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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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New plight for La. flood victims: Find a new home

Associated Press

DENHAM SPRINGS, La. — Keisha Taylor, a 37-year-old mother of four, has spent three nights in two different shelters since her family fled the flooding at their Baton Rouge apartment complex. And she doesn't know how many more nights they will be sleeping on cots inside the downtown arena where hundreds sought shelter.

Taylor probably could stay with relatives in White Castle, a town about 30 miles west of Louisiana's capital city, but three of her kids are enrolled in Baton Rouge schools that could reopen next week.

"This is where I live. I need to be home," she said.

Taylor is one of thousands of people across southern Louisiana displaced by catastrophic flooding and now struggling with where to live. With an estimated 40,000 homes damaged by deadly flooding, Louisiana could be looking at its biggest housing crunch since the miserable, bumbling aftermath of Hurricane Katrina a decade ago.

People now are staying in shelters, bunking with friends or relatives, or sleeping in trailers on their front lawns. Others unable or unwilling to leave their homes are living amid mud and the ever-present risk of mold.

Many victims will need an extended place to stay while they rebuild. Others do not have the means to repair their homes.

"I got nowhere else to go," said Thomas Lee, 56, who ekes out a living as a drywall hanger. The drywall in his rented house is puckering, but Thomas still plans to keep living there, sleeping on an air mattress.

No charges after report inmates made faulty GI combat helmets

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Federal inmates made thousands of defective combat helmets for the U.S. military at a prison facility that was rife with problems, including the use of degraded armor and the submission of preselected helmets for inspection to make sure they would be approved, according to a newly released investigative report.

A Justice Department Inspector General summary report released Wednesday said faulty helmets were made by Federal Prison Industries (FPI), for the Army and the Marine Corps. The U.S. government-owned company operates under the trade name UNICOR and served as a subcontractor for ArmorSource, an Ohio company that was one of four defense firms to win an estimated \$30 million contract in 2006 for the Army's then-new Advanced Combat Helmet.

Separately, ArmorSource

won multimillion-dollar contracts for the Marine Corps Lightweight Helmet, which has a slightly different design.

The Army disclosed in 2010 that it was recalling 44,000 helmets, including some in use in Afghanistan, citing an open federal investigation of ArmorSource. Army officials said at the time that the recall was issued after the Justice Department informed them of evidence that some of the helmets were produced using unauthorized materials and practices that could reduce protection.

The Justice Department announced in March that it reached a \$3 million false-claims settlement against ArmorSource, and noted that FPI was a subcontractor.

The new report states that FPI made helmets that had unauthorized or degraded materials, expired paint and other deformities. For example, fragments of Kevlar and dust were used to fill parts of helmets.

The inspector general also cites the Defense Contract Management Agency, which was supposed to provide oversight for the military. Inspectors did not conduct reviews, lacked training and submitted false reports in which they said shipments of helmets had been tested, according to the IG report.

"At least in one instance an inspector certified the lots as being inspected over a fax machine," the report said.

A Defense Department official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss specifics of the case, said the Pentagon is reviewing the findings for future action.

Federal prosecutors decided not to press charges, either at ArmorSource or at the FPI plant in Texas, the report said. Peter Carr, a Justice Department spokesman, said that as a matter of policy, the department does not explain why charges haven't been filed.

Calif. fire brings destruction, uncertainty

Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — A ferocious wildfire had swallowed up many homes as it spread across more than 49 square miles of mountain and desert east of Los Angeles. Exactly how many, however, and to whom they belonged, remained uncertain.

Firefighters were faced with the difficult task of tallying that damage while still battling the huge, unruly blaze amid hot, dry and gusty weather that was expected through Thursday evening.

That left evacuees in a cruel limbo, forced to spend another night wondering whether anything they owned was still intact.

They included Shawn Brady, who had been told by a neighbor that flames had raged down their street. But he was waiting for official word.

"What I've been told is that flames are currently ripping through my house," said Brady, a dockworker who lives on the outskirts of the evacuated town of Wrightwood with his mother, sister and a dog.

"I'm trying to remain opti-

mistic," Brady said as he sat outside a shelter for evacuees in Fontana. "It's the not knowing that's the worst."

San Bernardino County fire officials could only confirm that dozens of structures had burned, and that big numbers are likely.

"There will be a lot of families that come home to nothing," county Fire Chief Mark Hartwig said Wednesday after flying over a fire scene he described as "devastating."

"It hit hard. It hit fast. It hit with an intensity that we hadn't seen before," he said.

Fort Polk plans to move wild horses

Associated Press

FORT POLK, La. — The Army plans to remove hundreds of wild horses from Fort Polk.

An estimated 700 to 750 horses roam training lands on and around Fort Polk. The fate of the horses has been the subject of debate since the Army proposed removing them about a year ago. Army officials say the animals represent a safety hazard, while advocates have argued they should be left alone.

The Town Talk reported the Army said it will catch and corral 10-30 horses at a time. The horses will be offered to animal welfare groups such as the Humane Society for inclusion in their adoption program. If animal welfare groups do not take the horses, the Army will offer them to any citizen that will take them, and if that fails, the horses will be transported to a livestock auction for sale.

The time frame for catching and removing each group of horses is about 30 days. Concurrently, Fort Polk will actively search for a landowner to take the horses en masse, and will also attempt to find another government agency to remove and accept responsibility for them. The Army is developing lists of animal welfare groups and citizens interested in taking the horses.

“The alternative that was selected offers the best opportunity to find a new home for every horse and protects American soldiers from a catastrophic incident while training at Fort Polk,” said Brig. Gen. Gary Brito, commanding general of Fort Polk and the Joint Readiness Training Center. “This plan gives all interested parties the opportunity to be involved in helping the Army solve the problems it faces.”

Chinese admiral visits Syria

Associated Press

BEIJING — A top Chinese military officer visited Syria this week in a show of support for President Bashar Assad’s embattled regime, official media reported Thursday, underscoring Beijing’s backing of fellow authoritarian governments and concerns about the spread of religious militancy.

Rear Adm. Guan Youfei met on Sunday with Syrian Defense Minister Fahd Jassem al-Frej in Damascus, the Xinhua News Agency said. He also met the following day with a Russian general who is coordinating his country’s military assistance to Assad’s fight against armed opposition groups, the agency said.

Xinhua said Guan expressed China’s willingness to boost

military cooperation with Syria, while the newspaper Global Times cited the Chinese Defense Ministry as saying both sides agreed to expand personnel training and humanitarian aid via the Chinese military.

The Chinese military “is willing to strengthen cooperation with its Syrian counterparts,” it quoted the ministry as saying.

Guan is head of the Office for International Military Cooperation under the Central Military Commission that oversees China’s 2.3 million-member armed forces.

While China has followed Russia’s approach in backing Assad, it hasn’t directly contributed forces in keeping with its policy of opposing outside intervention in domestic conflicts. During the early months

of the 5-year-old civil war, China joined Russia in blocking motions at the United Nations calling for Assad to work for a resolution of the conflict.

Despite that, Chinese military advisers are on the ground in Syria helping train soldiers in the use of weapons purchased from China, including sniper rifles, rocket launchers and machine guns, reported the Global Times, which is published by the ruling Communist Party’s flagship newspaper People’s Daily.

Guan’s visit illustrates Beijing’s enduring recognition of the Syrian government and insistence that the warring parties reach a resolution among themselves, said Wang Lian of the School of International Studies at Peking University.

AF to change fire foam over contamination

Associated Press

The U.S. Air Force is changing the foam it uses to fight fires because of concerns the substance has contaminated groundwater and spread to drinking water at some military sites.

The Air Force said it awarded a \$6.2 million contract on Monday to replace the firefighting foam with an “environmentally responsible foam” to reduce the risk of possible contamination of soil and groundwater.

The current foam is used where potentially catastrophic fuel fires can occur, such as in a plane crash, because it can rapidly extinguish the flames. It contains perfluorooctane sulfonate and perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOS and PFOA, which are both considered emerging contaminants by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and have been linked to cancer and other illnesses.

The EPA issued stricter guidelines for human exposure to these chemicals in May, after years of pressure from public health experts and advocacy

groups. The agency said the new limits were prompted by recent scientific studies linking the chemicals to testicular and kidney cancers, as well as birth defects and liver damage.

The chemicals have been detected in water at some current and former bases where the military has conducted fire or crash training. In Colorado, health officials said Wednesday that it’s highly likely that trace amounts of toxic chemicals found in three drinking water systems came from firefighting foam used at nearby Peterson Air Force Base, where firefighters used the foam in training exercises.

The new formulation does not have PFOS and contains little or no PFOA.

Mark Kinkade, spokesman for the Air Force Civil Engineer Center, said the Air Force has completed preliminary assessments at all of its sites and is now sampling groundwater and soil. He said the Air Force still has “a lot of work to do” but at the same time it’s working to protect human health and the environment by changing

foams and taking other steps to ensure that foam is used safely.

Air Force fire chief James Podolske Jr. said the service must continue to use foam in its defense operations to protect people, weapon systems and infrastructure, but it will “do so in a more environmentally responsible way that also makes our operations safer for the public.”

The Air Force will no longer use the foam in training exercises, and the service plans to replace all foam in fire vehicles and at fire stations with the new formula by the end of this year. It also is retrofitting its aircraft rescue and firefighting vehicles with equipment that lets firefighters conduct vehicle operational checks and required annual foam tests without discharging the foam into the environment.

The Defense Department said earlier this year it’s examining hundreds of sites nationwide for potential contamination from the foam. It wasn’t immediately clear Thursday whether the Navy and Army are changing foams, too.

Eaton's grand slam lifts ChiSox

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The Chicago White Sox have had little success against the Cleveland Indians this season.

Adam Eaton put an end to that in stunning fashion.

Eaton's ninth-inning grand slam off closer Cody Allen capped a five-run rally and lifted the White Sox to a 10-7 win Wednesday night.

"That was a lot of fun," Eaton said.

Chicago was 2-8 against Cleveland, including seven straight losses going into the game.

"You don't give up, that's what it shows you," manager Robin Ventura said. "These guys keep playing all the way through every game because they know they can do it. Good things happen when you fight through."

The Indians went ahead 7-5 in the fifth inning and the White Sox had been held scoreless since the fourth.

Allen (2-5) retired the first hitter before Chicago loaded the bases on infield singles by Todd Frazier and J.B. Shuck, and a walk to Tim Anderson.

Dioner Navarro's bloop hit down the left field line scored a run before Eaton homered to right on an 0-2 pitch for his first career grand slam.

Driving the ball into the seats was the last thing on Eaton's mind, especially when he fell behind in the count.

"I was just looking to make contact," he said with a laugh. "I'm obviously happy about the result."

Jacob Turner (1-1) pitched the eighth and David Robertson retired the final two hitters with two on in the ninth for his 30th save.

Chicago's comeback prevented Cleveland from increasing its division lead to seven games

over second-place Detroit, which lost to Kansas City.

Anderson hit a two-run homer and Frazier had a two-run double for the White Sox.

Cleveland starter Carlos Carrasco struck out 11 in 6²/₃ innings.

Mariners 4, Angels 3: Ketel Marte drove in the tiebreaking run with a sacrifice fly, Leonys Martin scored from second base on a bunt, and Seattle held on for a victory over host Los Angeles.

Robinson Cano had three hits, Kyle Seager and Chris Iannetta each had two hits and scored a run as the Mariners won for the 10th time in 12 games to move two games behind Baltimore for the second AL wild card.

Dodgers 7, Phillies 2: Adrian Gonzalez hit two home runs and had five RBIs and visiting Los Angeles extended its NL West lead.

Pirates 6, Giants 5: Andrew McCutchen hit a two-run homer, Matt Joyce had a key two-run single and Pittsburgh overcame a four-run deficit against host San Francisco to complete a three-game sweep.

Cubs 6, Brewers 1: Jorge Soler hit a three-run homer during a five-run first inning, Jon Lester pitched into the seventh and Chicago beat visiting Milwaukee for its 17th victory 20 games.

Diamondbacks 13, Mets 5: Yasmany Tomas and Rickie Weeks Jr. each homered twice and drove in a combined 11 runs, leading Arizona past host New York.

Cardinals 8, Astros 2: Carlos Martinez took a no-hitter into the sixth inning, and Jeremy Hazelbaker and Brandon Moss homered in visiting St. Louis' victory over Houston.

Blue Jays 7, Yankees 4: J.A. Happ won his 11th consecutive decision to become the first 17-

game winner, Melvin Upton Jr. hit a three-run homer and Toronto beat host New York.

Darwin Barney had an early two-run double, and Russell Martin added three hits, including an RBI single off CC Sabathia.

Red Sox 8, Orioles 1 (6): David Price allowed four hits before a rainstorm stopped play for good after six innings, and visiting Boston beat Baltimore for its sixth straight victory.

Jackie Bradley Jr. homered and drove in four runs for the Red Sox. They swept the two-game series to climb past the Orioles into second place in the AL East.

Royals 4, Tigers 1: Eric Hosmer hit a two-run homer in the ninth inning to lift Kansas City past host Detroit for a three-game sweep.

Rangers 6, Athletics 2: Yu Darvish struck out nine and Texas beat visiting Oakland, giving the right-hander his first victory in his last 11 starts against the Athletics.

Rockies 12, Nationals 10: D.J. LeMahieu kept tormenting Washington with two hits, Gerardo Parra drove in four runs and host Colorado beat Stephen Strasburg.

Reds 3, Marlins 2: Brandon Phillips drove in two runs with his second double of the game and host Cincinnati rallied to beat Miami.

Rays 2, Padres 0: Chris Archer struck out nine in 7¹/₃ innings, Brad Miller homered again and host Tampa Bay beat San Diego to complete a three-game sweep.

Twins 10, Braves 3: Kyle Gibson threw his first nine-inning complete game and visiting Minnesota overcame two hits from Dansby Swanson in his big league debut to beat Atlanta.

Ex-NFL star gets 18-year sentence

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Former NFL star Darren Sharper has been sentenced to 18 years in prison in a case where he was accused of drugging and raping as many as 16 women in four states.

Judge Jane Triche Milazzo sentenced Sharper on Thursday. He had pleaded guilty or no-contest to charges arising from the allegations of drugging and raping women in federal court in New Orleans, and state courts in Louisiana, Arizona, California and Nevada.

Prosecutors suggested a 9-year prison term for Sharper under a multi-jurisdictional plea deal, but Milazzo rejected it as too lenient. The sentence was 15 months short of the maximum. He was also fined \$20,000.

Sharper pleaded guilty in federal court to three counts of distributing drugs with rape as the aim. He or his friend Brandon Licciardi, a former sheriff's deputy in neighboring St. Bernard Parish, put anti-anxiety drugs or sedatives into women's drinks so they could rape them, according to a 15-page statement signed as part of that plea.

Milazzo has scheduled sentencing Oct. 13 for Licciardi and a second New Orleans codefendant, Erik Nunez.

Sharper was named All-Pro six times and chosen for the Pro Bowl five times during a career that included stints with the Green Bay Packers and Minnesota Vikings. He played in two Super Bowls, one with the Packers as a rookie and one with New Orleans when they won in 2010.



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US women sweep medals in 100 hurdles

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — Tianna Bartoletta kicked off her country's whirlwind run of medals on the night. So, by all rights, she should get to name it.

Fittingly, the newly crowned Olympic long jump champion went with "Awesome Hour."

In a span of about 60 minutes Wednesday night, U.S. athletes hauled in a bevy of medals: Bartoletta and Brittney Reese went 1-2 in the long jump, Tori Bowie captured a bronze in the 200 and Brianna Rollins, Nia Ali and Kristi Castlin swept the medals in the 100-meter hurdles — a feat that's never been accomplished in that event.

A banner evening, for sure. The nation entered the night with 13 medals and left the track with a total of 19 — five gold, seven silver, seven bronze.

"It was an awesome hour,"

Bartoletta said.

She started things off by unseating Reese, the defending Olympic champion, in the long jump. Moments later, Bowie won her second medal in Rio by taking bronze in the 200 meters. Not long after that, the hurdlers made history. This was the seventh medals sweep by the U.S. track team in the Olympics and the 23rd for U.S. women in the history of the Summer Games.

And yes, they realized what their fellow Americans were up to. Ali watched Bowie, her suitemate in Rio, bring home another medal as the hurdler waited to take the track.

That fired Ali up. And then her hurdles teammates did the same thing.

"They smiled at me and were like, 'It's time. Do your part,'" Ali said. "I need to go out there and do my part. For Team USA, I knew it would be a great

thing."

How about this for an early birthday present: About an hour after the race Rollins turned 25.

"I tried to feed off all the positive energy from Team USA," Rollins said. "We were able to come out here and fulfill our dreams. It was an amazing opportunity. I was trying to enjoy each and every moment. I'm just happy to share the moment with Kristi and Nia."

Decathlete Ashton Eaton is a candidate to add to that haul. The defending champion finished Day 1 with a solid 121-point lead over Kai Kazmirek of Germany.

And to think, the evening got off on the wrong foot when Justin Gatlin surprisingly went out in the semifinals of the 200.

There went a good shot at an Olympic medal. There went another showdown with Usain Bolt.

An ankle injury hampered the 34-year-old Gatlin, who won a silver medal Sunday in the 100.

"For me, it has been an honor to be able to come out here," Gatlin said. "At the end of the day, seeing all of these young guys and young ladies out here doing a great job, it's an honor to be able to be a part of the team and run for my country."

Earlier in the day, Evan Jager earned silver in the 3,000-meter steeplechase — America's first medal in that event since 1984. A hint of things to come.

"Every single time I saw someone on the (medal) stand, I tried not to get emotional," Castlin said. "I was like, 'I could get on the stand.' It always feels good to see your teammates doing well."

"We're from all different states and universities. It feels good to come out and do a great job."

American men's basketball team hammers Argentina

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — The nail-biters ended for the U.S. Olympic men's basketball team.

So did a golden era of international basketball.

Emphatically stopping a stretch of three straight close games, the Americans advanced to the semifinals by sprinting past Manu Ginobili and Argentina, 105-78 on Wednesday night.

In front of a chanting, flag-waving crowd of Argentines who came to throw a raucous farewell party for their Golden Generation, the Americans delivered their most complete performance in Rio.

"What a remarkable run by Argentina and so we knew we had to match that energy tonight. I thought we did," U.S. coach Mike Krzyzewski said.

Turning a slow start into an early ending with a 27-2 run in the first half, the Americans put away one old rival and set up a

meeting with another. They will play Spain on Friday in a rematch of the last two gold-medal games. Australia meets Serbia in the other semifinal.

Kevin Durant scored 27 points for the Americans, who had played three straight close games for the first time under Krzyzewski, setting off a round of questions at home and in Rio de Janeiro about what was wrong with them.

The answer might be nothing. At least there wasn't against Argentina.

"We wanted to come out and our whole thing was dominating," forward Carmelo Anthony said.

The Americans eliminated Argentina for the third straight Olympics, this time ending not only a tournament run for the Argentines but also a couple of careers.

Ginobili, 39, and longtime 36-year-old teammate Andres Nocioni retired from international competition after the game, 12 years after winning

gold in Athens.

"We had a chance to grow up together and do some good things, win some games together. It was fun. It's a lot of years," said Luis Scola, who is also 36 but plans to keep playing. "We formed part of something unique we did for our country and it's going to be there. Sometimes we're not going to win, like today, sometimes we won but we fought together for many years."

Ginobili scored 14 points in his final game in Argentina's blue and white, tearing up after receiving applause from his fans and warm wishes from his opponents.

"They congratulated me and I'm very proud of their words," Ginobili said. "They were very kind, very respectful and when legends of the game showed their respect, it has an extra value."

The Americans have won 23 straight in the Olympics since Argentina beat them in the 2004 semifinals, and this

was how they usually do it: too much firepower, too much defense, and way too much talent.

It took a little while to get going, as Argentina opened a 10-point lead. The Argentines made nine of their first 10 shots inside the arc and led 19-9 when Nocioni drilled a 3-pointer. But the Americans finished the first period with a 16-2 run, getting the final six points from DeMarcus Cousins, to take a 25-21 edge to the second.

Three-point plays by Cousins and Jimmy Butler around Durant's 3-pointer in an 11-0 start to the second made it 36-21 before Facundo Campazzo stopped the onslaught with a three-point play.

Cousins, the normal starting center playing as a reserve, finished with 15 points.

Spain beat France 92-67 earlier Wednesday, its fourth straight victory after two losses to open the Olympics. The U.S. edged Spain 118-107 in the 2008 final and 107-100 four years ago in London.