

## WEEKEND EDITION EUROPE & PACIFIC



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## Veterans to Congress: Don't forget us

Advocates worry that cuts to retirement benefits are just the beginning

By LEO SHANE III  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — With Congress back this week, veterans groups are vowing to resume their fight against trims to military retirement benefits.

But what they're really fighting for is relevancy, and to make

sure the country hasn't forgotten about them.

Military advocates worry that Congress's willingness to attack veterans' retirement checks shows that lawmakers — and perhaps the public — have already moved on from the wars of the last decade, and that the sacrifices and promises made will be forgotten.

"This is what happens when you have an unengaged population whose focus starts to shift away," said Tom Tarantino, chief policy officer for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "When times get tough, people say everyone has to sacrifice. But not everyone has been sacrificing for the last 10 years."

The cut is a 1 percent trim on cost-of-living increases for working-age military retirees. Veterans 62 and older won't see any changes. But those younger — including medically retired servicemembers — will see their annual increases trimmed starting in January 2016.

SEE CUTS ON PAGE 2

## Shared sorrow

Investigators seek cause of helicopter crash that killed 4 US airmen | Page 7



ADAM L. MATTHEWS/Stars and Stripes

Flowers lie near one of RAF Lakenheath's gates on Thursday in remembrance of the four airmen killed in an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter crash near Salthouse, England. Investigators are looking into the cause of the crash.

## Army inactivating 5 of 29 Warrior Transition Units

By CHRIS CARROLL  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — With the pace of U.S. operations in Afghanistan slowing and fewer wounded troops coming home, the Army said Thursday it would eliminate some of the special units for sol-

diers who need long-term medical care and rehabilitation.

The Army plans to inactivate five of its 29 active-duty Warrior Transition Units by the end of September.

In the wake of a scandal over poor living conditions for some

wounded warriors, the units were set up in the United States and Europe in 2007, designed to oversee care for those who need at least six months of recovery time before returning to their Army jobs or transitioning to the civilian world. The Army also will close all

nine Community Based Warrior Transition facilities, nonresidential units that primarily serve National Guard and reserve troops regionally. They'll be replaced with 13 new Community Care Units on active-duty Army bases.

SEE UNITS ON PAGE 8

# QUOTE OF THE DAY

"They told us, 'Don't go out! The fleet is here!'"

— Marjorio Resinas Verano, a resident of Rota, Spain, describing her parents' warning about the arrival in 1964 of swarms of U.S. sailors as the installation there expanded

See story on Page 4

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# COMING SOON

Science & Medicine

Emotions move us in the same places



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# MILITARY

# Cuts: Congress urged to make repeal a top priority

## FROM FRONT PAGE

The cut will save about \$6.3 billion over 10 years and was included as part of a budget deal designed to avert another government shutdown.

Lawmakers who backed the deal bemoaned the military retirement changes but said fixing the problem later was preferable to jeopardizing budget harmony now. At least 14 separate bills to repeal the cut have been introduced in the two weeks since the deal passed.

In the last week, editorial boards at USA Today and The Washington Post have called the veterans' opposition out of touch, noting that the military's generous retirement benefits aren't comparable to any private-sector pensions.

Veterans groups argue that work is underway in the form of a compensation commission, which is reviewing large-scale changes to military pay and benefits.

They thought lawmakers had agreed not to make any changes until after that panel's recommendations were completed by February 2015 and had agreed that only changes to new retirees' benefits would be considered.

"This caught us by surprise," said Jack Klump, president of the National Association for Uniformed Services. "And that's always the danger we face — that politicians will forget the promises they made."

The budget deal was the culmination of two months of work by budget committee chairmen Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.

Ryan said last week that Defense Department leaders proposed the retirement cut. Murray said she disliked the retirement cut but believed that averting more fiscal brinkmanship and another government shutdown was the top goal for all Americans, including

## Lawmakers look to replace cost-of-living cuts

Congress passed its new budget deal less than three weeks ago, but lawmakers already have rushed new legislation to undo major portions of it. Here's a look at some of the ideas that would replace the military retirement cost-of-living cuts included in the plan:

■ End Saturday mail delivery (Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif.).

■ Crack down on fraudulent claims for child tax credits (Reps. Rodney Davis, R-Ill., and Michael Fitzpatrick, R-Pa.).

■ Reduce foreign aid to Egypt and Pakistan (Rep. Ted Poe, R-Texas).

■ Mandate joint prescription drug purchases for the departments of defense and veterans affairs (Rep. James Lankford, R-Okla.).

■ End tax loopholes for offshore corporations (Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii; Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H.; Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va.; Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va.).

■ Just repeat it, without any offsets (Rep. Julia Brownley, D-Calif.; Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla.; Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va.; Rep. Scott DesJarlais, R-Tenn.; Sen. Kay Hagan, D-N.C.; Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark.).

veterans. Both lawmakers have promised to find fixes in the coming months, including exempting disabled veterans from the cost-of-living trims.

In the days before the budget deal vote, a number of the veterans group leaders were agitated at having been left out of the budget discussions, railing against lawmakers in press conferences and muttering stronger insults from the sidelines.

Tarantino believes the reason that veterans groups were kept in the dark is simple. "They knew we would be a huge problem," he said. "We would have worked to scuttle the deal, or at least that part, before they got it out."

Visits to Capitol Hill offices produced only promises of corrections later and not the immediate rejection that the veterans lobbyists wanted.

The Military Officers Association of America estimates the retirement change will cost a typical enlisted member who retires at 40 about \$83,000 over 20 years, and cost a typical retired officer more than \$124,000 over 20 years. That's based on an estimated re-

placement package totaling about \$1 million over that span.

Last month, lawmakers also approved a 1 percent military pay raise for 2014, the lowest annual veteran pay raise since the start of the all-volunteer force.

"We've seen this before, where lawmakers go after military personnel when the wars end because they've become an easy target," Klump said. "I think it's a national disgrace."

Unlike in recent sessions, Congress failed to pass any sweeping veterans legislation last year, including measures backed by veterans groups on expanding GI Bill benefits and providing advance funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. It's unclear whether that's a reflection of groups' waning influence or the partisan gridlock.

Officials at Student Veterans of America have warned that lawmakers are eyeing the costs of veterans education benefits for savings initiatives. Groups lobbying the military compensation commission have also predicted dramatic cuts to active-duty and retirement benefits.

Congress has provided steady increases to the VA budget since the start of the war in Afghanistan, but leaders worry how long that generosity will last.

For now, the focus is on repealing the military retirement cut. Even with two years before it goes into effect, opponents are saying they might not have enough time to change it.

It's unclear which, if any, of the repeal bills pending in Congress might pass. Several have no spending offsets, which usually spells quick defeat in the Republican House. Others make up the \$6 billion-plus in cuts with politically tricky proposals: ending tax loopholes, cutting foreign aid, ending Saturday postal delivery.

Senate Armed Services Chairman Carl Levin, D-Mich., has promised hearings on the issue, and the veterans affairs committees are expected to take up the topic as well.

Mike Hayden, director of MOA's government relations, worries that if Congress doesn't move quickly on the issue — with weeks — it won't get fixed anytime soon.

He pointed to the mandatory budget cuts put in place under sequestration in August 2011. Lawmakers spent two years denouncing the across-the-board cuts as terrible policy but failed to pass any meaningful legislation before the cuts went into effect.

"Congress recently has been good at getting things done at the 11th hour, but not before," Hayden said. "We don't want that again. We'd like to put this behind us before we get into the (fiscal 2015) budget discussions this spring. Otherwise, we don't know when they'll deal with it," he said.

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## Report: Eisenhower officer relieved of duty

The commanding officer of a squadron assigned to the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower has been relieved of duty following a Navy investigation, WVEC.com reported.

A Judge Advocate General Manual investigation found that

Cmdr. Joe V. Martinez, a commanding officer of Electronic Attack Squadron 140, made inappropriate racial comments, gave false and misleading information and knowingly submitted inaccurate officer fitness reports, among other issues, according to the TV station.

Cmdr. Scott Hardy will be the interim commanding officer.

## 1 still missing in Navy helo crash that killed 2

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — The search continued Thursday for a sailor who has been missing since a Navy helicopter with five crew members aboard crashed in the ocean off the Virginia coast.

Two people died in the Wednesday crash, which happened during

a routine training mission, and two others were hospitalized.

The Coast Guard searched for the missing sailor by air and sea throughout the night and had crews on scene Thursday morning, said Petty Officer 1st Class Brandyn Hill. The Navy also was scheduled to send out two helicopters to assist with the search.

From wire reports



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## MILITARY

# Hagel: Budget cuts won't affect wounded vets

By JON HARPER

Stars and Stripes

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Wounded veterans imploried Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel during a town hall meeting Wednesday not to cut health care and other benefits for servicemembers and veterans.

Retired Sgt. Victor Rivera complained about the latest budget agreement reached by Congress which would cut the cost-of-living adjustment for younger veterans by 1 percent, effective in December 2015.

"Please don't take our money," Rivera told Hagel at the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio.

"Let me assure you that all disabled will be exempt from any adjustments in the budget growth

to benefits," Hagel said. "We've got two years to fix that particular problem. It will be fixed."

Sgt. Maj. Clifford Lovejoy spoke highly of his experiences at Brooke and expressed concern about what would happen if the medical center lost Defense Department funding.

"We're not going to do anything that would inhibit the continued progress of this institution," Hagel said. "We're going to continue to make the kind of resource commitments that are required."

Hagel said some benefit cuts to servicemembers and veterans appear inevitable.

"The current set of obligations we have — based on what projections are out into the future — is most likely unsustainable," he told the crowd.

An elderly amputee expressed concern about the impact on younger veterans.

"Now, I'm pretty senior, so probably I'm OK," retired Col. Stan Thomas said. "But there's a lot of [younger] folks in this room that fall into another category. They're at risk."

Hagel was also asked about the deteriorating security situation in Iraq, and whether the sacrifices of those who took part in Operation Iraqi Freedom were in vain.

"In eight years we did accomplish what we set out to do," Hagel said. "If we analyzed what Iraq is today versus what Iraq was when we went into Iraq, it's a different country ..."

"You all did what you were asked to do, and I think you did it as well as it could have been done

... So I don't agree with the analyses that lives were wasted at all. I just — I don't think that's true, and I think it's unfortunate that there are people out there saying that."

Hagel earlier toured the medical center — one of the military's premier facilities — and met with patients and staff. Brooke houses DOD's only burn center and only Level I trauma center in the United States. Its Center for the Intrepid specializes in advanced rehabilitative care for wounded warriors and has fostered technological breakthroughs.

Hagel later flew to Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, N.M., where he met with base officials

and toured Sandia National Laboratories, the engineering arm of the U.S. nuclear stockpile. Speak-

ing with reporters, he addressed former Defense Secretary Bob Gates' new memoir for the first time.

In the book, Gates is highly critical of President Barack Obama's handling of the war in Afghanistan and the White House's relationship with the military, according to journalists who were given pre-release copies. Gates led the Pentagon in 2006-11 during the Bush and Obama administrations.

Asked if it was inappropriate for a former defense secretary to publicly criticize the president he served, Hagel said, "I've never second-guessed motivations on why people do things ... I think it's up to each individual to make that judgment on his or her own."

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## US watchdog issues alert over Afghan dam project oversight

By HEATH DRUZIN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL — The top U.S. government watchdog for Afghanistan has issued an alert over what he calls "possible weaknesses" in the oversight of a troubled dam project that has become a symbol of America's fraught reconstruction effort in Afghanistan.

A letter from Special Inspector General For Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko raises concerns about lack of vetting power and access to the Kajaki Dam for the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has pledged \$75 million in direct aid to Afghanistan's national power utility to install an additional turbine at the site in the volatile southern province of Helmand.

"I am concerned that these oversight provisions are not as robust as they should be, which could make these funds more vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse," Sopko wrote in a letter addressed to USAID chief Rajiv Shah and USAID's Afghanistan director, William Hammink.

In response to a Stars and Stripes query, Hammink said the safeguards Sopko is asking for are already in the contract.

USAID has pledged nearly \$340 million in direct assistance — meaning U.S. funds going directly to the Afghan government without the use of intermediaries — to Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, Afghanistan's national utility. That includes the money for the turbine installation, intended to increase power production in southern Afghanistan.

The rest of the money is slated to go to the Power Transmission Expansion and Connectivity project, which is to improve Afghanistan's electrical transmission system.

According to Sopko, the PTEC money has more stringent oversight provisions than the money tied to the turbine, and he recommends adding those requirements to the turbine funds.

These are the three provisions from the PTEC contract Sopko recommended already in the turbine contract.

■ Under the PTEC agreement, USAID reviews all procurement actions, and the national utility must submit documentation related to contracting. USAID has the right to block procurement action if it has concerns about the documentation.

■ USAID has the right to vet organizations and individuals who may receive



MATT MILLHAM/Stars and Stripes

The Kajaki Dam and power station were begun by the U.S. in 1953 to bring development to southern Afghanistan. The dam has been turned over to Afghan control, but the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction has raised concern about "possible weaknesses" in the oversight of the project.

USAID funds related to the PTEC project.

■ USAID and its quality assurance contractor are guaranteed access to all Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat facilities, equipment and documents related to the PTEC project, including the utility's employees, authorized representatives, and organizations and people hired to work on the project.

Hammink contended that all three safeguards are already in the turbine contract.

■ USAID completely agrees with SIGAR's position that conditionalities similar to those that govern the USAID PTEC

project should also apply to the agreements that govern the Kajaki Dam Unit 2 Project," Hammink said in a statement emailed in response to a Stars and Stripes query. "In fact, such oversight provisions are already embedded within existing Strategic Objective Grant Agreement (SOAG) documents and the (Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat) contract with the Kajaki Unit 2 Project contractor."

The Kajaki Dam was built by the U.S. in the 1950s. The planned installation of three new turbines in the 1970s was halted by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which turned into a nine-year war.

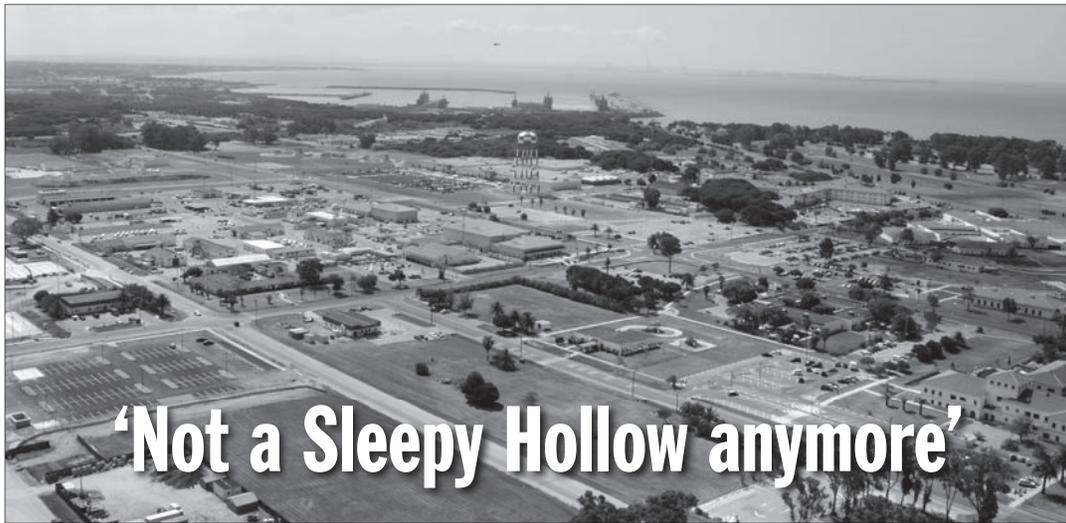
The dam sits in a violent corner of Helmand province, which has been, by far, the deadliest province for coalition troops in Afghanistan since the U.S.-led invasion of the country in October 2001.

The U.S. subsequently budgeted \$18 million for the third turbine, which was slated to be installed by 2005.

After going woefully over budget and taking years more than expected, USAID turned administration of the project over to the Afghan government last summer, but is still funding it.

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## EUROPE



Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

# 'Not a Sleepy Hollow anymore'

Established in 1953, Naval Station Activity Rota was a Cold War submarine port and logistical way station at the western edge of the Mediterranean Sea.

## Arrival of US missile destroyers to raise status of Rota, Mediterranean

By STEVEN BEARDSLEY  
Stars and Stripes

ROTA, Spain — The former Cold War submarine base in this sleepy town in southern Spain is about to experience a dramatic transformation — it will become the centerpiece of NATO's new ballistic missile defense shield stretching across southern and eastern Europe.

In February, the first of four U.S. Aegis missile destroyers, the USS Donald Cook, is scheduled to arrive here for permanent stationing. Another ship will come later in 2014, followed by two more in 2015. The Arleigh Burke-class ships, which are capable of shooting down ballistic missiles, will patrol the Mediterranean basin on four-month rotations on a mission to protect Europe from the threat of attack from Iran.

The program, known as the European Phased Adaptive Approach, is part of a wider NATO plan that includes land-based interceptor batteries in Romania and Poland and a radar system in Turkey. The plan has caused a major rift with Russia, which says the shield is aimed against its own nuclear missile arsenal.

Rota, located near the Strait of Gibraltar, will nearly double in population by the time the last ship arrives in 2015. The four vessels will bring more sailors and families to the town, as well as strategic significance as a base that is on the front lines of U.S. strategy in the region.

"We're not a Sleepy Hollow anymore," said base commanding officer Capt. Gregory S. Pekari.

Stationing the destroyers at Rota allows for their seamless rotation without draining manpower

because of long deployments from the United States, said Vice Adm. William Hunter Hilarides, head of the Naval Sea Systems Command.

"We've learned over a long time how long you can deploy people before they won't do it anymore," Hilarides said. "And so if you're going to have a lot of ships but still punch forward, punch above your weight forward, you've got to go change that dynamic."

The arrival of the ships coincides with increased U.S. interest in the Mediterranean and Africa, where an area of instability ranges from Syria to Egypt and across much of northern Africa, parts of which have become havens for militant groups. The Mediterranean also remains the gateway for U.S. deployments to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, where operations in Afghanistan and tensions with Iran have led to increased tours by carrier groups and smaller craft.

The four destroyers will significantly add to the number of ships controlled by the U.S. Sixth Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, a command that for years has had only its flagship, the USS Mount Whitney, as a permanent presence.

The U.S. established Rota in 1953 in a deal with Spanish dictator Francisco Franco in exchange for economic and military aid to the regime.

Located inside a 6,100-acre Spanish base on the Bay of Cadiz, the installation offered a way station for ships and aircraft transiting the Atlantic before entering the Mediterranean. In 1960, it received a squadron of Skywarrior reconnaissance jets.

Rota further expanded with

**'If it wasn't for (the American presence), in winter, there would be no business.'**

Juan Montoya Carpio  
Manager of a restaurant  
in downtown Rota, Spain

the arrival of the Polaris missile-wielding Submarine Squadron 16 from Charleston, S.C., in 1964.

With the growth of the base came an injection of American culture.

The first tattoo shop in the area opened soon after the first Americans came. Local bars filled with the arrival of ships, and residents watched as sailors flooded down Avenida San Fernando, the main drag between the base and downtown Rota. Marijo Resinas Verrano, who works for the town of Rota, remembered being warned by her parents as a teenager to stay inside.

"They told us, 'Don't go out! The fleet is here!'" she said, laughing.

But by 1979, the submarines had been redeployed to the U.S. East Coast. Anti-submarine and maritime patrol units continued, although the budget cuts of the 1990s slowed the pace of operations at Rota.

The base played a minor role in the logistical chain for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The military population began to fall in earnest in 2003 — having 12,000 personnel in the 1970s and '80s, Rota had dipped to 3,700 by 2008.

Fortunes outside the base fell about the same time. The global financial crisis revealed the country's troubled economy, forcing mortgages into foreclosure, businesses into bankruptcy and unemployment upward. The government cut military spending by 20 percent in the past four years.

It was against that dire backdrop that Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in 2011 announced the agreement for Rota to host a component of NATO's new ballistic missile shield. The four Aegis ships would join a radar unit in Turkey and the future "Aegis Ashore" launching sites in Romania and Poland.

Among the benefits to the Spanish economy are a \$276 million maintenance contract for a state-owned ship builder, Cadiz-based Navantia. Other benefits are expected to trickle into the surrounding economy. Roughly 1,200 sailors and 1,800 family members are expected with the ships, officials here say.

Many of Rota's 25,000 residents say they know relatives or family members who are putting long-vacant apartments back onto the market for rent. They say businesses in the town depend in part on Americans at the base and that an increase in population could only improve the local economy.

"It's very fundamental here," Juan Montoya Carpio, a manager at a downtown restaurant, said about the American presence. "If it wasn't for them, in winter, there would be no business."

Municipal officials said they have prepared to welcome the new arrivals. Earlier this year, a delegation visited Ramstein, Germany, home of a massive U.S. air base, to share ideas with city offi-

cials there about managing community relations with Americans, according to the city's tourism director, Ana Luna Peña. They came back with the idea of creating an "Office of Cooperation," a meeting place for both Americans and Spaniards to find help in dealing with each other.

Town officials also visited Norfolk in the summer to hold a town hall meeting for the Donald Cook sailors and their families.

"The aim is for them to live here, for them to make their life here," Peña said.

On base, changes have been minor because the infrastructure was already in place for larger populations, said Pekari, the base commander.

"The infrastructure, including the commissary and the exchange, which is fairly new, was all built upon the premise of the previous population in 2003," he said.

Some construction around the pier, including a weapons magazine and a warehouse for equipment for destroyers, is planned for the near future, Pekari said. By the end of 2013, the biggest outward change included the arrival of a maintenance detachment in December.

Speaking at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the detachment last month, Hilarides said the move played a significant part in what was coming to Rota.

"Simply put, this detachment is a very, very important underpinning for a strategic shift for the United States Navy," he said.

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MILITARY

# Gates' criticism highlights 'team of rivals' risk

## Memoir brings into question Obama's alleged insular approach to his Cabinet

By SCOTT WILSON  
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — In reminiscing about his time in office and the advice he has received along the way, President Barack Obama often cites an early warning passed on by the Washington veteran he decided to keep in his first Cabinet: Robert Gates.

"Every day," Gates told Obama in the first weeks of his presidency, "someone, somewhere, in the federal government is screwing up."

Now it turns out that Gates often believed that person was Obama — or, at least, some of those very close to him.

With the impending publication of a memoir that is critical of the president and some of his closest advisers, Gates has highlighted the risk some took by building a jostling, ambitious, big-intellect "team of rivals" to advise him.

The former defense secretary has called into question Obama's commitment to his Afghan War policy, criticized how political calculation influenced national security decisions and complained about the president's distrust of the uniformed military command.

An exercise in therapeutic truth-telling, perhaps, but also rough and in some ways unexpected treatment from a former friend.

Even before official publication next week, the reception of "Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War" is splitting along partisan lines, reinforcing and deepening the perceptions of the administration that have hardened over the years.

Conservatives see a politically motivated White House and a president who couldn't decide what to do in Afghanistan, choosing a half-measure and escape plan instead of a strategy to win. Liberals see a president unafraid of the military and eager to reflect the country's growing anti-war sentiment, focusing instead on economic problems at home.

In that sense, Obama probably faces his most lasting political damage from the account. But there are other implications that go to the personality of this president and of his senior advisers.

Since taking office, Obama and his most loyal inner circle, small and largely stagnant in composition over the years, have been accused of insularity at best, and a paranoid "us vs. them" mentality at worst.

Only veterans of Obama's U.S. Senate office or of his surprising victory in the 2008 Iowa caucuses

### Biden is defended by the White House

WASHINGTON — Current and former White House officials are defending Vice President Joe Biden against criticism by former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who writes in his memoir that Biden was "wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades."

"The president and the rest of us here simply disagree with that assessment," White House press secretary Jay Carney said Wednesday.

Carney and former advisers to President Barack Obama also disputed Gates' assertion that Obama had lost confidence in his strategy for the conflict in Iraq and that White House aides tried to micromanage military affairs.

"I never heard him express those feelings to the president or to the situations that I was involved in and I think it's unfortunate," Bill Daley, Obama's former chief of staff, said about Gates on Wednesday.

From Bloomberg News

were trusted implicitly as the administration took shape. Others — but only a very few others — worked their way in with loyalty and long hours.

But just as the Gates memoir is reinforcing partisan views about Obama, it may also serve as a kind of vindication of the opinion that only a select few longtime advisers can be trusted to serve him.

In the memoir, Gates writes that he was "put off by the way the president closed the meeting," referring to one devoted to Iran's nuclear program and Israel's concerns about it.

"To his very closest advisers, he said, 'For the record, and for those of you writing your memoirs, I am not making any decisions about Israel or Iran. Joe will be my witness,'" Gates writes of Obama. "I was offended by his suspicion that any of us would ever write about such sensitive matters."

White House officials say the feeling in the West Wing about Gates' assertions is a sense of disappointment more than betrayal.

"The irony is that the very diverse range of views that have been represented in the national security team undermines the notion of insularity he writes about," one senior administration official said, requesting anonymity, to speak about the internal process.



Courtesy of the White House

President Barack Obama and then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates walk from the Oval Office to the Old Family Dining Room for a working lunch with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2009.

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PACIFIC

# Group wants Futenma returned to Okinawa

By ERIC SLAVIN  
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A group of prominent academics, filmmakers and activists is calling on the United States and Japan to return Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to Okinawa and scrap plans to build a replacement facility on the island.

The 29 signatories to a statement issued this week include filmmakers Oliver Stone and Michael Moore; professor and author Noam Chomsky; Nobel Peace Prize recipient Mairead Maguire; Pentagon Papers figure Daniel Ellsberg; and several academics and authors active in anti-nuclear and anti-war causes.

Their statement follows Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima's decision to sign off on landfill work that will allow a runway to be built in the island's remote Henoko district, despite local opposition to any plan that maintains the Marine helicopter base on Okinawa.

"We support the people of Okinawa in their non-violent struggle for peace, dignity, human rights and protection of the environment," according to the statement. "The Henoko marine base project must be canceled and Futenma returned forthwith to the people of Okinawa."

Japan and the U.S. have been trying since the 1990s to find a replacement for Futenma. Decades of growth in the surrounding city of Ginowan have left the base in the middle of a densely populated area. A helicopter crash in 2004 at a nearby university did not injure anyone on the ground, but it stoked continuing fears among island residents.

However, attempts to relocate the base offshore near Henoko has drawn criticism from ac-

tivists protesting both the U.S. military presence and the environmental impact of a new base at Oura Bay. In 2006, the two nations came up with a new plan to use landfill to connect a runway to existing land, but that too has been delayed by political opposition until now.

A telephone poll sponsored by three Japanese media outlets in mid-December — after news had circulated that Nakaima was leaning toward approving the permit — found that 64 percent of Okinawa residents opposed the Henoko plan. The same poll showed Nakaima's approval rating at 57 percent, an indication that the Henoko plan might not be the majority's foremost concern.

Joseph Gerson, one of the signers and a director of the American Friends Service Committee, told Stars and Stripes that the Henoko plans are part of a pattern of abuse of Okinawan rights that began during Japan's imperial past, then spanned the U.S. military occupation and subsequent reversion to Japan in 1972.

"Okinawans are being pressed to continue paying these prices and more for decades to come," Gerson said. "That is unacceptable." Masashi Nishihara, president of the Research Institute for Peace and Security, a Tokyo think tank, called the signatories "irresponsible people" with a track record of criticizing the U.S. government for nearly everything. Nishihara said the prominence of the signatories concerned him enough to hope that U.S. officials would issue a rebuttal.

"If U.S. military withdrew from Okinawa, it would create enormous instability ... threatening the security of Japan, Okinawa and the entire region," he said.

The U.S. keeps a large military



GREG BAKER/AP

**A C-130 transport plane taxis at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma on Okinawa in 2012. A group of activists and others want the U.S. to drop plans for a replacement facility on Okinawa.**

force in Okinawa because of its proximity to nearly every potential hot spot in the western Pacific region. Jets can quickly reach Taiwan in the event of a clash with China, as well as South Korea if Pyongyang launches an attack. Navy vessels and aircraft can patrol the East and South China seas, where territorial disputes between China and several other nations have provoked maritime incidents and caused both China and Japan to scramble their fighter jets during the past year.

Marines based in Okinawa also regularly participate in aid missions to Southeast Asia, including relief operations in the Philippines in the aftermath of the dev-

astating Typhoon Haiyan.

The helicopters at Futenma transported those Marines and critical supplies. U.S. officials note that locating a Futenma replacement away from Okinawa would separate the Marines on Okinawa from their transport.

Last month, a senior Pentagon official called the Futenma replacement plan "the spine of the rebalance" of military forces in the Pacific. It is the first move in a plan that would send several thousand Marines — most of whom fulfill administrative functions — and their families, to Guam, lessening the military's large presence on the island.

Peter Kuznick, an American

University professor who signed the statement and co-authored "The Untold History of the United States" with Stone, said he believed not only that a Futenma replacement was unnecessary, but that troops on Okinawa were not needed.

Although critical of China's recent actions, which include assertive claims to much of the South China Sea and the declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone over Japanese-administered land, Kuznick said U.S. policy is encouraging Chinese nationalists to become more aggressive.

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# South Koreans' view of Japanese prime minister dims

By ASHLEY ROWLAND  
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is so unpopular in South Korea than even North Korean leader Kim Jong Un rated better in a recent poll.

Abe's Dec. 26 visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, which honors Japan's war dead, has plunged bilateral relations to a low point. A survey by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, conducted the week after Abe's visit, found that only 1.2 percent of respondents held a favorable opinion of the prime minister, compared with 1.9 percent for Kim.

Meanwhile, an overwhelming majority of South Koreans — 86.9 percent — now view Korea-Japan relations as "bad," with little difference in opinion because of age or political ideology, according to another Asan poll conducted Dec. 29-31. More than half of the 1,000

respondents expect relations to deteriorate further.

The dispute between two key U.S. allies was reportedly a topic of discussion during a meeting between South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry earlier this week in Washington.

To the disappointment of many South Koreans, Kerry did not address the Yasukuni issue during a news conference after the meeting, though Yun said the two "recognized the growing uncertainty pervading Northeast Asia in recent times."

"In particular, I pointed out that historical issues stand in the way of reconciliation and cooperation in this region, and I emphasized the need for sincere actions," Yun said in an apparent reference to Tokyo.

Japan's brutal colonization of the Korean peninsula and occupation of China before and during

World War II remain sore points with its neighbors, who believe Tokyo has not fully acknowledged its wrongdoings. Tokyo's possible expansion of the role of its defense-only forces has raised eyebrows in South Korea, where some believe Japan is returning to its militaristic past and could someday pose a threat to the region.

Forty-two percent of respondents said the Seoul-Tokyo dispute

over ownership of the Dokdo islets, called Takeshima in Japan, is the most important issue hurting the relationship, according to Asan. Thirty-three percent cited Japan's "distortion" of history, followed by the forced sexual slavery of Korean women during the Japanese occupation at 13.8 percent.

The survey also showed somewhat disparate attitudes toward Beijing, with nearly two-thirds

believing security cooperation with Japan would be necessary if China continues its rise. However, 74.5 percent said Seoul should cooperate with China to resolve historical grievances with Tokyo.

The survey also found that support for a Japan-South Korea summit had dropped by 8.6 percentage points since September to 49.5 percent.

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## EUROPE

## Cause of AF helicopter crash not determined

By ADAM L. MATHIS

Stars and Stripes

RAF LAKENHEATH, England — Two days after a U.S. Air Force helicopter crashed and killed its four crewmembers, officials are unable to say what caused the HH-60G Pave Hawk to go down near the town of Salthouse, England.

"It's still too early to speculate as to [what] caused the crash and make any long-term decisions based on that," said Col. Kyle W. Robinson, 48th Fighter Wing commander, speaking Thursday to reporters just outside one of RAF Lakenheath's gates.

Four airmen from the 56th Rescue Squadron were killed Tuesday when the helicopter crashed on a training mission.

Robinson said it was also too soon to decide whether any flight operations should be halted. He

said the 56th, which now has four Pave Hawks, is not scheduled to fly for the rest of the week. The 48th was to resume flying Thursday after having suspended flight operations out of respect.

A Norfolk, England, police spokeswoman said in a phone interview Thursday that the bodies of the airmen — Capt. Christopher S. Stover, Capt. Sean M. Ruane, Tech. Sgt. Dale E. Mathews and Staff Sgt. Afton M. Ponce — have been moved from the crash site and that the investigation has been handed over to the Air Force.

There was some concern that moving the bodies Wednesday would have interfered with the analysis of the crash site.

"The scene is on difficult ground, and the longer-term investigation and recovery work will take many more weeks," Chief Police Superintendent Bob

Scully said in a news release.

Robinson did not have exact numbers on the airmen's length of service, but he said the crew had been in the Air Force "from a couple of years" to more than 16 or 17 years.

"There is a range of experience levels and, in general ... some of the more experienced people will fly with the less experienced people, and this crew is no different," Robinson said. "They're all highly qualified in what they did and capable."

There was talk in Salthouse on Wednesday that something didn't sound right when the helicopters flew over before the crash. However, Robinson said he was not aware of the base receiving communications from the helicopter indicating anything was wrong before the crash.

Some concern also has been expressed about low-flying training

missions such as the one the helicopter was on when it crashed. A local government official was reported in The Guardian newspaper as saying that flying so close to a bird breeding ground was an "accident waiting to happen."

"Obviously we take great care to make sure we operate in the safest fashion, and all of the rules and missions that they follow are the standard ones followed by the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence, Robinson said.

The crash scattered ammunition over a wide area, and local police have asked the public to respect a cordon while the ammunition is retrieved. Robinson said the helicopter was carrying 600 rounds of .50-caliber bullets and 15 rounds of 9 mm bullets for use at a nearby range.

Stover is survived by his wife, Sarah, and parents. The Columbian newspaper in Washington

state quoted Stover's father as saying that his son died "doing what he truly enjoyed, flying."

Ruane's mother, Marcia Ruane, told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that her son was "a good kid, a good son and a wonderful brother." Ruane is survived by his wife, Rachel, and his son, Liam.

NBC affiliate WNDU in Indiana reported that Mathews was due to retire from the Air Force in a few months. He is survived by a his wife, two children and two stepchildren.

"We feel cheated," Larry Gussman, Mathews' stepfather, told WNDU. "And I say that because Dale was in Desert Storm, he was in Iraqi Freedom and he got through all of that, and then to die in a stupid silly training exercise. We just feel cheated."

More information on Ponce was not available.

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## US Navy health study consulted in Italian toxic dumping probe

By STEVEN BEARDSLEY

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Prosecutors here are consulting a U.S. Navy health study as part of an investigation into allegations of toxic waste dumping across the Naples region by mob-linked companies, Italian media reported Wednesday.

For decades, the organized crime syndicate Camorra has been dumping toxic waste on a swath of land just north of Naples. Environmental investigators have discovered thousands of dumping sites in recent years, and a 2004 British study pointed to higher cancer rates in one area, dubbed the "Triangle of Death."

The Navy study, conducted in the Naples region and at two U.S. bases between 2008 and 2009, looked at the health risks to Navy personnel living on the base and in the surrounding area. It concluded that contaminated wells were one

of the biggest health risks.

Local interest in the U.S. study has risen in recent months after new dumping claims by a former mob boss who was once active in the area. The Italian newspaper L'Espresso published an article in November suggesting that results from Navy testing confirmed the mobster's claims of dumping toxic and radioactive waste in certain areas across the region.

According to Wednesday's media reports, the anti-mafia task force is reviewing the U.S. study alongside local water testing from 2009 to 2013 and materials from the regional government.

A spokesman for the Navy base said the command has had no interaction with Naples prosecutors and that the health study has long been available on a public website.

After the L'Espresso article, titled "Drink Naples and Die," base commander Capt. Scott Gray held

a town hall meeting with Navy personnel in an effort to assuage growing concerns. He later met with the Caserta provincial president and the Naples mayor to discuss the study.

The Navy launched its study in 2007 after a prolonged garbage pileup in the city resulted in widespread fires at trash dumps, spurring fears of toxic fumes in the air.

Inspectors sampled tap water,

well water and soil at 543 off-base homes across the Naples area, as well as both bases — Capodichino, the headquarters of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, and the Support Site at Gricignano, where families live on base. They tested air quality at several areas and looked at health indicators among the U.S. population, such as birth defects, cancer rates and asthma severity.

They concluded that on-base

personnel were in no particular danger based on the length of the average tour at the base. Yet base officials created several restriction zones for American leases, largely due to contaminated wells, one of the biggest risks found in the study. Officials also required off-base tenants to receive bottled water in every lease.

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## Italy charges US soldier with sexually assaulting girl, 17

Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — A soldier with the 173rd Infantry Combat Brigade Team (Airborne) has been charged by Italian authorities with sexually assaulting a teenage girl, officials confirmed.

"We're aware of the charges," said Maj. Mike Weisman, a spokesman for the brigade. "We are participating fully with Italian authorities."

The soldier accused of the crime, whose name was not released, was not in Italian custody and had been returned to duty status, Weisman said.

The local Italian newspaper, Vicenza Giornale, reported Dec. 30 that the Vicenza prosecutor was investigating the soldier, 21, on

charges of kidnapping and sexual assault. According to the newspaper, the alleged crimes occurred in November.

The newspaper said the girl had been out at a local disco near Caserme Ederle, headquarters of U.S. Army Garrison Vicenza, before, she said, she was accosted and assaulted in a secluded area.

According to reports, the girl, 17, is a third-country national, Weisman said. He declined to specify her nationality.

It was unclear what would happen with the case. The U.S. military usually requests jurisdiction in criminal cases involving servicemembers even when alleged crimes occur off-post. It is not always granted, however.

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MILITARY

# Amid prisoner dispute, Karzai orders release

By KEVIN SIEFF  
The Washington Post

KABUL — The Afghan government said Thursday it will release 72 high-profile detainees, a decision that defies pleas by U.S. officials and deals a massive blow to U.S.-Afghan relations just as the two countries attempt to complete a long-term security agreement.

U.S. officials say the prisoners pose a threat to both Afghan security and American servicemembers based here, claiming their exoneration proves not only the dysfunction of the Afghan judiciary, but also the government's inability to cooperate on even the gravest matters.

The country is still on track to expel at least one reporter for the second year in a row.

President Hamid Karzai declared Thursday that the evidence against the 72 men — which had been collected by both the Afghan intelligence service and the U.S. military — was insufficient to warrant formal trials, according to a statement from the president's office.

The release, which is expected within days, was ordered after a "thorough and serious review of the prisoners," the statement said. To keep the detainees behind bars, U.S. officials had handed

over reams of evidence against them — enough, they said they assumed, to justify formal trials.

Presidential spokesman Aimal Faizi said Karzai and a panel of senior officials had decided that was not the case. "The Americans didn't have any proof against them," Faizi said.

Bilateral relations, tense before the prisoner release, are expected to worsen, casting doubt on a pact that would permit U.S. troops to remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

"Release of these individuals by the Afghan Review Board undermines Afghan rule of law, because the Afghan people do not get their day in court," said Col. David Lapan, a spokesman for the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force.

Karzai officials said the Afghan president was not concerned with the Bilateral Security Agreement when he chose to release the 72 prisoners.

"They are two separate issues," Faizi said.

The 72 prisoners slated for release were part of a group of 88. The other 16 will face trial in the coming weeks. Collectively, U.S. officials said, those 88 men killed 60 members of the U.S.-led coalition. They added that many detainees previously released by the Afghans have returned to the battlefield.

# Ex-Guantanamo detainee suspected in Benghazi raid

By ADAM GOLDMAN  
The Washington Post

U.S. officials suspect a former Guantanamo Bay detainee played a role in the attack on the American compound in Benghazi, Libya, and are planning to designate the group he leads as a foreign terrorism organization, according to officials familiar with the plans.

Militiamen under the command of Abu Sudan bin Qumu, the leader of Ansar al-Sharia in the Libyan city of Darnah, participated in the attack that killed U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans, U.S. officials said.

Witnesses have told American officials that Qumu's men were in Benghazi before the attack took place on Sept. 11, 2011, according to the officials. It's unclear if they were there as part of a pre-planned attack or out of happenstance. The drive from Darnah to Benghazi takes several hours.

The State Department is expected to tie Qumu's group to the Benghazi attack when it des-

ignates three branches of Ansar al-Sharia in Darnah, Tunisia and Benghazi as foreign terrorism organizations in the coming days.

Qumu and two other individuals, including militia leaders Ahmed Abu Khattala and Seif Allah bin Hassine, also will be identified as "specially designated global terrorists," a determination that allows U.S. officials to freeze their financial assets and to bar American citizens and companies from doing business with them.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the developments.

About a dozen criminal complaints have been filed in the Benghazi case, with more expected. U.S. intelligence officials have said several militias had a hand in the Benghazi attack. Some of those individuals charged so far are from Darnah, although it's not clear if they are tied to Qumu's group. Khattala has already been named in a criminal complaint.



Army Spc. Brent Hendrix stretches with the help of physical therapy technician Staff Sgt. Sara Sutton at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington in 2008.

# Units: Closings come as casualties decline

FROM FRONT PAGE

"Fortunately, the population of wounded, ill and injured soldiers across the Army has steadily declined over the last 14 months," Brig. Gen. David Bishop, commander of Army Warrior Transition Command, said Thursday at the Pentagon, according to prepared remarks. "There are 7,070 soldiers assigned to Warrior Transition Units and Community Based Warrior Transition Units as of Jan. 2, down from a high of 12,551 in June 2008."

The units to be inactivated are at Fort Irwin, Calif.; Fort Huachuca, Ariz.; Fort Jackson, S.C.; Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.; and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

The units slated to disappear are ones that have shrunk significantly as the character of the war in Afghanistan has changed. The largest of the units had 36 troops as of last week, and most had fewer than 10, all of whom will be moved to other units, Bishop said.

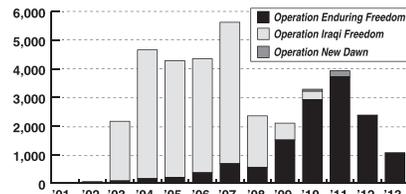
"Soldiers and their families assigned to these WTUs will undergo a deliberate transition process," Bishop said. "They will remain at the center of our focus and will continue to receive care and transition assistance." Guard and reserve soldiers transitioning into the new Community Care Centers will remain in their homes and will continue to receive care through the Tri-care network, Army officials said. Unlike the current CBWTUs, the new units will all be on Army bases alongside existing Wounded Warrior Battalions.

Bishop said bringing WTUs and CBWTUs closer together would simplify administration and would allow the units to take advantage of base command structures and installation support systems. The Army is aiming for the new structure to be as transparent as possible to soldiers, who will "as much as possible, have the same experience," he said.

The changes come at a time of dramatically falling numbers of dead and wounded following the end of the war in Iraq and the drawdown of troops in Afghanistan. There, Afghan troops are increasingly taking the lead in combat operations in preparation

## Fewer wounded coming home

With the Iraq War long since concluded, and the number of U.S. wounded in Afghanistan dropping, the Army announced the realignment of its Warrior Transition Units. A look at statistics on wounded soldiers:



SOURCE: Defense Casualty Analysis System Stars and Stripes

for the official end of Operation Enduring Freedom on Dec. 31.

In 2013, the Defense Casualty Analysis System reported 1,074 Army troops wounded in action, down from 2,380 in 2012 and 3,930 in 2011, the last year of the Iraq War. In the Army's worst year from the recent conflicts, 5,627 soldiers were wounded in action and 724 were killed as fighting raged in Iraq in 2007.

That year, following a scandal over poor conditions for wounded veterans at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, the Army established Warrior Transition Units in an effort to improve care for soldiers who need long-term recuperation.

Then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates fired Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey in March 2007 as a result of the Walter Reed scandal, while the Army replaced Lt. Gen. Kevin C. Kiley — a former commander at the medical center who stepped in after the scandal broke — just a day after he was named temporary commander.

While WTUs are structured similarly to traditional Army units, soldiers assigned to them spend their time going to medical appointments, doing physical rehabilitation, meeting with behavioral health therapists, playing sports, and other activities designed solely to aid in recovery.

The units themselves have not been without controversy, with news accounts highlighting prob-

lems such as overmedication, disrespectful treatment by NCOs, depression and idleness. The Army has fought such characterizations, citing a survey at the Fort Carson Warrior Transition Unit — singled out in a New York Times article — that indicated 90 percent of the troops there were satisfied with the level of care.

Thursday's announcement is not the first time the Army has trimmed Warrior Transition Units. In 2009, when the number of troops in the units had fallen from more than 12,000 to 9,500, the Army cut three WTUs at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., Fort Rucker and Redstone Arsenal, Ala., and restructured six others.

Currently, the Army reported, 9 percent of troops in the units are there because of combat wounds. Another 40 percent have deployment-related illnesses or injuries, while 4 percent have PTSD as a primary diagnosis. The others are nursing a variety of injuries and illnesses not directly related to the war, but the Army pointed out that 84 percent of troops in the WTUs have deployed during their careers.

Overall, more than 58,000 troops have passed through WTUs since they were created, and more than 28,000 have returned to the force, the Army said.

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## MILITARY

# Franklin will lose a star upon retirement

By NANCY MONTGOMERY  
Stars and Stripes

Third Air Force commander Lt. Gen. Craig Franklin will lose a star when he retires at the end of the month.

Franklin, whose decision last year to dismiss a sexual assault conviction led Congress to curb commander authority in the military justice system, and who announced his upcoming retirement on Wednesday, will be retired as a major general, officials said.

That's because Franklin will have served only 22 months as a lieutenant general when he retires effective Feb. 1. The law requires three years of time-in-grade for military officers' retirement purposes.

Franklin said in a statement that he was retiring "for the good of this command and the Air Force."

His statement said that for



Franklin

nearly a year his assignment as a court-martial convening authority had been questioned publicly and repeatedly. "The last thing I want in this command, is for people to feel they cannot bring a sexual assault case forward or feel it won't be dealt with fairly," his statement said. "In addition, public scrutiny will likely occur on every subsequent case I deal with."

Three weeks ago, Stars and Stripes reported that top Air Force officials had moved for a sexual assault case to be reinvestigated after Franklin, in concert with his legal adviser, had decided

against a court-martial.

For nearly a year, Franklin has been a lightning rod in the debate over military sexual assault and how best to address it. In February, he dismissed a court-martial jury's sexual assault conviction of then-Lt. Col. James Wilkerson, sprung the Aviano, Italy-based fighter pilot from jail and reinstated him into the Air Force.

The law governing general officer retirements — Title 10 U.S.C., Section 1370(a)(2)(A) — does

allow for exceptions for the time-in-grade requirements.

"The Secretary of Defense may waive the three-year time-in-grade requirement in instances where the general officer concerned has at least two years time-in-grade," according to the Senior Leaders Handbook for General Officers.

Additionally, the president may waive the requirement for general officers with less than two years of time-in-grade in "individual cases

involving extreme hardship or exceptional or unusual circumstances cases," the handbook says.

Franklin will not request a waiver, said Lt. Col. Paul Baldwin, a spokesman for U.S. Air Forces in Europe.

Franklin's retirement as a major general must be approved by the Air Force secretary, according to Lt. Col. Laurel Tingley, an Air Force spokeswoman.

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## Despite cuts, brass will keep pensions

By TOM VANDEN BROOK  
USA Today

WASHINGTON — Top military brass will keep their specially boosted pensions despite the December budget deal that trimmed pension rates for other military retirees, Pentagon officials said Tuesday.

In 2007, Congress passed a Pentagon-sponsored proposal that boosted retirement benefits for three- and four-star admirals and generals, allowing them to make more in retirement than they did on active duty. The Pentagon had requested the change in 2003 to help retain senior officers as the military was fighting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and wanted to entice officers to remain on active duty.

That means a four-star officer retiring with 40 years of experience would receive a pension of \$237,144, according to the Pentagon.

Base pay for active-duty top officers is \$181,501, according to Navy Lt. Cmdr. Kate Christensen, a Pentagon spokesman. Housing and other allowances can boost their compensation an additional third.

Last month's budget deal reduces cost-of-living adjustments, COLAs, by 1 percentage point a year until retirees reach age 62. At 62, the full COLA will return and pensions will bounce back to their full value.

The plan is estimated to save \$6 billion.

Currently, after 20 years of service, regardless of age, a military retiree qualifies for a pension amounting to 50 percent of final pay with an additional 2.5 percentage points for each year of service beyond 20.

The deal does not affect the 2007 enhancement for top pension, which has allowed pension rates for these officers to spike. Figures for 2011 show that a four-star officer retiring with 38 years of experience received a yearly pension of about \$219,600, a jump of \$84,000, or 63 percent beyond what was previously allowed.

A three-star officer with 35 years of experience would get about \$169,200 a year, up about \$39,000, or 30 percent.

Before the law was changed, the typical pension for a retired four-star officer was \$134,400.

A few officers top 40 years of service in part because the years spent at military academies is counted toward their pension.

In 2011, the Pentagon noted that the highest pension, \$272,892, was paid to a retired four-star officer with 43 years of service.

Since 2011, however, Pentagon officials have acknowledged that the military is top-heavy with brass and senior officials.

Then-Defense secretary Robert Gates announced a plan to eliminate positions for 102 generals and admirals.

Since then, 70 have been cut, others will leave when their combat assignments end and some jobs have been reassigned to lower ranks, according to the Pentagon.

Reasons for keeping pensions high for top brass is diminishing, said Loren Thompson, a military analyst at the Lexington Institute and a defense industry consultant.

"Elevating pension benefits to retain generals in wartime might make sense, but the next time we go to war most of the senior officers in the force today will be retired," Thompson said.

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NATION

# Obama may limit NSA phone records access

By JULIE PACE

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama is expected to rein in spying on foreign leaders and is considering restricting National Security Agency access to Americans' phone records, according to people familiar with a White House review of the government's surveillance programs.

Obama could unveil his decisions as early as next week. On Thursday, the president will discuss his review with congressional lawmakers, while his top lawyer plans to meet with privacy groups. Representatives from tech companies are meeting with White House staff Friday.

The White House said Obama is still collecting information before making final decisions.

Among the changes Obama is expected to announce is more oversight of the National Intelligence Priorities Framework, a classified document that ranks U.S. intelligence-gathering priorities and is used to make decisions on scrutiny of foreign leaders. A presidential review board has recommended increasing the number of policy officials who help establish those priorities, and that could result in limits on surveillance of allies.

Documents released by former NSA systems analyst Edward Snowden revealed that the U.S. was monitoring the communica-

tions of several friendly foreign leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The revelations outraged Merkel as well as other leaders, and U.S. officials say the disclosures have damaged Obama's relations around the world.

Obama and Merkel spoke by phone Wednesday, but U.S. officials would not say whether they discussed the NSA issues.

The president also is said to be considering one of the review board's most aggressive recommendations — a proposal to strip the NSA of its ability to store telephone records from millions of Americans and instead have phone companies or a third party hold the records. The NSA would

be able to access the records only by obtaining separate court approval for each search, though exceptions could be made in the case of a national security emergency.

It's unclear whether Obama will ultimately back the proposal or how quickly it could be carried out if he does.

Before making his final decisions, the president was supposed to receive a separate report from a semi-independent commission known as the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, which was created by Congress.

However, that panel's report has been delayed without explanation until at least late January, meaning it won't reach the president until after he makes his decisions

public. Members of that oversight board met with Obama on Wednesday and have briefed other administration officials on some of their preliminary findings.

In a statement, the five-member panel said its meeting with the president focused on the NSA phone collection program and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which oversees the data sweeps.

It's unclear why Obama will announce his recommendations before receiving the report from the privacy and civil liberties board. One official familiar with the review process said some White House officials were puzzled by the board's delay.

## President at odds with Congress over Iran sanctions

By BRADLEY KLAPPER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration enters the year locked in a battle with Congress over whether to plow ahead with new economic sanctions against Iran or cautiously wait to see if last year's breakthrough nuclear agreement holds.

The new sanctions, widely endorsed by both Republican and Democratic lawmakers, would blacklist several Iranian industrial sectors and threaten banks and companies around the world with being banned from the U.S. market if they help Iran export any more oil. The provisions would take effect only if Tehran violates the interim nuclear deal or lets it expire without a follow-up accord.

The House already approved similar legislation last July by a 400-20 vote and would likely pass the new sanctions by an overwhelming margin. The Obama administration, fearful of squandering a historic diplomatic opportunity to end the nuclear crisis, has succeeded so far in holding off a Senate vote.

The standoff has prompted sharp criticism from both sides.

The Nov. 24 agreement "makes a nuclear Iran more likely," argued Republican Sen. Marco Rubio.

The deal "falls short of what is necessary for security and stability in the region," added Democratic Sen. Mary Landrieu.

White House press secretary Jay Carney has accused lawmakers of trying to spoil negotiations in Geneva as part of a "march to war."

All want to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. But the prevention strategies differ strikingly over the role additional sanctions might play as negotiators try to end the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran.



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Secretary of State John Kerry testifies before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in the hope of persuading Congress not to forge any new economic sanctions on Iran.

### Argument for new sanctions

Many Republicans and Democrats in Congress criticize the Geneva deal as unbalanced: some \$7 billion in sanctions relief to Iran for merely freezing, not dismantling, parts of its nuclear program.

With the ink barely dry, key lawmakers launched their sanctions push, backed by powerful pro-Israel lobbying groups. Sanctions proponents say they must act to prevent Iran from acquiring new nuclear "rights" through the agreement and permanently benefiting from eased economic conditions. With companies looking to invest in Iran again, they say the threat of future economic restrictions prevents the Iranian government from raking in new cash for nuclear-related activity.

Also, Iran's nuclear record is replete with deception. Its approach to negotiations is often compared with North Korea's before it became a nuclear power a decade ago. The sanctions bill would require the Obama administration to certify Iran's adherence to the nuclear deal every 30 days. Without that certification, the new sanctions start immediately — without the need for additional diplomatic talks or congressional hearings.

### Argument against sanctions

The Obama administration says the point of sanctions was to pressure Iran into negotiating limits on its nuclear program. Now that Iran is doing that, U.S. officials say fresh sanctions are pointless and perhaps counterproductive as the world tests Iran. Congress, they warn, is providing ammunition to Iranian hard-liners who want to undermine President Hassan Rouhani's more moderate approach. Billions of dollars in U.S. sanctions remain in force already, and if Iran cheats or diplomacy fails, more sanctions could always come then.

As part of the interim deal, the U.S. promised Iran no new nuclear-related economic penalties for six months. A new round of sanctions, even though conditionally suspended, may stop short of breaking the agreement but could push Iran to quit negotiations — or issue its own threats of future action. Neither response serves U.S. national interests, administration officials say. America's international partners, who've invested years trying to resolve the crisis peacefully, could also blame Washington and question U.S. laws against investing in Iran.

## Unemployment benefits extension debated in Senate

By PAUL KANE

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday haggled over competing proposals to extend unemployment benefits for the long-term jobless, with negotiators searching for a compromise that could extend the existing program for a longer period than currently envisioned.

Republicans, who provided a key bloc of six votes to keep the legislation alive Tuesday, offered several proposals for offsetting budget cuts that would match the more than \$6.4 billion it would cost for a three-month extension of the benefits program. Democrats continued to oppose the alternative budget cuts to justify such a short extension, but they opened the door to finding cuts if the extension was longer.

"Let's try to figure out a way to do it for a year," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said late Wednesday. Reid cited "productive" discussions on the issue with Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, one of the six Republicans who voted to advance the legislation.

Speaking after Reid, Portman laid out his own proposal that would bar people from receiving jobless benefits while also drawing federal unemployment payments for those who lose work owing to injury on the job. His plan would bring an estimated \$5.4 billion in savings, almost enough to match the short-term extension of unemployment benefits. "I'm hopeful we'll be able to make progress on this," Portman said.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., also one of the six Republicans, offered another proposal meant to rein in fraud among illegal immigrants taking advantage of child tax credits.

In late December, a federal law expired that allowed for emergency extensions of unemployment benefits beyond the usual 26 weeks. That shifted 1.3 million unemployed off the insurance program, and many more will run up against the normal limits and lose benefits throughout the year.

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## NATION

# DA: Coaching given in false claims scam

The Associated Press

**NEW YORK** — When dozens of former police officers and firefighters sought disability benefits, advisers provided a playbook for faking mental illness — how to describe daily routines of languishing dysfunction, flunk simple concentration tests convincingly, dress down for benefits interviews, even how to link their supposed symptoms to 9/11, prosecutors say.

The decades-long scam netted more than \$20 million in Social Security disability payments for

more than 100 people and tens of thousands of dollars in kickbacks for the benefits experts who helped them, the Manhattan district attorney's office said this week in unveiling a case that points up the complicated role consultants play in a system that helps sustain more than 10 million people nationwide.

Experts say advisers can give people valuable help in understanding what's needed, compiling information and navigating bureaucratic complexities. But they acknowledge the boundary

between explaining and gaming the system can be tricky, and sometimes crossed.

"A lot of times, a person really does need a lawyer or someone to guide them through the system. But once you have that, they have a financial interest in the case succeeding," said Dr. David Reiss, a San Diego, Calif., psychiatrist who has evaluated first responders and other applicants for disability, workers' compensation and other benefits. At times, he thinks consultants' conduct begs a question: "Where's the line between helping

someone to express what's going on emotionally, and where is it planting seeds?"

In the New York case, benefits advisers Joseph Esposito, Thomas Hale and John Minerva and lawyer Raymond Lavallee are accused of supplying a veritable forest of fibs.

Many applicants had physical injuries that qualified them for police or firefighter disability pensions, but not for federal disability benefits that require being unable to work at any job for at least a year, District Attorney Cyrus R.

Vance Jr. said.

Esposito, a retired officer who'd gotten the benefits himself, told applicants to claim psychiatric problems stemming from their work, often specifically from their response to the Sept. 11 attacks, according to prosecutors.

And, they said, he detailed how to do it.

"They're liable to say ... 'Spell the word "world" so you go, 'W.R.L-D.'" Esposito told one applicant preparing to meet with benefits officials, according to prosecutors' court papers.



MEL EVANS/AP

**New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, seen sitting with students at Colin Powell Elementary School in Union City, N.J., on Tuesday, faces a big political test over revelations that members of his administration may have closed highway lanes to exact political retribution.**

## Christie fires key aide linked to lane-closing controversy

BY ANGELA DELLI SANTI  
AND GEOFF MULVIHILL

The Associated Press

**TRENTON, N.J.** — Gov. Chris Christie on Thursday apologized to his constituents and said he was "embarrassed and humiliated" by his staff, one day after emails and text messages revealed his administration may have closed highway lanes to exact political retribution.

Christie also said he was firing Deputy Chief of Staff Bridget Anne Kelly, "because she lied to me." Kelly is the latest casualty in a widening scandal that threatens to upend Christie's second term and likely run for president in 2016. Documents show she arranged traffic jams to punish the mayor, who didn't endorse Christie for re-election.

The revelations thrust a regional issue into a national conversation raising new questions about the ambitious governor's leadership on the eve of a second term designed to jumpstart his road to the White House.

The messages do not directly implicate Christie, but they contradicted his assertions that the

### Email exchange

"Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee."

*Email from Bridget Anne Kelly, a deputy chief of staff in the governor's office, to Port Authority officials.*

"Got it."

*Response from David Wildstein, a political intimate of the governor's.*

From The Washington Post

closings were not punitive and that his staff was not involved.

Christie acknowledged Thursday that was a lie, because his staff didn't tell him what they had done.

The messages were obtained by news organizations amid a state-house investigation into whether the lane closings that led to the tie-ups were retribution against the mayor of Fort Lee for not endorsing Christie for re-election last fall.

"Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee," Kelly wrote

in August in a message to David Wildstein, a top Christie appointee on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. A few weeks later, Wildstein closed two of three lanes connecting Fort Lee to the heavily-traveled George Washington Bridge, which goes into New York City.

Beyond the specifics of the lane closings, critics suggest the incident reflects a darker side of Christie's brand of politics that contradicts the image he'd like to project as he eyes the presidency.

The governor repeatedly sidestepped criticism that he bullied adversaries in an overwhelming re-election victory in November. Facing a little-known and underfunded opponent, he cast himself as a different kind of Republican: a compromising, consensus builder who ultimately earned strong support from minorities, union members and even many Democrats.

It was described as the opening argument for Christie's prospective White House run. That argument is now clouded, at least temporarily, during one of the most important transitions of his political career.

## Giffords skydives on shooting anniversary

The Associated Press

**TUCSON, Ariz.** — Three years after being shot in the head at a political gathering, Gabrielle Giffords is still learning how to walk and talk again. That didn't stop her from jumping out of a plane in a tandem skydive to commemorate the attack and how far she's come.

Across the city of Tucson on Wednesday, others gathered for bell-ringing and flag-raising ceremonies to remember the six killed and 13 injured, including Giffords, on Jan. 8, 2011, as the former Arizona congresswoman met with constituents outside a grocery store.

Giffords waved and blew kisses to a crowd at a skydiving site south of Phoenix after successfully landing without injury.

"Gabby" landed beautifully. Happy she's safe. So proud of her bravery," Giffords' husband, former astronaut Mark Kelly, wrote on his Twitter account after the tandem jump with his wife strapped to a professional skydiver.

"She was the least nervous person on the plane," said Jimmy Hatch, a former Navy SEAL who accompanied Giffords along with others. "They did a little moment

of silence at the drop zone ... The emotion was really heavy. Then she smiled and said, 'Let's go.'"

Vice President Joe Biden's office said he called Giffords on Wednesday to wish her good luck.

"Gabby's courage & determination has been absolutely inspirational,"

Biden wrote on his office's Twitter account. "Giffords' jump was to be broadcast Thursday on NBC's "Today" show."

In Tucson, about 100 residents attended a ceremony outside the University of Arizona Medical Center, where the injured were treated. A bell was rung once for each victim as the Rev. Joe Fitzgerald spoke to the crowd.

"Today, we gather to remember the tragic day three years ago when our community was deeply wounded," he said.

Other ceremonies and moments of silence took place across the city.



Giffords

## Trial set in vehicle deaths

Los Angeles Times

**LOS ANGELES** — The man accused of using his car to kill an Italian honeymooner and injure 17 people on the Venice Boardwalk in August will stand trial for murder and other charges, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Antonio Barreto Jr. found there was sufficient evidence for Nathan Louis Campbell, 38, a Colorado native, to stand trial on one count of murder with a deadly and dangerous weapon in the death of Alice Gruppioni, 32, who was honeymooning with her husband at the time she was fatally struck.

Campbell also faces 17 counts

of assault with a deadly weapon, including three with great bodily injury, and 10 counts of hit-and-run. Prosecutors had previously listed the number of people injured in the alleged attack as 16.

Campbell turned himself in to Santa Monica police an hour after the Aug. 3 incident.

Witness testimony bolstered surveillance video footage that shows Campbell's 2008 Dodge Avenger ramming past a barrier post onto the beachfront pedestrian walkway before striking people as it careened for at least half a mile. Witnesses testified the car appeared to deliberately strike people while zigging and zagging down the boardwalk.

NATION



AL HARTMANN, THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE/AP

Julia Navarro, 58, left, is due to give birth to her granddaughter in February. Navarro offered to be a surrogate to her daughter, Lorena McKinnon, right, of Provo, Utah, who has a history of miscarriages.

# US mom, 58, to give birth to her daughter's daughter

The Associated Press

PROVO, Utah — A 58-year-old U.S. woman is set to give birth in a few weeks — to her first grandchild.

Julia Navarro is serving as a gestational surrogate for her daughter and son-in-law after the couple struggled with fertility problems.

Navarro's daughter, Lorena McKinnon, said she began trying to have a baby with her husband, Micah McKinnon, three years ago.

The 32-year-old, from Provo, Utah, said she's had about a dozen miscarriages, with the longest pregnancy lasting 10 weeks.

After several tries, the couple began looking for a surrogate. McKinnon said a friend and sister both considered carrying her baby, but ultimately decided against it.

"That's when her mother offered to step in.

"As a family, we have to help each other," Navarro told The

Salt Lake Tribune.

Navarro had to undergo hormone shots for three months before an embryo fertilized by her daughter and son-in-law could be implanted. Because of her age, doctors had warned there was only a 45 percent chance the implantation would be successful.

The procedure was a success, and Navarro said she's had a smooth pregnancy carrying a developing baby girl.

As with other surrogacy arrangements, the couple and Navarro needed three months of counseling.

"The psychologists wanted to make sure we knew what we were getting into — that we were mentally prepared," McKinnon said. "Mostly, surrogacy contracts are with people you don't know. It was weird to have a contract with my mom."

It's unclear how rare it is for a woman to carry her own grandchild, but recent news reports have detailed similar relationships.

Last year, a 53-year-old Iowa woman gave birth to her twin granddaughters. And in 2012, a 49-year-old woman in Maine gave birth to her grandson.

McKinnon said she was grateful and overwhelmed by her mother's offer, which eases some of the obstacles and financial burdens for parents using a gestational surrogate.

According to Utah law, surrogates must be 21 or older, financially stable and must have already given birth once.

Couples must be married and are allowed to offer a reasonable payment to a surrogate.

On average, a couple can spend about \$60,000 on procedures and paying the surrogate, but McKinnon said her mother's offer to help is saving the couple about half of that.

Both she and her daughter said they've bonded over the experience.

The baby girl is due in early February.

# Vegas welcome sign now solar powered

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Officials in Las Vegas are harnessing the power of the sun to light the city's iconic welcome sign.

Elected officials and project leaders flipped a switch Wednesday linking solar panels on 25-foot towers to the glittering

neon "Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas" sign.

The project was headed by the Green Chips and Clean Energy Project nonprofit organizations, and funded by the Consumer Electronics Association, electric utility NV Energy, the Las Vegas Centennial Commission and Bombard Renewable Energy.

The new power source is the latest upgrade for the sign designed by Betty Willis and installed in 1959 in a traffic median on the Las Vegas Strip.

A parking lot for private vehicles and four buses was expanded in 2012 to make access to the sign safer for picture-takers.

# NYC residents sue over WTC security

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — New Yorkers living around the rebuilt World Trade Center are fighting what they call the "fortresslike" security planned for their neighborhood. They say the \$40 million barrier would block them in.

Residents have sued the New York Police Department, the city and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which runs the trade center.

On Thursday in Manhattan

state Supreme Court, members of the World Trade Center Neighborhood Alliance were set to show that the NYPD went too far with plans for guard booths, gates, fencing and checkpoints.

Plaintiff Mary Perillo, a long-time resident, said the neighborhood has become far more residential since 9/11. She said the security plan isolates residents while the area is flooded by tourists.

The city Law Department has said the security is necessary.

# Food, drink companies cut 6.4 trillion calories

By MARY CLARE JALONICK

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Some of the nation's largest food companies have cut calories in their products by more than 6.4 trillion, according to a new study.

The study sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that between 2007 and 2012 the companies reduced their products' calories by the equivalent of around 78 calories per person per day. The total is more than four times the amount those companies had pledged to cut by next year.

Seventy-eight calories would be about the same as an average cookie or a medium apple, and the federal government estimates an average daily diet at around 2,000 calories. The study said the calories cut averaged out to 78 calories per day for the entire U.S. population.

The 2010 pledge taken by 16 companies — including General Mills Inc., Campbell Soup Co., ConAgra Foods Inc., Kraft Foods Inc., Kellogg Co., Coca-Cola Co., PepsiCo Inc. and Hershey Co. — was to cut 1 trillion calories by 2012 and 1.5 trillion calories by 2015.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation signed on to hold the companies accountable, and that group hired researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to painstakingly count the calories in almost every single packaged item in the grocery store. To do that, the UNC researchers used the store-based scanner data of hundreds of thousands of foods, commercial databases and nutrition facts panels to calculate exactly how many calories the companies were selling.

The researchers aren't yet releasing the entire study, but they said Thursday that the companies have exceeded their own goals by a wide margin.

Dr. James Marks, director of the Health Group at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, said the group is pleased with the results, but the companies "must sustain that reduction, as they've pledged to do, and other food com-

panies should follow their lead."

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is a nonpartisan philanthropic and research organization that works to improve the nation's health.

Even though the companies that made the commitment represent most of the nation's most well-known food companies, they sold only around a third of all packaged foods and beverages at the beginning of the study. Missing are many off-label brands sold under the names of retailers, and

**Between 2007 and 2012, food companies have reduced their products' calories by the equivalent of around 78 calories per person per day.**

it's unclear how the reduction in calories translates into consumers' diets. When the companies made the pledge in 2010, they said one way they would try to reduce calories would be to change portion sizes in an attempt to persuade consumers to eat less. The companies also said they would develop new lower-calorie options and change existing products so they have fewer calories.

Evidence of those efforts are visible on any grocery store shelf. Many products now come in lower calorie versions, are baked instead of fried, or are sold in miniature as well as larger versions.

Marks said he believes that companies' efforts to package smaller servings — 100 calorie packs of popular snacks, for example — and smaller cans of sugary drinks may have contributed to the reduction in calories. He said the main contributors most likely were the public's increasing willingness to buy healthier food and companies responding to those consumers.

## WORLD

# Biden calls Iraqi leader for 2nd time this week

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Vice President Joe Biden spoke on Wednesday for a second time this week to Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, voicing support for the Baghdad government's effort to regain control of the city of Fallujah from al-Qaida-linked fighters.

The White House said Biden encouraged al-Maliki to continue U.S. military, tribal and national leaders and said Biden welcomed al-Maliki's affirmation Wednesday that Iraqi elections will occur as scheduled in April.

The White House said al-Maliki described a series of political initiatives in the embattled Anbar province. Biden endorsed a decision by Iraq's Council of Ministers to provide state benefits to tribal forces killed or injured fighting al-Qaida-linked fighters.

Biden also spoke to al-Maliki on Monday, voicing concern about those suffering from terrorism. The battle for Fallujah looms large for U.S. troops.

The fighting there began in April 2004 after four security contractors from Blackwater USA were killed and the desecrated bodies of

two were hung from a bridge. The so-called second battle of Fallujah occurred seven months later and, for several weeks, Marines went house to house in what has been called some of the heaviest urban combat involving the corps since the Battle of Hue City, Vietnam, in 1968. About 100 Americans died and another 1,000 were wounded during the major fighting there.

House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, said Thursday the United States should provide more equipment and other aid to the Iraqi government in its battle

against al-Qaida militants. But he also says U.S. troops should not be sent back there now.

Boehner told reporters Thursday that President Barack Obama must get more involved in helping Iraq fight terrorist groups. He said progress the U.S. made there before withdrawing its troops is being threatened, and has been reversed in Fallujah, where al-Qaida-linked moderates have seized control.

On Tuesday, Secretary of State John Kerry spoke with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari.

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Kerry encouraged the Iraqi government to continue efforts to empower local officials and tribes to isolate the al-Qaida fighters and drive them out of populated areas.

"He assured the foreign minister that we will continue to provide technical military advice and enhancing material support and stressed that military efforts must be fused with political and economic efforts to isolate extremist groups," Psaki said.

## Division over Iraq puts strain on Saudi-US ties

By GLEN CAREY  
Bloomberg News

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Few goods transit the desert border between the Middle East's two biggest oil producers, and Saudi authorities have built a fence to help ensure that political instability in Iraq doesn't cross over, either.

Dysfunctional ties between the countries have come into focus as a wave of violence sweeps Iraq, turning it into another arena where Saudi interests are diverging from those of the United States. Fighting is centered in Anbar province, bordering Saudi Arabia, where Sunni fighters with ties to al-Qaida are rebelling against the Shiite-led government of Nouri al-Maliki, which is supported by Iran.

The Saudi view is that al-Maliki is "aggravating the feelings of marginalization that some Iraqi Sunnis have long complained about and that are at the root of the current violence," said Fahad Nazer, a political analyst at Vienna, Va.-based intelligence analyst JTC and a former analyst for the Saudi embassy in Washington.

By contrast, the U.S. has offered to help al-Maliki and so has Iran, Saudi Arabia's main regional rival. That shows how far the Saudi-American alliance has drifted since the early days of the Syrian civil war, when a similar sectarian divide saw the Saudis and the U.S. on one side and Iran on the other.

While there's no indication that the Sunni fighters in Anbar, led by the al-Qaida-linked Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or

ISIL, are getting Saudi support, the wider Sunni community in Iraq is looking to Riyadh for assistance. Tariq Hashemi, Iraq's Sunni former vice president, last month called on Saudi Arabia for help.

Iraq's Sunnis "face two main problems," he said in an interview with Al-Jazeera. "We lack a unifying project and a country that supports our cause."

Saudi-Iraq ties have been strained since the U.S. overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 led three years later to the election of al-Maliki's government, the first led by Shiites to rule Iraq.

Saudi Arabia has no embassy in Baghdad, and there's little commercial contact. In 2012, Iraq traded more with Thailand than it did with the kingdom to its south, even though Saudi Arabia is the Arab world's largest economy, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The border between the countries is closed except during the annual Hajj pilgrimage, according to Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior.

In November, Saudi authorities said six mortar shells landed in an uninhabited desert area of the kingdom near the Iraq border. An Iraqi Shiite group claimed responsibility.

"The Saudis had serious reservations about the U.S. invasion, fearing that Saddam's removal would create a power vacuum that would be filled by Iran," Nazer said. "In the eyes of many, those fears were not unwarranted."



JABER AL-HELLO/AP

Mohammed Layth Ahmed weeps over the coffin of his father, Layth Ahmed, an Iraqi soldier who was killed during clashes in Ramadi, Iraq.

## Suicide bomber in Baghdad kills at least 21

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A suicide bomber blew himself up at a military recruiting center in Baghdad on Thursday, killing at least 21 people in an attack likely meant to send a message to the government and would-be army volunteers over the Iraqi troops' ongoing push to retake two cities overrun by al-Qaida militants.

The blast struck as an international rights group warned of the apparent use of indiscriminate mortar fire in civilian areas by Iraqi forces in their campaign to reassert control over the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi.

Al-Qaida-linked fighters overran parts of both cities in Sunni-

dominated Anbar province last week, seizing control of police stations and military posts, freeing prisoners and setting up their own checkpoints.

Iraqi troops, backed by pro-government Sunni militiamen, have since been clashing with the fighters and carrying out airstrikes against their positions in an effort to reassert control of the cities.

Tribal leaders in Fallujah, 40 miles west of Baghdad, have warned al-Qaida fighters there to leave to avoid a military showdown.

The United States, whose troops fought bloody battles in Fallujah and Ramadi, has ruled out sending American troops back in but has been delivering missiles to

help bolster Iraqi forces, with most on the way.

Human Rights Watch said Thursday that Iraqi forces appear to have used mortar fire indiscriminately in civilian areas in recent days in their effort to dislodge militants in Anbar, and that some residential areas were targeted with mortar shells and gunfire even though there was no sign of an al-Qaida presence in those specific areas.

It also warned that a government blockade of Ramadi and Fallujah is limiting civilian access to food, water and fuel, and that "unlawful methods of fighting by all sides" has caused civilian casualties and major property damage.

## NJ senator may drop opposition to selling, leasing US helicopters to Iraq

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A powerful Senate Democrat has signaled that he might allow the transfer of AH-64 Apache helicopters to Iraq as the government in Baghdad struggles to recapture key territory seized by Islamic extremists. The New York Times reported late Wednesday.

Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J.,

chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, has blocked the lease and sale of the powerful attack helicopters for months, the Times wrote. He is seeking assurances that Iraq would not use them to attack civilians and that the government in Baghdad would take steps to stop Iran from using Iraqi airspace to ship arms to Syria's military.

Menendez received a three-

page letter last week from Iraq Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki responding to his concerns and received an urgent call Tuesday from the State Department promising a further response, according to the report.

The Obama administration has proposed selling up to 30 of the helicopters to the Iraqis, but because building them could take years, it has also asked to lease up

to 10 aircraft in the interim, the Times noted.

Administration officials said the Apaches could be useful in targeting fighters affiliated with al-Qaida, such as those who have taken over parts of Fallujah and Ramadi. But even if Menendez dropped his objections, it could take until April to deliver them, and officials noted that pilots would still need to be trained.

The Times also wrote that the administration is planning to ship more Hellfire missiles as early as this spring, 10 ScanEagle surveillance drones in coming weeks and 48 Raven surveillance drones later in the year.

Those come on top of Aeronaut surveillance balloons provided in September and three additional Bell UH-60 helicopters sent last month.

WORLD



PHOTOS BY BULLIT MARQUEZ/AP

## Watching over Philippines celebration

**Above:** Police snipers keep watch as hundreds of thousands of Catholic Filipinos begin a raucous religious procession in Manila, Philippines, on Thursday to honor the feast day of the Black Nazarene, a centuries-old statue of Jesus Christ. **Right:** Devotees climb a carriage to touch and kiss the image of the Black Nazarene during the procession in an annual event that organizers say was being held partly to pray for the victims of a monster typhoon that devastated the central Philippines last year.



## Danish cinnamon rolls too spicy for EU

By JAN M. OLSEN  
The Associated Press

**COPENHAGEN, Denmark** — Easy on the cinnamon! That advice from Denmark's food authority has rankled pastry chefs whose cinnamon rolls were found to violate the European Union's spice rules.

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration recently discovered that Danish cinnamon rolls and twists contained more coumarin — a chemical compound in the most common variety of cinnamon — than EU rules allow. Excessive intake of coumarin can cause liver damage.

So the agency asked Danish bakers to reduce the amount of cinnamon they sprinkle into the dough for sweet treats like the "kanelnegle" (cinnamon roll) and "kanelstang" (cinnamon twist).

Danish bakers protested, saying the EU limit is too strict and would make it hard, if not impossible, to make their cherished pastries.

"A grown man like me could eat like 10 'kanelnegle' every day for several years and not even get near the limit of what's dangerous to my liver," said Anders Grabow, a spokesman for the Danish Bakers' Association. "I would probably get too much sugar in my body before that."

The EU limit for so-called "fine baked goods" is set at 15 milligrams of coumarin per kilogram of pastry. The Danish agency found last year that more than half of the 74 food samples it took from bakeries, supermarkets and importers contained more coumarin than that.

The Danish bakers noted that their colleagues in neighboring Sweden can get away with more than three times as much coumarin in their cinnamon rolls because food authorities there classify them as "traditional and seasonal bakery" for which EU rules are less strict.

The Danish food agency didn't use that classification because it didn't consider the "kanelnegle"

as a pastry sold primarily for Christmas or other holidays, said agency spokesman Henrik Nielsen.

Officials will meet with the bakers' association next month to review which baked goods can be considered seasonal or traditional, he said. "When someone challenges people's craftsmanship, it may get emotional," Nielsen said. But, "We want the industry to respect existing rules."

EU spokesman Frederic Vincent said it's up to authorities in member countries to enforce EU legislation and that the bloc's commission in Brussels isn't about to ban any Scandinavian pastry.

However, he said, the commission would be ready to help Swedish and Danish authorities upon request "to find a common interpretation that complies with the EU legislation, adequately protects Danish and Swedish (and other European consumers) and does not disrupt the EU internal market."

# No deep freeze: Australia bakes amid heat wave

By ROD MCGUIRK  
The Associated Press

**CANBERRA, Australia** — Bats are dropping from trees, kangaroos are collapsing in the Outback and gardens are turning brown. While North America freezes under record polar temperatures, the southern hemisphere is experiencing the opposite extreme as heat records are being set in Australia after the hottest year ever.

Weather forecasters in Australia said some parts of the sparsely populated Pilbara region along the rugged northwest coast on Thursday were approaching 122 degrees Fahrenheit. The record high of 123.3 degrees was set in 1960 in Oodnadatta, South Australia state.

Outback resident Gian Tate, 60, spends much of the day soaking in a small wading pool at her home near Emu Creek in the Pilbara region, a remote area off the electric grid. The thermometer outside her home registered 122 degrees on Wednesday, she said. Tate and her husband rely on two electric fans to cope with the oven-like heat and rarely turn on the small air conditioner in their bedroom because of the high cost of fuel to run their generator.

"We've just got to live with it; there's nothing you can do," she said.

Brazil also is sizzling, with the heat index reaching 120 degrees. Zookeepers in Rio de Janeiro were giving animals ice pops to beat the heat.

The late arrival of the monsoon in northern Australia, which has a cooling effect, is contributing to the searing heat, said Karly Braganza, the manager of climate monitoring at the Bureau of Me-

teorology. Global warming also is playing a role, he said.

So far, this year's heat wave, which started about Christmas and has moved counterclockwise across Australia's north, is not as extensive or prolonged as last year's. But it would likely continue and move toward South Australia state, Braganza predicted.

"Certainly looking at the forecast over the next week, it's looking like that heat is going to continue," he said.

Since Dec. 27, records have been set at 34 locations across Australia — some by large margins — where temperature data has been collected for at least 40 years mostly in Queensland and New South Wales states. In the mining town of Narrabri in New South Wales, the new record of 118 degrees exceeded the previous record by 6.5 degrees.

The extreme temperatures come on the heels of Australia's hottest year on record, beating the previous record year of 2005, with mean temperatures 2.2 degrees above the 1961-90 average.

The heat wave in Australia has taken a toll on wildlife, too.

In Winton, famous for being one of the hottest spots in Queensland and also the place where Australia's unofficial anthem, "Waltzing Matilda," was penned, a "large number" of parrots, kangaroos and emus have recently been found dead in the parched landscape, said Tom Upton, chief executive of Winton Shire Council.

At least 50,000 bats had been killed by the heat in the state's southeast, said Louise Saunders, president of the Queensland animal welfare group Bat Conservation and Rescue.

## Russia: 6 men found dead in abandoned cars

**MOSCOW** — Russian investigators were trying Thursday to determine who killed six men whose bodies were found in four cars abandoned in an area of southern Russia close to the volatile Caucasus Mountains.

Three of the cars had been rigged with explosive devices, but only one of the bombs went off and no one was hurt. The victims had been shot, according to investigators.

The killings, discovered Wednesday on the outskirts of Pyatigorsk, further heightened security concerns ahead of the Winter Olympics in Sochi. Both cities lie near the Caucasus region, where an Islamic insurgency is simmering.

Vladimir Markin, spokesman

for Russia's main investigative agency, said in a statement that Federal Security Service officers had joined the investigation, and that no motive had been determined.

NTV television reported from the scene that security had been heightened on the nearby border with Kabardino-Balkaria, one of several predominantly Muslim republics in Russia's Caucasus.

Three men whose bodies were in three of the cars have been identified. Two were taxi drivers and the third assembled furniture for a private businessman, Russian state news agencies reported, citing law enforcement agencies. Their names have not been released.

The men were said to be local residents and drove inexpensive, Soviet-model Lada cars.

From The Associated Press

## FAITH

# RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE



**Army Chaplain Capt. Jeremiah Catlin shows where surgeons sliced through his pectoral muscle to remove his melanoma cancer tumors six years ago, at Fort Jackson, S.C. Catlin has since been declared cancer-free and has improved his physical condition to the degree that he is running marathons.**

SUSANNE M. SCHAFER/AP

## Army chaplain beats cancer, completes SC marathon

By SUSANNE M. SCHAFER  
The Associated Press

**W**HILE DEPLOYED in Iraq in 2007, Army Chaplain Jeremiah Catlin discovered a lump growing on his chest. Evacuated to a military hospital, the 32-year-old was told he had Stage 4 melanoma cancer and that he should spend a last Christmas with his family since he had less than a year to live.

"I was crushed," Catlin recalled. "In my first talks with God, I was sure he'd made the wrong decision; I had so much more to offer."

That was six years ago.

Since then, Catlin endured three surgeries, months of chemotherapy and weeks of radiation. The treatment drained the once-active student who wrestled and played intramural soccer at Kansas State University. He said he was "devastated, very depressed" and nearly 40 pounds above his normal

weight.

But Catlin said the experience also taught him he could still serve as a chaplain. One day in the hospital, a nurse persuaded an older military veteran to sit with him. Catlin said the veteran agreed to take his anti-cancer drugs only if they sat together in the hours they got their intravenous medications.

"I realized God was still going to use me, even if I was hooked up to an IV," Catlin said.

Catlin, a Wichita, Kan., native who was trained in civilian life as a Baptist minister, said it began to dawn on him that cancer wasn't going to keep him from following his passion for counseling soldiers.

With his health improving, he was allowed to return to active duty in 2009. But he was placed on a regimen that sharply curtailed physical activity, meaning he could not be deployed overseas, run, or tote a backpack. His

doctors feared strenuous activity would cause his blood vessels to burst.

"My greatest time of ministry was in Iraq," Catlin said. "During combat, ministry increases. And I did not want to leave it."

So Catlin said he decided to get back in shape, pass the Army's physical fitness test and maybe even run a marathon at Darlington Raceway, about 70 miles east of Fort Jackson.

"I thought about the Darlington marathon because of the symbolism of me crossing that line," Catlin said.

Catlin said it took months to build up his strength.

"I couldn't run a quarter-mile without stopping. My shoulder was hurting where they had separated my pectoral muscle," Catlin said, showing where doctors sliced through his upper chest to remove many of his tumors.

Catlin said he worked on his running and fitness while attending advanced classes for senior-level chaplains at the

Army Chaplain Center and School at Fort Jackson.

In fall 2012, doctors declared him five years in remission and cancer-free.

To pass the Army's fitness test, Catlin had to run 2 miles and perform a series of pushups and situps in timed sequence for his age group.

Catlin's course instructor, Chaplain Martin Kendrick, said ministers at the school "all embraced him" once they learned his story.

"You can't help but be inspired by him, by his determination, his prayerfulness, his motivation," said Kendrick, a major.

Catlin said he thinks that his cancer may have been a gift from God.

"Every time I talk to someone with cancer, I think maybe God gave that to me so I can relate to them," Catlin said. "And if God can use me more by putting me through it, well praise the Lord for allowing me to have that experience."

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NATION

# Mariachi band has dreams of playing the college circuit

By MANUEL VALDES  
The Associated Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — By the end of a recent weekend, the big achievement among Ramon Rivera's high school mariachi band wasn't that they had logged more than 700 miles in a bus packed with musical instruments or that they had played two shows in front of large audiences.

It was that eight of them, all sons and daughters of Latino farmworkers from the agricultural city of Wenatchee, had been accepted into Washington State University — the first in their families to gain admission to college.

"They could be the next lawyers, senators, doctors, and the next president of the United States," Rivera told a cheering theater crowd that weekend during one of their shows.

The news was one of the successes stories from Wenatchee High School, where officials created a mariachi program to connect children of farmworkers in the heart of Washington state's apple country with their heritage.

School officials say the class has helped students center themselves and has even helped graduation rates.

It's not just for farmworker kids, however. Everyone's invited and some non-Latino kids have joined.

"Mariachi is a leadership class for our students because it teaches them self-discipline, teaches them to work hard, teaches them how to be on time, teaches them to speak in front of an audience," Rivera said.

"These are skills that can't be put down on a test," said Rivera, who moved to Wenatchee from the Los Angeles area in 2006 to take over the program, and reinforced the program's focus on higher education.

Wenatchee, located in north

central Washington state, is built on agriculture, sending millions of apples, cherries and pears worldwide. Many of the fruits are picked by immigrant farmworkers from Mexico and Central America. Some of their children work summers in the fields.



Rivera

To connect with them, the school district created the program using Mexico's mariachi music in 1997. The program is dubbed "Mariachi Huenachi" for the Spanish phonetic spelling of Wenatchee.

Now more than 300 students in the high school and middle school learn the soulful ballads.

More than 45 percent of students at the Wenatchee school district are Latino; 20 percent are migrant students. Nearly 60 percent of students are on free or reduced meal programs, an indicator of poverty, according to state figures.

Rivera is fully aware of those economic realities.

"I think the best key to get out of poverty is to get your education. The best way to help your family is to get your education," he said.

To reach his students, Rivera approaches his task from various angles. First, he requires a 3.0 GPA to play.

To perform with the traveling group, students must try out. Students in the top group are well-versed in playing the violin, guitar, trumpet and the "guitaron" — a large six-string guitar used by mariachis. Some students also must sing.

He keeps his students busy, filling in many weekends with per-



formances across the state. One weekend it's a gig at the Sounders soccer game in Seattle. Another weekend is a show at a Tacoma theater or at the state capital in Olympia for Gov. Jay Inslee.

The students also play at senior centers around their town.

They log their activities, and use them to improve their college, scholarship and job applications.

But for the 25-member traveling class, which is the varsity group of the whole program and usually for juniors and seniors, those trips are important beyond the chance to sing in front different audiences.

Along with shows, Rivera tries to schedule visits to universities and community colleges — that way students whose families don't have the means to go on college tours get to visit a campus.

At the colleges, counselors meet with the students to inform them about scholarships and loans.

"If I was at home, I wouldn't be able to. My family can't drive six, four hours away from home because I want to go to college. That's not possible for me. We have to take care of six other kids," student Yajaira Ramirez said.

Rivera's efforts have been lauded by the University of Washington, which gave his program a certificate of recognition last year. The eight students accepted



PHOTOS BY TED S. WARREN/AP

Members of Wenatchee High School's "Mariachi Huenachi" program perform outside CenturyLink Field prior to a Seattle Sounders MLS soccer game. Officials say the program, created to connect children of farmworkers with their heritage, has raised graduation rates.

at Washington State University were given certificates in a ceremony in November.

Since then, another student has been accepted into college this school year.

"It's our responsibility as educators and as a teacher to show

outside Wenatchee, show outside what's at the high school, show them every single thing that's possible out there," he said.

"This is the United States. Everyone has a possibility," he added.

## "ESCAPE TO THE HEART OF TOKYO!"

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## WORLD



KIM KWANG HYON/AP

Dennis Rodman, right, holds the ball near fellow U.S. player Jerry Dupree during an exhibition basketball game between U.S. and North Korean players Wednesday in Pyongyang.

## Rodman apologizes over comments on jailed US man

The Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea — Dennis Rodman apologized Thursday for comments he made in North Korea about a detained American missionary, saying he had been drinking and was under pressure as he organized a game with former NBA players.

The former basketball star issued the apology through publicist Jules Feiler in an email message to The Associated Press, a day after he sang "Happy Birthday" to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the start of the friendly game.

Rodman has been slammed for not using his influence with Kim to help free Kenneth Bae, the

missionary in poor health who is being confined in North Korea for "anti-state" crimes. In an interview with CNN on Tuesday, Rodman implied Bae was at fault.

"I want to apologize," Rodman said Thursday. "I take full responsibility for my actions. It had been a very stressful day. Some of my teammates were leaving because of pressure from their families and business associates. My dreams of basketball diplomacy was quickly falling apart. I had been drinking. It's not an excuse but by the time the interview happened I was upset. I was overwhelmed. It's not an excuse, it's just the truth."

# S. Korean family reunion plan dismissed by N. Korea

By HYUNG-JIN KIM  
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea on Thursday dismissed a South Korean proposal to resume reunions of families separated by war, but used an unusually mild tone that indicated it still wants better ties with its rival to help boost its struggling economy.

The reunion program has been stalled amid tension between the rival Koreas since late 2010. The Koreas had agreed to resume the humanitarian program last September, but North Korea abruptly canceled the plan.

North Korea wants to link the reunions to a restart of a lucrative joint tourism project at its scenic Diamond Mountain, according to Seoul officials. But South Korea wants to deal separately with the tourism project, which provided a legitimate source of hard currency for the impoverished North before it was suspended when North Korean soldiers fatally shot a South Korean tourist there in 2008.

South Korea offered this week

to hold talks on Friday on re-summing the reunions around the Lunar New Year holiday later this month, saying it could help improve strained ties. The Lunar New Year is celebrated by both Koreas and is traditionally a time when relatives get together.

North Korea responded Thursday that the talks could take place "at a good season" if the South is willing to discuss "the proposals of our side," an apparent reference to the tourism project.

The North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea also said the reunions could not occur this month because of annual springtime military drills planned by South Korea and the United States, saying the separated families could not have "reunions in peace amid gunfire," according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

However, North Korea's statement did not include its typical harsh rhetoric against Seoul, and proposed that the countries could meet later if conditions are met. Analysts said this suggests that North Korea doesn't want to

completely cut off ties with South Korea because it needs outside investment and assistance to achieve leader Kim Jong Un's vow of developing the economy and improving living standards.

"It's like rejecting the South Korean offer in a very euphemistic manner," said Lim Eul Chul, a North Korea expert at South Korea's Kyungnam University. "Cutting off ties with South Korea would be burdensome for North Korea."

North Korea urgently wants to restart the tourism project because "South Korea investment would set the tone for drawing other foreign investment," said Chang Yong Seok of the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University.

South Korea expressed its regret over the North Korean decision.

"The North must show its sincerity by actions rather than talking about improvement in South-North Korean relations only with words," the Unification Ministry said in a statement.

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WORLD

# Diplomat: Syria claims chemical depots attacked

By Mike Corder  
The Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A Western diplomat said Syria's representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said insurgents have twice launched unsuccessful attacks on Syrian depots where chemicals used in poison gas and nerve agents are being stored.

The diplomat said Thursday that Syria's ambassador to the OPCW reported the alleged attempted attacks Wednesday at a closed meeting of the group's executive council. The diplomat, who was at the meeting, spoke on condition of anonymity because it was closed to the media.

The Syrian representative who spoke was not available to comment and the OPCW declined comment because the remarks were made at a private meeting.

The New York Times first reported the Syrian comments.

According to the diplomat who spoke to The Associated Press, Syria claims that the insurgent attacks on storage sites near the

city of Homs and in a Damascus suburb were repelled. It was not clear when the alleged attacks happened, and the report could not be independently verified.

The reported attacks underscore the risks involved in international efforts to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons program.

The first batch of toxic chemicals was shipped out of Syria this week, a week later than expected due to the poor security and bad weather in the war-torn country.

Also Thursday, Germany said it would help destroy Syria's stockpile of chemicals used as the raw materials for poison gas and nerve agents. The government said German experts at a site in Munster will get rid of the byproducts created when the chemicals are destroyed — which is currently slated to be done aboard a U.S. ship at sea.

The first batch of Syria's toxic chemicals was loaded onto a Danish cargo ship in the Syrian port of Latakia and was shipped Tuesday toward international waters.



SHAKIL ADIL/AP

Pakistani investigators look at a vehicle destroyed by a bombing Thursday in Karachi.

# Bomb kills top Pakistan police officer who hunted Taliban

By Adil Jawad and Rebecca Santana  
The Associated Press

KARACHI, Pakistan — A senior police investigator known for arresting dozens of Pakistani Taliban was killed Thursday in a car bombing, a sharp blow to efforts to crack down on militant groups seeking to gain a foothold in the sprawling southern city of Karachi that's vital to the country's economy.

Chaudhry Aslam was traveling through a commercial area in the port city when a powerful explosion ripped apart the vehicle he was traveling in, police officer Amir Farooqi said. The blast killed two other officers with him, Farooqi said.

Aslam, known for being one of Karachi's toughest police officers, had escaped previous attempts on his life. In September 2011, a suicide bomber detonated a vehicle packed with explosives outside his home. That blast killed eight people, though Aslam escaped

unharm and vowed to continue his work.

"This is a cowardly act," Aslam told local television at the time. "I'm not scared. I will not spare them."

The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for that bombing and for the one Thursday that killed Aslam. In a telephone call to The Associated Press, Pakistani Taliban spokesman Sajjad Mohammad said that they killed Aslam for torturing their associates.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif condemned the killing, saying that it would not deter the morale of law enforcement agencies battling militancy.

In recent years, Karachi has seen a sharp growth in violence, which many worry has given militant groups such as the Taliban an opportunity to expand their presence in the massive city.

Aslam played a leading role in arresting scores of militants and other criminals there in recent years.

"He was a very brave man, that's for sure. He had a lot of courage in him," said Sharfuddin Memon, an adviser to the chief minister of the province in which Karachi is located. "Whenever there was some blast he was there on the scene right away without being scared."

Meanwhile, a Pakistani court trying former army chief and president Pervez Musharraf for treason on Thursday ordered him to appear at a hearing Jan. 16 despite his lawyers' saying he was too sick to attend.

The ruling was announced in Islamabad by court registrar Abdul Ghani Soomro, who also said that a medical report on Musharraf's health submitted earlier this week to the court indicated he had not suffered a heart attack as was rumored.

Musharraf has been staying at the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology since last week when authorities rushed him there instead of taking him to court.



PETROS KARADIAS/AP

A crewmember of the Danish warship Esbern Snare enters a decontamination shower wearing a gas mask while another crewmember waits during drills at sea Sunday between Cyprus and Syria.

## Belgium: Athlete, 95, commits euthanasia

BRUSSELS — A European masters athletics champion at 95, Emiel Pauwels committed euthanasia because he suffered from cancer — but not before holding a celebration complete with champagne.

Pauwels still looked a picture of vigor when he celebrated his impending death with friends and family, raising glasses two days before an official from his

hometown of Bruges confirmed his death Wednesday.

His son, Eddy, told VTM network he "agreed 100 percent with Father" to step out of life when prospects offered no hope.

In Belgium, euthanasia is legal for people older than 18, and more than 1,400 people per year choose the option to die peacefully.

Pauwels held the older-than-90 60 meters European title he won last year. Bruges is planning to name a street after him.

From The Associated Press

# Japanese chemical plant blast kills 5

By Mari Yamaguchi  
The Associated Press

TOKYO — An explosion at a chemical factory in central Japan on Thursday killed at least five workers and injured 17 others, authorities said.

Investigators suspect chemical reaction involving hydrogen caused the blast at metal and chemical company Mitsubishi Materials Corp.'s Yokkaichi plant, about 220 miles west of Tokyo.

The blast appeared to have occurred when plant workers were rinsing heat exchange equipment at the silicone plant during maintenance, according to a Mie prefectural police official, who spoke

on condition of anonymity due to department rules.

Police said five workers died. Fire department officials said that

17 people were taken to hospitals.

The dead and injured were all believed to be workers at the factory.

YOUR POINT OF CONTACT IN WIESBADEN MAINZ-KASTEL

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## FACES

## Bullock sweeps People's Choice Awards

## Hudson honored as humanitarian

By JESSICA HERNDON  
The Associated Press

Sandra Bullock reigned supreme at the 40th annual People's Choice Awards on Wednesday night, taking home four trophies as the evening's top winner.

The actress was named favorite movie actress, comedic actress, dramatic actress and shared the favorite movie duo award with "Gravity" co-star George Clooney. Bullock's buddy comedy, "The Heat," co-starring Melissa McCarthy, was awarded favorite comedic movie.

Fans deemed Ellen DeGeneres their favorite daytime TV host, making her the woman who has gained the most People's Choice Awards with a total of 14 trophies.

"As a young girl growing up in New Orleans, if anyone would have told me I was going to win 14 People's Choice Awards I ... I mean 12, yes, 13, maybe. But 14?" joked DeGeneres, host of "The Ellen DeGeneres Show."

"Iron Man 3" scored three awards including favorite movie, action movie and the film's star, Robert Downey Jr., channeling Iron Man in his acceptance speech, received the favorite action movie star honor.

Justin Timberlake also nabbed three awards. Among them was the favorite album accolade for "The 20/20 Experience." In a sweet moment, he thanked his "beautiful wife," Jessica Biel, "for teaching me patience and the little things like just putting the dishes in the dishwasher. It goes a



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

**Jennifer Hudson, left, accepts the favorite humanitarian award as her sister Julia Hudson looks on at the 40th annual People's Choice Awards in Los Angeles on Wednesday.**

long way. Fellas, you're welcome."

Katy Perry, who was not at the show, scored the win for favorite video for the third year in a row, following up last year's award for "Part of Me" and 2012's honor for "Last Friday Night" with her hit "Roar" this year.

After the debut of the talk show "The Queen Latifah Show" in 2013, fans crowned Queen Latifah their favorite new talk show host.

Len Somerhalder and Nina Dobrev, the stars of "The Vampire Diaries," earned the award for best on-screen chemistry at the People's Choice Awards. The duo, who had their round of breakups and makeups on-screen and off, joked about their coupledom.

"The good thing is chemistry," said

Dobrev, with her arm around Somerhalder, who she is no long romantically attached to. They managed to make a would-be awkward moment entertaining by addressing their buzz-worthy pairing head-on.

Jennifer Hudson was the show's second humanitarian award recipient for her work with children via her Julian D. King Gift Foundation. Bullock gained the show's first humanitarian award in 2013.

Accompanied on stage by her sister Julia, Hudson, holding back tears, accepted the favorite humanitarian award. "My mother always taught us without family you have nothing," Hudson said.

"Whether you know it or not, we all are family. What happens to the other happens to us. It's one thing to be a celebrity and have power, but it means nothing if we're not making a difference and helping someone else. It feels good to see positivity acknowledged. Where we come from all you hear about is who shot who and who went to jail. There is more to life than the block you live on. We want to show them that I came from the same area and if I can do it, you can do it too."

LL Cool J presented Hudson with the award.

For a complete list of nominees and winners: peopleschoice.com



Sandra Bullock holds her awards for favorite movie actress, dramatic movie actress and comedic movie actress.

JOHN SHEARER, INVISION/AP



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

## No deal

**Chris Brown was at District of Columbia Superior Court on Wednesday for a status hearing in a case. Lawyers for the singer told a judge Wednesday that Brown rejected a plea deal on a charge that he hit a man outside a Washington, D.C., hotel in October. Prosecutors had offered a deal in which Brown would plead guilty to the misdemeanor assault charge. One of Brown's lawyers, Danny Onorato, said outside of court that attorneys rejected the deal because Brown is not guilty. Brown's lawyers said in court that they expect a trial date to be set at another hearing, scheduled for Feb. 20.**

## WWE set to launch own 24/7 network in February

The Associated Press

WWE is moving outside the ring to mesh the best of Hulk Hogan, The Rock and John Cena all in one place — its own network. It's time to lay the smack down 24/7.

The WWE Network launches Feb. 24 as a streaming service for \$9.99 per month with a six-month commitment and will include all 12 pay-per-view events.

The network is available on desktops and laptops via WWE.com. WWE Network will also be available through the WWE App on Amazon's Kindle Fire devices; Android devices such as Samsung Galaxy; iOS devices such as Apple iPad and iPhone; Roku streaming devices; PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4; and Xbox 360.

"WWE Network will provide transformative growth for our company and unprecedented value for our fans," WWE Chairman and CEO Vince McMahon said Wednesday.

WWE joins the NFL, NHL, NBA and MLB as the latest sports-based organization that has its own around-the-clock network. The network will air original content, including pregame and postgame shows for its flagship "Raw" on Monday nights, classic events, reality shows, documentaries and other programming. The on-demand content is the main selling point for an older audience looking to reconnect with the product.

"We believe that is the future," WWE chief creative and marketing officer Michelle Wilson said.

Fans can relive matches from the Attitude Era or simply catch up on today's franchise players like Daniel Bryan and C.M. Punk.

WWE said it planned to hold the price at \$9.99 even after the initial six-month commitment.

## TV show to film in Australia

Typically one sign a TV series is doing well is if there's a budget to travel and film on location. By that definition, "Modern Family" is doing extremely well — the cast is heading across the globe.

Qantas Airlines says it is partnering with the show's production company, 20th Century Fox Television, to fly the cast to Australia next month for a two-week shoot of the ABC comedy.

"Modern Family," now in its fifth season, has aired previous vacation episodes that were filmed in Hawaii and Wyoming.

In a statement, show creator Steve Levitan says: "We promise to feature a kangaroo, a koala and a boomerang."

## Guitarists leaving band

Warren Haynes and Derek Trucks are leaving the Allman Brothers Band at the end of the year. A statement released by the band's spokeswoman Wednesday said the guitarists are leaving the legendary rock band to spend more time with their families

and work on their other musical projects.

Haynes joined the group in 1989, and Trucks became a member in 1999.

"While I've shared many magical moments on stage with the Allman Brothers Band in the last decade plus, I feel that my solo project and the Tedeschi Trucks Band is where my future and creative energy lies," Trucks said. Trucks fronts his own Derek Trucks Band and is a member of the Tedeschi Trucks Band. Haynes has his own band, Gov't Mule.

## Other news

■ "Saturday Night Live" is expanding its ethnic diversity off-screen as well as on. A network spokeswoman, Lauren Rosenman, said Wednesday that NBC's comic institution is adding two black women — LaKendra Tookes and Leslie Jones — to its writing staff.

■ The Insane Clown Posse sued the U.S. Justice Department on Wednesday over a 2011 FBI report that describes the rap-metal duo's devoted fans, the Juggalos, as a dangerous gang, saying the designation has tarnished reputations and hurt business. The American Civil Liberties Union filed the lawsuit on behalf of the group's two members, Joseph Bruce, or Violent J, and Joseph Utsler, or Shaggy 2 Dope. It also names four fans as plaintiffs. The lawsuit contends that the gang designation violates free speech and due process rights.

## FACES

# Gold RUSH

## Awards season kicks off with annual Golden Globes

By ANDY GOLDBERG

dpa

**T**he Oscars aren't until March, but Hollywood is already in the grip of awards fever.

The Golden Globe Awards will be handed out Sunday (the show airs Monday on AFN-Prime and AFN-Movie).

Serious film types often dismiss the Globes as largely irrelevant to the inner workings of Hollywood, since the awards are chosen by a small and self-selected group of foreign film journalists, few of whom are credentialled to major media organizations.

But that hasn't stopped the awards show from becoming one of the best-known Hollywood events of the year. The event often attracts major stars, and can give winning movies a boost with audiences.

Since 1956, the Globes have been honoring the best of television as well as film, unlike the Academy Awards, which focus only on movies.

In the past, the Golden Globes have had a haphazard record at predicting Oscar success. That is unlikely to change this year. But with critics acclaiming this year's crop of movies one of the most award-worthy in recent memory, there is bound to be significant overlap. That augurs well for "12 Years a Slave" and "American Hustle," the two movies which came out on top of the nominations, earning seven nods apiece.

Unlike the Oscars, the Golden Globes split their choice in two — choosing separate pictures for best drama and best comedy or musical. That means that Steve McQueen's tale of a free black man kidnapped into slavery in pre-Civil War America is the favorite to win the award for best drama, while David O Russell's caper about an FBI corruption sting operation is just as sure to win

for best comedy or musical.

The odds are best reflected in a closely-watched poll of experts conducted by entertainment awards site GoldDerby.com. Of the 19 experts it asked, 18 predicted victory for "American Hustle," with a single dissenter going for "Nebraska."

Similarly, 14 of GoldDerby's experts chose "12 Years a Slave" as the best drama, with the other five going for Alfonso Cuarón's brilliantly-made space thriller "Gravity."

If such equations take much of the suspense out of the show, there's still plenty of other reasons to tune in to the broadcast. Last year Tina Fey and Amy Poehler earned some of the strongest raves ever for hosts of an awards show with their charming, down-to-earth and often hilarious stint as the co-hosts. Fey and Poehler are returning to host again this year.

Film fans also will not want to miss the cavalcade of glamorous stars strutting the red carpet, and enjoying Champagne and a gourmet dinner made with local California ingredients.

This year's faces will include Cate Blanchett, Sandra Bullock, Judi Dench, Emma Thompson and Kate Winslet, who are up for best actress in a comedy or musical, as well as Amy Adams, Julie Delpy, Greta Gerwig, Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Meryl Streep, who are competing for the best dramatic actress prize.

Among the men, Christian Bale, Bruce Dern, Leonardo DiCaprio, Oscar Isaac and Joaquin Phoenix are the nominees for the best actor in a comedy or musical, while Chiwetel Ejiofor, Idris Elba, Tom Hanks, Matthew McConaughey and Robert Redford are vying for the dramatic acting award.



### Key nominations

#### Best Motion Picture, Drama

"12 Years a Slave"  
"Captain Phillips"  
"Gravity"  
"Philomena"  
"Rush"

#### Best Motion Picture, Comedy or Musical

"American Hustle"  
"Her"  
"Inside Llewyn Davis"  
"Nebraska"  
"The Wolf of Wall Street"

#### Best Actress in a Motion Picture, Drama

Cate Blanchett, "Blue Jasmine"  
Sandra Bullock, "Gravity"  
Judi Dench, "Philomena"  
Emma Thompson, "Saving Mr. Banks"  
Kate Winslet, "Labor Day"

#### Best Actor in a Motion Picture, Drama

Chiwetel Ejiofor, "12 Years a Slave"  
Idris Elba, "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom"  
Tom Hanks, "Captain Phillips"  
Matthew McConaughey, "Dallas Buyers Club"  
Robert Redford, "All Is Lost"

#### Best Actress in a Motion Picture, Comedy or Musical

Amy Adams, "American Hustle"  
Julie Delpy, "Before Midnight"  
Greta Gerwig, "Frances Ha"  
Julia Louis-Dreyfus, "Enough Said"  
Meryl Streep, "August: Osage County"

#### Best Actor in a Motion Picture, Comedy or Musical

Christian Bale, "American Hustle"  
Bruce Dern, "Nebraska"  
Leonardo DiCaprio, "The Wolf of Wall Street"  
Oscar Isaac, "Inside Llewyn Davis"  
Joaquin Phoenix, "Her"

#### Best Animated Feature Film

"The Croods"  
"Despicable Me 2"  
"Frozen"

#### Best Screenplay, Motion Picture

Spike Jonze, "Her"  
Bob Nelson, "Nebraska"  
Jeff Pope, Steve Coogan, "Philomena"  
John Ridley, "12 Years a Slave"  
Eric Warren Singer, David O. Russell, "American Hustle"

#### Best Television Series, Drama

"Breaking Bad"  
"Downton Abbey"  
"The Good Wife"  
"House of Cards"  
"Masters of Sex"

#### Best Television Series, Comedy or Musical

"The Big Bang Theory"  
"Brooklyn Nine-Nine"  
"Girls"  
"Modern Family"  
"Parks and Recreation"  
— Deutsche Presse-Agentur GmbH (Hamburg, Germany)

# WEEKEND

## Hobbit haunts

Experience New Zealand's beauty while hitting movie set-worthy highlights Page 34

## Spanish beauties

Explore the whitewashed villages of Andalusia

Europe travel, Page 30



## For love of onsens

Soak away your worries at the hot springs on Hirado Island

Pacific travel, Page 36



# WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS



## Apps to aid your New Year's goals

Another year, another set of New Year's resolutions. Here are three free smartphone apps that can guide you in your quest for improvement.

**Mynd:** If your goal is to become organized, consider this calendar app your very own personal assistant. Mynd helps start each day on the right foot by showing the current weather forecast, your number of commitments and locations for each meeting. It syncs with your GPS, gives you step-by-step directions, tells when you need to leave for each meeting and if you are likely to encounter traffic. For iPhone, iPad and iPod touch.

**Yummly:** Losing weight is about more than just exercising. Yummly lets dieters scroll through photos of delectable-looking dishes and cocktails and collect helpful recipes based on their tastes, allergies and other preferences. More than 1 million recipes are available. For iPhone, iPad and iPod touch.

**Lift:** This daily motivation app allows you to create your own resolution or search through ones created by others. Long-term goals offer daily instructional tips to help you achieve a little at a time. The app lets you schedule periodic reminders, check off a task once completed and see how many people have joined each plan. Lift tracks your progress and lets you connect with friends to track their too. For iPhone, iPad, iPod touch and Android.

— Jessica Reynolds  
Chicago Tribune

**ON THE COVER:** In Matamata, New Zealand, you can visit hobbit holes and gardens where *Hobbiton* was filmed for the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy and "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey."

PHOTO BY IAN BROOKE/TN2

## GADGET WATCH

# Devices for your light, sound and charging needs

By GREGG ELLMAN

McClatchy-Tribune News Service

It's a new year, but 2013 yielded so many gadgets worth mentioning that there are still some left. Here's more worth considering:

**Energizer's new hard-case inspection light**  is 88 percent brighter than previous models and is built with a rugged body. It's equipped with a shatterproof lens, which is water- and impact-resistant for drops of up to about 20 feet, and it works on just two AAA batteries (included).

The light beam distance is an amazing 181.5 feet (55 meters), and can shine for up to eight hours with the company's Energizer Max alkaline batteries.

In a somewhat related note: Energizer Ultimate Lithium batteries (AA and AAA) will now hold power for up to 20 years when not in use.



On-line: energizer.com; \$24.99

**The remastered software for the BassJump 2 portable subwoofer for MacBook** is typical of the Twelve South company, known for making cool gadgets that pair with Apple products.

Twelve South puts emphasis on making devices that work great, and they look so similar to Apple products that you would think they are produced by the tech giant. After turning up the sound on your computer's built-in speakers, you wouldn't say that they exactly rock the house. But when you combine the speakers with the subwoofer, you might be able to make that claim.

The device expands what the internal speakers produce to add both low and mid frequencies to form a complete sound system.

The software is refined to work with the new OSX Mavericks (10.9) operating system and includes automatic headphone detection and a refreshed Retina-ready interface.

Cosmetically, the Bass Jump is designed with silver/gunmetal finish to replicate the finish on most Apple computers.

Online: twelvesouth.com; \$69.99

**The multi-function powerdash r900 charger** from Vantec, a leader in portable charging accessories, functions as a portable battery with its internal rapid charging 900mAh battery. It charges your device with your own cable plugged into the



Designed exclusively for MacBook Pro and Air, Twelve South's BassJump 2 is a go-anywhere, USB-powered subwoofer that turns your MacBook into a mini-sound system.

TWELVE SOUTH/MCT

built-in USB port. The r900 is designed to plug into your vehicle's DC (cigarette lighter) port for charging while also powering your device if needed.

Tablets and other power-hungry devices up to 2.1A can charge while and up to 1.0A on the portable battery.

Online: vantec.com, \$24.95

**Octa's TabletTail Monkey Kit** has a flexible arm to hold an iPad or any other tablet or e-reader in place.

The arm is a flexible stand to position at most any angle and won't drop your device because it attaches with a vacuum-pump system with great suction power.

There's a suction cup, which you pump the air out of to create the seal. To release it, just pull on the tabs on the side, disconnecting the device.

Position the flexible arm to whatever position is



The TabletTail Monkey Kit has a flexible arm so you can position your device for hands-free use.

OCTA/MCT

needed or, as the company says, "wrapped, curled or tucked" in any angle or shape for hands-free use.

Online: octa.com; \$69.99

**RAVPower's new Qi Wireless Charging pad** will give you a wireless charge as long as your tablet or phone is Qi-compatible.

For those who have no idea what Qi charging is, it is a standard developed for specific devices to charge wirelessly. To get the charge, you just place your Qi device on top of the Qi charger.

This new charger has an internal 4800mAh battery and works for devices such as the Google Nexus 4, HTC Droid DNA and many others. An AC adapter and USB charging cable is included.

If your device isn't equipped with Qi technology, there are many Qi-compatible covers available for different phones and tablets. A quick Internet search found a Qi charging case for an iPhone 5 for \$16.99.

Online: ravpower.com; \$39.99

## ITUNES MUSIC

Top 10 songs on the iTunes Store for Jan. 8:

1. "Timber," Pitbull (feat. Ke\$ha)
2. "Dark Horse," Katy Perry (feat. Juicy J)
3. "Say Something," A Great Big World & Christina Aguilera
4. "Counting Stars," OneRepublic
5. "Let Her Go," Passenger
6. "Pompeii," Bastille
7. "Story of My Life," One Direction
8. "Team," Lorde
9. "Royals," Lorde
10. "The Man," Adele

— Compiled by MCT

## SPOTIFY MUSIC

The top streamed tracks on Spotify from Dec. 30 to Jan. 5:

1. Pitbull, "Timber"
2. OneRepublic, "Counting Stars"
3. Lorde, "Royals"
4. Eminem, "The Monster ft. Rihanna"
5. A Great Big World, "Say Something"
6. Katy Perry, "Dark Horse"
7. Avicii, "Wake Me Up"
8. Passenger, "Let Her Go"
9. Drake, "Hold On, We're Going Home"
10. Lorde, "Team"

— Compiled by The Associated Press

## ITUNES MOVIES

Top 10 movies downloaded from the iTunes Store for Jan. 8:

1. "Runner Runner"
2. "Don Jon"
3. "I Give It a Year"
4. "Despicable Me 2"
5. "Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa (Unrated)"
6. "Katy Perry, 'Dark Horse'"
7. "We're the Millers"
7. "Thanks for Sharing"
9. "Prisoners"
10. "The Lone Ranger"

— Compiled by MCT

## VIDEO GAMES

Game Informer rank the top 10 Xbox One games for January:

1. "Dead Rising 3," Capcom
2. "Need For Speed: Rivivals," Electronic Arts
3. "Killer Instinct," Microsoft
4. "Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag," Ubisoft
5. "FIFA 14," EA Sports
6. "Forza Motorsport 5," Microsoft
7. "NBA 2K14," 2K Sports
8. "Call of Duty: Ghosts," Activision
9. "Peggle 2," Electronic Arts
10. "Battlefield 4," Electronic Arts

— Compiled by MCT

## APPS

Top 5 new free apps for Jan. 8:

- ANDROID
1. Dragons World
  2. Farm Heroes Saga
  3. Little Throat Doctor
  4. Angry Birds Go!
  5. High School Story
- Top 5 free apps for Jan. 8:
- APPLE
1. Yahoo Weather
  2. Scanner Pro by Readly
  3. LEGO City My Riddle
  4. Farm Heroes Saga
  5. Calculator for iPad free

— Compiled by MCT

## WEEKEND

# CHECK IT OUT

## Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

# 1

### TV awash with popular returns, big premieres

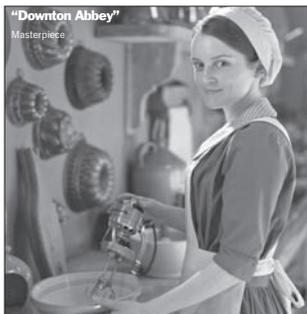
The recent trend of midseason TV premieres gets bigger every year. And in 2014, networks seem to be angling to get viewers hooked on new shows before everyone concedes the ratings war to the Winter Olympics in Sochi. Among those premiering or returning this week on AFN:

- **"Downton Abbey"** picks up its fourth season about six months after its shocking conclusion of Season 3. **Jan. 12 on AFN-Movie**

- **"Intelligence"** is a new, much-hyped dramatic thriller starring Josh Holloway ("Lost") as a high-tech intelligence operative enhanced with a super-computer microchip in his brain. He can hack into any data center and access key intel in the interests of protecting the United States. **Jan. 11 on AFN-Prime**

- **"Justified,"** about a tough, complicated U.S. Marshal played by Timothy Olyphant, returns for a fifth season. **Jan. 12 on AFN-Spectrum**

- **"American Idol"** is still around after 13 seasons — this is the show's first time out without any of the original three judges. Crooner Harry Connick Jr. joins the hunt for a new musical star. **Jan. 16 on AFN-Family**



"Downton Abbey"  
Masterpiece



"Justified"  
FX



"Intelligence"  
CBS



"American Idol"  
FOX

# 2

### See 'Downton Abbey' actress try to get tough

This week, as PBS' prim drama "Downton Abbey" returns for Season 4, the website Funny or Die released a video with actress Michelle Dockery (Lady Mary) in which the actress gets tough — or tries to — for a role in an American cop show called "Tough Justice." Spoiler alert: It doesn't go so well.



- Watch it at [tinyurl.com/pzxca9a](http://tinyurl.com/pzxca9a)

# 3

### Conan O'Brien shows his (lack of) gamer cred

Talk-show host and comedian Conan O'Brien has a recurring bit called "Clueless Gamer" where he plays — more like mocks — a popular video game. He recently went old school, playing games on the Atari 2600 console, which had its heyday in the late '70s and early '80s. The titles O'Brien plays include "Pitfall," "Space Invaders" and "E.T."



- Watch it at [tinyurl.com/conanatari](http://tinyurl.com/conanatari)

# 4

### Watch Hollywood's fun awards show

The movie awards season officially cranks up Jan. 12 as Hollywood glitterati assemble for a night of booze-drenched bonhomie. The 71st Golden Globe Awards, broadly considered a lighter, funnier version of the Academy Awards, will again be hosted by comedic actresses Tina Fey and Amy Poehler. To read more, including a list of the nominees, go to [goldenglobes.com](http://goldenglobes.com).

- The Golden Globe Awards air Jan. 13 on AFN-Movie



WEEKEND: MOVIES



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

A family is tormented by supernatural forces in "Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones," a spin-off of the "Paranormal Activity" franchise.

# A marked film franchise?

## 'Paranormal Activity' camcorder might be running out of juice

By MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN  
The Washington Post

"Paranormal Activity" fans hoping for a continuation of — or perhaps a bit of closure to — the supernatural saga that has stretched out over four films since the 2007 original insinuated itself into their nightmares might be disappointed by "Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones." As the subtitle of the new, unnumbered film indicates, the fifth chapter in the series isn't so much a sequel as a spinoff.

This sharp left turn takes the films' mythology in strange and not entirely satisfying new directions, including a crazy time-travel element.

Aimed at a Latino audience, "The Marked Ones" centers on two teenage friends, Jesse (Andrew Jacobs) and Hector (George Diaz), who stumble upon a world of dark, invisible forces when they break into the apartment of a creepy neighbor (Gloria Sandoval) after she is inexplicably murdered by their seemingly straight-arrow classmate (Carlos Pratts). Unlike the first four films, in which normal people are terrorized by a paranormal force, the new film shows Jesse



— who's been "marked" with what looks like an animal bite — suddenly developing supernatural powers, like the kids in "Chronicle" (2012). One day he wakes up, and he can levitate, do amazing tricks on his skateboard and hurl bullies through the air like he's Thor from the Avengers.

The drawback is that he also finds grotesque, foot-long black hairs growing where they shouldn't, like in his eye socket. Adolescence can be so hard, especially when you're possessed.

In addition to that nasty bite mark — a tip of the hat to the first two "Paranormal Activity" films — many of the core elements of the earlier movies

are retained here, including the increasingly annoying found-footage gimmick. Following the shtick of the series, in which people use their video cameras, iPhones and laptops to capture hauntings, "The Marked Ones" purports to have been shot entirely by Hector on a sporty little camcorder he got as a high-school graduation gift.

There are other nods to previous "Paranormal Activity" films. Ali (Molly Ephraim), the teenage daughter from the second film, makes a fleeting cameo here, as does the infamous box of videotapes featuring childhood footage of the series' main protagonists, sisters Katie (Katie Featherston)

and Kristi (Sprague Grayden), whose lifelong experience with a poltergeist-like demon is at the heart of the "Paranormal Activity" universe.

A glance at the film's cast list also reveals a guest appearance by Katie herself. How and in what context she shows up, however, I can't say.

It's not because I don't want to spoil the fun, since her appearance is anything but fun. By the time her scene arrives, the movie has thoroughly painted itself into a narrative corner. I shudder to think what contortions the writer of a "Paranormal Activity 6" might have to go through to get the story in gear, after writer-director Christopher Landon (who worked on the screenplays for the past three films) has taken it to "Back to the Future" territory.

There are some fun touches. The evil entity attempting to gain control over Jesse communicates through an old Simon electronic toy, instead of a Ouija board, as in the original film. It's a bit of horror-film nonsense, but it's more silly than spooky.

As for scares, "The Marked Ones" pulls out all the stops. Over time, of course, the series had already ratcheted up the fright factor, gradually eroding original

**New on base**

"Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones" is playing at:

**Europe**  
Mildenhall, Ansbach, Baumholder, Grafenwöhr, Ramstein, Spangdahlem, Stuttgart, Vilseck, Wiesbaden, Aviano, Vicenza and Brunsumm.

**Pacific**  
Misawa, Yokota, Zama, Yongsan South Post No. 1, Casey, Henry, Kunsan, Osan, Foster, Futenma, Hansen, Kadena, Kinser, Schwab and Courtney.

**Online:** [paranormalmovie.com](http://paranormalmovie.com)

writer-director Oren Peli's admirable restraint for an ever-increasing level of explicitness.

I'm not saying that the first four films weren't frightening. It's remarkable how durable the "Paranormal Activity" formula proved to be, even though each film is a retread of the previous one. How much night-vision footage of people sleeping can any one viewer watch?

Thankfully, "The Marked Ones" leaves that behind. In its place, it brings in dead-eyed children, a Santeria-style dungeon altar, a witch-hunting gang-banger with a shotgun (Richard Cabral) and a portal to an alternate dimension. It doesn't, of course, resolve a ton of mysteries left hanging by the previous films. Who, for example, was that creepy Robbie kid in the last movie?

It does, however, raise several interesting new questions. Chief among them: Has the "Paranormal Activity" camcorder finally run out of juice?

"Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones" is rated R for pervasive language, some violence, graphic nudity and some drug use. Running time: 84 minutes.

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Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues (PG-13)- Thur & Fri 18:00, Sat 13:30, 18:00, Sun 17:45, Mon - Wed 18:00  
Frozen (PG)- Thur 16:00, Fri 15:45, Sat & Sun 13:30, 15:45, Mon - Wed 16:00  
Grudge Match (PG-13)- Thur 16:00, Fri & Sat 15:45, Sun 13:30, Mon - Wed 16:00  
Anchorman 2: The Legend of Smaug (PG-13)- Thur 20:00, Fri & Sat 19:45, 22:00, Sun 19:45, Mon - Wed 18:00  
The Hunger Games: Catching Fire (PG-13)- Sat & Sun 13:30  
Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones (R)- Thur 16:00, 19:00, Fri 15:45, 18:45, 22:45, Sat 18:00, 22:45, Sun 18:30, Mon - Wed 16:00, 19:00  
The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (PG)- Thur 16:00, Fri 15:45, Sat 13:30, 15:45, Mon - Wed 16:00  
Walking with Dinosaurs (PG)- Sat 13:30

Scan Here or visit: [www.broadwaykino.com/mmc](http://www.broadwaykino.com/mmc)

Check movie listings for base theaters at [stripes.com/military-life](http://stripes.com/military-life)

## WEEKEND: MUSIC

## FOLK TALE

By RANDALL ROBERTS *Los Angeles Times*

Oscar Isaac performs as the title character in "Inside Llewyn Davis."

CANAL PLUS

## It's the music that moves the Coen brothers' 'Inside Llewyn Davis'

One of the most beguiling folk records of 2013 has the bonus of ferrying along a Joel and Ethan Coen film. The songs within the brothers' "Inside Llewyn Davis" move from balladry to blues to ancient British folk, adding a layer of lyricism and revealing a portal to another storytelling realm.

The selections and performances highlight a moment when a perfectly realized stanza sung honestly in a smoky cafe could produce an audible gasp, reverberate throughout New York's Greenwich Village and, with luck or if your name was Bob Dylan, American culture.

At the center of the story, set in 1961, is Llewyn Davis, an expert but oft-unlikable artist, and a few pivotal performances, most significantly of "Hang Me, Oh Hang Me," brought to prominence by singer Dave Van Ronk — his memoir "The Mayor of MacDougal Street" and "Inside Dave Van Ronk" album cover supplied many of the period details for the Coens' fictional story. "Hang Me" is the most recent of a series of songs that the Coens have plucked from relative obscurity to create fresh filmic moments, is sung from the perspective of a rebel who "went up to the mountain, that's where I made my stand" and, having apparently failed, is bound for the nose.

Even more than the Coens' ode to rural country music, "O Brother Where Art Thou," whose protagonists fall into the music business by happenstance, "Inside Llewyn Davis"

examines an occupation, singing and songwriting, with wry affection.

Joel Coen said during a recent conversation that the new movie, on which they collaborated with music producer T Bone Burnett, is the product of "a funny conversation that we've been having with T Bone for decades, from project to project, starting with 'The Big Lebowski.'" As such, it's a revelatory, loving and sometimes absurd look at the life of the musician, with a curated playlist starring actor-singers Oscar Isaac, Justin Timberlake, Carey Mulligan and others. Moving in unison with the action during sets and sessions, the music scores our anti-hero's circular journey from the Village to Chicago and back again.

The Coens' precise touch is captured, for example, in a notable absence: a spectral Dylan, then a freshman on the scene whose arrival and impending fame are only suggested. At the beginning, we briefly hear him tuning his guitar onstage, but the Coens are following another touched singer, so the action moves elsewhere. That shot teases a big American story developing just outside the frame: the tune-up to a whole movement that Dylan would help construct.

Such deftness isn't surprising. The Coens' best musical placements over the years are so memorable that they deserve their own super-cut: There's the rollicking, yodelled theme that chases Nicolas Cage's H.I. McDunnough through "Raising Arizona." To the kidnapped



## Various Artists

Inside Llewyn Davis:  
Original Soundtrack Recording  
(Nonesuch)

Should he want it, a career in folk singing awaits Oscar Isaac, the actor who brings soulful depth to the sad-sack jerk title character of "Inside Llewyn Davis," the Coen brothers' riff on the Greenwich Village folk scene of the early 1960s. Isaac more than holds his own with professional singing types like Justin Timberlake, who plays a blandly likable folkie, and Broadway actor Stark Sands. Isaac brings conviction to tunes performed solo or accompanied by Marcus Mumford or the Punch Brothers. The rest is a mishmash, with the too-cute novelty "Please Mr. Kennedy" and the odd cut by Bob Dylan and Dave Van Ronk, on whom Davis is partially based, adding to the jumble.

— Dan DeLuca  
Philadelphia Inquirer

Nathan Jr., Holly Hunter's character Edwina sings a tender lullaby, which is in fact a murder ballad called "Down in the Willow Garden," signaling doom on the horizon. Lower East Side folk punks the Fugs' biting protest song "CIA Man" closes "Burn After Reading"; the scratchy "Danny Boy" recording that bellows from a Victrola in "Miller's Crossing" scores an Albert Finney machine-gun shootout.

Memorably, "The Big Lebowski" resurrected an obscure psychedelic rock song, "Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)," turning it into a stoner anthem after it scored the Dude's bowling-themed dream sequence. "O Brother," another Burnett-produced effort, featured the fictional Soggy Bottom Boys' rendition of "Man of Constant Sorrow." It played a key role in that soundtrack going platinum more than half a century after the song's would-be heyday.

"The conversation expands in really interesting ways once we get T Bone involved in it," Joel Coen said. "He gets into the story, or the script, or whatever project we're working on, and takes it in places musically that we wouldn't have thought of, or didn't know about, and opens up all of these interesting things."

In "Llewyn Davis," music defines the story. As Davis, played by Isaac, travels from Upper West Side to the Village with an escaped cat that will come to haunt him, the song "Fare Thee Well (Dink's Song)" plays, suggesting journeys to come. While a sofa-crashing Southern singer offers a gentle

version of Tom Paxton's "The Last Thing on My Mind" and croons of "a lesson too late for learnin'," a character played by Mulligan informs Davis that she's pregnant.

Joel Coen said the placements came naturally and were part of the fabric of the script early on. The desire was to suggest, without being clumsy or heavy-handed.

"You're thinking about both what the song is lyrically," he said, "but what's the vibe of the song? What's the mood of it, even the tempo? What does it need here? We didn't want things to be right on the nose, but sometimes they were lyrically related in interesting ways to what was happening."

Granted, this isn't Ken Russell using the Who's rock opera "Tommy" as a storyboard. Lines aren't played out within the narrative. Rather, Ethan Coen described the process as "mushy," adding that "you feel out what's right for the character and the place in the story."

The choice, for example, to have Davis sing the haunting British ballad "The Death of Queen Jane" during an audition with a hotshot manager is revealing. "He goes to his big audition and he sings a song about an abortion," Burnett said, laughing. "There's so much stuff hidden in here. Every one of these songs, 'Hang Me, Oh Hang Me,' 'Fare Thee Well,' there's a distinct story being told in the libretto, really."

"The exercise there," Ethan Coen said, "is, what's the most beautiful song he could sing at this point that would also be the most self-destructive?"

# WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

By MICHAEL S. DARNELL  
Stars and Stripes

The wrapping paper is in the garbage, the ornaments are packed away and the remaining eggnog sits unwanted in the refrigerator. Christmas is over for another year and the doldrums of a long winter season are upon us. Luckily for you, Santa decided to overlook your behavior and left a shiny new Xbox One or PlayStation 4 under the Christmas tree. Well, now what? "Knack" and "Assassin's Creed IV" aren't going to keep you entertained forever, enjoyable as they are. So, what is there to look forward to? To answer that question, here's a look ahead at a few titles on the horizon for Xbox One.

## Quantum Break

"Quantum Break" is a game that set social media abuzz with its announcement, but since then details from its developers, Remedy Entertainment, have been a bit scarce. Even so, what we do know about the game is reason enough to be on the lookout for what Quantum Break is planning on bringing to the next generation of action-adventure titles.

This game, more so than others at the moment, looks to test the limits of the new Xbox, with its attention to detailed facial animations and the gameplay mechanic revolving around time manipulation to affect the world around you. The previews show a particular attention to detail in the destruction of the game world and using the freezing and rewinding of time to affect changes in how that destruction alters how the player proceeds. It's ambitious, but if Remedy puts it all together, they'll have a unique title on their hands that will be an early benchmark for what the Xbox One can accomplish.

Watch the launch trailer at [remedygames.com/games](http://remedygames.com/games).

## Halo 5

"Halo: Combat Evolved" was an Xbox classic. Since then, the series has defined what a console shooter is supposed to be. The next "Halo" missed making the Xbox One launch, but it's tentatively scheduled for release later in 2014. The secrecy is so thick that nobody is completely sure what the full title will be, what it looks like, or any of the new gameplay mechanics. What we do know is that when a teaser trailer was shown at E3, it instantly became the No. 1 game to look forward to for the millions of "Halo" fans around the world. Visit [youtu.be/bIW40AVWXrE](http://youtu.be/bIW40AVWXrE).

## Titanfall

The Xbox One has quite a few exclusives to look out for, but none are generating the type of buzz that Respawn's "Titanfall" has managed to create. Made up of former Infinity Ward developers (the people behind the massively successful "Call of Duty" franchise), Respawn

# New year, new games

## 5 titles to look forward to on Xbox One



Remedy

"Quantum Break" weaves the cinematic action of intense gameplay with the tension and drama of scripted television, creating a world where each has a direct impact on the other.



Respawn

Crafted by a "Call of Duty" co-creator, "Titanfall" is one of this year's most highly anticipated games.



Microsoft

Mystery surrounds the fifth chapter of the "Halo" series. The title has yet to be confirmed.



Microsoft

"Project Spark" lets users build, play and share whatever they can imagine.

promises they have the chops to pull off the ambitious "Titanfall," an online-only shooter with its sights set firmly on the hardcore



PopCap Games

In "Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare," players can blast zombies and plants across a mine-blowing world.

gamer crowd. Instead of cribbing from previous successes, Respawn is creating "Titanfall" from the ground

up to challenge the status quo in first-person shooters. Instead of striving for militaristic realism, "Titanfall" warriors are running

up walls, jumping into the titular walking tanks and maneuvering around the battlefield on futuristic jetspack. Think more of the space Marines from Avatar than the modern soldiers depicted in "Battlefield" and "Call of Duty." Thanks to this futuristic setting and the tools it brings players, the gameplay looks to be much different than your typical shooter, allowing for more vertical level design and action that comes from all angles.

Check out an official gameplay trailer at [titanfall.com/videos/angelcity-gameplay-demo](http://titanfall.com/videos/angelcity-gameplay-demo).

## Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare

"Plants vs. Zombies" is an interesting franchise. Initially released on PC, the game was soon ported over to every device known to mankind. It was a runaway success for developers PopCap Games, and the sequel in 2013 was one of our favorite games of the year. "Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare" is the game that looks to bring the super-popular franchise into both the new generation and into the third dimension.

"Garden Warfare" takes the core concept of a tower-defense war between zombies and plants and adds in free movement, unique abilities and more than a few concepts taken from modern action games, such as strikes and upgradable appearances. Players familiar with games like "Team Fortress 2" will feel right at home with "Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare."

Take a look at some gameplay videos and developer commentaries on their official YouTube page: [youtube.com/user/PlantsVsZombies](http://youtube.com/user/PlantsVsZombies).

## Project Spark

Taking a page from games like "LittleBigPlanet" and, to a lesser extent, "Minecraft," "Project Spark" is a game that seeks to put a player's imagination to the test. However, unlike those titles, "Project Spark" is not a game with creation tools built around it, rather the entire experience is built around player creation. It's more of a set of what looks to be easily used tools that allows you to build your own game, wrapped in a kid-friendly set of visuals.

From the information we have now, it looks like any type of game the player can imagine can be created with the toolsets in "Project Spark." Social interaction will be a major component. Many games have tried to offer this type of experience for players, but most have failed to grab any traction due to overly complex features and controls. "Project Spark" looks to be one of those few games that will have the depth to allow players to unleash their inner game designer, while being easy enough so they don't need to have a degree in coding to make their vision come to life.

The reveal trailer can be seen at their official site: [joinprojectspark.com](http://joinprojectspark.com).

## WEEKEND

## Europe

## THE EUROPE EXPERIENCE



Courtesy of holiday.filzmoos.at

The Austrian village of Filzmoos fills with colorful hot-air balloons beginning Saturday during the kickoff of the annual Balloon Week.

LOOK UP IN THE SKY:  
Filzmoos Balloon Week

Thanks to its central Alpine location with the majestic Bischofsmütze mountain as a backdrop, Filzmoos, Austria, has developed into a mecca for hot-air balloonists and is widely known as Austria's Ballooning Village.

Each January, thousands of balloon enthusiasts flock to the tiny village south of Salzburg for the annual International Hot Air Balloon Week.

This year's high-flying fun begins Saturday with the 35th Annual DOPGAS Balloon Trophy, in which 40 balloon teams from all over the world compete through Jan. 18.

On Sunday, during Night of the Balloons, the colorful orbs move to music in the night sky as spectators enjoy mulled wine; traditional *Jagatée* ("Hunter's Tea," black tea, spices, wine and schnapps); food and music. A fireworks display rounds out the evening.

Some of the week's events require tickets. For information, see the Filzmoos tourism office website, holiday.filzmoos.at/en, or call (+43) (0) 6453 8235. The website includes contact information for booking your own balloon ride.



Photo courtesy of csi-basel.ch

JUMP AT THE CHANCE:  
Basel horse show

The world's horse-jumping elite and their finest steeds have converged upon Basel, Switzerland, for the 2014 Longines CSI Basel, an international horse show running through Sunday. The popular event includes amateur and professional competitions, equestrian entertainment, food and horse gear for sale. Find more information at csi-basel.ch, which has an English link.

## TOP TRAVEL PICKS

## Tromsø film festival

Viewing a movie under the stars is an activity most often associated with the summertime. Imagine watching a film outdoors in January, and at a location above the Arctic Circle. Such an experience awaits at the Tromsø International Film Festival, whose 24th edition opens Monday and runs through Jan. 19.

TIFF, Norway's biggest film festival, takes place during the dark polar nights. The timing allows its organizers to show films at almost any hour of the day in an outdoor cinema located in the city's main square. Screenings are also at five indoor venues.

The festival program features a competition of 12 films by both new and seasoned filmmakers. "Films of the North" features 47 films from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Canada, Russia and Greenland/Denmark.

Other themes this year include "Signals," which focuses on Kurdistan, and "Baskets," with films about basketball. Roman Polanski's latest film, "Venus in Fur," closes the festival.

Admission requires the purchase of a festival bracelet for 120 Norwegian krone (about \$20), which also gets you a catalog.

Individual film tickets sell for



Karen Bradbury

See the Europe Traveler blog at [stripes.com/travel/europe-travel](http://stripes.com/travel/europe-travel)

90 Krone each; those who plan to attend several screenings can save by buying value cards.

Although there are few direct international flights to Tromsø, there are several daily connections from Oslo. Learn more about the festival at [tiff.no/en](http://tiff.no/en).

## Vogel Gryff in Basel

Carnival season, which, as every year, officially kicked off on Nov. 11, is heating up. On Monday, Basel, Switzerland, witnesses the re-enactment of an event dating to the 16th century known as the Vogel Gryff. The following description is drawn from the official Swiss tourism website:

"On a date in Jan. that varies from year to year, a raft bearing an unusual cast of characters is

launched into the Rhine River. The passengers include drummers, flagmen, cannoneers and a savage masked figure bearing an uprooted pine. The mysterious figure gazes toward the part of the city known as Kleinbasel while moving his feet in a rhythmic motion.

"As the crew passes under the Mittlere Brücke, or middle bridge, two more otherworldly creatures join the entourage: a lion standing on his hindquarters and a griffin with a huge beak. Promptly at noon, the three figures — symbols of different Kleinbasel societies — dance. They resume their dancing routine later that afternoon and evening as they take to the area's streets."

Visitors who want to see the spectacle can find a detailed description of the procession's route at [vogel-gryff.ch/jahr2014/gryff2014/routenplan.php](http://vogel-gryff.ch/jahr2014/gryff2014/routenplan.php).

To learn more about the event itself, along with its history, go to [myswitzerland.com/en-us/vogel-gryff-in-basel-bs.html](http://myswitzerland.com/en-us/vogel-gryff-in-basel-bs.html).

## Straw Bear Festival

Every second weekend in January, the English town of Whittlesey in Cambridgeshire hosts a curious folkloric celebration revolving around a straw bear — which isn't a bear at all. The Whittlesea (the old spell-

ing of the town's name) Straw Bear Festival celebrates an age-old custom of the Pens: A man or boy is covered from head to toe in bands of straw, fastened to a chain and led throughout the town and made to dance in exchange for beer, food or money.

By the early 1900s, the tradition had fallen into decline, but in 1980, the bear was brought back to life by the Whittlesea Society. Today, the bear's entourage is made up of some 250 dancers, musicians and performers from across England. Spectators enjoy Morris and other traditional dance performances, American-style Appalachian dancing, and Mummers plays, commonly characterized by disguised figures who are often killed and then miraculously resurrected.

Those hoping to catch sight of the bear should head to the town center between 10:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Saturday. On Sunday, music and dancing begin at noon at the Sir Harry Smith Community College and continue until 2:30 p.m., when the poor creature (or at least his costume) goes up in flames in a bonfire. Both events are free.

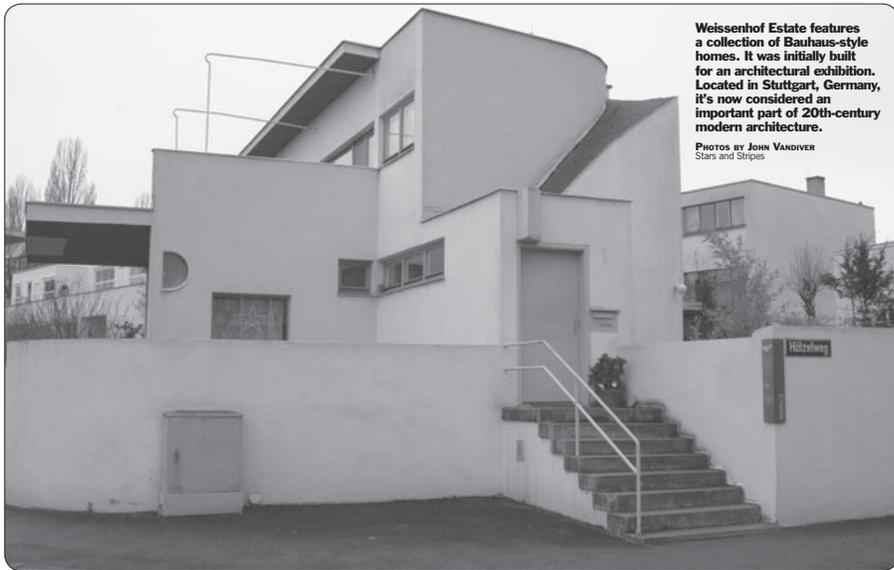
A barn dance and a creole dance are scheduled for 8 to 11:30 p.m. Saturday. Tickets for each dance cost 10 pounds. Find details at [strawbear.org.uk](http://strawbear.org.uk).



Looking for even more to do? For additional events, concerts and activities, go to [stripes.com/military-life](http://stripes.com/military-life)

## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

## Europe



Weissenhof Estate features a collection of Bauhaus-style homes. It was initially built for an architectural exhibition. Located in Stuttgart, Germany, it's now considered an important part of 20th-century modern architecture.

PHOTOS BY JOHN VANDIVER  
Stars and Stripes



Stars and Stripes

# Dwelling on German dwellings

## Weissenhof Estate built in 1927 to showcase modern architecture

By JOHN VANDIVER  
Stars and Stripes

**I**t's an unassuming stretch of residential road, but in 1939 it was deemed decadent by the Nazis and targeted for destruction. In its place was to be an army base.

The start of World War II delayed the demolition of the Weissenhof Estate, a collection of Bauhaus-style homes in the northern part of Stuttgart, Germany. The architectural landmark nearly bit the dust again at the end of the war when the Allied air campaign leveled much of Stuttgart, including about 10 homes on the Weissenhof.

Today, however, Weissenhof stands safe and secure. For architectural aficionados, the place is a big deal. Created in 1927 for a special exhibition, the estate consisted of 33 houses with 63 apartments. Nearly 20 architects from across Europe participated in the project, which aimed to provide new living solutions for city dwellers. Flat roofs with flexible floor plans and adjustable walls are some of the signature features of the homes. The goal was to make cost-effective living spaces that also offered a degree of variety.

The project was headed up by avant-garde architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, largely unknown at the time, but who would eventually be regarded as one of the 20th century's archi-



The Weissenhof area is set on a hillside, overlooking Stuttgart. It's within walking distance of Killesberg Park, one of Stuttgart's most scenic green areas. The park borders the city's fairgrounds.

tectural masters.

Today, many of the homes on the site are occupied by regular city residents. To my unskooled eye, the buildings seem rather unremarkable if not ugly.

However, information panels, which are posted outside the homes and offer explanations in German and English, instruct the uninformed about key innovations and architectural highlights.

Even if architecture isn't your thing, wandering around Weissenhof is a chance to look at buildings that at one time created a stir. When the Weissenhof opened, thousands of visitors came to see what was essentially a small neighborhood. At the time, the project was part of an effort in the post-World War I era to come up with solutions for a housing shortage in Stuttgart. Today, it's seen as a milestone in

development in modern architecture.

It doesn't hurt that the area, perched on one of Stuttgart's hillsides and across from the Killesberg Park, is one of the more scenic parts of the city.

The walk can be done in 10 minutes or an hour, depending on your level of interest. Best of all, it's free.

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## ON THE QT

### DIRECTIONS

You can begin your walking tour of Weissenhof Estate at the street Am Weissenhof, which is home to the city art academy. The area is directly across from the Killesberg Park, one of the main green areas in Stuttgart. Parking is available along Stressemannstrasse.

### TIMES

The homes are on a public street, so you can visit anytime.

### COSTS

Free

### FOOD

There are a host of cafes and beer gardens to choose from around the Killesberg Park area.

### INFORMATION

[www.stuttgart.de/weissenhof](http://www.stuttgart.de/weissenhof)

— John Vandiver

## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING

## Europe



PHOTOS BY KENT HARRIS/Stars and Stripes

This first course at Ristorante da Alessandro e Margherita in Nave di Fontanafredda, Italy, is probably unfamiliar to American fans of Italian food. "Fregula" is a specialty of Sardinia and features couscous, mixed vegetables and mixed meats.



Above: Rucola topped with ricotta cheese, artichokes and walnuts.  
Below: Homemade ravioli featured a filling of potatoes and mint.



## After Hours: Italy

BY KENT HARRIS  
Stars and Stripes

Normally, airmen assigned to Aviano would have to take a plane or boat to check out the food offered on the island of Sardinia.

Unless they happen to visit a restaurant that's only about a 15-minute drive away.

Ristorante da Alessandro e Margherita specializes in Sardinian fare. It's not exactly the kind of place one would expect to find in Nave, a blip on the road just a few minutes from Sacle. But a love story explains the mystery.

Many years ago, owner Alessandro Davià, who is a Sacle native, was working in Sardinia. There, in a tobacco shop, he met Margherita, his future wife. He fell in love with her and with her mother's cooking. The couple, tutored by Mama, decided to open a restaurant near where Alessandro grew up.

Ristorante da Alessandro e Margherita is in every sense a family affair. Alessandro and Margherita do the cooking.



The restaurant changes its decor to enhance the dining experience; in December, it was a wintry wonderland.

Their son, Maximiliano, and their daughter, Martina, wait tables.

Some of the food, such as the ravioli, isn't much different from what one could get in a restaurant a few miles away. But there are some differences.

Take *fregula*, a first-course dish that most Americans would not recognize as Italian. It's couscous with mixed vegetables and mixed meats. The dish reflects a bit of Sardinia's history. The island is only a boat ride away from northern Africa, where one can find similar food.

The evening we visited, we had a choice of several appetizers. One was Sardinian flat bread topped with cream cheese. Another was mixed Sardinian meats. There was also a large rucola salad topped with a mix of ricotta, bacon, artichokes and walnuts, and something typically Italian: bruschetta topped with tomatoes, artichokes and herbs.

Besides the *fregula*, other first-course options included three types of ravioli. The first was filled with ricotta, cinnamon and herbs; the second with

potatoes and mint; and the third with sheep's cheese. We enjoyed the potato and mint ravioli, which struck us as unusual.

The second course included T-Bone steak, lamb chops and sliced beef and pork. A cheese tray was available for those who preferred something other than meat.

For dessert, there were Sardinian almond cookies, a pancake of sorts with cheese and honey topping, and ice cream cake.

Alessandro says the family believes the dining experience isn't just limited to food, so the decor changes as well. In late December, the restaurant was outfitted in a wintry theme. They'll redecorate for special occasions and serve special meals with advance notice.



A fine way to top off a meal at Ristorante da Alessandro e Margherita is a mixture of cake and ice cream soaked in coffee.

Just don't expect to walk out the door onto a Sardinian beach. The nearest coastline is more than an hour away, and the water there is a bit colder than you would find farther south.

harris.kent@stripes.com



## RISTORANTE DA ALESSANDRO E MARGHERITA

**Location:** Via Amalteo 8, Nave di Fontanafredda  
**Directions:** Take the SS-13 to Sacle and turn right onto Via Vittorba. Nave is a few miles away. Via Amalteo is the first road to the right after you enter the town.  
**Hours:** 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for lunch and 7 to 10 p.m. for dinner. Closed Tuesdays.

**Food:** Sardinian specialties, with several options each night for appetizers, first and second courses, and desserts.

The dinner menu changes every Friday.  
**Dress:** Casual  
**Costs:** There's a fixed lunch menu for 12 euros. Appetizers cost 3-14 euros; first courses are 6-10 euros; second courses cost 10-15 euros; desserts are 4 or 5 euros.  
**Information:** English menu available; some English spoken. Visa and Mastercard accepted. Phone: (+39) (0) 434-98250.

— Kent Harris

## Warm up with white bean soup

To create the rich flavor and comforting texture of a good white-bean soup, keep a few things in mind. First, home-cooked dried beans are less metallic tasting and mushy than canned beans; it's worth it to make the effort to cook them from scratch. (It's literally a question of boiling water and then watching to make sure the pot doesn't bubble over.)

Finally, you have to amp up the broth with extra savorness. Add some Parmesan rind to the broth to release its cheesy flavor into the liquid. Then add a splash of soy sauce near the end. This adds not only crucial saltiness but also subtle complexity.

## White Bean and Kale Soup

## Ingredients for 6-8 servings:

1 pound dried white beans (such as cannellini, Great Northern, or navy), rinsed

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 large yellow onion, chopped

2 celery stalks, chopped

1 large carrot, peeled and chopped

5 garlic cloves, minced

Salt and black pepper

6 cups vegetable stock

One 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes

One 2-by-1-by-¼-inch Parmesan rind, cut into bite-sized pieces, if desired

3 fresh thyme sprigs

1 bay leaf

1½ pounds kale

1 tablespoon soy sauce

½ cup roughly chopped basil leaves

Grated Parmesan cheese for garnish (optional)

## Directions:

Put beans in a large pot and add enough water to cover them by 2 to 3 inches. Cover and bring to a boil, then adjust heat so the water simmers gently. Cook, stirring occasionally, until beans are tender, 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on their size; season with salt. (You can do this ahead of time, then cool and store until you're ready to make the soup.)

Put the olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. When it's hot, add the onion, celery, carrot and garlic, and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables are very soft, 12 to 15 minutes. Add the drained beans along with the stock, tomatoes, Parmesan rind, thyme and bay leaf. Stir, cover, and bring to a boil. Adjust the heat so the soup simmers steadily, and cook for 15 minutes.

Remove the thick stems and ribs from the kale and discard them; roughly chop the leaves. Stir the kale and soy sauce into the soup, cover and cook until the kale is tender, about 10 minutes. Remove the thyme stems, bay leaf, and Parmesan rind (if desired). Stir in the basil, taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve hot, garnished with grated Parmesan cheese, if desired.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe



# Spain's white villages

## Ancient 'pueblos blancos' stand as monuments to many cultures

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO  
The Associated Press

As dusk light slanted across the southern Spanish hamlet of Setenil de las Bodegas, the whitewashed houses and the cliffs they're carved into turned golden.

A gaggle of boys perched on a low wall, smartphone cameras at the ready, while clusters of old men converged where a one-way alley merged with a sharp, uphill right corner into a marginally larger street.

Stuck in that corner, brushing the ancient stone houses on both sides, was an cherry-red rental minivan. At the wheel, enjoying neither the beauty nor the Old-World camaraderie, sat I.

A driving tour to Andalusia's pueblos blancos, or white villages, is a highlight of any trip to Spain — as long as you don't try to drive through them. (Note to self: Learn to drive a stick shift so you are not saddled with giant vehicles with automatic transmissions.)

During trips in late January and early June, I took a few days off from the big star cities of the region — Seville, Cordoba and Granada — to roam the countryside.

I explored seven pueblos blancos: Some are hidden in fog-shrouded mountain valleys, others looked out to the Mediterranean, others rule the farmland from atop rocky hilltops.

From the road, all look like the perfect incarnation of the whitewashed southern European village fantasy, sprinkled with pale pink fruit tree blossoms in winter and bright purple bougainvillea in summer. Within their cool, hushed alleys, lie centuries-old monuments, many reflecting the region's history as the last stronghold of Islamic domination in Europe before Christian armies reconquered it.

And within them also lies

Andalusia's bounty: that most prized of hams, *jamon iberico de bellota*, all manner of fried seafood and marinated olives, and the dirt-cheap hoppy beer I badly needed after untangling the unscathed rental from its 5-foot street grip.

The cliff-top pueblos I visited, Arcos de la Frontera and Zahara de la Sierra, represent opposite ends of the spectrum as tourist destinations.

Arcos, a short hop off the main freeway connecting regional capital Seville with the spruced-up port city of Cadiz, has a long list of impressive churches and palaces huddled inside its walls. I spent a morning climbing its steep stone-paved alleys lined with flower pots and wrought-iron grilles and more than a smattering of tapa signs in English.

The dark castle of Zahara, deep in the olive-studded countryside, looms over a handful of tightly packed houses hanging to the rocky outcrop jutting into a man-made lake. The village is so tiny, and the roads so remote, that I found plenty of villagers taking their afternoon *paseo*, or stroll, along the main highway.

Ronda and Setenil are the equivalent extremes for the canyon-lugging pueblos. The latter slithers deep underneath the ledges of river-eroded rock, its cave-like homes and grocery stores evoking a contemporary version of the native dwellings in the American Southwest.

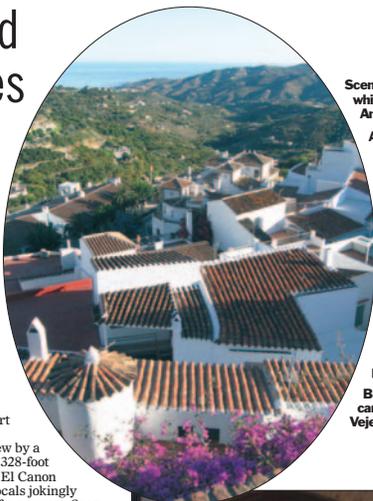
The ancient part of Ronda is separated from the new by a vertigo-inducing 328-foot river gash called El Canon del Tajo, which locals jokingly call the canyon of a common Spanish profanity that escapes many first-time visitors.

I crossed it, on foot, one January evening before a deep mist rose from the roaring river below. A short walking tour took me past many ornate churches, balconied buildings and palm-and-plane fringed parks to two major examples of the mixed Islamic and Christian style that characterizes Andalusia.

The top attraction is the solid, twin-towered Palace of Mondragon, which was the residence both of Muslim rulers and then Christian conquerors. But perhaps my favorite stood solitary in a tiny square — a 14th-century brick minaret turned bell tower with a typically Islamic horseshoe arch.

Also tucked away, in the new town near the celebrated 18th-century Plaza de Toros that many consider a cradle of Spanish bullfighting, was my other Ronda favorite: the tavern Bodega el Socorro.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31



Scenes from the whitewashed villages in Andalusia, Spain:

Above: A panorama of Arcos de la Frontera, one of the most easily reachable of the white villages.

Left: A cluster of homes in the former Islamic stronghold of Frigiliana, Spain, looks out over Nerja, a popular, pretty beach resort town, and hills covered in avocado plantations.

Below: The tiny, car-free alleys of walled Vejeer de la Frontera.



By SCHILLINE/Stars and Stripes



# WEEKEND: TRAVEL

# Europe

**FROM PAGE 30**

In the spattering rain, I followed there a steady stream of hungry faithful that emerged from a packed, incense-filled Mass with the visiting bishop. Like them, I made a serious dent into the forest of overhanging hams from acorn-fed, black-hoofed Iberian pigs.

In the mountains south and

west of Ronda is a profusion of isolated *pueblos*, including an unusual blue one, Juzcar, which was painted that way in 2011 as publicity for a Smurfs movie.

My pick was Grazalema, fitting snugly in the crag of a fir-covered, fog-shrouded mountain. I reached it by climbing more than 5,000 feet on twisting roads that looked more Swiss than Spanish.



GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO/AP

Wedding guests leave a church by horse-drawn carriage in Frigiliana, one of Spain's more isolated white villages.

## Hotel Directory

<p><b>Hotel Am See</b> Kirchenbumbacher Str. 36 92676 Eschenbach Tel: +49 (0)9645-8444 • Mobil: +49 (0)175-4024023 www.hotelamsee.de • hotelamsee@usa.net FREE WIRELESS INTERNET ACCESS Situated on the shore of the Ruffweiher</p>	<p>Glutschaufel Hotel &amp; Restaurant International Hotel &amp; Cuisine Cosmopolitan Atmosphere Open: Mon-Sat 5pm-11pm Obersee 1, 92676 Eschenbach 09645/602900 www.glutschaufel.de</p>
<p><b>City Inn</b> Am Schoenberg 18 • 92655 Grafenwoehr www.city-hotel-pension-grafenwoehr.de mail@city-hotel-pension-grafenwoehr.de FREE WIRELESS INTERNET ACCESS</p>	<p><b>Hotel Forsthaus by Garmisch</b> Free Breakfast, Family Apartments, Ho Tub, Sauna, Dogs Welcome, American/German Owned, 36 EUR/Person, Double Occupancy, Per Night. Tel: 08824-9120 • Email: hotel@forsthaus-oberau.de VAT Forms accepted! www.forsthaus-oberau.de</p>
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Between the two 17th-century churches that bracket its nucleus of terra cotta-roofed homes are many reminders of its long history, including a water fountain with two wide-eyed faces as water spouts, said to date to Visigoth times.

For my last stop, I visited two *pueblos* keeping watch over a spot where the Atlantic and Mediterranean meet, waters that once brimmed with pirates.

The first, walled Vejer de la Frontera, winds like a conch

shell around a hilltop castle and even boasts a couple of wind-mills.

The latter, the former Islamic stronghold of Frigiliana, looks out over Nerja, a popular, pretty beach resort town, and hills covered in avocado plantations.

Potted flowers, brightly painted door and window frames, and scores of ceramic shops give bursts of color, but keep looking down: The intricate black-and-white pebble mosaics that pave its alleys and steps are the true

standout and just as beautiful as the celebrated ones in Italy's Riviera, some 1,000 miles east along the Mediterranean coast.

I watched the sun set from an outdoor cafe at the bottom of Frigiliana's cliffside historic center, sipping a beer and munching tart green olives — for a total bill of less than \$2 — while I waited for my ride.

For my last *pueblo blanco*, I left the driving to the public bus. For more about the Andalusia region, see andalucia.org/en.

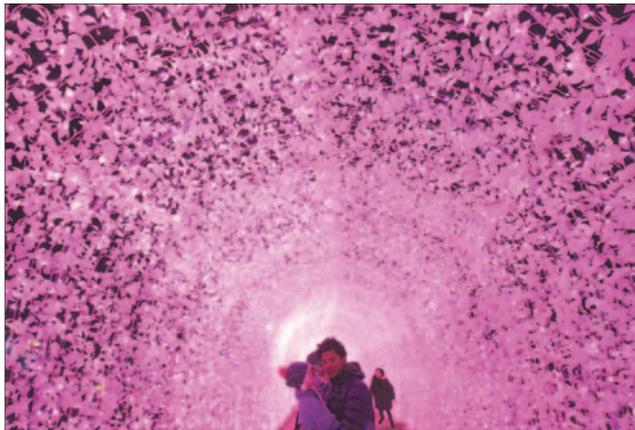
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WEEKEND



# THE PACIFIC EXPERIENCE



AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP

## ILLUMINATING: Garden of Morning Calm

A couple poses beneath a tunnel of lights in Gapyeong, South Korea, in late December. The festival — which features the garden illuminated with millions of lights — runs through March 16. For more on this event: [tinyurl.com/pzzcdzu](http://tinyurl.com/pzzcdzu) For a list of illuminations: [tinyurl.com/taeh54d](http://tinyurl.com/taeh54d)

## OFF BASE

Events are as accurate as possible at press time. Since times or event schedules can change, please verify events before attending.

### Japan

**KANCHU MISOGI (GAMAN TAIKAI):** Jan. 11, 10 a.m.; this annual event at Kanda Myojin features a cold-water purification to kick out the winter cold; [www.kandamyojin.or.jp](http://www.kandamyojin.or.jp).

**YOKOSUKA FIRE-BRIGADE REVIEW (Kanagawa prefecture):** Jan. 12, 11 a.m.; annual New Year's fire drill by Yokosuka Fire Department, featuring firefighting and rescue demonstrations, parade, acrobatic performances on ladders and more; Umikaze Koen.

**YOKOHAMA FIRE-BRIGADE REVIEW (Kanagawa prefecture):** Jan. 12, 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m.; annual New Year's fire drill by Yokohama Fire Department featuring firefighting and rescue demonstrations, parade, and acrobatic performances on ladders and more at Yokohama Redbrick Warehouse.

**GRAND SUMO TOURNAMENT — JANUARY BASHO (Tokyo):** Jan. 12-26; Ryogoku Kokugikan; [www.sumo.or.jp](http://www.sumo.or.jp).

**COMING-OF-AGE DAY:** Jan. 13; Coming-of-Age Day, or Adults' Day, is a Japanese national holiday on the second Monday of January. It honors 20-year-olds and seijin-shiki, or adult ceremony, is held in each city/town to celebrate the new adults. Many women dress in kimonos to

participate in the ceremony. **SAIKO (LAKE) SOFT RIME FESTIVAL (Yamanashi prefecture):** Jan. 25-Feb. 2; giant ice sculptures and night illuminations at Saiko Yacho-no mori Koen, one of five lakes at the foot of Mount Fuji.

### Okinawa

**37TH OKINAWA SANGYO FESTIVAL:** Jan. 25 & 26, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; introducing agricultural, marine, woodcraft and pottery



Photo by KTO NY

## CHECK THIS OUT: Taebaeksan Mountain Snow Festival

This festival in South Korea Jan. 17-26 features sculptures, like this one at a previous festival at Taebaeksan Provincial Park, 4834-31, Taebaeksan-ro, Taebaek-si, Gangwon-do. For more: [festival.taebaek.go.kr/e\\_index.html](http://festival.taebaek.go.kr/e_index.html).

products made on Okinawa at Okinawa Sago Undo Koen; 098-939-1212; [www.city.okinawa.okinawa.jp](http://www.city.okinawa.okinawa.jp).

### South Korea

**SINAN SASANQUA FESTIVAL (Jeollanam-do):** Through Jan. 12; nation's only festival on potted plants, and guests can view Camellias bloom; Cheonsaeseom Bunjae Park.

## ON BASE

### Japan

• **Atsugi** ITT Tours has trips to Disneyland & DisneySea on Jan. 20 (transportation only) and Happo-one ski on Jan. 25 (transportation only). Atsugi Athletics has a MLK 5K run at Halsey Gym at 11 a.m. Jan. 17.

• Check out or play in the MLK Midnight Madness Basketball Tournament at Fleet Gym Basketball Court B at **Yokosuka**. Teams must register by 5 p.m. Jan. 15 at the Fitness, Sports and Deployed Forces Office. On Jan. 20, see Mount Fuji in winter with Yokosuka Tours.

• On Feb. 1, enjoy midnight snowshoeing on a trip with Camp **Zama** Outdoor Recreation Center

and Leisure Travel Service. Or see a sumo tournament with a tour Feb. 9.

### Guam

• Giggle at the minions with a free showing of PG-rated "Despicable Me 2," at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 25 at Hotspot at **Andersen** Air Force Base.

### Okinawa

• Experience a Japanese tea ceremony on Jan. 24 or take a trip to see Nago cherry blossoms on Jan. 25 and 26 with Camp **Foster** tours. At 8 a.m. Jan. 15, take part in the 2014 King & Queen of the Pins Bowling Tournament at Foster Bowling Center.

**To see your events here: SSPEDLibrary@stripes.com.**

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Looking for even more to do? For additional events, concerts and activities, go to [stripes.com/military-life](http://stripes.com/military-life)

# WEEKEND: TRAVEL

# Pacific

## PLAN AHEAD: Sapporo Snow Festival

Walk through a winter wonderland at this 65th annual festival Feb. 5-11 in Sapporo, Japan. The event — featuring snow statues, ice sculptures and more — is one of Japan's largest winter events. For more: [www.snowfes.com/english](http://www.snowfes.com/english)



DAN SANFORD/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Above: During a previous year of the festival, Navy Chief Billy Knox applied handfuls of snow to the base of a snow sculpture to try to reinforce it. Knox led a team of U.S. sailors from Misawa Air Base, Japan, invited to the 62nd annual festival to represent the U.S. Navy.

Left: In 2011, hundreds of ice and snow sculptures were on display in Sapporo at the annual snow festival.

Stars and Stripes

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## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pacific

Gandalf (played by Ian McKellen) appears in *Hobbit* in a scene from "The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug."

WARNER BROS./MCT

# HOBBIT HABITATS

Newest 'Hobbit' movie locations reveal varied, beautiful Middle-earth landscapes

By ANDREA KITAY

McClatchy-Tribune News Service

**B**ilbo and company are back on the silver screen in the second of director Sir Peter Jackson's three-part adaptation of the adventure fantasy tome "The Hobbit." While fans flood to theaters, New Zealand's tourism machine is pumping out new location tours the way only Kiwis do — with a dash of down-hill and a heap of adrenalin. From trekking boulder-strewn meadows in Trollshaw Forest, kayaking the Pelorus River in the wake of barrel-bobbing dwarves to horseback riding near Beorn's house and woods, the pickings just got a lot brighter in the country whose identity is now inextricably linked with Middle-earth.

But do movie locations as a basis for travel make sense? If you're looking for some thrills and a lot of scenery, it just may. According to Jared Connon, supervising locations manager for the film company 3 Foot 7 Ltd. and all three "Hobbit" films, "What's amazing about filming on location in New Zealand is how diverse the landscape is and how quickly it changes. You can travel from snow-topped mountains, through lush tropical forests, across gently rolling countryside and down to the ocean all within the space of three hours."

But before you decide that setting a travel itinerary around a collection of movie locations is just for the bona fide wonky — I counted myself a skeptic — it turns out a well-planned road trip with locations as points of interest will get you to places off the beaten path you might never have considered otherwise. I started my own journey through Middle-earth with a list of the latest tour operators, winding my way south from Auckland via rental cars loaded with GPS and a few quick commuter flights.



ANDREA KITAY/MCT

Snap a selfie where Bilbo meets Sting at the North Island's newest location — Hairy Feet Waitomo.

#### Ruakuri Cave

After a night flight to Auckland from Los Angeles, I headed south to Ruakuri Cave in the North Island's Waitomo region. One of 300 known limestone caves in the area, Ruakuri played a sound-only role in

the first "Hobbit" movie. Here, ancient limestone formations and spectacular crystal tapestries are not only a stunning geologic wonder but also give a chilling bounce to sound that made them ideal for recording the background noises in the "Hobbit's" goblin cave scenes.

If the eerie sound effects aren't compelling enough, it's also the place for an epic adventure. While guided walking tours are the best way to get an overview of cave science, it's the spelunking, tubing and black water rafting excursions run by fifth generation farmer Angus Stubbs that provide the real action. For a treat at the lowest point of the elevated metal walkway, look down and you'll see a naturally occurring, still pool of water that might easily double as Gollum's pool.

As a destination by itself, Ruakuri Caves is somewhat off the beaten track. But as a stepping-off point for one of the newest locations operators, Hairy Feet Waitomo, it's well worth the trip.

#### Hairy Feet Waitomo

From Waitomo, it's a roughly 45-minute, very winding drive to the Mangaotaki Valley just beyond the small farming community of Pio Pio. It's home to one of the newest tour operators, Hairy Feet Waitomo, managed by Suzie and Warrick Denize on their 280-acre sheep spread. While the oddly rugged country isn't top-notch farmland, it turns out to be a stellar filming site. Undulating hills stippled with huge boulders left akimbo from eons of erosion rest below massive limestone bluffs.

"This is where several pivotal scenes were filmed in the first movie," beams Suzie, pointing to a clearing where a burned-out farmhouse and troll campfire built from polystyrene were placed in the first "Hobbit" film.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

## Pacific



PHOTOS BY ANDREA KITAV/MCT

A visitor on horseback treks through the woods surrounding Beorn's house.

## FROM PAGE 34

This is Trollshaw Forest to Hobbitophiles. While nothing remains of the filming that took place over four weeks here, for die-hard fans the location is instantly familiar, rewarding in the way an overdue visit to a beloved family home is.

A rock path through gnarled, ancient-looking trees leads to the massive, slightly tilting boulder marking the entrance of the Trolls' cave. The only reminder filming took place here is a small blue X still taped to the ground, a place marker for the character Bilbo as he examines his new sword, Sting. A few snaps with a replica new sword and it's off to stand where Radagast the Brown and his Rhosgobal Rabbit sleigh led Orcs and Wargs away from the company of dwarves.

## The Hairy Feet Waitomo tour ends with a mug of ale at the very real Green Dragon Inn, now a working pub.

### Hobbiton: the Shire

Hobbiton, the most commercially successful filming site, appearing in both "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings" trilogies, is a must-see on any travel itinerary. Better known as the Shire, the site is maintained exactly as it appeared in the films. Devotees can walk along the Shire's winding paths past 37 hobbit holes, a community garden and the famous party tree. While the hobbit holes are still just facades — you can dip into one and see how they were constructed into mounds of earth — tours end with a mug of ale at the very real Green Dragon Inn, now a working pub.

Located in the small farming community of Matamata, 12 acres of local sheep farmer Russell Alexander's 1,250-acre farm were transformed into the Shire more than a decade ago. Here, the landscape softens and rolling hills dotted with sheep dominate every view.

While the location isn't technically new — it appeared in the "Lord of the Rings" movies as temporary plywood polystyrene props — it has moved from temporary to permanent status after a rebuild for the "Hobbit" trilogy.

"We have no plans on becoming Disneyland," Alexander tells me, pointing out the yellow door of Samwise Gamgee's hobbit hole. But the sheer effort to maintain its authenticity — several greens workers are meticulously painting leaves that belong on the famous oak tree above Bilbo and Frodo's door when I visit — make it obvious that maintaining the Shire's standards requires immense focus, a substantial

labor force and a sizable budget. The result is a spectacular look at the realism props people bring to modern film, and is well worth a visit.

### Aratatia Rapids

Some of the most memorable scenes from the second "Hobbit" movie are the dwarves bobbing in barrels. Filming was done at two locations, the Aratatia Rapids on the Waikato River just off the North Island's Volcanic Highway, and the South Island's beech tree-lined Pelorus River in the Marlborough region.

On a rocky outcrop at the base of the Aratatia Rapids, 10 minutes outside the town of Taupo, film crews spent two days capturing roiling waters falling over boulders as regular releases of dam water flow down a narrow, bouldered channel.

Short of a perilous walk down slippery rocks, a spin in a jetboat is the preferred and much more amusing way to see the rapids at their base.

I hopped on a jetboat at Rapids Jet, just off State Highway 5. The ride

started with a quick zip up to the steep rapids before the water was released. The magic came after half an hour careening up and down the river, jumping rapids and doing speed-spins — I was soaking wet when I stumbled onto the dock — when the driver cranked the boat back up to the bottom of the falls for an "after" look at the torrent of water spilling over the rocks post-release.

A snappy commuter flight to the South Island's Marlborough region followed, and then it was a short drive to the coastal town of Havelock for a visit to Pelorus Eco Adventures. Here, it's all about nature and a slower pace as I donned a vest and inflatable kayak for a half-day paddle down the Pelorus River's placid waters to see the rocky outcrop where barrel-riding dwarves exited their barrels and negotiated a ride into Dale in the second "Hobbit" movie.

### Dart Stables

An hour north of Queenstown is Paradise, where I visited Dart Stables for its Ride of the Rings trek on one of six horses of Rohan still working at the stables. The 1½-hour trek took me through the woods of Lothlorien, past the Misty Mountains and to the site where the film crew spent two months building Beorn's house for the second film.

A favorite filming location of both cast and crew, "it is not only one of the most gorgeous parts of the country, but it means we all get to spend time in Queenstown, which is always a lot of fun," according to Jared Connor.

And, after all, isn't that the point of travel?

## KNOW &amp; GO

For information on Ruakuri and other Waitomo-area caves, visit [waitomo.com](http://waitomo.com).

Guided walking tours at Hairy Feet Waitomo are daily at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. [hairyfeetwaitomo.co.nz](http://hairyfeetwaitomo.co.nz)

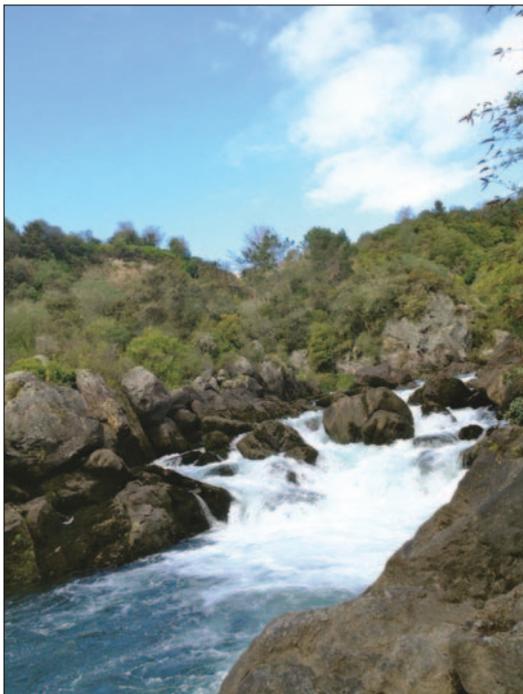
Hobbiton offers walking tours with a mug of ale at the Green Dragon Inn at the end. [hobbiton-tours.com](http://hobbiton-tours.com)

Rapids Jet offers 35-minute rides

beginning on the hour. [rapidsjet.com](http://rapidsjet.com)

Dart Stables offers several trails and accommodate all riding levels. [dartstables.com](http://dartstables.com)

For more Middle-earth itineraries, check out The Halfling's Ramble, Elven Magic or The Great Wizard's Journey at [newzealand.com/int/feature/middle-earth-itineraries](http://newzealand.com/int/feature/middle-earth-itineraries).



A jet boat ride takes fans to the Aratatia Rapids, the setting for some of the most memorable scenes from "The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug."



Gaze over the Shire's 12 acres of rolling hills, where sheep can be seen at every turn.

## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

Guests of the Hirado Kaijyo Hotel on Hirado Island, Nagasaki prefecture, Japan, can take advantage of sweeping ocean views.

# Onsen, take me away!

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
Stars and Stripes

**I**t is bitterly cold and overcast on a December afternoon on Hirado Island. The sea is angry and sends winds whipping across the chop toward land.

Fishermen can be seen huddling in their boats just offshore while they wait for a bite. The shores are desolate and uninventing.

Life couldn't be more different underneath the placid waters of the outdoor private onsen at the Hirado Kaijyo Hotel, one of the best places in Nagasaki prefecture to thumb your nose at Mother Nature this winter.

At Kaijyo, which literally means "on the ocean," steam steadily rises from the hot spring pools that are built for families but are great for couples or small groups of friends. A miniature waterfall gurgles as it steadily deposits more piping hot water into the cradle of dark-colored stone.

The fertile fishing channel that separates the island from the mainland can send its razor-sharp winds — but they are quickly disarmed, relegated to the harmlessness of a birthday-party clown.

Hirado Kaijyo Hotel, located less than an hour's drive from Sasebo, offers one of the best onsens around for the money. While it is not on the level of Unzen, Ureshino or Kurokawa, Kaijyo is comparable to high-quality outdoor onsens in Sasebo, Kawatana or Sechibaru.

If you want to spend a few hours outside and need the armor the outdoor onsens of Kaijyo provide, you pay 600 yen per person, and it guarantees you

## Hirado Kaijyo Hotel in Japan offers ultimate hot springs experience



The outdoor private onsen at Hirado Kaijyo Hotel is one of the best places in Nagasaki prefecture, Japan, to escape the cold this winter. Affordable priced, the hotel is located not far from Sasebo.

entrance into their large, beautiful outdoor public onsen.

Some foreigners find walking around in the buff a bit daunting, so should you fancy a private onsen experience, indoor onsens with an ocean view cost an additional 1,500 yen for one hour. The outdoor private onsen costs an additional 2,000 yen for an hour.

After your onsen soak, there are multiple rooms and lookouts where you can close your eyes, hydrate and relax before the drive home. The hotel is filled with pools, fish and the peaceful sounds of trickling water. Should you want to stay, rooms at Kaijyo start at 6,000 yen per night. They also have an in-house restaurant.

In the United States, jacuzzis are a sign of affluence, a toy like the jet ski or kegerator on the back porch. Regular folks usually see them only at hotels or spas, and many stay away, frightened off by the cauldron of uncirculated water, perceived germs and enough chlorine to take the paint off of a house.

The Japanese — with their natural hot springs — have made an art out of the notion and brought it to the masses at an affordable price.

True onsens in Japan usually offer serenity and stunning views to go along with the fact that everyone washes before getting in. Heat and constant circulation also ensure cleanliness. Instead of chlorine and other chemicals, onsens contain natural minerals that translate into healthy skin.

The onsens of Kaijyo are that blanket that protects you from the cold, a soothing, healthy escape from winter's unrelenting bite.

burke.matt@stripes.com



NOVA AM-14W/Stars and Stripes

## ON THE QT

### DIRECTIONS

Hirado Kaijyo Hotel is located at 2231-3 Okubocho, Hirado-shi, Nagasaki-ken. To get there from Sasebo, jump on the highway and head toward Hirado. The highway ends at Saza. Follow the signs toward Hirado Island, taking 227 to 204, left onto 383, right and left to stay on 383, right toward 153, right onto 153 for 550 meters, then right. The hotel is tall, light in color and located immediately on the right along the water. The entrance is about 50 meters after taking the last right. A map can be found at [www.hiradokaijyohotel.co.jp/access/index.html](http://www.hiradokaijyohotel.co.jp/access/index.html).

### TIMES

Hirado Kaijyo Hotel onsens are open from 3 to 10 p.m. weekdays and from 1 to 10 p.m. weekends.

### COSTS

The public onsen at Hirado Kaijyo Hotel costs 600 yen (about \$6). Outdoor private onsens cost 1,600 yen for 40 minutes, 2,000 yen for 60 minutes, or 3,000 yen for 90 minutes. Each person entering an onsen must pay the 600-yen fee for the public onsen on top of any private onsen costs. Doing so guarantees admittance to the public onsen as well as the private one. For two people to rent a private outdoor onsen for 90 minutes, it costs 4,200 yen. The indoor private onsens with an ocean view are slightly cheaper at 1,000 yen for 40 minutes, 1,500 yen for 60 minutes and 2,000 yen for 90 minutes (each entrant must also pay 600 yen for the public onsen fee).

### FOOD

Hirado Kaijyo Hotel sells snacks and drinks, and has a restaurant.

### INFORMATION

[www.hiradokaijyohotel.co.jp/](http://www.hiradokaijyohotel.co.jp/)  
Telephone: 0950-22-3800

— Matthew M. Burke



An enclosed staircase, left, leads guests to the outdoor private onsens, into which fresh, hot spring water is constantly fed, right.

## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING

## Pacific



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes



Above: Tanks at Yutaka Zushi are stocked with the freshest fish in the area.

Left: The eatery's tempura set comes with rice, soup, salad and multiple other side dishes, all for 1,500 yen. The tempura was light and fluffy and comes highly recommended.

## Ways to put more fish on the table in the new year

BY STEPHANIE WITT SEDGWICK  
Special to  
The Washington Post

Eating more seafood can be a key to a healthful diet. But it also can seem easier said than done. The hurdles? The people you cook for and dine with might not like fish. You might not know how to cook it. The cost can be daunting, and environmental questions can be confusing. Thankfully, each obstacle can be overcome.

## For the fish-phobic

Start with mild, white-fleshed fish, such as tilapia, cod and sole. Avoid the oily choices with darker flesh, such as mackerel and bluefish. Dark-fleshed fish have more healthful omega-3 fatty acids, but they're an acquired taste. Mild fish, meanwhile, can take on the flavor of whatever spices, seasonings and sauces you desire, and they absorb marinades in minutes.

## For the novice

Overcooking can render a delicate fillet tough and unappetizingly fishy, and it can happen in a flash because fish cooks so quickly — but that's also one of its best qualities. Your job is to keep an eye on it. Quickly pan-fry thin filets, browning them on each side until just opaque. Finish larger, thicker pieces in the oven or on the stovetop in a vibrant broth or stew.

## For the budget-wise

Shop wisely, control portion sizes and extend the seafood with other ingredients. Mix a handful of shrimp with vegetables, pastas, grains or beans. If the fish is particularly pricey, remember: A mere pound can yield four servings. Shop for sales, get to know your fishmonger and don't forget cold storage. Mild fish takes particularly well to freezing, so you can buy when the price is right, with no pressure to cook it right away.

## For the eco-aware

Turn to such sources as the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch Program and the Blue Ocean Institute, both of which use color-coded rankings online to help you choose fish that are caught and farmed responsibly. The Natural Resources Defense Council can help you identify fish that are low in mercury.

Keep those strategies in mind, and you can make the most important change of all: healthier eating at home.

## After Hours: Japan

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
Stars and Stripes

When it comes to food, there is such a thing as too big and too much. When it comes to fish, there is no such thing as too fresh.

When the two collide, you are left with Yutaka Zushi, the sushi experience on Hirado Island preferred by Japanese bloggers and Internet foodies alike.

Located less than an hour from Sasebo, the island is not only home to beautiful beaches and untouched wilderness, perfect for day trips, but also some of the most talked about fishing grounds in the region. As a result, Yutaka Zushi offers huge portions of the island's freshest fish, requiring patrons to conjure their inner Joey Chestnut just to complete a meal.

Yutaka Zushi is a sushi/sashimi restaurant in the traditional Japanese sense, a far cry from the sushi-go-rounds that feature frozen fish. Accompanied by the sounds of bubbling water and flanked by fish tanks, the master slices still-wriggling fish behind the counter with precision.

The restaurant offers a lunch and dinner menu. Lunches are very affordable and start as low as 600 yen (about \$6) for a *udon* and sushi combination. Dinners are a bit more expensive but are substantially larger.

Yutaka Zushi serves various combination sets with multiple side dishes, such as one with sashimi and sukiyaki for 2,800 yen. Sukiyaki is basically a small pot of vegetables and meat with a sweet sauce.

A top-shelf sushi set features the best cut of tuna, called *otoro*; Japanese tiger prawn; abalone; sea urchin; fish eggs; squid; yellow tail as well as white and



The top-shelf sushi set at Hirado's Yutaka Zushi features the best cut of tuna money can buy, called "otoro": Japanese tiger prawn, abalone, sea urchin, fish eggs, squid, yellowtail, whitefish and shellfish at a cost of 3,000 yen. This set has sea urchin and fish eggs swapped out for salmon, which is equally delicious.

shellfish at a cost of 3,000 yen. It features pieces of fish that are so big they must be eaten in multiple bites (using your hands ensures it won't fall apart). The *otoro* is divine and melts in your mouth. The abalone is an equally rare delicacy.

Should you want to substitute a certain thing that is more to

your liking, the staff is generally willing to do so if it is of equal or lesser value. A substitute of salmon is a tasty recommendation.

Yutaka Zushi's second-tier sushi set costs 2,000 yen and features *maguro* (regular cut of tuna), shrimp, squid, sea urchin, fish eggs, yellow tail, as well as white and shellfish.

The cheapest sushi set costs 1,500 yen and features yellow tail, shrimp, squid, octopus, sea urchin, conger eel as well as white and shellfish.

A *maguro don*, which is basically pieces of cut up raw tuna on top of rice with wasabi, costs just 600 yen and is a delicious starter.

A tempura set for 1,500 yen comes with more food than you could want, including soup, salad and multiple



A "maguro don," which is basically pieces of cut up raw tuna on top of rice with wasabi, costs just 600 yen and is a delicious starter.

## YUTAKA ZUSHI

Where: Hirado, Japan.  
Google Map GPS coordinates: 33.365270, 129.552283

Phone: Reservations are not required but are suggested, at 0950-23-2017.  
Cost: Lunch specials of *udon* and sushi start at just 600 yen. Dinner sets are more expensive but are more substantial.

Directions: Yutaka Zushi is located at 101 Shinmachi, Hirado-shi, Nagasaki-ken. To get there from Sasebo, jump on the highway and head toward Hirado. The highway ends at Saza. Follow the signs toward Hirado Island, taking 227 to 204, left onto 383. The restaurant is located off 383 in downtown Hirado. It's easy to find with its unique exterior that includes a circular cutout in the wall.

— Matthew M. Burke

side dishes.

Yutaka Zushi also specializes in whale and offers various cuts for a range of prices. A whale *don* is 1,300 yen, whale sashimi is 1,300 yen and sushi is 1,800 yen.

Reservations are not required but are recommended as the restaurant is usually full. The menu has pictures of some items but is in Japanese.

Private dining rooms are also available.

With big portions and big-time freshness, Yutaka Zushi stands out as a giant among local sushi joints.

burke.matt@stripes.com

WEEKEND: BOOKS

# Old comedy stars get new life

## Jeeves returns in 'Wedding Bells,' a tribute to author PG. Wodehouse

By MICHAEL D. SCHAFFER  
The Philadelphia Inquirer

What ho!  
A new novel starring the greatest comic characters of 20th-century English literature, bumbling Bertie Wooster and his unflappable, Spinoza-reading valet Jeeves?

How can this be, one asks oneself, scratching the bean with Bertie-like perplexity. Didn't PG. Wodehouse, who brought Jeeves and Bertie to life, hand in his lunch pail on Valentine's Day in 1937?

Well, old tops, what we have in "Jeeves and the Wedding Bells" — something even the mentally negligible Bertie could puzzle out unaided by Jeeves' massive, fish-fed cerebrum — is imitation Wodehouse.

Wodehouse, the most prolific and most beloved British novelist Sebastian Faulks, who helped himself to heaps of critical praise back in 2008 for writing a James Bond novel titled "Devil May Care."

But winding up Jeeves and Wooster for new adventures after years on the library shelf is a far more difficult mission than putting 007 through his paces.

Wodehouse was a comic genius, a master of farce, with a distinctive voice. Have there ever been funnier books than "The Code of the Woosters" (1938) or "Joy in the Morning" (1946), or just about any of the dozens of novels and story collections Wodehouse produced over his 93 years? Do we really need someone to add to that corpus, especially since Wodehouse wrote so much that a reader can easily

get lost in it for a lifetime? Faulks knows he isn't Wodehouse and doesn't try to be. The voice sounds a lot like Wodehouse, but anyone who has read much



Wodehouse will know it isn't the master. That's not a knock on Faulks: He's a novelist, not a copyist. And he humbly — if that's the word I want — labels his book "an homage" to Wodehouse.

Most of all, whether it's Wodehouse or Faulks, "Jeeves and the Wedding Bells" is a funny book, worth reading. Parts of it brought a chuckle to

the lips: "The Red Lion was a four-ale bar with a handful of low-browed sons of toil who looked as though they might be related to one another in ways frowned on by the Old Testament."

(Bertie describing a village inn in Dorsetshire.) "I sprang from the armchair like a roosting water-fowl at the sound of a shotgun being closed." (Bertie reacting to the entrance of a beautiful young woman.)

"The old dear read the message and began to shake her head. Then she peered at me in a way I have grown used to over the years; as though I had been licensed for day release from some corrective institution, but only by a majority vote." (Bertie describing the reaction

of a telegraph operator to a wire he had asked her to send.)

As in all the Jeeves stories, the Jeeves-Bertie badinage is the best part of the package. In fact, it's where Faulks' voice becomes almost indistinguishable from Wodehouse's (and, thanks to the TV series "Jeeves & Wooster," Bertie sounds like Hugh Laurie and Jeeves sounds like Stephen Fry):

"Jeeves, I said, when I had finally regained the power of speech. 'This is the bally end.'

"It would appear that confusion now hath made his masterpiece, sir."

"Well, I jolly well wish his masterpiece didn't involve me in a starring role. 'It is a most vexed state of affairs, sir, though perhaps not beyond hope.'"

Faulks thrives in the usual Wodehousian silly plot, revolving around a weekend at a country house where young hearts are trying to come together and something has to be pulled (in this case, copies of Debrecht's Peerage & Baronetage and Burke's Peerage & Baronetage) to make that happen. And there's plenty of shinning up drairpings.

The biggest problem for a Wodehouse fan confronting Jeeves and Wooster redivivis is that the new author now has charge of the storyline and can take it in directions the characters' creator probably never envisaged. Sherlock Holmes in the hands of Laurie R. King or Nicholas Meyer might have surprised Arthur Conan Doyle. Wodehouse fans may not care for the outcome of "Jeeves and the Wedding Bells."

Do we need Faulks' book? No. Is it worth reading? Yes.

## Wolcott delivers 'Critical Mass' of a long career

The thought hits every now and then when I read another critic: I wish I had written that sentence. Reading James Wolcott, though, "every now and then" turns into every paragraph.

Wolcott, the veteran culture writer with a vast new collection called "Critical Mass: Four Decades of Essays, Reviews, Hand Grenades and Hurrahs," has the rare gift for style that doesn't detract from substance. He writes with a muscular sense of humor that favors spry verbs over piled-on adjectives (ask any critic how hard that is). He covers the boardwalk, from pop music to literary fiction. And he was lucky enough to ply his trade in New York during a period when the city was shaking with cultural foment.

"Lucking Out": That's the name of Wolcott's 2012 memoir of finding himself in the right place at the right time. But it's one thing to have luck, quite another to run with it.

Here's Wolcott, writing for the Village Voice in 1975 about a new band called Talking Heads at CBGB: "David Byrne ... has a little-boy-lost-at-the-zoo voice and the demeanor of someone who's spent the last half hour whirling around in a spin dryer. When his eyes start Ping-Ponging in his head, he looks like a cartoon of a chipmunk from Mars."

Most of the pieces in "Critical Mass" were originally published in the Voice or Vanity Fair, outlets famous for letting writers write — provided they're good enough. Wolcott is a power hitter who swings for the upper deck, and he'll overdo it on occasion. On the novelist Richard Ford, "Waves of words baptize America's boss as Ford pipes his prayerful tone from a portable pulpit." As Albert Brooks' TV newsmen admonished a colleague in "Broadcast News," "Pretty peppy party, pal."

Regarding the subject, Wolcott argues his case with vigor and wit. His sentences pop off the page. He can even breathe new life into thoroughly covered fare like film noir, which "emerged like a walking hangerover after World War II, haunted shadow rising from Europe's bombed-out rubble and Japan's radioactive ash — a slice of death drawn from a larger annihilation."

Yeah, I wish I'd written that.

— Chris Vognar  
The Dallas Morning News

# Jane Austen rebooted; hold the zombies

By WENDY SMITH  
Newsday

Looking at the ever-growing list of contemporary fiction presuming to improve on Jane Austen (with or without zombies), readers might well wonder why they can't leave the poor author alone. Happily, Jo Baker's "Longbourn" is no mere riff but a fully imagined reinvention of "Pride and Prejudice" that casts a sharp imaginary reflection on the aristocratic antics of Elizabeth Bennet, Mr. Darcy and their friends.

The Bennets' household Sarah is Baker's heroine, and she seems far more heroic than the pampered family as we follow her through the never-ending rounds of backbreaking labor required to maintain a Georgian household. Muddy petticoats must be scrubbed clean with lye soap that leaves her hands cracked and bleeding; when inclement weather prevents young ladies from journeying to town for shoes to ornament their dancing slippers, Sarah must struggle through the rain for them. "If they send you on a fool's errand in foul weather again ... I'll go instead," says the new footman, James. Sarah has been suspicious of this young man, hired despite his shadowy background, and we learn that James has his reasons for keeping aloof from

the spirited housemaid. But a tender love story grows from their undeniable attraction, made more poignant because servants are at the mercy of forces beyond their control.

We observe the Bennet girls' romances at a distance, though the reprehensible Wickham behaves as unscrupulously here with the help as he does in Austen's original with Lydia. Baker is not entirely unsympathetic to the upper-

class characters; Mrs. Bennet, in particular, gets gentler treatment than Austen gave her. But the author doesn't airbrush the callousness of the privileged. Elizabeth doesn't seem quite so charming after she responds to Sarah's heartfelt inquiry about James (who has fled under duress from Wickham), "Oh, Smith! You mean the footman? You called him Mr. Smith. ... I thought you meant someone of my acquaintance. I thought you meant a gentleman."

Austen's novels amply demonstrate her cognizance of high society's less-than-gentle underpinnings, albeit within the confines of her breeding. I think she would have appreciated Baker's bracing rewrite from the

underdog's point of view. And I know she would have loved the well-deserved happy ending.

Joanna Trollope offers a more straightforward take in her modern-day rendering of "Sense and Sensibility," the debut volume in a British series pairing contemporary novelists with Austen titles.

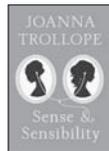
The plot and characters are almost exactly the same, the major difference being that Elinor, the sister with sense, is more openly exasperated by all the blithering around her than Austen allowed her to be, and that the many foolish and/or selfish secondary characters are far more obnoxious than they were in 1811.

Fans of the original will relish the sly twists derived by Trollope — yes, a descendant of the prolific Victorian writer Anthony Trollope. In her version, Belle Dashwood was never actually married to Henry, whose death leaves her in dire financial straits when Henry's son is persuaded by his odious wife to renege on a promise of support for Belle and her daughters. Belle's cousin, Sir John Middleton, with whom they take refuge in Devon, is now the manufacturer of upscale country

clothing; the home he provides, Barton Cottage, is an ugly new construction with all the modern conveniences, and, as such, highly ungenial to the romantic sensibility of middle daughter Marianne Dashwood. Marianne has asthma, which gives a lot more plausibility to her chance rescue by Willoughby, the weak-willed Adonis who breaks her heart, and to her life-threatening illness at the novel's climax.

It's good, malicious fun that smarmy Robert Ferrars turns out to be gay — not that their mother, who unfairly favors him over Elinor's true love, Edward, has a clue about it. That makes it so much more ridiculous when nasty little Lucy Steele jilts Edward, who has nobly maintained an unwise youthful engagement to her, so that she can marry Robert.

Elinor remains the calm, lovable center of this storm of silliness, updated only in the architecture degree derailed by her family's financial crisis. Edward, alas, is as colorless as before, and Trollope's Colonel Brandon is so charming we wish even more so that we had he and Elinor would get together. But Trollope honors her predecessor's intentions and reserves him for Marianne, whose chastened renunciation of excess sensibility is most vividly portrayed in this faithful retelling.



## WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT

## NEW ON DVD

**“The Following: The Complete First Season”:** It was beginning to look like cable was the only place to find great drama, with shows such as “Breaking Bad” and “American Horror Story.” But Fox showed in “The Following” that there is still some creative life in the networks. Kevin Bacon stars in his first TV series, playing burned-out FBI agent Ryan Hardy. He’s on the track of an escaped killer who has a huge cult following. The thriller is the most addictive network show to come along since “Lost.” But while the mystery is as thick, it certainly isn’t confusing. This is just a smart story about the battle between good and evil.

**“Closed Circuit”:** Two barristers must defend a man accused of masterminding a bombing. Eric Bana stars. A director’s done a proper job when the simple act of bringing a pitcher of water and glasses into a room triggers thoughts of subterfuge, espionage and sinister actions. That’s what John Crowley has accomplished in this legal/spy thriller. His deft ability to build suspense is Hitchcockian in nature, from the explosive opening to the unexpected ending. Give partial credit to writer Steven Knight, who has created a smart tale that gets amplified by the way Crowley put the movie together.



ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS/MCT

**Mark Ruffalo and Gwyneth Paltrow share the screen in the movie “Thanks For Sharing,” now available on DVD.**

**“Thanks for Sharing”:** Most of the story is told through Adam (Mark Ruffalo), a successful businessman who has been “sexually sober” for five years. It’s not been easy. His battle with his urges are so tough that he can’t even have a television in his room out of fear he will watch—and react—to inappropriate material. His battle has been so consuming that he’s had little time for a social life. It’s a difficult challenge to start from a point of disgust and to win over an audience. But director and co-writer Stuart Blumberg does it by telling rich and powerful stories that cast a harsh light on the realities of addiction. He shows that there’s never any true winners, just those who manage not to fail for another day.

Also available on DVD:  
**“House of Lies: Season Two”:** Don Cheadle stars in the Showtime series.  
**“Being Human: Complete Third Season”:** Syfy series about very weird housemates.  
**“To Love and To Cherish”:** Modern woman tries to keep her marriage alive.  
**“Linsanity”:** Portrait of NBA player Jeremy Lin.

**“Copper: Season 2”:** BBC America crime drama set in the 19th century.

**“Archer: The Complete Season Four”:** FX’s animated spy series.

**“In Sickness and in Health”:** The perfect bride is hiding a serious secret about her health.

**“The Act of Killing”:** Filmmakers examine a country where Indonesian death squad leaders are celebrated as heroes.

**“The Virginian”:** Trace Adkins stars in this made-for-TV western.

**“Duck Dynasty: Season 4”:** More adventures of the Robertsones.

**“Murph: The Protector”:** Documentary on Navy SEAL Lieutenant Michael Murphy.

—Rick Bentley/The Fresno Bee



## ‘Raising Hope’s’ Lucas Neff says his life has been one happy accident

By LUAINÉ LEE  
 McClatchy-Tribune News Service

When actor Lucas Neff was a kid, he was bullied constantly. He was severely overweight and his cronies loved to intimidate him. “Kids don’t need much,” he says, seated at a glass-topped table in the sunny patio of a hotel in Pasadena, Calif.

“Show any signs of weakness or insecurity, that’s where they go. Kids are simple to a certain extent. They call ‘em like they sees ‘em... We don’t learn as a kid how to bend, not break. You break as a kid if you let insults hurt you and show them that and then react. Try to hit back? It piles on an aggressive force. It takes a long time to laugh it off and to learn how to handle people with a little more grace and ease so they don’t feel any desire to attack you.”

Neff, who plays the unprepared father in the gentle TV comedy “Raising Hope,” eventually learned to fight back.

He did it by losing 65 pounds in three months when he was 13. “I didn’t want to be fat anymore,” he says. “I ran two to four miles every day, swam every day and went vegetarian on a very strict diet... That was a huge change for me. Not just in the way people saw me, but it sort of changed the way I saw life.”

“I’m a huge believer in the executive spirit of the human will,” he says. “We are more in charge of our own personal

destiny—how we live and respond to the world is within our control. That immediately tuned me to the persevering nature of the human spirit. If you want something, you can have it. It just takes hard work and dedication. You might not get there, but that’s the only way you can ensure something more than not.”

Actors are often ambitiously determined, but not Neff. To hear him talk, his entire career is one happy accident after another. For example, his application to college was mis-processed and he accidentally ended up in theater arts. His mother, who runs a nonprofit theater for kids in prison, approved. “My mom said, ‘It’s a sign from the heavens because you’re such a (expletive) loudmouth. Give it a shot.’ I ended up loving it, and that firmly established me on that path.”

His class hosted a casting director who encouraged the students to visit his office. When Neff did, they were casting an Internet commercial and asked him to read for it. Surprisingly, he won the part. “It was so terrible they never aired it,” he laughs. “It wasn’t even good enough for the Internet. But I got an agent out of it, and that agent got me auditions and almost everything else I got. I did a couple more commercials, and a year later they got me an audition for ‘Raising Hope,’ a year after I got out of school.”

Actually, Neff was down to less than five dollars when he auditioned for “Raising Hope.” “I was scraping by,” he says. “I had a play I was doing, but was getting

paid 500 dollars for three months’ work with no benefits, anything else. I cleaned the house of a colleague for 60 bucks the week I got ‘Raising Hope.’ I cleaned some families’ houses. I’d do whatever. Luckily, something would always come through at the last second.”

Neff, 28, doesn’t fret the erratic nature of acting. “I was taught from a very early age that money isn’t important. Both my parents are working artists; they don’t make a lot of money. And that the main thing was to follow your passion and put that above all else. As I’ve gotten older, they’ve begun to reinforce the idea of financial security a bit more because I think they got tired of paying my rent,” he says.

“I was never afraid. I’ve never really had a plan; never knew what I was going to do from one month to the next—or one day to the next. I just woke up and found it as the day happened. I feel like maybe that inclination in me makes me more suited to this profession.”

Engaged at one time, Neff says the hardest thing he ever did was break it off. But he’s not burned by the experience. His current sweetheart is actress Caitlin Spasey (“Reign”). “I believe in love,” he says. “I think as an actor it’s important to live at the heights and depths of human experience. You’ve got to experience the ecstasy of life and the agony of defeat and loss and grief. It’s our job to convey the full spectrum of human experience to people.”

Above: Lucas Neff, left, stars with Shannon Woodward on the TV comedy “Raising Hope.” The show airs Sundays on AFN-Family. Neff says he was down to less than five dollars when he auditioned for the show. “I was scraping by,” he says. “I had a play I was doing, but was getting paid 500 dollars for three months’ work with no benefits, anything else. I cleaned the house of a colleague for 60 bucks the week I got ‘Raising Hope.’ ... Luckily, something would always come through at the last second.”

COURTESY OF FOX/MCT

## WEEKEND: HEALTH &amp; FITNESS

# No pain, no gain? No way!

## Orthopedic spine surgeon gives advice on avoiding workout injuries

By MARY MACVEAN  
Los Angeles Times

Those fitness resolutions will do you no good if they lead you to visit the likes of Hooman Melamed.

As an orthopedic spine surgeon, Melamed sees the downside of efforts to get strong and fit. Exercising the wrong way can put a person out of commission for a long time, he says.

One recent morning, Melamed met us at the Spectrum gym in Santa Monica, Calif., and demonstrated the right way to do some common exercises and use some popular equipment, and he talked about the risks of getting it wrong.

Melamed, director of scoliosis at Marina del Rey Hospital, says he often sees people whose injuries could have been avoided with good form or more conservative workouts. And injuries often are cumulative, meaning the more you do an exercise

the wrong way, the greater the injury can be, he says.

In general, movements should be controlled and steady, Melamed says. That doesn't mean you can't move rapidly. In fact, Melamed endorses that as a way to make an exercise do double duty building muscles and increasing the heart rate.

Breathe. Melamed says inhaling and exhaling with the natural rhythm of the exercises will help keep you in control.

Some of these are simple adjustments, and they might seem unimportant, Melamed notes, but by using proper form, you train your brain, making it more likely you'll avoid injury when playing sports and not concentrating on form.

"Most of us are not trying to be Mr. Olympia. You don't need crazy heavy weights, and we need our bodies forever," he says.

### Elliptical machine

This is a popular machine in many gyms, perhaps because it's easy to read while working out. But that, Melamed says, can also cause problems, not the least of which is that you don't get all the calorie-burning, heart-pumping benefits if you're more concerned with your book than your thighs.

Concentrating on a book can take concentration away from form. And to read, some people tend to jut their chins forward into a "swan neck" position that can cause pinched nerves in the neck.

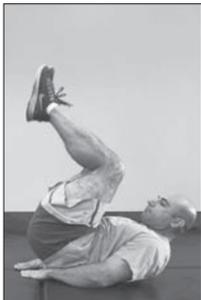
It's also not a good idea to lean forward on the machine and rest weight on the handrails — tempting, especially as you get tired. What you should aim for is an upright position, Melamed says.



### Crunches

Who besides Santa doesn't want a flat belly? For many of us, it takes effort, but the wrong effort won't help the abs and could cause injury. First, don't strain your neck by jerking upward with your hands clasped behind your neck. That movement can also torque the back and tear tissue, Melamed says. An alternative is to cross your arms so the hands are touching the opposite shoulders.

Another approach, he says, would be to have a partner stabilize your feet while you crunch up with control, working the muscles of the abdomen, not the back or neck. A third possibility is to place your hands under your buttocks, draw your navel toward your spine and then lift your bent legs, raising and lowering the hips from the floor.



To make it more challenging, and sudden moves less likely, hold a light medicine ball between your feet.



### Kettle bells

These metal weights with handles provide a great workout — when used properly.

Melamed says he sees patients who get hurt when they swing the kettle bell too forcefully or too high, or when they try to hold too much weight too far away from their torsos. Again, the risk is tearing the tissue around the disks, as well as torn muscles and herniated disks.

Some common exercises require jumping with the kettle bell. It's important to land on the balls of the feet — "like a cat" — and with the knees behind the toes to avoid knee injuries such as tearing the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), he says.

Try to make the jumps the same each time, and engage the abdomen and buttock muscles, he says.



### Bicep curls

Even before they start this exercise, many people risk injury when they lift a weight off the rack, Melamed says. People are not thinking about form at that point, and that's a mistake, because a careless bend can hurt the middle or lower back. You should stand facing the weight rack, squat if the weight is below chest level and bring it close to your chest to start an exercise.

He recommends doing bicep curls with one foot forward. Knees slightly bent. That posture relaxes the back and ensures there's no pressure on it. Start by holding the weights so the knuckles face outward, and turn your palms up as you raise the weights. Elbows remain still, as if someone were holding them at your sides. And as with other moves, no jerking motions.



MCT photos

### Bench presses

Melamed says people tend to arch their back on weight benches, more so as they tire or as they increase the weight. That can lead to a torn annulus, the tissue that protects the disks in the spine. Most of the time those tears can heal themselves, but it can take a year, he says. "How do I know? Because I did it too."

One way to prevent that is to raise the legs into tabletop position, keeping your back flat on the bench.

Another bad move is bouncing the barbell off the chest, which

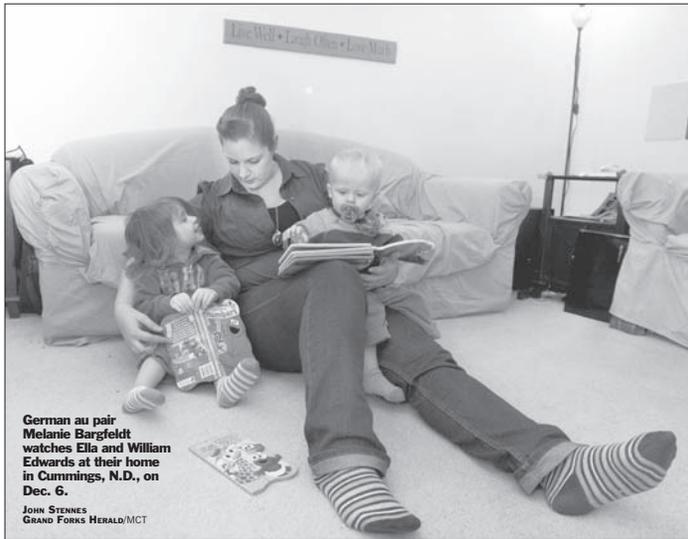
also occurs more as people tire. If you can't move smoothly and can't complete at least 15 repetitions, you might be trying to lift too much weight, Melamed says.

Improper weightlifting can cause sciatic pain, bulging disks and ligament sprains, he says.

Melamed recommends doing weight work at the end of a workout, when you are already somewhat tired and likely to use lighter weights.

"It's about having good form, and also you are warmed up so you're less likely to get hurt."

## WEEKEND: FAMILY



German au pair  
Melanie Bargfeldt  
watches Ella and William  
Edwards at their home  
in Cummings, N.D., on  
Dec. 6.

JOHN STENNES  
GRAND FORKS HERALD/MCT

# A welcome addition

For some, benefits of live-in child care top alternatives

By PAMELA KNUDSON  
Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald

Looking for an au pair to take care of her two young children while she and her husband were away at work, Sarah Edwards wanted experience, a calm temperament and a philosophy of child care that matched her own.

An au pair is a child-care provider from a different country who lives in the employer's home and is subject to government restrictions. The role is similar to that of a nanny, Edwards said, but "I think 'nanny' is a broad catch-all term" for hired help that might or might not live with the family.

The Edwardses also wanted an au pair who spoke German.

"I really wanted them to learn the language," said Sarah Edwards, who was born and lived in Germany until age 20 when she left to study at North Dakota State University.

"My husband doesn't speak German, and I don't speak it very well either, anymore."

The Edwards commute from their Cummings, N.D., home for work — she's an assistant professor of counseling psychology and community services at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, and her husband Robert works for an engineering firm in Fargo, N.D.

"There's no day care in Cummings," Edwards said. Without family members in the area, the couple has found it difficult to find steady child care providers.

"We had nannies before the au pair, but they were between high school and the next stage of life,"

she said. "When they figured out what they wanted to do, they'd leave."

College students had class schedules the family had to work around, she said. "They couldn't work full time. They'd leave for another job or to start a career."

The Edwardses searched for an au pair through EurAupair International Child Care Programs, an agency that recruits and screens candidates, ages 18 to 26, worldwide for one-year positions.

via Skype and email, the couple interviewed five candidates before selecting Melanie Bargfeldt, of northern Germany. She joined their household Nov. 22 to care for Ella, 3, and William, 1.

Bargfeldt, the second au pair the Edwards have hired, said, "I liked them from the first second. There was a connection."

Being an au pair "is an opportunity to see another part of the world," she said. "It's combining two things I like: traveling and child care."

Edwards was impressed with Bargfeldt's child care experience, she said. "She had a practicum experience in a preschool that lasted eight hours each day. I thought that was good."

It was evident in interviews that Bargfeldt had a calm demeanor and would not be easily frazzled, she said.

Bargfeldt's schedule varies week to week, but her hours are generally 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays. She has the upper level of the house to herself, which includes her own bedroom and bathroom.

The hiring of au pairs from foreign countries is governed by the

U.S. Department of State, Edwards said. Fourteen accredited agencies have been recognized by the government based on their adherence to rules on screening, psychological testing, acquiring appropriate visas and making travel arrangements.

The agency also provides health insurance coverage for the au pair, who must pass a physical examination to qualify to work.

The Edwardses paid \$8,000 upfront to EurAupair and they pay Bargfeldt \$195 per week plus free room and board.

The au pair meets once a month with a community counselor, and a 24/7 hotline is staffed by a person who speaks the au pair's language in the event that problems arise, Edwards said.

Once she qualifies for a North Dakota driver's license, Bargfeldt will be given use of the family car, Edwards said.

The cost of hiring an au pair is not less expensive than a babysitter, Edwards said. But having two children attend a Fargo day care, where they used to live, would cost nearly as much as what they're spending on their au pair, she said.

"An au pair can care for up to four kids," Edwards said. "If you have three children, you would save money, definitely, by hiring an au pair."

She estimates the family spends about \$20,000 per year when all the expenses — salary, room and board — are taken into account.

The flexibility of having an in-home caregiver is "really nice," Edwards said.

"Before we had au pairs, we had no date night for two years."

## SPOUSE CALLS

## Skilcraft: Unlimited products, possibilities

For the New Year, I bought a new broom. I took it home, ready to sweep my kitchen clean. I removed the plastic wrapper from the bristles and a card fell the floor. I picked it up and read:

"Skilcraft ... created with pride by Americans who are blind for the brave men and women of our armed forces." I don't usually give much thought to the Skilcraft items I bring home from the commissary, from dish towels and cleaning utensils to kitchen gadgets and candles. The brand is part of my military life, and has been for as long as I can remember.

My Air Force dad usually had a pen, stamped "Skilcraft U.S. Government Property," in the pocket of his flight suit. My husband uses those pens, too.

The red, white and blue card that came with my broom made me curious about this brand name I've taken for granted and its relationship with the U.S. military.

Military members and their families use Skilcraft items at home, at work and even while deployed, said Mike Johnson, communications program director for National Industries for the Blind.

Scrub brushes at the commissary, blood pressure cuffs at the clinic and helmet inserts on the battlefield are among the Skilcraft products used by the military.

"What many people may not know," he said, "is that these products — and so many more — are made in America by people who are blind."

Skilcraft is not a company but a brand name for products made in association with the National Industries for the Blind, Johnson said. The trademark, for which 75 percent of the labor is performed by people who are blind, was created in 1952, but the partnership between the NIB and the military started earlier.

In the 1930s, leaders in the blindness community came together and urged Congress to open up government markets to nonprofit agencies that produce products made by people who are blind," Johnson said.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed legislation in 1938 giving federal contract priority to those agencies, as long as products met quality and value specifications. During WWII, employees who were blind manufactured mops, brooms, mailbags and pillowcases for the U.S. military.

Military commissaries began carrying Skilcraft products in the mid-1950s, starting with dishcloths, doormats and clothespin bags.

The government-owned Skilcraft pen was created in 1969 after the General Services Administration inadvertently purchased — from another supplier — millions of defective ballpoint pens, Johnson said. The GSA offered NIB the opportunity to supply the government with 70 million pens a year. The organization met the requirements, and military history has been written with Skilcraft pens ever since.

"The success of the pen project changed people's perceptions about what people who are blind were capable of," Johnson said. "In addition to working in a variety of manufacturing fields, people who are blind deliver knowledge-based services, including contact center support, supply chain services, website accessibility testing ... and others," he said.

The 1938 legislation has evolved into a government initiative called AbilityOne, which creates employment opportunities for people who have severe disabilities. The NIB and the Skilcraft brand are part of this program.

In 2009, the NIB became involved in the military community in another way, creating a program for wounded veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts to inform them about training, job placement and career opportunities.

So now the Skilcraft brand is connected to the military on another front.

"What began as a steady supply of mops and brooms during World War II has grown to thousands of products," Johnson said. "Today's war fighter takes more than a dozen of these products into combat, including uniforms, apparel, helmet pads, canteens and shovels."

And on the homefront in my military household, a new broom to sweep clean.

To see a photo of Skilcraft laborers at work, check the Spouse Calls blog online at stripes.com/go/spousecalls.

Terri Barnes writes Spouse Calls weekly for Stars and Stripes. Contact her at spousecalls@stripes.com.



Terri Barnes



# BUSINESS/WEATHER

## Few wearables balance style, function

By Peter Svensson  
The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Gadget lovers are slipping on fitness bands that track movement and are buckling on smartwatches that let them check phone messages.

Some brave souls are even donning Google's geeky-looking Glass eyewear.

For the technology industry, this is exciting time, but also a risky one. No one really knows

whether the average consumer can be enticed to make gadgets part of their everyday attire.

The question is: Can tech companies create wearables with the right mix of function and fashion?

Wearable computing devices are igniting an explosion of hope and creativity that's engaged both startups and big companies including Samsung, Sony, LG and others. At the International Consumer Electronics Show this

week, companies are showing off hundreds of new watches, wristbands and eyeglasses with built-in video screens or cameras.

The industry is encouraged by the attention Google's Glass is getting. The device is worn like a pair of glasses and projects a small video screen into the wearer's field of vision. Companies are also encouraged by the success — albeit on a small scale — of the Pebble and Samsung Galaxy Gear smartwatches.

The wearables industry is haunted by an earlier false start: Bluetooth headsets, which were commonplace a few years ago, fell out of favor. The shift away from phone calls and toward texting was one factor, but many say it simply became uncool to walk around in public with a listening device protruding from one's ear.

It's easier to persuade consumers to wear gadgets on their wrists, and that's where most of the industry's energy is focused.

### EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Jan. 10)	\$1.3953
Dollar buys (Jan. 10)	\$0.7167
British pound (Jan. 10)	\$1.69
Japanese yen (Jan. 10)	102.00
South Korean won (Jan. 10)	1,038.00

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$1.6456/0.6770
Canada (Dollar)	1.0648
China (Yuan)	6.0552
Denmark (Krone)	5.4952
Egypt (Pound)	6.9525
Euro	\$1.3571/1.7369
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7547
Hungary (Forint)	220.42
Israel (Shekel)	3.5019
Japan (Yen)	104.94
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2824
Norway (Krone)	6.2027
Philippines (Peso)	44.78
Poland (Zloty)	3.0072
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7505
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2713
South Africa (Rand)	1,065.10
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9101
Thailand (Bath)	33.05
Turkey (New Lira)	3.1840

(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 non-local currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one euro, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

### INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Discount rate	0.75
Federal funds market rate	0.07
3-month bill	0.06
30-year bond	3.89

### EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$3.569	\$3.750	\$3.527	\$4.147
Change in price	+0.1 cents	+1.0 cents	+0.8 cents	+0.7 cents
Netherlands	---	\$4.693	\$4.989	\$5.078
Change in price	---	-1.0 cents	-0.8 cents	+1.6 cents
U.K.	---	\$3.285	\$3.862	\$4.082
Change in price	---	+1.0 cents	+0.8 cents	+0.7 cents
Azores	---	---	\$4.482	---
Change in price	---	---	No change	No change
Belgium	---	\$3.976	\$4.029	\$4.287
Change in price	---	No change	No change	No change
Turkey	---	---	\$4.445	\$4.015*
Change in price	---	---	---	+0.7 cents
Italy	---	\$3.936	---	\$4.272
Change in price	---	No change	---	No change

### PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	---	\$3.509	---	\$3.899
Change in price	---	+1.0 cents	---	No change
Okinawa	\$3.519	---	---	\$3.899
Change in price	+1.0 cents	---	---	No change
South Korea	\$3.589	---	\$3.949	\$4.169
Change in price	No change	---	+1 cents	+1.6 cents
Guam	\$3.589**	\$3.759	\$3.939	---
Change in price	No change	+1.0 cents	---	---

### MARKET WATCH

	Jan. 8, 2014
Dow Jones Industrials	-68.20
Nasdaq composite	+12.43
Standard & Poor's 500	-0.39
Russell 2000	-0.17
Jan. 8, 2014	1,157.46

\* Diesel EFD \*\* Midgrade  
For the week of Jan. 11-17

## WEATHER OUTLOOK

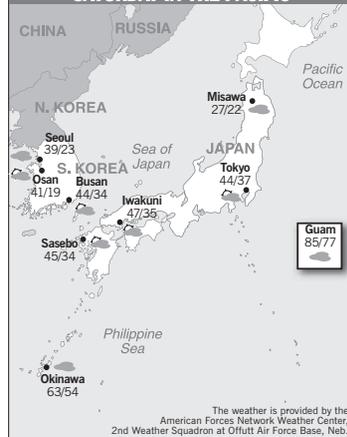
### FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



### FRIDAY IN EUROPE



### SATURDAY THE PACIFIC



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

### Friday's US temperatures

City	Hi	Lo	Wthr	Chattanooga	53/37	Cidy	Fort Wayne	38/24	Cidy	Louisville	50/34	Cidy	Pocatello	39/23	Cidy	Sioux City	34/17	Cidy
Arlington, Va.	41	31	Rain	Chattanooga	53/37	Cidy	Fort Wayne	38/24	Cidy	Louisville	50/34	Cidy	Pocatello	39/23	Cidy	Sioux City	34/17	Cidy
Arlington, Va.	41	31	Rain	Chattanooga	53/37	Cidy	Fort Wayne	38/24	Cidy	Louisville	50/34	Cidy	Pocatello	39/23	Cidy	Sioux City	34/17	Cidy
Arlington, Va.	41	31	Rain	Chattanooga	53/37	Cidy	Fort Wayne	38/24	Cidy	Louisville	50/34	Cidy	Pocatello	39/23	Cidy	Sioux City	34/17	Cidy
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## OPINION

## What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other state-side syndicates.

### Using less electricity

#### The (Rock Hill, S.C.) Herald

As of Jan. 1, production of 40- and 60-watt light bulbs was banned as part of efficiency standards signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2007. While some will miss the old incandescent bulbs, the move is part of a successful effort to make the nation more energy efficient.

The government phased out 75- and 100-watt incandescent bulbs over the past few years. The latest ban will have a bigger impact on consumers because 40- and 60-watt bulbs are the most popular on the market.

When the first practical incandescent bulb was devised by Thomas A. Edison, his scientists and engineering team, well, cutting edge technology for its time. By the time its production came to an end last Wednesday, it had become obsolete, an energy hog compared with compact fluorescent bulbs, or CFLs, and light emitting diode bulbs, or LEDs.

Both of those more efficient bulbs are initially more expensive than an incandescent bulb. But with much longer lifespans, sometimes lasting years, the new bulbs save considerable money over the long run.

The new light bulbs are just part of a growing array of more energy efficient products that have allowed Americans to significantly cut the amount of electricity consumed in homes and businesses. The Energy Information Administration recently announced that in 2013, the average amount of electricity consumed in U.S. homes fell to levels last seen more than a decade ago.

Big appliances such as refrigerators and air conditioners also have become more efficient thanks in large part to federal energy standards that grow stricter every few years as technology evolves. Even new TVs are far more efficient than the old cathode ray tube sets.

Desktop computers, once cutting edge, gobble much more energy than a portable tablet or smart phone, which are designed to use battery power sparingly. It costs \$1.36 to power an iPad for a year, compared with \$28.21 for a desktop, according to the Electric Power Research Institute.

Some may complain about a "nanny government" that sets insulation standards and takes away our incandescent bulbs. But increasing efficiency remains the most effective way to reduce energy usage.

There are only so many dollars in money, it also plays a key strategic role in reducing the nation's reliance on foreign oil. And more efficient electronic devices also have the benefit of reducing consumption of carbon fuels, consequently reducing damage to the environment.

### Medicaid expansion costs

#### The Albany (Ga.) Herald

Politicians, at least if they're honest, will tell you that the biggest problem with legislation is unintended consequences.

That may be what was running into as the Affordable Care Act continues to be implemented.

President Barack Obama's signature domestic legislation is off to a rocky start as federal officials work the kinks out of a flawed registration system. So far, the number of Americans who have obtained new coverage under Obama's plans in comparison with the number of Ameri-



Secretary of State John Kerry steps off the plane upon his arrival in Israel on Jan. 2 to broker Mideast peace talks that are entering a difficult phase.

cans who had their coverage pulled out from under them by the act. There are also concerns about the security of the system and its ability to protect the privacy of the information required of those who sign up.

An even more unsettling development came to light last week when one of the biggest selling points of the part of the program that expands Medicaid coverage turns out to not be the case in the only real sampling of its implementation. Proponents of expanding Medicaid coverage argued that it would lessen the stress on hospital emergency rooms because the newly covered individuals would use primary health care instead.

It appears the effect is just the opposite. A study published in the journal *Science* found that emergency room use by Medicaid patients increased by 40 percent, which some experts think could increase emergency room spending at U.S. hospitals by \$500 million a year rather than reduce it.

With the administration's estimate that 8.7 million people will be added to Medicaid in the United States this year, it means that federal taxpayers will shoulder much of the initial cost for the 26 states that went along with the Affordable Care Act and expanded their Medicaid coverage. But while the federal government is picking up that tab at first, that federal support will decrease and those states — and their taxpayers — will have to pick up a sizable tab in the not-too-distant future.

Georgia didn't expand its Medicaid program, though there is a growing political effort in the state calling for it to happen.

The climate under the Gold Dome isn't likely to change in the coming session, and in this case that is probably the best avenue of approach. The Affordable Care Act is flawed and first needs to be fixed by the federal lawmakers and the administration who created it before Georgia considers any Medicaid expansion.

### Mideast peace prospects

#### Los Angeles Times

In its quest for an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, the United States has pursued essentially the same objective over several administrations. So when Secretary of State John F. Kerry announced during his latest round of shuttle diplomacy that "we can achieve a permanent-status agreement that results in two states for two peoples if we stay focused," skepticism was understandable.

Not just because the peace process has been so tragically unsuccessful over the last 15 years, but because even today, each side seems intent on thumbing its nose at the other. Just last week, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas enraged many Israelis when he offered

a hero's welcome to a group of recently released Palestinian prisoners, many of whom had been convicted of attacking or killing Israelis. Israel infuriated Palestinians by announcing, on the eve of Kerry's arrival, that it would build yet more settlements in the West Bank.

There is also some reason for guarded optimism. First, Kerry has invested immense energy in trying to achieve an agreement. Second, despite periodic allegations of bad faith, Israelis and Palestinians are seriously talking to each other after a long rupture. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has grudgingly endorsed the notion of a two-state solution, though Palestinians and some Israelis doubt his sincerity. Finally, Saudi Arabia is supporting Kerry's effort.

There is little doubt about what the "framework" Kerry is seeking would contain: a partition between Israel and a Palestinian state that would generally follow Israel's pre-1967 borders, but with exchanges of territory to bring some Jewish settlements on the West Bank under Israeli sovereignty; a resolution of the status of Jerusalem that would allow for the establishment of a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem or nearby; a recognition that most Palestinians whose families were displaced in 1948 would be able to return to the new Palestinian state rather than Israel, perhaps with compensation; and guarantees that an independent Palestine wouldn't be a staging ground for attacks against Israel.

In recent years, Netanyahu has demanded that the Palestinians recognize Israel not only as an independent nation but as a "Jewish state," a designation he has called "the real key to peace." In one sense, the notion of Israel as a Jewish state is obvious: It was founded as a haven for the Jewish people. But Israel also is home to 1.6 million Arabs, 20 percent of the population. For Palestinians, being required to recognize Israel as a Jewish state would be a ratification of second-class citizenship for Israel's Arabs.

Disagreement over this issue shouldn't be a deal-breaker. The Jewish character of Israel doesn't depend on any blessing from the Palestinians. If an agreement is reached in which the Palestinians recognize Israel and commit to ending hostilities — and in which both sides agree on borders, Jerusalem, security and the refugee question — that would be an extraordinary achievement that would be felt around the region and around the world.

### Protecting football players

#### Kansas City Star

The life-altering damage caused by concussions to National Football League players have received much attention in recent

months, and appropriately so. The NFL for too many years ignored its responsibilities to better protect players.

However, tens of thousands of concussions and other brain injuries occur each year to football players at the college, high school and even pee-wee levels of the sport across America.

Parents, coaches and school officials need to be more involved in finding ways to prevent concussions. Coaches, along with trainers, must be aggressive in making sure players do not take part in games until they have recovered from possible concussions.

Baseline concussion testing should be required for all players at the high school and college levels because individuals react differently to brain injuries. The National Federation of High Schools and the National Collegiate Athletic Association should put together more comprehensive concussion education programs.

One barrier to progress: Players, parents and coaches sometimes don't recognize concussions when they occur. Or, players want to or are told to "play through" head injuries.

That kind of destructive attitude can lead to permanently harming the health of a young football player. Get rid of the macho posturing in the sport, and take injuries to the brain more seriously.

### Help middle class, tax rich

#### The (N.J.) Star-Ledger

Here's the sad truth about the so-called "economic recovery" that began in June 2009: For a large number of Americans, it simply doesn't exist.

As the stock market made giant gains and corporate profits hit record highs, the median income in America has only declined further. Blacks got hit hardest of all: While median income overall has dropped about 4 percent since 2009, for blacks, it plummeted by 10.9 percent.

In other words, the recession isn't over for most Americans. This speaks to the fundamental economic injustice that is inspiring the Occupy Wall Street protests two years ago, and President Barack Obama's central argument today: Widening income inequality is the challenge of our time and should be the issue that shapes the 2016 election.

What we really need now is vigorous government efforts to create jobs. Instead of slashing public programs, we must invest in middle-class Americans in order to rekindle the demand that creates and grows jobs. That means raising taxes on the rich and applying more funding to areas such as infrastructure, research and education.

Leading Republicans say they're against tax increases because they hinder job creation. There is more to it. Taxes help contain the debt and allow the government to make investments that strengthen the economy, such as spending on infrastructure, research and education. The truth is that economic growth has been stronger during periods of higher tax rates on top earners.

The self-serving argument that the prosperity of so-called "job creators" will somehow trickle down to the average American is just as baseless. The richest Americans save more of their earnings than others do and will never spend enough to make up for the tens of millions of Americans who remain unemployed or underemployed and the effect of stagnant and declining wages.

Consider these numbers: In recent decades, the incomes of the wealthiest 400 Americans grew five times larger, as their tax rates declined by nearly half. CEO pay rates grew 127 times faster over the past three decades than the pay of the average worker.

Unless we take real steps to reverse these trends, for most people, "economic recovery" will remain out of reach.

Frazz



Dilbert



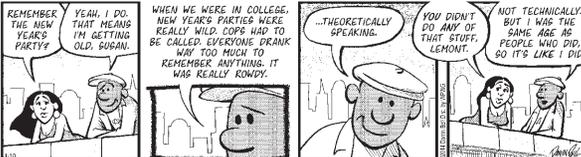
Pearls Before Swine



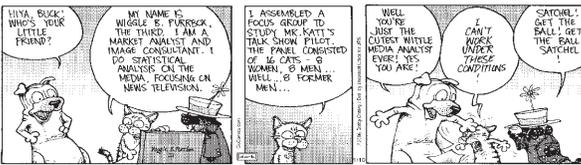
Non Sequitur



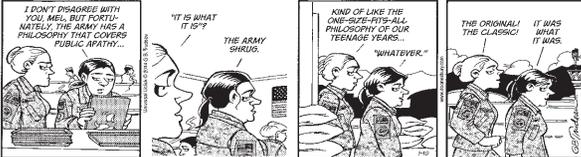
Cantorville



Get Fuzzy



Doonesbury



Fort Knox



### Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13					14		
15			16					17		
		18						19		
20	21			22	23					
24				25				26	27	28
29				30					31	
32				33					34	
				35					36	
37	38	39				40				
41				42	43				44	45
46				47					48	
49				50					51	

#### ACROSS

- 1 (Uncorrected)
- 4 Loathe
- 8 Money supply
- 12 Geological time
- 13 Came to earth
- 14 Sandwich treat
- 15 Utensil made from a gourd shell
- 17 Bound
- 18 Line of symmetry
- 19 Sackles and Anjou
- 20 Trip around the world?
- 22 Crafty
- 24 Roll up (like a flag)
- 25 CPA's concerns
- 29 "Most Wanted" org.
- 30 In all
- 31 Fuss
- 32 1852-meter measures
- 34 Entreaty
- 35 Tatoo parlor supply
- 36 Be on either side of
- 37 Mote
- 40 Depressed
- 41 Sound of contentment
- 42 Tragedy
- 46 Best Picture of 2012
- 47 Individuals
- 48 Born
- 49 Old Dodge model

#### DOWN

- 1 Moment
- 2 George's brother
- 3 Toe of Italy's boot
- 4 Custom
- 5 "Sad to say ..." reward
- 6 "— the season ..." bottle
- 7 Biblical verb suffix
- 8 Ill-fated queen
- 9 Vicinity
- 10 Approach
- 11 "Keystone" group of sientis
- 12 Leaf-stem angle
- 19 Stage show
- 20 Does in, mob style
- 21 Hayseed
- 22 Cardiff's country
- 23 Troubles
- 25 Heft
- 26 Anti-itch lotion
- 27 Perfect place
- 28 Drench
- 30 Snitch
- 33 Millionth of a meter
- 34 Jack Horner's
- 36 Portable liquor
- 37 Bridge
- 38 Undulterated
- 39 Hence
- 40 Singer Campbell
- 42 Demure
- 43 "SNL" alumna
- 44 Afternoon social
- 45 Nevertheless

#### Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	L	I	M	B	I	B	U	S	E	D
W	A	D	I	A	R	E	N	A	V	E
A	V	O	N	N	E	T	A	R	E	S
M	A	L	I	G	N	W	O	R	D	
	M	A	S	T	E	R	M	I	N	D
	M	I	N	U	S	W	E	B	N	O
	A	L	U	M	P	E	N	R	I	G
	I	I	I	J	A	R	R	O	A	S
	M	A	S	T	E	R	K	E	Y	S
	A	R	T	S	R	E	T	A	I	L
	J	U	N	E	L	A	G	R	U	B
	O	R	C	A	E	G	O	U	R	I
	B	L	E	D	Y	E	T	M	A	S

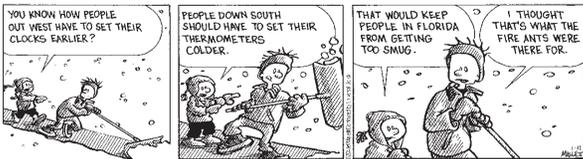
#### 1-10

#### CRYPTOQUIP

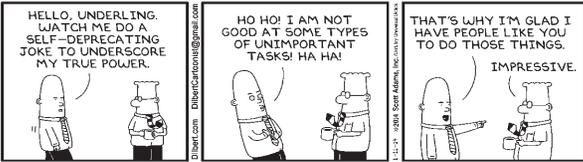
ZNXQAH VNMV ZBOPWMA  
 RFXQB HWZPQZZWYR ZTLBNXYT  
 PXLBXZVWVWXY JO AMJOAOh

MY WYZVFQLOYV BMYOAP  
**Yesterday's Cryptoquip:** SINCE THAT HIP-HOP PERFORMER'S USUAL TOPICS ARE DREADFUL, HIS STAGE NAME IS THE GRIM RAPPER.  
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals E

Frazz



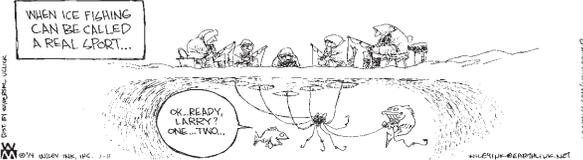
Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



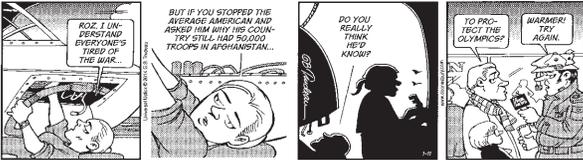
Candorville



Get Fuzzy



Doonesbury



Fort Knox



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	
12					13					14			
15					16					17			
18					19					20			
			21	22			23	24					
25	26	27					28			29	30	31	
32										33			
34							35			36			
			37							38			
39	40	41			42	43				44	45	46	47
48							49					50	
51							52					53	
54							55					56	

ACROSS

- 1 Encrust
- 5 Challenge
- 9 Yon maiden
- 12 Saharan
- 13 Astrigent
- 14 Savings plan acronym
- 15 Impart temporarily
- 16 Carte
- 17 Nameily (Abbr.)
- 18 Creche trio
- 19 Congregant's seat
- 20 "Holy cow!"
- 21 CBS logo
- 23 I lingo (Lat.)
- 25 Taxi drivers
- 28 Boorish ones
- 32 Cook-wear?
- 33 Small protuberance
- 34 "Now!"
- 36 Guard
- 37 Listener
- 38 Snoot
- 39 Unravel
- 42 Jam ingredient?
- 44 "Memory" musical
- 48 Tear
- 49 Horse's halter?
- 50 Farm fraction
- 51 Census stat
- 52 Suggestion
- 53 Carpet style
- 54 Invoice add-on

DOWN

- 1 Rhyming tributes
- 2 Creator
- 3 Upper limit
- 4 Spring mo.
- 5 Buddy
- 6 Ump's call
- 7 Bobby of hockey lore
- 8 Corsage flower
- 9 Nursery rhyme couple
- 10 "Animal House" group
- 11 Baltic Sea port
- 12 Pinnacle
- 13 Top-rated
- 14 In need of limnet
- 15 Snare
- 16 Lily variety
- 17 Owl's query?

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	I	C	H	A	T	E	B	A	N	K
E	R	A	A	L	I	T	O	R	E	O
C	A	L	A	B	A	S	H	L	E	A
A	X	I	S	P	E	A	R	S		
O	R	B	I	T	W	I	L	I		
F	U	R	L	B	A	L	A	N	C	E
F	B	I	F	F	U	L	L	A	D	O
S	E	A	M	I	L	E	S	P	L	E
S	P	E	C	K	G	L	A	M		
P	U	R	R	C	A	L	A	M	I	T
A	R	G	O	N	E	S	N	E	E	
N	E	O	N	Y	A	N	K	E	A	T

1-11

CRYPTOQUIP

Y L H W F Q A B Q X L M P L Y R C L Q F  
 B M Q L W C P B Q F N A F H X M F Q L H X  
 V F Z V P F , L N Z C P O O F Y W M L J F

A F M B Y A F P P Z - R C F H Q .  
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SHOULD THAT SPECIAL GROUP DISCUSSING SYMPHONY COMPOSITION BE LABELED AN INSTRUMENT PANEL?  
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals P

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MLB

Five things to know

# Hall of Fame inductees reflect steroids effect

By HOWIE RUMBERG  
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Hall of Fame voters made up for last year's empty slate, electing Greg Maddux, Frank Thomas and Tom Glavine — three stars who've never been connected to performance-enhancing drugs.

On a day that turned out to be a celebration of first-timers on the ballot,



Biggio

Craig Biggio missed out on baseball's highest honor by two votes. Mike Piazza gained a bit of ground in his second year of eligibility, too, but nearly everyone else saw their percentage of votes drop — 75 percent is needed for admittance.

Award winners from the Steroids Era struck out again, and big-game ace Jack Morris missed on his 15th and final chance in voting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

Next year, chances don't improve for returnees with another crowded class of achievers.

The induction ceremony July 27 will be an Atlanta Braves reunion with Glavine and Maddux joined by their former manager Bobby Cox, who along with fellow skippers Joe Torre and Tony La Russa were selected by the expansion era committee.

Here are five things to know about the Hall of Fame voting revealed Wednesday:

**1 Keep out:** Another rough ballot for stars suspected of steroids use. Home run king Barry Bonds and seven-time Cy Young Award winner Roger Clemens were among several who saw their support drop. In their second year on the ballot, the BBWAA gave Clemens 33.4 percent of the vote and

## Tainted by performance-enhancing drugs?

Yearly voting percentages for five prominent players eligible for the Hall of Fame from the Steroids Era:

Player, Years Eligible	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Yr6	Yr7	Yr8
Mark McGwire, 2007-14	23.5	23.6	21.9	23.7	19.8	19.5	16.9	11.0
Rafael Palmeiro, 2011-14	11.0	12.6	8.8	4.4x				
Roger Clemens, 2013-14	37.6	35.4						
Barry Bonds, 2013-14	36.2	34.7						
Sammy Sosa, 2013-14	12.5	7.2						

x=no longer eligible to be elected by the BBWAA

SOURCE: The Associated Press

Bonds 34.7. Mark McGwire (11 percent) and Sammy Sosa (7.2 percent) fell as well. Rafael Palmeiro, with 3,020 hits and 569 homers, received the ultimate rebuke: He got only 25 votes (4.4 percent), which is below the 5 percent threshold to remain on the ballot.

Whether the drop is a statement on the BBWAA's stance on PEDs or just a dip caused by the packed ballot is to be seen. But if Hall newcomer Thomas has his way, it won't get any easier for those with sullied reputations.

"Over the last year, doing a couple of charity events with Hall of Famers that are in, they've got a strong stance against anyone who's taken steroids. They do not

want them in," he said. "I've got to take the right stance, too. No, they shouldn't get in."

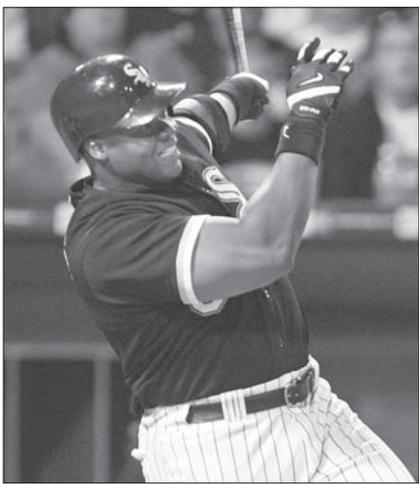
**2 Knock, knock:** Biggio, the Houston Astros second baseman with more than 3,000 hits, a Hall benchmark, received 427 votes (74.8 percent) after getting 388 last year in his first appearance. Even with another impressive list of first-time candidates next year, Biggio is on target to join the elite. His close call matched Nellie Fox in 1985 and Pie Traynor in 1947 for the smallest margin to just miss. They both eventually made it.

Whether it's suspicion of steroids use or a crowded field, Piazza, the career home runs leader for catchers, saw his chances for



JOHN AMES/AP

Former pitcher Tom Glavine speaks with members of the media during a news conference at Turner Field in Atlanta after being elected to the baseball's Hall of Fame on Wednesday.



BRIAN KESSEY/AP

The Chicago White Sox's Frank Thomas hits a three-run home run during the eighth inning of a game against Tampa Bay in Chicago on July 5, 2005. Thomas was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in voting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America on Wednesday. Joining him are pitchers Tom Glavine and Greg Maddux.

election improve, too. Piazza received 62.2 percent up from 57.8 last year.

**3 Fading fast:** Writers can vote for at most 10 candidates, and with a strong first-year group several players saw their vote totals go down, seriously hurting their chances for election. Tim Lincecum fell from 52.2 percent to 46.6 percent. Lee Smith, in his 12th year, dropped to 29.9 from 47.8. Curt Schilling tumbled to 29.2 percent after getting 38.8 percent in his first appearance in 2013. Another player perhaps affected by the stench of steroids, Jeff Bagwell, saw his support decrease to 54.3 percent after two years of improving results. Unfortunately, the ballot remains chock full of talent next year.

**4 Who voted?** Attention all ways zeroes in on the players who come closest to election. But with Biggio falling two votes shy of election, it's worth a look at the bottom of the ballot. This year, Armando Benitez, Jacque Jones and Kenny Rogers each received a vote. All fine players with solid careers,

but as is often said, it's the Hall of Fame, not the Hall of the very good.

**5 Head of the class:** There is little relief on next year's ballot for the holdovers. Maddux and Glavine's former teammate John Smoltz heads a worthy group that includes Randy Johnson, Pedro Martinez, Carlos Delgado and Gary Sheffield.

AP Sports Writers Andrew Seligman and Ronald Blum contributed to this report.

### Voting

**571 votes cast, 429 needed**  
Greg Maddux 555 (97.2%), Tom Glavine 525 (91.9), Frank Thomas 478 (83.7), Craig Biggio 427 (74.8), Mike Piazza 355 (62.2), Jack Morris 351 (61.5), Jeff Bagwell 310 (54.3), Tim Lincecum 263 (46.1), Roger Clemens 202 (35.4), Barry Bonds 158 (24.7), Lee Smith 171 (29.9), Curt Schilling 167 (29.2), Edgar Martinez 144 (25.2), Alan Trammell 119 (20.8), Mike Mussina 116 (20.3), Jeff Kent 87 (15.2), Fred McGriff 67 (11.7), Mark McGwire 63 (11.0), Larry Walker 58 (10.2), Don Mattingly 47 (8.2), Sammy Sosa 41 (7.2).

By receiving fewer than 28 votes (less than 5 percent), Rafael Palmeiro 25 (4.4), Moises Alou 6 (1.1), Hideo Nomo 6 (1.1), Luis Gonzalez 5 (0.9), Eric Gagne 2 (0.4), IT Snow 2 (0.4), Armando Benitez 1 (0.2), Jacque Jones 1 (0.2), Kenny Rogers 1 (0.2), Sean Casey 0, Ray Durham 0, Todd Jones 0, Paul Lo Duca 0, Richie Sexson 0, Mike Timlin 0 are no longer eligible for election by the BBWAA.

— The Associated Press

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## WINTER OLYMPICS

## Five women to know

With Vonn out, these ladies could be stars in Sochi

BY HOWARD FENDRICH  
The Associated Press

**L**indsey Vonn's announcement that she will miss the Sochi Olympics because of a right knee injury leaves a glaring gap for other athletes to fill.

As a star of Alpine skiing, Vonn was sure to get plenty of attention — from other athletes, from the media, from fans. As an American, she was sure to be one of the central figures in NBC's televised coverage in the

United States.

"We wish we still had Lindsey there, but we don't," NBC Sports Group chief Mark Lazarus said Tuesday. "That's the nature of sports. ... Lots of stars, unfortunately, get hurt."

So with Vonn now gone from these Winter Games, there is room for someone else to become a medalist, a household name, an international star during the 2½ weeks of competition.

Here's a look at five women to know in Sochi, where the opening ceremony is a month away:



GIOVANNI AULETTA/AP

**1 Mikaela Shiffrin, U.S., Alpine Skiing:** She's young and American and very, very good, a solid formula at Olympic time.

All of 18, Shiffrin already is the best slalom ski racer around, and she has a world championship and World Cup discipline title to prove it. From Colorado, which Vonn also calls home nowadays, Shiffrin has been tagged with the label of "Next Big Thing" in her sport, picked as the World Cup rookie of the year in 2012.

Shiffrin earned her second slalom win of the current season Sunday, at Bormio, Italy.



DARKO BANDIC/AP

**2 Kim Yu-na, South Korea, Figure Skating:** Already a huge star in her own country thanks to a gold medal at Vancouver four years ago, she very well could broaden her fan base if she can accomplish something only two other women have — repeat as Olympic champion in figure skating. Katarina Witt did it in 1984 and 1988, and Sonja Henie won in 1928, 1932 and 1936.

Not only are there no American women expected to challenge Kim for the gold medal, no one from any country is likely to make things tough on her.



RICK BOWMER/AP

**3 Heather Richardson, U.S., Speedskating:** A former inline skater from North Carolina, Richardson "could be a real Olympic breakout star," was the way Ted Morris, U.S. Speedskating's executive director, put it a couple of months ago.

He's biased, of course, but he also might be right if Richardson becomes the first American women's long track medalist since 2002, when Chris Wittly won gold in the 1,000. Richardson was the overall World Cup champion at that distance.

If it's not Richardson in short-track skating, it might be the personable Brittany Bowe, another ex-inline skater who was a point guard at Florida Atlantic.

Their sport also features the sort of compelling story TV producers like to set to music: Claudia Pechstein of Germany, who will turn 42 during the Olympics, her sixth Winter Games, and has won nine medals already. Oh, and there's this, too: Her career was tainted by a two-year doping ban that kept her from competing in Vancouver; she never tested positive for drugs, but was suspended based on irregular blood levels.



MANU FERNANDEZ/AP

**4 Lindsey Jacobellis, U.S., Snowboarding:** Hers could be the sort of "redemption" tale we hear a lot during the Olympics.

A seven-time champion in snowboardcross at the Winter X Games, she's never brought home gold from the plain ol' Winter Games — but she sure is famous for a flashy grab of her board on the final jump in 2006 that sent her tumbling, and turned a certain gold medal into a silver medal. That move might have been "cool," but it was absolutely not needed. In 2010, she wound up fifth.



CARLO ALLEGRI/AP

**5 Julie Chu, U.S., Hockey:** A forward who played at Harvard, Chu already is getting face time in American television ads.

At 31, she's the oldest member of the U.S. team, and she'll be heading to her fourth Olympics in search of her first gold, after already collecting two silvers and a bronze.

Women's hockey could draw extra eyeballs this time around if the heated rivalry between the United States and Canada continues in Sochi: They've engaged in a series of brawls, even in exhibitions.



# NFL DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

# Broncos figure to be better this time around

Denver is now healed and rested since its home loss to San Diego in December

By **ARNIE STAPLETON**  
The Associated Press

**ENGLEWOOD, Colo.** — The last top seed to open its playoff run against a team it had just lost to at home in December was the 2008 New York Giants, who were beaten again by Philadelphia in the rematch.

Six years later, the Denver Broncos and another Manning brother open against the San Diego Chargers, who held the highest-scoring team of the Super Bowl era to its lowest point total of the season in a 27-20 upset in Denver last month.

The Broncos figure to be a different team than the one that took the field on the final Thursday night game of the season, however.

This time, they'll have Wes Welker, Champ Bailey and Jeremy Mincey, but they'll also be without Von Miller, who's set to undergo surgery to repair his torn right ACL on Thursday.

The Chargers (10-7) and Broncos (13-3) have played 108 times but never in the postseason.

"This is why you have the off-season work, this is why you meet as often as you do in April, May and June," Peyton Manning said. "It's for opportunities like this."

Manning wasn't in the mood Wednesday to reflect on his record-setting regular season, focused as he is on trying to win another Super Bowl ring that would match brother Eli's pair.

Manning will have his stellar slot receiver back from a concussion that forced him to miss that last game against the Chargers, when the Broncos had three straight three-and-outs that helped San Diego turn an early score deficit into a 24-10 lead.

The Broncos were 2 of 9 on third downs that night, when they scored without Welker.

"Big time," wide receiver Eric

Decker said. "He's a guy that has done very well on third down and just on any down. When you lose a weapon like that, you have to fill the shoes and I don't think we as a team did a good enough job of having a successful first down, minimizing the third-and-longs and taking advantage of some opportunities we had."

Bailey was out with a nagging foot injury that night, too, and Philip Rivers picked on rookie cornerback Kayvon Webster, who played the final three quarters with a broken right thumb, no less.

Bailey's return at nickel back gives the Broncos three solid cornerbacks along with Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie and Chris Harris Jr. to cover the likes of Vincent Brown, Eddie Royal and Keenan Allen.

San Diego coach Mike McCoy said running back Ryan Mathews (ankle) won't practice until Friday. But McCoy declared, "He's going to be healthy on Sunday."

Mathews gained 127 yards on 29 carries against Denver last month, the only back to top 100 yards on the Broncos all season.

After San Diego gained 103 yards on the ground on first down, the Broncos shored up their run defense by signing Mincey, who was released by Jacksonville, and first-round draft pick Sylvester Williams picked up his play as Denver allowed just 3.28 yards per carry and 75 yards rushing over the last two games.

That gives the Broncos confidence they can turn things around against the Chargers, the only team to hold them under 65 snaps this season — and they did it twice.

The Chargers controlled the clock for more than 38 minutes both times the teams played.

"We have to do a better job of staying on the field," Denver tight end Julius Thomas said.

## San Diego Chargers (10-7) at Denver Broncos (13-3)

6:30 a.m. Monday, JKT, AFN-Sports

**SERIES RECORD:** Broncos lead 58-49-1  
**LAST MEETING:** Chargers beat Broncos 27-20, Dec. 12, 2013.

**LAST WEEK:** Chargers beat Bengals 27-10 in wild-card playoff; Broncos had first-round bye.

**CHARGERS OFFENSE:** OVERALL (2), RUSH (5), PASS (2)

**CHARGERS DEFENSE:** OVERALL (13), RUSH (5), PASS (16).

**BRONCOS OFFENSE:** OVERALL (1), RUSH (8), PASS (1).

**BRONCOS DEFENSE:** OVERALL (9), RUSH (3), PASS (14).

**STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES:** The two teams are meeting for the first time in the postseason. ... Last week, Chargers registered first

postseason win since Jan. 3, 2009. ... Chargers have won six of past eight at Denver. ... QB Philip Rivers has 4-4 career

postseason record. In 4 career postseason road games, Rivers has completed 66 of 107 passes (61.7 pct.) for 911 yards with 7 TDs

vs. 4 INTs & 95.2 passer rating. For career, Rivers is 10-6 (.625) as starter vs. Broncos with 27 TDs vs. 0 INTs & 120 passer rating in win vs. Denver on Dec. 12, 2013. Rivers (4,478) is sixth player in NFL history to register 5 4,000-yard seasons. Has passed for 32,369 career yards & 221 TDs, trailing only HOFer Dan Fouts for most in Chargers history. ... RB Ryan Matthews has 5 100-

yard rush games in seven career contests against Broncos. Had 127 rush yards with TD in last game at Den. Broncos have a 13-4 (.765) postseason record at home, tied for fourth-best all-time (minimum 10 games). Club is 8-5 (.615) all-time in Divisional Playoffs. ... Won AFC West for 13th time and first time in three straight seasons. ... Den. (606) had most points by team in season in NFL history. ... QB Peyton Manning (5,679) has fourth-most career postseason passing yards in NFL history. Manning (32) is tied with HOFer Dan Marino for fourth-most postseason TD passes in NFL history. Manning (5,477) set NFL's single-season passing-yard record & registered 55 TD passes in NFL history. ... RB Knowshon Moreno (1,038) has reached 1,000 rush yards for first time in career.

— The Associated Press

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postseason record. In 4 career postseason road games, Rivers has completed 66 of 107 passes (61.7 pct.) for 911 yards with 7 TDs

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— The Associated Press

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Denver Broncos QB Peyton Manning  
DOUG DURAN, CONTRA COSTA TIMES/MCT

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# NFL DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

## Saints' running game thriving at right time

### Ingram and rookie surprise Robinson carry the load while Thomas remains injured

By **BRETT MARTEL**  
The Associated Press

**W**hen Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman started studying video for this Saturday's rematch with the Saints in the NFC playoffs, he noticed something different about New Orleans' offense.

"They are running the ball extremely well and that is different from the game we played against them previously," Sherman said, alluding to the Seahawks' 34-7 demolition of the Saints on Dec. 2. "They are a confident bunch."

The Saints, whose offense has been defined by Drew Brees' prolific passing the past eight years, rushed for 185 yards in an opening-round playoff victory at Philadelphia last weekend.

Coach Sean Payton's confidence in the ground game was never more obvious than when he called eight runs on New Orleans' 10-play game-winning drive that chewed up the last 4:54 on the clock. The last seven plays consisted of six meaningful runs, followed by Brees' keeper to set up Shayne Graham's 32-yard field goal as time expired.

Mark Ingram, who has largely struggled to live up to

the expectations that came with being a Heisman Trophy winner and first-round draft choice, led the running game in the absence of Pierre Thomas — the Saints' leading rusher this season but sidelined with a chest injury. Ingram rushed 18 times for 97 yards and a touchdown, averaging 5.4 yards per carry.

"He's been running real well," Payton said. "I liked his ball security the other night. Those aren't always easy yards. I am pleased with how he is playing and I think he's had a handful of games now toward the latter part of the season where he's been exceptional."

Indeed, though Ingram's 386 total yards rushing during the regular season did nothing to distinguish him, he overcame

early season injuries and appeared to get stronger as the season wore on, finishing with a respectable average of 4.9 yards per carry for the season.

"I've always been confident in myself. I know what I can do. I'm confident in my abilities. It's just having the opportunity to get those touches and show what I could do and it was great to do it in a playoff game on the road," Ingram said. "I just wanted to take complete advantage of the opportunity and it felt good to be able to show what I could do and show my worth to my teammates — and all the hard work that I've been putting in, for it to pay off."

In addition to Ingram, the Saints have been getting run production from pleasant surprise Khiry Robinson, a rookie who made the team as a free agent.

He added 45 yards on eight carries in Philadelphia, an average of 5.6 yards. And while Darren Sproles often plays larger roles in the return game and short passing game, he averaged 7.3 yards on four carries against the Eagles.

With Thomas unable to practice again so far this week, the Saints are confident that

### By the numbers

**92.1**      **14**      **185**

Number of rushing yards per game the Saints averaged in the regular season

Saints' ranking out of 16 teams in rushing yards per game in the NFC this season

Number of yards the Saints running game gained in their wild-card win

SOURCE: The Associated Press

the trio of Ingram, Robinson and Sproles can carry a productive running game in Seattle.

"Even going into the Philly game we felt really confident that those guys are all good running backs," they tackle Zach Strief said. "They all kind of bring something different. That's the design of having this running back by committee. We have guys that can do different things. We have guys that we can plug in and play. ... There are games where some of those guys don't hardly get any carries. That's just a game-plan situation."

Payton, never one to even hint at a game plan, side-stepped questions about whether the running game might be featured again this

week.

"A lot of it is depending on the game situation," Payton said.

Seattle, which finished the regular season No. 1 in total defense, ranked seventh against the run and first against the pass. Those rankings, combined with a forecast of rain in Seattle this weekend, only seemed to raise the prospects for Saints running backs to see action.

Fullback Jed Collins said last week's performance demonstrated the potential the Saints saw in their running game earlier this season, though they weren't always able to show it.



The New Orleans Saints' Khiry Robinson, left, tries to break free of the Philadelphia Eagles' Mychal Kendricks during their wild-card playoff game Saturday in Philadelphia.

MATT ROURKE/AP

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NFL DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

# According to Cam

## Newton says he and Kaepernick are different

By STEVE REED  
The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Cam Newton doesn't like being compared to Colin Kaepernick. "Two different players," Newton said. Yet the Panthers' third-year quarterback

certainly understands the parallels with his 49ers counterpart. They both entered the NFL in 2011. They're both big, strong-armed guys who can shred a secondary with their arms and terrorize a front seven with their feet. "Being a big guy, being fast and being agile and having the art of throwing like only God has blessed a few people with — and Kaepernick has it (too)," Newton said.

Newton and Kaepernick go head-to-head Sunday with a trip to the NFC championship game on the line.

It's their second meeting this season.

Carolina beat San Francisco 10-9 in a defensive struggle Nov. 10 at Candlestick Park, a game in which neither quarterback played particularly well.

Both are out to change that in the divisional playoffs.

"We didn't execute the way we should have and I didn't play well," Kaepernick said the first game, where he was limited to 91 yards passing and 16 yards rushing and sacked six times.

Newton and Kaepernick shared a room at the scouting combine in Indianapolis leading up to the 2011 NFL Draft.

Both were kept busy by the onslaught of interview requests from

teams and barely had a chance to interact. A few months later, Newton was drafted first overall by the Panthers, while Kaepernick fell to the 49ers in the second round and was selected 36th overall.

Kaepernick was the first to get his team to the Super Bowl, leading the 49ers there last year in his first season as a starter before ultimately losing to the Baltimore Ravens.

Newton started right away in Carolina, but was just 13-19 in his first two seasons.

However, after a 1-3 start the Panthers have turned things around, winning 11 of their last 12 games to capture the NFC South and secure a first-round bye.

Along the way, Newton threw a career-high 24 touchdown passes and was selected to the Pro Bowl ahead of Kaepernick.

But all of that means little to Newton.

"I feel as if I haven't achieved anything worth mentioning yet," Newton said.

In Newton's eyes there's only one goal at the end of this season: bringing home Carolina's first Super Bowl.

"Nothing is worth mentioning unless we have something that we can all share with each other for years and years to come," Newton said.

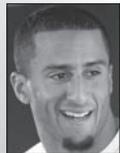
Newton jokingly compared his growth over the past three seasons to getting a software update on a SmartPhone.

He said all people need one eventually. "When you go to the general settings and hit update, it just updates the whole software," Newton said. "When I hit software update, I just hit the install button. I don't hit cancel or remind me tomorrow. I hit install and hopefully that will take care of me."

Newton version 3.0 is doing just fine.

But he knows to get where he wants to go he has to get by Kaepernick and the 49ers.

### 2013 quarterback comparison



**Colin Kaepernick**

Passing yards  
3,157  
Rushing yards  
524  
Touchdown passes  
21  
Rushing touchdowns  
4  
Interceptions  
8  
Completion percentage  
58.4  
Quarterback rating  
91.6



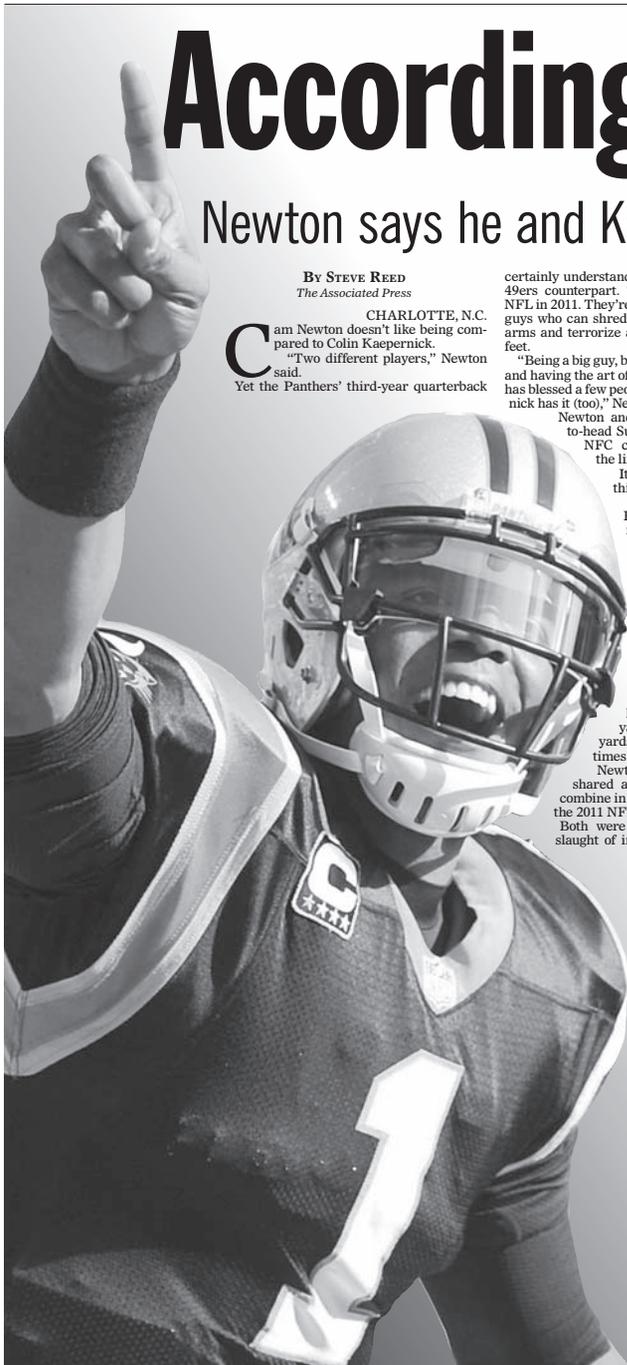
**Cam Newton**

Passing yards  
3,373  
Rushing yards  
585  
Touchdown passes  
24  
Rushing touchdowns  
6  
Interceptions  
13  
Completion percentage  
61.7  
Quarterback rating  
88.8

SOURCE: NFL.COM

Carolina quarterback Cam Newton celebrates a touchdown pass to wide receiver Brandon LaFell during a game against Tampa Bay on Dec. 1 in Charlotte.

JEFF SNER, CHARLOTTE OBSERVER/MCT



## NFL DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS



PHOTO BY KUNIKIDA JUN., SACRAMENTO BEE/MCT

San Francisco wide receiver Michael Crabtree, left, is chased by St. Louis cornerback Trumaine Johnson after a 60-yard pass reception during the third quarter on Dec. 1 at Park in San Francisco.

# Kaepernick has another weapon

## This time, Crabtree is in the lineup

By JANIE MCCAULEY  
The Associated Press

**T**SANTA CLARA, Calif. here's a far different dynamic for Colin Kaepernick and the San Francisco 49ers' offense this time around against Carolina.

His name is Michael Crabtree. Kaepernick had his least-productive game as a pro in a 10-9 loss to the Panthers on Nov. 10 at Candlestick Park, and the Niners had also lost tight end Vernon Davis to a first-half concussion that day.

Now, with two of Kaepernick's top targets at full strength to complement Anquan Boldin, San Francisco (13-4) is riding a seven-game winning streak and ready for a different outcome in the NFC divisional playoffs Sunday at Charlotte.

"I didn't perform well enough," Kaepernick said Wednesday. "A variety of things, it really depends on the play, but we have to play better this week. It was me. It was something that the first game we didn't play very well, we didn't execute the way we should have."

It didn't help Kaepernick's cause getting sacked six times. He went 11-for-22 for 91 yards and an interception with a dismal 42.0 passer rating, his second-lowest of the season after a 20.1 rating in a 29-3 Week 2 loss at Seattle.

Add Crabtree and Davis to

the mix and the Panthers have a lot more to deal with on defense other than focusing to slow down Frank Gore, who ran for 82 yards in the first meeting.

Crabtree caught eight passes for 125 yards Sunday in a 23-20 wild-card win at Green Bay. He returned for the final five games of the regular season following May surgery on a torn right Achilles tendon, making 19 receptions for 284 yards and a touchdown. His season debut came Dec. 1 against St. Louis.

"Offensively, they've got Michael Crabtree back 100 percent," Carolina coach Ron Rivera said Wednesday. "What it does is it gives them another weapon with a guy that has the ability to get open and make plays happen."

Coach Jim Harbaugh has taken his praise of Crabtree much further, saying he has never seen a player who can catch the ball as well as San Francisco's fifth-year wideout who produced a career season a year ago pre-injury.

"I just have never personally seen anybody catch the ball better than Michael Crabtree does," Harbaugh said about San Francisco's 10th overall pick in 2009. "He's a highly competitive individual. It's important for him to be good. It's important for him to make plays. He's got a lot of pride about his own personal performance and the team's performance. And, he's one of those guys that can really get his engine revved up for games and big games."

## San Francisco 49ers (13-4) at Carolina Panthers (12-4)

7 p.m. Sunday, CET; 3 a.m. Monday, JKT, AFN-Sports

**SERIES RECORD:** Panthers lead 11-1.  
**LAST MEETING:** Panthers beat 49ers 10-9, Nov. 10, 2013.

**LAST WEEK:** 49ers beat Packers 23-20 in wild-card playoff; Panthers had bye.

**STREAKS, STATS, NOTES:** San Francisco is 29-19 (604) in postseason. Team's 29 playoff wins are fourth most in NFL history and 604 winning percentage is third among teams with 25 or more playoff games. ... Jim Harbaugh is first head coach in franchise history to lead team to playoffs in each of first three seasons. ... Quarterback Colin Kaepernick (3,197 passing yards, 524 rushing yards) joined Hall of Famer Steve Young as only 49ers QBs with 3,000 or more passing yards and 500 or more rushing yards in a season. Has 93.9 passer rating in postseason career, second highest by 49ers QB with 100 or more attempts. ... RB Frank Gore rushed for 1,129 yards, his franchise-record seventh 1,000-yard season. Averages 91.3 rush yards per game in postseason career (548 yards, six games). Has five rushing TDs in past four postseason games and aims for fifth playoff game in a row with a rushing TD. ... TE Vernon Davis has 100 or more receiving yards in four of six career postseason games. Averages 97.2 yards per playoff game (583 yards, six games), fourth highest in NFL history. ... Carolina won

division for fourth time (1996, 2003, 2008). Team's 12 years are tied for most in franchise history (1996, 2008). ... QB Newton is only player with 50 or more passing (64) and 25 or more rushing (28) TDs in first three NFL seasons. Has 11,299 passing and 2,032 rushing yards in his career. His 11,299 pass yards are third most in 1st three seasons and his 2,032 rushing yards are most by a QB in first three years. ... RB DeAngelo Williams is franchise leader in rushing attempts (1,370), yards (6,627) and TDs (46). Had 843 rushing, 333 receiving and 1,176 scrimmage yards, his third season with 1,000 or more scrimmage yards, tied for most by RB in team history (DeShaun Foster). ... WR Steve Smith is franchise leader in catches, yards and TDs in both regular season and postseason. Has 836 catches for 12,197 yards with 67 TDs in regular season and 47 catches for 782 yards with seven TDs in postseason. Aims for fourth postseason in a row with a TD. His seven receiving TDs are tied for most by active player in 2013 postseason. TE Greg Olsen led team with 6 receiving TDs in one of two TEs in NFL with five or more receiving TDs in every season since 2008. Led team with career-best 73 catches. ... WR Brandon La Fell has 13 career receiving TDs & averages 27.1 yards per TD (352 yards).

— The Associated Press



San Francisco running back Frank Gore

MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

## NFL PLAYOFFS

# Picking up the pace

## Blount helps Patriots' deep group of running backs peak at perfect time

By HOWARD ULMAN

The Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — LeGarrette Blount's first season with the New England Patriots started slowly.

It's picking up speed at the right time.

The 250-pound bulldozer charges into the first playoff game of his four NFL seasons after a breakout performance — a team-record 344 all-purpose yards, a personal-best 189 yards rushing and two touchdowns.

That helped the Patriots beat the Buffalo Bills 34-20 in the regular-season finale and clinch a first-round bye.

On Saturday night, the Patriots (12-4) face the Indianapolis Colts (12-5) in an AFC divisional-round game.

"We've been out here in the cold," Blount said after practice Wednesday with the temperature in the teens, "trying to get used to it and see how it's going to be for the game."

Bad weather wasn't a problem against Buffalo. In a game-long downpour, he had 36- and 35-yard touchdown runs and returned kickoffs 83 and 62 yards.

And Blount's 189 yards rushing were just 76 fewer than his total of 265 in his first eight games. He nearly doubled that in the next eight games with 507 yards as he learned the offense in his first season after being traded from Tampa Bay, which drafted him in 2010.

"I feel like I ran hard in the beginning also, but it's just as the season went on I got more comfortable," Blount said. "I just kind of figured out a lot more about the offense to be a little bit more successful."

Now he's part of a deep group of running backs with different styles.

Blount runs over defenders. Stevan Ridley cuts between them. Shane Vereen catches passes against them. Brandon Bolden does all that.

"It wears and tears on the defense," Blount said. "They get tired of hitting backs like me, like Rid, like Brandon. And they get tired of chasing Shane around. So I feel like if you do that to them for a while, sooner or later they're going to crack."

Combine that with Tom Brady's leadership and passing, and the defense has plenty to worry about.

Until this season, Blount had never returned a kickoff in the NFL. He's done it 17 times for the Patriots for an average of 29.1 yards despite having a much bigger body than most top returners.

Or because of it. "Being my size definitely helps," Blount said. "I get

to come out running full speed. And then another part of it is the kickoff team has to run all the way down there to tackle you and then once you break their line of defense then they have to turn around and chase you."

But he knows returners like Leon Washington and Devin Hester, two of the best in NFL history, have something extra. "The 83-yarder I had probably would have been a touchdown with one of those guys," Blount said.

Brady isn't complaining about any of his backs.

"That's been a big strength of our team to take a lot of pressure off our passing game," he said. "Guys that are able to go in there and really impose their physical style of play against the other team, and the way we did it two weeks ago against Buffalo was awesome."

The Patriots rushed for a season-high 267 yards against the Bills; Ridley had 74.

Another big ground game could be coming against the Colts, who gave up the seventh most yards rushing in the league.

"It's a heck of a challenge," Indianapolis coach Chuck Pagano said. "They've got a stable of guys that are all more than capable."

In their last three games, the Patriots have rushed for an average of 168.3.

But if the Colts focus too much on stopping that, Vereen can catch a short pass and run. He had 47 receptions despite missing eight games with a broken wrist.

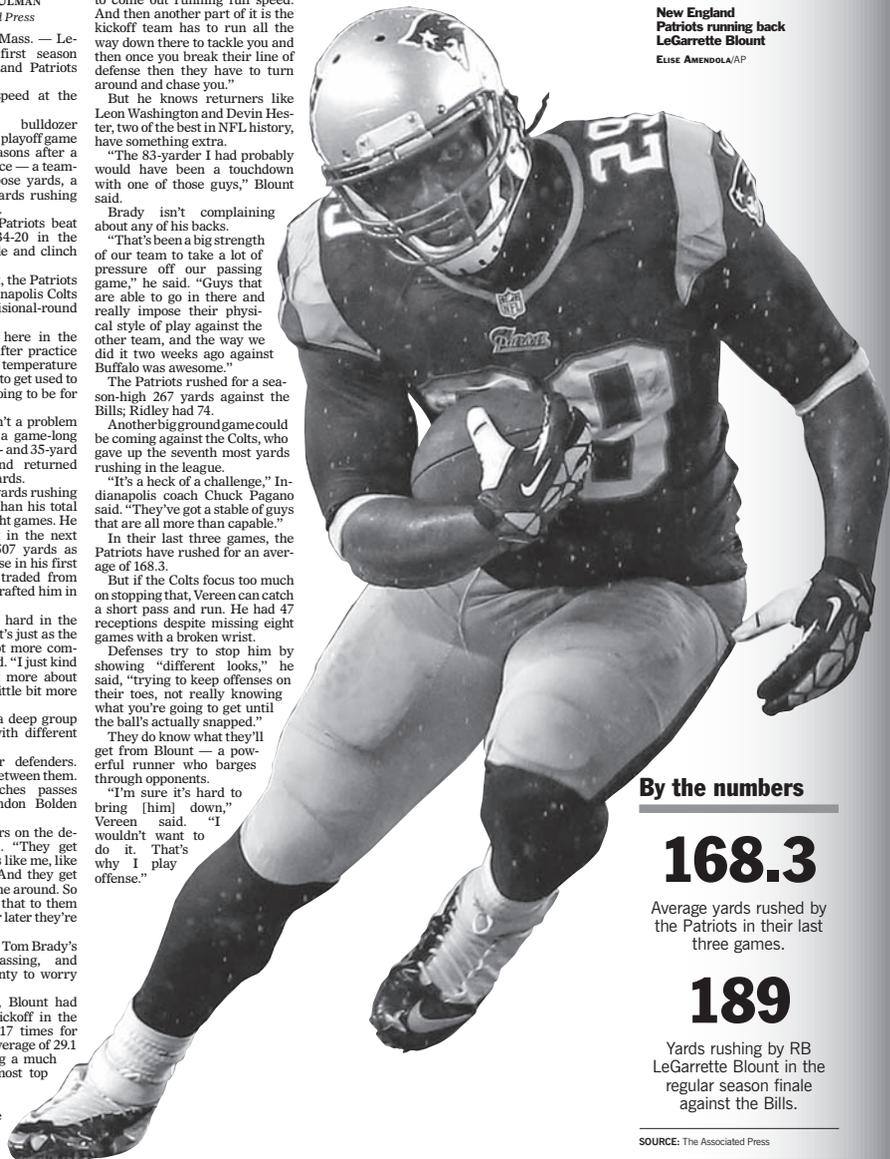
Defenses try to stop him by showing "different looks," he said, "trying to keep offenses on their toes, not really knowing what you're going to get until the ball's actually snapped."

They do know what they'll get from Blount — a powerful runner who barges through opponents.

"I'm sure it's hard to bring [him] down," Vereen said. "I wouldn't want to do it. That's why I play offense."

New England Patriots running back LeGarrette Blount

EUSE AMENOLA/AP



### By the numbers

# 168.3

Average yards rushed by the Patriots in their last three games.

# 189

Yards rushing by RB LeGarrette Blount in the regular season finale against the Bills.

## NFL PLAYOFFS

## Colts ready for another chance at Brady

Pats QB has handed Indy 10 losses since start in '01

By MICHAEL MAROT  
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Antoine Bethea enjoys a good chess match as much as the next guy — especially when the opponent is Tom Brady.

"The Colts' safety has spent years trying to get the upper hand on a three-time Super Bowl champion and one of the greatest quarterbacks in NFL history, and Bethea relishes the cat-and-mouse game that will be renewed Saturday night when Indianapolis and New England meet in a divisional-round playoff game.

"Still the same Tom, making those good throws, control of the offense and just continuing to be that elite quarterback," Bethea said.

Since being drafted by the Colts in 2006, Bethea has faced just about every big-name quarterback.

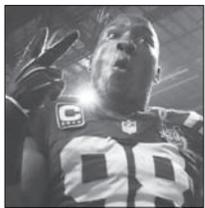
Every four years, he gets a shot at one of the NFL's best — Drew Brees, Eli Manning, Aaron Rodgers. Twice, he has faced Ben Roethlisberger. In October, Bethea and the Colts lined up against Peyton Manning for the first time outside of practice. And while Philip Rivers has won six of the last seven against the Colts, facing Brady has always been unique.

Perhaps it's because Brady made his first NFL start against the Colts way back in 2001. Or perhaps it's because Brady has handed Indy 10 of its 78 losses (12.8 percent) since making that first start. Or maybe it's because the former AFC East foe never really split up after realignment in 2002. Instead, they've played every year since 2003 and provided the league with some of its most enduring images over the last decade.

■ New England and Indy traded AFC championship game victories following the 2003 and 2006 seasons. The Pats won in the snow; the Colts won with one of the great comebacks in playoff history.

■ In 2007, the Brady-to-Randy Moss connection derailed Indy's quest for perfection — on the same day the Pats' continued their march toward 16-0.

■ In 2009, Manning took ad-



AJ Mast/AP

The Indianapolis Colts' Robert Mathis, the NFL sacks champion, has Patriots QB Tom Brady concerned.

**“First and foremost, you have to get him rattled.”**

Cory Redding

Indianapolis Colts defensive end on Patriots QB Tom Brady

vantage of Brady's inability to convert on fourth-and-2 from deep in his own territory late in the game to rally the Colts for an improbable 35-34 win.

Brady has won all three games since that mind-numbing finish including last season's 59-24 thumping in frosty New England. But Indy won the last playoff game, seven years ago. And while many of the names and faces have changed over the years, the challenge never really did. In 14 career games, Brady has carved up Indy's defense for 3,456 yards and 27 touchdowns with only 12 interceptions.

"The biggest thing is that Tom's going to get back there and make sure his playmakers get the ball in their hands and get the ball down the field," defensive end Cory Redding said. "We've got to get pressure on him. First and foremost, you have to get him rattled. You can't let him get comfortable in the pocket. And that's going to help out our back end as well. You can't cover these guys all day, so we have to get pressure on the quarterback."

Two years ago, Redding was on the wrong end of Brady's AFC championship game victory over Baltimore. That loss opened the door for coach Chuck Pagano to take the Colts' job and eventually led to the free-agent signing of Redding. But this will be a very different offense than what Redding saw that day.

Wes Welker and Aaron Hernandez are no longer with the Pats (12-4) and tight end Rob Gronkowski is out with a season-ending knee injury. But Brady has proven he can win with younger, lesser-known receivers.

And the Colts will be at an even bigger disadvantage after giving up 513 yards and 44 points in last weekend's crazy wild-card victory over the Chiefs. Starting cornerback Greg Toler will miss the game after going on injured reserve, and it's still uncertain whether LaRon Landry (concussion) will be cleared to play though he was a full participant in Wednesday's practice.

Brady has his other concerns, like trying to avoid NFL sacks champion Robert Mathis.

"He's a great player. You try to put guys around him and double team him, but he still seems to be making all the plays," Brady said. "I just know I don't have a lot of time back there in the pocket to sort things out. We've got to try and get the ball to our guys as quickly as we can so he's not ruining the game."

Indy will do everything it can

to make him uncomfortable Saturday night.

But it will all come down to the same old thing: Who makes the right moves?

"I think it changes every year," Bethea said about the rivalry. "This year, it's two good teams going against each other, hostile environment, playing this game to get to the AFC championship."



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Indianapolis Colts safety Antoine Bethea, right, relishes the cat-and-mouse game that comes with playing against the Pats' Tom Brady.

## Indianapolis Colts (12-5) at New England Patriots (12-4)

2 a.m. Sunday, CET; 10 a.m. JKT, AFN-Sports

**SERIES RECORD:** Patriots lead 47-29  
**LAST MEETING:** Patriots beat Colts 59-24, Nov. 18, 2012.

**LAST WEEK:** Colts beat Chiefs 45-44; Patriots had bye.

**STREAK, STATS AND NOTES:** Teams meeting for fourth time in postseason. Colts defeated Patriots, 38-34, in AFC Championship game on January 21, 2007. ... New England is 2-1 in three playoff meetings vs. Colts. ... Indianapolis overcame a 28-point deficit (38-10; 45-44) last week, second-largest comeback win in NFL playoff history. ... Have won 3 of past four on road in Divisional Playoffs. ... Clinched AFC South title for eighth time since 2003. ... Colts have made 11 postseason appearances since 2002, most in NFL. ... Last week, QB Andrew Luck tied for second-most TD passes in a postseason game in franchise history. Luck's 443 pass yards last week were second most in playoff game in club annals. Luck will make his second career start vs. New England (first in postseason). ... He has 8,196 career passing yards and is first player in NFL history with 8,000 passing yards in his first 2 seasons.

... LB Robert Mathis has 5.5 career post-season sacks, second-most by Colt since 1982 (Dwightreen, 9). Franchise (111 career, 19.5 in 2013) has most sacks in career by a Colt and in single-season since 1982. Has 5 career sacks vs. New England (all regular season).

S. Antoine Bethea has four career postseason INTs. Posted team-best 9 tackles last week. Has 3 career INTs vs. Patriots (all regular season). ... S LaRon Landry has 2 INTs in two career postseason games. ... With a win, Patriots will advance to third straight AFC Championship. New England is 14-4 (77.8) at home in postseason, second-best all-time (min. 10 games). ... Patriots are 10-6 (.625) in divisional playoffs. ... Posted 8-0 record at home in 2013. ... New England is 2-0 all-time at home in postseason vs. Colts. ... Head coach Bill Belichick and QB Tom Brady (17) have most postseason wins by QB-head coach duo. ... Belichick (18) has 3rd-most playoff wins all-time, trailing only Tom Landry (20) and Don Shula (19). ... Brady's 17 postseason wins are most playoffs wins by QB in NFL history. Brady has most completions (653), attempts (837) and passing yards (5,949) in NFL playoff history. Brady (42) needs 3 TD passes to surpass Brett Favre (44) for second-most postseason TD passes all-time. Has 17-7 (70.8) playoff record, third-best postseason record as starting QB in NFL history (min. 15 starts). ... Brady vs. Ind. (.714) record vs. Ind. (incl. playoffs) with 27 TDs vs. 12 INTs and 98.8 rating. In Week 17, RB LeGarrette Blount totaled 334 yards (189 rush, 145 KR), most in game by Patriot in franchise history.

Patriots QB Tom Brady  
GEORGE BRIDGES/MCT

# HIGH SCHOOL: DODDS PACIFIC



DAVE ORNAUER/Stars and Stripes

Kubasaki 148-pounder Austin Cyr pins Kadena's Elijah Takushi for the title during last year's Kinnick Invitational Wrestling Tournament at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan. This year's tournament has been renamed and will not have teams from outside of Japan.

# Beast on a leash

Kinnick hosting only Japan schools for wrestling tournament

By DAVE ORNAUER  
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE,  
Japan

Much will be different Saturday about a high school wrestling tournament formerly known as "Beast of the East."

For one, the tournament has been renamed the Kinnick Individual Tournament. For another, "Beast's" defending champion, Kubasaki, won't be in attendance; in fact, no teams outside of Japan will appear for the first time since 1999. And junior varsity wrestling will be up on the field, to 121 this year, organizers said.

"There will be a different feel to it," said host coach and co-tournament director Gary Wilson.

The Japan-only field features three returning Far East champions, all from international schools. Regular participant Shonan Military Academy, a Japanese school, has annually provided strong competition for its American counterparts, organizers said.

The increase in JV wrestlers will likely mean many a quick end against their experienced counterparts, and with the absence of Kubasaki and Kadena far fewer competitive bouts in the early rounds, Wilson said.

"It will be hard to find some of those bigger matchups," he said. "There will be a lot of one-sided bouts. The JV will end up with more bouts this year, which will help for the future if they decide to open it up next year and let outside teams in again."

While some weights such as 108 and 168 will have only four wrestlers, "unlike some 'Beasts,' we have full 16-man brackets," Wilson said. "Some will get a lot of work. Others won't. We'll make the best of it."

Also not in attendance at Kinnick will be E.J. King, the Cobras wrestlers will accompany the boys and girls' basketball teams for weekend bouts at Daegu against Korean-American Interscholastic Activities Conference schools.

E.J. King's location, nearly 700 miles southwest of Tokyo, puts it

in a unique situation, one that athletics director Charles Strobino and his Daegu counterpart, Ken Walter, have tried to alleviate by striking up a continuing competitive relationship.

It costs about 40 percent less for King to fly to Pusan and bus to Daegu than for the Cobras teams to fly to the Tokyo area "where they haven't been competitive," Walter said.

It puts Cobras teams on a more level playing field, assistant boys basketball coach Laird Small said. "We'll never see Yokota or Kinnick at Far East, but we will see Daegu again; hopefully, our guys won't have the doe-eyes-in-the-headlights look the next time they see them."

The other marquee matchup this weekend finds Kubasaki's basketball teams visiting Kadena on Friday in the third of four regular-season meetings. Kubasaki's girls beat Kadena for the first time in 10 seasons 48-42 on Dec. 20 to even the season series 1-1.

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## Game of the week

### Wrestling: Kinnick Individual Tournament

**When** — 9:30 a.m. Saturday.  
**Where** — Nile C. Kinnick High School, Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan.  
**What** — Tournament formerly known as the "Beast of the Far East." This year features 121 wrestlers from host Kinnick, Yokota, Zama American, Edgren, M.C. Perry, American School In Japan, St. Mary's, Christian Academy Japan and Shonan Military Academy. Will be conducted without teams from outside of Japan for the first time in 15 years. Will also feature junior varsity wrestlers as well as varsity athletes; only one wrestler per school can score team points per weight class.

**Format** — Modified double-elimination format. Seeding will be done randomly. Knockout-bracket wrestlers will wrestle back for third place. Still to be determined is period length, two or three minutes. First place is worth 10 team points, second place seven points, third place five points and fourth place three points.

**Wrestlers to watch** — The tournament will feature three returning Far East Tournament champions, Ryan Vasconcellos and Jeffrey Koo of St. Mary's and Eric Overton of CAJ.

— Stars and Stripes

## Other key matchups

### Schedule

<b>Japan</b>	<b>Wrestling</b>
<b>Basketball</b>	<b>Boys</b>
<b>Friday</b>	Kinnick at St. Mary's
<b>Friday-Saturday</b>	Zama at Edgren, Yokota at Perry
<b>Girls</b>	<b>Friday-Saturday</b>
<b>Friday-Saturday</b>	Zama at Edgren, Yokota at Perry,
<b>Girls</b>	King at Daegu
<b>Saturday</b>	St. Maur and YIS at CAJ
<b>Wrestling</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	Kinnick Individual Tournament
<b>South Korea</b>	<b>Basketball</b>
<b>Blue Division</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>Friday</b>	SFS and King at Daegu, TCIS at
<b>Saturday</b>	SAHS
<b>Saturday</b>	Osan at SAHS, TCIS and King at
<b>Saturday</b>	Daegu
<b>Wrestling</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	E.J. King, Humphreys, Osan and
<b>Saturday</b>	SAHS at Daegu
<b>Okinawa</b>	<b>Basketball</b>
<b>Friday</b>	Kubasaki at Kadena, girls at 5 p.m.,
<b>Friday</b>	boys at 6:30 p.m.
<b>Boys</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	Kitanakagusuku at Kadena, 1 p.m.

**Wrestling**  
EJ King, Humphreys,  
Osan, Seoul American  
at Daegu, Saturday

The long five-way individual tournament of the season and the only meet to feature inter-district competition. E.J. King is out of Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, and a regular participant in what used to be the "Beast" tournament.

**Basketball**  
King at Daegu  
Friday and Saturday

Also the only inter-district competition of the season, and could be a preview of the Far East Division II Boys Tournament championship game between the visiting Cobras, competitive again for the first time since 2008, and the always-contending Warriors. The girls Cobras finished second in the D-II tournament last year, Daegu won the tournament two years ago.

**Basketball**  
Kubasaki at Kadena  
Friday

Third installment of the annual four-game season series. For the first time since 2004, the girls' season series is tied 1-1 after two games, the Dragons boys are up 2-0 on the Panthers thus far. The teams meet again for the final time in the regular season Feb. 7.



# HIGH SCHOOL: DODDS EUROPE

## This week's key matchups

### Boys basketball Vilseck at Patch Friday and Saturday

The defending champion Panthers were among DODDS Europe's busiest basketball teams during the break, hosting and winning the annual Stuttgart Holiday Basketball Tournament.

That performance – particularly an encouraging 66-48 win over Wiesbaden in the tournament's Jan. 4 championship game – should boost Patch's confidence entering the stretch run of the regular season. But the Panthers, who played divisional rival Kaiserslautern to a doubleheader split in their only regular-season games thus far this season, know they're in for a serious fight to repeat as Division I champion.

Vilseck, the only other Division I program to share Region III with Patch, would like to play a major role in that regard. The Falcons looked legit before the break, coming back from a 26-point deficit against Wiesbaden before taking a 70-64 loss on Dec. 14.

Adding to its import, the regional rivalry represents the only Division II competition either team will face before the European tournament. The teams meet again to close out the regular season Feb. 14 and 15. Otherwise, they'll match up against Division II neighbors such as Hohenfels and Ansbach.

### Hohenfels vs. Ansbach Friday at Ansbach; Saturday at Hohenfels

Speaking of those Division II programs, Hohenfels and Ansbach will play a home-and-home doubleheader over the weekend that should go a long way toward determining each team's viability as a playoff contender.

Long a regional and divisional doormat, Hohenfels sprinted out to a perfect 3-0 start that included two wins by a combined three points over a tough Black Forest Academy team.

Ansbach, meanwhile, has a less instructive body of work from which to prognosticate. The Cougars took a blowout loss to Vilseck and enjoyed a blowout win over the dwindling Schweinfurt/Bamberg program. This weekend's games against Hohenfels will be the season's first measure of how they fare against comparable size and talent.

## Schedule

### Basketball

#### Friday

Menwith Hill at Lakenheath JV  
Bitburg at Kaiserslautern  
Black Forest Academy at Ramstein  
Hohenfels at Ansbach  
Vilseck at Patch  
Signonella at Aviano  
Vicenza at American Overseas  
School of Rome  
Marymount at Naples

#### Saturday

AFNORTH at Brussels  
TASIS at Lakenheath  
Menwith Hill at Lakenheath JV  
BFA at Ramstein  
Ansbach at Hohenfels

### Girls basketball AFNORTH at Brussels Saturday

Why is the weekend's Lions-Brigands game worthy of particular attention? Because the teams' meetings almost always are, and the one they've already had this season was no exception.

An even matchup between a contending Division II program in AFNORTH and a Division III powerhouse in Brussels, the ongoing Benelux struggle produced another strong entry in the series on Dec. 6. The Brigands rushed out to a 12-2 lead through one quarter and fought off a persistent Lion comeback effort in a 26-19 win.

Brussels got the better of both of last season's matchups as well, including a 32-31 classic on Jan. 19.

Expect another hard-fought game added to the historical record Saturday in the latest edition of the enduring DODDS-Europe girls hoops rivalry.

### Signonella at Aviano Friday and Saturday

Three of Italy's six girls hoops teams are undefeated, the other three are winless. That pristine picture will get a little muddier after the Jaguars and Saints meet this weekend.

Division III Signonella and Division II Aviano rank among the unbeaten entering the Friday-Saturday doubleheader. The Jaguars earned their two wins over an overmatched Marymount team; Aviano had a similarly stress-free road in double-digit wins over American Overseas School of Rome.

The two teams will get their shot at Naples – Italy's other undefeated team – over the next two weeks. Each would like to enter that showdown unbeaten at the other's expense. That makes for a pair of games with about as much postseason intensity as can be gathered in the first weekend back from the holiday break.

Vilseck at Patch  
Signonella at Aviano  
Vicenza at AOSR  
Marymount at Naples

#### Tuesday

Schweinfurt at Hohenfels  
Kaiserslautern at Baumholder

#### Thursday

Leeds Carnegie at Menwith Hill

### Marksmanship

#### Saturday

Alconbury, Baumholder, Patch, Bitburg at Wiesbaden  
Ansbach, Bamberg, Hohenfels, Schweinfurt, Vicenza at Vilseck

Wrestling resumes Jan. 18



Ramstein's Drew Tevebaugh takes a short jumper against Bitburg in a pre-break game. Ramstein hosts Black Forest Academy Friday and Saturday while Bitburg travels to Kaiserslautern Friday, as high school basketball action gets under way following the holiday break.

# Resolute to remove rust

After monthlong layoff, little time to regain form for championships

By GREGORY BROOME  
Stars and Stripes

After a hiatus of nearly a month, the DODDS Europe winter sports season resumes this weekend with a slate of 17 boys and girls basketball games and two marksmanship meets.

The long intermission — this weekend's schedule marks the first regular-season action since Dec. 14 — carries a substantial risk of a sluggish start for athletes who may or may not have maintained their conditioning and focus.

While some programs strive to schedule frequent practices, scrimmages and occasional games during the break, holiday plans and travel invariably siphon off personnel and prevent full-fledged team-building.

"It is very hard to have any kind of productive practices over the winter break," AFNORTH girls basketball coach D.C. McDonald said. "They call it a break for a reason."

That means the first few practices, like the first days in the classroom, serve as refresher courses for skills and strategies introduced prior to the break.

"The first couple practices after the break, we review and start adding to what we have," Patch girls basketball coach Billy Ratcliff said.

In addition to the epic recess, the quirky schedule presents its teams with a weird mix of urgency and forgiveness.

The 11 marksmanship programs will have just three Saturdays left in their regular season, including a Jan. 18 arrangement in which all teams will compete and submit scores remotely. But the European championship Feb. 1 at Wiesbaden will supersede the



PHOTOS BY JOSHUA L. DeMOTTS/Stars and Stripes

Ramstein's Desiree Palacios takes the ball to hoop against Bitburg's Hailey McKenna at Ramstein in a game last month. Both teams return to action after a monthlong layoff. Ramstein hosts Black Forest Academy Friday and Saturday while Bitburg travels to Kaiserslautern on Friday.

results of all of those meets.

With only six weeks remaining in the basketball regular season, meanwhile, rusty squads are encouraged to quickly regain their pre-break form. But basketball teams aren't competing for berths in the European tournament, in which every team participates. Instead, they'll use the games in

January and February to build teamwork, settle on rotations and establish a rhythm entering the grueling four-day tournament running Feb. 19-22 at Wiesbaden.

Only wrestlers, who resume a week later than their peers on Jan. 18 and are quickly confronted with sectional qualifiers Feb. 8, will be required to perform at their best before the European championship arrives Feb. 14-15.

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# SPORTS



**Lasting effects**  
 Latest Hall of Fame vote reflects  
 MLB's Steroid Era | **Page 52**

NFL

# Seattle ready to explode?

## Wilson, Seahawks' offense primed for big game Saturday

By **TIM BOOTH**  
*The Associated Press*

**T**HE LAST TIME Russell Wilson played like he was pushing to be included in the talk for MVP, he dissected the New Orleans Saints with one of the best performances of his career.

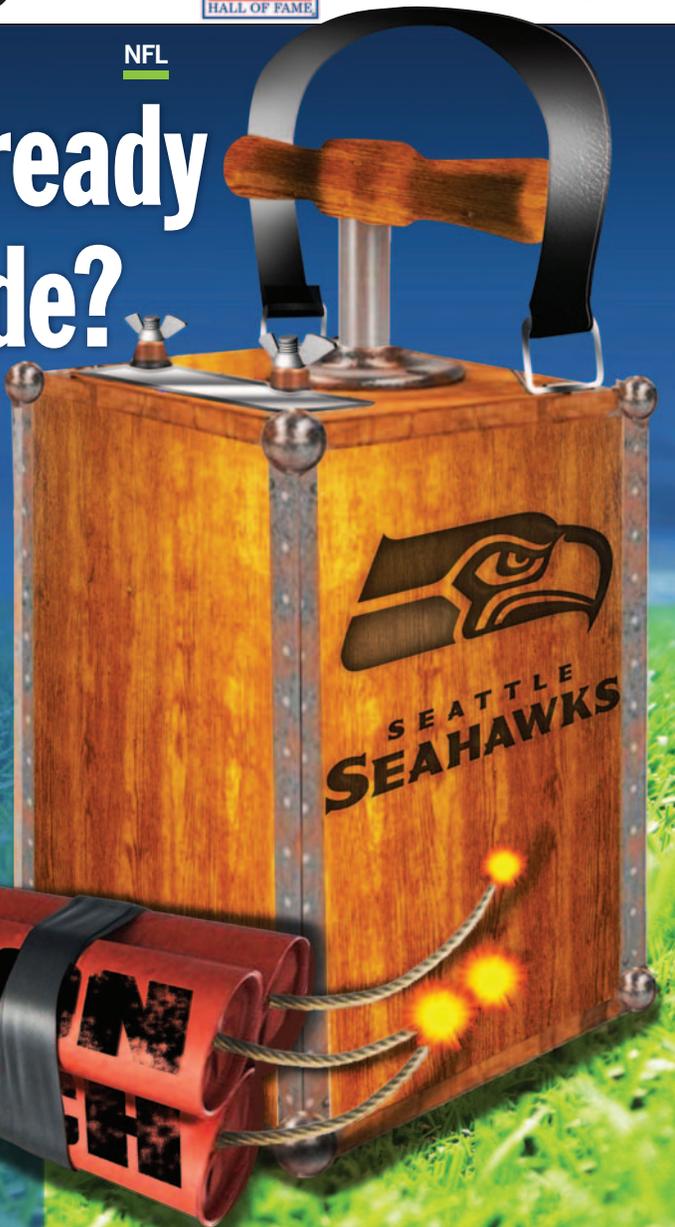
Since that December night, Wilson and the Seattle Seahawks scuffled toward the conclusion of the season, raising concerns that a stumbling offense could leave them vulnerable as the playoffs arrive.

"We weren't able to stay at the same level of production that we had maybe prior to that, but you'll see," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said. "Hopefully, we can play like we want to, which is to play a really good balanced attack

**SEE EXPLODE ON PAGE 57**

**Inside:**

- Panthers' Newton rejects Kaepernick comparisons, Page 58
- Blount leads deep group of Patriots running backs, Page 60



Five ready to shine in Vonn's absence  
**Olympics, Page 53**

Kinnick tourney now a Japan-only affair  
**High Schools, Pages 62-63**

