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Obama thanks troops as combat mission ends in Afghanistan

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Free to Deployed Areas



PRESTON GANNAWAY/The Washington Post

Army veteran Katie Weber, shown outside her house in Santa Rosa, Calif., is a survivor of sexual trauma while in the military. She now advocates for the interests of sexual assault victims and runs the Facebook group "Women Veterans for Equality in our VA System."

By EMILY WAX-THIBODEAUX ■ The Washington Post

Female veterans struggle for VA care after sexual trauma

Thousands of female veterans are struggling to get health-care treatment and compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs on the grounds they suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder caused by sexual trauma in the military. The veterans and their advocates call it "the second battle" — with a bureaucracy they say is stuck in the past.

Judy Atwood-Bell was just a 19-year-old Army private when she says she was locked inside a barracks room at Fort Devens in Massachusetts, forced to the cold floor and raped by a fellow soldier.

For more than two decades, Atwood-Bell fought for an apology and financial compensation from VA for PTSD, with panic attacks, insomnia and severe depression that she recalls started soon after that winter day in 1981. She filled out stacks of forms in triplicate and then filled them out again, pressing over and over for recognition of the harm that was done.

VA labels it "military sexual trauma" (MST), cov-

ering any unwanted contact, including sexual innuendo, groping and rape.

A recent VA survey found that one in four women said they experienced sexual harassment or assault. And the problem is growing more pressing because female veterans represent the military's fastest-growing population, with an estimated 2.2 million, or 10 percent, of the country's veterans. More than 280,000 female veterans have returned home from deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

About two weeks ago, when Atwood-Bell checked the VA website, as she does every day, she was stunned to discover that the agency had accepted her claim for compensation.

"It's taken over 20 years, and that should've never happened," said Atwood-Bell, who retired as a sergeant first class and lives in New Hampshire, her voice cracking with emotion. "My fight is not over. It's not done for so many other women out there. I want to help them to get what we are entitled to."

SEE TRAUMA ON PAGE 5

Data: Army deserters rarely face prosecution

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Army has prosecuted about 1,900 cases of desertion since 2001, despite tens of thousands of soldiers fleeing the service in the face of deadly combat, long and multiple deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan and strains on military families.

The data reflects how rarely the military takes desertion cases to court. And it underscores the complexities of such cases as a top military commander reviews the investigation of Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who left his Afghanistan post in 2009 and was captured and held by the Taliban for five years.

More than 20,000 soldiers have been dropped from the rolls as deserters since 2006, Army data show. Totals for earlier years weren't available, but likely include thousands more.

In trial cases during the past 13 years, about half the soldiers pleaded guilty to deserting their posts. Another 78 were tried and convicted of desertion.

Desertion is relatively easy to prove, former Army lawyer Greg Rinckey said, but circumstances such as post-traumatic stress or family problems are also taken into account.

"A lot of deserters suffered from PTSD and other mental health issues, or they were on their second or third deployment," said Rinckey. Numbers spiked as soldiers began deploying to the battlefield, sometimes for as long as 15 months.

SEE DESERTERS ON PAGE 2



Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl walked away from his post in Afghanistan in 2009 and was held by the Taliban for five years. His case is now in the hands of U.S. Army Forces Command. Even if Army officials conclude Bergdahl deserted his post, they

may consider mitigating circumstances while weighing whether to charge him with desertion or being absent without leave. Beyond court-martial, possible actions include counseling, a reprimand, forfeiture of pay, reduction in rank or involuntary separation from the military.

QUOTE
OF THE DAY

"If we can't find more than two or three families to run for high office, that's silly."

— Barbara Bush, wife of former President George H.W. Bush and mother of former President George W. Bush, discussing the Clinton/Bush political dynasties

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MILITARY

Deserters: \$300K in pay at stake for Bergdahl

FROM FRONT PAGE

Some disappearances involved divorce issues or sick children, he said. In other cases, soldiers deserted bases in the United States. Many of these are handled without going to court-martial, with soldiers administratively punished or sometimes medically discharged.

Soldiers who avoid deployment or leave posts in combat zones are more serious cases, particularly if the deserter is responsible for standing guard or protecting others in dangerous places.

"Those are looked at very harshly," said Rinckey, now a partner with the Washington law firm Tully Rinckey, "because commanders have a unit of other people who are looking at that soldier and saying, 'I don't want to go either,' so obviously there has to be an example made."

Rinckey and other military officials say the Bergdahl case will be difficult. It's now in the hands of Gen. Mark Milley, head of U.S. Army Forces Command at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Even if Milley concludes Bergdahl deserted his post, he may consider mitigating circumstances while weighing whether to charge the soldier with desertion or being absent without leave. He may also handle the matter administratively.

Milley has broad discretion, Army spokesman Wayne Hall

said. Beyond court-martial, possible actions include counseling, a reprimand, forfeiture of pay, reduction in rank or involuntary separation from the military.

Bergdahl could receive an honorable, general or other-than-honorable discharge. That decision can determine whether he gets as much as \$300,000 in back pay and other benefits, including continued health care.

Bergdahl deliberately walked away, an initial U.S. military investigation found in 2009 based on available evidence. Since his release, some who served with him have called him a deserter and said he should be held accountable for leaving his post. Others have said troops were put in danger, and even killed, as they searched for Bergdahl.

The maximum punishment for desertion during a time of war is death. That outcome is highly unlikely. Only one servicemember, Pvt. Eddie Slovik, was executed for desertion since the Civil War. Slovik, 24, was shot by a firing squad in January 1945. His execution, approved by then-Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, was kept secret by the Army until nine years later.

Bergdahl was handed over to U.S. special forces in Afghanistan in May in exchange for five top Taliban commanders who were imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.



PEGGY PRATTIE, U-T SAN DIEGO/AP

Home for the holidays

Shanita Frieson and her son, Anthony Black, 7, are reunited Wednesday in San Diego. The USS Peleliu arrived home to Naval Base San Diego from a six-month deployment in the western Pacific just in time to reunite hundreds of Navy families for the holidays. It was the final homecoming for the Peleliu, which will be decommissioned in March. The last Tarawa-class amphibious assault ship has been in service for 34 years, made 17 deployments and traveled more than a million miles. It was named for a World War II battle in the Pacific.

Coalition strike kills 3 armed Afghan villagers

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — An airstrike by U.S.-led coalition forces on Friday killed three Afghan villagers who were "heavily armed" but not part of the Taliban insurgency, an Afghan official said.

The governor of eastern Logar province, Neyaz Mohammad Amiri, said the coalition had told local authorities that the dead were Taliban insurgents, but that villagers in the remote Ab Josh area disputed that claim, say-

ing the dead were civilians who were protecting their land from nomads.

"The reason the coalition forces fired on them is that they were heavily armed," Amiri said. "Of course, it was a mistake by the coalition forces, but at the same time I blame the villagers for carrying the heavy weapons."

He said Afghan security forces had been deployed to Ab Josh two days ago to mediate a clash between the villagers and Kuchi nomads, who have a reputation

for violence and are often armed with machine guns and heavier weapons.

Security in Logar has deteriorated in recent months as the insurgents have spread their footprint across the country and taken control of some remote regions. But the war has also provided cover for local feuds, violent property disputes and organized crime.

The 13-year U.S.-led combat mission will officially end on Dec. 31. About 13,000 U.S. and NATO troops will remain to provide

training and battlefield support.

Elsewhere in the country, a woman and two men, members of the same family, were killed in southern Helmand province when the motorcycle they were sharing hit a roadside bomb, said the provincial governor's spokesman, Omar Zawaq.

In neighboring Kandahar, four members of the intelligence service and a civilian were killed when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb in Dund district, provincial police spokesman Zia Durrani said.



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MILITARY

Obama marks end of combat in Afghanistan

By JOSH LEDERMAN
The Associated Press

KANEHOE BAY, Hawaii — President Barack Obama marked the end of more than a decade of combat in Afghanistan by paying tribute to America's military, telling troops on Christmas Day that their sacrifices have allowed for a more peaceful, prosperous world to emerge out of the ashes of 9/11.

At an oceanfront Marine Corps base in Hawaii, Obama told troops that while tough challenges remain for the U.S. military in hot spots like Iraq and West Africa, the world as a whole is better off because American troops put country first and served with distinction. He said Americans and their president could not be more thankful.

"Because of the extraordinary service of the men and women in the American armed forces, Afghanistan has a chance to rebuild its own country," Obama said to applause from Marines and their

families. "We are safer. It's not going to be a source of terrorist attacks again."

Thirteen years and \$1 trillion later, the U.S. is preparing to pull the majority of its combat troops out of Afghanistan by year's end, as the U.S. and its partners seek to turn the page on a bloody chapter that started the day that al-Qaida militants struck American soil on Sept. 11, 2001. From a peak 140,000 troops in 2010, the U.S. and NATO plan to leave just 13,500 behind for training and battlefield support.

Although there are reasons for cautious optimism, including a new Afghan president whose seriousness of effort has inspired U.S. confidence, the broader picture still looks glum.

The U.S. is shifting to a supporting role after the bloodiest year in Afghanistan since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion. Civilian casualties this year are on track to hit 10,000, and some 5,000 Afghan forces were also killed in 2014, a



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama greet troops and their families on Christmas Day at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay during the Obama family vacation.

figure that has escalated as the country took on a greater role in its own security. Insurgents have seized territory across the country, raising fears that Islamic militants will successfully exploit the security vacuum formed as the U.S. pulls out.

Roughly 2,200 U.S. troops were killed in Afghanistan over the last 13 years in a war that cost the U.S. \$1 trillion, plus another \$100 billion for reconstruction.

A celebratory cheer of "hoorah" rang out from the hundreds of troops here when Obama affirmed that the combat mission was finally ending.

"We still have some very dif-

ficult missions around the world — including in Iraq," Obama said. But, he added, "The world is better, it's safer, it's more peaceful, it's more prosperous, and our homeland is protected because of you."

On the U.S. mainland and across the globe, other prominent leaders were fanning out, echoing the president's message with their own Christmas visits and phone calls to American troops.

Vice President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, visited the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., to spend time with wounded troops and their families and express

gratitude for their service. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel called military members on deployment, the Pentagon said, including those in Afghanistan and others assigned to U.S. Central Command, which is running the U.S. mission to fight the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., was spending Christmas in Kabul, Afghanistan, where the former Navy pilot met Thursday with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his chief executive officer, Abdullah Abdullah. A chief critic of Obama's foreign policy, McCain is set to lead the Senate Armed Services Committee next year.



Left: Santa walks through a dining hall at the headquarters of the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan on Christmas. Right: Soldiers toast the holiday with nonalcoholic beer.



PHOTOS BY HEATH DRUZIN/Stars and Stripes

As troop numbers fall in Afghanistan, another holiday at war

By HEATH DRUZIN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Spc. Ryan Asta was just 11 years old when American troops spent their first Christmas in Afghanistan.

Thirteen years later, it was Asta's turn to ring in the holiday

at the Kabul, Afghanistan, headquarters of the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force.

"Seems like a normal day — better food, though," the 24-year-old military policeman said while enjoying the Christmas meal in a dining hall decked out with green

and red tinsel, Christmas trees and more than one Frosty the Snowman.

On Thursday, Christmas tunes complemented ham, prime rib, mashed potatoes with gravy and the ever-present near beer, a staple of U.S. dining halls throughout the long, alcohol-free war. Even

Santa made an appearance, albeit sporting a sidearm.

For Army Sgt. Alex Newman, the highlight of the day was to come later that night when he planned to get on Skype with his family, including his three children. The Oregon National Guard soldier, spending his first Christ-

mas at war, said that joking with his fellow soldiers took the sting away from missing home.

"It's not the most fun, but we've got a good platoon, so it's all right," he said.

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MILITARY

Judge: Ex-VA official was given 'inappropriate gifts'

By Emily Wax-Thibodeaux
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The government agency charged with making sure federal employees are treated fairly upheld this week the Department of Veterans Affairs' decision to "formally remove" Sharon Helman, director of the Phoenix Department of Veterans Affairs' Health Care System and the leader at the center of the biggest scandal in the agency's history.

But the ruling by the Merit Systems Protection Board could not substantiate that Helman knew or should have known that employees at her hospital lied about health-care wait times for former troops seeking treatment for everything from cancer to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Instead, as the basis for upholding her removal, the judge named other charges against her by the VA, which said she accepted "inappropriate gifts," such as a trip to Disneyland "in excess of \$11,000 for what appears to be six of her family members for an 8-night stay," and \$729.50 for five tickets last year and parking to a Beyonce concert on Aug. 24, 2013.

The ruling finds she accepted a total of nine gifts offered by a consultant whose "very business is to assist its clients in securing favorable government contracts, particularly with the Department of Veterans Affairs, including five airline tickets between Phoenix and El Paso, Texas, Portland and Vancouver and entry fees for the Mississippi Blues marathon, according to the ruling.

The gifts were given to her by

Dennis "Max" Lewis, vice president of the Jefferson Consulting group, who "was seeking to do business" with one or more VA outpatient clinics under her management, the MSPB ruling says. The agency said the 61-page report speaks for itself and could not comment further.

Helman became a symbol of the VA's failure to provide medical care for veterans, and veterans' groups often complained about the fact that the agency took seven months to investigate the charges while she was placed on administrative leave and still received her \$170,000 annual salary.

Garry Augustine, executive director of the Washington headquarters of the Disabled American Veteran, said her removal was akin to getting Al Capone for tax evasion.

"Let's take the example of Al Capone. The bottom line is, she is gone. We got her," he said.

Some charges rejected

In the ruling, Chief Administrative Judge Stephen Mish rejected the VA's other charges, which said that Helman failed to see that veterans were waiting months or even years to get health care. But the judge said the VA failed to demonstrate any actions or inactions on the part of Helman that caused it.

"To phrase it more colloquially, an agency must connect the dots of fault from the identified failure by the subordinates back up the line to the manager," the judge wrote. "The agency did not attempt to do so here. Accordingly, this specification is not

sustained."

Similarly, the VA said Helman failed to process 2,500 new claims that were found, which led hundreds of veterans to be without health care for more than a year. But the judge again said the VA did not provide enough information to the board.

The ruling also points out that linking Helman's removal to the wait-times issue is complex. The report notes that the VA's office of the inspector general did not interview Helman about wait times during their investigation into the issue.

The IG's office had no comment on the issue.

The ruling comes after complaints from a growing chorus of Republicans who said the VA was not acting quickly enough to discipline officials responsible for the wrongdoing, despite legislation this summer to expedite the process for firing VA senior executives.

Under the new law passed after the scandal, an executive who is removed has seven days from the effective date of the removal to file an appeal with the Merit Systems Protection Board. The board must issue a decision within 21 days after the appeal is filed.

In the Helman ruling, the judge also indicated that the law only gives the board a few weeks to do "what normally requires several weeks or more to do correctly," and that expectation is "simply not realistic."

Law scrutinized

The decision raises questions about whether the law Congress



MICHAEL CHOW, THE (PHOENIX ARIZONA REPUBLIC/AP)

Sharon Helman, former director of Phoenix Veterans Affairs Health Care Center, is seen in Phoenix in April.

passed will be effective in allowing the VA to fire officials involved in the scandal.

Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., who heads the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said that this issue is something "our committee will study in detail next Congress in order to help maximize the department's ability to get rid of corrupt and reckless managers in the future."

"While I am glad the MSPB upheld Sharon Helman's firing, the fact that the ruling did not connect the central figure of VA's wait time scandal to any wait time schemes demonstrates a huge problem with the way this case was handled," he said in an e-mailed statement. "Additionally, this decision highlights how there are many other Phoenix VAMC employees who have contributed to the facility's problems. It's absolutely critical that VA take steps to ensure these individuals are held accountable as soon as possible to the maximum extent under the law."

Finally, the judge's contention, he said, that "at least some senior agency leaders were aware, or should have been, of (nationwide scheduling) problems underscores the need for a detailed

investigation into whether VA officials in Washington knew about widespread wait time fraud and when they knew it. VA leaders owe it to our veterans and America's taxpayers to seek answers to these unknowns."

The VA released an e-mailed statement that said: "We are making progress in improving access to care at Phoenix and VA facilities nationwide, and we are pleased that MSPB's decision today helps us begin to put the leadership failures at Phoenix behind us."

The law firm of Shaw Bransford & Roth P.C., which represented Helman, released a statement on Wednesday, saying that the ruling shows that the VA couldn't prove Helman manipulated wait-time data.

"The VA never asked or instructed Ms. Helman to sit for any interview regarding any of those public allegations," the emailed statement said. "But the MSPB's decision sets the story straight. Sharon Helman did not kill veterans. Sharon Helman did not manipulate wait time data. The VA's preferred storyline has been proven a fabrication, of which the VA was aware the entire time."

'American Sniper' author's widow to appeal defamation trial verdict

By Randy Furst
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

MINNEAPOLIS — The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has been asked to overturn the verdict in the defamation case of former Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura, who was awarded \$1.8 million in August by a jury following a trial in U.S. District Court in St. Paul.

A notice of the appeal was filed with the circuit court on Tuesday

morning by Taya Kyle, executor of the estate of the late Chris Kyle, author of the best-selling memoir, "American Sniper," which contains a subchapter about an incident in a California bar involving Ventura that the jury decided never happened.

Taya Kyle is Chris Kyle's widow. Chris Kyle was a member of the Navy SEALs and a sniper in the Iraq War who was killed in an unrelated incident in 2012 after the

book was published.

The book claimed that Kyle confronted a man he called "Scuff Face," later identified as Ventura, in a bar where a wake for a SEAL who was killed in Iraq was taking place. Ventura criticized the war and President George W. Bush, Kyle wrote, and said that the SEALs "deserved to lose a few," Kyle wrote that he punched Ventura and knocked him down.

Taya Kyle's attorneys produced

witnesses who backed up much of the story, but their accounts differed. Ventura, who is a former member of an underwater demolition team attached to the SEALs, admitted he was at the bar but denied he made the remarks and that he was ever punched. He produced witnesses to support his position.

As is typical of notices of appeal, there were no details as to what Taya Kyle's attorneys will

argue before the appeals court. Briefs will be submitted by both sides in the case, there may be oral arguments, and it will be many months before the appeals courts will rule.

Chris Kyle's book has been turned into a movie, also called "American Sniper," which began showing on Thursday. The film does not contain any reference to the Ventura bar fight, according to those who have seen it.

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MILITARY

Trauma: Advocates say lack of paperwork often hinders disability claims

FROM FRONT PAGE

The Pentagon has been conducting a high-profile campaign to prevent sexual attacks and to punish offenders amid concerns that defense officials neglected these assaults for years.

But advocacy groups say VA has been slow to adjust to the rising number of women in the military.

Some health centers, for instance, only recently opened female restrooms. Women who come in for treatment at VA centers say they are routinely asked if they are waiting for their husbands or are lost. And while there are a few showcase centers for female veterans, a third of VA medical centers lack gynecologists on staff, according to a report by Disabled American Veterans, or DAV. Thirty-one percent of VA clinics lack staff to provide adequate treatment for sexual assault, according to a recent report by the Institute of Medicine.

Female veterans, in part, are pressing for more VA centers that specifically treat military sexual trauma, with separate waiting rooms and more doctors, therapists and social workers with experience in issues of sexual assault in the military. The agency also says it is increasing the staff responsible for promoting VA benefits to female veterans and helping them with claims, especially those involving sexual abuse.

This month, VA announced it would expand mental health services to reservists and National Guard members who were sexually assaulted while on inactive duty.

VA simply must be an organization that provides comprehensive care for all veterans dealing with the effects of military sexual trauma," McDonald said. "Our range of services for MST-related experiences are constantly being improved to be able to meet the needs of our veterans."

This year, it became easier for survivors of this sexual trauma to get treatment because the government ended the requirement that military members produce proof they were harassed before they can get health care.

But advocates say thousands of female veterans confront an even larger problem: They are unable to get disability compensation benefits for sexual trauma because they do not have the paperwork to support their claims. Advocacy groups and VA officials blame a culture of secrecy and denial inside the military that heavily discourages women from reporting sexual assault.

VA officials said they are encouraging female veterans to reapply for benefits for PTSD caused by the sexual abuse and that they are re-reviewing cases.

'Mental health' label

Elena Giordano said she was



PRESTON GANNAWAY/for The Washington Post

Army veteran Katie Weber, a survivor of sexual trauma in the military, said that when she returned home, she found that VA lacked adequate medical and mental health services and had little understanding of how sexual trauma can be a factor in PTSD.

raped about 10 years ago by two men on separate occasions while serving aboard a Navy aircraft carrier in the Pacific Ocean as an airman recruit. When she reported the attacks, she said, Giordano was discharged with "mental health issues," a label that advocates say is often applied by military officers to women who report rape.

Giordano, now 29, said she had never wanted to go public with her complaint. She originally had asked to be assigned to the carrier and didn't want to leave it. But after the second attack, she said, "I just had to leave. I couldn't be around men without having a panic attack."

When she returned home to Arizona, VA agreed to provide counseling and medical treatment. But VA denied her disability benefits, citing the "totality of the evidence."

Veterans with service-connected disabilities — whether it's a back injury or PTSD, and including sexual trauma and assault — are entitled to compensation if they are causing lasting pain or make the individuals unable to work. The benefits can run from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand per month, depending on the injuries and their impact, according to federal law.

But in cases of sexual trauma, veterans often lack medical records and other documentation required for compensation through VA because the women do not report the incidents. Also, until recently, the Defense Department allowed the destruction of rape kits after one year and of sexual harassment and sexual assault reports after as little as two years.

Atwood-Bell, for instance, said sexual assault was something female troops did not dare talk about for fear that they would face retaliation and be discharged with a "mental health diagnosis." She said her application for benefits was rejected twice due to lack of evidence.

The Pentagon released new data on Dec. 4 that showed that 62 percent of those who reported being sexually assaulted had experienced retaliation or ostracism afterward, whether from superiors or peers in the service.

Because many survivors of sexual trauma lack traditional

paper trails, VA officials who evaluate claims have to search for what they call "markers," such as changes in performance reviews, e-mails or letters with friends or clergy about attacks, reports of depression and anxiety, weight loss or gain, requests for pregnancy tests or tests for sexually transmitted diseases.

"These are not easy claims. But I am very passionate about this issue," said Diana Williard, the quality assurance officer with the Veterans Benefits Administration. "And you do almost have to be like a little detective putting it together. But if there is even one bit of circumstantial evidence, we send them to a mental health counselor to see if they have PTSD."

'Broken policy'

Anu Bhagwati, executive director of Service Women's Action Network, calls the marker system "unfair and absurd."

Her organization, along with the Vietnam Veterans of America, filed a federal lawsuit against VA in July, alleging that VA's policies are discriminatory and claiming that experts consistently impose a higher burden of proof on survivors of rape in the military than on other veterans when it comes to verifying reports of PTSD.

The plaintiffs argue that veterans seeking disability benefits for combat-related PTSD do not have to provide evidence other than their own statements and a mental health professionals' reviews linking their illnesses to military service.

"It's just a broken policy. So veterans experience betrayal from the sexual assault, from the way they are treated by their units after the assault, and then by the VA when they file claims," said Bhagwati, a former captain in the Marine Corps. "The VA became the last place, after a long line of places, where any hope they had left of getting help just dies."

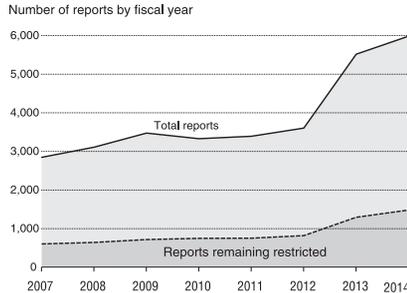
VA officials would not comment on the pending litigation.

Former Army private first class Katie Weber said she was raped by another soldier when she was 18 while posted in Nuremberg, Germany. She tried to report it but was told that it didn't really happen and to "not tell anyone

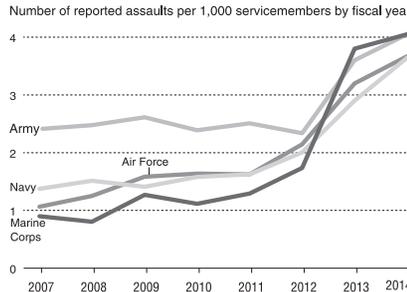
Sexual assault in the military

The numbers given to the president in the Defense Department annual report on sexual assault in the military have taken a dramatic upswing in the past two fiscal years. But, advocates and the Pentagon warn that the numbers of victims is probably higher because women often don't report assaults.

REPORTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT MADE TO THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT



VICTIM REPORTING OF SEXUAL ASSAULT BY MILITARY SERVICE



SOURCE: 2014 Report to the President on Sexual Assault THE WASHINGTON POST
Prevention and Response in the military

in the same breath," recounted Weber. "When I told another official, they said I was 'jumping the chain of command.' And that I was probably 'just really confused and a little slut.'" When she went home, she discovered that there was a severe lack of suitable medical and mental health services at VA and little understanding of how sexual trauma can cause PTSD. So Weber started a Facebook group called "Women Veterans for Equality in our VA System" to advocate for the interests of those who suffered sexual trauma in the military.

"We were really isolated," said Weber, now 40 and living in California. "So enter Facebook."

It was her encouragement and the Facebook group that ultimately persuaded a weary Giordano to resume her fight for benefits.

Giordano said she got "the letter" in late November, saying she indeed would be getting compensation benefits.

"I may never understand why they changed their mind and finally believed me," she said. "But I am glad they did. That's my hope for justice and dignity for all of the other women who have suffered this."

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WAR ON TERRORISM

Captured pilot's father pleads for his release

BY OMAR AKOUR
AND DIAA HADID
The Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — The father of a Jordanian pilot captured by the Islamic State group in Syria pleaded for his son's release on Thursday, asking the group to treat him well in captivity as a fellow Muslim.

So far, there has been silence from the extremists about the fate of their captive, 1st Lt. Mu'ath al-Kaseasbeh, since gunmen from the group dragged him away following his crash Wednesday morning.

Al-Kaseasbeh was carrying out airstrikes against the militants when his warplane crashed near the northern Syrian city of Raqqa, the Islamic State group's de facto capital. The group has executed captured Iraqi and Syrian Muslim soldiers in the past — it follows an extremist version of Islam that considers rivals, even some Sunni Muslims, as apostates. Still, the group may want to negotiate a prisoner swap or other concessions from Jordan.

The pilot's father, Safi Yousef

al-Kaseasbeh, made his plea while speaking to journalists in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

"I direct a message to our generous brothers of the Islamic State in Syria: to host my son, the pilot Mu'ath, with God's generosity and hospitality," he said. "I ask God that their hearts are gathered together with love, and that he is returned to his family, wife and mother."
"We are all Muslims," he added.

The pilot is the first known military member to be captured from the international coalition that has been waging a bombing campaign against the Islamic State group for months, trying to break its control over territory stretching across Syria and Iraq.

After the crash, al-Kaseasbeh was pulled by gunmen from a body of water and was hustled away, according to photos published by the Raqqa Media Center, which operates in areas under Islamic State control. He appeared to be able to walk and the only visible injury was what appeared to be a spot of blood at his mouth.



RAAD ADAYEN/AP

Masked people shout slogans calling for the freedom of Jordanian pilot Mu'ath al-Kaseasbeh, held by the Islamic State group in the Syrian city of Raqqa, as police officers try to control the protest after prayers Friday in downtown Amman, Jordan.



DALTON BENNETT/AP

Kurdish Peshmerga forces inspect a site in Hardan village in northern Iraq where Islamic State group fighters allegedly executed people from the Yazidi sect.

Yazidi village wrested from militants yields grisly finds

BY DALTON BENNETT
The Associated Press

HARDAN, Iraq — After he fled from this tiny northern Iraqi hamlet four months ago, Hayder Khalef got panicked phone calls from his relatives who had remained behind. They were at that moment being led by Islamic State group gunmen toward a checkpoint on the edge of town.

"If you don't hear from us, you'll find our bodies near the checkpoint," Khalef said they told him in the calls.

He is back in his hometown for the first time since, after Iraqi Kurdish fighters last week drove out the extremists holding the village. Khalef and a few other residents who escaped followed the Kurds in, hoping to discover what happened to hundreds of their relatives and neighbors who vanished after the jihad overran Hardan in early August.

They fear they know where they are: four mounds of recently dug-up earth. The sites have not yet been excavated, but Khalef and others are convinced they are mass graves, possibly holding dozens of dead. From the loose topos of earth, they and Kurdish fighters pulled out pieces of clothing as an Associated Press reporter watched.

At one point, they tugged on the elastic waistband of pants visible in the dirt — and it seemed a body was still wearing them. The ground bulged with the weight of a body being pulled up with the waistband. They stopped pulling, fearing booby traps, before a body could be clearly seen. But an ID card and some prayer beads fell out of the pants pocket — the ID of a 44-year-old man named Khero Khudeda Rufe. One returning resident, Khaled Wase, recognized the name as a neighbor who is among the missing.

There is no way to definitively say the mounds are graves nor to know how many bodies are in them until they are dug up. The Kurds have no plan to do so immediately, though they have cordoned off the four sites with tape. Fighting continues with Islamic State militants not far away, and the situation is too unstable to deal with searching for bodies. But Wase and Khalef say they are certain their loved ones are buried in the sites.

"They are all from my village and some of my cousins were arrested (by the militants) and may be here," Wase said, referring to the earth mounds. "My relatives are there along with all those from my village." Wase and Khalef estimate that some 530 people are

missing from Hardan, out of an original population of about 200 families, and he believes most were killed by the militants.

Hardan is one of a number of tiny villages dotting the plains of northern Iraq populated by members of the Yazidi religious community. When the Islamic State group swept through the area in early August, its fighters unleashed some of their most brutal atrocities against the Yazidis — whom they consider heretics. Hundreds were killed, and the militants abducted hundreds of Yazidi women and girls, enlisting them as sex slaves given to their fighters and supporters, according to accounts by escaped women and reports collected by the U.N. and rights groups.

On Aug. 3 — the same day they took the largest town in the area, Sinjar — the militants appeared at the entrance to Hardan in eight black SUVs, backed by Sunni Muslims from neighboring villages, Wase recounted. They ordered residents to hand over any weapons they possessed or else the extremists would behead their families, Wase said. The residents complied. Some fled that very night, including Wase and Khalef. Others were unable to leave, however, and stayed, hoping for the best, they said.

Iraq seeks Turkish support in fighting Islamic State

BY SUZAN FRASER
The Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Iraq and Turkey on Thursday discussed cooperation in countering the threat posed by the Islamic State group, including an Iraqi request for intelligence sharing and the possible delivery of Turkish arms to Iraqi forces, Iraq's prime min-

ister said.

Haider al-Abadi told reporters during a visit to the Turkish capital that he had provided "lists" of things Iraq was requesting from Turkey that included military cooperation, training and delivering weapons to fighters.

"(Islamic State group) is not only a threat to Iraq and Turkey, but is it a threat to the whole re-

gion. Therefore, there is a need for cooperation. That's what we expect of Turkey," al-Abadi said.

"Whether it is military, intelligence sharing, training or even arms — these were talked about," al-Abadi said.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said Turkey was ready to provide Iraq the assistance it needed, but didn't elaborate. He said the

countries' defense ministries were holding discussions.

"On the issue of support, we are ready to provide training ... We have provided support to the Peshmerga forces that are battling Daesh in northern Iraq," Davutoglu said, using the Arabic acronym for the militant group. "We are open to all kinds of opinions concerning the support to be

provided."

Turkey has declared it is willing to train and equip forces fighting Islamic State and also has allowed about 150 Peshmerga fighters to cross into Syria from its territory, but has been reluctant to provide greater support to the U.S.-led coalition. Turkey insists that the coalition also must aim to topple Syrian President Bashar Assad.

NATION

Crowds pack screenings of 'The Interview'

By HILLEL ITALIE
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Critics and early viewers agree that "The Interview" is less than a masterpiece. But thanks to threats from hackers that nearly derailed its release, it has become an event.

Hundreds of theaters Thursday, from The Edge 8 in Greenville, Ala., to Michael Moore's Bijou by the Bay in Traverse City, Mich., made special holiday arrangements for the Seth Rogen-James Franco comedy depicting the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Sony Pictures initially had called off the release after major theater chains dropped the movie that was to have opened on as many as 3,000 screens.

But with President Obama among others criticizing the deci-

sion, Sony officials changed their minds. "The Interview" became available on a variety of digital platforms Wednesday afternoon, including Google Play, YouTube Movies, Microsoft's Xbox Video and a separate Sony website. Meanwhile, Sony and independent theaters agreed to release it in more than 300 venues on Christmas.

"We are taking a stand for freedom," said theater manager Lee Peterson of the Cinema Village East in Manhattan, where most of Thursday's seven screenings had sold out by early afternoon. "We want to show the world that Americans will not be told what we can or cannot watch. Personally, I am not afraid."

At Atlanta's Plaza Theater, a sellout crowd Thursday hailed the film's release, washing down popcorn with beer and cocktails

and uniting for a boisterous sing-along of "God Bless America" before the opening credits.

"This is way more fun than it would have been," said Jim Kelley of Atlanta, who waited outside with his daughter, Shannon. The elder Kelley added, with mocking sarcasm, "This is almost dangerous, like we're living life on the edge."

Some venues showing "The Interview" were more likely to feature documentaries about North Korea than a low-brow comedy about it. At the Jean Cocteau Cinema in Santa Fe, N.M., owned by "Game of Thrones" author George RR Martin, the schedule also includes the Spanish art-house release "Flamenco," the locally made "The Twilight Angel" and an Italian film festival. The Film Society of Lincoln Center, which begins screening "The In-

terview" on Friday, will soon be hosting a tribute to "Force Majeure" director Ruben Ostlund of Sweden and a documentary about the late Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer.

The back story of "The Interview" has itself played out like a Hollywood satire, in which a cartoonish farce distracts from some of the holiday season's most prestigious films: "Selma," the drama about the 1965 civil rights march; Angelina Jolie's adaptation of the best-selling World War II story "Unbroken"; and the all-star, big-screen version of Stephen Sondheim's "Into the Woods."

Security was light at many theaters, with the occasional police officer on hand. The possibility of violence was taken more seriously by the movie industry than by government officials. Last week,

the Department of Homeland Security released a statement saying that there were no credible threats.

Meanwhile, Darrell Foxworth, a special agent for the FBI in San Diego, said Wednesday the agency was sharing information with independent movie theater owners showing "The Interview" out of "an abundance of caution" and to educate them about cyber-threats and what help the FBI can offer.

Kim Song, a North Korean diplomat to the United Nations, condemned the release Wednesday, calling the movie an "unpardonable mockery of our sovereignty and dignity of our supreme leader." But Kim said North Korea will likely limit its response to condemnation, with no "physical reaction."



MARCELLA CORONA, RENO (NEV.) GAZETTE-JOURNAL/AP

Several goats munch on a pine tree in Reno, Nev., on Tuesday.

Nev. goats help recycle Christmas trees

The Associated Press

RENO, Nev. — Goats are known to eat just about anything, but it didn't dawn on Vince Thomas until recently that the menu might include Christmas trees.

"They'll eat the pine needles and leave the skeleton of the tree," said Thomas, a longtime volunteer firefighter who has come up with a new use for his family-owned goat herding business, "Goat Grazers."

"It basically looks like Charlie Brown's Christmas with a scrawny tree that has nothing but the branches," he told the Reno Gazette-Journal.

Thomas is launching a new program with the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District on Friday to use his 40 goats to help recycle Christmas trees.

He said he got tired of watching people discard the trees in landfills or dump them onto public property, where they became a

fire danger.

"It was amazing to me to see how many Christmas trees people would just toss out there," he said.

Thomas said his goats have been used in the past to help graze in areas with fire-prone weeds along the Sierra's eastern front.

"We thought, 'What a great way to get rid of the weeds,'" he said. "We had the idea of doing just that with the recycling program and we thought about the trees."

"And the goats are great employees, they love their job and they don't complain."

Thomas said he noticed not long ago that no weeds were growing at his daughter's home in Spanish Springs, northeast of Reno, where she raises rabbits, pigs and goats.

"It was my daughter's goats. They ate every single weed in our yard," he said. He became curious and tossed a piece of pine tree to the goats, and they devoured it

— pine needles and all.

"I did a lot of research on that, and it's OK for the goats," Thomas said. "With cattle and some of the other animals, it can cause miscarriages. But for goats, it's a natural dewormer, and pine is very high in vitamin C, so it's healthy for them."

Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful is among a number of groups in the area that recycle trees and are glad to have the help from the goats.

"A lot of people dump it out on the desert and that's really a problem because people think it's a natural thing and it will decompose," said J Merriman, communications manager for the group that has been chopping recycled trees into mulch for 24 years. "But because we're out in the desert, they don't decompose, it will just get drier and drier and it really becomes a serious fire hazard."

Officers help deliver baby on Pa. train

PHILADELPHIA — A pair of Philadelphia transit police officers rushed onto a downtown subway train on Christmas and helped make a special delivery: a baby boy.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority Sgt. Daniel Caban and Officer Darrell James joined the delivery-in-progress shortly before 6 p.m. Thursday at the 15th and Market streets station.

They coached the woman through the delivery, unwrapped the umbilical cord from the baby's neck and placed the boy into her

arms. The baby's father wrapped him in a shirt to keep warm.

"Everything just happened so quick, but it was amazing," James told WCATV.

The mother and the newborn were taken to Hahnemann University Hospital, where they were reported in good condition.

SEPTA police Chief Thomas Nestel III tweeted his excitement over the birth, writing: "Transit Police Sgt. and PO deliver baby on Market Frankford El train!!!! WOOHOO!!! Now that's a Christmas gift!!!!"

Later, the chief joked that he had waived the fare for SEPTA's "newest rider."

From The Associated Press

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NATION

College offers guarantee for graduates' salary success

By JEFF KAROUB
The Associated Press

ADRIAN, Mich. — When it came time to pick a college, Abby Slusher leaned toward a private school near her southeastern Michigan home for the small campus and class sizes. Her mother pushed Adrian College for another reason: A new program guaranteeing every graduate would make more than \$37,000, or get some or all student loans reimbursed.

Adrian is among the first colleges to take out insurance policies on every incoming freshman and transfer student who has stu-

dent loans and at least two years of school remaining.

"She said, 'Look at me, I'm still trying to pay my student loans off — this would be great. I don't want you in this situation,'" said Slusher, 18, who is studying to become a social worker. "And seeing her in this situation, I don't want that."

The idea has been around for a few decades at Yale Law School and specific programs elsewhere such as seminary and social work degrees. Some small, religious schools started offering guarantees to all new students in recent years, but Adrian President Jeffrey Docking is taking it further by framing the program as a solu-

tion to skyrocketing tuition costs and student loan defaults. His crusade has gotten the attention of U.S. lawmakers and education officials.

Adrian paid roughly \$575,000 this year, or \$1,165 per student, to take out policies on 495 students. For those who graduate and get jobs that pay less than \$20,000 per year, the college will make full monthly student loan payments until they make \$37,000 per year. With a job that pays between \$20,000 and \$37,000, the college makes payments on a sliding scale.

There's no time limit for the payment plan, but the college caps total loan payments at \$70,000 per



CARLOS OSORIO/AP

Michigan's private Adrian College guarantees every graduate will earn at least \$37,000 per year, or they get some or all student loans reimbursed.

student. Adrian's annual cost of tuition, room and board is about \$40,000 before any forms of financial aid.

The school has 1,700 students. Docking already sees benefits: The entering freshmen class is up about 50 students to 570; to

break even, the school determined it needed about two dozen new students who took out loans.

He credits the program in part for the enrollment increase, but said other efforts, like launching a varsity bass fishing team, have served as a lure.

Mother Nature a formidable foe for Alamo replica

By MICHAEL GRACZYK
The Associated Press

BRACKETTVILLE, Texas — Time and Mother Nature are threatening to dismantle the Alamo. Not the original, but the replica 18th-century Spanish mission and Old West movie set John Wayne built for his Oscar-nominated 1960 movie and that for decades was a tourist mecca and film production site.

"It's not just something that represents history to a movie set — it is now history for sure," said Rich Curilla, the one-man curator and custodian of the now-closed Alamo Village.

Alamo Village, a 400-acre plot of land about 120 miles west of San Antonio, was carved out of a large ranch in the late 1950s for Wayne's directorial debut. Starring Richard Widmark as Jim Bowie and Wayne as Davy Crockett, "The Alamo" had an estimated \$12 million budget, huge for its time.

The 4-foot-thick Alamo facade was modeled off a 1936 map of the historic building — drawn up for the Texas centennial that year — and set construction took nearly two years. Unlike the real Alamo, which is dwarfed by taller buildings in the heart of San Antonio, the view from Wayne's Alamo offered a panorama of iconic Texas and Western images.

"Minnesota Public Radio News reported Friday that the student-led club launching in January will



ERIC GAY/AP

The replica of the Alamo built for John Wayne's 1960 movie, framed by arches at the movie set in Brackettville, Texas, is falling into disrepair.

begin working there full time in 1988. "I think Wayne was cognizant of building a monument and not just a movie set."

In its heyday, Wayne's Alamo hosted Jimmy Stewart, Dean Martin, Raquel Welch and even Willie Nelson. It's where James Arness reprised his famous Matt Dillon role in a "Gunsmoke" TV movie.

In all, nearly 40 major film and TV productions, plus hundreds of commercials, documentaries and music videos were shot at Alamo Village. And musical shows, comedy skits and staged gunfights drew hundreds of tourists daily.

"It was magical," said Penny Loewen, who was 18 in 1979 when she arrived from

tiny St. Francisville, Ill. She stayed for three years, getting paid \$350 per month to sing and perform six days per week, 11 hours per day.

"We would do just about anything," said Loewen, 55, a retired Nashville songwriter who remained involved with movie productions for 20 years. "That was the most fun I ever had in my life."

Business at Alamo Village began to wane in the 1980s when traffic along the main east-west route through South Texas shifted north with completion of Interstate 10. It closed to the public after the last remaining owner died in 2009 and the property was divided among heirs. The land now primarily is used for cattle grazing and hunting.

In recent years, a large crack has developed on the front of the Alamo facade. A tree grows inside. Other walls and structures that have been replaced or redone are falling.

At the main entrance to the ranch, only an abandoned ticket booth and a weathered sign telling visitors they're entering the world's largest outdoor movie set hint at its storied past.

Corpus Christi businessman David Jones, 74, envisions saving Alamo Village as a Texas version of Old Tucson, a thriving Old West theme park in southern Arizona.

Jones, who describes himself as a lifelong friend of the former owners, said he's close to raising the \$8 million he believes is necessary to buy the property and to ready it for visitors.

Minnesota high school students start sex education club

The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS PARK, Minn. — In a first-of-its-kind program in Minnesota, students at St. Louis Park High School are forming a sexual health education club to cover topics they say aren't getting enough attention in their regular health class.

Minnesota Public Radio News reported Friday that the student-led club launching in January will

cover a multitude of topics including birth control, abstinence and sexually transmitted infections. The club, open to students from grades 9-12, also will discuss how to foster healthy relationships.

It's been in the works for about six months and involved getting permission from school officials. While it will meet in classroom space, the club won't receive any school funding and must operate outside of the school day.

Shoshi Fischman, 17, said she and two co-founders had to spell out the topics and detail leader training to get clearance for the program.

"We're here to educate and instill confidence in people to make their own choices and they can say 'no' when they want to say 'no' and know how to control their own bodies and do everything that they can do for themselves," Fischman said. "We're here to

educate people on the topic of safe sex, not just to have sex and not to just promote sex."

Discussion leaders will receive training from myHealth for Teens and Young Adults, a clinic in Hopkins that specializes in sexual health.

Health teacher Allison Luskey will attend the meetings and will serve as adviser, but the discussions will be guided by students, Luskey said parents who feel

uncomfortable about students discussing sex should remember their generation is surrounded by sexual images.

"Social media, music, videos, TV, movies — it's everywhere," Luskey said. "So I think that they're learning and they've been taught by a lot of different sources that it's OK to talk about, and OK to have healthy, informative conversations about this, and I think that's fabulous."

NATION

Americans seem OK with political dynasties

By NANCY BENAC
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Again? Really?

There are more than 300 million people in America, yet the same two families keep popping up when it comes to picking a president.

The possibility of a Bush-Clinton matchup in 2016 is increasingly plausible.

After months of hints and speculation, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush says he's actively exploring a bid for the Republican nomination. And while Hillary Rodham Clinton hasn't revealed her intentions, she's seen as the odds-on favorite for the Democratic nomination.

Between them, the two potential rivals have three presidents and a U.S. senator in the branches of their family trees — and three governors, as well.

Why are these two families so dominant in modern politics?

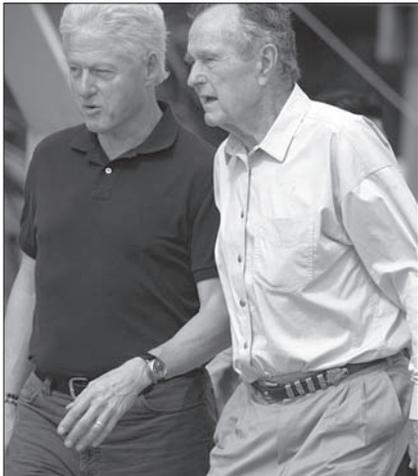
It turns out that even though American press to reject dynasties, in politics they're quite comfortable with familiar names.

And a famous name can bring a candidate instant brand recognition, important fundraising connections and a ready network of political contacts. It may even suggest competence at a time of dysfunction — like now.

"Power begets power," said Dartmouth College political scientist Brendan Nyhan. "Dynasties can self-perpetuate."

A political figure can have initiatives, though. A prominent surname sometimes carries unsavory associations and the risk of a fatigue factor.

Both sides of that equation were



PAT SULLIVAN/AP

Former presidents Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush walk on the beach in Galveston, Texas, in October 2008.

evident after Bush, 61, the son and brother of a president and the grandson of a senator, made his announcement.

Party activists said the Bush name would help Jeb attract early money, talent and supporters around the country.

But Bush's brother, George W. Bush, was hugely unpopular at

the end of his presidency six years ago. And while people seem to think more of him now, the recent release of a Senate report on Bush-era torture practices was a ready reminder of past controversies.

Clinton, 67, a former secretary of state, senator and first lady, will face the same competing dynamics of familiarity vs. fatigue if she

enters the race.

Former President Bill Clinton is enormously popular now and would be sure to campaign for his wife as he did in the 2008 race, but there is still plenty of lingering un-

‘Washington’s broken, and voters and campaign donors are looking for people who seem to know what they’re doing.’

Julian Zelizer
historian

wanted baggage from his White House years. After Bush edged closer to a run last week, the liberal RootsAction group quickly set up a NoBush-Clinton website and began collecting signatures on a “declaration of independence” that pledges to “reject future domination of government by the Bushes and Clintons and by Bush/Clinton-like policies.”

But Princeton historian Julian Zelizer thinks the comfort element might be more important to 2016 voters than any same-old, same-old worries.

“Washington’s broken, and voters and campaign donors are looking for people who seem to know what they’re doing,” he said. “The familiarity of these names becomes a big benefit and counteracts any sense that, ‘Oh my God, I can’t believe these are going to be the candidates again.’”

Despite some groaning about a possible Bush-Clinton sequel,

there’s plenty of reason to think voters will simply take a breath and size up the primary election candidates on their merits.

“It’s all about alternatives,” Zelizer said. “If that’s the best choice available, people will get over it.”

Dynastic politics, in which multiple family members hold elected office, are more common than people might think in the U.S., which has had 44 presidents, and eight of them came from four families (two each of Adams, Harrison, Roosevelt and Bush).

Nyhan points to a 2010 study published in *Legislative Studies Quarterly* that found that over the previous two centuries, nearly 9 percent of members of Congress were closely related to someone who had served in a previous Congress. It concluded that such politicians “enjoy ‘brand name advantages,’ giving them a significant edge over comparable nondynastic opponents.”

That kind of talk makes Jeff Cohen’s skin crawl.

Cohen, a co-founder of the RootsAction group, said even his nonpolitical friends frequently complain about the dominance of the Bushes and Clintons.

“It’s a source of frustration and it’s broad,” he said, calling the Bushes and Clintons “symbols of a corrupt system and a permanent governing class.”

Even Bush’s mother has suggested a third President Bush could be one too many.

“If we can’t find more than two or three families to run for high office, that’s silly,” she said earlier this year.

(Mom supposedly has since come around to the idea of another Bush candidacy.)

Dems optimistic about 2016 chances

By BILL BARROW
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Republicans crowned in 2004 that freshly re-elected President George W. Bush had established a “permanent governing majority” for the GOP. Eight years later, Democrats were touting the enduring power of the “Obama coalition” to keep their party in the White House.

But Democrats couldn’t sustain that coalition for this year’s midterm elections, leading to Republican gains in Congress, governorships and state legislatures nationwide.

“The notion of demographics as destiny is overblown,” said Republican pollster and media strategist Wes Anderson. “Just like (Bush aide Karl) Rove was wrong with that ‘permanent majority’ talk, Democrats have to remember that the pendulum is always swinging.”

So how will it swing in 2016? Is the path to 270 electoral votes so fixed that one side just can’t win? Will President Barack Obama’s limited popularity be a burden for the Democrats have in the next race for the White House? Or

will an increasingly diverse electorate pick a Democrat for a third consecutive presidential election for the first time since Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman won five straight elections from 1932 to 1948?

‘Could a Republican win? Sure. But they have to have a lot of different things happen.’

Ruy Teixeira
Democratic demographer

Democrat’s mid-term shellacking and talk of a “depressed” liberal base, many in the party still like their starting position for 2016. Ruy Teixeira, a Democratic demographer, points to a group of states worth 242 electoral votes that the Democratic presidential nominee has won in every election since 1992. Hold them all, and the party is just 28 votes shy of the majority needed to win the White House next time.

Obama twice compiled at least

332 electoral votes by adding wins in almost every competitive state. He posted double-digit wins among women, huge margins among voters younger than 30 and historically high marks among blacks and Latinos.

As nonwhite voters continue to grow as a share of the electorate, a Democratic nominee who roughly holds onto Obama’s 2012 level of support across all demographic groups would win the national popular vote by about 6 percentage points and coast to victory in the Electoral College, Teixeira estimates.

“Could a Republican win? Sure,” Teixeira said. “But they have to have a lot of different things happen.”

What if the GOP is able to continue its gains among nonwhite voters? A GOP nominee such as the Spanish-speaking Jeb Bush, former Florida governor, could make a difference. He is a proponent of comprehensive immigration reform who has the potential to capture significantly more than the 27 percent of the Latino vote that Mitt Romney claimed in 2012.



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WORLD

Asia marks 10 years since tsunami

The Associated Press

KHAO LAK, Thailand — Beachside memorials and religious services were held across Asia on Friday to mark the 10th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami that left more than a quarter-million people dead in one of modern history's worst natural disasters.

The devastating Dec. 26, 2004 tsunami struck a dozen countries around the Indian Ocean rim. It eradicated entire coastal communities, decimated families and crashed over tourist-filled beaches the morning after Christmas. Survivors waded through a horror show of corpse-filled waters.

As part of Friday's solemn commemorations, survivors, government officials, diplomats and families of victims gathered in Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and elsewhere.

Moments of silence were planned in several spots to mark the exact time the tsunami struck.

The disaster was triggered by a 9.1-magnitude earthquake, the region's most powerful in 40 years, that tore open the seabed off of Indonesia's Sumatran coast, displaced billions of tons of water and sent waves roaring across the Indian Ocean at jetliner speeds as far away as eastern Africa.

Indonesia's Aceh province was hit first and hardest. The sea rose



Onlookers watch the waves of the Bay of Bengal during a ceremony Friday to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the 2004 tsunami in Chennai, India.

as high as 33 feet and surged inland for miles with seemingly unstoppable force, carrying along trees, houses, train cars — and thousands of people — in a churning rush.

Indonesia's Vice President Jusuf Kalla attended a ceremony in Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province, on Friday in

which sashes were distributed to the ambassadors of countries that assisted in the massive recovery effort 10 years ago.

More than 160,000 people died in Indonesia, more than half of the total 230,000 people killed across the region.

In Thailand, more than 5,000 people were killed, about half of

whom were tourists celebrating the day after Christmas on the country's renowned white-sand beaches.

In Sri Lanka, the water swept a passenger train from its tracks, killing nearly 2,000 people in a single blow. A symbolic recreation of the train journey was planned as part of Friday's ceremonies.

Russia's ruble ends rally, drops 4 percent

MOSCOW — The Russian currency has ended its five-day rally and declined 4 percent as the markets remain jittery over the outlook of the Russian economy.

The ruble has been the worst-performing currency this year along with the Ukrainian hryvnia, having lost nearly half of its value against the dollar.

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov announced on Thursday that the ruble seems to have finally found its fair value.

But after gaining nearly 15 percent in the past five trading days, the ruble declined by 4 percent on Friday to \$54 rubles against the dollar.

Russian monetary officials have made stabilizing the ruble their priority, introducing a number of drastic measures to support it such as raising the key interest rate to a whopping 17 percent.

Talks on Ukraine settlement break down

MINSK, Belarus — The foreign ministry of Belarus, which has been hosting Ukraine peace talks, says the much-anticipated round of drastic measures to support it such as raising the key interest rate to a whopping 17 percent.

Ministry spokesman Dmitry Mironchik told The Associated Press that the talks broke down but did not give a reason.

The opening round was held on Wednesday, one day after Ukraine's decision to drop its nominal status, which added a new element of tension to the attempts to resolve the violent crisis in the country.

The talks were to discuss how to improve an often-violated cease-fire that was declared in September, to pull back heavy weapons and to exchange of war prisoners. The negotiators included representatives of Ukraine, Russia, pro-Russian rebels and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Russian opposition targeted with condoms

MOSCOW — Pro-Kremlin activists are distributing condoms on the streets of Moscow with the images of opposition leaders whom they blame for the collapse of the Russian currency.

The LifeNews TV channel late Thursday showed activists handing out condoms with pictures of Alexei Navalny, tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky and others on the packets.

LifeNews quoted one activist as saying that the opposition leaders were "fueling the panic about the collapsing ruble, which lost half of its value this year."

Navalny is awaiting the Jan. 15 verdict in his trial, where prosecutors demanded a 10-year prison sentence.

His supporters are gearing up for a protest on the day of the verdict, which Russian authorities dismissed as illegal.

Navalny has been the focus of Kremlin-instigated smear campaigns before.

From The Associated Press

Saudi female drivers referred to terrorism court

By AYA BATRAWY

The Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Two Saudi women detained for nearly a month over their defiance of a ban on females' driving were referred on Thursday to a court established to try terrorism cases, several people close to the defendants said.

The cases of the two, Loujain al-Hathloul and Maysa al-Amoudi, were sent to the anti-terrorism court in connection to opinions they expressed in tweets and in social media, four people close to the two women told The Associated Press.

They did not elaborate on the specific charges nor what the opinions were. Both women have spoken out online against the female-driving ban. Activists say they fear the case is intended to send a warning to others pushing for greater rights. The four people spoke on condition of anonymity because of fear of government reprisals.

The Specialized Criminal Court, to which their cases were referred, was established in the capital, Riyadh, to try terrorism cases but also has tried and handed long prison sentences to a number of human-rights workers, peaceful dissidents, activists and critics of the government. For example, this year it sentenced a rival Shiite cleric, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a vocal critic of the gov-



PROVIDED BY LOUJAIN AL-HATHLOUL/AP

Loujain al-Hathloul drives Nov. 30 toward the United Arab Emirates-Saudi Arabia border before her arrest on Dec. 1 in Saudi Arabia.

ernment, to death for sedition and sentenced a prominent human-rights lawyer, Waleed Abul-Khair, to 15 years in prison on charges of inciting public opinion.

Human Rights Watch recently warned that "Saudi authorities are ramping up their crackdown on people who peacefully criticize the government on the Internet." It said that judges and prosecutors are using "vague provisions of a 2007 anti-cybercrime law to charge and try Saudi citizens for peaceful tweets and social media comments."

This was the first time female drivers have been referred to the court, activists said.

The detention of al-Hathloul, 25, and al-Amoudi, 33 — both ar-

rested on Dec. 1 — has been the longest yet for any women who defied the driving ban. They were vocal supporters of a grassroots campaign launched last year to oppose the ban, and have a significant online following, with a total 355,000 followers on Twitter for the two of them at the time of their arrest.

Though no formal law bans women from driving in Saudi Arabia, ultraconservative Saudi clerics have issued religious edicts forbidding women from driving, and authorities do not issue them driver's licenses. No such ban exists anywhere else in the world, even in other conservative Gulf countries.

The four people close to the

women said their lawyers appealed the judge's decision to transfer their cases. An appeals court in Dammam, the capital of Eastern Province, is expected to decide on the referral in the coming days, they said.

Authorities have a history of clamping down on Saudi women who attempt to drive. In 1990, 50 women were arrested for driving. They had their passports confiscated and lost their jobs. More than 20 years later, a woman was sentenced in 2011 to 10 lashes for driving, though the king overturned the sentence.

Supporters of the current driving campaign delivered a petition to the royal court this month asking King Abdullah to pardon the two women.

Organizers behind the campaign, which began Oct. 26, 2013, say the ban on women driving underpins wider issues related to guardianship laws in Saudi Arabia that give men powerful sway over women's lives. One activist said the driving ban is also part of "a wider effort to quash any chances of raising the ceiling on civil liberties" in Saudi Arabia.

The two women appeared in court on Thursday for the second time in the eastern al-Hasa region, where they were detained after driving to Saudi Arabia from the United Arab Emirates.

WORLD

Girl says dad gave her to militants

Teen arrested after refusing to detonate bomb for Boko Haram

The Associated Press

KANO, Nigeria — A 13-year-old says her father gave her to Boko Haram extremists and that she was arrested after refusing to explode a suicide bomb in Kano, Nigeria's second largest city in the north.

Nigeria has suffered numerous suicide bombings in recent months carried out by girls and young women. That has raised fears that the insurgents are using kidnapped girls.

The girl told a news conference Wednesday night that she saw many people being buried alive at the Boko Haram camp where her father took her in Bauchi state, east of Kano.

She said her captors asked if she wanted to go to paradise, and when she said yes, explained she would have to be a suicide bomber.

"When I was told I would have to die to enter paradise, that I would have to explode a bomb and die, I said I cannot do it," she said.

When they threatened to kill her, she allowed them to strap her into a vest primed with explosives, saying "I was afraid to be buried alive."

Two other girls detonated their bombs at Kano's textile market on Dec. 10. Police said the attack killed four people and wounded seven, including the girl.

The West African nation's home-grown Boko Haram group attracted international condemnation when its fighters kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from a boarding school in northeast Chibok town in April. Dozens escaped but 219 remain missing.

Thousands of people have been killed and 1.6 million driven from their homes in the 5-year-old uprising to create an Islamic state in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation of 160 million people divided between mainly Muslims in the north and Christians in the south.

Police Superintendent Adenrele Shinaba said the girl was arrested in the hospital with a leg wound. A taxi driver took her to the hospital, and she said she left her suicide vest on the seat. The driver alerted police.

Shinaba said she will remain in custody while investigations continue. He said they had been unable to find her father, who the girl said belongs to Boko Haram.



Ricardo Alegria holds his donkeys by a leash as he sells their milk on the streets of Santiago, Chile.

Fresh donkey milk for sale on Chile's streets

The Associated Press



PHOTOS BY LUIS HIDALGO/AP

A man stops to drink fresh donkey milk in Chile.

SANTIAGO, Chile — Ricardo Alegria is a different sort of milk man. For a quarter century or more, he and his brother Marco have led donkeys through the streets of Chile's capital, milking them on the spot for customers.

It's a rare job, but a very old one. The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates recommended donkey's milk for some ailments and at least some claim that Cleopatra bathed in it for her skin.

The use of donkey's milk has persisted in some parts of the world. Even Pope Francis has said he drank it as a boy in Argentina, prompting an Italian company that produces the milk to give him two donkeys recently.

The Alegrias sell shot-sized cups of the milk for about \$2. A half-liter, the most they say a donkey produces in a day, goes for about \$20.

Ricardo Alegria said the milk "is taken as a vitamin jolt for babies with gastric problems," and researchers at the University of Camerino in Italy have reported it can be a good substitute for children with allergies to cow's milk. But adults too often drink it.

Carlos Aravena, 54, said he's been raising burros on the outskirts of Santiago and selling their milk as long as he can remember. His father did as well.



Marco Alegria leads his donkeys along a street, selling their milk on the spot in Santiago, Chile.

Turkey releases teen held for insult

The Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — A teenager was released from custody on Friday after his arrest for allegedly insulting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan caused uproar in the country.

The 16-year-old student, identified by his initials M.E.A., was taken away from his school on Wednesday and jailed for making a speech during a student protest in which he reportedly said Erdogan was regarded as the "thieving owner of the illegal palace."

The statement was a reference to a government corruption scandal as well as a controversial 1,150-room palace Erdogan inaugurated in October.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu had defended his detention, saying the presidential office had to be respected, but opposition parties denounced his arrest as the latest example of the government's crackdown on dissent in the country.

A court in the central Turkish city of Konya agreed to free the boy from police custody on Friday, after dozens of lawyers volunteered to defend him and petitioned for his release.

It is a crime in Turkey to insult the president and the boy still faces as many as four years in prison if charged and convicted.

Dogan news agency footage of his release showed the boy being embraced by his mother as he walked through the gates of a detention center. Dozens of his supporters sang and beat a drum in celebration.

Monkey gives first aid to electrocuted friend

NEW DELHI — Onlookers at a train station in northern India watched in awe as a monkey came to the rescue of an injured friend — resuscitating another monkey that had been electrocuted and knocked unconscious.

The injured monkey had fallen between the tracks, apparently after touching high-tension wires at the train station in the north Indian city of Kanpur.

His companion came to the rescue and was captured on camera lifting the friend's motionless body, shaking it, dipping it into a mud puddle and biting its head and skin — working until the hurt monkey regained consciousness.

The first monkey, completely covered in mud, opened its eyes and began moving again.

Crowds of travelers watched the Sunday scene in amazement, filming and snapping pictures.

From The Associated Press

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OPINION

Time for 'Gingrich senators' to change

By SEAN THERIAULT

SENATE Republicans and President Barack Obama last week agreed on a \$1.1 trillion spending plan, averting another government shutdown. Is the harmonious passage of the budget deal a sign of what we can expect from the Republican-led Senate that will take charge Jan. 3? The incoming Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., thinks so. As early as January, he promised that if the Republicans took control after the 2014 election, the Senate might again be worthy of the moniker "The Greatest Deliberative Body in the World." McConnell promised, "My purpose is to suggest that the Senate can be better than it has been, and that it must be if we're to remain great as a nation."

Are McConnell's words just the hot air that we have come to expect from senators? After all, the Senate that just adjourned was not only unworthy of being the "greatest" — even "deliberative" was a stretch. As one indication, more than one-third of the roll-call votes taken in the Senate during the past two years were to stop filibusters.

But I think McConnell may very well be correct, which is a bit surprising given my research. I found that the driving force behind the Senate's decline from a body worthy of praise to one worthy of only contempt is a group of senators who first served in the House Republican Conference after it was radicalized by Newt Gingrich. These "Gingrich senators" brought his politics to the Senate, and because they

came in such numbers and stuck around so long, they ended up transforming it rather than being transformed by it.

The Gingrich senators can account for almost the entire growth in party polarization in the Senate. They are primarily responsible for the massive increase in filibuster threats, and their warfare mindset has compelled them to develop and implement the latest strategy of killing bills in an endless stream of amendments until the Democrats simply give up. Gingrich senators' amendments were responsible for more than 30 percent of the roll-call votes in Obama's first two years in office. Eventually Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., squashed the strategy by filing the amendment tree, which restricted other senators' ability to offer amendments. While the parties have bickered for campaign talking points, the country has shut down, nearly slid off the economic cliff and suffered its first credit-rating downgrade.

Forty-two Gingrich senators have served in the Senate; 22 of them continue to serve today, including Tom Coburn, R-Okla.; David Vitter, R-La.; and Jim Inhofe, R-Okla. Their alumni include Jim DeMint, R-S.C.; Rick Santorum, R-Pa.; and Larry Craig, R-Idaho. In the Senate that will meet in January, there will be 26 Gingrich senators, which accounts for almost half of the Republican conference.

Despite their increasing numbers and power, McConnell is right; the Senate will function better. How can I possibly express such optimism? Although my research shows that the Gingrich senators are distinct from the other Republicans with whom they serve in their combative

approach to governing, that distinction has completely disappeared when the Republicans are in the majority and they become more conciliatory. The responsibility of governing and accountability to the American voters should compel this recalcitrant group to buckle down and solve problems.

Furthermore, the Democrats, because of their ideology, generally do not engage in the paralyzing warfare tactics that the Gingrich senators have perfected. They are, after all, the party of government. Even while serving in the minority, they are unwilling to paralyze the Senate for short-term electoral gain because it would make the government more dysfunctional, which would hurt their overall intellectual political argument.

The one wildcard is the tea party senators, led by Ted Cruz, R-Texas. However, the recent budget vote showed that his short-sided, filibuster-causing shutdown last year cost him influence in his party. Only 18 Republicans joined with him in opposing the compromise. As one Gingrich senator, Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., put it: "I've seen this movie before, and I wouldn't pay money to see it again."

— If Cruz's influence in the Senate continues to diminish, we may finally get a Senate worthy of being called "great" or at the very least "deliberative." And with it would come the possibility of the United States remaining a great country — or at least a country where its legislative branch is actively involved in problem solving.

Sean Theriault is a professor of government at the University of North Carolina. This column first appeared in The Washington Post.

Sen. Warren's anti-Wall St. jihad is misguided

By DAVID IGNATIUS

THE REVIVAL of the WALL STREET U.S. financial system after the crash of 2008 is arguably the Obama administration's biggest domestic policy success. But Sen. Elizabeth Warren, in her jihad against Wall Street, seems determined to devalue this accomplishment — and to make financial experts a mark of shame for Democrats, rather than a source of pride.

Warren's current target is Antonio Weiss, the administration's nominee for undersecretary of the Treasury for domestic finance. Weiss' chief defect, in the eyes of Warren and other liberal critics, is that he worked as an investment banker at Lazard and, in that role, appears to have advised Burger King on how to reduce its U.S. tax liability.

"Enough is enough," Warren wrote last month for The Huffington Post. "The overrepresentation of Wall Street in Obama's senior government positions sends a bad message." She told a New York Times reporter that while she had sometimes supported nominees who had worked on Wall Street, "the Antonio Weiss nomination is a mistake, and that's why I'm fighting back."

Never mind that Weiss is a liberal who advocated tax hikes for the rich and is publisher of the progressive literary journal The Paris Review. What offends Warren is the Lazard connection. "Time after time in government, the Wall Street view prevails," she argued in a speech this month.

Warren's enemies list includes Timothy Geithner and Lawrence Summers, the key architects of the administration's Wall Street rescue. They had never worked as private bankers but were suspect because they managed the bailout plan known as the Troubled Asset Relief Program. Warren crusaded against TARP in 2009

When historians look at the Obama presidency, they're likely to credit him especially for doing the politically unpopular things that were needed in 2009 to salvage the financial wreckage.

and 2010, arguing (incorrectly, as it turned out) that it would be a taxpayer giveaway to the banks. She hectoring Geithner in 2010 to redo his "stress tests" of U.S. banks after a first round indicated that TARP had been effective. "How could you be confident of these financial institutions without re-running the stress tests?" she asked. As it turned out, TARP made a \$15 billion profit, the Treasury announced on Dec. 19.

Has Warren apologized for getting this wrong, or conceded that the financial rescue program was headed by Geithner, Summers and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke was a success? Not to my knowledge. But in the process, she disowns a Democratic president's historic achievement.

To be fair, President Barack Obama sometimes seems embarrassed about taking credit for his financial rescue effort — leaving Geithner and Summers in the crossfire of critics such as Warren. This certainly seemed the case in the summer of 2013, when Obama floated Summers as a replacement for Bernanke at the Fed — and then let him twist in the wind while enemies took potshots. Summers (who privately had long promised the Fed job by Obama) finally withdrew his name from

consideration.

In the Summers debacle, the fact that he was a former treasury secretary, former president of Harvard and a distinguished economist proved less important than the fact that he had toxic political enemies, such as Warren. The outcome weirdly had the effect of distancing Obama from his own economic policies.

Making economic policy isn't a popularity contest, especially when financial markets are in a panic. Helping Wall Street regain confidence and stability was the last thing an angry public wanted in 2009 after the markets crashed. But without such support, markets can buckle and liquidity can disappear, often for decades as has been the case in Japan. "Our job was to fix it, not to make people like us," Geithner told Andrew Ross Sorkin of The New York Times in a May 2014 profile.

When historians look at the Obama presidency, they're likely to credit him especially for doing the politically unpopular things that were needed in 2009 to salvage the financial wreckage. The strength of the U.S. financial recovery since then has surprised analysts from Beijing to Brussels. But for Warren, it seems to be an embarrassment.

Warren and the neo-populists are right that the recovery hasn't benefited Main Street as much as it has Wall Street, and that the fruits of American prosperity are skewed toward the wealthy. Changing the structural problems that limit job growth for the country's biggest economic challenge, as Summers has argued persuasively. But fixing this problem will surely be harder if liberal Democrats like Weiss, who understand the financial world enough to challenge it, are barred from government for the offense of working on Wall Street.

David Ignatius is a member of Washington Post Writers Group.

OPINION

The return of Cuba Derangement Syndrome

By GEORGE F. WILL

WASHINGTON
Barack Obama has made a geopolitical irrelevancy suddenly relevant to American presidential politics. For decades, Cuba has been instructive as a museum of two stark failures: socialism and the U.S. embargo. Now, Cuba has become useful as a clarifier of different Republican flavors of foreign-policy thinking.

The permanent embargo was imposed in 1962 in the hope of achieving, among other things, regime change. Well.

Fidel Castro, 88, has not been seen in public since January and may be even more mentally diminished than anyone — including his 83-year-old brother Raul — who still adheres to Marxism. Whatever Fidel's condition, however, Cuba has been governed by the Castros during 11 U.S. presidencies, and for more years than the Soviet Union dominated Eastern Europe. Regime change — even significant regime modification — has not happened in Havana.

Some conservative criticisms of Obama's new Cuba policy — which includes normalizing diplomatic and commercial relations, to the extent that presidential action can — seem reflexive. They look symptomatic of Cold War Nostalgia and 1930s Envy — yearnings for the moral clarity of the struggle with the totalitarians. Cuba's regime, although totalitarian, no longer matters in international politics. As bankrupt morally it is economically, the regime is intellectually preposterous and an enticing model only for people who want to live where there are lots of 1950s Chevrolets.

Eleven million Cubans, however, matter. Obama's new policy is defensible if it will improve their political conditions by insinuating into Cuba economic and cultural factors that will be subversive of tyranny.

Sen. Rand Paul, a potential Republican presidential candidate, evidently considers this hope highly probable. He is correct to support giving it a try. But he may not understand how many times such wishes have fared the thought that commerce can pacify the world. In 1910, 40 peaceful European years after the Franco-Prussian War, Norman Angell's book "The Great Illusion" became an international best-seller by arguing that war between developed industrial countries would be prohibitively expensive, hence futile, hence unlikely. Soon Europe stumbled into what was, essentially, a 30-year war.

Angell's theory was an early version of what foreign-policy analyst James Mann calls "the Starbucks fallacy," the theory that when people become accustomed to a plurality of coffee choices, they will successfully demand political pluralism. We are sadder but wiser now that this theory has been wounded, if not slain, by facts, two of which are China and Vietnam. Both combine relatively open economic systems with political systems that remain resolutely closed.

Sen. Marco Rubio, a potential 2016 rival of Paul's, is properly disgusted that Obama, in striking his deal with Cuba, accomplished disgracefully little for the country's breathtakingly brave democracy advocates. There are two reasons for questioning whether Obama really tried. First, he is generally congruent with, and partly a product of, academic leftism. Hence, he might be tinged with the sentimentalism that has made Cuba a destination for political pilgrims too ideologically blinkered to see the extraordinary sadism of Cuba's treatment of its many political prisoners. Second, Obama is so phobic about George W. Bush's miscarried "regime change" in Iraq, that he cannot embrace, or at least enunciate, a regime change policy toward



Cuba. Regime change, however, must be, at bottom, the justification for his new approach.

Cuba Derangement Syndrome (CDS), a recurring fever, accounted for the Bay of Pigs calamity, the most feckless use of U.S. power ever. After this, the Kennedys, President John and Attorney General Robert, continued to encourage harebrained attempts to destabilize Cuba and assassinate its leader.

Today, CDS afflicts those who, like Rubio, charge that U.S. diplomatic relations and economic interactions "lead to legitimizing" Cuba's regime. America's doctrine about legitimacy has been clear since the Declaration of Independence: Governments derive their "just powers" from the consent of the governed. America has diplomatic and commercial rela-

tions with many regimes that are realities even though they flunk our legitimacy test. Twenty-three years after Cuba ceased being a Soviet satellite, there is no compelling, or even coherent, argument for why Cuba, among all the world's repulsive regimes, should be the object of a U.S. policy whose rationale is to express the obvious — U.S. distaste.

What makes Rubio uncharacteristically shrill, saying Paul has "no idea what he's talking about"? And what makes Paul too clever by half when saying Rubio wants to "retreat to our borders" and hence is an "isolationist"? CDS does this. As they brawl about Cuba, a geopolitical irrelevancy, neither seems presidential.

George F. Will is a member of Washington Post Writers Group.

Airlines don't owe Sen. Schumer any explanation

By ADAM MINTER
Bloomberg News

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., has always been relentless in defending the middle class (or at least in presenting himself that way), but his latest cause doesn't make much sense. Last week, Schumer called for a Justice Dept. investigation into why airlines aren't lowering ticket prices in tandem with plunging fuel costs.

It's true that the global airline industry has never been more profitable. According to the International Air Transport Association, global profits will reach \$19.9 billion this year, up from \$11 billion in 2013. But it's not clear why Schumer thinks high ticket prices are a cause for the attorney general. This is a situation any second-year MBA student ought to be able to explain. What's going on isn't price gouging — it's sound business management, combined with a bit of luck.

In fact, the assumption that airlines are profiting wildly from lower oil prices is only partly true. To start, most airlines hedge their fuel purchases, and as a result they're likely paying far more right now than the current market price for oil. Of course, cheap oil doesn't hurt: The IATA believes that airline profits will surge to \$25 billion in 2015, largely on the strength of oil-related savings.

But even without the aid of cheap oil, the global airline industry was already on track for record profits in 2014. In June,

Demanding that they give back the profits that have eluded them for so long overlooks how important it is that they're finally making money again.

the IATA projected that global net airline profits would hit \$18 billion for 2014, up 70.91 percent on 2013. The drop in oil prices, though significant, pushed up that projection by a comparatively modest 10.56 percent — not insignificant, but hardly the only airline profit story for 2014.

So what else contributes to the surging profits that Schumer would like returned to passengers? The popular target of his and others' ire is the notorious airline fuel surcharge. But that's another red herring. For U.S. carriers and their partners, surcharges typically apply only to international routes, and mostly exist as a means to extract some payment from frequent fliers who purchase tickets with miles and points. (Otherwise, it would be easy enough for the airlines to fold those fees into their overall fares.)

The IATA's account of the increased profits makes more sense. In June, it cited a number of contributing factors, including increased passenger demand, an improv-

ing global economy, and a consolidated industry. That last factor — consolidation means less competition — is perhaps the most important and controversial. Even marginally reduced competition on key routes (such as in the United States) allows airlines to better match their planes to actual demand, thereby reducing the number of empty seats (and cargo compartments) that they fly. Indeed, U.S. Department of Transportation data show that between 2003 and 2013, passenger load (a measure of the percentage of seats that are occupied on planes) on U.S. carriers rose from 72.75 percent to 83.48 percent. That's a big revenue bump.

Consolidation isn't the only new profit driver. Either starting in the late 2000s, U.S. airlines mastered the art of charging ancillary fees — that is to say, nickel-and-diming their customers. For example, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. airlines collected \$3.35 billion in baggage check fees in 2013, and an additional \$2.55 billion in cancellation and changed reservation fees — revenues that accounted for much of their \$9.6 billion in profits that year.

There's a broader point, however, to keep in mind: It's something of a miracle that the managers of airlines have figured out how to make profits at all. It wasn't so long ago that airlines were among the most incompetently managed businesses, stuck in endless iterations of boom-bust-bankruptcy and — when needed — government bailouts. The airlines' newfound creativity,

discipline and business sense deserve cautious praise, not scorn. It's true that airlines are now paying themselves and their shareholders. But for taxpayers, if not fliers, that should be a welcome change.

It's also one that's not guaranteed to last. As large as the airlines' profits might appear to be, the actual profit margins behind them are relatively small. The projected \$25 billion in airline profits in 2015 assumes a very modest 3.2 percent profit margin. (A healthy indie bookstore, by comparison, is one that runs a 5 percent margin.) If oil prices rise unexpectedly, that margin — and those profits — will shrink. So it's only reasonable that the airlines are holding onto their profits, paying down debt and — wisely — investing in fuel efficiency and other efficiencies likely to get them through the next oil surge.

Of course, Schumer has reason to be suspicious of their motives. In recent years, they've fought hard against making fares and surcharges transparent to consumers, and they are much too ready to play the victim at a time when their businesses are booming. But demanding that they give back the profits that have eluded them for so long overlooks how important it is that they're finally making money again. Lower airfares would be nice, but if fliers really want a piece of the airlines' current profits, they'd do better to buy their flying stocks instead.

Adam Minter is based in Asia, where he covers politics, culture, business and junk.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man walking his dog on crosswalk killed by car

DE CAMDEN — A Delaware man has been killed while out on a walk with his dog.

Delaware State Police said Tuesday that David Bilow, 55, was walking with his Labrador mix at about 7 p.m. Monday in Camden when he was struck.

Police said Bilow was in a clearly marked crosswalk when a car hit him, throwing him onto the vehicle and then into the roadway. He died three hours later at a hospital.

Police said the driver of the vehicle, Kyle Tieman, 18, didn't see Bilow because a car had turned in front of him after allowing Bilow to cross. An investigation into the crash is ongoing. No charges have been filed.

Police said Bilow's dog ran home after his owner was hit and was later treated for unspecified injuries.

Convicted man wants to change guilty plea

ND MINOT — A man convicted in the 2011 beating death of a Minot toddler wants to change his plea.

Anthony Robinson was sentenced to 27 years in prison for the death of Conrad Ayala, 19 months. The toddler's mother, Cassandra Ayala, was also convicted in the case and sentenced to 22 years in prison.

The state medical examiner determined that Conrad Ayala died from "blunt head injury in battered child syndrome." Authorities said the boy was covered "head to foot" with bruises.

KXMC-TV reported that Robinson said he was not read his rights and was intimidated into pleading guilty. A hearing on his change of plea request is set for January.

Diamond cross given to Salvation Army

MA BOSTON — Add a diamond-encrusted cross to the spontaneous acts of jewelry generosity that swept Boston this holiday season.

The Salvation Army said the latest person to drop an expensive piece of jewelry in one of its red donation kettles was an Australian who wanted to show gratitude to the city.

The anonymous donor said she was inspired by a widow who gave the wedding and diamond engagement rings to the charity to buy toys for poor children. That was followed by another widow who donated \$21,000 — 10 times what the rings were worth — so she could return them to the original donor.

The Salvation Army said the Australian gave the pendant, valued at \$1,500, to thank Bostonians for their warm welcome when she and her son relocated to the city.

Neighborhood's stolen Rudolph statue found

CA GARDENA — Los Angeles County sheriff's detectives have recovered a

THE CENSUS

\$100

The amount given out by West Virginia State Police troopers on Monday as part of a Secret Santa giveaway project funded by an anonymous donor. Several motorists in the Princeton area were surprised by the gift when they were pulled over by troopers. Spanishburg resident Marie Davis said she wondered what she had done wrong. She said the trooper asked her if she felt lucky and then handed her \$100 and a candy cane. Trooper D.C. Graham said people's dealings with law enforcement are usually negative, and it was a privilege to bring joy instead.



DAVID GOLDMAN/AP

Cabbage Patch picking

Eileen Cancilla, of Belmont, Calif., looks over a selection of Cabbage Patch Kids she is considering buying at a collector's convention at Babyland General Hospital, the birthplace of Cabbage Patch Kids, in Cleveland, Ga. "It's the personality and the look of the baby because we come in here and some draw us to them and some don't," Cancilla said. "It's the baby that picks us out." At home, Cancilla and her husband have a collection of about 2,500 of the dolls.

wooden Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer statue stolen from a Rolling Hills Estates neighborhood where it was a seasonal fixture.

A sheriff's department statement said the statue, which vanished Dec. 12, was found Monday standing atop a trailer home in the city of Gardena. Detectives obtained a search warrant, collected the statue and arrested the homeowner.

The Daily Breeze, meanwhile, reported that a resident used photos of the stolen Rudolph to speedily design and build a replacement that was placed atop the Ranchview neighborhood sign on Sunday.

Man performs sex acts on horse, later charged

WI WAUSAU — A Wausau man has been charged with a misdemeanor count of getting sexual gratification from an animal after authorities say he

admitted to performing sex acts on a horse.

Jared Krefl, 30, was charged last week in Marathon County, WKOW-TV reported.

His attorney's voicemail was full, and a message seeking comment could not be left by The Associated Press.

District Attorney Kyle Mayot told WKOW the case is unique. Krefl has also been charged with possession of drugs and drug paraphernalia.

Driver hits, kills good Samaritan on highway

WA YAKIMA — A good Samaritan who was hit Saturday while helping push a disabled pickup truck on Highway 12 died Monday at a Spokane hospital.

The Washington State Patrol said Ronald Brooker, 42, of Naches, had stopped to help the stranded driver when he was fatally injured.

Yakima Herald-Republic reported that the driver who struck him was arrested for investigation of vehicular assault and driving with a suspended license.

Target shooter wounded by his ricocheting bullet

AZ LAKE HAVASU CITY — Authorities said a California man is lucky to be alive after being struck by a ricocheting bullet while target shooting in western Arizona.

The Today's News-Herald reported that David Wayne Galdi, 50, was wounded by a ricocheting bullet from his own gun while shooting near Fort Mohave on Sunday.

The Mohave County Sheriff's Office said Galdi was transported to a hospital with a wound to the left temple caused by metal casing from the bullet.

However, the wound wasn't life-threatening, and he was treated and released. Deputies said no one else was injured, and Galdi

will not be charged.

2 men allegedly duct tape child to a door

WI IRMA — Two Irma men could face child abuse charges after they allegedly duct-taped a child to a door.

WSAW reported that the incident happened in the Town of Birch. Investigators got a call last week that a 3-year-old child had been duct-taped to a door. A Lincoln County sheriff's deputy said that the investigation found the child was bound by the hands and feet, but there were conflicting stories about which man was responsible.

The deputy is recommending that the 21-year-old and 22-year-old men be charged with felony physical abuse of a child and reckless causation of bodily harm because the child had an allergic reaction to the tape.

The case is being referred to prosecutors.

From wire reports

MOVIES

Angelina Jolie found inspiration in Louis Zamperini, his story

By JOHN HORN
Los Angeles Times

From within the sea of cast and crew she emerged, looking far less like one of the world's most recognizable movie stars than a random, plainly dressed member of the "Unbroken" production team. Wearing a simple black blouse and slacks and walking with no train of assistants or handlers, the director didn't magically part the waters of the way filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese or Baz Luhrmann do on a film set.

She put out her hand to shake, said, "I'm Angie," and started to show a visitor around.

There was tremendous bustle in and around Jolie's world as the actress-turned-director was filming the true story of World War II bombardier Louis Zamperini early this year. As a special-effects team prepared to re-enact the Pacific Ocean crash of Zamperini's B-24 on one massive stage, another crew inside another huge stage was setting up the yellow rafts in which Zamperini (Jack O'Connell) and crew mates Russell Allen "Phil" Phillips (Domhnall Gleeson) and Francis "Mac" McNamara (Finn Wittrock) would begin their epic voyage of survival.

Inside all of the comings and goings encircling her, Jolie found a quiet corner in Village Roadshow Studios where she pulled out a stack of photographs. They were taken just a few days earlier, when Jolie and her cinematographer, Roger Deakins, had filmed Zamperini and his fellow prisoners of war loading coal toward the end of their detention. The images were strongly evocative of (and indeed inspired by) Sebastião Salgado's black-and-white work from the Brazilian gold mines in Serra Pelada, with the American soldiers covered head to toe in soot, their darkened bodies almost part of the Japanese landscape.

"For us, the movie is all about the theme of light and darkness — it's both a metaphor and it's practical," the 39-year-old Jolie said of directing just her second film, after her 2011 debut, the independent Bosnian war drama "In the Land of Blood and Honey." "When Lou is in the camps it's dark, and when he comes up, it's light. And that's what we are trying to depict."

It's not only an interesting visual alchemy but also a telling use of language: "Unbroken" was not a movie Jolie was making as an "I," it was a movie she was making by "Us" and "We." And that group categorically was governed by one person, who was then miles from her Australian set and in the last months of his life: Zamperini himself.

Louis Zamperini, who died in July at age 97, was an Olympic long-distance runner who survived 47 days in a life raft only to be captured for more than two years as a prisoner and Phillip (McNamara) died at sea, were captured by the Japanese in 1943 and interned as prisoners of war.

Zamperini's extraordinary ordeal — and his postwar struggles with alcoholism before he was able to absolve his principal tormentor, the sadistic prison commandant Mutsuhiro Watanabe — were the focus of Laura Hillenbrand's 2010 biography, "Unbroken," which has been on the bestseller list more than 180 weeks.

Many filmmakers — including Steven Spielberg and Ron Howard — had been asked to shoehorn the sprawling story into a two-hour movie, but none before Jolie and her screenwriters, Joel and Ethan Coen, had figured out a possible path. The insurmountable challenge had been how



AP photos

"Unbroken" director Angelina Jolie, left, said she thought a lot about the human condition during the planning and filming of the movie about World War II bombardier Louis Zamperini's life. "It's a very interesting thing to wonder, what is our human potential?" Zamperini, top right with Jolie, died in July, before filming was completed.

to jettison the last third of Hillenbrand's biography — everything that Zamperini experienced after being liberated from his third and final camp — without excising the book's potent message of reconciliation.

Working with the Oscar-winning filmmakers behind "No Country for Old Men," Jolie seized on a singular moment in Zamperini's captivity and decided that it had to become the spiritual hinge of the adaptation, the film's emotional conclusion.

About three-quarters of the way through her book, Hillenbrand recounted how Watanabe forced Zamperini to hold a heavy wooden beam over his head. Healthy men might have labored to keep it aloft for more than a few minutes; Zamperini, racked by dysentery and malnourished, defied his oppressor and lifted it above him for more than half an hour. "Something went on

inside of me," Zamperini recalled later. When O'Connell tried to replicate the feat during filming, he twice passed out.

"I'm not one to look for or preach about miracles or anything like that; I'm still searching myself for what to be sure of and what to believe in," Jolie said. "You hear stories of women who, when a car falls on their children, they suddenly have the strength to lift it up. Is that simply in us? It's a very interesting thing to wonder, what is our human potential?"

In that brief scene, Jolie believed she had found a way to show that Zamperini, in a staging that recalls a crucifixion, would forgive. "Angie said to me, 'We can make that beam the defining moment of the third act,'" said producer Matthew Baer. "She felt it was when the battle of these two men comes to an end. That Lou had won. And I

think she was right."

Filmmakers can and often have personal relationships with their subjects, and it's fair to say that Jolie truly loved Zamperini. For Christmas last year, her husband, Brad Pitt, commissioned and presented to his wife a painting of Zamperini in his favorite bomber's outfit.

Jolie said she was inspired by his resilience and flaws.

"I think to see somebody rise up, to see somebody confronted with so many obstacles in life who refuses to go down, and not only stand back up but somehow find a way to love and live again and be full of usefulness and joy..." Jolie said, pausing as she considered her subject's life. After Zamperini experienced a religious conversion following the war, he dedicated himself to helping at-risk youth and became a popular motivational and devotional speaker.

"I've spent time with Lou and have been influenced by his story. I think it's something we need today more than ever: You look around you and there's so much to be overwhelmed by, and you study this life, this imperfect life, which is what's so beautiful about him. He was a little immigrant kid who was smoking, stealing and drinking by the time he was 9, and thought he was worth nothing.

"A lot of us have had that feeling. I've certainly had it myself. And he turned his life around and became someone who would later inspire so many people."

Zamperini didn't live to see the completed film, but when Jolie heard that he had been hospitalized this year, she rushed to his bedside with a rough cut of the film on her laptop computer.

"There's no Hollywood premiere that would mean more than sitting in that room alone with him at the end of his days," Jolie said. "As a man of faith, he very much believed he would see everyone soon in heaven and he was preparing for that, so he was revisiting his memories to prepare himself to pass away. And I was fortunate enough as a human being to witness that moment, so there's nothing that could mean more than that."

HEALTH & FITNESS

By HARRY JACKSON
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Early Richmeyer, 32, can move again without her back torturing her to be still. More than that, she's back to exercising, standing more than she sits and making plans for her June wedding.

As recently as six months ago, Richmeyer had debilitating lower back pain, a common affliction. About 80 percent of Americans will have some degree of non-specific lower back pain over the course of their lives.

She said she started noticing lower back pain around age 25. "I've always been really active, fitness oriented; when I would do certain things, it would hurt, even day-to-day things," she said.

She had difficulty exercising, wrestling with her pets or even teaching her middle school classes at Holy Cross Academy in Webster Groves, Mo.

"I'd started teaching sitting down," she said. Her middle school students pushed her around her classroom in a chair.

"I didn't go to the doctor, because one day it would be OK, then it would start again," she said.

In July 2013, she returned from a vacation almost bedridden.

She went to a chiropractor who said her right leg was shorter than her left. "I went through all of this, physical therapy and adjustment and insoles for my shoes, and I still had back pain.

"I was very depressed. I'm a fitness-oriented person, and for me not to be able to work out. ... I couldn't do anything. I put on a good 20 to 30 pounds. I wanted to be able to lift my kids, play with them — when I have kids. And I wanted to be that active mom. This was like taking it away."

In March, she saw a television spot about a Washington University study aimed at relieving lower back pain and qualified for it.

The study is run out of the program for physical therapy at the university.

Linda Van Dillen, professor of physical therapy and orthopedic surgery, said the study is aimed at finding ways to relieve lower back pain that has no apparent cause, which includes the vast majority of such complaints. The study does not include people with back pain caused by injury and illness, she said.

The study approaches therapy in two ways:

Strength and flexibility focuses on building muscles that have been overloaded when people compensate for pain.

Motor skills therapy targets how people move around in ways that can cause lower back pain. "Then we show how to do that differently," Van Dillen said.

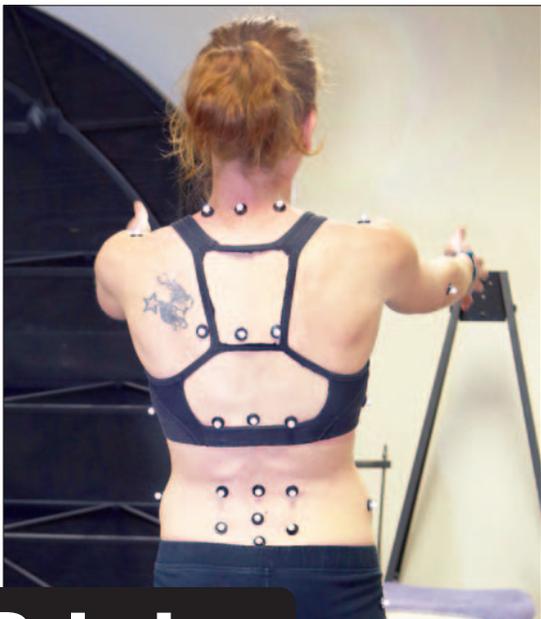
(Incidentally, chief researcher Van Dillen doesn't know which group Richmeyer is in and won't be reading this story until the study is finished three to four years from now.)

Richmeyer is in the motor skills group. "At my first appointment, they told me I was twisting my pelvis, my lower back constantly," Richmeyer said. "I used to sit on one leg and that would hurt my pelvis; I was crossing my legs too much, when I did certain tasks, I'd twist because it was more comfortable."

Her therapists learned that by placing adhesive sensors over her pelvis, back and upper body, then she did simple movements. The sensors produced a three-dimensional picture on a computer screen.

"They didn't determine which came first, the pain or (the effect from) the twisting," Richmeyer said. "But everything I was doing was causing a twist, drawing in my abs, bending over, sitting at my desk reaching for things, everything."

That explained what an orthopedic surgeon had told her, that a disk had been worn



ST LOUIS POST-DISPATCH/TNS

Pain in the back Sensors may help pinpoint problems

Sara Bohall, clinical research coordinator, demonstrates how the sensors are placed so they can map how movement could be causing lower back pain in test subjects.

Van Dillen said the study so far is finding a few things they expected. Either method works if the person does what they're told — easier said than done. The study takes people up to 60 years old. Bad habits could have been around for more than half a century.

Researchers are finding new things as well as putting older knowledge into context.

For example, "Activity is necessary," Van Dillen said. Change the load on your back about every half hour. "If you're standing, sit," she said. "If you're sitting, stand and move around. Change positions. You're changing how your weight is distributed on the spine."

Staying in one position can "change the tissue," she said. So muscles you avoid can become atrophied, and lower extremities can lose strength.

Another finding is that bed rest is not good for you when it comes to back pain. "There are a lot of physical issues associated with bed rest, and they're not good," Van Dillen said.

Richmeyer says she's still adapting. "The hardest thing to adapt to was the sleeping," she said. "I was so used to sleeping in that twisted position that my body didn't want to sleep any other way."

She has started exercising again, but slowly, with yoga and Pilates. But even with those she must be aware of moves that require twisting.

She's confident the bad old days are behind her. "I would go through six ibuprofen a day, just to deal with the pain."

By the fifth week of the program she wasn't taking any.

She has half a year left in the study, she said. And if some bad habits slip back in, she said: "I know what to do and who to call."

Study: Dr. Oz's medical advice often is wrong

By TERRENCE MCCOY
The Washington Post

It's not hard to understand what makes Dr. Oz so popular. Called "America's doctor," syndicated talk show host Mehmet Oz speaks in a way anyone can understand. Medicine can be complex. But with Dr. Oz, clad in scrubs and crooning to millions of viewers about "miracles" and "revolutionary" breakthroughs, it's often not. He makes it fun. And people can't get enough.

"I haven't seen a doctor in eight years," the New Yorker quoted one viewer telling Oz. "I'm scared. You're the only one I trust."

But is that trust misplaced? Or has Oz, who often peddles miracle cures for weight loss and other maladies, mortgaged medical veracity for entertainment value?



Oz

These questions have hammered Oz for months. In June, he was hauled in front of Congress, where Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., told him he gave people false hope and criticized his segues as a "recipe for disaster."

The past month, a study he widely trumpeted lauding coffee bean weight-loss pills was retracted despite Oz's assertions it could "burn fat fast for anyone who wants to lose weight." On Dec. 17, the British Medical Journal published a study analyzing Oz's claims along with those made on another medical talk show. What they found wasn't reassuring. The researchers, led by Christina Korowczyk of the University of Alberta, argued medical research either didn't substantiate — or flat out contradicted — more than half of Oz's recommendations. "Recommendations made on medical talk shows often lack adequate information on specific benefits or the magnitude of the effects of these benefits," the article said. "... The public should be skeptical about recommendations made on medical talk shows."

The study is part of an ongoing debate about the value of medical talk shows.

"Mehmet is now an entertainer," New York doctor Eric Rose told the New Yorker. "And he's great at it. People learn a lot, and it can be meaningful in their lives. ... (But) sometimes Mehmet will entertain wacky ideas — particularly if they are wacky and have entertainment value."

Oz, for his part, said he's only trying to give people all the options out there. He said data shouldn't stop patients from testing out things like raspberry ketone — a "miracle in a bottle to burn your fat" — even if it's never been tested on people, according to the study. "I recognize that oftentimes they don't have the scientific muster to present as fact," Oz said at a U.S. Senate hearing, adding that he "personally believes in the items I talk about in my show. But, nevertheless, I give my audience the advice I give my family. At the same time, I give my family these products, specifically the ones you mentioned."

BOOKS

Minor Holmes character steals spotlight

Inspector Athelney Jones pursues ruthless villain in thrilling murder mystery 'Moriarty'

By DAVID MARTINDALE
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Meet the new Athelney Jones. Version 2.0. He's a Scotland Yard inspector who originally appeared in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's second Sherlock Holmes novel. In 1890's "The Sign of Four," Jones cluelessly arrested the wrong man on suspicion of murder, only to be soundly humiliated when Holmes solved the mystery with his usual theatrical flair.

England's celebrated consulting detective is nowhere to be found in Anthony Horowitz's fiendishly clever new thriller, "Moriarty." But Athelney Jones has returned and, not one to accept defeat, he is a changed man.

He has read all of Dr. Watson's Strand Magazine stories. He has carefully studied all of Holmes' scientific monographs about bloodstains, codes, tobacco ash and more. He has met with other inspectors who worked alongside the great detective and picked their brains for insights about his methods.

Inspector Jones is a wannabe Sherlock Holmes — and it would appear his time to shine is here.

Holmes and the notorious Professor Moriarty, the

Napoleon of crime, have just met their deaths at the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland. (We, the readers who are familiar with the canon, know that Holmes merely faked his demise, but the world mourns his loss in April 1891.)

There's also a new villain who has arrived from America, one far more ruthless than Moriarty. He intends to take over as London's ultimate crime boss. Jones becomes convinced it is his duty, with an assist from Frederick Chase, plodding Pinkerton detective and the book's narrator, to thwart this new scoundrel.

This begins a rollicking adventure with Jones breathlessly racing about London — sometimes in disguise — as he tries to solve a horrific murder case while fulfilling his fantasy of playing Sherlock Holmes.

To his credit, he is quite brilliant. His powers of observation and deduction sometimes border on the magical. But success has gone to his head. He has adopted Holmes' infuriating tactic of withholding important information from colleagues until it's time to make the big, showboating reveal.

Is Jones half as smart as he likes to think he is?

Horowitz, a prolific English novelist and television writer, is the author of

2011's "The House of Silk," which his publisher claims is the first work to get the seal of approval from the Conan Doyle estate. Horowitz is currently writing the next official James Bond/007 thriller.

It is hardly a spoiler to say that "Moriarty" is a story in which a huge surprise awaits readers.

In true Conan Doyle tradition, all the clues are skillfully hidden in plain sight, but readers will sail right past them until a shocking twist forces them to replay the entire sequence of events in their heads, begrudgingly admiring the author for his audacity.

But there's more to "Moriarty" than just ingenious puzzle plotting. Horowitz also does a masterful job re-creating Holmes' London. And he has given us wonderfully rich characters in Jones, Jones' wife, Elspeth (who worries that Athelney is in over his head), and Chase (who professes to have an unremarkable mind for crime solving, although there's more to him than he lets on).

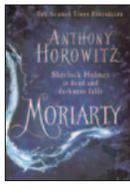
It's not necessary to have read all the Conan Doyle novels and short stories to enjoy "Moriarty."

But familiarity with the canon, particularly "The Sign of Four," "The Red-Headed League" (in which Holmes stymied a cunning bank robbery), "The Final Problem" (in which Holmes and Moriarty fought) and "The Empty House" (in which Holmes explains how and why he faked his death), wouldn't hurt.

Here's hoping that Horowitz has another Holmesian story just as devious to give us in the future.

"Moriarty" author Anthony Horowitz is currently writing the next official James Bond/007 thriller.

Orion Publishing



'When Books Went to War' shows literature's impact on the battlefield

By MATTHEW PRICE
Newsday

When U.S. soldiers came ashore in Europe and the Pacific during the Second World War, they carried M1 rifles and M1919 machine guns. Many of them were also packing ASEs — Armed Services Editions. Books might not shoot a shell, but they became vital components of the GI's mental armor; stories abound of soldiers ditching all their gear except for the paperback stashed in a pocket or in a pack.

The series exposed countless GIs to the classics of world literature and helped forge a generation of readers.

In "When Books Went to War," author Molly Gupptil Manning tells the fascinating story of how the military teamed up with New York publishers to bring books to the troops in the field. From the foxholes of France to the bug-infested jungles

of Guadalcanal, ASE books were coveted items, even more than cigarettes. Armed Services Editions, Gupptil writes, "were the most dependable distraction available on all fronts. Whenever a soldier needed an escape, an antidote to anxiety, relief from boredom, a bit of laughter, inspiration, or hope, he cracked open a book and drank in the words that would transport him elsewhere."

Manning is a terribly earnest stylist, and her fumbled attempts at melodrama don't come off. Book drives and committees of librarians aren't exactly scintillating, but her eye for zesty quotes — Manning makes excellent use of soldiers' letters — is spot on. This material carries the book after a plodding start.

As Manning shows, there was a propagandistic side to the military's efforts. In contrast to the Nazis, who burned books and banned Hemingway, America would promote freedom of thought and give its soldiers books of all kinds. The state of Army libraries was deplorable, however. The American Library Association swung into action, organizing a Victory Book Campaign, imploring Americans to donate books. The result was a case study in Be Careful What You Wish For — Americans gave away books by the millions, but a lot of them were useless castoffs such as

"How to Knit" and "Theology in 1870." It was time for plan B.

The Army Special Services Division had already mastered the distribution of periodicals, and this model was used to develop books in a smaller format — portability was a key factor.

New York publishers, led by Malcolm Johnson of Doubleday, and Pocket Books' Philip Van Doren Stern, formed the Council on Books in Wartime and fashioned "a new style of book suitable for mass production while operating under wartime restrictions." (Paper rationing was just one obstacle the team faced.)

The results were appealing — a softcover book, printed in double-column format designed to be easy on soldiers' eyes under stressful conditions.

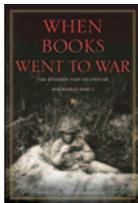
The first series that rolled off the presses in September 1943 included Graham Greene's "The Ministry of Fear," Herman Melville's "Typee," and James Thurber's "My World and Welcome to It." The series would be remarkably eclectic — high art and history mingled with pulp fiction potboilers and Westerns. Katherine Anne Porter's short stories struck a nerve, and Betty Smith's "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" was a favorite. Soldiers clamored for two racy novels, "Forever Amber" and "Strange Fruit."

One soldier wrote in to tell the Council to pay no attention to scolds — "If the legion of decency approaches you, please leer at them in your most offensive manner and tell them to stuff it."

Soldiers were an opinionated lot, but their enthusiasm and gratitude shine through these pages. After one Marine stationed in the Pacific, bored out of his mind, picked up "Typee," he wrote rapturously, "Hot stuff. That guy wrote about three islands I'd been on!"

Still, there were bumps. Republicans tried to police the content of books, fearful certain titles would influence soldiers to vote for Roosevelt, standing for a fourth term. But their legislation was so vague and expansive that even an innocuous title such as E.B. White's "One Man's Meat" ran afoul of the new rules, which were eventually revised.

All told, some 123 million ASEs were printed. Manning rather too neatly wraps things up in a bow, touching only on the postwar developments such as the GI Bill. And she mentions only in passing F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby," whose canonical status, no sure thing in 1944, was arguably cemented by its inclusion. U.S. armed forces won the war, and won literature an eager new audience.



VIDEO GAMES



Amid the chaos and violence of the French and Indian War, Shay Patrick Cormac undergoes a dark transformation that will forever shape the future of the colonies in "Assassin's Creed: Rogue."

Photos courtesy of Ubisoft.

GOING 'ROGUE'

New 'Assassin's Creed' title a bland entry for venerable series

By BRIAN BOWERS
Stars and Stripes

When you compare the Caribbean to Canada, you think of sand vs. snow. Bob Marley vs. Justin Bieber. And Blackbeard vs. former Toronto Mayor Rob Ford.

So don't go looking for the pirates of the Caribbean in Canada. I learned that lesson with "Assassin's Creed: Rogue."

Ubisoft's adventure game spans the gap between the piratical escapades of "Assassin's Creed IV: The Black Flag" and the Revolutionary War tale of "Assassin's Creed III."

When I heard that, I envisioned more fun in the tropics — plundering Spanish galleons, hobnobbing with Blackbeard and searching for Mayan artifacts. I was hoping for "Black Flag: Part 2" — a continuation as the best Assassin adventure ever. Instead, I got something much more like "AC III: Part 2" — a continuation of the franchise's least appealing episode. Sure, you can engage in most of the same basic activities as "Black Flag," but the atmosphere and the storyline are much more bleak — sometimes even bland — so it just isn't as fun.

"Rogue" focuses on the era dominated by the French and Indian War. Apparently, it wasn't just a time of imperial muscle-flexing by European powers. It was also a time of especially vicious fighting between the freedom-loving Assassins and the order-minded Templars.

You play as Shay Patrick Cormac, a newly minted Assassin who seems to be a little more surly than most of his peers. After a mission ends with devastating consequences, Shay turns against the brotherhood, throws his lot in with the Templars and ends up hunting down his former colleagues.

The game is available only on the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 — two venerable consoles that are still used by millions of people. However, it definitely seems that these gamers got the short end of the stick when you compare "Rogue" to the new "Assassin's Creed: Unity," which is

available only on the newer Xbox One and PS4.

Of course the graphics are far superior and certain elements of gameplay are more refined in "Unity." But that must be excused since the new consoles represent seven more years of technological advancement.

And it seems that most of the gameplay elements from "Black Flag" have found a home in "Rogue." You can still engage in countless sword fights, attack forts, board ships, search for treasure and even harpoon whales. (It's the 1750s, so I guess it's OK.)

So the problem lies beyond the game's mechanics. It lies in the story and setting.

Shay's tale is darker than the typical Assassin adventure. Most of the previous games featured heroes who were driven by vengeance. And many of them faced serious run-ins with their brotherhood's leaders or at least held them at arm's length for much of the game. Trouble in Assassinland is pretty much a running theme in the series. However, the other games turned this into part of the adventure without making it a drag.

In addition, the "Rogue" story has some major continuity problems. It seems to conflict with what we've learned in previous games, and isn't even consistent within itself.

Through Shay and his new companions, we get a much closer look at the Templars and their cause, which involves keeping a lid on chaos and searching for artifacts from a human civilization that flourished eons ago. Over the years, the franchise has given us plenty of reason to hate the Templars as repressive thugs. For example, in one previous game, Lucrezia Borgia was a Templar while Leonardo da

Vinci helped the Assassins. So, in order to present Shay as a hero, "Rogue" turns things upside down. The Assassins are now depicted as murderous anarchists bent on literally shaking the earth. Of course, this runs counter to almost everything we've been shown in previous games. This is confusing enough, but it gets worse as you dig into the obligatory side story about the Templars' modern front company known as Abstergo. This portion of the game makes it clear that 21st-century Templars are, indeed, the reprehensible goons we've come to know and hate. I guess we're supposed to believe that the two orders swapped characteristics for a generation back in the mid-1700s.

Perhaps the story would have been more cohesive if the game weren't so short. A typical "Assassin's Creed" game consists of about a dozen sequences. "Rogue" has only six. A little more exposition might have explained why the Assassins are such asses this time around.

Finally, the setting is a major comedown from "Black Flag." It's dreary and unappealing. To be honest, you spend more time in New York than Canada — but it isn't much better. Much of your time in the colony is spent in places like Albany and Sleepy Hollow, which are presented as squalid little burgs with little to do. And not only isn't the Big Apple all that big, we spent a lot of time there in "AC III," which leads to a serious feeling of déjà vu.

The segments on the high seas also fall short. The main problem is that you're just as likely to be sailing through a confined river valley as the open ocean. And when you are on the ocean, you're usually surrounded by icebergs and fog. This all adds to the tedium and detracts from the sense of adventure.

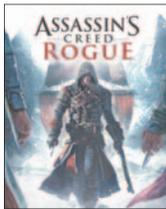
I have to admit that none of this actually adds up to a bad game, and I did have some fun. However, I had much more fun swishing my buckles in the game's predecessor.

Bottom line: C "Assassin's Creed: Rogue" represents a departure from the franchise's norm, but that's not a good thing in this case.

Rating: Mature, for violence

Platforms: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3

Online: assassinscreed.ubi.com



Overall grade: **C**



Many more staff-written game reviews at stripes.com/military-life

LIFESTYLE



Second chances

PHOTOS BY ROBERT DUVOIS, SUN SENTINEL/TNS

Alesha Howington, left center, poses for a portrait with her family, from left, Sophia Davis, James Davis and James Davis III, at their home in Hollywood, Fla. Alesha and James temporarily lost custody of their children due to drug addiction but have since found jobs and moved into their own apartment.

Addicts' rocky journey ultimately keeps family intact

By MIKE CLARY
Sun Sentinel

When Alesha Howington moved to south Florida nearly four years ago, she arrived with her two young children and high hopes for a fresh start.

She also brought with her a powerful addiction to opiates — oxycodone and heroin — that proved to be unrelenting. A few months after her arrival, Howington was arrested for drug possession.

Her children, then 5 and 3, were taken into custody by the state's Department of Children and Families.

That low point, in August 2011, lingers in Howington's mind as rock bottom but also the beginning of a long ascent that has brought her, her children and the children's father, James Davis, to a better place in life.

They have much to be grateful for this holiday season.

Thanks in part to the Salvation Army and other rehabilitation programs, Howington is holding down a steady job. She recently settled into a small Hollywood apartment with Davis, also in recovery, and their children. Sophia is now 8, and James III, called Tres, is 6.

"It has been quite a long adventure," says Howington, 32.

"We are addicts, and will be for life," Howington adds. "And we understand that our addiction is there, doing pushups and waiting for us to relapse. We have to face things one day at a time."

Raised in rural Virginia, Howington later moved to West Virginia, where she and Davis met. They both fell into drug use.

Together 10 years, the couple traveled to Florida to escape the culture that gripped them. "Everybody I knew was on drugs or trying to get away from it," says Davis, 33. "There was no help there."

But in south Florida, things got worse. They lost jobs,

money, and eventually the children. When a court ordered Howington into rehab, DCF placed Sophia and James in a foster home and then a group home.

Howington's first stop on the road to recovery was the West Palm Beach-based Comprehensive Alcohol Rehabilitation Programs, Inc., where she spent six months. From there she went to the Susan B. Anthony Recovery Center in Pembroke Pines, where she was reunited with her children.

For the next year, Howington concentrated on parenting skills and rebuilding relationships with her daughter and son. She also started working as a server at a local restaurant — a job she still holds.

Next, Howington was accepted into the Salvation Army's Plymouth Colony in Hollywood, Fla., a transitional housing program. She continued to undergo therapy while also focusing on life skills like budgeting, saving money and setting goals.

Over the next 11 months, she would bank enough money to buy a car, pay for insurance and get a cell phone.

She also never failed a drug test, didn't break the rules of the program, and stayed positive, says Plymouth Colony project manager Queteline Fabe.

"While here, she did what she needed to do: focus on her



children and be realistic about her options," Fabe says. "She seems to be someone who has a real-life perspective. She is resilient."

The Salvation Army's Yes Kids Can! program and the Rapid Rehousing program were also a big help.

Howington began making progress when "she dropped her defense system and realized that she had to follow the program if she wanted a better life," case manager Fernando Rosero says.

"And she did it," Rosero says. "She's a strong person." After two years apart, she and Davis reunited. Fabe says the couple and their kids are "functioning as a family."

Howington and Davis say they're determined to succeed because of their children. They hope to move north one day to live in the country.

For now, they have a home, their children are with them, and they are clean and sober. They also regularly attend group meetings sponsored by Alcoholics Anonymous and other organizations.

"It's step by step," Howington says.

"We are addicts, and will be for life. And we understand that our addiction is there, doing pushups and waiting for us to relapse. We have to face things one day at a time."
Alesha Howington

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BUSINESS/WEATHER

PlayStation, Xbox gamers face outages

By Lenny Bernstein
The Washington Post

Christmas turned into a frustrating day for many people eager to play games on new Xbox or PlayStation machines.

Online gaming services provided by Microsoft's Xbox Live and Sony's PlayStation Network were plagued by outages, and a group of hackers called the Lizard Squad took responsibility for the problems via Twitter.

Both companies acknowledged the difficulties experienced by users on what is presumably a heavy day for online gaming by recipients of new game consoles. But it was difficult to determine how widespread the outages were. Microsoft declined to comment on the scope of the problem and whether it was the result of a hack. E-mails sent to numerous Sony officials were not answered.

Xbox Live posted this message on its status page about 3 p.m. Eastern time: "Can't sign in to Xbox Live? Don't worry! We're



SHIZU KAMBARASHI/AP

A shopper walks on the logo of Sony's PlayStation 4 at an electronics store in Tokyo on Thursday.

working to get everything back to normal ASAP. We appreciate your patience. Check back in 30 minutes for a status update."

Sony tweeted: "We are aware that there have been issues reported with PSN. Thanks for your patience as we investigate."

Data on the website downtector.com showed thousands of reports of problems with both ser-

vices at various times beginning Wednesday evening. Media reports said the problems resulted from a distributed denial of service attack, one that overwhelms a network with useless traffic.

According to Vox.com, Lizard Squad brought down Sony's PlayStation network with a similar attack in August, and Business Insider UK said the group

took down PlayStation and Xbox at the beginning of December. It has claimed responsibility for disrupting other online gaming sites. The group also tweeted a bomb threat against a commercial flight carrying Sony Online Entertainment President John Smedley, forcing an emergency landing.

The group last week threatened to take down PlayStation and Xbox over Christmas, according to Business Insider UK.

Sony has suffered a series of online attacks this month. Hackers gained access to company online files, exposing sensitive e-mails and forcing the company to cancel the nationwide release of "The Interview," a comedy about a fictional attempt by two journalists to assassinate North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. U.S. officials blamed North Korea for the attack, but a hacker group called Guardians of Peace, which may have connections to Lizard Squad, also claimed responsibility.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Dec. 29)	\$1.2539
Dollar buys (Dec. 29)	€0.7975
British pound (Dec. 29)	\$1.59
Japanese yen (Dec. 29)	¥116.00
South Korean won (Dec. 29)	₩1,072.00

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3765
British pound	\$1.5552/0.6430
Canada (dollar)	1.1613
China (Yuan)	6.2313
Denmark (Krone)	6.1131
Egypt (Pound)	7.1685
Euro	\$1.2170/0.8217
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7611
Hungary (Forint)	260.45
Israel (Shekel)	3.8975
Japan (Yen)	120.45
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2926
Norway (Krone)	7.4520
Philippines (Peso)	44.70
Poland (Zloty)	3.58
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7537
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3222
South Korea (Won)	1,106.70
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9882
Thailand (Baht)	32.96
Turkey (New Lira)	2.3181

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
3-month Treasury bill	0.13
Federal funds market rate	0.13
3-month bill	0.06
30-year bond	2.83

WEATHER OUTLOOK

SATURDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



SATURDAY IN EUROPE



SUNDAY IN THE PACIFIC



Saturday's US temperatures

City	Hi	Lo	Wthr	Chatanooga	56	36	Cldy	Fort Wayne	48	38	Rain	Louisville	53	39	Rain	Pocatello	27	11	Cldy	Sioux City	25	20	Cldy
Arlene, Tex	43	34	Cldy	Cheyenne	24	1	PCldy	Fresno	54	34	Cir	Lubbock	39	24	PCldy	Portland, Maine	45	32	PCldy	Sioux Falls	23	15	PCldy
Akron, Ohio	50	34	Cldy	Chicago	45	40	Rain	Goodland	27	8	Cir	Macon	62	40	Rain	Portland, Ore.	45	40	Rain	South Bend	47	40	Rain
Albany, N.Y.	45	32	Cldy	Cincinnati	52	38	Rain	Grand Junction	28	13	PCldy	Madison	36	24	Rain	Providence	52	34	Rain	Spokane	32	25	Snow
Albuquerque	36	20	Cir	Cleveland	50	37	Rain	Grand Rapids	45	39	Rain	Medford	44	28	Cldy	Pueblo	30	-1	PCldy	Springfield, Ill.	47	43	Rain
Allentown, Pa.	51	29	PCldy	Colorado Springs	28	2	PCldy	Great Falls	28	12	Cldy	Memphis	58	48	Rain	Raleigh-Durham	62	34	Rain	Springfield, Mo.	44	44	Cldy
Amarillo	33	16	PCldy	Columbia, S.C.	64	38	Rain	Green Bay	34	31	Snow	Miami Beach	79	71	Cldy	Rapid City	27	5	Cldy	St. Louis	49	38	Rain
Anchorage	28	19	PCldy	Columbus, Ga.	60	41	Rain	Greensboro, N.C.	60	34	PCldy	Midland-Odessa	43	35	Cldy	reno	37	15	PCldy	Tallahassee	70	50	Cldy
Asheville	58	32	Cldy	Columbus, Ohio	53	36	Cldy	Hartford	52	31	PCldy	Milwaukee	41	37	Rain	Richmond	59	5	PCldy	Tampa	80	63	Cldy
Atlanta	57	49	Rain	Concord, N.H.	45	25	PCldy	Hartford Spring	51	30	PCldy	Ms-St Paul	26	24	Cldy	Rochester	49	36	Cldy	Tellico	49	38	Rain
Atlantic City	54	32	Cir	Corpus Christi	70	65	Cldy	Helena	25	8	Cir	Missoula	29	16	Snow	Rochester	49	36	Cldy	Topeka	33	26	Cldy
Austin	58	38	Cldy	Dallas-Ft Worth	47	46	Cldy	Honolulu	82	71	Rain	Montgomery	63	45	Rain	Rockford	40	38	Rain	Tucson	51	27	Cir
Baltimore	52	33	Cir	Dayton	51	37	Rain	Houston	72	63	Rain	Nashville	59	41	Rain	St. Louis	50	46	Rain	Tulsa	40	31	Cldy
Baton Rouge	73	60	Rain	Daytona Beach	77	63	Cldy	Huntsville	56	41	Rain	Nashville	59	41	Rain	St. Petersburg	77	64	Cldy	Tupelo	57	45	Rain
Bilings	25	10	cldy	Denver	27	6	PCldy	Indianapolis	50	38	Rain	New Orleans	72	61	Rain	St. Thomas	84	73	Cir	Waco	51	51	Cldy
Birmingham	58	43	Rain	Des Moines	30	29	Cldy	Jackson, Miss.	68	52	Rain	New York City	56	37	Cir	St. Thomas	84	73	Cir	Washington	53	40	Cldy
Bismarck	23	10	PCldy	Detroit	50	40	Cldy	Jacksonville	72	52	Rain	Newark	59	36	Cir	Salem, Ore.	45	39	Rain	W. Palm Beach	80	71	Cldy
Boise	34	20	PCldy	Duluth	22	17	Cldy	Jamez	34	27	Cldy	Norfolk, Va.	58	37	Cir	Salt Lake City	30	17	Cldy	Wichita	36	25	Cldy
Boston	51	34	PCldy	El Paso	47	32	PCldy	Kansas City	33	31	Cldy	North Platte	24	6	PCldy	San Diego	47	36	Cldy	Wichita Falls	42	35	Cldy
Bridgeport	51	33	Cir	Elkins	58	23	Cir	Key West	53	37	PCldy	Oklahoma City	58	32	Cir	San Francisco	60	56	Cldy	Wilmington, Del.	51	30	PCldy
Brownsville	78	67	Cldy	Erie	48	37	Rain	Knoxville	57	32	Cldy	Omaha	27	20	Cldy	San Jose	60	56	Cldy	Youngstown	49	34	Cldy
Buffalo	49	37	Cldy	Eugene	45	34	Cldy	Lake Charles	73	63	Rain	Orlando	81	62	Cldy	San Jose	60	56	Cldy				
Burlington, Vt.	42	24	PCldy	Fargo	21	9	Cldy	Lansing	47	39	Cldy	Pasadena	52	43	Rain	San Jose	57	33	PCldy				
Caribou, Maine	30	21	Cldy	Fairbanks	12	0	Cldy	Las Vegas	48	32	Cir	Pendleton	41	27	Cldy	Santa Fe	30	13	PCldy				
Charleston, S.C.	67	45	Cldy	Fargo	21	9	Cldy	Lexington	55	35	Cldy	Peoria	45	35	Cldy	St. Marie	33	20	Snow				
Charleston, W.Va.	60	31	Cir	Flagstaff	31	9	Cir	Lincoln	28	19	Cldy	Philadelphia	51	36	PCldy	Savannah	68	46	Cldy				
Charlotte, N.C.	60	36	Cldy	Fort Smith	48	48	Cldy	Little Rock	60	50	Rain	Phoenix	57	37	Cir	Seattle	47	41	Rain				
								Los Angeles	64	44	Cldy	Pittsburgh	52	35	Cldy	Shreveport	66	57	Rain				

The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 22 Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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 Military Reporters and Editors Awards – Notable Narrative Winner
Recipient: Laura Rauch

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 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 Headline 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 Baron

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

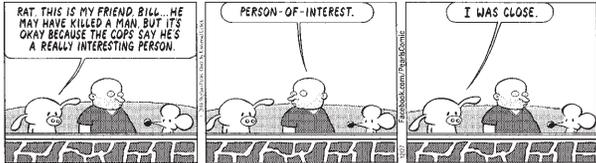
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



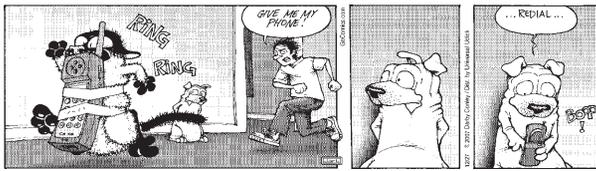
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Get Fuzzy



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	
11						12					13
14						15					
16				17		18				19	
20			21		22				23		
24				25		26		27			
			28		29		30				
31	32	33			34		35		36	37	38
39				40		41		42			
43				44			45		46		
47			48				49		50		
51							52				
			53						54		

- ACROSS**
- 1 Serious
 - 6 Fixes socks
 - 11 Comprehension
 - 12 "Seinfeld" role
 - 14 TU occupant
 - 15 Hatch fastener
 - 16 Raw rock
 - 17 Coffee additive
 - 19 Drench
 - 20 Taj Mahal city
 - 22 Big Apple letters
 - 23 Dimension
 - 24 Irritable
 - 26 LP, e.g.
 - 28 Highland head-gear
 - 30 Before
 - 31 Escapee
 - 35 Plotters' group
 - 39 Unoriginal one
 - 40 Crimson
 - 42 "Whip It" band
 - 43 Short short-order order
 - 44 Metric measure
 - 46 "Gosh!"
 - 47 Dark Knight
 - 49 Majorettes' props
 - 51 Queued up
 - 52 Seventh planet
- DOWN**
- 1 Bespatter
 - 2 Playful critters
 - 3 Scrouge's cry
 - 4 — out (supple-ments)
 - 5 Same old story?
 - 6 Fiasco
 - 7 Winged
 - 8 Scoundrel
 - 9 Fool
 - 10 Sternutation
 - 11 WWII vessel
 - 13 Log in
 - 18 Con
 - 21 Oil of roses
 - 25 Deviate off course
 - 27 Joan of —
 - 29 Seafarer
 - 31 Shul VIP
 - 32 Plateau
 - 33 Irritate
 - 34 Still
 - 36 "Scat!"
 - 37 Broad through-fare
 - 38 Claylike deposit
 - 41 Opening night
 - 44 Highway division
 - 45 Exceptional
 - 48 CalTech rival
 - 50 Spigot

Answer to Previous Puzzle

C	R	E	P	T	R	A	W	C	F	C
B	A	Y	O	U	S	A	H	I	E	
S	P	E	L	L	P	I	N	B	A	L
					B	O	S	S	E	S
P	T	A	A	T	E	R	I	S	E	S
I	O	L	A	A	S	K	E	D		
G	O	L	D	E	N	A	D	A	G	I
					V	A	D	E	R	L
A	S	S	E	T	V	E	T	M	O	D
D	E	E	R	B	E	N	U	M	B	
O	D	D	B	A	L	L	L	E	A	R
B	A	G	D	E	Y	I	G	L	O	O
E	N	E	O	W	N	P	A	L	E	D

12-27

CRYPTOQUIP

U'R_L MLBWC JMBJ QMLX JML
JQZ IZPXH CPAJ CLRUTA VLI
LBOM ZJMLV, JM LI MBC B

Q M U W T Q U X C W Z V B X O L .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THEMED AMUSEMENT PARK WHERE YOU'RE LIKELY TO FIND DOZENS OF FAST-SPINNING RIDES: DIZZY WORLD.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals W

HOCKEY

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Montreal	35	23	11	2	46	95	84
Tampa Bay	35	21	11	4	46	117	96
Detroit	35	18	16	1	45	100	102
Toronto	35	20	12	3	43	118	102
Boston	35	18	14	3	39	91	91
Florida	35	15	19	1	38	73	82
Ottawa	34	14	14	6	34	90	94
Buffalo	35	13	19	3	29	69	115

Metropolitan Division

Pittsburgh	34	23	11	0	46	108	80
N.Y. Islanders	34	23	11	0	46	105	94
Nashville	32	15	17	0	30	89	94
Washington	34	17	11	6	40	99	90
Philadelphia	34	14	16	5	34	97	101
Columbus	33	14	16	3	31	89	107
New Jersey	36	12	17	7	31	78	104
Carolina	34	10	20	4	24	70	93

Western Conference

Central Division

Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Chicago	35	23	10	2	48	107	72
St. Louis	33	19	9	2	45	99	84
St. Louis	34	21	10	3	45	100	86
Winnipeg	35	18	10	7	43	88	81
Minnesota	32	16	13	3	35	93	89
Colorado	34	13	13	8	34	99	101
Dallas	33	14	14	5	33	95	113

Pacific Division

Anaheim	36	23	8	5	51	104	98
San Jose	35	19	11	5	43	99	90
Vancouver	32	20	11	1	43	99	91
Los Angeles	35	17	11	7	41	97	88
San Jose	36	16	12	8	39	104	104
Arizona	34	12	18	4	28	80	112
Edmonton	35	9	21	7	25	75	121

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

Tuesday's games

- Carolina 2, New Jersey 1, SO
- Boston 5, Nashville 3
- Montreal 3, N.Y. Islanders 1
- N.Y. Rangers 4, Washington 2
- Philadelphia 5, Minnesota 2
- Toronto at Ottawa 9
- Detroit 6, Buffalo 3
- Tampa Bay 4, Pittsburgh 3
- Arizona 5, Edmonton 1
- Colorado 5, St. Louis 0
- Winnipeg 5, Chicago 1

Wednesday's games

No games scheduled

Thursday's games

No games scheduled

Friday's games

No games scheduled

Saturday's games

- N.Y. Islanders at Buffalo
- Detroit at Ottawa
- Carolina at Tampa Bay
- New Jersey at N.Y. Rangers
- Boston at Minnesota
- Washington at Pittsburgh
- Pittsburgh at Los Angeles
- Philadelphia at Nashville
- Anaheim at Arizona
- Chicago at Colorado
- Edmonton at Calgary
- San Jose at Los Angeles
- Sunday's games
- Toronto at Florida
- Vancouver at Anaheim
- Monday's games
- Detroit at Boston
- Pittsburgh at New Jersey
- Washington at N.Y. Islanders
- Montreal at Carolina
- Philadelphia at Atlanta
- Toronto at Tampa Bay
- San Jose at Dallas
- Minnesota at Winnipeg
- Nashville at Chicago
- N.Y. Rangers at Dallas
- Los Angeles at Calgary
- Philadelphia at Arizona

Scoring leaders

Player	Through Dec. 25	A	Pts
Jakub Voracek, Phi	34	14	32
Tyler Seguin, Dal	31	25	46
Evgeni Malkin, Pit	34	16	25
Claude Giroux, Phi	35	17	37
Ryan Getzlaf, Anh	35	12	27
Phil Kessel, Tor	35	17	31
Radko Gudas, StL	35	13	27
Tyler Johnson, TB	35	13	24
Max Pacioretty, Pit	35	12	27
Rick Nash, NYR	32	13	36
Steve Stamkos, TB	35	15	36
Patrick Kane, Chi	35	16	20
Nicklas Backstrom, Was	34	11	25
Mark Giordano, Cal	36	14	34

Sharks forward Scott suspended 4 games

NEW YORK — San Jose Sharks forward John Scott has been suspended for four games without pay for punching Anaheim Ducks forward Tim Jackman.

Scott was suspended for two games in October for coming onto the ice to fight Jackman. Scott already was considered a repeat offender because of a previous suspension for an illegal hit to the head.

The league said Wednesday he will forfeit \$34,146 in salary this time.

From The Associated Press



The Adirondack Phantoms' Tom Sestito wraps his arm around teammate Shane Harper, who scored the winning goal in overtime of an AHL game against the Hershey Bears on Jan. 6, 2012, in Philadelphia. The new overtime rule implemented in the AHL this season is a roaring success and could soon be seen at an NHL rink near you.

OT rule in minors generating buzz

By PAT GRAHAM
The Associated Press

DENVER — This rookie just might be called up from the American Hockey League after catching everyone's attention in an impressive debut.

Sorry, though, it's not the next Sidney Crosby, but a new overtime rule that should allow players like Crosby to showcase their skills even more with the game on the line.

The minor-league organization has long been the place to experiment with new directives, just to see how well they work — or don't work — before the NHL takes a look. Some (oversized blue lines) weren't popular. Others (not being able to change players after an icing call) have been promoted.

The new OT rule possibly could be coming soon to an NHL rink near you.

"It's certainly entertaining for fans and a lot of fun to watch," said David Andrews, the president and CEO of the AHL for the past 21 years.

The NHL uses a 4-on-4 OT model for five minutes. If no one scores, it goes to a shootout.

Here's how the extra period works in the AHL. It's seven minutes long — or until someone scores, of course — with the opening three minutes 4-on-4. After the next whistle, it switches to 3-on-3 for the last four, leading to lots of room for creativity and scoring chances. If that doesn't decide things, it goes to a shootout, a concept that drives many coaches bonkers since it's almost like a skills competition.

That's the thing: This new overtime system has cut down significantly on shootouts.

How they compare

NHL: Teams play 4-on-4 for five minutes of overtime. If no one scores, the game goes to a shootout. Coaches can find shootouts frustrating because they reduce a tightly contested game to a skills competition.

AHL: Seven minutes of overtime. For the first three minutes, the teams play 4-on-4. Then, after the next whistle, they switch to 3-on-3 for the last four. If that doesn't decide things, the game goes to a shootout. Last year the league had 65 percent of its OT games decided in a shootout, according to AHL president and CEO David Andrews. So far this season, that number is down to 25 percent.

Last year, the AHL had 65 percent of its OT games decided in a shootout, Andrews said. This season, it's slumped to 25 percent.

Also, of the 99 overtime games so far, 35 of them have been decided in 3-on-3 action.

Initially hesitant over the newfangled OT ordinance, Roy Sommer, the coach of the AHL's Worcester Sharks, has warmed up to the idea. He thinks it would be a big hit with fans and players on the next level.

"If you put your three best NHL players against each other with all that ice and creativity, man, it would be something to watch," said Sommer, one of the all-time winningest AHL coaches. "I know I wouldn't leave."

As for when — or even if — this version of overtime arrives in the NHL, that's hard to predict. In a statement, the NHL's hockey operations branch said the league follows "the

American Hockey League and other leagues closely. ... We're always interested in ways to make an already great game better."

The Colorado Avalanche and Toronto Maple Leafs had a 3-on-3 situation in overtime this season after both teams drew penalties. It was riveting as players raced from end-to-end, unable to risk heading to the bench for fear of an odd-man rush going the other way.

"If we did this, there's no way games would go to a shootout," Colorado forward Matt Duchene said. "As much as shootouts are fun to watch, I'm not a big fan of them, because it stinks to finish a game on a non-hockey play."

"But I'd love to see overtime 4-on-4 and then 3-on-3, because it would be amazing."

One possible downside? More ice time for players, which could take its toll over an already grueling regular season.

NBC hockey analyst Eddie Olczyk wouldn't mind seeing something similar to college football's overtime. His suggestion: One team receives a 4-on-3 power play for two minutes and if it scores, then the opponent gets its chance. The one that stops the other wins.

"If we're trying to get away from the shootout, there are ways of trying to do that," said Olczyk, a former NHL player and coach.

Hey, maybe another test idea for the AHL. The minor league isn't just a petri dish for the NHL. A lot of times, the AHL institutes a rule that causes the NHL to take notice and later implement, like the delay penalty for flipping a puck over the glass in the defensive end. Or the trapezoid area behind the goal.

Or, maybe soon, this new OT rule.

"The fans love the shootout," Avs defenseman Erik Johnson said. "But they'd LOVE 3-on-3 in overtime."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Game length on the rise with scoring

At 3:23, the average contest 14 minutes longer than in '08

By ERIC OLSON
The Associated Press

Bear Bryant said offense sells tickets, and he was right. College football is enjoying immense popularity in an era of record scoring.

But is there too much of a good thing? All that scoring caused this season's average length of game to hit 3 hours, 23 minutes in late November, according to the NCAA. That was up from 3:17 last season. Games are, on average, 14 minutes longer than in 2008. By comparison, this season's NFL average is 3:07.

"I think it's trending in the wrong direction, and it is a concern," American Athletic Conference commissioner Mike Aresco said.

Administrators are wary of turning off fans, especially young ones who crave faster action and represent future ticket buyers. They also are mindful of the risk of injury to fatigued players who are on the field longer and for more plays.

The NCAA Football Rules Committee expects to discuss the issue when it meets in February, secretary-rules editor Rogers Redding said.

"The 14-minute increase has been gradual" since 2008, he wrote in an email to The Associated Press, "but the cumulative effect has generated some concern among some stakeholders so that it is probably something that the committee will want to take a look at."

Increasing game lengths prompted rules changes in 2008. One shortened the interval between when the clock stopped and restarted on plays that end out of bounds. Another required the 40-second play clock to start right when the previous play is blown dead.

No changes are imminent for 2015, but a number of ideas have been proposed. They include shortening halftime from 20 to 12 minutes and keeping the game clock running while the chains are moved after first downs. Another idea is to allow the quarterback and one defensive player to wear earpieces in their helmets to allow for radio contact with coaches and streamline communication, as in the NFL.

Mid-American Conference commissioner Jon Steinbrecher, who chairs the College Football Officiating Board of Managers, said it's imperative to keep the average game under 3:30. That figure coincides with the typical window TV networks allow for a game. "A shorter game is better than a longer game. That's painting with a broad brush," Steinbrecher said. "If a game is exciting, I suppose it doesn't matter how long it takes. We ought to probably be in that 3:15 to 3:20 range."

Baylor's 61-58 victory over TCU on Oct. 11 — at 4 hours, 25 minutes — was the season's longest game that didn't go overtime or wasn't delayed by weather, according to STATS. Temple's 59-0 victory over Delaware State on Sept. 20 — at 2:40 — was the shortest.

Video reviews and the demands of television play a role in game times, but they are secondary to the increased scoring, administrators said.

The average number of game stops for the replay official to review a play has held steady



The longest day

Baylor's 61-58 victory

over TCU on Oct. 11 lasted

4 hours, 25 minutes

— making it the season's longest game that didn't go overtime or wasn't delayed by weather, according to STATS.

RICHARD W. RODRIGUEZ, FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM/MCT

Baylor wide receiver KD Cannon scores against TCU on Oct. 11 in Waco, Texas.

at 1.7 to 1.9 a game. The average duration of those stoppages is down to 1 minute, 15 seconds this season from a high of 1:22 in 2011.

Television agreements vary by conference and network, but generally there are three or four commercial breaks of differing lengths per quarter.

"In this world, you always want to make sure that if a TV commercial break is 2 minutes, 30 seconds, it's 2 minutes 30 seconds and not three minutes," Big Ten senior associate commissioner for television administration Mark Rudner said. "TV has a stake in it, too. The last thing TV wants to do is have a game that goes too long and miss a game that is coming up."

ESPN senior vice president Burke Magnus said as long as the average game doesn't extend past 3½ hours, his network sees no problem.

The issue comes back to those high-producing offenses.

In the NFL, the average number of offensive plays is 64 a game. It's 72 in the top tier of college football.

The NFL scoring average is 22.7 points.

Bowl roundup

W. Kentucky withstands furious rally

The Associated Press

NASSAU, Bahamas — Storming back from 35 points down in the final 12 minutes and getting the last score on a dazzling lateral-filled play as time expired, Central Michigan wound up one play short Wednesday in the inaugural Bahamas Bowl.

Western Kentucky overcame a record-setting seven touchdown passes from Cooper Rush and beat the Chippewas 49-48 in the first bowl played outside the U.S. or Canada since 1937.

"Our team is never going to quit while I'm the head football coach," Central Michigan coach Dan Enos said. "We've got blue collar guys. They work. They've got great character. Football mirrors life. There's adversity. There's ups and downs. You get your butt kicked and you got to bounce back. That's what these guys did. They battled back."

Just not all the way back. Central Michigan (7-6) scored the final five touchdowns of the game, including a three-lateral, 75-yarder on the final play where six Chippewas — one center, one quarterback and four receivers — touched the ball. Officially, it went down as a touchdown pass to Titus Davis by Rush, his seventh of the day, one more than anyone had ever thrown in any bowl game.

Central Michigan went for a two-point conversion and the win, only to have it broken up by Western Kentucky's Wonderful Terry.

Enos said he originally planned to kick the extra point. He then changed his mind, a decision that's surely going to be debated.

"Cooper had thrown seven touchdown passes already in the game, so we figured he was pretty hot," Enos said. "We didn't want to go to overtime because we had trouble stopping them all day. We thought we had momentum so we'd try to win the game."

The ending largely overshadowed a huge day by Western Kentucky quarterback Brandon Doughty, who threw for 486 yards and threw five TD passes to increase his nation-leading total to 49 this season.

Hawaii Bowl

Rice 30, Fresno State 6: At Honolulu, Driphus Jackson passed for 318 yards and three touchdowns. Fresno State completed a remarkable turnaround with a victory over the Bulldogs.

Rice (8-5) started the season 0-3 and ended it with its second bowl win in the past three years.

Fresno State (6-8), the only team to lose record to play in bowl this year, broke its Hawaii Bowl record for fewest points. Fresno State scored 10 two years ago in a lopsided loss to SMU.

The Bulldogs lost to Rice for the first time — they had a 6-0 edge from their old WAC days — and dropped their sixth consecutive bowl game.

In the Bowl Subdivision it's 29.4, the same as last year and just under the record of 29.5 in 2012.

The game clock stops for three to four minutes every time there's a touchdown. That's how long it takes to kick the extra point and for the clock to start running again on the kick return or next play from scrimmage if there is no runback.

Though college football attendance remains robust, administrators are always looking for ways to draw fans away from their high-definition TVs at home and to the stadium. Once there, they need to be entertained when the game is in a lull.

"Some schools have hired 'fan experience' directors to keep game day fun. Wifi has been enhanced at stadiums, and bigger-than-ever video boards have been installed. Still, many schools are seeing declines in student ticket sales. Those students represent the future fan base.

"People want the experience," said Jim Kahler, executive director of Ohio University's Center for Sports Administration, "but they want it convenient and they want it fast."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Marcus Mariota, who dominated the Heisman Trophy voting this year, received 49 of 54 votes in polling for The Associated Press player of the year award.

MARK J. TERRILL/AP



Oregon QB Mariota is AP player of year

By RALPH D. RUSSO
The Associated Press

The only thing left for Marcus Mariota to win at Oregon is the national championship.

The Ducks' star quarterback is The Associated Press college football player of the year, adding yet another honor to his spectacular season.

Mariota won the AP vote in the same landslide fashion he won the Heisman Trophy. He received 49 of the 54 votes submitted by the AP Top 25 media panel. Alabama receiver Amari Cooper drew three votes, Wisconsin running back Melvin Gordon and Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston had one vote each.

Mariota is the first Oregon player to win AP player of the year, which was first awarded in 1998, and the eighth quarterback to win it in the past nine years.

The junior has also won the Maxwell Award and Walter Camp player of the year, and the Davey O'Brien and Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award, which go to the top quarterbacks in the country.

Oregon will face Florida State and last year's Heisman winner and AP player of the year, Winston, in the College Football Playoff semifinals on Jan. 1 at the Rose Bowl. The winner will face Alabama or Ohio State in the national championship game Jan. 12 at AT&T Stadium in North Texas.

With his combination of speed and a strong arm, Mariota is a play of the day waiting to happen.

He set a Pac-12 record by accounting for 53 touchdowns, including 38 TD passes. He is the highest rated passer in the country (186.33) and has thrown for 3,783 yards and just two interceptions.

"He's an absolute competitor, an incredible perfectionist," Oregon coach Mark Helfrich said.

Here are a few of the most memorable Mariota moments from 2014:

The shove! In perhaps the biggest non-conference game of the season, Michigan State had Oregon in trouble in the second half. It was 27-18 Spartans midway through the third quarter and the Ducks were facing a third-and-10 after having punting on their first two second-half possessions. Michigan State collapsed the pocket around Mariota, who eluded three defenders, slipping and stepping around a mess of Spartans around his feet. Mariota stumbled out of the pocket and pushed a pass to Royce Freeman, who went for 17 yards. That drive ended with a touchdown. So did the next Oregon drive. And the next one. The Ducks won 46-27.

Scoop and score: As good as Mariota is, a little luck helps. Against UCLA, the Ducks were dominating when Mariota was driving them toward another score in the third quarter. He faked a handoff and the ball slipped from his hand and hit the turf. The ball bounced back into Mariota's hands and he secured it on the go, bursting into an untaught sprint to the end zone from 23 yards out.

Duck tough! Mariota's first win after two losses to Stanford had plenty of flashy plays from Hawaii native. Still, it was an 8-yard run early in the second quarter on a third-and-5 around midfield which said more about Mariota than any of the big gains and great throws. The Stanford losses called into question the Ducks' toughness. On this play it was Mariota busting through a tackle and dragging a Stanford defender for a first down that led to a TD. It was obvious Oregon was done being pushed around by Stanford. The final, 45-16 Ducks.

Burning Arizona: The Ducks jumped out to a huge lead against Arizona and Mariota assured there would be no miracle comebacks in the Pac-12 championship. As he did against Michigan State, Mariota escaped a crumbling pocket and rolled to his right. On the move, he stepped into a long twisting throw that hit Darren Carrington in the numbers for a 46-yard gain.

TCU's Patterson wins Associated Press honor for 2nd time

By RALPH D. RUSSO
The Associated Press

TCU coach Gary Patterson embraced change and joined an exclusive club. Patterson was voted college football coach of the year by The Associated Press on Wednesday, joining Nick Saban as the only two-time winners.

The AP coach of the year has been awarded since 1998. Patterson, in his 14th season at TCU, was coach of the year in 2009. Saban was coach of the year in 2003 when he was with LSU and in 2008 at Alabama.

Patterson received 27 of 54 votes from the AP Top 25 media panel. Urban Meyer of Ohio State was the runner-up with 14 votes. Mississippi State's Dan Mullen received six votes. Alabama's Saban and Arizona's Rich Rodriguez drew two votes each. Florida State's Jimbo Fisher, Baylor's Art Briles and Memphis' Justin Fuente had one.

Patterson guided the Horned Frogs to an 11-1 record and a share of the Big 12 title after going 4-8 in 2013.

"The head coaches get too much attention," Patterson said. "That means really that you had a good team. Good players and really a great coaching staff."

After his worst season at TCU, Patterson overhauled his offense, knowing he needed more production to keep up in the Big 12. He brought in Doug Meacham to be offensive coordinator and Sonny Cumbie to assist and coach quarterbacks. They installed an up-tempo, spread offense similar to the one used by Texas Tech, Oklahoma State and West Virginia.

What resulted was one of the biggest turnarounds of the season. TCU went from being ranked 105th in the nation in yards per play and 106th in yards per game in 2013 to ranking ninth and fourth, respectively, in those categories in 2014. The Horned Frogs increased their points per game from 25 to 46. Trevone Boykin,

who seemed destined to become a full-time receiver, instead developed into one of the best dual-threat quarterbacks in the country.

Patterson learned a good defense and an up-tempo offense could co-exist. TCU, in its third Big 12 season, won a share of the conference title. A last-second loss at Baylor kept it from a perfect season.

TCU was in the hunt for a College Football Playoff spot and came into the final weekend of the season third in the selection committee rankings. The Frogs ended up sixth and will meet Mississippi in the Peach Bowl on Dec. 31.

"We wanted to be in the playoff, but I'm not sure the way it all was handled that TCU didn't gain even more from not being it in. How we handled it," Patterson said. "There's a lot of positives that came out of how everything turned out."



Gary Patterson
AP

NFL

Briefs

Manning intends to play 18th season

From wire reports

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — NFL fans and fantasy football owners debating Peyton Manning's prowess and problems can continue their discussion well into the new year.

The five-time MVP says he plans to return to the Denver Broncos in 2015 for an 18th NFL season.

Manning was asked during his weekly news conference Wednesday if there were a set of circumstances that would lead him to retire after the upcoming playoffs.

"I have not thought about those circumstances at all," Manning replied. "So, I certainly plan on being back, if the Broncos will have me. But at this point, I'm kind of thinking about Oakland."

A victory over the Raiders (3-12) on Sunday would earn the Broncos (11-4) a first-round bye.

Manning said he knows talk this time of year turns to the coaching carousel and "I get to fall into that category because maybe I'm closer to the same age as some of the coaches. But yeah, I have no plans along those lines. I'm enjoying playing and looking forward to Sunday game and the game to follow that."

Manning, 38, is trying to supplant his boss, Broncos GM John Elway, as the oldest QB to win a Super Bowl.

But first, he's trying to bounce back from a poor performance in Denver's 37-28 loss Monday at Cincinnati, where he threw four interceptions for the sixth time in his career.

Arians reportedly going back to Lindley at QB

TEMPE, Ariz. — The Arizona Cardinals went back to work Thursday amid media reports that coach Bruce Arians has changed his mind and decided to start Ryan Lindley at quarterback Sunday in the regular-season finale at San Francisco.

Arians does not talk to reporters Thursday and offensive coordinator Harold Goodwin was not forthcoming about the reported quarterback switch.

"We'll see on Sunday," Goodwin said.

Arians had said that rookie Logan Thomas would get his first NFL start against the 49ers but apparently didn't like what he saw in Wednesday's practice.

Lindley was working with the Cardinals in the brief portion of Thursday's practice that was open to reporters.

Azcentral.com, which includes The Arizona Republic, first reported the quarterback switch.

Smith sees himself as Jets' QB for 'long time'

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Geno Smith is unfazed by all the critics and doubters.

There are lots of them, for sure. There is a growing contingent of fans and media who think Smith's



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Five-time NFL MVP Peyton Manning intends to be back with the Denver Broncos in 2015.

time as a New York Jets quarterback is over — no matter what happens Sunday in the season finale at Miami.

Smith has news for you: He believes he's only getting started. "I see myself being the quarterback here for a long time," he said Wednesday. "I see myself helping this team turn things around. Obviously, I'm a part of the reason why we're in this position (3-12), so I'd love to be a part of the solution."

Smith has 10 touchdown passes and 13 interceptions with a 70.9 quarterback rating this season. With his shaky play in his first two years, many believe the Jets will pursue another quarterback through free agency or the draft.

In 29 NFL games, Smith has 40 turnovers along with a paltry 68.4 overall quarterback rating.

6 Giants fined for actions in Rams game

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Game-breaking wide receiver Odell Beckham and five other New York Giants were fined a total of \$72,400 for their actions in Sunday's melee-marred game in St. Louis.

While the NFL does not announce fines for the previous weekend's games until Friday, placekicker Josh Brown and defensive tackle Cullen Jenkins discussed the levies Wednesday after being informed they were being docked.

Jenkins said he got the biggest fine, \$16,000, for driving Rams quarterback Shaun Hill into the ground after the quarterback threw an incomplete pass in the

fourth quarter. Wide receiver Preston Parker and defensive end Damontae Moore were fined \$15,000 apiece for taking part in a second-quarter brawl that started when Beckham was thrown to the ground well out of bounds by linebacker Alec Ogletree. Parker and Moore were ejected after the play, along with Rams DE William Hayes.

Beckham was fined \$10,000 on the play for kicking at Ogletree after being thrown down. Brown was docked \$8,200 for making a kicking motion at a Rams player while on top of a pile following a kickoff return. Long snapper Zak DeOssie was fined \$8,200 for a late hit out of bounds on a punt return shortly after the melee.

Also: The league fined Seattle Seahawks running back Marshawn Lynch \$11,050 for his "obscene gesture" following his backward dive into the end zone at the end of a 79-yard TD run against the Arizona Cardinals on Sunday night. According to NFL.com, the league decided that the dive — which included grabbing his crotch — constituted unsportsmanlike conduct. Lynch performed a similar move in 2011 against the Saints in the playoffs. He was not fined after that run.

Chiefs QB Smith out with lacerated spleen

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Chiefs quarterback Alex Smith will miss Sunday's game against the San Diego Chargers because of a lacerated spleen.

Backup Chase Daniel will start in Smith's place. Team trainer Rick Burkholder said Friday that Smith was hurt on a hit during the third quarter of last weekend's loss to the Steelers, but the injury was not initially obvious. Smith will not need surgery. If the Chargers beat Kansas City on Sunday, they make the playoffs. The Chiefs would need to win and have Baltimore and Houston lose to earn a postseason berth.

John Harbaugh denies report about brother

Baltimore Ravens coach John Harbaugh vehemently denied Wednesday that family members are attempting to convince his brother, San Francisco 49ers coach Jim Harbaugh, to take the University of Michigan job.

Jim Harbaugh has been linked to Michigan throughout the season and has reportedly been offered a six-year, \$48 million contract. He is also expected to be a candidate for NFL jobs, including the Oakland Raiders'.

ESPN's Adam Schefter cited unnamed sources last week in a report that said "family and friends have been encouraging him to take the Michigan [head coach] job but he is torn because his heart is in the NFL."

"The report that said his family is encouraging him to go to Michigan is absolutely incorrect," John Harbaugh told Cleveland reporters during a conference call Wednesday. "There has been no family that I know of that has given him any advice at all, because that's a personal decision."

Playoff scenarios

AFC

CLINCHED: New England — AFC East and home-field advantage throughout AFC playoffs; Denver — AFC West; Indianapolis — AFC South; Cincinnati and Pittsburgh — playoff berth.

DENVER (vs. Oakland)
Clinches first-round bye with:
■ Win or tie, OR
■ Cincinnati loss, OR
■ Cincinnati tie and Indianapolis win

CINCINNATI (at Pittsburgh)
■ Clinched playoff spot
Clinches AFC North with:
■ Win or tie
Clinches first-round bye with:
■ Win and Denver loss or tie, OR
■ Tie and Denver loss and Indianapolis loss or tie

PITTSBURGH (vs. Cincinnati)
Pittsburgh clinches AFC North with:
■ Win

SAN DIEGO (at Kansas City)
Clinches playoff spot with:
■ Win, OR
■ Tie and Baltimore loss or tie

BALTIMORE (vs. Cleveland)
Clinches playoff spot with:
■ Win and San Diego loss or tie, OR
■ Tie and San Diego loss

KANSAS CITY (vs. San Diego)
Clinches playoff spot with:
■ Win and Baltimore loss and Houston loss or tie

HOUSTON (vs. Jacksonville)
Clinches playoff spot with:
■ Win and Baltimore loss and San Diego loss

NFC

CLINCHED: Arizona — playoff berth; Seattle — playoff berth; Detroit — playoff berth; Green Bay — playoff berth; Dallas — NFC East.

DALLAS (at Washington)
Clinches home-field advantage throughout NFC playoffs with:
■ Win and Arizona loss or tie and Detroit/Green Bay tie

CINCINNATI first-round bye with:
■ Win and Seattle loss or tie and Arizona loss or tie, OR
■ Win and Detroit/Green Bay tie, OR
■ Seattle loss and Arizona, loss, OR

■ Tie and Seattle tie and Arizona loss or tie and Detroit/Green Bay does not end in a tie

DETROIT (at Green Bay)
Clinches NFC North with:
■ Win and Seattle loss or tie and Arizona loss or tie, OR
■ Win and Seattle loss and Arizona loss and Dallas loss or tie

CINCINNATI first-round bye with:
■ Win, OR
■ Tie and Dallas loss or tie, OR
■ Tie and Seattle loss and Arizona loss

GREEN BAY (vs. Detroit)
Clinches first-round bye with:
■ Win

CINCINNATI home-field advantage throughout NFC playoffs with:
■ Win and Seattle loss or tie or tie

SEATTLE (vs. St. Louis)
Clinches NFC West with:
■ Win, OR
■ Tie and Arizona loss or tie, OR
■ Arizona loss

CINCINNATI home-field advantage throughout NFC playoffs with:
■ Win and Detroit/Green Bay game does not end in a tie, OR
■ Win and Dallas loss or tie, OR
■ Tie and Dallas loss or tie and Dallas loss or tie and Green Bay/Detroit tie

CINCINNATI first-round bye with:
■ Win, OR
■ Tie and Arizona loss or tie and Dallas loss, OR
■ Tie and Arizona loss or tie and Green Bay/Detroit tie

ARIZONA (at San Francisco)
Clinches NFC West with:
■ Win and Seattle loss or tie, OR
■ Tie and Seattle loss

CINCINNATI home-field advantage throughout NFC playoffs with:
■ Win and Seattle loss or tie and Green Bay/Detroit tie, OR
■ Tie and Seattle loss and Dallas loss or tie, OR
■ Tie and Seattle loss and Dallas loss or tie, OR

CINCINNATI first-round bye with:
■ Win and Seattle loss and Green Bay/Detroit tie

CAROLINA (at Atlanta)
Clinches NFC South with:
■ Win

ATLANTA (vs. Carolina)
Clinches NFC South with:
■ Win

SPORTS BRIEFS/NBA

Briefly

Rockets add Pistons castoff F Josh Smith

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Free agent Josh Smith, released by the Detroit Pistons this week, joined the Rockets on Friday in a move aimed at strengthening Houston's frontcourt.



Smith

Howard, who is in his second season in Houston.

Smith should provide a boost for a team that has played the last 23 games without starting power forward Terrence Jones. Jones averaged 14 points and 7.5 rebounds last season, but is out indefinitely with nerve inflammation in his left leg.

In other NBA news: ■ Coach Kevin McHale has agreed to a three-year contract extension with the Houston Rockets.

McHale is in his fourth season in Houston, where he has compiled a 153-104 record. ■ Rockets owner Les Alexander says: "He embodies the leadership, passion, knowledge, and team-first qualities we need as we continue our pursuit of bringing another NBA championship to the city of Houston."

■ Cleveland's LeBron James and Stephen Curry of Golden State are the leading vote-getters in the first returns from NBA All-Star fan voting.

James had about 553,000 votes at the Eastern Conference frontcourt spot, where New York's Carmelo Anthony ranked second and Chicago's Pau Gasol was third in the results released Thursday. Washington's John Wall topped East guards, and No. 2 was James' former Miami teammate, Dwyane Wade.

Curry had more than 549,000 votes to lead second-place Kobe Bryant among West guards. New Orleans' Anthony Davis had the most votes in the West frontcourt, followed by the Clippers' Blake Griffin and Memphis' center Marc Gasol.

Voting runs through Jan. 19, and starters for the Feb. 15 game in New York will be announced Jan. 22.

■ The Anderson Varejao's season has ended, dealing a major blow to the Cavaliers' NBA title hopes.

Cleveland's starting center tore his left Achilles tendon on Tuesday night in a win over Minnesota, an injury that will cost him the rest of this season and will force the Cavs to look for immediate help up front. The Cavs said an MRI confirmed the feared tear and that Varejao will undergo

surgery "in the near future." A timetable for his return and rehab will not be established until after the operation.

■ New York Knicks forward Quincy Acy has been suspended one game without pay by the NBA for his flagrant foul against John Wall in a Christmas game.

The league said Friday that Wall was fined \$15,000 for escalating the confrontation by pushing Acy.

Slumping Devils fire coach Pete DeBoer

NEWARK, N.J. — The New Jersey Devils have fired coach Pete DeBoer, with the team in danger of missing the playoffs for a third straight season.

Devis president and general manager Lou Lamoriello confirmed the move Friday. He would not say who will take over the aging team until he speaks on Saturday with the players, who are on a three-day Christmas break.

New Jersey is 12-17-7 in an injury-plagued season. It has not won consecutive games since early last month, going 4-12-4 in its last 16.

The 46-year-old DeBoer was hired in 2011-12 and immediately took the Devils to the Stanley Cup finals, where they lost to the Los Angeles Kings.

In other NHL news: ■ Add forward Steve Downie and goaltender Thomas Greiss to the list of Pittsburgh Penguins dealing with the mumps.

The team said Friday that both tested positive for the virus and will remain in isolation. Forward Brandon Sutter tested negative. All three players missed Pittsburgh's two-game road swing through Florida after coming down with symptoms suggesting mumps.

Gamecocks running back Davis off to NFL

SHREVEPORT, La. — South Carolina junior running back Mike Davis is leaving the Gamecocks for the NFL draft after the Independence Bowl.

Davis ran for 1,183 yards last year. He has 927 yards so far this year and can join Heisman Trophy winner George Rogers as the only players in South Carolina history with multiple 1,000-yard seasons.

In other college football news: ■ Pittsburgh is hoping Michigan State defensive coordinator Pat Narduzzi can bring some stability to a program trying to find its footing in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

A person familiar with the decision told the Associated Press on Wednesday that Narduzzi has reached an agreement with the Panthers to replace Paul Chryst. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the school had not yet made an announcement. A press conference is scheduled for Friday.



AP Photos

In this photo taken on Nov. 30, Chinese security guards hold up shield to protect the Beijing Ducks' Stephon Marbury during a CBA match between his team and the Shanxi Dragons in Taiyuan in northern China's Shanxi province.

'Starbury' lives in China

Former NBA All-Star has found a home in Far East

BY CHRISTOPHER BODEEN
The Associated Press

BEIJING — After a roller-coaster NBA career, Stephon Marbury has found peace in basketball-crazed China. The two-time all-star is thriving on the court with the Beijing Ducks while becoming one with his adopted hometown away from basketball.

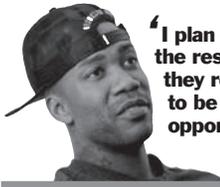
He is so entrenched, he wants to one day coach China's national team.

"I plan on living here for the rest of my life," the 37-year-old point guard and Brooklyn native said in an interview in the lobby of his plush apartment building in the heart of Beijing. "I think they respect me enough to be able to give me the opportunity."

China is a world away from Marbury's life in the U.S., where he endured a string of disappointing stints with several NBA teams. But he has found his groove in Beijing, leading the Ducks to two Chinese Basketball Association championships. He is an unrivaled fan favorite and the team's on-court leader — the organization has even erected a statue of him in front of its arena.

"I don't make nowhere near the money that I made when I was playing in the NBA," Marbury said, "but I'm way happier, so I mean, what is that to say?"

A big part of Marbury's Chinese appeal has been his willingness to embrace local culture and make himself accessible to fans. He rides the Beijing subway



"I plan on living here for the rest of my life. I think they respect me enough to be able to give me the opportunity."

Stephon Marbury
Two-time NBA All-Star

with a backpack and headphones, posing for photos with people he meets along the way. He dines at local eateries, and digs into the same simple meals as his Chinese teammates.

Marbury has been a vocal supporter of Guoan, Beijing's beloved local football team, and studied the graceful martial art of tai chi. He even took a stab at learning Chinese before a knee surgery threw him off his lessons.

He's also active on Weibo, the ubiquitous Chinese version of Twitter, and wrote a column — "Starbury News" — in the China Daily newspaper.

"Marbury was seen as a loner in America, but he's completely changed his image here in China. He's shown huge interest helping both his team and young people generally," said veteran Chinese sportscaster Xu Jicheng.

Marbury believes he can play another two or three years but no matter what happens on the court — or with his coaching ambitions — he plans to keep China at the center of his life and career.

"I am forever indebted to this country for them helping change my life and my basketball career, and how I'm viewed in the world of basketball."

born in the 1980s and '90s. Fans have also connected with Marbury.

While other NBA All-Stars have given China a shot — including Metta World Peace, Tracy McGrady and Gilbert Arenas, with varying degrees of success, none embraced the country in the way Marbury has.

NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct GB	
Toronto	12	15	.444	9
Brooklyn	10	18	.353	10 1/2
Boston	5	26	.161	18
New York	5	26	.161	18
Philadelphia	1	31	.032	24 1/2
Southeast Division				
Atlanta	21	7	.750	—
Washington	18	8	.690	—
Miami	14	16	.467	8
Charlotte	11	19	.366	11 1/2
Orlando	10	19	.345	11 1/2
Central Division				
Chicago	19	9	.680	—
Cleveland	17	11	.607	2 1/2
Memphis	15	15	.500	—
Indiana	10	19	.345	10
Detroit	5	23	.179	14 1/2

Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct GB	
Memphis	21	7	.750	—
Houston	20	7	.741	1/2
Dallas	10	10	.500	—
San Antonio	18	12	.600	4
New Orleans	14	14	.500	7
Northwest Division				
Portland	14	16	.467	—
Oklahoma City	14	16	.467	—
Denver	12	17	.414	10 1/2
Utah	9	20	.303	13 1/2
Minnesota	5	22	.185	16 1/2

Pacific Division				
Golden State	23	5	.821	—
L.A. Clippers	20	10	.667	4
Phoenix	18	14	.563	8
Sacramento	12	16	.429	11
L.A. Lakers	2	29	.104	14 1/2

Thursday's games
 Washington 102, New York 114
 Oklahoma City 114, San Antonio 106
 Miami 101, Cleveland 91
 Chicago 113, L.A. Lakers 93
 L.A. Clippers 100, Golden State 86

Friday's games
 Brooklyn at Boston
 Cleveland at Orlando
 Milwaukee at Atlanta
 Indiana at Detroit
 San Antonio at New Orleans
 Charlotte at Oklahoma City
 Houston at Memphis
 L.A. Lakers at Dallas
 Philadelphia at Denver
 Phoenix at Sacramento

Saturday
 Toronto at L.A. Clippers
 Orlando at Washington
 Charlotte at Charlotte
 Memphis at Miami
 Philadelphia at Chicago
 Indiana at Brooklyn
 Atlanta at Milwaukee
 Philadelphia at Utah
 New York at Sacramento
 Minnesota at Golden State

Sunday's games
 Detroit at Dallas
 Houston at San Antonio
 Oklahoma City at Dallas
 New York at Denver
 Toronto at Portland
 Phoenix at L.A. Lakers

Thursday
Bulls 113, Lakers 93
L.A. LAKERS — Johnson 6-18 5-16, Davis 5-10 3-6, Hill 6-16 4-16, Price 3-7 0-0, Ellington 5-12 1-12, Young 1-5 0-0, Boozer 7-11 0-14, Lin 2-2 2-6, Sacre 1-2 0-2, Clarkson 0-0 1-1 2-1. Totals 68-108 21-21.

CHICAGO — Dunleavy 2-5 0-0 6, Gasol 9-9 2-12, Noah 0-0 0-0, Rose 7-14 4-4, Butler 7-12 6-6 2-1, Gibson 3-5 3-7 9-9, Bales 1-3 0-0 1-3, Turner 2-4 0-4, Mirovic 4-9 2-13, Snell 0-2 0-0, Baird-Stow 0-0 0-0. Totals 42-86 19-25 11-3.

Three-Point Goals — Chicago 18-93, Lakers 27-111
Rebounds — Chicago 23, Lakers 30
Assists — Chicago 27, Lakers 25
Steals — Chicago 11, Lakers 10
Blocks — Chicago 11, Lakers 10
Technical Fouls — Chicago 1, Lakers 2
Flagrant Fouls — Chicago 0, Lakers 2
Time of Possession — Chicago 24:12, Lakers 23:48

Heat 101, Cavaliers 91
CLEVELAND — Marion 1-5 0-0, James 2-10 2-18, Love 5-13 4-14, Irving 10-14 5-25, Miller 2-4 0-6, Watson 3-5 3-12, Thornton 1-2 0-2, Smith 2-2 0-2, Jones 0-0 0-0, Jones 0-0 0-0. Totals 37-72 31-51.

MIAMI — Hill 11-16 2-2 12, Williams 2-6 0-0 5, Andersen 4-5 4-12, Chalmers 2-4 0-2, Westbrook 2-5 2-5, Granger 2-7 3-8, Haslem 3-4 0-0 0-6, Whitehead 5-8 1-3 0-0, Granger 4-5 0-0, Totals 40-84 14-17 10-11.

Cleveland 27 25 17-91
Miami 22 24 12-91
Three-Point Goals—Cleveland 6-26 (Miller 2-4, James 2-8, Irving 1-3, Whitehead 1-4, Bellowsford 1-4, Thornton 0-2, Love 0-4), Miami 7-21 (Wade 2-5, Granger 2-1, Hill 2-2, Chalmers 1-3, Chalmers 1-4, Williams 1-5). Fouled Out—None, Rebounds—Cleveland 15, Miami 15
Assists—Cleveland 16 (James 8), Miami 17 (James 8). Totals 101-91
Steals—Cleveland 15, Miami 28
Blocks—Cleveland 15, Miami 28
Technical Fouls—James, A.—19,817 (19,765)

Clippers get by Warriors

2nd straight loss for Golden State

By JOE RESNICK
 The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Golden State Warriors shot as dreadfully in the fourth quarter as the Los Angeles Clippers did in the first. As a result, the team with the NBA's best record absorbed its fifth loss of the season and second at Staples Center in three days.

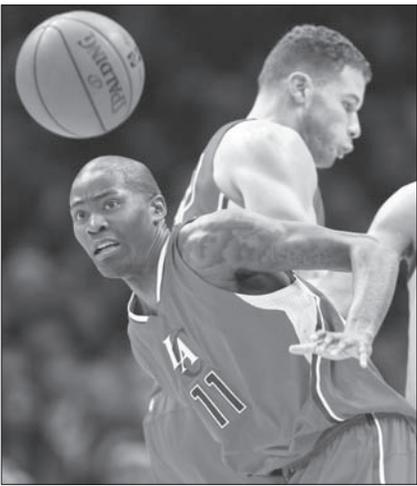
Jamal Crawford scored 12 of his 24 points in the fourth and Chris Paul added 22, helping the Clippers beat the Warriors 100-86 on Thursday night.

"Wow, that was ugly," Clippers coach Doc Rivers said. "Neither team shot the ball well. It really came down to mental toughness — having the ability to hang in there. And we did that. It's nice winning games when you don't play great. In the first half, we had shots that I would take all day. They just didn't go in."

The Warriors held the Clippers to 4-for-24 shooting in the opening quarter and 39.1 percent for the game, two nights after the Lakers shot 51.7 percent without Kobe Bryant to beat them 115-105. That loss ended a streak of 27 straight games the Warriors in which they held opponents under 50 percent.

"We're not invincible," Warriors point guard Stephen Curry said. "We have to play the way we're supposed to play — at our highest level — in order to win games."

The Clippers, beginning a nine-game homestand after back-to-back losses to San Antonio and



DANNY MOLOSHOK/AP

The Clippers' Jamal Crawford, left, chases the ball as Blake Griffin, rear, sets a pick during the second half of Thursday's 100-86 victory over the Golden State Warriors in Los Angeles.

Atlanta, haven't dropped three in a row since March 29-April 1, 2013. Blake Griffin missed his first eight shots and was 5-for-16 overall with 18 points and 15 rebounds. DeAndre Jordan had 14 points and 10 boards.

"I think we were shooting 17 percent at the end of the first quarter, or something like that. And we

were only down by two. So we just tried to stay the course," Paul said. "Our defense helped us win the game. It was a good win for us."

Golden State has lost three of five following a 2-3-3 start that included a franchise-record 16-game winning streak. The Warriors still lead them by four games in the standings.

Wizards outclass Knicks

By BRIAN MAHONEY
 The Associated Press

NEW YORK — John Wall is fast and flashy, a showman who practices 360-degree layups and then pulls them off in games. And when he gets pushed, he pushes back.

Wall had 24 points and 11 assists, eluding the Knicks all day until getting knocked to the floor by a flagrant foul that sparked an altercation, and the Washington Wizards beat New York 102-91 on Thursday.

Wall toyed with the Knicks for 3 1/2 quarters, highlighted by his spinning layup, before Quincy Acy knocked him down with a forearm shove with 5:31 to play. Wall got up and pushed Acy, who responded with what appeared to be a punch that hit Wall behind the neck. Acy was ejected in the Christmas Day dust-up, and Wall received a technical foul.

"I'm just a feisty guy that likes to compete," Wall said. "And I want to win games."

Washington won this one easily, leading by what amounted to a never trailing. Bradley Beal

added 17 points for the Wizards, who had their top five of Wall, Beal, Paul Pierce, Nene and Marcin Gortat in the starting lineup for the first time this season.

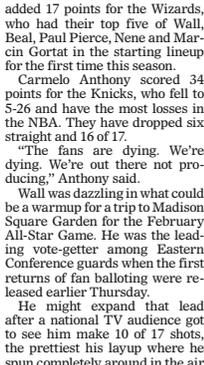
Carmelo Anthony scored 34 points for the Knicks, who fell to 5-26 and have the most losses in the NBA. They have dropped six straight and 16 of 17.

"The fans are dying. We're dying. We're out there not producing," Anthony said.

Wall was dazzling in what could be a warmup for a trip to Madison Square Garden for the February All-Star Game. He was the leading vote-getter among Eastern Conference guards when the first returns of fan balloting were released earlier Thursday.

He might expand that lead after a national TV audience got to see him make 10 of 17 shots, the prettiest his layup where he spun completely around in the air before scooping it in.

Wall's spinning shot wasn't just something he made up. "It's something I practice all the time, so it's pretty fun," he said. "I was happy to pull it off. In the Garden, can't get no better."



KATH WILLENS/AP

Washington Wizards guard John Wall drives past Knicks guard Jose Calderon, left, and center Samuel Dalembert at Madison Square Garden in New York on Thursday.

Washington 34 26 24-102
New York 21 24-91
Three-Point Goals—Washington 7-16 (Butler 3-6, Beal 2-5, Wall 2-1, Pierce 1-3), New York 4-22 (Calderon 2-7, Landry 1-1, Hardaway Jr. 1-6, Prigioni 0-2, Anthony 0-2). Technical Fouls—New York 17, Calderon 4).
Rebounds—Washington 49 (Gortat 9), New York 44 (Stoumville 9-15). Assists—Washington 24 (Wall 10), New York 17 (Calderon 7).
Total Fouls—Washington 20, New York 24
Technical Fouls—Washington 1, New York 5
Flagrant Fouls—Acy, Ejected—Acy, A.—19,812 (19,765)

NBA



LYNNE SLADKY/AP

Heat guard Dwyane Wade scored 31 points as Miami topped the Cleveland Cavaliers on Thursday in Miami.

Roundup

Wade leads Heat in win over Cavs

The Associated Press

MIAMI — Dwyane Wade scored 24 of his 31 points in the first half. Lu Deng finished with 25 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, and the Miami Heat beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 101-91 in LeBron James' first game back at his former home.

Chris Andersen scored 12 for the Heat, who led by as many as 17, trailed for a moment in the fourth quarter before gathering themselves and pulling away again. James scored 30 points for the Cavaliers, hugging his former teammates before the game and after the final buzzer.

Kyrie Irving had 25 points for Cleveland. **Bulls 113, Lakers 93:** Pau Gasol had 23 points and 13 rebounds against his former team and host Chicago beat Los Angeles with Lakers star Kobe Bryant resting his sore body.

Derrick Rose had 20 points and six assists to help the Bulls win their season-high fifth straight.

With Bryant out for the second straight game, the Lakers were unable to pull off another upset after stunning Golden State on Tuesday night.

Gasol, a two-time champion in six-plus seasons with the Lakers, was 9 of 14 from the field in his first game against Los Angeles since joining the Bulls in the summer.

Thunder hold off San Antonio

Westbrook scores 34 in rematch of Western Conference final foes

By Raul Dominguez
The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Russell Westbrook smiled as he walked off the court in San Antonio, blowing a kiss to a spectator and waving at the few Oklahoma City Thunder fans in attendance.

The joyful tidings were a drastic change from the scowling, screaming, chest-thumping passion Westbrook showed after essentially walking into the Spurs' home on Christmas and kicking aside their presents.

Westbrook had 34 points and 11 assists, and ignited a decisive run in the fourth quarter to help Oklahoma City beat San Antonio 114-106 on Thursday in a fiery rematch of last season's Western Conference finals.

"Regardless of what's going on, like I said before and I'm going to keep saying it, my job is to attack," Westbrook said.

He led the Thunder to their sixth straight regular-season victory over the defending NBA champions in the first meeting between the teams since San Antonio topped Oklahoma City in six games on the way to a fifth title.

The Thunder were without reigning MVP Kevin Durant, and the Spurs were missing NBA Finals MVP Kawhi Leonard, but there was plenty of firepower thanks to Oklahoma City's emotional point guard.

Westbrook was 14-for-28 from the field and had five rebounds and five steals in a fevered performance over 35 minutes.

"You've just got to rally behind him," said Thunder guard Anthony Morrow, who had 15 points. "He's a leader, natural born. He comes out there, he plays hard."

Serge Ibaka had 21 points, including going 3-for-4 on three-pointers for Oklahoma City (14-16). Steven Adams added 16 points and 15 rebounds to offset San Antonio center Tiago Splitter matching his season-high with 14 points.

It was a physical rematch between the rivals, with referees having to separate Kendrick Perkins and Manu Ginobili in the first half, and Westbrook and Cory Joseph in the second.

"I thought they outplayed us almost in every facet of the game," San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said. "When somebody retrieves 50 percent of their shots, you can't say you're focused or playing competitive



DARREN ABATE/AP

Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook shoots over Spurs guard Cory Joseph during the first half Thursday's game in San Antonio. The Thunder won 114-106 behind Westbrook's 34 points, 11 assists, five rebounds and five steals.

in any way, shape or form.

"When you add turnovers to that and missed assignments defensively, it's a pitiful performance."

Westbrook wasn't in a festive mood despite standing among many fans wearing Santa hats, and "Happy Holidays" messages emblazoned on the stanchions of both baskets.

The Spurs rallied while Westbrook sat for six minutes bridging the third and fourth quarters.

Ginobili kept and feigned a pass right, feeding Splitter on the left side for a layup

and a 77-75 lead to close the quarter.

Westbrook made two contested layups upon his return to tie the game at 86, sparking a 20-7 run that gave Oklahoma City a 102-93 lead with 3 minutes remaining. Westbrook had 15 points in the run.

"He does what he does night in and night out," Spurs guard Danny Green said. "He attacks the rim relentlessly. He gets to the free throw line. He has some open looks for their shooters. He did it all for his team."

"He carried them and he led them pretty much the whole way. He took over in the fourth quarter."

Return: Bond remains strong between James, ex-teammates in Miami

FROM BACK PAGE

"I gave everything and more to this city when I was here," James said before the game, his first time back at the arena since leaving Miami for Cleveland this past summer. "Never disrespected this city or the franchise, or any of my teammates. Everything is professional. I gave it all. That's all I can do."

James took a seat on the scorers' table near midcourt for the last 30 seconds or so of that video, watching it on the giant overhead screen.

"I've got a lot of memories here, man," James said.

“What me and my teammates created here while we were here, it's going to last forever.”

LeBron James

Cleveland Cavaliers forward, on returning to Miami after leaving the Heat in free agency following last season

It was predictably an emotional return for James, who acknowledged feeling butterflies when he walked in and headed toward the visitors' locker room for the first time in nearly five years. He scored 30 points, but his Cavaliers

lost to the Heat 101-91. Many from the nearest seats took pictures when James did his traditional powder-toss before taking the court, and he exchanged huge hugs with several Heat players moments later.

He also pointed toward the Heat bench and tapped his heart.

"What me and my teammates created here while we were here, it's going to last forever," James said. "You can never take that out of the books... Whatever else that comes with it, we'll deal with it then."

Whatever negativity James heard on Thursday, it was nothing like his last such "homecoming" game — the one when he returned to Cleveland in 2010 for the first time since joining the Heat.

He said he didn't "circle" Thursday's game on his calendar, saying he's long past things like that.

"LeBron was an enormous figure here," Cavaliers coach David Blatt said. "I thought he handled it well."

James has remained friends with several Heat players, and interacted with some members of the team's front office at Dwyane Wade's wedding this offseason.

And many Heat players said in the days leading up to this showdown that they expected James to be greeted with at least some measure of appreciation.

In turn, James said he appreciated those sentiments, and the bonds that remain.

"It shows what we were able to do in that locker room," James said.

SPORTS


Marcus the Magnificent

 Oregon QB Mariota named
 AP player of the year | **Page 27**

No hard feelings

James hears plenty of cheers in return to South Beach

 BY TIM REYNOLDS
 The Associated Press

LeBron James was running the gamut of emotions Thursday when he arrived at the arena that he called home for the past four seasons. So did the Miami Heat fans who were seeing him again.

They booed the four-time NBA MVP when he and the Cleveland Cavaliers took the court for warmups, booed the first few times he touched the ball, gave him plenty of cheers but still a mixed welcome when he was introduced as a starter, then cheered when he turned the ball over on one of his first touches.

But perhaps the truest measure of how James is remembered came during the first timeout of the game, when the Heat unveiled a tribute video for their former star — a minute-long series of clips commemorating his four NBA Finals runs and two titles in Miami, after which he waved to the crowd and got a lengthy standing ovation.

"I'll look forward to seeing it one day," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "It was an incredible run. He was a major part of it. None of us have forgotten his contribution. I'll look back on it with incredible pride and perspective that I coached one of the all-time greats."

No, Miami isn't happy he left.

Also, no, Miami hasn't forgotten what he meant to the Heat.

SEE RETURN ON PAGE 31

NBA

 Cleveland Cavaliers forward
 LeBron James (23) and Heat
 guard Dwyane Wade (3) stand
 near each other during the
 first quarter of Thursday's
 game in Miami.

DAVID SANTIAGO/AP


Inside:

- Westbrook pours in 34 as Thunder top Spurs despite MVP Durant's absence, Page 31
- Feisty Wall leads Wiz past Knicks, Page 30
- Cold-shooting Warriors fall to Clippers for second loss in three days, Page 30
- Josh Smith set to join Rockets, Page 29

Broncos QB Manning intends to return next season | NFL briefs, Page 28