

STARS AND STRIPES®

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stripes.com

Free to Deployed Areas

SAFE HAVEN

Bringing veterans home

A YEARLONG SERIES

Five years ago, President Barack Obama announced an ambitious plan to house all of the nation's homeless veterans by the end of 2015. The country has made steady progress since then, with more than 26,000 veterans moved off the streets and into stable housing, but considerable work lies ahead.

As the president's deadline approaches, Stars and Stripes will examine efforts by cities across the country to bring the remaining homeless veterans home.

INSTANT COMPASSION

Nonprofit helps veterans by paying rent deposits

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STABLE HOUSING

For those struggling, a home can make all the difference

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FINDING SOLUTIONS

How some cities are tackling homelessness

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Obama takes shot at ending sequestration

By JOSH LEDERMAN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama will ask Congress to boost government spending by roughly 7 percent above current limits, the White House said Thursday, setting up a certain clash with Republicans who insist that federal spending must be held in check.

Obama's budget, to be formally released Monday, will call for \$74 billion more than the levels frozen in place

‘If Congress rejects my plan and refuses to undo these arbitrary cuts, it will threaten our economy and our military.’

President Barack Obama

by across-the-board cuts agreed to by both Democrats and Republicans and signed by Obama into law. The White House said his new budget proposals will “fully reverse” the

so-called sequestration cuts by increasing spending on both the domestic and military sides by similar amounts.

Under Obama's proposal, national security programs would see an increase of \$38 billion over current spending limits, raising the defense budget to \$561 billion. On the domestic side, Obama is calling for \$530 billion in spending — an increase of \$37 billion.

“If Congress rejects my plan and refuses to undo these arbitrary cuts, it will threaten our economy and our military,” Obama warned in an opinion article Thursday on The Huffington Post.

The proposal from the president, two months after voters booted his party from control of the Senate, reflects the White House's newfound confidence in the economy.

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3 US contractors killed in insider attack in Kabul

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US classifies statistics used in SIGAR reports

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All-female cast is a go for new 'Ghostbusters'

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Super Bowl: Game will be a history maker no matter the winner » Back page

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We must never fail to always ask the most important question when making decisions and policy: What happens next?"

— Outgoing Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel during his farewell ceremony on Wednesday

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5. Ventura won't see 'American Sniper,' says Kyle is no hero

COMING SOON



Shifting Gears
The uproar over fake engine noise

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MILITARY

Penalty phase of slaying trial starts

By MATT MILLHAM
Stars and Stripes

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — The penalty phase of Air Force Staff Sgt. Sean Oliver's court-martial began Thursday with tearful testimony from family and friends of both the airman and the man he was convicted of killing.

Oliver faces up to life in prison without the possibility of parole after being found guilty Wednesday of unpremeditated murder in the killing of Petty Officer 2nd Class Dmitry Chepsov, an American Forces Network broadcaster. "It's every parent's nightmare to bury your child," Chepsov's mother, Eugenia Bushmikh testified. "You're never prepared for it."

Army Cpl. William Midgley, one of Chepsov's former neighbors, grew emotional as he remembered his friend. If Chepsov died in an accident or on a deployment, it would be easier to comprehend his death, he said.

But "he wasn't lost," Midgley said. "He was (expletive) stolen from us."

Oliver's defense tried to build a case for leniency for the airman, calling Oliver's ex-wife and others to talk about him as a friend and father and to assess his potential for rehabilitation.

Angel Oliver testified that her ex-husband's problems with alcohol ran throughout their marriage and had gotten worse before she left him and moved back to the U.S. with their children in 2011.

"I have a lot of happy memories of Sean, despite everything," she said.

Oliver's sister, Miranda Pancoast, testified by phone in her brother's defense. But defense attorney Maj. Shane McCammon interrupted her testimony after she told the military jury who will decide the airman's sentence that

“Now, just like him (my father), I will be separated from you.”

Air Force Staff Sgt. Sean Oliver
convicted of murder

the petty officer arrived in Europe, promoting him ahead of other higher-ranking and longer-tenured servicemen because of his ability to get the job done.

Losing friends in combat, "that you can understand," Chatlos said. "This made no sense."

Oliver was found guilty of strangling Chepsov after a night out drinking in December 2013. Oliver testified at court-martial that he was on his way to dump the sailor's body when he was pulled over by German police early on



JOSHUA L. DeMOTTS/Stars and Stripes

Air Force Staff Sgt. Sean Oliver, left, on Thursday walks into the courtroom where he was found guilty of unpremeditated murder in the killing of Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Dmitry Chepsov.

Dec. 14, 2013.

In an unsworn statement, Oliver apologized to Chepsov's family and to AFN.

He said he spent much of his life trying not to be like his father, who spent 10 years in prison for raping his mother at knife-point. "Now, just like him, I will be separated from you," he said to his family.

The maximum sentence Oliver faces is life without parole, reduction to the lowest enlisted grade, forfeiture of all pay and allowances and a dishonorable discharge. The panel is to begin deliberations on sentencing Friday morning.

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Asian embargo could affect Pacific commissaries

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — An avian flu outbreak in the United States might cause shortages of chicken and other poultry at base commissaries in Japan and South Korea, the Defense Commissary Agency said this week.

Embargoes in those countries designed to stop the spread of the

disease are holding up U.S. shipments of chicken, turkey, eggs and related products such as pot pies, lunch meat, hot dogs and egg rolls, according to the agency. Eleven commissaries in South Korea and 14 stores on mainland Japan and Okinawa are affected.

Three outbreaks of the disease have occurred among birds in Washington state since last

month and have triggered concerns among the poultry industry there and in nations in Asia where people consume the meat, according to media reports.

"We are using various alternatives to provide some poultry products on our shelves in South Korea and Japan," said Joseph Jett, director and CEO of the DeCA. "However, because these

are limited interim solutions that may not stock our shelves fully, our patrons may experience shortages of certain poultry items."

More expensive, locally sourced products are being stocked in some cases in Japan. South Korea has allowed some cooked poultry to enter the country, the DeCA said. The agency does not know when the embargo may end.

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WAR/MILITARY

Few cabinet nominees confirmed

BY CARLO MUNOZ
AND ZUBAIR BARAKKHAHL
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — President Ashraf Ghani's fledgling unity government faced another public setback this week when lawmakers rejected most of his ministerial nominees.

Of the 25 candidates jointly selected by Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah, only eight were confirmed by the Wolesi Jirga, the lower house of parliament.

In a surprise vote, Afghan parliamentarians even rejected the nomination of the army's popular chief of staff, Gen. Sher Mohammad Karimi, to lead the country's Defense Ministry.

Karimi had been acting minister of defense since former President Hamid Karzai left office in September.

It was a further setback for Ghani's administration, which took months to name Cabinet nominees among reported infighting between the Ghani and Abdullah camps.

The two were rivals in the bitter presidential election, with both sides trading accusations of electoral fraud and corruption.

Lawmakers did back Ghani and Abdullah's picks for some high-profile ministries during this week's confirmation hearings, including the former head of Afghanistan's High Peace Council, Salahuddin Rabbani, as foreign minister, and Noor-ul-Haq Ulumi, who will take over the Interior Ministry.

Lawmakers also threw their support behind Rahmatullah Nabeel, who is slated to head Afghanistan's intelligence agen-



MASSOUD HOSSAINI/AP

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani speaks during a ceremony last week at the parliament in Kabul, Afghanistan, where he presented his nominees for Cabinet. Of the 25 candidates selected, only eight have been confirmed.

cy, the National Directorate of Security.

Among the nominees who failed to secure parliament backing was Qamaruddin Shinwari for head of the ministry of tribal and border affairs. His brother, Jalaluddin Shinwari, served as the deputy minister of justice under the Taliban.

Several other nominees were rejected over concerns about their policy views or their edu-

cation and some were rejected earlier over their citizenship qualifications.

One nominee, Mohammad Yaqub Haidari, was pulled from the candidate list after his name appeared on Interpol's wanted list for alleged tax evasion in Estonia. Haidari was nominated to take over the Ministry of Agriculture.

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Insider attack kills 3 American contractors

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Three U.S. contractors were killed and a fourth wounded Thursday in Kabul, a U.S. defense official said.

Two media outlets reported that the shooter was an Afghan in a military uniform.

U.S. Army Col. Brian Tribus, a spokesman for the NATO-led Resolute Support mission, said the shooting occurred at about 6:40 p.m. at the military site of Kabul's international airport.

The shooting is under investigation, he said.

Tribus said an Afghan national also was killed, but would not confirm whether the Afghan was a member of the security forces or whether he was the shooter. Afghan military officials reached late Thursday night could not provide any more details.

The military base at the airport hosts Afghan military units as well as advisers from a variety of NATO and allied countries. In 2011 the airport was the scene of the deadliest insider attack of the war when eight U.S. airmen and a contractor were killed by an Afghan officer.

Green-on-blue, or insider attacks, peaked in 2012 as the NATO forces were ramping up training of the ANA.

The U.S. and NATO then began a major review of the vetting pro-

cess for Afghan recruits for the police and the army to include checking on the identities and loyalties of village elders and Afghan officials who are required to vouch for the trainees, the officials said.

Maj. Gen. Harold J. Greene, a 34-year veteran, who was the deputy commanding general of Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, is the highest ranking victim of such attacks. He was killed in Kabul on Aug. 5, 2014, when an Afghan soldier fired into a group of Americans from a bathroom window.

Also Thursday, a suicide bomber struck a funeral in Afghanistan for the victims of an earlier Taliban attack, killing 16 people and wounding 39, an Afghan official said.

The attack took place in eastern Laghman province, according to the local governor's spokesman, Sarhadi Zwak. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing but the blame is likely to fall on the Taliban who have staged similar attacks in the past.

Also, the bombing came on the heels of a spate of Taliban attacks across Afghanistan overnight and Thursday morning that killed at least 17 people.

US classifies Afghan stats used in SIGAR reports

BY JOSH SMITH
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — As the United States declares an end to its war in Afghanistan, the American-led coalition has taken steps to classify most of the indicators of how Afghan forces are faring after more than a decade of assistance.

For the past six years, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction has been able to publicly release data on Afghan National Security Forces, including troop numbers, salaries, training, equipment such as aircraft, and infrastructure projects in its quarterly reports to Congress, SIGAR said in its latest report.

Effective this quarter, most of that information has been classified by the coalition.

"The classification of this volume of data for SIGAR's quarterly report is unprecedented," the latest report, released Thursday, contended. "The decision leaves SIGAR for the first time in six years unable to publicly report on most of the U.S. taxpayer-funded efforts to build, train, equip and sustain the ANSF."

Military officials say the release of the

information on how \$65 billion in military aid has been spent could compromise security and give insurgents battling Afghan forces an edge.

"With lives literally on the line, I am sure that you can join me in recognizing that we must be careful to avoid providing sensitive information to those that threaten our forces and Afghan forces, particularly information that can be used by such opposing forces to sharpen their attacks," U.S. Army Gen. John Campbell, who leads all international and American forces in Afghanistan as commander of the Resolute Support mission, wrote in a memo to SIGAR on Jan. 18 that was appended to the report.

Campbell confirmed he gave the order to classify the information, but refused to explain why the information, if considered so sensitive, was unclassified for the previous six years. SIGAR was provided the information this quarter, but presented it to Congress in a classified appendix.

The classification of data follows a series of moves by American officials to reduce public information about the increasingly unpopular war. Operational reporting on U.S. troops' efforts ended in July 2013, and

journalists trying to report on American forces through embeds have faced increasing hurdles.

SIGAR itself has contributed to a steady stream of less-than-favorable press coverage, using media-savvy strategies and sometimes bombshell investigations to highlight examples after example of U.S. aid going to waste in Afghanistan.

In the last quarter of 2014, which is documented in this latest report, SIGAR says it published the results of 17 investigations, including several financial audits that identified some \$23.6 million in questionable costs. Other probes found little confirmation of any success in improving conditions for Afghan women, and that more than \$300 million in U.S. funding for Afghan police salaries is based on potentially inaccurate data.

"With the departure of coalition combat troops and the concomitant drawdown of U.S. civilian personnel, Afghanistan has entered a new era," John Sopko, the inspector general, concluded in the report.

"In these circumstances, U.S.-funded reconstruction will require more aggressive oversight than ever, even as carrying out that oversight becomes more difficult and

dangerous."

Getting a clear idea of the results of America's continued aid to Afghanistan will be constrained by the military's move to prevent the American people from seeing the ANSF data, Sopko argued. Among the questions U.S. forces refused to answer publicly were queries about how \$25 million allocated for women in the Afghan army has been used, details of contracts to improve ANSF literacy, and assessments of anticorruption efforts at the Afghan Defense and Interior ministries.

The decision to classify the material was met skeptically by many, including "The New York Times" editorial board, which opined that "it strains credibility to believe that insurgents would become more proficient fighters by poring over lengthy inspector general reports about an increasingly forgotten war." Instead, the board members argued, it is American taxpayers who are prevented from being able to draw informed conclusions about the 14-year, \$107 billion effort to defeat an insurgency, train Afghan forces and reconstruct Afghanistan's war-torn infrastructure.

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MILITARY



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

Outgoing Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, escorted by 3rd Infantry Regiment commander Col. Johnny Davis, reviews the troops during a farewell tribute in his honor Wednesday at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va.

Farewell ceremony held for Hagel

By **JON HARPER**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The man who held the exalted post of defense secretary for the past two years is more proud of the position he held 48 years ago: Army gunn.

Outgoing Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel volunteered to join the service in 1967 during the height of the Vietnam War. The following year, he deployed to South Vietnam, where he led an infantry squad through rice paddies, canopy jungle and the urban battlefield of Saigon. During his 12-month tour, he was seriously wounded and received two Purple Hearts.

When Hagel was appointed secretary of defense in 2013, he became the first former enlisted man to lead the Pentagon. Early next month, he is expected to be replaced by Ashton Carter, President Barack Obama's nominee to take over the job. Carter's Senate confirmation hearing is scheduled for next week.

"Of all the opportunities my life has given me ... I am most proud of having once been a soldier," Hagel said Wednesday during a farewell ceremony at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va. "The lessons from my time in uniform about trust, responsibility, duty, judgment and loyalty to your fellow soldier — these I have carried with me throughout my life."

The former infantryman praised those who have followed in his footsteps.

"To the men and women who serve our country, and their families, whose service and sacrifice is unequalled, you have my deepest gratitude," Hagel said. "We salute your high purpose and defense of our freedoms and our values. Every day, you wake up and you go to work knowing that this department ... is charged with one fundamental mission: the security of this nation. It's been my absolute privilege to have been on your

team." Obama praised the former infantryman as a "true American patriot" who helped end the war in Afghanistan and managed the Pentagon in a difficult budget environment. Obama said Hagel's experience as a combat veteran helped him understand the rank and file.

"Being down in the mud, feeling the bullets fly overhead has allowed you to connect with our troops like no other secretary before you," Obama said.

'Of all the opportunities my life has given me ... I am most proud of having once been a soldier.'

Chuck Hagel
outgoing secretary of defense

secretary of defense but as an old Army sergeant who knows the wages of war."

Gen. Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, described Hagel as "an incredible advocate within our government and with the American people" for the troops and their

families. "The shrapnel that still resides in his chest [is] a permanent reminder of his sacrifice for America," Dempsey said.

During his remarks, Hagel joked with the man who frequently sat by his side during press conferences and contentious encounters with lawmakers.

"It has been a great privilege for this old sergeant to have worked side by side with a general of your character and courage," Hagel told Dempsey. "I have been very fortunate to have you as my partner in this job, especially during those 'self-help' and 'educational' opportunities called congressional hearings."

Near the end of his remarks, Hagel touched on world affairs. He described the current environment as a "complicated and defining time," and said those who serve in the national security arena are "the architects of this new 21st-century world."

Looking to the future, Hagel warned against American overreach. Successfully handling global challenges "will require steady, wise and judicious use of American power, prestige and influence," Hagel said.

"We must never fail to always ask the most important question when making decisions and policy: 'What happens next?'" he said.

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Welsh questioned about 'treason' comment, probe

By **TRAVIS J. TRITTEN**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh faced tough questioning Wednesday in the Senate over whether the service is investigating airmen who have spoken to Congress about the planned retirement of the A-10 Thunderbolt aircraft.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., said she was told about the internal probes after the two-star vice commander of the Air Force Air Combat Command caused a minor scandal and prompted an ongoing inspector general investigation by warning airmen that discussing the aircraft's capabilities with lawmakers could amount to "treason."

The service is trying to retire the close-air-support aircraft — known for its 30 mm Gatling-type cannon — to save money, but has run into resistance from troops and members of Congress who believe the so-called Warthogs are still highly valuable on the battlefield.

Maj. Gen. James Post's comments and the report of internal investigations come as the White House prepares to release the proposed defense budget and likely opens another year of wrangling between the Air Force and Congress over the aircraft's retirement.

"What I'm hearing is there is actually an investigation going on in reverse — to find out who has communicated with Congress — and to me that seems the opposite of what we would be trying to accomplish in looking at what Gen. Post said and whether it was lawful or not," Ayotte said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. "So, I hope there will be no punishment or any kind of pursuit of people trying to communicate with Congress."

Welsh, who had been called to testify on budget caps, denied any involvement or knowledge of the probes.

"I know of nothing along those lines at all. I would be astonished by it," Welsh said. "Certainly, I am not part of it; the secretary

'I hope there will be no punishment or any kind of pursuit of people trying to communicate with Congress.'

Sen. Kelly Ayotte
R-N.H.

is not part of it, and I would not condone it."

Federal and military law gives all troops the right to communicate with congressional lawmakers through official and private channels, though they are not to use their service or rank to endorse partisan political causes or campaigns.

"I completely commit to the lawfulness of communication with Congress," Welsh said. "I support any airman's right to discuss anything that you'd like to discuss with them, and for them to give you their honest opinion."

The general said he took some action, but the inspector general's investigation into Post's "treason" comment is ongoing and he is waiting until the facts are in to make any final judgment.

"When I read the newspaper article, I actually contacted the general officer involved and his commander," he said.

Post made his comments to a roomful of officers at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada earlier this month. "If anyone accuses me of saying this, I will deny it ... anyone who is passing information to Congress about A-10 capabilities is committing treason," Post told the airmen, according to the military blog John Q. Public.

The Air Combat Command has said the statement was meant as hyperbole to underscore that airmen should not be involved in influencing finalized plans to retire the beloved aircraft.

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MILITARY

AF documents breathe life into Md. UFO case

By KEVIN RECTOR
The Baltimore Sun

In the summer of 1949, special military investigators and Maryland state troopers descended on an old tobacco farm in Glen Burnie and discovered something bizarre in a rundown barn: "prototypes" of a flying saucer.

The rudimentary flying machines were determined to have human origins — the work of an eccentric designer who had disappeared — but their discovery nonetheless was outlined in classified Air Force documents as part of a secret program to track sightings of unidentified flying objects, or UFOs, across the country.

An unidentified Air Force officer at the time told The Baltimore Sun that he suspected improved models of the dilapidated aircraft found in the barn could be the source of some of the reports.

"I personally think the inventor went to some other part of the country and that he — or someone else — developed new planes along these lines and is sending them up," the officer was quoted as saying, though the Air Force later denied such a connection.

From 1947 to 1969, the Air Force investigated a spate of UFO sightings all across the United

'There's this kind of aura around the UFO topic, that it's something that's just hokey or science fiction or pulp culture, but when you look at the documents, you realize there's a lot more to this.'

John Greenwald
UFO enthusiast

States under a program known as Project Blue Book, finding reasonable explanations for many of them and leading the service to conclude there was no evidence of extraterrestrial visits.

Today, many of the program's once-secret case files — such as those about the flying saucer in Glen Burnie — are receiving a second life online after being posted to UFO enthusiast John Greenwald's website, theblackvault.com.

Greenwald, 33, of Los Angeles, has used Freedom of Information Act requests since he was 15 years old to compile thousands of pages of previously classified documents on UFO sightings. This month, he posted Project Blue Book's full record — 12,618 case files totaling nearly 130,000 pages — to his website, most of them indexed to allow visitors to search for keywords and find nearby investigations.

"That was essentially the idea,"

Greenwald said in an interview. "There's this kind of aura around the UFO topic, that it's something that's just hokey or science fiction or pulp culture, but when you look at the documents, you realize there's a lot more to this."

The documents have been of interest to private UFO investigators and enthusiasts for decades, according to Mark Rodeghier, the scientific director of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies in Chicago — which is named for its late founder, a former scientific adviser to Project Blue Book.

While other lesser-known databases of the files have existed online for years, Greenwald's collection is the first to receive widespread attention, Rodeghier said.

"The more people that know about it, the better," he said. "I don't expect the public to do any amount of true research, but they might learn more about the

subject."

The Air Force did not respond to a request for comment but has made the documents available at the National Archives.

A recent search of Greenwald's collection for the word "Maryland" generated 75 results, including personal accounts from state residents of run-ins with what they believed were UFOs.

"I saw them only once, but they were the brightest objects I've ever seen in the sky," one Severna Park woman wrote in a note to investigators in the summer of 1957. "I'm a 25 yr. old housewife who formerly thought such things as flying saucers might be imaginary."

A friend of the woman's who was a local minister — their names were redacted from the files, like those of other witnesses — said he saw the same objects and told a similar tale of how he had decided the bright lights were from UFOs.

The Air Force investigators de-

termined that the objects in that case were regular aircraft reflecting the "sun's slant rays."

Reports of other sightings in Maryland range from College Park to Bel Air, from Baltimore to the Eastern Shore, and involve a variety of descriptions — from the visually stunning to the more mundane.

"I believe Project Blue Book was not the investigation that the government or military claimed it was, but really was more of an explanation," Greenwald said.

Given the attention UFO sightings attracted during the 1940s, '50s and '60s, the government created Project Blue Book to place investigators on the ground, take statements and allay concerns by offering decidedly terrestrial explanations for what people saw, Greenwald said.

The Center for UFO Studies' Rodeghier said he discussed the project's history in depth with Hynek, an astronomy professor who served as an adviser to the Air Force in investigations in which UFO sightings might be explained by astronomical phenomenon.

"As time went on, the Air Force became less and less enamored with their job of investigating UFOs for the public, so they were able to find their way out of it," Rodeghier said.

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MILITARY

Panel urges troop pension, insurance overhaul

By Travis J. Tritten

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A panel created by Congress on Thursday recommended sweeping changes to pensions, health care and other troop benefits following its two-year review of the military's compensation and retirement systems.

The White House and Capitol Hill lawmakers should consider creating a mixed retirement system that would allow the bulk of troops to separate with some pension before the 20-year mark, according to the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

Troop insurance should be replaced with an array of insurance options similar to the system already offered to civilian employees, the commission said.

The long-awaited recommendations come from surveys of thousands of servicemembers and would cost \$12 billion per year in spending as Congress looks to rein in personnel costs. The Pentagon says the current spending on personnel is unsustainable and lawmakers must now decide whether to act on the proposed overhauls after they made other smaller cuts to troop benefits in

December.

"We've listened extensively to what the servicemembers have had to say to us," said Alphonso Maldon, chairman of the commission. "We've based a great extent a lot of what we have done on what the servicemembers preferred."

The panel visited 55 installations, reviewed 150,000 troop surveys and spoke with military and veteran groups, he said.

The panel said the current retirement system — pension after 20 years of service — could be improved by creating a 401(k)-style savings system by auto-enrolling servicemembers in the Thrift Savings Plan and providing matching contributions.

About 75 percent of troops could get some retirement pay under the proposal. Currently, 83 percent of servicemembers separate before the 20-year threshold and receive no pension, the panel said.

Savings would come by spreading the retirement pay out over years and using the compounding interest of the investment plans. Expanding the benefits would require decreasing the pension benefits for those who do serve two decades.

The panel suggested providing more choice and better access to



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

President Barack Obama is reportedly planning to propose in his new budget that across-the-board cuts be negated and defense and domestic spending be increased by equal amounts.

Troop beneficiaries by offering a wide selection of private insurance.

The military's insurance program has decreased in quality and has become more expensive in recent years, the panel found. Many survey respondents complained about difficulties getting care and a lack of continuity in their health care.

A health insurance system similar to the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program could save money and provide up to 250 alternatives, with a minimum of 11 plans for rural areas and dozens for metropolitan areas, the panel reported.

However, the panel aimed mostly at modernizing military compensation and "the savings were after-calculations," commissioner Michael Higgins said.

The costs of personnel have been ballooning for decades, but have grown especially in the post-9/11 era.

Average compensation per servicemember has increased 178 percent since 1990, according to a briefing this week by the Center for a New American Security. For example, the average annual spending on a soldier grew from \$41,130 then to \$122,067 last year. Similar increases occurred across the services during that time.

In December, Congress reined in costs by approving some Pentagon cost-cutting proposals. Troop pay raises were capped lower than in past years, housing allowances were reduced, and Tricare pharmacy copayments were increased.

Congress and the Defense Department again are wrangling

over the next budget, with the rising personnel costs and mandatory caps on defense spending front and center. Still, it is unlikely that troops will see any major reforms to compensation and benefits this year, said Ryan Croty, a fellow and deputy director for defense budget analysis at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The White House and the DOD are slated to release proposed budgets Monday, so the recommendations came too late to be included, Croty said. The Pentagon will probably request time to review the proposals and report back to Congress later.

"I expect there will not be any big proposals, knowing the fight is to come post-budget," he said.

Meanwhile, many lawmakers have resisted DOD proposals to cut personnel costs, saying they fear it could hurt readiness. Republican majorities in the House and Senate have begun a push to instead repeal defense spending caps in the budget to free up more money for personnel, equipment and operations.

Croty said any big reform proposals for troop pay and benefits may come in 2016.

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Commission: Offer choices and see compensation costs fall

By Tom Philpott

The Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization

Commission is urging President Barack Obama to endorse and Congress to enact sweeping changes to military health insurance and retirement options to "empower" servicemembers to make choices that would drive down compensation costs.

The panel's final report makes 15 recommendations that, if fully implemented, would cut personnel spending for the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs by \$12 billion per year. The most surprising idea is to replace the triple-option Tricare program for military families and working-age retirees with a selection of commercial health insurance plans.

On retirement, current force members could stay under their High-3 plan. But the commission forecasts 40 percent of them, if given a chance, would replace that plan offering no benefits before 20 years of service with a "modified" plan that lowers annuities for careerists, but offers some retirement savings to the 83 percent of servicemembers who leave short of 20 years.

That menu of health insurance offerings to the military would be similar to the Federal Employees Health Benefits Insurance Program for civilians. The Office of Personnel Management, which administers that program, would

also run the military plans. But rather than saddle active-duty servicemembers with the same costs paid by civilians — roughly 28 percent as premiums — they would receive a new two-part Basic Allowance for Health Care, or BAHC, to cover at least most of their new health insurance costs.

One part would be paid to the selected insurance plan directly and cover member premiums for an average-priced plan. The second part, to cover copayments and deductibles, would go to members to use as they choose.

The intent for those dollars is to give military families incentive to be careful consumers of health care. They are not today, the report says. Tricare Prime users, for example, make 55 percent more outpatient visits than do civilians enrolled in HMOs who have to cover copayments out of pocket.

Participating insurance plans would have to include military treatment facilities in their provider networks. Patients and plans would be enticed to use on-base care with offers of reduced copayments and fee reimbursements, particularly for complex medical cases that keep waiting skills sharp.

Troop administrative costs are excessive, the report says, and yet too many beneficiaries don't get timely care or quality care. Also, Tricare provider networks have coverage gaps because contractors set physicians' fees too low. Moving to a commercial insurance would improve access, speed

MILITARY UPDATE

referrals for specialty care, save millions of dollars in administrative costs and leave beneficiaries more satisfied, the commission predicts.

The commission would leave unchanged Tricare for Life, the golden supplement to Medicare that senior retirees have prized for a dozen years.

Working-age military retirees and families would fare less well. Initially, they would have to pay 5 percent of health plan premiums. That cost share would grow by 1 percentage point a year over 15 years so retirees younger than 65 eventually pay 20 percent of health insurance costs. The costs would stop when retirees are eligible for Medicare and Tricare for Life.

Commissioners say beneficiaries heard from during their site visits and public hearings expressed a desire for more health care choices than the ponderous Tricare program can provide.

The retirement plan they propose for new entrants and for any current members drawn to its features would still provide an immediate, although reduced, annuity after 20 or more years of service. But among its new features would be a Thrift Savings Plan with government match-

ing of member contributions up to 5 percent of monthly basic pay. That would be portable like 401(k) plans in the private sector. The savings plan would vest after only two years and members could roll it into civilian employer 401(k)s on leaving service.

Also, 12 years into a military career, members would receive a lump-sum "continuation" payment equal to at least 2½ months of basic pay, more if they have critical skills. To get the cash, members would have to agree to serve four more years. Presumably, at 16 years in, most careerists would decide to serve for at least 20 years to gain the immediate annuity. With the new plan, retiring members would have more choices.

They could draw an immediate annuity based on 2 percent (not the current 2.5 percent) of average basic pay for each year served, accept a lump-sum amount and a smaller annuity or accept a full cash-out and forego any military annuity until they age into Social Security.

At that point, military retired pay would start and equal the retired pay of their peers who elected to draw full annuities since time of retirement.

The nine members of the commission, including two retired generals and four former members of Congress, endorse current basic pay tables and the tradition of paying tax-free allowances for housing and subsistence. They also unanimously recommend streamlining, not dismantling,

commissionary and exchange systems to preserve on-base shopping discounts. Other recommendations would strengthen support of families with more child care and improved access to services for special-needs children.

The commission doesn't endorse ending the offset of Survivor Benefit Plan payments for thousands of widows who also receive VA dependency aid in Dependence Compensation. It would give retirees the option of paying higher survivor benefit premiums to ensure that their spouses, if deemed eligible for the dependents' compensation, would also receive full survivor benefits.

Commission ideas to "safeguard" the Post-9/11 GI Bill could spark some of the sharpest protests from military and veterans associations. One would affect many of the more than 423,000 members who have elected to transfer GI Bill benefits to family members in return for serving longer. The transferred benefit now includes a housing stipend equal to monthly housing allowance locally for a mid-grade enlisted member. The commission says that stipend shouldn't be paid to family member students after June 2017 even if it was part of the original deal.

Newly sworn-in commissioners present and defend these proposals and more before the Senate and House armed services committees.

Send comments to Military Update, P.O. Box 231111, Centerville, Va., 20120; email milupdate@aol.com; or twitter: Tom Philpott @Military_Update.

MILITARY

Hasan may get new lawyer

By **BILL DRAPER**
The Associated Press

FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan. — The gunman who killed 13 people at a Texas military base in 2009 appeared in court Thursday without the beard he had fought to keep and said he wanted to keep his lead appeals lawyer. A change of counsel could complicate an already delayed review process.

Nidal Hasan appeared in court at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he is being held on the military death row. He no longer has the beard he wore during his August 2013 trial, where he was convicted and sentenced to death for a November 2009 rampage inside a medical readiness building at Fort Hood in Central Texas.

A Fort Hood spokesman confirmed Hasan's beard had been forcibly shaved according to military guidelines.

Nearly 18 months after his conviction, Hasan has not yet had his case reviewed by top Fort Hood officials, as required in the military criminal justice system. If Fort Hood's commanding general approves Hasan's death sentence, he would then receive two mandatory reviews by military appellate courts and possibly the U.S. Supreme Court.

While he represented himself at trial, Hasan's appeals are being handled by a team led by Lt. Col. Kris Poppe, who has been named a military judge. In his new position, Poppe is subordinate to Col. Tara Osborn, Hasan's trial judge, who is now the chief trial judge of the Army.

Osborn on Thursday questioned whether Poppe could keep handling Hasan's appeals, a position that requires him to try to find mistakes with Osborn's handling of the trial.

"My concern is Maj. Hasan's defense counsel now works for the trial judge," she said.

But Hasan told Osborn after conferring with another defense lawyer privately that he wanted to keep his counsel in place.

"I do not want you to substitute someone else for Col. Poppe," said Hasan, who appeared alert in court and at one point laughed softly with his lawyers during a break.

Poppe argued he could handle both positions.

"I believe there's not even a smidgen of concern about full representation of Maj. Hasan," he said. "The two can be reconciled."

Osborn asked the prosecution and the defense to state their positions in writing by next week.

Osborn ordering Poppe off the case could create grounds for a challenge by the next attorney to lead Hasan's appeals, said Geoffrey Corn, a military law expert who teaches at South Texas College of Law.

Corn said the post-trial process for Hasan was taking much longer than a typical military case. But, he added, "That has been the unifying theme of everything in this case. Nothing has been routine."

One hiccup was Hasan's now-shaved beard. Hasan insisted on keeping the beard at trial in what he said was an expression of his Muslim faith. The judge on his case before Osborn was removed from the case by a military appeals court after he tried to order Hasan to be forcibly shaved.

Osborn allowed Hasan to keep the beard despite it violating Army grooming rules.

Fort Hood officials did not immediately respond to a request to release a new photo of Hasan.

Sequester: Point of contention likely to be how to fund increased defense expenditures

FROM FRONT PAGE

Obama's aides believe that improving conditions give Obama credibility to push his spending priorities unabashedly — despite the fact that Republicans still believe the government spends far too much.

Federal deficits, gas prices and unemployment are all falling, while Obama's poll numbers have crept upward. The president has been newly combative as he argues it's time to ease the harsh measures that were taken to help pull the economy out of recession.

Obama was to promote his proposed spending levels to House Democrats at their annual retreat in Philadelphia on Thursday evening. The White House said his budget will be "fully paid for with cuts to inefficient spending programs and closing tax loopholes," but taxpayers will have to wait until the budget is made public to find out exactly how.

Republicans react

While the proposal to spend more on things like education, sick leave and health care was sure to delight many members of Obama's own party, the Republicans now fully control Congress.

"This is not a surprise," said Don Stewart, deputy chief of staff for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "Previous budgets submitted by the president have purported to reverse the bipartisan spending limits through

tax increases that the Congress — even under Democrats — could never accept."

A precarious position

Yet Obama's move also puts Republicans in a precarious position.

Many in the GOP want to spend more on defense, especially in light of threats from terrorism and extremist groups. But Republicans are divided about how to pay. While some have argued for ignoring the spending limits, others want to offset the increases with cuts to either domestic programs or mandatory programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

By proposing to raise defense spending by about the same amount as domestic programs, Obama is putting the GOP on notice that he won't accept cuts to his own priorities just to make way for more spending on national security programs that both parties are in the mood to support.

The Pentagon's base budget is currently \$496 billion, plus another \$64 billion for overseas missions. Obama's increases would allow for next-generation F-35 fighter jets, for ships and submarines and for long-range Air Force tankers.

Military leaders have said the earlier cuts forced reductions in pilots' flying hours, training and equipment maintenance.

On the domestic side, Obama has proposed two free years of

community college and creating new or expanded tax credits for child care and spouses who both work.

He's called for raising the top capital gains rate on some wealthy couples and consolidating education tax breaks, although some of these ideas have already faced intense opposition.

An inevitable clash

"Until he gets serious about solving our long-term spending problem, it's hard to take him seriously," said Cory Fritz, a spokesman for House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio.

The president's budget proposal is just that — a proposal — and will not become law.

The budget frames Obama's opening offer as Democrats and Republicans head toward an inevitable clash. It's an agenda that Obama started selling in the run-up to his State of the Union address this month, and that House Democrats have sought to echo as they regroup after losing more members in the midterms.

In his meeting Thursday with House Democrats, Obama was also to insist that House Republicans not use a funding bill for the Homeland Security Department to try to quash the executive actions he took late last year on immigration and deportations.

The White House called that a "dangerous view" by the GOP that would imperil the country's national security.



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NATION

Study: Chance of dying in a car crash plunges

By JOAN LLOYD
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The chances of dying in a crash in a late-model car or light truck fell by more than a third over three years, and nine car models had zero deaths per million registered vehicles, according to a study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The study, which examined fatalities involving 2011 model-year vehicles, looked at how many fatalities occurred in a particular model over the course of a year of operation, expressed as a rate per million registered vehicle years. It found there was an average of 28 driver deaths per million reg-

istered vehicle years through the 2012 calendar year, down from 48 deaths per million for 2008 models through 2009.

Improved vehicle designs and safety technology have a lot to do with the reduced risk, the institute said. A weak economy that led to reductions in driving may also have played a role, it said.

"This is a huge improvement in just three years, even considering the economy's influence," said David Zuby, the institute's chief executive vice president and chief research officer. "We know from our vehicle ratings program that crash test performance has been trending steadily better. These

latest death rates provide new confirmation that real-world outcomes are improving too."

The gap between safest and riskiest models remains wide. Three 2011 models had rates exceeding 100 deaths per million registered vehicle years.

The riskiest models also were mostly lower-priced, small cars, while the safest models were all mid-sized or large vehicles.

The nine models with zero deaths were: Audi A4 four-wheel drive, a mid-sized luxury car; Honda Odyssey, a minivan; Kia Sorento two-wheel drive, a mid-sized SUV; the Lexus RX 350 four-wheel drive, a mid-sized

luxury SUV; Mercedes-Benz GL-Class four-wheel drive, a large luxury SUV; Subaru Legacy four-wheel drive, a 4-door mid-sized car; Toyota Highlander hybrid, a four-wheel drive mid-sized SUV; Toyota Sequoia, a four-wheel drive large SUV; and Volvo XC90, a four-wheel drive luxury mid-sized SUV.

The vehicles with the highest death rates were the Kia Rio, a 4-door mini car, at 149 deaths per million registered vehicles; Nissan Versa, a small 4-door sedan, 130 deaths; and Hyundai Accent, a 4-door mini car, 120 deaths.

The institute has published death rates by make and model

periodically since 1989, at first for cars only and later for all passenger vehicles. The rates include only driver deaths because the presence of passengers is unknown.

Although the latest numbers reflect 2011 models, the study included data from model-year vehicles as far back as 2008 if the vehicles weren't substantially redesigned before 2011. Including older, equivalent vehicles increases the exposure and thus the accuracy of the results, the institute said. To be included, a vehicle must have had at least 100,000 registered vehicle years of exposure during 2009-12, or at least 20 deaths.

Attorney general nominee Lynch moves closer to confirmation

By ERIC TUCKER
and ERICA WERNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans demanded wholesale change at the Justice Department on Thursday as they questioned whether President Barack Obama's attorney general nominee, Loretta Lynch, would provide it.

"The question for me and a lot of members on this side is whether Ms. Lynch is committed to leading the Department of Justice in a new direction," Senate Judiciary Chairman Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, said as he gaveled open the second day of hearings into her nomination.

"She's clearly a skilled and competent lawyer," Grassley said, while complaining that Lynch's answers during daylong testimony Wednesday were "indirect." Grassley said he would be following up with more questions in writing.

Still, there was little doubt about the ultimate outcome. Lynch needs support from at least three Republicans on the committee to advance to the full Senate, and she is expected to win those votes and achieve eventual confirmation.

One senior committee Republican, Orrin Hatch of Utah, issued a statement Thursday saying that Lynch "appears to be well qualified, and I appreciated the commitments she made yesterday to enforce the rule of law, act independently of the White House, defend the constitutionality of statutes and work with us on important legislation." Hatch said he would make his final decision when the committee votes in coming weeks.

When top committee Democrat Patrick Leahy, of Vermont, asked the nine outside witnesses testifying Thursday for a show of hands if they were opposed to Lynch's nomination, not one hand

went up.

Lynch did not appear at the second and final day of her confirmation hearing, which was designed instead to feature testimony from outside experts, several summoned by Republicans to amplify their criticism of Obama and his current attorney general, Eric Holder. Republicans deride Holder as a liberal firebrand and Obama cheerleader who has failed to cooperate with Congress.

Witnesses included attorney Jonathan Turley, who has charged the Obama administration engages in executive overreach, and Catherine Engelbrecht, who says she was targeted by the Internal Revenue Service for leading a conservative group. Engelbrecht described the Justice Department as "an increasingly rogue agency."

Democrats took issue with the GOP focus on Obama and Holder.

"Barack Obama is not the nominee. That may come as a surprise to some who heard the questions. Eric Holder is not the nominee," Leahy said Thursday.

In her appearance Wednesday, Lynch pledged independence from Obama and promised to work with the Republican-led Congress. She offered support for some controversial Obama administration policies, including the president's unilateral protections for millions of immigrants in the country illegally.

She also suggested she would provide a departure from Holder: "If confirmed as attorney general, I would be myself. I would be Loretta Lynch," she said, when asked how senators could be assured that she would lead differently.

If approved, Lynch — the top federal prosecutor since 2010 for parts of New York City and Long Island — would become the nation's first black female attorney general.



CARLOS OSORIO/AP

A demolition sign is posted on a vacant house Jan 22 in southwestern Detroit.

Squatters slow Detroit demolition plans

By COREY WILLIAMS
The Associated Press

DETROIT — Chris Mathews' crew showed up this month to demolish one of the thousands of vacant homes destined for demolition as part of Detroit's grand plan to bulldoze its way to prosperity when a call from his office stopped them in their tracks: Someone was living there.

A middle-aged woman who watched the crew tear away the home's warped, wooden steps the day before had called their company, Adamo Demolition, to point out she was living on the second floor, despite no power, heat or gas and a flooded basement.

"It was like a swimming pool. We would never have thought anybody was upstairs," said Mathews, noting that the incident cost his crew time because the demolition wasn't called off until after they had shown up with their equipment.

As Detroit carries out its plan to tear down tens of thousands

of homes to combat blight and to tailor the city to fit its population, which has dwindled to about a third the size of its 1950s peak, it will have to deal with an unknown number of squatters. Because the city doesn't allow occupied properties to be demolished, police must be summoned to remove squatters who won't leave homes voluntarily, which can take weeks or months. That makes them a complication of sorts for the recovery of the city, which emerged in December from the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history.

Clearing away as many vacant homes as quickly as possible is a priority. Drug dealers often set up shop in them, bodies turn up in them and some houses have been sites of sexual assaults.

But for some of the approximately 16,000 homeless people in Detroit, the structures offer safety and shelter.

Michelle McCray calls them "abandonminims," McCray, 58, has been homeless for much of

her adult life, yet she has had her pick of vacant houses to live in over the years.

"You look for one that's decent, already fixed up," McCray said from a homeless shelter where she stays when it's too cold to hunker down in a house without heat and other utilities.

"The first thing you do is cut the grass ... because the neighbors want to know who you are and what's going on over here," she said. "You have to maintain the property. Paint the place up, keep it looking good."

Squatters aside, the city will not stop its fight against blight, said Craig Fahle, a spokesman for the Detroit Land Bank Authority, the agency overseeing the project.

"Illegal occupancy is an issue, but there is plenty of work to do with homes that are not occupied," he said.

About 10 percent of the houses Adamo goes out to demolish have squatters or evidence of squatters, according to Mathews.

NATION

Balloon crew draws closer to N. America

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN
The Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The pilots of a helium-filled balloon on a daring flight across the Pacific Ocean drew closer to North America as they attempt to break two world records.

Accomplished balloon pilots Troy Bradley, of the United States, and Leonid Tikhutyaev, of Russia, were expected to cross into North America sometime Thursday evening and are on course to break a distance record that has stood for more than three decades. They're also looking to break the flight-duration record set in 1978.

They still have some distance to go, however. They are planning to cross over the Canadian Rockies and land somewhere in the northern U.S., possibly Montana or North Dakota, on Saturday morning.

No one has crossed the Pacific Ocean in a gas balloon since 1981. To break the distance record, the balloonists need to exceed the current records by 1 percent — meaning they need to travel 5,260 miles.

Another important record is the duration of the flight, set in 1978 when Ben Abruzzo, Maxie Anderson and Larry Newman made the first trans-Atlantic balloon flight. That record of 137 hours aloft in a traditional gas balloon is considered the "holy grail" of ballooning achievements. The pilots on the current flight are at about 100 hours.

The balloon, made up of a massive envelope and a specially-designed carbon fiber-composite capsule, is capable of staying aloft for as many as 10 days.

If they get that far, the team will notify the National Aeronautics Association of its claim within seven days of landing, and all the documentation will be forwarded to the Federation Aeronautique Internationale for consideration.

The process can take weeks, but the team will have plenty of data to present since the balloon is outfitted with an array of monitors and other instruments.

Since there's no certainty about where the balloon will touch down, the head of the recovery effort has established a network of balloonists across the U.S. and in southern Canada who can serve as chase crews, those who are on the ground to help with tethering the capsule and rounding up the balloon's envelope as it deflates.



Max Gomez shovels his vehicle out at his home in Boston's Charlestown section on Wednesday.

ELISE AMENDOLA/AP

Boston bouncing back

Subways, buses, trains up and running after blizzard

By BOB SALSBERG
AND WILLIAM J. KOLE
The Associated Press

BOSTON — Boston bounced back quickly Wednesday from the Blizzard of 2015, with subways, buses and trains up and running again the morning after the storm buried a swath of New England in 2 to 3 feet of snow.

Many businesses reopened, as did Logan Airport, and homeowners, motorists and storekeepers dug out with grudging praise for the forecasters, who missed the mark in New York but got it right in New England.

A Boston bartender, Chris Laudani, became an instant symbol of the city's resilience for shoveling snow off the yellow-and-blue Boston Marathon finish line on Boylston Street, where the 2013 terrorist bombing killed three people and wounded more than 260.

"For someone to brave the blizzard to clear our finish line for us is yet another statement as to what our event means not only to runners but also to Americans," said Tom Grik, executive director of the Boston Athletic Association, which oversees the marathon.

Meteorologists had warned that Boston would get more than 2 feet of snow by Tuesday night, and the National Weather Service said the city ended up with 24.4 inches, the sixth-highest total on record. Other areas received around 2 to



Chris Laudani, a bartender at the Back Bay Social Club, pauses after shoveling snow from the Boston Marathon finish line on Boylston Street after the storm slammed into eastern Massachusetts.

COURTESY OF PHILIP L. HILLMAN/AP

3 feet, pretty much as predicted. "They actually got it right," James Hansen said as he cleared a Boston sidewalk.

There was no gloating among the forecasters, who just seemed relieved they were on the money.

Pointing up the guesswork factor, the weather team at Boston's WHDH-TV tweeted a photo of the office snow pool, with prestorm predictions ranging from 22 to 25.5 inches.

As the storm gathered earlier in the week, forecasters had warned that Philadelphia, New York and New Jersey could get 1 to 2 feet of snow. In the end, they didn't see even a foot.

With snow removal in Boston well underway, commuters high-stepped their way through snowy paths and towering snowbanks that gave the capital an almost alpine feel.

Still, bitter cold threatened to complicate efforts to clear clogged streets and restore power. Forecasters warned that it won't get above freezing in Boston for a week, and several more inches of snow are expected Friday and again over the weekend.

A man shoveling snow in New Bedford, Mass., on Tuesday night collapsed and died. Two other deaths, both on Long Island, were blamed on the storm.

1 in 5 children on food stamps

By MARY CLARE JALONICK
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sixteen million children were on food stamps as of last year, the highest number since the nation's economy tumbled in 2008.

Numbers released by the Census Bureau on Wednesday as part of its annual look at children and families show that one in five children were on food stamp assistance in 2014. The survey was taken last spring.

The number of people receiving food stamps under what is now called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, spiked through the recession and has stayed at a higher level since. In the 2007 Census survey, 9 million children received SNAP assistance.

Participation and spending appear to be going down, though. The Congressional Budget Office said this week that the government spent \$76 billion on SNAP last year, down 8 percent from the year before.

That was the first time spending went down since the beginning of the recession.

About 46.5 million people received food stamps last year, according to the Agriculture Department, which oversees the aid, up from about 26 million in 2007. Participation is expected to decrease over the next 10 years, though higher food costs could keep spending up.

Half of the children receiving food stamps in the Census survey — 8 million — were living with only their mothers. About 5 million children receiving food stamps lived with married parents.

The spike in food stamp spending has caught the attention of Congress, and House Republicans tried to cut the program by about \$4 billion a year in 2013.

In an eventual compromise, Congress agreed to cuts of about \$800 million a year, policy that was signed into law by President Barack Obama early last year as part of a larger farm bill. Since then, many states have found ways to get around the cuts.

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SAFE HAVEN

Dave Hammond ended up homeless in Toledo, Ohio, in 2012, seven years after his medical discharge from the Army. He moved into an apartment last fall with the help of Veterans Matter.

MARTIN KUZ/Stars and Stripes

GIVING THE GIFT OF INSTANT COMPASSION

Ohio-based nonprofit helps veterans reclaim their lives by covering rent deposits

By MARTIN KUZ ■ Stars and Stripes

A whiteboard that hangs on the refrigerator in Dave Hammond's apartment lists his itinerary to search for a life gone missing.

In green marker and neat, coiled script, he has written 10 priorities for recovering what he lost in the years after his medical discharge from the Army in 2005. He longs to reunite with his young son, who lives with his ex-wife in Washington. He wants to find a job, return to school, buy a computer. He needs a driver's license.

In time, Hammond hopes to rewind the spiral that by 2012 had left him homeless, surviving on the dollar menu at McDonald's and sleeping at bus stops.

He faces a long journey back from a decade of misfortune and mistakes, and there are days when his mood turns as leaden as Ohio's winter sky.

Still, looking out at the snowy tableau of downtown Toledo from the warmth of his 12th-floor apartment, he had reason for gratitude. He could ponder ambitions beyond the desire to be inside.

"It was cold out there," said Hammond, 34, who grew up in nearby Perysburg and served six years in the Army before a degenerative back condition cut short his career. "When you don't have a place to stay, that's pretty much all you think about."

He moved into his one-bedroom unit in October with the help of Veterans Matter, a nonprofit established in Toledo in 2012. The group provides rent deposits for homeless veterans who qualify for federal housing vouchers through a program run by the departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development.

The joint effort by the VA and HUD has boosted President Barack Obama's five-year campaign to end homelessness among veterans. The push began

TOLEDO, Ohio

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in 2010, when more than 76,000 former service-members lacked permanent housing. The VA reported last year that the number had dropped below 50,000. (The agency will release the results of its 2015 survey of homeless veterans, conducted earlier this week, in the coming months.)

Yet the relative success of the voucher program obscures a pitfall that thwarts more veterans from escaping the purgatory of shelters and the streets.

SEE COMPASSION ON PAGE 11

Can homelessness ever be conquered?

By JENNIFER HLAID
Stars and Stripes

New Orleans announced in early January that it was the first major city in the country to meet a goal issued by the Obama administration in 2010: ending veteran homelessness.

But despite dedicated efforts across the country to meet the goal by the end of 2015, and a renewed push last year after Michelle Obama's announcement of the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, there has been no standard or official definition of what "eliminating veteran homelessness" really means.

For Zero: 2016, a national campaign to end chronic and veteran homelessness by the end of 2016, "zero" means that at any point in time, the number of people experiencing homelessness won't be greater than the community's ability to place them in permanent housing.

SEE CONQUER ON PAGE 11

“When you don't have a place to stay, that's pretty much all you think about.”

— Dave Hammond

SAFE HAVEN

COMPASSION FROM PAGE 10

The vouchers do not cover rent deposits that landlords require as a condition of leasing. A veteran can apply for the money through an array of other programs, but approval routinely takes 30 to 60 days, and sometimes stretches to four months or longer. By then, in a typical scenario, a landlord has rented to another tenant, or the veteran has drifted out of the VA's orbit.

Veterans Matter seeks to reduce the wait from months to minutes. The organization has created a cloud-based platform for VA social workers and case managers to submit online requests for rent deposits.

If the application conforms to VA and HUD guidelines, a Veterans Matter staffer accepts the request and mails a check that day to the landlord, who also receives a confirmation email. Most property managers treat the electronic notice as proof of payment and allow the veteran to move into housing without further delay.

The accelerated process delivers "instant compassion" in the words of Ken Leslie, the group's founder, whose advocacy for the homeless in Toledo traces to his own time on the streets a quarter-century ago. "The philosophy is simple," he said. "Get veterans housed to save their lives."

In three years, the group has raised \$20,000 to cover deposits for more than 600 veterans in six states. The housing has benefited almost 800 dependents, including 200 children.

Leslie, backed by one part-time employee and two contractors, plans to assist an additional 1,500 homeless veterans this year while expanding into more states, and he envisions offering aid nationwide by 2017. A former standup comedian with ties to the entertainment industry, he has drawn fundraising support from the likes of Katy Perry, Kid Rock, John Mellencamp and Dusty Hill of ZZ Top through public service announcements and comedy ticket auctions.

The high-profile names contrast with the group's unseen impact. Hammond knew nothing of Veterans Matter before it paid his \$475 deposit last fall. At the time, he was nearing the two-year limit for residency at a transitional housing complex for homeless veterans. He found a gathering there last fall. "I couldn't have done it with the money," he said. "I was worried I was going to be back on the streets."

'Black-ops speed'

Leslie's concept for Veterans Matter blossomed three years ago in the chilled air of February. Every month or two, he and members of 1Matters, the homeless advocacy group he formed in 2007, set out to visit different areas in the border region of northwestern Ohio and southeastern Michigan. They enter a parallel realm — a place of wood-paneled bars, transient businesses and vacant buildings — to look for those he dubs "the unhoused."

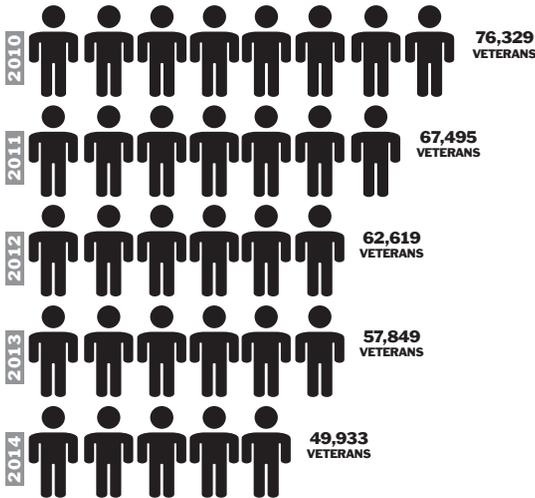
Joining the search party was his friend Shawn Dowling, a social worker with the VA's Ann Arbor Healthcare System in Michigan, a network that encompasses Toledo. She mentioned that he had received 35 vouchers. But unable to afford security deposits, the veterans who qualified for the program remained in limbo.

Leslie asked how the VA attempted to come up with the deposits. "We take them around to VA offices and churches and help them beg," Dowling said.

Her answer at once pained and prodded Leslie, who had found himself among the unhoused in the late 1980s.

During his touring days as a comedian, he had fallen for the dark charms of drugs and alcohol, an expensive romance that he preferred to paying rent. Sobriety arrived in 1990 after he realized how much he hated sleeping in his car. The same year, Leslie launched Tent City, an annual event that provides free job,

HOMELESS VETERANS ON THE DECLINE



SOURCES: Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Housing and Urban Development

housing and medical services to the homeless, and he has devoted much of the past 25 years to their plight.

When Dowling explained that a modest \$750 separated each veteran from permanent housing, he saw a chance to bring them across the threshold.

The next morning he called Barbara Petee with ProMedica, a nonprofit health care network based in Toledo. She manages the group's advocacy fund, distributing grants for regional projects that improve the health and well-being of low-income adults and children.

Leslie laid out the dilemma of the 35 veterans and requested \$26,250 to cover their deposits. He added that he wanted to acquire the funding "at black-ops speed."

Petee needed little persuading. "Just because something like veterans' homelessness is a difficult problem doesn't mean we have to try to find difficult solutions," she said. "It was clear Ken's idea could help these veterans right away."

Seven days later — "Valentine's Day, 5:36

The population of homeless veterans across the country has declined by more than 26,000, or 33 percent, since President Barack Obama launched a five-year campaign to end homelessness among veterans in 2010. To meet the goal, almost twice as many homeless veterans will need to be placed in permanent housing in 2015 as have been placed in the last four years.

p.m." to Leslie's memory — Petee called back to tell him ProMedica would supply the grant. "Three days after that, we housed our first veteran," he said. "Eleven days from idea to execution. And it's only because it's so simple and it's focused only on the people."

A translator between worlds

The work of Veterans Matter in the ensuing years has had a dramatic effect on the VA's housing program in the area. Dowling related that, before 2012, an average of 137 days elapsed between a former servicemember applying for a voucher and signing a lease. The wait has since plunged to 32 days.

She identified Leslie's organization as the principal reason, even as funding for rent deposits has become available through other federal programs. The group, acting with a nimbleness mostly unknown to government agencies, has enabled 90 veterans in the region to move into permanent housing.

The urgency is crucial given the prevalence of addiction and mental illness among the homeless. "If you take too long to get veterans housed, you'll lose them," Dowling said. "They'll go away, and they'll stay gone until you can find them again."

Toledo has earned national notice for aiding former military members in need through the cooperation of public officials, social service agencies, nonprofit groups and private businesses. The latest evidence of progress is a \$12.5-million, 75-unit apartment complex for low-income and homeless veterans that will open this summer on the city's south side. Veterans Matter will contribute to covering the rent deposits of tenants.

CONQUER FROM PAGE 10

Beth Sandor, director of Zero:2016, said her organization recognized early that it needed a clear definition of what it was working toward.

New Orleans was one of more than 70 communities selected for the program, and in its news release about reaching the goal, defined ending veteran homelessness as "ensuring every homeless veteran who can be located is placed in permanent housing or in temporary housing with an identified permanent housing placement" within 30 days.

That doesn't mean that no veteran will ever again fall into homelessness in New Orleans, said Baylee Crone, executive director of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. But now, there is a system in place to find permanent housing for those veterans quickly, she said.

The philosophy of "housing first" requires moving the homeless into permanent housing quickly — and frequently requires lowering barriers to entry to that housing. For example, where people may have previously been required to complete a drug or alcohol treatment plan prior to being placed in permanent housing, now they could be placed in housing and given a case manager for access to the treatment and other services at a later time.

Though the approach is "not perfect by any means," research has shown it works, Crone said. The key for communities and outreach teams is to know every person on the streets or in a shelter, Crone and Sandor said. "If you don't know their name and needs, you'll never know what you need to get them into permanent housing," Sandor said.

And the fact that New Orleans has hit the goal "is a game-changer," Sandor said.

"It is a proof point," she said, "an amazing example of what's possible with good leadership, with the introduction of best practices, of knowing every single person's name, of not giving up until we get there."

New Orleans' achievement also is helpful for other communities that may be looking for their own definition of zero, Crone said, as well as those looking for best practices and ways to track their progress. The city took the number of homeless veterans from a point-in-time count last year, 193, as its starting point, and was able to house 127 of them in six months, she said. But the work is not over: Organizations there must continue to connect people with the resources they need to get back on their feet.

"Ending veteran homelessness is not a set point in time," Crone said.

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MARTIN KUZ/Stars and Stripes

Three years ago, Ken Leslie founded Veterans Matter, a nonprofit based in Toledo, Ohio, that covers the rent deposits of homeless veterans to help them move into permanent housing.

SEE COMPASSION ON PAGE 13

SAFE HAVEN

The difference a home makes

By MARTIN KUZ
Stars and Stripes

COLUMBUS, Ohio — A simple rule guided Travis Goodman during the years he sought shelter in vacant houses across Ohio's capital city.

"Go in late, get out early." Slipping into an empty home after nightfall and vanishing before daybreak reduced the risk that a neighbor would spot him and call police. If he moved only in the dark, he could sleep unnoticed in the same house for days, sometimes weeks.

But now and then alcohol and pot loosened his discipline. The cops would show up and arrest the former Marine, charging him with trespassing or drug possession or both. He might stay in a homeless shelter for a stretch before resuming his particular style of house hunting.

Goodman worked a string of construction and warehouse jobs that earned him enough to afford a place of his own. He chose instead to invest in his vices, and when money ran short, he turned to petty theft and check forgery. There were more short stints in jail as lessons went unlearned.

He spun in that cycle for more than a decade until the day in 2011 when he received a call from his sister. She had seen a report on TV about a new housing community for disabled and homeless veterans. She urged him to apply for an apartment there.

The call coincided with his growing sense that he needed to change. The old military man felt hollowed out in body and mind.

"I got tired of being tired, and I got tired of being ashamed," said Goodman, 54, who grew up in Columbus and joined the Marines in 1978 for a three-year stint. "Your conscience starts to get to you. You start seeing yourself as less than human."

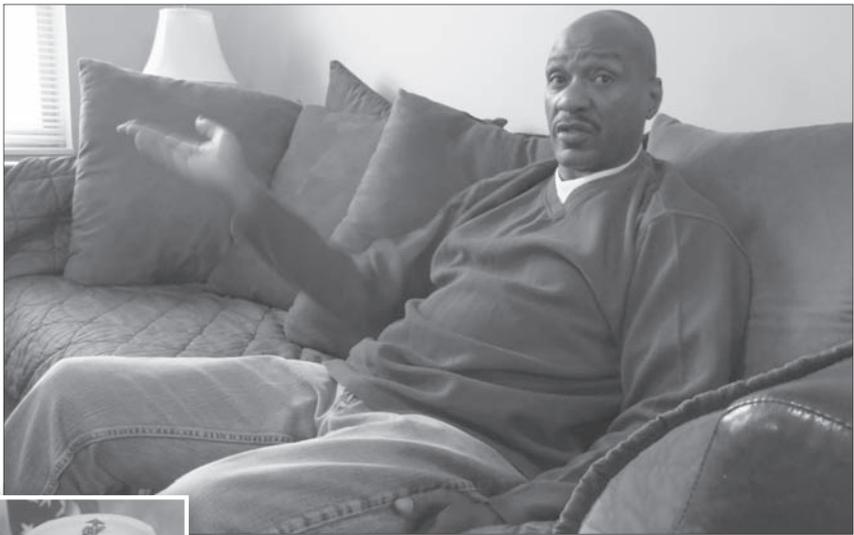
In summer 2012, he received approval to move into the Commons at Livingston, a red-brick, three-story housing complex of 50 one-bedroom units run by National Church Residences. The non-profit housing provider, based in Columbus, expanded the campus last year, doubling its capacity to house 100 veterans.

A framed portrait of Goodman as a 13-year-old private stands on a table in his apartment. The young man in the uniform now appears more familiar to him in some ways than the version of himself who first arrived at the Commons.

He has been sober for more than two years. He holds a part-time maintenance job and attends classes as he pursues a GED. He started dating a woman last year and spends more time with his three siblings, who live in the city.

The purpose of his life has transcended the impulse to invade and evade, to "go in late, get out early."

"I don't know where I'd be if I hadn't ended up here. Probably back in jail or dead," he said. Large windows let in the day's pale light



PHOTOS BY MARTIN KUZ/Stars and Stripes

Travis Goodman, a former Marine, lives in a one-bedroom apartment at the Commons at Livingston, a permanent supportive housing community in Columbus, Ohio, for disabled and homeless veterans. Goodman served a three-year stint starting in 1978, and later was homeless for more than a decade.

room and bathroom, and there's a large hall for group gatherings and computer, fitness and laundry rooms. Residents sign a renewable one-year lease and are allowed to stay indefinitely, paying monthly rent equal to 30 percent of their income, or no less than \$50.

VA social workers and case managers work out of offices in the building, and every week there are regular visits by physical and occupational therapists, behavioral health providers and job and education counselors. Apart from job or education training for the unemployed, the services are made available without requiring tenants to take part, creating an ethos of autonomy that nurtures their dignity.

"What we've seen for the most part is that veterans want to get better," said Robyn Haycock, a support services coordinator with National Church Residences. "They'll generally seek the help they need once they're here. But it's important for them to feel that it's their decision, and we want them to have that independence."

The rate of homelessness among veterans nationwide remains twice that of those who have never served in the armed forces. Returning to the civilian world can

inflame feelings of isolation for veterans as they mourn the loss of their military identity. The sense of estrangement often persists even for those who cope without retreating to the streets.

Living with fellow veterans in permanent supportive housing offers a healing camaraderie, an oasis of shared experience and empathy. "For some of them, being here is the first time they've felt connected to anyone since they got out of the military," Haycock said. "They feel like they're part of something again."

The presence of others who wore the uniform has comforted Chris Eckert. The Army veteran, who mustered out in 1996 after six years, lost his warehouse logistics job in 2013. His savings had drained away by early last year, and he wound up in a homeless shelter for several months before moving into the Commons in September.

"This has been like a safe haven for me," said Eckert, 45, who struggles with seizures and the effects of a brain tumor that impairs his vision.

SAFE HAVEN
Bringing veterans home
A YEARLONG SERIES

"I wish the things that brought me here hadn't happened. But at the same time I feel lucky to be here because I'm around people who understand. There's just a bond you feel with another veteran that you can't get with somebody else."

A second shot

The Commons blends into a milieu of residential and commercial properties on the east side of Columbus. Five years ago, in the project's early stages, the "crazy vet" stereotype shadowed its development, with some residents and business owners nervous about housing former service-members in the area.

A similar strain of anxiety has run through other cities, and projects have been scuttled or scaled back as a result. Around the Commons, meanwhile, the divide between the civilian and military realms appears to have dissolved. Veterans from the complex participate in the neighborhood's "black watch" aimed at deterring crime and mingle with residents at community events.

SEE HOME ON PAGE 13

“I don't know where I'd be if I hadn't ended up here. Probably back in jail or dead. I have goals now. Direction.”

— Travis Goodman

SAFE HAVEN

COMPASSION FROM PAGE 11

For their efforts, Leslie and Mayor D. Michael Collins, along with civic leaders in many cities, were invited to Washington last spring for a summit on ending homelessness among veterans hosted by first lady Michelle Obama.

On a recent morning, the two men took hands and begged when they met in the mayor's office on the 23rd floor of the city's government center. A gray haze shrouded vistas of downtown outside the floor-to-ceiling windows as Collins, a former Marine, discussed with his guest's clarity of purpose.

"What often happens in the political arena is like a Baskin-Robbins experience. An issue comes up and it's the flavor of the day, so everybody comes together and says, 'This isn't right and we have to do something about it,'" he said.

"Then the following day there's a new issue and everybody says the same thing, and nobody pays attention to yesterday's issue. That's why it's good to find people like Ken. He doesn't let you force me."

For someone who once made a living by seeking the laughter and affirmation of strangers, Leslie, 57, demurs when praised for his advocacy. He diverts credit to Dowling and her VA colleagues to Petec and ProMedica, to Collins and other elected officials, to the county's housing authority and Veterans Service Commission.

"I'm not that smart. Really — that's not fake humility," he said, his gray ponytail spilling down from the top of his head. He wears red-framed sunglasses perched on the brim. He talked in the rapid cadence of a man who, in addition to managing his nonprofit endeavors, must squeeze enough minutes from the day to run a small headlining firm. "I'm very simple, and so when I see a problem, I look for a simple solution."

Leslie, who grew up in Perrysburg and lives in Toledo with his wife, keeps an office on the ground floor of a business center converted from an old shopping mall. He has a view of a parking lot. On the wall behind his desk hangs a photo of the late folk singer Harry Chapin, one of his three heroes together with Irish songwriter Bob Geldof and John Mellencamp.

He sees the true stress for their music than for their humanitarian work. Like Chapin before him, Geldof has fought to end world hunger; Mellencamp cofounded Farm Aid in 1985. The annual benefit concert for family farmers drew Leslie to launch his Tent City project five years later.

During a tour stop in Toledo in 2007, Mellencamp visited the Tent City venue to meet with homeless residents. Leslie forged a bond with him, and the singer has recruited his public attention to help promote Veterans Matter. Similar support from Ice-T, Susan Sarandon and other entertainers has raised thousands of dollars in donations and extended the group's presence into Indiana, Massachusetts, Texas and Washington.

Leslie's emphasis on recruiting the famous to crusade for the anonymous arises from a populist sensibility. He believes that celebrities, by illuminating a hidden struggle, can motivate Americans to care about those who served and who now live on the streets.

How cities around the US are doing

Since 2010, when President Barack Obama launched a five-year national campaign to end homelessness among veterans, the number of former servicemembers living on the streets has dropped from over 76,000 to below 50,000. In early January, officials in New Orleans declared that their city was the country's first to find permanent housing for all of its homeless veterans, who numbered 227 at the start of last year. Here's a look at efforts in a handful of other U.S. cities, based on figures provided by federal, state and local agencies. — Martin Kuz

Portland, Ore.

City officials announced in November that 139 homeless veterans had been housed since April, exceeding the goal of 100 set in the spring. Housing advocates and city officials have announced a joint initiative to move 424 homeless veterans off the streets by year's end.

Los Angeles

The Department of Veterans Affairs just agreed to create a plan to end homelessness among veterans in the city, which has more than 4,200 former service-members who lack permanent housing. The agreement, reached in a lawsuit that accused the VA of neglecting homeless veterans, also calls for the creation of permanent supportive housing on a 400-acre VA campus in West Los Angeles.

Phoenix

From 2010 through 2013, the city housed 222 veterans classically as chronically homeless, making Phoenix the nation's first city to eliminate veterans' homelessness in that category. Among former servicemembers who lack permanent housing but are not considered chronically homeless, the city's population fell from 187 in 2011 to 48 last year.

Houston

The city found housing for 2,800 homeless veterans from 2012 to 2014, reducing Houston's overall homeless population by almost 40 percent. Among the remaining 681 homeless veterans who were counted in a survey in January 2014, more than half were in the process of receiving housing by September.

Chicago

Mayor Rahm Emanuel unveiled a \$5 million plan last fall to provide housing for the city's 721 homeless veterans by the end of this year. Federal agencies will cover \$4.2 million of the tab, which includes construction of two permanent supportive housing communities for 127 veterans. The remaining veterans will be placed in existing affordable housing.

New York

The city's population of homeless veterans fell by almost two-thirds between 2011 and 2014, with 3,032 former servicemembers placed in permanent housing. Several housing projects are underway across the city as officials seek to place the remaining 1,300 homeless veterans.



MARTIN KUZ/Stars and Stripes

Ken Leslie, left, the founder of Veterans Matter, talks with Greg Johnson, an Iraq War veteran, last month in Johnson's apartment in Toledo, Ohio. Leslie's Toledo-based organization paid the \$540 rent deposit that helped Johnson move into the space in September.

"I don't think of John Mellencamp as a star. I consider him a comrade in arms," he said. He held up his hands as if clapping a basketball and moved them toward each other. "What I try to do is sort of be a translator between these two worlds and get them a little closer. Because in the end, we're all at the same level."

'A big relief'

Leslie stepped inside Greg Johnson's apartment and shook hands with the Iraq War veteran while clapping him on the shoulder.

"What's up, bitch?" Leslie said. Both men laughed as Johnson replied in kind.

The Toledo native moved into the one-bedroom unit on the city's west side last fall after Veterans Matter paid the \$540 rent deposit. He had spent the summer living out of a 2001 Cadillac DeVille. His wardrobe consisted of two pairs of pants and a few T-shirts that he stashed in the trunk. He drove to a Rite Aid each morning to shave

and wash up in the bathroom.

He was deployed to Iraq in 2007. A year removed from high school, he belonged to an Army flag detail at Camp Liberty in Baghdad that took part in memorial ceremonies for fallen troops. The duty weighed on him as the months passed.

"Even though I wasn't going outside the wire much, seeing those bodies going home does have an effect on you," he said. "You start to think, 'Could I be next?'"

He returned to Toledo following his honorable discharge in 2009 and over the next five years his life imploded in slow motion. By last spring, he was unemployed and estranged from his wife, and the county had taken custody of his three young children after police charged him with domestic assault.

Johnson found renewed hope when he connected with Dowling and her team with the VA in August. Gaining a fixed address a month later freed him to begin rebuilding his future.

He soon picked up a part-time job at the post office and enrolled in a counseling course for domestic violence that grants him visitation with his kids. A local nonprofit donated a bed, recliner and a handful of other furnishings for his apartment, and though the space still appears more empty than occupied, the comforts surpass those of a Cadillac.

"Having this place has been a big relief," said Johnson, 27, who wore a blue T-shirt imprinted with the words "I Am... Appreciated." "I know an apartment doesn't change everything, and I know I have a long way to go. But being here makes it easier to focus on what I need to do to turn things around. When you don't have a place to live, you're just thinking about surviving."

Dowling regards permanent housing as essential to guiding former servicemembers toward VA support services and, in turn, restoring their dignity. She described Veterans Matter as redefining in Americans a mission that may mean life instead of death.

"These men and women are either going to die on the streets or we can give them a place to live and help them regain control of their lives," she said. "We served their country. I think we owe it to them to get them housed as fast as we can, and that's what Ken does."

The cause animates Leslie. Driving to a meeting after leaving Johnson's apartment, he received a call from a VA social worker in Dallas. She asked if he could cover a \$250 rent deposit for a veteran who had qualified for the voucher program. "Yup, no problem," he said. "The check will go out this afternoon." The entire exchange lasted under a minute.

A couple of hours later, sitting at his desk, Leslie slipped the check into an envelope. He looked up and smiled.

"Another veteran housed. Boom. Done."

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HOME FROM PAGE 12

Michael Preston, a regional director for National Church Residences, ascribed the area's acceptance of the campus mostly to the passage of time. "I think that as we've gone along people have taken into consideration that these veterans served our country, and we need to do right by them," he said.

In the common perception of permanent supportive housing, shaped in no small part by the term itself, tenants stay for good. In practice, and contrary to the criticism that such housing amounts to "veteran welfare," the Commons staff encourages residents to reintegrate into their communities and families as their recovery evolves.

"The goal is for them to reach independence," Haycock said. "It isn't something that's forced. But we want them to eventually live in the community again without the need for the intensive services we give them here."

Blaine Ware found himself homeless after the death of his girlfriend three years ago. The former Marine, who left the service in 1983 after four years, initially resisted asking for help.

"It was hard," said Ware, 55, who grew up in Dayton, Ohio. "I'm supposed to serve others, not have others serve me." Yet his time at the Commons has enabled him to land a job at a retail clothing chain and prepare for moving out in the next year or two.

"I've been fortunate to have this opportunity to put my life back together," he said. "I'm not sure what I would have done otherwise."

For Travis Goodman, who lost so many years to alcohol and drugs and self-inflicted inertia, the Commons represents redemption. He plans to collect his GIED later this year and switch to full-time work, and if he saves enough money, the man who once skulked into houses hopes to someday buy one.

"It's only by luck that I didn't die," he said. "I got a second shot. I'm not going to let it pass."

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MARTIN KUZ/Stars and Stripes

Blaine Ware, a former Marine who left the service in 1983, has lived at the Commons at Livingston in Columbus, Ohio, since 2012.

WAR ON TERRORISM



A Kurdish Peshmerga soldier stands guard overlooking the road between Mosul and Tal Afar at the frontline of Eski Mosul, Iraq, on Tuesday.

As Iraqi Kurds gain ground from the Islamic State, local Sunnis are wary

By Vivian Salama
The Associated Press

ESKI MOSUL, Iraq — An unarmed Sunni Arab man walked along a road in a patch of northern Iraq newly liberated from Islamic State extremists, holding a white surrender flag — a signal to Kurdish fighters that he is not a militant. Cars drove by a similar white banner flying from their windows.

As they retake territory from Islamic State militants, Iraqi Kurdish fighters have found surprising ambivalence in areas they freed from the jihadists' oppressive rule. Locals have swiftly shaken off the imposed Islamic lifestyle — but as Sunnis, from the same ethnic group as the militants, many are nonetheless bracing for treatment as collaborators.

For their part, the Kurdish peshmerga troops are suspicious about why the locals chose to stay on when the Islamic State conquered the area in a blitz last year. An Associated Press team traveling with the Kurds found the road to Mosul, a coveted prize in the battle for Iraq, strewn with suspicion and fear.

The recent Kurdish push secured several towns and villages along a critical junction that connects the town of Tal Afar to the city of Mosul — two of the Islamic State group's biggest strongholds in Iraq. The artery, which eventually leads to Syria, has been a vital supply line for militants transporting weapons, goods and people across the lawless Iraq-Syria border.

The Kurdish fighters struggled for months to inch ahead, backed by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes. On Tuesday, at least four airstrikes hit Islamic State group positions near Eski Mosul, a village of up

“We need them to trust us and to cooperate with us. ... It is essential that we identify those people and take care of our backs before we continue.”

Kurdish Col. Marwan al-Mizouri

to about 9,000 residents some 25 miles northwest of Mosul.

Kurdish Brig. Gen. Bahjat Taymes, who led the peshmerga operation to retake the Tal Afar-Mosul junction, said seizing it was “crucial” because it also leads to the Mosul Dam, which Kurdish and Iraqi forces won back in August with the help of U.S. airstrikes.

The Kurdish fighters in Eski Mosul — Turkish for “Old Mosul,” a name from the Ottoman rule — say they plan to leave as soon as Iraqi troops return but their enthusiasm about pressing ahead in a fight for predominantly Arab territory is half-hearted.

The villagers in Eski Mosul are grateful for their Kurdish liberators, many of whom speak most no Arabic. But the Sunni villagers also know it will take time to convince the newcomers they hold no allegiance to the Islamic State. The militants left much devastation behind that they fled.

Many in Eski Mosul admit they welcomed the Islamic State when the group first arrived, resentful of what they perceive as years of neglect, discrimination and sectarian policies by the Shiite-led government in Baghdad.

“We thought they were revolutionaries coming to help us and give us our rights,” said grocer Salim Khudair, 30. Hard times followed. The village soon lost cooking gas and electric-

ity, forcing the people to heat what little food remained over open ground fires. The cows became emaciated and many stopped giving milk. Most of the infants and the elderly became sickly.

Now, they can glimpse a better life emerging. Cigarettes — strictly banned under the Islamic State, which seized a third of both Iraq and neighboring Syria and imposed strict Sharia law — are sold and smoked freely. For the first time in months, women and young girls walk the narrow dirt streets without having to cover their faces. Young boys wrestle and play soccer without fear.

But mistrust lingers. As several Kurdish fighters on Tuesday handed out bottled water, speaking to the villagers in broken Arabic, a group of village girls came up, timidly saying to the soldiers, “Please don’t blow up our homes.”

While the Islamic State still sporadically shells the village — the last time as recently as Monday — some among the Kurds worry the villagers are tipping off the militants about the Kurdish positions.

“We need them to trust us and to cooperate with us,” said Kurdish Col. Marwan al-Mizouri. He said he believes some villagers are still loyal to the jihadis. “Not all of them, but maybe 10 percent. It is essential that we identify those people and take care of our backs before we continue.”

Jordan demands proof captured pilot still alive

By Elaine Kurtenbach
and Karin Laub
The Associated Press



AMMAN, Jordan — Jordan on Thursday demanded proof from Islamic State militants that a Jordanian pilot they are holding is still alive, raising doubts that a rapidly approaching Thursday sunset deadline for a prisoner swap set by the group could be met.

The militants have purportedly threatened to kill the pilot, Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, by sunset Iraq time unless Jordan frees an Iraqi woman from death row and delivers her to the Turkish border.

The woman, Sajida al-Rishawi, was involved in deadly Amman hotel bombings a decade ago.

Jordanian government spokesman Mohammed al-Momani said Thursday afternoon that al-Rishawi is still in Jordan, raising doubts that the sunset deadline could be met.

“We want to see a proof of life of the Jordanian pilot and then we can talk about the exchange between Sajida al-Rishawi and the Jordanian pilot,” he said.

Jordan has said it is willing, in principle, to swap al-Rishawi for the pilot but has not said if it is negotiating such an exchange. Indirect talks are reportedly being held with the help of tribal and religious leaders in Iraq.

Islamic State militants, who control large areas of Iraq and Syria, appeared to be rebuffing Jordan's proposed swap in the latest audio message.

The message was read in English by a voice the Japanese government said was likely that of another hostage, Japanese journalist Kenji Goto. It was released online late Wednesday after Jordan offered to swap al-Rishawi for the pilot.

It wasn't clear what Goto's fate would be if the woman wasn't returned.

The message said the deadline was sundown in Mosul, Iraq, the largest city held by the militant group.

The Associated Press could not independently verify the contents of the recording, which was distributed on Twitter by Islamic State-affiliated accounts.

The cases of the Japanese hostage, the Jordanian pilot and the Iraqi prisoner held in Jordan have become intertwined in recent days.

In Tokyo, government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said Thursday the government was in close communications with the Jordan government. He said Japan was doing its utmost to free Goto, working with nations in the re-

Jordan has said it is willing to swap Jordanian pilot Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, left, for death row inmate Sajida al-Rishawi.

gion, including Turkey, Jordan and Israel.

Efforts to free al-Kaseasbeh and Goto gained urgency after a purported online ultimatum claimed Tuesday that the Islamic State group would kill both hostages within 24 hours if Jordan did not free al-Rishawi.

Japan has scrambled to deal with the crisis that began last week with the release of a video by the Islamic State group showing Goto and another Japanese hostage, Haruna Yukawa, kneeling in orange jumpsuits between a masked man who threatened to kill them within 72 hours unless Japan paid a \$200 million ransom.

That demand has since shifted to one for the release of al-Rishawi. The militants have reportedly killed Yukawa, 42, although that has not been confirmed.

“This heinous terrorist act is totally unforgivable,” Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said in parliament Thursday.

Goto, a freelance journalist, was captured in October in Syria, apparently while trying to rescue Yukawa, who was taken hostage last summer.

Releasing the would-be hotel bomber linked to al-Qaida would breach Jordan's usual hard-line approach to the extremists and set a precedent for negotiating with them.

It would also be a coup for the Islamic State group, which has already overrun large parts of neighboring Syria and Iraq. Jordan is part of a U.S.-led military alliance that has carried out airstrikes against the extremist group in Syria and Iraq in recent months.

The Islamic State group has not publicly demanded prisoner releases before and Jordan's mainly ally, the United States, opposes negotiations with extremists.

Jordanian King Abdullah II faces growing domestic pressure to bring the pilot home. The pilot's father said he met on Wednesday with Abdullah, who he said assured him that “everything will be fine.”

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 transported to printers in Afghanistan, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Djibouti, as well as in Germany, Italy, UK, Japan, and South Korea. Stars and Stripes also publishes several weeklies (Stripes Guam, Japan, Korea and Okinawa), designed to serve the

needs of their respective military communities.

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

STARS AND STRIPES RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE

- **2014 VFW News Media Award** – For outstanding contribution to a better understanding of our American way of life and its institutions and interests by honest and forthright reporting.
- **2013 Best American Newspaper Narrative Writing Contest** – Notable Narrative Winner
Recipient: Martin Kuz: "Soldiers Recount Attack"
- **2013 National Headline Awards – Second Place: News Series** (Forever After: A Warrior Wounded; A Family Challenged)
- **2013 min Best of Web: Redesign** – Honorable Mention
Stripes UK website

- **2011 Military Photographer of the Year** – Honorable Mention
Recipient: Joshua DeMotts
- **2011 Sigma Delta Chi Award** – Breaking News Photography (Newspaper Circulation 100,001+ or Affiliated Website/National Magazine) Recipient: Laura Rauch: "For those I love I will sacrifice"
- **2011 John Reagan "Tex" McCrary Award for Excellence in Journalism** – Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation
- **2010 Military Reporters and Editors Awards** – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Jon Rabinoff

- **2010 National 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 Barton
- **2009 min Editorial & Design Awards** – Editorial Print / Special Supplement: HEROES 2009; Custom Publication Design: Stripes GAMER

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

- **2006 Military Reporters and Editors Awards** – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipients: Monte Morin, Joe Giordano; Honorable mention: Nancy Montgomery Photography; Fred Zimmerman
- **2005 Military Reporters and Editors Awards** – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Steve Lower Photography; Terry Boyd
- **2004 American Legion Excellence in Journalism Award** – Ground Truth Hero
- **2003 Scripps Howard Foundation National Journalism Award** – First Amendment, Finalist

WORLD

Malaysia declares MH370 crash an accident

By EILEEN NG

The Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysia's government declared Thursday the crash of Flight 370 an accident to pave the way for compensation claims, angering victims' families still waiting for evidence while officials said the search for wreckage will go on.

Civil aviation chief Azharuddin Abdul Rahman said the hunt for the Malaysia Airlines jet, which disappeared March 8, 2014, while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people, "remains a priority."

The plane is believed to have crashed in the southern Indian

Ocean off the coast of western Australia. No debris has been found.

"After 327 days and based on all available data as well as circumstances ... survivability in the defined area is highly unlikely," Azharuddin said in a pre-recorded message broadcast on Malaysian television. "It is therefore with the heaviest heart and deepest sorrow that we officially declare Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 an accident."

All 239 passengers and crew on board are presumed to have lost their lives, he said. The declaration will help facilitate financial claims by families, and Malaysia Airlines is ready to proceed with the compensation process, he

said. Malaysian Transport Minister Low Tiong Lai said the announcement was agreed to by the governments of Malaysia, China and Australia and was intended to "enable the families to move forward."

"The announcement has no bearing on the search operations. The search for MH370 will continue," he said.

In China, where most of the passengers came from, some family members refused to accept the official position that the plane was lost.

"There's nothing new," said Wen Wancheng, whose son, Wen Yongsheng, was aboard the plane. "The Malaysian authorities have

been covering up the truth from the get-go, and they have no credibility to speak of. We are not accepting the conclusion."

"Because you have no evidence at all," said Wang Chunjiang, who lost his brother Wang Chuyong. "How can you come to such a conclusion? Chinese New Year is coming up. Why did you choose now to make the announcement?"

Li Jingxin, brother of Li Zhixin, a laborer who was returning to China on the flight, said the family would not accept any compensation from the airline for now.

"They have found nothing," said Li Jingxin, who lives in the northern province of Hebei. "With nothing found, how can they make any announcement?"

Azharuddin said that Malaysia, China and Australia had spared no expense and resources in their search for the plane but were still unable to locate it.

The hunt resumed in October after a four-month hiatus, with more sophisticated sonar equipment. The Australian coordinators of the search have said the current underwater phase could take another year and there is still no guarantee of success.

Azharuddin said that the Convention on International Civil Aviation, commonly referred to as the "Chicago Convention," states that the definition of the term "accident" includes "the aircraft is missing."

Indonesian officials: AirAsia plane was flown by co-pilot

By NINIK KARMINI

The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Indonesian investigators announced Thursday that the co-pilot of the crashed AirAsia jet was in control when he struggled to recover the aircraft as stall warnings sounded.

The Airbus A320-200 crashed on Dec. 28 into the Java Sea, halfway from Indonesia's city of Surabaya to Singapore. All 162 people aboard were killed.

Chief investigator of the National Transportation Safety Committee Marjono Siswosumarto said the cockpit voice recording indicated the co-pilot, French national Remi Emmanuel Plesel, was flying the plane while Indonesian Capt. Iryanto was monitoring.

Iryanto, who like many Indonesians uses a single name, was a former fighter pilot with more than 20,500 flying hours, while the less-experienced Plesel had about 6,000 hours.

Siswosumarto said the black boxes retrieved from the seabed provided a relatively clear picture of what went wrong in the last moments of AirAsia Flight 8501

as the plane was struggling to recover and stall warnings sounded until the end of the recording.

"However, we are still examining many other things on the issues," Siswosumarto told a news conference.

Another investigator, Ertata Lananggali, said that based on the voice recorder, the captain was monitoring and communicating with air traffic control while Plesel was flying the plane.

"But it is normal practices; both pilots can exchange their roles with each other," Lananggali said.

Investigators concluded that the plane was in airworthy condition prior to the crash.

Both flight and cockpit data recorders showed that the jet was stabilized cruising at the height of 32,900 feet before the pilot contacted ground control saying they were turning left and a minute later sought permission to climb to 38,000 feet. The ATC at Jakarta's Sukarno-Hatta airport asked them to stand by.

Siswosumarto said the weather satellite images at the time showed formation of storm clouds reaching up to 44,000 feet.

He added that flight data showed that the jet was in a dangerously fast climb and stalled before going down slowly into the last position of 24,000 feet high recorded on the radar.

He said investigators were still looking into whether turbulence or updrafts contributed to the plane's drastic climb as repeated stall warnings were heard clearly on the cockpit recording within four minutes until the end of the recording since the plane reached more than 8 degrees of its pitch angle.

Indonesia Minister of Transportation Ignasius Jonan has said previously that radar data showed the Airbus A320 was climbing at an abnormally high rate, about 6,000 feet per minute, before it disappeared.

"In many cases, the engine is not strong enough to fly in this high angle," Siswosumarto said.

Indonesian rescuers have retrieved 72 bodies, with the last two found drifting Wednesday off Sulawesi island. Unconfirmed reports said another body was discovered Thursday about 620 miles east of the crash scene.



DTA ALANGKARA/AP

Indonesian National Transportation Safety Committee investigator Ertata Lananggali, during a news conference Thursday in Jakarta, Indonesia, uses a model plane to explain the movement of AirAsia Flight 8501 before it crashed into the Java Sea on Dec. 28.

Netanyahu faults Iran for attack by Hezbollah on Lebanon border

By ARIEL SCHALIT

The Associated Press

SHEAR YASHUV, Israel — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday said that Iran is to blame for a deadly flare-up along the Israeli-Lebanese border the previous day, the deadliest escalation in the disputed zone since the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel.

The violence erupted when the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah on Wednesday fired a salvo

of anti-tank missiles at an Israeli military convoy in the disputed area, killing two soldiers and wounding seven. Israel responded to the missiles with shelling. A Spanish peacekeeper with the U.N. force in southern Lebanon also was killed.

The area was calm but tense on Thursday and village life appeared to return to normal. But Israeli forces were on high alert and the Lebanese National News Agency said Israeli warplanes were flying low over border villages.

"It is Iran that is responsible for yesterday's attack against us from Lebanon," Netanyahu said. "We will continue to defend ourselves against all threats, near and far alike."

Iran backs Hezbollah, which declared its attack an act of retaliation for an Israeli airstrike on Hezbollah fighters inside neighboring Syria earlier this month that killed six Hezbollah fighters and an Iranian general. Both Iran and Hezbollah are allies with Syrian President Bashar Assad in the civil war in the neighbor-

ing country.

"This is the same Iran that is now trying to achieve an agreement, via the major powers, that would leave it with the ability to develop nuclear weapons, and we strongly oppose this agreement," Netanyahu said referring to the negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program.

Though the violence sparked fears of yet another crippling war between the two foes — and an even further regional chaos — both Israel and Hezbollah seemed disinterested in escalat-

ing the situation further.

Israel goes to the polls in March and Netanyahu would not want to get involved in fighting so close to the election.

Shiite powerhouse Iran has been Assad's major backer throughout its bloody civil war, lending Damascus military support through its proxy Hezbollah group. If Hezbollah were to divert its forces from Syria to a war along the border with Israel, the Lebanese Shiite group could likely find itself stretched too thin.

FAITH

'We have a mission for you'



ARMANDO R. LINON/Stars and Stripes

Air Force chaplain helps to serve the Vietnamese community in South Korea

By ASHLEY ROWLAND
Stars and Stripes

TOSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — twice a month after celebrating Sunday morning Mass at Osan, Capt. Thienan Tran travels some four hours by car, subway and train to minister to what has become his second flock.

His destination is a borrowed Korean church in the southeastern coastal city of Pusan that serves as the spiritual home for a group of poor Vietnamese migrant workers. Most have come to South Korea to work for several years and send money back to help their families lift themselves out of poverty.

The 41-year-old 51st Fight Wing chaplain, born in Vietnam and raised in poverty knows firsthand what it's like to be an outsider in a foreign country. And he sees the comfort that practicing their faith brings the 150 or so Vietnamese who attend his services.

"They can go to a Mass and a Korean priest will celebrate Mass, but they don't understand it," said Tran, son of a former South Vietnamese army officer who emigrated to the U.S. with his family in 1992. "The (Vietnamese) who come to this country, they're far from home, so they feel very lonely. So when they see a priest, it gives them a kind of consolation."

Tran joined the Air Force in 2011. Soon after he learned he was being assigned to South Korea, he was contacted by another Vietnamese-American priest stationed at

Osan who was ministering to the Pusan group. "When he learned about my assignment to replace him, he said, 'We have a mission for you,'" Tran said. He was initially assigned to Osan for one year, but extended for a second year because of his ministry to the Vietnamese.

When he leaves Korea next year, Tran probably won't be replaced by a Vietnamese-speaking priest. But there are several nonmilitary priests in the country who are learning Vietnamese, and he hopes they will one day be able to not only conduct Mass in the language but minister to the congregants outside worship services.

Growing up in Vietnam

The youngest of four children, Tran grew up in a village outside Ho Chi Minh City after it was captured by the North Vietnamese communists in 1975. He still calls the city by its old name, Saigon.

After the communist takeover, his father was imprisoned near Hanoi, not far from the Chinese border, but a world away from his family in the south. During the 13 years his father was in jail, they communicated mostly through letters. Tran saw his father only twice because the long trip was too costly for his family.

He remembers neighbors giving them food when they returned from those trips because they had no money.

"All the possessions that we had, even our home, got confiscated," Tran said. "We had to move to the city to stay with our grandparents."

Because his father had fought for the

enemy and was imprisoned, his family members were treated "like criminals," he said. "They hated us because we used to be the enemy," he said. "But later on, people seemed to sympathize with us more because we lived in poverty just like a lot of people over there, and they reached out to help us during difficult times. We had good neighbors."

His father was released in 1989, weak and with health problems that would require several years of recovery. Nobody in his family knows why he was held for so long or why authorities decided to let him go. They emigrated to the U.S. in 1992 as political refugees, landing in upstate New York, a world away from steamy Ho Chi Minh City and its chaotic traffic.

"For the first time in my life, I saw snow coming down," said Tran, who was 19 and spoke little English when he arrived in Syracuse. "It was beautiful. It was like heaven to me."

He studied English — "Even now, I'm still learning," he said — and became a U.S. citizen in 1999. He joined the priesthood about 10 years ago, a vocation he probably would never have been able to pursue had he stayed in Vietnam, where his family's poverty likely would have limited him to life as a laborer.

Adjusting to life overseas

Of the nearly 190,600 Southeast Asians working in South Korea, nearly 55,550 are Vietnamese, according to the Ministry of Justice. Vietnamese migrant workers face the typical obstacles of adjusting to life overseas, from eating unfamiliar foods to adapting to South Korea's cold winters. And in a country that is largely ethnically homogeneous and places a high value on material success, some may face discrimination or even abuse on and off the job.

An officer at the Incheon Support Center for Foreign Workers, a government agency for overseas workers, said some Vietnamese have reported being denied months of wages as well as benefits — from bonuses to paid holidays and severance pay — that their Korean coworkers receive.

"South Koreans behave condescendingly toward the Vietnamese workers. They seem to look down on them just because they are foreigners," the officer said, speaking on customary condition of anonymity. "Or, South Koreans look down on them because they are from a less well-off country."

With only a half-dozen Vietnamese-speaking priests in South Korea, opportunities for the workers to hear a Mass in their native tongue are rare.

Tran said about 150 Vietnamese on average attend his Masses in Pusan. Most of the workers are men in their 20s to mid-40s. Many have a wife and children back home. About one-fifth are women; some marry Koreans, and others marry the Vietnamese men they meet here.

They work in construction, farming and fishing or at industrial jobs, sometimes 12 or more hours a day, Tran said. Even though their wages are low by U.S. standards, they make far more than they would in Vietnam.

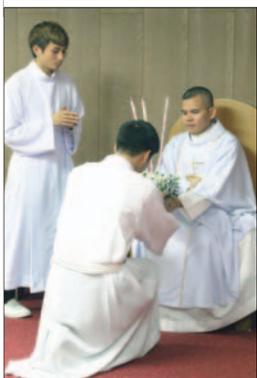
"The work very, very hard," he said. "But most of them, they're very appreciative that they can have a better life in their country."

Even though they can talk with their families by phone, the biggest problem for most, particularly the men, is loneliness.

If he can, Tran stays after Mass to counsel or eat with the congregants if he can. Many simply want to talk, and he shares his own struggles of being in South Korea without a family. He tells them to reach out to others, because keeping to yourself can make life harder.

He said the experience has changed him, helping him to be more focused on his work and thankful for what he has — especially since he knows he could easily be in their shoes.

Stars and Stripes staffer Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this story.
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Courtesy of Thienan Tran

Capt. Thienan Tran receives the offering from the Vietnamese Catholic community in Changwon, South Korea. Catholics representing the whole community bring wine and unleavened bread to the priest to be consecrated for use in Mass. Tran, an Air Force chaplain, frequently offers Mass and communion to the Vietnamese population throughout the Korean peninsula.

FACES

Ventura won't see 'Sniper'; says Kyle is no hero

The Associated Press

"American Sniper" is tops at the box office but don't expect to see former Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura lining up at a theater for it.

Ventura, a former Navy SEAL, won \$1.8 million in a defamation lawsuit last year against the estate of the late Chris Kyle, the SEAL protagonist of the movie, which has sparked debate over whether snipers should be considered heroes. Ventura said Wednesday he won't see the film partly because Kyle is no hero to him.

"A hero must be honorable, must have

honor. And you can't have honor if you're a liar. There is no honor in lying," Ventura told The Associated Press from his winter home in Baja California, Mexico. He also noted that the movie isn't playing there.

Ventura also dismissed the movie as propaganda because it conveys the false idea that Iraq had something to do with the 9/11 attacks. "It's as authentic as 'Dirty Harry,'" he said, referring to fictional movie series starring Clint Eastwood, the director of "American Sniper."

Ventura testified Kyle fabricated a subplot in his "American Sniper" book in which Kyle claimed he punched out a man,

whom he later identified as Ventura, at a California bar in 2006 for allegedly saying the SEALs "deserve to lose a few" in Iraq. Ventura said it never happened.

The jury gave Ventura the legal vindication he craved. Publisher HarperCollins removed the passage from the best-seller, and it gets no mention in the movie. Kyle's estate has appealed. Ventura's separate lawsuit against HarperCollins remains pending.

Ed Huddleston, a lawyer for Kyle's widow, Taya Kyle, said they won't comment on Ventura's remarks because the lawsuit is on appeal.



William Shatner can be seen in a priceline.com ad set to debut during the Super Bowl.

Shatner knows the ups and downs of travel

By LYNN ELBER
The Associated Press

William Shatner is back as a shrewd, unflappable travel expert in his latest TV commercial for an online company.

But in real life, even Shatner can't avoid the perils of getting through airport security lines.

"I got patted down one time, wearing loose-fitting clothing, and my pants fell down. It was one of the most embarrassing moments of my life," Shatner said, recalling the incident at Los Angeles International Airport.

Shatner returns as the priceline.com Negotiator in a new ad campaign that launches Sunday, with Kaley Cuoco-Sweeting ("The Big Bang Theory") again playing the travel pro's daughter. He's unfazed that fans recognize him for the long-running commercial gig as well as the "Star Trek" TV series and movies and his Golden Globe-winning role on "Boston Legal."

"This is a form of creativity," he said of collaborating on the TV spots. "It is like an acting job."

Working with priceline.com is only part of what keeps Shatner busy as he nears his 84th birthday in March. The original Capt. James T. Kirk just wrapped a national tour of his one-man stage show and is planning for another. He's got what he calls an "unusual" summer series for NBC in the works; it is the upcoming fact-based movie "The Sunday Horse" and is collaborating with a custom motorcycle manufacturer on designing a new three-wheeled vehicle. Shatner, an avid motorcyclist, plans a Chicago-to-Los Angeles charity ride to launch the bike this summer.

CALLED UP

'Ghostbusters' cast set with McCarthy, Wiig, McKinnon, Jones

The Associated Press

The "Ghostbusters" reboot has set its all-female leads with Melissa McCarthy, Kristen Wiig and a pair of "Saturday Night Live" performers.

Director Paul Feig announced his stars by posting their pictures on Twitter on Tuesday. Joining McCarthy and Wiig are Kate McKinnon and Leslie Jones.

Feig tweeted that Sony Pictures will release the film in July 2016. Production is expected to begin later this year. The new "Ghostbusters" updates the original 1984 film and the 1989 sequel.

Wiig and McCarthy both starred in "Bridesmaids," which Feig directed. He has since worked with McCarthy on all of his films, including their upcoming action comedy, "Spy."

McKinnon joined "SNL" in 2012. Jones first came to the show as a writer and transitioned into a featured player last fall.

From left, Melissa McCarthy, Kristen Wiig, Kate McKinnon and Leslie Jones will star in the upcoming "Ghostbusters" reboot.
FROM WIRE SERVICES, NBC

Desert stars: Celebrities converge on Phoenix for Super Bowl

The Associated Press

The desert is great for stargazing, and that will certainly be the case as the Super Bowl takes over Phoenix and its suburbs.

Comedians Joel McHale and Kevin Hart will crack jokes for partygoers, newcomer Charli XCX will perform for troops and then revelers at ESPN's party, and Jamie Foxx and Drake will hold court at a pair of lounges at a Scottsdale, Ariz., hotel.

Here's a look at some of the places where stars will mix and mingle:

better bring their A game — or expect to be the brunt of jokes from Kevin Hart. "The Wedding Ringer" star will host and zero in on the action on the digital gridiron.

Electronic Arts is taking over a block of downtown Scottsdale for a party that will include performances by Florida Georgia Line, and Hart hosting Madden matches between NFL players. Last year's winner, Eagles running back LeSean McCoy, will return to defend his title.

Busy weekend for Charli XCX

Grammy-nominated singer Charli XCX is one of Super Bowl week's most sought-after acts, with at least three performanc-

es scheduled. The pop singer is singing for troops Friday night at Luke Air Force base and performing a set at ESPN's bash later that night. On Saturday, she'll perform for partygoers at Rolling Stone's bash.

The ESPN party on Friday will be a hub for some of the weekend's biggest names in pro sports and entertainment. Also scheduled to make appearances at the show are "Froze" star Dina Menzel, who will sing the national anthem at Sunday's game and John Legend, who will sing "America the Beautiful" before kickoff.

Good times for a good cause

Not all of the pre-game parties are sim-

ply for fun and games. McHale will host a roast of NFL great Terry Bradshaw, a charity event that will benefit a program that brings entertainment to wounded veterans.

The Friars Club roast of Bradshaw is one of several charity events planned for this week, including the Big Game Big Give charity event. The gala is being hosted by Mark Wahlberg, Michael Bay and Washington Nationals manager Matt Williams. The beneficiaries will be three charities.

Glady's Knight headlines the Super Bowl Gospel Celebration, which donates some of its proceeds to charity. The evening, a NFL-sanctioned event, will be hosted by actress Holly Robinson Peete and her husband, retired NFL player Rodney Peete.

Games before the big game

Participants in this year's Madden Bowl

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

'Sasquatch' sightings during Boston blizzard

MA BOSTON — One was spotted in downtown Copley Square. Another was sighted trying to hail a cab in suburban Somerville.

People were watching out for the Boston Yeti: someone — maybe more than one person — who was getting laughs by walking through this week's blizzard in a Sasquatch suit.

New England Cable News reporter Tony Sabato tweeted a photo of the not-so-elusive creature. "Found the yeti in the blizzard at Copley Square in Boston," he said above a snapshot of the white, furry phantom looking rather pensive.

Cookie competition gets a deflated twist

MI MUSKEGON — An annual western Michigan cookie competition held ahead of the Super Bowl is getting a new twist thanks to all the talk about deflated footballs.

In "The Ultimate Cookie Smackdown Poll," Ryke's Bakery, Catering & Cafe sells cookies decorated to represent the teams taking the field. Each sale is counted on a white board in the bakery.

This year, in addition to team logo cookies, there's a third option: cookies decorated with deflated footballs.

Customers who purchase the deflated cookie option get to pick which team they'll support.

UPS driver throws box, urinates against house

TX HOUSTON — A UPS driver has been fired after a Houston homeowner posted security video that shows the delivery man throwing a parcel over a gate and urinating against a house.

Homeowner Ben Lucas said Tuesday that he checked his surveillance video after finding that the parcel was broken open.

The video shows the delivery man hurling the package over a gate, then unzipping his pants and relieving himself on the property.

After being hit by car, cat crawls back from grave

FL TAMPA — If cats have nine lives, Bart the black and white feline from Tampa has certainly used up one.

The Tampa Bay Times reported that when 1½-year-old Bart was hit by a car earlier this month, owner Ellis Hutson was so distraught he couldn't stand the thought of burying the cat. He asked neighbor Dusty Albrinton to dig a shallow grave.

Five days later a matted and injured Bart emerged, meowing for food.

Hutson got in touch with the Humane Society of Tampa Bay, which through the Save-A-Pet Medical Fund will help cover costs of surgery to remove an abscess, have his jaw shut and insert a feeding tube.

THE CENSUS

76

The number of bottles of fine wine, worth a total of more than \$300,000, recovered from a private cellar in Greensboro, N.C., after being stolen from the world-renowned French Laundry eatery. Who broke into the famed Napa Valley restaurant and how the wine got to the other side of the country have yet to be solved. The theft occurred on Christmas, a day after the restaurant closed for a six-month kitchen remodeling.



KAREN WARREN, HOUSTON CHRONICLE/AP

Stealing a kiss

Jayden Guerra, 2, tries to kiss Julissa Solis, 3, in a kissing booth as their mothers take photos of them for Valentine's Day at Hermann Park in Houston.

Catalogue SkyMall files for bankruptcy

NY NEW YORK — Apparently, airline passengers aren't buying enough garden gnomes, superhero pajamas and heated cat shelters. SkyMall has filed for bankruptcy.

The quirky in-flight shopping catalog has been a mainstay on airlines since 1989. Passengers with nowhere to go would pull it from the seatback and flip through the pages.

In recent years, passengers

have found other distractions. More planes have seatback TV screens. The federal government now allows passengers to keep Kindles and iPads on during the entire flight. And most jets in the U.S. now have Wi-Fi, meaning passengers can chat or do work.

Suburb resident calls off hunt to cull coyotes

OH COLUMBUS — A central Ohio woman who hired professional hunters to cull the coyote population from her suburban property has called off

the hunt.

A city councilman in Dublin, northwest of Columbus, told The Columbus Dispatch that Kally Rish told two hunters hired to shoot coyotes on her 11-acre Washington Township property not to carry out the event. Rish's decision followed public uproar over the hunt on her land, which is surrounded by populated subdivisions.

State plans to restore 'free coffee' signs

WA OLYMPIA — Signs alerting drivers to free

coffee will return to about a dozen highway rest stops in the state.

State transportation official Chris Christopher said the signs will be installed by March.

Volunteers and nonprofit groups serve free coffee at 37 highway rest stops in Washington, but drivers don't always know when it's available because worn or damaged signs have not been replaced.

California sea lions take over Astoria docks

OR ASTORIA — About 200 sea lions have invaded the docks at the East Basin Mooring at the Port of Astoria.

They haul out when they're not feasting on smelt near the mouth of the Columbia River. Biologists expect they'll hang around for Chinook salmon in the spring.

KGW reported the sea lions are damaging docks and are a nuisance to boaters. Attempts to harass the animals into leaving have failed.

Twins left mostly alone for months; parents in Nigeria

NH MANCHESTER — Twin 9-year-old boys were left mostly alone in their U.S. apartment for four months after their parents took three siblings to Nigeria and left an uncle to care for them, authorities said.

Police said the uncle, Giobari Atura, 25, told them he would stop by every couple of days to drop off food. Police found no edible food in the refrigerator and only ramen noodles in a cabinet in November. Atura was charged with one count of endangering the welfare of a child.

Atura's older brother, Jerusalem Monday, left for Nigeria with his wife and three of their children in July, intending to return in August. They told police they were delayed by illness and passport problems.

Confederate shipwreck delays channel project

GA SAVANNAH — Before workers can start to deepen the busy shipping channel to the Port of Savannah, their first must remove a Confederate shipwreck still sitting at the bottom of the Savannah River after 150 years.

The CSS Georgia was an armored warship that never fired a shot in battle before Confederate troops scattered the ironclad in December 1864 to prevent its capture by Union Gen. William T. Sherman. Now its wreckage stands in the way of dredging the river to make room for larger classes of cargo ships.

Officials have estimated the recovery will cost about \$14 million, a relatively small sum for the harbor deepening's \$706 million price tag.

From wire reports

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Fed staying 'patient' on interest rates

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve's outlook for the U.S. economy is steadily brightening. Yet the Fed will be "patient" in raising interest rates from record lows.

That was the dual message the central bank sent Wednesday in a statement it issued after its latest policy meeting.

Why is no rate increase likely soon? The main reason, the Fed

suggested in its statement, is that inflation remains well below the central bank's target rate.

It said the pressures holding down inflation — mainly plunging oil prices — have intensified. The Fed said it thinks inflation will decline further before eventually reaching the central bank's 2 percent target rate.

The Fed sketched a bullish picture of the economy — with a strengthening job market, lower unemployment, rising consumer

spending and higher household purchasing power fueled by lower energy prices.

Paul Ashworth, an economist at Capital Economics, said the statement suggested that the Fed "is still taking the view that the collapse in oil prices is a net positive for the economy." The Fed's statement also made clear that policymakers still think the impact of low oil prices on inflation will prove temporary, Ashworth said. The statement was approved on

a 10-0 vote. The Fed's emphasis on low inflation could affect when it decides to raise its key short-term rate from near zero. Many economists have forecast a rate increase in June, but some object to their predicted timetable.

The Fed did not explicitly mention the weakening global economy but it said it planned to take "international developments" into account in determining when to start raising rates.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro cents (Jan. 30)	\$1.1638
Dollar buys (Jan. 30)	€0.8600
British pound (Jan. 30)	\$1.55
Japanese yen (Jan. 30)	¥115.00
South Korean won (Jan. 30)	₩1,063.00

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3771
British pound	\$1.5122/0.6613
Canada (dollar)	1.2589
China (Yuan)	6.2481
Denmark (Krone)	6.5667
Egypt (Pound)	7.9912
Euro	\$1.1337/0.8721
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7530
Hungary (Forint)	284.22
Israel (Shekel)	3.9242
Japan (Yen)	117.91
Kuwait (Dinar)	6.2950
Norway (Krone)	7.7799
Philippines (Peso)	44.72
Poland (Zloty)	3.7020
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7600
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3514
South Korea (Won)	1,096.98
Switzerland (Franc)	6.9193
Thailand (Bath)	32.72
Turkey (New Lira)	4.0031

(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 unit, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$2.347	\$2.553	\$2.747	\$3.169
Change in price	-2.2 cents	-2.7 cents	-2.9 cents	-6.7 cents
Netherlands	---	\$3.268	\$3.512	\$3.479
Change in price	---	-8.2 cents	-9.0 cents	-8.9 cents
U.K.	---	\$2.523	\$2.717	\$3.139
Change in price	---	-2.7 cents	-2.9 cents	-6.7 cents
Azores	---	---	\$3.635	---
Change in price	---	---	no change	---
Turkey	---	\$3.421	\$3.347	\$2.950
Change in price	---	no change	no change	no change
Turkey	---	---	\$3.495	\$3.755*
Change in price	---	---	no change	no change
Italy	\$3.978	---	---	---
Change in price	no change	---	---	---

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	---	\$2.523	---	\$3.949
Change in price	---	-3.0 cents	---	-7.0 cents
Okinawa	\$2.129	---	---	\$2.949
Change in price	-2.0 cents	---	---	-7.0 cents
South Korea	\$2.169	---	\$3.559	\$2.989
Change in price	-2.0 cents	---	-2.0 cents	-7.0 cents
Guam	\$2.199**	\$2.369	\$2.559	---
Change in price	-2.0 cents	-3.0 cents	-3.0 cents	---

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of Jan. 31-Feb. 6

MARKET WATCH

	Jan. 28, 2015
Dow Jones Industrials	-195.84 17,191.37
Nasdaq composite	-43.50 4,637.99
Standard & Poor's 500	-27.39 2,002.16
Russell 2000	-19.54 1,175.12

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Discount rate	4.00
Federal funds market rate	0.11
3-month bill	0.02
30-year bond	2.29

WEATHER OUTLOOK

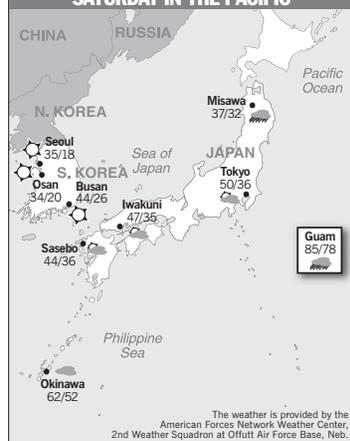
FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

Friday's US temperatures

City	Hi	Lo	Wthr	Chatanooga	44	24	Cir	Fort Wayne	24	16	Cldy	Louisville	34	22	Cldy	Pocatello	42	26	Cldy	Slou City	41	26	Cir
Ablene, Tex	49	41	Cldy	Cheyenne	48	20	Cir	Fresno	60	45	PCLdy	Lubbock	41	35	Rain	Portland, Maine	32	12	Snow	Souix Falls	39	24	PCLdy
Akron, Ohio	16	4	Cldy	Chicago	25	18	PCLdy	Goodland	50	31	Cldy	Macon	56	30	PCLdy	Portland, Ore.	52	37	Snow	South Bend	26	17	Cldy
Albany, N.Y.	31	3	Snow	Cincinnati	39	16	Cldy	Grand Junction	47	33	Cldy	Madison	23	16	PCLdy	Providence	37	11	Snow	Spokane	38	30	Cldy
Albuquerque	40	31	Snow	Cleveland	17	5	Cldy	Grand Rapids	22	16	Cldy	Medford	53	34	PCLdy	Pueblo	50	28	Cldy	Springfield, Ill.	33	21	PCLdy
Allentown, Pa.	30	7	Cir	Colorado Springs	48	28	Cldy	Great Falls	44	23	Cir	Memphis	47	30	PCLdy	Raleigh-Durham	44	22	Cldy	Springfield, Mo.	45	30	PCLdy
Amarillo	37	32	Snow	Columbia, S.C.	53	31	Cir	Green Bay	18	12	PCLdy	Miami Beach	75	58	Cldy	Reno	55	29	PCLdy	St. Louis	68	53	PCLdy
Anchorage	21	12	Snow	Columbia, Ga.	57	31	Cir	Greensboro, N.C.	44	23	PCLdy	Midland-Odessa	43	37	Cldy	Reno	55	29	PCLdy	Tampa	70	48	Cldy
Asheville	38	21	Cir	Columbia, Ohio	24	11	Cldy	Hartford	28	6	PCLdy	Milwaukee	42	17	PCLdy	Richmond	43	28	PCLdy	Tampa	70	48	Cldy
Atlanta	51	31	Cir	Concord, N.H.	32	7	Snow	Hartford Spfld	34	6	Snow	Minneapolis-St. Paul	23	18	PCLdy	Rochester	36	18	PCLdy	Wichita Falls	46	33	Cldy
Atlantic City	35	10	Cir	Corpus Christi	64	55	Cldy	Helena	40	19	PCLdy	Missoula	37	20	Cldy	Rochester	20	3	Snow	Wichita Falls	50	38	Cldy
Austin	68	62	Cldy	Dallas-Ft. Worth	54	42	Cldy	Honolulu	80	64	PCLdy	Mobile	34	19	PCLdy	Rockford	35	16	PCLdy	Yuba City	49	44	Cir
Baltimore	33	13	Cir	Dayton	22	11	Cldy	Houston	60	43	Cldy	Montgomery	56	32	Cir	Sacramento	65	47	Cir	Tucson	62	48	Rain
Baton Rouge	60	40	PCLdy	Daytona Beach	67	45	PCLdy	Huntsville	44	26	PCLdy	Nashville	43	25	PCLdy	St. Louis	38	26	Cldy	Tulsa	48	35	PCLdy
Bilings	48	26	Cir	Denver	49	33	Cir	Indianapolis	28	18	Cldy	New Orleans	38	24	PCLdy	St. Petersburg	68	53	PCLdy	Tulsa	48	35	PCLdy
Birmingham	49	30	Cir	Des Moines	39	29	Cir	Jackson, Miss.	55	34	Cir	New York City	32	13	Snow	St. Thomas	84	76	Rain	Waco	56	42	Cldy
Bismarck	41	18	PCLdy	Detroit	18	11	Cldy	Jacksonville	61	39	PCLdy	Newark	32	12	Snow	Salt Lake City	46	32	Cldy	W. Palm Beach	74	58	Cir
Boise	37	28	Cldy	Des Moines	39	29	Cir	Janeau	39	27	PCLdy	Norfolk, Va.	43	24	PCLdy	Salt Lake City	46	32	Cldy	Wichita Falls	46	33	Cldy
Boston	36	12	Snow	El Paso	47	37	Rain	Kansas City	42	30	PCLdy	North Platte	52	24	PCLdy	San Angelo	52	41	Cldy	Wichita Falls	50	38	Cldy
Bridgport	35	8	Snow	Elkins	24	10	Snow	Key West	74	64	PCLdy	Oklahoma City	48	36	Cldy	San Antonio	58	47	Cldy	Wichita Falls	50	38	Cldy
Brownsville	71	60	Cldy	Erie	17	4	Rain	Knoxville	40	20	PCLdy	Omaha	40	29	Cir	San Diego	66	55	Cldy	Wichita Falls	27	5	Cldy
Buffalo	17	1	Snow	Eugene	48	35	Cldy	Lake Charles	61	42	Cldy	Orlando	71	48	PCLdy	San Francisco	61	49	Cir	Wilmington, Del.	34	11	Snow
Burlington, Vt.	28	-4	Snow	Evansville	36	22	PCLdy	Lansing	20	14	Cldy	Paducah	39	24	Cir	San Jose	65	42	Cldy	Youngstown	16	1	Snow
Caribou, Maine	26	13	Snow	Fairbanks	20	-32	Cir	Las Vegas	58	47	Rain	Pendleton	40	30	Cldy	Santa Fe	36	27	Snow				
Casper, Wyo.	42	18	PCLdy	Fargo	28	12	Cldy	Lexington	31	18	Cldy	Peoria	31	18	Cldy	Sierra Marie	6	0	Snow				
Charleston, S.C.	56	32	PCLdy	Flagstaff	39	37	Rain	Lincoln	45	28	Cir	Philadelphia	34	11	Cir	Savannah	58	33	PCLdy				
Charleston, W.Va.	30	17	Snow	Flint	18	8	Cir	Little Rock	51	34	PCLdy	Phoenix	61	53	Rain	Seattle	52	39	Cldy				
Charlotte, N.C.	48	24	Cir	Fort Smith	55	35	Cir	Los Angeles	69	54	Cldy	Pittsburgh	24	6	Cldy	Shreveport	56	38	PCLdy				

National temperature extremes
Hi: Wed., 86, Cotulla, Texas
Lo: Wed., 12, Rudyard, Mich.

Frazz



Dilbert



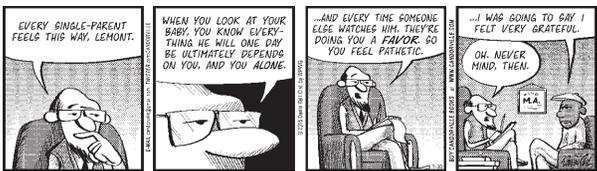
Pearls Before Swine



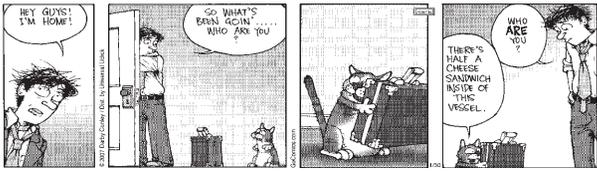
Non Sequitur



Candorville



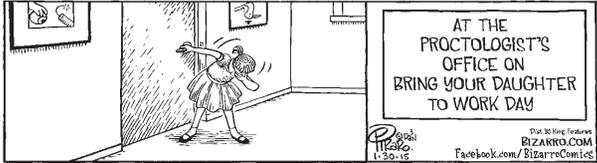
Get Fuzzy



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							42	43	44
45	46	47						48	49				
50								51			52		
53								54					

ACROSS

- 1 Vacationing
- 4 Wrinkly-faced dogs
- 8 Overly theatrical
- 12 — Baba
- 13 Falls to be
- 14 On the briny
- 15 Harmonic design system
- 17 Whammy
- 18 Tranquil
- 19 Winter bug
- 21 Rock ridge
- 22 Boston stadium
- 26 Fisherman's basket
- 29 Plead
- 30 Previous to
- 31 "The Laughing Cavalier" artist
- 32 Opposed
- 33 Bar
- 34 Zsa Zsa's sister
- 35 Pledite, in a way
- 36 Untamed
- 37 Ding site, maybe
- 39 Trot
- 40 Honest politician?
- 41 Gets up
- 45 October birth-stone
- 48 Small opening in a bone
- 50 Groot
- 51 "Exodus" author
- 52 Early bird?
- 53 Sans siblings

DOWN

- 1 Lummocks
- 2 Take off
- 3 Locate
- 4 Handgun
- 5 Leading man?
- 6 Wildebeest
- 7 Add starch
- 8 New Orleans culinary
- 9 "... was saying
- 10 Follows
- 11 Opposite of bel-lum
- 12 Microsoft master-mind
- 20 Journey segment
- 23 Have on
- 24 Diva's rendition
- 25 Holler
- 26 Almost any Food Network host
- 27 Carry on
- 28 Panache
- 29 Carton
- 32 Cautious
- 33 Kelly's former co-host
- 35 Symbol of intrigue
- 36 Robin Hood's territory
- 38 Waste time
- 39 Joplin or lan
- 42 Goble feature
- 43 Therefore
- 44 Wise one
- 45 Discoverer's cry
- 46 Zero-star review
- 47 Be under the weather
- 49 Detergent brand

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

1-30

CRYPTOQUIP

OS U ZNIUCDA ZAY UPA
 GOZPAW KDUZG U ZUOWNCO
 MNZMAWI, KDAZIR NS SNDVG
 YODD GAA AZRU OZ VAZRU.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN I WAS READY TO TEACH MY SMALL KID HOW TO TIE HER SHOES, I CRIED "HERE GOES KNOTTING!"
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: R equals Y

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Ernie Gates

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OPINION

Is US drone use truly constrained?

By RACHEL STOHL

In the State of the Union address, President Barack Obama made a singular reference to unmanned aerial vehicles, more colloquially referred to as "drones." During his remarks on American values, Obama said, "As Americans, we respect human dignity, even when we're threatened, which is why I've prohibited torture, and worked to make sure our use of new technology like drones is properly constrained."

That sounds good in theory, but is it really true in practice? Does the United States "properly constrain" drones?

Let's review the facts. The United States is now believed to have operational drone bases in 11 countries, including Djibouti, Niger and Turkey. Since Obama took office, the United States has undertaken at least 450 drone strikes (and counting — as compared with 50 under the George W. Bush administration). The United States has acknowledged drone use in the recent effort against the Islamic State and has used drones in campaigns in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. The Pentagon is committed to the drone program (even with reports of drone pilot shortages and fatigue), requesting \$2.4 billion in its fiscal year 2015 budget for drones — including \$1.25 billion for research, development, testing and evaluation alone.

While drone use and reliance has increased under Obama, it has done so without clearly articulated policy guidelines or oversight and accountability mechanisms, which only complicates a determination of "proper constraint."

A little over a year ago, the Stimson Center convened a nonpartisan task force to consider this issue. Co-chaired by retired Gen. John P. Abizaid, former head of U.S. Central Command, and Rosa Brooks, former counselor to the undersecretary of defense for policy, the task force reviewed current U.S. drone policy, taking into account America's national security goals, foreign policy ideals and commercial interests. The report noted that the United States' expanded use of drones is inadvertently creating an international norm and standard for use based on secrecy and unspecified legal rationale and found that increasing use of lethal drones may in fact "create a slippery slope leading to continual or wider wars." The report also warned that the United States' heavy reliance on drones "risks increasing instability and escalating conflicts."

In 2015, we're closer to realizing that slippery slope than ever before as U.S. drone use continues unconstrained and without clear oversight and accountability. The administration's refusal to acknowledge certain aspects of the drone program — such as continued use by the CIA — only fuels more suspicion and confusion. Yet the administration has done little to provide clarification. To date, the clearest explanation of the core values of U.S. drone policy has been enunciated in a series of speeches by Obama and other administration officials, but these talking points have fallen far short on articulating a clear, comprehensive policy in line with long-term U.S. interests.

Much remains to be done for the United

States to not only demonstrate constraint but to deliberate in the development of its drone policy. To judge whether it has "properly constrained" drone use, the Obama administration should first conduct a rigorous strategic review and cost-benefit analysis of lethal drone strikes, particularly in counterterrorism operations. Enhancing transparency would also help determine the level of U.S. constraint. At the very least, the administration could provide historical data on past U.S. strikes that would allow for better understanding of how the drone program has been used and if constraint has in fact been demonstrated. Clarity of the U.S. drone program in general can also facilitate the development of an effective and useful international precedent and norm for drone use, particularly in nontraditional settings outside of traditional battlefields.

The State of the Union address highlighted the key issues on the president's agenda. However, if this administration wants a legacy on drones that is judged beyond a record number of strikes and uses in new theaters, the president will have to clearly articulate a comprehensive U.S. drone policy in the next two years. Without normative metrics for evaluation, it will be difficult to discern whether the administration's use of drones has truly been properly constrained.

Rachel Stohl is a senior associate with the Managing Across Boundaries Initiative at the nonpartisan Stimson Center and was project director of the 2014 report, "The Drone Policy." She wrote this column for Tribune News Service. The opinions are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of Tribune or its editors.

3 ways to level the economic playing field

By MATTHEW MITCHELL

President Barack Obama recently extolled the virtues of what he called "middle-class economics" or "the idea that playing field isn't just unfair, it's grossly inefficient. It undermines competition, discourages innovation and prompts businesses to expend billions of dollars in socially wasteful efforts to win the favor of politicians. I need not be this way.

Ours is not a country where everyone plays by the same set of economic rules. Many longstanding federal and state policies privilege some businesses and not others. This tilted playing field isn't just unfair, it's grossly inefficient. It undermines competition, discourages innovation and prompts businesses to expend billions of dollars in socially wasteful efforts to win the favor of politicians. I need not be this way.

A serious agenda to level the economic playing field appeals to both the progressive impulse to stick up for the powerless and the conservative urge to check government's scope and power. The president and Congress will soon deliver more detailed agendas. Here are three ways they could level the economic playing field:

First, end corporate bailouts. The first time the federal government rescued a single private company (Lockheed Aircraft) was in 1971. It bailed out a railroad on Chrysler by the end of the '70s; Continental Illinois National Bank in the '80s; and the savings-and-loans in the late '80s/early-'90s. But the big bailouts came in 2008-09 when the government rescued hundreds of insurance companies, financial institutions and auto manufacturers. These bailouts give corporations the (correct) impression that politicians in Washington can rescue them if they get into trouble. That encourages risky behavior, making

It's easy to oppose "special interest" politics. It's much harder to get down to specifics.

bailouts a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Fed-Frank regulatory overhaul may have staved off the possibility of directing the Federal Reserve to designate certain firms "systemically important financial institutions," broadcasting the federal government's belief that these firms are important enough to save. A good first step would be to repeal this designation.

A next step could be a constitutional amendment prohibiting bailouts. With the knowledge that they alone bear the costs of their mistakes, firms would be more prudent, and the entire financial system would be more secure.

Second, end trade protectionism. Scientific consensus can be elusive. But the closest we get in economics is the consensus view that barriers to trade are bad for an economy. Tariffs, quotas and domestic subsidies stand in the way of competition, or lower prices, and of higher standards of living. These barriers pad the pockets of a few favored firms at the expense of millions of consumers and businesses who must pay more for the protected products.

The typical member of Congress is generally in favor of freer trade but wants to make exceptions for hometown industries. For the better part of a century, the way to get around congressional protectionism has been to give the president "fast track" trade negotiating authority. Congress lets the president negotiate trade agreements

and agrees to simply vote up or down without amendments. Democrats first came up with this idea. They should embrace it again.

Congress can end protectionism in other ways. They could start by letting the Export-Import Bank's authorization expire this summer. Taxpayers shouldn't guarantee a loan that J.P. Morgan makes to Air India to buy a Boeing. Then-Sen. Obama was right to call the corporate welfare, and he is wrong to have abandoned that view.

Third, eliminate the grab bag of subsidies to agribusiness. Everyone loves farmers. Many of us have some in the family. But that's no reason to favor them with special privileges, especially since the average farm household makes 53 percent more than the average U.S. household. But agribusinesses enjoys a host of special privileges: price supports, tariffs, quotas, insurance subsidies, overseas marketing subsidies and favorable tax treatment.

All of this should go.

There's much more. Congress could end both traditional and "green" energy subsidies; it could reform corporate taxes by closing loopholes; and it could shut down programs that promote specific industries like tourism, shipping and air travel.

It's easy to oppose "special interest" politics. It's much harder to get down to specifics and recommend that particular programs go. With a detailed and specific agenda to level the playing field, we could turn the president's words into deeds.

Matthew Mitchell is a senior research fellow and director of the Center for Global Markets and Capitalism with the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, where he is also an adjunct professor. He has written for Tribune News Service. The opinions are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of Tribune or its editors.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

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

Netanyahu invite says plenty The (Memphis, Tenn.) Commercial Appeal

As part of its serial rebuttals to President Barack Obama's State of the Union address — remembered largely for GOP Sen. John Boehner's reminiscences of using Wonder Bread bags as foul weather footwear — the House Republican leadership has invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress on Feb. 11.

"I don't believe I'm poking anyone in the eye," John Boehner said of the invitation, although of course it was a direct jab at Obama and a gross breach of traditional protocol.

Congress can invite whomever it wishes to speak to it, but when the guest is a foreign leader the White House as a matter of courtesy is consulted, or at least informed, well in advance.

Obama learned of the invitation just shortly before Boehner announced it publicly.

Netanyahu has never been reluctant about meddling in U.S. politics. He lobbied strenuously and, thankfully, unsuccessfully in favor of a U.S. strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, an attack whose results would have been problematic given Iran's defensive preparations.

In the current political climate, Netanyahu would add weight to Republican lawmakers' push to impose additional sanctions on Iran. Netanyahu would also veto them and diplomatic warnings that no sanctions would blow up talks with Tehran about scrapping its development of a nuclear weapons capability. In addition, it might fracture the coalition of nations that have joined with the U.S. in those talks.

The mess in Israel's politics has been painfully slow and they might ultimately fail, but there is no Plan B other than an increasingly hostile Iran determined to assert itself by stepped-up military meddling in Iraq and Syria.

Congressional Republicans themselves do not have clean hands when it comes to meddling in Israel's politics. Netanyahu's Likud Party is behind the opposition Labor Party in polls leading up to Israeli elections in March. The prestige of an address to the U.S. Congress on the eve of the voting could give him a significant boost.

There is a major partisan politics stop at the water's edge, although the professedly honored more in the breach than in reality, has served this country well.

The Republicans may get yet another chance to run U.S. foreign policy after 2016. They should wait until the voters decide whether they deserve that chance. In the meantime, they should address some problems to keep them occupied at home.

Hold Selma events all weekend Dothan (Ala.) Eagle

There's a disappointing controversy clouding the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Bloody Sunday march in Selma that became the tipping point for the Voting Rights Act of 1965. President Barack Obama has scheduled a trip to coincide with the anniversary of the March 7, 1965, march, cut short by a violent standoff with law enforcement at Edmund Pettus Bridge. However, March 7 is a Saturday, and the anniversary march is scheduled for the next day, Sunday the 8th, just as it has always been observed on the Sunday nearest to March 7.

Hence the kerfuffle — Georgia Rep.



John Lewis, who was badly beaten in the 1965 march, invited the president to Selma on March 7, and local black leaders are insistent that the Sunday observance is sacred and must not be rescheduled.

What we've got here is a failure to communicate.

Considering that the Bloody Sunday march is about something far greater than a presidential visit, rescheduling the observance to fit the schedule of a dignitary is unreasonable. State Sen. Hank Sanders, Tuskegee Mayor Johnny Ford and others who have stood firm on the scheduling should be commended.

However, it would not be unreasonable to extend the observance of the 50th anniversary of this pivotal civil rights event into a weekend, with anniversary events planned for both Saturday, when the president is scheduled to arrive, and Sunday, the somber gathering on Edmund Pettus Bridge.

Far greater obstacles have been cleared in the course of civil rights in America.

Crowded early GOP field is OK Orange County (Calif.) Register

These are nervous times for Republicans. After losing an election that should have been a cakewalk, Mitt Romney is back for more. After years of middling performance and sagging approval, President Barack Obama's ratings have risen to roughly where Ronald Reagan's and George W. Bush's were at the same point in their presidencies. No wonder that seemingly every well-known Republican officeholder wants to run for president.

The list is long and growing longer. Beyond the predictable — Jeb Bush, Rand Paul, Chris Christie and so on — the GOP has on offer the likes of Carly Fiorina and Sen. Lindsey Graham.

The temptation for Republicans is to worry that too many candidates will crowd the field. Since George W. Bush left office, every presidential primary has acquired more than a whiff of a freak show — with dud candidates like Mike Huckabee, Rick Santorum or Newt Gingrich creating political circuses that ultimately amounted to nothing. It all compounds the adage that the quicker a nominee is selected, the sooner he or she can train fire on the other party's pick.

Of course, however, Republicans ought to relax. Today, the GOP is stuffed to the gills with varying ideas and varying kinds of talent. It's natural to see successful politicians whose careers have matured through their hat in the ring. And, after two consecutive defeats, it's natural that this horse race — in its ideological house, homing in on a theme and a style that came to serve

them — in spite of it all — better than they'd been served in a generation. Clintonism is still alive in the Democratic Party. In fact, it's difficult to imagine where the Left would go without it.

In the same way, Republicans have a chance to let their crowded field winnow itself down to a few clear and coherent choices. Sure, the primary season might be a disaster. It might lead to the internecine war that so many Republicans have long feared.

Then again, the Right has a way of smoothing things out when it's crunch time. Why not define today's GOP along the way?

Progress works for US, India The New York Times

After years of nuclear missile and unfulfilled promises, President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi appear to have set relations between their democracies on a deeper, perhaps even revolutionary, path.

Part of the improvement in bilateral relations has to do with the personal chemistry between the two, which by all accounts appears warm and genuine. Obama had barely gotten off his plane in New Delhi when he and Modi embraced like old friends. They share humble roots. A visit by Modi to the White House in September went exceptionally well. And there was plenty of colorful symbolism in New Delhi: Obama became the first American president to attend the annual Republic Day parade.

There are strategic imperatives at work as well. Both leaders need to expand their economies, and both see the other as a crucial partner in offsetting China's increasingly assertive role in Asia. The potential for cooperation is considerable. Much of the public focus on the visit was on trade, energy and breaking a logjam that has held up the sale of American nuclear energy technology to India. But when Modi and Obama sat down to talk, the first 45 minutes of the discussion was consumed by China.

Although it has a history of suspicion and rivalry with China, India has acted independently in foreign policy and resisted American efforts to forge a common front. That seems to be changing with Modi, who shares concerns about China's growing economic and military strength and has shown remarkable confidence in striking a new path. He signed a joint statement with Obama chiding the Chinese government for provoking conflict with its neighbors over the South China Sea; suggested reviving a security network involving the United States, India, Japan and Australia; and expressed interest in playing a greater role in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, in which India could help balance China's influence.

China was not happy, dismissing the visit as a "silly rapportage moment." The trick for Obama and Modi will be to stand

firm in support of a stable, rules-based order in Asia while not provoking China.

That could be tested by their decision to renew a 10-year defense pact as well as agreements to proceed jointly on developing military hardware, including Raven drones, systems for Lockheed's C-130 transport planes and jet engine technology. India is the world's biggest weapons importer and, just last year, the United States overtook Russia as India's main arm supplier. Modi, who has made economic growth his first priority, is determined to develop an indigenous defense industry. The question is how to do that without fueling a regional arms race. ...

With their talk of an "enduring commitment," Obama and Modi have raised expectations and set a firm basis for moving forward. Even so, the countries have no obvious plans to deal with Pakistan or the India-Pakistan nuclear competition that threatens the region, and it cannot be assumed that all past differences will fade. Building a true partnership will take sustained efforts over many decades.

Plan for better Ebola response The Dallas Morning News

The latest World Health Organization statistics indicate that Ebola infection rates are plummeting across West Africa. With 710 new cases confirmed in the past 21 days, this epidemic is far from over. But now that health experts are easing back from crisis mode, this is a good time for an assessment of what went wrong and how to address the problem more effectively the next time.

There will be a next time. Ebola has surfaced in different strains multiple times since its discovery in 1976, and the fact that the current epidemic got so wildly out of control, with more than 8,600 deaths, indicates ample room for improvement in how the world responds.

Some of the world's top medical minds in Geneva this week to examine what went wrong. As Dr. Margaret Chan, director general of the WHO, told the board, the epidemic "delivered some horrific shocks and surprises. The world, including the WHO, was too slow to see what was unfolding before us."

Some of the problems that exacerbated Ebola's spread went beyond the medical community's control. War and political upheaval weakened local governments' ability to identify and contain the early outbreak.

Cultural factors, such as traditions calling for corpses to be washed before burial, also proved difficult to change. Myths and rumors spread rapidly, putting medical personnel at risk. And, perhaps most disturbing, convinced the health workers were there not to save them but to infect them.

First among many top international priorities should be expanded public education. In schools, mosques and churches across Africa, the WHO and other U.N. bodies should redouble efforts to explain how to prevent disease, encourage people to avoid contact with people showing disease symptoms. The best time to educate the public is in calmer times when people are better able to absorb the message.

West Africa's medical community has been hit hard by the Ebola deaths of 499 health workers. Vulnerability to new epidemics is a serious concern. Investing in education of qualified health workers to treat the ill. International organizations such as Doctors Without Borders and Samaritan's Purse can lead the way to helping fill this gap as West Africa works to rebuild its medical corps.

Finally, WHO officials should consider more aggressive responses. While poor African countries certainly benefit from having more hospitals and clinics, nearly a third of the 64 Ebola treatment centers planned for West Africa still remain under construction. A better approach might be emphasis on mobile facilities that can be deployed when Ebola hot spots develop.

The exercise board's lessons-learned examination is a healthy one.

SCOREBOARD

Sports on TV

Go to the American Forces Network website for the most up-to-date TV schedules. myafn.net

Tennis

Australian Open

Thursday
At Melbourne Park
Melbourne, Australia
Purse: \$32.5 million (Grand Slam)
Surface: Hard
Singles
Men
Novak Djokovic, Serbia, 2-0
Andy Murray (6), Britain, def. Tomas Berdych (7), Czech Republic, 6-7 (6), 6-0, 6-3, 7-5.

Women

Semifinals
Maria Sharapova (Russia), def. Ekaterina Makarova (Ukraine), 6-3, 6-2.
Serena Williams (U.S.), def. Madison Keys, United States, 7-6 (5), 6-2.

Doubles

Semifinals
Simone Bolelli and Fabio Fognini, Italy, def. Jean-Julien Roquet and Nicolas Pietrangeli, France, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.
Nicola Pietrangeli and Nicolas Pietrangeli, France, def. Ivan Dodig and Marcelo Melo (4), Brazil, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-3.

Mixed

Quarterfinals
Kristina Mladenovic, France, and Daniel Nestor (3), Canada, def. Sara Bonini and Zimbabwe, and Juan Sebastian Cabal (5), Colombia, 6-2, 6-3.

Wesley Koolhof, Taiwan, and Pablo Cuevas, Uruguay, def. Katarin Srebotnik, Slovenia, and Marcelo Melo (2), Brazil, 6-1, 6-2.

College hockey

Wednesday's game

EAST
Princeton 4, Army 1

Boxing

Fight schedule

Jan. 30
At Foxwoods Resort, Mashantucket, Conn., Karl Dargan vs. Tony Luis, 10, lightweight.

Feb. 6
At Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, Biloxi, Miss., Able Han vs. Sergio Mora, 12, for Taylor's IBF middleweight title.

Feb. 13
At the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, Conn., Boxer's Quartermasters Junior Middleweights: Cleotis Pendarvis vs. Ricardo Miral, 12, for WBA title. Michael Moore: Brandon Adams vs. Alex Perez; Lightweight: Mike Haskins vs. Michael Sanchez.

Feb. 14
At Tropic, Nevada, David Sanchez vs. Juan Alberto Rosales, 12, for the interim WBA super flyweight title.

Feb. 21
At Turning Stone Resort Casino in Verona, N.Y., Cletus Duhaime: Heavyweights: Donovan Dennis vs. Steve Jackson; Welterweights: Delvin Rodriguez vs. Eliezer Gonzalez, 10, junior middleweight.

Feb. 28
At Fantasy Springs Casino, Indio, Calif., for the IBF super flyweight title: 12, for Caballero's IBF bantamweight title.

Feb. 28
At Olympia Arena, Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Frampton vs. Chris Avila, 12, for Frampton's IBF super bantamweight title.

Feb. 28
At O2 Arena, London, Dmitry Chudinov vs. Tony Danvers, 12, for the interim WBA middleweight title; Tyson Fury vs. Wladimir Klitschko, 9, for the WBO international heavyweight title; Liam Walsh vs. Joe Murray, 12, for Welsh's British and Commonwealth junior lightweight titles; Frank Bullington vs. Ivan Juarez, 12, for Bullington's WBO European middleweight title; Ahmet Ptasnik vs. Glenn Foot, 10, welterweights.

Pro football

NFL playoffs

Wild-card playoffs

Saturday, Jan. 3
Carolina 24, Tampa Bay 17
Baltimore 30, Pittsburgh 17

Sunday, Jan. 4

Los Angeles 26, Cincinnati 10
Dallas 24, Detroit 20
New England 35, New York Jets 31
Seattle 31, Carolina 17

Sunday, Jan. 11

Green Bay 24, Pittsburgh 17
Indianapolis 24, Denver 13

Conference Championships

Sunday, Jan. 18
Seattle 28, Denver 22
New England 45, Indianapolis 7

Pro Bowl

Sunday, Jan. 25
At Glendale, Ariz.
Team Invi 53, Team Contor 28

Super Bowl

Sunday, Feb. 8
At Glendale, Ariz.
New England vs. Seattle

NFL injury report

NEW YORK — The National Football League injury report, as provided by the league (OUT = Definitely will not play; DNP = Did not practice; LIMITED = Limited participation in practice; FULL = Full participation in practice):
ATRIOTS AT SEATTLE
SEAHAWKS — PATRIOTS: QUESTIONABLE: CB Richard Sherman (elbow), R.J. Flacco (right shoulder), DT Chris Jones (elbow), WR Brandon Larell (shoulder), B.J. Stankovic (knee), QB Tom Brady (knee), RB LeGarrette Blount (knee), TE Earl Thomas (shoulder), PROBABLE: DE Malcolm Smith (knee), RB Marshawn Lynch (not injured), RB Chris Sherman (elbow), DE J.R. Sweezy (ankle).

Golf

Champions Tour statistics

Through Jan. 25
Scotia
1. Miguel Angel Jimenez, 66.33, 2. Mark O'Meara, 67.3, 3. Fred Couples, 67.33, 4. Rocky Quiroz, 67.67, 5. (tie), Bernhard Langer, Wes Shortt, Jr., Colin Montgomerie, Fred Couples, 68.00, 6. Bart Bryant and Corey Pavin, 68.67.
Driving Accuracy Percentage
1. Fred Couples, 85.71%, 2. Paul Goydos, 83.33, 3. Fred Couples, 83.33, 4. (tie), Roger Chapman and Joe Daley, 78.57%, 5. (tie), Matt Kuchar, Bart Bryant, Tom Lehman and Kohki Ikeda, 76.19%, 10, 6. tied with 75.93%.

Greens in Regulation %

1. Fred Couples, 81.48%, 2. (tie), Scott Dunlap and Wes Shortt, Jr., 76.63%, (tie), Bart Bryant, Miguel Angel Jimenez, 75.00%, 4. (tie), Fred Couples, 75.00%, 5. (tie), Fred Couples, 75.00%, 6. Fred Couples, 75.00%, 7. Fred Couples, 75.00%, 8. Fred Couples, 75.00%, 9. Fred Couples, 75.00%, 10. Fred Couples, 75.00%.

Total Drives

1. Wes Shortt, Jr., 9, 2. John Regier, 13, 3. Fred Couples, 17, 4. Roger Chapman, 18, 5. (tie), Fred Couples, 18, 6. (tie), Fred Couples, 18, 7. Fred Couples, 18, 8. Fred Couples, 18, 9. Fred Couples, 18, 10. Fred Couples, 18.

Putting Average

1. Loren Roberts, 1.55, 2. Miguel Angel Jimenez, 1.59, 3. Fred Couples, 1.61, 4. Corey Pavin, 1.61, 5. (tie), Fred Couples, 1.61, 6. (tie), Fred Couples, 1.61, 7. Fred Couples, 1.61, 8. Fred Couples, 1.61, 9. Fred Couples, 1.61, 10. Fred Couples, 1.61.

Birdie Average

1. Miguel Angel Jimenez, 7.00, 2. (tie), Fred Couples, 7.00, 3. Fred Couples, 7.00, 4. Fred Couples, 7.00, 5. Fred Couples, 7.00, 6. Fred Couples, 7.00, 7. Fred Couples, 7.00, 8. Fred Couples, 7.00, 9. Fred Couples, 7.00, 10. Fred Couples, 7.00.

Sand Save Percentage

1. (tie), Kirk Triplett, Roger Chapman, Bernhard Langer and John Regier, 100.00%, 5. Fred Couples, 83.33%, 6. (tie), Fred Couples, 83.33%, 7. Fred Couples, 75.00%, 8. Fred Couples, 72.73%, 9. David Frost, 71.43%, 10. Loren Roberts, 70.00%.

All-Around Ranking

1. Bernhard Langer, 2. Miguel Angel Jimenez, 65, 3. Fred Couples, 72, 4. (tie), Fred Couples, 72, 5. Fred Couples, 72, 6. John Regier, 83, 7. Mark O'Meara, 84, 8. Kirk Triplett, 91, 9. Colin Montgomerie, 92, 10. Rocky Quiroz, 92.

Champions Tour Charles Schwab Cup leaders

Through Jan. 25

Rank	Name	Money
1.	Miguel Angel Jimenez	\$1,309,000
2.	Mark O'Meara	\$1,120,000
3.	Fred Couples	\$1,033,000
4.	Rocky Quiroz	\$810,000
5.	Colin Browne	\$767,500
6.	David Frost	\$767,500
7.	John Regier	\$767,500
8.	Colin Montgomerie	\$1,767,500
9.	Wes Shortt, Jr.	\$767,500
10.	Paul Goydos	\$525,000
11.	Corey Pavin	\$503,500
12.	Loren Roberts	\$427,500

College basketball

Wednesday's men's scores

EAST

Albany (NY) 47, Vermont 44
Assumption (Pa.) 78, Duquesne 56
No. 25 Butler at Marquette
No. 24 Oklahoma at Oklahoma State
No. 11 Utah at Santa Clara
No. 23 Miami at Florida State

WEST

California 83, Nevada 77
Catholic 82, Susquehanna 66
Clemson 65, Wake Forest 63
Dominican (NY) 91, Post (Conn.) 85
Drexel 65, Northeastern 60
Florida 61, Penn State 60
Hawaii 73, CNY 60
Iowa 61, Michigan State 61
Lehigh 81, Brooklyn 78
Louisville 81, Boston College 72
Mount St. Vincent 69, Purchase 65
New York 64, American U. 54
New Hampshire 63, Maine 58
Old Westbury 79, NY Maritime 72
Penn St. 63, Minnesota 56
Rice 64, Baylor 64
Rosemead 85, Immaculata 81
Stony Brook 72, Hartford 66
St. Joseph's (LI) 73, Farmingdale 68
Syracuse 82, Wake Forest 66
Swarthmore 81, Washington (Md.) 70
Thiel 71, Washington and Jefferson 59

BERA

Berea 76, Ohio Mid-Western 70
Bryan 78, Point (Ga.) 61
Carson-Newman 66, Anderson (SC) 52
Clemson 68, NC State 57
E. Michigan 67, Shepherd 53
Erskine 74, Southern Wesleyan 53
Florida 52, Middle Tennessee 66
GRU Augusta 57, UNC Pembroke 55
Ga. Southwestern 73, Clayton 52
Goshen 62, Smith 62, Winston-Salem 46
Guilford 91, Emory and Henry 88, 2OT
Indiana 82, Belmont 66
Johnson C. Smith 81, Winston-Salem 68

LSU

LSU 64, South Carolina 88
Lees-McRae 88, Belmont Abbey 80
Louisiana 88, Arkansas 77
Livingstone 76, St. Augustine's 62
Louisiana 88, Arkansas 77
Mississippi 79, Mississippi 57
Morehead St. 82, Austin Peay 69
North Carolina 88, Eastern 69
Newberry 56, Queens (NC) 80
Pfeiffer 76, King 72, Middle Tennessee 47
Radford 84, Charleston Southern 77
Randolph-Macon 58, Bridgewater 48

Richmond 66, Duquesne 55

SCAikee at Armstrong
SMU 63, South Florida 52
Shaw 74, Fayetteville St. 54
Shaw 74, Fayetteville St. 54
Temple 86, UCF 62
Virginia 82, James Madison 64
Wachusett 87, Mars Hill 73
Western Michigan 59, Eastern 64
Washington & Lee 77, Hampden-Sydney 79, 7-5

William & Mary 10, Hofstra 79

Winthrop 75, Coastal Carolina 68

Midwest

Carleton 71, Michigan 67
Concordia (Mich.) 66, Lawrence Tech 68
Concordia (Nebr.) 80, Doane 68
Cleveland State 74, Cleveland State 74
Davenport 80, Aquinas 73
Drake 66, Bradley 57
Eastern Michigan 65, (Minn.) 57
Illinois St. 67, Missouri St. 57
Indiana Tech 75, Siena Heights 62
N. Iowa 59, 7, Duquesne 57
Notre Dame 77, Illinois 75
Oakland 84, Wright St. 76, OK State 76
Ohio State 82, Indiana 64
S. Dakota St. 86, Nebraska-Omaha 64
St. Joseph's (Mo.) 75, Concordia (Mo.) 68

Southwest

Arizona 67, 74, Macalester 52
St. Thomas (Minn.) 64, Gustavus 52
St. Thomas 67, 74
Wichita St. 58, Loyola of Chicago 47
Wis.-Eau Claire 61, Wis.-Stout 64
Wis.-Stevens 62, Indiana 76
Wis.-Stevens Pl. 63, Wis.-LaCrosse 44
Wis.-Platteville 65, Wis.-Platteville 64

Southwest

Angelo State 79, Texas A&M Commerce 63
Houston 59, Rice 48
Kansas 64, TCU 61
New Mexico State 58, Texas Tech 36
Tarleton St. 69, McMurry 42

Far West

Air Force 66, New Jose 52
Arizona 50, Oregon 56
Boise State 65, Oregon 55
Stanford 84, Washington 74

AP Men's Top 25 schedule

Friday's game

No. 6 Arizona vs. Oregon State
Saturday's games
No. 1 Kentucky vs. Alabama
No. 2 Virginia vs. No. 4 Duke
No. 3 North Carolina vs. Michigan
No. 5 Wisconsin at Iowa
No. 7 Iowa vs. Michigan
No. 8 Notre Dame at Pittsburgh
No. 9 Kansas vs. Kansas State
No. 10 Kansas vs. Michigan
No. 12 Wichita State at No. 18 North Carolina
No. 14 UC vs. Richmond
No. 15 Iowa vs. Michigan
No. 17 West Virginia vs. Texas Tech
No. 19 Texas at No. 20 Baylor

Wednesday's women's scores

EAST

California 83, Nevada 77
Catholic 82, Susquehanna 66
Clemson 65, Wake Forest 63
Dominican (NY) 91, Post (Conn.) 85
Drexel 65, Northeastern 60
Florida 61, Penn State 60
Hawaii 73, CNY 60
Iowa 61, Michigan State 61
Lehigh 81, Brooklyn 78
Louisville 81, Boston College 72
Mount St. Vincent 69, Purchase 65
New York 64, American U. 54
New Hampshire 63, Maine 58
Old Westbury 79, NY Maritime 72
Penn St. 63, Minnesota 56
Rice 64, Baylor 64
Rosemead 85, Immaculata 81
Stony Brook 72, Hartford 66
St. Joseph's (LI) 73, Farmingdale 68
Syracuse 82, Wake Forest 66
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Indiana Tech 75, Siena Heights 62
N. Iowa 59, 7, Duquesne 57
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No. 3 Baylor vs. Kansas
No. 4 Notre Dame vs. Wake Forest
No. 5 Maryland vs. No. 10 Iowa
No. 6 Tennessee vs. No. 18 Mississippi State
No. 10 Kentucky vs. No. 21 Georgia
No. 12 Texas vs. No. 13 Virginia Tech
No. 12 Texas vs. No. 13 Virginia Tech
No. 15 Nebraska vs. Michigan
No. 16 North Carolina vs. Boston College
No. 22 Rutgers vs. Penn State
No. 24 Oklahoma at West Virginia

Deals

Wednesday's transactions

BASBALL

Major League Baseball
OFFICIALS — **COMMISSIONER** — Suspended New York Yankees SS Tyler Palmer (GCL) 50 games after testing positive for amphetamine. Arizona RF Felipe Perez (Hillsboro-NV) and Pittsburgh OF Kevin Riso (Scottsdale) suspended 50 games each for second positive tests. **MINOR LEAGUE** — **PREVENTION** — The Minor League Drug Prevention and Testing Program will be implemented in 2015.

American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Designated C Mike Hillman for assignment. Named Jim Mioduski as manager of media relations. **CHICAGO WHITE SOX** — Acquired infielder with INF Gordon Beckham on a one-year contract. Designated OF Dewayton Adams for assignment. **HOUSTON ASTROS** — Announced Jeff Bagwell will be an instructor at spring training.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Named Chad Green as special assistant to the general manager. **ATLANTA BRAVES** — Agreed to terms with OF Dan Toscano on a four-year contract. Designated OF Jose Constanza for assignment. **LOS ANGELES DODGERS** — Agreed to terms with OF Matt Kemp on a one-year contract. **BOSTON RED SOX** — Agreed to terms with RHP Javier Mejia on a one-year contract.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

Announced David Montgomery will assume the position of general manager. Will take the position of chairman emeritus. **PITTSBURGH PIRATES** — Agreed to terms with Travis Snider to Baltimore for LHP Steve Terpstra and a player to be named.

National Basketball Association

MIAMI HEAT — Signed Dwyane Wade to a 10-day contract. **MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES** — Signed Johnson to a 10-day contract. **NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION PLAYOFFS** — Traded F Camille Little and G/F Shekinna Stricklen to Connecticut for the 15th pick in the 2015 draft.

FOOTBALL

National Football League
BALTIMORE RAVENS — Signed P Richie Lewis to a future contract. Named Chris Hewitt defensive backs coach, Matt Weiss cornerbacks coach, Willie Young defensive coaching assistant, Richard Smith defensive coordinator, and Donald def.ensive assistant and Andy Schacht offensive quality control coach. **PHILADELPHIA EAGLES** — Signed Phillips defensive coordinator, Brian Price offensive coordinator and defensive backs coach.

BASEBALL COACHERS

INDIANAPOLIS PISTONS — Signed P Casey Washem to a future contract. **INDIANAPOLIS REDSKINS** — Named Matt Ryan as offensive coach.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League
NHL — Fined N.Y. Islanders F Cal Clutterbuck \$20,000 for illegal play. Suspension for a Jan. 19 recall game Philadelphia.

BASEBALL COACHERS

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Recalled F Brendan Shinniman from Portland (AHL). **PITTSBURGH PIRATES** — Placed LW Jeremy Morin on injured reserve. **DALLAS STARS** — Reassigned D Jyrki Jokipakka to Texas (AHL).

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

Recalled D Alex Nedeljkovic from Portland (AHL). **MINNESOTA WILD** — Recalled F Radek Susler from Alaska (AHL). **IOWA HAWKS** — Recalled F Devin Devils to Iowa (AHL).

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference															
Atlantic Division					Metropolitan Division										
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA		
Detroit	48	28	11	3	65	144	123	N.Y. Islanders	47	32	14	8	62	155	130
Tampa Bay	49	30	15	4	64	158	131	Pittsburgh	49	25	14	9	62	143	124
Boston	48	25	16	4	64	126	108	Washington	48	25	14	9	59	144	124
Florida	48	25	16	7	57	129	123	Chicago	48	27	14	4	58	135	110
Montreal	49	25	15	10	50	111	127	Philadelphia	49	20	22	7	47	134	149
Toronto	49	22	23	4	48	143	152	Columbus	49	21	23	3	45	117	145
Ottawa	46	19	18	9	47	126	128	New Jersey	48	18	22	8	44	109	135
Buffalo	48	13	28	3	31	90	171	Carolina	47	17	25	5	39	102	122

Western Conference															
Central Division					Pacific Division										
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA		
Nashville	46	31	10	5	67	141	107	Anaheim	48	32	10	6	70	143	124
St. Louis	46	29	13	4	62	148	111	San Jose	48	29	17	6	56	131	133
Chicago	48	30	16	2	62	151	112	Vancouver	49	26	17	3	55	124	118
Winnipeg	49	26	15	8	60	138	122	Calgary	48	26	19	3	55	140	123
Colorado	49	20	18	11	51	128	141	Los Angeles	48	21	19	12	54	133	129
Dallas	47	21	19	7	49	146	154	Arizona	47	21	15	6	38	108	109
Minnesota	47	21	20	5	48	130	138	Edmonton	48	12	27	9	33	110	160

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

Wednesday's games
 New Jersey 2, Toronto 1, SO
 Washington 4, Pittsburgh 3
 Los Angeles 4, Chicago 3

Thursday's games
 Boston at N.Y. Islanders
 Montreal at N.Y. Rangers
 Winnipeg at Philadelphia
 Arizona at Toronto
 Dallas at Ottawa
 Detroit at Tampa Bay
 Columbus at Florida
 Nashville at St. Louis
 Minnesota at Calgary
 Buffalo at Edmonton
 Anaheim at San Jose

Friday's games
 Pittsburgh at New Jersey
 St. Louis at Carolina
 Nashville at Colorado
 Buffalo at Vancouver
 Chicago at Anaheim

Saturday's games
 Washington at Montreal
 N.Y. Islanders at Detroit
 Arizona at Ottawa
 Dallas at Winnipeg
 Toronto at Philadelphia
 Carolina at N.Y. Rangers
 Florida at New Jersey
 Los Angeles at Boston
 Columbus at Tampa Bay
 Edmonton at Calgary
 Chicago at San Jose



Maple Leafs center Mike Santorelli, left, skates against Devils defenseman Eric Gelinas during Wednesday's game in Newark, N.J. New Jersey won 2-1 in a shootout.

JULIO CORTEZ/AP



ALEX BRANDON/AP

Capitals right wing Eric Fehr, left, scores a goal past Penguins goalie Marc-Andre Fleury on Wednesday in Washington. The Capitals shut out Pittsburgh 4-0.

Roundup

Caps blank Pens to end skid

Ovechkin nets 2 to take the lead in goals; Crosby struggles

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Alex Ovechkin scored twice to take the NHL lead in goals, Braden Holtby recovered from a mini-slump to get his fifth shutout of the season, and Sidney Crosby had one of his worst effort nights as the Washington Capitals broke a four-game losing streak with a 4-0 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Wednesday.

Ovechkin had a tip-in goal in the first period and then scored during a power play in the second. His 29 goals are one more than Rick Nash and Tyler Seguin. Eric Fehr and Mike Green scored in the third.

Holtby, who had allowed four goals in each of his last three starts, stopped 27 shots to blank the Penguins for the second time in a little over a month. Pittsburgh hasn't scored on Washington in 120 minutes this season.

Crosby received an injection last week to treat a lower-body in-

jury that caused him to miss one game as well as the NHL All-Star game, and he wasn't the usual Sid.

He lost 15 of his first 18 faceoffs and lost 17 of 24 for the game. The Penguins also played their third straight without Evgeni Malkin, who also has a lower-body injury. Pittsburgh has lost five of six.

Devils 2, Maple Leafs 1 (SO): Jacob Josefson and Patrik Elias scored in the shootout and host New Jersey rallied late to extend Toronto's losing streak to a season-high seven games.

Cory Schneider made 29 saves through overtime and handled both Toronto shootout attempts as the Devils won for the fifth time in eight games (5-2-1). Defenseman Adam Larsson scored the tying goal with 2:50 left in regulation.

James van Riemsdyk scored on a breakthrough in the third period, and Jonathan Bernier made 22 saves in Toronto's loss.

Bernier made a pad save on Scott Gomez of the Devils' first shootout attempt, but Josefson and Elias beat him with back-handers on the next two tries.

Kings 4, Blackhawks 3: Jake Muzzin scored the tiebreaking goal with 3:37 to play. Jeff Carter had two goals and an assist, and the Los Angeles roared back in the final minutes to snap its four-game losing streak with a victory over visiting Chicago.

Tyler Toffoli tied it with 6:11 left for the defending Stanley Cup champions, who made a dynamic rally in their first game back after stumbling into the break in ninth place in the Western Conference.

Andrew Shaw scored the tie-breaking goal early in the third period for the Blackhawks, who had won four straight regular-season games over Los Angeles.

Jonathan Quick made 26 saves, thwarting a huge Blackhawks surge in front of Los Angeles' net in the final minute.

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COLLEGE BASKETBALL



TONY GUTIERREZ/AP

Kansas guard Frank Mason III fights against the half-court press by TCU's Trey Zeigler, left, and Brandon Parrish during the second half Wednesday in Fort Worth, Texas. Kansas won 64-61.

Roundup

No. 9 Kansas holds off TCU

The Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Frank Mason III had a couple of key baskets in the second-half run that put No. 9 Kansas ahead to stay.

There were also his two missed throws that gave TCU one last desperate shot to extend the game. "We're always happy with a win but it was an ugly win in our eyes," Mason said after the Jayhawks' 64-61 victory Wednesday night. "We definitely could get better. We did a lot of things wrong."

Mason's layup with 13:26 left got the Big 12-leading Jayhawks (17-3, 6-1 Big 12) to 43-42 and started a 12-0 run that put them ahead to stay. The sophomore guard, who finished with 16 points, also had a long jumper in that spurt.

But a layup by Mason with 3:35 left was their last field goal. He then missed two free throws with 4.7 seconds left to give TCU (14-6, 1-6) a chance to force overtime. A long three-point try by Charles Hill Jr. ricocheted off the back rim at the buzzer.

"I've been to the dentist and got a root canal and I may have enjoyed that slightly more than watching the last 2 minutes," coach Bill Self said.

The Jayhawks led 59-48 when Mason made his last jumper. They didn't score again until Brannen Greene made five free throws in the final 37 seconds.

TCU, looking for another memorable victory over the top-10 Jayhawks, pulled to 59-57 on Trey Zeigler's three-point play when he grabbed a rebound of his own miss and made the putback while being fouled.

"The whole game was frustrat-

ing. I thought they played harder and obviously they were quicker to balls," Self said. "Yeah, it was a frustrating game and very fortunate that we won because I think that they outplayed us."

No. 6 Arizona 90, Oregon 56: Gabe York scored 16 points, Brandon Ashley added 13 and host Arizona put on an offensive show to dismantle Oregon.

After routing Oregon earlier this season behind its defense, Arizona (19-2, 7-1 Pac-12) ran away from the Ducks a second time with one of its best offensive performances of the season.

No. 10 Louisville 81, Boston College 72: Chris Jones scored 28 points, including a pair of three-pointers after Boston College cut a 10-point deficit to one, and Louisville held on.

Jones scored 10 of the visiting Cardinals' next 12 points after BC cut the lead to 62-61 with just over 5 minutes left. Terry Rozier scored 23 for Louisville (17-3, 5-2 Atlantic Coast Conference).

No. 12 Wichita State 58, Loyola 47: Fred VanVleet scored a career-high 27 points to lead host Wichita State.

Ron Baker added 16 points as the Shockers (19-2, 9-0 Missouri Valley) shot just 41 percent from the floor and 43 percent from the free throw line. VanVleet and Baker were a combined 16-for-28 from the floor. The rest of the team was 6-for-26.

No. 18 Northern Iowa 59, Southern Illinois 52: Paul Jesperson matched his season-high with 13 points and Seth Tuttle also had 13 to keep Northern Iowa in the hunt for the Missouri Valley Conference title with a win over host Southern Illinois.

The Panthers (19-2, 8-1 Missouri Valley) rallied from their fifth halftime deficit of the season and stay a game back of No. 12 Wichita State.

Purdue 83, No. 22 Indiana 67: Raphael Davis scored 19 points and Purdue's stifling defense shut down Indiana.

The host Boiler-makers (13-8, 5-3 Big Ten) have won three of their last four including back-to-back victories over ranked opponents.

Purdue already has matched last season's conference victory total. **Georgia Tech 70, No. 23 Miami 50:** Marcus Georges-Hunt scored 24 points and Georgia Tech earned its first Atlantic Coast Conference victory of the season by upsetting host Miami.

The Yellow Jackets shot a season-high 57 percent, well above their season average of 41 percent, in part because they repeatedly drove inside for easy baskets. They scored 34 points in the paint.

No. 24 Oklahoma 81, Texas Tech 36: Host Oklahoma allowed the fewest points ever by a Big 12 team in a conference game.

Air Force 66, San Jose State 52: Matt Mooney scored 20 points off the bench to lead Air Force. Hayden Graham added 16 points and six rebounds for the Falcons (9-11, 2-7 Mountain West Conference). Trevor Lyons had 11 points.

Navy 64, American University 54: Worth Smith scored 19 points, Brandon Venturini chipped in 17 and host Navy snapped a four-game losing skid.

Navy (8-13, 4-5 F Patriot League) shot 24-for-37 (65 percent) from the floor.

Grant, No. 8 Irish turn back Duke

By Tom Coyne

The Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — In a match of player-of-the-year candidates, Jerian Grant made more clutch plays for eighth-ranked Notre Dame than Jahill Okafor did for fourth-ranked Duke.

Grant finished with 23 points and 12 assists and in the final 67 seconds hit a jumper just as the shot clock expired, fired a pass to a wide-open Steve Vasturia for a three from the corner just as the shot clock expired then blocked a layup attempt as the Irish rallied from 10-points down to win 77-73.

"He loves the moment," Notre Dame coach Mike Brey said. "He's such a bright lights, big-stage guy. He is really clutch."

Grant sparked the winning rally when he lost control of the ball at the free-throw line as the shot clock was running down, grabbed it at the last second and hit the basket to give the Irish a 73-70 lead.

"It's a heck of a bucket," said Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski, who won his 1,000th game on Sunday. "A fortunate bucket, but a heck of a bucket."

Grant added six rebounds, three steals and two blocked shots. On the pass to set up the three-point, Grant looked as though he was holding for the last shot when he suddenly passed to Vasturia in the corner. It was the only basket Vasturia made all night.

"The best thing about him is, he's going to attack, but he's not going to attack with tunnel vision just to get to the basket," Pat Connaughton said. "Everyone on

this team knows that he's going to make the right play, the winning play, and he did that."

A year ago the struggling Irish stunned No. 7 Duke 79-77 by holding standout freshman Jabari Parker to a season-low seven points. The Irish couldn't do the same against Okafor, who, like Parker, is from Chicago, just 90 miles west of South Bend. Okafor was a point shy of a double-double at halftime and finished with 22 points and 17 rebounds.

But he was 2-for-7 from the free throw line, including 1-for-5 in the final 4:30.

"Jah had a heck of a game," Krzyzewski said. "If he hit those free throws then we'd be talking about Jah having the amazing game, not Grant. But Jah had a great game."

The win keeps Notre Dame (20-2, 8-1 Atlantic Coast Conference), which finished in 13th place in its first season in the league last year, in second-place halfway through the conference season.

Duke (17-3, 4-3) is off to its worst start in league play since opening the 1995-96 3-4 after losing their first four league games.

The Blue Devils didn't come up with enough big plays against the Irish, finishing with 13 offensive rebounds but had just nine second-chance points.

"We'll look at this as some missed opportunities," Krzyzewski said. "There were six or eight finishes right by the bucket where the ball wouldn't go in."

Zach Auguste added 14 points and six rebounds for the Irish, and Pat Connaughton had 13 points



JOE RAYMOND/AP

Notre Dame guard Jerian Grant grabs a rebound in the second half Wednesday against Duke in South Bend, Ind. The Irish won 77-73.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN/SPORTS BRIEFS



PHOTOS BY LEE JIN-MAH/AP

Andy Murray makes a backhand return to Tomas Berdych during their semifinal match at the Australian Open in Melbourne, Australia, on Thursday. Murray won 6-7 (6), 6-0, 6-3, 7-5 to reach the final.

Murray advances to final

Serena tops Keys; will face Sharapova for Aussie crown

By JOHN PYE
The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Andy Murray has reached the Australian Open final for the fourth time, beating Tomas Berdych in a tension-filled semifinal to earn one more shot at a long elusive title.

Serena Williams has five titles from five finals at Melbourne Park, and earned a chance at another one when she advanced to a championship match against Maria Sharapova, who has one Australian title from three trips to the final.

Top-ranked Serena Williams beat 19-year-old Madison Keys 7-6 (5), 6-2 in an all-American semifinal Thursday, after Sharapova beat fellow Russian Ekaterina Makarova in straight sets.

In the night match, sixth-seeded Murray beat No. 7 Berdych 6-7 (6), 6-0, 6-3, 7-5. There was obvious animosity between the players due to a coach switching from the Murray to the Berdych camp.

An aggravated Murray bristled when Berdych spoke a few words to him after the first-set tiebreaker, and yelled profanities throughout the match. TV cameras appeared to show his fiancée, Kim Sears, uttering expletives in support.

Murray has lost three finals at Melbourne Park — to Roger Federer in 2010 and Novak Djokovic in '11 and '13. He'll get a chance to end that streak on Sunday, against either Djokovic or defending champion Stan Wawrinka.

Williams has put herself into a prime position. The 18-time Grand Slam champion, who has struggled with a cold for a week, said she'd benefit from a tough workout against Keys, who pounded her with heavy groundstrokes and a big serve for the first set.

"She pushed me really hard the first set ... and I had to really dig deep mentally to get through that," Williams said. "It was a little frustrating. I had like nine or 10 match points and couldn't close it out."

Keys, playing in her first Grand Slam semifinal, saved seven match points on serve in a penultimate game that lasted more than 11 minutes. Williams kept her cool, though, wasting one match point on her serve before closing with an ace to reach her 23rd major final.

Sharapova, who beat No. 10-seeded Makarova 6-



Maria Sharapova makes a backhand return to Ekaterina Makarova during their semifinal match Thursday. Sharapova won and will meet Serena Williams in the final.

3, 6-2, has lost her last 15 matches against Williams. Her only two wins in their 18 career meetings were in 2004.

She won the 2008 Australian title, but was comprehensively outplayed in her two other trips to the final — by Williams in 2007 and by Victoria Azarenka in 2012.

"I think my confidence should be pretty high going into a final of a Grand Slam no matter who I'm facing and whether I've had a terrible record, to say the least, against someone," Sharapova said. "It doesn't matter. I got there for a reason. I belong in that spot."

The five-time major winner opened the 2015 season in confident style by winning the Brisbane International title but had a close call in the second round here, having to save match points against No. 150-ranked Russian qualifier Alexandra Panova.

Chase Elliott will replace Gordon in No. 24 next season

The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Chase Elliott will replace Jeff Gordon when the four-time NASCAR champion retires at the end of this season.

Elliott is the reigning Xfinity Series champion, and Hendrick Motorsports had to find a Sprint Cup seat for him or risk losing the 19-year-old to another organization.

Elliott will drive a second season in NASCAR's second-tier series this year with JR Motorsports. He will also make five Sprint Cup starts, debuting in March at Martinsville, in the No. 25 Chevrolet for Hendrick.

He'll be paired with Gordon's current crew chief, Alan Gustafson, next season. No sponsor was announced.

Confirmation that Elliott will replace one of NASCAR's greatest drivers came the day before Elliott's father, Bill, is to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. He had 44 career Cup wins, including the 1985 Daytona 500. Elliott was also voted NASCAR's most popular driver 16 consecutive times, but removed his name from consideration following his final win in 2002.

Gordon announced last week that his 23rd season will be his final full-time year as a driver.

Wiesberger holds one-shot lead at Dubai

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Bernd Wiesberger made seven birdies on his last 10 holes Thursday to take a one-shot lead after the first round of the Dubai Desert Classic.

The 29-year-old Austrian finished at 8-under 64. Lee Westwood and Nicolas Colseurts were among four players tied for second, along with American Peter Uihlein and Andy Sullivan.

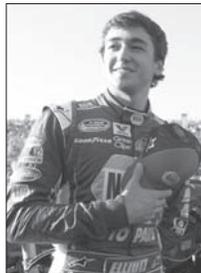
In other golf news: ■ Jessica Korda, Stacy Lewis and Azahara Munoz each shot 6-under 66 in the opening round of the LPGA Tour season opener in Ocala, Fla.

Freese, Angels reach 1-year agreement

Third baseman David Freese has avoided arbitration with the Los Angeles Angels, agreeing to a one-year contract for \$6,425,000.

The deal Wednesday was the midpoint between the \$7.6 million Freese had asked for and the \$5.25 million the Angels had offered.

In other baseball news: ■ Reliever Jenny Mejia and the New York Mets reached agreement Wednesday on a one-year contract worth \$2,595,000 and avoided salary arbitration. ■ Cuban outfielder Dian Tosoano and the Atlanta Braves



J PAT CARTER/AP

Chase Elliott will take the wheel of Jeff Gordon's No. 24 Chevrolet when the four-time NASCAR champion gives up his seat at the end of the season.

have agreed to a \$6 million, four-year contract.

The 25-year-old, a left-handed hitter, batted .356 during the 2012-13 season for Villa Clara in Cuba.

■ A person familiar with the negotiations said right-handed reliever Casey Janssen and the Washington Nationals have agreed to a one-year contract with an option for 2016.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal had not been announced.

Bode Miller makes US roster for worlds

The U.S. Ski Team announced its roster for world championships next week in Beaver Creek, Colo., and all the big names were on the squad, including Bode Miller as he tries to return from back surgery.

Lindsey Vonn made the team, of course. So did Mikaela Shiffrin, Julia Mancuso and Ted Ligety.

Miller has yet to compete in a World Cup race this season after having a herniated disc repaired in November. His race status for Beaver Creek still remains uncertain.

US soccer team falls to Chile in exhibition

The U.S. soccer team started 2015 the same way the Americans ended last year: with a loss.

Mark Gonzalez scored in the 66th and 75th minutes, rallying Chile to a 2-2 exhibition win over the U.S. on Wednesday night that sent the Americans to their first five-game winless streak since 2007.

The 27th-ranked Americans led 2-1 at halftime on goals by Brek Shea in the sixth minute and Jory Alvarado in the 31st around Roberto Gutierrez's 10th-minute equalizer at Rancagua, Chile.

SUPER BOWL

Patriots' near-perfect season just a memory

New England focused on present, not past, in return to Arizona

By HOWARD ULMAN
The Associated Press

CHANDLER, Ariz. — The road to perfection reached a dead end in the Arizona desert. Now the New England Patriots are back where a Super Bowl championship — and an unbeaten record — barely eluded them seven years ago.

Not that they dwell on their return to the place where the best season in NFL history slipped from their grasp.

"It's not where we play, it's how we play," Tom Brady said Wednesday, "and I'm glad to be here with the opportunity to do something really special."

A win Sunday night against the Seattle Seahawks would even the Patriots record in Super Bowls at University of Phoenix Stadium at 1-1. New England is seeking a championship, not closure for its 17-14 loss to the New York Giants in 2008.

"I'm sure it will be a cool story if we win,

saying we came back to the same place," kicker Stephen Gostkowski said, "but I don't think about that stuff. I'm just looking to make the first kick that they send me out for."

So when a receiver leaps for a pass at the opponent's 23-yard line, don't expect the Pats to have flashbacks to David Tyree trapping the ball against his helmet at that spot with Rodney Harrison draped over him.

That 32-yard completion with just over a minute left, after Eli Manning kept the play alive by breaking free with defensive end Richard Seymour tugging at his jersey, set up the winning 13-yard touchdown pass to Plaxico Burress.

It took Patriots players a long time to get over how close they came to a 19-0 record. Then coach Bill Belichick met with his assistants.

"One day Bill walks in," running backs coach Ivan Fears said. "He says, 'we got to

move on guys, start smiling.'"

It's a cornerstone of Belichick's philosophy. Lamenting misfortunes leads to more of them, Fears said.

Fears, offensive coordinator Josh Daniels and defensive coordinator Matt Patricia remain from the staff at the 2008 Super Bowl. Brady, Gostkowski and defensive tackle Vince Wilfork are the only players from that game still on the Patriots.

"It was a heartbreaker," Gostkowski said, but "we've already played in (and lost) another Super Bowl since then, so I don't even sweat that. I have two kids and a wife and two dogs, and I didn't have any of that seven years ago. So life has changed a lot since then."

Wilfork agrees. "This is a different team and we don't look in the past," Wilfork said. "We never look back at the games we've lost or won in the Super Bowl."



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Things didn't go so well the last time New England played in a Super Bowl at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz. The Patriots will look to avoid a repeat of 2008's 17-14 loss to the New York Giants when they face the Seattle Seahawks this Sunday.

Historic: Circus atmosphere detracts from what's at stake on field

FROM BACK PAGE

From the NFL media under-inflated backs saga to injuries for All-Pro defensive backs Sherman and Earl Thomas to Marshawn Lynch being fined yet again for the case of silence with the media, the 49th Super Bowl has taken on a circus atmosphere.

Which seems fitting given all that has gone wrong for the NFL off the field — even as pro football remains as popular as ever.

Just finding any comments about the matchup of the dynamic defense from Seattle and the potent offense from New England has been a chore. Everything else, it seems, has been in play.

Indeed, here's how Seahawks All-Pro cornerback Sherman, recalling last year, described what the week leading up to the game is like:

"To us, it was just another week in the season, obviously. You're with these guys 180 or 190 of the 365 days, so you just get to spend a special week with them. You get to know their families a little better because it's not just them there, but it's their families, their sons and daughters.

"A lot of times you don't get to meet them during these weeks, we're always at work from eight to six and everyone goes home. You get one day during training camp to meet people's family, but that's about it. So you have a good time getting to know people more."

Notice, no mention of football. But Sherman does insist the left elbow he hurt in the NFC title game was no factor:

"If I had to slay my brother, I'd be able to do it," he said jokingly.

Not much light-hearted stuff coming from New England. Not much football talk, either.

Belichick, who can equal Chuck Noll's four Super Bowl rings as a head coach, is grilled about the air pressure in a football, not about the past pressure Seattle can bring on Brady.



MATT YORK/AP

Complaints about Seahawks' running back Marshawn Lynch's reluctance to talk during media day this week is just one of the off-field issues distracting from what will be an historic Super Bowl on Sunday.

Brady, in turn, gets cross-examined about the weight of the footballs, not about the weight of trying to reach Joe Montana/Terry Bradshaw territory with a fourth Super Bowl triumph.

"Obviously I'd much rather be up here talking about the Seahawks and preparing for the Super Bowl, which we've been trying to do for the last few days," he said.

As for Lynch, while it's certain the Patriots are scheming how to slow down Beast Mode, the league is trying to figure out what to do with him on media day and beyond. Lynch was fined \$20,000 Thursday for an obscene gesture in the NFC championship win over Green Bay.

In November, he was nailed for \$50,000 for not adhering to the league media policy. Another \$50,000 from 2013 that was withheld with the expectation he would cooperate in the future also was collected because, well, Lynch didn't speak up when required to. Some folks in the NFL offices

must be wondering what else could happen to shift the focus from Patriots-Seahawks.

What the football-watching world hopefully prefers is to get back to the machinations on the 100-yard gridiron. Such as the showdown between tight end Rob Gronkowski and Seahawks safety Kam Chancellor, perhaps the only defender who can somewhat match Gronk's power and speed.

Such as how Seattle avoids the pitfalls that plagued it for much of the NFC title game, when it fell behind 16-0.

And how high-priced Patriots cornerback Darrelle Revis performs in his first Super Bowl after seven seasons of falling short (on the field if not at the bank).

There's also what some have dubbed "Pete's Revenge," recalling how Carroll was canned by the Patriots after the 1999 season and replaced by Belichick. Carroll went on to phenomenal success at Southern California even as his successor was turning New England into a power. He's displayed no animosity toward the Patriots organization — anything otherwise would have fit in with the theme of the 2014 season and the past few weeks, of course.

"It was a real challenge," said Carroll, who went 28-23 in three seasons with the Patriots. "It's a great place to be in sports: a great town, a great following, much like it is here (in Seattle). Just tremendous support and all, really heartfelt."

"That was the old days and all of the old facilities; it wasn't quite as nice as it now, I am sure. Still, the whole setup was really exciting to be around, they had such history. It didn't work out. We did some good stuff while we were there, but it didn't work out and time to move on."

Yep, maybe it's time to move on from all the tangential stuff and concentrate on what the Super Bowl is supposed to represent: football.

SUPER BOWL XLIX

New England Patriots vs. Seattle Seahawks



Regular-season + Postseason stats

OFFENSE

Total yards (avg.): 365.5	Total yards (avg.): 375.8
Passing	Passing
Rushing	Rushing
257.6	203.1
107.9	172.6

Postseason: 409.5	Postseason: 372.5
314.0	225.5
95.5	147.0

First downs: (361)	First downs: (328)
Rushing	Rushing
Passing	Passing
Penalty	Penalty
96	144
228	160
37	24

Postseason: (57)	Postseason: (36)
35	1
4	15
18	20

Yards allowed (avg.): 344.1	Yards allowed (avg.): 267.1
Passing	Passing
Rushing	Rushing
239.8	185.6
104.3	81.5

Postseason: 318.5	Postseason: 334.0
209.0	200.5
109.5	133.5

DEFENSE

Points for	Points for
29.2	24.6
19.6	15.9

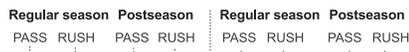
Points for	Points for
40.0	29.5
19.0	15.9

SCORING (PPG)

Points for	Points for
40.0	29.5
19.0	15.9

PLAY SELECTION (PCT.)

Regular season	Postseason	Regular season	Postseason
PASS	RUSH	PASS	RUSH
58.2	41.8	61.9	38.1
53.6	46.4	54.8	45.2



SOURCE: National Football League

SUPER BOWL

Others often outshine well-known stars

Just like last year, 'I wouldn't be surprised if somebody nobody talks about is MVP'

By ROB MAADDI
The Associated Press

PHOENIX

Almost all football fans know Tom Brady, Russell Wilson, Richard Sherman, Marshawn Lynch and Rob Gronkowski.

The New England Patriots and Seattle Seahawks wouldn't be playing in the Super Bowl on Sunday if it weren't for their superstars. But both teams got here with lesser-known players coming up big at key times.

Jermaine Kearse caught a touchdown pass in overtime in Seattle's win over Green Bay in the NFC championship game. Julian Edelman threw a TD pass in New England's division-round win over Baltimore.

There's Rob Ninkovich, Michael Bennett and several others. Often, surprise players are the stars in the Super Bowl.

Just look at last year when Seahawks linebacker Malcolm Smith was the unlikely MVP in Seattle's win over Denver. Smith returned a Peyton Manning interception for a touchdown and recovered a fumble in a 43-8 rout. Now the former seventh-round pick hardly plays on defense.

"That's the beauty of our team that anybody can have an MVP-type of day," Seahawks wide receiver Doug Baldwin said Wednesday. "That's what makes us special. I wouldn't be surprised if somebody nobody talks about is MVP."

Brady, Wilson, Lynch, Gronkowski and LeGarrette Blount have the five best odds of winning the MVP award. But Smith is listed at 100-to-1 by Bovada.

"To get to this point and to win these games, it's not about anything more than that," Smith said. "That is how we can be successful."

Ninkovich, one of New England's top pass rushers, is also at 100-to-1 odds. He had eight sacks in each of the past three seasons and will be a key factor in trying to contain Wilson.

"You can't run past him," Ninkovich said. "Those are when the big plays happen. You have to be under control, but also not just stand there and not do anything to affect him in the pocket. So you just have to be smart."

Bennett has helped solidify Seattle's defense since arriving from Tampa Bay before the 2013 season. The defensive end gets



GENE PUSKAR/AP

New York Giants receiver David Tyree, left, catches a pass while in the clutches of New England Patriots safety Rodney Harrison during the fourth quarter of Super Bowl XLII on Feb. 3, 2008. Eli Manning was the MVP, but Tyree was the star of the game because of this memorable catch on the game-winning drive.

overlooked on a unit known for the "Legion of Boom" secondary featuring Sherman, Earl Thomas and Kam Chancellor.

"I don't really worry about the atmo-

sphere of the game," Bennett said. "I think for us we treat every game exactly the same and we've been in every situation we could possibly be in."

Here's a list of some surprise stars from past Super Bowls:

Dexter Jackson

Jackson had two interceptions to help the Tampa Bay Buccaneers beat the Oakland Raiders 48-21 in the 2003 Super Bowl. Teammate Dwight Smith returned two picks for touchdowns against Rich Gannon and Oakland's top-ranked offense, but Jackson got the MVP award. Jackson signed a \$14 million, five-year deal with Arizona in free agency, but was released after one season and returned to the Buccaneers.

Larry Brown

Brown became the first cornerback to win Super Bowl MVP when his two interceptions helped the Dallas Cowboys beat the Pittsburgh Steelers 27-17 in 1996. Brown leveraged that performance into a \$12 million, five-year contract with the Raiders in free agency, but lasted only two seasons in Oakland and started just one game.

David Tyree

Tyree only had 54 career catches, but he'll forever be remembered for the helmet grab that helped the New York Giants beat the Patriots 17-14 in the 2008 Super Bowl, snapping New England's perfect season. Giants quarterback Eli Manning was the MVP of the game.

Timmy Smith

After running for only 126 yards as a rookie in 1987, Smith set a Super Bowl rushing record with 204 yards and scored two TDs to help the Washington Redskins beat Denver 42-10. Quarterback Doug Williams was the MVP of the game. Smith played only two more seasons in the NFL and ran for another 476 yards total.

Rod Martin

Martin had more interceptions (three) against Ron Jaworski in Oakland's 27-10 win over Philadelphia in the 1981 Super Bowl than he had in his first four seasons in the NFL. Martin eventually went to two Pro Bowls and was a productive player for eight more seasons. Quarterback Jim Plunkett was MVP of the win over the Eagles.



MARK HUMPHREY/AP

New England Patriots defensive end Rob Ninkovich doesn't draw a large crowd during media day on Tuesday for Super Bowl XLIX in Phoenix. Ninkovich is one of the Patriots' top pass rushers with eight sacks and likely will be a key in trying to contain Seattle quarterback Russell Wilson on Sunday.

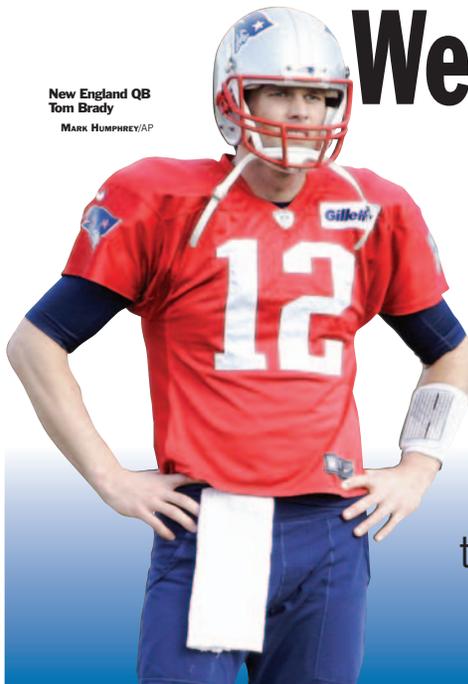


DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

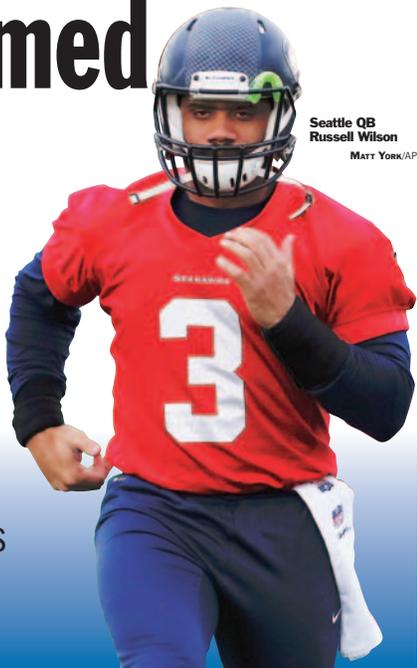
Seattle Seahawks defensive end Michael Bennett answers a question at a news conference for Super Bowl XLIX in Phoenix. Bennett has helped anchor a defensive line that doesn't get as much attention as the "Legion of Boom" secondary. Bennett will be more of a factor if the Patriots try to run the ball.

SUPER BOWL

Well-armed



New England QB
Tom Brady
MARK HUMPHREY/AP



Seattle QB
Russell Wilson
MATT YORK/AP

Pats' Brady playing for fourth title; Seahawks' Wilson seeking second in just three seasons

By HOWARD FENDRICH
The Associated Press

Tom Brady began winning Super Bowls when Russell Wilson was still a teenager, tuning in to see the big game on TV.

"Of course I remember watching Brady," Wilson said on Tuesday. "He won some incredible games. Incredible comebacks. Incredible throws. Incredible plays. Hopefully he doesn't make too many incredible ones this year."

When Wilson leads the Seattle Seahawks into the Super Bowl against Brady and the New England Patriots on Sunday, both quarterbacks know the outcome will affect the way each is viewed for quite a while.

Wilson can become the eighth starting quarterback to win consecutive Super Bowls, and the first since Brady did it 10 years ago.

According to STATS, Wilson also would be the first to claim two in his first three years in the league (as it is, he's the first starting quarterback to make it to two Super Bowls that quickly).

Wilson, meanwhile, won titles in 2002, 2004, and 2005. But since then, he is 0-2 in Super Bowls, with a pair of losses to the New York Giants in 2008 and 2012.

"Look, any time you lose the last game of the year, it's tough," said Brady, who sounded stuffed up and coughed a couple of times. "The last two times we've been in this game, we haven't been able to close it out. We're hoping this is

Their time to shine on the big stage

Russell Wilson hopes to lead the Seahawks to the first Super Bowl repeat since Tom Brady's Patriots won back-to-back Lombardi trophies in 2004.



SOURCE: STATS LLC

AP

our day."

A victory over the Seahawks would allow the 37-year-old Brady to match his idol as a kid, Joe Montana, and Terry Bradshaw with four championships. But a defeat would drop Brady's career mark on Super Sunday to 3-3.

"You never get over any of those," Brady said about the defeats. "As time goes on, you gain perspective, and you still had some great years. ... It would be great for this team to try to leave a great legacy."

When he won his first NFL championship in 2002, with a 20-17 victory over the St. Louis Rams, Brady was in his first year as a starter and second year in the league.

Initially a backup after being drafted in the sixth round, he took over from injured quarterback Drew Bledsoe — and the rest is history.

After the usual Media Day fare concerning his favorite music (Jay-Z got a shout-out) and his hair (but no marriage proposals, as happened in the past), Brady got around to taking questions about his place in the game.

He knows full well that Super Bowl success is a major part of how quarterbacks' careers are defined. And Brady said he recalls the feeling of hoisting the Lombardi Trophy three times in a four-year span a decade ago.

"Those things happened so fast back then. I didn't even understand what was happening,"

Brady said. "It's not like I didn't appreciate those experiences. I certainly did. But ... we've had two tough ones."

Wilson, 26, has yet to play an NFL season that didn't include at least one playoff victory for his team.

He goes about things a different way than Brady on the field, far more skilled as a ball carrier and on-the-move improviser. Wilson can sling the football, too, though, and put it right where he wants it, as evidenced by his 35-yard touchdown throw in overtime to win the NFC Championship against the Green Bay Packers.

Before a late comeback, Seattle trailed by 16 points. Wilson had a passer rating of zero at halftime and he finished the game with four interceptions.

But that did not concern him on Tuesday. The only thing that did was the final score.

"I want to be considered a winner," said Wilson, sporting a thick beard. "That's ultimately the goal in terms of playing quarterback: Win, win, win."

Asked which quarterbacks were his favorites while growing up, Wilson mentioned Brady and Peyton Manning, calling them "two guys that I've looked up to since I was a little kid."

In last year's Super Bowl, Seattle overwhelmed Manning's Denver Broncos 43-8, part of Wilson's 10-0 record in games against quarterbacks who have won a title.

That could become 11-0 on Sunday.

By the numbers

10

Number of wins Wilson has in a perfect stretch against Super Bowl-winning QBs (3-0 vs. Aaron Rodgers; 2-0 vs. Eli and Peyton Manning; 2-0 vs. Drew Brees; 1-0 vs. Brady).

7

Number of postseason games Brady's had with 3 or more TD passes, second most in NFL history. He trails only Joe Montana (9).

1

Number of points the Seahawks beat the Patriots by in their last meeting (24-23), when Wilson threw 2 fourth-quarter TDs.

SOURCE: NFL.COM

SPORTS



Kyrie's got it

Irving leads Cavaliers with 55 in James' absence » **Page 26**



MAX FAULKNER, FOX; WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM/TNS

American History XLIX

Legacies on the line in Super Bowl

By BARRY WILNER
The Associated Press

A PHOENIX historic Super Bowl is before us.

On Sunday, Seattle goes for a second straight title, seeking to be the first team to repeat since the Patriots a decade ago. A victory, particularly a convincing one, would stamp the Seahawks as one of the great teams of the Super Bowl era.

Meanwhile, New England's coach and

quarterback chase a record-tying fourth Super Bowl ring.

Yet, as has been the custom this season, major distractions have taken focus away from the field.

As much as Tom Brady, Bill Belichick, Pete Carroll and Richard Sherman might want the spotlight to shine only on the game itself — and the potential achievements at hand — much of the buildup to the kickoff has been about anything but.

SEE HISTORIC ON PAGE 29



AP photos

Murray, Serena advance to finals at Australian Open » **Page 28**

Grant's heroics lift No. 8 Notre Dame over fourth-ranked Duke » **Page 27**

