chaim and Schmuel Gali. They face federal conspiracy charges in Philadelphia and Brooklyn, N.Y., for allegedly running an odometer tampering scheme from 2006 to 2011. Indictments said the men sold cars, some with 100,000 miles kicked off the odometer, at auctions in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.



STEVE GOOCH, THE OKLAHOMAN/AP

On frozen pond

A mallard duck attempts to walk on a frozen pond in Yukon, Okla., on Monday

while it still works, it isn't feasible to keep the machine gun.

This Thompson machine gun was manufactured in 1936.

The machine gun itself dates to the Prohibition era. The "Tommy Gun" became infamous from its use by both law enforcement officers and criminals such as Al Capone. It's now popular among gun collectors.

The machine gun saw extensive use during World War II.

Return of soldiers' remains is sought

TN NASHVILLE — A team of historians and scientists from Middle Tennessee is trying to bring the remains of Mexican-American War soldiers back from Mexico.

WPLN-FM reported the remains of more than a dozen men were discovered several years ago by construction workers in Monterey, Mexico.

Historian Tim Johnson believes the soldiers likely were volunteers for the midstate. That's because they were found at a spot where the 1st Tennessee Regi-

ment fought and later set up camp in the 1846 Battle of Monterey.

Johnson teaches at Lipscomb University. He has been working with a group from Middle Tennessee State University to cut through the red tape and return the bones to Tennessee.

The MTSU Forensics Institute hopes to examine the skeletons and possibly even use DNA to identify individuals.

School sends food where it's needed

TN KINGSPORT — When Jackson Elementary School instructional aide Angie Hyché saw all the food that was wasted every school day in the Kingsport public school's cafeteria, she did more than just fret.

She helped find a solution with help from the Rock and Wrap It Up! anti-poverty think tank.

With help and support from local officials, the Jackson cafeteria in September began collecting unopened food for reuse from the grades K-5 school.

In just two months, more than 1,000 pounds of food once des-

tined for the trash at Jackson instead has been measured and sent to area children, a program Hyché hopes to see replicated throughout the region.

Food goes to local kids. Each Monday, Wednesday and Friday the food goes to Girls Inc., and each Tuesday and Thursday it goes to the Boys and Girls Club. In addition, it is sometimes used in the YMCA after-school programs at the school if the two other groups can't use it, and students in the cafeteria when the food is collected may request it too.

51 years after wreck, car part found in arm

MO CREVE COEUR — Fifty-one years ago, Arthur Lampitt, of Granite City, Ill., smashed his 1963 Thunderbird into a truck. Recently, during surgery in suburban St. Louis, a 7-inch turn signal lever from that T-Bird was removed from his left arm.

Dr. Timothy Lang removed the lever during a 45-minute operation. Lampitt, now 75, is recovering at home.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that the accident broke Lampitt's hip, drawing attention away from the arm, which healed.

A decade or so ago, his arm set off a metal detector at a courthouse. An X-ray showed a slender object the length of a pencil, but since it caused no pain or hardship, Lampitt was told to let it be.

He was moving concrete blocks a few weeks ago when the arm began to hurt for the first time.

"Everything was fine until it started to get bigger," Lampitt's wife, Betty, said. "The arm started bulging."



Arthur Lampitt holds the 1963 Thunderbird turn signal that was embedded in his arm for 51 years.

From wire reports

FACES

“American Idol” judges, clockwise from left, Jennifer Lopez, Keith Urban and Harry Connick Jr., right, take a selfie with host Ryan Seacrest. The show starts Jan. 8 on AFN-Family.

Fox



Slimmed-down show returns

By LYNN ELBER/The Associated Press

“American Idol” is practicing addition and subtraction in its 14th season.

Longtime judge, short-time mentor Randy Jackson is gone. Music executive Scott Borchetta, whose impressive credentials include acting as mentor to Taylor Swift, will play that role for contestants and the winner will be signed to Borchetta's Big Machine Records.

There's another shake up ahead for the series, which returns with an hour-long episode Jan. 8 and a two-hour episode the following night on AFN-Family: Starting with the live shows in mid-March, “American Idol” will cut back to a two-hour show once a week.

It's a logical move given the aging show's ratings decline in an increasingly

competitive entertainment landscape, said analyst Brad Adgate of Horizon Media. “American Idol” dipped last season to an all-time low weekly average of 10.2 million viewers, according to Nielsen company figures.

That's about a third of the 30.2 million the singing contest hit at its peak in 2006, when Taylor Hicks claimed the title over runner-up Katharine McPhee. But “Idol” remains a relatively strong performer for Fox, one the network seeks to protect, Adgate said.

“Whatever audience erosion will happen this year will be mitigated by limiting the show to one night,” he said.

It's only fair to viewers to reduce the demand on their time, said executive producer Trish Kinane, given that the once-unique “American Idol” is now part of a flood of talent shows, including NBC's popular “The Voice.”

“To commit to three hours a week for our or any other of the shows is too much, even if you adore these (talent) shows,” she said.

The compressed schedule will allow for a better program, one that combines performances with the results of viewer voting for the previous week's competition, Kinane said.

All the contestants will be on hand for the live episodes, “dressed, ready and with their songs rehearsed,” only to find out who is being eliminated, according to Kinane. The results won't be announced at the beginning of the show, but in a “more dramatic way,” she said, holding details back for now.

The show will retain a familiar look. Ryan Seacrest, the sole original cast member, is returning as host, and Harry Connick Jr., Jennifer Lopez and Keith Urban will be back for their second year together as judges.

All that's needed now is the kind of compelling contestants and future stars that “American Idol” has discovered in the past, including Kelly Clarkson, Carrie Underwood and Jennifer Hudson.

“If I have a criticism of the show for us last year, it is that we haven't found, in the last two years, a group of kids who have captured the imagination of the public,” Peter Rice, chairman and CEO of Fox Networks Group, told a news conference after the 2014 season's conclusion.

That bar will be met, Kinane said, with outstanding performers discovered in auditions held in Nashville, New Orleans; San Francisco; and elsewhere.

‘Interview’ earns \$31 million from VOD, \$5 million at box office

From wire services

Sony Pictures' “The Interview,” the movie at the center of the crippling cyber attack on the studio, has grossed \$31 million through video on demand as of Sunday.

The movie has been rented or purchased about 4.3 million times through services including online streaming sites, digital retailers and cable and satellite VOD, the company said Tuesday.

Starring Seth Rogen and James Franco, the comedy was originally intended for wide theatrical release in 3,000 theaters on Christmas Day. But Sony changed plans after major theater chains dropped the movie in the face of terror threats from hackers calling themselves Guardians of Peace.

Instead, Sony put the movie out through online channels on Dec. 24 and 331 independent theaters the following day. In its first four days of release, the movie generated \$15 million in sales through VOD, making it Sony's top online film ever.

To be sure, the movie almost certainly would have packed a bigger financial punch had it opened in wide release as originally planned. Eric Wold, an analyst at B. Riley, had estimated the movie could have done \$45 million to \$60 million in domestic ticket sales in December. It was expected to gross \$20 million to \$25 million in its opening weekend alone.

The film's theatrical reach has expanded to 580 cinemas, and it has grossed \$5 million at the box office.

Gay advocates assail new TV show

Two Mormon men say they're appearing on a controversial TV show called “My Husband's Not Gay” because they're happy in their marriages to women even though they are attracted to men.

Preston “Pret” Dahlgren and Jeff Bennion, both members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, tell The Associated Press they have long been at-

tracted to men but also wanted to marry women and have children.

The gay advocacy group GLAAD says it's irresponsible and dangerous to suggest people should change who they love, and calls the show a sad reminder of so-called gay conversion therapy that can be emotionally scarring.

Dahlgren and Bennion say their marriages were individual choices influenced by their Mormon faith. The show is set to air Jan. 11 on TLC.

Other news

■ **Amy Poehler** has been named 2015 Woman of the Year by Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals. The group said Tuesday Poehler's comedy “fits so well with the Pudding's own tradition of satire and social commentary.” Poehler will get a parade and roast Jan. 29.

■ The marriage of **Nicholas Sparks** appears headed for an unhappy ending. Spokeswoman Jill Fritzo of PMK-BNC confirmed Tuesday that the best-selling author and screenwriter, 49, had

separated from his wife of 25 years, Cathy Sparks is known for such novels as “The Notebook” and “The Wedding.”

■ Poland has been asked to extradite filmmaker **Roman Polanski** to the U.S., where he is wanted on charges from 1977 of sex with a minor, an official said Wednesday. Spokesman for the prosecutor general, Mateusz Martyniuk, told The Associated Press that the request from Los Angeles prosecutors was being forwarded to Krakow, where Polanski's case is handled. In October, Krakow prosecutors refused a U.S. request to arrest Polanski, 81, but questioned him and obliged him to turn up on every summons.

■ Former U.S. President **Jimmy Carter** will present **Bob Dylan** with the 2015 MusiCares Person of the Year honor next month in Los Angeles. The Recording Academy announced Tuesday that Bruce Springsteen, Willie Nelson and Jack White will perform at the pre-Grammy event on Feb. 6 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

■ The stop-motion animators



COLUMBIA PICTURES-SONY/AF

Randall Park, in gray, portrays the North Korean leader **Kim Jong Un** in “The Interview.” Sony Pictures said Tuesday that the flick has been rented or purchased approximately 4.3 million times through services including online streaming sites, digital retailers and cable and satellite VOD.

behind films that include “Coraline” and “The Boxtrolls” will be auctioning puppets, models, props and sets from its archives for the first time. Dallas-based Heritage Auctions will offer the items from Laika Studios on Feb. 12 in Beverly Hills, Calif.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Tooth, plastic found in McDonald's meals

The Associated Press

TOKYO — McDonald's Corp. officials in Japan bowed deeply Wednesday to apologize for a human tooth, plastic pieces and other objects found in the burger chain's food, highlighting how consumers here are both loving and hating the fast-food eatery.

The hubbub over objects turning up in the food comes on the heels of a different kind of problem at the popular chain — a lack of fries, stemming from a shortage set off by labor disruptions on the U.S. West Coast. Last year, McDonald's in China and Japan along with other fast-food brands were hit by a scandal over expired meat from a Chinese supplier.

In the recent cases, a child's mouth was injured by a piece of plastic in an ice cream sundae in December. The fragment had fallen into the dispenser while

being assembled, according to McDonald's.

In another case, a customer who bought a Big Mac meal in August last year found a tooth in the fries. McDonald's said none of its employees at the outlet or its suppliers had lost a tooth, and there were no signs the tooth had been fried. It was still investigating how the tooth and plastic got in the food.

"To make such cases zero is our goal," said Takehiko Aoki, a senior executive. "We are doing our utmost to tackle them, one by one."

Aoki denied such cases highlighted an overall quality-control problem and called them "isolated" cases. He acknowledged there were other cases, including metal in a pancake and plastic in a McMuffin, but declined to give a tally of the incidents.



EUGENE HOSHIO/WAP

McDonald's Holdings Co. Senior Vice President Takehiko Aoki, right, and McDonald's Company Ltd. Senior Vice President Hidehito Hishinuma, left, leave a press conference in Tokyo on Wednesday.

He said it was possible that outsiders had planted the tooth and other items.

In two other cases, pieces of plastic were found in the Chicken McNuggets, delivered from a plant in Thailand. One was blue, and so it could have fallen in during production, but the other was clear, a type not used at McDonald's, officials said.

"I will not use McNuggets," Aoki said. "I will feed McNuggets to my children. I have no doubts."

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Jan. 8)	\$1,2183
Dollar buys (Jan. 8)	€0.8208
British pound (Jan. 8)	\$1,5688
Canada (dollar) (Jan. 8)	1,1834
China (Yuan)	6,2130
Denmark (Krone)	2,9566
South Korean won (Jan. 8)	1,0740
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0,3770
British pound	\$1,5688
Canada (dollar)	1,1834
China (Yuan)	6,2130
Denmark (Krone)	2,9566
Egypt (Pound)	7,1509
Euro	\$1,1825/0,8457
Hong Kong (dollar)	7,7544
Hungary (Forint)	270,24
Israel (Shekel)	3,7943
Japan (Yen)	119,54
Kuwait (Dinar)	0,2940
Norway (Krone)	7,1150
Philippines (Peso)	45,08
Poland (Zloty)	3,564
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3,7540
Singapore (Dollar)	1,3403
South Korea (Won)	1,10375
Switzerland (Franc)	1,0161
Thailand (Baht)	32,990
Turkey (Lira)	2,3262

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., Netherlands and the United Kingdom), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates in Germany, rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollar-to-euro.)

MARKET WATCH

Jan. 6, 2015

Dow Jones Industrials	-130.01	17,371.64
Nasdaq composite	-59.83	4,592.74
Standard & Poor's 500	-17.97	2,002.58
Russell 2000	-20.04	1,161.31

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Discount rate	4.75
Federal funds market rate	0.12
3-month bill	0.02
30-year bond	2.50

WEATHER OUTLOOK



The weather is provided by the American Forces Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

Thursday's US temperatures

City	Hi	Lo	Wthr	City	Hi	Lo	Wthr	City	Hi	Lo	Wthr	City	Hi	Lo	Wthr
Ablene, Texas	45	25	Pcldy	Chatanooga	29	19	Cir	Fort Wayne	11	6	Cldy	Louisville	20	16	Pcldy
Akron, Ohio	11	11	Snow	Cincinnati	46	11	Pcldy	Fresno	63	43	Pcldy	Lubbock	45	21	Pcldy
Albany, N.Y.	17	11	Pcldy	Chicago	12	1	Snow	Goodland	42	12	Pcldy	Macon	38	19	Cir
Albuquerque	48	29	Pcldy	Cleveland	13	12	Snow	Grand Junction	43	23	Pcldy	Madison	11	4	Snow
Allentown, Pa.	18	13	Pcldy	Colorado Springs	54	15	Pcldy	Grand Rapids	13	8	Snow	Medford	54	33	Pcldy
Amarillo	29	29	Cir	Columbia, S.C.	33	19	Cir	Great Falls	27	7	Snow	Memphis	26	21	Cir
Anchorage	27	14	Sir	Columbus, Ga.	40	23	Cir	Green Bay	8	-3	Snow	Miami Beach	69	64	Cir
Annapolis	32	17	Sir	Columbus, Ohio	13	13	Pcldy	Greensboro, N.C.	26	17	Cir	Midland-Odessa	45	24	Pcldy
Atlanta	32	21	Cir	Concord, N.H.	12	9	Cir	Harrisburg	18	15	Cir	Milwaukee	11	0	Snow
Atlantic City	20	19	Cir	Corpus Christi	44	39	Cir	Hartford	20	14	Cir	Mpls-St. Paul	14	-6	Snow
Austin	41	33	Cir	Dallas-Ft. Worth	39	28	Cir	Helena	26	2	Cldy	Missoula	28	12	Cldy
Baltimore	21	16	Cir	Dayton	12	11	Pcldy	Honolulu	78	66	Cir	Mobile	41	27	Cir
Baton Rouge	40	28	Cir	Daytona Beach	35	48	Cir	Houston	41	35	Pcldy	Montgomery	37	22	Cir
Bismarck	14	-9	Snow	Denver	45	12	Cldy	Indianapolis	28	19	Cir	Nashville	24	18	Cir
Boise	35	30	Cir	Des Moines	21	-1	Snow	Jacksonville	44	35	Cir	New York City	20	18	Pcldy
Boston	19	17	Cir	El Paso	42	31	Cir	Janeau	32	26	Cldy	Newark	20	17	Cir
Bridgeport	45	24	Pcldy	Elkins	68	20	Pcldy	Kansas City	24	8	Pcldy	Norfolk, Va.	25	20	Cir
Brownsville	46	45	Cir	Erie	13	12	Snow	Key West	68	65	Pcldy	North Platte	35	-2	Pcldy
Buffalo	17	13	Cir	Eugene	48	39	Cir	Knoxville	26	17	Cir	Okahoma City	34	18	Cir
Burlington, Vt.	15	11	Sir	Evansville	18	17	Pcldy	Lafayette	41	32	Cir	Omaha	24	1	Cir
Caribou, Maine	4	-8	Cir	Fairbanks	1	-7	Cir	Las Vegas	66	45	Pcldy	Orlando	58	47	Cir
Charleston, S.C.	37	24	Cir	Flagstaff	48	25	Pcldy	Lexington	19	15	Pcldy	Paducah	21	19	Pcldy
Charleston, W.Va.	23	20	Pcldy	Fargo	8	-10	Snow	Lincoln	27	3	Cldy	Pendleton	33	30	Cir
Charlotte, N.C.	28	19	Cir	Fort Smith	33	21	Cir	Little Rock	28	22	Cir	Phoenix	72	49	Cir
							Los Angeles	75	52	Cldy	Pittsburgh	12	11	Pcldy	

National temperature extremes
Hi: Tue., 91, Camarillo, Calif.
Lo: Tue., -24, Mount Washington, N.H.

Stripes SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating the European Business Market



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Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) is published weekdays (except Dec. 25 and Jan. 1) for \$3 on Friday Monday through Thursday and for \$1 on Friday by Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96338-5002. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA, Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96338-5002.

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OPINION

Our biases can disarm critical thinking

By KATHLEEN PARKER

WASHINGTON
 Recent events from Ferguson, Mo., to Staten Island, N.Y., might prompt an observer to infer that American cops are racist and that a bigoted white populace tolerates unnecessary lethal force against minorities.

One might also conclude that America has a hearty appetite for the carnival barker, the jester, the rable-rouser, the race baiter and, lest we leave anyone out, the performance-activist who pretends to be a newsman while fomenting unrest that only he can quell.

I haven't yet said Al Sharpton, but if his name came to mind, there must be a reason.

In nearly every high-profile case in recent years that involved a black alleged victim and a white alleged perpetrator, Sharpton has injected himself as arbiter. Where once he was a mild street activist, he is today a disruptive celebrity. He has stepped off the soapbox and into the MSNBC television studio, where he is free to pontificate and to chastise those who don't fit his template of truth and justice.

This isn't to say that Sharpton doesn't have fans or that he hasn't helped many people. He has. But in too many cases that he designates as racist, he has inarguably contributed to more harm than good. He has evolved into a variation on the Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy. He creates a problem, then zooms in to save the day.

One can argue that he isn't really taken seriously, but this isn't so. Protesters take him seriously. The president of the United States takes him seriously enough to bring him in as an adviser. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio takes him seriously enough to keep him close despite, or perhaps because

Al Sharpton has evolved into a variation on the Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy: He creates a problem, then zooms in to save the day.

of, Sharpton's recent threat to the mayor: "If we're going to just play spin games, I'll be your worst enemy."

Well, now.

This was in connection with Sharpton's push to revolutionize the police department in the wake of the death of Eric Garner, who was asphyxiated after being placed in a police chokehold. Was that cop racist? Hard to say, but it's not difficult to deduce racism in the subsequent murder of two police officers sitting in their cars by a black man who described his act on Instagram as revenge.

Sharpton was a key player in the aftermath of all instances, including the last. You do not get to stir the pot until it boils over and then say, "Hey, whoa, I didn't say to turn up the heat that much. Simmer down."

Other cases are numerous. In 2006, Sharpton took up the cause of exotic dance Crystal Gail Mangum, who accused three players on the Duke lacrosse team of gang-raping her. Ultimately her claims were found to be baseless.

Even so, this story was immediately assumed to be true, even by the university, because it fit one of our cultural narratives — white males rape black females. Call it the Pawson-raw Assumption, another one of Sharpton's gifts.

In 1987, then-15-year-old Brawley, who is African-American, claimed she had been gang-raped by six white men (including an assistant district attorney and a New York state trooper) who scrawled "KKK" across her chest and a racial epithet on her

stomach. Sharpton was Brawley's spokesman and has yet to express contrition for helping perpetuate what turned out to be a hoax, though he was forced to pay \$65,000 in damages to the assistant district attorney he falsely accused.

Brawley, who, we remind ourselves, was a child, allegedly made up the story because she feared being beaten by her stepfather for being away for four days. Poor child. She came up with the best worst story she could imagine. And Sharpton, with nary a glance at due diligence, ran with it.

To be fair, though the race card may be Sharpton's ace, the game is also played by whites. Susan Smith, the South Carolina woman who drowned her two young sons by letting her car slip into a lake, initially blamed her children's disappearance on a black hijacker.

Another hoax, another narrative. No one doubts that race sometimes plays a role. Perhaps white cops are more fearful around black suspects and react too quickly. Blacks are surely justified in their rage about being stopped and frisked for being black, a law enforcement technique that has ended under de Blasio.

But as we try to ease racial tensions, we might begin by examining our own unconscious biases, which are too easily coaxed to the surface, and apply a more critical eye to narratives before accepting them as true. We might also send racist agitators back to the soapbox, where the peddlers of outrage have always belonged.

Kathleen Parker is a member of Washington Post Writers Group.

Obama set to undo good policy on fracking

By JAY AMBROSE
 Tribune News Service

For most of his six years in office, President Barack Obama utilized virtually every means a Keynesian imagination can cook up to give us the worst economic recovery since World War II. First came a waddling, often misdirected, utterly confused, obese stimulus that cost as much as the war in Iraq. It seems to have accomplished precious little, maybe less than relatively small sequester budget cuts Obama believed could be helpful.

But let's give the president credit for something important. It is not something he did but something he did not do. Although he is big buddies with radical environmentalists, showing his kinship with them in stalling an economically beneficial, science-approved Keystone XL pipeline, he did not oppose fracking that also gives them the willies. It is an amazing technology providing energy companies with relatively easy, inexpensive access to vast quantities of natural gas and oil, thereby increasing world oil supply and boosting our economy.

Obama likely stayed out of the way in part because of the global warming issue. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas seen as increasing warming, and fracking was causing it to go down far more than government programs because the low-emission, inexpensive natural gas that fracking

produced was increasingly replacing high-emission coal. Something else. It was vast, increasing oil supplies and causing prices to tumble. For consumers, it was joy in the pocketbook, something far more likely to lead to helpful spending than short-term stimulus gifts, and for many businesses it meant still perkier profits, the kind of thing that causes investments and more jobs.

Put it all together, add in some other economic pluses, and what we had in the third quarter of 2014 was higher household incomes and a 5 percent economic growth rate causing many economists to predict good times in 2015.

It's not all meritment. The price dip makes some worry about lower demand caused by stagnant economies abroad and stocks lately dropped after dramatic gains. But the overall message is that free markets — including energetic energy companies so often lambasted by Obama as somehow the enemy — are the best economic friends we have, certainly not excessive regulation and the Big-Government-Knows-Best thesis.

To be sure, there are still those saying the Obama stimulus saved us from a second Great Depression, the intellectual dereliction being that "there is little direct empirical evidence that it had a significant effect." Those words come from John B. Taylor of Stanford, an economist who respects research, and more words of wisdom have emanated from John H. Cochrane, a University of Chicago economist. "George

Washington's doctors probably argued that if they hadn't bled him, he would have died faster," he wrote in The Wall Street Journal after noting that big government spending splashes have repeatedly failed to rescue economies.

What the stimulus did help do was vastly increase the federal debt under Obama, which could mean catastrophe down the road, especially as deficits start going up again because of the essentially undressed issue of unsustainable entitlement expenditures. The economy is also still less lively than could be the case because of an overdose of regulations, such as the Dodd-Frank bill meant to protect consumers and prevent a future Wall Street fiscal crisis. Some think it hurts consumers and increases the risk.

Meanwhile, the Obama who saw fit to leave fracking alone seems to have changed his mind.

Mr. Unilateralist and his team are reportedly preparing all kinds of new federal rules on fracking and other energy technologies that some fear will do less to save us from environmental worry — the states and companies that do not want to risk setbacks were already doing that — than to re-establish economic worry.

Some people can never cease from the kind of good-but-misplaced intentions that convert the best of times to the worst of times.

Jay Ambrose is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service.

OPINION

Iran is a dangerous 'ally' in Syria and Iraq

By HUGH SHELTON

At the dawn of 2015, the U.S. has yet to articulate a comprehensive foreign policy strategy to counter the influence and territorial gains of the Islamic State, the terrorist group that emerged last year — and poses a dangerous and vexing threat to stability across the Middle East and North Africa. By the Pentagon's admission, we neither understand the underlying ideology of the merciless group nor have a grasp of all the players in the region who have aggravated the crisis.

Indeed, the fog of war seems to have muted Iran's role in this dark chapter of regional affairs. Is Tehran an ally or a nemesis in the fight against the Islamic State? At least initially, the U.S. believed that Iran could play a constructive role in combating a mutual adversary. Secretary of State John Kerry, touting the age-old axiom "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," suggested that Iran could be part of the solution.

The only trouble is that Iran is a major part of the challenges we face.

The Islamic State, also known by the acronym ISIS, rose out of the sectarian conflict that exploded in Iraq in 2004 shortly after the U.S. military ousted Saddam. It immediately backed Shiite Muslim militant factions with training, money, weapons and intelligence, sparking a vicious Sunni Muslim militant counter-reaction that nourished al-Qaida and, later, ISIS. The rise to power of Nouri al-Maliki, an inept and corrupt Shiite prime minister with strong ties to Tehran, sealed Iraq's fate not only as a breeding ground for Sunni extremism, but as an Iranian satellite state.

Iran now has more than 7,000 Revolutionary Guards and elite Quds Force members in Iraq, according to the National Council on Resistance in Iran, an Iranian opposition organization. The killing of Iranian military adviser Hamid Tagavi, a brigadier general in the Revolutionary Guard, in December in Samarra put an exclamation



BERAHIM NOROOZI/AP

Women mourn during the funeral of Brig. Gen. Hamid Tagavi, a senior Revolutionary Guard commander who was killed during a battle against the Islamic State extremist group in Iraq, outside the Guard compound in Tehran, Iran, on Dec. 29.

point on the scope and significance of the Revolutionary Guard's presence in Iraq. As the most senior commander of the Quds Force to die abroad since the Iran-Iraq War ended 26 years ago, Tagavi played a key role in Tehran's training and control of Shiite militias in Iraq.

Amnesty International has pointed to the presence of Iran's proxy militias in Iraq as a key source of instability and sectarian conflict there. In an October report called "Absolute Impunity, Militia Rule in Iraq," Amnesty found that the growing power of Shiite militias has contributed to a "deterioration in security and an atmo-

sphere of lawlessness" and that the Shiites "are ruthlessly targeting Sunni civilians... under the guise of fighting terrorism, in an apparent bid to punish Sunnis for the rise of the ISIS and for its heinous crimes."

Iranian clerics' paranoia over domestic discontent has made meddling in regional countries, Iraq in particular, a cornerstone of Tehran's foreign policy and survival strategy. Speaking at Tagavi's funeral, top Iranian security official Ali Shamkhani said, "Tagavi and people like him gave their blood in Samarra so that we do not give our blood in Tehran."

Iran's reasons for "fighting" ISIS di-

verge considerably from U.S. objectives. Whereas we seek a stable and nonsectarian government in Iraq, the mullahs' interests are best served by the ascension of a subordinate Shiite leadership, enabling them to use the neighbor to the west as a springboard for their regional hegemonic, anti-Western designs. The Iranian government sees an opening in the turmoil in Iraq for consolidating its grip on that country, weakened by the ouster of al-Maliki.

Iran's role in the civil war in Syria is following a similar dynamic. Through its proxy Hezbollah — the Shiite Muslim political and paramilitary organization — Iran has served as Syrian President Bashar Assad's battering ram against his people, killing and enraging Sunnis and fueling ISIS' exponential growth.

Aiding and abetting Iran's destructive role in Iraq or Syria would be a strategic mistake for the U.S. that only exacerbates the chaos, reviving the sectarian divides to even consider allying with Iran — which the U.S. State Department still considers the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism — to fight the terrorism inspired by ISIS.

Iranian opposition leader Maryam Rajavi is well versed in the agenda and ambitions of Tehran's mullahs, rightly describes a potential Western alliance with Iran against ISIS as akin to "jumping from the frying pan into the fire." The eviction of the Iranian government from the region, especially from Syria and Iraq, must be part of the U.S. strategy for countering ISIS and resolving the sectarian divides that drive extremism throughout the region, Rajavi said.

She's right. The U.S. must think beyond ISIS to what kind of region will be left in its smoldering wake. As the U.S. weighs its policy options, any scenario that leaves the U.S. and its allies staring at the wreckage must be rejected outright.

Gen. Hugh Shelton served as the 14th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This column first appeared in the Los Angeles Times.

Palestinians' actions show they still don't want a state

By DANIEL GORDIS

Bloomberg News

Last week's attempt by the Palestinian Authority to obtain recognition from the United Nations Security Council has mostly disappeared from the world's front pages. That is not true in Israel, though, where a new diplomatic war with the Palestinians is just taking shape.

As soon as the Palestinians lost the vote in the U.N., Mahmoud Abbas announced that the Palestinian Authority would seek admission to the International Criminal Court.

If granted, the authority could then use that position to urge prosecution of Israeli soldiers for war crimes during the Gaza War.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has responded equally pugnaciously. While insisting that he will not "punish" the Palestinians by building in settlements (a move he knows would be toxic to the international community), the prime minister has said Israel will ask Congress to cut off the flow of the \$1 billion in annual aid that the Palestinians receive from the U.S. He has also said that Israel will not transfer the tax revenue it has collected on the Palestinian Authority's behalf. Other measures, he has pledged, are forthcoming.

The ICC threat is worrisome to Israel for many reasons, including making alleged "war crimes" rather than the consistent

Palestinian drive to destroy the Jewish State the subject of discussion, it allows the Palestinians to shape the narrative of the conflict in a way that does Israel great damage. It also means Israeli soldiers and commanders could be arrested and tried for war crimes when they travel abroad. In a tiny country in which travel abroad is, for many, virtually de rigueur, that is very worrisome. Netanyahu (who is running for re-election in a tight race) has vowed that he will not let it happen.

This reshaped conflict is precisely what Abbas wanted. Not only did he know he could not win the vote, but he apparently wanted it to fail. The version of the resolution France, Germany and Britain proposed stipulated that Palestine would be a nonmilitarized state; but the Palestinians put forward a draft that omitted that proviso, thus ignoring the issue of Israel's security and ensuring an American veto.

Further indication that Abbas wanted the measure to fail was his timing. The Palestinians could have fared much better had they waited just a few days to bring the resolution to a vote.

Eight countries (Argentina, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Luxembourg and Russia) supported the resolution, while Australia and the United States voted against. Five countries (Lithuania, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Korea and Britain) abstained. Given that nine votes were needed for passage, the U.S. did not have to use its

veto. But after the new year, when Angola, Malaysia and Venezuela replace Rwanda, South Korea and Argentina, respectively, the Palestinians would probably have had the nine votes. The U.S. would have been in the more uncomfortable position of vetoing, and the Palestinians would have been able to point to more compelling international support for their gambit. Had they waited and submitted a version palatable to the U.S., they might actually have succeeded.

Why, then, did they act this way? One European diplomat remarked that this latest Palestinian move was simply another instance of their "never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity" (a phrase coined decades ago by Israel's Abba Eban). But this was no missed opportunity. Abbas did not want the resolution to pass because he knows that the Arab street is totally opposed. Indeed, some Arabs accused him of "high treason" for submitting a proposal that makes concessions to Israel; Anwar Sadat's fate cannot be far from his mind. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine have all decried the Palestinian Authority move at the U.N.

Abbas was much better off with the proposal dying an ugly death because the defeat enables him to use the ICC to indict Israeli soldiers, a move bound to infuriate Israel and rile up the Arab street rather

than lead to negotiations.

Nothing sums up the Palestinian street better than comments made by Mahmoud Zahar, a co-founder of Hamas and still a member of its leadership, this week. "This Palestinian resolution is catastrophic and has no future on the land of Palestine," he said. "The future belongs to the resistance. We will continue to work to liberate all the land and achieve the rise of a new Arab Palestinian state. Hamas will not accept anything less than all the lands that were occupied in 1948."

For decades, the Palestinian leadership has preferred conflict to statehood. When the U.N. voted on Nov. 29, 1947, in favor of the Partition of Palestine (and thus in favor of the creation of a Jewish State), the land allocated to Israel was home to 500,000 Jews and 450,000 Arabs. It barely had a Jewish majority. But the demographics almost equally balanced, birthrate differentials and the ease of encouraging Arabs from nearby lands to immigrate to this new state, Arabs could quickly have tipped the scales and created an Arab majority. There would have been two Arab States and no Jewish State.

But in 1947, the Arabs attacked Israel instead. The rest is history. If last week's events are any indication, nothing much has changed.

Daniel Gordis is senior vice president and Koret distinguished fellow at Shalem College in Jerusalem.

NHL



Julio Cortez/AP

Devils left wing Patrick Elias, right, scores on Sabres goalie Jonas Eröth as center Zigmund Graboski defends Tuesday in Newark, N.J. Elias logged his 1,000th career point in the Devils' 4-1 victory.

Roundup

Devils down Sabres

Elias notches 3 points in win to reach 1,000

The Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Patrick Elias had a goal and two assists to reach 1,000 NHL points, and the New Jersey Devils beat the struggling Buffalo Sabres 4-1 on Tuesday night.

The goal was the 399th for Elias. Travis Zajac and Michael Cammalleri each had a goal and an assist, and Jordan Tootoo also scored as the Devils won consecutive games for the first time since Nov. 14.

Cory Schneider made 20 saves. Mikhail Grigorenko netted his first goal of the season for the Sabres, who have lost five straight and are 1-8-1 in their last 10 games.

Lightning 4, Canadiens 2: Tyler Johnson scored twice in Tampa Bay's four-goal second period, and the Lightning won the matchup for the top spot in the Eastern Conference by beating host Montreal.

Brett Connolly and J.T. Brown also scored for Tampa Bay (26-12-4), which moved two points ahead of Montreal atop both the Atlantic Division and the Eastern Conference.

Flyers 2, Senators 1 (SO): Wayne Simmonds scored the tying goal in regulation and had the winner in the shootout to lift host Philadelphia over Ottawa.

Ottawa's Mika Zibanejad and Philadelphia's Jake Voracek each scored on the opening shots of the tiebreaker.

Neither team scored in the next three rounds. Simmonds then punched in the winner against Craig Anderson.

Predators 3, Hurricanes 2: Roman Josi scored the tiebreaking goal late in the third period to give Nashville a victory over visiting Carolina.

Ryan Ellis and Mike Fisher also scored 23 shots to help Nashville win for

the third time in four games. Viktor Stalberg had two assists.

Sharks 4, Wild 3 (OT): Marc-Edouard Vlasic scored his second winning goal in two nights 3:09 into overtime, and San Jose completed a come-from-behind victory over host Minnesota.

Avanche 2, Blackhawks 0: Nathan MacKinnon scored and set up a goal by Maxime Talbot in the opening 1:17. Simon Varlamov made 54 saves for his third shutout of the season and visiting Colorado blanked Chicago.

Blue Jackets 4, Stars 2: Sergei Bobrovsky made 11 of his 24 saves in the third period, and Columbus beat host Dallas.

Columbus scored the first three goals of the game, but the Stars pulled within one before Bobrovsky shut them out in the third.

Canucks 3, Islanders 2: Nick Bonino and Linden Vey scored in the second period to snap long goal droughts, and host Vancouver beat the New York Islanders.

Ryan Stanton added his first goal in more than a year as Vancouver (23-12-3) improved to 5-1-1 in its last seven games.

Red Wings 4, Oilers 2: Pavel Datsyuk scored the tiebreaking goal with 34 seconds left, and Detroit topped host Edmonton for its fourth win in six games.

Datsyuk also had an assist, and Justin Abdelkader added a goal and assist for Detroit.

Blues 6, Coyotes 0: David Backes scored four goals to lead St. Louis' shutout rout of host Arizona.

Backes notched his 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th goals of the season over a 17-minute span between the second and third periods. It was the second time Backes has scored four goals in a game.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
Philadelphia	40	26	12	4	56	119/104
Tampa Bay	40	26	12	2	54	110/93
Toronto	40	21	16	3	45	113/101
Detroit	40	21	16	3	45	130/122
Boston	40	19	15	6	44	104/108
Florida	37	17	11	9	42	87/97
Ottawa	39	16	15	8	40	103/107
Buffalo	41	16	22	2	31	78/140

Metropolitan Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
Pittsburgh	39	24	10	5	53	118/94
N.Y. Islanders	40	22	13	1	53	112/99
Washington	38	20	11	7	47	112/99
N.Y. Rangers	40	20	13	7	47	103/96
Dallas	39	18	16	6	42	121/128
Minnesota	38	15	15	8	41	107/110
Colorado	40	16	16	8	40	103/117

Western Conference

Central Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
Nashville	39	26	9	4	56	119/93
Chicago	40	26	12	2	54	124/87
St. Louis	40	23	11	4	52	124/99
Winnipeg	40	20	13	7	47	103/96
Dallas	39	18	16	6	42	121/128
Minnesota	38	15	15	8	41	107/110
Colorado	40	16	16	8	40	103/117

Pacific Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
Anaheim	41	26	9	6	58	115/100
Vancouver	38	22	12	4	49	102/100
San Jose	41	22	14	5	49	113/108
Los Angeles	40	19	12	9	47	112/103
Calgary	40	21	16	3	45	115/108
Arizona	39	15	20	4	34	92/130
Edmonton	40	13	22	5	27	90/138

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss.

Monday's games

San Jose 3, Winnipeg 2
 Tuesday's games
 Philadelphia 2, Ottawa 1, 50
 Philadelphia 4, Buffalo 1
 Tampa Bay 4, Montreal 2
 Nashville 3, Carolina 2
 San Jose 4, Minnesota 3, OT
 Colorado 2, Chicago 0
 Columbus 4, Dallas 2
 St. Louis 0, Arizona 0
 Detroit 4, Edmonton 2
 Vancouver 5, N.Y. Islanders 2
 Washington at Toronto
 Boston at Pittsburgh
 Detroit at Calgary
 N.Y. Rangers at Anaheim

Wednesday's games

Washington at Toronto
 Boston at Pittsburgh
 Detroit at Calgary
 N.Y. Rangers at Anaheim

Thursday's games

New Jersey at Boston
 Washington at Philadelphia
 Buffalo at Carolina
 San Jose at St. Louis
 Dallas at Nashville
 Chicago at Minnesota
 Ottawa at Colorado
 Columbus at Dallas 2
 St. Louis at Vancouver
 N.Y. Rangers at Los Angeles

Friday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
 Minnesota 2, 0, 1, 1-3
 First Period—1, Minnesota, Zucker 13 (Pominville), 15:21, 2. Minnesota, Spurgeon (Zetterstrom), 7:35, 6. Minnesota.
 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
 Third Period—4, San Jose, Pavelski 21 (Couture), 6:21, 5. San Jose, Wingses 10 (Sheppard), 8:14 (pp.), 4. Nashville, Fisher 6 (Wilson, Forsberg), 10:29, 5. Nashville, Josi 7 (Stalberg, Nyström), 15:17.
 Overtime—7, San Jose, Vlasic 6.
 Shots on Goal—San Jose 8-6-10-2-6. Minnesota 10-6-11-3-2-1.
 Power-play opportunities—San Jose 0 of 4; Minnesota 0 of 2.
 Goals—San Jose, Stalock 5-4-1 (31 shots-28 saves). Nashville, Kuemper 13-12-1 (26-22).
 A—19,043 (17,954). T—2:39.

Saturday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
 Minnesota 2, 0, 1, 1-3
 First Period—1, Minnesota, Zucker 13 (Pominville), 15:21, 2. Minnesota, Spurgeon (Zetterstrom), 7:35, 6. Minnesota.
 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
 Third Period—4, San Jose, Pavelski 21 (Couture), 6:21, 5. San Jose, Wingses 10 (Sheppard), 8:14 (pp.), 4. Nashville, Fisher 6 (Wilson, Forsberg), 10:29, 5. Nashville, Josi 7 (Stalberg, Nyström), 15:17.
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 Goals—San Jose, Stalock 5-4-1 (31 shots-28 saves). Nashville, Kuemper 13-12-1 (26-22).
 A—19,043 (17,954). T—2:39.

Sunday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
 Minnesota 2, 0, 1, 1-3
 First Period—1, Minnesota, Zucker 13 (Pominville), 15:21, 2. Minnesota, Spurgeon (Zetterstrom), 7:35, 6. Minnesota.
 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
 Third Period—4, San Jose, Pavelski 21 (Couture), 6:21, 5. San Jose, Wingses 10 (Sheppard), 8:14 (pp.), 4. Nashville, Fisher 6 (Wilson, Forsberg), 10:29, 5. Nashville, Josi 7 (Stalberg, Nyström), 15:17.
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Minnesota	38	15	15	8	41	107/110
Colorado	40	16	16	8	40	103/117

Devils 4, Sabres 1

Atlantic Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
Philadelphia	40	26	12	4	56	119/104
Tampa Bay	40	26	12	2	54	110/93
Toronto	40	21	16	3	45	113/101
Detroit	40	21	16	3	45	130/122
Boston	40	19	15	6	44	104/108
Florida	37	17	11	9	42	87/97
Ottawa	39	16	15	8	40	103/107
Buffalo	41	16	22	2	31	78/140

Metropolitan Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
Pittsburgh	39	24	10	5	53	118/94
N.Y. Islanders	40	22	13	1	53	112/99
Washington	38	20	11	7	47	112/99
N.Y. Rangers	40	20	13	7	47	103/96
Dallas	39	18	16	6	42	121/128
Minnesota	38	15	15	8	41	107/110
Colorado	40	16	16	8	40	103/117

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss.

Monday's games

San Jose 3, Winnipeg 2
 Tuesday's games
 Philadelphia 2, Ottawa 1, 50
 Philadelphia 4, Buffalo 1
 Tampa Bay 4, Montreal 2
 Nashville 3, Carolina 2
 San Jose 4, Minnesota 3, OT
 Colorado 2, Chicago 0
 Columbus 4, Dallas 2
 St. Louis 0, Arizona 0
 Detroit 4, Edmonton 2
 Vancouver 5, N.Y. Islanders 2
 Washington at Toronto
 Boston at Pittsburgh
 Detroit at Calgary
 N.Y. Rangers at Anaheim

Wednesday's games

Washington at Toronto
 Boston at Pittsburgh
 Detroit at Calgary
 N.Y. Rangers at Anaheim

Thursday's games

New Jersey at Boston
 Washington at Philadelphia
 Buffalo at Carolina
 San Jose at St. Louis
 Dallas at Nashville
 Chicago at Minnesota
 Ottawa at Colorado
 Columbus at Dallas 2
 St. Louis at Vancouver
 N.Y. Rangers at Los Angeles

Friday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
 Minnesota 2, 0, 1, 1-3
 First Period—1, Minnesota, Zucker 13 (Pominville), 15:21, 2. Minnesota, Spurgeon (Zetterstrom), 7:35, 6. Minnesota.
 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
 Third Period—4, San Jose, Pavelski 21 (Couture), 6:21, 5. San Jose, Wingses 10 (Sheppard), 8:14 (pp.), 4. Nashville, Fisher 6 (Wilson, Forsberg), 10:29, 5. Nashville, Josi 7 (Stalberg, Nyström), 15:17.
 Overtime—7, San Jose, Vlasic 6.
 Shots on Goal—San Jose 8-6-10-2-6. Minnesota 10-6-11-3-2-1.
 Power-play opportunities—San Jose 0 of 4; Minnesota 0 of 2.
 Goals—San Jose, Stalock 5-4-1 (31 shots-28 saves). Nashville, Kuemper 13-12-1 (26-22).
 A—19,043 (17,954). T—2:39.

Saturday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
 Minnesota 2, 0, 1, 1-3
 First Period—1, Minnesota, Zucker 13 (Pominville), 15:21, 2. Minnesota, Spurgeon (Zetterstrom), 7:35, 6. Minnesota.
 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
 Third Period—4, San Jose, Pavelski 21 (Couture), 6:21, 5. San Jose, Wingses 10 (Sheppard), 8:14 (pp.), 4. Nashville, Fisher 6 (Wilson, Forsberg), 10:29, 5. Nashville, Josi 7 (Stalberg, Nyström), 15:17.
 Overtime—7, San Jose, Vlasic 6.
 Shots on Goal—San Jose 8-6-10-2-6. Minnesota 10-6-11-3-2-1.
 Power-play opportunities—San Jose 0 of 4; Minnesota 0 of 2.
 Goals—San Jose, Stalock 5-4-1 (31 shots-28 saves). Nashville, Kuemper 13-12-1 (26-22).
 A—19,043 (17,954). T—2:39.

Sunday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
 Minnesota 2, 0, 1, 1-3
 First Period—1, Minnesota, Zucker 13 (Pominville), 15:21, 2. Minnesota, Spurgeon (Zetterstrom), 7:35, 6. Minnesota.
 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
 Third Period—4, San Jose, Pavelski 21 (Couture), 6:21, 5. San Jose, Wingses 10 (Sheppard), 8:14 (pp.), 4. Nashville, Fisher 6 (Wilson, Forsberg), 10:29, 5. Nashville, Josi 7 (Stalberg, Nyström), 15:17.
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Monday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
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 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
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 Goals—San Jose, Stalock 5-4-1 (31 shots-28 saves). Nashville, Kuemper 13-12-1 (26-22).
 A—19,043 (17,954). T—2:39.

Tuesday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
 Minnesota 2, 0, 1, 1-3
 First Period—1, Minnesota, Zucker 13 (Pominville), 15:21, 2. Minnesota, Spurgeon (Zetterstrom), 7:35, 6. Minnesota.
 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
 Third Period—4, San Jose, Pavelski 21 (Couture), 6:21, 5. San Jose, Wingses 10 (Sheppard), 8:14 (pp.), 4. Nashville, Fisher 6 (Wilson, Forsberg), 10:29, 5. Nashville, Josi 7 (Stalberg, Nyström), 15:17.
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 Goals—San Jose, Stalock 5-4-1 (31 shots-28 saves). Nashville, Kuemper 13-12-1 (26-22).
 A—19,043 (17,954). T—2:39.

Wednesday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
 Minnesota 2, 0, 1, 1-3
 First Period—1, Minnesota, Zucker 13 (Pominville), 15:21, 2. Minnesota, Spurgeon (Zetterstrom), 7:35, 6. Minnesota.
 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
 Third Period—4, San Jose, Pavelski 21 (Couture), 6:21, 5. San Jose, Wingses 10 (Sheppard), 8:14 (pp.), 4. Nashville, Fisher 6 (Wilson, Forsberg), 10:29, 5. Nashville, Josi 7 (Stalberg, Nyström), 15:17.
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 Goals—San Jose, Stalock 5-4-1 (31 shots-28 saves). Nashville, Kuemper 13-12-1 (26-22).
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Thursday's games

San Jose 0, Tampa Bay 1-4
 Minnesota 2, 0, 1, 1-3
 First Period—1, Minnesota, Zucker 13 (Pominville), 15:21, 2. Minnesota, Spurgeon (Zetterstrom), 7:35, 6. Minnesota.
 Second Period—3, San Jose, Karlsson 4 (Burns, Pavelski), 10:54.
 Third Period—4, San Jose, Pavelski 21 (Couture), 6:21, 5. San Jose,

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Buckeyes loose during final practices

Second win-or-go-home game is new for two-time champion Meyer

By **RUSTY MILLER**
The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — When it was pointed out to Ohio State coach Urban Meyer that a small town in the state was changing its name to honor him, he thought it was a joke.

Told that the village of Urbana, in western Ohio, was dropping its last letter in his honor — becoming Urban on Monday, when the Buckeyes play Oregon in the national championship game — Meyer was temporarily taken aback.

“You’re kidding,” he said with a grin. “They’re dropping the ‘a’?”

Assured that was the case, he smiled and added, “Wow. That’s very nice.”

That was just one of many amusing vignettes on Tuesday when Meyer and the Buckeyes faced questions on Ohio State’s media day.

At one point, quarterback Cardale Jones did cartwheels, laughing loudly. (It should be noted, he did them with no coaches in sight.)

It’s clear the Buckeyes are a loose bunch heading into the biggest game of their lives.

During 30 minutes of a light practice open to reporters, the Buckeyes stretched and went through their paces — just like a typical workout inside the Woody Hayes facility. A four-inch snowfall overnight forced everyone indoors.

H-back and kick returner Dontre Wilson, out the final six games with a broken foot, sat on the sidelines in a compression boot. Still, he’s listed as probable, along with tight end Jeff Heurman (leg).

Despite the grind of a long, 14-game season and playing in a winner-take-all national championship game just 11 days after playing another game that was win-or-go-home, the Buckeyes



ADAM CAIRNS, COLUMBUS DISPATCH/AP

Ohio State coach Urban Meyer speaks during a news conference Tuesday in Columbus, Ohio. Ohio State faces Oregon in the national championship college game on Jan. 12.

“Those days, we had 37 days to prepare. I remember in ‘06 it was 37 or 47, some ridiculous number. So that’s much different.”

Urban Meyer
Ohio State coach

were in good spirits.

Meyer won Bowl Championship Series titles after the 2006

and 2008 seasons at Florida, so he is a grizzled veteran when it comes to huge postseason games.

But none of his players have ever participated in any event remotely like this.

Meyer was asked about his two previous titles (the first coming in a 41-14 rout of then-No. 1 Ohio State in Glendale, Arizona).

“I just went back — practices were a little different,” Meyer said. “Those days, we had 37 days to prepare. I remember in ‘06 it was 37 or 47, some ridiculous number. So that’s much different.”

“This is a one-game shot. You



National Championship
Ohio State vs. Oregon
AFN-Sports
2:30 a.m. Tuesday CET
10:30 a.m. Tuesday JKT

have four practices in shoulder pads. And tomorrow we’re going to give our guys a day off of practice. You just can’t go the tempo we went the last three days. You just can’t. You’re going to break them down.”

The Buckeyes fly out on Friday. They’ll be taking a jumbo, double-decker jet that will accommodate all the players, support personnel and everybody in the travel party, instead of taking two planes.

Jones threw with receivers during practice on Tuesday. Later, after the 6-foot-5, 250-pounder had shown off his acrobatic skills, he laughed while playing catch with an Ohio State employee.

The Buckeyes’ third-string quarterback — he took over after first Braxton Miller (shoulder) and then J.T. Barrett (broken ankle) went down — said he never feels terribly nervous before or during a game.

“There are little jitters before the game,” he said. “When you’re out there, it’s just you and your guys. You’re doing something you’ve done basically all your life, and something you’ve prepared with your guys. That eliminates all the nervousness.”

Offensive tackle Taylor Decker spoke for most of his teammates about the Buckeyes’ work leading up to the big game.

“Right now my focus is really on my preparation,” he said. “Because it is nice to be in this game, but it won’t matter at all unless we win.”

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NBA

Lifting Hawks emerge as most surprising team

Ex-Spurs assistant Budenholzer has Atlanta playing similar fashion

By PAUL NEWBERRY
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Paul Millsap knocked the ball away. Thabo Sefolosha scrambled into the corner to grab it and passed quickly to Dennis Schroder, who took off the other way.

Schroder dribbled into the frontcourt and spotted Millsap already ahead of him on the wing. Millsap didn't keep the ball for long, bouncing a pass to Al Horford streaking through the lane for a thunderous dunk.

That play epitomized the way the Atlanta Hawks are going right now.

A stop at the defensive end. Four guys touching the ball. An easy basket.

The Hawks are the biggest surprise in the NBA, leading the Eastern Conference with a 26-8 record that is the best in franchise history through 34 games. Most striking, they have won seven straight on the road, wrapping up a sweep of their West Coast road trip with a 107-98 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Monday night.

"We've got a good group of players, who play unselfish and play hard," said second-year coach Mike Budenholzer, who learned at the knee of San Antonio's Gregg Popovich and is looking to build another powerhouse in Atlanta.

The Hawks have won 19 of 21, but their play over the last three weeks has been especially impressive. Atlanta has twice beaten the Clippers and LeBron James' Cavaliers, sending a bit of a shockwave through the league with a 29-point blowout at Cleveland. The stretch also includes wins over Chicago, Houston, Dallas and Portland, so this is looking less and less like a fluke.

The Hawks are facing all sorts of uncertainty off the court, from ongoing efforts to sell the franchise to what will become of disgraced general manager Danny Ferry. But the turmoil seems to have brought the team together, and Budenholzer — a long-time assistant with the Spurs — has instilled many of the same principles that work so well in San Antonio.

Atlanta ranks among the league's top clubs in steals and assists, scoring about two-thirds of its baskets off passes from teammates. All five starters are averaging at least 11.6 points. There's not one true superstar, but Jeff Teague is emerging as one of the league's best point guards, Millsap can do a bit of everything, and Horford's return after missing most of last season with an injury has been a huge boost for the team.

Budenholzer and his staff have



Atlanta's Al Horford soars for a layup past Utah's Rudy Gobert on Friday. The Hawks have won seven straight road games.

also gotten surprising contributions from DeMarre Carroll, who bounced around to four teams before finding a home in Atlanta, and Kyle Korver, who has proven to be a lot more than a three-point specialist. The bench is deep, too, with players such as Schroeder, Sefolosha, Mike Scott and Pero Antic making important contributions.

Sounding very much like his mentor, Budenholzer talks constantly about "activity" at the defensive end, pushing his players to get a hand on the ball and cut off passing lanes. The Hawks aren't a pick-and-roll-focused offense like the Spurs, but they feed off their defense, run at every opportunity, and wind up with a lot of easy baskets.

"We know if we make plays on the defensive end, everything else will take care of itself," Teague said.

Teague's development has been a huge key. He flashed plenty of potential in his first five seasons, but he's finally demonstrating the sort of consistency that Budenholzer demands. In the past five games, the 26-year-old is averaging 23.2 points, 8.2 assists, 4.8 rebounds and 2.6 steals while

shooting 52 percent from the field.

Horford and Teague are the only players who've been with the Hawks longer than three years, the roster almost totally overhauled the last two summers by Ferry. While the GM successfully turned things around in Atlanta, there's no indication he'll ever return to his job after making racially charged comments about potential free agent Luol Deng.

Ferry is on an indefinite leave of absence, watching from afar as the roster he built keeps piling up the wins. Budenholzer is now in charge of player personnel, though it looks as if the bulk of the work is done.

Once the Hawks get to the playoffs, the lack of one dominant scorer could prove to be a weakness. It certainly cost them last season, when they squandered a chance to knock off top-seeded Indiana in the opening round.

For now, it's not an issue.

"We've got a good group of guys in that locker room," Budenholzer said. "We're playing well on both ends of the court."

AP Sports Writer Beth Harris in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference			
Atlantic Division			
	W	L	Pct
Toronto	16	18	.706
Brooklyn	16	18	.471
Boston	15	19	.438
Philadelphia	5	28	.152
New York	5	28	.135
Southeast Division			
Atlanta	26	8	.765
Washington	23	11	.676
Miami	15	20	.429
Orlando	10	25	.286
Charlotte	12	24	.333
Central Division			
Chicago	20	10	.714
Cleveland	19	16	.543
Milwaukee	18	16	.500
Indiana	14	22	.389
Detroit	11	23	.324

Western Conference			
Southwest Division			
	W	L	Pct
Memphis	25	9	.735
Dallas	26	10	.722
Houston	23	11	.676
San Antonio	21	15	.583
New Orleans	17	19	.500
Northwest Division			
Portland	24	8	.750
Oklahoma City	17	18	.486
Denver	15	20	.429
Utah	12	22	.349
Minnesota	12	22	.353
Pacific Division			
Golden State	27	5	.844
L.A. Clippers	21	16	.569
Phoenix	21	16	.569
Sacramento	14	20	.412
L.A. Lakers	11	24	.314

Monday's games
Philadelphia 95, Cleveland 92
Charlotte 104, Boston 95
Dallas 96, Brooklyn 88, GT
Washington 92, New Orleans 85
Chicago 114, Houston 105
Memphis 109, New York 83
Denver 110, Minnesota 101
Indiana 105, Utah 114
Portland 98, L.A. Lakers 94
Atlanta 107, L.A. Clippers 98
Golden State 111, Oklahoma City 91

Tuesday's games
Phoenix 102, Milwaukee 98
Detroit 105, San Antonio 104
Wednesday's games
Milwaukee at Philadelphia
New York at Washington
New Orleans at Charlotte
Houston at Cleveland
Memphis at Atlanta
Boston at Brooklyn
Utah at Chicago
Detroit at Dallas
Orlando at Denver
Phoenix at Minnesota
Oklahoma City at Sacramento
Thursday's games
Indiana at Golden State
L.A. Lakers at L.A. Clippers
Charlotte at Toronto
Houston at New York
Miami at Portland

Thursday's games
Suns 102, Bucks 96
PHOENIX — Tucker 27 0-0 5, Mark Morris 14 4-8 26, Dragic 17 2-9 6, Dragic 7-13 0-0 16, Bledsoe 3-10 4-6 30, Marc. 2-10 0-0 6, Plumlee 2-4 0-4, Green 2-9 3-7, Thomas 5-8 7-8 19. Totals 37-81 21-127 102

PHOENIX — Antetokounmpo 7-13 2-2 16, O'Bryant 1-1 2-3, Pachulia 2-3 3-4 16, Middleton 3-9 1-3, Knight 10-20 4-4 26, Dudley 3-9 4-4 10, Henson 6-9 1-12 14, Green 2-4 0-4, Marshall 0-0 0-0 0
27 0-0 4, Thomas 5-8 7-8 19. Totals 37-81 21-127 102

PHOENIX 15 28 28 24-96
Three-Point Goals—Phoenix 7-25 (21.4%), Detroit 4-24, Mark Morris 2-4, Tucker 3-1, Marc. Morris 0-3, Bledsoe 0-4, Green 0-5, Milwaukee 3-20 (Knight 2-6, Middleton 1-4, Marshall 0-1, Antetokounmpo 0-2, Mayo 0-3, Dudley 0-4)
Rebounds—Phoenix 32 (Antetokounmpo 53 (Mark Morris 10), Milwaukee 51 (O'Brien 14), Assist—Phoenix 19 (Green 10), Milwaukee 22 (Knight 11, Marshall 4), Total Fouls—Phoenix 16, Milwaukee 16
Technical—Bledsoe, Milwaukee defensive three second. A—12:11 (18:17).

Pistons 105, Spurs 104
DETROIT — Singler 1-1 1-2 3, Monroe 2-13, Meeks 1-10, Jennings 5-18 2-13, Meeks 1-13, J. Smith 1-10, M. J. Mills 1-5, Augustin 8-12 3-19, Butler 1-0 0-2, Tolliver 1-5 1-3. Totals 41-87 20-28 105
SAN ANTONIO — Bellinelli 4-8 2-2 12, Duncan 7-12 1-2 15, Splitter 4-9 2-4 10, Green 5-10 0-0 14, Papaya 0-3 1-5, Middleton 10-11 2-6, Ginobili 3-7 3-11, Diaw 3-5 3-5 10, Ayton 3-2 6-7 16, Jorgensen 1-1, Bonner 1-3 2-7 6, Thomas 2-3 2-3 10-4

DETROIT 20 29 33 23-105
Three-Point Goals—Detroit 10-31 (32.3%)
(Jorgensen 1-2, Augustin 1-3, Jennings 1-5, Butler 1-2, Caldwell-Pope 0-2, Meeks 0-2, Tolliver 0-4), San Antonio 9-21 (Green 3-5, Ginobili 2-2, Middleton 1-5, Diaw 1-1, Mills 1-5, Duncan 0-1, Bonner 0-2), Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Detroit 34 (Drummond 15), San Antonio 54 (Duncan, Splitter 7). Assists—Detroit 19 (Jennings 7), San Antonio 24 (Ginobili 8), Total Fouls—Detroit 28, San Antonio 21. Technicals—Duncan, A—18:51 (18:57).

Roundup

Pistons win 6th straight on late shot

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The San Antonio Spurs kept giving the Detroit Pistons hope, and Brandon Jennings made the most of one last chance.

With just eight seconds left, Jennings collected an errant in-bound pass by Tim Duncan and drove the length of the court for the winning basket with 0.1 seconds remaining, lifting Detroit to its sixth straight victory, 105-104 on Tuesday night.

His bucket backed up double-doubles from Andre Drummond and Greg Monroe and the Pistons rallied from 18 points down in the first half.

"We are getting better," Detroit coach Stan Van Gundy said. "If you stay in there, sometimes you get a break. We had a very good break at the end. We got lucky at the end. Our resolve to stay in the game right down to the last few seconds was huge."

Drummond had 20 points and 17 rebounds and Monroe added 17 points and 11 boards, as the Pistons snapped a four-game skid in San Antonio (21-15). D.J. Augustin added 19 points for Detroit (11-23), which has lost since waving Josh Smith on Dec. 22.

San Antonio point guard Tony Parker played just 13 minutes in his return from a five-game absence due to a strained left hamstring. He was 0-for-3 shooting and had just two assists, but he did not appear to aggravate the injury.

"He wanted to play, but I'm being conservative," coach Gregg Popovich said. "He had 13 minutes. That's good after sitting out as long as he did, make sure he doesn't re-injure."

Parker had missed 13 games total due to the injury, returning twice for a single game only to aggravate his hamstring. The Spurs were 6-7 in Parker's absence.

It was part of an odd night for the defending NBA champions.

The Spurs rallied behind five three-pointers in the fourth quarter, but were 4-for-7 on free throws in the final 20 minutes.

Suns 102, Bucks 96 at Milwaukee. Markieff Morris scored 26 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to lead Phoenix.

Isiah Thomas added 19 and Goran Dragic 16 for the Suns, who have scored 100 or more points for nine straight games.

Brandon Knight scored 26 and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 16 for the Bucks, who lost their fourth straight at home.

The Suns have won nine of the last 11 and opened the four-game road trip with their third consecutive victory. They also updated their record to 8-1 over Eastern Conference opponents.

HIGH SCHOOL: DODDS PACIFIC

Numbers crunch: Yokota shifts to D-II

Declining enrollment necessitated move as many Panthers teams struggled at D-I level

By DAVE ORNAUER
AND JAMES KIMBER
Stars and Stripes

For the first time in its 42-year history, Yokota is getting used to life being classified as a small school.

Long a dominant force in Division I, the school was shifted Nov. 20 to Division II because of declining enrollment.

The early results? The Panthers basketball teams haven't had much trouble with teams from any division at this point. The boys and girls teams have won all seven games, the boys by a margin of 37.7 and the girls 23.7. Five of those opponents are in Division I.

But that, DODDS Pacific officials say, disguises the fact that Yokota's program as a whole the past 10 years has not kept pace with the rest of the D-I pack, timed with a steady drop in enrollment, from 400 in 2004 to 277 as of Jan. 2.

"It's the right thing to do for the kids," longtime Yokota athletics director and football coach Tim Pujol said.

While there is the perception that Yokota is an alpha dog on the D-I block, Pujol said since 2005, it's won just four Far East banners: two football, one boys basketball and one girls tennis. "We haven't been competitive in most sports most years," he said.

Yokota not only had the smallest enrollment for a DODDS Pacific D-I school — Kinnick is next with 594 — but it had less than Zama (314), which was competing in D-II.

"I have to do what's right according to the numbers," DODDS Pacific Athletics Coordinator Don Hobbs said while announcing the change. In an interview in September, Hobbs said he intended to have Yokota remain at D-I through the school year. But when enrollment numbers remained in the 275 range, he felt a change had to be made.

Several coaches said that the school's reputation as a bastion of sports excellence has in recent years exceeded results. "We've had a hard time finding four girls to fill out a whole team," cross country coach Dan Galvin said. "And it's not like



TYLER ESPINOSA/Special to Stars and Stripes

Yokota's Jarmarvin Harvey drives during a 90-59 victory over ASU. The Panthers are 7-0 this season and have won by an average of 37.7 points, but that success isn't common at the school, and many say isn't sustainable given its declining enrollment.

there are athletes in the school looking for something to do. You get schools that are twice as big or bigger, you can't compete against them."

Galvin and Pujol each pointed to last spring's Far East track meet at Yokota, where the Panthers scored 72 points but finished fourth in the D-I standings, while Zama scored 30 and won the D-II banner.

"On our track. In front of their parents," Pujol said. "Each of those kids knew that Zama had 10 more students at their school but they were competing against D-I schools. That's hard for them to justify how to accept that it's right."

"Some of our teams can now go into a Far East tournament and think they have a chance to do something, they're not just

going in for a week of playing some games," Galvin said. "It makes the experience a whole lot better for them."

Yokota's move to D-II was met in some circles with frustration. Defending boys D-II basketball champion Daegu already had a high mountain to climb, given it lost all its key pieces, and it just got higher.

"I wouldn't be surprised if Yokota is the eventual champion," Warriors coach Phillip Loyd said. "No one's convinced it will be an even playing field. Still, the games have to be played."

Others greeted the move with resigned acceptance. "The powers that be made the decision," Perry girls coach April Kelley said. "We have to rise up no matter who we play and do the best we can in that situation."

There are some schools in the Pacific that field programs that seem to be competitive no matter what level they're playing at.

Perry has 145 students as of Jan. 2 — smallest in DODDS Pacific — but Mark Lange coaches a boys soccer program that's won three straight D-II titles, gone 60-13-8 in that span and won the DODDS Japan tournament, beating D-I power Kinnick 1-0 in the final.

"Could we do it? Absolutely," Lange said of his Samurai playing up, citing a weekend series two seasons ago against two-time D-I champion Kadena that the teams split. "I think we can play with those teams. I don't see why we couldn't."

But such programs are exceptions and many argue that such success might not be sustainable with a small enrollment base.

"Right now, yes," E.J. King boys basketball coach Scott Jarrard said of Yokota's chances this season. "But what will they have next year? They just happen to have the personnel to play D-I this year, but you never know what you'll get in DODDS."

"That could shift," Hobbs agreed. "We don't know what's going to happen next year or two years from now."

He's already been approached, Hobbs said, by those who believe — especially in basketball — that Yokota will sway the through the D-II opposition and "haul down all the trophies." His response to D-II schools?

"Don't just settle for second place," Hobbs said. "Rise to their level. I have to go by the numbers and I have no concrete evidence that their numbers are going to increase by 50 to 100 students. Get kids out, coach them, get them in condition and build a program."

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COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Kentucky survives Ole Miss upset bid

By GARY B. GRAVES
The Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Dominant almost all season and facing expectations of going unbeaten, top-ranked Kentucky looked vulnerable and very beatable against a Mississippi team intent on pulling off a seismic upset.

Wildcats guard Aaron Harrison thwarted the Rebels' quest by scoring 26 points, including two big free throws with 1:29 remaining in overtime to put Kentucky ahead to stay. Kentucky then withstood three final Mississippi attempts to rally before escaping with an 89-86 victory Tuesday night to win its Southeastern Conference opener and keep its hopes for a perfect season alive.

"We knew they were going to fight," Harrison said after beating the Rebels with 9-of-10 shooting from the line and five three-pointers. "The SEC is tougher than what people think and we knew they weren't going to lay down.

"They came out and fought really hard. We had a game where we had to make big plays and we made them."

Crunch-time heroics weren't expected from Kentucky (14-0, 1-0 SEC), which entered as overwhelming favorites against a Mississippi squad it had beaten 102 times in 115 previous meetings. The Wildcats instead got a back-and-forth battle with the determined Rebels, who didn't flinch and seemed to have momentum and opportunities in their favor.

Especially in OT, as missed free throws down the stretch gave the Rebels chances to either go ahead or tie the game. Mississippi just couldn't take advantage as LaDarius White missed on one possession

and the Rebels (9-5, 0-1) lost the ball out of bounds on the next.

The Rebels had one last opportunity after Trey Lyles missed two free throws with 15.4 seconds left, but Martavious Newby's three-pointer bounced high and was grabbed by Willie Cauley-Stein to keep Kentucky unbeaten.

"We never talked one time (coming into the game) about going in and beat the No. 1 team in the country," Mississippi coach Andy Kennedy said. "I just told them to compete for 40 minutes and I certainly thought we did that. We gave ourselves a chance. I'm proud of the effort, proud of the fight."

Devin Booker added 13 points, Andrew Harrison 12, including a free throw with 33 seconds left, and Karl-Anthony Towns 11 as the Wildcats survived their toughest test this season. Cauley-Stein had 12 rebounds and three blocks in 39 minutes, all of which were critical in withstanding the Rebels.

Stefan Moody scored 25 points and Jarvis Summers 23 for the Rebels, who beat Kentucky 30-26 in the paint and controlled the boards for much of the game before falling short 34-32.

Summers even had a chance to win it at the end of regulation, but his three-point attempt with 4 seconds left bounced high off the rim with the game tied at 77. The Rebels fell short of pulling off a huge upset, but they succeeded in giving Kentucky the scare that few expected the Wildcats to face in the SEC.

"We're still learning and this is a wake-up call for them," Kentucky coach John Calipari said. "Look, teams are coming after you. We didn't play great, but you have to give it to Mississippi, they played."



Kentucky's Aaron Harrison shoots under pressure from Mississippi's Aaron Jones during Tuesday's game in Lexington, Ky. Harrison scored 26 points in the Wildcats' 89-86 overtime win.

JAMES CRISP/AP

Roundup

Loving lifts No. 22 Ohio State past Minnesota in OT

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Marc Loving's jump shot from the lane with 5.6 seconds left in overtime lifted No. 22 Ohio State to a 74-72 victory over Minnesota, helping the Buckeyes escape with the win after blowing a 12-point second-half lead.

D'Angelo Russell had 25 of his 27 points in the first half, missing all seven of his field-goal attempts after the break, but he made two critical free throws for Ohio State (13-3, 2-1 Big Ten) in the closing minutes. Loving added 13 points and seven rebounds.

Mo Walker had 18 points and nine rebounds, DeAndre Mathieu scored 17 points and Andre Hollins had all 12 of his points in the second half, all the Gophers (11-5, 0-3) weren't able to turn their comeback into a win.

No. 8 Villanova 90, No. 24 St. John's 72: Darrun Hilliard scored 21 points and Villanova rebounded nicely from its first defeat of the season, pulling away



Minnesota guard Nate Mason, left, defends Ohio State guard D'Angelo Russell during Tuesday's game in Minneapolis. Ohio State won 74-72 in overtime.

HANNAH FOSLER/AP

from host St. John's in the second half for a victory.

Dylan Ennis added 15 points and nine rebounds for the Wildcats (14-1, 2-1 Big East). Dan-

iel Ocheuf had 13 points and 13 boards to help coach Jay Wright earn his 300th win at Villanova.

No. 17 Iowa State 63, Oklahoma State 61: Dustin Hogue

blocked a three-point try with under a second left to help host Iowa State hold off Oklahoma State in the Big 12 opener for both teams.

No. 23 Arkansas 79, Georgia 75: Bobby Portis scored 21 points, Michael Qualls added 15 and Arkansas rallied from a first-half deficit of 13 points to beat host Georgia in the Southeastern Conference opener for each team.

In other college games: **UConn 58, South Florida 44:** Rebounding from losing its American Athletic Conference opener at home, defending national champion Connecticut completed a successful road swing through the Sunshine State with a victory over South Florida.

Amida Brimah scored 13 points and Ryan Boatright added 10 for UConn (8-5, 1-1).

Providence 66, Butler 62: Kris Dunn scored 20 of his career-high 25 points in the second half — including a free throw with 8 seconds to go to answer a Butler

threat — and Providence fended off the Bulldogs for its first road win of the season.

George Washington 75, Saint Louis 72: Yuta Watanabe blocked Mike Crawford's corner three-point attempt at the buzzer to preserve George Washington's victory over visiting Saint Louis.

San Diego St. 56, New Mexico 42: Winston Shepard scored 16 of his 20 points in the second half and San Diego State beat visiting New Mexico.

Angelo Chol added 10 points for the Aztecs (12-4, 2-1 Mountain West Conference).

Georgetown 65, Marquette 59: Joshua Smith had 12 points and 10 rebounds, and host Georgetown survived a 12-minute field goal drought in the second half in a win over Marquette.

Smith had seven offensive boards, and D'Vauntes Smith-Rivera added 15 points and Jabril Trawick 13 points for the Hoyas (10-4, 2-1 Big East) in their first game since dropping out of the AP Top 25.

MLB/SPORTS BRIEFS

Hall voters still give cold shoulder to PED-tarnished

BY HOWIE RUMBERG
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Roger Clemens, Barry Bonds, Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire's chances to enter the Hall of Fame are dwindling.

Baseball writers so far overwhelmingly have decided the outsized statistics of the Steroids Era stars are tarnished by their connection to performance-enhancing drugs use.

Once again Tuesday, Cooperstown's doors remained shut.

"I did it the only way I knew how, and I wanted to do it clean," Pedro Martinez said Tuesday after he was elected along with Randy Johnson, John Smoltz and Craig Biggio. "And the integrity of the way I did it is probably the reason of me going to the Hall of Fame on the first ballot."

For emphasis during a news conference at Boston's Fenway Park, the Dominican right-hander held open his navy blazer to show off his wiry frame, a stark contrast to the bulked-up bodies that personified the years offense reigned.

Clemens, the only seven-time Cy Young Award winner, and Bonds the home run king and only seven-time MVP, failed in their third turns on the ballot.

Smoltz voiced approval of drug testing in 2000, two years before players and owners reached a joint drug agreement for the first time since 1985.

"This great game and the game that I personally love has found a way for to the time being, to make it sure that it again has back the integrity and the legitimacy that it needs so that fans, the great fans of baseball, do not sit there and wonder what they're watching, is it legitimate or not?" Smoltz said.

Clemens received support on 37.5 percent of the ballots and Bonds 36.8 percent. The situations of McGwire and Sosa are more dire.

The duo, who electrified the nation with a dizzying home run

chase in the summer of 1998, are on the verge of dropping out of contention altogether. Because of a rules change last summer that limits a player's years of eligibility from 15 to 10, McGwire has one more chance at receiving the necessary 75 percent vote from the Baseball Writers' Association of America. This year he received his lowest vote total yet, 10 percent, and he never was named on more than 23.7 percent of the ballots since he's been eligible in 2007.

Sosa survived being swept off the ballot by nine votes, receiving recognition by just 36 of 549 voters (6.6 percent) after just three years. A 5 percent threshold is needed to remain on the ballot.

Gary Sheffield received little attention in his first year on the ballot, getting 11.7 percent. He hit 509 home runs and says he only accidentally took a PED.

Mike Piazza and Jeff Bagwell, two players who have fallen under suspicion of use but were never caught up in any investigation, fell short, too, though Piazza could gain admiration next year. He received 69.9 percent in his third year, a steady rise. Bagwell is up to 55.7 percent.

"I realize the cloud has covered a multitude of so many different people and I realize that the media and people have a hard time distinguishing and determining, and in time maybe it will become clearer for all parties involved," Smoltz said.

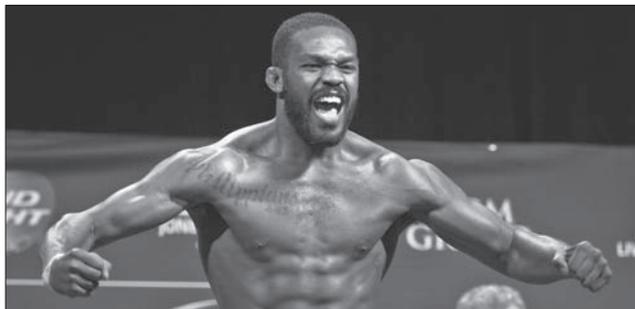
The future for players who've fallen under suspicion might be a bit brighter, though. The ballot could expand next year to 12 votes for each writer. Ken Griffey Jr. appears to be the only sure thing among a newcomer group that also includes Trevor Hoffman and Billy Wagner.

"It's actually sad, to be honest. It's sad," Martinez said. "People I admired are not going in with me."



BERETO MATTHEWS/AP

The 2015 National Baseball Hall of Fame inductees, from left, John Smoltz, Randy Johnson, Craig Biggio and Pedro Martinez pose during a press conference Wednesday in New York.



LE BASKOW, THE LAS VEGAS SUN/AP

Light-heavyweight mixed martial arts champion Jon Jones entered a drug treatment facility three days after he beat Daniel Cormier. Jones failed a drug test on December 4.

Briefly

QB Winston enters draft; accuser suing Florida St.

The Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston is going to the NFL.

The 2013 Heisman Trophy winner announced his decision to forgo his final two years of eligibility and enter the 2015 Draft in a statement released to ESPN by The Legacy Agency Wednesday.

Winston was the most successful quarterback in college football the last two seasons, but also faced lengthy sexual assault investigations. He was not charged by police and was cleared by the university.

However, the woman who says Winston assaulted her in 2012 is suing the university's board of trustees.

A civil lawsuit filed Wednesday in federal court in Orlando claims FSU had knowledge of her alleged sexual harassment and discrimination by Winston, and that it created a hostile educational environment for her.

Winston was cleared of wrongdoing by FSU following a two-day hearing last month to determine whether he violated sections of the student conduct code. A Florida prosecutor made a similar decision last year. The suit says the university had an unreasonable response to her allegations. It seeks a jury trial and unspecified damages.

The Seminoles went 26-1 with Winston starting and won the 2014 national championship.

Winston is expected to be one of the first quarterbacks selected, but faces questions about his off-the-field incidents.

Jones enters rehab after failing drug test

LOS ANGELES — UFC light heavyweight champion Jon Jones has entered a drug treatment fa-

cility after testing positive for the main metabolite of cocaine.

The UFC issued a statement supporting the 27-year-old Jones on Tuesday, three days after he defeated Daniel Cormier to cement his reputation as the world's best pound-for-pound mixed martial artist.

"I am proud of Jon Jones for making the decision to enter a drug treatment facility," UFC President Dana White said. "I'm confident that he'll emerge from this program like the champion he truly is."

Jones (21-1) was tested by the Nevada Athletic Commission last month heading into his title defense against Cormier at UFC 182. Benzoylgonine is not banned by World Anti-Doping Agency guidelines for out-of-competition use, so Jones wasn't penalized or suspended before he defeated Cormier by unanimous decision.

Jones was given the random test Dec. 4, and the Nevada commission still could impose disciplinary measures on the fighter. The UFC also could discipline Jones, but showed no indication of such plans in its initial statement.

Giants fire assistants Fewell, Guinta

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — The New York Giants have fired defensive coordinator Perry Fewell and defensive backs coach Pete Guinta.

Giants coach Tom Coughlin announced the moves on Wednesday, a little more than a week after the Giants (6-10) missed the playoffs for the third straight season and the defense was ranked among the worst in the NFL.

Fewell had been the Giants defensive coordinator since 2010 and was at the helm when the Giants' defense played a major role in their 2012 Super Bowl victory.

Petke out as coach of MLS Red Bulls

HARRISON, N.J. — Mike Petke is out as the coach of the New York Red Bulls.

The Major League Soccer team announced on Wednesday that Petke would not return for the 2015 season despite leading the team to the playoffs in each of his two seasons and the league's best regular-season record in 2013.

The move came two weeks after Ali Curtis was hired to replace Andy Roxburgh as the team's sporting director.

Liverpool's Gerrard to join Galaxy in July

CARSON, Calif. — Steven Gerrard will join the Los Angeles Galaxy in July after completing his illustrious career with boyhood team Liverpool.

The 34-year-old midfielder announced last week he was leaving Liverpool after the English Premier League season to move to Major League Soccer.

The Galaxy on Wednesday confirmed Gerrard as a designated-player signing on an 18-month deal.

Giants' Hudson has surgery on ankle

SAN FRANCISCO — Giants right-hander Tim Hudson has undergone surgery to remove bone spurs from his right ankle, the same one he injured during the 2013 season with Atlanta that sidelined him for the final two months.

The expected recovery is eight weeks, and the defending World Series champions expect him to be ready by Opening Day.

NFL PLAYOFFS

Cowboys coach turns gambler in first playoff game

By SCHUYLER DIXON
The Associated Press

IRVING, Texas — Jason Garrett never hesitated with the biggest decision in his first playoff game as a head coach.

One might say the usually stoic, Princeton-educated leader of the Dallas Cowboys went all riverboat gambler going for it on fourth-and-6 near midfield when the safer play would have been to punt and hope to get the ball back.

The Cowboys converted on Tony Romo's 21-yard pass to Jason Witten with 6 minutes remaining and later scored the go-ahead touchdown in a 24-20 wild-card win over Detroit. Perhaps this is the key—it was Dallas' first playoff game in five years.

"What kept going through my mind was, 'When you get a chance to go play at the Masters, you don't lay up. You go after it a little bit,'" Garrett said after a win that sent the Cowboys (13-4) to Green Bay (12-4) for a division game Sunday. "And again, a lot of confidence in the guys to go out and execute it. They play football better than I swing a golf club."

There's another key. The tools Dallas has on offense are a lot more potent than a defense that is surviving mostly on low-budget free agents, castoffs and young, generally lower-round draft picks.

"I believe in our guys, our ability to control the line of scrimmage in some fourth-and-short situations, to win the line of scrimmage and to make those first downs," Garrett said. "The fourth-and-6 really as much as anything was just a matter of saying, 'Hey, who knows what happens if we punt this ball away.'"

For years, Romo has carried the reputation of a gambler who drew the ire of Dallas fans fed up



Dallas Cowboys at Green Bay Packers
AFN-Sports
7:00 p.m. Sunday CET
3:00 a.m. Monday JKT

with late-game interceptions that cost the Cowboys games. So yes, he's one to lobby Garrett in a lot of fourth-down situations. He didn't have to say a word Sunday.

"I give credit to coach Garrett for making that call and going to try to win the football game at that point," Romo said. "It shows that he believes in us. I think that he thinks in that situation he wants us on the field to have a chance to win a playoff game."

And that's where the big gamble was the safest — Romo to Witten, the tight end who has caught more passes than anyone from the quarterback who has surpassed Troy Aikman as the franchise passing leader in touchdowns and yards.

Witten ran straight up the field, got open by faking to his right and turning back to his left. The ball was there in plenty of time for him to pick up another 10 yards after the catch. Romo put the Cowboys ahead with an 8-yard scoring toss to Terrance Williams, his second TD of the game.

"Tony and I have done that for a long time," said Witten. "It was a gutsy call by coach Garrett. He has the confidence to be able to go for it, and for Tony to give me that look and know that I was going to win, turn inside."

Kind of makes it sound like it wasn't a gamble at all.



BRANDON WADE/AP

Cowboys head coach Jason Garrett talks to quarterback Tony Romo during Sunday's wild-card playoff game. Garrett took a chance on fourth-and-6 and Dallas went on to win 24-20.



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

The Colts' Cory Redding celebrates with fans following Indianapolis' win over the Bengals in an NFL wild-card playoff football game Sunday. The Colts defense hopes to keep the momentum going this week against Peyton Manning and the Denver Broncos.

Colts defense looks to step up, change image

By MICHAEL MAROT
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Mike Adams spent his first 10 NFL seasons developing his own perception of the Colts.

He bought into the theory that Indianapolis needed a high-scoring offense to win games. He also realized the Colts needed a better defense to win championships.

Now, the Colts' starting strong safety and his teammates want to show the rest of the league image isn't everything.

"We're good enough to win, and that's what you need to do at this point in the season. Stats don't matter," Adams said Monday. "But to win games like this, in Denver, our defense has to step up."

The defense has done that before.

During their 2006 title run, Indy held Pro Bowl running back Larry Johnson to 32 yards on 13 carries in a wild-card round win, limited Baltimore to two field goals in a divisional-round win, closed out the AFC championship game victory with Marlin Jackson's interception and sealed their previous Super Bowl win with a 56-yard interception return from Kelvin Hayden. All that came after the Colts had allowed 375 yards rushing in a Week 14 loss to Jacksonville.

Could it happen again? Perhaps.

Since allowing 244 yards rushing in Week 11, the Colts have buckled down.

When Andrew Luck and the offense were plagued by turnovers



Indianapolis Colts at Denver Broncos
AFN-Sports
10:30 p.m. Sunday CET
6:30 a.m. Monday JKT

and a rash of drive-killing penalties over the final six regular-season games, the defense played well enough to help the Colts (12-5) win five of the six.

When Luck protected the ball in Sunday's 26-10 wild-card win over Cincinnati, the defense held up again. Indy limited Cincinnati to five first downs, 98 total yards and four straight three-and-outs in the second half.

Sure, detractors will contend the Bengals' top two receivers, A.J. Green and Jermaine Gresham, were inactive because of injuries. But the Colts also limited the NFL's top rookie rusher, Jeremy Hill, to 47 yards on 13 carries. And after allowing a 23-yard end around on Cincinnati's first offensive play, the Bengals ran 20 more times for 87 yards.

Defensive tackle Cory Redding liked what he saw Sunday, but he knows the Colts must play even better this weekend to survive against Peyton Manning at Denver (12-4).

"I think we did enough to do what we needed to do (against

Cincinnati). We got the win," Redding said. "So we've got to keep the same mojo, the same mindset this week."

It was Manning's release in March 2012 that spurred a major change in the Colts' plans.

Team owner Jim Irsay, general manager Ryan Grigson and coach Chuck Pagano agreed that Indianapolis needed to be more than a point-scoring machine to be a contender. They invested in a bigger, more physical defense and stronger special teams.

Three years later, that investment appears to be paying off.

Kicker Adam Vinatieri and punter Pat McAfee are All-Pro, long snapper Matt Overton played in last year's Pro Bowl and Indy's coverage units were ranked among the league's best this season.

Indy spent most of the season ranked in the top half of the league in pass defense and finished in the top 10 in sacks (41).

"We're getting there," defensive tackle Ricky Jean Francois said when asked to compare this defense to the stout units he was with in San Francisco. "There are a few things we're still looking to improve. But I think we're getting closer and closer, and I think we'll get above that standard this postseason."

Perhaps just in time to change their reputation.

"Even though we love No. 12 (Luck), we don't want to put all that on his shoulders," Adams said. "We want the defense to have an identity, we want the defense to go out there and make plays."

NFL PLAYOFFS

Panthers have thrived despite adversity

From Newton's accident to Rivera's house fire, Carolina's playoff path filled with bumps

BY STEVE REED
The Associated Press



Carolina Panthers at Seattle Seahawks
AFN-Sports
2 a.m. Sunday CET
10 a.m. Sunday JKT

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Panthers coach Ron Rivera said he's never experienced a season like this one since he joined the NFL 30 years ago.

Carolina's journey to the NFC divisional playoffs has included quarterback Cam Newton flipping his truck and being hospitalized with two fractures in his lower back, franchise defensive end Greg Hardy being convicted on two counts of domestic violence, and Rivera's house catching fire and causing \$500,000 worth of the damage five days before the biggest game of his coaching career.

"It has been different," Rivera said. "You can't make this stuff up."

There's been nothing ordinary or predictable about the Panthers on the field, either.

Carolina became the first NFL team to go more than two months without a victory and reach the playoffs. The Panthers won the NFC South despite a 7-8-1 record. And last Saturday, a defense that gave up 25 or more points in four of its first seven games held Arizona to 78 yards in the wild-card round, the fewest ever allowed in the NFL postseason.

Safety Roman Harper said he wasn't expecting this type of adventure in his first season in Carolina. The Panthers visit Seattle (12-4) Saturday with a trip to the NFC championship game on the line.

"It isn't the prettiest thing, but we got a date to the prom at

the end of the day," Harper said, laughing. "We're here. She's probably not the best-looking one; she's not going to win prom queen, but we'll have a good time."

The Panthers aren't apologizing for their record.

In fact, in some ways they believe the season has toughened them and left them playoff ready.

They had to win their last four games just to get into the playoffs.

Newton has fought through ankle and rib injuries and the back fractures, and he has the Panthers on a five-game winning streak.

Rivera is already hunkered down preparing for Seattle while his wife handles the details of where he'll live for the next 6-8 months while their burned-out home is rebuilt.

Hardy still isn't eligible to play, but his absence paved the way for fellow defensive end Charles Johnson to step out of character and become one of the team's vocal leaders.

Cornerback Josh Norman is convinced the Panthers have ben-



CHUCK BURTON/AP

Carolina Panthers players including Cam Newton (1) celebrate their NFC wild-card victory over the Cardinals on Sunday. The Panthers take on defending champion Seattle on Saturday.

effed from some divine intervention — particularly when it came to Newton's accident.

"If it weren't for God's angel covering him in that truck, I don't know what would have happened," Norman said. "We could have been talking about missing our quarterback, our leader, forever. But he was blessed."

The idea the Panthers are even still playing after a 3-8-1 start speaks volumes about the team, said center Ryan Kalil.

"Some strange things have

come up," Kalil said, "but it's been very telling of the character and closeness of this team that whether it is something happening inside or outside the locker room, this is a group that stuck together and continue to work and work."

Kalil said that is also a reflection of Rivera, the 2013 NFL Coach of the Year, for staying positive and keeping everyone together when it would have been easy to quit on the season.

Rivera said he never once lost

faith in his team.

"At the end of the day you learn how to deal and cope with these things," Rivera said, "and if you can keep your focus then you will have an opportunity and a chance."

Then again, maybe Carolina's season isn't that unusual.

Former Jets wide receiver Jericho Cotchery was asked about this year and simply laughed.

"Well, I played in New York," Cotchery said, "so I won't even go there."

Above: 'Big-time players show up when you need them most'

FROM BACK PAGE

Harbaugh became Baltimore's coach in 2008, the same year the Ravens made Flacco their top draft pick out of Delaware. The two have been to the postseason in six of seven years.

"Joe has a great arm, is a very good athlete, a big, strong guy in the pocket, can make any throw in any kind of weather," Harbaugh said.

Especially in the playoffs.

"He's a good quarterback, period," said New England coach Bill Belichick, whose top-seeded Patriots (12-4) host the Ravens (11-6) on Saturday.

"I have a lot of respect for him," Belichick said. "He has a great arm, can throw the ball the length of the field with guys hanging all over him. He's mobile. He's athletic enough to extend plays, makes good decisions, uses all his weapons."

Flacco and the Ravens beat the Patriots 28-13 in the AFC championship game two years ago to advance to the Super Bowl. Flacco joined Joe Montana as the only quarterbacks in NFL history to throw 11 touchdown passes without an interception in a single postseason.

"Big-time players show up when you



DON WHEAT/AP

Ravens quarterback Joe Flacco is 5-0 and with 13 TDs and no interceptions in his last five playoff games.

need them most, and that's how he's been," Ravens fourth-year receiver Torrey Smith said. "He's as good as anyone, and maybe the best in the playoffs these past few years."

Soon after Baltimore beat San Francisco 34-31 in the Super Bowl, Flacco received a contract worth \$120.6 million that made him the highest-paid player in NFL

history.

To this point, it's been a worthwhile investment. Although the Ravens went 8-8 and missed the playoffs last year, they've never had a losing record and are 82-44 (including the postseason) with Flacco as a starter. Oh, and he's started every game since the outset of his rookie year.

Flacco has thrown 166 passes in the playoffs since his last interception, in the 2011 AFC title game in New England.

"I'm doing the best I can to put everybody in position to do good things," he said. "Put the ball in their hands and let them take over."

Flacco is 6 feet 6 inches tall but surprisingly agile in the pocket. Against Pittsburgh, he scrambled to his left to elude the rush and threw off his back foot to connect with Smith for an 11-yard touchdown that made it 20-9.

"His athletic ability is underrated," Smith said. "He's been making plays like that for a long time."

In the playoffs, though, something special happens when Flacco is on the field.

"He's a franchise quarterback and has had a great career," Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said.



Baltimore Ravens at New England Patriots
AFN-Sports
10:30 p.m. Saturday CET
6:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

Brady is among a select few top-shelf quarterbacks considered to be the best in the game by those not named John Harbaugh.

"The cool thing about it is, Tom was playing for who knows how many years before I got in here," Flacco said. "I was in high school watching him win Super Bowls."

Flacco is 2-1 in the playoffs against the Patriots, but warns that those games — and this one — aren't about Brady vs. Flacco.

"It's not really me outdueling Tom or him outdueling me," he insisted. "We're not playing against each other."

SPORTS



Close call

No. 1 Kentucky barely avoids upset by Mississippi » Page 28

NFL

ABOVE AVERAGE JOE

In playoffs, Ravens' Flacco stands out

By DAVID GINSBURG
The Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — In the afterglow of a playoff victory over Pittsburgh last weekend, Ravens coach John Harbaugh proclaimed Joe Flacco to be “the best quarterback in football.”

Given time to reflect on his comment, Harbaugh didn't back down.

“I said it. I meant it,” Harbaugh said after Tuesday's practice.

Flacco's numbers in the postseason support Harbaugh's lofty assessment.

After throwing two touchdown passes in a 30-17 win over the Steelers, Flacco improved to 5-0 in his last five playoff games. He has 13 TDs, no interceptions and a 116.6 quarterback rating during that span. He was Super Bowl MVP two years ago, is 10-4 in the postseason and has more road playoff wins (seven) than any quarterback in NFL history.

Flacco has twice as many playoff wins as peers Drew Brees, Aaron Rodgers and Ben Roethlisberger.

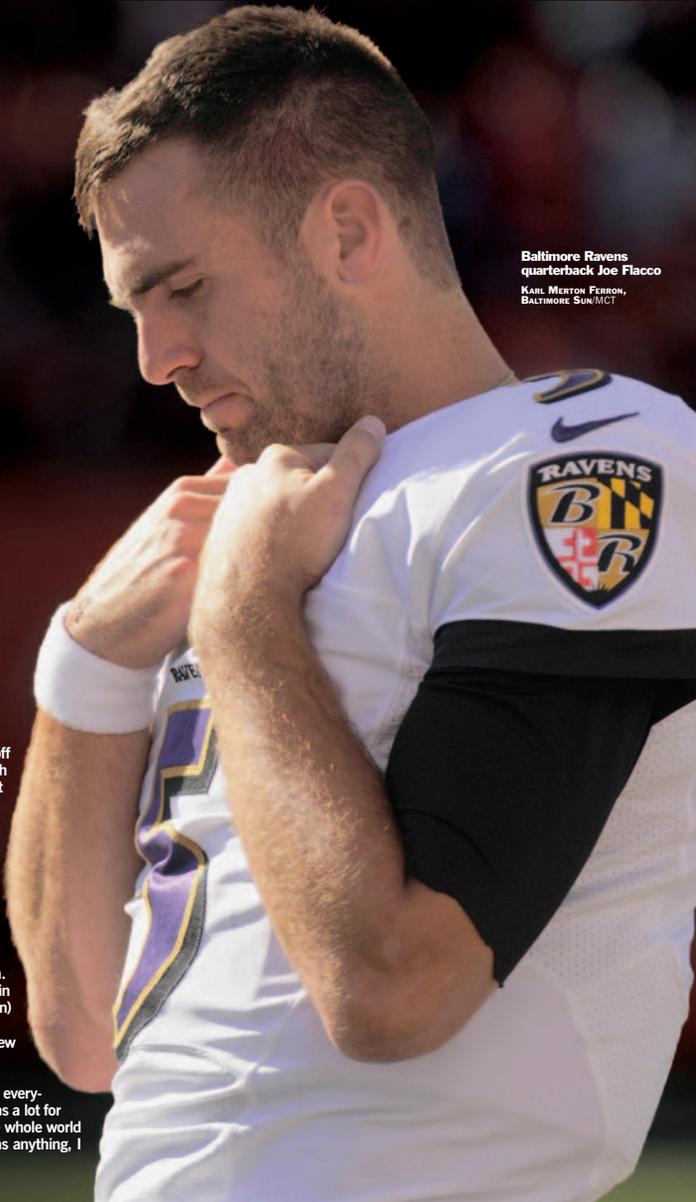
So, is this guy elite or what?

“At the end of the day it doesn't really matter what everybody wants to think,” Flacco said. “It obviously means a lot for a head coach to stand up in front of everybody in the whole world and say those kind of things. Whether it really means anything, I don't know. But it definitely means a lot to me.”

SEE ABOVE ON PAGE 31

Baltimore Ravens
quarterback Joe Flacco

KARL MERTON FERRON,
BALTIMORE SUN/MCT



UFC champ Jones enters rehab after failing pre-fight drug test » Page 29

Colts defense looking to boost reputation in playoffs » Page 30

