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WEEKEND EDITION

EUROPE & PACIFIC



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WEIGHING A 'MODEST' INCREASE

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EVAN VUCCI/AP

Gen. Martin Dempsey, right, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, listens as Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel testifies on the Islamic State group before the House Armed Services Committee in Washington on Thursday.

Report: Army officer cuts disproportionately affect prior enlisted

Stars and Stripes

The post-9/11 military force reductions are starting to cut into the field-grade officer corps, and for reasons the Army has not explained, a disproportionate number — nearly one in five — began as enlisted soldiers, according to The New York Times.

Faced with declining budgets,

the largest of the services cut its force this year to 508,000 soldiers from 530,000, with plans to trim 20,000 more troops next year.

Cuts had largely come through attrition and reductions in recruiting and had mostly affected low-ranking enlisted soldiers. This summer, the cuts fell on officers as well, including 1,188 captains and 550 majors, many

of whom were intending on making a career of the military, the Times wrote.

Being forced out of a life they have known for a decade or more has been a disruption as shocking and painful as being laid off, the Times noted. They are losing jobs and, in many cases, receiving smaller pensions than they had expected — or no pensions

at all. They are being forced to give up their identities as soldiers. Some are losing their ranks or status as officers. All must be out by April.

"It's our culture, it's our family, it's our language," Capt. Bill Moore, who works in intelligence at Fort Bragg, N.C., told the Times.

SEE CUTS ON PAGE 4

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“You can issue all the executive orders you want. If you don’t have any money to enforce them, they don’t go very far. We’re going to be pretty aggressive in using the power of the purse.”

— Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., on a GOP plan to give states the option of not complying with an EPA mandate to limit greenhouse gas emissions

See story on Page 9

PACIFIC

Intel officer reassigned after probe

Pacific Fleet official removed over classified information disclosure

By **ERIK SLAVIN**
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A senior Pacific Fleet official known for his blunt assessment of China has been reassigned following an investigation into mishandling of classified information.

Capt. James Fanell, formerly the Hawaii-based command’s top intelligence officer, is now working as an aide at fleet headquarters, Navy spokesman Capt. Darryn James said Thursday.

James declined to provide specifics on Fanell’s removal, citing privacy concerns.

A defense official who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the record said Fanell was removed because he had inappropriately disclosed classified information.

The Pacific Fleet investigation also raised concerns of a negative climate in Fanell’s office, the defense official said.

Fanell’s views first gained attention in 2013 at the U.S. Naval Institute West conference, during which he stated that the Chinese PLA



DAVID KOLMEL/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Capt. James Fanell addresses the audience at a ceremony at U.S. Pacific Fleet Headquarters in June 2013 to commemorate the 71st anniversary of the Battle of Midway. Fanell has been reassigned over the reported mishandling of classified information.

Navy’s expansion was focused on sinking an opposing fleet and was largely about countering the U.S. Navy.

At the same conference this year, Fanell’s assessment that China is gathering the capability to fight Japan in a “short, sharp war” made it to Fox News, The New York Times and several international news outlets.

Fanell’s previous outspoken views on China led to speculation that he was removed because of them — a claim Pacific Fleet officials strongly denied Thursday.

“Capt. Fanell’s internal reassignment on Oct. 31 was in no way related to his views on China,” James said. “Any reporting that implies such speculation is not only inaccurate, it is wholly misleading and irresponsible. It is not true.”

The Navy typically releases decisions about removals only when commanding officers, executive officers and command master chief petty officers are involved or when a crime has been committed.

“This policy protects their privacy and shields them from unwarranted public scrutiny,” James said.

Since Fanell filled none of those positions, the Navy made no official announcement. Other media reports and speculation over the nature of the removal led Pacific Fleet officials to respond Thursday, James said.

Fanell declined a Stars and Stripes request for comment through a Navy spokesman.

slavin.eric@stripes.com
Twitter: @slavin_stripes

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COMING SOON

Science and Medicine
Recession’s effect on motherhood



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By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

Sailors on ships docked at Subic Bay won’t get shore leave while authorities determine the fate of a Marine accused of a slaying there.

“In consideration of recent events in Olongapo City, the United States has temporarily restricted shore leave for ... U.S. forces [visiting] the Subic Bay area,” according to an official at the U.S. Embassy in Manila.

Marine Pfc. Joseph Scott Pemberton, who has been in custody in the Philippines for almost a month, is suspected of involvement in the death of Jeffrey Laude, 26, a transgender person

also known as Jennifer, whose body was found Oct. 11 in a motel bathroom.

The death, which prompted protests from family members and anti-American activists, comes at a crucial time for U.S.-Filipino relations as the countries prepare to implement an agreement that will see thousands of U.S. troops rotate through bases in the Philippines over the next decade.

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority chairman Robert Garcia told the AFP news agency earlier this month that nine U.S. Navy ships had canceled visits to the port. Ships were still scheduled to visit for emergency repairs, but crews wouldn’t be allowed ashore, he said.

Cmdr. William Marks, spokesman for the U.S. Navy’s 7th Fleet, said Thursday that no “announced visits” to the Philippines had been canceled.

“USNS Mary Sears has been at Subic Bay and just left, and the USNS Henson (an oceanic survey ship) just arrived yesterday,” he said.

Port visits are often not confirmed until a week or even a few days before a ship arrives, Marks said.

“To say that all port visits have been canceled for the next two months is not accurate,” he said. “We just do not have any confirmed port visits to the Philippines right now. Of course port visits of U.S. Navy ships to the

Philippines is a key part of the U.S.-Philippine alliance so we’re always looking for opportunities to get our ships there.”

The embassy official, who asked not to be identified, said many factors that go into arranging port calls and that schedules of a particular ship can change for a variety of reasons.

“The U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Pacific Command are working together to review each port call to ensure U.S. servicemembers still have an opportunity to visit the Philippines and experience the food, culture and strong historic ties between our two countries,” the official said.

robson.seth@stripes.com
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MILITARY

Study offers help with suicide prevention

Army using algorithm developed after analysis of hospitalized soldiers deemed at risk

By ALAN ZAREMBO
Los Angeles Times

The U.S. Army has a new analytical tool that officials hope will counter a surge in suicides by identifying soldiers whose history, age and injuries indicate they are at high risk of taking their own lives.

In an analysis involving all 40,820 U.S. soldiers hospitalized for psychiatric problems over a six-year period, researchers created an algorithm to identify some of the Army personnel most likely to commit suicide. Sixty-eight of the soldiers killed themselves within a year of hospitalization.

More than half those suicides occurred among the 1,947 soldiers whose health histories and other characteristics gathered from Army records placed them in the algorithm's highest risk group.

Ronald Kessler, a Harvard University sociologist and suicide expert who led the study — published Wednesday in JAMA Psychiatry — said the statistical model could be used to target suicide prevention efforts.

"We saw quite a few people who killed themselves within six weeks of getting out of the hospital without any follow-up visit," he said.

In the six years covered in the study — 2004 to 2009 — the annual suicide rate in the Army was 18.5 suicides per 100,000 soldiers. The rate among soldiers hospitalized for psychiatric problems was more than 14 times that.

Within that group, the researchers wanted to see if they could home in on those at greatest risk.

Computers combed through 421 variables on each soldier drawn from 38 military data systems. Using a method known as "machine learning," the researchers identified roughly two dozen factors that proved most important.

The soldiers most likely to take their own lives were men with past suicidal behavior and a history of psychiatric disorders and criminal offenses, including weapons possession and verbal assaults.

Soldiers with hearing loss also faced heightened risk — a strong indicator that he had suffered a head injury. So did enlisting in the Army after age 27, most likely because those soldiers had already experienced trouble finding their way in life.

In all, the 5 percent of soldiers identified as highest risk accounted for 36 of the 68 suicides and had an annual rate of 3,824 suicides per 100,000 — more than 200 times the overall rate in the Army.

Rate of accidental deaths and suicide attempts were also significantly greater among the 1,947 soldiers in the high-risk group. Seven died in accidents and 555 made a suicide attempt within a year of hospitalization.

The Army has put in place an array of suicide-prevention pro-

grams, but most were applied broadly to all personnel, said Dr. Eric Schoonmaker, who served as surgeon general of the Army

until 2012.

The new research will allow the Army to focus on soldiers at greatest risk, Schoonmaker said.

In Britain, a variety of interventions have reduced the suicide rate among civilians who were hospitalized for psychiatric prob-

lems. They include mandatory outpatient visits after discharge and community crisis teams to monitor patients.

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MILITARY

US considering Iraq ground combat role

By JON HARPER
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military is considering sending a limited number of American ground forces to fight alongside Iraqi troops as they launch complex missions to regain territory lost to Islamic State militants, the country's top military officer said Thursday.

Thus far, American military personnel have been limited to serving as rear guard advisers to the Iraqi security forces and the Kurdish peshmerga. Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, said that could change as the campaign against the Islamic State becomes more difficult.

"As it evolves, there are certain operations that could be more complex than the ones in which the Iraqi security forces are currently involved," Dempsey told the House Armed Services Committee. "There are some places along the path that I think will be fairly complex terrain for them, including, for example, Mosul. And, eventually, as they need to restore the border between Iraq and Syria."

Dempsey said he was not predicting that American troops would be required alongside Iraqi forces in such operations, "but we're certainly considering it."

In any event, Dempsey said the number of U.S. combat troops being sent alongside the Iraqis would be relatively small.

"We've established a modest footprint," he said. "Any expansion of that, I think, would be equally modest. I just don't foresee a circumstance when it would be in our interest to take this fight on ourselves with a large military contingent."

President Barack Obama made ending the Iraq War a centerpiece of his foreign policy in his first term and repeatedly has stated that American soldiers would not return to ground combat in Iraq. That position has come under fire from congressional Republicans, who question whether the opera-



A CodePink demonstrator is removed Thursday by Capitol Hill police after interrupting a House Armed Services Committee hearing in Washington on the Islamic State group with Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey.

tion against the Islamic State can succeed without a change in the White House policy.

The Obama Administration is hoping that the new Shiite-led government in Baghdad will provide enough of a role for Sunni and Kurdish minorities that the Iraqi people as a whole will be able to handle the ground war on their own.

"If those assumptions are invalid, I will have to adjust my recommendations," Dempsey said.

Despite Dempsey's comments, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, appearing at the same hearing, repeated the administration's position that "U.S. military personnel will not be engaged in a ground combat mission."

Republican hawks have criticized the administration for that taking that position.

"How can you successfully execute the mission you've been given to degrade and ultimately

destroy ISIL when some of your best options are taken off the table?" asked committee chairman, Rep. Buck McKeon, R-Calif., using an acronym for the Islamic State. "Declaring we won't use ground forces is like telling your opponent you're not going to play your best players."

The Obama administration has asked Congress to authorize the use of military force against the Islamic State. In August, the White House said it did not need a new congressional authorization. However, Obama said last week he would request a new authorization.

McKeon said that any authorization request that ruled out ground forces would be "D.O.A." in Congress.

"I will not support sending our military into harm's way with their arms tied behind their backs," McKeon said.

In a written statement, Rep.

Adam Smith, D-Wash., the Ranking Democrat on the committee, said he is "skeptical that we can assemble a majority" to pass use-of-force legislation because of the differences between the White House and the Republicans on Capitol Hill.

Regarding Syria, Hagel was asked whether the U.S. should also go after the regime of President Bashar Assad. The Obama administration has said that Assad has lost legitimacy, but thus far has refrained from using military force against his government, which is currently fighting the Islamic State.

The Turks and several key Arab allies of the United States reportedly want the U.S. to facilitate the overthrow of Assad. CNN reported this week that the administration is rethinking its strategy in Syria.

Hagel told lawmakers that debates about whether to go

after Assad pose a "fundamental question" for American policymakers.

"Assad is part of the equation, of course. But ... you could change Assad today and that's not going to change all the dynamics quickly, certainly in Syria," he said. "[Assad] is a longer-term part of this ... but [the Islamic State] is right now ... threatening the country of Iraq and the government of Iraq, and so that's why we are dealing with that component first — because we must."

Another point of contention at the hearing was the administration's decision to continue to release detainees from the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"The risk to our forces increases even more with terrorist detainees returning to the battlefield ... The roughly 150 detainees that are left are the worst of the worst. To continue these releases — just as we have had to open a new front in the war on terror — is unwise," McKeon said.

Hagel cited intelligence community assessments that the risk of detainees returning to the battlefield is low, and he told lawmakers that the releases will continue.

"If I can get assurances required by the host governments ... that it substantially mitigates the risks, then I will sign" the release orders, he said.

harperjon@stripes.com
Twitter: @JHarperStripes

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"We love to say yes!"

Cuts: Many soldiers say money a factor in separation picks

FROM FRONT PAGE

"A lot of us have been in since high school," Moore said. "We fought, we've given everything, our families have given everything, and they just give us a handshake and say, 'Thank you for your service.'"

When the Army announced the impending officer cuts a year ago, officials said they would target officers with evidence of poor performance or misconduct.

An internal Army briefing disclosed by a military website in September showed the majority of captains being forced out had no blemishes on their records. The briefing, a copy of which was obtained by The Times, also showed that officers who had joined the Army as enlisted soldiers, then

endured the demanding process required to rise into the officer corps, were three times as likely as captains who graduated from West Point to be forced to retire.

Many of the prior enlisted had been encouraged to make the jump to the officer corps between 2006 and 2009, when the Iraq War was raging and the Pentagon was struggling to replace junior officers as soon as they were leaving the Army as well as their initial commitments were over, often because they were worn out by multiple deployments.

The soldiers who volunteered to fill the gap — older than most junior officers because they had been enlisted — were picked from the best of the ranks, and some had to earn bachelor's degrees to

make the cut. Many said in interviews they believed they are now being pushed out because they are entitled to more pay and are eligible for retirement earlier because they've been in the Army longer than other commissioned officers.

"The Army knew we had more years and they could save money by cutting us," said Capt. Tina Patton, 43, a combat medic who became an officer in 2007. "Looking back at our records, a lot of us can't figure out why else we would be cut."

The Army declined to discuss its criteria.

"Selections for separation are based on a soldier's manner of performance relative to their peers while serving as a commis-

sioned officer." Lt. Col. Benjamin Garrett, an Army spokesman, told The Times in an email. "The boards retained those with the highest demonstrated levels of performance and the most potential for future contributions on active duty."

Capt. Twananna Jamison, 43, who served 22 years in the Army but only seven as a captain, will get a sergeant's retirement pay of \$2,200 per month, less than half of what a retired captain receives, which is about \$4,500.

"I could be facing bankruptcy," she said. "I was helping my daughter pay for college. Now she's on her own. I couldn't have planned for this. It's hard not to feel like the Army [is] trying to save money on our backs."

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EUROPE



MINDAUGAS KULIŠ/AF

Training in Lithuania

Members of the U.S. Army's 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division attend military exercise Iron Sword 2014 at the Gaizium Training Range in Pabrade, 38 miles north of Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital. The exercise this year in Lithuania from Nov. 2-14 involves more than 2,500 military personnel from nine NATO member states.

Ukraine warns of deteriorating security situation

By PETER LEONARD
The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine warned Thursday that the security situation in rebel-held areas in the east has steadily worsened as separatist fighters move closer to demarcation lines separating them from government forces.

A cease-fire agreed on in September between rebels and Ukraine's government in effect has been rendered invalid as intense hostilities proceed on a daily basis.

National Security and Defense Council spokesman Andriy Lysenko said the Russian army is massing troops, including air defense units, near the border. Ukraine accuses Russia of directly supplying separatist forces.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich on Thursday reiterated Moscow's denial of that charge.

"There have been and are no military movements across the border or, all the more, any presence of our troops in the south-east of Ukraine," he said.

Ukrainian warnings of potential renewed intense hostilities follow multiple recent observations of large military convoys on the move around separatist-controlled areas. Trucks transporting troops, ammunition, fuel and large-caliber artillery systems have been seen traveling primarily in the direction of Donetsk, the main rebel city.

Ukraine and NATO have said they believe the equipment has been delivered from Russia, although they have yet to provide conclusive evidence for their claims.

Teams from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe that are monitoring two Russian-Ukrainian frontier crossings have noted an increase in the number of people in military clothing traveling across the border over the past week.

"The (observer teams saw) 665 men and women in military-style dress crossing the border in both directions. This is the highest number observed so far," the OSCE said in a statement Wednesday.

Naples command training to lead NATO response force

By STEVEN BEARDSLEY
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — With ground forces in Germany, air assets in France and maritime forces off the coast of Spain, assembling NATO's parts into a single fighting force is complicated by distance and communication.

The events of the past year have added new challenges as the NATO command staff here prepares to assume control of the 25,000-strong NATO Response Force, which is viewed as a counterweight to expanded Russian operations in the east.

NATO Joint Forces Command Naples is in the middle of a two-week exercise testing its ability to direct the response force, a ready-to-assemble force comprising units set aside by member states and commanded on a rotational basis by staffs in Naples and Brunssum, the Netherlands. The exercise, called Trident Juncture, is a capstone to a year of training for the smaller tactical units — the air, sea, land and special operations commands — that will become part of the reaction force in 2015 and fall under Naples' control.

During the September NATO summit in Wales, the alliance's member states placed more emphasis on the response force and underlined the need for it to become faster and more flexible.

Trident Juncture "places a premium on the readiness and

'It's not just 10 individual threat streams. It's 10 of them facing us together at one time.'

Lt. Gen. D. Michael Day
deputy commander of JFC Naples

responsiveness of the force," said Navy Adm. Mark Ferguson, commander of JFC Naples and U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa.

The annual exercise is using simulations to test JFC Naples' control of the subordinate units across Europe during a series of operations in a rapidly evolving crisis.

The scenario — an invasion of the Baltic nation of Estonia by a fictitious, neighboring nation-state — mirrors the concerns of nations on NATO's eastern flank who, like Ukraine, were once part of the Soviet Union and have considerable populations of Russian speakers.

The conflict evolves over time, officials say, changing from a large-scale ground war to stability operations and irregular warfare. Threats will often overlap or reinforce one another, mimicking the kind of hybrid warfare seen in Ukraine, where NATO officials

have said Russia employs special operations, cyberwar and information operations.

"It's not just 10 individual threat streams," said Canadian Forces Lt. Gen. D. Michael Day, deputy commander of JFC Naples and head of the command staff for the exercise. "It's 10 of them facing us together at one time."

Complicating matters is the act of managing incoming reports from, and disseminating outgoing orders to, six subordinate commands across Europe, ranging from a shipboard command of a Spanish maritime force to a Polish staff in Krakow in charge of special operations.

"There are many, many, many moving parts and there is a great deal of uncertainty," said British Army Lt. Gen. Robert Weighill, deputy chief of staff for operations at JFC Naples. "So exercising command in this type of environment is very challenging."

Staff at NATO's Joint Warfare Center in Stavanger, Norway, will role-play the forward headquarters and logistical arm of the effort, taking all traffic from component commands to provide a clear battlefield picture to Naples. An evaluation team from the JWC will also grade the performance of the Naples command staff, submitting its report to Ferguson, who will decide whether to certify his team for the next year.

beardsley.steven@stripes.com
Twitter: @sbeardsley

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MILITARY

VA allowing extra time to challenge firings

By Travis J. Tritten
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — VA officials told lawmakers Thursday that it has been giving federal executives linked to its nationwide health care scandal more time to appeal firings because a new law aimed at faster terminations may violate their rights.

Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson told a House oversight committee the agency is allowing executives targeted for termination an additional five days to make their cases. He said the VA fears the massive overhaul law passed during the summer does not provide enough time and would result in the overturning of firings by an appeals board.

Months after the overhaul law passed, the VA has proposed disciplinary action against about 42 executives but has not fired any managers linked to the manipulation of records to hide long wait times at veterans' hospitals, including Sharon Helman, the director at the Phoenix facility where the off-books scheduling scandal erupted. The lack of action has rankled some in Congress who want faster action to root out a widespread culture of wrongdoing that led to the problems.

"The case law is very clear that we have to provide a reasonable opportunity [for VA executives] to respond to charges," Gibson said. The additional five days is not included in the law but was added after "clear and unequivocal"

advice from VA legal counsel, he said. The overhaul passed in August streamlined an appeals process that often took many months and replaced it with one that can be completed in a month — one week for an executive to file an appeal and three weeks for an appeals board to rule on the appeal.

Gibson said the additional time was an effort by VA to square the requirements of the new law with legal precedent that indicated executives are entitled to a longer appeals window.

Members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee called the change an unnecessary new layer of bureaucracy that ignores the intent of Congress.

"The law is clear — it says they should be fired," said Rep. Jeff

Miller, R-Fla., chairman of the veterans committee and a key architect of the VA overhaul law.

Miller said the agency does not appear to be taking the deep problems with employee misconduct seriously despite it blowing up into the biggest scandal in VA history. About 90 health care facilities across the country were found to have manipulated patient wait-time data and some doctors claimed vets may have died due to the delays.

"I am not seeing the corresponding efforts to see those involved held accountable for their actions," Miller said.

The Senate has also strongly criticized the lack of firings. VA Secretary Bob McDonald has said in recent weeks there have

been no terminations due to ongoing criminal investigations by the FBI and due to the agency's efforts to compile cases against the employees.

Rep. Beto O'Rourke, D-Texas, said he accepted Gibson's explanation for the slow progress on rooting out employee misconduct, but the public is becoming impatient for action at facilities such as the El Paso VA in his district.

O'Rourke asked Gibson how long it would take, "within this calendar year, within the next six months, to see the firings we are expecting?"

Gibson said he would check with VA staff and get back to the congressman.

tritten.travis@stripes.com
Twitter: @Travis_Tritten

'Valor' concert drives donations for veterans

By John Woodrow Cox
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Before introducing rock star Dave Grohl at Tuesday night's Concert for Valor, film star Meryl Streep told those packed onto the National Mall and watching on HBO about something more important.

"Please: Go to theconcerforvalor.com and read about the veterans' service organizations like Semper Fi Fund and Give an Hour and Soldier On," she said. "Find your way to give and honor the valor of those who serve."

None of the three organizations has well-known brands, and their combined exposure to the audience (including Streep's pause for a cheer) was about nine seconds long, but the impact was immediate — and dramatic.

Semper Fi's Web traffic spiked, helping fuel 355 contributions that totaled nearly \$60,000 by night's end. Give an Hour, which provides free mental health care to veterans, received 60 times as much money as it does on a typical day. Donations to Soldier On, which helps homeless veterans, surged to their highest level in the charity's 13-year existence.

"Because we don't advertise, many people don't know about us," said Wendy Lethin, vice president of community outreach for Semper Fi Fund, which gives financial assistance to wounded warriors. "To have that sort of exposure from someone who is so highly thought of, there's no doubt it gives us credibility."

Benefit concerts have long been used to raise millions of dollars for all kinds of causes, from famine relief in Africa to aid for the families of victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Though the Concert for Valor was not held exclusively to raise money, 16 organizations were featured on the concert's website and mentioned at least once by celebrity presenters.

Comedian John Oliver implored viewers at home to visit the site of the Pat Tillman Foundation, which awards college scholarships to veterans and their spouses.

"If you're thinking [at] home of not doing that, think of it this way — it's literally the least you can do," he said.

The foundation received an onslaught of emails from veterans either interested in applying or from civilians who wanted to help.

"Motivated by the concert for valor," wrote one person.

The Fisher House Foundation, which helps veterans adjust to life at home, received a \$3,000 donation just minutes after comedian George Lopez mentioned the nonprofit group.

The Bob Woodruff Foundation received more than \$13,000, the vast majority of which came in after Woodruff, a journalist wounded in Iraq, addressed the crowd. The foundation helps injured servicemembers and their families get back on their feet.

The Fisher House Foundation, also mentioned by Woodruff, raised \$75,000 on Tuesday, more than twice what it did on Veterans Day a year ago. Team Rubicon — featured in a stirring short film at the concert about how the group uses disaster relief efforts to give veterans a sense of purpose — received about \$20,000 during the three-hour extravaganza.

Hiring Our Heroes, run by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, wasn't mentioned until after 9 p.m. but still drew more online traffic than on any day this year but one, when the Pittsburgh Steelers featured the organization on their website during a Sunday night football game.



Bruce Springsteen performs Tuesday during the "Concert for Valor" at the National Mall in Washington. Meredith Tibbitts/Stars and Stripes

Bruce Springsteen's anti-war songs at Veterans Day event stir ill will

By Justin Moyer
The Washington Post

At the "Concert for Valor" on the Mall Tuesday night in Washington, D.C., Bruce Springsteen caught social media heat for a song choice: Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son," which he performed with Zac Brown and Dave Grohl during Brown's set. Though written by leather-wounded classic rock mastermind John Fogerty — a man Springsteen once called "our generation's Hank Williams" — this is lyrical terrain familiar to the Boss. "Fortunate Son" takes on income inequality and unthinking patriotism.

But it was the third chorus that really got people's dander up on the Mall. In that one, Fogerty insisted he "ain't no military son."

On Veterans Day, in the heart of a centuries-old democracy fighting interminable foreign wars, George Washington — this didn't

go over well.

"The song, not to put too fine a point on it, is an anti-war screed, taking shots at

COMMENTARY "the red and blue," the Weekly Standard wrote. "It was a particularly terrible choice given that Fortunate Son is, moreover, an anti-draft song, and this concert was largely organized to honor those who volunteered to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq."

And then there was Twitter. "Will never understand why Fortunate Son is played during 'patriotic' scenarios. Not really getting this. #TheConcertForValor"

— Colette Moran (@ColetteMoran)

But Springsteen did have his defenders.

"If you think Fortunate Son was inappropriate for tonight's concert, you've clearly never paid attention to the lyrics. #VeteransDay"

— Karen Hensley (@Karen)

Indeed, at the same concert, Springsteen also performed a dirge-like version of "Born in the U.S.A."

"I wrote this 30 years ago — think it still holds," Springsteen said before playing the song.

While some think "Born in the U.S.A." is an American anthem, a quick look at the lyrics confirms that it's more of an anti-anthem anthem overtly critical of the Vietnam War.

So, starting right now, let's agree: Songs like "Fortunate Son" and "Born in the U.S.A." while they criticize the armed forces, aren't anti-American in the sense that, for example, the Islamic State is anti-American. By offering a critique of our nation's policies, they celebrate its promise.

Or, as Mark Twain put it: "The true patriotism, the only rational patriotism, is loyalty to the Nation all the time, loyalty to the Government when it deserves it."

OK?

EBOLA OUTBREAK

Military to use fewer troops in Ebola fight

By CHRIS CARROLL
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The need for U.S. military support in the battle against Ebola in West Africa is smaller than expected, officials say.

On Wednesday, the general in charge of the operation said a planned troop deployment to Africa was dropping by about 1,000 service members — a 25 percent cut. The Defense Department official in charge of special operations told Congress on Thursday that the DOD is now being asked to build 12 Ebola treatment units around the country, down from the 17 initially planned.

There are now 2,200 troops, some from each service branch, in Liberia, expected to top out just short of 3,000 in mid-December, said Army Maj. Gen. Gary Volesky, commander of Operation United Assistance, which began in September.

The Pentagon had planned to send about 4,000 troops to Africa to help deal with the largest Ebola outbreak in history. The outbreak may now be waning in Liberia, but Ebola continues to kill there and elsewhere, with a death toll that recently topped 5,000, according to the World Health Organization.

The bulk of American troops are deploying to help with engineering and logistical demands, functions which U.S. officials discovered Liberians were better able to handle than expected. Volesky told reporters at the Pentagon via teleconference Wednesday from the capital, Monrovia.

"What we found working with [the U.S. Agency for International Development] and the government of Liberia was that there was a lot of capacity here that we didn't know about before, and so that enabled us to reduce the forces that we thought we originally had to bring," he said.



A passenger arriving at the airport in Entebbe, Uganda, on Thursday has her temperature checked to screen for Ebola. The U.S. military has reduced its planned troop deployment in West Africa intended to help stop the spread of the deadly virus.

STEPHEN WANDERA/AP

USAID had already identified and begun working with capable local contractors able to help construct treatment facilities, Volesky said. Liberian troops, meanwhile, did most of the work building the first of the Ebola treatment units, which are planned for completion by the end of the year, he said.

Fewer treatment units

Speaking before House legislators Thursday during a hearing on the American response to the Ebola outbreak, Michael Lumpkin, assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low-intensity conflict, said the DOD is now planning only 12 Ebola treatment units.

A defense official at the Pentagon said the number was scaled back from 17 in consultation with the Liberian government and the USAID, the lead U.S. agency on Ebola in Africa.

So far no U.S. troops or DOD civilians have shown any signs of infection, which Volesky said was a result of effective training in personal protection from the virus both before and during the deployment. Commanders are keeping close watch over their troops, he said.

"You won't see soldiers roaming all over Liberia; we've got it very controlled," he said. "They go places where there's a mission, and we just make sure that we're following all those protocols."

More than 80 airmen, sailors, Marines and soldiers who were due to return to Virginia on Thursday after a deployment to Liberia

will spend 21 days in quarantine at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., being monitored for symptoms, the Pentagon announced Thursday.

U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Deborah R. Malach said during the teleconference Wednesday that while the number of cases is still rising, Ebola infection rates in the country have dropped significantly. Just 45 people throughout the country became infected Tuesday, compared with about 100 contracting the virus daily in Monrovia alone at the height of the outbreak, she said.

President Barack Obama's decision to send the U.S. military sparked an influx of international nongovernmental organizations willing to help fight the disease, she said during the Wednesday teleconference.

"The presence of the U.S. military and the capacity that they bring to the table has been a real confidence builder for all of these NGO partners who are now stepping forward in response to help us with this effort," Malach said.

Lumpkin on Thursday told Congress that U.S. military participation was galvanizing the battle against Ebola in West Africa, and filling a crucial gap while the rest of the world tries gear up a response.

"The Ebola epidemic we face truly is a national security issue," he said. "Absent our government's coordinated response in West Africa, the virus spreads (and) brings the risk of more cases here in the United States."

carroll.chris@stripes.com
Twitter: @ChrisCarroll_

Troops to be quarantined at Va. base

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — More than 80 troops were scheduled to enter three weeks of quarantine in Virginia on Thursday after their return from a mission fighting an Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

The 51 airmen, 27 sailors, four Marines and two soldiers were to arrive by military aircraft at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., in the early afternoon, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said in written statement Thursday.

The group, none of whom is showing symptoms of Ebola, will be medically screened on arrival. They'll then enter a 21-day period of what the Pentagon calls "controlled monitoring" in secluded buildings near the flightline, Kirby said. During their isolation, troops will be screened twice daily for symptoms at a medical facility dedicated to the servicemembers back from Liberia.

Defense Department officials say the monitoring period, in which all troops who spend more than a short time in the Ebola zone must participate, is intended to be comfortable. Two of the larger buildings will be used as a dining hall and a gym, Kirby said.

"The facilities will include all appropriate amenities," he said. "Troops will be able to communicate with family members via telephone and electronic means."

Kirby said Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel "joins all Americans in welcoming the troops home" and promised to provide all the care and support they've earned.

"Secretary Hagel is both proud and grateful for the service rendered by these men and women in the critically important mission of trying to stop the spread of Ebola at its source," he said.

About 2,200 U.S. troops are deployed to Liberia to help build treatment facilities, train health care workers and provide testing services to identify those who are infected.

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MILITARY

Experts: NK progress on missiles limited

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

How far along North Korea has come in miniaturizing nuclear warheads for use on intercontinental missiles depends on the target, experts say.

North Korea has been testing a medium-range intercontinental missile that could reach South Korea or Japan since the late 1980s, said Joel S. Wit, a visiting scholar at Johns Hopkins University's U.S.-Korea Institute in Washington. The country would have to be "pretty incompetent" to have not developed a warhead design for that missile type after so many years, he said.

Miniaturizing sufficiently for a long-range missile that could reach the U.S. is a different story.

"I don't think there's anyone who would say [North Korea] could [put one] on top of an ICBM — or at least no one I know," Wit said. "It doesn't exist in North Korea."

Such a nuclear missile would require far more testing than North Korea has done. After several failed attempts, the country in late 2012 successfully launched its three-

stage Unha-3 rocket, deploying a satellite in space that failed to work.

As ballistic missile expert Michael Elleman noted in an analysis last year for the nonpartisan Arms Control Association, based in Washington, the technological requirements differ between a satellite rocket launch and a ballistic missile launch — particularly the need for a functional re-entry vehicle to keep the warhead from burning up while descending from space.

"Although space launch activities offer an opportunity to accumulate experience and generate data that could aid efforts to develop long-range ballistic missiles, the results have limited application to ballistic missiles," Elleman wrote.

"Only a fraction of the overall missile development issues can be addressed when testing the system as a satellite launcher," Elleman wrote. "Other requirements, most notably re-entry technologies and operational flexibility requirements, cannot be adequately addressed by satellite launches. A proven satellite launch vehicle would still need to be flight-tested as a ballistic missile

a half-dozen or more times before it would be combat ready.

"For these reasons and others, the universal trend has been to convert ballistic missiles into space launchers, not the opposite, as evidenced by the Soviet, U.S., and Chinese experiences."

Dr. William Wieninger, an expert on weapons of mass destruction at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, said the presumption is that North Korea will eventually develop a bomb about the size of the one used by the U.S. on Hiroshima in World War II, which would be small enough to mount on a rocket.

"The rocket would almost certainly have a very low accuracy," he said. "A Hiroshima-sized warhead on a very inaccurate rocket is essentially a weapon of terror. It has very little military significance because they really can't expect to hit what they're shooting at."

Historically, nuclear-armed intercontinental missiles have been a means of defense relying on threat of use. During the Cold War, NATO was able to leverage

its conventional military force in Europe against a much larger Soviet military because NATO's nuclear weapons assured mutual destruction.

Analysts generally agree that even though North Korea behaves erratically at times, it's a rational regime that understands risk.

"The main reason that North Korea would not seriously consider using a nuclear weapon against the U.S. or South Korea is because they understand the consequences," said Greg Thielmann, a senior fellow at the Arms Control Association. "It would be the end of their regime. If there's one thing that Kim Jong Un and his clique is interested in, it's preserving their regime."

An extensive 2012 analysis of North Korea's nuclear missile threat by Markus Schiller with the Rand Corp. characterized the program as a "bluff."

The program is a "paper tiger," Schiller wrote, that "largely appears to be a political tool to gain strategic leverage, fortify the regime's domestic power, and deter other countries ... from military action."

olson.wyatt@stripes.com



WWMR/AP

A fire burns on a nuclear submarine at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, on May 23, 2012. A report by Navy investigators is critical of the response to the fire.

Navy report faults response, preparedness in sub fire

By DAVID SHARP
AND JENNIFER MCDERMOTT
The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — A fire that crippled a nuclear submarine at a shipyard showed that the Navy had become complacent about safety in industrial settings and put too much faith in land-based firefighters who had never trained to battle a blaze aboard a submarine, Navy investigators concluded.

The investigators also said there was confusion at the start of the May 2012 fire at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and that there were too few firefighters in which no water was being put on the flames.

The conclusions were included in more than 100 pages of documents obtained by The Associated Press via a Freedom of Information Act request.

It took 12 hours and the efforts of more than 100 firefighters to bring the Groton, Conn.-based USS Miami after a worker who wanted to go home early set a small fire that quickly spread. Though the sub was saved, the Navy ultimately decided to scrap it after the repair bill hit \$700 million.

The fire severely damaged living quarters, the command and control center and a torpedo room, but it did not reach the nu-

clear propulsion components. Seven people were hurt dousing the flames.

"Complacency had set in, based on the infrequency of shipyard fires and relative success of fire prevention measures," the report said. "Also, there was an assumption that the proximity to far more assets, especially federal firefighters, reduced the likelihood of a fire not being quickly contained. This organizational reluctance to prepare for a fire of this scale should serve as a wake-up call — largely fires can and do happen in industrial environments."

The Navy launched a series of investigations that led to recommendations, including the installation of temporary automatic fire-detection systems while vessels are being repaired or overhauled.

The full report released by U.S. Fleet

Forces Command indicated how dire the situation became aboard the Los Angeles-class submarine, which was undergoing a 20-month overhaul in Kittery, Maine. At one point, officials discussed abandoning their firefighting efforts and flooding the dry dock when it appeared the submarine was going to be lost. Instead, firefighters battling extreme heat and limited visibility eventually beat back the blaze.

Investigators said shipyard firefighters were unfamiliar with the submarine's layout and that there was no requirement for certification to battle a fire in a shipboard environment — or even conduct a walk-through to familiarize themselves with the sub. They also said the firefighting force had been reduced, leading to a greater reliance on civilian firefighters.

A regional assessment of the 26-person shipyard fire department was conducted in October 2011 and found them to be fully ready, despite the department having conducted no live fire training since 2006, the report said.

While the report cited lack of readiness by firefighters, the Navy also said it was to blame for failing to incorporate lessons learned from past fires into training.

The report included 99 recommendations — virtually all of which were redacted.

Input sought on technology in classrooms

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — For the first time, students, parents and educators with the Department of Defense Education Activity have the opportunity to participate in a national survey about technology use and interest in the classroom.

The Speak Up 2014 online survey is open through Dec. 19.

This is an opportunity to speak up. DODEA Director Tom Brady said in a statement. "Data from the survey will allow DODEA to make better technology decisions in many areas, as well as how we resource our classrooms and the type of professional development teachers want."

The survey asks K-12 students, educators and parents how they use — and how they would like to use — technology for learning.

For students, survey questions are geared to particular grade levels — and some are open-ended. Last year, for example, students in kindergarten to second grade were asked to explain what they like about using computers or the Internet to learn science or math. Students in grades 9 to 12 were asked to "pick a subject and tell us how using technology in that class could make that subject more interesting for you."

Students need a password, to be assigned locally, to access this year's survey.

Administered by Project Tomorrow, a nonprofit national education organization based in California, the Speak Up survey has been around for more than a decade, with so far more than 3.4 million participants, according to the group's website. National data findings will be released in the spring during two congressional briefings, according to DODEA. Districts and schools will also have access to the results.

For the first time, others in the community are also invited to participate in the survey, according to the survey website.

The online survey takes about 20 minutes to complete; answers are confidential. It is available at <http://www.speakup4schools.org/SpeakUp2014/Default.aspx>.

svan.jennifer@stripes.com

NATION

GOP leaders pan US-China deal on climate

By Ed O'Keefe, David Nakamura and Steven Mufson
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Any hope for Congress to reconvene with a sense of bipartisanship was quickly erased Wednesday morning as Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, sharply criticized the announcement of a new climate deal between the United States and China.

McConnell made his comments during a morning coffee with 10 newly elected Republican senators in his office off the Senate floor. As his new colleagues stood beaming, McConnell was asked by reporters whether he planned to shift the Senate to the political middle in hopes of reaching accord with President Barack Obama and Democrats.

"The president continues to send a signal that he has no intention of moving toward the

middle," said McConnell, who is in line to become the new Senate majority leader in January. "I was particularly distressed by the deal he's reached with the Chinese on his current trip, which, as I read the agreement, it requires the Chinese to do nothing at all for 16 years, while these carbon emission regulations are creating havoc in my state and other states across the country."

In his initial reaction, McConnell said, "This unrealistic plan that the president would dump on his successor would ensure higher utility rates and far fewer jobs."

Boehner denounced the agreement as "the latest example of the president's crusade against affordable, reliable energy that is already hurting jobs and squeezing middle-class families."

The speaker, who will preside over an increased GOP majority when the new Congress convenes, charged in a statement that Obama "intends to double down on his job-crushing poli-

cies no matter how devastating the impact," and he pledged that Republicans would continue to make blocking Obama's energy policies a priority for the rest of his term.

Top administration officials made it clear Wednesday the president would pursue some of his top priorities despite GOP opposition. Speaking to reporters on a press call Wednesday, Environmental Protection Agency administrator Gina McCarthy said Obama has for months emphasized the importance of curbing greenhouse gas emissions linked to climate change for months.

"The president has been very clear in the direction in which he is moving," McCarthy said. "He is not changing at all."

While there is little lawmakers can do to block the U.S.-China climate agreement, McConnell's aides have already started investigating ways they could block or delay implementation of the EPA's proposed rule to limit greenhouse gas emissions from

existing power plants, which is set to become final next June. Rather than pushing for an outright reversal of the rule before it's finalized, according to individuals familiar with these deliberations, Senate Republicans are looking at passing language that would give states the option of not complying with the EPA mandate until litigation on the issue is resolved, or that would bar federal authorities from enforcing the rule.

"You can issue all the executive orders you want. If you don't have any money to enforce them, they don't go very far," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla. "We're going to be pretty aggressive in using the power of the purse."

McConnell's home state of Kentucky is heavily dependent on its coal industry, and he made his criticisms of the Obama administration's carbon emission and climate change policies central themes of his re-election campaign. McConnell handily won his race in the Nov. 4 midterm elections.

"I would welcome the president moving to the middle," he said. "I've said before I hope we can do some business on trade and maybe tax reform. First indications have not been helpful."

McConnell said he was especially pleased to see such a large class of incoming Republican senators and noted that one more may soon join up once results are finalized in Louisiana.

Other Republicans joined McConnell and Boehner in trashing the deal.

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., who is widely expected to assume the chairmanship of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in January, called the pledges by Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping "hollow and not believable," and he suggested that the agreement was tilted in China's interest.

"The United States will be required to more steeply reduce our carbon emissions while China won't have to reduce anything," Inhofe said.

House, Senate to vote on Keystone pipeline

By Donna Cassata
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A political gambit by an endangered Senate Democrat broke loose long-stalled legislation to force approval of the Keystone XL pipeline as Congress returned to a Capitol where reports of last week's Republican blowout are still sinking in.

Sen. Mary Landrieu, of energy-rich Louisiana, facing an uphill fight to hold her seat in a Dec. 6 runoff, called for the vote on approving the long-stalled pipeline project.

Senate passage of the bill as early as next Tuesday would force President Barack Obama either to sign it into law or to veto the measure just weeks after devastating Democratic losses in the Nov. 4 elections. Obama has delayed a decision on the pipeline, which environmentalists maintain would have a negative impact and would contribute to climate change.

Republicans and several moderate Democrats insist that construction of the pipeline would create tens of thousands of jobs.

The pipeline is critical to Canada, which needs infrastructure in place to export its growing oil sands production, and the Obama administration's delays have caused friction between the two countries.

The White House stopped short of directly threatening a veto, but spokesman Josh Earnest said Obama takes a "dim view" of legislative efforts to force action on the project. Earnest reiterated Obama's preference for evaluating the pipeline through a long-stalled State Department review.

It was unclear what impact the votes would have on Louisiana's Senate race.

Republicans swept the midterm congressional elections, wresting control of the Senate and expanding their majority in the House. The Republicans are assured of 53 of the 100 Senate seats when the new Congress takes office in January. Louisiana would make it 54.

In a speech on the Senate floor, Landrieu spoke of bipartisanship and her willingness to work with Republicans. She pressed for a speedy vote on Keystone.



Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., chair of the Senate Energy Committee, speaks to reporters Wednesday at the Capitol in Washington about the new urgency to get congressional approval for the Keystone XL pipeline as Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., looks on.

Echoing Landrieu's plea were moderate Democrats from Republican states who argued for the project that would carry oil from Canada south to the Gulf Coast. The southern leg of the

pipeline between Oklahoma and Texas is already operational.

The Republican sponsor of the bill, Sen. John Hoeven, of North Dakota, said the measure has the support of all 45 Republicans

and 11 Democrats in the still-Democratic-controlled Senate.

It will be incumbent upon Landrieu to persuade four more Democrats to back the measure to reach the 60-vote threshold.

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NATION

Drones used to patrol half of Mexican border

By ELLIOT SPAGAT AND BRIAN SKOLOFF
The Associated Press

SIERRA VISTA, Ariz. — The U.S. government now patrols nearly half the Mexican border by drones alone in a largely unheralded shift to control desolate stretches where there are no agents, camera towers, ground sensors or fences, and it plans to expand the strategy to the Canadian border.

It represents a significant departure from a decades-old approach that emphasizes boots on the ground and fences. Since 2000, the number of Border Patrol agents on the 1,954-mile border more than doubled to surpass 18,000 and fencing multiplied nine times to 700 miles.

Under the new approach, Predator Bs sweep remote mountains, canyons and rivers with a high-resolution video camera and return video in three days for another video in the same spot, according to two officials with direct knowledge of the effort on condition of anonymity because details have not been made public.

The two videos are then overlaid for analysts who use sophisticated software to identify tiny changes — perhaps the tracks of a farmer or cows, perhaps those

of immigrants who entered the country illegally or a drug-laden Hummer, they said.

About 92 percent of drone missions have shown no change in terrain, but the others raised enough questions to dispatch agents to determine if someone got away, sometimes by helicopter because the area is so remote. The agents look for any sign of human activity — footprints, broken twigs, trash.

About 4 percent of missions have been false alarms, like tracks of livestock or farmers, and about 2 percent are inconclusive. The remaining 2 percent offer evidence of illegal crossings from Mexico, which typically result in the planting of ground sensors for closer monitoring.

The government has operated about 10,000 drone flights under the strategy, known internally as “change detection,” since it began in March 2013. The flights currently cover about 900 miles, much of it in Texas, and are expected to expand to the Canadian border by the end of 2015.

The purpose is to assign agents where illegal activity is highest, said R. G. Kerlikowske, commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, the Border Patrol’s parent agency, which operates nine unmanned aircraft across the country.



WABC/AP

A window washer straddles the space between his dangling scaffolding and 1 World Trade Center as New York City firefighters remove him from the scaffolding as it hangs 68 stories high in New York.

World Trade Center scaffold mishap under investigation

By JAKE PEARSON
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Investigators are looking into the collapse of a World Trade Center scaffold that left two window washers dangling from the nation’s tallest skyscraper, 1 World Trade Center.

The workers were trapped 68 stories above the street when a cable suddenly developed slack Wednesday.

The workers held on to the teetering platform for two agonizing hours. One called his wife during the ordeal, fearful that it might be his last opportunity to speak to her.

Firefighters used diamond

cutters to saw through a double-layered window and pulled the men to safety.

The dramatic rescue, coming a little more than a week after the building officially opened, was followed by throngs of New Yorkers watching from the ground and many more around the world watching on live TV.

The window washers, Juan Lizama and Juan Lopez, were working on the south side of the lower Manhattan building when one of the platform’s four cables abruptly gave way, Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro said. The open-topped platform tilted sharply and swayed slightly between the 68th and 69th floors,

he said. “It suddenly went from horizontal to nearly vertical,” Nigro said.

Officials haven’t determined what caused the cable problem, the fire commissioner said.

It was unclear whether anything about the design of the 1,776-foot-tall, 104-story skyscraper complicates working on the window-washing scaffolds, which went into service in June.

The silvery, \$3.9 billion skyscraper that rose from the ashes of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack opened last week to 175 employees of magazine publisher Conde Nast.

School district removes calendar’s religious names

By BEN NUCKOLS
The Associated Press

Presented with the opportunity to recognize a Muslim holiday on the school calendar for the first time, leaders of Maryland’s largest school district went a different direction: They removed all mention of religious holidays from the calendar.

Many school districts nationwide don’t spell out religious holidays on the calendar, having replaced “Christmas Break” with the secular “Winter Break.” But school officials in Montgomery County, Md., a wealthy and diverse Washington suburb, are being criticized for the impetus behind their decision: a push by Muslims to close schools on the Eid holy days.

Muslim activists had asked the board to note on next year’s calendar that Yom Kippur, a day when schools are already closed, is also Eid al-Adha. The two holidays do not always fall on the same date. But the board rejected

that proposal, instead voting 7-1 to close schools on the same days as usual without mentioning their religious associations.

As a result, Christians and Jews are upset at the removal of their holidays from the calendar, and Muslims are upset that theirs weren’t included. Conservative bloggers seized on the decision as part of a perceived “war on Christmas” by secular forces. Muslims accused the board of hiding behind secularism to protect more established communities.

“It was a no-win situation for us,” school board chairman Phil Kaufman said.

The Constitution bars public schools from using religious holidays as a reason for closing. Schools can close only if opening would significantly affect their operation — essentially, because so many students and teachers would be absent that the school couldn’t function. That’s why the county opted to close schools on the Jewish high holidays starting in the 1970s.

Study: Pot changes brains of young users

By KELLY GIBLON
Bloomberg News

Heavy marijuana users had different brain shapes and lower IQs than nonusers in a newly published study, suggesting a potential danger to young people who abuse the drug.

The research in this week’s Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences used magnetic resonance imaging to measure people who used marijuana three times per day on average. The users had smaller amounts of gray matter and increased connectivity in the orbitofrontal cortex — a section associated with decision-making and response to

rewards — and the changes were more pronounced in people who had started using earlier.

The study adds to a growing collection of evidence that marijuana alters the young brain, just as more parts of the U.S. are decriminalizing the drug and more young people are using it. Current research indicates the brain doesn’t reach maturity until age 25 or 30, and people should hold off heavy pot use before then, said Francesca Filbey, who co-authored the study.

The data included 48 heavy marijuana users, 28 years old on average, plus 62 nonusers of the same genders and ages. The research, which controlled for al-

cohol and tobacco use, suggested people who used frequently had increased connectivity in their brains — possibly compensating for the effects of drug use, Filbey said.

After about five years of drug use, the increased connectivity dropped off, which could mean that the brain was no longer able to make up for the negative effects of the marijuana. The earlier someone started, the worse the result.

Study participants who consumed marijuana also scored lower on IQ tests than nonusers, though the study didn’t draw a correlation between those results and brain differences.

NATION



SETH PERLMAN/AP

The timing of the health law's expanded coverage couldn't have been better for Shawn Turner, 54, a medical transcriptionist in central Illinois.

Nick of time

Shawn Turner didn't realize it when the health insurance program debuted, but she would become a dramatic example of its purpose.

A 54-year-old medical transcriptionist in the tiny Illinois village of Cisco, Turner had gotten health benefits through her job for 15 years. "The main reason I worked was to get the health insurance," she said.

Then, last year, she lost coverage when her employer outsourced her work to an Internet-based transcription service. Her husband, Lloyd, who owns an auto body shop, had been on her policy so he lost his insurance, too.

In December, the Turners signed up for a "silver," or medium grade, plan on the new government website listing policies available. They would pay \$236 a month and the government would pay the insurance company \$830 a month, a subsidy based on their estimated \$22,000 income. Their deductible was \$750.

A few weeks after her coverage started, she was suddenly doubled over with abdominal pain that sent her to the emergency room. It was uterine cancer.

"I was in shock, just kind of numb," she said.

From late January through July she endured two surgeries and chemotherapy. Blue Cross Blue Shield covered more than \$265,000 in medical bills, a sum that otherwise "could have wiped us out, I would imagine," she said.

Today, Turner said, her doctors believe she's cancer-free. Her once-lustrous brown hair is beginning to grow back after chemotherapy. She's preparing to look for a part-time job as her strength returns. The Turners were able to keep their small house on the edge of town surrounded by corn and soybean fields.

"We got to keep our livelihood and we didn't become a detriment to society and our hospitals got paid," Lloyd Turner said.

A search for a specialist

Vince and Patty Mastracco, an enterprising Northern California couple, have always preferred to take care of themselves. He's a self-described "house rat," a real estate agent who loves to show houses and meet new people. She's a food stylist and recipe consultant with a bright collection of camera-friendly blouses ready for her TV cooking appearances.

They purchased their policies before the Affordable Care Act and never had difficulty getting care. Last year, they chose a similarly priced "bronze" policy on California's version of the health marketplace.

"I did not expect to be 100 percent happy with the changes, but at the same time I did not expect we would receive less bang for our buck," said Vince, 63.

A lump on Patty's knee led to a maddening search for a bone specialist who would accept their insurance. Four orthopedists rejected her without much explanation. An MRI showed the lump was probably not-

4 stories

of how new health care law affected Americans

BY CARLA K. JOHNSON
The Associated Press

More than 7 million people have signed up for private health insurance under the system introduced last year for those who were uninsured or had policies considered substandard.

What happened to them since has varied greatly.

Many have been happy with their new insurance, according to polls. Others are encountering a variety of snags — high premiums, telephone runarounds or difficulty getting care. Together their experiences provide a glimpse of how the largest social program launched since Medicare has worked out for the people involved.

With lessons learned, the program enters its second year with enrollment beginning Saturday.

More for more

For 10 years, Steve Duchesne, 49, carefully purchased health insurance that covered what he believed his family of five needed — catastrophic illness and injury — and omitted what it didn't, such as full vision care services and treatment for drug abuse.

Now, under the new system, he has more insurance than he's ever had, but at a higher cost, and he's not happy about it.

The public relations consultant's old plan was canceled because it didn't include all the minimum services required under the new law. His monthly health insurance costs have risen from \$645 a month to \$1,033 a month for the new policy.

"We're a middle-class family with what I consider a middle-class income for our area," said Duchesne, who lives in Redondo Beach, Calif. No subsidies were available for a family of five with a household income of more than \$110,000.

Duchesne said he's had to drop his adult dental coverage, reduce his contribution to his individual retirement account and cut other household expenses to make up the



NICK UY/AP

Steve Duchesne has more insurance than he's ever had, but at higher cost, and he's not happy about it.

cost difference.

"The idea the government would destroy my health insurance policy — one that I was satisfied with, which met our needs and was affordable — and force us to buy a new product that's 60 percent more expensive, is shocking to me," Duchesne said.



MORRY GASH/AP

Pat Barone signed up for a new health plan last year that costs her just \$50 a month, but technical glitches with HealthCare.gov have kept her in constant fear of losing her insurance.

Perseverance required

Pat Barone has the willpower to lose 90 pounds and keep it off. She turned that perseverance into a weight-loss coaching business that has led to speaking engagements and clients on four continents.

But her resolve has been tested by the new health insurance system.

After losing her insurance following a divorce in 2013, Barone, 59, of Madison, Wis., signed up for a new health plan last year that costs her just \$50 a month and also covers her 21-year-old son.

But the technical snafus have been endless. In July she began getting requests from the plan's government administrator to send paperwork verifying her citizenship and income or her coverage would be terminated. She got the documents, but the system's website, HealthCare.gov, wouldn't upload them.

"When I finally got someone on the phone, they instructed me to mail the documents in. I did that, but I am being barraged by monthly email, snail mail and phone calls to get my documents filed, or I will lose coverage," Barone said.

The letters, she said, "are kind of demanding and threatening." For now she's decided to take the assurances from operators at the HealthCare.gov telephone help line that she can ignore the warnings. She hopes they're right.

Despite the problems, she said, she's delighted with the coverage. "It's a godsend to those of us who don't have other alternatives," Barone said. "I have used it for preventative care with no problems."

Vince and Patty Mastracco have been unable to find a specialist who would accept their insurance.

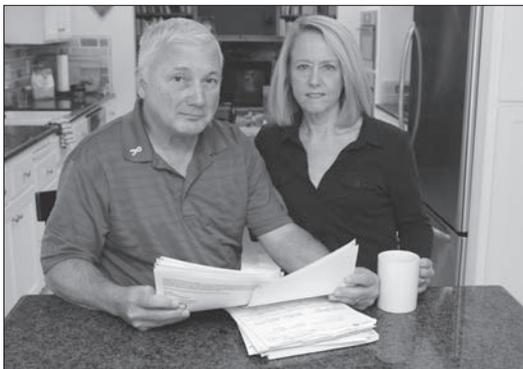
RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP

ing, but she wanted a specialist to look.

"To date we still have not identified a doctor that accepts our insurance and will accept her as a patient," Vince said. It's a common pattern with the most economical policies: The insurance companies are paying doctors lower rates so fewer are joining their networks. A recent small national survey conducted by the Urban Institute found that 14 percent of newly insured adults with marketplace plans say they've had trouble finding a doctor.

"I believe that this is a case where, by design, (our plan) is now being made to resemble an HMO," he said, referring to the health maintenance organizations that inspired a patient backlash in the 1990s for limiting care. "An inferior HMO."

The couple will be shopping for a new policy this year, hoping for a better network.



WORLD

Global leaders wrap up Asia talks

The Associated Press

NAYPYITAW, Myanmar — President Barack Obama and other world leaders wrapping up a series of summits in Myanmar on Thursday were expected to offer expressions of concern about issues ranging from territorial disputes in the South China Sea to the Islamic State group but no firm recommendations.

Some experts still say the meeting is more than just a talk shop, and that it is a chance for political foes to sit down together in a safe atmosphere.

Millions of dollars are spent hosting Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the East Asia summits, and Myanmar ran the two-day event in its purpose-built capital Naypyitaw with military-like discipline.

Presidents and prime ministers from 10 Southeast Asian nations met Wednesday and were joined Thursday by Obama and leaders from China, India, South Korea and Thailand, among others.

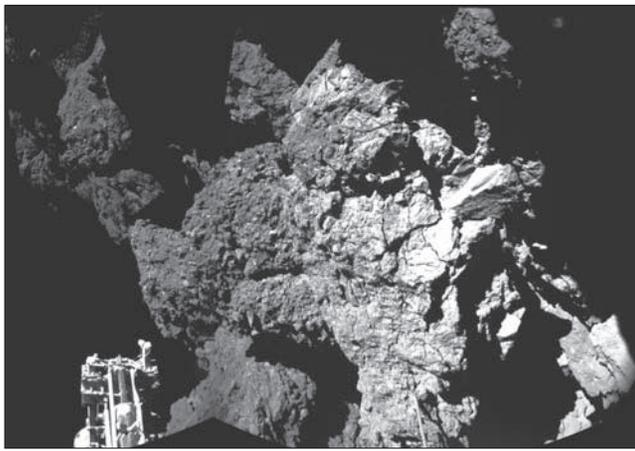
Here are highlights from the draft "final" statements, which were written ahead of the meetings and circulated before the talks began:

■ **The South China Sea.** Territorial disputes in the South China Sea, which is of tremendous strategic importance to everyone, need to be resolved peacefully and through dialogue. Southeast Asian nations and China should work toward the early conclusion of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

■ **Ebola.** Ebola poses a global threat to peace and security and relief assistance is needed to help fight the deadly virus in the hardest-hit West Africa nations, home to most of the world's 5,000 deaths. When necessary, leaders from Southeast Asian nations will seek technical assistance from the World Health Organization to help detect and respond to public health threats.

■ **Islamic State group.** Participants reiterated that they supported efforts to restore law and order inside Iraq as it and the world at large struggle with threats posed by the Islamic State group. They called on Iraq and international partners to ensure the protection of civilians and access to humanitarian assistance for those affected by the conflict. Participants also called for the safe and unconditional release of all those who are kept hostage by the group or associated individuals and entities.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit on Wednesday and the East Asia Summit on Thursday bring together more than 18 leaders. They include Obama, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, South Korean President Park Geun-hye and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



A photo created from different images taken with the CIVA camera system released Thursday shows Rosetta's lander, Philae, safely on the surface of Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko.

ESA/AP

A comet with a view

European Space Agency releases 1st image from lander

The Associated Press

BERLIN — The European Space Agency on Thursday published the first image taken from the surface of a comet, and said that its Philae lander is still "stable" despite a failure to latch on properly to the rocky terrain.

The lander scored a historic first Wednesday, touching down on comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko after a decadal-long, 4 billion-mile journey through space aboard its mother ship, Rosetta.

Scientists' jubilation was slightly dampened because the harpoons which were meant to anchor the lander to the surface failed to deploy, causing it to bounce twice before it came to

rest on the comet's nucleus.

"Philae is stable, sitting on the nucleus and is producing data," Gerhard Schwehm, a scientist on the Rosetta mission, told The Associated Press. "The lander is very healthy."

The photo sent back to Earth shows a rocky surface, with one of the lander's 3 feet in the corner of the frame.

Scientists are still analyzing what effect the two bounces had on the spacecraft and plan to release further details. Communication with the lander is slow, with signals taking more than 28 minutes to travel some 300 million miles between Earth and the Rosetta orbiter.

Schwelm said it may still be

possible to fire the harpoons but that would be done only if it doesn't imperil the lander.

Another key question is whether Philae's drill can be used to extract samples from beneath the surface without pushing the lander into space. Gravity on the comet is 1/100,000th that of Earth, meaning the washing machine-sized lander weighs just 0.04 ounces there.

Philae and Rosetta will use 21 instruments to analyze the comet over the coming months. Scientists hope the \$1.6 billion project will help them better understand comets and other celestial objects, as well as possibly answer questions about the origins of life on Earth.

Indian doctor denies role in sterilization deaths of 13

The Associated Press

NEW DELHI — The doctor who conducted sterilization procedures after which 13 women died in central India was arrested but insisted he didn't do anything wrong — even though he said he used to perform up to 10 times more surgeries a day than allowed.

Dr. R.K. Gupta, who had been hiding since Saturday's operations, was arrested at a relative's home near Bilaspur city late Wednesday, said Dr. S.K. Mandal, the chief medical officer of Chhattisgarh state.

Gupta denied responsibility for the deaths and blamed medication given to the women after the surgeries.

A total of 83 women had the surgeries as part of a free government-run mass sterilization campaign and were sent home that evening. Dozens became ill and were rushed in ambulances to private hospitals in Bilaspur.

Mandal said at least 13 women died and dozens more were hospitalized, including at least 16 who are fighting for their lives.

Gupta had performed the 83 surgeries in six hours — a clear breach of government protocol which prohibits surgeons from performing more than 30 sterilizations in a day, Mandal said. He said investigators were also trying to determine whether the women, all of them poor villagers, had been given tainted medicines.

"I am not guilty. I have been performing surgeries for a long time and there has never been any problem," Gupta told reporters in Bilaspur around the time of his arrest.

"I have a history of completing up to 200 to 300 surgeries in one day," he said. "There are no written guidelines, but what we should know is that quality is that we shouldn't perform more than 30 operations in a day."

He said the patients began throwing up and complaining of dizziness and weakness after they were given medication following the operations.

Gupta has been charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, local Inspector General of Police Pawan Dey told the Press Trust of India news agency. If found guilty he would face a maximum punishment of life in prison.

Experts say the deaths are the result of a lack of medical oversight and because of sterilization targets set by the Indian government as part of its efforts to stabilize the country's booming population.

In the 1970s, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed a policy of forcibly sterilizing men who had already fathered two children. Opponents said the program targeted unmarried and poor men, but the government continued to operate on low-income patients.

Poll: Latin America steadily drops Catholicism

The Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — Latin Americans born into Roman Catholic families have increasingly left the faith for Protestant churches, while many others have dropped organized religion altogether in a major shift in the region's religious identity, according to a survey released Thursday.

While 84 percent of Latin American adults report they were raised Catholic, only 69 percent currently identify as such, said the Pew Research Center in Washington. At the same time, Protestants have gained members. About one in five Latin Americans were raised Protestant, but nearly one in five now call them-

selves Protestant. About 4 percent of Latin Americans report they were raised with no religion, but 8 percent say they have no tie to any faith.

The survey, conducted between October 2013 and February 2014, outlines the challenge for Catholic leaders in a region that was once a stronghold for the faith. Latin America still has about 425 million Catholics, or 40 percent of adherents worldwide, according to the poll. But the exodus from the church continues.

The losses were part of the reason for the 2013 election of Pope Francis, the former archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, who is the first Latin American pontiff. In most countries of the region,

two-thirds or more respondents held positive views of Francis. But the authors of the Pew report said former Catholics are more skeptical of the pope than those still in the church, with only a majority of ex-Catholics in Argentina and Uruguay viewing him favorably.

According to Pew, the percentage of Catholic-born people flocking to Protestant churches has steadily grown in recent decades in nearly all 18 countries and Puerto Rico where the poll was conducted. "In most of the countries surveyed, at least a third of current Protestants were raised in the Catholic Church, and half or more say they were baptized as Catholics," the authors of the report said.

NATION



Brenda Mader gives her 7-year-old service dog, Max, a ride on her scooter in Lewisburg, Pa., in 2011.

BRENDA MADER FAMILY/AP

Rough & tumble

DOGS TOPPING PEOPLE IN NEED OF KNEE SURGERY

By SUE MANNING
The Associated Press

Leonard Sands poses with his dog, Molly, in Fountain Hills, Ariz. Molly, a 3-year-old, 65-pound pit bull, got her first surgery after being injured in December 2012. Just as it was healing, the ligament in her other knee gave out and she underwent a second operation.

CAROL SANDS/AP



DASHING after a ball or tumbling off a couch make dogs up to 10 times as likely to get surgery on a key knee ligament that is similar to the one athletes often injure.

Playing sports like soccer, basketball or volleyball can lead people to traumatically tear their anterior cruciate ligament, more commonly known as the ACL, during games or practices. Dogs can get hurt that way, too, but it's more likely their subtle strains will grow over time from an everyday strain to a painful obstacle because of the animals' high level of activity.

"I think the average dog is infinitely more athletic than the average person," said Dr. Ross Lirtzman, a veterinary surgeon at Arizona Canine Orthopedics & Sports Medicine Group.

While dogs are living longer and becoming bigger parts of people's lives, more pet owners are getting the surgeries for their pets, Lirtzman said. But with increasing interest in the operations comes potential pitfalls. Veterinary care isn't as well-regulated as the medical industry, so heartbreak can follow if pet owners fail to get a qualified surgeon for the operation.

The surgeries worked for Molly, a 3-year-old, 65-pound pit bull, who lives with her owner in the Phoenix suburb of Scottsdale. The dog got her first surgery after being injured in December 2012. Just as it was healing, the ligament in her other knee gave out and she underwent a second operation, owner Leonard Sands said.

"Everything she was able to do prior to surgery, she was able to do after," Sands said. "She still can't beat the greyhounds at the dog park, but she swims, hikes, climbs and runs like crazy."

Since the surgeries, she has become a certified therapy dog, is a regular at children's and veteran's hospitals and keeps up with Sands, 68, and his wife, who live on a golf course and go hiking, walking and bike riding.

Dogs don't have an ACL, but a similar cranial cruciate ligament, or CrCL. Lirtzman doesn't believe the numbers of dogs getting knee ligament operations have changed much since figures were published about five years ago in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association. The journal estimated just over 1 million CrCL surgeries were being done each year.

About 200,000 people are diagnosed with ACL tears annually. About half get surgery, and the rest are treated with rest, rehabilitation and a special brace to keep the knee from shifting, said Dr. Alan Reznik, an orthopedic surgeon who specializes in sports medicine at Yale University School of Medicine and has a private practice in New Haven, Conn.

Dog surgery can cost up to \$5,000, depending on location, while ACL surgery can cost as much as \$27,000, according to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. Many professional athletes have come back from successful ACL surgery, but it takes a year out of their careers, said Reznik, an academy member who's performed thousands of operations and written two books — "I've Fallen and I Can Get Up" and "The Knee and Shoulder Handbook."

Surgery gave a boost to Max, Brenda Mader's 7-year-old service dog, after his left knee gave out.

"When he's down, I'm down; and when I'm down, he's down," said Mader, 51, of Lewisburg, Pa., who has multiple sclerosis. Max has been with her five years, helping her keep her balance, shop at the grocery store and do laundry.

These days, when they play, Mader keeps the ball on the ground so Max won't jump, but she falls or can't turn in bed, she doesn't hesitate to call him for help.

MILITARY



NATIONAL ARCHIVES/AP

Two combat swimmers with the Maritime Unit of the Office of Strategic Services conduct a training exercise in Helford, England, for a mission to destroy German submarine pens in France during World War II.

Before SEALS

Book recounts history of WWII's combat swimmers

By CHRIS CAROLA
The Associated Press



JULIE JACOBSON/AP

Frank Montealeone was a Navy radio operator and fluent in Italian, a combination that got him recruited to join the Maritime Unit of the OSS.

of America's Most Elite Unit."

The book's release comes as two members of the SEAL team that killed Osama bin Laden in 2011 are making headlines and drawing criticism from U.S. military authorities for going public about their roles in taking down the terrorist leader inside his compound in Pakistan.

"I've always wanted to do a book on these (World War II) guys," said author Patrick K. O'Donnell. "The bin Laden raid was sort of the culmination of what all these men had built from 1943 to 1945."

O'Donnell, the author of eight previous books on WWII military and intelligence history, had met Montealeone 15 years ago while researching a book on the OSS, which was led by Gen. William "Wild Bill" Donovan, a Buffalo-born Wall Street lawyer. For the Maritime Unit, Donovan's OSS



NATIONAL ARCHIVES/AP

Members of the combat swimmers and other OSS operatives launch a mission from a submarine in the South Pacific in 1945.

recruiters sought out yachtsmen, Olympic-caliber swimmers and California "beach rats" — lifeguards and surfers.

Montealeone, the son of Italian immigrants, was recruited by the OSS because he spoke fluent Italian and was trained as a Navy radio operator.

"The radio operator was the key to the mission," O'Donnell said. "If you could not send and receive information on missions behind the lines, you were dead."

Montealeone, 89, said he went through "all kinds of training" with the OSS, including demolition and hand-to-hand combat, but had missed out on parachute training, a must for any OSS operator.

Once in the Mediterranean Theater, his detachment was assigned to the British Eighth Army.

"When they sent me to the British, they wanted to know if I had jump training," Montealeone, a retired tailor living in Staten Island, told The Associated Press in phone interview. "I said no, and they gave it to me right then and there."

Montealeone said he conducted dangerous missions nearly the entire length of Italy, from the beaches at Anzio to the Alps, often working with Italian partisans behind the lines.

Some of the missions entailed landing on beaches at night using the inflated craft that resembled

mattresses and were powered by silent electrical motors. Montealeone and his Italian comrades had another name for the teardrop-shaped vessel: "tartuga," Italian for turtle.

About 13,000 people served in the OSS during the war, but only a few hundred were in the Maritime Unit.

O'Donnell believes Montealeone may be one of the last still living. Another member included in the book is Gordon Soltau, a combat swimmer considered one of the Navy's first "frogmen."

Soltau, who starred for the San Francisco 49ers during the 1950s, died in California at 89 on Oct. 26, just days before "First SEALs" was published.

MILITARY

USS Fort Worth: Set to go to Asia after fixes

By JENNIFER HLAJ
Stars and Stripes

SAN DIEGO — The USS Fort Worth is slated to depart Monday for Asia, where it will operate largely out of Singapore for 16 months, the longest deployment of a U.S. Navy ship in more than 41 years.

Almost a year after the first littoral combat ship deployed to Singapore, contractors and crews have completed some 400 improvements to the ship and are finishing last-minute preparations, Navy officials said.

The crew of 54, plus the 24-person aviation squadron, will swap out early next year, and that group will be replaced again late in 2015, said Cmdr. Ken Bridgewater, the ship's commander. The crew will switch out a third time before it returns to San Diego. After 16 months, the Fort Worth will be replaced by the USS Freedom.

Navy officials told Reuters news service that this would be the longest deployment of a U.S. Navy ship since the carrier Midway was underway for 327 days in 1973. The Midway used one crew.

The Navy wants to keep the Fort Worth deployed for a long time to stress the Navy's logistics capabilities and to understand where problems might arise.

The Freedom, which spent 10 months in Southeast Asia dealing with significant maintenance problems — the ship lost propulsion during a replenishment, and had issues with its steering water jets — also delivered humanitarian relief supplies to areas of the Philippines hardest hit by a 2013 typhoon.

Sen. John McCain, the Arizona Republican pushed to head the Senate Armed Services Com-

mittee, has questioned the ships' ability to survive attacks at sea.

The Pentagon is reviewing Navy recommendations on whether to upgrade the ships, modify them or switch to a different design. The decisions will be part of the fiscal 2016 budget request.

The Navy has taken advantage of the lessons learned on the Freedom's maiden voyage and incorporated those and other changes into the Fort Worth — including different air compressors, fixes to cooling systems that experienced corrosion issues and a 15 percent increase in fuel capacity, in addition to cosmetic changes, the commander of the ship and the commodore of LCS Squadron 1 said.

The Fort Worth will be the first LCS to deploy with both an MH-60R Seahawk helicopter and an MQ-8B Fire Scout unmanned helicopter. The ship also has crew members and the necessary equipment for "visit, board, search and seizure" missions, to include anti-piracy operations.

The LCS is a fast ship with a shallow draft, which allows it to go into ports other Navy ships can't access, Bridgewater said.

"We can go in and engage with a lot more partners and allies," he



JENNIFER HLAJ/Stars and Stripes

Chief Petty Officer Beth Simpson-Fuchs explains the consoles for the USS Fort Worth's 577mm gun system on Wednesday at Naval Base San Diego. The littoral combat ship leaves for Singapore on Monday.

said.

The Fort Worth uses water jets instead of traditional propellers, which allows the ship to "walk sideways," pivot and get into tight spaces, Bridgewater said.

Capt. Randy Garner, commodore of LCS Squadron 1, said the ship offers extensive automation,

which means it can do more with fewer people. Crews operate without any administrative tasks, so those costs have been transferred to supporting shore commands.

The ship's design allows different "packages" of gear designed for different missions, Garner and Bridgewater said. The Fort Worth is loaded with the surface warfare package; the two other packages are still in the testing phases.

The surface warfare package includes two 30-mm gun systems, two 11-meter rigid hull inflatable boats that can launch out of the back of the ship, and the two helicopters. The ship also has a 57-mm gun with a range of 10.5 miles to guard against small boat threats, Bridgewater said.

Navy planners view the LCS as a cheaper alternative to rotating a larger ship into the region. An Arleigh Burke-class destroyer generally has more than 300 crew members and requires more fuel, water and other resources. Operations and support normally make up about 70 percent of costs over a ship's service life.

However, LCS critics question whether the originally envisioned savings will prove accurate.

The Navy planned the LCS to

have a core crew of 40 sailors and mission and module crews of 15 to 20 sailors, according to a July Government Accountability Office report on the USS Freedom's 2013 deployment to Singapore. It later increased that number after finding sailors were overworked and not getting enough sleep.

The Navy expects to have an LCS manpower study done next year, although the GAO report sees potential flaws in the findings.

"Manpower studies do not account for the issue of crew crews relying on mission module crew and contractor ship riders to assist with their core crew functions," according to the report.

The LCS class of ships consists of two variants, the Freedom and the Independence, which has a distinctly different hull. The Freedom variant team is led by Lockheed Martin. The Independence variant team is being led by General Dynamics, Bath Iron Works and Austal USA.

The ship is expected to do patrols, training and joint exercises around Singapore, the South China Sea and elsewhere in the 7th Fleet area of responsibility.

hlaj.jennifer@stripes.com
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NATION

Path to replace last icebreaker not clear

US ability to reach Arctic might be at risk without breakthrough on funding

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The last U.S. icebreaker capable of crushing through the thickest ice of the Antarctic and Arctic resumed its mission after the latest repairs to postpone its already past-due retirement.

Climate change makes the 38-year-old Polar Star Icebreaker's science and security missions ever more vital, according to scientists and other backers of rebuilding the country's dwindling ice fleet.

The ship headed home to Seattle on Tuesday before starting its new assignment, said U.S. Coast Guard spokeswoman Chief Warrant Officer Allyson Conroy.

Earlier Tuesday, crew members of the Coast Guard vessel drilled before leaving the former naval shipyard at Mare Island, across the bay from San Francisco. Shipyard workers replaced worn, 18-foot-high propellers for refitting and carried out other work on the country's sole remaining heavy icebreaker, now eight years beyond its scheduled decommissioning date. The icebreaker is expected to head for Antarctica shortly after Thanksgiving.

By late January, the Polar Star will loom over the western Antarctic on its key annual mission — breaking through ice for the yearly resupply of U.S. researchers at the McMurdo Research Station and another research center at the South Pole.

With 75,000 horsepower and a hull strong enough to batter through 6 feet of ice at running speed, the Polar Star is the only operational U.S. vessel capable of getting the food, fuel and re-

search material to the two Antarctic research stations.

If they "didn't get that resupply, it would shut down or severely curtail the amount of science" at the two U.S. Antarctic centers, Capt. Matt Walker, the Polar Star's commander, said Monday afternoon from the Polar Star, with the icebreaker's gangway up for departure.

"It puts a huge weight of responsibility that we cannot fail, we cannot suffer catastrophic casualty to our equipment, because the resupply of McMurdo wouldn't occur," Walker said. "We have no redundancy in the U.S. system."

Engine troubles in 2010 took the only other heavy U.S. icebreaker, the Polar Sea, out of service.

The U.S. Coast Guard has one other icebreaker, a medium-size one, which mainly works in the Arctic. The National Science Foundation has a still-lighter icebreaker for research. The Russian government, by contrast, has 18 icebreakers, including four nuclear-powered and operational heavy icebreakers. Russia on Monday announced the planned start of work on a new icebreaker to supply that country's growing military presence in the Arctic and tug Russian combat ships through Arctic ice.

While the Obama administration, Congress and the Coast Guard all say maintaining at least one heavy icebreaker is essential for maintaining U.S. security and science, no funding proposals have yet gained momentum to have a new heavy U.S. icebreaker built before age forces the Polar Star out of service, any time from five to 20 years from now.



U.S. COAST GUARD/AP

The U.S. Coast Guard's Polar Star icebreaker is the country's last vessel capable of breaking through the heaviest ice of the Arctic Circle, and resupplying the U.S. polar research station there. At 38 years old, it's a decade past its decommissioning date.

Without active heavy icebreakers, "the control of the Arctic is in the hands of Russia," Rep. John Garamendi, of California,

the ranking Democrat on the House subcommittee that oversees the Coast Guard and maritime affairs, said Tuesday.

The Arctic is estimated to hold more than 10 percent of the world's undiscovered oil reserves, nearly one-third of undiscovered gas reserves, and remains a strategically critical area for the United States, congressional researchers said earlier this year.

Melting ice means traffic has increased in the Bering Strait, between Russia and Alaska, 118 percent since 2008. More melting means more vessels will be coming within harm's way of ice.

Meanwhile, researchers say study of the 1.5 million-year-old ice of the Antarctic is critical to tracking the Earth's increasingly variable weather and the course of man-made climate change.

For American researchers, too, growing differences this year between the Russian and U.S. governments over Ukraine, Syria and other matters are increasing doubts about the Russia-U.S. logistical cooperation in science that bloomed after the Cold War.

"The idea of sharing space stations or icebreakers with them — you feel a little less secure relying on them, because of the tensions, and the fact we're sort of poking each other in the eye lately," said Ted Scambos, senior research scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center in Colorado and a veteran Antarctic researcher.

For Walker, the Polar Star's captain, each yearly run to the Antarctic is a run at unlocking critical secrets held in its ice.

"I think it's critical to humankind to be able to conduct the research work that they do in the Antarctic," he said. "It's fundamental to be able to predict or ascertain information about the climate change. The only place you can get that kind of information is Antarctica."

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WORLD

Japan's nuclear cleanup stymied by water woes

By MARI YAMAGUCHI
The Associated Press

OKUMA, Japan — More than three years into the massive cleanup of Japan's tsunami-damaged nuclear power plant, only a tiny fraction of the workers are focused on key tasks such as preparing for the dismantling of the broken reactors and removing radioactive fuel rods.

Instead, nearly all the workers at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant are devoted to an enormously distracting problem: a steadily growing amount of contaminated water used to keep the damaged reactor from overheating. The amount has been swelled further by groundwater entering the reactor buildings.

Hundreds of huge, blue and gray tanks to store the radioactive water, and buildings holding water treatment equipment, are rapidly taking over the plant, where the cores of three reactors melted following a 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Workers were building more tanks during a visit to the complex Wednesday by foreign media, including The Associated Press.

"The contaminated water is our most pressing issue that we must tackle. There is no doubt about that," said Akira Ono, head of the plant. "Our effort to mitigate the problem is at its peak now. Though I cannot say exactly when, I hope things start getting better when the measures start taking effect."

The numbers tell the story.

6,000 workers

Every day, about 6,000 workers pass through the guarded gate of the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant on the Pacific coast — two to three times more than when it was actually producing electricity.

On a recent workday, about 100 workers were dismantling a makeshift roof over one of the reactor buildings and about a dozen others were removing fuel rods from a cooling pool. Most of the rest were dealing with the contaminated water, said Tatsuhiro Yamagishi, a spokesman for Tokyo Electric Power Co., or TEPCO, the utility that owns the plant.

The work threatens to exhaust the supply of workers for other tasks because employees must stop working when they reach annual radiation exposure limits. Experts say it is crucial to reduce the amount and radioactivity of the contaminated water to decrease the risk of exposure to workers and the environmental impact before the decommissioning work gets closer to the highly contaminated core areas.

40 years

The plant has six reactors, three of which were offline when disaster struck on March 11, 2011. A magnitude-9.0 earthquake triggered a huge tsunami which swept into the plant and knocked out its backup power and cooling systems, leading to meltdowns at the three active reactors.

Decommissioning and dismantling all six reactors is a delicate, time-consuming process that includes removing the melted fuel from a highly radioactive environment, as well as all the extra fuel rods, which sit in cooling pools at the top of the reactor buildings. Workers must determine the exact condition of the melted fuel debris and develop remote-controlled and radiation-resistant robotics to deal with it.

Troubles and delays in preparatory tasks, including the water problem and additional measures needed to address environmental and health concerns in removing highly radioactive debris from atop reactor buildings that exploded during meltdowns, have pushed back schedules on the decommissioning plan.

The process of decommissioning the four reactors is expected to take at least 40 years.

500,000 tons

The flow of underground water is doubling the amount of contaminated water and spreading it to vast areas of the compound.

Exposure to the radioactive fuel contaminates the water used to cool the melted fuel from inside, and much of leaks and pours into the basements of the reactors and turbines, and into maintenance trenches that extend to the Pacific Ocean. Plans

to freeze some of the most toxic water inside the trench near the reactors have been delayed for at least eight months due to technical challenges.

The plant reuses some of the contaminated water for cooling after partially treating it, but the additional groundwater creates a huge excess that must be pumped out.

Currently, more than 500,000 tons of radioactive water is being stored in nearly 1,000 large tanks which now cover large areas of the sprawling plant.

10 trillion yen

An estimated \$18 billion will



SHIZUO KAMBAYASHI/AP

Tanks that hold contaminated water are stored Wednesday at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant in Okuma, Fukushima prefecture, northeastern Japan.

be needed just for decontamination and other mitigation of the water problem. Altogether, the entire decommissioning process, including compensation for area residents, reportedly will cost about \$90 billion.

All this for a plant that will never produce a kilowatt of en-

ergy again.

About 500 workers are digging deep holes in preparation for a taxpayer-funded \$290 million underground "frozen wall" around four reactors and their turbine buildings to try to keep the contaminated water from seeping out.



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William James +49 (0) 631 3511358 william.james@euler-group.de			

AUTOHAUS GRASER

Areas · Grafenwöhr · Vilsbiburg · Hofelns	Eschenbacher Str. 1 92690 Pressath	Chad Sims +49 (0) 9644 9229-31 chad.sims@graser-bmw-us-carsales.com	Brett Waldrop +49 (0) 9644 9229-31 brett.waldrop@graser-bmw-us-carsales.com
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FAITH

The stand

Evangelical college's position on gay rights causes uproar

By RACHEL ZOLL
The Associated Press

D Michael Lindsay thought he was on safe political ground when he signed the letter.

President Barack Obama was about to expand job protection for gays employed by federal contractors. Under the proposed changes, faith-based charities with federal grants worried they could lose the right to hire and fire according to their religious beliefs. Religious leaders flooded the White House with pleas to maintain or broaden the exemption.

Among them was one endorsed by Lindsay, president of Gordon College, a small evangelical school, and 13 evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders.

In the end, Obama left the existing exemption in place. But it was no victory for Lindsay.

His stand last July came at a cost — to him and the school — that he never anticipated: broken relationships with nearby cities, the loss of a key backer for a federal grant, a review by the regional college accrediting agency, and campus protest and alumni pushback over whether the school should maintain its ban on “homosexual practice” as part of its life and conduct standards.

“I signed the letter as a way of trying to show my personal support,” Lindsay said during an interview at the Wenham campus, about 25 miles north of Boston. “Obviously, if I had known the response that in particular Gordon College would receive, I wouldn’t sign.”

Lindsay had learned the hard way just how much gay rights had been dividing members of his own community and driving a wedge between his school and local communities.

Changing landscape

Gordon is among the many conservative religious institutions struggling to find their place in a landscape rapidly changing in favor of gay rights. Their view of marriage as the union of one man and one woman is being challenged not only from outside, but also from within their own faith communities, and once-uncomfortable partnerships with public organizations are being re-evaluated according to new terms.

After coming under fire for its ban on hiring faculty in same-sex relationships, Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia recently took a year to delay a decision on whether to uphold the policy, which means it won't be enforced for now. World Vision, a Christian international relief agency based in Washington state, said last March it would hire openly gay employees, but that quickly backtracked after drawing condemnation from evangelical leaders and losing thousands of donors.

At several evangelical colleges, students have formed advocacy groups on gay acceptance, such as OneWheaton, at Wheaton College



Gordon College in Wenham, Mass.

PHOTOS BY AP



The college's mission statement is displayed near the entrance. Gordon College is among the many conservative religious institutions struggling to find their place in a landscape rapidly changing in favor of gay rights.

in Illinois.

Lindsay's support for an exemption from a civil right for gays unleashed long-simmering campus tensions over the school's assertion that it has created a safe place for lesbian and gay students, while maintaining a conduct policy that singles them out. The school bars sex outside of marriage for everyone in the Gordon community, while also specifically banning “homosexual practice.” OneGordon, a group for gay students, alumni and their allies, is now pressing the college to eliminate the language.

“There should be the same sexual ethic for LGBT and heterosexual students,” said Paul O. Miller, an alumnus and co-founder of OneGordon.

The uproar over Lindsay's letter also prompted local community leaders to take another look at Gordon's policies. The college hires gay men and lesbians, but effectively requires them to be celibate.

Mayor Kim Driscoll, of Salem, responded by ending Gordon's contract to manage the city's Old Town Hall. Salem's Peabody Essex Museum ended its academic relationship with the school and withdrew support for Gordon's grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities. The New England Association of Schools & Colleges started a review of the controversy.

Some community leaders said they didn't know before that Gordon was an evangelical institution, or didn't fully understand what that meant.

“I had no idea that Gordon was even a Christian school,” said Rick Starbard, a Lynn public school teacher for 14 years and a School Committee member for five. The committee voted 4-3 in late August to end its 11-year partnership between Gordon and Lynn public schools over Lindsay's position. Thousands of Gordon volunteers had taught English to refugees,



The president

Gordon College President D. Michael Lindsay signed a letter against expanded job protection for gays employed by federal contractors. “I signed the letter as a way of trying to show my personal support,” he said. “Obviously, if I had known the response that in particular Gordon College would receive, I wouldn't sign.”



Paul O. Miller, a 2008 Gordon College graduate and founder of OneGordon, an LGBT rights group, speaks during an interview in Boston. “There should be the same sexual ethic for LGBT and heterosexual students,” Miller said.

The controversy

The reaction

higher education, Gordon sits on the liberal end of the spectrum. The college upholds the Bible as the authoritative word of God while providing the “freedom to offer constructive criticism of this tradition.”

Evolution is taught in the science program. Draped nude models are used for art students learning to draw the body — unusual in Christian art programs. An alcohol ban is only for campus and school events, instead of the blanket prohibition sometimes found at other evangelical schools. The 1,700 or so undergraduates are encouraged to respect different views of what it means to be Christian.

“Unity does not mean sameness,” Gordon professor Sharon Ketcham told students at a chapel service this semester. “No one here is asking you to be the same.”

Yet the school is grounded in conservative Christian beliefs. At the campus entrance, on a sign between two granite pillars, the school spells out its mission to instill “Christian character” in students.

“I'm OK in civil society for there to be civil unions, insurance rights, domestic partnerships, all those kinds of things,” Lindsay said. “But the difference here I think we need to pay attention to — this is a religious institution that presumably might be asked to betray one of its core convictions.”

Easing controversy

Lindsay said he has received several offers from legal groups who want to represent Gordon in lawsuits that would allow the broken partnerships amount to unconstitutional retaliation for free speech. He insists he will not take that path. Instead, he has been working to ease the controversy.

He has met with faculty and staff and with gay students and alumni. He spoke to a teachers' union in nearby Georgetown, which agreed to continue to host Gordon student-teachers, and sent letters to superintendents of other public schools where Gordon students trained.

When the fall semester began, Lindsay went to six dorms over two nights to answer questions from undergraduates. Gordon has formed a working group including trustees, students, administrators and faculty to address some of the concerns raised about the challenge of gay students on campus. The group, which includes a gay student and some faculty who oppose the current life and conduct statement, will meet through February.

Lindsay said he wouldn't be taking public stands in the future on any publicly charged issues.

“He made a mistake in signing it,” said James Trent, a sociologist and Gordon professor for 11 years who supports eliminating the ban on “homosexual practice.” “The middle ground begins to wear when you're oppressing people. How do you slightly oppress someone?”

Among its peers in Christian

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Suspected marijuana found in child's diaper

MI BATTLE CREEK — Police in Battle Creek say a small baggie of suspected marijuana was found in the diaper of a 1-year old girl at a day care center.

The Battle Creek Enquirer reported that an employee told officers she made the discovery on the morning of Nov. 5 while changing the child's diaper.

The worker told police that the child arrived with a clean diaper and she believes the suspected marijuana could have gotten into the diaper before the child was dropped off at the day care.

Police were awaiting a lab test on the green leafy substance to confirm whether it is the drug.

Officials plead the 5th at hearings on charter

PA PHILADELPHIA — Officials from an embattled Philadelphia charter school invoked their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination 77 times at hearings on the future of its charter.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reported Wednesday that administrators from the Walter Palmer Leadership Learning Partners Charter School refused to answer questions on topics ranging from qualifications to the accuracy of invoices.

Last week's hearings were part of the Philadelphia school district's fight to revoke Walter Palmer's charter amid academic and financial stability concerns. The school's also the subject of a federal investigation.

A court recently ordered the school to return \$1.5 million to the district after finding it enrolled twice the number of students allowed.

E-cigarette explosion blamed in house fire

WA TACOMA — A house fire in Tacoma that seriously injured a man was reportedly started by an e-cigarette explosion.

Fire Battalion Chief Dave McRoberts said the cause remains under investigation but a woman said her electronic cigarette exploded, spilling liquid that set a couch on fire.

The News Tribune reported that firefighters rescued a man from inside the burning house Tuesday afternoon. He was taken to a hospital with burns and smoke inhalation.

There were five people in the house, which had been converted to six apartments. Firefighters hauled two residents off the roof and two others escaped on their own.

Veterans disgusted by theft of memorial flag

MA FALL RIVER — Military veterans are reacting with disgust after someone stole a flag from atop a memorial erected to honor those who served in World War II.

Fall River said they don't have any suspects in the

THE CENSUS

\$4,000

The value of a 1979 Gibson Les Paul guitar that a Tennessee man is accused of stealing and pawning for \$1,000. WKRN-TV in Nashville reported that police charged Donald Nelson, 36, on Tuesday with the theft of the vintage guitar during a home break-in in May. Police said Nelson told officers he bought the guitar from a woman in Bowling Green, Ky., for \$1,500.



AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS, KNOXVILLE (TENN.) NEWS SENTINEL/AP

Polishing the dome

A crew from Apex Window Cleaning polishes the windows on the Sunsphere in Knoxville, Tenn., on Wednesday. The 74-foot gold-colored glass sphere, which served as a symbol for the 1982 World's Fair, has 360 glass panes, covering about 14,000 square feet. Each pane contains 14-karat gold.

theft, which occurred as families were stopping by the city's Ivo Jima Memorial in Bicentennial Park to reflect and lay flowers on Veterans Day.

WJAR-TV reported the city replaced the flag almost immediately Tuesday — but veterans are decrying not just the theft but the timing. Vietnam veteran John Raymond called the act a disgrace and said whoever is responsible doesn't understand the significance of the flag.

College senior wins county write-in vote

NH HANOVER — A Dartmouth College senior from Chicago is Grafton County's newly elected registrar of probate after his fraternity brothers launched an impromptu write-in campaign Election Day.

The Valley News reported that Mick Wopinski won the seat with 20 write-in votes in a race that featured no official candidates.

Wopinski's Alpha Delta fraternity brother Sam Todd wrote in his friend's name and then rallied

others to do the same.

The newspaper reported the position was formerly a full-time job, but most of its duties were repealed and shifted to the circuit court clerk in 2011. The salary is \$100 a year.

Wopinski says he's researching what the job entails and still trying to decide whether he'll accept the position.

Researchers seek way to track wild bobcats

WV MORGANTOWN — Researchers say observing bobcats in the wild isn't easy because the animals are solitary and elusive.

West Virginia University researchers tasked with evaluating the state's bobcat population found a solution. They're going to use DNA to develop an assessment of the bobcat population's size, health and movements.

The university said the study's findings will help the state determine whether the bobcat trapping season should be shortened or lengthened, and whether the

annual three-becat limit should be reduced or increased.

Researchers will use devices called hair-snare to collect DNA samples from bobcats across the state. The devices attract animals and obtain hair samples as the animals step over or walk by them.

Chicago aquarium has adopted sea otter pup

IL CHICAGO — The Shedd Aquarium in Chicago has acquired a sea otter pup that was found alone on a California beach.

The Chicago Sun-Times reported that the aquarium said the weeks-old female otter arrived in Chicago last week after being cared for at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in Monterey, Calif., for the first four weeks of her life. She was just days old and weighed 2 pounds when a passerby found her.

Animal care experts and veterinarians are teaching her to groom and feed herself. She's

also learning to regulate her body temperature by getting in and out of the water.

Live hand grenade removed from home

NY ALBION — Authorities said a live hand grenade from World War II was removed from a western New York home.

Police in the Albion in Orleans County said a contractor was cleaning out the house when he found the grenade in the basement. The woman who lived in the house since the 1920s had recently moved in with relatives.

The sheriff's office bomb squad in neighboring Monroe County was called in and determined the grenade was from World War II. Police removed the explosive from the home and detonated it at another location.

Police believe the grenade was brought home by one of the homeowner's relatives who served in the military during the war.

From wire reports



Futuristic 'Call of Duty:
Advanced Warfare' slays competition

Page 24



WEEKEND

Ski the world

- Savor the sun at Switzerland's Crans-Montana resort, Page 29
- Hit slopes in Switzerland and France in the scenic Portes du Soleil region, Pages 30-31
- Less atmosphere, but still plenty of great powder at resorts near bases in Japan and South Korea, Pages 34-35

WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS

Blasting enemies might boost brain

Blowing away enemy soldiers and aliens might be good for the brain, as researchers have found that fast-paced action video games improve a player's learning ability.

People who play video games such as Activision Blizzard Inc.'s "Call of Duty" are better able to multitask, perform cognitive tasks such as rotating objects in their minds and focus and retain information better than non-players, said Daphne Bavelier, a research professor in brain and cognitive sciences at the University of Rochester in New York. They also have better vision. The reason is, the games help people learn, even those who aren't regular players.

"People who play action video games get better much faster," said Bavelier. The skills are seemingly unrelated to each other and hard to practice, she said.

The study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, explains the diverse benefits that stem from faster learning. The insights from the study may be used to improve education or to help people with strokes or other brain injuries.

Players were better able to predict what was coming next, even when they were asked to identify patterns that had nothing to do with the game. Non-gamers also improved after their processors assigned them to play a game like "Call of Duty" for as long as two hours a day, five times a week for two months. The benefits lasted as long as a year.

"I can show that playing the video games itself improves their performance," said Bavelier. "But all video games don't lead to improvement."

A comparison group of people was asked to play social games like Electronic Arts Inc.'s "The Sims 2," which don't feature rapid action. Those players didn't reap any benefits, the study found.

The fast-paced games, generally first- or third-person shooting video games, created better learners. An examination of how



MCT

Fast-paced shooter video games can have a positive effect on a player's learning ability, recent research suggests.

their brains were vivid showed the connectivity adapted as the games progressed, Bavelier said.

"The brain has not just one neuron, but networks of neurons talking to each other," she said. "During the task, they were changing their connectivity on the fly to match the task at hand," she said. "They knew what was important to pay attention to and what was noise and distraction, and they could suppress distractions."

The researchers are now examining the details of each game to try to tease out which elements are critical for improved learning, she said. They are designing a non-violent game that includes the elements they believe are important for learning, aimed at children ages 8 to 12.

"We would rather have these mechanics help with layers of learning and academic knowledge, rather than learning how to shoot zombies," she said. "All of these games that are on the market are violent and inappropriate for children."

For children, teenagers and young adults who do play video games, the findings aren't an excuse to spend hours a day in front of a screen or to avoid homework, she said. While learning improves, other measures of brain function might worsen.

Bloomberg News

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY BEV SCHILLING/Stars and Stripes

GADGET WATCH

No glasses needed with EyeFly3D

BY GREGG ELLMAN
McClatchy-Tribune News Service

The LCDs on smartphones already produce amazing image quality, but when you add the EyeFly3D screen protector, it brings it into a whole new category.

There are specific instructions for applying the tempered glass protector to your iPhone 5/5s (iPhone 6/6 plus versions are due out in January) to ensure it works properly.

EyeFly3D was developed by Nanoveu with a patent-pending technology, which allows it to work without glasses but makes your images and video's appear to jump out of the screen.

The EyeFly3D uses free apps for viewing video (EyeFly3D Vid) or images (EyeFly3D Pix) in landscape or portrait modes.

"Through the apps' settings, you'll convert your media to 3-D.

It sounded confusing to me when I read about this product, but to see it is to believe it. It's almost like magic to know I can now watch everything in 3-D, without the need of 3-D glasses.

According to Nanoveu, "What sets EyeFly3D apart from its competitors is that the technology uses lenticular lenses to produce high-quality 3-D that feels natural to the human eye. Our screens are more transparent, affordable, simple to use, and feature intuitive apps that allow the user to create, share and experience glasses-free 3-D, without distorted, darkened images that are uncomfortable to view."

Online: eyefly3d.com

The **NewerTech aluminum numeric wireless keypad** is a perfect companion for Mac keyboards. It's certainly the accessory I've been waiting for.

Apple fans will really like the "Apple-esque" design, which is a perfect match with its aluminum outer casing and white keys. According to NewerTech, an international version with black keys is coming soon.

It connects to your computer or laptop with Bluetooth, and 2 AAA batteries (included) keep it running.

The keypad also includes a bracket to attach it to Apple keyboards without the need of tools.

Besides all the number keys, it also includes delete, tab, page up, page down and home. In all, there are 28 keys.

Online: eshop.macsales.com; \$49



MCT

The EyeFly3D allows you to convert your media to 3D through the use of a screen protector and free apps.

The **Thinium Charge** is a slick-looking retractable USB charger and syncing device for smartphones and tablets. You won't need any cables to make it connect to your device or to plug in a wall.

It's available in versions with lightning or microUSB connections, which retract and allow your phone to rest on top. It allows both charging and syncing while using the device for most anything in portrait mode.

There's also a tangle-free USB cable to hook it up directly to a computer for power or for connecting to your own AC USB adapter.

What makes this device shine for me is the fold-out AC prongs on the back that enable the charger to be plugged directly into a wall outlet.

I tried it with an iPhone 5s and an iPhone 6, and it worked great. Then I tried it with several cases, with mixed results; the thinner the case, the better the chance of it working.

The feather-light, pocket-sized device is super portable, or you can just leave it plugged as your serious charging dock.

Online: thinium.com; \$49.99, available in black, white or bronze

The **Recoils Automatic Cord Winders** feel the pain of those who get incredibly frustrated when they pull out their headphones and find that they've formed a tangled web.

In seconds, you can attach your headphones to the device, and it winds your headphones up in an untangled manner for storage.

Consider it a problem solver for any USB or charging cable. You can even keep a USB AC charging plug on the end and just retract it when you need it.

Online: recoilwinders.com; small, medium or large versions \$9.99 each, combo packs \$27.99



The Recoils automatic winders will take care of your cords.

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ITUNES MUSIC

Top 10 songs on the iTunes Store for Nov. 12:

- "All About That Bass," Meghan Trainor
- "Blank Space," Taylor Swift
- "Shake It Off," Taylor Swift
- "Take Me to Church," Hozier
- "Animals," Maroon 5
- "The Heart Wants What It Wants," Selena Gomez
- "Something in the Water," Carrie Underwood
- "Bang Bang," Jessie J, Ariana Grande & Nicki Minaj
- "I'm Not the Only One," Sam Smith
- "Hobbit (Stay High)," Tove Lo

— Compiled by MCT

SPOTIFY MUSIC

The most streamed tracks on Spotify Nov. 3-9:

- "Take Me To Church," Hozier
- "Animals," Maroon 5
- "I'm Not the Only One," Sam Smith
- "Hobbit (Stay High)," Tove Lo
- "All About That Bass," Meghan Trainor
- "Love Me Harder," Ariana Grande
- "Stay With Me," Sam Smith
- "Cool Kids," Echosmith
- "Blame," Calvin Harris
- "Don't Tell 'Em," Jeremih

— Compiled by The Associated Press

ITUNES MOVIES

Top 10 movies downloaded from the iTunes Store for Nov. 12:

- "Maleficent"
- "Dawn of the Planet of the Apes"
- "Let's Be Cops"
- "Tammy"
- "A Most Wanted Man"
- "The Expendables 3 — Unrated Edition"
- "How to Train Your Dragon 2"
- "Heracles (Extended Cut)"
- "Neighbors"
- "Planes: Fire & Rescue"



— Compiled by MCT

ITUNES MOVIES VIDEO GAMES

Game Informer rank the Top 10 Xbox 360 games for November:

- "Dragon Age: Inquisition," Electronic Arts
- "Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare," Activision
- "The Evil Within," Bethesda
- "Far Cry 4," Ubisoft
- "Skylanders Trap Team," Activision
- "Assassin's Creed Rogue," Ubisoft
- "Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor," Warner Bros.
- "Alien: Isolation," Sega
- "Fantasia: Music Evolved," Disney Interactive
- "Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel," 2K Games

— Compiled by MCT

APPS

Top 5 new free apps for Nov. 12:

- ANDROID
- Disney Movies Anywhere, Disney
 - Angry Birds Transformers, Rovio Mobile Ltd.
 - Legion of Heroes, NEKOM M Inc
 - Clash of Stars, IGG.COM Inc
 - Remote Control for TV (PRO), Best TV Remote For
- Top 5 free phone apps for Nov. 12:
- APPLE
- Facebook Messenger, Facebook, Inc.
 - Facebook, Facebook, Inc.
 - Instagram, Instagram, Inc.
 - YouTube, Google, Inc.
 - Microsoft Word, Microsoft Corporation

— Compiled by MCT

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time



Be blown away by 'Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare'

'Tis the season for must-have video games, and there aren't many franchises hotter than "Call of Duty." The most recent title, "Advanced Warfare," gives your fighters special suits that enhance maneuverability and speed, making for a game-changing experience. If you're more interested in the visuals than

the gameplay, "Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare" has some of the most realistic and even beautiful graphics ever seen in a video game. This is one title that fans of first-person shooters won't want to miss.

- Read more about "Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare" on Page 26.

2

Watch Jeff Daniels play both dumb and smart

Actor Jeff Daniels presides over movie screens and television sets this weekend, and in roles that don't remotely resemble each other. On the big screen, he and Jim Carrey reprise the semi-lovable doofuses who first appeared in "Dumb and Dumber." On the tube, Daniels' Will McAvoy will anchor his fictional coworkers through a third and final season of the HBO drama "The Newsroom."

- Profile of Daniels and a review of "Dumb and Dumber To" on Page 25.
- The Season 3 premiere of "The Newsroom" airs Saturday on AFN-Spectrum.

3

Marine, McCain provide great new war reads

"One Million Steps: A Marine Platoon at War" is a gripping account of Marines in Afghanistan struggling against Taliban fighters for control of a remote village. And in "13 Soldiers," Senator John McCain, no stranger to battle himself, recounts true tales, heroic and otherwise, from individual troops in 13 of the U.S.' most consequential conflicts.

- Books reviewed on Page 38.



4

'Too Many Cooks': Adult Swim's viral hit

Ready to have your nostalgic memories of sitcoms from the '70s and '80s smashed into a billion pieces? Then watch "Too Many Cooks," an 11-minute video that first aired in the wee hours on Comedy Central's Adult Swim programming Oct. 31. In the past week, it's gone viral. The first four minutes will (mostly) give you the warm fuzzies you remember from the theme song-heavy intros, but things get much weirder from there on out. It seems that you CAN go home again, but it's not always what you remembered.

- Watch the clip at tinyurl.com/orr3n6c.

MOVIES

Suffering for their art

2014's movies suddenly fixated on artistic torment

BY STEVEN ZEITCHIK
Los Angeles Times

The chief enemy of creativity," Pablo Picasso once said, "is good sense."

He might have added that it doesn't get on so well with healthy living or emotional well-being either. The birth pangs of art have been a staple of the examined life since humans began examining it. Vincent van Gogh lost an ear in such a pursuit. Syd Barrett lost his mind. Ernest Hemingway lost his life.

Such torment has been catnip for filmmakers: the Bette Davis noir "Deception," "8½," "Amadeus," "Black Swan." The idea of artists grappling with the pain and delusions of their fragile psyches has been as encoded in cinematic DNA as clinical madness has been in the real genome.

But film directors seem especially preoccupied with the subject lately. Visit your local movie theater this fall and you might think you mistakenly walked into the office of the Juilliard psychologist.

Popping up everywhere are movies about people buckling under their own artistic weight — the kind that comes with being a certain type of jazz musician ("Whiplash"), actor ("Birdman"), novelist ("Listen Up Philip"), painter (Mike Leigh's "Mr. Turner") and actor again (Al Pacino's "The Humbling").

The disciplines vary; the personalities run the gamut. Yet all of these movies rest on one key dramatic idea: being a creative person is really, really hard.

In an age when iPhones have created armies of Annie Leibovitzes and anyone with a Typepad account is instantly a writer, stories about artistic struggle are on everyone's minds a little more, including directors. Or maybe creative people just don't want to stress too far.

"The truth is that filmmakers like me can't always step out of our own lives," said "Listen Up Philip" director Alex Ross Perry. "Philip" is about a writer

(Jason Schwartzman) at war with himself and the world around him, a man of the belief that normal behavior is incompatible with great art. It ups the ante by putting him in a relationship with a photographer (Elisabeth Moss) who has her own issues working with other people. Though the film is about a novelist, a photog-

Right: Naomi Watts plays a Broadway actress, Lesley, in "Birdman."

Fox Searchlight Pictures/MCT



SONY PICTURES/MCT



Above: Michael Keaton plays Riggan Thomson, a washed-up actor who wants to reinvent his career, in "Birdman."

Left: Miles Teller stars as 19-year-old jazz drummer Andrew Neyman, who's haunted by his father's failed writing career, in "Whiplash."

rapher and the novelist's self-centered literary mentor, Perry wrote it as a cloak for his own dilemmas — not out of laziness or solipsism but because he found something compelling in the idea that for him, as for his characters, the collaborative stage of the artistic process can be a challenge.

"As I'm writing a script I think, writing is fun," Perry said. "And wouldn't it be easier if the creative output was entirely about me sitting here working by myself."

Of course, plenty of artists can go mad that way, too.

For the purveyors of screen entertainment, creative achievement is a juicy, hanging fastball. We tend to romanticize it even as we privately believe we could pull it off too, if only inspiration would be kind enough to strike our time and circumstance generous enough to allow.

That gives artist characters an appealing on-screen tension.

Movies about creative sorts simultaneously hold a kind of romance and relatability. Watching Michael Keaton's Hollywood actor Riggan Thomson struggle in Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu's "Birdman" to mount a play and restore the luster to his reputation, we think how uncommonly thrilling it must be for someone to have all this artistic capital to spend. Then we let our mind wander to how we might spend it better.

Creativity is also something that plays into our sense — heightened in this go-go, FOMO world — that someone else is having it a lot easier than we are, a spiritual ecstasist fantasy of sorts. Sure, it can't be easy to master Shakespeare, as Al Pacino's actor character must do in "The Humbling," Barry Levinson's upcoming film about a stage actor possibly losing his mind.

"The fear of being judged against others who've come

before is very powerful," Pacino said, referring both to his character and to his own turns playing the Bard. But compared to finding a babysitter or making a mortgage payment, the inconvenience quotient is low.

Needless to say, stories about these topics also come with built-in drama. In "Whiplash," Miles Teller plays a jazz drummer who believes his hands must literally bleed if he's to become the next Charlie Parker — a self-flagellating perfectionism reinforced by his abusive teacher (J.K. Simmons), who likes to say that "there are no two words in the English language more harmful than 'good job.'" Sparks fly before anyone's lit a match.

But just to be sure, the director, Damien Chazelle, offers some heavy stakes: Teller's Andrew Neyman character tosses away a promising romantic relationship to commit fully to drumming.

"A lot of movies about artists are set up like sports movies, where they build to a big victory and the artist achieves their art like the athlete wins the big game, which is by learning how to balance their life at the end," Chazelle said. "And, really, if someone is throwing themselves into their art in that way their personal life will probably suffer and vice versa. It can't always be one happy package. That's what I wanted to show."

That doesn't mean depicting creative torment is easy. Almost by definition, artistic breakthroughs happen out of sight of the human eye and thus out of view of the camera lens. For all the write-what-you-know appeal of movies about artists, depicting one in the throes of struggle is — fittingly — hard work. There's barely a film about a writer that doesn't contain a scene of him or her ruminating at a typewriter or computer screen — and just as reliably leaving us to wonder what on Earth is going through their minds.

Leigh's sprawling, evocative "Mr. Turner" is about the 19th century artist J.M.W. Turner (Timothy Spall), an irascible talent whose unconventional landscape paintings heralded an era of Abstract art, though not before he dealt with pretty concrete personal problems. This is refreshingly not about the familiar yearning, dewy-eyed Romantic artist.

"I'm not sure you could ever show the creative moment, at least as I experience it. It's too elusive," Leigh said. "What you can do, or at least as I tried to do here, is show the grubby curmudgeon of a man in profound reaction to the elements around him. That's interesting," he added of his unkempt and at times unlikeable protagonist.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

“DUMB” LUCK

Jeff Daniels on family, his enduring career in Hollywood

By ROB LOWMAN
Daily News

In the fading Los Angeles afternoon light, Jeff Daniels stretches his six-foot-3-inch frame, putting his feet up. He's talking guitars and a bit of "Dumb" luck.

Wearing his long-sleeved black shirt untucked and jeans, Daniels looks more like he's ready for a gig at a folk club rather than having gone through a day of press for "Dumb and Dumber To," opening Friday.

In the long-awaited sequel to the 1994 Farrelly brothers' hit comedy, Daniels carries the role of blond doofus Harry opposite Jim Carrey's bowl-headed Lloyd. Asked earlier at a press conference which of the two is "Dumb" and which is "Dumber," Daniels cracks that it depends on which page of the script you're on. But the Farrellys describe Harry as the one of the two you don't mess with "because if you do he'll come back to bite you."

On his website, jeffdanials.com, the 59-year-old actor writes about how in 1976 he had bought a Guild D-40 in his home state of Michigan, packed it in his car and drove to New York City to pursue an acting career. Since then, playing guitar and writing songs has been his "solace," a creative outlet for him away from acting.

"I just love that with the acoustic guitar you didn't need a band," says Daniels.

Inspired by the likes of Arlo Guthrie, Steve Goodman and Christine Lavin — folkies who laced their songs with humor — Daniels has written a lot of funny tunes over the years.

"Funny I could do. Now, I don't have to be funny all the time, I can write 'Days Like These,'" his latest album. And when he can, he performs with his son's group, the Ben Daniels Band.

Daniels' career has always been somewhat outside the box, and even mostly outside the acting nexuses of Hollywood and New York City.

In 1979, he married his high school sweetheart, Kathleen Rosemary Treado. In New York City, he had been eking out a living doing theater. He made his feature film debut in Milos Forman's "Ragtime" (1981), but got national notice as the feckless Flap Horton in the Oscar-winning film "Terms of Endearment" (1983).

In 1985, he got a starring role in Woody Allen's Depression-era fantasy comedy "The Purple Rose of Cairo."

He was 30 at this point, and a big moment came when Allen called him "good." "For a young actor, that was amazing. I remember going home to the apartment and telling Kathleen that. It wasn't because I thought I'd be a big star, it was because now I knew I could make a living at this business. Because if I'm good enough for Woody Allen, then I'm good enough for everybody."

"That changed everything. It gave me confidence to stick it out, and I was able to carve a career out for decades."

But Daniels had become a father in 1984 with a son, Ben, and he and his wife, living in a one-bedroom apartment at the time, wanted more children.

"I didn't know how to raise kids in New York or Los Angeles, but I did back home in Michigan. So I told my wife, 'Let's go back to Michigan,'" he says.

Honestly did not think my career would last. Careers don't. I didn't think I had the looks; so I thought when it's over, let's be home already. Fata- listically, I thought I'd get five more years and then I

could do something else."

Back home in central Michigan, Daniels did better than five years, with a stream of steady, if not always memorable, film roles. Meanwhile, he and his wife had two more children, son Lucas (born in 1987) and daughter Nellie (1990).

Then in 1994, some "Dumb" luck came along. He was cast opposite Carrey in the monster comedy hit and cult favorite "Dumb and Dumber." "That got me another 10 years," Daniels says.

Daniels, however, stuck to his plan to raise his kids in Michigan. "So I became the supporting actor and indie guy," he notes. He had some memorable roles during the next two decades, though, including in the hit family film "Fly Away Home," as a diner owner in "Pleasantville," in Clint Eastwood's "Blood Work" and in the adaptation of the best-seller "The Five People You Meet in Heaven."

Along the way he was scratching his creative itch writing his music and plays for the Purple Rose Theatre Co. in Chelsea, Mich., which he founded in 1991. Daniels has written 15 plays for the theater and is working on a 16th for its 25th year.

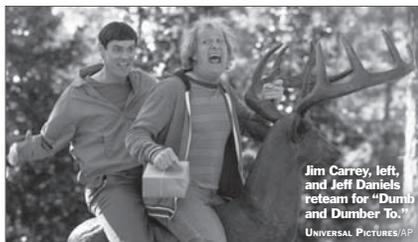
As his children grew, it allowed him more time for his career. He returned to Broadway in 2009 in Yasmina Reza's "God of Carnage" with Marcia Gay Harden, Hope Davis and James Gandolfini.

The actor recalls getting notes during the "Car-nage" production that half-second pauses were too long. That is like the fast pace of "The Newsroom," the HBO series by Aaron Sorkin that began in 2012. He thinks this abbreviated season — its last — is the best ever.

"We really rode it hard and in the same way we attacked the pilot," says Daniels, who plays network anchor Will McAvoy on the series. "Nobody phoned it in. I can walk away thinking we gave it everything we had. It's hard to do well, it's very difficult to write well and I think that's why we're done, because Aaron insists on writing every word."

Meantime, more "Dumb" luck came his way with the sequel to "Dumb and Dumber" finally getting made after 20 years. Still close to his grown children, Daniels proudly notes that all of them have parts in the film and that his son Ben has two songs.

Early next year, he will tour with his son's band. "I love that. It's a real escape," he says.



Jim Carrey, left, and Jeff Daniels reteam for "Dumb and Dumber To." UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

'Dumber To' a nostalgic, sometimes stale sequel

By ROGER MOORE
McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Twenty years after they permanently lowered the bar on broad and dumb character comedies, Lloyd and Harry are back, "Dumb and Dumber" than ever in "Dumb and Dumber To."

And within moments of the opening credits, you might find yourself overcome with sentimental warmth at seeing two 50-something actors as characters that the years have not made smarter. Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels energetically reprise their popular roles, and the warmth follows.

Sure, it's only trickling down your leg and never comes close to reaching your heart, but warmth is warmth, right?

Those fart-joke farceurs, Bobby and Peter Farrelly, reteam with their stars and an equally aged supporting cast for a film of occasional funny lines, random uproarious sight gags and bodily function jokes, all scented with a whiff of sad desperation.

Harry visits a cataninic, bearded Lloyd in a rest home only to learn he's been the butt of Lloyd's 20-year-long practical joke. His comebacker? Harry enlists two groundskeepers to help him yank out Lloyd's catheter (after changing his colostomy bag, with his teeth, of course).

And they're off, doubling up on a Schwinn to visit Harry's estranged Asian parents and then the aged, bloated floozy (Kathleen Turner, enduring jokes about her current appearance) who supposedly had Harry's baby and gave her up for adoption, decades ago.

Harry needs a kidney donor. So the 50-something "10-year-olds" motor to Maryland and then El Paso in search of the dopey bombshell (Rachel Melvin, out of her depth) who might be his donor-daughter, a "genital donor match."

The road trips, with Rob Riggle playing a malcontent schemer trying to keep them from reaching Harry's daughter, have an epic fart joke, but too many lame zingers to get them or us all the way across the country.

The stars made the first "Dumber" enduring and convincingly stupid. Here, they're sometimes funny, and sometimes

New on base

"Dumb and Dumber To" is playing at the following:

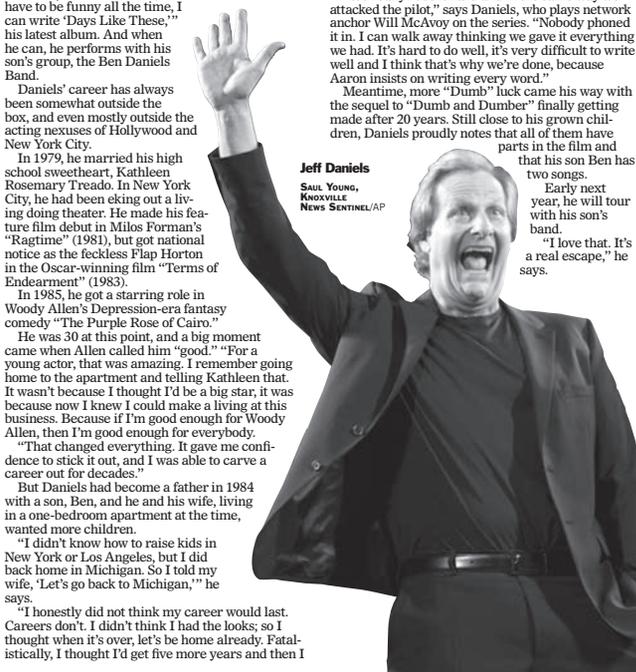
Europe
Lakenheath, Mildenhall, Ansbach, Baumholder, Grafenwöhr, Ramstein, Spangdahlem, Stuttgart, Vilseck, Wiesbaden, Aviano, Viconza and Brunnsum.

Pacific
Atsugi, Misawa, Showboat, Village, Benny Decker, Fleet, Negishi, Yokota, Zama, Futenri, Futenma, Hansen, Kadena, Kinser, Schwab, Courtney, Yongsan South Post No. 1, Casey, Henry, Humphreys, Kunsan and Osan.

Online: dumber.com

just for fun. They're better than this, no matter how good they are at hiding the fact that they know it.

"Dumb and Dumber To" is rated PG-13 for crude humor, language and drug references. Running time: 110 minutes.



Jeff Daniels
SAUL LOEB/
NYU/RETNA/AP

Check movie listings for base theaters at stripes.com/military-life

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10:00am, 12:00pm, 2:00pm, 4:00pm, 6:00pm, 8:00pm, 10:00pm, 12:00am

22:45, Sat 13:30, 15:45, 18:00, 20:00, Sun 13:30, 15:45, 18:00, 20:15, Mon - Wed 16:00, 18:00, 20:30

Annabelle (R) - Fri 17:45, Sat 22:45, Mon 18:00

Dracula Untold (R) - Fri 22:45, Sat 17:45, Tue 16:00

Gone Girl (R) - Thu 18:00, Sat & Sun 14:00, Wed 18:00

Guardians of the Galaxy (PG13) - Sat & Sun 18:30

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1 (PG13) - Wed 20:00

Interstellar (PG13) - Thu 16:30, 17:30, 19:45, Fri 16:00, 17:30, 19:30, 22:00, Sat 13:30, 15:30, 18:00, 20:15, 22:00, Sun 15:30, 15:30, 16:30, 19:45, Mon & Tue 16:30, 17:30, 19:45, Wed 16:00, 17:00, 19:45,

The Maze Runner (PG13) - Thu 16:00, Fri 15:45, Sat 13:30, Sun 13:30, 17:30, Mon & Wed 16:00

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WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Futuristic combat

Stunning graphics, engaging story make new 'Call of Duty' a must-play

By **TIM BOWERS**

Special to Stars and Stripes

SledgeHammer Games breaks ground with "Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare." Many people might discard it as just another "Call of Duty" game, but it deserves a shot.

The game has an immersive story, awe-inspiring graphics and a fun co-op mode. The first-person shooter also incorporates enough changes to make it feel very different while still

maintaining enough familiar elements to make it feel like a "Call of Duty" game.

The game starts in the year 2055, with the U.S. military engaged in a counter-offensive to push invading North Koreans back from Seoul, South Korea. Gamers play as a Marine named Jack Mitchell.

Overall grade: **A**

Things go awry during the fighting, and Mitchell is severely wounded.

After leaving the military, Mitchell is approached by Jonathan Irons, the owner of ATLAS, a private military company, and is offered a job as a field operative. ATLAS provides Mitchell with many new and improved gadgets. It also eventually shows that it has some dark ambitions.

The ensuing story never has a dull moment, and the advanced technology and weapons, although far-fetched, make for impressive combat situations.

For example, each soldier is equipped with an Exo suit that allows him to double jump, power dodge, slow down rapid descents and forcibly move objects that no normal human could move. These suits and their abilities represent the greatest departure from previous "Call of Duty" games. The maneuverability and speed provided by these suits represent a fundamental change in the way combat unfolds. They also make the gamer feel a little like one of the jet-pack-equipped troops in the science-fiction shooter "Titanfall," which was developed by a team that split from the "Call of Duty" franchise.

One of the coolest gadgets used in the story mode is the Mute Charge. Once activated, the Mute

Charge dampens all sound, which allows the use of silenced weapons to take out enemies without alerting other combatants. The game does not explain how Mute Charges work or why the enemies never notice when their hearing is suddenly dampened, but it does make for some really fun and interesting fights.

"Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare" has some of the most realistic and beautiful graphics ever seen in a game. Whether it's fighting your way through Seoul, or crawling through the ruins of Detroit, the attention to detail is astounding. Nothing seems out of place or rushed; it appears that there was a real desire to create a visually breathtaking game. The cutscenes are masterfully created, almost to a point where it seems that they are live-action rather than digitally rendered. This is enhanced by some excellent voice acting, most notably by Kevin Spacey who plays the role of ATLAS' power-hungry leader. The only other game that could possibly compare graphically is "The Last of Us."

Most of the new technology is brought into the multiplayer mode, which presents some new tactical options. However, matches still feel similar to those in earlier games in the franchise. If you like the pace and style of previous "Call of Duty" games, you'll like this one too. If you don't, you won't. The Exo Survival mode allows players to team up and fight off waves of increasingly tougher enemies. These include a mixture of standard troops, dogs, drones and troops in heavily armored Goliath suits.

At certain points, players have to complete special tasks, such as defusing bombs, to earn points that can be used to upgrade the Exo suits and weapons. If one of these tasks is failed, some form of penalty is placed on the player for a limited time. It can be anything from a hacked Exo suit, which causes the screen to be scrambled, to a pistols-only restriction.

If the team manages to survive 25 waves of enemies, players start all over again with even tougher opponents. There are several maps to choose from, and you can unlock more as you progress.

The game receives a mature rating for violence, blood and strong language.

Bottom line: A SledgeHammer's "Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare" is an extremely entertaining game. The mix of futuristic weapons and beautifully crafted graphics lets the player kill enemy combatants in many interesting ways.

Platforms: Xbox One, Xbox 360, PlayStation 4, PS3, PC

Online: callofduty.com/advancedwarfare



Photos courtesy of Activision

"Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare" envisions the powerful battlegrounds of the future, where both technology and tactics have evolved to usher in a new era of combat for the franchise.

WEEKEND

Europe

THE EUROPE EXPERIENCE



COURTESY OF BRAD HAYS/Edelweiss Lodge and Resort

American Leigh Plowman cuts through some powder on the Zugspitze at Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. From the top of the Zugspitze, you can see more than 400 mountain peaks in four countries.

DO THIS:

Take on the Zugspitze at Edelweiss Lodge & Resort

Shouts of joy go up from the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, when the first snow of winter falls. Resting at the foot of the Zugspitze mountain in one of the most scenic parts of Germany, the lodge has for the past 10 years catered to American military personnel in Europe and their families. It recently released its free winter activities guide, which can be downloaded at: <http://edelweisslodgeandresort.com/news-deals/winter-vacation-guide>.

Edelweiss boasts the only ski school outside the United States that is certified by the Professional Ski and Snowboard Instructors of America, according to Bray Hays, director of marketing for Edelweiss. This assures quality, English-speaking ski instructors who teach both adults and children at affordable rates. Regular lessons range from two hours to five days. Packages include transportation to the lifts, ski and snowboard equipment, lift tickets and daily lessons.

Book by Dec. 1 to receive a free continental breakfast for two adults when you book three nights at the lodge (a \$54 value, according to Hays).

Meanwhile, you can learn about safe backcountry skiing and snowboarding while testing equipment Jan. 24-25 in a free day of instruction on the slopes offered by the Zugspitze. Find event details at <http://zugspitze.de/de/aktuell/veranstaltungen/freeride-tage-2015>. No reservations are required, but participants must buy a lift ticket.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Time to hit the slopes!

Ski season is here, and throughout Austria, they're pulling out all the stops to welcome winter sports fans back to the slopes.

Parties, concerts, competitions and testing of the latest gear make up just some of the fun being planned at ski resorts through December. Here's a rundown of some of the festivities on the docket:

• **Nov. 14-16: Schladming:** The O'Neill Pleasure Jam kicks off the World Snowboard Tour at the Superpark Dachstein with freestyle contests and entertainment. Competitors include top names from Europe and beyond. Movies, parties and music keep the nights hopping. Various Sleep and Ride packages are available from 64 euros (about \$80) per person per night. pleasurejam.com

• **Nov. 21-22: Vienna:** The Fridge Festival brings the feel of a slope-side opening party to Austria's capital. Some 60 top skiers and boarders will show their stuff on a 130-foot-high jump set up on an island in the Danube River. The Masters of Dirt Show showcases freestyle motocross riding. Add to that live music and parties. <http://fridge-vienna.at>

• **Nov. 29: Oberaltaun:** The filming of the Beatles' second feature film, "Help!," took place on the ski slopes here 50 years ago this year. An open-air concert featur-



Karen Bradbury

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



ing two Beatles tribute acts celebrates the anniversary. Tickets bought on-site cost 48 euros. tinyurl.com/noqylha

• **Nov. 29: Ischgl:** Ischgl traditionally opens and closes the ski season with its Top of the Mountain Concert featuring today's hottest acts. The artist to open the 2014-2015 season, James Blunt, is no exception. ischgl.com

• **Dec. 5-7: St. Anton am Arlberg:** The St. Anton Ski Open offers a trio of acts on Dec. 6 including The BossHoss, The Weight and Manfred Mann's Earth Band. There will be opportunities to test the latest ski and snowboard equipment all three days. Concert tickets at the door cost 39 euros, while those who hold two-day ski passes (84 euros) enter free.

• **Dec. 5-7: Nassfeld:** The University of Snow, geared toward stu-

dents, offers music and dancing on the slopes and in the massive CUBE Club, which can hold up to 3,000 guests. uniofsnow.com

• **Dec. 4-8: Flachau:** Start Up 15 is a party weekend offering entertainment on the slopes, nightlife and more. flachau.at/de/aktuell/events/veranstaltungen-snow-space.html

• **Dec. 5-8: Wagrain-Kleinarl:** Twice the Winterstart offers two concerts, including Söhne Mannheims on Dec. 6 and Revolverheld on Dec. 7. Both shows start at 9 p.m. at Wagrain's Flying Mozart lift station. Packages offering three nights' accommodation, tickets to both concerts and a two-day ski pass begin at 171 euros per person. wagrain-kleinarl.at/en/winter/events/twice-the-winterstart.html

• **Dec. 6: Pitztal:** The season kicks off with a live open-air concert by the band Opus at 2 p.m. at the Hochzeiger ski resort's middle station. Entry is free for those with a valid ski pass. tinyurl.com/05pdwvh

Join the club, skiers

Skiers and boarders who are new to Europe could spend hours researching destinations. Taking into consideration snow conditions, resort character and skiing abilities, it's possible to stumble upon a decent fit.

But there's another way. Join a ski club, and have all the logistics taken care of by those

with years of expertise.

The Hessen International Ski Club, whose membership hails mostly from the Wiesbaden community, is one of the many clubs that are active around U.S. military bases in Germany. Others include Bavarian, Kaiserlautern West-Pfalz, Patch and Tannenbaum.) Although the club is relatively new, several of its some hundred current members were previously active in the Heidelberg Ski Club. The group enjoyed a full schedule of trips last year.

Dave Ellis, first vice president and trips manager of the club, has been active with the two ski clubs for about a decade. He says the first good reason to join a club is for the range of destinations offered. Ski clubs purposely pepper their schedules with a variety of trips, aiming for a mix of resorts geared toward families and high-end trips, along with a wide choice of countries.



SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

Time for a selfie in the snow as you take to the slopes.

Some destinations claim special places in club members' hearts. Ellis confesses a fondness for Arabba, Italy, around Christmas, as well as a *Hütte* nestled in the mountains in Kitzbühel, Austria, where the club's members are the only guests. "Americans just don't get up to places like that very often," he notes.

Ellis points out that once ski season ends, other club activities typically fill the calendar, from cycling trips over Memorial Day weekend to rafting on the Isar River in summer to a day out at the Bad Cannstatt volksfest.

There's another compelling reason to join a club: making friends. While some of the club's senior members have formed friendships spanning decades, newcomers attending one of the club's many social events are warmly welcomed into the fold. With a membership encompassing both military and civilian teachers and contractors, a club is a way to meet people from all walks of life, Ellis notes.

"Folks that take a tour on a bus board with a bunch of strangers and get off with a bunch of strangers," he said. "Making friends, looking out for one another and taking the angst out of the whole experience is what we're all about."

To learn more, visit one of the monthly social events offered by your local ski club. To find clubs, visit the clubs' Facebook pages or websites.



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

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



PHOTOS BY ADAM L. MATHIS/Stars and Stripes

The Pint Shop's lamb shoulder is placed on toast with gravy, oats and cheese. A relatively new addition to Cambridge, England, the restaurant prides itself on meat and bread.

After Hours: England

BY ADAM L. MATHIS
Stars and Stripes

As every beer connoisseur will tell you, the quest for a good pint never ends. If you brew it (well), we will come — and drink it. But finding it is sometimes the hard part.

Often, the problem is the limited selection offered by a local pub or restaurant. Tied to either a brewery or dedicated to serving local beers, these offerings can be great, but the discerning drinker knows there is a much wider world of beer out there waiting to be tapped.

Cambridge's Pint Shop has the answer.

It was getting late one recent Monday evening, but despite the call of responsibilities the next day, the bar at the Pint Shop still had a few customers. My friend and I had eaten, but neither of us felt like going home yet, and the bar is cozy. Outfitted with wooden furniture in a building that was probably a house 100 years ago, the decor is trendily old-fashioned.

The beer menu is long. Beautifully long.

Sixteen varieties of beer are on tap, and they are "ever changing," according to the website.



Overnight pork belly comes with apples and black pudding.

My first beer of the evening was the Idaho, an American Brown-style beer from the north of England that starts slightly sweet but finishes with a sting of hop.

My friend tried the table beer — one of the cheaper options but surprisingly good, lemony and refreshing — before moving to a sweeter stout called Camden Ink.

The food menu warms the heart of every beer drinker with its hearty options. I ordered the slab of lamb. Spit-roasted over charcoal, it was served over toast with gravy and oats. Some

pungent goat cheese gave it a lively kick.

The spit-roasted pork belly was succulent and tangy with apple. It was accompanied by black pudding.

Located in the center of Cambridge, the Pint Shop offers what every beer lover really wants — a place that prides itself on a good, wide selection of beer accompanied by hearty food.

mathis.adam@stripes.com

PINT SHOP

Address: 10 Pans Hill, Cambridge, CB2 3PN

Times: noon to 11 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and Sundays. Open until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Costs: Most entrees cost at least 13 British pounds, or about \$20.

Attire: Casual

Menu: In English

Information: Telephone: (+44) (0) 1223 352293; website: pintshop.co.uk. The website takes reservations.

— Adam L. Mathis

Pair colorful rice with sea scallops

BY LINDA GASSENHEIMER
McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Fresh sea scallops served with a colorful Vegetable Rice Medley make a quick dinner that takes only 20 minutes to complete. Scallops, which need very little cooking, should be cooked so that the inside remains creamy. Prolonged cooking will shrink and toughen them.

The secret to searing the scallops is to make sure your skillet is very hot. The scallops will need only 3 to 4 minutes to cook this way.

If your scallops seem very large, check for doneness by slicing into one. If the meat is opaque, they are done; if translucent, cook them another 30 seconds.

Diced or sliced fresh onions, red bell pepper and mushrooms are available in most produce sections of the supermarket. Using these cuts down on your prep time, and the rice can be made in 10 minutes.

Helpful hints

- Scallops should smell sweet, should not be sitting in liquid and show no browning when purchased.
- Freeze-dried chives can be substituted for fresh.

Countdown

- Make rice dish.
- Sauté scallops.

Shopping list

Here are the ingredients you'll need for tonight's Pan-Seared Scallops and Vegetable Rice Medley.

To buy:

- ½ pound fresh scallops
- 1 small red bell pepper
- 1 small bunch chives
- 1 small container sliced mushrooms
- 1 package frozen chopped onion
- 1 small carton reduced-fat sour cream
- 1 small bottle prepared horseradish

Staples: Olive oil, minced garlic, long-grain white rice, garlic, salt and black pepper-corns

ENTREE: PAN-SEARED SCALLOPS

Ingredients

- ¾ pound fresh scallops
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions

Rinse scallops in cool water; drain, pat dry with paper towel and set aside. Heat oil in the nonstick skillet. When smoking, add scallops and sauté on high 3 minutes, turning after one minute. Add salt and pepper to taste. Sprinkle chives over scallops.

Makes 2 servings, 210 calories each.

SIDE DISH: VEGETABLE RICE MEDLEY

Ingredients

- ½ cup long grain white rice
- 1 cup frozen chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 cup diced red bell pepper
- ½ cup diced button mushrooms
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ¼ cup reduced-fat sour cream
- 1 tablespoons prepared horseradish
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions

Bring a large saucepan filled with water to a boil. Add the rice and bring the water back to a boil. Cook rice 8 minutes. Test a few grains to make sure they are cooked. Boil another minute if the rice is not ready. Meanwhile, add onion, garlic, red bell pepper and mushrooms to a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high 3 minutes. Drain rice and add to the bowl with the oil, sour cream and horseradish. Mix well. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Makes 2 servings, 307 calories each.



A spongy cake swims in a lake of chocolate, caramel salt and cream at the Pint Shop in Cambridge, England.



MCT

Fresh sea scallops served with a colorful Vegetable Rice Medley make a quick dinner that takes only 20 minutes to complete.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

A resort for all reasons

Switzerland's Crans-Montana boasts lots of sunshine and gorgeous views

By LEAH LARKIN

Special to Stars and Stripes

Sunshine and snowy slopes. A perfect combination. If you like basking in sunlight while whizzing down the mountains on skis or boards, Crans-Montana is for you.

This Swiss resort claims the sun shines "300 days a year on the Haut-Plateau (high plateau)." Its south-facing slopes occupy a high plateau above the Rhone Valley and offer a fantastic mountain panorama.

Two mountain villages, Crans-sur-Sierre and Montana Verma-la, began marketing themselves as one resort about 40 years ago. In town, it's hard to know where one ends and the other begins.

Its three main ski areas are linked and offer 140 kilometers (87 miles) of marked terrain.

While the sun is a treat, it can wreak havoc with snow. I spent a few days in Crans, as it is often called, late last March. The slopes at lower elevations were bare. Even high up we often had to walk over patches of dirt to reach more snow.

"This is the barest I have ever seen the mountain," said ski instructor and guide Guy Frere-Cook. "You may have to give up good snow for good weather."

However, when the snow falls "with powder the off-piste is fantastic," he added. When Mother Nature fails, snow cannons can blanket one-third of the resort's slopes.

Frere-Cook, who is British, has been teaching on the Crans



PHOTOS BY LEAH LARKIN/Stars and Stripes

Pierre Chauveaux offers "raclette" (melted cow's milk cheese) and polenta at his funky mountain eatery named Cabane des Taules on the slopes of Crans-Montana, Switzerland.

slopes for 10 years.

"I did not intend to stay so long," he says. But, Crans-Montana "has the real feel of a real town. You are part of a real community. It's not just a winter resort. It's a brilliant resort."

Because it was late in the season and the snow was thin, he and I were the only customers at Cabane des Taules, a funky eatery on Piste de la Toula where we stopped for a morning break. Tricky maneuvering was required to find enough snow to

reach this delightful spot where local Pierre Chauveaux offers outdoor treats: *raclette* (melted cow's milk cheese) and *polenta au fromage* (cheese polenta), as well as Johannisberg, a regional wine. I had to try the polenta (yummy), and he insisted I try the wine, even though it was early in the day.

"The Swiss drink lots of wine," Frere-Cook said. "I was shocked to see people drinking before noon."

He gave his tip for a Crans ski

day: "Ski in the morning. Stop at noon and have a nice lunch with a couple of beers. Enjoy being in the mountains. Don't worry about skiing anymore."

I like it. After a morning of fast skiing and covering much of the resort, I did just that. But first, the long, long run from the highest point, the Plaine Morte glacier at 9,840 feet, down to the valley, a 12-kilometer (7½-mile) jaunt. Another must was the Piste National downhill course for some speedy cruising.

Lunch at the restaurant at the Cabane des Violettes gondola station was the stuff of ski brochures. The 125-mile broad panorama from the terrace encompasses all the major Alpine peaks that reach 2,500 feet. My ski guide was right. I was more than happy to lounge in the sunshine, ponder the mighty mountains and write off afternoon skiing. Of course,

had the snow been better ...

Crans-Montana is a red run resort, perfect for intermediate skiers. There are some beginner (nursery) slopes at base level. But, to reach the easiest slopes on the mountain, you first need to ski slopes that are a bit more demanding.

It's not just Frere-Cook who is smitten with Crans. The resort is also said to be popular with wealthy Russians who have bought chalets and apartments in and around the town. They, and the other upper-crust residents, can shop at all the designer boutiques in the resort, which has a reputation as a shopping mecca. Big names in fashion, watches and sports equipment line the Crans-Montana streets.

Contact Leah Larkin through her website, leahlarkin.com, or blog address, <http://talesandtravel.com>.



Stars and Stripes



Ski guide and instructor Guy Frere-Cook came from Great Britain to Crans-Montana 10 years ago to ski and decided to stay.

KNOW & GO

Getting there: Crans-Montana is 114 miles from Geneva (closest international airport). It can be reached by train from both Geneva and Zurich. However, check with local military-based ski clubs to see if Crans is on their schedules.

Costs: A one-day ski pass costs 63 Swiss Francs (about \$61). **Accommodations:** The hotel, Le Mont Blanc Paisible (montpaisible.ch), offers comfortable rooms, many with breathtaking views, and is within a short walk of Les Violettes gondola

station. The hotel has a restaurant and offers ski packages.

Information:

- Crans-Montana website: crans-montana.ch;
- Cabane des Violettes, cabanedesviolettes.ch.

— Leah Larkin



Breathtaking views await skiers at the Cabane des Violettes gondola station in Crans-Montana, Switzerland.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe



Low clouds fail to obscure the higher peaks of the Portes du Soleil region, which stretches from Switzerland into France.

Below left: Mountain peaks rise above the bell tower of a church in Champéry, Switzerland.

A peak experience

PHOTOS BY LEAH LARKIN/Special to Stars and Stripes

Portes du Soleil offers 12 resorts in two countries

By LEAH LARKIN

Special to Stars and Stripes

The Swiss Wall. American skiers often call it “the wall of death.” Indeed, skiers have perished on the infamous steep, treacherous slope in the Portes du Soleil ski region. The wall is one of those legendary slopes good skiers want to say they have conquered — another notch in the belt.

In my younger days, I skied around those mammoth moguls on the Wall, but last winter I employed reason and decided not to risk it. I was happy cruising on the wonderful red (intermediate) runs that abound here.

Portes du Soleil (“Gateway to the Sun”) ski region with slopes in both Switzerland and France claims to be the largest ski area in the world with 194 lifts in 12 resorts in two countries.

The Wall is a challenging slope en route to Switzerland from the French resorts. But there’s no need to risk your life. You can ride a chairlift or ski

other slopes. An American who did perish on the Wall years ago made the mistake of taking his skis off, thinking it would be easier to walk down. He slipped and fell, hitting his head against a rock. No matter how difficult the slope, you are safer with your skis on, experts advise.

During my visit last winter, I stayed on the Swiss side of Portes du Soleil. Snowfalls and patches of dense fog added an extra challenge to those first few days on the slopes. Friends and I decided to stay in Switzerland and ski the blue and red (beginner and intermediate) runs above the village of Les Crosets. We were in awe of the grandiose scenery with few other skiers to tarnish the natural wonder. The better skiers ventured off-piste for adventure in powder.

Lunch on the mountains is a highlight of a ski day. On the slopes above the Swiss town of Champéry, we took shelter from the foul weather at Chez Coquoz,

a delightful retreat, cozy with a fireplace inside and a terrace surrounded by sensational views outside. The eatery features unusual, innovative offerings made from mountain flowers and herbs. Proprietor Agnes Coquoz, a friendly soul who, in her younger days, was a member of the Swiss Olympic ski team, persuaded us to try the special of the day, hay soup, made from dried mountain grass and herbs. Very tasty. We returned the next day for gnocchi made with mountain grass, plus cheese, cream and nuts.

A few days later we ventured to Avoriaz, France, and beyond. Avoriaz is a ski village with high-rise apartment complexes, lots of restaurants and some futuristic ski lifts. Express chairlifts whisk you to both red and black (intermediate and difficult) runs in Les Hauts Forts above the town. We continued down the valley to Les Lindarets, skiing scenic routes bordered by towering pines. Our return to

Avoriaz by the Prodains Express was impressive — a high-speed, sleek lift with a dozen 35-passenger cabins. At the end of the four-minute cable car ride, an escalator awaits for the last leg of the ascent.

The ultimate Portes du Soleil adventure is to ski a circuit from village to village. If you are a strong and fast skier, you might be able to hit all the resorts in one day, but with little time for lunch. The Portes du Soleil ski map has a suggested route. Follow signposts on the slopes to the resorts on your route. Begin early to make sure you arrive back at your starting point before the lifts close.

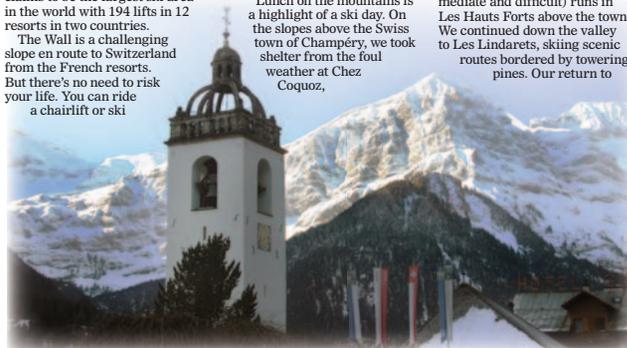
Champéry was my base for this ski vacation. The Old World village with its wooden chalets, interesting shops and restaurants, and a church, whose bells chime frequently, is a charmer.

Although it has no ski slopes, it’s a short walk or free shuttle bus ride from most of the town’s hotels to the 125-passenger Planchaux cable car for the ride to the top from where you head off in one direction to ski Swiss slopes, or in another direction to French resorts, including Avoriaz. While Champéry does not have ski slopes per se, you can end your ski day on skis — not crammed into a cable car for the descent. From the top of the Ripaille lift, there is an intermediate trail to the Grand Paradis ski area adjacent to Champéry. Shuttle buses run from its parking lot to the village. It’s a perfect leisurely and scenic finale to a day on the slopes.

Contact Leah Larkin through her website, leahlarkin.com, or blog address, talesandtravel.com.



Noga Amharav/Stars and Stripes



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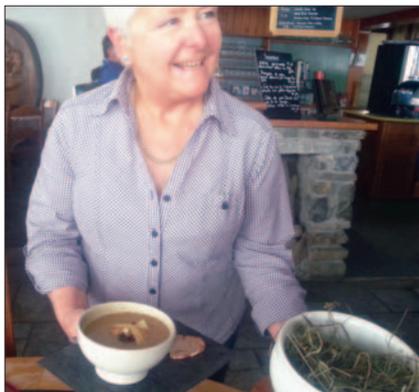
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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe



PHOTOS BY LEAH LARKIN/Special to Stars and Stripes

The proprietor of Chez Coquoz, Agnes Coquoz, serves her special of the day: hay soup, made of dried mountain grass and herbs. Coquoz is a former member of the Swiss Olympic ski team.



Chez Coquoz, a welcome retreat on the slopes above the Swiss town of Champéry, provides guests with stunning mountain views.

KNOW & GO

Getting there: There is train service to Champéry, about 78 miles from Geneva, the closest international airport. Also, many military-based local ski clubs travel to Portes du Soleil.

Costs: A one-day lift pass for all Portes du Soleil slopes this season costs 48.50 euros for adults.

Accommodations: National Hotel Restaurant (lenational.ch), Champéry, a small family-run hotel in the heart of the village with a gourmet restaurant. Walk

or ride a free shuttle bus to the Planchaux cable car.

Food: La Ferme à Gaby (lafermeagaby.ch), a farm restaurant on the Swiss slopes, with lodging also available. Specializes in homemade cheeses and regional products. Chez Coquoz Champéry, Valais, Switzerland. Phone: (+41) (0) 24 479 12 55.

Information: Champéry website: champéry.ch; Portes du Soleil website: portesdusoleil.com.

— Leah Larkin

Hotel Directory GERMANY

<p>Eichendorffstraße 3, 92655 Grafenwöhr (Germany) 0175-7235641 or 0151-657088336 (USA) 253.314.8900 Email: info@easycomforts.com</p>	<p>Book now! VAT form required, show your ID card. Book directly on marriott.com via your Mill. code. T: +49 (0) 6122 801 0 F: +49 (0) 6122 801 800 M: reservations@courtyard-wiesbaden.de www.courtyard-wiesbaden.com</p>
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Restaurant Directory

GERMANY

<p style="text-align: center;">Idar-Oberstein</p> <p>The place to go for the original open fire grilled Gaucho style steaks! Hauptstrasse 432-43743 Idar - Oberstein 06781-28059/367733 www.restaurant-altekanzlei.de</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mainz / Wiesbaden area</p> <p>Sayoutne Cuisine Oriental Wilhelm Strasse 52 65183 Wiesbaden 0611-3086110</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mainz / Wiesbaden area</p> <p>Steinernstrasse 2, 55252 Mainz-Kastel 06134-5649669 Get our juicy Irish Angus Burger!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Kaiserslautern area</p> <p>Gasthaus & Biergarten Inh. Sascha Gärtner Entenweilerstraße 74 67657 Kaiserslautern www.Quack.kit.de Tel. 0631/42828</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ENCHILADA - PURO MEXICO!</p> <p>Enchilada - Restaurant Bay Mexicano Schützenhofstr. 3 65183 Wiesbaden Tel: 0611 450483-50 wiesbaden@enchilada.com www.enchilada.de</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Okinii</p> <p>Taunus Strasse 22 65183 Wiesbaden Tel. 0611-23835808</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Holzofen Pizzeria Am Seewog</p> <p>Waldstr. 40, 66877, Ramstein-Miesenbach Tel: 063719522955 Fax: 063719522944 www.seewogpizzeria.de</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Café Temptation</p> <p>*reservations recommended Walter-Hallstein Strasse 5-7 65197 Wiesbaden (5 minutes from the Hainberg/PX area) Tel. 0611-6091230 Email: info@cafe-temptation.de www.cafe-temptation.de</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SMOKETIQUE</p> <p>Nassastrasse 6-8 65719 Hofheim-Wallau 06122-4022 www.smoketiquebbq.com</p>
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WEEKEND

Pacific

THE PACIFIC EXPERIENCE

WINTER ILLUMINATIONS

Japan

MIKIMOTO (Tokyo): Nov. 15-Dec. 25; 11 a.m.-10 p.m.; decoration in Tokyo's popular Ginza district includes a 32-foot tree from Hokkaido decorated with multicolored ornaments of 6,500 LEDs featuring the theme: snow, ice, oneminute walk from Ginza Station on Metro.

OMOTE SANDO HILLS CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATION 2014 (Tokyo): Through Dec. 25; 11 a.m.-11 p.m.; a 26-foot tree in the theme of Symphonic Forest along with three minutes of classical music played every 20 minutes; JR Hanzuiku Station or Omotesando Station on Chiyoda and Ginza-Lines.

SHIBUYA HIKARIE CHRISTMAS 2014 - WONDERLAND (Tokyo): Through Dec. 25, 4 p.m.-midnight; 26-foot tree with white flashing LEDs along with music at 1st floor of ShinQs, Hikarie, located near JR Shibuya Station; JR Shibuya Station; hikarie.jp.

TOKYO TOWER: Through Dec. 25, 4 p.m.-10 p.m.; 39-foot tree decorated with white, red, green and orange LEDs, and 60,000 LEDs ornaments synced with music from Sunrio animated film "The Nutcracker" at the first floor main gate and 492-foot high observation desk; tinyurl.com/pp5qub8.

TOKYO OPERA CITY CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATION: Through Dec. 25, 4:11-30 p.m.; a 39-foot tree with 120,000 LED lights in the theme of Ice Crystal along with concerts at Tokyo City Opera City; tokycopera.city.jp.

TOKYO SKYTREE DREAM CHRISTMAS 2014: Through Dec. 25, 4:45-11 p.m.; three illuminations - Candle Tree, White Tree and Champagne Tree - on the world's tallest tower and Tokyo Skytree Arena and Town are decorated with 500,000 LEDs; Tokyo Skytree Station on Toei Line or Oshiage Station on metro; tokyo-skytree.jp.

ROPPONGI HILLS GALAXY ILLUMINATION 2014 (Tokyo): Through Dec. 25, 5-11 p.m.; 20,000 LED lights line Kayojo Street, Subway Hiya Line to Roppongi Station; 03-6406-6000.



Courtesy of Yomiuriland

Yomiuriland Jewellumination in Tokyo is decorated in 3 million LEDs by designer Motoko Ishii through Feb. 15. For more: yomiuriland.com/english.

MACHIDA GRANDBERRY MALL CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATION 2014 (Tokyo): Through Dec. 25; sunset 10 p.m.; 29.5-foot fir tree with 70,000 champagne, white and candle-colored LEDs blinking with the theme of White Berry Christmas every 30 minutes at Grandberry Mall outlet shops, Minami Machida Station on Tokyo Den-en Toei-Line, 042-795-0109.

TAMA CENTER ILLUMINATION 2014 (Tokyo): Through Jan. 7, 4:30-10:30 p.m.; illumination on 58 camphor and fir trees along the Farthenon Odori

Street, Tama Monorail Tama Center Station on Odakyu Tama Line, 090-8946-9909.

YOMIURLAND JEWELLUMINATION (Tokyo): Through Feb. 15, 4-8 p.m., 4-9 p.m., Dec. 13-25; 3 million LEDs; 1,000 yen adults, 500 yen junior and senior high school students, 1,800 yen adults for admission and free rides, except Ferris wheel & gondola; 1,300 yen ages 3-17; yomiuriland.com.

TOKYO DOME CITY WINTER ILLUMINATION: Through Feb. 16, 5 p.m.-1 a.m.; lit with more than 2

million LED lights in the theme of Lights Promenade on Tokyo Dome and more; JR Suidobashi Station or Sakbu Line Suidobashi Station or Korakuen Station on Manuuchi Line; 03-5800-9999.

SHIROYOZE SENMAIDA ILLUMINATION (Ishikawa prefecture): Through March 15, for four hours after sunset, Shiroyoze's Senmaida are Japan's historic rice paddy terraces and one of the most scenic places in Ishikawa prefecture; enjoy 21,000 LEDs lit by solar energy on footpaths between rice paddy terraces and the best time to view is 8 to 9 p.m.; 20-minute shuttle from JR Wajima Station, 500 yen adults, 250 yen kids or 40-minute ride from Noto Kaku [Airport] I.C. on Notsu Express; tinyurl.com/nhtgzl.

SAGAMIKI ILLUMINATION (Kanagawa prefecture): Through April 12, 5-9:30 p.m., daily until Jan. 7, weekends Jan. and Feb. and March 20-April 5; fantasy world created by 5 million LEDs in sync with music at SagamiKI Resort Pleasure Forest, 10-minute bus ride from JR SagamiKI Station on Chu-o-Line and Hashimoto Station on JR and KeioLines or seven-minute ride from SagamiKI Higashi I.C. (exit only) on Chuo Express; 600 yen adults, 400 yen kids, 1,000 yen to park; sagamiKI-resort.jp.

Okinawa

ITOMAN PEACEFUL ILLUMINATION: Dec. 13-Jan. 3, 6-10 p.m., until 12:30 a.m. Dec. 31; 350,000 LED lights, along with concerts by performers ages 7-9 p.m. Dec. 25, fireworks 9 p.m., Dec. 25, and fireworks and countdown Dec. 31 at Itohan Kanko Noen; 250 yen adults, kids free.

KANUCHA RESORT STARDUST FANTASY: Through Feb. 28, 6-11 p.m. Nov. and Dec., 7-11 p.m. Jan. 1-Feb. 28; with one million LED lights in the theme of Celebrations synced with music; 80-minute ride from Naha Airport; 3,000 yen/vehicle, 2,000 yen /vehicle in advance, free for a stay or a dinner; 0980-55-8880; kanucha.jp/en.

For a more complete list: stripes.com/go/pacificlights.

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We will respond with a confirmation number or contact you if your first choice of dates is not available. For current availability, call our Reservation Desk or check our website: www.thenewsanno.com Available dates on the above calendars are subject to change without notice.



WEEKEND: TRAVEL

OFF BASE FESTIVITIES

Japan

SHICHI-GO-SAN: Nov. 15 is a day of prayer for the healthy growth of young children. Shichi-go-san translates to seven, five, three. Around Japan, 3-year-old boys and girls, 5-year-old boys and 7-year-old girls visit a Shinto shrine with their parents. Most girls wear kimonos and most boys don haori jackets and hakama trousers when making their Shichi-go-san visit. One of the most popular destinations in Tokyo is Hie Shrine in Akasaka.

ODAIBA CLASSIC CAR PARADE: (Tokyo): Nov. 23, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.; more than 700 vintage cars and motorcycles, along with booths for rare parts and items; Odaiba special outdoor stage; 1,200 yen, which includes 500 yen coupon for purchases; kids free.

LABOR THANKSGIVING DAY: Nov. 24; holiday began in 1948 as a day for citizens to express gratitude for work done during the year and for the fruits of those labors. Labor Thanksgiving (Kinro Mansha no Hi) is actually a modern name for an ancient ritual called Niinamesti (harvest festival).

FUJI KAWAGUCHIKO AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL (Yamanashi prefecture): Through Nov. 24, 9 a.m.-8 p.m.; see maple leaves in autumn red

along Fuji Kawaguchikohan Maple Corridor (Kawaguchiko Art Museum street), local products and crafts on sale; Maple Corridor is illuminated until 10 p.m. at Nashigawa; tinyurl.com/p333ygr.

THE WORLD OF TIM BURTON (Tokyo): Through Jan. 4, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. daily, until 11 p.m. weekends; 500 artworks by Tim Burton including oil paintings, sketches, videos and more; Mori Art Museum; tim-burton.jp.

Okinawa

THE 34TH TSUBOYA POTTERY FESTIVAL: Nov. 21-24, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Tsuboya pottery masters exhibit their finest works, sold for 20-30 percent off the market price. Events include a pottery square, where people can make shiso (flon dog) masks and use the pottery wheel; Naha Tsuboya Elementary School.

OKINAWA INTERNATIONAL CARNIVAL 2014: Nov. 29 and 30; includes giant tug-of-war along the Kuko (airport) Street, 10,000 people's folk parade, bullfighting, samba parade and more in the Kozza Gate Street area and Chuo Park Avenue, Okinawa city, outside Kadena AB Gate #2.

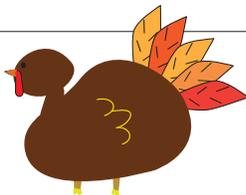
South Korea

SEOUL INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL: Nov. 27-Dec. 5; CGV Apujjeon; siff. or.k.



Courtesy of JNTO

A girl is dressed for Shichi-Go-San — Seven-Five-Three — holiday. It falls on Nov. 15.



THANKSGIVING ON BASE

Events are as accurate as possible at press time. Since times or event schedules can change, please verify events before attending.

Japan

Atsugi: Athletics is holding a Turkey Bowl Flag Football Holiday Challenge on Nov. 28-30. Make sure to register by Nov. 21. Atsugi IIT Tours is offering transportation to Universal Studios Japan on Nov. 28. **Yokosuka:** has a trip to DisneySea and Disneyland — with a holiday discount — on Nov. 27. Yokosuka Outdoor Recreation has several events scheduled. On Nov. 22, take part in the Turks and Pilgrims Paintball Scenario: The Thanksgiving Finale at Ikego Paintball Paradise. Try out seaside cliff rock climbing on Nov. 27. Jagasaki, Shizuoka prefecture — registration fee includes instruction, transportation, and rock climbing gear. Or ski and snowboard at Yetsi Ski resort in Shizuoka prefecture on Nov. 27.

Guam

Take the Gobble Wobble 5K Fun Run at Tarague Beach on Nov. 26 at **Andersen Air Force Base**. Gecko Lanes has a turkey shoot; sign up by 6 p.m. Nov. 20. Take a Thanksgiving shopping excursion 5-8 p.m. Nov. 26 with Hotspot.

Skiers can scout the slopes ahead of time

Ski trips can be so expensive. Before you go, wouldn't it be nice to have a friend who could give you all the inside info on hotels and resorts? Scout is here for you.

Name: www.ScoutSki.com

What it does: Scout is a recommendation and review site that covers 370 hotels, lodges and chalets as well as 48 ski resorts in the U.S., Canada, Japan, New Zealand, France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy.

What's hot: All the website content (and the guidebook given to customers who book a multiday trip through Scout) is written by Sarah Plaskitt, a skier and writer who has visited every resort and property on the site. She handpicks the destinations, and if she doesn't like a place she won't include it. Don't miss the "Scout Collections" if you're an advanced skier hunting for the most "extreme steeps," a mom looking for the best family resorts or a "resortist" who selects his or her ski lodge based on the best hot tubs. Some properties have partnered with Scout to provide room upgrades and other perks if you book through the website.

What's not: A minor annoyance: When I was in the "Browse & Book" section looking at ski resorts, the pinned resorts led only to pop-up descriptions. To get the full insider's point of view, you must scroll down (outside of my laptop screen's view) to a list of the resorts that links to more info. I would like to have clicked on the resort's description or pin and been taken straight to the info.

— Jen Leo/Los Angeles Times



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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pacific



Pacific's mountain magic

Asia offers plenty of good options for skiing and boarding near bases

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

It's true that Europe's vast ski and snowboard options get the most publicity — for the great powder, the high elevations, the charming chalet accommodations, the food, the après-ski.

But on the other side of the world, in Asia, it's not as if powder hounds in Japan and Korea are missing out on snow sports.

In South Korea, due to host the Winter Olympics in 2018, there are plenty of places to take to the slopes within a few hours' drive of U.S. bases, both north and south of Seoul.

The rugged peninsula made for tough fighting during the Korean War, but in the last six decades, Korea's mountains have been developed as ski and snowboard resorts complete with some of the latest and greatest equipment.

At Yongpyong Resort, you can ride a two-mile-long gondola up to the highest point on the ski field to enjoy

spectacular views that stretch from the surrounding mountains all the way to the coast.

Heated chairlifts make for a smooth ride at many Korean resorts, which usually include terrain parks with plenty of jumps and rails for youngsters to show off their tricks. The half-pipe at Hyundai Sungwoo Resort includes a conveyor that runs alongside it, allowing snowboarders to hone their skills by going up and down dozens of times in a day.

Koreans are keen to show off their cool ski outfits on the mountain. However, the person who looks the coolest getting on the lift at the bottom of the mountain in Korea is often the worst skier on slopes. That can make for some challenging conditions on Korean pistes.

Despite the extreme cold in winter, South Korean ski areas don't get a lot of natural snow. The white stuff that people ski and board on there is mostly manmade and, just below the top couple of inches raked by a snowplow, it's hard as rock. At Bears Town — a



Courtesy of the Japan National Tourism Organization

have particularly challenging terrain, but none of the resorts in Korea will wow the

experts. After skiing, you can revive with a serving of the local specialty, spicy *tak kalbi* chicken.

The Japanese Alps aren't as majestic as those in Europe, and the ski areas there don't have the charm of an Austrian ski chalet. But what they lack in character they more than make up for with the lightest, deepest and most consistent powder you can imagine.

A full account of ski areas that can be reached for a day or weekend trip from Tokyo would fill a large book. However, those contemplating a trip to the snow in the weeks and months to come have plenty of choices.

The home of the Fuji Rock music festival in summer, Naeba Ski Resort in Niigata Prefecture is only 120 miles from Tokyo and easily accessible by train and bus.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

Naeba Ski Resort in Japan's Niigata Prefecture is 120 miles from Tokyo and easily accessible by train and bus. The Naeba Prince Hotel complex awaits at the foot of the mountain for après-ski refreshment.

ski area north of Seoul — the lack of skill exhibited by the fashionable snow bunnies is a recipe for the sort of crashes that you might see on the gridiron on any given Sunday. Fortunately, après-ski in Korea involves copious amounts of *soju* (a local liquor) and *makju* (beer) to dull the pain along with plenty of barbecued red meat and rice to restore your energy for another day on the hill.

For a family-friendly vice with beautiful mountains and rivers, try Elysian Gangchon Ski Resort near Chuncheon City, once home to Camp Page, a large U.S. Army base. The ski area doesn't

Top: Located in what are known as the Korean Alps, Yongpyong Ski Resort claims it can accommodate more skiers than any other venue in South Korea.

Courtesy of Yongpyong Ski Resort

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pacific



Courtesy of Korea Tourism Organization

South Korea's **Hyundai Sungwool Resort** gets many days of snow each winter. The resort has a diverse collection of courses catering to all kinds of skiers, including a wave course and mogul course in the intermediate slopes area. It also has an area just for snowboarders, Half-Pipe Park.

FROM PAGE 34

The massive resort on the slopes of Mount Takenoko was built during Japan's boom times and has a 1990s vibe. A 1,299-room hotel complex at the foot of the mountain, the Naeba Prince Hotel, greets skiers, who can relax in one of dozens of restaurants before or after they hit the slopes.

The lower part of the mountain is where most people will have their fun. It's got plenty of wide, groomed slopes that are suitable for beginners. If you want to practice tricks, there's challenging terrain at one end of the valley. There are also plenty of places to sit and drink coffee or beer in the sun.

The alpine views are slightly spoiled by the resort's lack of charm (most of the buildings look like gray concrete boxes) and massive power pylons.

Those in search of adventure can board a gondola to head up to the top of the mountain — almost 3,000 feet above the valley floor.

The top section of Naeba has a chairlift that offers the most fun for off-piste skiers who, if they are willing to scoot under a rope, can carve lines through a sparse forest before dropping into a deep bowl and finding their way back to the lift.

The most skilled powder hounds can have fun going all the way to the valley directly under the gondola, although they'll have to watch out for some rather dense trees.

Skiing in the trees at Naeba has its rewards (untracked snow), but those who stray too far from the piste risk dropping into gullies that will force them to make long and tiring slopes through deep snow to reach the valley floor.

Mount Norikura in Nagano Prefecture is a bit farther afield for Tokyo residents, but it's possible to get there on a bus or car within four hours. It's much lower-key than a massive resort like Naeba and offers the added



Courtesy of the Japan National Tourism Organization

A shuttle to Japan's Mount Norikura Highland saves skiers the aggravation of slippery roads and marooned vehicles.



NOEA AMI-HAV/Stars and Stripes

benefit of natural *onsen* (hot springs) to soothe skiers' aching bodies after a hard day on the mountain.

Many skiers drive partway up the mountain to park their cars, but the road can be slippery, and traffic sometimes backs up when vehicles get stuck. A better option, if you are staying at a nearby hotel, is simply to walk to the lowest lift, which is within about 500 yards of most of the accommodations.

Many of the runs on Mount Norikura are long and flat. Experienced skiers might find the on-piste skiing a little dull, but it's perfect for beginners.

country skiers, who can be seen heading higher above the top lift on cross-country skis.

There are some large restaurants with excellent menus partway up the mountain, but it's also nice to stop at the lowest lift — an area that has a sort of European feel to it and plenty of hot coffee available.

Après-ski at Norikura involves trudging down the road to the local *onsen*, which include scenic outdoor hot pools.

A two-hour drive from Tokyo, the family-friendly ski area of Kawaba offers enough challenging terrain and off-piste powder to interest skiers and snowboard-

The best option for thrill seekers might be to head over to one of three challenging terrain parks, some of which feature large jumps along with rails and quarter pipes.

The mountain also has its fair share of back-



Courtesy of the Japan National Tourism Organization

At Mount Norikura in Japan, soaking in the thermal waters of an *onsen* is a major part of the après-ski scene.



Courtesy of Korea Tourism Organization

Bears Town Resort on the outskirts of Seoul is a great destination for beginners; ski lessons are available. The resort provides a free shuttle bus from Seoul (reservations required).



BEV SCHILLING/Stars and Stripes

ers of all abilities.

You know you are in Kawaba when you start seeing pictures of *ringo* (apples) outside shops. The valley leading to the ski area is planted with numerous orchards, and the local vending machines are filled with cans of apple juice rather than Coke.

Getting up to the ski lifts involves a challenging ascent along a winding, often snow-covered road that's slippery enough to make chains or snow tires mandatory. At the top there's a large gray seven-story concrete parking garage that, like most structures at Japanese ski resorts, looks like it could have been designed in North Korea.

Inside, it's a different story. There are comfortable restrooms, changing areas and lockers on every level and elevators that ferry guests to the

ski area. The top two floors include plenty of colorful shops and restaurants as well as a gear-rental store.

Those with very small children can take them right outside to frolic in a kids snow park.

If you are a novice snowboarder, you will be in good company at Kawaba. About 80 percent of the almost exclusively Japanese clientele are intermediate-level snowboarders taking advantage of the gentle slopes and moderately challenging terrain.

The ski area itself includes five chairlifts, including two quad lifts with padded seats and plastic windshields, along with several more basic lifts. The most popular lift is the second quad-chair, which takes skiers toward the 6,627-foot summit of Mt. Kemamine.

The layout at Kawaba is great if you are skiing with friends of differing abilities. All of the courses — on and off-piste — funnel toward Magic Valley, so it's easy to meet up at the bottom of various lifts.

For those interested in lunch, there are two restaurants near Magic Valley and another very large restaurant on the top floor of the car park. All serve hearty Japanese food, such as ramen noodles, that provide plenty of calories to expend on the slopes.

Robson.seth@stripes.com

WEEKEND: MUSIC

NEW ALBUMS

**Pink Floyd**

The Endless River
(Columbia Records)

Never was an album more aptly named than “The Endless River,” the new — and seemingly final — release from Pink Floyd. It flows unstopably, and while some listeners might feel it meanders on too long, it’s very easy to get swept along by it.

Although this is the band’s first studio album in two decades, much of the material was recorded in 1993 and 1994, during sessions for “The Division Bell.” For years, it seemed that album would be Pink Floyd’s swan song. But now the material has been tweaked and shaped under into a new release, partly in tribute to keyboard player Rick Wright, who died in 2008.

Guitarist David Gilmour has called “The Endless River” a series of musical conversations; the band members’ musical rapport was always more eloquent than their spoken communications. There are not many words on this mostly instrumental album, although physicist Stephen Hawking lends his distinctive voice to “Talkin’ Hawkin’.”

Both the compositions and their titles allude to all the water that has passed under the bridge in the course of Pink Floyd’s long career. The opening track, “Things Left Unsaid,” sets the tone: It’s a woozy wash of Wright’s keyboards, haunting horn sounds and Gilmour’s guitar that feels elegiac.

On it rolls from there, sometimes a tranquil wash, sometimes churned into rapids by Gilmour’s piercing guitar and Nick Mason’s thundering drums, for 18 tracks — four sides of vinyl if you opt for the old-fashioned format.

What’s on display is not so much songwriting as chemistry. This band had something, a magic, and you can hear it throughout “The Endless River.”

The band members know it, too. The closing track is “Louder Than Words,” and finally there are lyrics: “We bitch and we fight, diss each other on sight,” it begins, a fond but weary tribute to creative spark and strife. “The sum of our parts, the beat of our hearts, is louder than words.”

— Jill Lawless
The Associated Press

Life is a

**Foo Fighters**

Sonic Highways (Roswell/RCA)

HIGHWAY

Foo Fighters go on cross-country road trip to record ‘love letter to American music’

By GLENN GAMBOA
Newsday

Foo Fighters’ “Sonic Highways” project is much more than an album. It’s like a doctoral thesis that rocks.

The companion series on HBO, which was directed by singer-drummer-guitarist Dave Grohl, traces the process of recording the album in music hot spots around the country. Each of the album’s eight songs was recorded in a different city, with local artists involved and, theoretically, the local flavor seeping into the music.

That leads to the bits of Chicago blues and power pop that color the epic single “Something From Nothing,” which even features a solo from Cheap Trick’s Rick Nielsen. It brings some country inflection into “Congregation,” which was recorded in Nashville with help from the Zac Brown

Band. And there’s a whole lot of hard-core rage in “The Feast and the Famine,” recorded in Washington, D.C.

Grohl calls the album a “love letter to American music,” and that love shows, much as it did in his directorial debut, “Sound City,” the documentary of the Southern California recording studio of the same name. Like that project, “Sonic Highways” is wildly ambitious — an impressively difficult musical trick, as well as a way to keep things fresh for the band’s eighth album and their 20th anniversary.

Their bedrock sound hasn’t changed much over the years — based on potent drumming, grand guitar solos and Grohl’s distinctive vocals. But on “Sonic Highways,” they layer other influences onto that base more blatantly than in the past.

The problem with “Sonic Highways,” though, is you can almost hear the pressure of making it. There’s a lot of joy in the

music, but there seems to be a lot of worry in the lyrics. After all, Grohl had to write the lyrics to these songs at the last minute in the city where they were recording.

“There you go again putting words into my mouth,” Grohl sings in the Southern-rock stomp “What Did I Do?/God as My Witness.” “This one’s for you to know and for me to find out.” Not a bad line, but not as graceful as what has come before.

It’s moments like that where an important distinction is drawn about working with crazy deadlines. There’s a difference between “great, considering the circumstances” and just plain “great.” Much of “Sonic Highways” is just plain great, but there are times that make you wonder what it would have sounded like if they’d had more time and weren’t working with marketing deadlines and cross-promotional issues looming in the distance. That said, it is truly great, considering the circumstances.



Courtesy of Nasty Little Man

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Brooks still his own man on 'Machine'

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

How long was Garth Brooks out of the spotlight? Consider this: When Luke Bryan accepted a trophy from Brooks at last week's Country Music Association Awards, the younger star revealed that he'd never met the older singer and wondered if he might have a hug. (Bryan got two.)

By far the biggest country act of the 1990s, Brooks stepped away from music in 2001, saying he wanted to concentrate on raising his three daughters. And though he wasn't entirely invisible over the next decade — he played a regular gig in Las Vegas and last year released a box set with covers of some of his favorite songs — his disappearance enabled a new generation of Nashville A-listers to come up without knowing him personally.

They know his work of course. In Brooks' absence, country bent undeniably toward his example, mainstreaming the elements that once made him a maverick: the loud guitars, the booming drums, the arena-rock histrionics.

The genre has evolved further to incorporate hip-hop and dance music, neither of which Brooks appears much interested in. But nobody did more to seed that growth.

So now that he's returned with his first set of original songs since 2001 — part of a larger-scale comeback that began in September with the launch of a world tour — you might expect Brooks, 52, to fit in at last. In fact, he's as weird as ever on "Man Against Machine," which opens with a title track that makes it clear he still views himself as an outsider and a pugacious one at that.

"John Henry's 'bout to show on the scene," he bellows amid the clank of sledgehammers on steel, "in this war of man against the machines."

His primary weapon — and the quality that most sets him apart from the country stars who've surfaced in his wake — is his earnestness. The singer's aggressive sincerity remains intact.

In "Midnight Train" and the throbbing "Cold Like That," he's a man with a heart broken wide open, too devastated to stand back and assess the damage. He gets a little distance in "Tacoma," about a guy fleeing a breakup by hitting the road but keeps reliving the pain in his mind.

"Don't know where I'm going," he moans

over a slow-boiling, blue-eyed-soul groove. "I just know that I can't stay."

Despite the apparent technophobia of "Man Against Machine," it's not the pumped-up sound of modern Nashville that is the target of Brooks' war, but the sly, smart-alecky tone that now defines the genre. His foes are successors like Blake Shelton and Eric Church, even the admiring Bryan — guys who rarely put across an emotion without doubling back on it somehow.

Brooks, by comparison, never doubles back, even when he probably should, as in this album's dim-witted lead single, "People Loving People." It's a surging rocker, complete with Edge-style guitar work, about the futility of looking for resolution "at the end of a needle." How, then, to fix "whatever's making this world ill"? Why, "people loving people," described by Brooks as "the enemy of everything that's evil."

Finally, someone figured it out. "All-American Kid" feels similarly facile in its depiction of a small-town football champ going off to war. Brooks needn't approach the topic with suspicion, the way Church might, but it deserves an examination deeper than the platitudes he provides here.

Though he's hardly a threat to Shelton's job as a wise-cracking judge on "The Voice," Brooks isn't without a sense of humor. In "She's Tired of Boys" he sketches a relationship between a man and a younger woman with warmly funny detail (and handsome vocal help from his wife, Trisha Yearwood): "I called her 'the kid,' and I guess it made her mad. She said, 'Don't call me 'kid,' pops, and I won't call you 'Dad.'"

But Brooks has always been most convincing at his most nakedly sentimental. And in his recent experience as a full-time parent — before the youngest of his daughters left home and he refocused on his music — he's found the mother lode of sentiment.

"Little kids on the skinned-up knee/ Playing soccer, riding bikes, climbing trees," he sings, practically near tears, in "Send 'Em on Down the Road," about a father struggling to say goodbye to his grown children. He rides himself of even more shame on "Mom," which he sings from alternating perspectives: first as an unborn baby nervous about exiting the womb, then as God, full of assurance about the maternal love that awaits.

It's so corny — and so against the grain — that it feels like an act of bravery.

Your move, Machine.

Garth Brooks, country music's biggest star in the 1990s, released his first new album in 13 years on Tuesday.

BARRY BRECHSEN, INVISION/AP



Garth Brooks
Man Against Machine
(RCA Nashville)

Longtime holdout embraces digital on his terms with GhostTunes

By EMILY YAHR
The Washington Post

Just like Jack Donaghy on "30 Rock," Garth Brooks can't make it 1997 again through science or magic. Too bad, because that's when CD sales were robust and Brooks reigned over the music industry as the best-selling artist in history.

As a result, Brooks — notoriously opposed to distributing his music through iTunes and online retailers — is now simultaneously adapting to the 21st century and staying rooted in '90s mentality. With the release of "Man Against Machine" on Tuesday, his first new album in 13 years, the country veteran also officially launched GhostTunes, an alternative music sales website that dubs itself "the spirit of music."

What makes it different? For consumers, the actual site looks very similar to iTunes (featured artists, divided by genre, top-selling singles or albums on the right-hand side), except that it's more simple to access as a Web site instead of a separate program. The key difference is more apparent to the artists: Because they have a say about how they want their music sold.

On GhostTunes, artists can set preferences requiring fans to buy complete albums — or, they can just as easily sell individual singles or physical copies of the CD, hawk merchandise, or provide links to Ticketmaster for their latest tour. Or, they can offer "bundles." Brooks, for example, famously hates the idea of albums being broken up into singles. So his new record is only available as a whole, but he's offering a bundle that includes eight old albums and live concert footage for \$29.99.

The point is that artists have the control, as opposed to a digital company that limits their sales options.

While some observers, including the Wall Street Journal, note that it's not exactly a new business model, the GhostTunes mission claims that it's the most "artist-friendly." The site pays back 80 percent of revenue back to music-makers, over digital music services pay around 70 percent. "The difference is that the copyright owner gets to make that decision" about how to sell their own music, Brooks said when making the announcement.

In an interview with Billboard, GhostTunes COO Chris Webb explained "that they are not competing with Services like iTunes' Apple Store or Amazon's digital mp3 store, they're simply providing an alternative."

Another difference is that when customers buy music, it's transported to a personalized "locker," or a cloud that will make the music available anywhere they want to stream it when they log in to their GhostTunes account: via any type of iPhone or Android smartphone, desktop computer, tablet, etc.

Look at GhostTunes shows that so far, many artists (from Universal Music, Sony and more) have opted to take the "singles" route that's the same on iTunes, offering songs for \$1.29 or less. However, Brooks and his wife, Trisha Yearwood, are both listed as "featured artists" and their new projects are both album-only.

There's every type of genre — country, rap, hip-hop, Latin, jazz, pop, rock and comedy. And so far, many big-name artists, though Brooks says there will be independent acts available later as well. Some prices are slightly cheaper: Taylor Swift's "1989" is \$11.99, as opposed to \$12.99 on iTunes. Sam Hunt's "Monte-

vallo," the top-selling country album last week, is \$6.99 instead of the iTunes price of \$9.99. Still, some are the same: T-Pain's "Happy Hour: The Greatest Hits" is \$9.99 in both digital stores.

Meanwhile, Brooks' entrance into the crowded digital music space comes at a fascinating time. Swift made many headlines last week for pulling all of her music off Spotify, a big move that some said helped her album go platinum. She called the hugely popular streaming service an experiment, and told Yahoo, "I'm not willing to contribute my life's work to an experiment that I don't feel fairly compensates the writers, producers, artists, and creators of this music."

Could GhostTunes be the middle ground, a site that tries give control back to the artists themselves while making it easy for fans? It will be fascinating to watch it play out, especially keeping that sort of '90s mentality in a very troubled 2014 music industry.



WEEKEND: BOOKS

'13 Soldiers' a collection of powerful stories

John McCain reveals experiences of US troops who fought in major conflicts in latest book

By Travis J. Tritten
Stars and Stripes

John McCain delivers the thesis of his new book, "13 Soldiers," with an opening quote from renowned British historian John Keegan.

"What battles have in common is human: the behaviors of men struggling to reconcile their instinct for self-preservation, their sense of honor and the achievement of some aim over which other men are ready to kill them," Keegan wrote in his 1976 book, "The Face of Battle."

The book by the senator and former presidential contender, co-written with his longtime staffer and collaborator Mark Salter, is a meditation on the personal experience of war. It follows the stories of individual troops — often told in their own words — as they fight and struggle through 13 of the United States' most consequential conflicts.

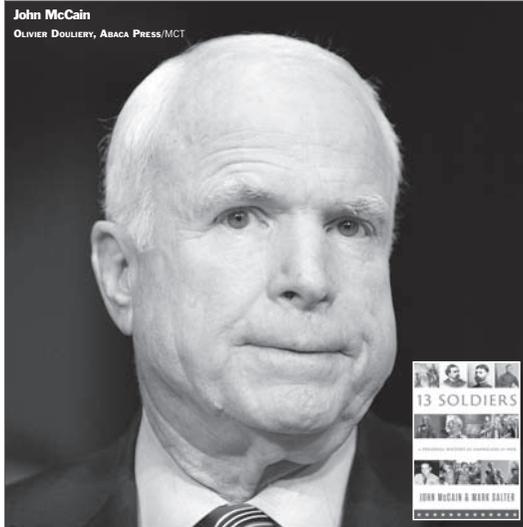
It begins with the wry recollections of an often starving Continental soldier in the Revolutionary War and follows history through a Navy SEAL's grinding firefights in Iraq.

"They are about more than one thing, but they share a common experience," McCain told Stars and Stripes.

The subject and format are not new for McCain, who in 1999 wrote a best-selling account of his own struggles as a prisoner of war in Vietnam in "Faith of My Fathers." In 2004, he published a collection of stories on heroism and leadership among famous and not-so-famous figures in "Why Courage Matters."

"13 Soldiers" trends similar ground. At times, it seems overly romantic. McCain describes George Washington during a battle at Kip's Bay by saying, "he wheeled his white charger amid the noise and confusion, his powerful legs gripped the animal firmly, his broad-shouldered, six-foot-two-inch frame sat erect in the saddle." We get reminded of the fateful charge of Marines at Belleau Wood during World War I and the famous battle cry of a first sergeant: "C'mon, you sons of bitches, do you want to live forever?"

Ultimately the book is not about towering military figures such as Washington. McCain's writing is most interesting for its focus on colorful, little-known characters



and an embrace of the political controversies that have often surrounded our conflicts.

Samuel Chamberlain, the soldier-McCain channels to tell about the Mexican-American War, described himself as a scoundrel and appears to be a prodigious exaggerator and liar. McCain treats the reader to some of Chamberlain's entertaining tales of admiring senioritas, daring escapes and violent brawls.

Most are untrue, he reminds readers, and then goes on to separate out the accounts of a "real" religious bigot, a braggart, a murderer, a serial seducer, and a deserter." That are likely true. The result is an illuminating firsthand view into the U.S.

fight against Santa Anna's Mexican forces in the late 1840s.

To his credit, McCain does not shy away from the moral vagaries of war and those who fight. He chose to tell about the Philippine-American War through Marine Maj. Gen. Littleton Waller "Tony" Tazewell Waller, who led troops in Southeast Asia five decades after Chamberlain's war in Mexico.

The United States employed brutal tactics against the Philippine insurgents after ousting Spain, including mass executions and the burning of villages. The conflict has been compared to the Vietnam War. McCain enumerates the tactics and atrocities, recounting a slaughter in the town of

Balangiga, in Eastern Samar, Philippines, in chilling detail.

Waller comes off looking better than others in command — his superior Army Gen. Jacob Smith famously ordered him to kill every Filipino over 10 years old able to fight. But Waller was eventually put on trial for killing civilians and became a symbol of U.S. atrocities in the Philippines. He was acquitted by a court-martial.

Women receive two later chapters in McCain's book covering the Persian Gulf War and the Iraq War. McCain, an old hand in Senate politics, seems to relish a good political fight and goes after military leaders for denying women combat roles for so long.

He points out that 159 military women had died in Iraq and Afghanistan, mostly from hostile fire. "It cost them everything to be there, and until recently their government thought they should haven't (sic) been there," McCain writes.

Monica Lin Brown, an Army combat medic who served in Afghanistan, is offered as a prime example of women showing their worth under fire. Brown deployed to Forward Operating Base Salerno in Khost province, where soldiers bent the rules and allowed her to accompany a patrol in a need of a medic.

Technically, Brown was not allowed to be outside the wire on patrol. But she would later be awarded the Silver Star after helping to save the lives of two soldiers who were gravely wounded during an enemy ambush.

History buffs are not likely to learn much new from "13 Soldiers." Although the characters are probably new, the yarns are mostly well known. At times, the book also gets bogged down with play-by-play descriptions of battles and troop movements, which can be difficult to follow without deeper context or maps.

But these are great and powerful stories that deserve to be retold, and McCain and Salter do an admirable job of showing us why. McCain said they are the stories that have inspired him and could be useful as others go off to war. Indeed, as we head into a new war in Iraq, it is good to know where our fighting men and women have already been and what they saw there.

tritten.travis@stars.trites.com
Twitter: Travis_Tritten

A gripping 'One Million Steps' examines Marines in Afghanistan

By Tony Perry
Los Angeles Times

In the preface to "One Million Steps: A Marine Platoon at War," Bing West announces that "this is my sixth and final book about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."

West has clearly left the best for last: a gripping, boot-level account of Marines in Afghanistan during the bloody struggle with Taliban fighters for control of an obscure village called Sangin.

When he longer was in U.S. history is finished (or at least U.S.

involvement in it), "One Million Steps" might well stand as a classic account of what it was like to be a grunt in that war, assigned each day to find the elusive enemy and kill him.

West knows the Marine Corps. A Marine officer in Vietnam, he was an assistant secretary of defense during the Reagan administration. His style is narrative, almost novelistic, capturing the personalities of individual Marines and their roles in the platoon. His reporting comes from walking with the Marines during perilous patrols in an area infested with buried bombs and "murder holes" cut into mud houses so Taliban snipers could attack from ambush.

The Marines depicted are from the 3rd Platoon, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Regiment, The Camp Pendleton-based battalion

had more killed and wounded than any other Marine battalion in Afghanistan: 25 killed in combat, more than 200 wounded, including more than two dozen suffering amputations, during the deployment that stretched from fall 2010 to spring 2011.

"The platoon had depth of leadership," West writes. "Like wolves, they became accustomed to the routine of the hunt. When a leader goes down, another must step forward, be accepted, and be followed." As casualties mounted, the secretary of Defense offered to allow the Marines to withdraw. Marine generals refused.

A sergeant explained to West: "It didn't matter how hard the next fight was. Our attitude was — you killed one of us, we kill 20 of you."

West's respect for the young Marines is balanced by a with-

ering disdain for much of the military leadership, including the commander in chief and the Army general who was in charge of the Afghanistan mission until a 2010 story in Rolling Stone by the now late Michael Hastings got him fired.

To West, the U.S. strategy of nation-building, of winning hearts and minds and trying to buck up the Afghan government, is folly. Sangin is a Taliban stronghold where farmers grow the poppy crop used to make heroin and provide profits to support the insurgency against the government in far-distant Kabul. Taliban fighters enjoyed sanctuary in nearby Pakistan. According to West, "Sangin was the inevitable overreach of a strategy blindly willful and excessively ambitious."

He predicts a quick collapse by the Afghan army once the U.S. departs on the timetable declared by the president. "What a tangled web we weave when we deceive ourselves. The war didn't end because Mr. Obama quit. Al Qaeda and the Taliban remained on the battlefield, undefeated."

West's gloomy prediction aside, "One Million Steps" is not about foreign policy. It's about young men like Sgt. Matthew Abbate, 26, a sniper who fought bravely, "always leading from the front," but who was killed by friendly fire and posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.

"Any grunt who is not a fatalist is foolish," West writes. "Death is as random as it is unexplainable. If you're very skillful — like me — you might tilt the odds a little, but not much."



WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT

NEW ON DVD

West thrilled by release of 'Batman' on DVD

By Rick Bentley
The Fresno Bee

Adam West knew going into the 1960s TV series "Batman" there was a good chance he would be typecast. Once you've played a costumed crimefighter on a camp comedy, it's hard to be taken seriously for dramatic roles.

Despite the super efforts West had to make to shake the shadow of the Bat after the TV show ended in 1968, he doesn't regret his choice to put on the cape and cowl. "I think it was a good decision. How many actors get to play a character who becomes so iconic? I was typecast and it was tough for a while. But, as I look back, I'm so happy I did it," West, 86, says. "I am one of the fortunate ones."

He's had plenty of opportunity recently to look back at his work on "Batman," which has finally defeated its greatest enemy — tangled film and TV rights — and is being released Nov. 11. "Batman: The Complete Television Series" is available in a limited-edition box set (\$249.97) that includes all 120 episodes in re-mastered Blu-ray, plus a Hot Wheels replica Batmobile, 44 vintage replica trading cards, the "Adam West Photobook" and episode guide. It's also available as just a DVD set (\$199.70) and "Batman: The Complete First Season" DVD (\$39.98).

The series has long been the most-wanted program on DVD, but because so many different parties owned portions of the show, getting the rights to create a DVD set where tougher than the Riddler's riddles. Once the rights were granted, the process of re-mastering the shows began. The episodes are much brighter and crisper than the versions that have aired in syndication for decades.

It's been 48 years since Bruce Wayne first directed his ward, Dick Grayson, "to the Batpools." Because the show was designed with the bright colors and tilted look of comic book panels, there's a timeless quality to the show. West calls it "our own little world" where Gotham City could pass for any major metropolis, evil minions wore T-shirts with their criminal names and villains dressed in garish outfits.

"I know when I read the script this show was something special. It was the funniest pilot I had ever read. It was carefully put together to be colorful for kids and funny for adults," West says. "It was a tightrope to walk the line between absurdist social satire and appearing to be serious."

Available now on DVD

- "How to Train Your Dragon 2"
- "Tammy"
- "Let's Be Cops"
- "Jersey Boys"
- "Mood Indigo"
- "Dads: The Complete Series"
- "Deadliest Catch: Season 9"
- "I Am Ali"
- "Star Wars: The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions"
- "True Blood: Season 7"

From MCT



Warner Bros. Pictures

Susan Sarandon, left, and Melissa McCarthy star in "Tammy."

FIVE WHO THRIVE

Fall TV's fresh faces are front and center

By Chuck Barney/Contra Costa Times

It happens every fall.

Established TV shows and familiar actors continue to hog space in our DVRs, but there are always a few fresh faces worthy of attention. Think of them as the Joe Paniks of prime time — standout rookies who soak up the spotlight and wow us with their considerable skills. From a tenderhearted virgin to a computer geek-turned-improbable-action-hero, here are five who thrive:



The CW

Gina Rodriguez
'Jane the Virgin'

The season's No. 1 breakout cast absolutely shines in a role that requires her to quickly swivel between comedy and drama. That she does so while nailing all the nuances and coaxing viewers to invest in the show's harebrained, telenovela-inspired premise, makes her performance all the more impressive. Bursting with radiant energy and a natural charm, Rodriguez is simply a joy to behold. Show airs Thursdays on AFN-Family.



FOX

Robin Lord Taylor
'Gotham'

"Batman" fans all have an image in their heads of how the notorious Penguin should look and act. That poses a major challenge to Taylor, who nonetheless brings his own brand of demented charisma to Oswald Cobblepot. Cold and calculating, this Penguin-to-be commits violent acts that can freeze your blood, yet he's also oddly funny and even sympathetic. When Taylor is on the screen, you just can't take your eyes off him. Show airs Saturdays on AFN-Family.



ABC

Alfred Enoch
'How to Get Away With Murder'

Frankly, we find most of the young students in the Viola Davis legal thriller to be dull and annoying. The happy exception is Enoch, who plays Wes Gibbins. He initially won us over with his compassion and wide-eyed earnestness as the shy underdog of the bunch. He's displaying the kind of grit it takes to go toe-to-toe with the formidable Davis. Enoch made the shift smoothly, without crunching any gears. Show airs Thursdays on AFN-Family.



CBS

Elyes Gabel
'Scorpion'

We were somewhat surprised when "Scorpion" became one of the biggest new freshman hits of the season, but maybe we shouldn't have been. The London-born Gabel excels as Walter O'Brien, an eccentric genius who, with a team of brilliant misfits, works with Homeland Security to fend off high-tech threats. Gabel has great chemistry with his co-stars and helps to assure that viewers get a big bang out of the revved-up drama. Show airs Saturdays on AFN-Prime.



ABC

Cristela Alonzo
'Cristela'

Alonzo's semi-autobiographical comedy is too broad and cliché-ridden to completely win us over. Still, we see signs of hope, and they're mainly embodied in the stand-up-comedian-turned-lead actress. She brings boundless energy to the show and is so warm, funny and likable that you just can't help but root for her. Meanwhile, we'll root for "Cristela" to get better.



NBC

Matt Ryan stars as John Constantine in 'Constantine.'

Honorable mentions

Here are some other fresh faces that we've been keeping our eyes on so far this season: Matt Ryan, the caustic leading man in "Constantine"; Griffin Gluck, the narrator and tent patient in "Red Band Society"; Grant Gustin, the former bit character in "Glee" now starring in "The Flash"; and Yara Shahidi, the rebellious teen daughter in "Black-ish." "Red Band Society" airs Sundays on AFN-Family. "The Flash" airs Fridays on AFN-Family. "Black-ish" airs Fridays on AFN-Prime.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Lose weight without breaking a sweat

Head to the pool and try this 3-part circuit to improve joint health and overall fitness

By **RENE LYNCH**
Los Angeles Times

Any athlete will tell you: Rest and recovery are critical to any workout regimen. John Platero, director of education for the National Council for Certified Personal Trainers, created this three-move pool circuit to

provide a recovery workout that will get your heart pumping even as it helps care for hard-working joints.

"As we get older, we tend to move less and less," Platero says, and that's why "the pool is magic. It acts as a compression sleeve, protecting the joints." When you're doing these moves, Platero said, "don't think 'workout' ... think 'controlled movement' with the

resistance coming from the water."

Ideally, this circuit — the scarecrow, the Michael Jackson and the bear hug — is done in water that's roughly chest-deep.

Please keep safety in mind.

You're likely to get winded, so you might want to stay near the edge of the pool, where you can rest and catch your breath.



1. THE SCARECROW



Gently squat in the water until it's shoulder depth. Position your upper arms straight out at your side and your hands up, palms facing forward, like a scarecrow. Hold your core tight as you lower and raise your forearms, slicing through the water. Let your comfort level dictate your range of motion.

What it does

Gives you a recovery workout on days when your body needs a break but you still want a calorie burn. If you wear a heart-rate monitor, you'll be surprised to see how this circuit sends your heart soaring with very little impact.

2. THE MICHAEL JACKSON



This mimics a move you likely saw from the performer. Raise the knee to hip height, and then gently sway the foot and ankle side to side for an inner and outer leg workout. Alternate legs. You can bend the knee so your foot is reaching out behind you, or simply allow it to dangle as the foot and ankle sway.

How much

Perform these three moves in a circuit, with 10 to 20 repetitions for each move. Repeat the circuit three to five times. Over time, add more repetitions.



3. THE BEAR HUG



Gently squat in the water until it's shoulder depth. Bring your arms forward and around like you're hugging a barrel. Then reverse the movement so you squeeze the shoulder blades and stretch the chest muscles. "The faster you go, the harder it will be. This is going to really help your posture," Platero said.

John Platero, director of education for the National Council for Certified Personal Trainers, demonstrates the three-move pool circuit he created that provides a recovery workout, improving joint health and integrity.

PHOTOS BY DORIANE RAIMAN, LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT

WEEKEND: FAMILY

Failure to launch

Experts offer advice on parenting unambitious adult children

By CHERYL STRITZEL MCCARTHY
Chicago Tribune

Got a high school or college kid who zones out with video games or TV instead of tackling his schoolwork or pursuing a career?

You might be unwittingly contributing to the problem, says Adam Price, a psychologist with offices in New York and New Jersey whose practice is tailored to young adults.

"We can demotivate our kids when we rescue them from consequences," says Price, the father of two college-student children, ages 19 and 21. "We learn when we make choices and face consequences. When parents soften the blow, we're not helping our kids learn."

Examples include typing their student's homework, or calling their child in sick at school on a Monday because he played in a big game over the weekend.

Failing to enforce parental decisions won't help, either: Parents might tell their young adult, if you fail any classes, you won't play soccer. The kid fails a class but parents let her play, rationalizing their failure by telling themselves the sport is better for their child. Plus, maybe parents don't want to sacrifice their own time.

"Parents have told me, 'I grounded my son Friday night, but we had to go out, and then he snuck out.' No. The parent has to stay home," Price says.

Here are more suggestions on what parents can (and can't) do, from Price and research psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, co-author of "Getting to 30: A Parent's Guide to the 20-Something Years" (Workman).

Set reasonable limits and hold kids accountable. For high schoolers, that means expecting B's. If the student wants A's, that's his choice, not the parent's. If your high-schooler isn't earning B's, Price says, cut

"We can demotivate our kids when we rescue them from consequences. We learn when we make choices and face consequences. When parents soften the blow, we're not helping our kids learn."

Adam Price
psychologist

down his digital and social life until grades improve.

Manage your expectations. Understand your child's limits. With college-age kids, if consequences continually aren't working, look at their history: Your child may have a learning disability, be suffering from substance abuse, or simply has average academic abilities. With high-schoolers, Price notes, keep in mind neurocognitive development. "Adolescent brains are going through reorganization," Price says, referring to the prefrontal cortex that manages foresight and judgment. "Some kids just aren't there yet. No matter how much we push or prod, the brain needs time to grow."

Open lines of communication. Engage in productive dialogue so they know you're on their side. With high school and college-age kids, "be an asker, not a talker," Price says. "Listen for answers, long before you give opinions. The more they say, and the less you lecture, the better. You don't have to agree for them to know you hear them."

Be patient. Young adults today take longer than their parents did to find their life partner and settle into a career, says Arnett, of Clark University in Worcester, Mass. For his book, he surveyed emerging adults, ages 18 to 29, across the U.S.

"Give your children time to find out what they want to do," Arnett says. "It's not something you

can give them. If you substitute something you want, it won't work because they won't be motivated."

Money matters. The idea that this age group wants to sponge off parents as long as possible isn't based in reality, says Arnett, who researched a broad cross-section of emerging adults for the book, not just the troubled or college-educated. Arnett's research shows 74 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds prefer to live independently of their parents even if it means living on a tight budget. Among 18- to 21-year-olds, 28 percent receive regular support toward living expenses. Among 26- to 29-year-olds, 6 percent receive support toward expenses.

Also, consider the reasons they need money. A young adult who needs financial support due to substance abuse is managed differently than a young adult who needs support because he's doing an unpaid internship, or going to school full-time.

Accept your limits. Even if your emerging adult isn't making progress, there might not be much you can do. "Accept that your power as a parent is limited," Arnett says. "You don't have the authority you did when they were 3 or 13. At ages 19 or 23 or 28, it's a mistake to try to take over their decisions."

"You can decide whether to support them financially, and whether to let them live in your household while they figure things out."

When living with an adult child, exercise honest communication. Clarify your expectations, and discuss responsibility in the areas of courtesy, housework, finances and future plans.

SamMuir, FOTOLIA/MCT



SPOUSE CALLS

The Arlington Lady meets the Berliners

One stormy autumn afternoon not long ago, I attended a book club meeting on Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington, D.C. It was cold and wet, and we were happy to be indoors talking about books and telling stories. Air Force wife Patty Stendahl told about a visit to Berlin that recalled the city's history.

When the Berlin Wall came down 20 years ago this month, East Germany and West Germany were reunited, and the Cold War ended. That era began as WWII ended, when Germany and its capital, Berlin, were divided up among the Allies after their victory.

In 1948, mounting tensions between the Soviet Union and the rest of the Allies resulted in the Soviet blockade against supplies to West Berlin, then surrounded by Soviet-controlled territory. The United States devised a plan with Great Britain to fly food, water and other necessities to the beleaguered city. This lifesaving mission continued for nearly a year, and was called the Berlin Airlift. A memorial in the city now commemorates British and American aircrews lost during the airlift that saved the city.

Patty and her Air Force husband, Howard, visited Berlin a few years ago for a military event. Her husband was in uniform when they visited the Berlin Airlift Memorial. "As we stood at the memorial, I noticed a number of older Germans watching us," said Patty. An older German woman approached her, and looking at Patty's husband in uniform, asked, "American military?" When Patty said yes, the woman's response was remarkable.

"Tears welling in her eyes, this German woman looked deep into my eyes and said to me, 'Thank you.' With memorable conviction, calm and an emotion-filled voice that is difficult to describe, she said, 'Thank you, thank you for saving us. We will always remember. We will never forget.'"

Humbled and moved, Patty said all she could do was squeeze the woman's hand and respond, "Thank you." Several others with the woman stepped over to express their gratitude — all Berliners who were saved by the American supply mission decades earlier.

About two years after this outpouring of gratitude in Berlin, Patty told us she had an opportunity to pass it on.

Patty is a member of the Arlington Ladies, an organization of military spouse volunteers who attend every burial at Arlington National Cemetery. The committee was founded in 1948 by military spouses who wanted to ensure that all burials at Arlington were attended.

Before each ceremony, Arlington Ladies research the background of the person being interred and make a brief statement to the family if any are present.

"I had the privilege of serving for the burial of a woman who served as a nurse in the U.S. Army Air Corps" after WWII, Patty said. "She served as the flight nurse on her husband's plane during the Berlin Airlift."

Here was a couple, both of whom served in the airlift. The nurse's pilot husband had already died.

"I already knew that the heartfelt thanks I received in Berlin was for the work of brave and dedicated airmen like this nurse and her pilot husband," Patty said. "An Arlington Lady's remarks are typically meaningful but short, but in this instance I felt it important to share my Berlin experience with this family," she said.

Patty told the family, "They were thanking me for the work of your mother, your parents. And so I say to you today, 'We will always remember. We will never forget.'"

Wind howled and rain lashed, so we lingered around the table after lunch. Other members of the Arlington Ladies were in the group.

"I've been at funerals when no other family member was able to come," said Suzette McKenzie, "Just me and the honor guard and the chaplain. In that case the honor guard hands the flag to me, as a representative of the family. I felt honored to be part of their Air Force family."

"To serve as an Arlington Lady is a privilege," said Patty. "It is among the most, if not the most, meaningful volunteer work I have ever done."

These military spouses pledge, like the Berliners, "We will always remember. We will never forget."

Terri Barnes is the author of "Spouse Calls: Messages From a Military Life." Contact her at spousecalls@aol.com or at stripes.com/go/spousecalls.



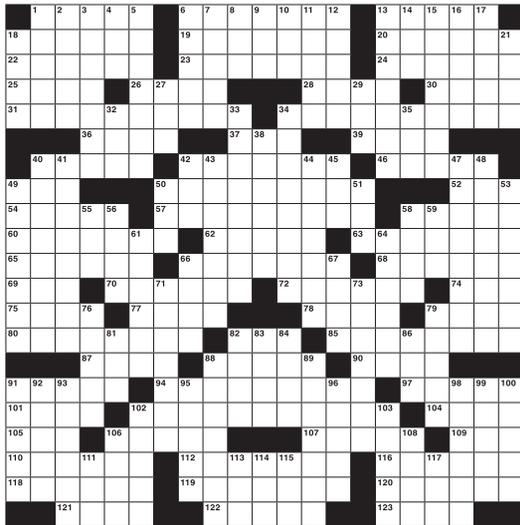
Terri Barnes

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

COLORFUL CHARACTERS BY TOM MCCOY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

- ACROSS
1 Extremely attractive bodies
6 Bird found in this grid's lower-right corner
13 Building material in Oz
18 Female surfer
19 Words from a Latin lover
20 Byproduct of petroleum refining
22 1996 Olympic tennis gold medalist
23 Suffer remorse
24 U.S.S.R.'s Brezhnev
25 Sharp
26 Side of a diner
28 Background color of a \$100 bill
30 It might be stained
31 Hikers' snacks
34 Facetious unit defined as the amount of beauty needed to launch one ship
36 Young musician?
37 Nail holder
39 Libby's bagful
40 "That old" stuff of song
42 Sodium ___ (potato- chip flavoring)
46 World's first national park
49 Dog's plant
50 Leading
52 Whitney who went to Yale, appropriately
54 Quaking ___
57 Body of water found in this grid's upper-right corner
58 Lawn tool
60 Performing, say
62 Plagued
63 Vitamin used to fight Alzheimer's
65 X contributor
66 Puts on eBay, say
68 "What a ___!"
69 "Methinks," in forums
70 Instruments in the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood" and "Within You Without You"
72 Hawaiian verandas
74 Prey for a cheetah
75 & 77 When combined into one word, national trivia championship, e.g.
78 Hardware-store or nursery purchase
79 Gels
80 Beverage found in this grid's lower-left corner
82 Ending with may
85 Injury found in this grid's upper-left corner
87 Bereavement
88 Placeholder?
90 Prey of the Morlocks
91 Give the go-ahead
94 Relative of a panpipe
97 Common muffin flavor
101 Jai ___
102 Impersonal notes
... or what four groups of this puzzle's answers do (totating 11 words)
104 "Mon ___!"
105 Josh
106 ___ 6
107 Fundamental
109 Unit named for a telephone pioneer
110 Crass
112 Substance in some signs
116 Inclined (to)
118 Eponymous Bloomer
119 Tranquil
120 Print up?
121 Owner of Columbia Pictures
122 Baby bird?
123 Super-rare creature
DOWN
1 Helga's "horrible" husband
2 Butler's maiden name?
3 Banning from future work
4 Nitrogen symbols
5 Earth-shattering, maybe
6 Quaint way of sending documents
7 Lerner's partner on Broadway
8 Behive Starter
9 Long, narrow fish
10 Insect
11 Centuries-old instrument
12 Peak performance?
13 Lily-lived sorts
14 Course: Abbr.
15 "Fingers crossed!"
16 Illusory sight on Mars
17 Robotic dog on "Doctor Who"
18 Bit of power
21 Paradise lost in "Paradise Lost"
27 Rapper ___ Wayne
29 View from Neuchâtel
32 What you might bow your head to receive
33 Like some winglasses
34 Have good intentions
35 Sunburn preventer, maybe
38 Idle
40 "Kula bear," e.g.
41 Modern purveyor of Scrabble and Monopoly
42 "___ we done here?!"
43 Who said, "I can't prove it, but I can say it"
44 Trial site
45 Pittsburgh-to-Wilkes-Barre dir.
47 Honeymoon attire
48 110, to Bilbo Baggins
49 Sports star with size 18 shoes
50 "Ginger ___" (1952 Newbery winner)
51 Bill
53 "NO!"
55 End of the Bible?
56 Scottish negatives



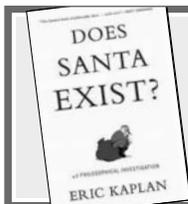
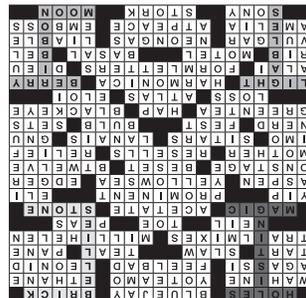
- 58 Some ovides
59 Director Guillermo ___ Toro
61 Swindles
64 Like some councils
66 Tabula ___
67 Ignore
71 Start of a round
73 Rapt
76 Home of India's Red Fort
79 Went down a slippery slope
81 "... just kidding!"
82 Web file format, for short
83 Burn aviator
84 Be winded
86 Frosty's pipe
88 Decorative bands
89 Chiffax, say
91 Future imago
92 Alternative name for Troy
93 Anne's home, in literature
95 Court locale
96 Desist
98 Top prize
99 Film archive
100 December celebrations
102 Incursion
103 Beaver State capital
106 Chief
108 Long ride
111 Day ___
113 Go (for)
99 Film archive
114 Modern beginning?
115 Long, narrow fish
117 Blood-type system

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



In the hands of acclaimed comedy writer and scholar Eric Kaplan, a search for the truth about old St. Nick becomes a deeply insightful, laugh-out-loud discussion of things we dearly believe in — that are not universally acknowledged as real. Just like Santa and his eight (or nine) reindeer.

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Stripes Book Club and Dutton, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc., are proud to offer you a chance to win one of 10 signed copies of Eric Kaplan's DOES SANTA EXIST?: A Philosophical Investigation.

Go to stripesrewards.com/bookclub to enter and win.



Penguin Group (USA)

FACES

SOUND ON

Rihanna teases new music at military base

BY HANNAH BUCHDAL
The Associated Press

Rihanna won't say when she plans to release new music, but she is confident about what it sounds like.

"I can't give you any hints of when it will drop. It's going to be great, that's all I'm going to tell



PHOTOS BY KEVIN WOLFF/AP

Rihanna shares a hug with Chief Warrant Officer 2 William Farrington during an event promoting her *Rogue Man* cologne at Fort Belvoir in Virginia on Wednesday.

you, and I'm excited about it," said the singer at a meet-and-greet Wednesday with fans at Fort Belvoir, Va.

The critic she is worried about is herself.

"I try to battle myself and outdo everything I've done, and that's been the hardest thing to do. You start overthinking things at times," she confessed.

The 26-year-old typically has released albums in November in the past, but wouldn't comment on that. She just said, "I can't wait for everybody to hear (the music) little by little. ... little by little. I can't wait."

Rihanna also brought along her new men's fragrance, *Rogue Man*.

"I feel like, what better way to get these people excited than to get them something nice, to smell good. They're running around all day working hard. And, you know, the guys are sexy. They need to smell sexy." She also joked about not having a rogue man of her own, saying with a wink, "hopefully I'll find one here today on the base."



Robert Plant quashes reunion claims

Robert Plant says there is no truth to reports he turned down a lucrative offer from Virgin boss Richard Branson to play Led Zeppelin reunion shows.

A statement from Plant spokesman Ken Weinstein says the singer "has not been in receipt of any offers in recent months" about Led Zeppelin gigs, and hasn't met or communicated with Branson in 50 years.

Wednesday's statement said Plant was "disappointed with any confusion this current fabricated story may bring."

Citing a Led Zeppelin song, Branson said in a blog post he was "dazed and confused" by reports he had offered the band 500 million pounds (\$800 million) to reform.

Led Zeppelin disbanded after drummer John Bonham died in 1980. Surviving members Plant, Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones last performed together in 2007.

Bono's private plane loses hatch

Berlin airport authorities say U2 front man Bono's private plane lost a hatch as it was coming in for a landing in the German capital, but the Irish singer was never in any danger.

Airport spokesman Ralf Kunkel told the news agency dpa that the 32-by-40-inch rear hatch landed in the vicinity of Schoenefeld airport, on Berlin's south-eastern edge.

Kunkel, who didn't immediately return calls seeking comment, says it was not clear how the hatch came off and that German authorities were investigating.

He says the aircraft, which was flying from Dublin, was never in danger of crashing and landed safely Wednesday.

Other news

■ New York City police say "Cake Boss" Buddy Valastro was arrested on a drunken driving charge around 1 a.m. Thursday.

■ Ian Somerhalder, star of *The CW* series *The Vampire Diaries*, has publicly shown his opposition to a proposal to set up a fracking well north of New Orleans. *Nola.com/TheTimes-Picayune* reports that Somerhalder attended a public meeting Wednesday where many in the crowd waved signs against the proposed well.

■ The City of London has given actor Morgan Freeman the Freedom of the City award. The time-honored ceremony makes Freeman a freeman in the City of London. The award is believed to have originated in the 13th century. The ceremony was held Wednesday at London's Guildhall.

■ A trial over television actor Stephen Collins' divorce was delayed Wednesday after his estranged wife's attorney withdrew from the case hours before testimony was to begin. Judge Mark Juhas, slated to preside over the trial, ordered the proceedings to be delayed until Jan. 5 to give Collins' wife Paye Grant time to find a new lawyer.

From The Associated Press

Aldean: Writers, publishers should be paid fairly

BY KRISTEN M. HALL
The Associated Press

Country star Jason Aldean pulled one of the year's hottest country albums — his latest record, "Old Boots, New Dirt" — off the music streaming service Spotify because he said he wants songwriters, publishers, producers and engineers to get fairly compensated.

Aldean joined Taylor Swift and other artists who have decided to remove their music from the service, which allows users to stream albums for free. The album has sold more than 467,000 copies since its release Oct. 7 and hit No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart. It also had

the biggest first week for a country album on Spotify with more than 3 million streams.

"The debate the whole music industry is having on streaming is complicated," Aldean said in his first statement given to The Associated Press since the album was removed Monday. "And while I'm definitely paying attention to the business side of things, I am first and foremost an artist. I'm an artist whose career has been built by the songwriters, publishers, producers and engineers that line Music Row in Nashville. What they do has value, and I want everyone who is involved in making my music to be paid fairly. This is about trying to

do what is right for the people who have given me a great life."

Aldean has certainly benefited from digital sales and streams in his career and was recognized this year by the Recording Industry Association of America as the top digital male country artist in history with more than 21.5 million in digital single certifications, counting song downloads and on-demand streams. "I don't know what the future holds or what my record label will ultimately decide to do with streaming partners, but for now, we made a mutual decision to hold my album back," he said.

Moore says TV is 'the most enticing medium for an actor'

BY ALICIA RANCILO
The Associated Press

Mandy Moore has stepped back into the spotlight with a recurring role on Fox's "Red Band Society."

Moore, a singer-actress, plays Dr. Erin Grace, the new chief of surgery. She had worked at the hospital, but took a year off to work with Doctors Without Borders. She

had also dated Dave Annable's character, Dr. Adam McAndrew, and her promotion is one that he was gunning for.

"Red Band Society," airing Sundays on AFN-Family, follows the doctors and their long-term teen patients at a children's hospital. "I've been brought in to sort of stir it up on the adult side," said Moore in a recent interview.

Moore was approached about the show before the part was written. She "loved ev-

erything" about the pilot episode. "I really thought it was such a unique tone from everything else on TV right now," she said.

The 30-year-old, known for films like "A Walk to Remember" and "Saved" wanted a job in television. "I think it's the most enticing medium for an actor out there right now," she said.

Moore is also known for her music. She said she's been recording and hopes to release something early next year.

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Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
 Richard Braun, General Manager, Europe
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EDITORIAL

Terry Leonard, Editor
 leonard.terry@stripes.com
 Robert H. Reid, Senior Managing Editor
 reid.robert@stripes.com
 Sam Amrhein, Managing Editor International
 amrhein.sam@stripes.com
 Tina Croley, Managing Editor for Content
 croley.tina@stripes.com
 Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
 moores.sean@stripes.com
 Joe Gromelski, Managing Editor for Digital
 gromelski.joe@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast
 Teddie Weyr, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief
 weyrteddie@stripes.com
 +49(0)131.3615.9310 cell
 +49(0)173.315.1881; DSN (314)583.9310
Pacific
 Paul Alexander, Pacific Bureau Chief
 alexander.paul@stripes.com
 +81-3 6385.5377; cell (080)583.1673
 DSN (315)225.5377
Washington
 Patrick Dickson, Washington Bureau Chief
 dickson.patrick@stripes.com
 (+1)202(761.0908; DSN (312)763.0908
 Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News
 bowers.brian@stripes.com
 Amanda Trypanis, Design Desk Supervisor
 trypanis.amanda@stripes.com

CONTACT US

Washington
 tel: (+1)202.761.0900; DSN (312)763.0900;
 fax: (+1)202.761.0890
 529 14th Street NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC
 20045-1301
Reader letters
 letters@stripes.com
Additional contacts
 stripes.com/contacts

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OPINION

Helping a reform-minded VA secretary

By MARTIN SCHRAM
 McClatchy-Tribune News Service

At last, America's military veterans seem to have a secretary of Veterans Affairs who gets it.

Robert McDonald, the former chairman, president and CEO of Procter and Gamble who came to the VA just three and a half months ago, has made clear in his words and early deeds that there must be sweeping systemic changes at the VA. And also what he calls a change in the "culture" that permeates the VA.

The new secretary celebrated Veterans Day this week by issuing a sweeping reorganization plan designed to finally make the system work. He has also fired 35 VA employees for concealing VA hospital backlogs and begun procedures to remove 1,000 more.

But while he and his new team have visited more than 100 VA sites, McDonald still may not grasp the full malevolent extent to which the cultural VA mindset has fostered what veterans feel is a VA policy of delay and deny toward claims filed by veterans (or VA "customers," as the ex-P&G head now wants his department to call veterans).

It was back in 2008 that I first chronicled the VA's litany of failures and suggested a number of solutions, in my book, "Vets Under Siege: How America Deceives and Dishonors Those Who Fight Our Battles." Now a new VA secretary seems determined to make sweeping reforms and affect a cultural sea change.

And our job today is just to make sure McDonald gets the benefit of what many faithful readers already know. (Here it could get awkward, because as VA officials discovered, their new boss doesn't want to be called "Mr. Obama.") To prefer, simply, "Bob." And his underlings have opted for a middle-ground salutation: "Secretary Bob." So here goes.)

MEMO TO: Secretary Bob
RE: Stage Two — Solving Problems by Changing the VA's Culture/Mindset



JOE GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

New Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald has fired 35 employees for concealing hospital backlogs and begun procedures to remove 1,000 more.

1. Why veterans sometimes feel "VA" stands for "Veterans' Adversaries": In 2005, National Guardsman Garrett Anderson, of Champaign, Ill., was driving a truck near Baghdad when an improvised explosive device detonated. He lost his right arm, broke his jaw and his body was riddled with shrapnel. The VA claim adjudicator granted him benefits for his lost arm and broken jaw, but declined to award shrapnel injury benefits with these mind-boggling words: "Shrapnel wounds all over body not service connected." There are scores (maybe hundreds or even thousands) of similar, hauntingly infuriating examples.
2. Bureaucratic blinders: In January 2011, a World War II vet, who retired to

Florida after a long postal service career, died. He was getting VA and U.S. Postal Service pension. His wife, needing basic living income, promptly sent the VA and USPS requests for her spousal share of the pensions and copies of his death certificate. Days later, USPS responded and she received her first monthly pension share in February. But nothing from the VA, except more paperwork. Half a year later, after I asked a top VA official about it, she finally got her first pension check in August (with retroactive back payments). When I asked the VA's top benefits official why USPS could respond immediately but the VA didn't, he calmly explained the VA pension was more complicated because she might deserve more money if her husband died of his war injuries. So I asked the most obvious question: Why couldn't the VA immediately pay her the base amount (like the USPS did) and then if the VA calculator she deserved more? The VA official gave me a surprise: Yes, that's how it should be done, he said, and wrote himself a note about it.

But of course, Secretary Bob, if your VA officials really saw themselves as veterans' advocates, they'd have come up with that simple solution ages ago. You are pushing your notion that veterans should think of your department as "My VA." And, on CBS News' "60 Minutes," when asked what values you want to instill at the VA, you said: "It's integrity, it's advocacy, it's respect, it's excellence."

Well, it's time to revive an idea I've long proposed: To end the VA cultural mindset that resulted in veterans viewing the VA as Veterans' Adversaries — and encourage VA employees to view themselves as Veterans' Advocates, then an official department name-change will instantly accomplish that.

And you'll have a new title: secretary of the Department of Veterans Advocacy.

Martin Schram, a McClatchy-Tribune op-ed columnist, is a veteran Washington journalist, author and TV documentary executive.

Forming alliances, as they did before WWI

By ROBERT FREEMAN

At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, the Great War was over. But the "War to End All Wars" famously didn't live up to its billing. Still, it had greater impact on the world than any event of the last thousand years. The question is whether another such war might be looming today.

It was in World War I that humanity first practiced the industrialization of human slaughter — 16 million people were killed, more than 17 million were wounded. No one could seem to stop it. During the height of the carnage, at the battle of the Somme, about 60,000 died the first day. Four great empires expired in the war, more than in any other event in history. The German, Austrian, Russian and Ottoman empires were destroyed and dismembered. Out of their carcasses were born 11 new countries.

Five of those countries — Iraq, Jordan, Palestine (now Israel), Syria and Lebanon — are in the Middle East. They are still the source of some of the most intractable conflicts on the planet.

Communism came into being as a state-based system as a result of World War I. The war played a major role in bringing down the government of the Russian czar in 1917. Into the breach leapt the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin. Their seizure of power set the stage for one of the most enduring conflicts of the 20th century, the Cold War.

And World War I was the moment in history when the center of global power shifted, from Europe to the United States, where it has resided ever since.

In other words, industrialized war, communism in the U.S. as the dominant world power and the modern Middle East had their origins in World War I. No event of the last 1,000 years has so decisively rearranged the architecture of global power.

But could such a tectonic upheaval happen again? Three patterns of conflict in the world today remind us of patterns that presaged World War I.

The first is the fact of a declining imperial power being confronted by a rapidly growing upstart. In World War I, Britain was the declining power while Germany was the galloping upstart. In 1850, Britain controlled almost 60 percent of the entire world's wealth, compared with 3 percent for Germany. By 1913, Britain's share had shrunk to 14 percent, and Germany's had risen to 21 percent.

Today, the dominant global power is the United States. It is being challenged, at least economically, by China. In October, China became the largest economy in the world in purchasing power parity terms. It could shortly surpass the U.S. in raw terms. Economic power inevitably translates into political power — an echo of early 1900s.

and Russia.

Today, world powers are again forming alliances. They are the U.S. and Europe, as the dominant powers, against Russia and China, the challengers. The current conflict in Ukraine has driven Russia and China closer together. They may be joined in their alliance by Brazil, India and South Africa. Think of it as the "haves" versus the "want-to-haves."

The final parallel is conflict in the Middle East. World War I was fundamentally about who would control the collapsing Ottoman Empire, with its oil riches in the Persian Gulf. Germany had made friends with the Ottomans. If they seized the gulf it would have posed an existential threat to Britain, which ran its globally deployed navy on oil. The war lost.

The conflict in the Middle East today is about oil. Well, it is the lifeblood of industrial civilization, but it is running out. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 is now notorious for having been carried out under false pretenses, the real story being oil. Still, today we fight for who will control the Persian Gulf, and, therefore, the world.

It's been said that "history never repeats itself, but it does rhyme." There won't be a second World War I, but we can hear the rhymes of history echoing from that tectonic upheaval of 96 years ago.

Robert Freeman is the author of "The Best One-Word War I," "Germany and Austria-Hungary Face Off against England, France and Russia."

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 statewide syndicates.

Obama right on 'net neutrality' (Raleigh, N.C.) News & Observer

It's no small irony that President Barack Obama supported protections for an open Internet on the same day he arrived in China, a nation that notoriously controls and censors Internet communications.

The president is trying to ensure that Americans from having their Internet access and usage manipulated by a dictatorship of the nation's Internet providers. But in the United States, unlike China, keeping the Internet free requires giving a government agency, the Federal Communications Commission, the power to ensure "net neutrality." The term means that information moving on the Internet — except for illegal material, such as child pornography — is treated equally and not subject to blockages, slowdowns or special tolls determined by providers.

Net neutrality conflicts with the desire of Internet providers like Verizon, AT&T, Comcast and Time Warner Cable to establish "fast lanes" for which users pay more to move data at higher speeds. They say that traffic controls and high-speed lanes are a natural evolution of the nation's innovation superhighway and that government regulations will slow commerce and innovation.

"We are stunned the president would abandon the longstanding, bipartisan policy of lightly regulating the Internet and calling for extreme" regulation, said Michael Howell, president and CEO of the National Cable Television and Communications Association, the primary lobbying arm of the cable industry.

But the industry's call for "freedom" is really a demand that those who control the means of Internet communications be able to stifle the flow and character of Internet content. The president and other advocates of net neutrality say a truly free Internet would be shaped by the tastes and needs of consumers, not by the monopolies that control the pipelines.

To ensure net neutrality, the president called on the FCC to treat Internet providers like public utilities just as phone companies are regulated.

The FCC should move to protect net neutrality. When Internet providers file lawsuits in response, the FCC's authority should be upheld by the courts. The Internet is becoming the main transmitter of communications in the United States. How it responds to the public's needs should not be left to phone companies and especially not to the cable titans that have already established records of high monopoly pricing and wretched consumer service.

Obamacare numbers confusing Anniston (Ala.) Star

One of the Affordable Care Act's bothresome traits is its reliance on numbers to show its success — and those numbers vary, depending on who provides them.

That said, President Barack Obama's signature legislation is having a profound effect on health care in the United States. By any measure, more Americans have health insurance today than before the law was first enacted in 2010. The numbers in the uninsured this year, by most estimates, Obamacare may be a flawed law, but in that sense, it is working.

Saturday marks the law's second open-enrollment period — a critical phase in Obamacare's growth. But here's where the numbers begin to vary.

On Monday, the Obama administration



Kim Kyung-Hoon/AP

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, left, and Chinese President Xi Jinping shake hands at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Beijing on Monday.

estimated that 9.1 million people would sign up for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act by the end of 2015. That's several million fewer than most independent projections and those of the Congressional Budget Office, according to The New York Times. The CBO's estimate: 13 million in 2015.

Anne Pilipic, the president of the non-profit Enroll America, which advocates for expanded health care coverage, told The Times that the White House had taken "a pragmatic, analytical approach" to its 2015 projections. It's easy to understand why.

Memories of Obamacare's botched rollout and website issues haven't fully subsided. What was to be the shining moment of Obama's presidency was overwhelmed by a website that crashed under pressure. Months went by before the story about the Affordable Care Act wasn't a story about an administration with a balky, ineffective online sign-up.

Today, the Obama administration's reserved projections are in sharp contrast to its bold predictions of the past. Understandable? Yes. But it's a byproduct of previous mistakes, an administration that would rather undersell the law's potential now instead of being forced to address missed goals tomorrow.

As we've seen for the last six years, this White House has excelled at messaging and timing, especially on matters as important as the Affordable Care Act. Lowerballing its projections on Obamacare may limit future disappointments, but it's hardly the tact of a confident administration.

FBI ruse put reporters at risk The Seattle Times

Americans of every stripe should echo The Associated Press' recent demand that the FBI never present its agents as journalists again.

This appeal comes after the FBI acknowledged two weeks ago that one of its agents posed as an AP reporter to snare a teenager making bomb threats against a Thurston County high school in 2007. FBI Director James Comey argued in a Nov. 7 letter to The New York Times that, when such tactics are employed, they are done "reasonably and legally," and are subject to close court supervision.

Journalists disagree, and so should anyone who values the fundamental freedoms of American life. If sources think that journalists are cooperating with law enforcement, or actually are law enforcement officers, those sources with important information to tell would not trust reporters. Stories would not be shared, investigated, published. The watchdog would not be as strong.

The AP's demand is grounded in the

constitutional guarantee that the press be free from any government interference. More fundamentally, that First Amendment aegis preserves the freedom to share ideas and convey information vital to a functioning republic.

By impersonating journalists, the FBI directly infringes upon the freedoms the Founding Fathers explicitly safeguarded in the Bill of Rights.

Instead of ensuring the safety of Americans, the secretive intelligence agency could be endangering the lives of America's truth-tellers. Such impersonations could imperil the safety of journalists if violent sources, at home and abroad, suspect they are cops instead. ...

This deception undermines core American principles. It should stop.

Tension greets China, Japan The Washington Post

China's Xi Jinping and Japan's Shinzo Abe were careful not to smile when they met in Beijing on Monday — the first encounter between the leaders of Asia's two biggest powers since either took office. Their 25-minute get-together nevertheless represented a welcome step toward easing tensions in East Asia. At the beginning of the year, the two nations were embroiled in a deepening conflict over a string of tiny islands, exacerbated by the expansive foreign policy ambitions of both leaders. While neither the dispute nor the conflicting agendas have been resolved, the dangerous downward spiral of Japanese-Chinese relations has at least been arrested.

For that, credit mostly goes to Abe, who played suitor to Xi in seeking a meeting at the Asian summit meeting in Beijing. The Japanese leader has rankled leaders and public opinion around the region with nationalistic rhetoric and gestures such as a visit to a Tokyo shrine where war criminals are among those honored. But Abe's government has mostly been on the defensive in the dispute over the Senkaku (or Diaoyu) Islands, which have long been under Japan's control but have been the target of increasingly assertive claims — and naval incursions — by China.

Xi, who during his first two years in power has overseen a disturbing series of aggressive acts toward other countries in the South China Sea, has played on easily roused public hostility toward Japan. While ostensibly trying to meet with Abe, the Chinese president set a couple of tough conditions for reversing himself: that Japan acknowledge that the sovereignty of the islands was disputed and that Abe pledge not to return to the Yasukuni shrine. In the end both issues were finessed. Abe made no public promise, but dispatched emissaries who privately assured Beijing he

planned no future Yasukuni visits, and the two governments agreed on a statement saying they had "different positions" on the islands.

The fragile accord is a help to President Barack Obama, who has been hoping to build closer ties to Xi even while supporting U.S. allies — including the Philippines as well as Japan — in the recent territorial disputes. Obama's exaggerated territorial claims Obama usefully made it clear this year that the United States would come to Japan's defense in the event of an attack on its forces around the islands, but he also pressed Abe to avoid further nationalist gestures. Asian fears that China might be emboldened by Obama's reluctance to use U.S. hard power in Syria or Ukraine, voiced by numerous official visitors to Washington, have not borne out.

That leaves unanswered whether the Sino-Japanese summit reflects a stepping back by Xi from the aggressive foreign policy of his first two years. With his power in Beijing apparently consolidated, and myriad domestic problems to address, that would be a logical tactical step for a ruler with eight years left in his prospective tenure. Xi's sown as he shook Abe's hand did seem to foretell a more moderate, but Abe expressed optimism Tuesday that Japan and China would "return to our basic focus of mutually beneficial and strategic relations." We hope China shares that goal.

Cooperate on foreign policy (Minneapolis) Star Tribune

Congressional Republicans resoundingly won the midterm election battle. Now the GOP needs to pivot from campaigning to governing, and President Barack Obama will need to work with the new majority despite the divide, and even enmity, that separates them.

Foreign policy offers both sides a chance to cooperate, if not coalesce, on shared objectives.

On his part, Obama should better articulate his foreign policy strategy. Adversaries and allies alike perceive America as close to rudderless, which can invite aggression and even military miscalculation that could necessitate U.S. force. And Congress should consider that hobbling Obama further only upsets the foreign policy fecklessness that the GOP campaigned against. Instead, it's time to bilaterally advance U.S. interests.

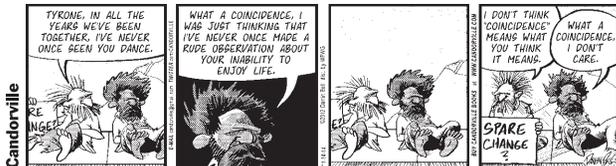
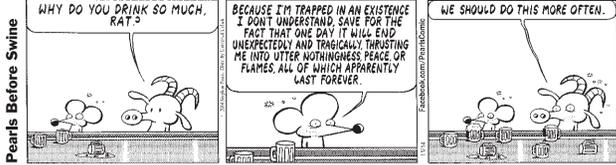
Obama has signaled that he will ask Congress for authorization to use force in the fight against the Islamic State group. That is long overdue, and should spur a spirited dialogue about what Obama's stated goal of "degrading and ultimately destroying" the Islamic State really means.

Those who think the fight should be left to local forces will have their say. Those who concur with the growing consensus that U.S. strategy is woefully inadequate to counter forces in Syria is unworkable should make their case, too, and most important, weigh in on whether to deploy combat troops. Doing so is the most profound decision a president makes, and Congress should show more oversight of the decision.

Of course, an effective foreign policy must rely on more than force. The most effective tool, diplomacy, can be bolstered by free-trade agreements. Two major pacts are pending: The Trans-Pacific Partnership is a 12-nation free trade agreement under scrutiny of the Senate. Brazil, Chile, China, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. The other proposed deal, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, would link the U.S. and the European Union.

As the world's most innovative and productive nations, the U.S. and Europe stand to benefit from free-trade agreements, despite the disruption they can cause.

Politics stopping at the water's edge may be an anachronism of a more cohesive era. For Congress and Obama, however, presenting a more united front on critical foreign policy issues should be a bipartisan goal.



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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49				50					51	

- ACROSS**
- 1 Lustrous black
 - 4 Actor Lowe
 - 8 Boars' mates
 - 12 Acapulco gold
 - 13 Type of pudding
 - 14 Mine entrance
 - 15 Patterned silks
 - 17 Bart's sister
 - 18 Meds measure
 - 19 Breast-pocket accessory
 - 20 Enjoys the hammock
 - 22 — McAn
 - 24 Concept
 - 25 Trite notions
 - 29 Cattle call
 - 30 Duplicity
 - 31 Before
 - 32 Served as intermediary
 - 34 Zoo structure
 - 35 Full house, e.g.
 - 36 Sin city
 - 37 Pipe type
 - 40 Part of a Batman costume
 - 41 Slender
 - 42 Form of male bonding
 - 46 Con
 - 47 Mary's follower
 - 48 Insult (Sl.)
 - 49 Resumes, briefly
 - 50 "Take — Train"
 - 51 Perched
- DOWN**
- 23 Contain
 - 25 Incinerate
 - 26 Maze runner's problems
 - 27 Therefore
 - 28 Equip
 - 30 Appearance
 - 33 Military garb
 - 34 Nightclub in a Manilow song
 - 36 Ballroom dance
 - 37 Spill the beans
 - 38 Hindu noble
 - 39 Grooving on
 - 40 Arrive
 - 42 Lunch order, briefly
 - 43 "Go, team!"
 - 44 Spy org.
 - 45 "Guinness Book" suffix

Answer to Previous Puzzle

C	A	S	K	I	K	E	A	B	L	Y
U	G	L	I	N	O	R	E	O		
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W	O	O	B	I	C	B	A	N	N	S
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11-14

CRYPTOQUIP

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 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: PREVIOUS U.S. PRESIDENT WHO ALWAYS INSISTED ON HAVING THINGS NEAT AND ORDERLY: TIDY ROOSEVELT.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals D

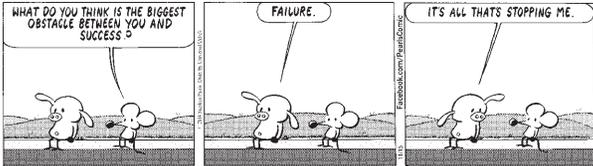
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



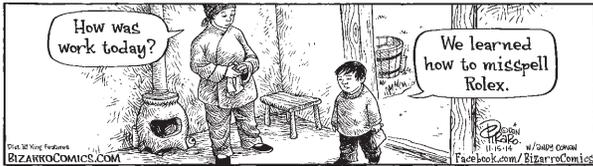
Get Fuzzy



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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- ACROSS**
- 1 Get lippy
 - 5 Firearms
 - 9 Rx overseer
 - 12 Groundbreaking invention?
 - 13 St. Louis landmark
 - 14 A billion years
 - 15 Chills and fever
 - 16 Edgar — Burroughs
 - 17 Potent stick
 - 18 Eli's alma mater
 - 19 Spelldown
 - 20 Fill till full
 - 21 As well
 - 23 Pair
 - 25 "The Daily Show" guest, often
 - 28 Got away from
 - 32 Literary intro
 - 33 Put before a judge
 - 34 Wholly absorbed
 - 36 Crucial
 - 37 Pi follower
 - 38 Paving gunk
 - 39 Italy's silhouette
 - 42 Thanksgiving veggie
 - 44 Roundish hair-style
 - 48 Suitable
 - 49 Sean Lennon's mom
 - 50 Lowly laborer
 - 51 Long, crosser
 - 52 "How sweet —!"
- DOWN**
- 22 Pizzazz
 - 24 Extreme
 - 25 Mimic
 - 26 Grecian vessel
 - 27 Anderson's "High —"
 - 29 Conk out
 - 30 Still, in verse
 - 31 Banned bug spray
 - 35 Camry or Prius
 - 36 Nth
 - 39 South Seas paradise
 - 40 October birth-stone
 - 41 "Beetle Bailey" dog
 - 43 Related
 - 45 Accomplishment
 - 46 Optimistic
 - 47 Cameo quartz
 - 49 Shrilk bark

Answer to Previous Puzzle

J	E	T	C	H	A	D	S	O	W	S
O	R	O	R	I	C	E	A	D	I	T
B	R	O	C	A	D	E	S	L	I	S
D	O	S	E	H	A	N	K	Y		
L	O	L	L	S	T	H	O	M		
I	D	E	A	B	R	O	M	I	D	E
M	O	O	G	U	I	L	E	R	E	R
B	R	O	K	E	R	C	A	G	E	
			H	A	N	D	S	O	D	O
B	R	I	A	R	C	A	P	E		
L	A	N	K	B	R	O	M	A	N	C
A	N	T	L	A	M	B	D	I	S	
B	I	O	S	T	H	E	A	S	A	T

11-15

CRYPTOQUIP

WNJMZRXM D'E NDCQ JZ ZOG
 JM Q OZBNE'V KWGTDQVJ
 OWJTM, D CGZO JMWJ'V

ZGNH OBDVJ-KRN JMDGCDGX.
 Yesterday's Cryptquip: AFTER THAT GUY KNOWINGLY PARKED HIS CAR IN THE WRONG PLACE, HE HAD A SENSE OF IMPOUNDING DOOM.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: J equals T

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Government: Get used to cheaper gas

By JONATHAN FAHEY
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Those low gas prices on station signs aren't going away soon, the government says.

In a dramatic shift from previous forecasts, the Energy Department predicted Wednesday that the average price of gasoline in the U.S. will be below \$2.94 per gallon in 2015, a 44-cent drop from an outlook issued just a

month ago. If the sharply lower estimate holds true, U.S. consumers will save \$61 billion on gas compared with this year.

Rising oil production, particularly in the U.S., and weak spots in the global economy have led to a sharp reduction in oil prices during the past four months. Not seeing much of a change ahead, the government cut its forecast for global oil prices next year by \$18 per barrel to \$83.

As a result, U.S. drivers on average will pay 45 cents less for a gallon of gas next year compared with this year. Based on expected gasoline consumption, that's a savings of \$60.9 billion.

That may not seem like a lot in the context of a \$17.5 trillion U.S. economy, but economists say it matters because it immediately gives consumers more money to spend on other things. Consumer spending accounts for 70 percent of the U.S. economy.

"It would be a reversal of the trend over the last few years where consumers can't stretch a dollar far enough," said Tim Quinlan, an economist at Wells Fargo.

After falling for 48 straight days, the average gasoline price in the U.S. is \$2.92, the lowest since December 2010, according to AAA.

That was also the last full year when the average came in below \$3 per gallon.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro cents (Nov. 14)	\$1.2788
Dollar buys (Nov. 14)	67.820
British pound (Nov. 14)	\$1.63
Japanese yen (Nov. 14)	112.00
South Korean won (Nov. 14)	1,069.00

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$1.5747/6,350
Canada (dollar)	1.1337
China (Yuan)	6.1248
Denmark (Krone)	5.9695
Egypt (Pound)	7.1515
Euro	\$1.2469/8,820
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7547
Hungary (Forint)	240.20
Israel (Shekel)	3.8127
Japan (Yen)	115.64
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2912
Norway (Krone)	6.7797
Philippines (Peso)	44.87
Poland (Zloty)	3.1723
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	1.0934
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2912
South Korea (Won)	1,069.42
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9542
Thailand (Baht)	32.77
Turkey (New Lira)	2.4409

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., 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 United Kingdom, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$3.244	\$3.437	\$3.618	\$3.980
Change in price	-5.2 cents	-8.3 cents	-5.4 cents	+5.4 cents
Netherlands	..	\$4.226	\$4.491	\$4.460
Change in price	..	-0.1 cents	-0.2 cents	-0.2 cents
U.K.	..	\$3.407	\$4.056	\$3.950
Change in price	..	-5.3 cents	-0.2 cents	+5.4 cents
Azores	..	..	\$3.707	..
Change in price	..	..	no change	..
Turkey	..	\$3.372	\$3.575	\$3.827
Change in price	..	no change	no change	no change
Italy	..	..	\$3.960	\$4.445
Change in price	..	..	no change	no change
Italy	\$4.428	..	..	\$4.466
Change in price	no change	..	..	no change

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	..	\$3.399	..	\$3.759
Change in price	..	-6.0 cents	..	+5.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.199	..	..	\$3.759
Change in price	no change	..	..	-5.0 cents
South Korea	\$3.069	..	..	\$3.759
Change in price	-5.0 cents	..	..	+5.0 cents
Guam	\$3.059**	\$3.249	\$3.429	..
Change in price	-5.0 cents	-5.0 cents	-6.0 cents	..

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of Nov. 15-21

MARKET WATCH

Nov. 12, 2014	
Dow Jones Industrials	-2.70
Nasdaq composite	14.58
Standard & Poor's 500	-1.43
Russell 2000	6.51
1,186.47	

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Discount rate	4.00
Federal funds market rate	0.09
3-month bill	0.03
30-year bond	3.10

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



Friday's US temperatures

City	Hi	Lo	Wthr	Chatanooga	42	25	Pcldy	Fort Wayne	34	19	Cldy	Louisville	37	24	Pcldy	Pocatello	41	28	Snow
Ablene, Tex	44	31	Cldy	Cheyenne	33	11	Cldy	Fresno	68	48	Pcldy	Lubbock	42	29	Pcldy	Portland, Maine	42	28	Cldy
Akron, Ohio	34	22	Cldy	Chicago	30	21	Cldy	Goodland	30	18	Cldy	Macon	55	28	Cldy	Portland, Ore.	44	24	South
Albany, N.Y.	41	23	Cldy	Cincinnati	33	20	Pcldy	Grand Junction	42	29	Cldy	Madison	28	13	Pcldy	Providence	43	27	Cldy
Albuquerque	58	38	Cldy	Cleveland	34	25	Cldy	Grand Rapids	33	26	Snow	Medford	57	43	Cldy	Pueblo	38	23	Cldy
Allentown, Pa.	43	24	Pcldy	Colorado Springs	40	26	Cldy	Great Falls	8	-6	Cldy	Memphis	40	26	Pcldy	Raleigh-Durham	46	24	Pcldy
Amarillo	42	25	Pcldy	Columbia, S.C.	51	29	Pcldy	Green Bay	27	11	Pcldy	Miami Beach	89	66	Pcldy	Rapid City	71	59	Cldy
Anchorage	38	31	Cir	Columbus, Ga.	51	30	Cir	Greensboro, N.C.	43	23	Cldy	Midland-Odessa	46	33	Pcldy	Reno	58	35	Cir
Ashville	40	22	Pcldy	Columbia, S.C.	51	29	Pcldy	Harrisburg	42	26	Pcldy	Milwaukee	30	18	Cldy	Richmond	45	25	Cldy
Atlanta	45	26	Cir	Concord, N.H.	44	25	Pcldy	Hartford-Spfd	43	26	Pcldy	Minneapolis	20	5	Pcldy	Roanoke	40	25	Cldy
Atlantic City	45	26	Cir	Corpus Christi	52	47	Pcldy	Helena	12	-4	Snow	Missoula	24	3	Snow	Rochester	36	27	Cldy
Austin	48	28	Pcldy	Dallas-Ft. Worth	46	33	Pcldy	Honolulu	84	71	Rain	Mobile	84	71	Rain	Rockford	38	15	Pcldy
Baltimore	40	26	Cir	Dayton	33	19	Cldy	Houston	51	37	Pcldy	Montgomery	48	26	Cir	Sacramento	69	47	Pcldy
Baton Rouge	51	31	Cir	Daytona Beach	66	51	Pcldy	Huntsville	40	23	Pcldy	Nashville	39	23	Cir	St. Louis	34	23	Cir
Biloxi	17	-1	Cldy	Denver	35	20	Pcldy	Indianapolis	30	18	Pcldy	New Orleans	49	37	Cir	St. Petersburg	71	59	Cldy
Birmingham	43	26	Cir	Des Moines	27	17	Cir	Jackson, Miss.	45	27	Cir	New York City	43	33	Pcldy	St. Thomas	87	79	Pcldy
Bismarck	14	-2	Cir	Detroit	37	24	Cldy	Jacksonville	61	39	Cir	Newark	46	33	Pcldy	Salerno, Ore.	45	27	Rain
Boise	40	18	Snow	Duluth	20	3	Pcldy	Janeau	39	22	Cir	Norfolk, Va.	46	33	Pcldy	San Lake City	50	33	Cldy
Boston	43	30	Cldy	El Paso	66	49	Cldy	Kansas City	31	21	Pcldy	North Platte	26	12	Cldy	San Angelo	48	32	Cldy
Bridgport	44	28	Pcldy	Elkins	28	18	Cldy	Key West	78	69	Cir	Oklahoma City	38	26	Pcldy	San Antonio	50	39	Pcldy
Brownsville	58	50	Pcldy	Erie	35	30	Snow	Knoxville	38	24	Pcldy	Omaha	26	17	Snow	San Diego	69	61	Cir
Buffalo	36	27	Cldy	Eugene	50	34	Rain	Lake Charles	49	31	Cir	Orlando	69	51	Pcldy	San Francisco	67	53	Pcldy
Burlington, Vt.	38	22	Cldy	Evansville	37	24	Cir	Lansing	34	24	Cir	Paducah	36	18	Cir	San Jose	64	49	Pcldy
Caribou, Maine	33	18	Cldy	Fairbanks	23	5	Pcldy	Las Vegas	70	51	Cldy	Piedmont	29	5	Snow	Santa Fe	52	32	Cldy
Casper, Wyo.	31	3	Cldy	Fargo	33	23	Pcldy	Lexington	35	22	Cir	Peara	31	17	Cir	St. Marie	28	18	Cldy
Charleston, S.C.	56	33	Pcldy	Flagstaff	50	30	Cldy	Lincoln	27	16	Snow	Philadelphia	44	29	Cir	Savannah	59	33	Pcldy
Charleston, W.Va.	37	21	Cldy	Flint	36	23	Cldy	Little Rock	41	25	Pcldy	Phoenix	80	59	Pcldy	Seattle	43	30	Pcldy
Charlotte, N.C.	46	28	Pcldy	Fort Smith	39	25	Pcldy	Los Angeles	70	56	Cldy	Pittsburgh	35	23	Cldy	Shreveport	46	27	Pcldy

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

National temperature extremes
Hi: Wed., 85, Pompano, Fla.
Lo: Wed., 26, Powder River, Wyo.



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STARS AND STRIPES

HIGH SCHOOL/MLB



JAMES KIMBER/Stars and Stripes

Yokota's Phil Delisi signs a national letter of intent Nov. 13 at Yokota High School to play golf next fall at UCLA. Delisi credits his parents for forcing him to play as a child and feels being able to play golf at the Department of Defense golf courses consistently helped hone his game.

Yokota golfer Delisi signs letter of intent with UCLA

By JAMES KIMBER
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Phil Delisi has played golf as long as he can remember.

"I've pretty much had a club since I could walk, I think," the Yokota senior said, moments after he signed a national letter of intent to play golf for UCLA on full scholarship next fall.

Nov. 12 was national signing day for many prospective NCAA student-athletes. Given the time zone difference, Delisi had to wait until Nov. 13 to sign his letter. It was probably the smallest of the many obstacles he's had to endure trying to win a scholarship to play golf in the U.S. while his father, an Army officer stationed here, took the family overseas.

"Being overseas has really helped me home in my game and I think I'm able to take it to another level," Delisi said. "The courses here are narrower than the ones I'm used to in the States. That really helped me with my accuracy, though."

The entire Delisi family golfs and his father joked that if Phil wanted to spend time with the family, he would have to come out to the course.

"I'm guilty of forcing [my son] to play," Maj. Chong Delisi said laughing as he noted that his insistence has finally paid off. "When we went to Disney World, we spent all of our time playing the courses there. We didn't even visit the amusement park. We're a strange family."

For the junior Delisi, golf was rarely a hobby reserved for vacations.

"It really began [to be serious] when I was seven playing competitive golf in Hawaii. I won a few tournaments and realized that I really enjoyed this game and wanted to pursue it," he said. "We then moved to Texas and I won the state boys championship when I was 14. I began to believe I could play at a great college and maybe go pro someday."

Two years ago, the Delisi family moved from Texas to Japan, where green fees are significantly higher. The narrower courses here forced him to work on his weaknesses by shaping his shots more accurately.

"It really changed my perspective of the game playing here and traveling back to the States to play," he said. "The different levels of competition and the cultural differences between players really gave me a unique world view of the game."

What made it especially challenging, though, is that most DODDS schools in the Pacific — including Yokota — don't have varsity golf teams. This limited him to the few local tournaments hosted on base as well as the few tournaments for top-level junior national talent.

But "the DOD courses are a great benefit. I can play an unlimited number of rounds there, but they're also a little far from where I live," Delisi said. "But the Par 3 here in Yokota is my favorite facility. It forces you to dial in your short game and that's the majority of golf."

Kimber,james@stripes.com
Twitter:@james_kimber

Kershaw, Kluber win Cy Young Awards

By BEN WALKER
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Everyone expected Clayton Kershaw to pitch a shutout, and he did — a unanimous choice for the NL Cy Young Award.

Corey Kluber edging out Felix Hernandez for the AL pitching prize, that was no sure thing.

Now, the big question: Is Kershaw the Most Valuable Player, too?

"I can't even really fathom it happening," Kershaw said on a conference call Wednesday, shortly after winning his third Cy Young in four seasons.

Kershaw led the majors in victories and ERA and threw a no-hitter, going 21-3 with a 1.77 ERA for the NL West champion Los Angeles Dodgers.

The 26-year-old lefty with a wicked curveball was to find out Thursday if he's the first NL pitcher to sweep the MVP and Cy Young honors since Bob Gibson in 1968.

"I think a lot of things probably have to go right," Kershaw said, adding, "there are so many people out there who don't think a pitcher should win."

Pittsburgh center fielder Andrew McCutchen, who won the NL MVP last year, and Miami slugger Giancarlo Stanton are competing against Kershaw for the honor.

"Everybody's going to have an opinion" on the position players-pitcher debate, Kershaw said. His thought? "I don't really have an opinion either way," he said, diplomatically.

"I think most valuable is such a tough thing to assess," he said.

Kershaw won the Cy Young for the second year in a row, getting all 30 first-place votes in balloting by members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

Johnny Cueto of Cincinnati was second with 112 points, followed by Adam Wainwright of St. Louis (97) and World Series MVP Madison Bumgarner of San Francisco (28).

Voting was completed before the postseason began. Kershaw went 0-2 with a 7.82 ERA in a Division Series loss to St. Louis, leaving him at 1-5 with a 5.12

ERA in his playoff career.

Kluber's dominant second half helped him draw 17 of 30 first-place votes and 169 points, while Seattle ace King Felix got 13 firsts and 159 points. Chris Sale of the Chicago White Sox was third with 78 points.

"I think I'm definitely surprised," said Kluber, who "just assumed" Hernandez would win.

Nicknamed "Klubot" for his stoic demeanor, his plans after the announcement were far from flashy.

"Probably go home and give my daughters a bath," he said.

A 28-year-old righty, Kluber went 18-9 to tie for the AL lead in wins. He had a 2.44 ERA in his first full major league season and 269 strikeouts, two behind league leader David Price.

Kluber had consecutive 14-strikeout games in September, but not done since Arizona's Randy Johnson in 2004. He became Cleveland's fourth Cy Young winner, joining Gaylord Perry (1972), CC Sabathia (2007) and Cliff Lee (2008).

"To have your name mentioned along with theirs in certain categories is humbling," Kluber said.

Hernandez, who won the AL award in 2010, went 15-6 with a league-leading 2.14 ERA. He struck out 248 in 236 innings.

"I don't know what to say. That was tough," Hernandez said. "A little disappointed."

Kershaw joined Dodgers Hall of Fame lefty Sandy Koufax as one of nine pitchers with at least three Cy Youngs. Roger Clemens leads the list with seven.

The previous pitcher with a unanimous win was Detroit's Justin Verlander, who took the AL Cy Young and MVP in 2011. A year earlier, Philadelphia's Roy Halladay unanimously won the NL Cy Young.

Verlander is among six AL pitchers to take the Cy Young and MVP since Gibson's NL sweep nearly a half-century ago.

Kershaw became the first pitcher to lead the majors in ERA for four straight years.

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STARS AND STRIPES

HIGH SCHOOL: DODDS EUROPE

ATHLETES OF THE YEAR



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Wiesbaden's Leah Rojas concentrates on the ball in the Division I final against Naples at the DODDS Europe volleyball championships in Ramstein, Germany. Rojas has been named the Stars and Stripes volleyball athlete of the year.

Volleyball: Leah Rojas, Wiesbaden

By GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

Everyone's heard the sports cliché "there's no I in team." But Wiesbaden senior Leah Rojas is the living embodiment of the phrase.

The Warrior outside hitter was a lot of volleyball-related skills, but talking about those skills isn't one of them. Rojas is unable, it seems, to talk about anything but her team.

"I prided myself on being able to mesh with the team. The team led itself," Rojas said. "We had so many strong players that were also leaders and good in their position. Everyone knew what they had to do and we just worked together."

And it worked spectacularly well. The Warriors navigated a tough regular season without taking a loss, did the same over the first two days of the European volleyball tournament and finally outlasted Naples 19-25, 25-11, 25-14, 23-25, 16-14 in a classic title-match duel.

Rojas won't talk about her central role in the Warriors' success this year. But her efforts didn't go unnoticed. She was named the most valuable player of the Division I tournament, just minutes after recording the title-clinching point with a service ace.

Now, she is the Stars and Stripes volleyball Athlete of the Year.

"There is no doubt that she was the glue keeping everything together, on and off the court," Warrior coach Linnea Velsvaag said. "She is a true team player."

Wiesbaden's 2014 season doesn't look like a roller-coaster ride, unless that roller-coaster starts at the top of an ascent and stays there until the end. The Warriors emerged as a championship favorite early and stayed firmly in that strata until they

actually won it.

But that success didn't come easily. There were unexpected obstacles, moments of adversity and the ongoing challenge of turning a talented group of high-school athletes into a high-functioning, championship-caliber team. The fact that it all worked out so well doesn't mean there weren't other, less desirable possible outcomes.

"We had to find that right mix to work together, on the court and off the court," Rojas said. "It's just really hard to pull everybody on the same page."

The most Rojas would say about her own contributions to that process is that she tried to "help the girls keep good spirits."

But her contributions went well beyond that.

Velsvaag offered a lengthy string of adjectives to describe her senior star, from "savvy" to "smart" to "humble." In every way, Velsvaag said, Rojas was instrumental to Wiesbaden's success.

Her on-court play was a key to the Warrior championship.

"She plays anywhere and everywhere on the court," Velsvaag said. "She is sound defensively as well as being a great hitter and setter."

And her off-court demeanor kept the Warriors focused and poised for the success that was quickly coming their way.

Rojas was "able to represent the team with a calm, clear head," Velsvaag said.

The days after Wiesbaden's championship win have confronted Rojas with a new challenge. People are approaching her with congratulations and high-fives. And while she usually knows just what to do in volleyball-related situations, the attention has left Rojas a bit flummoxed.

"I don't feel like a champion," Rojas said. "But then I watch the game, and I think, 'Wow, maybe we are champions.'"



JOSHUA L. DeMOTT/Stars and Stripes

Hohenfels' David Vidovic stiff arms an Ansbach defender in the DODDS Europe Division II football championship in Kaiserslautern, Germany. Vidovic is Stars and Stripes' football athlete of the year for the second straight year.

Football: David Vidovic, Hohenfels

By GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

David Vidovic is extremely difficult to tackle.

It triggered upsets and felled a dynasty. This simple but irrefutable fact has had profound implications for DODDS-Europe Division II football over the last four years.

It launched an entire program from relative obscurity into the division's elite.

It prompted opposing coaches to spend full weeks drawing up ultimately futile defensive schemes.

It produced some of the most memorable moments in recent DODDS-Europe history.

And it is why, for the second consecutive season, Hohenfels Tigers running back Vidovic is the Stars and Stripes football Athlete of the Year.

Vidovic's ascent into stardom began with his transfer to Hohenfels after a freshman season spent on the Vilseck junior varsity. That fall, the sophomore Vidovic helped the Tigers clinch a playoff berth on the last day of the regular season with 403 yards and three touchdowns in a 52-20 win over Aviano.

A year later, Vidovic's prodigious runs led Hohenfels back to the postseason, but he didn't stop there. He scored the go-ahead rushing touchdown and game-clinching interception return in the Tigers' historic semifinal defeat of four-time champion Bitburg. The following week, he scored twice in a one-minute span to lift Hohenfels to a stunning comeback win over SHAPE for the 2013 Division II European championship.

Vidovic, now the accomplished and award-winning centerpiece of a championship team, entered his senior season under the heavy burden of expectation.

He responded as he always had, with discarded tackles, iron-man excellence, astronomical stat lines and touchdown after dramatic touchdown. The only thing lacking from Vidovic's fairy-tale career was a happy ending: his Tigers were denied a second straight title Nov. 1 in a 30-20 loss to Ansbach.

A crestfallen Vidovic wandered the Kaiserslautern High School field in tears that evening, seemingly incredulous that he could want something so bad and not achieve it. The truth that he was just one young man, on a sprawling 100-yard field of 22 young men who all care, all try and all want to win, with a championship-tested coach on either sideline, couldn't console him.

Meanwhile, the Cougars jubilantly explained how they'd contained Vidovic to a mere 377 combined rushing and receiving yards. They talked with pride about how Ansbach coach Marcus George had warned them on the bus ride from Bavaria that Vidovic might outright dominate them for a good portion of the game. It was up to them to fight back, the Cougar players said, and to their credit, they did.

But that, more than anything, is the impact Vidovic has had on DODDS-Europe football.

Not every run ended in a touchdown. Not every game ended in a win. And not every season ended in a championship.

But between the first and last time Vidovic pulled on a Hohenfels Tiger helmet, things changed. Championships switched hands. Dynasties fell. Potential was realized.

And the exploits of David Vidovic were carved into the annals of DODDS-Europe football.

broome.gregory@stripes.com
Twitter: @broomestripes

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Auburn's struggling defense facing Gurley

By JOHN ZENOR
The Associated Press

AUBURN, Ala. — Auburn's defense has been struggling against quarterbacks ranging from a Heisman Trophy contender to a freshman making his first road start.

Now, the ninth-ranked Tigers face a different but equally formidable challenge: Trying to contain No. 16 Georgia's star tailback Todd Gurley on Saturday night upon his return from a four-game suspension for accepting money for autographs.

"Nobody's stopped him and some of them slowed him down a little bit," Auburn defensive coordinator Ellis Johnson said. "The only guy that stopped him was the autograph guy."

Jokes aside, the Tigers' defensive problems became serious over the past month. Auburn's secondary was picked apart by Texas A&M freshman Kyle Allen in the first half of a 41-38 defeat, and Auburn fared even worse against Mississippi State star Dak Prescott.

Gurley and the Bulldogs represent just the latest challenge. "The only guy that stopped him was the autograph guy."

Auburn opponents have been averaging 487 yards and 36 points over the last four games, including losses to the Aggies and Mississippi State. It's especially disturbing for a defense that appeared to have improved dramatically over last season before starting a downward slide, particularly against the pass.

Auburn fans barely got a chance to rattle Allen before he threw a 60-yard touchdown four plays into the game and a 36-yarder less than a minute later after a turnover.

The Tigers did hold A&M to two field goals in the second half. "Getting off to the start, that's been the thing that we've got to fix," Tigers coach Gus Malzahn said. "Once we get into the game, especially the second half, our guys are playing better than they're settling down and all that."

"We've got to get off to a better start defensively earlier in the



No. 9 Auburn (7-2, 4-2 SEC)
at No. 16 Georgia (7-2, 5-2)
AFN-Sports
1:15 a.m. Sunday CET
9:15 a.m. Sunday JKT

game." Auburn did get a boost from the return of safety Jermaine Whitehead. He worked his way back onto the defense for the first time since returning from a suspension after starting out just playing on special teams.

Whitehead had an interception to help out a secondary that has given up 12 touchdown passes and an average of 320 yards passing during that four-game stretch.

The Tigers have been better against the run with a front line that lacks a consistent pass rusher. Defensive end Carl Lawson, who was expected to fill that role, has been sidelined all season by a knee injury sustained in the spring.

Gurley was averaging 154.6 yards on the ground over the first five games, and freshman Nick Chubb put up big numbers in his absence.

They presents a different kind of task for a defense that has been so porous against the pass.

Prescott is the only player to rush for 100 yards against the Tigers this season. But they still have to correct issues ranging from missed tackles to poor communication and busted assignments.

Auburn made it to the national championship game last season with a defense ranked 86th in total yards allowed, while coming up with some big defensive stands.

"I would say we have to do a better job of reacting sometimes," defensive tackle Gabe Wright said.

"That's the thing, when you play in the SEC, you're going to play against great coaches and these coaches bring in great talent."

"I really believe it is a game of adjustments. We of course have to do a better job of starting off better. I always felt like since last year when the new coaching staff came in, we've always been good on third downs and in the fourth quarter. That's something we really have to get back to and stressing."



JIM LYTTLE/AP

Mississippi State running back Brandon Holloway, left, sprints to the end zone for a touchdown ahead of UT-Martin defender Taino Fears-Perez last week. After several weeks of facing inferior opponents, the top-ranked Bulldogs face a tough test against No. 4 Alabama in an SEC Western Division showdown.

Back in the spotlight

No. 1 Mississippi State prepares for SEC West showdown vs. Alabama after lull in schedule

By DAVID BRANDT
The Associated Press

STARKVILLE, Miss. — No. 1 Mississippi State has been an afterthought on college football's landscape during the past few weeks, securing ho-hum wins over inferior opponents with regular monotony.

That all changes on Saturday. The Bulldogs (9-0, 5-0 Southeastern Conference, No. 1 CFP) travel to face No. 4 Alabama (8-1, 5-1, No. 5 CFP) in Tuscaloosa in what will be a showdown for Western Division supremacy. The game begins a pivotal three-game stretch, which also includes Vanderbilt and rival Mississippi.

Just minutes after Mississippi State beat Tennessee-Martin 45-16 on Saturday night, the Bulldogs had already switched their focus to the Tide.

"This is what you play for," Mississippi State coach Dan Mullen said. "We're in the middle of November, competing for first place in the SEC West, which is what it's all about. That's what you come here for. That's what we want our program to be like."

Mississippi State goes into the Alabama game on a 12-game winning streak that's second in the nation behind Florida State. That's one of many reasons the Bulldogs have plenty of confidence despite losing six straight games in the series dating to 2007.

The Tide is riding high after a

come-from-behind, 20-13 overtime win over LSU in Death Valley.

"Playing in big time games in November means you're playing for championships," quarterback Dak Prescott said. "To go to Tuscaloosa being the hunted is a challenge we are willing to take."

Prescott had a good game against Tennessee-Martin, throwing for two touchdowns and running for a 48-yard touchdown before being pulled from the game in the third quarter after the Bulldogs had built a big lead.

The 6-foot-2, 230-pound junior has been dealing with an injured left ankle, but looked healthy against the Skyhawks, scrambling for the long touchdown score and moving in the pocket with ease.

Mississippi State also cleaned up some of its miscues from previous weeks. After eight turnovers over a three-game stretch against Auburn, Kentucky and Arkansas, the first-team offense didn't have any against Tennessee-Martin.

The Bulldogs' offense continues to be nearly unstoppable — they're on pace for single-season program records in both points and total yards. But Mullen is still frustrated with his defense's inability to force three-and-outs and turnovers.

"I give our guys credit, we're finding ways to make plays, we're finding ways to win the game, even though we're doing a lot of things that you can't do to win



No. 1 Mississippi St. (9-0, 5-0)
at No. 4 Alabama (8-1, 5-1)
AFN-Sports
9:30 p.m. Saturday CET
5:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

games," Mullen said. Mississippi State showed its depth in the win against Tennessee-Martin, which might prove useful in what will likely be a physically taxing game against Alabama. Ashton Shumpert ran for 82 yards and a touchdown while Brandon Holloway had 70 yards rushing and a touchdown.

Freshman Gabe Myles caught a team-high five passes for 54 yards. Junior Joe Morrow — the team's ninth-leading receiver coming into the game — caught a 55-yard touchdown pass.

While the Bulldogs will lean on stars like Prescott, running back Rush Robinson and receiver De'Ronny Wilson against the Tide, the hope is Alabama will have to be mindful of everyone on the field.

"We don't want teams to fear one of us," Morrow said. "We want them to fear all of us."

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College GameDay



ETHAN HYMAN, CLEMSON NEWS & OBSERVER/MCT



VASHA HUNT, AL.COM/AP

Player to watch

Deshaun Watson QB|Clemson

The freshman missed the past three games with a broken bone in his throwing hand. Now he's back under center as the Tigers' (7-2, 6-1) head to Georgia Tech (8-2, 5-2) on Saturday. The offense averaged nearly three touchdowns fewer under replacement Cole Stoudt, and Watson is eager to reignite the Tigers' offense. Watson accounted for 15 touchdowns in Clemson's first five games while the Tigers have only managed seven offensive TDs in the four games since.

No. 8 Clemson at No. 24 Georgia Tech 6 p.m. Saturday, CET, 2 a.m. Sunday Japan/Korea, AFN-Xtra

Alabama quarterback Blake Sims, center, works through drills during a team practice on Wednesday in Tuscaloosa, Ala. The No. 4 Tide is hoping to follow last week's dramatic win over LSU with an upset of No. 1 Mississippi State at home on Saturday to preserve their chance at an SEC title and the playoffs.

THE POWER CONFERENCES

ACC			
Atlantic Division			
Conf.	W	L	All
Florida St.	0	0	0
Clemson	6	1	7
Coussville	5	3	8
Boston College	3	6	9
NC State	3	6	9
Syracuse	1	5	6
Wake Forest	0	5	5
Coastal Division			
Conf.	W	L	All
Duke	4	1	5
Georgia Tech	3	2	5
Miami	3	2	5
North Carolina	2	3	5
Pittsburgh	2	3	5
Virginia	2	4	6
Virginia Tech	1	4	5

Game of the week: No. 2 Florida State at Miami. The Hurricanes certainly look like the toughest obstacle between the Seminoles and another unbeaten regular season. A Florida State win would clinch its third straight trip to the ACC title game and make it significantly tougher for Miami to earn its first championship-game berth in its decade in the league.

Inside the numbers: None of the eight most efficient QBs in the conference are seniors and the leader in passing efficiency is true freshman Brad Kaaya of Miami, who has a rating of 157.6.

Players to watch: Pittsburgh RB James Conner, WR Tyler Boyd. Any number of Pitt players could put up huge numbers against a North Carolina defense that is the ACC's worst. Can the Tar Heels slow down Conner, the nation's fourth-leading rusher at 149 yards per game, or Boyd, who averages nearly 89 yards receiving?

Big Ten			
East			
Conf.	W	L	All
Ohio St.	5	0	5
Michigan	4	1	5
Maryland	3	2	5
Michigan State	3	3	6
Penn St.	3	3	6
Rutgers	1	4	5
Indiana	0	5	5
West			
Conf.	W	L	All
Nebraska	4	1	5
Minnesota	4	1	5
Wisconsin	4	1	5
Iowa	3	2	5
Northwestern	2	3	5
Illinois	1	4	5
Purdue	1	4	5

Game of the week: No. 11 Nebraska (8-1, 4-1) at No. 22 Wisconsin (7-2, 4-1). It's time for a showdown in the West when. Those two are tied for first place with Minnesota, and since the Golden Gophers (7-2, 4-1) have to play No. 8 Ohio State, the Wisconsin-Nebraska winner could easily be alone atop the division by Sunday morning.

Inside the numbers: Nebraska's Ameer Abdullah leads the nation with 187.9 all-purpose yards per game, while Wisconsin's Melvin Gordon leads with 156.8 yards rushing per game. Gordon is second to Abdullah in all-purpose yards per game.

Player to watch: Nebraska RB Ameer Abdullah. He has been dealing with a left knee injury from earlier this month, although he was able to practice this week wearing a brace. The three-time 1,000-yard rusher had extra time to rest because the Cornhuskers had a bye last week.

Big 12			
Conf.	W	L	All
Baylor	5	1	6
TCU	5	1	6
Kansas State	5	1	6
Texas	4	2	6
West Virginia	4	2	6
Oklahoma	3	3	6
Oklahoma State	3	3	6
Texas Tech	1	4	5
Kansas	0	6	6
Iowa State	0	6	6

Game of the week: Texas at Oklahoma State. Since being shut out for the first time in 10 years, Texas (5-5, 4-3 Big 12) has won consecutive games for the first time under coach Charlie Strong. The Cowboys (5-4, 3-3) have their first three-game losing streak since five losses in a row in 2005, Mike Gundy's first season as head coach. But Oklahoma State is trying to become bowl eligible for a school-record ninth year in a row since then.

Inside the numbers: Kansas linebacker Ben Hisey leads the FBS with eight solo tackles per game. He leads the Big 12 with 11.2 tackles per game.

Player to watch: Oklahoma State defensive end Emmanuel Ogbah has six sacks and 10½ tackles for loss the last four games. The sophomore leads the Big 12 with 14½ TFLs and his nine sacks are tied for the league lead.

Pac-12			
North			
Conf.	W	L	All
Oregon	6	1	7
Stanford	3	3	6
California	3	4	7
Washington	2	4	6
Washington St.	2	5	7
Oregon St.	1	5	6
South			
Conf.	W	L	All
Arizona St.	5	1	6
UCLA	5	2	7
Southern Cal	5	2	7
Arizona	4	2	7
Utah	3	3	6
Colorado	0	7	7

Game of the week: No. 7 Arizona State at Oregon State. The Sun Devils are in control of their own destiny in the Pac-12 race and, quite possibly, the College Football Playoff. Beat the Beavers this week, and win out the regular season and they'll play in the Pac-12 championship game Dec. 5 in San Francisco. The winner of that game will be 12-1 and seemingly a lock for one of the four playoff spots.

Inside the numbers: The five conference teams ranked in this week's AP Top 25 (Oregon, Arizona State, Arizona, Utah, and UCLA) have a combined road record of 19-2.

Player to watch: Oregon State QB Sean Mannion. The senior keeps adding to his Pac-12 career-best passing numbers, which is currently 12.73 yards. He's about to take over the top spot on the Pac-12's list for total offense. He's at 12,125 yards, and needs just 90 yards to move past Matt Barkley's career total of 12,214.

SERVICE ACADEMIES



Air Force vs. Nevada
Last week: Beat UNLV 48-21
Next game: at San Diego State Nov. 21



Army Western Kentucky
Last week: Beat Connecticut 35-21
Next game: vs. Fordham, Nov. 22



Navy vs. Georgia Southern
Last week: Did not play
Next game: vs. South Alabama, Nov. 28

AP TOP 25 SCHEDULE

Saturday

- No. 1 Mississippi State at No. 4 Alabama
- No. 2 Florida State at Miami
- No. 5 TCU at Kansas
- No. 7 Arizona State at Oregon State
- No. 8 Ohio State at Minnesota
- No. 9 Auburn at No. 16 Georgia
- No. 11 Nebraska at No. 22 Wisconsin
- No. 12 Michigan State at Maryland
- No. 15 Notre Dame vs. Northwestern
- No. 17 Arizona vs. Washington
- No. 18 Clemson at No. 24 Georgia Tech
- No. 19 Duke vs. Virginia Tech
- No. 20 LSU at Arkansas
- No. 21 Marshall vs. Rice
- No. 25 Utah at Stanford

SEC			
East			
Conf.	W	L	All
Missouri	5	1	6
Georgia	4	1	5
Kentucky	2	5	7
South Carolina	2	5	7
Tennessee	1	4	5
Vanderbilt	0	6	6
West			
Conf.	W	L	All
Mississippi St.	5	0	5
Alabama	5	2	7
Mississippi	4	2	6
Auburn	4	2	6
Texas A&M	3	3	6
LSU	3	3	6
Arkansas	3	3	6

Game of the week: No. 1 Mississippi State at No. 4 Alabama. The Bulldogs are the top team in the country according to both the AP and College Football Playoff rankings, but Las Vegas sees it differently, with Alabama a touchdown favorite going into Saturday. Mississippi State's strength is a productive running game led by QB Dak Prescott and running back Josh Robinson. Alabama will counter through the air with quarterback Blake Sims and receiver Amari Cooper.

Inside the numbers: Texas A&M defensive end Miles Garrett has an SEC-leading 11 sacks to share the total of eight Jadeveon Clowney recorded in 2011.

Player to watch: Georgia RB Todd Gurley. He is expected back from a suspension as the 16th-ranked Bulldogs host No. 9 Auburn. Gurley has rushed for 773 yards and eight touchdowns while averaging 8.2 yards per carry this season.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Race for ACC Coastal title could get messy

Division standings are muddled mess

By TIM REYNOLDS
The Associated Press

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — It's called the transitive property of inequality, a fancy way of saying that if A is greater than B, and B is greater than C, then A must be greater than C.

Works in math. Not in the Atlantic Coast Conference's Coastal Division.

Meet the top remaining contenders for the ACC's Coastal title: Duke (4-1 in league play), Georgia Tech (5-2) and Miami (3-2). Now, check if the transitive property applies:

- Duke beat Georgia Tech.
- Georgia Tech beat Miami.
- So ... Miami beat Duke.

Rule of math, defeated. Coastal standings, a muddled mess.

"That's pretty much how it's been, right?" Miami coach Al Golden said.

Since the ACC went to a divisional format in 2005, only two teams have escaped regular-season play with 8-0 records — Virginia Tech in 2010, and Florida State last year. In 2012, a 5-3 record (and Miami self-imposed sanctions because of an NCAA investigation) got Georgia Tech to the ACC title game as the Coastal winner. Last year, Duke won the Coastal at 6-2.

This year seems wackier.

Duke coach David Cutcliffe told reporters in July they should do a preseason top-to-bottom ranking of the seven Coastal teams, then flip the paper over and list the teams again in reverse order.

"It would be interesting to see which one was the most accurate," Cutcliffe said.

Turns out, he was right.

Of the 100-plus votes cast by media members in a poll asking them to pick this year's ACC champion, the only Coastal Division team that got a single nod was Virginia Tech.

The Hokies are currently last in the Coastal, eliminated from the race.

"I knew it was going to be a little bit of an up and down year," Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer said.

The game that really throws off that transitive property is Georgia Tech beating Miami. Not only did the Yellow Jack-



GENRY BROOME/AP

Georgia Tech quarterback Justin Thomas hands off to Synjyn Days during last Saturday's game against NC State in Raleigh, N.C.

ets lose to Duke, but they also lost to North Carolina — a team that the Hurricanes dominated.

Hence, Coastal chaos.

The Atlantic Division picture is clear: One more win for Florida State or a Clemson loss to Georgia Tech, and the Seminoles are headed back to the conference title matchup.

The Coastal race is much murkier.

Duke is in the driver's seat, with three league games left, all of them at home. Win out, and the Blue Devils are headed to the ACC title game. Lose once, and things could get interesting. Lose twice, who knows what will happen.

Knowing that, there's no division-title talk happening in Durham.

"We don't play bad teams," Cutcliffe said. "At this level, there is no such thing."

Maybe so, but there are some ACC teams clearly better than others. And that's helping Duke.

Each ACC team plays two cross-division games. Duke's Atlantic Division foes (Syracuse and Wake Forest) are a combined 1-10 in league play. Georgia Tech's crossover opponents, Clemson and North Carolina State, are a combined 7-6. And Miami's crossover teams are Florida State and Louisville, a combined 11-3.

Given that, there's a chance Miami — which has Pittsburgh and Virginia remaining after Florida State and will likely be favored in both — could finish with the

best record within Coastal play but finish third in the division.

Pitt and Virginia both looked like title hopefuls early; Virginia is out of the race, and Pitt has dropped five of its last six games.

"Miami's not out of this thing by a long stretch," Georgia Tech coach Paul Johnson said. "They've got a couple games in the league. If they win they'll probably have the tiebreakers on a three-way tie."

Georgia Tech finishes ACC play this weekend against Clemson. The way tiebreakers may shake out, it's probably win-or-else for the Yellow Jackets' divisional hopes.

"It's long from being over," Johnson said.

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

RBs in spotlight for Wisconsin-Nebraska

Defenses know where to focus most attention

By GENARO C. ARMAS
The Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — It sounds like good buddies Melvin Gordon and Ameer Abdullah were maintaining radio silence most of this week.

If that's the case, two of the nation's top running backs will communicate next on Saturday, when Gordon and No. 22 Wisconsin host Abdullah and No. 11 Nebraska in what could be a Big Ten West division elimination game.

Let the games begin between the potential Heisman Trophy finalists.

Abdullah texted Gordon on Monday morning. "But he said, 'I'll see you Saturday,' so it don't sound like we'll be talking until then," Gordon said with a chuckle. "Yeah, that's pretty much what it sounded like, that last text."

Gordon and Abdullah are the headline acts, and deservedly so. Gordon leads the country at 166.8 yards per game; Abdullah leads the country with 187.9 all-purpose yards per game. Their friendly footrace on the rushing charts would alone make for a compelling story line.

But this game has much broader implications.

The Cornhuskers (8-1) and Badgers (7-2) are tied with Minnesota atop the Big Ten West with 4-1 league records. The winner gets an edge in claiming the division title and the trip to Indianapolis for the conference championship game.

This is exactly the position that Wisconsin was hoping to be in despite losing to Northwestern 20-14 on Oct. 4. Since then, the Badgers have won four straight by double



AJ MAST/AP

Wisconsin running back Melvin Gordon, left, leaps over Purdue's Leroy Clark during the second half last Saturday. His duel with Nebraska's Ameer Abdullah is the highlight of the key Big Ten game.

digits.

The running game is rolling and the nation's top-ranked defense just keeps getting better. It's happening just in time for the defining three-game stretch to end the regular season, with home games against Nebraska and Minnesota sandwiched around a trip to Iowa.

But the Badgers' collective focus is trained entirely on the Cornhuskers.

"It's going to be a great environment for us," coach Gary Andersen said. "It's the only game that matters. A lot of that is coach-talk, but it's really true."

This will be Wisconsin's big-

gest home game under Andersen since he took over here in 2013, though the even-keeled coach himself would rather not get involved in such talk.

"We're going to approach it exactly the same," he said.

It is a sound plan given the overwhelmingly positive results of late. The two-quarterback system with starter Joel Stave and mobile, change-of-pace junior Tanner McEvoy is finally gaining traction to balance the offense.

Until last week, the Badgers alternated Stave and McEvoy by series, with Stave getting the majority of playing time. But in last week's 34-16 win over Purdue,



ERIC GREGORY, THE JOURNAL-STAR/AP

Nebraska running back Ameer Abdullah is expected to be at full strength for this week's game at Wisconsin after spraining his left knee against Purdue on Nov. 1.

Stave and McEvoy alternated at times by play.

Stave still saw the majority of snaps, but the system worked with Stave going 19-for-29 for 219 yards with two touchdowns, and McEvoy running for a 13-yard score.

"Just the flexibility within the offense is huge for us," Andersen said.

But make no mistake — all eyes at Camp Randall on Saturday will be on the highly anticipated duel between Gordon and Abdullah. Gordon is pretty sure each team's defense is already a little annoyed by the all the Heisman hype.

"And they're going to be tired



No. 22 Wisconsin (7-2)
at No. 11 Nebraska (8-1)
AFN-Xtra
9:30 p.m. Saturday CET
5:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

of hearing it come Saturday," Gordon said. "They're going to be ready to shut both of us down. Me and him, we're going to have to run hard — one cut and go."

Only the Badgers' defense would rather throw up a roadblock to Abdullah.

By the numbers

166.8

Yards rushing per game for Wisconsin's Melvin Gordon, tops in the nation. Nebraska's Ameer Abdullah is sixth with 138.9 yards per game.

187.89

All-purpose yards per game for Nebraska's Abdullah, No. 1 in the nation among RBs. Wisconsin's Gordon is second with 176 per game.

SOURCE: The Associated Press

Expansion leaves Big Ten with uneven schedules

By NOAH TRISTER
The Associated Press

If Minnesota was the Big Ten's West Division, the Golden Gophers will have done it the hard way.

This weekend, coach Jerry Kill's team hosts Ohio State, which just took control of the East by hammering Michigan State on the road. Although the Golden Gophers are tied atop their division with Wisconsin and Nebraska, they're at a bit of a disadvantage. The Badgers and Cornhuskers don't have to face the Buckeyes during the regular season.

"We've just got to do our job. I've said that all along," Kill said. "We've had a tough schedule, and it's not getting any easier, but that's the challenge that our football team has, and we're looking forward to that challenge."

With the addition of Maryland and Rutgers this season, the Big Ten now has two seven-team divisions, and there's no way for everyone in the league to play every-

one else. Instead, each team plays two opponents from the other division, meaning some of the league's top teams won't necessarily face each other.

Right now, No. 11 Nebraska (8-1, 4-1), No. 22 Wisconsin (7-2, 4-1) and Minnesota (7-2, 4-1) are tied atop the West. Nebraska's crossover games this year are against Michigan State and Rutgers, and the Cornhuskers already lost to the Spartans. Wisconsin beat Rutgers and Maryland handily. Minnesota beat Michigan and now here come the eighth-ranked Buckeyes.

Advantage, Wisconsin.

"With new teams coming in from Maryland and Rutgers and realignment and those type of things, those games, it'll circle back around," Kill said. "It's part of it, and we understand it from adding teams."

The schedule may hurt Ohio State as well. The Buckeyes made a major statement last weekend with their 49-37 victory at Michigan State — the first Big Ten loss for the Spartans since 2012. But even if Ohio State beats everyone it plays from the Big Ten,

it's hard to say how much that will impress college football's playoff committee.

Before beating Michigan State, the Buckeyes' best victory this season was probably against Maryland or Penn State, and neither of those wins was much of a head turner for a team climbing back in the polls from a two-touchdown loss at home to unranked Virginia Tech. If Ohio State had a chance to play both Nebraska and Wisconsin, the Buckeyes might be able to bolster their résumé a bit, but their best-case scenario now is probably a win over one of those two teams in the Big Ten title game.

Contrast that with the Big 12, in which each team plays all nine of its conference rivals. Teams like TCU and Baylor don't have to worry about missing a chance to earn a quality win.

The Big Ten is going to a nine-game conference schedule in 2016, so it will be marginally harder for the top teams in different divisions to miss each other during the regular season.

"I'm sure there will always be some questions, year in and year out. Who's going to be in the driver seat when you get late in the year? And who's playing well? Who's not playing well?" Wisconsin coach Gary Andersen said. "But nine games should definitely help that. We'll have more cross-over games, so you're going to have more — whatever you want to call those — the quality matchups or big-time matchups."

Wisconsin faces Nebraska this weekend, then Minnesota takes on Nebraska and Wisconsin to end the regular season. The Gophers have their title hopes very much in their own hands — but unless they can pull off an upset against Ohio State, they won't have much margin for error when they play the Badgers and Cornhuskers.

So Ohio State's dominance could end up affecting both division races this year.

"We had a good win against Iowa [last weekend], and then you go home, you get a little bit of time," Kill said. "And then you watch the Michigan State-Ohio State game. And then you don't sleep."

AUTO RACING



AP photo

Ryan Newman, above, has a chance to win the 20-year championship drought for Richard Childress Racing when he faces Joey Logano, below left; Denny Hamlin, below center; and Kevin Harvick, below right, in the season finale Sunday at Homestead-Miami Speedway.

Not much star power but plenty of intrigue

Biggest names missing from NASCAR's final four

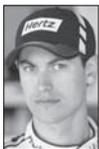
By JENNA FRYER
The Associated Press

MIAMI There's no Jeff, Jimmie or Junior. Bad Brad missed the cut and Smoke never contended.

NASCAR's biggest stars are all absent from this final field of four racing for the Sprint Cup championship at Homestead-Miami Speedway on Sunday.

The new elimination format introduced by NASCAR this season was designed to emphasize wins over points and create a survival-of-the-fastest final. Jeff Gordon and Brad Keselowski were eliminated last week. Six-time and defending champion Jimmie Johnson and Dale Earnhardt Jr., NASCAR's most popular driver, were knocked out in the second round. Three-time series champion Tony Stewart didn't even make the 16-driver field.

It was a startling development for NASCAR, particularly since Earnhardt, Gordon, Johnson and Keselowski combined to win 18 of 35 races this season. They will be racing only for pride and a trophy on Sunday while Kevin Harvick, Denny Hamlin, Joey Logano and Ryan Newman will be chasing the Sprint Cup championship.



reach of what will be the first NASCAR title for 13 of them. Harvick spent for one season driving for Richard Childress, who hastily called him up to the big leagues to drive Dale Earnhardt's car just five days after the Hall of Famer was killed in the 2001 Daytona 500. He had raw talent to go with his hair-trigger temper.

But Richard Childress Racing could never get him close enough — he finished a career-best third in the standings three times — and he began talking to good friend Stewart about his future in 2012. Stewart told Harvick if he left RCR to drive for Stewart-Haas Racing, he could get Harvick a title.

To make room for Harvick, Stewart had to jettison Newman, the driver he brought with him in 2009 when he became part-owner of Stewart-Haas.

Newman got his pink slip last July and promptly won the Brickyard 400 the next race out. That victory raised his stock and Childress brought him on board.

Of the four, only Hamlin has been in this position before.

He was the points leader headed into the finale under a different format in 2010. But his nerves were the same driver since. He has the points leader headed into the finale under a different format in 2010. But his nerves were the same driver since.

shaky before he even got in the car and he lost the championship to Johnson. Hamlin hasn't been the same driver since. Last season, Hamlin feuded for more than a month with Logano, his former Joe Gibbs Racing teammate. Things boiled over at California when they raced each other hard and contact sent Hamlin hard into the wall. He broke his back, missed five races and failed to make the Chase for the first time in his career.

Logano, meanwhile, was on a career resurgence at Team Penske after failing to meet expectations in four seasons with Gibbs. The former 18-year-old phenom dubbed "Sliced Bread" was pushed into Stewart's ride before he was ready when Stewart left for SHR.

Cast aside so Gibbs could add Matt Kenseth last year, the fit with Penske has been spectacular as Logano made the Chase for the first time last year, then held his own with five wins against the big dogs this season.

Around the tracks

NASCAR SPRINT CUP

This week: Ford EcoBoost 400 at Homestead, Fla.

Track: Homestead-Miami Speedway (oval, 1.5 miles).

Race distance: 400.5 miles, 267 laps.

TV: AFN-Xtra, 9 p.m. Sunday, Central European Time; 5 a.m. Monday, Japan/Korea Time.

Last year: Jimmie Johnson won his sixth season championship, finishing ninth in the finale to beat Matt Kenseth by 19 points. Denny Hamlin won the race.

Last week: Kevin Harvick won at Phoenix to earn an automatic spot in the four-man Sprint Cup championship finale. Hamlin, Joey Logano and Ryan Newman advanced through points.

Online: nascar.com

POINTS STANDINGS

1. Denny Hamlin	5,000
2. Joey Logano	5,000
3. Ryan Newman	5,000
4. Kevin Harvick	5,000
5. Brad Keselowski	2,320
6. Jeff Gordon	2,312
7. Matt Kenseth	2,296
8. Kyle Busch	2,280
9. Carl Edwards	2,278
10. Dale Earnhardt Jr.	2,271
11. AJ Allmendinger	2,256
12. Greg Biffle	2,244
13. Jimmie Johnson	2,239
14. Kurt Busch	2,229
15. Kasey Kahne	2,202
16. Aric Almirola	2,170
17. Kyle Larson	1,049
18. Jamie McMurray	975
19. Clint Bowyer	943
20. Austin Dillon	939

DRIVER TO WATCH



It's a toss-up as to which driver is going to win the Sprint Cup championship. Four drivers are dead even atop the standings, and whichever one finishes the highest will claim the title.

Denny Hamlin is the only one of the four to have won at Homestead-Miami twice. Joey Logano has one top-10, Ryan Newman has one top-five and four top-10s. Kevin Harvick has five top-fives and 11 top 10s.

But Logano has the most victories this season with five, while Harvick has won four times. Hamlin has one victory, while Newman has yet to win a race this season.

NATIONWIDE SERIES

This week: Ford EcoBoost 300 at Homestead, Fla.

Track: Homestead-Miami Speedway (oval, 1.5 miles).

Race distance: 300 miles, 200 laps.

TV: Delayed, AFN-Xtra, 9 a.m. Sunday, Central European Time; 5 p.m. Sunday, Japan/Korea Time.

Last year: Brad Keselowski won the season finale. Austin Dillon finished 12th to take the season title, three points ahead of Sam Hornish Jr.

Last week: Chase Elliott was fifth at Phoenix to become the youngest season champion in NASCAR's three national series. The 18-year-old Elliott gave JR Motorsports — owned by Dale Earnhardt Jr., his sister, Kelley, and Rick Hendrick — its first title. Keselowski won the race.

Fast facts: Kyle Busch has seven victories this year and a record 70 overall in the series. ... Keselowski has five victories in 10 starts this season.

Online: nascar.com

CAMPING WORLD TRUCK SERIES

This week: Ford EcoBoost 200 at Homestead, Fla.

Track: Homestead-Miami Speedway (oval, 1.5 miles).

Race distance: 201 miles, 134 laps.

Last year: Kyle Busch won the season finale for his 12th victory of the year. Matt Crafton wrapped by the season championship by starting the race.

Last week: Erik Jones won at Phoenix when a power outage forced NASCAR to end the race with 24 laps left. He finished the season with three victories in 12 starts.

Online: nascar.com

FORMULA ONE

Next race: Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Nov. 23, Yas Marina Circuit, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Last week: Mercedes' Nico Rosberg won the Brazilian Grand Prix to cut teammate Lewis Hamilton's points lead to 17 with only the double-points Abu Dhabi race left. Hamilton finished second for Mercedes' record 11th 1-2 finish. Mercedes also matched the team victory record of 15.

Online: formula1.com

NHRA MELLO YELLO DRAG RACING

This week: Auto Club Finals at Pomona, Calif.

Track: Auto Club Raceway at Pomona.

TV: Delayed, AFN-Xtra, 6:30 a.m. Wednesday, Central European Time; 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, Japan/Korea Time.

Last year: Jeg Coughlin won his fifth Pro Stock season title, joining John Force, Shawn Langdon and Matt Smith as champions. Matt Hagan won the Funny Car final, Rickie Jones topped the Pro Stock field, and Eddie Krawiec won in Pro Stock Motorcycle.

Last week: Erica Enders-Stevens won in Las Vegas on Nov. 2 to reclaim the Pro Stock points lead. Del Worsham topped the Funny Car field, Spencer Massey won in Top Fuel, and Andrew Hines in Pro Stock Motorcycle.

Online: nhra.com

OTHER RACES

U.S. AUTO RACING CLUB: Sprint Car. Hall of Fame Classic, Friday, Saturday, Canyon Speedway Park, Peoria, Ariz.

Online: usacracing.com

— The Associated Press

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Game becoming more positionless

By JOHN MARSHALL
The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Basketball coaches long ago developed numerical shorthand for positions on the floor to define players' roles and help diagram plays.

The point guard is referred to as the 1, the shooting guard 2, small forward 3, power forward 4 and the center is the 5.

Those numbers don't add up quite as much anymore.

With the game becoming more up-tempo and players developing a wider array of skills, more coaches are willing to throw out the concept

‘The fact that a big guy is going to play closer — what if you didn't have a big guy?’

of positions and put their best five players on the floor. “Welcome to the era of positionless basketball.” “Teams are going smaller and caring more about skill.” UNLV coach Dave Rice said. “There are still some teams that play big — and we still have the ability to do that some — but I think you see more and more across the country (is) positionless basketball, just playing more skilled guys, multiple guys on the floor who can handle the ball, multiple guys who can space the floor and just make plays for each other and share it.”

From the early days of basketball, players' roles were defined by their positions: The point guard distributed the ball, the shooting guard and small forward were the slashers and shooters, the power forward did the heavy lifting inside and the center camped near the rim at both ends of the floor.

Now, true point guards are hard to find, replaced by combo guards who are just as good at scoring as

setting teammates up.

Back-to-the-basket big men are all but extinct; the tallest players on the court are often their teams' best perimeter shooters. Small forwards and shooting guards are essentially the same player on most teams. A player who has one position on offense may switch to another on defense.

Everyone on the floor, it seems, can do a little bit of everything.

“The mentality, especially for a lot of our guys, is they can play any position at any time,” Duke junior forward Amile Jefferson said. “Because they can do a lot of things on the court, they can be at different positions.”

Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski has long been a proponent of ignoring positions and has used the concept while coaching Team USA in international competition.

The difference now is positionless basketball has become more prevalent. Except for a handful of teams that have a true point guard or back-down center, college basketball is filled with teams that spread the floor and rely on interchangeable parts.

“Our game doesn't have a position,” Krzyzewski said. “You have five guys working together trying to stop the other five guys from creating a shot. The fact that a big guy is going to play closer — what if you didn't have a big guy?”

Following the example set by big, athletic players like Kevin Durant and LeBron James, the new big kids seem far more interested in losing someone with a crossover dribble or stroking in a three-pointer than shooting a jump hook from 3 feet. Personal coaches and elite travel team coaches have added to skill development, creating taller players with guard-like skills.

And with that, the game has changed, becoming more up-tempo and more reliant on the three-point shot.

AP Basketball Writer Aaron Beard in Raleigh, North Carolina, contributed to this story.



CHARLIE NEIBERG/ALP

Iowa State forward Georges Niang goes into the season 25 pounds lighter than he was a year ago.

Players shed pounds to hone body of work

By LUKE MEREDITH
The Associated Press

AMES, Iowa — Iowa State's Georges Niang was already one of the nation's top players.

Imagine what Niang can do now that he's in shape.

His broken foot in last season's NCAA tournament provided the impetus to fix perhaps the only thing keeping him from becoming an All-American: his fitness.

Niang averaged 16.7 points and 4.5 rebounds last season despite being in less than ideal shape. So Niang set about reshaping his body, and he'll head into the season 25 pounds lighter.

“He's the same old Georges. He's just a little bit more explosive. He's got a little bit more stamina,” Iowa State coach Fred Hoiberg said.

Niang isn't the only notable college basketball player slimmer than ever in 2014-15.

North Carolina's Kennedy Meeks has shed about 50 pounds since arriving on campus as a freshman. NC State's forward Beejay Anya is roughly 60 pounds lighter in his second season.

Tennessee forward Dominic Woodson has dropped nearly 25 pounds in the offseason in an effort to adjust to new coach Donnie Tyndall's up-tempo system. Virginia swingman Justin Anderson has lost close to 15 pounds as he looks for an expanded role this season.

Niang, a 6-foot-7 forward, made himself a star with an array of spin moves and crafty bank shots. He's also an excellent passer — a major plus in coach Fred Hoiberg's space-oriented attack — and has a knack for hitting more

By the numbers

25

Number of pounds Iowa State forward Georges Niang lost between last season and this season.

320

Weight of North Carolina's Kennedy Meeks when he arrived on campus a year ago. Now he's at 270.

than three most power forwards would even shoot.

Niang's talents have made him invaluable to the 14th-ranked Cyclones, especially in late-game situations. But Niang noticed he'd get tired as the game went on, and that led to mental mistakes and turnovers in crucial moments.

“By this time last year I felt like I was a little worn out,” Niang said. “I feel rejuvenated and I feel a lot healthier. I took a step in the right direction by helping myself out.”

The 6-9 Meeks showed up in Chapel Hill just more than a year ago at 320 pounds. He dropped to 290 by the start of last season, averaging 7.6 points and 6.1 rebounds.

Meeks is now about 270 pounds. He could very well be one of this season's breakout stars for the sixth-ranked Tar Heels.

“He's more explosive. I want him to be more aggressive thinking. That doesn't mean foul people. Get the ball and go stronger to the basket. You're not carrying 285 to 295 now,” North Carolina coach Roy Williams said.

Anya, who is 6-9, struggled with his weight all season and yet still ranked ninth in the ACC in blocked shots in 2013-14. He's now listed at 295 pounds and, like Meeks, could emerge as one of the ACC's most improved players.

“Now that I'm in better shape, I'm more capable of going up and down the court,” Anya said. “I can go in there for 10-15 minute stretches without them having to take me out.”

SOURCE: The Associated Press



ADAM LAU, KNOXVILLE NEWS-SENTINEL/AP

Tennessee forward Dominic Woodson has dropped nearly 25 pounds in the offseason.



ROBERT WILLET, RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER/MCT

Duke junior forward Amile Jefferson says the mentality of many of his teammates is that they can play any position at any time.

AP Sports Writers Aaron Beard in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Joedy McCreary in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Steve Megarage in Knoxville, Tennessee contributed to this report.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Year of the team?

Lack of fantastic freshmen puts focus on depth

By JOHN MARSHALL
The Associated Press

The 2013-14 college basketball season was known as the year of the freshman. With the likes of one-and-doneers like Andrew Wiggins, Jabari Parker and Aaron Gordon, it lived up to the billing, too.

This season, the stars aren't shining so bright and it is teams that are on the marquee instead: Kentucky's 12-deep roster, Arizona's loaded squad and the experienced Badgers of Wisconsin.

Year of the team doesn't exactly have the same ring to it, but it's more to the essence of what college basketball is about.

Just look at Kansas. The Jayhawks, ranked No. 5 in The Associated Press preseason poll, lost two lottery picks and may be even better this season.

"This is a team like that in that there's not a first, second or third pick right now," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "I mean, I'm not saying somebody couldn't become that eventually, but right now there's not. But we've got a whole bunch of good players and I'm excited about that because we do have good basketball players."

The team with the highest number of good players, at least on paper, is preseason No. 1 Kentucky.

The Wildcats have another batch of potential first-round NBA picks in John Calipari's latest recruiting class and, in a twist, have many of their star players back from a team that played for a national championship. They are so deep that Calipari is trying a platoon system.

Arizona coach Sean Miller may have his best team yet, which is saying something for a team that's been within seconds of the Final Four twice in three seasons. Wisconsin made it to the Final Four last season and has nearly everyone back, including center Frank Kaminsky. Duke's loaded, too, adding a strong recruiting class headed by preseason All-American Jahliil Okafor.

But it's not just about who has the best talent. Chemistry is a big part of which teams make deep March runs.

"I just keep telling our team no championship teams are here in November," Arizona senior point guard T.J. McConnell said. "We can't predict the future. It only matters in March."

Predicting this season's star players could be tough, too, though there are some quality choices.

Kaminsky led the Badgers to the Final Four, is a nightmare matchup as a 7-footer who can shoot and is a preseason All-American. North Carolina point guard Marcus Paige was perhaps college basketball's best go-to player last season. Kentucky has returning stars like big-shot Aaron Harrison, his twin Aaron and athletic 7-footer Willie Cauley-Stein.

The freshmen class might not be quite as sparkly as last season's, but there's definitely talent.

Okafor was the third freshman preseason All-American in five years and could make the Blue Devils quickly forget the loss of Duke. Athletic Stanley Johnson could do the same at Arizona, which lost one-and-done forward Aaron Gordon.

Big man Cliff Alexander will be a handful at Kansas and Karl-Anthony Towns might be the most talented player on Kentucky's roster this season.

The conference with the best group of teams will likely be the powerful ACC.

Last season, the ACC picked up Syracuse, Pittsburgh and Notre Dame. Louisville will be a part of the conference this season, giving it four Hall of Fame coaches and grinder of a schedule for its teams.

"Based on past successes, this may be the strongest collection of basketball programs in history," ACC Commissioner John Swofford said. "I think historically it certainly falls into that category."

It all begins today.

Back page photos courtesy of the Associated Press.

"I just keep telling our team no championship teams are here in November. We can't predict the future. It only matters in March."

T.J. McConnell
Arizona senior point guard



JAE C. HONG/AP

San Diego State forward Josh Davis (22) shoots between Arizona guards Nick Johnson (13) and Aaron Gordon (11) in Anaheim, Calif., on March 27. There are fewer star players in college basketball this season, putting the focus back on the team instead of individuals.



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Baylor guard Gary Franklin (4) has a shot stopped by Wisconsin forward Frank Kaminsky (44) in Anaheim, Calif., on March 27. No. 3 Wisconsin has one of the nation's top frontcourts with preseason All-American Kaminsky and athletic forward Sam Dekker.

Badgers, Wildcats among nation's best front lines

By GENARO C. ARMAS
The Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Seven-footer Frank Kaminsky's inside-out game won't take opponents by surprise this year. Getting named a preseason All-American kind of takes away any element of surprise that the jump-shooting big man may have had left.

Double team Kaminsky and Sam Dekker can make opponents pay just as dearly from just about anywhere on the court — just like Kaminsky.

This is the predicament that opponents of the third-ranked Badgers must face all season.

Coach Bo Ryan likes big men who can stretch the floor and shoot the three. In Kaminsky and Dekker, he may have his best frontcourt tandem yet in his 14th year in Madison.

A look at some of the other top frontcourts in the country for the college basketball season:

Arizona: Goodbye Aaron Gordon, hello Stanley Johnson. The athletic, 6-foot-7 Johnson could be a one-and-done phenom for the Wildcats, who were already fortified with the return of 6-foot-9 junior Brandon Ashley from a broken foot. Seven-footer Caleb Tarzewski averaged 9.9 points last season, while 6-7 Rondae Hollis-Jefferson averaged 9.1 points.

Duke: Speaking of freshman phenoms, the 6-11, 270-pound Jahliil Okafor is the latest presumed one-year wonder for the Blue Devils. Okafor has already been called "a dominant player" by coach Mike Krzyzewski. A preseason All-American before playing a college minute, Okafor averaged 24 points and 11.3 rebounds as a high school senior. Amile Jefferson, a 6-9 junior, also returns in the frontcourt.

Kentucky: The Wildcats keep stockpiling first-year talent, with 6-11 Karl Anthony Towns and 6-10 Trey Lyles joining a frontcourt

that already has returning 7-footers Willie Cauley-Stein and Dakari Johnson.

Louisville: Not to be outdone by their in-state rivals, the Cardinals boast preseason All-American forward Montrezl Harrell. The athletic, 6-foot-8 Harrell averaged 14 points and 8.4 rebounds last season. Coach Rick Pitino wants another returnee, 6-5 senior forward Wayne Blackshear (8.2 points) to be more aggressive this year.

Texas: Don't mess with Texas in the paint. The stocky Longhorns already return 6-10 center Prince Ibeh, 6-8 forward Jonathan Holmes and 6-9, 285-pound forward Cam Ridley. Prized recruit Myles Turner, a 6-11 forward, could end up being the best of the bunch. The freshman can block shots and hit threes. Coach Rick Barnes has so much depth he has said he has tinkered in practice with a lineup using four forwards to go with point guard Isaiah Taylor.

NFL



PHIL MASTURZA/Akron Beacon Journal/MCT

Cleveland Browns punter Spencer Lanning is kicked in the head by Pittsburgh return man Antonio Brown on Sept. 7 in Pittsburgh. At 5-foot-10 and 180 pounds, Brown is small by NFL standards. But that hasn't seemed to make any difference to the wide receiver, who has become of Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger's favorite targets.

Small size, big impact

Shorter, lighter receivers are proving worth

By WILL GRAVES
The Associated Press

The NFL's leading receiver — the one taken in the sixth round of the 2010 draft as an unknown, undersized project — would like to have a word.

"I'm not a little guy," Antonio Brown says.

Point out that at 5-foot-10 and 180 pounds the frenetic Pittsburgh Steelers star is hardly considered an NFL prototype, and Brown shrugs.

"I'm not a little guy," he repeats.

And the scouts who believed he was a fringe prospect at best four years ago, favoring the likes of Marcus Easley, Kerry Meier and Dezmon Briscoe, all 6-2 or taller, all no longer in the league?

"They made a mistake," Brown said with a smile.

Freed by a crackdown on illegal contact in the secondary, bolstered by creative sets designed to get him in open space, and emboldened by a chip on his shoulder that never seems to go away, Brown is spearheading a mini-revolution at his position.

Scooch over, Calvin Johnson. Make room, Julio Jones. Hold up there, AJ Green and Dez Bryant. You've got company.

Midway through the season, the NFL's most electric playmakers are the guys whose modest frames belie big-time numbers.

After 10 weeks of play, Brown's 70 receptions and 1,070 yards receiving are tops in the league and his eight touchdowns are tied for fourth. Brown's childhood buddy TY Hilton of the Indianapolis Colts — generously listed at 5-9 — is third in yards and sixth in yards per catch.

They're not alone. Seven of the top 11 players in yards receiving are under 6 feet tall. Emmanuel Sanders (5-11) is developing into Peyton Manning's

Did you know

Seven of the top 11 players in yards receiving are under 6 feet tall, led by Pittsburgh's Antonio Brown with 1,070 through 10 weeks.



SOURCE: The Associated Press

favorite target in Denver. Golden Tate (5-10) has become so explosive the Lions are soaring even with Johnson — Megatron himself — struggling to stay healthy. Julian Edelman (5-10) is a Wes Welker-type in New England. Washington is a mess but DeSean Jackson (5-10) and his not-a-type 21.8 yards per reception offer the beleaguered franchise and quarterback Robert Griffin III a glimmer of hope.

In Baltimore, a rejuvenated 35-year-old Steve Smith is the old-school boss in the midst of a late-career renaissance. The 5-9 veteran already has four 100-yard receiving games at a time when most guys at his position have evolved into part-time role players if they have a job at all.

"The little guys are coming back to rule the world," Smith said with a laugh. "We're coming back (and) we're here to stay. That's the bottom line. That's what it's about. The big guys, you can throw it up to them but at the end of the day when you want to move the sticks, you have to throw it to the little guys. We move the needle."

They're doing more than that. They're finding the end zone with the same frequency as their larger — and largely higher profile — colleagues.

AP Sports Writers Mike Marot and Joseph White in Washington, Genaro Armas in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Rob Maaddi in Philadelphia contributed to this report.



GAMEDAY

WEEK 11

TELEVISED GAMES



Seattle Seahawks (6-3) at Kansas City Chiefs (6-3)
 AFN-Sports
 7 p.m. Sunday CET
 3 a.m. Monday JKT
Series: Chiefs lead 32-18, including the past two.
Last meeting: Kansas City beat host Seattle 42-24 on Nov. 28, 2010.

Notes: Seahawks QB Russell Wilson is 9-3 vs the AFC (including Super Bowl) ... RB Marshawn Lynch rushed for 14 yards and 4 TDs last week. ... In the past seven games, Chiefs QB Alex Smith has completed 137 of 198 for 1,412 yards and 10 TDs with 1 INT.



Cincinnati Bengals (5-3-1) at New Orleans Saints (4-5)
 AFN-Atlantic
 7 p.m. Sunday CET
 3 a.m. Monday JKT
Series: Tied 6-6, but Bengals have won three of the past four.
Last meeting: The visiting Saints beat the Bengals 34-30 on Dec. 5, 2010.

Notes: Bengals WR A.J. Green has 460 receiving yards and 6 TDs in his past five games vs. the NFC ... In the past five games, WR Mohamed Sanu has 24 catches for 414 yards and 2 TDs. ... In his last home game against Cincinnati, Saints QB Drew Brees passed for a career-high 510 yards.

Marquee matchup

Philadelphia Eagles (7-2) at Green Bay Packers (6-3)

AFN-Sports, 10 p.m. Sunday CET, 6 a.m. Monday JKT

SERIES RECORD: Packers lead 24-14 and have won two of the past three.
LAST MEETING: Eagles beat Packers 27-13 on Nov. 10, 2013.
EAGLES OFFENSE: OVERALL (5), RUSH (13), PASS (5).
EAGLES DEFENSE: OVERALL (21), RUSH (19), PASS (22).
PACKERS OFFENSE: OVERALL (12), RUSH (18), PASS (10).
PACKERS DEFENSE: OVERALL (23), RUSH (30) PASS (9).
STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES: QB Mark Sanchez passed for 352 yards with 2 TDs, 0 INTs and a 102.5 rating in his first start for the Eagles last week ... RB LeSean McCoy rushed for 155 yards in the teams' last meeting ... RB/PR Darren Sproles aims for third in a row vs. Green Bay with a TD (receiving, punt return). He had a rushing TD and a punt-

return TD last week ... WR Jeremy Maclin has 18 catches for 345 yards and 4 TDs in the past two road games ... Rookie WR Jordan Matthews had 7 catches for 138 yards and 2 TDs last week ... LB Connor Barwin had 3 1/2 sacks last week and leads the NFC with 10 1/2 ... Packers QB Aaron Rodgers had 315 yards, 6 TDs, 0 INTs and a 145.8 rating last week. He's the first Packer with two 6-TD games ... RB Eddie Lee has 300 yards from scrimmage and a TD in the past two games ... WR/PR Randall Cobb leads NFL WRs with 10 receiving TDs. He has a TD in six consecutive games, and a TD in all four home games this season ... WR Jordy Nelson aims for his sixth in a row at home with a TD reception (including playoffs) ... CB Tramon Williams has an interception, forced fumble and fumble recovery in past two vs. Philadelphia (including playoffs) ... LB Julius Peppers is the only player in NFL history with 100-plus sacks (123 1/2) and 10-plus INTs (10).



Detroit Lions (7-2) at Arizona Cardinals (8-1)
 AFN-Atlantic
 10 p.m. Sunday CET
 6 a.m. Monday JKT
Series: Lions lead 31-26-5, but Cardinals have won the past five.
Last meeting: Arizona beat visiting Detroit 25-21 on Sept. 15, 2013.

Notes: Lions QB Matt Stafford has 19,953 passing yards, the most in a player's first 70 games in NFL history ... Cardinals QB Drew Stanton, a second-round pick by the Lions in '07, threw a game-winning 48-yard TD pass last week in relief of Carson Palmer (knee).



Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers threw for 315 yards and 6 TDs in the first half of last week's rout of the Chicago Bears.

KICHIRO SATO/AP

Game capsules compiled from nflmedia.com

EXPANDED STANDINGS

American Conference

	W	L	T	East			Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
				Pct	PF	PA					
New England	7	2	0	.778	281	198	5-0-0	2-2-0	5-2-0	2-0-0	2-1-0
Buffalo	5	4	0	.556	191	182	2-3-0	3-1-0	2-4-0	3-0-0	2-1-0
Miami	5	4	0	.556	227	171	2-2-0	3-2-0	4-2-0	1-2-0	1-1-0
N.Y. Jets	2	8	0	.200	174	265	0-4-0	0-4-0	2-5-0	0-3-0	0-2-0
South											
Indianapolis	6	3	0	.667	290	211	3-1-0	2-2-0	5-2-0	1-1-0	3-0-0
Houston	4	5	0	.444	206	197	2-2-0	2-3-0	3-2-0	3-1-0	1-1-0
Tennessee	2	7	0	.222	144	223	1-3-0	1-4-0	2-5-0	0-2-0	0-2-0
Jacksonville	1	9	0	.100	158	282	1-4-0	0-5-0	1-6-0	0-3-0	0-2-0
North											
Cleveland	6	3	0	.667	209	172	4-1-0	2-2-0	4-3-0	2-0-0	2-2-0
Cincinnati	5	3	1	.611	197	211	4-1-1	2-2-0	4-3-0	1-0-1	2-1-0
Pittsburgh	6	4	0	.600	261	239	4-1-0	2-3-0	5-3-0	1-1-0	2-2-0
Baltimore	6	4	0	.600	261	181	4-1-0	2-3-0	3-4-0	3-0-0	2-3-0
West											
Denver	7	2	0	.778	288	202	5-0-0	2-2-0	5-1-0	2-1-0	3-0-0
Kansas City	6	3	0	.667	217	151	3-1-0	2-3-0	5-2-0	1-1-0	1-1-0
San Diego	5	4	0	.556	205	186	3-1-0	2-3-0	4-3-0	1-1-0	1-2-0
Oakland	0	9	0	.000	146	252	0-5-0	0-4-0	0-7-0	0-2-0	0-2-0

National Conference

	W	L	T	East			Home	Away	NFC	AFC	Div
				Pct	PF	PA					
Philadelphia	7	2	0	.778	279	198	5-0-0	2-2-0	4-2-0	3-0-0	2-0-0
Dallas	7	3	0	.700	261	212	3-3-0	4-0-0	4-3-0	3-0-0	1-1-0
N.Y. Giants	3	6	0	.333	195	247	2-2-0	1-4-0	2-5-0	1-1-0	1-2-0
Washington	3	6	0	.333	197	229	2-2-0	1-4-0	1-5-0	2-1-0	1-2-0
South											
New Orleans	4	5	0	.444	251	235	3-1-0	1-4-0	4-4-0	0-1-0	2-1-0
Carolina	3	6	1	.350	198	281	2-3-0	1-3-1	3-4-0	0-2-1	1-1-0
Atlanta	3	6	0	.333	219	238	2-2-0	1-4-0	3-4-0	0-2-0	3-0-0
Tampa Bay	1	8	0	.111	167	272	0-5-0	1-3-0	0-6-0	1-2-0	0-4-0
North											
Detroit	7	2	0	.778	182	142	4-1-0	3-1-0	5-1-0	2-1-0	2-0-0
Green Bay	6	3	0	.667	277	205	4-0-0	2-3-0	4-3-0	2-0-0	3-1-0
Minnesota	4	5	0	.444	168	199	2-2-0	2-3-0	4-3-0	0-2-0	0-2-0
Chicago	3	6	0	.333	194	277	0-3-0	3-3-0	2-3-0	1-3-0	0-2-0
West											
Arizona	8	1	0	.889	223	170	5-0-0	3-1-0	6-0-0	2-1-0	2-0-0
Seattle	6	3	0	.667	240	191	4-1-0	2-2-0	4-2-0	2-1-0	0-1-0
San Francisco	5	4	0	.556	195	202	2-2-0	3-2-0	4-3-0	1-1-0	1-2-0
St. Louis	3	6	0	.333	163	251	1-3-0	2-3-0	3-5-0	0-1-0	2-2-0

REST OF THE SCHEDULE

Minnesota at Chicago
 Denver at St. Louis
 Houston at Cleveland
 Atlanta at Carolina
 Tampa Bay at Washington
 San Francisco at N.Y. Giants
 Oakland at San Diego
Open: Baltimore, Dallas, Jacksonville, N.Y. Jets
 Pittsburgh at Tennessee

NEXT WEEK

Thursday, Nov. 20
 Kansas City at Oakland
Sunday, Nov. 23
 Green Bay at Minnesota
 Cincinnati at Houston
 Tampa Bay at Chicago
 Cleveland at Atlanta
 Tennessee at Philadelphia
 Detroit at New England
 Jacksonville at Indianapolis
 N.Y. Jets at Buffalo
 Arizona at Seattle
 St. Louis at San Diego
 Washington at San Francisco
 Miami at N.Y. Giants
Open: Carolina, Pittsburgh
Monday, Nov. 24
 Baltimore at New Orleans

SPORTS



Golden arms
Dodgers' Kershaw, Indians' Kluber
win Cy Young Awards | Page 52

Spartans! ★ Huskies! ★ Bulldogs! ★ Cardinals!

TEAM BEAT



HOT!!!
HOT!!!
HOT!!!

WILDCATS!

coach calipari
RECRUITING WIZARD

Back for more
Badgers better than ever!

Preseason **No. 1**
Incredible Depth Of Talent!

ACC!
"Strongest collection... in history..."

Marcus!

Can North Carolina's best **Go-to player** get even better?

Star search

★ Kansas copes with loss of **two lottery picks**

★ Can Kentucky's **Karl-Anthony Towns** live up to the **hype?**

Season preview: **Page 61**

Jayhawk-O-Rama!

Wisconsin, Nebraska prepare for battle of running backs | **College football, Page 58**

Undersized receivers thriving in pass-friendly offenses | **NFL, Page 62**

