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Free to Deployed Areas



PHOTOS BY HENDRICK SIMOES/Stars and Stripes

The Navy has been testing the \$40 million laser weapon system (LaWS) aboard the USS Ponce, an afloat forward staging base deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet, to see how it will hold up to the rigors of a maritime environment.

Navy encouraged by performance of LaWS on USS Ponce

By HENDRICK SIMOES
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — The U.S. Navy is one step closer to outfitting ships with lasers that officials say can hit air and surface targets with precision.

Although the laser weapon system is still in the testing phase, Navy personnel and officials — from the operator directing the laser beam to the chief of naval operations — are excited about what it can do.

The laser weapon system, known as LaWS, was installed during the summer



The system was used to cut a hole through this metal plate, which sits in the captain's office aboard the Ponce.

on the 43-year-old USS Ponce — an afloat forward staging base deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet — to evaluate how the system handles a rugged maritime environment.

The laser is a directed-energy weapon that can target both air and surface targets — either with lethal or nonlethal force, depending on the power setting.

Over the years, researchers have made significant improvements to the weapon's ruggedness, range and power and beam quality.

SEE LASER ON PAGE 4

Hostages die during rescue attempt

'Imminent danger' seen before special ops raid

By AHMED AL-HAJ AND JULIE PACE
The Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — An American photojournalist and a South African teacher held by al-Qaida militants in Yemen were killed Saturday during a U.S.-led rescue operation that President Barack Obama said he ordered because of "imminent danger" to the U.S. hostage.

U.S. officials believe the militants shot the two men during a firefight, and that both were alive when American forces pulled them from a building on the group's compound and put them on aircraft, where medical teams operated on them during a short flight to the USS Makin Island, a Navy ship in the region.

South African Pierre Korkie is believed to have died during the flight, while American Luke Somers died on the ship, according to senior U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because the information had yet to be approved for release.

About 40 U.S. special operations troops were part of the mission, the U.S. officials said. The rescuers, backed by Yemeni ground forces, got within 100 yards of the compound in southern Shabwa province when they were spotted by the militants, and the skirmish ensued.

SEE HOSTAGES ON PAGE 7



Somers

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Oregon secures spot in playoff with defeat of Pac-12 rival Arizona

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EBOLA OUTBREAK

US troops deployed to Africa look ahead to their next task

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MUSIC

Pitbull continues quest for global domination in his latest release

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QUOTE
OF THE DAY

“My final message to everybody: Put the gun down and come out from the forest. It’s a nice life out here.”

— Lorenzo Vinciguerra, a former hostage of Philippines militants. He escaped after more than two years of jungle captivity

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MIDEAST

Up to 1,000 troops to stay longer

Afghan force level to exceed original plan in early 2015

By ROBERT BURNS
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said Saturday the United States will keep as many as 1,000 more troops in Afghanistan than planned for the first part of 2015.

At a joint news conference at the presidential palace with President Ashraf Ghani, Hagel said the original plan to cut U.S. troop levels to 9,800 by the end of this year had been abandoned, but not because of a recent surge in Taliban attacks.

Hagel said the U.S. will keep up to 10,800 troops for the first few months of next year and then restart the drawdown, which is scheduled to reach 5,500 troops by the end of 2015.

The U.S. decided to keep additional forces in the country temporarily because planned troop commitments by U.S. allies for a NATO train-and-assist mission starting in January have been slow to materialize.

President Barack Obama “has provided U.S. military commanders the flexibility to manage any temporary force shortfall that we might experience for a few months as we allow for coalition troops to arrive in theater,” he said. “But the president’s authorization will not change our troops’ missions, or the long-term timeline for our drawdown,” he added.

On his final visit to Afghanistan as U.S. defense secretary, Hagel said with striking optimism that he believes Afghans will successfully put down a surge in Taliban attacks in the capital and stabilize the nation.

Hagel arrived in Kabul on a previously unannounced trip one day after Obama declared he would nominate one of Hagel’s former deputies, Ashton Carter, to succeed Hagel, who resigned under pressure Nov. 24.

In an interview with reporters traveling with him from Wash-



MARK WILSON/AP

U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel is greeted by Gen. John F. Campbell after arriving Saturday in Kabul, Afghanistan.

ington aboard a military aircraft, Hagel was in a reflective mood about America’s longest war. He recalled arriving in Kabul in January 2002 as a member of a congressional delegation when security was so dicey that the lawmakers arrived under cover of darkness and left before dawn. Hagel at the time was a Republican senator from Nebraska.

The Taliban, which had ruled Afghanistan since 1996, were forced from power in late 2001 just weeks after a U.S.-led invasion prompted by the 9/11 terrorist attacks. But they recovered gradually after the U.S. shifted its military focus to Iraq in 2003, and by 2008, the U.S. was conceding that the war in Afghanistan was stalemated.

Hagel, on his fourth trip to Afghanistan as defense secretary, said it should not be surprising that the Taliban are still able to launch significant attacks in the capital.

“The Taliban are going to continue to have pockets of resurgence, and it’s predictable that they would do everything they possibly could to disrupt” the new

Afghan government under Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah, Hagel said.

The Taliban clearly are aiming to disrupt the new government and to undermine confidence in it. But Hagel said they have failed thus far and are unlikely to ever succeed.

“I have confidence in the Afghan security forces that they will continue to meet these challenges,” he said.

Hagel said that during his visit he intended to discuss with Ghani and Abdullah the state of security in Kabul and ways that it can be improved. He said the main reason for his visit is to reinforce support for their new government, to reiterate a long-term U.S. commitment here and to thank American troops.

The U.S.-led war in Afghanistan has lasted far longer than anyone predicted at the outset in October 2001, and the final result, after more than 2,200 U.S. deaths, remains in doubt even as Obama officially ends the U.S. combat mission Dec. 31.

Hagel said that in hindsight, the struggle to prevent Afghani-

stan from reverting to a haven for al-Qaida has been difficult but worthwhile.

“As difficult, as challenging, as long as this has been, by any definition the country of Afghanistan, the people of Afghanistan, are far better off today than they were 13 years ago, if for no other reason than they have the opportunity to decide their own fate, their own way, on their terms,” he said.

“They’re not completely there yet, but they’ve come a long way and that’s to the credit certainly of the United States,” Hagel said. At the peak in 2010-2011, the U.S. had 100,000 troops in Afghanistan. The Americans have fought alongside troops from a coalition of countries, including Britain, Canada, Australia, Italy, Denmark, Turkey and Poland.

About 9,800 U.S. troops are to remain after this year as part of a NATO mission, dubbed Resolute Support, to train and assist Afghan security forces and to carry out counterterrorism missions. The U.S. troop total is to shrink further to 5,500 by the end of next year, but the pace of the decline yet to be decided.

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EBOLA OUTBREAK



ABBAS DULLEN/AP

Ebola health care workers carry the body of a man suspected of dying from the Ebola virus in the small village of Gbah on the outskirts of Monrovia, Liberia, on Friday.

Virus claims 2 more Sierra Leone doctors

By CLARENCE ROY-MACALUAY
The Associated Press

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone — Two more Sierra Leonean doctors have died from Ebola, further depleting the West African country's ability to respond to the devastating outbreak, health officials said Saturday.

The deaths bring the number of Sierra Leonean doctors killed by Ebola to nine.

The disease is spread through the bodily fluids of people showing symptoms and people who have died of the disease. Because transmission requires close contact with those fluids, health

workers are among the most at risk of contracting it, and hundreds have become infected in this outbreak.

Dr. Thomas Rogers, who had worked at Connaught Hospital in the capital, died Friday, according to Chief Medical Officer Dr. Brima Kargbo. Dr. Dauda Koroma also died Friday, said Jonathan Abass Kamara, a spokesman for the Health Ministry.

In all, 11 Sierra Leonean doctors have been infected; one has been cured and another is still in treatment.

The high number of infections in health workers has deterred

many from volunteering to work on Ebola wards, especially local health workers. While foreign doctors and nurses who have become infected have been evacuated for treatment at world-class hospitals abroad, locals are typically treated in-country.

In an effort to address that disparity, special clinics dedicated to the treatment of health care workers and staffed by foreigners have opened in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and another is planned for Guinea. Rogers was treated at one of those, a clinic in Kerry Town staffed by British army medics.

'Czar' urges Congress to authorize funding

By MATT HANSEN
Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Ebola outbreak can only be successfully contained if the U.S. takes the lead and provides funding to fight the deadly virus at home and in West Africa, the man tapped to coordinate the federal government's response to the disease said Friday.

"In this case, America has to lead, and it has led," said Ron Klain, the nation's Ebola "czar," reiterating the administration's appeal for more money from Congress to fight the disease.

Klain called on lawmakers to pass an emergency spending request put forth by President Barack Obama that would authorize \$6.18 billion for domestic readiness as well as efforts on the ground in West Africa. Of that amount, \$1.54 billion would be used as reserve funding in case of a resurgence of the disease or a worsening outbreak in the United States.

Klain said that although U.S. efforts have had an effect in fighting the outbreak, dedicated funds need to be set aside for recurrences, even as public attention in this country has drifted from the

threat.

"No one a year ago had Ebola response in their budgets," he said during a talk at Georgetown University in Washington alongside Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institutes of Health. "These resources are running out. The only way we can keep up the response — let alone expand it — is to get this emergency funding request."

Ron Klain U.S. Ebola "czar" Both men said that in addition to stopping the current outbreak, increased funding could have a significant effect on devastated health care systems in West Africa and other parts of the world where insufficient or nonexistent health care can exacerbate the spread of the disease.

"If something good comes out of this, it is a realization that if you

do not have a minimum modicum of health care infrastructure, how vulnerable you are to so many things," Fauci said.

Klain noted the deaths of other patients from medical complications, including malaria, because doctors have been overwhelmed by the Ebola outbreak.

Klain, who has been criticized by Republicans for his lack of medical experience, said he was tapped for the job because of his experience handling complicated projects involving multiple government agencies.

He said the Ebola response was particularly challenging because it involved multiple layers of government, including state departments of health and local hospitals.

Five U.S. airports that handle much of the incoming traffic from Ebola-stricken countries now screen for the virus, and state health departments have established 21-day monitoring programs for travelers returning from West Africa.

The Department of Health and Human Services has announced that 35 hospitals across the country have established Ebola treatment wings.

US troops' work in Ebola zones ending as infections drop

By STEVEN BEARDSLEY
Stars and Stripes

The commander of U.S. forces deployed to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa says troops are finishing much of their work in the country and will expect new direction by month's end.

Seven Ebola treatment units have been turned over to Liberian officials, and another 10 will be finished by the end of December, said Maj. Gen. Gary Volesky, the joint force commander for Operation United Assistance. Troops are still training local health care workers and performing lab work to diagnose the disease — tasks increasingly assumed by U.S. and international aid workers.

"The decision point there is what's next after those tasks are done," said Volesky, who also commands the 101st Airborne Division. "I'll have a lot of soldiers, sailors or Marines without a lot to occupy them once that time comes."

New cases of the infectious disease have fallen in recent months in Liberia, where the bulk of the military's roughly 2,700 troops are based.

The international and local response has grown since troops first arrived in October. The United Nations, the World Food Program and task forces from other countries — including the United Kingdom, France and China — have all expanded their role.

Volesky's boss, U.S. Africa Command Chief Gen. David Rodriguez, said last week that many of the deployed units could soon either return home or be deployed elsewhere in the region.

As of last week, infection rates were climbing in Guinea and parts of Sierra Leone, including the capital of Freetown, according to the World Health Organization.

The role, if any, of U.S. military units in other parts of the region is still under discussion, said Mia Beers, head of the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team, which is leading the U.S. response in the region.

Volesky, who spoke from Monrovia in a telephone interview with Stars and Stripes, said he would expect force size to fall in January as current progress in Liberia holds.

Some units have already gone home, including a Seabee unit and a Marine tilt-rotor Osprey unit. The Pentagon has named the new headquarters unit to take over for the 101st, as well as the Reserve and National Guard units to rotate into the region.

Their deployment status is now unclear, although Volesky said

he remains in close contact with them.

There have been more than 17,000 confirmed cases of the Ebola virus and more than 6,000 deaths since January, according to the WHO.

The military expected a mission lasting as long as six months and requiring as many as 4,000 troops when it began deploying soldiers this fall. It later capped the force at 3,000 as the situation improved and aid organizations expanded their reach in Liberia.

The U.N. is now responsible for moving the bulk of materials throughout the region, including protective gear and medical equipment. It began airlifting supplies into West Africa in November, and is now using helicopters to fly blood samples to labs for faster diagnosis.

"I'll have a lot of soldiers, sailors or Marines without a lot to occupy them once that time comes."

Maj. Gen. Gary Volesky Operation United Assistance commander

The U.K. is leading operations in Sierra Leone, while France is working closely with Guinea. China opened a treatment center in Monrovia.

Trends in Liberia are generally positive. Infection rates are holding steady, and the country

is now isolating 70 percent of new Ebola patients and burying 70 percent of victims, important benchmarks for turning the disease back, according to the WHO. Volesky said there were only nine confirmed infections and 30 possible cases last Thursday, versus 52 confirmed and 80 possible in September.

Officials warn that infection rates remain higher in rural areas of the country and that gains can quickly be lost. Aid workers are now focusing on the county and local levels, where isolation centers are being built to stage patients before they can be taken to a treatment center. The military is also training health workers in rural areas of the country instead of having them travel to Monrovia.

"We're out at a point where we're aggressively hunting the disease," said Beers.

Volesky said he's encouraged by the progress but remains cautious.

"No one's declaring victory," he said.

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MILITARY

LASER: System provides USS Ponce with 'superb defensive depth'

FROM FRONT PAGE

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert said the weapon could be a game changer.

"Imagine you take this ... you double or triple the power on this, you're going from a close-in weapon system to cruise-missile-like weapons system to ballistic-defense-type weapon system," Greenert told Stars and Stripes after visiting the Ponce and seeing the laser firsthand.

The Ponce provided a test platform to see how well the laser could hit targets from a moving platform subject to unstable conditions at sea.

Officials were pleased with the initial testing of the system.

"For the most part, each event went as planned or better than planned," said Capt. Dale Maxey, who was the commanding officer of the Ponce during the installation and testing. The crew fired at mock-up surface and air targets. "It proved to be very effective against UAVs," Maxey said, referring to unmanned aerial vehicles.

The laser can blind sensors, target electronics or destroy a target with precision. For example, officials said, to destroy a target, the laser can be fired at its fuel tank.

But officials say one of most useful features doesn't involve firing the laser at all. The system can track targets at a greater distance than other shipboard equipment — including at night.

"It's great as far as determining what a contact is doing," said Lt. j.g. Katie Woodard, the officer in charge of the laser weapon system aboard the Ponce. "We have a great optic system on there."

"It gives us more time to deal with contacts," she said, referring to any object that may be approaching the ship from the air or water.

Lt. Kristofer Kalstad supervised the initial use of the weapon aboard the ship.

"This brings so much more to the table than just a weapon system, defensive or otherwise," he said.

The laser is operated by a single person from a station inside the ship's combat information center. "The laser operator's job isn't as automated as some systems because it's early on," Maxey said. An operator can move and fire the laser using a hand controller similar to ones used with popular gaming consoles. "There is an art to the operator," Maxey said.

While the system was briefly tested two years ago on the guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey in San Diego, the Ponce is the



PETER D. LAWLOR/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert gets a firsthand look on Nov. 26 at the directed-energy Laser Weapon System operator's console aboard the afloat forward staging base USS Ponce.



The system, which is being evaluated for its performance in a rugged maritime environment, sits directly above the bridge.



PHOTOS BY HENDRICK SIMOES/Stars and Stripes

first deployed ship to include it in its arsenal. The sailors who work with the laser aboard the Ponce are charged with developing procedures for its use and maintenance at sea.

"We put it out here specifically to learn additional things, to test tactics, to find out how the environment affects it," Maxey said.

Kalstad said the system has "exceeded expectations." Its ability to perform in a harsh maritime

environment of sea spray, dust and sand has diminished some of the "very serious concerns" that existed before the installation.

Maxey said the laser gives the ship a "superb defensive depth" that allowed him to sleep better at night.

The Ponce's defensive arsenal includes Phalanx close-in weapon system gun mounts and the 25-mm machine gun system. Maxey said the laser doesn't replace those

weapons, but that it's an "excellent addition."

Officials said a single laser shot costs about \$1 in energy costs — compared to the high expense of using projectile weapons. The laser isn't cheap, though: It cost about \$40 million to develop.

The U.S. Navy won't be installing its new laser weapon system on ships throughout the fleet any time soon, despite the initial success aboard the Ponce. The system

is still in the experimental phase, and testing on the Ponce will continue for an undetermined period.

In addition, the laser and its components — generators, coolers and various other components — require quite a bit of space.

"I would put a LaWS on every ship," Greenert said, "if I could miniaturize it and fit it."

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MILITARY

Navy civilian charged in leak of USS Ford info

By MATT ZAPOTOSKY
The Washington Post

A Naval engineer was charged Friday with trying to leak drawings of the military's new aircraft carrier to the Egyptian government, not knowing that he was dealing with an undercover FBI agent.

Federal authorities alleged in court filings that Mostafa Ahmed Awwad, 35, of Yorktown, Va., gave computer drawings of the USS Gerald R. Ford to an agent posing as an Egyptian intelligence officer and talked about where to shoot the vessel to sink it. He was charged with attempted exportation of defense articles and technical data and was ordered held after an initial appearance Friday in federal district court in Norfolk, Va.

Awwad's alleged plot was a startling one, potentially threatening the security of a carrier that officials have hailed as a technological marvel. The ship — which will eventually weigh 100,000 tons and hold 4,660 staffers and 75 aircraft — is expected to cost \$13 billion to complete. It is being built in Virginia.

Authorities alleged in court filings that Awwad, a civilian who worked in the Nuclear Engineering and Planning Department at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, had a secret clearance and that some of the materials he provided to the undercover agent were not supposed to be released to non-U.S. citizens, or contained technical data that was subject to U.S. export laws. The court filings stated that Awwad was born in Saudi Arabia but had married a U.S. citizen in Cairo in 2007 and went about becoming a U.S. citizen then.

It is unclear why authorities first became concerned with Awwad, but in September, an undercover agent speaking in Arabic and identifying himself as "Yousef" from Washington, D.C., called the engineer and asked to meet at a park in Hampton, Va., according to a search warrant affidavit.

Awwad, who had been working at the Norfolk shipyard since February and had the secret clearance for only about a month, agreed to meet without asking for any more information, authorities alleged in the affidavit.

The events that transpired in the following months seem drawn from the pages of a spy novel.

Awwad told the agent he wanted to use his Navy position to help give military technology to Egypt, according to the affidavit. The pair met at the Sandy Bottom National Park in Hampton, Va., and used a dead-drop location — a secret hole in the ground



STEVE EARLEY, THE (NORFOLK, VA.) VIKINGIAN-PILOT/AF

Mostafa Ahmed Awwad was arrested on charges he tried to steal schematics for the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier.

off a secluded hiking trail where each could leave materials for the other to find — to avoid law enforcement detection, according to the affidavit.

They also exchanged pay-as-you-go phones and agreed to code their emails. Awwad, for example, used the pseudonym "Cathy Jean" and the subject line "Sick" to indicate a problem, according to the affidavit. At one meeting, Awwad flashed a .45-caliber handgun, according to the affidavit.

Awwad described to the agent a plan he had to buy his computer so that he could copy restricted materials without drawing attention, according to the affidavit. But authorities allege he also used more old-fashioned methods. At one point, he asked the agent for money to buy a pinhole camera, and he was spotted in his office at the shipyard using what appeared to be a pocket camera to take photos of an aircraft carrier's design schematics, according to the affidavit.

The affidavit describes at least 10 drawings of the USS Ford that Awwad gave to the undercover agent.

A spokeswoman for Huntington Ingalls Industries, which is building the USS Ford, declined to comment for this story, referring inquiries to the Navy. A spokesman for the Norfolk Naval Shipyard said he was unable to comment immediately, and another Navy spokesman did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

No lawyer was listed for Awwad in court records, and relatives could not immediately be located.



PHOTOS BY KAREN SCHIELY, AKRON (OHIO) BEACON JOURNAL/TNS

Tom Stiles, a surgical assistant at Summa Barberton Hospital in Ohio, started sending holiday cards to servicemembers overseas after his son, Joshua, joined the Navy. He set up a table at the entrance of the hospital for others to write cards for members of the military.

Inspired by son's service, father pens cards for troops

By KIM HONE-MCMAHAN
Akron (Ohio) Beacon Journal

BARBERTON, Ohio — Tom Stiles' heart ached when his son and best buddy, Joshua, left for the U.S. Navy just before Christmas last year. While he was a proud papa, he knew he would miss him terribly. So Tom found therapy in writing cards to our servicemen and women — thousands of them.

Sitting in the lobby of Summa Barberton Hospital, where Tom is a surgical assistant, is a small table with a selection of Christmas cards, pens and a sign that reads "Stiles Salutes Our Military Troops."

The table is placed beneath the hospital's Wall of Courage — a display of photos of hospital relatives who are in the military. Anyone is welcome to fill out a card. As for Tom, he pens a message inside 10 to 15 cards daily.

"Merry Christmas, Happy New Year. May God bless you and watch over you and your team. Thank you for all that you do to keep us safe and free. Thank you for your time, your service, and your sacrifices."

"You are all American heroes to us. You may be far from your home, but you are never far from our hearts and our prayers."

"Love and respect, Tom
"Green, Ohio"
"I would love to tell them in person," said Tom, whose 20-year-old son is currently serving as a seaman apprentice on the USS Abraham Lincoln in Norfolk, Va.

The idea took off after Tom spotted another group on the Internet that was doing something similar. Excited, he went shopping to look for cards and discovered some made in the USA by Fantus Paper Products. A perfect



Joshua Stiles

match, he reasoned, for saluting our soldiers.

Last year he filled 2,000 cards with his special message. After Christmas, he called the company to see if they could cut him a break on the cost of the cards for this year. Impressed with Tom's project, Fantus agreed to give him the cards, provided he paid for the shipping to his home.

Tom works on the cards, which are addressed to "any service member" and sent to military serving overseas, each day of the year. Next year, he expects to write nearly 5,000 himself. And

others have begun to lend a helping hand, including at least one church and students at Green and Norton schools. He's also received signed cards from celebrities like Chuck Norris, Ted Nugent, Jeff Foxworthy, Donald Trump, Judge Jeanine Pirro, former Cavalier Larry Nance and more.

Tom takes care of the postage, which is about \$16 to mail 800 cards in flat rate boxes — well, on most days.

During a recent visit to the Barberton post office, a man who was working there asked Tom about the cards. When he explained, the man leaned over the counter and shook his hand.

"You are done," he told Tom. "But I haven't paid you," he answered.

"Looks like zero to me," the man said, reaching for his wallet and removing the money needed to pay for Tom's shipment.

And that small gesture meant the world to Tom.

"It's not about the money. It's about what he did and why. That is so incredible to me," he said, blinking away the tears in his eyes. "You see, my ultimate goal is for my son to call me one day and tell me he got one of my cards."

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WAR ON TERRORISM

Militant rebels squeeze out Syrian moderates

By Liz Sly

The Washington Post

ANTAKYA, Turkey — The main al-Qaida affiliate in Syria is extending its control over a swath of territory that was until recently held by the collapsing moderate opposition, jeopardizing U.S. plans to form a new rebel force to fight extremists.

Since routing two of the biggest Western-backed rebel movements last month from the province of Idlib, Jabhat al-Nusra has been steadily consolidating its position as the single most powerful military force in northwestern Syria.

The group has overrun towns and villages throughout the province, has secured supply routes into neighboring Turkey and potentially paved the way for the establishment of an Islamic "emirate" — a competing entity to the "caliphate" declared last summer by the Islamic State in

northeastern Syria and western Iraq.

The al-Qaida affiliate's expanding footprint risks further complicating the U.S.-led effort to contain and destroy the far more powerful Islamic State, a fierce Nusra rival that ejected the al-Qaida loyalists from its territories last summer.

If the fighting in Syria continues on its current trajectory, the country soon will be partitioned almost entirely between jihadist forces and those of the Assad regime, leaving the moderate rebels without territory and the United States without allies in the strategically important country, rebel commanders and analysts say.

Meanwhile, Pentagon plans to train and equip a force of 5,000 rebels in northern Syria to fight against the Islamic State are still being formulated. A loca-

tion south of the Turkish capital, Ankara, has been identified as a base for training the first 2,000 rebels, and the opposition has been given a date — February 1 — for the first classes to begin, according to Syrian opposition representatives.

But U.S. officials have yet to meet with Syrian opposition leaders to discuss the program, are still debating with Turkey which groups will be picked and have not yet finalized the questions to be asked in the vetting process.

Rear Admiral John Kirby, the Pentagon spokesman, said on Thursday that officials are still waiting for funds to implement the program. The money was authorized later that day with the passage by Congress of a Defense authorization bill.

By the time the process gets underway, there may not be any

moderate rebels left to aid, said Yezid Sayegh of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut.

The policy "assumes a continued viable presence of the moderate opposition inside Syria. The fact of the ascendance of Jabhat al-Nusra is rendering these ideas moot," he said. "By the time these things become a reality on the ground, Jabhat al-Nusra will have already acquired such a degree of control the policy will no longer be feasible."

Rebel commanders say there is still life in the Free Syrian Army, the umbrella name used by moderate groups, even as it fights for its survival on two fronts, against the government and against the Islamic State. A covert, CIA-run program to aid moderate rebels has helped hold off a government advance that threatens to dislodge them from Aleppo, their most important stronghold, located to the

east of Idlib.

U.S. officials have said they are considering expanding that program in light of the recent setbacks, acknowledging the need for what one official called "a little more urgency."

But while some rebel leaders say they have been promised increased resources, others say their support has been suspended since the Jabhat al-Nusra offensive. All say the limited aid in any case never amounted to enough to ensure their survival.

"If we see our support continue at the same levels we've had in the past, in the next three to six months we will see the moderate rebels disappear," said Khalid Saleh, the spokesman for Hara-kat Hazm, the biggest recipient of U.S. support, which was ousted by Jabhat al-Nusra from its headquarters in Idlib last month.

Islamic State group attacks Syria base

By BASSEM MROUE

The Associated Press

BEIRUT — Islamic State group fighters stormed parts of a sprawling army air base Saturday in eastern Syria after days of clashes that killed dozens on both sides, activists said, while state media reported that the offensive was repelled.

The base, outside the city of Deir el-Zour, has been used by the government in the past months to launch air raids on areas held by the Islamic State group bordering Iraq.

The Islamic State group is trying to capture the air base and a nearby barracks known as Brigade 137 to eliminate the main pocket of resistance in the area and provide a major morale and propaganda boost after a string of setbacks in recent weeks.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the latest attack began Saturday with a suicide car bomb at the main entrance of the Deir el-

Zour air base. Later Saturday, the push stopped after fighters came under heavy shelling from army positions, it added.

The group said that some Islamic State fighters had breathing problems in the area after government forces used chlorine gas against them.

Syrian state TV quoted an unnamed military official as saying that troops repelled attempts by "terrorists" on several areas near the city of Deir el-Zour and killed "tens of them and destroyed their vehicles and weapons."

The Islamic State group began a major offensive on the air base, one of the last government-held areas in the province of Deir el-Zour, on Thursday.

The Observatory said that since Thursday, 119 fighters on both sides have been killed, including 51 troops and pro-government militiamen. It said some 68 Islamic State group fighters have been killed, of which 33 were Syrians and two were French citizens.



JOHN PHILIP WAGNER JR., COURTESY OF THE U.S. NAVY/AP

Good to go

Sailors assigned to the Fighting Redcocks of Strike Fighter Squadron 22 signal Friday that an aircraft is ready for launch from the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson as the ship conducts flight operations in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations supporting Operation Inherent Resolve targeting Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria.

Great Britain to boost military presence in Persian Gulf

By ADAM SCHRECK

The Associated Press

MANAMA, Bahrain — Britain has announced plans to send a large military ship to the Persian Gulf, signaling a deal with Bahrain that will bolster the United Kingdom's military presence in the island nation and give it a more permanent naval base in the oil-rich Persian Gulf region.

The agreement marks a strategic shift for Britain, which formally withdrew from its major Gulf military bases in 1971. It comes

as the U.K., the United States and their allies seek to push back Islamic State group militants that have taken over large parts of Iran and Syria and as world powers work to forge a lasting nuclear deal with Iran, which sits just across the Gulf from Bahrain.

British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond emphasized his country's historic links to the Gulf in announcing the plans at a security conference in the Bahraini capital, Manama.

"In a globalized world, our domestic security and prosperity depends on developments beyond our shores," Hammond said. "Your security concerns are our security concerns."

Tiny Bahrain already hosts the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, which is responsible for operations around the Arabian Peninsula as well as parts of the Indian Ocean.

The deal ensures a permanent footing for the Royal Navy in the oil-rich Gulf, Hammond said. The

Strait of Hormuz, which is the Gulf's only exit and is bounded by Iran and Oman, is the route for 30 percent of world oil supplies carried by tanker ships.

The agreement calls for improved onshore facilities at Bahrain's Mina Salman port that will give the Royal Navy a base to plan, to store equipment and to house military personnel.

Four British minesweepers are already based in Bahrain, and other British ships rely on facilities

in the kingdom. Those operations were carried out on an ad hoc basis, and left personnel relying on "frankly very poor temporary accommodation," Hammond said.

He did not say how much the expanded operation would cost.

Defense Secretary Michael Fallon described the facility as "a permanent expansion of the Royal Navy's footprint" that will ensure Britain can send more ships and bigger vessels into the Gulf.

WAR ON TERRORISM

Suspected al-Qaida operative detained

A suspected member of al-Qaida who had recently been designated a global terrorist by the United States has been detained in Jordan. The United States is also investigating whether he played a role in the 2012 attacks on U.S. facilities in Benghazi.

U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation, identified the man as Abd al-Baset Azzouz, a Libyan national. Details about his capture and what charges he could face in the United States remain unclear.

Turkish media reported that Azzouz was captured Nov. 13 in an operation in Yalova, which is about 100 miles south of Istanbul, and was later deported to Jordan.

Azzouz has not been named in any public statements or reports about those sought in connection with the Benghazi attacks. While the State Department designated Azzouz as a terrorist, it is not known if there are any criminal charges against him that would facilitate his extradition to the United States.

British jihadists receive steep sentences

LONDON — Two British men who traveled to Syria to join the fight against the Assad regime armed with copies of "Arabic for Dummies" and "The Koran for Dummies" face record jail sentences of almost 18 years after pleading guilty to terrorist offenses.

Yusuf Sarwar and Mohammed Ahmed, both 22, can be released for the last five years of the term under extended bail, intended to "punish, deter and incapacitate" them, Judge Michael Topolski said as he delivered the heaviest punishment to date for Syrian related-offenses.

The pair, from Birmingham, bought the two reference books before traveling to Syria in 2012. Sarwar's mother found a letter in her son's room saying he wanted to die a martyr and reported him to anti-terrorist police.

Bombings kill 10 people in Iraq, officials say

BAGHDAD — A string of bombings targeting Shiites killed 10 people Saturday around Baghdad, Iraqi officials said.

Police officials said the first attack took place Saturday morning when a bomb exploded near a market in the Shiite section of the town of Mahmudiyah, killing five people and wounding 12. Mahmudiyah is 20 miles south of the capital.

On Saturday, police said a bomb attached to a mini-bus exploded in the capital's suburb of Hussainiyah, killing two passengers and wounding nine.

In eastern Baghdad, police said a bomb blast near food stalls serving Shiite pilgrims killed three people and wounded eight. The pilgrims were heading to the Shiite holy city of Karbala to attend the religious commemoration known as Arbabeen.

From wire reports

Hostages: Raid was second attempt at rescue

FROM FRONT PAGE

Yemen's highest security body, the Supreme Security Committee, issued a rare statement acknowledging that the country's forces had carried out the raid with "American friends." The committee said all the militants who were holding the hostages were killed in the operation.

The second rescue attempt in less than two weeks to free Somers was prompted by a video posted online earlier in the week in which al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula threatened to kill the photographer within 72 hours.

But an aid group helping negotiate Korkie's release said he was to be freed Sunday and his wife was told that "the wait is almost over."

In a statement, Obama did not address Korkie by name, only saying he "authorized the rescue of any other hostages held in the same location as Luke." The South African government did not immediately comment on Korkie's death.

Information "indicated that Luke's life was in imminent danger," Obama said. "Based on this assessment, and as soon as there was reliable intelligence and an operational plan, I authorized a rescue attempt."

Officials said Obama authorized the rescue mission "Friday morning" and was informed that evening about the outcome.

Lucy Somers, the photojournalist's sister, said that she and her father learned of her 33-year-old brother's death from FBI agents at midnight.

"We ask that all of Luke's family members be allowed to mourn in peace," she said from near London.

Yemen's national security chief, Maj. Gen. Ali al-Ahmedi, said the militants planned to kill Luke Somers on Saturday, and that prompted the joint mission.

"Al-Qaida promised to conduct the execution of (Somers) today so there was an attempt to save them but unfortunately they shot the hostage before or during the attack," al-Ahmedi said at a conference in Manama, Bahrain.

The operation began before dawn Saturday in a province that is a stronghold of al-Qaida's branch in Yemen. U.S. drones struck the Wadi Abdan area first, followed by strafing runs by jets before Yemeni ground forces moved in, a Yemeni security official said. Helicopters flew in more forces to raid the house where the two men were held, he said.

At least nine al-Qaida militants were killed in an initial drone strike, another security official said. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reporters. U.S. officials said no American forces were killed or injured. The



JABER AHMAD GHRAIB/AP

Luke Somers, seen in July 2013, was an American photojournalist who was kidnapped over a year ago by al-Qaida.

American military team was on the ground for about 30 minutes. Officials also said that based on the location on the compound where Somers and Korkie were found, there was no possibility that the hostages were killed by American fire.

U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the rescue mission was "extremely well executed, and was complicated and risky. The two men "were murdered by the AQAP terrorists during the course of the operation," Hagel said during a visit to Afghanistan.

The rescue mission was the second by U.S. and Yemeni forces searching for Somers, among the roughly dozen hostages believed held by al-Qaida militants in Yemen.

On Nov. 25, American special operations forces and Yemeni soldiers raided a remote al-Qaida safe haven in a desert region near the Saudi border, freeing eight captives, including Yemenis, a Saudi and an Ethiopian. Somers, a Briton and four others had been moved days earlier, officials later said.

Following that first raid, al-Qaida militants released a video Thursday that showed Somers. The group threatened to kill him in three days if the United States did not meet unspecified demands or if another rescue was made.

Somers was kidnapped in September 2013 as he left a supermarket in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, said Fakhri al-Arashi, chief editor of the National Yemen, where Somers worked as a copy editor and a freelance photographer during the 2011 uprising in Yemen.

Before her brother's death, Lucy Somers released an online video describing him as a romantic who "always believes the best in people." She ended with the plea: "Please let him live."

In a statement, Somers' father, Michael, also called his son "a good friend of Yemen and the Yemeni people" and asked for his safe release.

preparing the final security and logistical arrangements, related to hostage release mechanisms, to bring Pierre to safety and freedom. It is even more tragic that the words we used in a conversation with Yolande at 5:59 this morning was: 'The wait is almost over.'"

Somers, who was born in Britain, earned a bachelor's degree in creative writing while attending Beloit College in Wisconsin from 2004 through 2007.

"He really wanted to understand the world," said Shawn Gillen, an English professor and chairman of Beloit College's journalism program who had Somers as a student.

Fuad Al Kadas, who called Somers one of his best friends, said Somers spent time in Egypt before finding work in Yemen. Somers started teaching English at a Yemen school but quickly established himself as one of the few foreign photographers in the country, he said.

"He is a great man with a kind heart who really loves the Yemeni people and the country," Al Kadas wrote in an email from Yemen. He said he last saw Somers the day before Somers was kidnapped.

"He was so dedicated in trying to help change Yemen's future, to do good things for the people that he didn't leave the country his entire time here," Al Kadas wrote.

Al-Arashi, his editor at the National Yemen, recalled a moment when Somers edited a story on other hostages held in the country.

"He looked at me and said, 'I don't want to be a hostage,'" al-Arashi said. "I don't want to be kidnapped."

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NATION

Protesters of chokehold death rally in US cities

The Associated Press

Demonstrators around the country staged die-ins, blocked roadways and marched into stores to protest a New York grand jury's decision to not indict a white police officer in the chokehold death of an unarmed black man.

Tensions were already running high around the nation because of a grand jury's decision almost two weeks ago not to indict a white

“It makes us kids feel unsafe, that we're outsiders, enemies of society.”

Bennie Mahonda
Aurora, Colo., eighth-grader

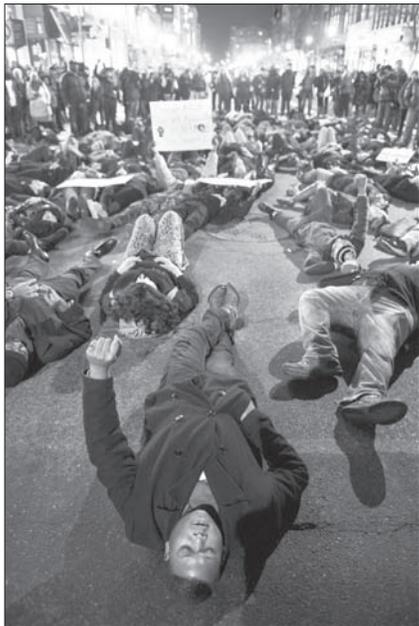
“I can't breathe” while he was being arrested for selling loose, untaxed cigarettes.

Hundreds of protesters marched and many briefly laid down at Macy's flagship store, Grand Central Terminal and an Apple store. They streamed along Fifth Avenue sidewalks and other parts of Manhattan with signs and chants of “black lives matter” and “I can't breathe.”

News outlets reported that demonstrators later blocked traffic on FDR Drive in Lower Manhattan, spurring arrests. Police said it immediately have information on the number arrests.

In Oakland, Calif., hundreds of protesters briefly blocked Interstate 880, a major freeway, on Friday night. There were no immediate reports of any arrests or injuries.

In suburban New York City on Friday, about 65 demonstrators lay down on a street corner in protest. Among them were Jason Walker, of Atlanta, who was in



CLIFF OWEN/AP

A protester raises his fist as he takes part in a 4½-minute “die-in” while blocking an intersection in downtown Washington on Friday.

New York for a wedding, and his daughter, Jaidyn, 3. She told her father she wanted to lie down when the demonstrators did, and she lay on the sidewalk for the full seven minutes.

In New Haven, Conn., home of Yale University, hundreds of demonstrators marched Friday afternoon from the law school to the courthouse. In New Jersey,

dozens of students from Rutgers University walked through New Brunswick, slowing downtown rush-hour traffic to a crawl and forcing the city to postpone a tree-lighting ceremony scheduled at Monument Square.

In Colorado, students walked out of class Friday to protest the grand jury decisions. In Aurora, a suburb of Denver, eighth-grader

NY police say victim complicit in demise

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Eric Garner was overweight and in poor health. He was a nuisance to shop owners who complained about him selling untaxed cigarettes on the street. When police came to arrest him, he resisted. And if he could repeatedly say, “I can't breathe,” it means he could breathe.

New York City police officers were making such arguments even before a grand jury decided against charges in Garner's death, saying the possibility that he contributed to his own demise has been drowned out in the furor over race and law enforcement.

Officers say the outcry has left them feeling betrayed and demonized by everyone from the president and the mayor to throngs of protesters who scream at them on the street.

“Police officers feel like they are being thrown under the bus,” said Patrick Lynch, president of the police union.

The grand jury last week cleared a white patrolman, Daniel Pantaleo, who was caught on video applying what appeared to be an illegal chokehold on the black man. Mayor Bill de Blasio said the case underscores the New York Police

Department's need to improve relations with minorities.

But Lynch said, “What we did not hear is this: You cannot go out and break the law. What we did not hear is that you cannot resist arrest. That's a crime.”

At the noisy demonstrations that have broken out over the past few days, protesters have confronted police who had nothing to do with the case. Signs read: “NYPD: Blood on your hands,” “Racism kills” and “Hey officers, choke me or shoot me.” Some demonstrators shouted, “NYPD pigs!”

In private and in Internet chat rooms, officers say they feel demoralized, misunderstood and “all alone.” Some are advising each other that the best way to preserve their careers is to stop making arrests like that of Garner's, in defiance of the NYPD's campaign of cracking down on minor “quality-of-life” offenses as a way to discourage serious crime.

“Everyone is just demonizing the police,” said Maki Haberfeld, a professor of police studies at John Jay College of criminal justice. “But police follow orders and laws. Nobody talks about the responsibility of the politicians to explain to the community why quality-of-life enforcement is necessary.”

Bennie Mahonda walked about 5 miles to the municipal center shouting, “Hands up, don't shoot!” to honks from passing cars. She had her parents' permission, but she promised her mother she would return to class after the demonstration, which she called “social studies outside of class.”

“It makes us kids feel unsafe, that we're outsiders, enemies of so-

ciety,” said Bennie, who is black.

In Florida, activists marched through the streets of midtown Miami and blocked a major causeway connecting Miami to Miami Beach. In Providence, R.I., several hundred people blocked downtown streets, while city police had to stop some protesters from walking onto Interstate 95 on Friday night. No arrests were reported.

House GOP leaders move to avoid immigration showdown

By **ANDREW WERNER**
AND **DREW TAYLOR**

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Trying to avoid a showdown over immigration, House Republican leaders are moving to make a deal with Democrats to pass a spending bill that would keep the government running past this week.

The emerging strategy follows legislation passed Thursday by the House declaring President Barack Obama's executive actions to curb deportations of immigrants in the U.S. illegally to be “null and void.”

That legislation wasn't enough for some conservatives, who complained that the only way to stop Obama's actions on immigration

would be to forbid them in legislation that must pass if the government is to stay open.

Republican leaders are opposed to that course of action, fearing a government shutdown that they don't want, and they plan to rely on Democratic votes to pass a bill to keep the government going.

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, of California, said Friday that Democrats were committed to keeping the government open, but she warned that Republicans could lose their support if they include too many contentious so-called policy riders in the spending bill on issues like school lunch nutrition standards and water quality.

“We haven't seen the bill. But there are some very destructive

riders in it that would be unacceptable to us and, I think, unacceptable to the American people,” Pelosi said.

“The responsibility to keep government open is theirs. If the bill is anything that we can support, we will,” added Pelosi, who has more leverage in the negotiations because of House Speaker John Boehner's likely need to rely on her to deliver Democratic votes.

The spending bill would pay for the operations of most government agencies for a year while extending the Homeland Security Department operations only for a few months.

Homeland Security includes the immigration agencies that would carry out Obama's executive actions, so the approach

would allow Republicans to revisit them early next year, once they have control of the Senate and a bigger majority in the House.

“We think this is the most practical way to fight the president's action,” said Boehner, R-Ohio.

Several conservative lawmakers sounded resigned Thursday to being ignored by Boehner, who with a bigger majority next year will have more room to maneuver around balky tea party lawmakers.

“My assumption is that the fix is in, and they don't need us,” said Rep. Matt Salmon, R-Ariz. “They're going to vote this with a large number of Democrats.”

The omnibus spending bill would cut the approximately one-third of the budget dedicated

to day-to-day operations of Cabinet agencies.

There's slightly more than \$1 trillion for the Pentagon and domestic agencies, plus more than \$70 billion to tackle overseas military operations in Afghanistan and to fight Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria.

Obama appeared likely to get most of his \$6.2 billion request for fighting Ebola at home and in Africa, but not the infrastructure money he has requested.

Most of the money issues are largely worked out, House Appropriations Committee spokeswoman Jennifer Hing said. But many of the policy riders, on environmental regulations, long-haul trucker hours, labor relations and more are unresolved.

NATION

Rolling Stone backs away from university rape story

By T. REES SHAPIRO
The Washington Post

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — A University of Virginia student's harrowing description of a gang rape at a fraternity, detailed in a recent Rolling Stone article, began to unravel Friday as interviews revealed doubts about significant elements of the account. The fraternity issued a statement rebutting the story, and Rolling Stone apologized for a lapse in judgment and backed away from its article on the case.

Jackie, a University of Virginia junior, said she was ambushed and raped by seven men at the Phi Kappa Psi house during a date party in 2012, allegations that tore through the campus and pushed the elite public school into the epicenter of a national discussion about how universities should handle sex-assault claims. Shocking in its gruesome details, the account described Jackie enduring three hours of successive rapes, an ordeal that left her blood-spattered and emotionally devastated.

The University of Virginia fraternity, Phi Kappa Psi, where the attack was alleged to have occurred, has said it has been working with police and has concluded that the allegations are untrue. Among other things, the fraternity said there was no event at the house the night the attack was alleged to have happened.

A group of Jackie's close friends, who are advocates for sex-assault awareness at the university, said they believe something traumatic happened to her, but they also have come to doubt her account.

A student who came to Jackie's aid the night of the alleged attack said in an interview late Friday night that she did not appear physically injured at the time but was visibly shaken and told him and two other friends that she had been at a fraternity party and had wanted to have oral sex with a group of men.

They offered to get her help, and she said she just wanted to return

to her dorm, said the student, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject.

The friends said that details of the attack have changed over time and that they have not been able to verify key points in recent days.

For example, an alleged attacker that Jackie identified to them for the first time last week — a junior in 2012 who worked with her as a university lifeguard — was actually the name of a student who belongs to a different fraternity, and no one by that name has been a member of Phi Kappa Psi.

Reached by phone, that man, a University of Virginia graduate,

said Friday that he worked at the Aquatic and Fitness Center and was familiar with Jackie's name. But he added that he never met Jackie in person and took her out on a date. He also said he was not a member of Phi Kappa Psi.

Jackie, who spoke to The Washington Post several times during the past week, stood by her account, offering a similar version and details.

"I never asked for this" attention, she said in an interview. "What bothers me is that so many people act like it didn't happen. It's my life. I have had to live with the fact that it happened every day for the last two years."

A lawyer who is representing Jackie said Friday that she and her client are declining to comment beyond her interviews. The Washington Post generally does not identify victims of sexual assault without their permission and is identifying Jackie by her nickname at her request.

The prominent trustee — which has been vilified, vandalized and ultimately suspended on campus after Sabrina Rubin Erdely's Rolling Stone article went online last month — said in its statement Friday that its initial doubts as to the accuracy of the article have only been strengthened as alumni and undergraduate members have

delved deeper."

Phi Kappa Psi said it did not host "a date function or social event" during the weekend of Sept. 28, 2012, when Jackie alleges she was upstairs to a date party, lured into an apartment room and then ambushed and gang-raped by seven men who were "rushing" the fraternity.

The fraternity also said it has reviewed the roster of employees at the Aquatic and Fitness Center for 2012 and that it does not list a member of the fraternity — a detail Jackie provided in her account to Rolling Stone and in interviews with The Washington Post — and that no member of the house matches the description detailed in the Rolling Stone account. The statement also said the house does not have pledges during the fall semester.

"Moreover, no ritualized sexual assault is part of our pledging or initiating process," the fraternity said. "The Rolling Stone article, and we vehemently refute this claim."

University President Teresa Sullivan said Friday that the developments will not alter the university's focus on "one of the most difficult and critical issues facing higher education today: sexual violence on college campuses."

"The University remains first and foremost concerned with the care and support of our students and, especially, any survivor of sexual assault," Sullivan said in a statement. "Our students, their safety, and their well-being, remain our top priority."

Sullivan vowed to continue taking a "hard look" at the school's practices, policies and procedures.

Capt. Gary Pleasants of the Charlottesville Police Department, said detectives are looking into the allegations at the request of the university but declined to comment on the status of that investigation.

"Our purpose is to find the truth in any matter, and that's what we are looking for here," Pleasants said. "These articles do not change our focus moving forward."

Rolling Stone's editors apologized to readers for discrepancies in the story, issuing a statement and posting it on their website. Will Dana, Rolling Stone's managing editor, said there is fresh doubt about the article.

"In the face of new information, there now appear to be discrepancies in Jackie's account, and we have come to the conclusion that our trust in her was misplaced," he said in the statement.

Congress takes another crack at Calif. memorial

WASHINGTON — One of the nation's longest-running church-state conflicts could be nearing a conclusion.

As part of a bill setting defense policy, Congress would authorize the defense secretary to transfer

a scenic parcel of federal land in the La Jolla section of San Diego to a private group — the Mount Soledad Memorial Association.

The parcel contains a memorial to the nation's veterans and a 43-foot-high cross that federal courts have determined is an unconstitutional effort by the government to endorse a religion.

The federal government has owned the land since 2006, when Congress stepped in to acquire the parcel from the city, which was facing court-ordered fines. Still, after more than 25 years of litigation, nobody familiar with the dispute will be surprised if this latest effort falls short.

The Associated Press



Judy Huth



Bill Cosby

LA police investigating Cosby molestation claim

By ANTHONY MCCARTNEY
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles police opened an investigation into a woman's claims that Bill Cosby molested her when she was 15 years old, a department spokeswoman said.

The investigation was opened Friday after Judy Huth, who is suing Cosby for sexual battery, met with detectives for 90 minutes, Officer Jane Kim said.

Huth's civil suit claims Cosby forced her to perform a sex act on him in a bedroom of the Playboy Mansion in about 1974, when she was underage.

Attorney Gloria Allred said Huth met with two special victim unit detectives Friday, three days after her lawsuit was filed.

Huth did not take questions during a news conference.

Police did not give any additional details about the investigation. Cosby's attorney, Martin Singer, accused Huth and another lawyer of extortion and said she attempted to sell her story to a tabloid a decade earlier.

Singer's filing states that attorney Marc Strecker first demanded \$100,000 for Huth to remain

silent, then raised the demand to \$250,000 as more women came forward accusing Cosby of sexual misconduct.

Cosby has been accused by more than 15 women in recent weeks of sexual misconduct, ranging from groping to drugging and raping. He has never been charged with a crime.

Crews on Friday were forced to clean up Cosby's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame after someone wrote "rapist" on it three times.

Also Friday, a woman who said Cosby drugged and sexually assaulted her in 1979 told her story in interviews with CNN and The Associated Press and said she wanted to help stop the comedian from abusing others.

P.J. Masten said in an interview with CNN that she woke up naked and bruised in a bed with Cosby in Chicago after he gave her an alcoholic drink, and that she believes she was raped.

She said she knew Cosby from working at Playboy clubs in New Jersey, Los Angeles and Chicago.

"I just want him exposed for the serial druggie rapist that he is. He's got to be stopped," Masten said. "I don't care if he's 77 years old. He's got to be stopped."

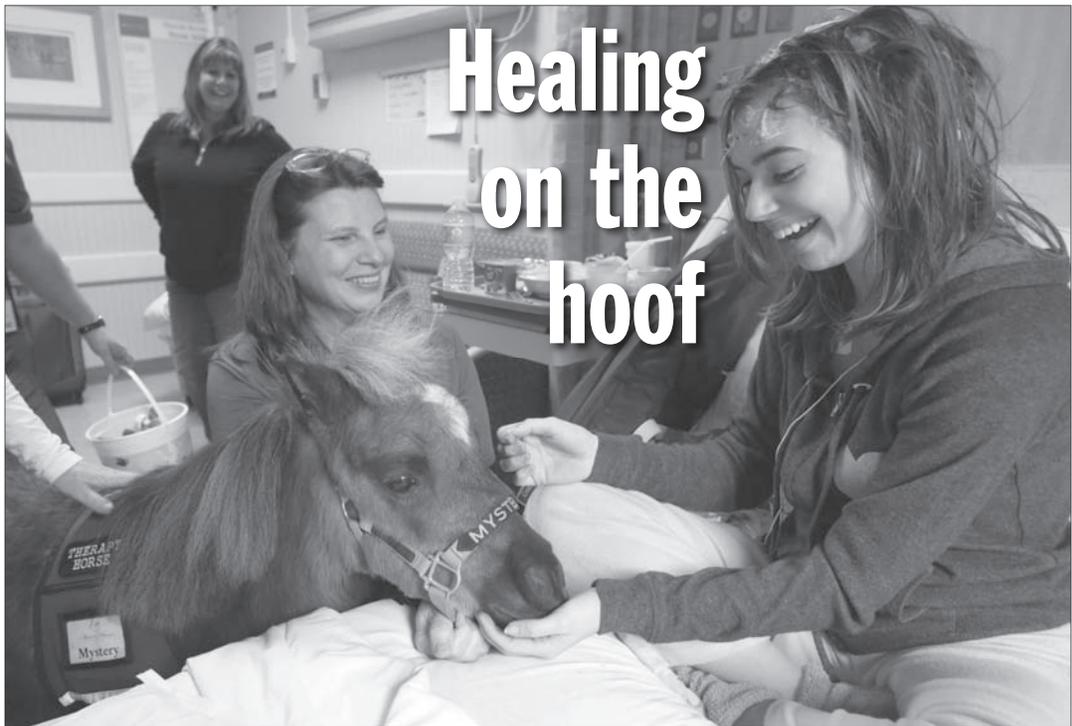


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NATION



PHOTOS BY M. SPENCER GREEN/AP

Patient Emily Pietsch enjoys a November visit with Mystery, one of two miniature therapy horses that visited the pediatric unit at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

Horses trot into hospital: It's therapy, no joke

By LINDSEY TANNER
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Two miniature horses trotted into a hospital. Doctors and patients did double-takes when the equine visitors ambled down long corridors in the pediatric unit at Chicago's Rush University Medical Center.

Wide-eyed youngsters hooked up to IV poles stepped into hallways to get a glimpse, and kids too sick to leave their rooms beamed with delight when the little, long-lashed horses showed up for some bedside nuzzling.

Mystery and Lunar, as small as big dogs, are equines on a medical mission to offer comfort care and distraction therapy for ailing patients. It is a role often taken on by dogs in health care settings — animal therapy, according to studies and anecdotal reports, may benefit health, perhaps even speeding healing and recovery.

Mini-horses add an extra element of delight — many kids don't know they exist outside of fairy tales.

"I want one," said Elizabeth Duncan, 14, stroking Mystery's nose from her propped-up hospital bed.

These horses and two others

belong to the animal-assisted therapy group Mane in Heaven. They have visited nursing homes and centers for the disabled, but this November visit was their first ever inside a hospital. It was also the first horse-therapy visit for Rush, and more are planned.

"We have long had animal-assisted therapy here at Rush and

just seen the enormous benefits that animals can have on most children — just the joy that they bring, the unconditional love," said Robyn Hart, the hospital's director of child life services.

Mini-horses "are something that most people whether kids or adults have never seen before, and so that builds in a little more excitement and anticipation. They almost look like mythical animals, like they should have wings on," Hart said.

Some people confuse these horses with better-known Shetland ponies, but minis are less stout, with a more horse-like build. The therapy they offer contrasts starkly with the austere, high-tech hospital environment — soft ears to scratch, fluffy manes to caress, big, soulful eyes to stare deeply into.

"They're so nice and they don't judge and they're so sweet," said epilepsy patient Emily Pietsch, 17, after gently tracing Lunar's heart-shaped muzzle with her fingers.

Mane in Heaven's owner, Jodie Diegel, a former obstetrics nurse, said the minis bring "smiles, joy, love and laughter, and that's the true healing in action."

Some research has suggested



Patients Nathaniel Lopez, left, and Araceli Morales take turns petting Lunar during the miniature horse's visit to the pediatric unit.

that animal-assisted therapy may reduce pain and blood pressure, and decrease fear and stress in hospitalized children. But much of it is based on patients' reports.

A review of 10 years of studies about in-patient therapy using dogs, published in April in the Southern Medical Association's journal, concluded that it's safe and can be effective. Dr. Caroline Burton of the Mayo Clinic in Florida, a co-author of the review, owns seven dogs, four regular horses and a donkey, and strongly supports animal-assisted

therapy. Burton acknowledged that skeptics dismiss it as "touchy-feely" and lacking hard evidence of any meaningful medical benefits. She said studies are needed on whether animals in hospitals can shorten patients' stays and reduce readmission rates — something her hospital is looking into with dogs and heart failure patients.

While some worry about animals bringing germs into hospitals, Burton's review found no associated infections in patients.



Staff and volunteers from Mane in Heaven escort Mystery to patients' rooms.

WORLD

Pakistan says top militant killed

By MUNIR AHMED
The Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan's military said Saturday that soldiers killed al-Qaida's chief of global operations during a raid in the country's lawless tribal region, a man indicted in the U.S. over a plot to bomb New York's subway system.

Adnan Shukrijumah was killed, along with two other suspected militants, in Pakistan's

North Waziristan tribal area early Saturday, the military said. "The al-Qaida leader who was killed by the Pakistan army in a successful operation is the same person who had been indicted in the United States," said a senior Pakistan army officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to talk to journalists.

Shukrijumah held a position that once was held by Sept. 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. The FBI lists the Saudi as a "most wanted" terrorist and had offered up to a \$5 million reward for his capture.

Federal prosecutors in the U.S. allege Shukrijumah had recruited men in 2008 to receive training in the lawless tribal region of Pakistan for the attack. The New York indictment links him to the Manhattan plot and to a similar, never-executed scheme to attack British suburbs.



A girl walks along the shore as strong waves from Typhoon Hagupit hit Atimonan, Quezon province, eastern Philippines, on Saturday.

AARON FAVILA/AP

Typhoon makes landfall in Philippines

The Associated Press

LEGAZPI, Philippines — Typhoon Hagupit slammed into the central Philippines' east coast late Saturday, knocking out power and toppling trees in a region where 650,000 people have fled to safety, still haunted by the massive death and destruction wrought by a monster storm last year.

Packing maximum sustained winds of 109 miles per hour and gusts of 130 mph, Hagupit made landfall in Dolores, a coastal town facing the Pacific in Eastern Samar province, according to the Philippines' weather agency. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Although it was unlikely to reach the unprecedented strength of Typhoon Haiyan, Hagupit's strong winds and heavy rain were enough to possibly cause major damage to an impoverished region still reeling from the devastating November 2013 storm, which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing.

"There are many trees that have toppled, some of them on the highway," police Senior Inspector Alex Robin said by phone late Saturday from Dolores, where he reported Hagupit made landfall. "We are totally in the dark here. The only light comes from flashlights."

From Eastern Samar, Hagupit — Filipino for "smash" or "lash" — was expected to hammer parts



PAUL CINCO/AP

Filipinos evacuate to safer ground with their belongings in Tanauan township, Leyte province, in central Philippines, on Thursday.

of a string of island provinces that was devastated by Haiyan's tsunami-like storm surges and ferocious winds. Hagupit weakened slightly on Saturday, but remained dangerously powerful and erratic.

Eastern Samar province Rep. Ben Evardone said electricity was knocked out early Saturday in Borongan city, 43 miles south of Dolores, where the government has set up a command center for rescue and relief operations headed by Interior Secretary Mar Roxas.

Evardone said the strong winds also felled trees and ripped off roofing sheets. "You can hear the

whistling of the wind," he said.

Army troops deployed to supermarkets and major roads in the typhoon's path to prevent looting and chaos and clear debris, all of which slowed the government's response last year, said Gen. Gregorio Pio Catapang, head of the Philippines' 120,000-strong military.

While unlikely to reach Haiyan's strength, forecasters said Hagupit's maximum sustained winds and gusts were strong enough to set off deadly storm surges and landslides and cause heavy damage to communities and agriculture.

Swiss hostage escapes from extremists in Philippines

By JIM GOMEZ
The Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — A Swiss hostage made a dramatic escape Saturday from Abu Sayyaf extremists when he hacked a rebel commander then got shot as he dashed to freedom amid a military artillery assault, ending more than two years of jungle captivity in the southern Philippines, officials said.

Lorenzo Vinciguerra, 49, made his daring escape while government forces were firing artillery rounds near the jungle forest where he was being held in mountainous Patikul town in Sulu province.

He grabbed a long knife, hacked an Abu Sayyaf commander and then ran away, but he was shot and wounded by another militant, security officials said.

Philippine army scout rangers later found him and escorted him to safety.

"He was wounded, but he's well and recovering in a hospital," Lt. Gen. Rustico Guerrero regional military commander

expressed relief that Vinciguerra had regained his freedom, but regretted that his Dutch companion remained in captivity.

In Bern, the Swiss government expressed relief that Vinciguerra had regained his freedom, but regretted that his Dutch companion remained in captivity. While lying later in a military combat hospital bed, his head wrapped in a bandage, Vinciguerra barked in his hard-won freedom and thanked the military. He said he was happy because he can finally spend Christmas with his family but worried about his companion, Ewold Horn, who was still in Abu Sayyaf custody in Sulu's jungles.

Vinciguerra was seized by the militants in nearby Tawi Tawi province in February 2012 while on a bird-watching trip with Horn.

A Filipino guide who was with them had jumped into the sea and escaped while the militants were taking them by boat from Tawi Tawi to Jolo island in Sulu, an impoverished, predominantly Muslim province where the Abu Sayyaf has endured years of U.S.-backed military offensives.

"I talked to him and asked him to join me, but he refused," he said of Horn, adding that the Dutchman had teeth problems and other ailments.

Vinciguerra said he felt the extremists would treat Horn well and urged the militants to surrender and start a new life. "My final message to everybody: Put the gun down and come out corruption to rebuild the party's image.

China arrests former security chief Zhou, launches probe

By IAN MADER
AND DIDI TANG
The Associated Press

BEIJING — Chinese authorities have arrested the once-feared ex-security chief Zhou Yongkang and launched a criminal investigation Saturday on charges ranging from adultery and bribery to leaking state secrets, after expelling him from the Communist Party overnight.

The developments, announced shortly after midnight, pave the

way for a trial of the most senior figure so far to be ensnared in President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption crackdown and appear to seal the downfall of a formerly powerful politician once considered a potential rival for Xi.

The square-jawed, granite-faced Zhou, 72, is the highest-level official to be prosecuted since the 1981 treason trial of Mao Zedong's wife and other members of the "Gang of Four" who persecuted political opponents during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution.

Although the case against Zhou has been touted by state media as another example of the party's determination to fight corruption regardless of one's rank, some analysts say it is part of factional politics in the ruling party's uppermost echelon.

"The fundamental issue remains the power struggle," Beijing-based historian and independent political observer Zhang Lifan said.

Made public at the announcement past midnight on a weekend is a sign

that the party leadership wants to downplay its impact, Zhang said. An allegation that Zhou leaked state secrets may give authorities a reason to close the trial and keep dirty politics under the wraps, he added.

Li Cheng, director of the John L. Thornton China Center at the Washington-based think tank Brookings Institution, said the prosecution against Zhou was a genuine effort by Beijing to root out corruption to rebuild the party's image.

STARS AND STRIPES

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SCOTT WENIG/AP

Protesters march through New York's Times Square on Wednesday in response to the grand jury's decision to clear the police officer in the Eric Garner case. Garner, an unarmed black man, died after being stopped on suspicion of selling untaxed cigarettes.

Law puts all in same danger as Garner

By STEPHEN CARTER
 Bloomberg News

On the opening day of law school, I always counsel my first-year students never to support a law they are not willing to kill to enforce. Usually they greet this advice with something between skepticism and puzzlement, until I remind them that the police go armed to enforce the will of the state, and if you resist, they might kill you.

I wish this caution were only theoretical. It isn't. Whatever your view on the refusal of a New York City grand jury to indict the police officer whose chokehold apparently led to the death of Eric Garner, it's useful to remember the crime that Garner is alleged to have committed: He was selling individual cigarettes, or looses, in violation of New York law.

The obvious racial dynamics of the case — the police officer, Daniel Pantaleo, is white; Garner was black — have sparked understandable outrage. But, at least among libertarians, so has the law that was being enforced. Write Nick Gillespie in the Daily Beast, "Clearly something has gone horribly wrong when a man lies dead after being confronted for selling cigarettes to willing buyers." Republican Sen. Rand Paul, of Kentucky, appearing on MSNBC, also blamed the statute: "Some politician put a tax of \$5.85 on a pack of cigarettes, so they've driven cigarettes underground by making them so expensive."

The problem is actually broader. It's not just cigarette tax laws that can lead to the death of those the police seek to arrest. It's every law. Libertarians argue that we have far too many laws, and the Garner case offers evidence that they're right. I often tell my students that there will never be a perfect technology of law enforcement, and therefore it is unavoidable that there will be situations where police err on the side of too much violence rather than too little. Better training won't lead to perfection. But fewer laws would mean fewer opportunities for official violence to get out of hand.

The legal scholar Douglas Husak, in his excellent 2009 book "Overcriminal-

ization: The Limits of the Criminal Law," points out that federal law alone includes more than 3,000 crimes, fewer than half of which are found in the Federal Criminal Code. The rest are scattered through other statutes. A citizen who wants to abide by the law has no quick and easy way to find out what the law actually is — a violation of the traditional principle that the state cannot punish without fair notice.

In addition to these statutes, he writes, an astonishing 300,000 or more federal regulations may be enforceable through criminal punishment in the discretion of an administrative agency. Nobody knows the number for sure.

Husak cites estimates that more than 70 percent of American adults have committed a crime that could lead to imprisonment. He quotes the legal scholar William Stuntz to the effect that we are moving toward "a world in which the law on the books makes everyone a felon." Does this seem too dramatic? Husak points to studies suggesting that more than half of young people download music illegally from the Internet. That's been a federal crime for almost 20 years. These kids, in theory, could all go to prison.

Many criminal laws hardly pass the giggle test. Husak takes us on a tour through bizarre statutes, including the Alabama law making it a crime to maim oneself for the purpose of gaining sympathy, the Florida law prohibiting displays of deformed animals, the Illinois law against "damaging anhydrous ammonia equipment." And then there's the wondrous federal crime of disturbing mud in a cave on federal land. (Be careful where you run to get out of the rain.) Whether or not these laws are frequently enforced, Husak's concern is that they exist — and potentially make felons of us all.

Part of the problem, Husak suggests, is the growing tendency of legislatures — including Congress — to toss in a criminal sanction at the end of countless bills on countless subjects. It's as though making an offense criminal shows how much we care about it.

Well, maybe so. But making an offense criminal also means that the police will go

armed to enforce it. Overcriminalization matters, Husak says, because the costs of facing criminal sanction are so high and because the criminal law can no longer sort out the law-abiding from the non-law-abiding. True enough. But it also matters because — as the Garner case reminds us — the police might kill you.

I don't mean this as a criticism of cops, whose job after all is to carry out the legislative will. The criticism is of a political system that takes such bizarre delight in creating new crimes for the cops to enforce. It's unlikely that the New York legislature, in creating the crime of selling untaxed cigarettes, imagined that anyone would die for violating it. But a wise legislator would give the matter some thought before creating a crime. Officials who fail to take into account the obvious fact that the laws they're so eager to pass will be enforced at the point of a gun cannot fairly be described as public servants.

Husak suggests as one solution interpreting the Constitution to include a right not to be punished. This in turn would mean that before a legislature could criminalize a particular behavior, it would have to show a public interest significantly higher than for most forms of legislation.

He offers the example of a legislature that decides "to prohibit — on pain of criminal liability — the consumption of designated unhealthy foods such as doughnuts."

Of course, activists on the right and the left tend to believe that all of their causes are of great importance. Whatever they want to ban or require, they seem unalterably persuaded that the use of state power is appropriate.

That's too bad. Every new law requires enforcement; every act of enforcement includes the possibility of violence. There are many painful lessons to be drawn from the Garner tragedy, but one of them, sadly, is the same as the advice I give my students on the first day of classes: Don't ever fight to make something illegal unless you're willing to risk the lives of your fellow citizens to get your way.

OPINION

Boehner can't seem to shut down dissent

By DOYLE MCMANUS
Los Angeles Times

After November's midterm election, polls found that most Americans wanted their members of Congress to seek compromise — anything to end the gridlock that has plagued Washington. An NBC-Wall Street Journal survey found that even among Republicans, more favor compromise over intransigence. Four years ago, only 27 percent of GOP voters were in the compromise camp; now 49 percent are, while just 45 percent want their legislators to stand firm.

But that message hasn't reached everyone in Washington. As Republicans' internal wrangling on Capitol Hill made clear on Tuesday, House Speaker John Boehner's majority is still hamstrung by a knot of zealous conservatives who don't want to yield. And there's no reason to think that will change next year.

The issue on the table is that Congress needs to pass a spending bill by Dec. 11, or the federal government stops working.

Boehner, of Ohio, has already ruled out another government shutdown. The last time the GOP tried that in 2013, it was an inglorious failure that drove the party's popularity to record lows.

But the Republicans whom Boehner wants to move a spending bill, especially tea party conservatives, are furious at President Barack Obama for his decision to allow an estimated 4 million undocumented immigrants to stay in the country without fear of deportation, and they're looking for a way to stop the move from going forward.

On Tuesday, Boehner proposed a way to change the budget without jeopardizing the budget deal. First, he said, the House could pass a bill declaring Obama's executive action illegal. Then it could approve funding for the government for the next nine

months, to avoid a shutdown.

But conservatives weren't having it. The bill declaring Obama's action illegal would only be symbolic, they complained, since it would almost certainly die in the Senate, which still has a Democratic majority until next month. Meanwhile, the spending bill would allow the federal government to carry out the president's orders.

"I don't think you fund any unconstitutional action ... not even for the short term," objected Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas. "On principle, we should not compromise."

Outside D.C., conservative zealots were far less polite. On his Red State blog, Erick Erickson denounced "Boehner's two-step plan to do nothing about amnesty," saying the speaker needed some "testicular fortitude."

That left Boehner where he has been a half dozen times before: negotiating with the most conservative members of his own party to try to hold his majority together. After a closed-door meeting in the Capitol in which he tried to sell his plan — and appealed to his members to "be responsible" — the speaker admitted he wasn't there yet.

"We're looking at a variety of options," he said. "No decisions have been made at this point."

What might those options include? The House could pass a bill that funds the government for less than nine months, thus giving Republicans another chance to use the power of the purse early next year. The House could fund most of the government for nine months, but put the Department of Homeland Security, which runs the immigration service, on a shorter leash. And Boehner could even ask Democrats to lend him some votes to keep the government running, although their leader, Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has said she's not interested in bailing him out.

The moral of the story is this: Last



month's election didn't change Congress much, at least in the short run. We're still heading toward the same kind of cliffhanger that we've seen on spending bills for the last three years.

"The Republican Party is still caught up in a struggle between pragmatic conservatives and radicals," noted Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute. "That hasn't changed."

And the furor over immigration hasn't helped. "The Republican base is now convinced that Barack Obama is trying to hijack the Constitution," Ornstein noted. "How do you turn around and say now we want to work with him?"

There are still optimists who think this is a passing phase, that Republicans, once they have the majority in both houses, will embrace the opportunity to show voters that they can make Washington work

again. "I think it's going to be better," said former Rep. Mickey Edwards, an Oklahoma Republican who has worked on projects to reform Congress for two decades. "I may be a Pollyanna, but I think the lesson of the last election was that the tea party lost. The people who won are conservative, but they are conservatives who want to govern."

Maybe. At least one of those winning conservatives, Rep. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., who won a Senate seat last month, says he is not ready to back Boehner's proposal. Many of the 41 new Republicans coming to the House next month come from the GOP's tea party wing, not Boehner's pragmatic conservative tradition.

Said Ornstein: "If he's been herding cats until now, just wait until he has to deal with all the fetal cats who arrive in January."

Doyle McManus is a Los Angeles Times columnist.

Schumer offers a big-government fix-it fixation

By MARTIN SCHRAM
Tribune News Service

There's a surefire trick the capital city's chattering heads learned long ago, while working the talk-for-pay circuit out in the heartland.

To get your audience laughing from the get-go, start with a proof opening line:

"I'm from Washington and I'm here to help you!"

So it was a double-blink surprise the other day when the Senate's third-ranking Democrat, Sen. Charles Schumer, of New York, delivered a lengthy National Press Club speech on what his party must do to rebound from its sweeping 2014 defeats to be winners again by 2016.

"Democrats must embrace government," Schumer said. "It's what we believe in; it's what unites our party; and, most importantly, it's the only thing that's going to get the middle class going again. ... We must convince the middle class that the only way out of their morass is by embracing a strong and effective government, not demeaning or running from it."

First blink: Huh? As chairman of the Democratic Policy and Communications Center, the number one Democrats' designated message-maker. So, did the top message man never hear that old Washington joke?

Second blink: Or maybe Schumer heard it but never really got it. He was pleased to have his big government embrace spread through the heartland that just resoundingly rejected the notion that big govern-



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said recently of health care reform: "It wasn't the change we were hired to make."

ment is the solution for anything.

Fourteen blocks up Pennsylvania Avenue from where Schumer was speaking, Senate and House Republican leaders were struggling to create a working semblance of unity that would keep their party's most anti-government right-wingers from pushing to defund government — knowing that would probably enrage their newly won middle-class voters, especially those in blue states.

When Schumer's message of big-government-is-your-only-hope reached Capitol Hill, we can envision the GOP leaders' reactions: Senate Minority (soon-to-be Majority) Leader Mitch McConnell, voic-

ing a soft "Thank you, Jesus!" and House Speaker John Boehner perhaps wiping away tears of joy. Or we can stick with reality. The most on-point response was issued by the YG Network, a group of conservative idea spinners who call themselves the "Young Guns" and have considerable influence with GOP leaders: "The failure of big-government liberalism is why liberals were overwhelmingly rebuked at the polls this month."

But if you can blink your way through Schumer's pro-government fix-it fixation (and if you can survive his overblown rhetoric and redundancies, in a speech that lasted twice as long as it was supposed to) you come to an analysis that is spot-on.

(Readers' Warning Note: You may not be able to read Schumer's views; his Senate website didn't list a speech transcript. One caller's telephoned request to Schumer's office for a transcript produced no response. Until Schumer can fix his own micro-government glitch, you'll better stick with YouTube.)

Schumer correctly noted that Barack Obama's 2008 election gave Democrats their chance of rebranding big government benevolence. And he was especially correct in his conclusion — which was stunning not because it was wrong but because he had the guts to flat-out say it:

"Unfortunately, Democrats blew the opportunity the American people gave them. We took their mandate and put all our focus on the wrong problem — health care reform."

While Schumer couched his criticism in

terms of generic "Democrats," he was unmistakably firing big-time blasts at Obama's decision to push for health reform first.

"It wasn't the change we were hired to make," Schumer said. "Americans were crying out for the end to the recession, better wages and more jobs. Not changes in health care." Schumer noted 85 percent of Americans had health care paid by Medicare, Medicaid, or their employer. Schumer said Obama's reform "was aimed at the 35 million Americans who were not covered." He should have added: plus all Americans with pre-existing conditions who needed to transfer insurance coverage.

Obama should have pushed first for quick-acting, long-term job-creating government programs (rebuilding America's roads, bridges and rail infrastructure). Then, bipartisan health reform might have been possible.

As things turned out, Team Obama's disastrous health care website rollout, plus flawed administration responses to unrelated crises (Islamic State, Veterans Affairs, U.S. border infiltration, Ebola) fueled perceptions of government failure. On Election Day, Republicans won big without offering any big ideas.

Schumer's undisguised disgust came down to this: Team Obama failed because it repeatedly blew off the smart but hardly intellectual warning Bill Clinton's 1992 team made into its mantra: "It's the economy, stupid."

It was then. It always is.

Martin Schram, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service, is a veteran Washington journalist, author and TV documentary executive.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man ordered by county to get rid of chickens

MI THOMAS TOWNSHIP — A Michigan man who fatally shot a dog to protect chickens that he keeps in his backyard said he's upset by an order to get rid of the birds.

Mark Feinauer told WNET-TV that he's had chickens for years in Saginaw County's Thomas Township without anyone complaining. On Wednesday, Feinauer said he killed the dog to protect his birds and that he acted within his rights.

Police said they're investigating the shooting. A decision on whether criminal charges will be sought could come this week.

Meanwhile, a Saginaw County court has ordered Feinauer to remove the chickens by the end of the year, saying he's in violation of a township ordinance prohibiting the birds. Feinauer said he'll need to find someone to take the chickens or he'll have to kill them.

Man forces woman to swallow abortion pill

NY ROSENDALE — Police say a New York State doctor choked a woman inside a home and forced her to swallow a pill that could cause an abortion after she told him she was pregnant.

The Ulster County Sheriff's Office said deputies responded Wednesday night to a "no voice" 911 call from a home in the town of Rosendale, 60 miles south of Albany. Police say they learned that Dr. Thomas Pfeiffer, 44, a licensed anesthesiologist, had choked the woman and forced her to swallow a pill that could cause an abortion after she told him a home pregnancy test had come out positive.

Pfeiffer was charged with strangulation, assault and abortion in the second degree. He was being held Friday in the county jail on \$50,000 cash bail.

The woman was treated at a hospital and released.

Teenagers use paintball gun in robbery attempt

DE WILMINGTON — Four teenagers were arrested in Wilmington after police said they tried to use a paintball gun to rob several people.

Wilmington police said Friday that three victims reported that three teens had tried to rob them at gunpoint on Wednesday evening. The teens fled after the robbery failed.

Police said soon after, they found four teenagers matching the victims' description and arrested them on charges of first-degree robbery. Among them were three boys ages 14, 15 and 16, and a 15-year-old girl. Police said the teens had a paintball gun that looks like a regular handgun.

The teens are being held in lieu of \$33,000 cash bail.

Stolen 5,000-pound footbridge recovered

MI FARMINGTON HILLS — A Michigan man said his family's 5,000-pound foot-



WILFREDO LE/AP

Haza the Pig painter

The artist known as Haza the Pig paints a pig on a wall Thursday in the Wynwood Art District of Miami as part of Art Basel-Miami Beach. Leading international galleries show work at the event, which was held this weekend, including masters of modern and contemporary art, as well as pieces by newly emerging stars, according to the show's website. Paintings, sculptures, drawings, installations, photographs, films and edited works are displayed in the main exhibition hall, while ambitious artworks and performances become part of the landscape at nearby beaches and parks.

bridge has been recovered after being stolen from his property in suburban Detroit.

Robert Cortis filed a police report Wednesday saying a 40-foot bridge made of steel and wood was stolen from his property in Farmington Hills.

Cortis said he discovered the bridge was missing when he stopped by his property with plans to move the bridge last week. He planned to set it up at his catering business to use as scenery for wedding photos.

Cortis said the bridge has sentimental value because his father built it decades ago.

The Detroit News said police on Thursday found the bridge undamaged in Belleville, about 20 miles south of where it disappeared.

There's no word of suspects.

'Pregnant man' pleads not guilty to stalking

AZ PHOENIX — A transgender man in Arizona who gave birth after beginning to change from female to male has pleaded not guilty to stalking his estranged wife.

A Maricopa County Superior Court spokesman said Thomas Trace Beatie entered the plea Thursday to one count of stalking.

Phoenix police said after Beatie was arrested that the victim had found a GPS tracking device under her car on Sept. 15 and reported it to authorities.

Charging documents identified

the victim as Beatie's spouse.

Salvation Army returns \$10K ring left in kettle

PA MONROEVILLE — The Salvation Army has returned a \$10,000 gold-and-diamond ring to a Pittsburgh-area woman who accidentally dropped it into a donation kettle.

Lisa Hawkins, of Murrysville, told KDKA-TV that she stopped to Christmas shop Tuesday and unknowingly scooped up the ring when she grabbed some change out of her purse. Hawkins was planning to get the ring resized. It was a 10th-anniversary gift 24 years ago.

The television station learned that volunteers found the ring

THE CENSUS

13

The lucky number for a new mother in Colorado. Alisha Hernandez gave birth to Mia Yasmin Hernandez,

13 pounds, 13 ounces, by cesarean section in Alamosa, Colo. The Alamosa Valley Courier reported that the newborn was flown to a Denver-area hospital because she had low glucose levels and trouble breathing. KUSA-TV in Denver reported that Hernandez was expecting a 7-pound baby. Mia is being welcomed by four older sisters.



and put Hawkins in touch with them Wednesday.

Delegate-elect attacked after rescuing small girl

WV LOGAN — A delegate-elect said he saved a 4-year-old girl from being hit by a train. In return for his good deed, he received a punch in the face from the child's father.

Logan County Democrat Ralph Rodighiero told media outlets that he and his son were returning home with a pizza order when he saw the girl trying to go under a slow-moving train in Logan on Sunday. He said he got out of his truck, scooped up the child and then walked her down the street in an attempt to calm her.

Rodighiero said he called 911 and was waiting for police and an ambulance when the girl's parents and uncle arrived at the scene. He handed the girl to the mother and told the father that leaving the child alone was irresponsible.

"He felt it in him to whip me in the eye," he said.

Police charged the father, James Gollick, with battery. The uncle, John Madison, of Pasadena, Md., was charged with child neglect. Police said Madison left the girl unattended in his vehicle while he visited a residence.

'Drunk' man accused of swapping furniture

WA TACOMA — A Lake-wood man is accused of swapping furniture with his neighbors while they were away.

The News Tribune reported that the man and a friend who is accused of helping him pleaded not guilty Wednesday to charges of residential burglary.

Court papers say a couple who returned to their apartment Monday found their love seat, reclining chair and other belongings gone. A recliner and TV stand were left in their place. Information on a traffic ticket and pizza receipt pointed to the neighbor.

The man told police he thought the couple had moved and abandoned their furniture. He said he was drunk when he decided to switch furniture, calling his buddy for help.

From wire reports

LIFESTYLE



THE DESIRE TO ACQUIRE

Star of A&E hoarding show expects behavior to worsen as boomers age

By **CHUCK DARROW**
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Looking to get into a literally burgeoning industry? Two words: hoarding cleanup.

"Grief and time is what causes hoarding," proclaims Matt Paxton, six-season star of the A&E reality series "Hoarders." "The elderly just happen to have more time."

And, one might argue, more reasons to grieve.

Not all old people hoard, but the issue is, the number of the nation's elderly is getting ready to triple. "In 30 years, 35 percent of the country will be over 65," said Paxton. "We're gonna have more hoarders. In 20 years, I'm gonna have a bunch of Beanie Baby hoarders."

Paxton knows whereof he speaks. Thanks to the television show, the Richmond, Va., native has been as responsible as anyone for putting the mental disorder in the spotlight.

Although his program was canceled last year (you can stream previous episodes at aetv.com/hoarders), Paxton still devotes his life to helping the afflicted to rearrange their lives through his Richmond-based company, Clutter Cleaner.

He is currently barnstorming the nation speaking with mental-health and social-work professionals under the aegis of ServiceMASTER Restore, a

national franchise that specializes in extreme cleaning jobs like those seen on "Hoarders."

According to the American Psychiatric Association website, "People with hoarding disorder excessively save items that others may view as worthless, and have persistent difficulty getting rid of or parting with possessions, leading to clutter that disrupts their ability to use their living or work spaces."

About 2 percent to 5 percent of the population have the disorder, which "often leads to substantial distress and disability."

Paxton began his cleaning and restoration career after offering to clean out his grandmother's storage areas and discovering she was a hoarder. But he stressed that the condition is not exclusive to older people.

"We think that hoarders are 65-year-old white women with cats who have no money," he said during an interview. "That's not the case. Hoarding is about grief and time. Something tragic happens, and then time happens. We're seeing it in younger people."

That, he continued, means that hoarders aren't just accumulating mid-20th-century items.

"9/11 is my number-one trigger I get calls on," he said, referring to the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. "We had a whole house that was 9/11 paraphernalia.

That was the trigger — for this person."

A desire to acquire doesn't necessarily make someone a hoarder. The distinction between the two is clear, Paxton said.

"When collecting interferes with normal conduct of life, it becomes hoarding," he explained. "It's a really aggressive curve." He said that hoarders keep an average amount of possessions until that trigger — "a death, the loss of a job, whatever. That's when it starts to ramp up."

While some critics claimed his TV show exploited mentally ill people, Paxton views the program as having been something of a game-changer for those with the disorder.

"We had 10 people from a hoarder support group raising their hands saying, 'I'm a hoarder,'" he said. "Two years ago, they never would have done that."

A change in perspective from the mental-health and insurance realms was another step forward, he said. The American Psychiatric Association has acknowledged hoarding as a mental



Photos by TNS

Above: A St. Paul, Minn., home packed with a hoarder's possessions caught fire in July, 2013, and the man who lived there died when he was unable to get to the door to get out, authorities said.

Top: Charlie Castronovo, an investor who bought this house in Clifton, N.J., with the intention of renovating and re-selling it, cleans out unwanted household items kept by a hoarder.

disorder. And insurance companies now are more willing to pay for treatment.

When Paxton describes what he does for a living, it's clear that it could qualify for another reality TV show, "Dirty Jobs."

"Bedbugs are a major issue right now. They're worse than roaches, and roaches are horrific," he said in the same tone of voice he might use to order a cup of coffee.

"We had one house that had two feet of spider webs and the house was completely full of roaches. They would climb up into the spider webs and literally rain roaches on top of you."

He wouldn't think of changing careers, though, he said. "This may sound like hell, but this is the best job," he said. "I get paid to help people. It's better than a real job. I get a hug, and I get a check. "And that's a pretty cool gig."

LIFESTYLE



PHOTOS BY RON JENKINS, FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM/TNS

Above and at left: The professionals at We Hang Lights DFW use long ladders and employ safe techniques to hang decorative lights, at a private residence on Nov. 25 in Haslet, Texas.

Holiday hazard

Failure to use caution when hanging lights can land homeowners in the hospital

By MONICA S. NAGY
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

On a recent breezy afternoon, Justin Rivas and his crew lugged a 100-pound, 32-foot ladder across a one-story home in north suburban Haslet, Texas, as they lined its gutters and peaks with red and white lights. The ladder was almost too heavy for Rivas' 20-year-old workers to carry.

"For one person to move around a 32-foot ladder — it could crush you," said Rivas, owner of We Hang Lights DFW.

Many homeowners, however, choose to use ladders, chairs and even stacks of boxes and books to hang holiday decorations and lights themselves. The result can

be a holiday in the hospital with broken bones.

While it might cost about \$800 for a professional to deck out the average two-story Haslet home with holiday lights, that's just a fraction of what it will cost if you fall and suffer a brain injury, area medical professionals and lighting experts say.

"The dad is in a position where he wants to make his family happy, his wife happy. They want what the neighbors have, but at what price?" said Rivas.

The average home he decorates is two stories tall and requires at least three men and three hours of work. The average homeowner trying to go it alone often is a middle-aged man with a six-foot ladder, Rivas said.

Those ladders are the bane of the season, hospital trauma workers said.

"When I talk to people about doing that, they say it's expensive. But an average fall cost is about \$40,000 because the most common injury is a brain injury," said registered nurse Mary Ann Contreras, trauma outreach coordinator at Fort Worth's John Peter Smith Hospital.

Brain injuries take months to heal, while arm or leg injuries can require six to eight weeks in casts, she said.

Contreras said the next most common injuries from falls are to the chest, ribs, liver and spinal cord.

Falls are the leading cause of death from unintentional injury in the state of Texas, Contreras said.

"Just to survive a fall from four stories high is pretty impossible," she said.

JPS admits about 100 people suffering from fall injuries per year; about seven of those are injured hanging holiday lights, Contreras said.

Rivas said homes with peaks more than two stories high require professionals.

For those who insist on doing it themselves, having a cup of holiday cheer beforehand for courage is a bad idea.

"You probably shouldn't be using ladders at all if you've been drinking. It sounds very obvious, but you wouldn't believe ...," said Dr. David

Smith, trauma department medical director for Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Fort Worth.

Smith said Harris admits about 10 people each year with injuries stemming from hanging lights during the holiday season, and between one and four of them have serious head and neck injuries or paralysis.

"One thing we are seeing more and more of, with the graying of our population, is that more and more people are on anticoagu-

lants," Smith said.

Anticoagulants, or blood thinners, slow the time it takes for blood to clot, which is especially bad for Santa's helpers who hit their heads, he said.

"I think if you are older, you would be better off hiring somebody," Smith said. "If you are young and agile and familiar with using ladders and the typical weekend warrior, you should at least not do it alone."

Smith describes "older" as anyone over 55.



Dr. David Smith, of Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Fort Worth, recommends hanging lights in groups with at least two people, with one person at the bottom holding the ladder.

LIGHT AND LADDER SAFETY TIPS

Don't want help?

- Hang lights in groups with at least two workers, with one holding the ladder at the bottom, said Dr. David Smith, trauma department medical director for Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Fort Worth.
- Make sure the ladder is firmly positioned, and avoid climbing one-handed by attaching items to a belt, Smith said.
- Untangle the lights and prepare them with clips before climbing ladders to make sure you don't get caught up, said Justin Rivas, owner of We Hang Lights DFW.
- Make sure there are no open wires and that plugs aren't overloaded, Rivas said. Stick to the manufacturer's recommended number of lights to strand together.
- Try to decorate more on the bottom of the house by hot-gluing plastic clips to inner archways and clipping lights on, Rivas said. Wrap small trees and outline doors, windows and walkways, Rivas said.

BOOKS

Character evolution a constant for writer

Cornwell discusses 'Flesh and Blood,' work and inspirations

By SARAH BRYAN MILLER
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Author Patricia Cornwell has come a long way since her days as a crime reporter for the Charlotte Observer and a computer analyst at the chief medical examiner's office in Richmond, Va.

She's published more than 30 books; 22 of them focus on her forensic scientist/crime-solving protagonist, Dr. Kay Scarpetta.

Cornwell discussed her latest book, "Flesh and Blood," and her work and inspirations, in a telephone interview.

How do you approach each new book?

I begin each of these stories to create an experience for people, an adventure. It goes beyond just the written words on the page. Part of my mission is to go out and do things that give me such a tactile experience, a physical one, so that if I'm describing a scene — whether it's Scarpetta out on a mile-long firing range in the miserable heat of New

Jersey in the summer, whether it's scuba diving a shipwreck almost a hundred feet on the bottom of the ocean in the Bermuda Triangle — whatever it is, I want the reader to feel they are doing this, to make it that vivid for them. I want people to have a little bit of a roller coaster ride.

How do you stay ahead of your readers?

I go out and do research, look for new and different ways to pose crime problems that Scarpetta is going to turn over. What can I do at the crime scene, what can I do to fool her? There's an answer that is couched in the world of science. If she does her homework, she's going to have a moment when she goes, 'Oh, my God, now I see how this happened.' For ("Flesh and Blood"), I found a new technology in firearms that a lot of people don't know about yet. I did a lot of scuba diving around shipwrecks, because I have a big finale that has to do with that.

You've switched styles over the years, from first person to third person and back to first, and between present



PATRICIA CORNWELL/HarperCollins

Patricia Cornwell is the author of the Kay Scarpetta series. In "Flesh and Blood," the 22nd Scarpetta novel, the master forensic sleuth finds herself in the unsettling pursuit of a serial sniper.

tense and past tense. Is that about making the reader feel like she's really there?

Yes, it is. I went with first person in the early days. Then for a while I experimented with the third person point of

view, because I really feel that when you switch perspectives, it's a little more like a movie. But I found that my fans were not happy with that. They really like to be in Scarpetta's head.

So for the last four, five years, I've been back to telling the stories from her point of view. I like to use present tense, because, again, I want it to be the same kind of experience as when you turn on a beloved television series. You lose yourself instantly in the drama; you feel that it's happening as you're watching it.

Has the character developed over the years?

Scarpetta's changed a lot over the years. She debuted in 1990, and obviously we don't live on that same planet anymore. I don't even know what planet that was.

The things that threaten our stability, our security, our happiness, are very different than they were in the 1990s. We didn't have 9/11. We weren't constantly preoccupied with our government spying on us, and a war that never ends. It seems like a very idyllic life, compared to what we have today. So, obviously, Scarpetta is not going to be the same person. She's affected by these changes the same way you and I are...

We know that she is an expert in the science of death, but I also want to know her feelings about the art of life. What does she think about when she gets up in the morning? What does she think about people who are really dead, of the afterlife? There are so many things that we all think about constantly. And so I give her a chance to be reflective in a way that I didn't do so much in the early ones. She's definitely more malleable, a little more mellow, and most of all she's more flexible than she was in the early days of the series.

A few years ago I interviewed P.D. James. She mentioned how difficult it is, as science and technology continue to improve, to write a good traditional detective novel. Is that a problem for you, given your genre?

No, because I'm such a student of it. That's always been my stock in trade, forensic science and medicine. It's always been what I'm known for.

However, I completely understand, because these days you have to say something about certain tests that would be done, or what the labs would say. If you don't, your readers will. They'll go, "But if they'd used the scanning electron microscope, they would have known that it was iron, not aluminum, that was left in the bottom of that glass!" People now are archaic experts with it. I think that does put demands on writers.

For me, it's more about balancing the science with the characters and the world they occupy. I try to keep them extremely approachable and interesting. The science itself is not as interesting as it used to be, because we're flooded with it, on television in particular. People watch this all the time now, including autopsies. When I talk about an autopsy table, I assume they know what it looks like.

'Skeleton Road' combines politics, procedural, war

By OLIVE H. COGDILL
The Associated Press

Author Val McDermid melds the political thriller with the police procedural for an intense novel that gives equal attention to each genre.

McDermid pulls together a complicated tale of war and its aftermath for a plot that feels both intensely personal and global. "The Skeleton Road" moves at a brisk pace, giving attention to each of its myriad

characters as the action moves from Scotland to England to Croatia.

Detective Chief Inspector Karen Pirie with the Historic Cases Unit — Scotland's official name for the cold case unit — is called to a decaying Victorian building where a demolition crew has found a skeleton. The site is a favorite of free climbers who use these old buildings as their personal urban mountains. But this skeleton, which has been hidden for nearly eight years, has a bullet hole in its head. Karen and her team link the skeleton to Dimitar

"Mitja" Petrovic, a general in the Croatian army who emigrated to England following the Balkan conflict. There, he lived with Oxford University professor Maggie Blake, who met him when she worked as an academic in Dubrovnik during the war. Maggie has never gotten over Mitja, who she believes left her more than eight years ago to return home.

"Skeleton Road" gracefully flows from Karen's investigation to Maggie's life and her memories of the war and Mitja. Meanwhile, two members of an international

war crimes tribunal also are seeking Mitja as they try to find who is meting out "rough justice" by killing people accused of war atrocities before they can be indicted.

Without being overly graphic, "Skeleton Road" depicts the horrors of the Serbo-Croat war during the 1990s, including both genocide and personal betrayal. Maggie's war memories, which she chronicled in a highly praised book, delve into the personal cost of war while exhibiting the effects on a nation.



MUSIC

NEW ALBUMS



AC/DC

"Rock or Bust" (Columbia Records)

In 1980, AC/DC's very existence was at stake: singer Bon Scott died just as the band was starting to get big. They used the uncertainty and grief to dig down deep, and the result was one of the greatest albums in rock history, "Back in Black."

In 2014, AC/DC is once again in turmoil: founding rhythm guitarist Malcolm Young had to leave the band due to dementia, and drummer Phil Rudd recently saw charges that he hired a hit man to kill someone dropped, but still faces serious legal matters. And once again, the band has come up big, with "Rock or Bust."

The album is based on lead guitarist Angus Young's butt-shaking, foot-stomping guitar riffs, elegant in their simplicity and their ability to burn themselves into your brain. The title track, and the first single, "Play Ball," are perfect examples of this.

"Miss Adventure" adds a "nah nah nah" chant to a bouncy blues beat in the same way that chants benefited their previous hit "Thunderstruck." And "Emission Control" is one of the all-time great song title double entendres.

But the happiest surprise here is the re-emergence of Brian Johnson's voice. During the '90s and early 2000s, you could literally hear it crumble before your ears, seeming to get weaker with each new album. Whether it has re-energized during the time off since the band's tour wrapped in 2010, or is just miked and processed better, it sounds strong and vibrant again — an essential element of the classic AC/DC sound.

— Wayne Parry
The Associated Press



Angus Young
AP

'Mr. Worldwide'

Pitbull's latest release continues global push

By LORRAINE ALI
Los Angeles Times

Like a bright yellow Hummer in a sea of gray Priuses, there's nothing subtle about Pitbull.

Propelled by raw talent and a whole lot of moxie, the former reggaeton artist has emerged as one of the most successful crossover stars around — selling more than 5 million albums and 60 million singles worldwide — despite a seemingly bottomless collection of shiny dress shirts and bad suits.

His eighth album, "Globalization," continues the Cuban American rapper's successful formula of mixing salsa with hip-hop, hip-hop with EDM, EDM with pop, and all of it with a cocky sense of humor and some of the worst pickup lines ever.

"She on the rebound, broke up with her ex, I'm like Rodman, ready on deck," he raps on his new album, one of many tracks on "Globalization" that demonstrate Pitbull will do just about anything to get with you (and widen his fan base).

It's working. The self-proclaimed "Mr. Worldwide" (it's catchier than his given name, Armando Christian Perez) is everywhere: working with JLo and Keshia, hosting the American Music Awards and co-writing and performing the recent World Cup anthem.

If there's an outlet where the Miami-based Pitbull hasn't been yet, he will be there soon. That means co-hosting and performing on "The View" and — hide the kids — dropping a tune in DreamWorks' "Penguins of Madagascar."

So why all the love for a guy who seems so unlovable?

He surrounds himself with teams of hit-making producers (Max Martin had his hands in "Globalization") but makes the sound his own with Latin influences and his own gruff energy. The result is club anthems like "Fireball" his third single off the new album. It's one of many Pitbull songs that are so over-the-top catchy they dare you not to dance, be it at that cheesy club your friend dragged you to or alone and behind closed doors, far from the judgmental gaze of your Radiohead-loving peers.

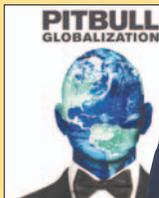
On "Globalization" — not to be confused with his previous worldly themed efforts "Global Warming: Meltdown" and "Planet Pit" — Pitbull includes more club-minded songs and a wide cast of characters. For "Ah Leke," he teams up with everyone's favorite sidekick, Sean Paul, on an infectious, dance hall-meets-EDM number that finds Pitbull once again offering himself up via a 2 a.m. bar-is-closing mantra: "All the ladies, when you're ready let me know."

Chris Brown joins Pitbull for "Fun," a more straight-ahead upbeat R&B dance tune fueled by Latin beats and instrumentation. It's places like this where a crack production team and insane energy

levels pay off, making what could sound tired and familiar (how many times can we hear Brown's voice against sassy slow jams) sharp and lively.

Though tempos shift and guests add up (Jason Derulo, Ne-Yo), every song is connected by the rapper's gravelly voice, so-stupid-they're-great lyrics and banshee howls.

Lest anyone be left out, there's something here for the kids too in this otherwise booty-



Pitbull

"Globalization" (RCA)

laden

fare.

"Celebrate"

is

Pitbull's bouncy

"Penguins of Madag-

ascar" theme, based

on Rare Earth's "I Just

Want to Celebrate." Sure,

it's OK, but can a zebra

dance to it? It's no "I Like

to Move It."

Songs like "Sexy Beach-

es" and "Day Drinking"

are the weakest. But

they will be played by

vacationers worldwide

thanks to universal idiot-

in-paradise refrains

such as "Day drinkin',

sun goes up and drink

goes down, ooh, ooh."

And that World Cup Anthem, "We Are One (Ole

Ola)," is as lame as the

day it was performed in

Brazil.

There are 11 songs in

all, not as many as you'd

think from someone as

prolific as Pitbull, but when

you figure he's out there on

a billion more tracks by

himself and other artists,

does he really need to pack

his own album with his A1

work?

Besides, he's likely holding

onto his best moito-slugging

material for the next round,

waiting for some other club

artist to disappoint so he can

catch you on the rebound.

RCA Records



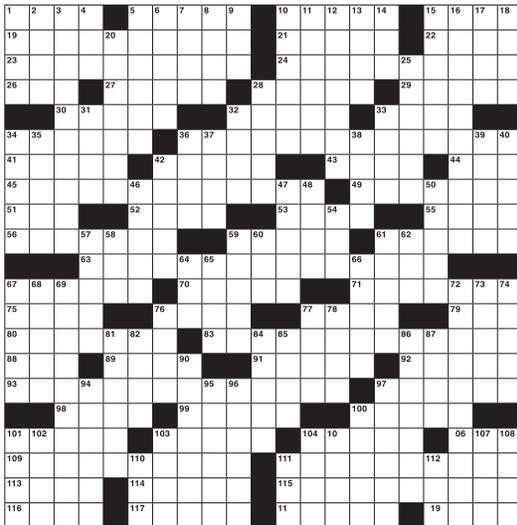
CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

ZAP!

BY MATT GINSBERG / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

- ACROSS
- 1 Interjects
 - 5 Pass off
 - 10 Pianist Schumann, early champion of Brahms
 - 15 Certain servers
 - 19 Focused on one's fellow fraternity members?
 - 21 Egyptian war god
 - 22 Fast break?
 - 23 Workers in booths
 - 24 Dublin dance?
 - 26 Pooh's baby friend
 - 27 King Abdullah, e.g.
 - 28 Like a desert climate
 - 29 Like circus tumblers
 - 30 What may come with a trophy
 - 32 "Shut up!"
 - 33 Like the Head Start program, for short
 - 34 African file r
 - 36 What Clark Kent needs to become Superman?
 - 41 Response to a gotcha
 - 42 One-named chanteuse
 - 43 Dry
 - 44 Julius Wilbrand invention of 1863, for short
 - 45 Somewhat bashful ?
 - 49 Article of papal attire
 - 51 ___ spot
 - 52 Red alert source?
 - 53 Uncommon cry after a lottery drawing
 - 55 Oscar winner who was formerly a regular on TV's "Laugh-In"
 - 56 Fine-wood sources
 - 59 Firing offense?
 - 61 Polish capital
 - 63 Local afternoon newscast?
 - 67 Sentence ender, maybe
 - 70 Execs
 - 71 Eggs-to-be
 - 75 Subject of a Fox hunt
 - 76 Excel function
 - 77 "I'm f4-freezing!"
 - 79 ___Locks, Fla.
 - 80 Show, as cards in gin rummy
 - 83 Business offering the right to buy and sell securities?
 - 88 Carrier to Tokyo
 - 89 End of an era?
 - 91 Ill
 - 92 Textile patented in 1894
 - 93 How to find what a creep is looking at?
 - 97 Become fond of
 - 98 Ones bowled over?
 - 99 What Microsoft Word's Track Changes shows
 - 100 Flowering tropical plant
 - 101 Spartacus, at one time
 - 103 Itsy-bitsy
 - 104 Northern passage
 - 106 Chain letters?
 - 109 Says, "I didn't do it!" before fessing up?
 - 111 Clarifies
 - 113 Fibula : leg ___ arm
 - 114 Taken
 - 115 Cigarettes or booze?
 - 116 Conclude in court
 - 117 Where Indiana Jones reunites with Marion
 - 118 Overly involved
 - 119 Paul who composed the "Tonight Show" theme
 - 16 "Well, fine"
 - 17 Washington attraction
 - 18 English glam-rock band with six #1 hits
 - 20 Essential, in a way
 - 25 Armored, as a horse
 - 28 Asian capital known as the City of Lakes
 - 31 Astronaut's woe, perhaps
 - 32 Sleeper and others
 - 33 Father
 - 34 When D.S.T. starts or ends
 - 35 Burn a little
 - 36 Refuse at the polling station
 - 37 Old Hollywood's ___ Code
 - 38 Leaves in a waiting room?
 - 40 British guns
 - 42 Climax of many an action film
 - 46 Hot-pot spot
 - 47 Pieces in the game Othello
 - 48 Certain Endorian
 - 50 Flamboyant
 - 54 Connections
 - 57 Poker resignation
 - 58 Bubkes
 - 59 O'Connor successor
 - 60 Bilg e
 - 61 "Butterfly" actress, 1982
 - 62 ___ cit. (footnote abbr.)
 - 64 Mexican bear



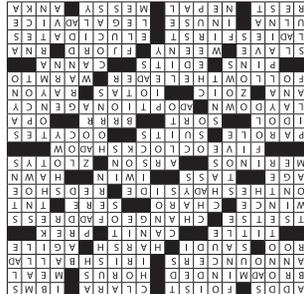
- 65 Band-Aid competitor
- 66 Orchestra section
- 67 Rice ___
- 68 Hersey novel local e
- 69 Major annoyances
- 72 Singer whose "I Get Ideas" was on the charts for 30 weeks
- 73 Its icon is Spaceship Earth
- 74 Decline
- 76 Pique activity?
- 77 Quick snack
- 78 Sound of approval
- 81 Some oxygen molecules
- 82 Bowls over
- 84 Ugly ones
- 86 Pop's pop
- 87 Make
- 90 "Things aren't so bad"
- 94 Occupy
- 95 Ancient Macedonian capital
- 96 Stonehenge feature
- 97 With caution
- 100 Chewed stimulants
- 101 Potential libel
- 102 Scoop (out)
- 103 With 105-Down, some amphora
- 104 Scout
- 105 See 103-Down
- 107 Head turner
- 108 Between parts
- 110 Cod piece
- 111 West ___ (upscale furniture store)
- 112 Actress Gardner

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



KNOWLEDGE

ARCHIVE PHOTO OF THE DAY

STRIPES CENTRAL

IS POWER.

Stripes BLOGS

Get your fair share from our award-winning journalists at Stripes.com/blogs.

PACIFIC SPORTSBLOG

PACIFIC STORM TRACKER

OMBUDSMAN

GADGETS & CHARTS



Screenshots

The video game "That Dragon, Cancer," aims to teach players about illness, death and suffering. The usual questions about whether it's fun or challenging don't apply.

'Dragon' brings serious, real-life ordeal to gaming

By Todd Martens
Los Angeles Times

One of the first things you hear in Ryan Green's video game is a voice mail. Though it's not a horror game, the sound isn't just frightening; it's borderline bone-chilling.

A woman leaving a message for her husband sounds exasperated. She's leaving the doctor's office and coming home without any answers. The couple's baby boy is vomiting. Maybe it's this? Maybe it's that? There is no diagnosis. And why is the child's head always cocked to one side?

Everyone is thinking the worst, but no one is saying it.

At this point the player can see a glimpse of the boy, whose name is Joel. The voice mail, it turns out, was a memory, and Joel, now older, is on a slide in a park. He's almost 5. His older brother wants to know why he doesn't talk. Yet Joel still has the ability to bring a smile to people's faces — and to player's faces, such as the moment when he tries to feed a duck in a pond by throwing an entire loaf of bread at the animal. Is Joel going to be OK? Just like so often in the real world, the answers may be unclear or unpleasant, but this is not a game about solutions.

This is "That Dragon, Cancer," an independence video game that raises the sort of big questions video games have long avoided. The common ones — Is it challenging? Is it fun? — are practically irrelevant here. Green and a small team that includes his wife, Amy, are after something more ambitious. Can a video game teach us something about death? Or, maybe more accurately, can a video game be a memoir?

"That Dragon, Cancer" copes with loss and heartbreak via wishful thinking, imagining at times an alternate past and future while the outcome stubbornly refuses to change.

Although writing about cancer is relatively common in literature, it's a rarity in gaming. Discussing the illness — and how it affects a family whose son was ultimately diagnosed with terminal brain cancer — is a major risk in a medium where play is paramount.

Now two years into development, Green and his team have turned to the crowd-funding site Kickstarter in the hopes of keeping the project independent. At the time of writing, with three weeks left to secure funds, "That Dragon, Cancer" has raised just shy of \$70,000 of its \$85,000 goal.

The game is in development for PCs and Macs, and Green has also been working closely with Ouya, an independent publisher and home console maker. There's even a documentary in the works, "Thank You for Playing," which filmmakers David Osti and Malika Zouhalil-Worrall intend to bring to film festivals in 2015.

"That Dragon, Cancer," says Osti, seems "like a special way to approach the unapproachable."

But making people curious isn't the same as making them want to play, and Green knows his game can't make players uncomfortable — well, too uncomfortable.

"I would love it if people are willing to trust us, to go there with us," Green says. "We're not trying to hurt you. Give us a shot. But there are certain movies I haven't watched on purpose because it's a kid with cancer. I know I'm asking a lot of people."

GADGET WATCH

Food thermometer talks to your phone

By Gregg Elluman
Tribune News Service

The innovative Kitchen Thermometer mini from iDevices connects to your smartphone or tablet and alerts you when your cooking item is at the desired temperature.

It's built like an oversized hockey puck and connects to a probe, which wirelessly sends data to a free iDevices Connected app available for iOS and Android systems.

The app allows you to customize your cooking to let you know when it reaches a specific temperature (from 22 to 572 degrees).

With dual probes, you can monitor two temperatures simultaneously as well as to 150 feet of Bluetooth Smart Range.

The back is magnetic so you can mount it on an appliance for easy viewing.

Online: iDevicesInc.com; \$79.99

Logitech's Type+ case for iPad Air

2 holds your tablet in place and folds up to protect it when not in use.

The keyboard connects to the tablet with Bluetooth technology. Obviously, the keyboard isn't full-size, but everything you would expect from a keyboard is there: shift, delete, return and tab, to name a few.

The Logitech website states that when you combine the case with your iPad, the result "looks like an iPad, feels like a laptop," which I can say is fairly accurate.

The case lets you adjust the angle of your screen, and the keys flow with comfort like a keyboard should.

It measures 7.23 by 10.23 by 0.67 inches and weighs 15.2 ounces before attaching your iPad. The shell protects it from bumps, scratches and spills.

A single microUSB charge (cable included) can last up to three months, and there are battery-saving features such as putting the keyboard to sleep.

Online: Logitech.com; \$99.99

The Stance is a compact tripod from

Kenu that's designed specifically for iPhones.

It mounts directly into the iPhone's Lightning port using Kenu's patent pending MicroMount.

This is connected to a ball-and-pivot joint to let the phone tilt and rotate freely to find your perfect angle in landscape or portrait positioning.

It weighs just 1.2 ounces and when folded, it's about the size of a pack of gum. Added bonus — it has a bottle opener built into one of the legs.

Online: Kenu.com; \$29.95

Ollolclip's 4-in-1 photo lenses are available for the iPhone 6/iPhone 6 plus with three key new innovations.

They have front- and rear-facing cameras designed to help with iPhoneographers taking photos or just selfies. The new model fits both iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus models.

A wearable customizable pendant is included with the Ollolclip to clip it to something for safekeeping and easy access.

The 4-in-1 kit includes fisheye and wide-angle lenses; the 10x and 15x macro lenses are grouped together on a single clip-on device. All you do is screw/uncrew or clip on the one you want.

Online: Ollolclip.com; \$79.99

The Soundcap Beanie from

808 Audio is made with a polyester cotton blend to fit snugly on your head, but what makes it unique is the built-in speaker you can connect to your smartphone, or any device with a 3.5mm connection.

There's even an in-line microphone to take calls through your hat.

Online: 808audio.com; \$19.99 with free shipping



Photos by TNS

ITUNES MUSIC

Top 10 songs on the iTunes Store for Dec. 3:

- "Blank Space," Taylor Swift
- "The Hanging Tree," James Newton Howard
- "Uptown Funk (feat. Bruno Mars)," Mark Ronson
- "Take Me to Church," Hozier
- "The Heart Wants What It Wants," Selena Gomez
- "All About That Bass," Meghan Trainor
- "I'm Not the Only One," Sam Smith
- "Lips Are Movin'," Meghan Trainor
- "Jealous," Nick Jonas
- "Shake It Off," Taylor Swift

— Compiled by TNS

SPOTIFY MUSIC

The most streamed tracks on Spotify from Nov. 24-30:

- "Take Me to Church," Hozier
- "Love Me Harder," Ariana Grande
- "I'm Not the Only One," Sam Smith
- "The Heart Wants What It Wants," Selena Gomez
- "I Don't Live With You," Big Sean
- "Animals," Maroon 5
- "Jealous," Nick Jonas
- "Stay With Me," Sam Smith
- "Thinking Out Loud," Ed Sheeran
- "Habits (Stay High)," Love Lo

— Compiled by TNS

IBOOKS

Bestseller list of paid U.S. iBooks downloads for week ending Dec. 1:

- "Gone Girl," Gillian Flynn
- "Unbroken," Ariana Hillenbrand
- "The Burning Room," Michael Connelly
- "Captivated By You," Sylvia Day
- "The Escape," David Baldacci
- "Wild," Cheryl Strayed
- "Hope to Die," James Patterson
- "Dark Places," Gillian Flynn
- "Personal," Lee Child
- "Big Little Lies," Liane Moriarty

— Compiled by TNS

VIDEO GAMES

Game Informer's Top 10 for December:

- "Super Smash Bros.," Wii U
- "Dragon Age: Inquisition," PS4, Xbox One, PS3, 360, PC
- "Grand Theft Auto V," PS4, Xbox One
- "Sunset Overdrive," Xbox One
- "Civilization: Beyond Earth," PC
- "Halo: The Master Chief Collection," Xbox One
- "Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare," PS4, Xbox One, PC, PS3, 360
- "Pokémon Omega Ruby & Alpha Sapphire," 3DS
- "Pro Evolution Soccer 2015," PS4, Xbox One, PC, PS3, 360
- "Assassin's Creed Rogue," PS3, 360, PC

— Compiled by TNS

APPS

Top 5 new paid apps for Dec. 3:

- ANDROID
- Five Nights at Freddy's 2
 - Kingdom Rush Origins
 - The Banner Saga
 - Dirt Trackin
 - Fulling USA

Top 5 paid apps for Dec. 3:

- APPLE
- Five Nights at Freddy's 2
 - Minecraft — Pocket Edition
 - Five Nights at Freddy's 4
 - Afterlight Afterlight, Collective
 - MEGA MAN X

— Compiled by TNS

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BUSINESS/WEATHER

Gas falls below \$2 mark in Texas, Okla.

By Ken Miller
The Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Gas dropped below \$2 per gallon at a handful of stations in Oklahoma and Texas last week, a level that a price-watching group said Friday was the lowest in the nation and a bargain that's proven irresistible to some long lines of drivers coming from miles away to fill up.

A station in Oklahoma City started the trend earlier this week at a new location as a way to thank residents who put up with construction. Two nearby stations followed suit, becoming what Patrick DeLuana with GasBuddy.com said early Friday were the only ones in the United States with sub-\$2 gas. A San Antonio station also later dropped its price.

"When I first saw it, I thought it was a misprint," said Marcus Hendricks, a student who lives in Oklahoma City, at the OnCue Express in southeast Oklahoma City, where the price was \$1.99 per gallon for gas with a 10 per-



SUE OROCK/AP

Gasoline is advertised for \$1.99 per gallon Friday at an OnCue station in Oklahoma City.

cent blend of ethanol. "There were so many cars, it looked they were giving something away for free. They practically are."

The nationwide average for a gallon of gas was \$2.71 Friday, nearly \$1 below this year's peak of \$3.70 in June. Gas hasn't been this cheap since October 2010.

The decline has been driven by falling global oil prices as supplies are high. Benchmark U.S. crude oil fell 68 cents to \$66.11 a barrel in New York on Friday, after hitting \$107 in June.

Gas prices are expected to keep falling nationwide, perhaps by as much as another 10 cents to 20 cents per gallon by the end of the year, said AAA Oklahoma spokesman Chuck Mai. The statewide average in Oklahoma was \$2.48, tied for third-lowest in the nation behind Missouri's \$2.43 average and Mississippi's \$2.47. The highest prices were \$3.81 in Hawaii, \$3.47 in Alaska and nearly \$3.12 per gallon in New York, according to AAA.

"The world is swimming in crude oil right now. And this, of course, is what is driving our pump prices in this country, that and good, old-fashioned, street-corner competition," Mai said. "It may not be a gas war, but it certainly is one-upmanship, or maybe in this case, one-downmanship."

OnCue Express in Oklahoma City first lowered its price to \$1.99 early last week at the station that has been open for a month.

"We probably inconvenienced the neighbors during construction and we wanted to do something with it, and we came up with this idea," said Jim Griffith, CEO of Stillwater-based OnCue Express. He said OnCue's price will rise "probably soon," but that he's not losing money on the sales.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Dec. 8)	\$1.2674
Dollar buys (Dec. 8)	€0.7890
British pound (Dec. 8)	\$1.61
Japanese yen (Dec. 8)	¥117.00
South Korean won (Dec. 8)	1,084.00

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3771
British pound	\$1.5591/£0.6414
Canada (dollar)	1.1439
China (Yuan)	6.1502
Denmark (Krone)	6.0541
Egypt (Pound)	7.1501
Euro	\$1.2284/€0.8100
Hong Kong (Dollar)	248.86
Hungary (Forint)	814.80
Israel (Sheqel)	3.9834
Japan (Yen)	121.45
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2922
Norway (Krone)	7.1330
Philippines (Peso)	44.53
Poland (Zloty)	3.38
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7534
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3232
South Korea (Won)	1,121.09
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9786
Taiwan (Dollar)	32.89
Turkey (Lira)	2.2606

(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., currencies of other countries), 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 dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

MARKET WATCH

Dec. 5, 2014

Dow Jones Industrials	58.69
	17,958.79
Nasdaq composite	11.32
	4,780.76
Standard & Poor's 500	3.45
	2,075.37
Russell 2000	9.42
	1,182.43

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
3-month bill	0.12
Federal funds market rate	0.12
3-month bill	0.03
30-year bond	2.97

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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

Monday's US temperatures

City	Hi	Lo	Wthr	Chatanooga	55	38	Pcldy	Fort Wayne	36	29	Pcldy	Louisville	45	35	Pcldy	Pocatello	50	30	Pcldy	Sioux City	41	29	Cldy
Ablene, Tex	54	41	Cldy	Cheyenne	50	27	Cir	Fresno	66	48	Pcldy	Lubbock	56	37	Cldy	Portland, Maine	52	32	Cir	Sioux Falls	39	28	Cldy
Akron, Ohio	39	27	Cir	Chicago	38	30	Pcldy	Goodland	60	27	Cir	Macon	62	39	Pcldy	Portland, Ore.	48	39	Pcldy	South Bend	36	29	Pcldy
Albany, N.Y.	31	11	Cir	Cincinnati	41	33	Pcldy	Grand Junction	59	27	Pcldy	Madison	35	29	Cldy	Providence	40	22	Pcldy	Spartanburg	38	30	Cldy
Albuquerque	56	33	Cir	Cleveland	39	28	Cir	Grand Rapids	35	27	Cir	Medford	55	42	Cir	Pueblo	60	26	Cir	Springfield, Ill.	39	33	Cldy
Allentown, Pa.	39	22	Cir	Colorado Springs	57	30	Cir	Great Falls	44	27	Pcldy	Memphis	51	38	Cldy	Raleigh-Durham	49	32	Pcldy	Springfield, Mo.	48	35	Cldy
Amarillo	59	34	Cldy	Columbia, S.C.	57	37	Pcldy	Green Bay	33	28	Pcldy	Miami Beach	80	65	Pcldy	Rapid City	53	27	Pcldy	St. Louis	74	61	Pcldy
Anchorage	34	32	Cldy	Columbus, Ga.	63	42	Cir	Greensboro, N.C.	48	31	Cir	Midland-Odessa	56	37	Cldy	Roanoke	57	36	Cldy	Tallahassee	68	45	Cir
Ashville	52	32	Cir	Columbus, Ohio	39	32	Pcldy	Hartford	42	24	Cir	Milwaukee	31	31	Pcldy	Richmond	48	30	Pcldy	Tampa	76	58	Pcldy
Atlanta	59	29	Cir	Concord, N.H.	31	10	Cir	Hartford Springfield	40	19	Cir	Mpls-St. Paul	34	30	Cir	Rockford	50	30	Cir	Tucson	79	65	Pcldy
Atlantic City	44	28	Cir	Corpus Christi	66	58	Cldy	Helena	41	20	Pcldy	Missoula	38	19	Cir	Rochester	28	21	Pcldy	Topeka	45	35	Cldy
Bakersfield	58	45	Cldy	Dallas-Ft. Worth	57	42	Cldy	Honolulu	81	40	Cir	Mobile	30	40	Cir	Rockford	37	29	Cir	Wichita	50	34	Cldy
Baltimore	45	28	Cir	Dayton	39	32	Pcldy	Houston	63	50	Cldy	Montgomery	63	43	Cir	Sacramento	63	52	Cldy	Wichita Falls	56	40	Cldy
Baton Rouge	65	43	Pcldy	Daytona Beach	73	58	Cldy	Huntsville	53	38	Pcldy	Nashville	50	37	Pcldy	St. Louis	42	34	Pcldy	Tulsa	53	37	Cldy
Bilings	47	22	Cir	Denver	59	31	Cir	Indianapolis	39	21	Pcldy	New Orleans	65	49	Pcldy	St. Petersburg	74	61	Pcldy	Tupelo	54	39	Pcldy
Birmingham	57	41	Cir	Des Moines	40	32	Cldy	Jackson, Miss.	60	42	Pcldy	New York City	38	25	Cir	St. Thomas	84	77	Cir	Washington	45	29	Cir
Bismarck	40	23	Cldy	Detroit	36	29	Cir	Jacksonville	67	52	Pcldy	Newark	30	23	Cir	Salem, Ore.	50	42	Cldy	W. Palm Beach	79	65	Pcldy
Boise	56	35	Pcldy	El Paso	50	24	Snow	Janeau	39	34	Rain	Norfolk, Va.	38	29	Cir	Salt Lake City	55	36	Pcldy	Wichita	50	34	Cldy
Boston	38	21	Pcldy	El Paso	65	43	Pcldy	Kansas City	44	36	Cldy	North Platte	56	23	Pcldy	San Diego	57	42	Cldy	Wichita Falls	56	40	Cldy
Bridgport	46	19	Cir	Elkins	46	25	Pcldy	Key West	68	35	Pcldy	Okla. City	50	40	Cir	San Antonio	59	51	Cldy	Wilkes-Barre	33	21	Cir
Brownsville	73	62	Cldy	Erie	34	28	Cir	Knoxville	50	35	Pcldy	Omaha	40	29	Cldy	San Angelo	70	58	Pcldy	Wilmington, Del.	42	25	Cir
Buffalo	30	23	Cir	Eugene	47	44	Cldy	Lake Charles	62	47	Cldy	Orlando	75	58	Cldy	San Francisco	65	55	Cldy	Yakima	37	33	Cldy
Burlington, Vt.	20	9	Cir	Fargo	51	43	Pcldy	Lansing	39	28	Pcldy	Paducah	45	34	Cldy	San Jose	66	50	Pcldy	Yellowstone	39	18	Cir
Caribou, Maine	11	12	Cir	Fairbanks	9	0	Cir	Las Vegas	65	49	Pcldy	Pendleton	41	34	Cldy	Santa Fe	53	27	Cir	Yuma	67	51	Cldy
Casper, Wyo.	49	25	Cir	Fargo	38	24	Cldy	Lexington	43	33	Pcldy	Peoria	38	22	Cir	St. Marie	38	24	Cldy	National temperature extremes			
Charleston, S.C.	57	39	Pcldy	Flagstaff	51	25	Cir	Lincoln	43	29	Cldy	Philadelphia	42	27	Cir	Savannah	59	42	Pcldy	Hi: Fr., 84, Edinburg, Texas and Punta Gorda, Fla.			
Charleston, W.Va.	45	29	Cldy	Flint	35	26	Cir	Little Rock	48	35	Cir	Phoenix	76	54	Cldy	Seattle	52	44	Cldy	Lo: Fr., -20, Estcourt Station, Maine			
Charlotte, N.C.	54	34	Pcldy	Fort Smith	52	36	Cldy	Los Angeles	72	54	Pcldy	Pittsburgh	43	29	Pcldy	Shreveport	57	41	Cldy				

MLB/SPORTS BRIEFS



NICK WASS, TOP, AND ROB SCUTERI, BOTTOM/MP

The New York Yankees have made their first big moves to reshape for 2015, agreeing to a \$36 million, four-year contract with reliever Andrew Miller, top, and obtaining shortstop Didi Gregorius from Arizona, bottom, as part of a three-team trade that sent right-hander Shane Greene to Detroit.

Yanks sign Miller, acquire Gregorius

By RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Yankees made their first big moves to reshape for 2015, acquiring a shortstop to replace Derek Jeter and a relief pitcher who could take over from David Robertson as closer.

As part of a three-team trade, the Yankees obtained shortstop Didi Gregorius from Arizona and dealt right-hander Shane Greene to Detroit. A few hours later, they agreed to a \$36 million, four-year contract with reliever Andrew Miller.

New York is uncertain whether it will re-sign Robertson, who had 39 saves in his first season after replacing retired great Mariano Rivera as closer. A free agent, Robertson is expected to command a four-year deal at a much bigger price than Miller.

"I can't predict yet as his free agency continues where he's going to land," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said. "I certainly would not allude to the level of our participation. We've been in touch with his agency, and I'll just leave it at that."

A 29-year-old left-hander who is an imposing 6-foot-7, Miller held opponents to a .153 batting average this year while going 5-5 with a 2.02 ERA for Boston and Baltimore. He averaged 14.87 strikeouts per nine innings, second in the major leagues behind Cincinnati's Aroldis Chapman (17.67) among pitchers who faced at least 50 batters.

Cashman said Miller turned down a \$40 million, four-year offer from a team he didn't specify. He called Miller "a high-end

weapon to go along with what we already had and what we're collecting" and said the Yankees didn't commit to using him as closer.

After allowing a .282 opponents' batting average from 2006-12, Miller simplified his mechanics and limited his pitches to mainly fastballs and sliders. He held hitters to a .175 average the last two years.

"He's now found a niche where he has excelled extremely well."

'He's now found a niche where he has excelled extremely well.'

Brian Cashman
Yankees GM
on reliever Andrew Miller

Clearly we took notice as well as the rest of the game," Cashman said.

Miller lives in Tampa, Fla., where the Yankees hold spring training.

He will make \$9 million annually and joins a bullpen that includes hard-throwing right-hander Dellin Betances, who finished third in AL Rookie of the Year voting. New York's relievers also include Shawn Kelley and Adam Warren — unless they get shifted to the rotation.

Gregorius, a 24-year-old left-handed hitter who was born in Amsterdam and raised in Curaçao, becomes the favorite to take over at shortstop following Jeter's retirement. Gregorius hit his first big league homer at Yankee Stadium in April 2013 in his first at-bat with the Diamondbacks but lost the starting shortstop job to Chris Owings during spring training this year and was sent to the minors.

He was recalled when Cliff Pennington tore a thumb ligament and became the regular shortstop when Owings injured a shoulder. Gregorius batted .226 with six homers and 27 RBIs in 80 games this year but hit .137 (7-for-51) against left-handers.

Briefly

Earnhardt wins record 12th most popular driver award

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Dale Earnhardt Jr. extended his run as NASCAR's most popular driver with his 12th consecutive win.

Earnhardt was presented with the NASCAR Sprint NMPA Most Popular Driver Award at Friday night's season-ending awards ceremony. Earnhardt last year broke a tie with 16-time winner Bill Elliott for most consecutive years as winner.

Completing the top 10 in total votes for this year's award were (listed alphabetically): Carl Edwards, Jeff Gordon, Jimmie Johnson, Kasey Kahne, Matt Kenseth, Brad Keselowski, Danica Patrick, Tony Stewart and Josh Wise.

Slovenia's Maze wins downhill

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta — Lindsey Vonn is quickly getting up to speed, just

not fast enough to catch up to Tina Maze in the women's World Cup downhill opener on Friday.

The Slovenian standout finished in 1 minute, 50.98 seconds, beating Anna Fenninger of Austria by 0.45 seconds. Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein was third.

Vonn wound up in eighth place, 0.85 seconds behind the winning time, as she returned to the World Cup circuit following a second knee operation that kept her out of the Sochi Olympics. It was her first race since last December in Val d'Isere, France, where she failed to finish a downhill.

In other skiing news: ■ Kjetil Jansrud of Norway extended his World Cup streak to three straight races with a downhill victory Friday at Beaver Creek, Colo., on a challenging course he skied to near perfection. Jansrud followed his two-race sweep

last weekend in Lake Louise, Alberta, with another splendid showing. He finished in 1 minute, 40.17 seconds, holding off Benoit Pozzani by 0.54 seconds after the Swiss skier made a late push. American Steven Nyman was third.

Spith remains in lead

WINDERMERE, Fla. — A chip and a putt was all Jordan Spieth needed to complete his 5-under 67 and maintain a two-shot lead in the Hero World Challenge.

Spieth and Steve Stricker were the only players who chose not to finish the rain-delayed second round because of darkness. Spieth was just short of the 18th green. He chipped to 5 feet and saved par. He was at 11-under 133, two shots clear of Henrik Stenson.

Stricker three-putted from about 50 feet,

missing a 4-footer for par. He had a 73 and was seven shots behind.

Tiger Woods was in last place and in the first group Saturday under mostly sunny conditions. Woods was 14 shots out of the lead in his first competition since the PGA Championship on Aug. 9.

Georgia Tech extends Johnson

ATLANTA — Georgia Tech athletic director Mike Bobinski announced Saturday it has reached an agreement with football coach Paul Johnson on a four-year contract extension through 2020.

Johnson's current contract was set to expire after the 2016 season. The failure to reach a new deal threatened to become a factor in recruiting.

Johnson is 88-34 in seven seasons at Georgia Tech.

NHL/NBA

NHL roundup

Chicago outlasts Montreal

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Most of the bounces — even crazy, hard-to-explain ones — seem to be going the Chicago Blackhawks' way.

Brandon Saad scored with 27 seconds left in the third period and surging Chicago won its fifth straight game, 4-3 over the Montreal Canadiens on Friday night. Saad snapped a shot past Corey Price from the low edge of the right circle for the winner. Patrick Kane shot from the top of the slot and Canadiens defenseman Andrei Markov couldn't handle the puck.

That turned out to be the difference in a back-and-forth, up-tempo game between two Original Six rivals played before a crowd of 22,087, the Blackhawks' largest this season.

Chicago's Jonathan Toews scored a power-play goal early in the third to tie it at 2. Michal Rozsival and Ben Smith connected at even strength as the Blackhawks won for the eighth time in nine games by coming back from a 3-2 deficit after two periods.

It was just Chicago's second win this season when trailing after 40 minutes.

"I think there was composure," Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville said. "You could sense on the bench there was no desperation."

"We were heading in the right direction. Let's be positive in finding a way," he said.

Montreal's Brendan Gallagher scored and set up 40-year-old Sergei Gonchar's first goal in nearly a year. P.K. Subban added a power-play goal for the Canadiens, who have lost two straight and are 1-4-1 in their last six.

Jets 6, Avalanche 2: Bryan Little scored three goals to help host Winnipeg beat Colorado.

Little's hat trick was the first for the franchise since Eric Boulton had three goals for the Atlanta Thrashers on Dec. 18, 2010.

Little scored twice 32 seconds apart early in the third period and also had an assist. Blake Wheeler assisted on all three of Little's goals.

Rookie Michael Hutchinson scored 20 saves for Winnipeg, which improved to 4-0-1 in its last five games.

Jarome Iginla scored both goals for the Avalanche.

Ducks 5, Wild 4: Matt Beleskey scored the tiebreaking goal midway through the third period by hitting visiting Anaheim over Minnesota.

Ryan Kesler had two goals, and Jakob Silfverberg and Tim Jackman also scored for the Ducks, who rallied after giving up a 3-0 lead and trailing 4-3 early in the third period.

Mikko Koivu, Zach Parise, Jonas Brodin and Justin Fontaine scored for the Wild.

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
Tampa Bay	27	15	8	3	39	97/69
Montreal	28	17	9	2	36	73/72
Detroit	27	13	10	4	35	82/67
Toronto	25	13	9	3	29	84/77
Boston	27	14	10	3	32	82/79
Florida	24	10	7	7	27	53/62
Ottawa	26	10	11	2	20	56/82
Buffalo	26	15	2	2	20	82/68

Metropolitan Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
N.Y. Islanders	26	17	6	2	38	82/68
Pittsburgh	25	17	6	2	36	82/58
N.Y. Rangers	27	11	11	5	26	63/70
Washington	25	11	10	4	26	79/70
New Jersey	26	10	11	5	25	71/61
Philadelphia	25	8	13	4	20	66/81
Carolina	25	8	15	2	18	58/71
Columbus	25	8	15	2	18	58/67

Western Conference

Central Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
Nashville	26	17	8	1	35	82/52
Chicago	26	16	8	2	34	70/59
St. Louis	27	14	8	5	31	61/60
Winnipeg	25	14	10	1	29	71/61
Minnesota	25	12	6	2	24	62/60
Colorado	26	12	5	2	23	75/94
Dallas	26	12	5	2	23	75/94

Pacific Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA	
Anaheim	28	17	6	5	39	81/76
Vancouver	26	16	8	1	33	82/69
Calgary	27	17	8	1	33	82/69
Los Angeles	26	14	7	5	31	77/57
San Jose	27	10	12	5	25	70/61
Arizona	27	10	14	3	23	64/85
Edmonton	26	15	11	0	31	90/89

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

Friday's games
 Anaheim, Minnesota 4
 Winnipeg 6, Colorado 2
 Chicago 4, Montreal 3

Saturday's games
 Los Angeles at Pittsburgh
 Dallas at Islanders
 Philadelphia at Los Angeles
 Toronto at Montreal
 N.Y. Rangers at Detroit
 Columbus at Tampa Bay
 Buffalo at Florida
 Washington at New Jersey
 Chicago at Nashville
 Montreal at Dallas
 Boston at Arizona

Sunday's games
 Anaheim at Winnipeg
 Detroit at Carolina
 Vancouver at Ottawa
 San Jose at Edmonton

Friday Ducks 5, Wild 4

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA
1	0	1	2	0	4
2	1	1	0	2	4

First Period—1. Anaheim, Kesler (Palmeri, Fowler), 1:31; 2. Anaheim, Silfverberg 2 (Cogliano, Smith-Pelly), 11:44.
Second Period—3. Anaheim, Kesler 3 (Lindholm, Jackman), 2:28; 4. Minnesota, Koivu 4 (Granlund, Scandella), 4:59 (pp); 5. Minnesota, Parise 10 (Granlund, Brodin), 5:10 (pp); 6. Minnesota, Brodin 1 (Pominville, Parise), 17:49.
Third Period—7. Minnesota, Fontaine 2 (Brodzki, Prosser), 2:07; 8. Anaheim, Jackman 1 (Krug, Kruger), 8:28.
Goals-by-play opportunities—Anaheim 0 of 4; Minnesota 2 of 4.
Goals—Anaheim, Anderson 13-4-4 (25 shots); Sweden, Backstrom 8-28-28 (31); 19-0-04 (17:35-4), T-2-34.

Jets 6, Avalanche 2

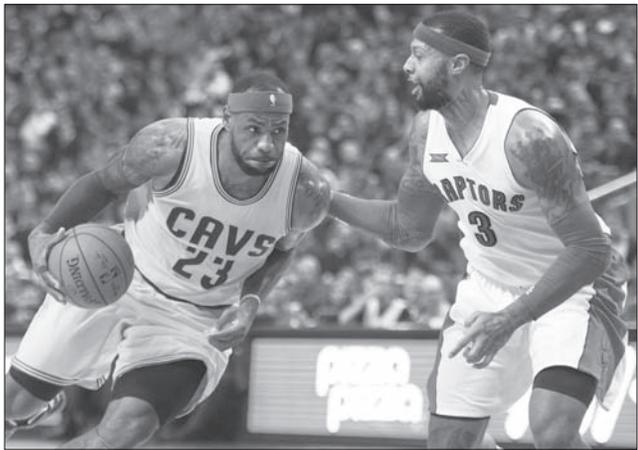
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA
1	0	1	0	0	2
2	1	1	0	2	6

First Period—1. Winnipeg, Thorburn 1 (Postma, Pardy), 4:31; 2. Colorado, Iginla 5 (Landskoog), 9:23; 3. Winnipeg, Little 9 (Wheeler, Ladd), 12:29.
Second Period—4. Winnipeg, Ladd 9 (Cottler, Parise), 19:15.
Third Period—5. Winnipeg, Little 10 (Cottler, Parise), 4:55; 6. Colorado, Iginla 6 (Reed, Landskoog), 11:37 (third, 7-6); 7. Winnipeg, Byfjellgren 6, 13:20.
Goals-by-play opportunities—Colorado 1 of 4; Winnipeg 4 of 4.
Goals—Winnipeg, Ladd 9-11-37; Little 10-11-37.
Power-play opportunities—Colorado 1 of 1; Winnipeg 4 of 4.
Goals—Colorado, Varlamov 4-6-5 (30 shots); Winnipeg, Hutchinson 5-12 (22-20).
 15-10-06 (15:00-4), T-2-30.

Blackhawks 4, Canadiens 3

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF/GA
1	0	1	0	0	3
2	1	1	0	2	6

First Period—1. Chicago, Rozsival 1 (Krug, Norstrom), 18:16; 3. Montreal, Kesler 2 (Krug, Norstrom), 18:24.
Second Period—4. Montreal, Gonchar 1 (Gallagher, Emelin), 7:58; 5. Montreal, Subban 7 (Markov, Deshaies), 17:22.
Third Period—6. Chicago, Toews 11 (Rozsival, Forsberg), 4:18 (OT); 7. Chicago, Saad 5 (Kane, Toews), 15:33.
Goals-by-play opportunities—Montreal 1 of 4; Chicago 14-11-16.
Power-play opportunities—Montreal 1 of 4; Chicago 1 of 1.
Goals—Montreal, Peca 14-7-1 (36 shots); Chicago, Toews 11-11-3 (30-41, 38).
 A-22,887 (19:17), T-2-33.



NATHAN DENETTE, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Cleveland forward LeBron James, left, drives to the basket past Toronto forward James Johnson during the first half of Friday's game in Toronto. Cleveland won 105-91 to stretch its winning streak to six.

NBA roundup

James scores 24 points as Cavs win 6th straight

The Associated Press

TORONTO — Less than two weeks ago, the Raptors went into Cleveland and rallied from an early 18-point deficit to win 110-93, causing LeBron James to call the Cavaliers "a very fragile team."

It hasn't taken long for Cleveland to toughen up.

James had 24 points and a season-best 13 assists. Kevin Love added 15 points and 13 rebounds, and the Cavaliers won their sixth straight game by beating Toronto 105-91 Friday night.

"We definitely owed them one tonight," Cleveland guard Kyrie Irving said. "They came into our house and they gave it to us, hands down. That definitely motivated all of us."

Tristan Thompson set season highs with 21 points and 14 rebounds while Irving scored 15 for Cleveland, unbeaten since Nov. 22 loss to Toronto.

Amir Johnson scored a season-high 27 points and Kyle Lowry had 22 as Toronto lost for the third time in five games.

Hornets 103, Knicks 102: Kemba Walker drove for a left-handed layup as time expired to help host Charlotte beat New York snap its 10-game losing streak.

Gerald Henderson scored a season-high 22 points and Al Jefferson had 16 points and 13 rebounds for the Hornets.

Rockets 114, Timberwolves 112 (OT): James Harden had

38 points before fouling out and Nick Johnson scored on a driving layup with 0.8 seconds to go in overtime that helped visiting Houston escape with a victory over Minnesota.

Harden made 11 of 17 shots and also had six assists, but he fouled out with 1:20 to play and the Rockets led a 13-point lead with 5 minutes to go slip away.

Celtics 113, Lakers 96: Tyler Zeller had season highs of 24 points and 14 rebounds, and host Boston went ahead for good less than two minutes into the game against Los Angeles.

The Lakers got cut a 14-point deficit to 92-83 with 7:49 remaining on a three-point play by Nick Young.

Wizards 119, Nuggets 99: Kris Humphries scored 20 points, Rasual Butler and Kevin Seraphin in each had 16 and host Washington posted its biggest win of the season against Denver.

The Wizards won their fourth straight, improving to 13-5. They set a season high for points.

Hawks 98, Nets 75: DeMarre Carroll scored 16 of his 18 points in the first half. Paul Millsap had 17 points and visiting Atlanta beat Brooklyn for its fifth straight victory.

Brook Lopez had 20 points and Joe Johnson added 12 for the Nets, who had won two straight.

Suns 118, Mavericks 106: Goran Dragic had 28 points and a season-high 13 assists. Markieff Morris scored 22 and visiting

Phoenix ended Dallas' five-game winning streak.

Eric Bledsoe had 19 points for the Suns.

Thunder 103, 76ers 91: Russell Westbrook had 27 points to lead visiting Oklahoma City over Philadelphia.

It was the first win for the Thunder (6-13) with stars Kevin Durant and Westbrook healthy and back in the lineup together.

Bucks 109, Heat 85: Kendall Marshall came off the bench and scored a season-high 20 points, including three big three-pointers in the fourth quarter, as host Milwaukee beat Miami.

Khris Middleton had 14 points for the Bucks, who got a huge effort from their bench. Milwaukee's reserves outscored the Heat's reserves 60-18.

Magic 98, Jazz 93: Tobias Harris scored 22 points and Victor Oladipo had 20 to help visiting Orlando send Utah to its eighth loss in a row.

Harris made a three-pointer from the corner and then converted a three-point play on a drive to give the Magic an 88-78 lead with 4:04 to play.

Kings 102, Pacers 101 (OT): Rudy Gay scored 27 points, Carl Landry made the game-winning basket with 0.8 seconds left and host Sacramento beat struggling Indiana to stop a four-game losing streak.

Landry rebounded a missed shot by Gay, made a quick fade and converted underneath.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

AP Top 25 roundup

Jayhawks overtake Gators

The Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Last year, Wayne Selden Jr. might have let a lousy shooting performance in Kansas's previous game affect his confidence in a high-profile matchup with Florida on Friday night.

That's the difference between being a freshman and a sophomore.

Selden poured in 21 points and keyed a massive second-half run, allowing the No. 11 Jayhawks to overcome an 18-point deficit and beat the Gators 71-65 inside boisterous Allen Fieldhouse.

"You're not going to make them every night," said Selden, who was 0-for-10 from the field last Sunday against Michigan State. "You just have to stay persistent."

Cliff Alexander and Frank Mason III had 12 points apiece, and Perry Ellis finished with 10 for the Jayhawks (6-1), who trailed 39-24 at halftime before using a 17-0 surge to seize control.

Kansas wound up outscoring the Gators 47-26 in the second half.

"It was a terrible start and our best players were not very good at all in the first half," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "The roles reversed in the second half."

Devin Robinson scored 13 points and Chris Walker had 12 for Florida, which is off to its worst start through seven games since he also started 3-4 during the 1990-91 season.

"You have to credit them. They had a lot of fight," the Gators' Jon Horford said. "I felt like we let them speed us up a little bit, take us out of the flow we had in the first half."

The Gators once again played without the calming influence of guard Eli Carter, who has been hobbled by a sprained left foot. He hurt it during practice Nov. 20 and had struggled in two of the four games he had played, causing coach Billy Donovan to rest him Friday night.

"It's been hard the last week just because we've had limited numbers in practice," Donovan said. "It was good to see Devin Robinson respond like he did. I thought he was a bright spot."

The Jayhawks led 14-10 as the game approached the midway point of the first half, but a slew of turnovers and some frigid shooting allowed Florida to pull into the lead.

No. 5 Louisville 82, Florida International 57: Anton Gill scored a career-high 15 points, Montrezl Harrell had 13 points and 12 rebounds, and the host Cardinals rolled past the Panthers.

The Cardinals (7-0) started slow before an 18-0 run in the first half. The Panthers had held Louisville to eight points in the opening 10 minutes.

Dennis Mavin led FIU (5-4) with 15 points and Marco Porcher Jimenez added 13 while shooting 4-for-6 on three-pointers.

No. 22 Oklahoma 82, Missouri 63: Ryan Spangler scored a season-high 18 points to help the host Sooners defeat the Tigers in the SEC/Big 12 challenge.

Buddy Hield had 17 points and three steals and Isaiah Cousins added 16 points for the Sooners (5-2).

The Sooners opened the second half on a 15-0 run.

Jonathan Williams led Missouri (4-4) with 16 points and eight rebounds.



JAMES CRISP/AP

Kentucky's Karl-Anthony Towns, left, and Texas' Prince Ibeh battle for a rebound during Friday's game in Lexington, Ky.

Run fuels No. 1 Kentucky

Wildcats pull away from Longhorns

By GARY B. GRAVES
The Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Willie Cauley-Stein was determined to make an impact no matter which Kentucky platoon he played on against No. 6 Texas.

The Wildcats' 7-foot junior succeeded by making the Longhorns feel his presence all night.

Cauley-Stein had a career-high 21 points and made several defensive plays to key Kentucky's 18-2 run to open the second half, helping the top-ranked Wildcats beat No. 6 Texas 63-51 on Friday night in the SEC/Big 12 Challenge.

Normally playing on the first of Kentucky's two talented platoons, Cauley-Stein began alongside fellow 7-footer Dakari Johnson and 6-10 Trey Lyles on the second squad and the big trio sparked the Wildcats' game-changing 8-minute sequence after a 26-all halftime tie.

They combined for the spurt's first 10 points before Cauley-Stein's tip-in provided a 44-28 lead with 11:20 remaining. That gave Kentucky (8-0) the cushion to hold off the stubborn Longhorns (7-1), who regrouped to close to 56-51 with 1:44 left before Cauley-Stein added a free throw and dunk.

"I was more confident," said Cauley-Stein, who shot 6-for-11 from the field while logging 33 minutes. "I've been working on my game and I had confidence. That was the biggest thing, doing it. It paid off."

Cauley-Stein's rebounding was a big boost for Kentucky, which was outbounded 42-31 by Texas. Johnson finished with 11 points and Karl-Anthony Towns added 10, but the postgame talk centered on Cauley-Stein.

"He was ridiculous today," Kentucky coach John Calipari said.

Johnson called his teammate's game "crazy," adding, "hopefully, he'll have more nights like this."

Jonathan Holmes scored 14 points and Demarcus Holland 10 for Texas, which shot just 30 percent in falling to 0-8 against the No. 1 team.

Things were nonetheless tense in a game featuring a number of subplots, including Kentucky guards Aaron and Andrew Harrison seeking big performances against their home state's marquee school. That didn't happen as the 6-6 twins combined for just seven points on 3-for-17 shooting, but Andrew Harrison hit a big three-pointer with 2:47 left for a 56-47 lead that proved critical.

The Wildcats came away with another



JAMES CRISP/AP

Kentucky's Willie Cauley-Stein, right, shoots under pressure from Texas' Prince Ibeh during the first half.

signature win following last month's 72-40 drubbing of then-No. 5 Kansas in Indianapolis. But beating the athletic and physical Longhorns required a lot of energy and grit by Kentucky.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Mariota: Oregon QB named game MVP after five-TD effort

FROM BACK PAGE

Oregon outgained Arizona 617 yards to 224. The Ducks ran for 301 yards and held the Wildcats to 111 on the ground.

"This is a huge accomplishment for us," said Mariota, who won game MVP honors. "Now we need to continue to improve and get better for whoever comes next."

The victory avenged Oregon's only loss this season — a 31-24 setback to Arizona on Oct. 2 in Eugene — and a 42-16 loss in Tucson last year that kept the Ducks out of the conference championship game.

Arizona coach Rich Rodriguez benched banged-up quarterback Anu Solomon — and later backup Jesse Scroggins — in the second half trying to find a spark. By then it was too late, and Rodriguez's scrunched face on the sideline exemplified his team's frustrations.

"Outcoached us, outplayed us," Rodriguez said.

It was quite a turnaround from the last meeting between these teams, when Arizona held the Ducks to a season-low 144 yards rushing. The Wildcats also sacked Mariota five times and forced two fumbles in that game.

This time, Mariota completed 25 of 38 passes and ran for 33 yards on 10 carries. He extended his conference record to 53 touchdowns this season — 38 passing, 14 rushing and one receiving.

"If this guy isn't what the Heisman Trophy is all about, then I'm in the wrong profession," Helrich said. "If you want your son

or daughter to have a role model, pick this guy."

As wide as the final margin was, it could've — and probably should've — been even wider.

Oregon settled for four field-goal tries — making three — in the first half. The Ducks also finished with 12 penalties for 74 yards, including a holding penalty that erased Royce Freeman's 37-yard TD run and back-to-back false starts that pushed back the failed field-goal attempt in the second quarter.

Mariota made up for most of Oregon's errors, though, running for two TDs just before the break to give the Ducks a 23-0 lead. It was the first time Arizona was held scoreless in the first half since a 49-0 loss to Oregon on Sept. 22, 2012.

"We wanted to show people that we could play with Arizona and come out and show them how Oregon football is supposed to be played," said Freeman, who finished with 114 yards rushing.

The Wildcats briefly broke through when Scroggins found a wide-open Cayle Jones for a 69-yard TD pass with 9:34 remaining in the third quarter. Scroggins finished 3-for-9 passing for 79 yards and also had an interception.

Solomon, who has dealt with ankle and leg injuries this season, completed six of 12 passes for 34 yards before third-stringer Jerard Randall took over late, running for a 25-yard touchdown on the final play of the game.

Antonio Gonzalez can be reached at: www.twitter.com/agonzalezAP



JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

The SEC logo is seen in Atlanta ahead of the Southeastern Conference championship game between Alabama and Missouri, which took place on Saturday. As the playoff era begins, a number of questions about the future of conference championship games are emerging.

Championship changes could be on their way

Future of conference title games under question

By RALPH D. RUSSO
The Associated Press

Trophies will be awarded. Champions will be crowned. A confetti cannon or two will likely be fired.

And after all the celebrating is done, there is a good chance at least one conference this weekend is going to have to deal with the fact that the "wrong team" won its championship game and cost the loser a spot in the College Football Playoff.

As the playoff era begins, a number of questions about the future of conference championship games are emerging. Among them: What's the best format? Should they even exist anymore?

Even when the Bowl Championship Series was being used to determine the teams in the national title game, conference championship games could be perilous. Plenty of teams have stumbled in their final steps to the national championship game while playing for a conference crown. It happened to Ohio State in the Big Ten championship last year.

Now with four spots and a selection committee sizing up the contenders, there is more uncertainty about how these showcase games will be factored into the process.

"We always felt during the BCS

'We always felt during the BCS era that there were years where it was helpful and there were years that it could hurt. I suspect we'll find the same thing during the playoff era.'

John Swofford

ACC commissioner, on having a conference championship game

era that there were years where it was helpful and there were years that it could hurt. I suspect we'll find the same thing during the playoff era," said Atlantic Coast Conference Commissioner John Swofford. How the committee evaluates a conference championship game is "a bit of an unknown right now."

Swofford was in Charlotte, N.C., Saturday to see Florida State, fourth in the last playoff rankings, face Georgia Tech for the ACC title.

The Yellow Jackets upset the unbeaten Seminoles, there's a good chance the ACC won't have a team in the playoff.

and all the teams in that division must play each other.

The Big 12 has no plans to bring back its conference title game. But with autonomy on the way for the Big Five conferences, which essentially allows them to make their own rules, some wonder if it makes sense to allow conferences the freedom to determine a champion any way they want.

Swofford agrees. The ACC, with 14 teams in two divisions, has tossed around the idea of eliminating its divisions and having a championship game matching the two highest-ranked teams in the conference.

"If given the opportunity, I don't know whether we would change or not," Swofford said. "That would be up to our institutions. We've had some discussion about it without taking a formal vote."



Ben Margot/AP

Oregon quarterback Marcus Mariota threw for 303 yards and two touchdowns while rushing for three more in a 51-13 victory over Arizona in the Pac-12 Conference championship game on Friday in Santa Clara, Calif.

NFL

Luck's Colts on verge of division crown



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Colts quarterback Andrew Luck (12) has Indianapolis on the cusp of a third consecutive playoff berth, and ninth South division title.

Indianapolis could wrap up South with win, Houston loss

BY COREY ELLIOT
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Colts are closing in on a division title and a third consecutive playoff appearance.

Indianapolis can win its ninth AFC South title on Sunday with a victory over Cleveland and a loss by Houston. The Browns will try to spoil the Colts' plans as they try to stay in the hunt for an AFC wild card spot. The Texans face a Jacksonville Jaguars team that is just 2-10.

If Indianapolis can't wrap up two of its season goals in Cleveland, it will have an opportunity to do so without help from any other opponent next Sunday when it hosts the Texans. Houston has never won at Indianapolis and the Colts have won 11 straight against division opponents.

Reggie Wayne has been a part of every AFC South title Indianapolis has brought home. The 14-year veteran is no stranger to the sort of musical chairs the month of December often becomes for prospective playoff teams.

While the Colts may not be accustomed to the weather in Cleveland late in the year, they are 8-2 in in December since 2012.

"We've got goals and the first goal is to take care of the AFC South," Wayne said. "We know we control our own destiny, so we just want to make sure we do everything we possibly can to make that as easy as possible and the only way to do that is to go out there and win. Our focus is on the Cleveland Browns."

Up-and-down Rams looking to build on rout of Raiders

BY WARREN MAYES
The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The St. Louis Rams are coming off a laugh against the Oakland Raiders that reminded fans of the Greatest Show on Turf. Enthusiasm must be tempered because Oakland has one win and the Rams have yet to win consecutive games.

The Rams (5-7) do have three signature victories this season, against Denver, San Francisco and defending Super Bowl champion Seattle.

But after each win came a loss.

St. Louis will try to put together consecutive victories Sunday on the road in Washington against the Redskins (3-9).

"We're always looking to win, not looking to apologize for anything once we get into competition," said defensive coordinator Gregg Williams. "We need to win another game, win two in a row."

The Rams posted back-to-back wins twice in finishing 7-9 in 2013. The Rams did win three in a row in 2012, which was when coach Jeff Fisher took charge of the team.

With a playoff berth an outside possibility even if the Rams win out in December to finish 9-7, Fisher knows the team must first get by Washington.

"Well, then, the challenge



CHRIS LEE, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH/AP

Rams tight end Cory Harkey, top, is sent airborne by the Raiders safety Charles Woodson in last week's 52-0 shutout of Oakland. St. Louis will attempt to win consecutive games for the first time this season when it visits the Washington Redskins on Sunday.

is to win the next one," Fisher said. "We're playing consistently. We're playing hard. We just haven't been able to put two in a row. That's our hope and that's our goal this week."

Why the team has yet to produce any kind of a winning streak is a mystery to Fisher. His club is not hard to figure out, he said.

"I know we know what to expect. I mean, we're going to get a maximum effort out of them Wednesday through Sunday," Fisher said. "We're going to get that out of them. That's all you can ask of them. Sometimes there's tipped balls and sometimes guys make mistakes, but they're going to make it going full speed."

The Rams put it all together in thrashing Oakland 52-0 last weekend. It was the second-largest margin of victory in team history.

Brian Schottenheimer, the Rams' offensive coordinator, said he believes the offense is getting into a good flow.

"I think their confidence is certainly up. I think we feel good coming off that game, ball's getting spread out," Schottenheimer said. "Our big thing has been try to be consistent all year long. Obviously, we played really, really well. (We) had a good week of practice. Be on top of it on the road and try to do it again."



GAMEDAY

WEEK 14

TELEVISED GAMES



**Pittsburgh Steelers (7-5)
at Cincinnati Bengals (8-3-1)**

AFN-Sports
7 p.m. Sunday CET
Series: Pittsburgh leads 53-34, including six of the past eight.
Last meeting: Steelers beat the visiting Bengals 30-20 on Dec. 15, 2013.

Notes: Steelers RB Le'Veon Bell ranks second in the NFL with 1,689 scrimmage yards (1,046 rushing, 643 receiving) ... WR Antonio Brown leads the league with 1,258 receiving yards. ... Bengals are 13-1 in their past 15 regular-season home games.



**Indianapolis Colts (8-4)
at Cleveland Browns (7-5)**

AFN-Atlantic
7 p.m. Sunday CET
Series: Browns lead 14-13. Colts have won six of the past seven.
Last meeting: Indianapolis beat visiting Cleveland 17-13 on Oct. 21, 2012.

Notes: Colts QB Andrew Luck is one of three NFL players to pass for 4,000 yards in two of their first three seasons (Peyton Manning, Dan Marino). ... In his 15 starts, Browns QB Brian Hoyer is 10-5 with 3,671 passing yards and 16 TDs.

Marquee matchup

Seattle Seahawks (8-4) at Philadelphia Eagles (9-3)

AFN-Sports, 10 p.m. Sunday Central European Time

SERIES RECORD: Eagles lead 7-6; Seahawks have won three of the past four.
LAST MEETING: Seahawks beat the Eagles 31-14 at Seattle on Dec. 1, 2011.
SEAHAWKS OFFENSE: OVERALL (13), RUSH (1), PASS (25).
SEAHAWKS DEFENSE: OVERALL (1), RUSH (5), PASS (3).
EAGLES OFFENSE: OVERALL (4), RUSH (6), PASS (5).
EAGLES DEFENSE: OVERALL (24), RUSH (12) PASS (26).

STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES: Seahawks QB Russell Wilson has a 110.9 rating (4 TDs, 0 INTs) in the past three games. ... In two meetings with the Eagles, RB Marshawn Lynch has rushed for 253 yards and 2 TDs. He needs 44 yards and 1 TD to rush for 1,000 yards and 10 TDs for a fourth consecutive season. ... WR Doug Baldwin leads the team with 48 catches and 519 receiving yards. ... CB Richard Sherman had 2 INTs last week. Since entering the league in 2011, he leads the NFL with 23 picks. ... The Eagles have won 10 in a row at home ... They have won four of five games when QB Mark Sanchez played, including four starts ... RB LeSean McCoy has 289 rushing yards and 2 TDs in the past two games ... RB Darren Sproles has 4 TDs in his past three home games ... WR Jeremy Maclin has 1,088 receiving yards, his first 1,000-yard season ... WR Jordan Matthews has 5 TDs in the past five games.



The Eagles have faced well in games started by quarterback Mark Sanchez.

Tim Sharp/AP

Game capsules compiled from nflmedia.com



**Kansas City Chiefs (7-5)
at Arizona Cardinals (9-3)**

AFN-Xtra
10 p.m. Sunday CET
Series: Kansas City leads 8-2-1, including the past three.
Last meeting: The Chiefs beat the visiting Cardinals 31-13 on Nov. 21, 2010.

Notes: Chiefs LB Justin Houston has 12 sacks and 2 forced fumbles in the past 10 games. He needs 1 sack to join Derrick Thomas, Jared Allen and Neil Smith as the only KC players with 15-plus in a season. ... The Cardinals are 6-0 at home for the first time since 1970.



**New England Patriots (9-3)
at San Diego Chargers (8-4)**

AFN-Sports
2:20 a.m. Monday CET
Series: New England leads 20-14-2, including three of the past four.
Last meeting: The Patriots beat the visiting Chargers 35-21 on Sept. 18, 2011.

Notes: The Patriots need a win to join the San Francisco 49ers (1983-98) as the only NFL teams to win 10-plus games in 12 consecutive seasons. ... Chargers QB Philip Rivers needs four passing TDs to join HOFer Dan Fouts (254) as the only Chargers with 250.

Also on AFN: Baltimore Ravens (7-5) at Miami Dolphins (7-5), AFN-Xtra, 7 p.m. Sunday CET. Buffalo Bills (7-5) at Denver Broncos (9-3), AFN-Atlantic, 10 p.m. Sunday CET.

EXPANDED STANDINGS

American Conference

	W	L	T	East			AFC	NFC	Div
				Pct	PF	PA			
New England	9	3	0	.750	378	253	6-0-0	3-3-0	6-2-0
Miami	7	5	0	.583	301	232	3-2-0	4-3-0	6-3-0
Buffalo	7	5	0	.583	264	217	4-3-0	3-2-0	4-5-0
N.Y. Jets	2	10	0	.167	190	319	2-5-0	0-5-0	2-7-0
North									
Indianapolis	8	4	0	.667	382	283	5-2-0	3-2-0	6-3-0
Houston	6	6	0	.500	287	247	3-3-0	3-3-0	5-3-0
Tennessee	2	10	0	.167	213	338	1-4-0	1-6-0	2-7-0
Jacksonville	2	10	0	.167	186	329	2-4-0	0-6-0	1-7-0
South									
Cincinnati	8	3	1	.708	260	247	4-1-1	4-2-0	5-3-0
Pittsburgh	7	5	0	.583	328	242	4-2-0	3-3-0	3-5-0
Pittsburgh	7	5	0	.583	320	298	4-2-0	3-3-0	6-3-0
Cleveland	7	5	0	.583	252	245	4-2-0	3-3-0	4-5-0
West									
Denver	9	3	0	.750	361	276	6-0-0	3-3-0	7-1-0
San Diego	8	4	0	.667	279	249	5-1-0	3-3-0	6-3-0
Kansas City	7	5	0	.583	277	224	4-2-0	3-3-0	5-4-0
Oakland	1	11	0	.083	176	337	1-5-0	0-6-0	1-8-0

National Conference

	W	L	T	East			NFC	AFC	Div
				Pct	PF	PA			
Philadelphia	9	3	0	.750	375	285	6-0-0	3-3-0	5-3-0
Dallas	9	4	0	.692	343	301	3-4-0	6-0-0	6-4-0
Washington	3	9	0	.250	257	319	2-4-0	1-5-0	2-7-0
Atlanta	5	7	0	.417	293	299	3-3-0	2-4-0	5-4-0
New Orleans	5	7	0	.417	323	318	3-3-0	2-4-0	4-4-0
Carolina	3	8	1	.292	228	331	2-4-0	1-4-1	3-6-0
Tampa Bay	2	10	0	.167	220	314	0-6-0	2-4-0	1-7-0
North									
Green Bay	9	3	0	.750	380	267	6-0-0	3-3-0	6-3-0
Detroit	8	4	0	.667	231	207	5-1-0	3-3-0	6-2-0
Minnesota	5	7	0	.417	233	297	3-3-0	2-4-0	5-5-0
Chicago	5	8	0	.385	281	378	2-4-0	3-4-0	4-5-0
West									
Arizona	9	3	0	.750	258	224	6-0-0	3-3-0	7-2-0
Seattle	8	4	0	.667	298	221	5-1-0	3-3-0	6-2-0
San Francisco	7	5	0	.583	231	244	3-3-0	4-2-0	6-4-0
St. Louis	5	7	0	.417	261	285	3-3-0	2-4-0	3-5-0

REST OF THE SCHEDULE

N.Y. Giants at Tennessee
Carolina at New Orleans
N.Y. Jets at Minnesota
St. Louis at Washington
Tampa Bay at Detroit
Houston at Indianapolis
San Francisco at Oakland
Monday
Atlanta at Green Bay

NEXT WEEK

Thursday, Dec. 11
Arizona at St. Louis
Sunday, Dec. 14
Oakland at Kansas City
Pittsburgh at Atlanta
Washington at N.Y. Giants
Miami at New England
Houston at Indianapolis
Tampa Bay at Carolina
Cincinnati at Cleveland
Denver at San Diego
N.Y. Jets at Tennessee
San Francisco at Seattle
Minnesota at Detroit
Dallas at Philadelphia
Monday, Dec. 15
New Orleans at Chicago

SPORTS



Making moves

Yankees acquire SS Gregorius, lefty reliever Miller | Page 25

COLLEGE FOOTBALL : PAC-12 CHAMPIONSHIP



The Ducks' Ayele Forde celebrates Oregon's 51-13 defeat of Arizona to win the Pac-12 Conference championship on Friday in Santa Clara, Calif.

BEN MARCOT/AP

Leave no doubt

No. 3 Oregon routs Arizona behind five scores from Mariota

BY ANTONIO GONZALEZ
The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Marcus Mariota made a strong final impression in his bid for the Heisman Trophy, and No. 3 Oregon left no doubt about whether the Pac-12 champions will get a chance to play for the national title.

About the only question now is who the Ducks will face next.

Mariota threw for 303 yards and two touchdowns and ran for a career-high three scores, and Oregon all but assured itself a spot in the first College Football Playoff by overwhelming eighth-ranked Arizona 51-13 in the Pac-12 title game Friday night.

"There are a bunch of big smiles, and I'm proud of that," Oregon coach Mark Helfrich said.

The Ducks (12-1) entered the week ranked second in the playoff standings and are expected to land in the Rose Bowl for the semifinals. Alabama (11-1) is No. 1 and TCU (10-1) is third followed by Florida State (12-0), Ohio State (11-1), Baylor (10-1) and Arizona (10-3), which is now just hoping to make a Jan. 1 bowl.

Even that is no longer certain.

On a rainy night in Silicon Valley, Oregon wiped out the Wildcats in front of a sparse but rowdy pro-Ducks crowd — announced as 45,618 — that sprinkled the red seats at the \$1.3 billion Levi's Stadium bright yellow and green. Mariota also boosted his credentials for college football's most prestigious award as the Ducks turned the patchy field into their personal playground.

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