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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Congress eyes Guard bonus woes

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Support was building on Capitol Hill on Thursday for a new law that could absolve some Army National Guard troops from repaying re-enlistment bonuses doled out during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The top Republican and Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee said they hope to permanently protect troops and veterans from the National Guard's controversial effort to collect the bonuses by passing legislation in the coming weeks as part of the annual defense budget.

A group of more than 100 House members — mostly Democrats — also sent a letter to the chamber's leadership asking that they move quickly to pass a law giving troops some relief.

After days of public outcry, the Pentagon on Wednesday temporarily halted the collection of the bonus payments of \$15,000 or more and some education benefits from National Guard troops in California. Nearly 10,000 soldiers and veterans there could be affected.

However, the collections could resume in January when the DOD completes a review. The issue also affects soldiers in other states.

"The servicemembers and families who received bonuses in good faith deserve to know they will be made whole, that the problem will be solved, and that those responsible will held accountable," Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, Armed Services chairman, and Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., the panel's ranking Democrat, said in a joint statement.

10 female soldiers graduate from infantry officer course

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Ten women who were commissioned Army officers in the spring graduated from the initial infantry training course Wednesday, becoming the Army's first female infantry lieutenants.

The women were among 166 soldiers to complete the Infantry Officer Basic Leadership Course at Fort Benning in Georgia, a 17-week class that provides new officers the basic skills to lead a rifle platoon into combat, said Army Lt. Col. Matthew W. Weber, the commander of the unit that oversees the course. Officers are commissioned through ROTC, Officer Candidate School or the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

The infantry officer course is a "critical step" toward leading a rifle platoon, but the soldiers who graduated the Army's first gender-integrated infantry class Wednesday will not join combat units for nearly a year, Weber said. They will attend additional courses to prepare them to serve in the traditionally all-male infantry. Those classes include the famously grueling Ranger School, the Airborne School, the Stryker Leaders Course and the Mechanized Leaders Course, Weber said.

Eventually, they'll become platoon leaders at Fort Hood in Texas or Fort Bragg in North Carolina.

"This, the training of an infantry lieutenant, is a process until they step into a rifle platoon," Weber said. "This is but the very first step in the process."

The Army did not identify the graduates by name, and the graduation ceremony was not open to reporters.

The class began with 12 female officers. It was not clear Thursday whether the two who did not graduate would be given the opportunity to try again. An Army official said he could not comment on individual students.

In December, Defense Secretary Ash Carter ordered all military jobs, including those in special operations, open to women, clearing the way for female servicemembers to serve in front-line combat roles.

Interest among women to serve in those positions — primarily in the infantry and armor fields — has been limited, Army officials have

said, but Lt. Gen. James C. McConville, the Army's deputy chief of staff for personnel, said he expects interest to rise as more women enter those jobs.

The female officers who graduated Wednesday join one other woman as Army infantry officers.

In April, the Army approved Capt. Kristen Griest to transfer from military police into the infantry branch. Griest and Army Capt. Shaye Haver became the first female soldiers to graduate Ranger School in August 2015. One other female soldier, Army Maj. Lisa Jaster, has completed Ranger School. To date, 29 women have attempted the course.

Griest remains in infantry training, and she will join the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N.C., in November. Haver also has been approved to transfer from aviation into the infantry, but she is awaiting official orders to attend training, said Brig. Gen. Peter Jones, the commandant of the Army's infantry school at Fort Benning.

Jones said the new female lieutenants — just like the women who graduated Ranger School — faced the same challenges as their male classmates. The standards were the same as those for the men who served before them.

"They are going to be standing in front of their formation, and they are going to be judged based on their leadership skills, not on whether they are male or female," he said.

The Army will likely soon have more female lieutenants serving in combat arms jobs. There are 10 recently commissioned officers attending Armor Officer Basic Leadership Course, which is also at Fort Benning. Their class will graduate later this fall.

Including women in front-line combat positions will strengthen the Army because it provides a larger talent pool to draw from, said Maj. Gen. Eric J. Wesley, commander of the Fort Benning's Maneuver Center of Excellence.

"This whole issue has driven us to ensure that we have the right standards aligned to each occupational specialty in the Army," Wesley said. "We have created a gender-neutral, standards-based training environment, where it no longer becomes a question of male or female. ... It makes us better."

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Philippines has much to lose in shift away from US

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

America would suffer a setback in its rebalance to the Pacific if new Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte moves ahead with his promised “separation” from the United States.

But the Philippines also has much to lose if, as Duterte has suggested, his country turns instead to China — even if that growing superpower already has promised the new president billions of dollars in loans.

While Duterte has backtracked a little and called the moves toward China — and possibly Russia — strictly economic, his anti-American rhetoric hasn’t wavered.

A shift in alliances could put at risk the Philippines’ role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the high ground in an island dispute with China, military modernization and the ongoing fight against separatist and jihadi groups in the south.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei all have unresolved disputes in the South China Sea with China, which has claimed nearly all of it. Under Duterte’s predecessor, the Philippines had led the charge against China’s sweeping claims and aggressive buildup by bringing the case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands, in 2013. This summer, the tribunal ruled that China’s claims were largely invalid.

But Duterte, who assumed office in June, has expressed a desire to set aside the tribunal’s decision and to negotiate with China over the islands and reefs.

“Sooner rather than later, Duterte will be held accountable if he trades his country’s territory and sovereignty for deals worth \$13.5 billion,” Mohan Malik, an Asia expert with the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, said of the package that China offered during Duterte’s first overseas visit.

Even as Duterte nudges the Philippines into China’s orbit, he said, Vietnam is stepping up military cooperation with the United States and other “China-wary” countries.

Duterte recently assumed the year-long chair of the 10-nation ASEAN. While ASEAN countries, such as Cambodia and Laos, that generally side with China likely will greet Duterte as a fellow traveler, his decision to push away from America could be viewed as a betrayal by other claimants

in the sea dispute, such as Vietnam and Malaysia.

“He can’t afford to also alienate Vietnam and Singapore and other countries in the region that have a stake in the dispute,” said Virginia Bacay Watson, a Philippines expert at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. “They can’t lose this legal high ground they’ve achieved against the Chinese.”

Some high-level Philippine officials have said Duterte would face impeachment if he surrenders sovereignty to China over the disputed Scarborough Shoal. Such a confrontation would leave the country in turmoil.

The armed forces of the Philippines would endure a major setback if Duterte’s separation is realized. The military, long underfunded and undertrained, has clearly benefited from a renewed U.S. presence and materiel, even if Duterte calls the ships that the country has been given “hand-me-downs” and “crumbs.”

“This is a military that has very, very strong ties to the U.S., from its military training and exercises to its education and the types of weapons it has,” said Patricio Abinales, a professor with the Asian Studies Program at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. Abinales has authored several books about Philippine politics and is a native of the southern island of Mindanao, where Duterte grew up.

“I think the military will close ranks and just say, ‘No, we will keep our ties to the U.S.’ These ties have been strong for the last 20 years,” Abinales said.

The Philippines had hosted large U.S. military bases for generations until the government closed them in 1991 in a wave of nationalist fervor. Military-to-military ties were not entirely severed and were bolstered after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the U.S. as the two countries found common cause in countering jihadi terrorism.

In 2001, the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group carried out a mass kidnapping on the Philippine island of Palawan. An American hostage was beheaded while the crisis dragged on for a year with a U.S. missionary killed in the military assault to rescue the remaining captives.

Bombings, abductions for ransom and other attacks were commonplace in Mindanao and other cities in the sprawling archipelago.

In 2002, the U.S. — fresh from its invasion of Afghanistan to root out al-Qaida and Taliban extremists — opened what it called

Duterte eyes drills with Japan, not US

Associated Press

TOKYO — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte left Japan on Thursday without meeting Emperor Akihito, as their scheduled meeting had to be canceled because of the death of the emperor’s uncle.

Before ending his three-day visit, Duterte proposed joint military exercises with Japan, while reiterating that he will not conduct them with Americans.

Duterte made the proposal during his visit to a coast guard unit to observe an exercise from one of the patrol vessels Japan pledged to provide the Philippines to upgrade Manila’s maritime security capabilities amid South China Sea disputes with Beijing.

The president told reporters in an unscheduled interview that he discussed a possibility of the joint exercises during talks with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Wednesday, according to a statement released by the Philippine presidential palace. Duterte also said that allowing American military to stay in his country would be “difficult.”

a second front in the war on terrorism by dispatching special forces to help the Philippines battle al-Qaida-linked jihadis in Mindanao, with as many as 600 U.S. troops there in 2010. The U.S. primarily helped with training and surveillance, and the terrorist groups steadily lost ground.

A Pentagon spokesman said last month that the number of U.S. special operations troops in the Philippines now ranges from 50 to 100, depending on rotational exercises. There are also routinely 300 to 500 U.S. troops in the country to support regular bilateral training and other activities, he said.

Abinales said he is skeptical that the officers atop the Philippine armed forces would readily shift away from the U.S. alliance.

“The U.S. military is a comforting and reassuring presence,” Maj. Gen. Conrado Parra, Jr., vice commander of the Philippine Air Force, said during the fifth annual U.S.-Philippines Airman-to-Airman talks in Hawaii in late August.

Marine Corps cites pilot error in deadly Hawaii helo crash

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Pilot error and other factors caused a nighttime collision of two helicopters that killed 12 Marines off the coast of Hawaii earlier this year, the Marine Corps said.

The disclosure on Tuesday stemmed from an investigation that also found low aircraft readiness that led to inadequate pilot proficiency, Marine Corps Forces Pacific spokesman Lt. Col. Curtis Hill said in a statement. The squadron's lack of focus on basic aviation practices also contributed to the January crash, he said.

The helicopters collided off Oahu's north shore. Hours later, rescue crews spotted debris 2½ miles off Oahu and a five-day search followed.

Investigators believe poor light also made it difficult for the crews to gauge the distance between the two aircraft.

The III Marine Expeditionary Force, which included the helicopters, conducted the investigation. The Marine Corps plans to post the investigation report on its website.

The CH-53E helicopters were part of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 463 based at a Marine base in Kaneohe Bay.

In February, the Marine Corps said the commander of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing had fired the squadron's commander on Jan. 11, just days before the crash.

NATO ships, planes to join migrant patrols at sea

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

NATO warships and aircraft will soon be patrolling the central Mediterranean Sea as part of a new agreement with the European Union, which is attempting to stem the flow of illegal migrants into Europe, the military alliance announced Thursday.

The decision, adopted by NATO defense ministers at the end of two days of talks in Brussels, amounts to an expansion of an alliance effort so far focused exclusively on containing migrant flows across the Aegean Sea into Greece.

"NATO/EU cooperation is now closer than it has ever been before," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said during a closing news conference.

Within two weeks, NATO ships and planes will be in place in the central Mediterranean as part of its new Operation Sea Guardian to assist the EU in curbing illegal migration by boat from

North Africa.

Greece and Turkey announced they will provide ships and maritime patrol aircraft to the mission. Spain also will provide air support, and more allies are considering joining the efforts, NATO said.

For the EU, unrest in northern Africa and Syria has brought in waves of migrants, straining the social and political fabric of much of the Continent and threatening to undermine the bloc's political unity.

NATO also agreed it would extend its effort in the Aegean, which was launched last year in connection with concerns about high numbers of migrants moving from Turkey to Greece.

"We have seen a substantial reduction in the number of illegal crossings," said Stoltenberg.

Nonetheless, NATO wants to keep ships in the Aegean as a platform for boosting cooperation between allies and the EU, he said.

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US network of drone bases expands to N. Africa

The Washington Post

The Pentagon has secretly expanded its global network of drone bases to North Africa, deploying unmanned aircraft and U.S. military personnel to a facility in Tunisia to conduct spy missions in neighboring Libya.

The Air Force Reaper drones began flying out of the Tunisian base in late June and have played a key role in an extended U.S. air offensive against an Islamic State stronghold in neighboring Libya.

The Obama administration pressed for access to the Tunisian base as part of a security strategy for the broader Middle East that calls for placing drones and small special operations teams at a number of facilities within striking distance of militants who could pose a threat to the West.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss an operation that has not been acknowledged, said the drones being flown out of Tunisia were currently unarmed and were being used principally to collect intelligence on Islamic State group targets in Sirte, Libya, where the

U.S. has conducted more than 300 air strikes since August.

U.S. officials said they sought access to the air base in Tunisia to close a critical "blind spot" for U.S. and Western intelligence services in North Africa, which has become the Islamic State's largest base of operations outside Syria and Iraq. The region also is home to al-Qaida-linked fighters.

Obama administration officials say they have tried to shore up Tunisia's fledgling democracy and to position the country as a key counterterrorism partner in the region. Though the drones operating out of Tunisia currently conduct only surveillance missions, U.S. officials said they could be armed in the future if Tunisia gives the United States permission. The Tunisian Embassy in Washington declined to comment.

The U.S. military has other drone bases on the African continent, from Niger to Djibouti. But officials said they were too far from populous areas on the Libyan coast to be useful in day-to-day counterterrorism operations there. The longer drones have

to travel to reach their destinations, the less time they have to "loiter" over their targets.

For lethal strikes in Libya, the U.S. military has relied on manned U.S. aircraft based in Europe and armed drones flown out of Naval Air Station Sigonella on the Italian island of Sicily.

Sigonella is relatively close to Sirte, but flights from the base are routinely canceled because of cloud cover over the Mediterranean and other weather-related issues, officials said.

U.S. logistical concerns about using Sigonella and other bases in Europe for operations in North Africa prompted the Pentagon's push for a facility on Tunisian soil.

The Obama administration has kept its negotiations over access to the base secret for more than a year because of concerns that Tunisia's young democracy, worried about being closely associated with an outside military power, would pull out of the talks or that militants would step up attacks in the North African country.

Early voting good for Clinton in key states

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The millions of votes that have been cast already in the U.S. presidential election point to an advantage for Hillary Clinton in critical battleground states, as well as signs of strength in traditionally Republican territory.

The strong early-voting turnout by those likely to support Clinton — registered Democrats, minorities and young people, among others — could leave Donald Trump with virtually no path to the 270 electoral votes needed for victory.

Clinton is showing strength in Florida and North Carolina, both must-win states for Trump, as well as the battleground states of Nevada, Colorado and Arizona. There are even favorable signs for Clinton in Republican-leaning Utah and Texas.

“It’s going to be a very tall order for Trump to win,” said Michael McDonald, a University of Florida professor who specializes in election turnout. Other analysts also point to a strong finish for Clinton based on the early vote.

Early voting, via mail or in-person, is underway in 37 states. More than 13.4 million votes have been cast, far higher than the rate in 2012, according to Associated Press data. In all, more than 46 million people — or as much as 40 percent of the electorate — are expected to vote before Election Day, Nov. 8. Here’s a look at the latest trends:

Positive signs in NC, Fla.

The Clinton campaign describes North Carolina and Florida as “checkmate” states. Trump probably can’t win if he loses either.

After trailing in mail ballots, Democrats surged ahead of Republicans in North Carolina ballots cast after the start of in-person early voting last week. Democrats currently lead in ballots submitted, 46 percent to 29 percent. In-person voting is off to a slower start for both Democrats and Republicans

Poll: Clinton lead fueled by increased backer enthusiasm

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Hillary Clinton appears on the cusp of a potentially commanding victory over Donald Trump, fueled by solid Democratic turnout in early voting, massive operational advantages and increasing enthusiasm among her supporters.

An Associated Press-GfK poll released Wednesday finds that Clinton has grabbed significant advantages over her Republican rival. Among them: consolidating the support of her party and even winning some Republicans.

Overall, the poll shows Clinton leading Trump nationally by 14 percentage points among likely voters, 51-37. That is the largest national lead for Clinton among recent surveys.

The AP-GfK Poll of 1,546 adults, including 1,212 likely voters, was conducted online Oct. 20-24, using a sample drawn from GfK’s probability-based KnowledgePanel, designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.75 percentage points, plus or minus 3.1 percentage points for likely voters.

compared with 2012, when Republican Mitt Romney narrowly won the state. But many Democratic-leaning counties reduced the number of polling stations in the first week, a likely factor in the decline. Several counties are opening more stations this week.

In Florida, more than 2 million voters have already returned ballots. In-person voting began Monday, and Democrats have pulled virtually even with Republicans, at 41 percent each. That’s a much faster rate of catch-up than in 2012 and 2008, when Barack Obama won the state.

This year’s numbers are troubling for Republicans. “If current early vote trends hold, it’s a real possibility that Clinton can sweep a majority of swing states including Florida,” said Scott Tranter, co-founder of the Republican data analytics firm Optimus.

Latinos, young people buoy Democrats in West

Once Republican states, Nevada, Arizona and Colorado are in play for Democrats. All are crucial for Trump.

Overall ballots in Nevada are down but the Democratic lead widened after the start of in-person voting last week. Democrats lead in returned ballots, 46 percent to 35 percent. Ballots from older white voters declined significantly while those from Hispanics and Asian-Americans rose.

Nearly 70 percent of all Nevada ballots were cast early in 2012; Obama won the state by 6 percentage points.

Early voting is surging in Arizona, normally a Republican state but one that Clinton has targeted. More than 616,000 ballots have been cast and Democrats are about even with Republicans, 37 percent to 38 percent. Another 25 percent were independent or unknown. At this point in 2012, Republicans led by more than 7 percentage points. Ballots rose in Arizona, especially among younger adults and Latinos.

In Colorado, where early voting has been by mail, Democrats led 40 percent to 34 percent among the 416,000 ballots returned. In 2012, Democrats trailed Republicans at this point by 10 percentage points. Since then, registered Democrats have surpassed Republicans in the state.

Officials in quake-ridden central Italy assess damage

Associated Press

VISSO, Italy — Officials in central Italy began early Thursday to assess the damage caused by a pair of strong earthquakes in the same region of central Italy hit by a deadly quake in August as an appeal went out for temporary housing adequate for the cold mountain temperatures.

Thousands of people spent the night in their cars following the pair of quakes that struck late in the evening, sending residents into the streets in pouring rain, too late for authorities to come up with

adequate shelter. A series of small shocks overnight, including two registering magnitudes above 4 before dawn, further unsettled residents.

The morning after the quakes, there remained no reports of serious injuries or signs of people trapped in rubble. The head of Italy’s civil protection agency, Fabrizio Curcio, said it appeared that the situation “is not as catastrophic” as it could have been. A 73-year-old man died of a heart attack, possibly brought on by the quakes, local authorities told the ANSA news agency.

Mayors of towns scattered in the mountain region spanning the Umbria and Marche regions say many more homes were rendered uninhabitable, on top of those damaged in the August quake, while historic structures that survived previous quakes had succumbed this time. Camerino Mayor Gianluca Pasqui said the town’s historic bell tower had collapsed, but emphasized that reconstruction work after a magnitude-6.1 quake in 1997 appeared to have contributed to the absence of serious injury.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Truck hauling coffee veers into river

CO GRAND JUNCTION — A tractor-trailer carrying coffee veered off Interstate 70 into the Colorado River, injuring the driver and leaving boxes of coffee floating in the waterway.

The Grand Junction Daily Sentinel reported the crash occurred Sunday just west of Grand Junction.

Colorado State Trooper Tim Sutherland said the driver was taken to a hospital. His name and the extent of his injuries weren't immediately released.

Bigger shrimp being caught after Matthew

SC CHARLESTON — Hurricane Matthew flooded roads and homes and tore branches from trees, but there has been one upside to the storm: bigger shrimp.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources biologist Jeff Brunson told The Post and Courier of Charleston that in some places along the coast, larger shrimp have moved from estuaries to offshore waters where they're being caught by commercial shrimpers.

He said the storm lowered the salt levels of water in the estuaries and high tides from the storm may have also pushed shrimp seaward.

Dogs being used to sniff out fecal pollution

NJ FAIR HAVEN — Some specially trained dogs are helping humans curb themselves.

A company that has trained dogs to recognize the smell of human fecal bacteria has been sniffing out sources of water

pollution nationwide. The dogs have discovered broken sewer pipes, leaking septic tanks and illegal sewage discharges.

The dogs give an instant yes-or-no indication as to whether a particular location is contaminated with human fecal bacteria. That's much faster than lab testing.

Otisfield, Maine-based Environmental Canine Services uses dogs rescued from shelters and specially trained to detect human waste in the same way other dogs are trained to sniff out drugs or explosives.

No parole for man who threw victim from plane

CA SAN LUIS OBISPO — A state panel has denied parole for a California man convicted of murdering his childhood friend for money then throwing his body out of an airplane into the Pacific Ocean.

It was the fourth parole bid for Lawrence Cowell, who is serving 25 years to life for killing Scott Campbell. Orange County prosecutor Matt Murphy, who argued against release, said Cowell still poses a danger to the community.

Cowell was convicted in 1989 of murder during a possible drug-related robbery. Authorities say he took Campbell up in a Cessna and had an accomplice kill him. The men then battered his face to draw sharks and threw the body out near Catalina Island.

The accomplice, Donald Dimascio, died in prison.

Principal beaten after asking music be lowered

NY NEW YORK — A principal of a New York City public high school who was beaten by a student

after asking him to turn down the music in his headphones is recovering.

Matthew Tossman addressed a letter to his students at Manhattan Early College School for Advertising on Tuesday thanking them for their support. He said he'll be back as soon as possible.

Tossman had asked an 18-year-old student on the lower Manhattan campus to turn down his music-blasting headphones.

A Department of Education spokesman said that, according to police Tossman was attempting to pick up the headphones from the ground when he was punched and beaten.

The student, identified as Luis Penzo, was arraigned on assault charges. His lawyer said he was acting out because his mother died last year.

Old gravestones returned to cemetery

RI NEWPORT — Centuries-old gravestones missing from a Colonial-era cemetery in Rhode Island have been returned after turning up elsewhere, including one found in a Pennsylvania woman's yard.

The three gravestones were reset in the Common Burying Ground in Newport.

One stone that dates to 1690 was for a 1-year-old child. Lew Keen, of the Newport Historic Cemetery Advisory Commission, said the 12-inch-by-24-inch stone was found in August by Stephanie Pallas, of Upper Darby, Pa.

The others were from 1835 for a Newport woman and her children. Those were found in a Newport yard in the 1980s and stowed in a basement until the homeowner alerted the commission in the spring.

Restaurant reopens after wall broken to free man

PA PITTSBURGH — A restaurant near the University of Pittsburgh has reopened two months after one of its walls had to be broken through to reach a student who fell into the narrow gap between the restaurant and another building.

Qdoba Mexican Grill owner Chad Brooks said the eatery offered free "Knock Out the Wall" tacos and even posted a picture of the gaping hole hanging on the restaurant wall during Monday's reopening.

Rescue crews broke through the wall Aug. 23 after Grant Birdsong, 22, became stuck. Police say he was trying to jump over the gap separating the buildings to impress a girl, but fell and became wedged between the buildings.

Hunter credited with finding girl lost in field

MN RAYMOND — A pheasant hunter is credited with finding a child with autism after she went missing in central Minnesota for about three hours.

The Kandiyohi County Sheriff's Office said the child's mother called authorities after her 9-year-old girl went missing from her home in Raymond.

WCCO radio reported that several local agencies searched for the girl in the cornfields near her home, and two local pilots searched from the air.

Pheasant hunter Daniel Kiecher reported hearing the girl yelling for help, and she was found in a field north of where the search had been underway.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Arrieta delivers as Cubs even Series

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Jake Arrieta made a brief run at a no-hitter and ended another 71-year pause between celebrations for the Chicago Cubs and their faithful fans.

Not only are they back in the World Series, they've won there again.

One more drought quenched, one more to go.

Arrieta carried a no-hit bid into the sixth inning, Kyle Schwarber drove in two runs and the Cubs brushed off a shutout to even the Series with their first Fall Classic win in more than seven decades, 5-1 over the Cleveland Indians in Game 2 on Wednesday night.

Arrieta, who pitched a no-hitter this season, briefly invoked Don Larsen's name by flirting with one deep in October before the Indians touched him for two hits and a run. However, the right-hander helped give Chicago just what it needed — a split at Progressive Field — before the Cubbies return to their Wrigley Field den for the next three games starting Friday night.

"It's always crazy good," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said when asked how he expected things to be on the corner of Clark and Addison for Game 3. "But I'd have to imagine a little bit more than that, especially coming back at 1-1. I think the folks will be jacked up about the win tonight.

"It's the finest venue there is in professional sports and maybe in all of sports."

The Cubs hadn't won in the Series since beating Detroit 8-7 in 1945 to force a decisive Game 7, and after their latest win, hundreds of Chicago fans gathered in the pouring rain in the rows behind their first-base dugout, where they danced and sang. A few waved the familiar white and blue "W" flags.

They hope to do it three more times.

The big-swinging Schwarber, who made it back for Chicago's long-awaited Series return after missing six months with an injured left knee, hit an RBI single in the third off Cleveland's Trevor Bauer and had another in the Cubs' three-run fifth — highlighted by Ben Zobrist's run-scoring triple.

In Game 1, Schwarber doubled and walked.

"No, it's not that easy, first off. Baseball's a crazy game," he said.

Even the presence of star LeBron James and the NBA champion Cavaliers, sporting their new rings, couldn't stop the Indians from losing for the first time in six home games this postseason.

And Cleveland manager Terry Francona's magical touch in October finally fizzled as he dropped to 9-1 in Series games.

"We gave up nine hits, eight walks, two errors, and we only gave up five runs," Francona said. "For us to win, we generally need to play a clean game, and we didn't do that."

With rain in the forecast, Major League Baseball moved the first pitch up an hour in hopes of avoiding delays or a postponement.

It turned out to be a good call as the game went on without a hitch and ended after more than four hours as light rain was beginning to fall.

Arrieta and the Cubs provided the only storm.

The bearded 30-year-old coasted through five innings without allowing a hit, and his no-hit bid was the longest in a Series game since Jerry Koosman of the New York Mets tossed six no-hit innings in 1969.

For a brief period, Arrieta looked as if

he might challenge Larsen's gem — a perfect game — in 1956 before Indians second baseman Jason Kipnis, a die-hard Cubs fan as a kid, doubled with one out in the sixth.

Arrieta has two career no-hitters, in fact, including the only one in the majors this year.

"I knew I hadn't given up a hit all the way to the sixth," Arrieta said. "That's really not the focus in a game like this. Whether they get a hit or not really doesn't affect the way you continue to approach that lineup, especially with a five-run lead."

Kipnis was impressed.

"We didn't get much going," he said. "You have to tip your hat to Arrieta. He was awesome."

Cubs lefty Mike Montgomery replaced Arrieta and worked two scoreless innings before Aroldis Chapman came in and unleashed his 103 mph heat while getting the last four outs in his Series debut.

The teams will have an off day before the series resumes with Game 3 at Wrigley, which will host its first Series game since 1945, when tavern owner Billy Sianis was asked to leave with his pet goat, Murphy, and a curse was born.

Josh Tomlin will start for the Indians, who will lose the designated hitter in the NL ballpark, against Kyle Hendricks.

Schwarber might also wind up on the bench after two days as the DH. Maddon loves the way he's swinging but isn't sure he's ready to play in the outfield.

"That's something I'm waiting to hear from our guys, from our medical side, because obviously he looks good," he said. "He looks good at the plate. Running the bases he looks pretty good so far."

And the Cubs finally do, too, as they head home.

Chicago's offense comes alive behind Rizzo, Zobrist

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Nothing scares these Chicago Cubs. Not the stakes, the weight of history, a tough night at the plate or the prospect of going down two games to none in the franchise's first World Series in 71 years.

Their at-bats were good during a Game 1 shutout loss, the Cubs insisted. A breakout by the balanced lineup that propelled them to a National League championship and the best record in the majors was just a swing away.

Three swings, as it turned out.

Kris Bryant provided the first, a sharp single to center field off Cleveland Indians starter Trevor Bauer two batters into Game 2 on Wednesday night that gave the Chicago dugout and blue-clad Cubs fans a much-needed jolt.

The second came seven pitches later, a double to right from Anthony Rizzo that sent Bryant racing home with the Cubs' first World Series run since Harry Truman was president.

The third was in the fifth, a triple to right by Ben Zobrist that handed Jake Arrieta all the cushion he needed in a 5-1 vic-

tory that tied the Fall Classic at one game apiece heading back to Chicago on Friday.

"Our goal today, it felt like a must-win for us," Bryant said. "We didn't want to go home down 0-2."

And so the Cubs didn't, thanks in large part to three players who represent the various stages of Chicago's renaissance under President of Baseball Operations Theo Epstein.

Rizzo, the team's longest-tenured position player, endured 101 losses during his first season with the Cubs in 2012, a summer-long bout of misery

that led to Chicago taking Bryant with the second pick in the 2013 amateur draft.

Bryant's arrival in the majors last spring helped propel the Cubs to 97 wins and a spot in the NLCS, leading Zobrist — fresh off a championship with the Royals in 2015 — to sign with Chicago last winter.

There the three were in the heart of the order Wednesday, scoring four of their team's five runs to move the Cubs within three victories of the franchise's first World Series title in 108 years.

Thunder top 76ers, spoil Embiid's debut

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Philadelphia 76ers told a national anthem singer and a middle finger-flipping fan to hit the road.

Russell Westbrook then sent the Sixers packing with a loss and showed life without Kevin Durant might not be so bad for Oklahoma City.

Westbrook stared down a double bird and spoiled Joel Embiid's debut with 32 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Thunder to a 103-97 victory on Wednesday night.

Westbrook's surge down the stretch capped a peculiar night in Philly.

The 76ers had a tripleheader of image faux pas on opening night: The scheduled anthem singer says she was booted because she wanted to wear a "We Matter" jersey; a fan was kicked out for extending two middle fingers at Westbrook; and half-time singer Desiigner was booed off the court for a shirtless performance where he dropped his pants past his rear.

"Crazy, right?" Westbrook said. "I turned a new leaf though because that cost me \$25,000 last time. I guess the fan, he'll be all right. I guess they can say whatever they want to the players and do what they want."

Westbrook was fined by the league for

"directing inappropriate language toward a fan" in a playoff game last year. He took the high road toward the Sixers fan and stuck around to score the decisive points on opening night for the Thunder in their first game since Durant left in free agency and signed with the Golden State Warriors.

Embiid nearly matched Westbrook down the stretch and showed a needed spark for the Sixers.

Embiid scored 20 points in 22 minutes in his first game since the Sixers made him the No. 3 overall pick in the 2014 draft. Embiid had sat out the last two seasons with foot injuries. He received a roaring ovation when he was introduced and fans went wild on every shot.

Fans chanted "Trust The Process" when Embiid was at the free-throw line. The catchphrase became a rallying cry under former team president Sam Hinkie.

"Having the fans chant that, it was special and I loved it," Embiid said.

Westbrook and Embiid swapped jumpers that tied the game 97-all. Westbrook sank two free throws with 35 seconds left for a 99-97 lead in front of a raucous crowd. Enes Kanter silenced them for good and sent them toward the exits with a putback

layup after the Sixers missed a shot on the other end.

Yes, it was another loss for the Sixers, but one that came with a 7-foot-2 asterisk. Embiid's performance largely stole the show from the opening-night shenanigans that otherwise tarnished the night.

Sixers fans who had been waiting to cheer for Embiid for more than two years went wild every time he touched the ball. A group of fans held a sign that read, "In Embiid We Trust."

The Sixers just might prove they made the right decision to trust in Embiid.

The sellout crowd of 20,487 fans erupted when the "7-foot-2 center from Kansas, Joooooel, Embiiiiid" was introduced during game introductions. They stood and gasped when Embiid attempted his first shot of the game — a missed 3-pointer.

He had a nifty spin in the post and a bucket for a quick 10-2 lead.

The Sixers, yes, the 10-72 Sixers, at last had a dose of good news.

"I love this city and I just want to appreciate the moment," Embiid said.

Turner lifts Pacers over Mavericks in OT

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Myles Turner walked onto center stage Wednesday night — and looked as comfortable in his starring role.

The Indiana Pacers second-year center scored 30 points, tied his career high with 16 rebounds, blocked four shots and made a three-pointer in overtime that started the decisive 8-0 run in his first opening night start.

If Turner keeps this up, the Pacers could be celebrating a lot more than just a 130-121 season-opening victory over the Dallas Mavericks.

"I was talking to some of my friends about and they were saying 'Take it easy on Dallas tonight,'" Turner said. "It was cool to go out like that against my hometown team. After the final buzzer sounded, everything hit me. It was just like, 'Wow, I just did that.'"

Before the game, new coach Nate McMillan told reporters

he expected NBA teams to defend Turner differently this season and said his budding 20-year-old star would have to adapt. He looked just fine against the Mavs.

In a game that was supposed to be all about the Pacers' revamped roster and new up-tempo style, Turner stole the show by making 13 of 19 shots, coming up with big play after big play and overshadowing All-Stars Paul George and Dirk Nowitzki.

George added 25 points, including another three with 55 seconds left to seal Indiana's fifth season-opening win in six years.

"I loved the fight our guys showed in that overtime," McMillan said.

Nuggets 107, Pelicans 102: Jusuf Nurkic scored 23 points, Will Barton added 22, and the Nuggets survived a dominant performance by Anthony Davis to defeat the host Pelicans.

Davis had 50 points, 16 re-

bounds, seven steals, five assists and four blocks. His production helped New Orleans trim a deficit as large as 14 late in the second quarter down to two points in the waning minutes. He simply didn't have enough help.

Lakers 120, Rockets 114: Jordan Clarkson scored 12 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter, and the host Lakers won coach Luke Walton's debut, holding off the Rockets.

Hornets 107, Bucks 96: Michael Kidd-Gilchrist had 23 points and 14 rebounds in his return from a shoulder injury, Roy Hibbert added 15 points, and the Hornets opened their season with a victory over the host Bucks.

Heat 108, Magic 96: Miami center Hassan White had 18 points, 14 rebounds and four blocked shots and point guard Goran Dragic added 16 points as the Heat cruised to a season-opening victory over the host Magic.

Celtics 122, Nets 117: Isaiah Thomas had 25 points and nine assists, Jae Crowder added 21 points and Al Horford pitched in 11 in his Boston debut as the host Celtics survived a late scare.

Raptors 109, Pistons 91: DeMar DeRozan scored 40 points and Jonas Valanciunas added a career-high 32 as the host Raptors opened their season with a victory over the Pistons.

Grizzlies 102, Timberwolves 98: Mike Conley scored 24 points, Marc Gasol added 18 and the host Grizzlies overcame a slow start for a victory over the Timberwolves.

Kings 113, Suns 94: DeMarcus Cousins scored 24 points, Rudy Gay added 22 and the Kings beat the host Suns in the season opener for both teams.

The Kings won an opener for the first time in three years and gave coach Dave Joerger a victory in his Sacramento debut.

Canadiens top Isles for 5th straight win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Shea Weber scored a power-play goal with 2:57 remaining to lift the Montreal Canadiens to their fifth straight victory, 3-2 over the New York Islanders on Wednesday night.

With the Islanders' Nick Leddy off for slashing, Weber fired a shot from the point. It was just the second power-play goal in 23 opportunities given up by New York's league-leading penalty-killing unit.

Paul Byron and Phillip Danault also scored to help Montreal improve to 6-0-1 and remain the only team in the NHL without a regulation loss.

Al Montoya, who played for the Islanders from 2010-12, stopped 26 shots in his first start since Oct. 18. The Canadiens beat New York for the seventh straight time.

John Tavares and Dennis Seidenberg scored for New York.

Rangers 5, Bruins 2: Brandon Pirri scored twice to help host New York beat Boston.

Rick Nash, Kevin Hayes and Jimmy Vesey also scored for New York, and Henrik Lundqvist stopped 27 shots. The Rangers won their third straight game, overcoming a 2-0 deficit to improve to 5-2-0.

David Pastrnak and Austin Czarina scored for Boston.

Zane McIntyre made 26 saves in his first NHL start. He was called up prior to Boston's 5-0 home loss to Minnesota on Tuesday night to back up Malcolm Subban due to injuries to Tuukka Risk and Anton Khudobin.

Oilers 4, Capitals 1: Benoit Pouliot scored twice, Cam Talbot made 34 saves and Edmonton beat Washington to stretch its winning streak to four games.

Patrick Maroon and Milan Lucic also

scored for the Oilers. They have won four of five games at Rogers Place, their new downtown arena, and are 6-1-0 overall.

Alex Ovechkin scored for the Capitals, and Braden Holtby made 25 saves.

Ducks 6, Predators 1: Jakob Silfverberg scored a short-handed goal and another on the power play to lead host Anaheim.

Nick Ritchie, Corey Perry, Andrew Cogliano and Ryan Kesler also scored for Anaheim, and John Gibson stopped 28 shots, as the Ducks earned a point in their fourth consecutive game and for the fifth time in their last six outings.

Silfverberg had his ninth career multi-goal game, leading a five-goal burst in second period.

Ritchie put the Ducks ahead 2:57 into the first period with his second goal of the season, putting a backhand between Pekka Rinne's pads.

Raiders' pass-rusher Smith seeks reinstatement

Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — Oakland Raiders pass rusher Aldon Smith has applied to the NFL to be reinstated from his one-year suspension.

A person with knowledge of the application tells The Associated Press that Smith has asked Commissioner Roger Goodell to be allowed back on the field once his ban for violating the league's substance-abuse policy ends on Nov. 17.

Smith was suspended for one year last November for violating the substance-abuse policy. That stemmed from an arrest in August on charges of drunken driving, hit and run and vandalism, which led to his release by the San Francisco 49ers.

Smith signed with Oakland last September and played nine games before being suspended for a second time by the NFL.

Galaxy, Toronto advance in playoffs

CARSON, Calif. — Emmanuel Boateng scored two goals in eight minutes, Landon Donovan had an assist in his first start since 2014 and the Los

Angeles Galaxy beat Real Salt Lake 3-1 on Wednesday night in the knockout round of the MLS playoffs.

Los Angeles (13-6-16) will play the Colorado Rapids in the first game of the two-leg Western Conference semifinals Sunday. Salt Lake (12-13-10) lost its final six road games.

In Toronto, Sebastian Giovinco had a goal and two assists to and Toronto FC beat Philadelphia 3-1 for the first MLS playoff victory in franchise history.

Toronto will host New York City FC on Sunday in Game 1 of the two-leg Eastern Conference semifinal.

British government condemns unruly fans

LONDON — The British government has condemned the latest disorder at the Olympic Stadium and says it hopes it doesn't spark a return to the "dark days" when fan violence blighted soccer in England.

Seats, coins and bottles were hurled as rival fans clashed in London on Wednesday in the closing minutes of West Ham's match against Chelsea.

Stewards and police battled

to separate fans in scenes sports minister Tracey Crouch called "desperately sad." Seven people were arrested.

Crouch says "football and the authorities have worked extremely hard to tackle this type of behavior over the last 30 years ... no one wants to see a return to the dark days of the late '70s and '80s."

Memphis suspends players in shooting

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Memphis coach Mike Norvell has suspended wide receiver Jae'Lon Oglesby and cornerback Kam Prewitt indefinitely while police investigate an incident that left Oglesby's car riddled with bullet holes.

Norvell issued the statement Wednesday noting the incident Tuesday night is being investigated by police and the university also is reviewing an undisclosed incident under the student code of conduct. Norvell said he consulted with athletic director Tom Bowen in suspending the players from the Tigers (5-2), and Norvell will not comment further.

Simmons: 'I'll come back when I'm ready'

PHILADELPHIA — No. 1 overall draft pick Ben Simmons said there is no timetable for his return from a broken bone in his right foot.

Simmons attended the Philadelphia 76ers' season opener on Wednesday in street clothes and said he's taking his time in the rehabilitation process.

Simmons said he has not discussed the possibility of sitting out the season. "I'll come back when I'm ready," he said

Manfred, Indians to discuss mascot

CLEVELAND — Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred says he plans to meet with Indians owner Paul Dolan following the World Series to discuss the team's continued use of the controversial Chief Wahoo logo.

The smiling, red-faced symbol has stirred strong opinions for years. Manfred said he understands "that particular logo is offensive to some people, and all of us at Major League Baseball understand why."