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Free to Deployed Areas

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'EXTREMELY DAMAGING'



CIA scales back presence in Yemen amid turmoil, embassy closure

By GREG MILLER AND HUGH NAYLOR ■ *The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — The closure of the U.S. Embassy in Yemen has forced the CIA to significantly scale back its counterterrorism presence in the country, according to current and former U.S. officials, who said the evacuation represents a major setback in operations against al-Qaida's most dangerous affiliate.

The spy agency has pulled dozens of operatives, analysts and other staffers from Yemen as part of a broader extraction of roughly 200 Americans who had been based at the embassy in Sanaa, officials said. Among those removed were senior officers

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Marines destroy weapons before leaving Yemen

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who worked closely with Yemen's intelligence and security services to target al-Qaida operatives and disrupt terrorism plots often aimed at the United States.

The departures were triggered by mounting concerns over security in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, where Houthi rebels have effectively toppled the government.

SEE YEMEN ON PAGE 10

Houthi Shiites celebrate the fourth anniversary of the revolution in Sanaa, Yemen, on Wednesday.

HANI MOHAMMED/AP

Congressional panel warns Tricare in 'death spiral'

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The military's Tricare health insurance is a broken system that is now in a "death spiral" and must be replaced, a congressional review commission told the House on Wednesday.

The insurance has been veering toward less choice and access since it was created and now falls far behind other networks in its number of providers and ability to incorporate new types

of medical care, members of the Military Retirement and Compensation Modernization Commission testified before an Armed Services subcommittee.

The testimony is the beginning of hearings on Capitol Hill so lawmakers can consider legislation to overhaul the health coverage, troop retirement system and other compensation that the Pentagon says is growing too expensive to sustain. The Senate has also planned a series of subcommittee hearings

to weigh a number of the commission recommendations, including a complete restructuring of the 20-year military retirement system.

Commission member Stephen Buyer warned House lawmakers that the Pentagon and contractors will likely try to persuade them the "Tricare system is not in trouble and they should not believe the claims.

"Tricare is a broken system ... do not get sucked into the status quo," Buyer said.

SEE TRICARE ON PAGE 4

'Tricare is a broken system ... do not get sucked into the status quo.'

Stephen Buyer
Military Retirement and Compensation Modernization Commission

QUOTE
OF THE DAY

"I have never run a federal agency that tolerates corruption the way the VA has. ... And I've never been a skill for inept bureaucrats who allowed American heroes to die on a medical waiting list."

— Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo., after sparring with Veterans Affairs chief Robert McDonald over cost overruns at a Denver VA hospital

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MILITARY

Official checks progress on nuke fixes

By ROBERT BURNS
The Associated Press

MINOT AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. — The Pentagon's point man for fixing what ails the nation's nuclear forces came to this remote air base to get a feel for nuclear missile duty in an inhospitable climate.

Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work got the feel the moment he arrived Tuesday: a slap-in-the-face kind of cold, energized by an icy wind. He joked before arriving that veterans told him February was the perfect time for his first visit because, "If you don't go to Minot in the winter, you're a wimp."

By the time he ventured out to the missile fields Wednesday, the temperature had dropped to 2 degrees Fahrenheit.

What concerns Work more than the harsh weather, however, is Minot's worrisome history of missteps with the nuclear missiles it houses and whether the fixes he's overseeing will be as durable as Minot's reputation for hard winters.

Work, a retired Marine colonel, was assigned that oversight duty by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, who ordered a top-to-bottom overhaul of the nuclear force last November just days before he announced his resignation. Ashton Carter, who happens to be a nuclear weapons expert, is expected to become Work's new boss next week.

Minot Air Force Base has the distinction of being the only U.S. base to host both B-52 nuclear bombers and nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles, or ICBMs. Minot's 91st Missile Wing operates 150 of the nation's 450 Minuteman 3 missiles. They have been "on alert," ready for unleashing nuclear hell, for nearly half a century.

Nearly two years ago, The Associated Press disclosed an internal email from the 91st Missile Wing's deputy operations group commander that decried "rot" in the ranks, including a disregard by some for safety and security rules and what he considered a lack of professional pride. The AP subsequently reported on other issues within the nuclear corps and leadership lapses, prompting Hagel in January 2014 to order in-depth reviews aimed at restoring



ROBERT BURNS/AP

Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work prepares to visit a nuclear ICBM launch control center Wednesday in Minot, N.D., to check on progress in fixing the problems plaguing the force.

public trust in the nuclear force.

Work said he came to Minot to see whether the upbeat assessments of progress he is hearing in Washington are in line with what members of the ICBM force are seeing in their day-to-day duties, tending to missiles tucked among farm fields over 8,300 square miles.

Work said he needs some convincing, as do the men and women who operate, maintain and secure the ICBMs.

"They're very skeptical," Work said before arriving at Minot. "They've seen this movie before" — a flurry of talk about positive change and better management, followed by a return to business as usual.

After a day spent talking to a mix of enlisted airmen and officers, Work told reporters they were pleased to see the Air Force starting to fill long-vacant jobs, even as the missile force continues to suffer from slow delivery of spare parts and a lack of experience among the mid-ranking personnel who perform maintenance.

"Otherwise, I thought morale was pretty high," he said, later noting he preferred to call morale "strong."

The Air Force already has lined up, and in some cases has begun

to implement, changes that could improve conditions in the ICBM force and may boost morale and lessen the number of mistakes. It is giving launch officers more authority, for example, and investing in refurbishments and replacements of key elements of the structure that supports the nuclear missiles.

Hagel said last November that the Pentagon would add 10 percent per year to nuclear spending in order to correct the problems. That's at least an extra \$1.5 billion per year, but the Obama administration's proposed 2016 defense budget falls about \$400 million short of that, according to Pentagon figures.

Work, however, said the administration is still committed to spending an extra \$8 billion over five years to fix these problems, even if the sum for 2016 is short of the initial forecast. He said one study performed at Hagel's request last year suggested an even more dramatic series of increases — \$3 billion to \$5 billion per year — but that idea was rejected. That study is classified secret.

Minot's troubles are not necessarily worse than at the two other ICBM bases, in Wyoming and Montana. But amid a wave of optimism flowing from Washington

and embraced by commanders here, signs of trouble keep emerging. Two weeks ago, the Air Force confirmed that a Minot missile launch officer who was sentenced in December to 25 years in prison and was thrown out of the service had been the leader of a violent street gang.

A military judge at Minot convicted Capt. Leon Brown IV of two counts of sexual assault of a child younger than 16 and other crimes including distribution of marijuana and psilocybin and use of psilocybin, which is a hallucinogen chemically related to LSD.

To some, the Brown case raises questions about the reliability of safeguards against certifying unfit Air Force members for ICBM launch control duties.

Work sees it differently. With his blessing, the Air Force also is changing — some would say easing — the rules that govern its "personnel reliability program," which is designed to ensure that the men and women entrusted with the world's deadliest weapons are mentally and physically suited for the duty. A 2014 review of the reliability rules concluded they make airmen feel they are not trusted, contribute to morale problems and put an undue burden on nuclear managers.

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VETERANS



Army veteran John Christensen, who was paralyzed in a motorcycle accident 32 years ago, has been part of the focus group trying to bring a vertical wheelchair prototype to commercial production.

Below: Dr. Gary Goldish, right, and engineer Andrew Hansen, left, help Christensen with the wheelchair.

PHOTOS BY RICHARD TSONG-TAATARI, (MINNEAPOLIS) STAR TRIBUNE/TNS



A CHANCE TO STAND ON THEIR OWN

New wheelchair gives paralyzed veterans more mobility

(Minneapolis) Star Tribune

MINNEAPOLIS — The pan sizzles as Army veteran John Christensen separates an egg over a pool of butter. He pivots his wheels, props his chair to the cupboard and stretches for the salt shaker. He's back to the stovetop before the egg burns.

"It's my first time cooking and standing in 32 years."

The Minneapolis VA hospital has revamped the traditional standing wheelchair to help make paralyzed veterans more functional in everyday life. Having had this vision of a more mobile chair nearly a decade ago, its creator has finally seen a workable prototype come to life.

"For years I've felt so frustrated because my patients who could benefit from standing didn't have the ability to move once they stood up," said Dr. Gary Goldish, the hospital's director of extended care and rehabilitation.

With help from a team of biomedical engineers, Goldish modified a wheelchair already on the

market by adding a drive wheel that allows the push rim to rise so patients can reach it when they stand, Goldish explained.

Whether working in an assembly line, painting a living room, or reaching for a book, "the chair moves with the patient and gives them full functionality like we have when we stand," according to Goldish.

In existing models, patients who can't reach the push rim in the standing position are forced to sit before they can boost the chair and move themselves to a new location.

"They're just hard to get going," Christensen said.

The VA's design also keeps the chair's four wheels on the ground at all times, providing more stability — and much more maneuverability.

Goldish began pitching his ideas in 2006. And though his is not the first upright wheelchair, the VA hopes the doctor's revisions will make it easier for paralyzed vets to complete daily tasks and im-

prove their sense of well-being. "I'd just like to be able to see what's in the cupboard," Christensen laughed.

Increasing functional reach comes with benefits far beyond the ability to grab a book from the top shelf. Because standing suddenly becomes convenient, patients will stand more often, reducing the risk of pressure sores from prolonged sitting, Goldish explained.

"If we gave them a chair that is functional, and that really is part of their life, they won't have to be reminded to stand, because it becomes routine."

VA inventors funded the project with a \$150,000 grant from the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Goldish and his team have asked for more money to correct the imperfections of their first chair.

"We found the drive wheel is too far forward ... we need to move it further towards the middle," Goldish said. Doctors said the next project will also address the prototype's bulkiness and wide frame, making it easier to transport.

MILITARY

Senator to defend retirement reform

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., the new chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Military Personnel, has signaled that he will defend retirement reforms proposed for a new generation of servicemembers by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

Graham on Wednesday led commission Chairman Alphonso Maldon Jr. carefully through the logic that fueled its retirement proposals, having him underscore that current retirees would be unaffected, and those currently serving would be free to keep their current plan or choose the new one.

Graham then called a second panel of witnesses, representatives of military associations, to share their concerns. But as he closed the hearing, Graham addressed those worries, finding nothing significant to block a plan that would lower annuities for 20 or more years' service in return for a Thrift Savings Plan with government matching of contributions plus early vesting.

The new plan also would use GI Bill transferability to entice members to serve to 10 years, and offer a continuation bonus at 12 years in return for four more years of service. At 16 years, the plan assumes most members will stay to earn an immediate annuity at 20, although the annuity would be set at 40 percent of basic pay, not 50 percent as under the current plan.

This combination of features, Graham said, would be more "fair" to the vast majority of members who now leave service short of 20 years with no employer-paid retirement benefits. It also would be fairer to the current force because they could stay under the existing plan or shift to the new one.

Robert L. Frank, chief executive officer of the Defense Sergeants Association, challenged the commission's claim that 80 percent of servicemembers, given such a choice, would pick the new plan. "Now that everything is in context and we run our survey, I can tell you there's a stark difference in what people currently say in uniform today say about the choice," Frank said.

He blasted how the new plan narrows retired pay for future careerists to provide "easier off ramps" to noncareerists as if they leave early-handling. Consider the valuable training, \$80,000 in GI Bill benefits, robust veterans' benefits and thrift savings without government matching, he said.

"To take away from those who have gone the long term — the ones we need to go long term — to give to those who are one-and-done, will have a significant effect

on the all-volunteer force," Frank predicted.

He suggested billions of dollars in savings might be the true catalyst.

Dandrea Parke Holleman, executive director of The Retired Enlisted Association, quoted an economist who said the commission used a "discount rate" far too high to calculate the perceived present value of future retirement money in comparing the proposed plan to the current system.

Also, it seems that if servicemembers perceive the value of the new plan as far more favorable than it really is, "then retention will not be harmed. That assumption may be correct, but is it appropriate," she asked.

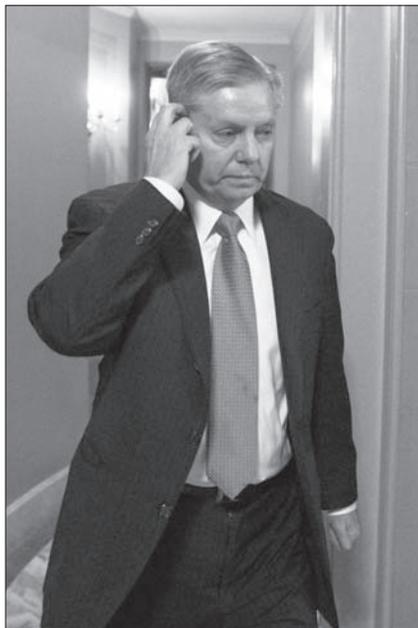
Graham said he's more concerned that with today's plan, thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans are leaving service or being forced to leave short of 20 years with no government-funded retirement package.

"Here's my belief: That if you're going to enlist in the military the day after we reform the system, you're going to know on day one the defined benefit plan (for serving 20 years) is 40 percent. If that's not a good deal for you, don't join. Go somewhere else," Graham said. "If you're halfway decent managing your money, you'll make up the 10 percent" using a TSP with government matching up to 5 percent of basic pay after two years in service and continuing until reaching 20 years.

But Richard A. Jones, legislative director of the National Association for Uniformed Services, said the "pay for" to deliver those early benefits is a 20 percent cut in retirement annuities for those who reach 20 years. He asked why that's necessary "to enhance the system for those who leave early."

Graham rejected criticism the new plan would pay "for this on the backs" of careerists "because you can't create a new benefit — helping the 12-year guy, the eight-year guy — without something giving... [T]his modernization effort of a blended plan will serve the country well."

Earlier Wednesday, commissioners defended their plans before the House Military Personnel



J. SCOTT APPELWITZ/AP

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, walks through a corridor at the Capitol in Washington after a closed-door meeting.

Subcommittee, where more focus fell on its call to replace triple-option Tricare with a menu of commercial health-insurance plans willing to include in their networks military providers and facilities.

Active-duty families would get a health care allowance to cover most of these plans' costs. Elderly retirees get to keep their Tricare for Life coverage, a prized insurance supplement to Medicare. Younger retirees, however, would have to pay 5 percent of their insurance premiums, and their cost share would climb gradually — a point a year to reach 20 percent.

Rep. Joe Heck, R-Nev., an Army Reserve physician who chairs the subcommittee, challenged the commission's claim that Tricare is failing because doctor fees are set at or below Medicare rates, making physicians reluctant to join networks and leading to long waits and limited care choices.

"Even private health insurers right now base all their reimbursements on Medicare rates," Heck said. "So there's really not a big

difference between what you're calling 'fair market' rate and what most private health insurers are providing as reimbursements to their networks."

Commissioner Steve Buyer defended that charge, noting that a relatively small number of specialists serve Tricare patients near, say, Fort Bragg, N.C., compared to specialists who participate in the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

Buyer later advised lawmakers to rely on the deep knowledge gained by commissioners rather than bureaucracies. "They have a different constituency than what you have," he said.

Rep. Paul Cook, R-Calif., a retired Marine colonel, asked why the commission didn't strive to simplify compensation. "Twenty, 30 years ago, I used to understand this," Cook said. "Now, I feel like I'm in the middle of a calculus problem."

To comment, write Military Update, P.O. Box 231111, Centerville, VA, or email milupdate@aol.com or twitter: Tom Philpott@Military_Update

Tricare: Low payments to doctors cited as major problem

FROM FRONT PAGE

He said the essential problem with the military's system is that it has driven down costs by reducing its reimbursements to health care providers below that paid to Medicare, the government subsidized insurance system that functions as a measuring stick for the industry.

The low payments have driven doctors and providers out of the system, said Buyer, himself a former congressman from Indiana. For example, the Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance network has 114 OB-GYN providers in Fayetteville, N.C., where Fort Bragg is located, but Tricare only has 36.

"Go talk to them," Buyer said. "It is a reimbursement issue that these providers are not signing onto Tricare."

Furthermore, the system is very slow to cover new and emerging procedures for military patients because updates are done rarely on a cyclical schedule, said commission member Peter Chiarelli, a retired general.

"You are receiving medical care that is eight years in arrears," Chiarelli said.

Such problems have continued to worsen since the inception of the Tricare program and as the military continually seeks to save money, said commission member Edmund Giambastiani, a retired admiral.

"I think our commission believes Tricare is in a death spiral," he said.

The commission is proposing replacing the health insurance with a wider selection of private plans for troops and their families, similar to what is offered to civilian employees. It would result in about a \$5 increase per year for a policy that costs \$535, and would save the military about \$6 billion to \$7 billion per year.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., said the increased coverage costs would roughly equal the cost of Starbucks latte each year and create more choice of doctors and improve access to care.

The realm of military personnel costs, especially health insurance, is one of the best areas to cut, Speier said.

"We've just got to inject a little guts into each of us to do the right thing," she said.

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MILITARY UPDATE

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PACIFIC

Japan's first lady tours USS George Washington

By **ERIK SLAVIN**
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS George Washington played host Thursday to Japan's first lady and U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy, completing one of its highest-profile ship tours before the aircraft carrier leaves Japan later this year.

Akie Abe, wife of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, spent a few hours aboard talking with sailors, checking out the flight line and purchasing some Navy gear in the ship store, among other activities.

The tour began with three of the approximately 500 women serving aboard the carrier sharing an overview of the ship's fire-fighting capabilities.

"She seemed happy that there were women presenting this," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Monica Duran, of El Paso, Texas.

In recent years, Abe has been outspoken in her support for more women to be active in the

job market, despite Japan's male-dominated business culture.

Multiple sailors said they enjoyed talking with Abe, Kennedy and other dignitaries Thursday.

"I definitely don't think I ever expected to do something like this," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Ariel Peterson, of Springfield, Mass.

The size of the 1,092-foot ship, often compared to a floating city, and its complement of about 5,500 sailors with its air wing embarked impressed the first lady.

"I'm very thankful to the young sailors and their great efforts to protect the security of Japan," Abe said.

Abe's husband is widely viewed as a staunch advocate for bolstering the U.S.-Japan security alliance.

The prime minister is spearheading legal changes that would, among things, allow Japan to attack an adversary engaged in a fight with U.S. forces, if not doing so would constitute a threat to Japan.

Shinzo Abe's plans have met

criticism from parties concerned that the move will lead Japan away from the pacifist role it has played since it adopted its U.S.-written constitution in 1947.

However, with tensions over North Korea's nuclear program and multinational territorial disputes simmering in the region, Washington has been receptive to much of the Japanese government's agenda.

Kennedy acknowledged Japan's role in the alliance and welcomed further participation in security affairs.

"We're thankful for Japan's interest in taking on additional responsibilities," Kennedy said.

The USS George Washington arrived in Japan in 2008 and will head back to the U.S. for a multi-year overhaul project.

Most of the crew will return to Japan later this year aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, which will then be homeported at Yokosuka.

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Above: Akie Abe, wife of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, talks with sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS George Washington following a tour on Thursday. Left: Abe is seen on the bridge alongside commanding officer Capt. Timothy Kuehhas.

PHOTOS BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes



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PACIFIC

THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Where US military follows its nation's money

By ERIC SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE,

Japan
Middle East turmoil and the Islamic State's gains dominated the security headlines in 2014, yet it's the Asia-Pacific region that remains the United States' top long-term priority.

It is a case of security interests following economic interests — beyond North America's shores, nowhere on Earth is the U.S. economy more dependent.

About a quarter of everything the U.S. sells goes to 15 countries on the Pacific Rim, according to Census Department data analyzed by Stars and Stripes.

More than 37 percent of all purchases come from those countries, or roughly the same as what Americans buy from Europe, Africa, most of the Middle East and South America combined. Total trade with those 15 countries is up 68 percent from 2004 through 2013. Although the trade deficit with those countries remains large, export growth is actually outpacing import growth by 28 percent over that time period.

That U.S. growth trend in Asia is expected to continue for the foreseeable future, but security and economics analysts say there is one big unknown with the potential to unravel it: China's ambitions.

The big question is whether China will turn out to be a nation that wields its increasing power in concert with other countries or it asserts that power with force to seize disputed territory and regulate the international spaces where trillions of dollars in global trade flows.

"It's not about the China we see today," said Sheila Smith, a senior fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations, a Washington think tank. "It's about the China we'll see 20 years from now."

The uncertainty surrounding China's future direction is driving the U.S. "rebalance" of its forces to the Asia-Pacific.

By 2020, the Navy and Air



About a quarter of everything the U.S. sells goes to countries in the Pacific Rim. Security interests follow economic interests, making the Asia-Pacific region the top U.S. long-term priority. The biggest unknown:



Force will base 60 percent of their assets in the region under current plans. The rationale for the rebalance, stated without fail by U.S. leaders, includes freedom of movement through waters and airspace. The only country in the region that actively disputes the American vision of that freedom is China.

China holds an ambiguous claim on about 90 percent of the South China Sea — a congested area where \$1.2 trillion in U.S. trade transits annually by ship, Pacific Command chief Adm. Samuel Locklear noted during a June security summit in Singapore. Add hundreds of billions of dollars in trade flowing to the U.S. through the East China Sea

— where the U.S. guards Taiwan from a Chinese invasion and defends Japan amid rising tensions — and the stakes grow even higher.

What level of security is necessary to protect U.S. interests, and how to go about it, is a matter of intense debate in Washington.

China's point of view

In the last few years, China has proclaimed jurisdiction over airspace that includes Japan-ad-

ministered and South Korean-claimed territory; engaged in ship-ramming incidents with the Philippines, Japan and Vietnam near disputed territory; scrambled jets in response to the movements of U.S. allies; and, had a fighter plane fly a barrel roll maneuver within 30 feet of a much slower U.S. anti-submarine plane, according to

Pentagon officials. In nearly every case, China claims the uninhabited territories as its own by historical discovery, calls its neighbors the true aggressors and refuses to bring its arguments to international court.

China also called for an end to U.S. surveillance flights within its Exclusive Economic Zone — a 200-mile extension from a nation's shoreline into international waters. Such zones represent more than one-third of the world's oceans, and all but a handful consider them open to surveillance.

The U.S. response to China's assertiveness has been to increase military ties with its allies in the region, which Beijing officials view as an attempt to surround their country's Pacific borders. To China's south, the U.S. has new rotational troop agreements with the Philippines and Australia. To its east are 50,000 U.S. troops stationed in Japan and about 28,500 more in South Korea. In between, the U.S. Navy holds dozens of exercises and hundreds of port visits annually.

"We think about it as 'projecting power,'" Smith said. "[China] talks about 'pushing out.'"

The air defense identification zone that China declared in 2013, to international consternation, can be viewed by China as a buffer zone for the concentration of wealth and trade lining their eastern coastal cities, Smith said.

Beijing's economic interests in the South China Sea are vast and potentially vulnerable, in the eyes of China's hawks. About 83 percent of China's oil imports flow through the Malacca Strait and into the South China Sea, according to the 2014 Defense Department report to Congress on China. Trade also accounts for a sizable chunk of global South China Sea trade, which a 2012 Center for Strategic and International Studies study pegged at \$5.3 trillion annually.

Pierre Noel, senior fellow for economic and energy security at the International Institute for Security Studies, doesn't believe that China's access to trade and resources is vulnerable, barring a major war.

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PACIFIC

FROM PAGE 6

Their markets are simply too lucrative to foreign merchants.

However, pro-military hawks in China view U.S. alliances as a security risk, Noel said.

"Clearly one of the things they emphasize is the security of sea lanes and communications in Asia, which are either directly or indirectly controlled by the U.S., or countries close to the U.S.," Noel said. "This gives those powers, potentially, veto power over the Chinese."

Chinese pre-eminence

The goal of the U.S. presence in the Pacific since WWII has been "stability," which largely boils down to preventing major wars and protecting trade routes from terrorism, piracy and smaller wars.

The U.S. military rebalance seeks to continue that strategy by putting its best hardware in the region and by strengthening its alliances.

"The Asia-Pacific's shifting security landscape makes America's partnerships and alliances indispensable as anchors for regional stability," Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said May 31 in Singapore during a speech that also condemned China's use of "coercion and the threat of force" to advance its aims.

Even as Hagel, President

Barack Obama and administration officials tout the rebalance at every turn, many in Asia remain skeptical that the U.S. will have the money to follow through.

The U.S. Future Years Defense Program exceeds federal budget caps by \$116 billion over the next five years, according to a Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments study released in September.

There are less costly alternatives to the present strategy. All of them carry economic and strategic risk for the United States, according to analysts.

One option would be to roll back the U.S. role in the region over the next few decades and watch Beijing supplant Washington as the top power in the region.

The historical precedent for that is Great Britain's acceptance of U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere in 1890s, which ended more than a century of friction, said Ted Galen Carpenter, senior fellow at the Cato Institute.

"One of the things would be absolutely essential if the U.S. conceded pre-eminence in East Asia would be a firm guarantee of navigation rights," Carpenter said. "We are a maritime power, and I don't think we're about to let that part of the world become a Chinese lake."

It's hard to see an authoritarian country like China and a democratic United States establishing enough trust to make such a deal, Carpenter said.

Chinese pre-eminence also creates the possibility of territorial battles that could turn into wars on the open seas, absent U.S. support. Analysts estimate that about 90 percent of U.S. trade in the region is seaborne.

Carpenter views the Obama administration's rebalance as an unsustainable mix of engagement and containment.



Courtesy of the Vietnam Coast Guard

A Chinese ship, left, shoots a water cannon at a Vietnamese vessel, right, while a Chinese Coast Guard ship, center, sails alongside in the South China Sea, off Vietnam's coast, on May 7.

Instead, he advocates a "first among equals" arrangement for the U.S. by which it maintains a deterrent presence but doesn't try to contain China or dominate the region. The U.S. would cut spending just enough to get countries like South Korea, Japan and others to do more than they do now.

"The problem is that the U.S. is a victim of its own great success over the last seven decades," Carpenter said. "It has fostered, somewhat deliberately, a dependent mentality on the part of friendly countries. I think without the overall reliance on the U.S., we would see these countries at least consider doing more in the security arena for their own interest."

To some extent, U.S. allies are already doing more than in the past, as are others.

Of 22 Asia-Pacific countries

reviewed by Stars and Stripes, at least 20 increased defense spending last year. Japan, which U.S. officials often call their "cornerstone" ally in the region, is planning Marine Corps-like capabilities. South Korea is improving its surface and submarine fleet.

Those developments are welcome to Washington, but they are no replacement for U.S. spending, technology and expertise in the region, analysts said. Japan, which has been criticized by China and South Korea for harboring supposedly militaristic sentiments, still spends only 1 percent of its gross domestic product on defense, according to the World Bank.

Supporters of the rebalancing strategy in the Obama administration and the Pentagon also want to see U.S. allies take larger roles. The difference is that they

believe the way to reduce tensions with China is through a greater projection of allied strength, combined with diplomatic and economic overtures.

For now, the U.S. appears committed to its rebalancing strategy, Smith, of the Council on Foreign Relations, said. The trade routes that the U.S. and much of world depend on appear generally secure. However, the U.S. will become far more concerned in the future if China attempts to use its rapidly modernizing navy to manage the region's trade routes.

"If people feel like China can interfere with commerce, they will adapt their behavior accordingly," Smith said. "Anything that threatens the basic stability of the region threatens economic behavior across the board."

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For a country-by-country breakdown of trade in the Asia-Pacific region, go to stripes.com/go/asiapacific

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MILITARY

General supports slowed drawdown

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan confirmed Thursday that he supports a slowing of the troop drawdown and a later pullback from bases in the country by the end of the year, as the White House reconsiders its plans.

Gen. John Campbell told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he has made those recommendations and they are now being considered by the joint staff and secretary of defense's office.

The proposed changes from the front-line leadership of the U.S.-led NATO mission building Afghanistan's military and police come just as the White House also reconsiders its withdrawal timeline announced last year that would bring troop levels down to an embassy security force of 5,500 by 2016. Republicans in Congress have slammed the Obama administration for what they call an artificial withdrawal plan that ignores realities on the ground.

"This is their first fighting season on their own," Campbell said, speaking of the Afghan forces the United States hopes will be able to secure the country against drug lords and Taliban and Islamic

extremists linked to the Islamic State group.

The general said that this year is a crucial point in the 13-year effort to root out factions that could launch more 9/11-type attacks against the United States and pull Afghanistan back into warring chaos.

About 10,000 U.S. troops began a noncombat support mission in January. A slower withdrawal timeline could allow the forces to continue the advise-and-assist mission as well as counterterrorism operations going on at some of the 21 bases it and coalition forces now use throughout the country.

Campbell did not provide details of his proposals. He was scheduled to give a closed-door classified briefing to senators on Thursday.

He painted a picture of increasingly positive gains in Afghanistan over the past year. He said Afghan forces were able to maintain security through a disputed national election and are now the most respected organization in the country.

Meanwhile, the new government of Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah have improved relations with Pakistan and become reliable partners with the United States.



JOE GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

Gen. John F. Campbell, commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, speaks during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in Washington on Thursday.

Still, U.S. and coalition forces waged an airstrike last month in support of the Afghan army to push back thousands of Taliban fighters that flooded into Kunar, a district in eastern Afghanistan.

The incidents underscore concerns that the country's security is still fragile, and a misstep by U.S. forces such as an early withdrawal could result in a collapse similar to what happened last year in Iraq. The U.S.-trained Iraqi army quickly folded last summer, allowing the Islamic State group to seize control of large areas of the country and trigger a new U.S. and coalition war there.

"We are worried about it being done just as we've done in Iraq," said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., mocking a statement by President Barack Obama last year that touted the proposed Afghanistan

drawdown.

Obama's statement came before the collapse of Iraq and the rise of the Islamic State group. McCain said the planned drawdown "no longer accurately reflects the facts and conditions on the ground."

The senator asked Campbell if he supports proposed changes to the U.S. withdrawal.

"Absolutely," Campbell said. "I think that prior Senate testimony from retired Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis called for about 20,000 troops in Afghanistan, which would double current forces.

Campbell said his recommendations do not include an increase of troops but instead propose slowing the planned decreases.

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Airman jailed for his role in fatal accident

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — An airman with the 86th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron will serve one month in jail and lose a stripe for his role in a fatal motor vehicle crash that killed a German motorcyclist.

Charles McCollum II, reduced in rank to technical sergeant, pleaded guilty in a court-martial this week at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, to one count of negligent homicide.

The charge stems from a June 15, 2013, accident near Waldmohr in which McCollum turned left into the path of Karsten Bauerfeld's oncoming motorcycle, Capt. Grethe Hahn, a senior trial counsel at Ramstein and the lead prosecutor for the government, said in an interview Thursday.

While braking hard to avoid a collision, Bauerfeld, 45, from Hüttschenhausen, flipped over his bike and struck the back passenger door of McCollum's sedan. He died at the scene, Hahn said.

An aggravating circumstance in the case was that McCollum had been drinking the day of the accident. He testified under oath that he had consumed four beers throughout the morning while attending a squadron golf tournament and luncheon on Ramstein, where he worked as a C-130 maintainer, Hahn said.

After the event, McCollum drove to a friend's house off base to pick up his children, spending about an hour there, Hahn said. The accident occurred on his way home at about 3 in the afternoon.

"He sees an oncoming car and he also sees the motorcyclist," Hahn said. "He lets the oncoming car go and turns in front of" the motorcyclist.

McCollum's blood-alcohol content was an estimated 0.067 at the time of the accident, below the legal limit to be criminally liable for drunken driving under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Hahn said.

The Air Force alleged that McCollum's decision to drink and drive was conduct that brought discredit upon the armed forces.

McCollum could still remain in the Air Force despite the conviction. As part of a pretrial agreement, McCollum's commander agreed not to consider the outcome of his court-martial when he comes up for re-enlistment in June, Hahn said.

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SIGAR: Troops put at risk by open-air burn pits

By HEATH DRUZIN
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military knowingly put troops' health at risk and wasted tens of millions of dollars on shoddy contracts while operating dangerous open-air burn pits in Afghanistan, according to a report from the government's top watchdog there.

"Although [the Defense Department] knew about the risks associated with open-air burn pits long before contingency operations began in Afghanistan, it was not until 2009 that U.S. Central Command developed policies and procedures to guide solid waste management, including requirements for operating, monitoring, and minimizing the use of open-air burn pits," according to a report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

It's still unclear how many

troops were sickened by burn pits, but their widespread use in Iraq and Afghanistan — sometimes against CENTCOM's own directives — means related illnesses could represent the latest health crisis for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, with echoes of Agent Orange in Vietnam. Many troops who say they were downwind of the smoke from base burn pits have reported a wide range of maladies, including severe respiratory problems.

At the mission's peak in 2011, when there were 110,000 American troops in Afghanistan, the U.S. military was producing 440 tons of waste per day. Despite a 2009 CENTCOM rule that bases over a certain size were to find alternatives to burn pits to dispose of waste, many bases continued to use the pits, even buying prohibited items such as batteries and tires, according to the report.

As late as August 2010, CENT-

COM reported that there were 251 active open-air burn pits in Afghanistan. "The overall approach to its solid waste disposal in Afghanistan was haphazard and reactive," the report says.

The SIGAR report is the culmination of two years of work that took investigators to several bases in Afghanistan to inspect waste-disposal mechanisms. To replace burn pits, many bases turned to incinerators, but installation and use were plagued by missteps, and some contractors were paid for inadequate work, according to the report.

The military installed incinerators that were never used on at least four major bases, at a cost of more than \$20 million, according to the report.

Officials with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers disputed some of the findings, saying that some of the incinerators SIGAR says were not in use were operational upon

installation with just minor problems. They added that some of the incinerators that were not used were never turned on because of imminent base closure due to the drawdown of U.S. troops.

In their response to the report, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan officials said they generally concurred with the findings, though they took issue with what they saw as an "oversimplification" of the issues surrounding using burn pits and incinerators in a combat environment.

"The safety of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and civilians is always our top priority," U.S. Army Gen. John Murray said in a letter. "Although this report clearly identifies areas for improvement, it does not fully account for the difficult and complex operational environment that led commanders to make some very difficult decisions."

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OMBUDSMAN

MILITARY

VA secretary asks Iraq War vet: 'What have you done?'

By MATTHEW DALY
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald asked a Republican lawmaker who served in both Iraq wars, "What have you done?" as the two men sparred over huge cost overruns at a troubled Denver VA hospital.

McDonald was defending the VA's budget at a hearing when he and Colorado Rep. Mike Coffman tussled over construction delays and cost increases at the long-de-

layed hospital project.

After a few minutes of arguing, McDonald snapped at Coffman: "I've run a large company, sir. What have you done?"

Coffman, an Army veteran, did not respond at the hearing. But the four-term lawmaker said in a statement later that he could tell McDonald a few things he hasn't done.

"I have never run a federal agency that tolerates corruption the way the VA has. I've never built a hospital that's years be-

hind schedule and hundreds of millions over budget. And I've never been a shill for inept bureaucrats who allowed American heroes to die on a medical waiting list," he said.

The dust-up started when Coffman criticized the VA for citing its legal efforts to defend the Denver hospital project as a major accomplishment.

"How is that a success?" Coffman asked. "You lost that case on every single point for the hospital in my district that is hundreds of



Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald holds a chart as he testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington on Wednesday before the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

MANUEL BALCE CENETIA/AP

millions of dollars over budget and years behind schedule.

"I think that that's just characteristic of your glossing over the extraordinary problems confronted by your department," Coffman added. "This is a department mired in bureaucratic incompetence and corruption."

McDonald said he was offended by Coffman's remarks and noted

that he had only been on the job for six months.

"You've been here longer than I have," he told Coffman. "If there's a problem in Denver, I think you own it more than I do."

McDonald then offered to give Coffman his cellphone, "and you can answer some of the calls and see if I'm making a difference for veterans."

AFN moving to new satellites; customers need to change their settings

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Military families in the Pacific with AFN decoder boxes will have to make changes soon to avoid disruption in service.

The American Forces Network said in a statement Thursday that it will begin to migrate to three satellites. The move will require

customers to repoint their satellite dishes and change their settings to continue to receive both TV and satellite radio services.

Cable operators, State Department locations and military units will make the changes for the official organizational decoders they use, but those who own or lease their decoder boxes will

have to make the required changes illustrated at www.myafn.net/satchange.

"Viewers can make the changes anytime between February 19 and April 22," George Smith, an AFN spokesman said in the statement. Smith also advises customers to make the switch in February or March or risk losing

service.

The move hopes to save the Defense Media Activity \$4.3 million over the remaining duration of the contract and is unrelated to both AFN's effort to provide additional HDTV support and potential streaming video services. However, some customers in remote locations receiving only

three channels will have access to all of AFN's channels after the realignment.

There are approximately 15,000 decoders in Japan, Korea and other locations in the Pacific, according to AFN estimates. Military members and their families in Europe or Southwest Asia will not be affected by the move.

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WAR ON TERRORISM

Yemen: Some counterterrorism efforts to continue despite departures

FROM FRONT PAGE

Britain and France said Wednesday that they also would close their embassies, as news footage showed Houthi fighters driving off in vehicles that U.S. diplomats had abandoned at an airport during their exodus.

The collapse of Yemen's government already had disrupted some U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen. The closure of the U.S. mission compounds the challenges and "is extremely damaging" to the CIA's mission in Yemen, said a former senior U.S. official involved in the effort. That person said that the embassy had served as the primary base in Yemen for U.S. intelligence operations and that "the political turmoil in Sanaa and the closure of the embassy all play into the hands" of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, as the Yemeni franchise is known.

U.S. officials emphasized that not all CIA personnel were withdrawn from Yemen, saying that the agency would try to salvage an intelligence network that it had assembled in cooperation with Yemen, Saudi Arabia and other allies during the past five years.

But officials acknowledged that key intelligence arrangements and relationships have been severed at least temporarily. The embassy's closure, for example, involved the departure of key CIA and U.S. military personnel who in recent years have worked alongside Yemeni and Saudi counterparts at a counterterrorism center in Sanaa.

The CIA declined to comment. Senior U.S. lawmakers warned of significant damage to counterterrorism efforts.

"The coup in Yemen and the deteriorating security situation in Sanaa are particularly concerning because they will hinder the United States' campaign against al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula," Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Calif., the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said Wednesday in a written statement. "AQAP is a direct threat to the U.S. homeland that we must continue to hunt down with unrelenting persistence."

The al-Qaida affiliate in Yemen has been linked to a series of bombing plots targeting the United States, including the failed attempt to blow up a Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas Day in 2009. More recently, the group claimed responsibility for last month's terrorist attacks in Paris — although whether it was directly involved in the coordination of those assaults remains unclear.

The CIA has deployed teams of operators and analysts to Yemen, and has built an air base in Saudi Arabia for a fleet of armed drones that have carried out dozens of strikes against AQAP targets.

But that campaign has depended heavily on intelligence from informant networks and other sources developed in collaboration with Yemen's government. The CIA worked particularly closely with Yemen's primary intelligence services, the National Security Bureau and the Political Security Organization.

The CIA may still be in contact with officials at those agencies, many of whom have continued to report to work despite the chaos in the capital. And three CIA drone strikes in recent days showed that the agency's aircraft are still tracking AQAP, even if they are no longer doing so with the permission of Yemen's government.

But the embassy closure has made close coordination with Yemen's intelligence service all but impossible, prompting worries among U.S. officials that the intelligence streams that have sustained the drone campaign soon could evaporate.

"The issue would be whether you have the intelligence you need to know what



ANES MANYOUB/AP

Demonstrators in Sanaa, Yemen, shout slogans Wednesday against Houthi Shiites who have seized power.

Marines destroy weapons before departing Yemen

Stars and Stripes

Marine guards disabled all of their personal weapons before leaving Yemen as part of the evacuation of the U.S. Embassy in the capital of Sanaa, the military said Wednesday.

A statement from the Marine Corps released Wednesday said none of the weapons belonging to the embassy's Marine security detachment were handed over to anyone upon departure.

"All crew-served weapons were destroyed at the embassy prior to movement," the statement said. "None of them were 'handed over' in any way to anyone. The destruction of weapons at the embassy and the airport was carried out in accordance with an approved destruction plan."

Officials said the Marines left the embassy on Tuesday with only personal weapons. Upon arriving at the airport they removed the bolts and smashed them with sledge hammers and then did the same to the weapons' bodies.

They later flew out on board commercial aircraft.

"All of these destroyed components were left at the airport — and components were scattered," the statement said. Marine Corps officials stressed that no usable weapon was taken from any Marine at Sanaa's airport.

While U.S. Embassy personnel were leaving Yemen, U.S. Navy and 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit forces operating from the USS Iwo Jima in the Red Sea were standing by to assist the State Department's departure from Yemen but they were not needed, 5th Fleet officials said.

The Iwo Jima, part of an Amphibious Ready Group with an embarked Marine Expeditionary Unit, has a multitude of capabilities, including close air support aircraft, a Quick Reaction Force, a Casualty Evacuation Force and a Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and a Personnel Force.

news@stripes.com

to target," a senior U.S. official said in an interview before the embassy was closed. "To a large extent, that was a product of the cooperation we got from the Yemenis."

Pentagon officials have said that U.S. Special Operations teams are still in Yemen and are continuing to work with that country's counterterrorism units outside the capital. But U.S. officials acknowledged that those operations also have been impaired by the political turmoil and said that any deterioration in intelligence also would affect a parallel drone program in Yemen operated by the U.S. military's Joint Special Operations Command.

As recently as September, President

Abdulmalek al-Ajri, a member of the Houthis' political bureau, described U.S. drone strikes as a violation of Yemeni sovereignty, but said the group has not ordered the nation's intelligence services to halt counterterrorism coordination with the United States, nor has it demanded that the drone flights stop. Instead, he said those decisions would be left to revolutionary committees that the Houthis have formed in recent days to assume control of the government.

"If the Americans were to change their strategy and show respect for Yemen's sovereignty, we would not oppose the drones," Ajri said, although it was not clear how the United States might meet that standard.

Another Houthi political leader, Deif Allah al-Shami, expressed a similar view, saying that the group is "moving towards fighting al-Qaida, and if there is anything that can help Yemen while preserving its sovereignty and integrity, then we will take it into consideration."

In cities outside the capital, tens of thousands of Yemenis took part in demonstrations against the Houthis, who are part of the country's Shiite minority. At the same time, Houthi supporters rallied in neighborhoods in Sanaa, some waving placards bearing the slogan "Death to America, death to Israel, damnation to the Jews."

The State Department said that diplomats and other U.S. Embassy staffers left Yemen on private jets provided by Oman, flying to the Omani capital, Muscat, before traveling Wednesday to Washington. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said that operations at the embassy were "suspended" rather than terminated and that the mission would be reopened when the security situation permitted.

Psaki described the Houthi seizure of U.S. vehicles left at the airport as "unacceptable" and said that "we are requesting their return." Houthi officials confirmed that the group had taken as many as 20 vehicles left by departing U.S. diplomats, including the ambassador, but indicated that they would be returned to remaining Yemeni staff at the U.S. Embassy on Wednesday evening, with a U.N. official observing the handover.

Members of a Shiite sect in Yemen's northernmost provinces, the Houthis are openly hostile to both al-Qaida and the United States, although senior members of the group signaled in interviews this week a willingness to consider limited counterterrorism cooperation.

WAR ON TERRORISM

Obama successor could inherit Mideast conflict

By JULIE PACE

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Seeking war power authority for three years, President Barack Obama is setting up the prospect that his successor will become the third American president in a row overseeing U.S. military forces grappling with turmoil in the Middle East.

Passing on an active military mission in the region would be an unexpected and unwanted legacy for Obama, a president who **ANALYSIS** once appeared poised to fulfill his campaign pledge to end U.S.-led conflicts in the region.

"It's conceivable that the mission is completed earlier," Obama said Wednesday as he urged Congress to pass a force authorization against the Islamic State group that would extend into 2018. "It's conceivable that after deliberation, debate and evaluation, that there are additional tasks to be carried out in this area."

"The people's representatives, with a new president, should be able to have that discussion," he added.

The president has long said the campaign against the Islamic State militants would be lengthy, suggesting it could extend beyond

his presidency. But his authorization request to Congress makes that implication a reality and injects a complex foreign policy matter into the early stages of the 2016 presidential campaign.

Under Obama's proposal, the use of military force against Islamic State fighters would be authorized for three years, unbound by national borders. The fight could be extended to any "closely related successor entity" to the Islamic State extremists, but the measure does not authorize large-scale ground operations.

The very act of Obama asking Congress to authorize military action in the volatile Middle East marks an extraordinary moment in his presidency. Congress hasn't approved a presidential request for military action since 2002, when George W. Bush asked lawmakers to give him authority to set the Iraq War in motion.

Obama ended that long, expensive and unpopular war in 2011. But he turned to that same 2002 authority last year when he sought a legal justification for sending a small number of troops back to Iraq to protect American interests and work with local forces fighting the violent and fast-growing Islamic State

group.

By late summer, the U.S. was launching airstrikes against the militants in Iraq, as well as Syria.

As a presidential candidate, Obama said he would have voted against the authorization Bush sought in 2002, a position that helped him distinguish himself from Democratic rival Hillary Rodham Clinton, who voted for the measure while in the Senate. Clinton later said she regretted that vote.

Obama's proposed legislation would repeal the 2002 Bush authorization. He has said that while he does not believe he legally needs new authorities for the military campaign already underway, having Congress pass a new measure would send an important message about American unity and more accurately define the current mission.

Clinton, who is expected to seek the Democratic nomination in 2016, has not weighed in on the draft Obama sent Congress Wednesday, nor did most of the likely Republican candidates.

Among the potential GOP candidates who did comment was Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who said it was "good news" that Obama submitted the request to



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

President Barack Obama, flanked by Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State John Kerry, speaks about the Islamic State group on Wednesday at the White House.

Congress but faulted the president for putting limits on the tactics the military could use to fight the Islamic State group. Rick Santorum, the former Pennsylvania senator who is weighing a second White House run, said the president's proposal puts the nation in an "untenable position."

"The next president needs to be able to have all the tools at their disposal to not just conduct military operations, but win this war," he said in a statement.

Whether Obama's request will be in force when the next president takes office is a huge open question. There were few, if any, lawmakers in either party who said Wednesday that they outright supported the draft legislation.

While Republicans criticized the legislation for being too lim-

iting, some Democrats fear the wording is too vague and leaves too much room for the conflict to expand. The wide gap between the parties' criticisms could make it difficult for the White House to find a way to bridge the differences.

For the president, the outcome of the congressional debate could be as central to his legacy as the outcome of the fight on the ground in Iraq and Syria. That reality did not appear to be lost on Obama as he appealed for congressional support for a strategy he insists will succeed.

Turning to unusually blunt language for a president who tends to prefer context-filled soliloquies to soundbites, Obama declared, "ISIL is going to lose."

President's war plan in search of first supporter

By DAVID ESPO

AND MATTHEW DALY

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — One day after President Barack Obama sent Congress legislation backing the use of military force against Islamic State militants, he is still searching for his first outright supporter for the measure.

Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate, senior lawmakers and newcomers to Congress, lawmakers across the congressional spectrum all found parts of the proposal to oppose, or else said nothing to tip their hand.

Rep. Ed Royce, the Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said Thursday he was pleased that Obama had formally asked Congress to authorize use of military force against the Islamic State.

But Royce said Obama still "needs to make the case to the American people" and Congress, adding, "This won't be easy."

Over the past year, the Foreign Affairs Committee has pressed the Obama administration to intensify and accelerate its response to the threat posed by the Islamic State. Royce said at a hearing Thursday as the panel

reviewed Obama's request.

"Some pieces are being put together, but too slowly," Royce said, noting that about 85 percent of all airstrikes against the Islamic State group are from U.S. fighter jets.

"This air campaign isn't pumeling the enemy as it should," he said. "Congressional authority is of no value if the president isn't willing to act decisively."

In Obama's own party, Sen. Patrick Leahy, the senior Democrat in the Senate, referred to two wars in the past decade and a half and said any legislation must avoid "repeating the missteps of the past." He added it must stay clear of an "open-ended authorization that becomes legal justification for future actions against unknown enemies, in unknown places, at unknown times."

Republicans focused, in part, on Obama's call to rule out "enduring offensive combat operations," while leaving the door open to a more limited role.

Republican House Speaker John Boehner expressed doubt Wednesday that it would "give our military commanders the flexibility and authorities they need to succeed and protect our people."

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NATION

Within NBC, debate raged over whether to fire Brian Williams

The Washington Post

Senior NBC officials seriously considered firing anchor Brian Williams because he lied to his viewers about riding in a military helicopter hit by a rocket-propelled grenade during the Iraq War, according to a top network official.

The ultimate decision to suspend Williams for six months without pay was made after an internal investigation unearthed other "instances of exaggeration," according to a person familiar with intense behind-the-scenes discussions between network officials and Williams.

During those talks, Williams failed to secure a promise that he can return to the anchor chair he has occupied for the past decade, according to two network sources, who like others interviewed spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive topic.

The suspension represents a stunning fall for Williams, whose wry, likable style helped propel his "Nightly News" broadcast to the top of the network news ratings race and made him a popular guest on late-night talk shows.

Williams and his Washington-based attorney, Robert Barnett, declined to comment.

The Williams saga traces to an appearance he made at a New York Rangers hockey game with a soldier who provided security for the anchorman and his reporting team in Iraq in 2003. The public address announcer said the soldier was with Williams after his Chinook helicopter was "hit and crippled by enemy fire." Wil-

liams featured the appearance on his "Nightly News" broadcast on Jan. 30. However, a flight engineer on the helicopter that was hit posted a message on Facebook saying Williams was not on the same aircraft.

In full damage-control mode, Williams told Stars and Stripes, which first reported the flight engineer's remarks, that "I would not have chosen to make this mistake. I don't know what screwed up in my mind that caused me to conflate one aircraft from the other."

The suspension was the culmination of a long period of internal concerns. NBC officials had been warned for some time about Williams's exaggerations and self-aggrandizement, the network official said.

People were sending up red flags about a year ago, the official said.

What started out as eye-rolling escalated into genuine concern, but no one took action earlier because the statements that drew attention of staffers were not aired on the news broadcast.

That changed with the hockey-game report. Once Williams used the broadcast to claim his helicopter had been shot down, he crossed a line that led to Tuesday's decision.

"When it surfaced, it was prima facie. It was Stars and Stripes and [military] crew members. How much more authentic can you get?" the network official said.

Wis. Gov. Walker is latest '16 hopeful with UK hiccup

The Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — It ought to be the friendliest of soil for White House hopefuls looking to pad the resume with a little foreign policy experience: the United Kingdom.

So far this campaign season, however, the trips to England have been anything but merry for several prospective GOP candidates.

The latest to emerge scathed from a trip across the Atlantic Ocean is Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, who capped an appearance at the prestigious Chatham House think tank on Wednesday by avoiding a question about whether he believes in the theory of evolution.

"I'm going to punt on that one, as well," Walker said at the end of a Q&A during which he also de-

clined to answer questions about foreign policy. "That's a question a politician shouldn't be involved in one way or the other," he said. "So I'm going to leave that up to you."

Walker's appearance came a week after New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's trip to the U.K. was driven off course by a question about childhood vaccinations. Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal came in for criticism during his visit abroad when he said Muslims have established autonomous "no-go zone" neighborhoods in some Western European cities where they govern by a harsh version of Islamic law — a notion that drew ridicule from British Prime Minister David Cameron, among others.

Quipped Democratic National Committee spokesman Mo Eliehan: "Do any other GOP presidential candidates want to go to London? If so, let us know. The DNC is more than happy to pick up your travel costs."



AL DRAGO, THE (RALEIGH, N.C.) NEWS & OBSERVER/AP

Suzanne Askar rests her head on the shoulder of Safam Mahate, a student at North Carolina State University, on Wednesday as they stand next to Nida Allan during a vigil for three people who were killed at a condominium near the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Police probing role of hate in NC killing of 3 Muslims

The Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Police on Thursday were trying to determine whether religious hatred played any role in the killing of three Muslims in North Carolina, a crime they said was sparked by a neighbor's long-simmering anger over parking and noise inside their condominium complex.

Craig Stephen Hicks, 46, describes himself as a "gun-toting" atheist. Neighbors said he always seemed angry and frequently confronted his neighbors, sometimes while wearing a handgun on his hip. His ex-wife said he was obsessed with the shooting-rampage movie "Falling Down," and showed "no compassion at all" for other people.

The killings are fueling outrage among people who blame anti-Muslim rhetoric for hate crimes. A Muslim advocacy organization pressed authorities to investigate possible religious bias. Many posted social media updates with the hashtags #MuslimLivesMatter and #CallItTerrorism. About 2,000 people attended a candlelight vigil for the victims in the heart of UNC's campus Wednesday evening.

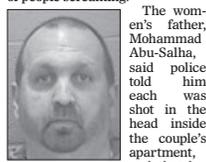
"We understand the concerns about the possibility that this was hate-motivated, and we will exhaust every lead to determine if that is the case," Chapel Hill police Chief Chris Blue said in an email.

Hicks' current wife, Karen Hicks, said he "champions the rights of others" and said the killings "had nothing to do with reli-

gion or the victims' faith." Later Wednesday, she issued another statement, saying she's divorcing him.

Hicks appeared in court Wednesday on charges of first-degree murder in the deaths Tuesday of Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23; his wife, Yusor Mohammad, 21; and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19. He pleaded indigence and was appointed a public defender.

Officers were summoned by a neighbor who called police reporting five to 10 shots and the sound of people screaming.



Hicks

The women's father, Mohammad Abu-Salha, said police told him each was shot in the head inside the couple's apartment.

and that he, for one, is convinced it was a hate crime. "The media here bombards the American citizen with Islamic, Islamic, Islamic terrorism and makes people here scared of us and hate us and want us out. So if somebody has any conflict with you, and they already hate you, you get a bullet in the head," said Abu-Salha, who is a psychiatrist.

Chapel Hill Police asked the FBI for help in their probe, and Ripley Rand, the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina, said his office was monitoring the investigation. But

Rand said the crime "appears at this point to have been an isolated incident."

Barakat and Mohammad were newlyweds who helped the homeless and raised funds to help Syrian refugees in Turkey last summer. They met while running the Muslim Student Association at North Carolina State before he began pursuing an advanced degree in dentistry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Mohammad planned to join her husband in dentistry school in the fall.

Abu-Salha was visiting them Tuesday from Raleigh, where she was majoring in design at North Carolina State.

Imad Ahmad, who lived in the condo where his friends were killed until Barakat and Mohammad were married in December, said Hicks complained about once per month that the two men were parking in a visitor's space as well as their assigned spot.

"He would come over to the door. Knock on the door and then have a gun on his hip, saying, 'You guys need to not park here,'" said Ahmad, a graduate student in chemistry at UNC-Chapel Hill. "He did it again after they got married."

Both Hicks and his neighbors complained to the property managers, who apparently didn't intervene. "They told us to call the police if the guy came and harassed us again," Ahmad said.

A probable cause hearing is scheduled for March 4. Police said Hicks was cooperating.

NATION

Widow of slain sniper testifies at Routh trial

BY JAMIE STENGLE
The Associated Press

STEPHENVILLE, Texas — The widow of the Navy SEAL depicted in the Oscar-nominated film "American Sniper" clutched military dog tags and told jurors about her final moments with her husband, just hours before he and a friend were slain at a Texas gun range.

Taya Kyle was the first prosecution witness called Wednesday in the murder trial of the ex-Marine accused of fatally shooting Kyle and his friend, Chad Littlefield, two years ago. The trial in the small town of Stephenville, Texas, about 30 miles from the rural luxury resort where the men were killed, has attracted national attention with the recent release of the blockbuster movie based on the memoir of the sniper who served four tours in Iraq.

Defense attorneys are seeking an insanity defense for Eddie Ray Routh, 27, who faces life in prison without parole if convicted of capital murder. Kyle had taken the troubled Marine to the shooting range after Routh's mother asked Kyle if he could help him.

Taya Kyle paused and then her voice broke when a prosecutor asked her to give jurors the name of the man she'd married. But her testimony was conversational and compelling, and she often looked straight at jurors as she talked about him, smiling when she said he had attended Tarleton State University in Stephenville before leaving to ride broncos in the rodeo and later joining the Navy.

"I'm not nervous, just emotional," she told the prosecutor.

She told jurors that as her husband left to go to the shooting range on Feb. 2, 2013, "We just said we loved each other and gave each other a hug and kiss, like we always did."

The day started like any typical Saturday for the Kyles. As parents of an 8-year-old boy and a 6-year-old girl, their morning had been spent cheering at youth sporting



Former Marine Cpl. Eddie Ray Routh appears in court on the opening day of his capital murder trial.

events and chatting with friends. Taya Kyle had plans that afternoon to take their daughter to Build-a-Bear Workshop.

Taya Kyle said she'd called her husband midafternoon — around the time he arrived at Rough Creek Lodge and Resort — and noticed he was unusually terse. Instead of his usual, "Hello, babe," he gave a quick "hello." He said it would be fine to have dinner with friends. Then she asked if he was OK. He just said, "Yep."



PHOTOS BY TOM FOX, THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/AP

Taya Kyle, left, wife of slain Navy SEAL Chris Kyle, leaves the Erath County District Attorney's office following Wednesday's proceedings in Stephenville, Texas.

"It was short, like, 'I wish I could say more,'" she said.

During opening statements, a defense attorney revealed a text message exchange between Chris Kyle and Littlefield as they drove to the lodge with Routh, whom Kyle had picked up at his house.

Kyle texted Littlefield: "This dude is straight-up nuts."

"He's (sitting) right behind me, watch my six," Littlefield texted back, using a military reference for watching one's back.

As dinner time approached, Taya Kyle became concerned. Littlefield's wife called her, also worried. Taya Kyle's alarm grew when she texted her husband: "Are you OK? I'm getting worried." There was no reply.

The bodies of Littlefield and Kyle were found at the shooting range about 5 p.m. Both were shot multiple times.

Erath County District Attorney Alan Nash described Routh as "a troubled young man" who on the morning of the

killings numbed himself with marijuana and whiskey. He said a history of mental illness should not absolve Routh of being accountable for the deaths.

"The evidence will show that mental illnesses, even the ones that this defendant may or may not have, don't deprive people from being good citizens, to know right from wrong," Nash said.

Tim Moore, an attorney for Routh, said Kyle and Littlefield's text exchange shows how Routh was spiraling out of control. He told jurors that Routh was suffering from severe mental strain that day and thought he needed to kill the two or they would turn on him.

Routh was a small-arm technician who served in Iraq and was deployed to earthquake-ravaged Haiti before leaving the Marines in 2010. Authorities say that after the shootings, Routh drove to his sister's house in Kyle's truck, admitted to the killings and told his sister people were "sucking his soul."



COURTESY OF FELD ENTERTAINMENT/AP

Gemma Kirby, 25, a human cannonball, performs at Circus Xtreme.

Ms. Big Shot to celebrate special milestone

BY MARK KENNEDY
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Plenty of performers have had explosive entrances. Some rise like meteors, soaring to new heights. Others find their moment in the spotlight fleeting.

Few have done all of that at once and quite so literally as Gemma Kirby, 25, the human cannonball at Circus Xtreme. She hurtles out of a cannon at up to 66 mph and lands up to 104 feet away in an air bag.

"It's a very intense sensation," she said by phone recently. "Very few human beings get to feel that sensation, except for fighter jet pilots or an astronaut. It's really remarkable to feel it completely untethered to any type of vehicle."

Kirby will be celebrating a special milestone on Saturday. She's expected to notch her 500th total flight in Philadelphia — a heart-thumping moment on Valentine's Day.

"I can never do this act half-awake or not prepared or warmed up," she said. "Every single time is a risk. Every single time is a bit of a mystery."

Circus Xtreme is a new traveling show from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus that showcases extreme acts — ac-

robats rappelling from 15-foot towers, BMX riders, high-wire performers, contortionists and Bengal tigers, to name a few.

It's part of what Nicole Feld, executive vice president of Feld Entertainment, Ringling's parent company, hopes will "tap into that edge-of-your-seat, thrill-seeking, live entertainment experience."

Kirby, who during her act experiences a G-force of seven, about the same as an astronaut re-entering the atmosphere, is one of the circus' highlights, even though her actual flight lasts only about 2.4 seconds.

"Gemma lives and breathes the thrill of being a human cannonball," said Feld. "And there's something about her that feels like a fairy tale superhero come to life."

Kirby, nicknamed "The Jet," hopes to notch 1,000 flights by the time the two-year tour ends. After Philadelphia, the circus hits states including New York, New Jersey, Alabama, South Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Missouri and North Carolina.

Born in Minneapolis, Kirby fell in love with performing as a youngster and she danced onstage at age 7. She liked ballet, but began to find it restrictive and not creative enough.

At 13, she attended aerial classes at the youth-oriented Circus Juventas in St. Paul and was hooked. "I knew right away I wanted to be in the air," she said.

From age 17 to 22, Kirby was on the flying trapeze with several circuses.

Last year, while working toward her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Minnesota, she was contacted about possibly being shot out of a cannon for Circus Xtreme. She's a rare woman in a secretive, exclusive world.

"Everyone in the circus knows the cannon is the most daunting, the most thrilling, the most daring of all the acts," she said. "It's just something I never thought in my wildest dream that would be offered to me."

Though her time in the air is brief, Kirby loves to see young women's stunned faces as she zooms through the air, a missile in a sparkly silver outfit.

"I'm not saying that little girls should necessarily watch me and want to do exactly what I do, but I hope that some of them can see my performance and say, 'That's something I didn't realize girls could do,'" she said.

For now, that's the most important thing: Empower someone to believe in themselves.

NATION

Authorities crack down on theft of cardboard in Calif.



CHRIS CARLSON/AP

Jerry N. Villanueva, supervising investigator with the San Bernardino (Calif.) County District Attorney's office, searches a truck loaded with cardboard on Wednesday in Fontana, Calif.

By AMY TAXIN
The Associated Press

FONTANA, Calif. — Investigators wearing bulletproof vests sit in unmarked cars outside a Southern California recycling center, swapping license plate details over two-way radio before dawn.

A truck emerges and they follow, hoping to learn where drivers pick up what to many looks like trash but turns out to be treasure: cardboard.

"It's big, big money — for somebody," said Steve Rivera, a senior investigator with the San Bernardino County District Attorney's office, who has been conducting sunrise surveillance to track, educate and cite the culprits. "People don't recognize the fact that it's actually theft."

The crackdown in gritty, industrial suburbs east of Los Angeles aims to stop a practice that surges with cardboard prices and wallops trash company revenues — and could eventually push up trash collection rates for homeowners

and shopkeepers. New York City has battled cardboard theft for years. Local authorities elsewhere have cited those who swipe recyclables from waste hauler-provided bins, but the efforts haven't curtailed the theft of cardboard, which can net anywhere from \$100 to \$200 a ton.

When the economy booms, cardboard prices rise as manufacturers make more goods and need more packaging to sell them. Thieves are more brazen and steal much more when cardboard prices peak.

Waste haulers court on selling the recyclables they retrieve at the curb to offset the cost of collection, industry experts said.

"Our industry loses millions of dollars a year due to cardboard," said David Biderman, general counsel for the National Waste & Recycling Association. "One piece of cardboard by itself isn't valuable. But customers often generate substantial volumes of it."

The price of cardboard cur-

rently hovers around \$100 a ton — much higher than during the 2008 recession, but down from last year due to weaker demand from China, which is the largest export market for U.S. cardboard, Biderman said.

Under most state and local laws, people can collect cardboard left outside by a business or doled out by a shopkeeper for recycling. But they can't remove materials from recycling bins left out at the curb, which are considered property of the local waste hauling company, said Ronald Steiner, a professor at Chapman University law school in Orange County who teaches case law related to privacy rights and garbage.

In San Bernardino County, officials are citing offenders with misdemeanor petty theft. So far, two citations have been issued, Rivera said.

In Huntington Beach, about half to three-quarters of the cardboard placed in commercial bins is stolen before drivers can retrieve it, said Sue Gordon, vice president

of public affairs at Rainbow Environmental Services.

"They know our routes and they get there before we do, and they pop the lock and they pull it out," Gordon said.

Cardboard theft also makes it harder to determine whether the site is meeting mandated recycling goals, he said.

Neighbors often complain about residential scavenging, fearing those rummaging through their trash bins might find information that could make them susceptible to identity theft. Others are more sympathetic to homeless scavengers seeking bottles and cans to make a meager living.

Authorities say cardboard theft occurs on a much larger scale in commercial areas where big box retailers unload tons of the material along with their merchandise, but law enforcement rarely has time to see it.

Cardboard thieves drive pickup trucks fitted with rails to prevent the material from flying away, or trailers so they can pack more in. Some drivers double the material with water to make it heavier and fetch more money at recycling centers, said Rivera, who has conducted surveillance on more than a dozen trucks, some of them trekking miles to retrieve cardboard, since last year.

Boycott of 'Fifty Shades' urged

By CAROLYN THOMPSON
The Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — "Fifty Shades of Grey" hasn't even opened in theaters yet but already it is getting a big thumbs-down from religious and other groups who say it is degrading to women and endorses sexual violence.

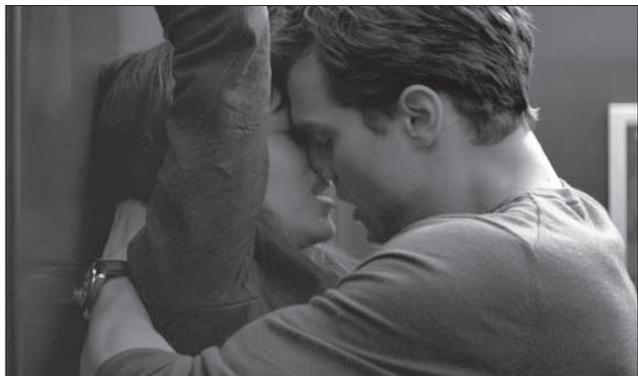
One social media campaign is encouraging would-be moviegoers to donate their ticket and popcorn money to women's shelters, while Roman Catholic bishops are using it as what-not-to-do guide to marriage.

Even as screenings sell out in advance, critics, including the American Family Association and National Center on Sexual Exploitation, are pushing for boycotts, saying they were compelled to speak out because of the attention the movie, with its scenes of bondage and sadomasochism, has attracted.

Amason, Wis., group planned to picket outside a Thursday premiere.

"This is not a healthy thing to mainstream," American Family Association President Tim Wildmon told The Associated Press by phone. "We'd like to see theater chains refuse to carry it."

That is unlikely to happen. The



COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES AND FOCUS FEATURES/AP

Dakota Johnson and Jamie Dornan appear in a scene from "Fifty Shades of Grey."

"This is not a healthy thing to mainstream. We'd like to see theater chains refuse to take the movie."

Tim Wildmon

American Family Association president

ticket-buying site Fandango has said pre-sales have propelled the movie, which stars Jamie Dornan and Dakota Johnson, into the company's all-time top five for R-rated selections, and fans of the book are giddily building the big-screen version into Valentine's weekend plans.

The movie opens in theaters Friday. It's based on a best-selling book by E.L. James about a college student and her torrid affair with a 27-year-old billionaire with a penchant for bondage, discipline, sadism and masochism.

"What's unique about it is the overall message is that they're trying to glorimize and romanticize violence against women," said Amanda Smith, spokeswoman for the National Center on Sexual Ex-

ploitation, which launched a website fiftyshadesabuse.com.

"It's such a lie," Smith said, "telling women that they should want to endure this kind of physical abuse and telling them that women want it, and also pushing the lie that if women are obedient and subservient enough, then they can fix a violent and controlling man."

James, who wrote the erotic trilogy that launched the film, has

heard the backlash and says the critics have it all wrong.

"Why have these books taken off if they are about abuse?" said James, who discussed the physical with the AP over the weekend. "Domestic violence, rape, are unacceptable. They are not entertaining in any way. Let me be absolutely clear: Everything that happens in this book is safe and consensual. ... What do I need to do to convince people?"

3 winning Powerball tickets sold

The Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Tickets in North Carolina, Puerto Rico and Texas have matched all six numbers to split a \$564.1 million Powerball jackpot, lottery officials said Thursday.

Sue Dooley, senior drawing manager and production coordinator for the Multi-State Lottery Association, said the Puerto Rico ticket was the first Powerball jackpot winner ever sold outside the continental United States.

The Texas Lottery posted on Twitter early Thursday that one of the winning tickets was sold at Applebee Food Mart in Princeton, Texas.

There was no immediate information on the cities or stores that produced the winners in North Carolina or Puerto Rico.

It had been nearly a year since a Powerball prize reached the giant number people have come to expect recently. That was last February, when someone won \$425.3 million.

Should the winners select the lump-sum option, each would get a one-third share of \$381,138,450 before taxes. The other option is an annuity, under which the lottery would make payments 30 times over 29 years.

The winning numbers were: 11, 13, 25, 39, 54 and the Powerball 19. The jackpot now goes back to \$40 million for the next drawing on Saturday.

INDEPENDENT NEWS FOR THE U.S. MILITARY COMMUNITY

Whenever They Fight and Wherever They Live

The first Stars and Stripes was printed during the Civil War, when a band of Union soldiers published a handful of editions.

During World War I, Stars and Stripes reappeared in Paris on February 8, 1918, to serve the doughboys of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), by order of General of the Armies John J. Pershing. An all-military staff produced it weekly until the war's end.

A second renaissance began on April 18, 1942, when a small group of servicemen began publishing a four-page weekly Stars and Stripes in London. They sold each copy for "tuppence" (about 5 cents) and in no time doubled their page count to eight pages, printing daily instead of weekly.

The first World War II edition of Stars and Stripes featured an interview with Gen. George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff. Marshall quoted Gen. Pershing, World War I Commander of the AEF, who described Stripes as a major factor in sustaining morale. Stars and Stripes later found a champion and protector in Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander and later president of the United States.

Eisenhower enforced a hands-off policy in regard to Stars and Stripes that continues to the present day.

Operations expanded, following GIs to the battlefield to bring them the news. During the war, Stars and Stripes published over 30

separate editions, running up to 24 pages per issue.

At one time, Stars and Stripes had some 25 printing locations in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific. The Pacific edition was launched a week after VE day (Victory in Europe, May 8, 1945).

The war ended—but Stars and Stripes kept going. Its reporters and photographers continued to join American troops in the field, throughout the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, during the 1990s Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and in Bosnia and Kosovo.

From the 2003 outset of Operation Enduring Freedom, Stars and Stripes was there to report first-hand. The war in Afghanistan continues to receive steady coverage. And during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Stripes reporters embedded with military units in Kuwait and Iraq, as well as on Navy ships in the region.

Stars and Stripes today is a multimedia news organization. The majority of Stars and Stripes unique reporting efforts is read now in digital form, either online at stripes.com or via mobile offerings for iPhone, Android and iPad, in over 200 countries around the world.

The print newspaper is still available for servicemembers, government civilians and their families in



Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific—and in contingency areas. Washington, D.C., hosts the Central office, where daily editions are transmitted to printers in Afghanistan, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Djibouti, as well as in Germany, Italy, UK, Japan, and South Korea. Stars and Stripes also publishes several weeklies (Stripes Guam, Japan, Korea and Okinawa), designed to serve the

needs of their respective military communities.

A U.S. edition comprised exclusively of Stars and Stripes reports from around the world now serves stateside forces and veterans. The U.S. edition is published in partnership with commercial newspaper publishers who serve communities with large military populations.

STARS AND STRIPES RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE

2014 VFW News Media Award – For outstanding contribution to a better understanding of our American way of life and its institutions and interests by honest and forthright reporting.

2013 Best American Newspaper Narrative Writing Contest – Notable Narrative Winner
Recipient: Martin Kuz: "Soldiers Recount Attack"

2013 National Headline Awards – Second Place: News Series (Forever After: A Warrior Wounded; A Family Challenged)

2013 min Best of Web: Redesign – Honorable Mention
Stripes UK website

2011 Military Photographer of the Year – Honorable Mention
Recipient: Joshua DeMotts

2011 Sigma Delta Chi Award – Breaking News Photography (Newspaper Circulation 100,001+ or Affiliated Website/National Magazine) Recipient: Laura Rauch: "For those I love I will sacrifice"

2011 John Reagan "Tex" McCrary Award for Excellence in Journalism – Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation

2010 Military Reporters and Editors Awards – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Jon Rabinoff

2010 National Headliner Awards – First Place: Public Service (Forcing Change) – Third Place: News Series (Coming Home: The Men of Triple Deuce)

2009 George Polk Awards in Journalism – George Polk Award for Military Reporting
Recipients: Charlie Reed, Leo Shane III and Kevin Barton

2009 min Editorial & Design Awards – Editorial Print / Special Supplement: HEROES 2009; Custom Publication Design: Stripes GAMER

2007 Military Reporters and Editors Awards – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Monte Morin

2006 Military Reporters and Editors Awards – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipients: Monte Morin, Joe Giordano; Honorable mention: Nancy Montgomery Photography; Fred Zimmerman

2005 Military Reporters and Editors Awards – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Steve Lower Photography; Terry Boyd

2004 American Legion Excellence in Journalism Award – Ground Truth Hero

2003 Scripps Howard Foundation National Journalism Award – First Amendment, Finalist

WORLD

Former executive in Korean Air ‘nut rage’ gets 1 year in prison

By **YOOKYUNG LEE**
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — The in-flight tantrum dubbed “nut rage” culminated Thursday in a one-year prison sentence for Korean Air heiress Cho Hyun-ah, a humiliating rebuke that only partially quelled public outrage at the excesses of South Korea’s business elite.

Cho, the daughter of Korean Air’s chairman, achieved worldwide notoriety after she ordered the chief flight attendant off a Dec. 5 flight, forcing it to return to the gate at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York.

Head of cabin service at the time of the incident, Cho was angered she had been offered macadamia nuts in a bag instead of on a dish. A heated and physical confrontation with members of the crew in first class ensued.

A Seoul court said Cho, 40, was guilty of forcing a flight to change its route, obstructing the flight’s captain in the performance of his duties, forcing a crewmember off a plane and assaulting a crewmember. It found her not guilty of interfering with a transport ministry investigation into the incident. Cho pleaded not guilty and prosecutors had called for three years in prison.

Cho, in custody since Dec. 30, wiped away tears with a tissue as a letter expressing her remorse was read to the court by head



AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP

Cho Hyun-ah, former vice president of Korean Air Lines, arrives at the Seoul Western District Prosecutor’s Office in Seoul, South Korea, in December.

judge Oh Seong-woo.

It included details about how Cho, one of the richest women in South Korea, who regularly flew first class, was adjusting to the basic conditions in prison and reflecting on her life. “I know my faults and I’m very sorry,” Cho said in her letter.

Cho’s behavior caused an uproar in South Korea. The incident was a lightning rod for anger in a country where the economy is dominated by family-run conglomerates known as chaebol that often act above the law.

The sentencing did not entirely douse that outrage. One year in prison is a “bit short,” said Jo Young-sang, 24.

EU leaders set to debate anti-terrorism measures

The Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Galvanized by the recent terrorist attacks in France, European Union leaders on Thursday were debating a range of ambitious steps to better protect their 28 nations, including exchanging airline passenger manifests, tightening controls at the border and combating extremism on the Internet.

As the heads of state and government gathered, EU President Donald Tusk, the official summit host, said he would seek the leaders’ agreement on a “work plan to step up the fight against terrorism.”

“Europe is facing an unprecedented, diverse and serious terrorist threat,” Gilles de Kerchove, the bloc’s counterterrorism coordinator, warned EU member governments last month.

But on the eve of the high-level Brussels meeting, an EU official, briefing journalists on condition he not be identified by name or function, said work was still underway to finalize the list of recommended actions to be submitted to leaders for their approval.

Finish Prime Minister Alexander Stubb on Thursday summarized what, for his and many other EU countries, is a key concern — the need for “a careful balance between civil liberties and security.”

Counterterrorism policy shot to the top of the EU agenda following the Jan. 7-9 terrorist attacks in Paris against a satirical weekly, a policewoman and a kosher grocery store that claimed a total of 17 victims. The three gunmen, who proclaimed allegiance to Al-Qaida in Yemen and the Islamic State group, also were shot dead by French police.

The attacks mobilized France and other EU countries to seek more effective ways to deal with armed Islamic militancy, especially the problem of radicalized European-born Muslims who go to fight in Syria or Iraq and then return home.

The attacks in the French capital “were a game changer” for EU counterterrorism policy, said Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer, senior trans-Atlantic fellow and director of the Paris office of the German Marshall Fund think tank.



PETR DAVID JOSEK/AP

Russia-backed separatists pay respects to a comrade during a funeral Thursday at a cemetery in the eastern Ukrainian village of Mospino, near the city of Donetsk.

Talks yield Ukraine peace deal as questions remain

By **YURAS KARMANOV**
AND **VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV**
The Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus — Guns will fall silent, heavy weapons will pull back from the front, and Ukraine will trade a broad autonomy for the east to get back control of its Russian border by the end of this year under a peace deal hammered out Thursday in all-night negotiations between Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany.

The deal was full of potential pitfalls that could derail its implementation, however. In announcing the plan, Russia and Ukraine differed over exactly what they had agreed to in marathon, 16-hour talks, including the status of a key town now under rebel siege.

Russian President Vladimir Putin told reporters that the agreement envisages a cease-fire beginning Sunday as well as a special status for Ukraine’s separatist regions and provisions to address border concerns and humanitarian issues.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said there was no agreement on any autonomy or federalization for eastern Ukraine, a longtime demand of Russia, which wants that to maintain leverage over Ukraine to prevent it from ever joining NATO.

The deal, however, requires the Ukrainian Parliament to give wide powers to the eastern regions as a condition for restoring Ukraine’s full control over its border with Russia — a provision certain to trigger heated political debate in Kiev.

Uncertainty remained even on the cease-fire, as Putin admitted that he and Poroshenko disagreed on the situation at a key eastern flashpoint, the government-held town of Debaltsevo.

“We now have a glimmer of hope,” said German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who brokered the talks in the Belarusian capital of Minsk together with French President Francois Hollande. “But the concrete steps of course have to be taken, and we will



KIRILL KUDRYAVTSEV/AP

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande embrace after Ukraine peace talks Thursday in Minsk, Belarus.

still face major obstacles.

But, on balance, I can say what we have achieved gives significantly more hope than if we had achieved nothing.”

More than 5,300 people have died since April in the fighting in eastern Ukraine between Russia-backed separatists and government troops. Battles continued to rage Thursday even as the four leaders were holding peace talks.

The new deal envisages a buffer zone created by pulling back heavy artillery and rocket systems between 31 and 87 miles away from the front line, depending on their caliber. The withdrawal should begin no later than the second day after the cease-fire becomes effective and it should be completed within two weeks.

Animal keeper dies in lion attack at Seoul zoo

SEOUL, South Korea — An animal keeper died Thursday after apparently being attacked by two lions at a zoo in South Korea’s capital, officials said.

A colleague found the keeper, Kim Geun-bae, 52, unconscious and bleeding heavily from his

neck and legs in the animals’ enclosure as two lions, a male and a female, wandered near him, according to Seoul Children’s Grand Park official Jisun Lee. Kim was pronounced dead at a hospital about two hours later, she said.

There were no witnesses or visitors at the time of the attack because the zoo has been closed since last week to prevent the spread of avian flu, Lee said.

The park said Kim had 20 years of experience as an animal keeper and had been working with dangerous animals such as lions, tigers and leopards for the past three years.

Lee said the zoo is waiting for police to examine security camera video and other evidence before deciding what to do with the lions.

From The Associated Press

FAITH



“At a time when synagogues are losing market share and ‘Next Gen’ Jews are deeply ambivalent about how much they are prepared to identify as Jews, I can testify that this kind of service mission is a game changer.”

— Rabbi Sid Schwarz, founding rabbi of synagogue Adat Shalom

Mission trips aren't just for Christians anymore as Jews aim to heal the world

By LAUREN MARKO
Religion News Service

Christian missionary work spans the globe. But Jewish mission trips?

Your average American synagogue is not planning a congregational visit to a poor corner of the world. But a few are starting to, and some rabbis are lobbying for more to follow.

“At a time when synagogues are losing market share and ‘Next Gen’ Jews are deeply ambivalent about how much they are prepared to identify as Jews, I can testify that this kind of service mission is a game changer,” said Rabbi Sid Schwarz, founding rabbi of Adat Shalom, a Reconstructionist synagogue in suburban Bethesda, Md.

Unlike many Christian groups, Jews don’t believe in proselytizing: It’s just not in their religious DNA. But alumni attest that synagogue-sponsored mission trips provide a hands-on way for Jews to fulfill the obligation of *tikkun olam*, Hebrew for heal the world, as they strengthen Jewish identities.

Schwarz and 20 congregants returned from a 10-day trip to Haiti in December — the congregation’s third trip in four years to the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. There, they partnered with a pastor and used their bodies and their bank accounts to build houses and provide school tuition for Haitian families. Many had been living under tarpis since the devastating 2010 earthquake.

Schwarz can point to less than a handful of synagogues that have done similar mission work. One is Temple Beth El in Hol-

lywood, Fla., which has made more than 10 mission trips to Haiti since 2007 and left again for the island in January.

“The Christians have a tradition of missionary work, and part of it is to Christianize the world. We Jews have no interest in Judaizing the world,” said Beth El’s Rabbi Allan Tuffs. Nevertheless, “we should be out there.”

That’s not to say there aren’t a slew of Jewish organizations — the American Jewish World Service and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee among them — that help non-Jews abroad. Synagogues often organize mission trips to help struggling non-Jewish communities here at home, as well as poor Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, Israel, Cuba and elsewhere.

But what Tuffs is leading remains rare: a synagogue trip outside the country to help non-Jews in a place where people may never have met a Jewish person.

Working in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, Fla., Temple Beth El has sustained and expanded an orphanage outside Port-au-Prince since 2007, watching its children grow up over the years. The upcoming mission delegation includes a pediatrician from Beth El, who will give the children checkups, and his two teenage daughters, who donated money they received for their bat mitzvah ceremonies to the orphanage.

Young Jews on these trips benefit especially, said Tuffs. “It cements the idea that to be a Jew means making a difference in this world.”

So why are there so few synagogues going on such journeys?

“This is not easy stuff,” said Rabbi Joel Soffin, who regularly traveled with his

congregants to Ethiopia, Cambodia and other desperate corners of the world during his 27 years at the helm of Temple Shalom in Succasunna, N.J.

You have to organize your trips, raise funds and find partners abroad. Rabbis also have to marry couples, preside at funerals and lead services, Soffin said, describing an exhausting life of 100-hour workweeks and little vacation time.

And synagogues don’t as easily plug into networks of Christian missionary organizations that help churches get their members overseas.

Aaron Dorfman, vice president for national programs at the American Jewish World Service, a nonprofit that aims to alleviate poverty worldwide through grants and advocacy, echoed Soffin on the obstacles to serving abroad in meaningful ways.

“It’s very expensive and it’s very complicated to do well,” he said.

Until recently, the AJWS ran a sort of “Jewish Peace Corps” program, sending thousands of Jewish volunteers — both individuals and groups — to some of the neediest places across the globe for short and extended stays. The organization realized its resources could do more good through other channels, Dorfman said.

At Adat Shalom, congregants have challenged themselves with a question that many church missionaries also ask about their service: Is the cost of sending middle-class Americans to needy regions better spent directly on the people they want to help?



Photos courtesy Reconstructionist Congregation, Bethesda, Md.

Top: Adat Shalom volunteers with Haitian partners pour the foundation for the first house at Lambi Village 2, designed to house 60 Haitian families through Grace International Ministries. **Above:** Adat Shalom volunteers play with Haitian children who live at Lambi Village. Adat Shalom helped build the first homes alongside the eventual residents of the homes on a service mission in 2011.

Yes, if your commitment is short-term, Schwarz said. But relationships the synagogue has built in Haiti have inspired congregants to commit for the long term, monetarily and otherwise, he said.

Jonny Jeune, a native Haitian and project manager for the Christian aid group Grace International, worked with Adat Shalom on the island and has heard the “why-don’t-they-just-write-a-check question” too. He’s glad the congregants came to Haiti.

“If I’m a Haitian schoolchild and I see this group of people who don’t know who I am, never met me, and they are willing to come leave their families and help me build my school? That tells me a lot,” he said. “There are people in the outside that actually care. You can’t put a price tag on that.”

With synagogues, there is an additional question: Judaism teaches that you have to help those closest to you first, said Soffin. So isn’t the first responsibility to Jews in need?

“But those most in need come in a close second,” he said.

FACES



Dakota Johnson, left, and Jamie Dornan star in the movie "Fifty Shades of Grey." UNIVERSAL PICTURES AND FOCUS FEATURES/AP

'Fifty Shades' author fought hard for fans

By JOCELYN NOVECK/The Associated Press

The Associated Press: What was the hardest thing about adapting your book?

James: My biggest concern was making sure that the sex was really classy and tasteful. It's very coyly written in the books. Women don't like salacious slang. So that was really important to me, to keep it tasteful.

Making the film, were you thinking about your readers, or about a new audience that perhaps hasn't read the book?

I was thinking about the readers. There are enough of them! (Laughter) I mean hopefully we'll bring other people to it as well, of course; there are people who don't read at all. But my readers are the people I've always had in my mind. I understand the disappointment when key scenes are forgotten, or missing, so I was an advocate for them.

Did you have to fight hard for anything?

Oh, I had to fight for a lot of things really hard. And I did. (laughs).

Like what?

Well, the Red Room (of Pain), for example, wasn't red at first. But it's things like this, within any creative process, when you're the auteur of a whole universe, and then, you're spreading it out ... it's not always going to be aligned with how you saw it. But beneath it all, I was just hoping that we'd have something that the fans would be happy with.

Who's your typical fan?

Female. That's it. All ages — from too young, and into their 90s.

Does that mean that men aren't really the right audience?

Well, I've had some lovely emails from men. Like one saying, "Thank you for reminding me why it's like to fall in love."

When shooting started, you said you were terrified.

Yes! Coming from fandom, I know what it's like when you're let down by

certain things, and I just didn't want to do that. What I can say is, we got there in the end.

Was it a difficult process for the actors?

I think it was very difficult. But all the really intimate stuff happened at the end of the shoot, which meant that Jamie and Dakota got to know each other, and were far more comfortable with each other. That helped.

This isn't the first movie to have intimate sex scenes.

Absolutely! But you guys, the media, are all about the sex. The fact is, it's a love story, and women respond to the love story. The fact that there's a little bit of kinky sex in there is sort of like an added bonus. It's just become sensationalized, because it's like ... Oh my God, women like sex. Yes we do, thank you very much!

Have the books had similar success all over the world?

Except in Japan. It's doing OK in Japan, but women don't talk to each other there. They're so private about what goes on in the bedroom. That was interesting.

Are reports true that there was an argument over the final word in the movie?

Um, there was a discussion. But I am very happy with the final scene.

Your main character, Anastasia Steele, certainly takes a journey. What was YOUR personal journey been?

I think I just realized how strong I am, and how resilient. Actually, I wrote the books really just to entertain myself. The fact that they've entertained a whole lot of other people is just thrilling. My only ambition when I published this (as a small e-book) was to see it one day in a bookstore. So everything else has been like, "Holy crap!" (Editor's note: Actually, though "Holy crap" is a favorite expression of Anastasia Steele, James used a somewhat stronger word.)

Jackman prepared heavier Australian accent for new film

It's not that often that Hugh Jackman gets a role speaking in his native Australian English, so while working on the upcoming sci-fi thriller "Chappie," he had to get reacquainted with the dialect.

The 46-year-old Tony Award winner told The Associated Press on Tuesday that using his own accent "was great but weird."

"I had to practice it because it was way stronger than my natural accent," Jackman said.

Jackman also admits brushing up on some of the Australian slang that writer-director Neill Blomkamp wrote for the part. "He used a lot of phrases, and I had to end up Googling the slang," Jackman said. "Neill was coming up with some really cool sayings ... I was trying to think of more, so I ended up Googling some of them."

"Chappie" tells the story of a fallen police robot reprogrammed to think and feel for itself.

Jackman said he had fun playing the film's antagonist, an engineer strongly opposed to artificial intelligence.

"We got to create this character that did stretch it a bit. We had a lot of fun with him from the look, his mannerism, the way he talked. At the same time, it was very much based in a reality that was needed for the movie in terms of the voice of caution," Jackman said.



EVAN AGOSTINI, INVISION/AP

Hugh Jackman attends a photo call in New York for his new movie, "Chappie."

West calls Grammys a joke

Kanye West says he has nothing but respect for Beck. The Grammys? Not so much. West paid a visit on Ryan Seacrest and his "On Air" radio show Wednesday to expound on his post-Grammy diss of the surprise Album of the Year winner.

The rapper walked up the steps at the Staples Center in Los Angeles as Beck was accepting his award Sunday night but retreated. During an aftershow on E!, West ranted that Beck should "respect artistry" and turn over his statue to fellow nominee Beyonce.

West told Seacrest of his stair-climbing antics: "It was kind of a joke, like the Grammys themselves." And the post-show tirade? "This is our Super Bowl, you know, and someone's gotta be mad that Marshawn didn't get the ball," he said. Marshawn being Beyonce in this scenario, but Seattle Seahawks running back Marshawn Lynch in actual life.

As for "respecting artistry," West explained he was upset that Beck didn't mention other nominees as worthy in the category during his speech. West went on to describe the Grammys thusly: "They're like a broke clock. They're right only, like, twice a day."

Other news

■ "60 Minutes" correspondent Bob Simon, who covered riots, Academy Award-nominated movies and wars and was held captive for more than a month in Iraq two decades ago, died in a car crash in New York City on Wednesday. He was 73.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

City hopes humor slows down drivers

CA HAYWARD — A Northern California city is using humor to get drivers to slow down and pedestrians to pay attention.

The city of Hayward has placed traffic signs along a downhill boulevard that read "35: It's a speed limit, not a suggestion" and "Heads up! Cross the street, then update Facebook." Another sign warns: "Downhill: Use eyes, brakes, brain."

The Oakland Tribune reported city workers installed the offset traffic signs in January along Hayward Boulevard, which is known for cars zipping down from the hills.

City spokesman Frank Holland said authorities hope using humor will get people to do a double-take and be careful on the hill.

Burglary suspect's getaway ends in air duct

WA SEATTLE — A burglary suspect who cut through an apartment building's drywall in an attempt to escape became trapped in an air duct and had to be rescued by firefighters.

KIRO reported a resident of the apartment building caught the man Tuesday night stealing quarters from a soda machine in the laundry room.

The burglar blocked the door and tried to get away by cutting through drywall. When he ran into a basement masonry wall he tried to crawl out the vent but became stuck and had to call for help.

Firefighters cut him free. When they asked if he needed medical attention, he said, "heroin."

Middle schoolers given 'Fifty Shades' puzzles

PA MONESSEN — Parents in a Pennsylvania school district are turning 50 shades of red over word search puzzles given to their middle school students based on an erotic novel and movie.

The students were given puzzles based on "Fifty Shades of Grey." The puzzles contained terms including "spanking," "submissive," "leather cuffs" and "bondage."

Officials in the Monessen School District said they can't say who passed out the puzzles or how many students received one because they just learned about it Monday.

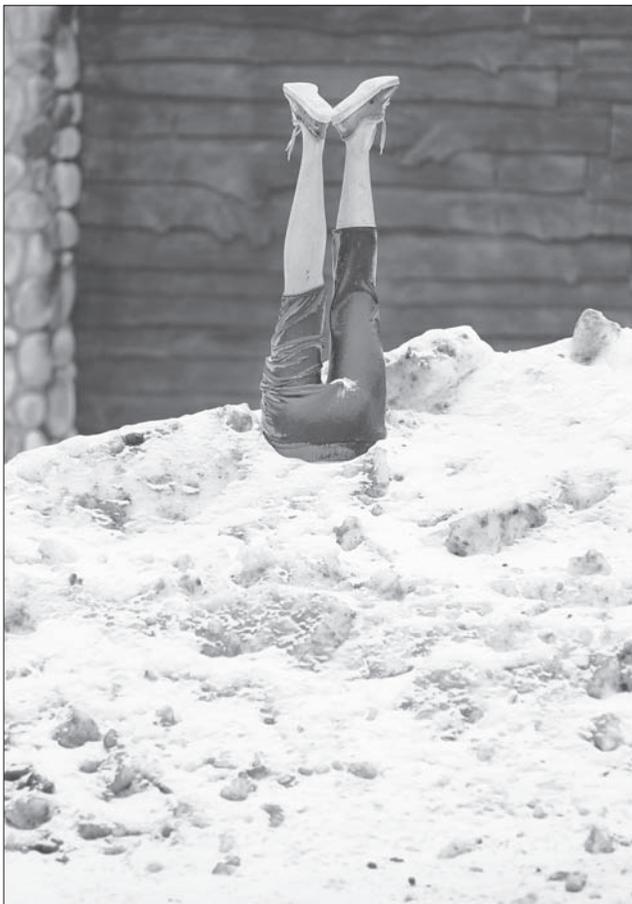
Parents complained about it at Tuesday night's school board meeting.

Superintendent Leanne Spazak said the incident was under investigation.

Parent James Carter said he tried to question the school's principal and dean of students about the puzzle his son received, but they refused when he insisted on recording their conversation.

Suspicious 'banana' in pine tree is geocache

NE LINCOLN — Emergency personnel and a bomb disposal expert have deter-



BUTCH COMEDYS, THE (SCRANTON, PA.) TIMES & TRIBUNE/AP

When weather knocks you off your feet

The lower half of a mannequin juts out from pile of snow outside a Covington Township, Pa., home Tuesday.

mined that a suspicious "banana" hanging in a pine tree in Nebraska is simply a harmless geocache.

The Lincoln Journal Star reported that a utility worker spotted the device wrapped in yellow tape and attached to a wire on Tuesday in northeast Lincoln.

The worker called 911. Police, firefighters and a bomb technician determined the "banana" wasn't a bomb, but a prize hunted by people on geocaching quests.

Geocachers across the world use GPS devices to track and find the hidden objects.

Lincoln fire investigator Chuck Schweitzer said city bomb technicians have been out on similar calls through the years as geocaching has grown in popularity.

2 sleeping in dumpster end up in garbage truck

FL TAMPA — Authorities in Florida say a man and woman who were intoxicated had to be rescued after falling asleep in a dumpster that was later emptied into a garbage truck.

Hillsborough County Sheriff's officials say the couple had been sleeping in a dumpster outside a convenience store near Tampa early Wednesday. When the dumpster was emptied into the back of the garbage truck, they started screaming and banging on the sides of the truck.

Rescue crews removed Donald L. Jordan, 37, and Lisa Sirbella, 49, from the truck. They were taken to Tampa General Hospital after complaining of back pain.

Deputies originally believed they were homeless, but learned they were highly intoxicated after hanging out at a nearby casino.

Charges dropped in tea arrest at liquor store

NC FAYETTEVILLE — Charges are being dropped against a man arrested after refusing to hand over the cannediced tea he was sipping outside a North Carolina liquor store.

The Fayetteville Observer reported a Cumberland County judge agreed there was no reasonable suspicion for a state Alcoholic Beverage Control officer to confront the man.

An online video showing the plainclothes officer arresting

THE CENSUS

\$30K

The price of the Valentine's Day special at a bar and grill in Austin, Texas, which includes a premium margarita and a pair of dangling diamond earrings. Iron Cactus portrayed the beverage and hand-crafted jewelry, shown below in a screen grab from its website, as a creative and unforgettable way to celebrate. The nearly 4-carat earrings are part of what the eatery touts as a Vision for Valentine's Day.



Christopher Beatty, 28, of New York, was viewed hundreds of thousands of times. The 2013 video shows the former 82nd Airborne Division staff sergeant wrestled to the ground after asking the officer for identification.

Beatty was charged with trespassing and resisting an officer.

ABC Officer Rick Libero told the judge he suspected the can contained alcohol, which is illegal to consume in public areas.

Man let go on ticket for eating while driving

GA MARIETTA — A man who says he got a traffic ticket for eating a cheeseburger while driving in metro Atlanta won't be prosecuted after all.

Cobb County Solicitor General Barry Morgan said in a written statement Friday that his office submitted a dismissal of the case against Madison Turner, and a judge signed it.

Morgan said the state didn't believe it had the evidence to prove the case beyond a reasonable doubt, giving the facts and circumstances his office investigated.

Turner, who lives in Alabama, said he was enjoying a cheeseburger as he drove down a highway outside Atlanta when he was ticketed for violating Georgia's distracted driving law.

He said the officer told him, "You can't just go down the road eating a hamburger."

Senators try to give McKinley Native name

AK ANCHORAGE — U.S. Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan are resurrecting an effort to give Mount McKinley its historical Alaska Native name.

The Alaska Republicans announced a Senate bill Wednesday to formally call North America's highest peak by its Athabascan name, Denali, KTUU reported.

The 20,320-foot mountain now honors the 25th U.S. president, William McKinley, of Ohio, who served one full term as president before his assassination in 1901.

From wire reports



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11			
12			13			14							
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56								57					58

ACROSS

- 1 Prop for Gehrig
- 4 Bro or sis
- 7 Nibbles
- 12 Commotion
- 13 Opposite of vert.
- 14 With no omissions
- 15 Torched
- 16 With insistence
- 18 Vast expanse
- 19 Karaoke props
- 20 "Lang Syne"
- 22 Fresh
- 23 Young horse
- 25 Eisenhower
- 29 Famish
- 31 Give a speech
- 34 War correspondent, today
- 35 Lynx
- 37 Tiny
- 38 Craving
- 39 "Eeeewwww!"
- 41 Fix a sock
- 45 First pig's building material
- 47 Chart format
- 48 Come about
- 52 Spring mo.
- 53 "Anywhere else!" acronym
- 54 Dry red wine, familiarly
- 55 Gun the engine
- 56 Mornay, e.g.

DOWN

- 24 Scepter topper
- 25 "Hail, Caesar!"
- 26 Started
- 28 Mauna —
- 30 Shirt shape
- 31 Kimono closer
- 32 Deteriorate
- 33 Easy as —
- 36 Frill for Fonteyn
- 37 "Suppose ..."
- 40 Barely hit
- 42 Separated
- 43 More mature
- 44 Brush
- 45 Eyelid woe
- 46 Departed
- 48 Navy rank (Abbr.)
- 49 By way of
- 50 Ostrich's cousin
- 51 Brian Williams' employer

Answer to Previous Puzzle

W	A	D	S	T	U	B	P	A	P	A	
E	G	O	N	O	N	E	U	S	E	R	
D	O	G	W	O	O	D	S	R	A	R	E
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B	R	E	Z	E	T	U	T				
E	E	R	E	R	R	B	A	D	G	E	
T	E	E	M	E	A	R	N	O	L	A	
A	D	L	I	B	M	U	G	G	E	T	
			S	A	C	B	L	A	M	E	
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L	L	U	L	D	O	G	W	A	T	C	
E	L	U	A	O	N	E	I	R	A		
D	A	M	E	S	P	U	R	C	O	Y	

2-13

CRYPTOQUIP

V NOOQCG UDGT N DVOYBMVH
 HNLNEMF JGTGMNE UNTYGP
 PGOOGMY, DG'P SMBANA EF
 DNLG HQOYGM HMGNC SVG.
 Yesterday's Cryptquip: THE OLYMPICS FEATURES ATHLETES COMPETING FROM A VARIETY OF NATIONS, INCLUDING DIVERSE DIVERS.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: D equals H

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OPINION

Huckabee: Huckabee or serious candidate?

By ANN McFEATHERS
 Tribune News Service

Mike. Mike. Mike. Mike. What DAY is it?
 This refers not to GEICO's camel commercial about hump day but to Mike Huckabee, the guitar-playing former Baptist preacher who has taken to criticizing other religious beliefs all the time, not just on Sunday.

We are assessing former Arkansas Gov. Huckabee in our quest for a qualified GOP presidential nominee. Huckabee has given up his lucrative Fox show, which enabled him to build a sumptuous Florida waterfront estate in addition to his Arkansas home. He has tweeted 4,196 times! He has written a book called "God, Guns, Grits and Gravy."

On "Fox & Friends" the other day he lit into President Barack Obama:

"Everything he does is against what Christians stand for and against the Jews in Israel. The one group of people that can know they have his undying, unflinching support would be the Muslim community. It doesn't matter whether it's the radical Muslim community or the more moderate Muslim community."

It's one thing to criticize the president's artless remarks about the Crusades and Christian violence centuries ago. Obama is correct that great evil was perpetrated in the name of Christianity hundreds of years

ago when civilization barely existed. Yet for Obama to compare that and Christian support of slavery to the horrors that the Islamic State group is perpetrating today was stupid and inhumane politics.

But it's quite another thing for a man like Huckabee who says he wants to be president and a statesman on the world stage to charge the president of the United States with acting willfully against Christians and Jews in favor of radical Islamists. That is patently false and irresponsible.

We got to know and like Huckabee for his sense of humor, his battle to lose weight, his warmth and ease in connecting with people and what seemed to be his straightforward honesty. Were we misled?

Huckabee's spewing of nonsense about Obama indicates he apparently is not serious about running to be president but may be merely attempting to further his career. That is his career portraying an artful dodger of reality and a right-wing huckster who will get an even bigger salary out of Fox or another network down the road.

Obama is a church-going Christian who speaks as a believer. He has the support of half of all Americans. The country will not elect a Huckabee who spreads hyperbolic falsehoods and does not live up to the Christian principles he says he espouses.

Obama is legitimately vulnerable to criticism on many issues but is certainly no supporter of radicalism or terrorism.

Huckabee also has suggested the legal fight for gay rights parallels Nazi lies told to gain power. We are stupefied.

On the same day Huckabee's self-censor bled the life out of Obama's contention that climate change is future earth's most dangerous threat. "I assure you that a beheading is much worse than a sunburn, and this president couldn't watch a western from the '50s and know the difference between the good guys and the bad guys," Huckabee said. Cute. People seemed unimpressed in Boston, farmers fighting drought and flooded out coastal homeowners might not find Huckabee funny.

Our nation is polarized beyond workability. We don't debate; we yell and vilify. If someone is not with us, they're not only against us but rotten to the core. Hence the disappointment with Huckabee, who had a chance to be a voice of reason and a paragon of civility. He might have wooed us with music and gentle words but blew it.

Imagine the Republican debates! As in 2012, candidates will shred each other into unrecognizable pieces. We can only imagine the terrible things Huckabee will conjure up about Job Bush or Scott Walker or any of the others who will be on the stage. If he gets that far.

Sadly, our search for a GOP standard bearer continues.

Ann McFeathers is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service.

Special ops vets get tailored transition help

By ROB CLAPPER

"To every CEO in America, let me re-peat: If you want somebody who's going to get the job done, hire a veteran."

—President Barack Obama, Jan. 20

The president's call to action in his recent State of the Union address is well-founded. Veterans from all services, at all levels, are hard-working, well-trained, battle-tested (in real battles) and operate intuitively in command-and-control environments.

Their service has been rewarded with employment as the country has made great strides, especially in the last three years, in putting veterans to work in the private sector. According to a White House Council of Economic Advisors report released in November, unemployment rates for post-9/11 era vets hovers around 8 percent.

Two recent studies underscore the difficulty of swapping a veteran for a pinstripes suit. But there are no studies and no data for a group of Americans who spent more time at the tip of the spear than any one.

The Rand Corp. and Prudential Financial, in separate 2014 studies of veterans, highlighted the dual challenges that individual employers face, according to Rand concluding, "[I]t can be difficult for companies to locate veterans and for veterans to identify companies with positions suitable to their skills."

How difficult? Of surveyed vets, Prudential found that finding a job was the most difficult part of transitioning to civilian life. In the Prudential study, one in partnership with the nonprofit group Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, 60 percent of survey respondents lamented the difficulty in translating their skills to a civilian employer, a consistent and troubling theme throughout the study.

We are truly thankful for the many men and women who served one or two deployments and left the service at 24 or 25 years old. Their valor is without question. But special operations forces, or SOF, vets sometimes did 10 or 12 deployments in unimagined stressful circumstances and need assistance that no government or

private-sector program offers.

That's why my organization and others are rushing to fill the vacuum in programs to help them navigate the shoals of civilian life.

A lot of veterans get out of the service with marketable skills that translate well to what the business world wants. Vets speak foreign languages, know how to build roads and bridges, are computer-savvy, can perform emergency surgery. But one resume that crossed my desk recently highlights in microcosm what Prudential and Rand studied, but what has not been studied at the Special Forces level.

A 33-year-old former Green Beret with three children and a wife and five tours of duty to his credit is a highly decorated expert in demolition and munitions disposal. And his resume said so. What this Green Beret's resume didn't say — nor do many other SOF resumes say — is that he is an excellent team leader, decision maker and problem solver; exactly the kind of guy you want by your side and in a boardroom.

But Green Berets, SEALs and Rangers are an elite group, and a minority of active-duty and retired personnel. More than 500,000 served in these elite units from all branches (including reserve units), with a Pentagon directive to grow the force to 69,700 to sustain counterterrorism operations around the world. They are older — average age 32 — married, have two children, have advanced education, speak foreign languages and have had significantly more training than their comrades in arms.

Many of these SOF veterans serve four and five tours, but it is not uncommon for them to serve twice that many, in the most hostile places in the world, and come home to no Department of Veterans Affairs program designed to serve elite units' specific needs. That is why Your Grateful Nation was formed last year. The charity, supported by individual donations, aims to provide a full range of transition services to SOF veterans and their families, that run the gamut from molding a raw recruit to job placement.

What special operations veterans need, and are getting in increasing numbers, is

a life reboot in the form of an intense four-part employment transition service designed to successfully turn combat leaders into corporate leaders.

1) **Assessment.** SOF vets sit down with civilian executives to get a thorough tutorial of what life in corporate America is really like, and determine what path to put them on based on their battlefield experiences, education and goals. It is then that the vet learns how marketable he or she is. This is where we helped reposition the munitions expert I mentioned. His resume now reflects his leadership and team-building skills that would be more relevant for a potential employer.

2) **Mentorship.** Each protégé meets regularly with an assigned mentor who teaches how to meld into corporate life, from how to effectively communicate in a boardroom meeting to how their distinct skills learned under fire and on the battlefield can translate into an office or factory setting.

3) **Internships.** Our Special Forces heroes get three distinct types of experiences to get some real-world experience under their belts before going to work full time: professional growth and development, on-the-job dual-track support and program design, and relationship-building opportunities. It's also a try-before-you-buy opportunity for employers, who get to observe a potential manager and leader before making any commitments or investments.

4) **Career Placement.** This is where hope meets reality. SOF veterans compete with thousands of civilians for jobs, but they have advantages and experiences no civilian can match. We help vets at job fairs, introduce them to partner companies and coach them on interview techniques. As Chris Kyle said in his book, "American Sniper," "I've seen a lot of people who have fought for their country should be homeless or jobless."

One hero is not jobless. A very large American manufacturer heeded the president's word to employ a vet and hired that Green Beret, who has been on the job since early January.

Rob Clapper is executive director of Your Grateful Nation.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by the Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Student loan plan a shell game The Wall Street Journal

Liberals make it seem as if federal student loans don't cost taxpayers a penny. Some, notably Elizabeth Warren, are aghast that the government is profiting handsomely from lending to students. No need to worry, Senator Burrhead in the White House budget is a \$21.8 billion writedown on the government's student loan portfolio that no one seems to want to mention — perhaps because taxpayers can expect more red ink to come.

The budget news that dare not speak its name is that more borrowers will mean student debts are enrolling in President Barack Obama's Pay As You Earn loan forgiveness plan, which caps graduates' payments at 10 percent of their adjusted gross income minus 150 percent of the poverty line. After 20 years, borrowers can shed their remaining debt. Those who go to work in "public service" can be debt-free after 10 years.

The administration's definition of public service is, well, broad. The liberal advocacy groups 350.org and Center for American Progress, which has been lobbying hard for more student loan forgiveness, would qualify even if they're 501(c)(3) nonprofits under the tax code. Can journalists qualify, too?

Under a 2010 law, only new borrowers as of 2014 qualified for these generous loan forgiveness programs; Congress wanted to keep a short-term lid on the costs. Then in 2010, the law was amended to allow retroactively to 2007, which happened to cover more of the young voters he needed to win re-election. Then last year he eliminated the statute of limitation in toto to qualify an additional 5 million borrowers.

Meantime, the Education Department has been aggressively steering more borrowers into these plans with the goal of keeping down politically embarrassing default rates. High-priced law and graduate schools have also been advertising the benefits. ...

According to the New America Foundation, 24 percent of the Direct Loan Program balances that have come due are enrolled in loan forgiveness plans, up from 14 percent about a year ago. Hence the White House's new \$21.8 billion writedown, which isn't included in the White House budget summary tables that project only the projected "net" effect of deficits. That's because the writedown is now built into the budget baseline.

Instead and incredibly, the White House projects \$14.6 billion in savings over a decade from its de minimis "reforms" to Pay As You Earn. ... The putative savings are so big only because the original writedown closed costs of extending eligibility were so big.

In a giant fiscal shell game, Obama wants to pump these fictitious savings into expanding other higher-ed subsidies such as Pell grants. Then in next year's budget, he can propose to "re-form" to pocket the savings. That he can use to offset the spending again. The proper name for this budget charade is Kick It Forward.

Keep war authorization specific The New York Times

Nearly five months after launching a war against the Islamic State, in Iraq and Syria, the Obama administration has gotten around to requesting formal authorization from Congress to conduct that war.

While indefinitely late, the move is



nevertheless welcome if it triggers the long-needed substantive debate about the goals, scope and justification of a military intervention that was launched with the claim of authority from laws passed more than a decade ago to allow the use of force in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In seeking a three-year authorization, President Barack Obama appears to be trying to avoid leaving an open-ended mandate that his successor could interpret unjustifiably broadly, much as his administration has. The request sets limits on the use of ground forces, which is good news if Congress and the White House view that as explicitly ruling out another protracted intervention.

The parameters of a proposed war authorization the White House sent to Congress on Wednesday, however, are alarmingly broad. It does not limit the battlefield to Syria and Iraq, the strongholds of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, which is attempting to form a caliphate. It also seeks permission to attack "associated persons or forces" of the brutal group, a term that appears to be excessively expansive and could undermine Obama's stated intent to limit the force authorization.

While a new Authorization for Use of Military Force, or AUMF, would sunset the 2002 law Congress passed to pave the way for the invasion of Iraq, it would leave intact the 2001 mandate for the war in Afghanistan. That is problematic, considering that the Obama administration has relied on that law to start attacks that were well beyond the scope of what lawmakers authorized at the time. In a letter to Congress delivered on Wednesday, Obama reiterated his intent to "refine, and ultimately repeal" that statute, which serves as a foundation for American military operations in Afghanistan. He should go further and set a date for its expiration.

If the White House prevails, it would get virtually unrestricted power to engage in attacks around the globe as long as it can justify a connection, however tenuous, to the Islamic State. ... But as Congress tailors a new war authorization, lawmakers should reflect on the missteps and unintended consequences of efforts over the past decade to fight Sunni insurgent groups in the Middle East and Africa. While American bombs and firepower have undoubtedly killed many terrorists, some of the tactics have expanded the ranks of militant groups. A mandate for war that was intended to punish the terrorists behind the 9/11 attacks was blotted to the point where it could be used to justify anti-terrorist campaigns just about anywhere.

Striking the proper balance is more an art than a science. Washington is more likely to get it right if ... resists the temptation to let the country on an unrestricted war footing.

Make Islamic State a pariah The Kansas City (Mo.) Star

The savage crimes against humanity committed by Islamic State militants now include the reported immolation of a captured Jordanian pilot.

It's another grim reminder that the world must focus its attention on stopping this horrific group from spreading further terrorism in the Middle East.

The actions of Islamic State fighters, while happening far from American shores, can't be shrugged off with the wish that the movement will simply go away or eventually collapse. These thugs appear to delight in ratcheting up their brutality. ...

There's no easy solution to reducing the mayhem the Islamic State is causing or the threat it poses to further destabilizing the Middle East. The bombings against Islamic State strongholds must continue. The U.S. properly has committed itself to lead this campaign but does need continued crucial support from Arab states. ...

Rushing to put U.S. soldiers on the ground in Islamic State strongholds is not a move that deserves strong consideration at this time.

Some members of Congress want to send more military assistance to Jordan, an idea that has some merit. Meanwhile, Obama administration officials are grappling with how deeply America can become involved without overly offending various factions in the tinderboxes of Syria, Iraq and Iran. Islamic State leaders appear to know all this and seemingly have tried to gain the upper hand by using social media as propaganda tools intended to bring others into their bloody cause. ...

The murder of pilot Muath al-Kaseasbeh, for the moment, seems to have united almost all factions in the Middle East against the Islamic State and its butchery. Officials from different warring parties in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Iran lashed out at the Islamic State. The people of Jordan vowed to step up the war against the monstrous movement.

Jordan King Abdullah II blasted the Islamic State, saying "this terrorist organization is not only fighting us, but also fighting Islam and its pure values."

That could become a rallying cry for more people in Middle Eastern countries to rise up and oppose the Islamic State. Still, it's extremely difficult to predict the actions of a foe whose moral compass is completely out of sync with humanity and civil society.

The United States and other champions of humanity must find strategies aimed at reducing and ultimately ending these terrorists' abilities to take hostages, kill innocent citizens, and displace and brutalize people.

Fight drug supply and demand Charleston (W.Va.) Daily Mail

The trend is alarming: sharp increases in illegal drugs flowing northward into the U.S. from Mexico. Since 2011, there has been a 40 percent increase in the volume of heroin seized by border officials, and a 105 percent increase in the volume of methamphetamine.

The drugs that evade detection go on to infect American communities. Two U.S. senators, West Virginia's Shelley Moore Capito and Indiana's Dan Claitor, would like the federal government to do more to stem the tide.

Capito, a Republican, and Donnelly, a Democrat, have introduced legislation that would help combat heroin and meth trafficking along the southern border. ...

The bill would require U.S. Customs and Border Protection to report to Congress on what resources it needs to respond to the increased drug trafficking on the border, whether it be better technology or more personnel. Washington can then work to give our people on the border what they need to limit the demand effectively.

In West Virginia and around the country, efforts to combat the drug epidemic are fought on two fronts. First, law enforcement tries to limit the supply of the illegal substances. Other leaders — educators, health workers, parents and policymakers — try to limit the demand.

It's a two-pronged problem. As long as people are willing to pay for mind-altering substances, criminal enterprises will try to supply them. And the more ubiquitous drugs are in our communities, the harder it is to keep young people from falling prey to them.

As a state, we must continue efforts to limit the demand side of the equation, but there's only so much we can do about the supply. ... West Virginia law enforcement isn't equipped to fight Mexican drug cartels. The federal government is. Capito's bill pushes federal law enforcement in a direction that inspires our communities in West Virginia and elsewhere.

Francis inspires rare unity Paris (Tenn.) Post-Intelligencer

You don't suppose, do you, that Pope Francis could heal the rift that splits Washington?

It's welcome news, of course, that the Holy Father has accepted an invitation to address Congress on Sept. 24. It's probably safe to say that he's the world's most popular individual just about now.

It would take a miracle worker to bring Republicans and Democrats to the point of working together for the national good.

We're being facetious, of course. This is truly a historic event. The invitation to have the pope speak is unprecedented, and his address will no doubt be a momentous occasion.

It will be the first visit to the U.S. by Francis, who has set all kinds of firsts since his election. His coming is the sort of capital-E Event that leads bitter political opponents to set aside their differences for a time.

Take John Boehner and Nancy Pelosi, for example. He's Republican speaker of the House, where she's the Democratic minority leader. They're polar opposites, and no one agrees on the time of day, but they can speak the same hymnal to greet the news of the pope's coming visit.

Boehner: "His teachings, prayers and very example bring us back to the blessings of simple things and our obligations to one another."

Pelosi: "Pope Francis inspired a new generation of people, regardless of their religious affiliation, to be instruments of peace."

Of course, the pope will not heal the bitter divide in American politics. But in some measure, and perhaps a very large one, he will remind us that we are all creatures of God, and thus brothers and sisters on this planet.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Tiger taking break until his game is ready

The Associated Press

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — Tiger Woods said Wednesday his game is "not acceptable" to compete in tournaments and he will return when he thinks it is.

Hopeful of having injuries behind him, Woods made a horrific start to the new year. He shot a career-high 82 in the second round of the Phoenix Open to miss the cut by 12 shots. And then he withdrew after 11 holes of ordinary golf at Torrey Pines because of tightness in his back from a fog delay.

Woods said on his website the last two weeks have been disappointing, especially at Torrey Pines, where he is an eight-time winner. He said he never wants to withdraw, but recent injuries have allowed that to happen too often.

Woods said his latest injury was not related to the back surgery he had last spring, and that he is feeling better every day with physical therapy.

"Right now, I need a lot of work on my game, and to still spend time with the people that are important to me," Woods said. "My play, and scores, are not acceptable for tournament golf. Like I've said, I enter a tournament to compete at the highest level, and when I think I'm ready, I'll be back."

Woods is not playing Pebble Beach or Riviera, and said he would practice next week at his home and at The Medalist "getting ready for the rest of the year."

He said he wants to play the Honda Classic, which starts Feb. 26, but he won't be there unless his game is tournament ready.

"That's not fair to anyone," Woods said. "I do, however, expect to be playing again very soon."

Ernie Els, who has known Woods longer than any other active PGA Tour player, heard about his woes while playing in Dubai and later saw highlights.

"As competitive as we are, we don't want to see anyone suffer like that," said Els, who has finished second to Woods more than any other player. "We've got to do our stuff in public. I don't care if you're Tiger Woods, Ernie Els or whoever. If you have some error in your game, you got exposed."

Woods, the winner of 79 PGA Tour events and 14 majors, has never looked this bad on the golf course. He had back surgery to relieve a pinched nerve a week before the Masters and missed three months (including the first two majors), and then he took four months off at the end of last year to regain strength and get his



GREGORY BULL/AP

Tiger Woods is driven off the course after withdrawing from the Farmers Insurance Open last week in San Diego.

back fully healed.

He also hired a new swing consultant and embarked on the fifth swing change of his career.

Woods is at No. 62 in the world, his worst ranking since before he won his first PGA Tour event in 1996. He is not eligible for the World Golf Championship at Dorland.

"I am committed to getting back to the pinnacle of my game," Woods said.

Police make arrest in Allenby case

HONOLULU — Honolulu police say there's been an arrest in connection with credit cards stolen from Australian golfer Robert Allenby.

Allenby was in Honolulu for the Sony Open when he said was beaten and robbed during a night out on Jan. 16.

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported that local police said Wednesday that a 32-year-old man already in custody at Oahu Community Correctional Facility was arrested.

Allenby posted photos of a bloodied forehead and swollen eye to his Facebook account. He says he has no recollection of anything from about 11 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. the night he was at a wine bar.

In other golf news:
■ The Royal and Ancient Golf Club announced its first seven

female members on Thursday, including Swedish great Annika Sorenstam and Britain's Princess Anne.

The club voted in September to end 260 years of male-only exclusivity by voting in favor of inviting women to join.

Colts release Landry to save \$2 million

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis Colts have released safety LaRon Landry, inside linebacker Andrew Jackson and offensive tackle Xavier Nixon.

Landry started 18 games over the last two seasons after signing with Indy in March 2013. He also served a four-game suspension in 2014 after violating the league's policy on performance-enhancing substances. Landry had 144 tackles and 2½ sacks but never lived up to the four-year, \$24 million deal he signed. Indy will save approximately \$2 million by releasing Landry.

Tampa dumps McCown ahead of NFL Draft

TAMPA, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Buccaneers have terminated the contract of quarterback Josh McCown, a move Wednesday that clears salary cap space for free agency.

The 35-year-old McCown went 1-10 as a starter and had the sec-

ond-lowest passer rating in the NFL after signing a two-year, \$10 million contract with the Bucs last winter.

Tampa Bay has the No. 1 pick in the draft and is weighing the prospect of making Florida State's Jameis Winston or Oregon's Marcus Mariotta the team's quarterback of the future.

McCown completed 56 percent of his passes for 2,206 yards, 11 touchdowns and 14 interceptions last season. Jacksonville's Blake Bortles was the only quarterback with a passer rating lower than McCown's 70.5.

Police investigate death of ex-NFL QB Freitas

PETALUMA, Calif. — A man found dead in a parked car has been identified as former San Diego Chargers quarterback Jesse Freitas, authorities said Wednesday.

Petaluma police Lt. Dan Fish said an investigation found no indication of trauma or foul play. An autopsy was performed Tuesday but authorities were awaiting the results from toxicology tests before making a final determination, Fish said.

Freitas, who ran into legal troubles in recent years, was found unresponsive in his vehicle Sunday by a family walking in a Petaluma neighborhood. The Santa Rosa Press Democrat reported.

Freitas, 63, was fully clothed and on his back with his left arm across his chest, as if he had been lying down to take a nap or rest.

Freitas apparently had come to the area to meet with a real estate agent in the neighborhood but missed the appointment, Fish said.

Freitas grew up in San Mateo and was drafted by the NFL's Chargers in 1974. Over the next two seasons, he played in 13 games and threw eight touchdowns as a backup to Hall of Famer Dan Fouts.

Freitas' family agreed to the coroner's suggestion to have Freitas' brain analyzed to see if he was suffering from traumatic shock that occurs from football injuries.

In other NFL news:
■ The Minnesota Vikings and Pittsburgh Steelers will open the 2015 NFL preseason in the Hall of Fame game on Sunday, Aug. 9.
■ Monte Kiffin won't return to the Dallas Cowboys coaching staff a year after he was demoted from defensive coordinator job.

A person with knowledge of the decision said Wednesday that Kiffin, the assistant head coach under Jason Garrett last season, wouldn't return. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the team wasn't planning to announce Kiffin's departure.

Kiffin, who turns 75 later this month, wasn't under contract for next season.

Goalie Nabokov retiring from NHL as Shark

SAN JOSE, Calif. — An emotional Evgeni Nabokov announced his retirement Wednesday from the National Hockey League, just two days after the goaltender was traded by Tampa Bay to the San Jose Sharks, the team that drafted him out of Kazakhstan in 1994.

"It means a lot that this circle is coming to an end and I'm happy I will retire as a Shark," Nabokov said, holding back tears at a news conference attended by his family, friends and former San Jose teammates.

Nabokov played 10 seasons for the Sharks, a span that ended after the 2009-10 campaign. He owns a list of franchise goaltending records, including most wins (293), shutouts (50) and games (563).

Nabokov was a Vezina Trophy finalist in 2008 after going 46-21-8 in the regular season. He was a two-time NHL All-Star, making the team in 2001 and 2008. As a rookie in the 2000-01 season, Nabokov won the Calder Memorial Trophy.

Paris takes step toward bid for 2024 Games

PARIS — Paris moved a step closer to bidding for the 2024 Olympics on Thursday when Mayor Anne Hidalgo welcomed the results of a feasibility study on bringing the games back to the capital after a 100-year absence.

Hidalgo, who received the feasibility study during a ceremony at city hall, said "decisive steps" have been made toward a Paris candidacy. With the support of French President Francois Hollande already secured, convincing Hidalgo to give her approval has been the main task of French Olympic officials in recent months.

Last November, Hidalgo said she was concerned about the costs, the environmental impact and the specter of white elephants if France hosted the games.

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COLLEGE BASKETBALL

No. 2 Virginia barely holds off N.C. State

By Aaron Beard
The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Second-ranked Virginia survived its first test without injured starter Justin Anderson.

Malcolm Brogdon scored 15 points to help the Cavaliers lead off North Carolina State 51-47 on Wednesday night.

Mike Tobey scored nine of his 11 after halftime for the Cavaliers (22-1, 10-1 Atlantic Coast Conference), who improved to 9-0 in true road games this season.

"To kind of struggle along and have to grind it out ... validates that, hey, look you can do this," coach Tony Bennett said. "We've just got to do it a little better."

The Cavaliers missed Anderson, their No. 2 scorer at 13.4 points and the league's top three-point shooter at 48 percent. He broke a finger on his shooting hand last weekend against Louisville and will be out 4-6 weeks. The injury required surgery and left him on the bench with his left hand heavily bandaged as junior Evan Nottle

started in his spot.

"I think in the beginning of the game it was a little bit of an adjustment for us to play without him, but as the game went on we kind of got into a little bit of a groove," Tobey said. "And going forward it's a tough win for us and I think it kind of gives us confidence to play without him."

Tobey had a three-point play for a 42-37 lead with 4:44 left, then threw down a dunk off pass from Brogdon to make it 45-42 with 1:18 left.

Finally, after Trevor Lacey missed a drive in the final seconds for the tie, Tobey rebounded in traffic and hit two free throws with 7 seconds left to make it a two-possession game again. Brogdon hit two more with 1.4 seconds left to seal the win.

Lacey scored 14 points to lead the Wolfpack (14-11, 5-7), but Ralston Turner managed just four and missed all six three-point tries while playing with a balky knee — a critical lack of production on a night when neither team led by more than six.

N.C. State also blew a huge opportunity



KARL B. DEBAKER/AP

Virginia's Malcolm Brogdon, right, loses control of the ball while being defended by N.C. State's Caleb Martin during the second half Wednesday. Virginia won 51-47.

to bolster its NCAA tournament chances. "We've put ourselves behind in a great way," coach Mark Gottfried said, "and now we've got to figure out how to finish in a flurry."

Gottfried said he disagreed with a flagrant foul call on freshman Caleb Martin, who was whistled for running into Nottle

and knocking him to the court after a Wolfpack basket.

Brogdon hit a free throw, then Tobey followed with his three-point play.

"We go from being down one to down five," Gottfried said. "In a game of this magnitude at that point in the game, that is just huge."

Roundup

Ferrell misses two chances to knock off Maryland

The Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — It was only fitting that the game featuring 18 lead changes and seven ties came down to the final shot.

Or, rather, two shots. Melo Trimble and Dez Wells each scored 18 points, and No. 19 Maryland edged Indiana 68-66 Wednesday night to earn a split of the season series.

The Hoosiers had a chance to win in the closing seconds. After Kevin "Yogi" Ferrell missed an open three-pointer, he got his own rebound and missed again as the buzzer sounded.

Only then could Maryland coach Mark Turgeon breathe a huge sigh of relief. "The first one went up and I said, 'OK, they're trying to win it.' It was probably the most open look he had all night, to be honest with you. I was hoping he'd miss it. I'm like every other fan in the building."

Turgeon got his wish, but Ferrell got the ball back when two Terrapins collided trying to get the rebound. Fortunately for Maryland, the second shot clanged off the rim.

"Time ran out on them," Turgeon said. "I don't care how you do it, we had to get a stop and we got one."

The Terrapins (20-5, 8-4 Big Ten) trailed 61-59 before Wells tied it with a shot in the lane. After Collin Hartman missed a layup on the other end, Jake Layman scored inside with 1:02 remaining to put Maryland ahead for good.

Two free throws by Trimble made it 65-61 with 30 seconds to go. After Indiana (17-8, 7-5) closed to 67-66, Wells sank one of two foul



PATRICK SEMANSKI/AP

Indiana guard Yogi Ferrell reacts after missing two shot attempts to tie the game against Maryland on Wednesday in College Park, Md. Maryland won 68-66. Ferrell missed an open three-pointer, got his own rebound, and missed again at the buzzer.

shots with 12.5 seconds left. That set the stage for Ferrell, who was playing the last of his game-high 37 minutes. He lined up a shot behind the key and let it fly.

"Probably the best shot I took all game," he said. "Felt like it was going in. It just hit the back rim."

And then? "I got a second shot, saw I had about 2.5 seconds and I just tried to put it up and in," Ferrell said. "It just didn't go in."

Coming off a 16-point defeat at Iowa, Maryland improved to 5-0 following a loss.

"Our kids are resilient," Turgeon said. "On Sunday it was, the world's coming to an end."

No. 6 Villanova 74, Providence 68: Ryan Arcidiacono scored 20 points, Daniel Ochefu had 19 and

visiting Villanova held off upset-minded Providence.

Darrun Hilliard added 16 points to help the Wildcats (22-2, 9-2 Big East) win their fifth straight.

LaDontae Henton scored 23 points, and Kris Dunn and Tyler Harris added 17 apiece to lead Providence (17-8, 7-4).

No. 9 Louisville 69, Pittsburgh 56: Montrezl Harrell had 28 points and 12 rebounds, and the junior forward led a 22-2 second-half run that helped host Louisville beat Pittsburgh.

Strong shooting positioned the Panthers to take control with a 45-39 lead before the Cardinals (20-4, 8-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) answered with an energetic 14-1 run that included several baskets set up by their trademark pressure defense.

No. 13 Northern Iowa 83, Illinois State 64: Seth Tuttle scored 23 points and host Northern Iowa rolled past Illinois State for its 12th straight victory.

Deon Mitchell had 12 points for the Panthers (23-2, 12-1 Missouri Valley Conference), who matched top-ranked Kentucky with their 23rd win. Only third-ranked Gonzaga has more wins than the Panthers, who haven't lost since New Year's Day.

No. 15 Wichita State 74, Indiana State 57: Fred VanVleet followed up a triple-double with 21 points, and host Wichita State cruised to an easy win.

Darius Carter added 17 points and Tekele Cotton finished with 16 as Wichita State (22-3, 12-1 Missouri Valley) beat the Sycamores (12-13, 8-5) for the fifth straight time. VanVleet also

had six rebounds, four assists and three steals in his virtuoso performance.

La Salle 74, No. 20 VCU 69 (2017): Jordan Price scored 34 points, including 12 in the second overtime, and grabbed 18 rebounds to lead visiting La Salle.

Price, who also had five assists, hit a three-pointer with 29 seconds left in regulation to force overtime. The Explorers (14-10, 6-5 Atlantic 10) got 12 points each from Jerrell Wright and Cleon Roberts in winning for the fourth time in five games.

No. 21 West Virginia 76, Kansas State 72: Reserve forward Brandon Watkins scored a career-high 14 points and host West Virginia squandered a double-digit lead before recovering.

West Virginia (19-5, 7-4 Big 12) got plenty of scoring from its deep bench to snap a two-game skid and hand the Wildcats their fifth straight loss.

No. 23 Ohio State 75, Penn State 55: Sam Thompson scored a career-high 22 points and D'Angelo Russell flurried with his second straight triple-double to lead host Ohio State.

Russell, the nation's top freshman scorer, added 17 points, six rebounds and seven assists for Ohio State (19-6, 8-4 Big Ten), which has won five of six.

Boise State 67, Air Force 42: James Webb III had 17 points and matched a season high with 15 rebounds to lead host Boise State.

Derrick Marks added 13 points as the Broncos (18-6, 8-3 Mountain West) set a school record with their eighth consecutive victory.

Matt Mooney scored 12 points to lead Air Force (11-13, 4-9),

which lost for the seventh time in 10 games. Zach Kocur added nine points for the Falcons, who were 4-for-16 from three-point range and 4-for-14 from the free-throw line.

Bucknell 52, Navy 51: Ryan Frazier scored 19 points — with 15 coming in the second half — as visiting Bucknell rallied after the break to edge Navy.

Frazier was 3-for-7 from the field overall — including a pair of three-pointers — and 11-for-13 from the free throw line.

Holy Cross 73, Army 64: Justin Burrell scored 26 points, 19 coming in the second half, and grabbed five rebounds to lead host Holy Cross.

Malcolm Miller and Eric Green scored 10 apiece for the Crusaders (10-13, 5-8 Patriot League).

Tanner Plomb had 19 points, Cox added 17, six assists and five rebounds and Kyle Wilson pitched in 15 points for the Black Knights (14-10, 5-8).

San Diego State 67, Wyoming 41: San Diego State (19-6, 9-3) celebrated the legacy of late two-sport star Tony Gwynn and then raced past Wyoming to take sole possession of first place in the Mountain West Conference.

Gwynn, who played basketball and baseball at SDSU, died of cancer June 16. He was in his 12th season as SDSU's baseball coach.

Georgia 62, Texas A&M 53: Kenny Gaines scored 15 points, on 6-of-12 shooting, and Charles Mann added 14 to help visiting Georgia.

The game was tied midway through the second half before the Bulldogs reeled off eight consecutive points.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Tennessee teams may go without madness

BY STEVE MEGARREE
The Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — The state of Tennessee might be shut out of the NCAA men's basketball tournament for the first time since 2002.

With Tennessee and Vanderbilt recovering from off-season roster turnover and Memphis struggling with injuries and inconsistency, the Volunteer State doesn't have any schools included among the top 85 teams in the RPI.

Barring a late-season surge by one of those three teams or an upset in a conference tournament, the state of Tennessee likely won't have any NCAA tournament representation. The last time that happened was 13 years ago, when Memphis won the NIT.

The potential lack of Tennessee representation in the NCAA men's tournament would be a major change for a state that boasts plenty of consistent post-season participants.

Memphis has been to the NCAA tournament eight of the last nine years, including a runner-up finish in 2008. Tennessee has seven NCAA tournament invitations in the last nine years. Belmont has earned six NCAA bids over the last nine seasons, while Vanderbilt has five in the last eight seasons.

But this has been a trying season for the state's three biggest programs, although they're all over .500.

Injuries left Memphis (14-10, 6-5 American) with only eight healthy scholarship players available Tuesday for the Tigers' 64-53 loss at East Carolina. Arguably the toughest blow came Saturday, when leading scorer Austin Nichols sprained his ankle in a 61-60 loss to Temple. Nichols is expected to miss two weeks.

Tennessee (14-9, 6-5 SEC) overachieved for the first half of the season but ran its last four of its last six games. Senior guard Josh Richardson is the only Volunteer who averaged more than five points for the Tennessee team that reached a regional semifinal last season.

Vanderbilt (13-11, 3-8 SEC) saw its only growing pains when it split three freshmen and a sophomore. The Commodores have lost eight of their last 10, including Wednesday's 76-73 loss to Tennessee in overtime.

Plenty of Tennessee schools from traditional one-lead leagues are ending solid seasons. That group includes Belmont (15-10, 7-5 Ohio Valley), UT Martin (15-8, 7-3 Ohio Valley), Chattanooga (16-9, 9-3 Southern), East Tennessee State (13-10, 6-7 Southern) and Middle Tennessee (13-11, 6-5 Conference USA).

But no Tennessee team figures to enter its conference tournament as the top seed.



RICK SCUTERI/AP

Arizona guard T.J. McConnell directs the offense during the second half of a Feb. 7 game against Arizona State in Tempe, Ariz.

Stoking the fire for Arizona

McConnell's pass-first game perfect fit for No. 7 Wildcats

BY JOHN MARSHALL
The Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — The mayor of McKale Center goes to work any chance he gets, during free throws, TV timeouts, video reviews.

Typically holding court near center court, he greets players like a first baseman chatting with opposing baserunners, bantering about how well they're playing, how much he respects them, maybe saying something to make them laugh.

Occasionally, he'll wander in front of the opposing team's bench, praise the coach or chat with a player.

Once the game goes live again, Arizona point guard T.J. McConnell transforms.

He spits fire, no compliments. Hounds opponents relentlessly. Howls at the crowd with a red-faced fury. Puts every ounce of his being toward winning.

"After that free throw goes up, it's game on," McConnell said.

The arrival of Sean Miller as

Arizona's head coach in 2009 started a revolving door of star players into McKale Center.

Derrick Williams, Aaron Gordon, Nick Johnson and Solomon Hill all went to the NBA. Stanley Johnson, Brandon Ashley, Rondae Hollis-Jefferson and Kaleb Tarczewski could end up there.

McConnell, the one player who came to the desert without all the hype, may be the most important piece of the puzzle.

Scrappy, tenacious, heady, efficient and now more of a leader and a scorer, the senior is the piston that keeps No. 7 Arizona churning forward.

"T.J. came here with very little fanfare, but I can make the argument that no player that we've brought here during my time has been more instrumental toward winning than him," Miller said.

McConnell was lightly regarded out of high school and played two seasons at Duquesne, a small Catholic university in Pittsburgh.

Wanting to challenge himself at a higher level, he opted to transfer to Arizona in 2012.

McConnell had an immediate

By the numbers

5.7 **49** **47**

Number of assists Arizona point guard T.J. McConnell averages per game.

Number of steals McConnell has this season, including eight against Oregon State.

Percentage McConnell is shooting from three-point range during Pac-12 play.

SOURCE: The Associated Press

impact even when he couldn't play. Sitting out under transfer rules, McConnell gave the Wildcats a behind-the-scenes push in practice during the 2012-13 season, helping them earn an NCAA tournament berth.

McConnell established himself as a leader for Arizona (20-3, 8-2 Pac-12) this season, still playing in your-jersey defense and setting up teammates while becoming more of a scorer.

"He is the head of the snake," Utah coach Larry Krystkowiak said.

McConnell is Arizona's second-leading scorer in conference at 12.3 points per game and is

shooting 56 percent, including 47 percent from three-point range. He scored 25 points in a loss to rival Arizona State on Saturday and had 21 in a rout of Oregon on Jan. 8.

McConnell's uptick in scoring hasn't affected what he does best: Distribute the ball on offense and take it away on defense.

McConnell averages 5.7 assists per game and is 15th nationally with an assist-to-turnover ratio of 3-to-1. He also leads the Wildcats with 49 steals, including a career-high eight against Oregon State two weeks ago, and is as sound defensively as anyone in the country.

NHL/COLLEGE FOOTBALL



GEORGE NIKITIN/AP

The Capitals' Joel Ward, left, scores the game-winning goal past Sharks goalie Antti Niemi during overtime Wednesday in San Jose, Calif. Washington won 5-4.

Roundup

Ward boosts Caps past Sharks in OT

The Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Joel Ward was standing in his favorite spot on the ice, which meant good fortune for the Washington Capitals.

Ward scored with 2:18 remaining in overtime to lift the Capitals past the San Jose Sharks 5-4 on Wednesday night.

"As soon as the rebound popped out I knew that's Ward's house," Capitals forward Jay Beagle said. "He loves being in front and he banged it home."

Beagle, who scored twice, was part of the winning play. He was about to take a shot and then heard Mike Green call for the puck. Green's shot ricocheted off the pads of Sharks goalie Antti Niemi and Ward was in the perfect position to end the game.

"Greenie shot it and I was fortunate enough to be there," Ward said. "We put in a pretty solid effort and fortunately we got the two points. That's the main thing."

John Carlson and Troy Brouwer also scored for the Capitals, who have won four of their last five.

Brent Burns scored twice, Logan Couture and Joe Thornton also got goals, and the Sharks lost their third straight and fifth in six games. Burns scored his goals within 22 seconds of the second period.

Bradley Holtby, with a 0.88 GAA over his last five, saved 26 of 30 shots for Washington. Niemi stopped 28 of 33 shots.

Beagle connected on a breakaway, beating Niemi to the far post, and getting a little help from a linesman, who got tied up with a Sharks defender on the play. Carlson scored the go-ahead goal a few minutes later, with an assist

from Marcus Johansson. Thornton scored a minute later to tie the score at 4. He found an opening at the near post after taking a cross-ice pass from Joe Pavelski.

"It was good to get one back," Ward said. "I was upset giving up one to Thornton there. That was kind of my responsibility, so to get the game-winner is a bonus."

Canucks 5, Blackhawks 4 (OT): Daniel Sedin scored his second goal at 1:20 of overtime, and Vancouver recovered after blowing a late two-goal lead, beating host Chicago.

Henrik Sedin made a great pass to his brother in the middle of the ice, and Daniel pushed it into the left side of the net for his 13th of the season. He also scored in the third period to give Vancouver a 4-2 lead with 4:37 remaining.

Patrick Kane had a goal and two assists for Chicago, which looked less for much of the night, and then closed with a flourish. Marian Hossa scored two goals for the third consecutive game.

Penguins 4, Red Wings 1: Blake Comeau scored and picked up an assist in his return from an upper body injury, and Pittsburgh dominated visiting Detroit.

Comeau missed nearly two months after getting hurt in an overtime loss to Florida on Dec. 22. He wasted little time getting back to work, assisting on Patrick Hornqvist's score just 1:51 into the game and firing a one-timer past Petr Mrazek later in the first.

David Perron and Nick Spaling also scored for the Pittsburgh. Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 23 shots to earn his fourth win in his last five starts.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference						
Atlantic Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	56	34	15	7	74	181
Montreal	53	35	15	3	73	143
Detroit	53	28	19	7	71	156
Boston	54	26	19	7	63	142
Florida	52	21	22	11	51	141
Ottawa	52	21	22	11	51	141
Toronto	55	22	26	4	50	157
Buffalo	54	19	26	7	45	103

Metropolitan Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
N.Y. Islanders	54	35	12	1	170	151
Pittsburgh	54	31	15	8	70	155
Washington	54	35	15	3	74	181
N.Y. Rangers	52	31	18	5	67	157
Philadelphia	54	23	22	9	51	146
New Jersey	54	22	22	9	51	146
Columbus	52	23	26	4	49	135
Carolina	52	19	26	7	45	116

Western Conference						
Central Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	54	36	12	6	78	164
St. Louis	54	35	15	4	77	170
Chicago	55	33	18	4	70	167
Minnesota	54	32	19	5	66	144
Minnesota	53	26	20	7	59	145
Dallas	54	25	21	8	57	175
Colorado	54	22	21	11	55	137

Pacific Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Anaheim	56	28	20	8	64	158
San Jose	56	28	20	8	64	158
Vancouver	54	25	21	8	57	149
Calgary	54	30	21	3	63	156
Los Angeles	52	23	18	12	54	144
San Jose	52	23	18	12	54	144
Edmonton	55	19	31	5	49	182

Note: Two points for each one point for overtime loss.

Wednesday's games
 Vancouver 5, Chicago 4, OT
 Washington 5, San Jose 4, OT

Thursday's games
 Toronto at N.Y. Islanders
 Anaheim at Carolina
 (Orlando, Colton) 15:00
 Pittsburgh at Ottawa
 St. Louis at Tampa Bay
 Winnipeg at Nashville
 Florida at Minnesota
 S.C. Flyers at Colorado
 Calgary at Los Angeles
Friday's games
 Philadelphia at Columbus
 New Jersey at Chicago
 Florida at Dallas
 San Jose at Arizona
 Boston at Vancouver

Wednesday Capitals 5, Sharks 4 (OT)

Washington 0 1 1 1-5
San Jose 0 0 3 1 0-4

First Period—1. Washington, Beagle 8 (Carlson, Couture) 1:03, 3. San Jose, Burns 14 (Marlea, Nieb), 4:3. Washington, Browner 16 (Ovechkin, Backstrom), 6:17 (pp.). 5. San Jose, Couture 20 (Nieb, Marlea), 14:48.

Second Period—5. Washington, Beagle 9 (Carlson, Orpik), 11:17. 7. Washington, Carlson 10 (Johnson, Backstrom), 12:26. 8. San Jose, Thornton 12 (Pavelski, Kariszon), 14:29.

Overtime—9. Washington, Ward 12 (Green, Beagle), 2:42.

Shots on Goal—Washington 10-13-7. 3-33. **San Jose** 6-13-10-1-30.

Power-play opportunities—Washington 1 of 2; **San Jose** 1 of 1.

Goals—Washington. Holtby 26-11-9 (39 shots, 26 saves). **San Jose.** Niemi 22-13-7 (33-28 shots, 17 saves).

A—15,925 (17,562). T—2:29.

Canucks 5, Blackhawks 4 (OT)

Vancouver 0 3 1 1-5
Chicago 0 1 1 0-4

Second Period—1. Chicago, Kane 27, 5:7. Vancouver, Veitch 8 (Kane, Hossa, Tanev), 6:44. 4. Vancouver, Kassian 5 (Gibbs, Higgins), 11:13.

Third Period—5. Chicago, Hossa 15 (Crosby, Toews), 12:48 (pp.). 5. Vancouver, Sedin 12 (Burrows, H.Sedin), 15:23. 7. Chicago, Sedin 17 (Crosby, Kane), 17:40 (pp.). 8. Chicago, Hossa 16 (Kane, Rozival), 19:05.

Overtime—9. Vancouver, Sedin 13 (H.Sedin, Sibus), 1:20.

Shots on Goal—Vancouver 12-16-7-1-36. **Chicago** 7-15-19-0-41.

Power-play opportunities—Vancouver 0 of 1; **Chicago** 2 of 4.

Goals—Vancouver. Laek 5-6-2 (41 shots, 37 saves). **Chicago.** Crawford 21-12-3 (36-31 shots, 17 saves).

A—13,346 (19,717). T—2:37.

Penguins 4, Red Wings 1

Detroit 0 0 0-1
Pittsburgh 2 2 0-4

First Period—1. Pittsburgh, Hornqvist 15 (Latang, Comeau), 1:51. 2. Pittsburgh, Comeau 12 (Hornqvist), 12:15.

Second Period—3. Pittsburgh, Perron 14 (Laperriere, Martin), 3:04. 4. Pittsburgh, Spaling 8 (Scuderi, Despres), 7:52. 5. Detroit, Weiss 7 (Zetterberg, Kronwall), 13:26 (pp.).

Shots on Goal—Detroit 6-9-9-24. **Pittsburgh** 9-9-4-21.

Power-play opportunities—Detroit 1 of 1; **Pittsburgh** 0 of 1.

Goals—Detroit. Mrazek 13-5-1 (43 shots, 29 saves). **Hornqvist** 0-0-3 (20-23). **Pittsburgh.** Fleury 26-11-5 (24-23).

A—10,580 (18,387). T—2:13.

FCS All-American's transfer puts NCAA rule under scrutiny

By RALPH D. RUSSO
 The Associated Press

Vernon Adams passed for 658 yards and six touchdowns against Montana State the past two seasons, leading Eastern Washington to a victory each time.

Still, Bobcats coach Rob Ash is disappointed to see Adams transfer from the Big Sky to the Pac-12 and wants Football Championship Subdivision coaches to push to change the rule that allows the dynamic quarterback to play for Oregon next season.

"We're Division I like the other level," Ash said in a telephone interview. "Our guys need to start and finish at the same school. We cannot be perceived as a farm system or Triple-A ballclub or anything like that."

Adams signed a grant-in-aid agreement with Oregon this week, hoping to take advantage of an NCAA rule that allows athletes who have graduated to switch schools and be immediately eligible to play. Most transfers must sit out a season.

The rule was put in place to allow athletes to pursue graduate degrees that were not offered at their schools, but it has turned into college football free agency.

"I'm really opposed to the rule the way it's starting to be manipulated by FBS schools," said Ash, who has never had a losing record in eight seasons at Montana State.

"As FCS coaches, we need to lobby now to get this rule changed. It's going to be potentially a very difficult, bad situation for FCS with really good players that we recruit, we develop, being tempted to move on to that fifth and final year."

Ash said he spoke to Eastern Washington coach Beau Baldwin about the graduate transfer issue earlier this week and that he hopes the Big Sky coaches can work with the conference office to develop a proposal for an NCAA rule change.

Big Sky Commissioner Doug

Fullerton said that might not be necessary. He expects all transfer rules to be examined and reformed as the NCAA moves to become more "student-athlete-centric."

Fullerton agreed the grad transfer rule has morphed into something it was not intended to be. Adams, who is on track to graduate from Eastern Washington by the summer, could spend one semester at Oregon and then leave to pursue a professional football career.

While Eastern Washington has not stood in Adams' way, school officials have made it clear they are not happy with a rule that lets their opening opponent next season poach their All-American.

"We wish Vernon the best in his future endeavors and thank him for all that he has done for Eastern," athletic director Bill Chaves said in a statement. "The chance for him to pursue this opportunity is certainly a unique one given the fifth-year transfer rule. We are not sure that this was the actual intent of the legislation when it was approved, but it is the rule currently in place that we and potentially other schools have to adhere to. We will continue to work through the process of this transfer based on the rule as it stands now."

The graduate transfer rule also doesn't sit well with many at the FBS level.

"It smacks of hired gun, for one thing," Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said. "There typically are no good academic reasons for the transfer."

Transfer rules are not an area in which the Big 12 and the rest of the Big Five can make autonomy legislation. Bowlsby said the directive from the NCAA steering committee that put the new autonomy structure in place was for transfer reform to be undertaken within the next two years.

Until it happens, Ash hopes Oregon hasn't started a trend.



ELAINE THOMPSON/AP

Eastern Washington quarterback Vernon Adams Jr., an FCS All-American, will transfer to Oregon where he will be eligible to play next season and compete to replace Marcus Mariota.

NBA



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

George Karl will take over as coach of the Sacramento Kings after the All-Star break, according to an AP source.

Source: Karl to coach Kings after break

BY ANTONIO GONZALEZ
The Associated Press

The Sacramento Kings and George Karl have agreed to the framework of a deal for him to take over as coach, a person familiar with the negotiations said Wednesday.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the discussions were private. The plan is for Karl to coach the Kings in their first game following the All-Star break Feb. 20 at home against Boston, meaning Tyrone Corbin will be coaching his final game for Sacramento on Wednesday night at Milwaukee.

Karl is attending funeral services for former North Carolina coach Dean Smith this week. The Kings are expected to announce the deal in the coming days after final terms have been agreed upon and the contract has been signed.

Karl will be Sacramento's third coach this season.

The Kings (18-33) made the surprising move to fire Michael Malone in December after an 11-13 start in his second season as coach, even though they had shown progress until All-Star center DeMarcus Cousins was sidelined for an extended period with viral meningitis. Sacramento slid even further after promoting Corbin from lead assistant, losing 12 of its last 14 games and 20 of 27 overall since Malone's dismissal.

Karl is a proven winner in the league and a familiar face for Sacramento's front office.

Kings general manager Pete D'Alessandro and assistant general manager Mike Bratz are among those who worked with him in Denver, and team adviser Chris Mullin played for Karl with the Golden State Warriors from 1986-88.

Karl last coached in the 2012-13 season, when he won NBA Coach of the Year with the Nuggets before being fired following a first-round playoff loss to the Warriors.

The Nuggets made the post-season all nine years under Karl. They advanced past the first round only once during his tenure, losing to the Los Angeles Lakers in the 2009 Western Conference finals.

The 63-year-old Karl, a cancer survivor, is one of nine coaches in league history to eclipse 1,000 wins. He has 1,131 victories as a head coach, with stops in Cleveland, Golden State, Seattle and Milwaukee, earning a reputation for turning around teams.

Kings owner Vivek Ranadive, Mullin and D'Alessandro had discussed Karl's candidacy since December. They'd also weighed whether to conduct a lengthier search in the offseason when more coaches might be available and have the benefit of training camp to prepare.

But with the Kings continuing to fall into irrelevance in the deep Western Conference, they ultimately decided to make another switch now.

Nowitzki in for West All-Stars; Harden, Thompson to start

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Western Conference All-Star team coach Steve Kerr's lineup will look nothing like the one voted for by fans as star after NBA star has gone down with injuries.

Golden State Warriors guard Klay Thompson and Houston Rockets guard James Harden were named Wednesday as starters. They will replace Kobe Bryant,

who is out for the season with a shoulder injury, and Blake Griffin, who will be sidelined at least three weeks after surgery for a staph infection in his right elbow.

Bryant and Griffin were voted starters by the fans for the NBA mid-season showcase set for Sunday in New York, as was Pelicans forward Anthony Davis and Thompson's fellow Splash Brother, Stephen Curry.

But after a loss to the Pacers on Wednes-

day, Davis announced that he, too, has decided to sit out with an injured right shoulder that kept him out of the last two games before the break.

His last-minute replacement is Dallas Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki, giving him his 13th All-Star appearance for a franchise that doesn't have another player with more than four.

The 36-year-old Nowitzki is averaging 18.3 points and 5.9 rebounds per game. The

7-footer from Germany went to 11 straight All-Star Games before missing in 2013. He went again last year.

Davis had the support of his coach and teammates to play Sunday if he was healthy enough. But he chose to rest the shoulder.

"After careful thought and consideration, I've decided I will not be participating," Davis said. "I want to thank the fans for voting me into the All-Star game and I am sorry I will not be able to play."

Roundup

Cavs rout Heat to stay hot

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — LeBron James scored 18 points against his former Miami teammates and Cleveland had six others score in double figures as the Cavaliers beat the Heat 113-93 Wednesday night for their 14th win in 15 games.

Timofey Mozgov scored 20 and Tristan Thompson 17 in Cleveland's final home game before the All-Star break. The Cavs were to play at Chicago on Thursday before the season's extended respite.

With the win, the Cavs avenged an emotional Christmas Day loss in Miami — James' first game against the team he led to two NBA titles and four straight Finals. Cleveland is a very different team these days, improved by two major trades and James again playing at his unrivaled levels.

Hassan Whiteside had 17 points and 14 rebounds for the Heat, who were again without All-Star Dwyane Wade. He missed his seventh straight game with a strained right hamstring.

Cavaliers forward Kevin Love sat out most of the second half after he was accidentally poked in the right eye by Mario Chalmers. Love was reaching for a rebound when he was swiped by Chalmers with 9:48 left in the third quarter. Love went down immediately in pain, and as he was checked by the medical staff, his teammates looked on with concern.

Love was escorted to the locker room and didn't return. The Cavs said he has a corneal abrasion.

Cleveland built a 26-point lead in the first half, allowed Miami to climb back within 12 in the third before the Cavs finally put away the Heat.

Warriors 94, Timberwolves 91: Andre Iguodala and Leandro Barbosa led a dominant effort from Golden State's reserves and Klay Thompson hit a big three-pointer down the stretch to close out a long road trip with a victory over host Minnesota.

Magic 89, Knicks 83: Nik Vucevic had 28 points and 18 rebounds, and host Orlando held off New York.

Raptors 95, Wizards 93: DeMar DeRozan hit a tiebreaking jump shot with 12 seconds left and Toronto headed into the All-Star break on a winning note, beating visiting Washington.



TONY DEJAN/AP

The Cavaliers' Kyrie Irving, left, drives to the basket against the Heat's Hassan Whiteside during Wednesday's game in Cleveland. The Cavaliers won 113-93.

Spurs 104, Pistons 87: Danny Green scored 19 points and Tony Parker added 17, and San Antonio easily brushed aside host Detroit.

Pacers 106, Pelicans 93: David West and George Hill each scored 17 points and Indiana went into the All-Star break with its fourth victory in the last five games, pounding host New Orleans.

Thunder 105, Grizzlies 89: Kevin Durant scored 26 points and Russell Westbrook added 24 to help the host Oklahoma City defeat Memphis.

Bucks 111, Kings 103: Brandon Knight scored 20 points, powering a third-quarter surge that helped host Milwaukee to a

victory over a Sacramento team on the brink of yet another coaching change.

Mavericks 87, Jazz 82: J.J. Barea scored 15 of his season-high 22 points in the third quarter and Dallas held on for a victory against visiting Utah.

Trail Blazers 102, Lakers 86: LaMarcus Aldridge had 18 points and 12 rebounds and host Portland extended Los Angeles' road losing streak to a franchise-record 11 games.

Clippers 110, Rockets 95: DeAndre Jordan had 24 points and 20 rebounds, Jamal Crawford and J.J. Redick each had 20 points, and Los Angeles beat visiting Houston.

NBA

Celtics top Atlanta at buzzer

By JIMMY GOLEN
The Associated Press

BOSTON — Boston Celtics coach Brad Stevens wasn't about to put too much importance on his team's comeback victory over the Eastern Conference-leading Atlanta Hawks.

"For 47 minutes, 59.8 seconds, we were the losing team," Stevens said on Wednesday night after Evan Turner's scoop shot with 0.2 seconds left gave the Celtics their only lead and lifted them to an 89-88 victory over the Hawks.

It was just Atlanta's third loss of the calendar year, but all three have come in the last 10 days following a 19-game winning streak that propelled them to the NBA's best record.

"I don't think they were saying 'they've been home,'" Stevens said. "They've been on the road for three games; they've had a miraculous couple of months of basketball. They missed some shots late, and we were fortunate."

Jared Sullinger had 17 points and 15 rebounds for the Celtics, who had won four of five. Turner had seven points, nine assists and seven rebounds.

All Horford scored 22 points and added 12 rebounds for the Hawks, who still have the most wins in the NBA. They will send an NBA record-tying four players to the All-Star Game in New York; the last team to place four players on the All-Star roster was Boston in 2011.

This year's Celtics have no All-Stars, and they remain out of playoff position.

"It's been a good first half," Hawks forward Paul Millsap said. "But it's definitely not the way we wanted to end this half, going into the break with a loss against a team that we know we should've won. Especially becoming a lead like that."

Atlanta scored the first nine points of the game and nursed the lead through most of the next four quarters. The Hawks led by 14 with just over 7 minutes left before Boston scored the next eight points. It was 84-75 when the Celtics ran off seven in a row, including a three-pointer from Marcus Smart with 2:12 to play that made it a two-point game.

Avery Bradley made a three-pointer to cut an 86-82 lead to one point, then the teams traded baskets and misses.

Jeff Teague missed a runner with 15 seconds left, and the Celtics called a timeout with 6.4 seconds on the clock. Turner dribbled at the perimeter before cutting into the lane and floating in a seven-footer just before the buzzer.

The Hawks had a chance for a tip-in, but the inbound pass was knocked harmlessly away by the defense.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Toronto	21	11	67%
Brooklyn	20	11	404/14%
Milwaukee	20	12	392/3%
Philadelphia	12	41	226/24%
New York	10	43	189/26%

Southeast Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Atlanta	43	11	796/10%
Washington	22	30	423/20%
Charlotte	22	30	423/20%
Orlando	16	36	304/24%
Miami	17	39	304/27%

Central Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Chicago	33	20	623/21%
Cleveland	33	21	611/1%
Minnesota	29	25	566/33%
Detroit	21	33	389/12%
Indiana	21	33	389/12%

Western Conference

Southwest Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Memphis	39	14	736/31%
Dallas	39	19	655/42%
San Antonio	34	19	642/40%
New Orleans	27	26	509/12%

Northwest Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Portland	40	17	679/28%
Oklahoma City	28	25	528/8%
Denver	28	25	528/8%
Utah	19	34	358/17%
Minnesota	12	42	208/25%

Pacific Division			
Team	W	L	Pct
Golden State	29	9	624/21%
Los Angeles	28	10	611/18%
Phoenix	22	57	147/14%
Sacramento	22	57	147/14%
L.A. Lakers	10	43	245/30%

Tuesday's games			
Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Houston 127	Phoenix 118	127-118	10:00
Los Angeles 104	Sacramento 86	104-86	10:00
Memphis 95	Brooklyn 86	95-86	10:00
Denver 102	Lakers 86	102-86	10:00

Wednesday's games			
Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Orlando 89	New York 83	89-83	7:00
San Antonio 104	Detroit 87	104-87	7:00
New Orleans 89	Atlanta 88	89-88	7:00
Indiana 106	New Orleans 93	106-93	7:00
Golden State 94	Minnesota 91	94-91	7:00
Los Angeles 113	Miami 88	113-88	7:00
Dallas 87	Utah 82	87-82	7:00
L.A. Clippers 110	Houston 95	110-95	7:00
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Thursday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Friday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Saturday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Sunday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Monday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Tuesday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Wednesday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Thursday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Friday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Saturday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Sunday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Monday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Tuesday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Wednesday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Thursday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Friday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Saturday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00

Sunday's game

Home	Visitor	Score	Time
Cleveland at Atlanta			7:00



The Celtics' Evan Turner (11) shoots the game-winning basket over the Hawks' DeMarre Carroll (5) with 0.2 seconds left on the clock in the second half on Wednesday in Boston. The Celtics won 89-88.

Three-Point Goals

Utah 11-29 (Novak 4-6, Burke 4-6, Booker 1-3, Hayward 1-5, Millapp 1-5, Exum 0-4), Dallas 10-28 (Barca 4-7, Villanueva 2-3, Parsons 2-4, Ellis 1-2, Harris 1-6, Aminu 0-1, Nowitzki 0-3), Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Utah 37 (Kanter 10), Dallas 45 (Nowitzki 14). Assists—Utah 19 (Hayward 8), Dallas 18 (Harris 6). Total Fouls—Utah 21, Dallas 21. A—19,447 (19,200).

Pacers 106, Pelicans 93

INDIANA — Miles 41 1-1, West 8 1-2, Hill 4-4 5-2, Watson 2-2 2-7, Mchinnigan 10-2-4, Stuckey 17-0-0 15, Rudez 3-5 0-0 6, Scotts 3-4-3, Sloan 0-0 0-0, Whittington 0-2-4, Copeland 0-2-0 0, Totals 40-71 18-106.

NEW ORLEANS

INDIANA — Miles 41 1-1, West 8 1-2, Hill 4-4 5-2, Stuckey 2-2, Watson 3-3, Copeland 2-2, Fretz 0-2, New Orleans 7-1 1-2, Ponderketer 4-7 0-0, Douglas 5-9 3-6 14, Babbitt 5-7 2-2, 5, Sloan 0-0 0-0, 9, Totals 34-74 18-253.

Indiana

NEW ORLEANS — Miles 41 1-1, West 8 1-2, Hill 4-4 5-2, Stuckey 2-2, Watson 3-3, Copeland 2-2, Fretz 0-2, New Orleans 7-1 1-2, Ponderketer 4-7 0-0, Douglas 5-9 3-6 14, Babbitt 5-7 2-2, 5, Sloan 0-0 0-0, 9, Totals 34-74 18-253.

Three-Point Goals

Indiana 9-20 (Gill 4-5, Hill 2-3, Stuckey 2-2, Watson 3-3, Copeland 2-2), Pelicans 9-20 (New Orleans 7-1 1-2, Ponderketer 4-7 0-0, Douglas 5-9 3-6 14, Babbitt 5-7 2-2, 5, Sloan 0-0 0-0, 9, Totals 34-74 18-253).

Cavaliers 113, Heat 93

MIAMI — Deng 5-11 1-7, Bosh 5-17 4-15, Whiteside 8-15 1-17, Napier 3-6 0-6, Chalmers 6-15 4-18, Granger 0-1-0, Cole 3-7 0-7, Anderson 2-0-2, Johnson 1-4-0-3, Haslem 1-3-3, Hamilton 1-0-0-3, Totals 34-64 16-20-93.

CLEVELAND

MIAMI — Deng 5-11 1-7, Bosh 5-17 4-15, Whiteside 8-15 1-17, Napier 3-6 0-6, Chalmers 6-15 4-18, Granger 0-1-0, Cole 3-7 0-7, Anderson 2-0-2, Johnson 1-4-0-3, Haslem 1-3-3, Hamilton 1-0-0-3, Totals 34-64 16-20-93.

Miami

MIAMI — Deng 5-11 1-7, Bosh 5-17 4-15, Whiteside 8-15 1-17, Napier 3-6 0-6, Chalmers 6-15 4-18, Granger 0-1-0, Cole 3-7 0-7, Anderson 2-0-2, Johnson 1-4-0-3, Haslem 1-3-3, Hamilton 1-0-0-3, Totals 34-64 16-20-93.

Three-Point Goals

Miami 24 (Deng 11-22, Bosh 11-22, Whiteside 11-22, Napier 3-6, Chalmers 6-15, Granger 0-1, Cole 3-7, Anderson 2-0, Johnson 1-4, Haslem 1-3, Hamilton 1-0), Cleveland 19 (Deng 11-22, Bosh 11-22, Whiteside 11-22, Napier 3-6, Chalmers 6-15, Granger 0-1, Cole 3-7, Anderson 2-0, Johnson 1-4, Haslem 1-3, Hamilton 1-0), Totals 43-41 41-213.

Raptors 95, Wizards 93

WASHINGTON — Pierce 7-12 1-21, Nene 7-8 0-8, Morris 10-17 2-20, Johnson 5-21, Porter 2-2-2, Gooden 5-11 0-10, Temple 13 0-3, Butler 2-10 0-5, Seraphin 3-7 0-6, Miller 1-4-0-2, Totals 39-85 16-93.

Spurs 104, Pistons 87

SAN ANTONIO — Duncan 4-7 0-8, O'Quinn 1-2, Green 2-9, Baynes 0-0 0-0, Parker 6-10 5-5 17, Green 7-13 0-19, Ginobili 6-9 0-10, Diaw 1-5 0-0, Splitter 3-6 0-6, Bellini 4-10 0-10, Mills 4-1-2, 7, Bonner 0-2 0-2, Joseph 1-0-0-0, Ayres 1-1 0-2, Totals 42-88 10-110.

DETROIT

SAN ANTONIO — Duncan 4-7 0-8, O'Quinn 1-2, Green 2-9, Baynes 0-0 0-0, Parker 6-10 5-5 17, Green 7-13 0-19, Ginobili 6-9 0-10, Diaw 1-5 0-0, Splitter 3-6 0-6, Bellini 4-10 0-10, Mills 4-1-2, 7, Bonner 0-2 0-2, Joseph 1-0-0-0, Ayres 1-1 0-2, Totals 42-88 10-110.

San Antonio

DETROIT — Singleton 4-11 0-0, Monroe 3-10-1-8, Drummond 4-11 0-6, Augustin 4-6 0-0, 2, Caldwell-Pope 7-15 4-4, 2, Meeks 3-9 0-0, Tolliver 3-5 0-0, Lucas 3-4 0-0, 2, 2, Totals 33-63 12-177.

DETROIT

SAN ANTONIO — Singleton 4-11 0-0, Monroe 3-10-1-8, Drummond 4-11 0-6, Augustin 4-6 0-0, 2, Caldwell-Pope 7-15 4-4, 2, Meeks 3-9 0-0, Tolliver 3-5 0-0, Lucas 3-4 0-0, 2, 2, Totals 33-63 12-177.

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DETROIT

NBA

All-Star weekend brings basketball's best to Big Apple

By BRIAN MAHONEY
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Think basketball is bad in New York now? Marty Albert remembers when fans would go to Madison Square Garden and wouldn't even stick around to watch the Knicks.

The days of NBA doubleheaders there are long gone — a good thing, so both of New York's bumbling ballclubs can't lose at the same place on the same day.

Fans in the Big Apple remain just as passionate about good basketball as they were then, when the chance to see someone like Bill Russell made the opening act the main event. They get their chance this weekend when the NBA All-Star festivities come to town, and locals say the enthusiasm can't be diminished no matter how many games the Knicks or Nets have lost.

"I don't think it matters because you have all these great stars coming there and I think it's going to be a wild scene, both Saturday in Brooklyn and then Sunday at the Garden," said Albert, a New York native and longtime Knicks broadcaster who will call the game on TNT.

Breaking from what had become standard procedure of taking the mid-winter showcase to a warm-weather city, the NBA decided to stay home in 2015 and show off two of its flashiest arenas: Brooklyn's Barclays Center, opened in 2012, and famed Madison Square Garden, recently renovated over the course of three years, and both with \$1 billion price tags.

The buildings may be magical, but the basketball is miserable. The Knicks are headed toward their worst season ever with a 10-41 record entering Monday,

while the Nets were 21-29, though still in the playoff race thanks to the mediocrity of the Eastern Conference.

Subway stations and trains have been decorated with pictures of the NBA's best, but there's nothing the league can do to clean up the Knicks and Nets. No matter, says Commissioner Adam Silver.

"I know that as a New Yorker, I don't think interest in people's favorite teams wanes necessarily because the team isn't successful in a particular year," he said last month at a press conference before a game in London.

Brooklyn gets the Friday and Saturday events, All-Star Saturday being highlighted by a three-point contest featuring Golden State teammates Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson, and Atlanta sharpshooter Kyle Korver. The game Sunday is at MSG, "the world's most famous arena" where Joe Frazier beat Muhammad Ali in the "Fight of the Century," and Willis Reed gamely limped out of the tunnel to play in Game 7 against the Lakers and spark the Knicks to the 1970 NBA championship.

The building remains revered by today's players, no matter how bad the Knicks team is that's waiting when they get there. "Regardless of what the Knicks or the Nets are doing, the city is the Mecca of basketball," said TNT analyst Kenny Smith, who grew up in Queens before winning two NBA titles in Houston.

"I think that the city will be excited, regardless of what the Knicks, the Nets, St. John's, Fordham University or any other teams are doing. It's a city game. We own that and we love it, and we relish the fact that we are that."



PHILAN M. EBENCK/AP

It's been a rough start for first-year New York Knicks head coach Derek Fisher, whose team is an abysmal 10-41 and is on pace to record the worst season in franchise history.



PHOTOS BY MORRY GASH, ABOVE, AND DARREN HAUCK, BELOW/AP

Milwaukee forward Giannis Antetokoumpo, above, and guard Brandon Knight, below, are two of the young stars that have the surprising Bucks as the sixth seed in the Eastern Conference playoff race.

Young Bucks

Emerging Milwaukee defies expectations as one of this season's biggest surprises

By GENARO C. ARMAS
The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Six-foot-11 Giannis Antetokoumpo will start concentrating on dunks after Wednesday.

The first priority for the Milwaukee forward is to help his team beat the Sacramento Kings in the Bucks' last game before the All-Star break. Then he can focus on mapping out his plan as one of the participants in the All-Star weekend dunk contest.

Antetokoumpo is thinking big, just like the rest of a team that has been one of the NBA's pleasant surprises this year.

"After the (Kings) game I will be like, 'Ah, dunking all over the place! I will let you guys know,'" said the Bucks' emerging 20-year-old star.

At 29-23 going into Wednesday night's game, the Bucks are already one win away from doubling their victory total from all of last season.

New owners took over last April and coach Jason Kidd joined the team over the summer. Jabari Parker was drafted with the second overall pick out of Duke to join Antetokoumpo as young franchise building blocks.

All that change generated new energy around the club. Even so, most prognosticators picked the Bucks to finish near the bottom

'I think this is a great story of overachievement of our guys.'

John Hammond
Milwaukee Bucks GM

of the Eastern Conference standings. They were written off again after Parker went down with a season-ending knee injury in mid-December.

Instead, the Bucks have only gotten better.

They're 16-11 since Parker was lost for the season. Milwaukee is also comfortably nestled into the sixth seed in the conference race, seemingly a postseason lock in the mediocre East.

General manager John Hammond is among many in the organization who did not expect the team to be approaching 30 wins at the break.

"I think this is a great story of overachievement of our guys," Hammond said Tuesday.

Under Kidd, the Bucks are one of the best defensive teams in the league, bolstered by the length and speed of young players like Antetokoumpo and point guard Brandon Knight.

Hammond has also brought in



veterans Jared Dudley and Jerry Bayless to add experience and bolster depth. Dudley, especially, seems to be a vocal but calming presence in the locker room.

Dudley said that there was "a lot of trust in J-Kidd and how he coaches and the way he goes about his business."

The timing couldn't have been better for an organization hoping to generate statewide support for a new downtown arena.

But don't expect the team to change course from its long-term rebuilding blueprint. The goal is build a championship contender built to last, not just to make a one-year push.

"I think we're all aware that's not who we want to be," Hammond said. "Right now, anything we're looking at today is still hopefully going to be focused on maybe acquiring a piece or adding a piece that can be future-to-long term players for this organization."

SPORTS



Turning tail

Tiger taking break from tourney play to work on game » **Page 25**



Bad Apple

For New Yorkers accustomed to mediocre Knicks, Nets, NBA's All-Star weekend is a reminder of better times

Page 31

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY BEV SCHILLING/Stars and Stripes

Karl set to take over as Kings' coach following All-Star break » **Page 29**

Short-handed No. 2 Virginia survives scare from NC State » **Page 26**

