

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Bombing near US troops; jets scramble

By COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — U.S. special operators were near Hassakeh on Thursday when Syrian bombers attacked the Kurdish-controlled city, a Pentagon spokesman said.

The United States issued a stern warning to President Bashar Assad's Syrian government after two of its SU-24 bombers conducted airstrikes on the city of Hassakeh, which is controlled by Kurdish People's Protection Unit forces, or YPG, said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman.

The United States, which is allied with the YPG in the fight against the Islamic State group,

scrambled aircraft into the area to protect U.S.-coalition forces, he said.

"We will ensure [American and coalition troops'] safety, and the Syrian regime would be well advised not to do things that put them at risk," Davis said Friday. "This is counterproductive and undermines the claims by Russia and the regime that they're serious about combating terrorism in Syria."

None of the U.S. or coalition troops were injured or otherwise impacted Thursday by the Syrian airstrikes, Davis said.

The United States has the "inherent right" to protect its troops, Davis said. He added the coalition would take "whatever

action is necessary to protect coalition forces on the ground."

There are about 300 U.S. special operators and support troops on the ground in Syria, where they are serving as trainers and advisers for the local partner forces fighting the Islamic State group. The local partners, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, are largely composed of YPG fighters and the Syrian Arab Coalition.

Davis declined to say how close American troops were to the areas bombed. He said it is a Pentagon policy not to provide the specific location of U.S. troops in Syria.

Tensions have escalated between the YPG and pro-Assad forces around Hassakeh in re-

cent days after clashes initially broke out Tuesday.

At least 16 people have been killed in the fighting, including six women and children, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based activist organization. It was not clear Friday whether any people were killed in the airstrikes.

The YPG fighters have been among the most effective the United States has worked with in its fight against the Islamic State group.

Though there are no Islamic State fighters around Hassakeh, the YPG trains in the area, preparing for future operations against the terrorist group.

## Divided city unites in face of flooding

*Associated Press*

BATON ROUGE, La. — It's been a long, hot summer of pain and grief in Louisiana, its capital city engulfed by a string of tragedies that began with the killing of a black man at the hands of police. Then there followed the retaliatory slayings of three officers and now days of deadly floods.

Baton Rouge, the unassuming neighbor to hard-partying New Orleans of Mardi Gras fame, is enduring its latest turmoil with the catastrophic flooding. But stricken residents of the Baton Rouge area say they've seen people pull together — white and black, officers and civilians — in ways that give optimism as the high water begins to recede.

Anger. Sorrow. Vengeful glee. Guilt. Terrence Carter has experienced it all during Baton Rouge's summer of tribulation. On Thursday, as he walked through the murky water on the floor of his home, Carter said he was experiencing, of all things, hope.

The tragedies began July 7 with the shooting death of a black man at the hands of two white police officers, followed by the July 17 ambush killings of three officers by a black man, and now, the rains that inun-

dated thousands of homes and businesses. There've been more than a dozen deaths.

"A couple of weeks ago, it seems like everybody was pulling apart. Now it's no black and white thing. Everybody's just got to help everybody to come out of this," Carter said.

Carter, who is black, knew Alton Sterling, the black man killed outside a Baton Rouge convenience store after a struggle on the pavement.

Angered by Sterling's death, the soft-spoken Carter protested at police headquarters. He confesses he was initially happy when he first heard about the deadly assault on the officers by an attacker who was then fatally shot.

He later felt guilty about the officers' deaths: "Their families lost them. They had kids who'll be growing up without a father."

Then came the rains, which sent 4 feet of water into his home. The stench is overpowering and the task ahead daunting.

One sure sign of how the city has unified has been the "Cajun Navy," a corps of regular citizens who have gone out on boats to rescue people stranded in their houses.

## Big gains against California wildfire

*Associated Press*

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — Firefighters made major gains Thursday against the wildfire that broke out Tuesday in the mountains and desert 60 miles east of Los Angeles.

Driven by wind, the fire chewed through tall grasses and drought-parched shrubs, torching an unknown number of homes and vehicles.

The blaze, covering nearly 58 square miles, was 26 percent contained by early Friday, and plans were in the works to begin demobilizing some of the nearly 1,600 firefighters by afternoon.

"Crews really buttoned up some areas. But the possibility is still there for explosive growth," fire spokesman Brad Pitassi said.

That concern was especially focused on an area southeast of the mountain town of Wrightwood where old-growth brush and trees haven't burned in 70 years, fire behavior analyst Brendan Ripley said.

Elsewhere, the fire's growth was limited because the land had become a moonscape.

# Obama panned for Iran payment

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration is facing a storm of Republican criticism after acknowledging that a \$400 million cash payment to Iran seven months ago was contingent on the release of a group of American prisoners.

Thursday's explanation was the first time the U.S. had so clearly linked the two events, which critics have painted as a hostage-ransom arrangement.

State Department spokesman John Kirby has said the negotiations to return the Iranian money from a 1970s account to buy U.S. military equipment were conducted separately from talks to free four U.S. citizens in Iran. But he recently noted the U.S. withheld the delivery of the cash as leverage until Iran permitted the Americans to leave the country.

Kirby said Friday on MS-

NBC's "Morning Joe" program that the U.S. offers "no apologies."

"First of all, this was Iran's money, OK? It was money that they were going to get back anyway," he said. "The second thing that was going on here ... was that there was a team working to get our American citizens back. That was a separate track. And it's true that with the nuclear deal done these two tracks were kind of converging and coming together, and we took full advantage of that. We make no apologies for that."

Kirby added that "there isn't a lot of trust with Iran, so it would have been foolish and imprudent, in our view, to go ahead and settle the cash payment ... when we didn't have our Americans back."

The hostage release and cash transfer occurred Jan. 17, fueling suspicions from Republican

lawmakers and accusations from GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump of a quid pro quo that undermined America's long-standing opposition to ransom payments. Several members of Congress immediately pounced on Thursday's shift.

"If it quacks like a duck, it's a duck. If a cash payment is contingent on a hostage release, it's a ransom. The truth matters and the president owes the American people an explanation," Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., said.

Kirby spoke a day after The Wall Street Journal reported new details of the crisscrossing planes on that day. Earlier this month, after the revelation the U.S. delivered the money in pallets of cash, the administration flatly denied any connection between the payment and the prisoners.

# Charity to stop taking certain donations if Clinton elected

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The charitable foundation led by former President Bill Clinton will no longer accept foreign and corporate donations if Hillary Clinton is elected president, and it will hold its final annual Clinton Global Initiative meeting in September regardless of the outcome of the November election.

Bill Clinton announced the changes to the foundation in a staff meeting on Thursday, saying he and daughter, Chelsea Clinton, would be remiss if they didn't plan for the possibility of Hillary Clinton winning the White House.

The former president said the foundation would continue its work but refocus its efforts in a process that will take up to a year to complete. Ahead of celebrating his 70th birthday on Friday, Clinton said he would resign from the board and would accept contributions only from U.S. citizens and independent charities if his wife were elected president.

Amid criticism of cronyism from Republicans, the changes aimed to address how the Clinton Foundation would function in the event of another Clinton presidency and push back against Donald Trump's critique that the sprawling foundation had created conflict of interests and allowed foreign governments to peddle influence with Hillary Clinton.

Under the changes, the foundation would no longer take money from any foreign entity, government, foreign or domestic corporations or corporate charities. A Clinton spokesman said the former president will also refrain from delivering paid speeches until the November election and will no longer give paid speeches if Hillary Clinton is elected.

Clinton said he and his daughter wanted to avoid any potential issues or second-guessing for Hillary Clinton should she win.

# Trump: 'I do regret' some comments

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — In a highly uncharacteristic move aimed at resetting his struggling campaign, Donald Trump has said for the first time that he regrets some of the caustic comments he's made that may have caused people pain.

"Sometimes in the heat of debate and speaking on a multitude of issues, you don't choose the right words or you say the wrong thing. I have done that," the GOP nominee said, reading from prepared text, at a rally in Charlotte, N.C., Thursday night. "And believe it or not, I regret it — and I do regret it — particularly where it may have caused personal pain."

Trump didn't specify what comments he was referring to, but he added that, "Too much is at stake for us to be consumed with these issues."

It was a rare admission for a man who has said he prefers "not to regret anything," and it

underscores the dire situation in which he finds himself. With just 80 days left until the election, Trump is trailing Democratic rival Hillary Clinton in preference polls of most key battleground states. At the same time, party leaders have conceded they may divert resources away from the presidential contest in favor of vulnerable Senate and House candidates if things don't improve.

The remarks came a day after Trump announced that he was overhauling his campaign operation, bringing in a new chief executive and appointing a new campaign manager. In addition, campaign chairman Paul Manafort resigned Friday following revelations about his work for a pro-Russian political party in Ukraine.

Rarely do presidential campaigns wait to advertise, or undergo such leadership tumult, at such a late stage of the general election. Yet Trump

has struggled badly in recent weeks to offer voters a consistent message, overshadowing formal policy speeches with a steady stream of self-created controversies, including a public feud with an American Muslim family whose son was killed while serving in the U.S. military in Iraq.

Trump's decision to tap Stephen Bannon, a combative conservative media executive, as his new campaign chief suggested to some that he might continue the divisive rhetoric that has angered minorities and alienated large swaths of voters.

Instead, a new Trump emerged on Thursday: a less combative, more inclusive candidate who said he was running to be the "voice for every forgotten part of this country that has been waiting and hoping for a better future" and for those who "don't hear anyone speaking for them."

# Bumgarner helps Giants rally past Mets

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Madison Bumgarner had stymied the New York Mets over the years with his pitching. This time, the Giants' ace turned the tables and delivered the big blow with his bat.

At this point, manager Bruce Bochy's ballclub will take a win however it comes.

Bumgarner hit a go-ahead two-run homer off Jacob deGrom in the fourth inning — moments after giving up a grand slam — and San Francisco came back from four runs down to beat the Mets 10-7 on Thursday night.

Bumgarner, who narrowly missed a home run in his first at-bat, hit a 2-2 pitch into the stands in left field to cap a five-run inning when the Giants batted around. It was Bumgarner's third home run this season and the 14th of his career.

"I don't know if anybody's ever going to say they're comfortable against (deGrom) but for whatever reason I was seeing the ball a little better today," Bumgarner said. "With the RBI situations I've had the

last few games, I wanted to shorten up and just try to make contact."

The highly anticipated matchup between pitchers with two of the five lowest ERAs in the majors wound up being a slugfest.

San Francisco and New York combined for 17 runs and 30 hits.

"I didn't see that kind of game coming," Bochy said.

**Royals 8, Twins 1:** Alex Gordon hit a grand slam and Dillon Gee pitched seven strong innings as host Kansas City beat Minnesota.

The defending champion Royals have won five straight and eight of nine to move above .500 for the first time since July 22. Starting pitchers have a 1.61 ERA in the five-game winning streak, allowing 23 hits and six earned runs in 33<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings, while striking out 27 and walking seven.

**Orioles 13, Astros 5:** South Korea's Hyun Soo Kim had a career-high four hits and J.J. Hardy and Chris Davis each hit two of host Baltimore's six home runs as the Orioles beat rookie

Joe Musgrove and skidding Houston 13-5 on Thursday.

Mark Trumbo and Manny Machado also homered to help Baltimore improve to 40-19 at home and climb into a second-place tie with Boston in the AL East. The 13 runs matched a season high, set June 1 against Boston.

**Angels 6, Mariners 4:** Japanese pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma's quest for four straight wins came unstuck as he and visiting Seattle lost to Los Angeles.

**Cubs 9, Brewers 6:** Kris Bryant homered twice, doubled and drove in five runs while going 5-for-5 as the Chicago Cubs overcame Jake Arrieta's career-high seven walks to beat the Milwaukee Brewers 9-6 on Thursday for a four-game sweep.

Bryant tied Colorado's Nolan Arenado for the NL lead with 30 home runs. The Cubs won for the 18th time in 21 games and improved the best record in the majors to 77-43.

**Tigers 4, Red Sox 3:** Second baseman Ian Kinsler caught a line drive by Mookie Betts for the final out with runners on

second and third to ensure host Detroit snapped Boston's six-game winning streak.

**Phillies 5, Dodgers 4:** Maikel Franco hit a go-ahead two-run home run in the seventh inning to help Philadelphia hold off visiting Los Angeles.

**Indians 5, White Sox 4:** Manager Terry Francona put up a pinch-hitter in the middle of an at-bat and the strategy paid off when Tyler Naquin lofted a game-ending sacrifice fly in the ninth inning that lifted host Cleveland past Chicago.

**Reds 5, Marlins 4:** Ramon Cabrera hit a three-run homer and Dan Straily continued his second-half surge as host Cincinnati beat Miami for its eighth victory in 10 series since the All-Star break.

**Nationals 8, Braves 2:** Rookie Reynaldo Lopez struck out 11 and Jayson Werth reached safely in his 46th straight game as visiting Washington pulled away to beat Atlanta.

**Padres 9, Diamondbacks 8:** Rookie Alex Dickerson's two-out, three-run double in the eighth inning lifted host San Diego.

## Steelers' Harrison says he's ready to talk about PEDs

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker James Harrison is willing to meet with the NFL to discuss an alleged link to performance-enhancing drugs — but only five days after a deadline the league has imposed while threatening him and three other players with indefinite suspensions.

NFL Players Association attorney Heather McPhee sent a letter to the NFL on Thursday, accusing it of trying to "bully and publicly shame" Harrison

without offering evidence beyond a brief mention in a television interview last year that was recanted by the accuser.

"When it came down to it, (if) I got the suspension, the bigger outcome wasn't really worth it," Harrison said after the Steelers' 17-0 home exhibition loss to Philadelphia on Thursday night. "I wouldn't be on the team, it would hurt the team, it would hurt my teammates and coaches, so it was easier to do the interview."

Green Bay's Clay Matthews and Julius Peppers, and free-

agent Mike Neal also were threatened with suspensions. It was not immediately known if a similar meeting was being proposed by the union.

"I'm just glad the process is moving forward," Green Bay coach Mike McCarthy said after the Packers' 20-12 home victory over Oakland on Thursday night. "As already has been stated, as an organization, we support Clay and Julius. And we're looking to get this resolved as soon as possible."

The league's deadline for cooperation from the four play-

ers is Aug. 25. McPhee's letter says Harrison would meet with the NFL at 5 p.m. on Aug. 30 at the team's facility, and would only discuss the portion of the Al-Jazeera interview that mentioned the 14-year veteran.

In the report, Charlie Sly, who worked as an intern at an anti-aging clinic, made claims of PED use against several athletes, including the four linebackers. Sly later recanted his claims.

NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said the league has yet to respond to the letter.



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# Bolt captures third straight 200 gold

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — Usain Bolt tilted his head backward and screamed. He plaintively raised his palms to the sky, tugged hard on his shirt, then angrily ripped the No. 6 sticker off his right hip.

It had the look of an unthinkable loss in the Olympic 200 meters.

But there's only one opponent that can really beat Bolt: Time.

The Jamaican superstar romped in what he says is likely his last Olympic individual race Thursday night, but finished in 19.78 seconds, .59 short of his own world record — the one he said he really wanted to break.

"I wanted to run a faster time," said the sprinter, who turns 30 on the night of the closing ceremony. "I knew it was going to be hard to break the world record, because I could tell by my legs. When I came off the corner, my legs decided,

'Listen, we're not going to go any faster.'"

Hard to argue with a win, though, and Bolt has Olympic gold medal No. 8, and a third straight 200 title to go with the same trifecta in the 100. His run for gold No. 9 comes Friday in the 4x100 relays.

All good stuff. But that expression as he crossed the finish line told the real story.

Bolt was leading before those legs on his 6-foot-5 frame had even powered him through the first curve. The field chased him through a thin mist that started about 30 minutes before the race. Andre de Grasse of Canada finished .24 behind and Christophe Lemaitre of France squeaked out bronze by .003 over Adam Gemili of Britain. You could've driven a truck through the gap between first and second place.

Way up ahead, Bolt gave every ounce of effort — no hot-dogging or celebrating early as

was his wont in some of his best 100s — his arms pumping hard, face twisted with pain and effort as he hugged the left edge of his lane and approached the line.

He glanced to his left to check out the clock. The time came up: 19.78. Not even the fastest 200 run of the season. When Bolt saw it, the reaction looked more like that of someone who'd lost than won.

"All I wanted to do was win the 200 meters one time," he said, dismissing the notion he was disappointed. "So, to be eight-time gold medalist is shocking. Just proves I've worked hard."

As always, the after-party was great.

With chants of "Usain Bolt, Usain Bolt" ringing out across a mostly full stadium, Bolt paraded around the track with his Jamaican flag while Bob Marley's "One Love" blared in the background. The once-in-a-lifetime sprinter dropped to his

knees and kissed the track before giving his iconic "To The World" pose.

"What else can I do to the world to prove I am the greatest? I'm trying to be one of the greatest. Be among Ali and Pele," Bolt said after the race. "I hope after these games, I will be in that bracket."

He's there already.

"He's a championship man, he's an unbelievable guy," Lemaitre said. "And he has nothing to prove now."

In the lead-up to the Olympics, Bolt insisted the time to step away is approaching. He plans to compete at the world championships in London next summer, and has said that will be it.

But first, Friday night, and a chance to make it three sweeps over three Olympics, the likes of which we may never see again.

"I've proven to the world I'm the greatest," he said.

## Turnovers hurt Steelers in shutout loss to Eagles

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Landry Jones threw four interceptions and the Philadelphia Eagles capitalized.

Nolan Carroll's 38-yard interception return for a score was the lone touchdown of the first half, helping the Eagles to a 17-0 victory Thursday night.

The Eagles' defense has nine takeaways in six quarters. Pittsburgh, which suffered its previous preseason shutout in 2014, has one offensive touchdown in two games.

Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger was held out for the second straight week along with running backs Le'Veon Bell and DeAngelo Williams and wide receiver Antonio Brown.

**Bengals 30, Lions 14:** Jeremy Hill ran for a 9-yard touchdown on his team's first possession, and visiting Cincinnati went on to beat Detroit.

Hill hurt his left hand in Cincinnati's preseason opener last week, but he had three carries for 16 yards against the Lions and also caught a pass.

Former Cincinnati wide receiver Marvin Jones, signed by the Lions in the offseason, had four catches for 65 yards against his former team. Detroit's Matthew Stafford was 8-for-11 for 113 yards, but the Lions went without a touchdown until the final minute of the game.

**Falcons 24, Browns 13:** Robert Griffin III threw two touchdown passes in the first half in his home debut with his new team in Cleveland's exhibition loss to Atlanta.

Griffin found wide receiver Terrelle Pryor streaking down the right sideline on Cleveland's second drive of the game for a 50-yard scoring strike. Griffin connected with tight end Gary Barnridge for a 22-yard touchdown pass in the second quarter.

Griffin, who signed with

the Browns (0-2) after being released by Washington, was 6-for-8 for 96 yards in four series. The 2011 Heisman Trophy winner also gained 36 yards on three carries, including a 22-yarder.

**Patriots 23, Bears 22:** Tom Brady sat out his second straight preseason game, while the guy that will replace him at the start of the regular season continued to make progress.

Brady did not go through pregame warmups and never made it to the field for host New England's win over Chicago.

Brady had been expected to make his debut after missing last week's game to attend memorial services for a family member.

**Packers 20, Raiders 12:** Eddie Lacy's powerful running early on helped propel host Green Bay past Oakland.

Lacy had nine carries for 45 yards, capped by a 1-yard touchdown dive on third-and-goal, to highlight a 14-play, 74-yard

drive to start the game as the Packers again played without quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

The night was over at that point for Lacy, who made coach Mike McCarthy happy in the offseason by slimming down after the coach was critical of the lead back's playing weight at the end of last season.

**Vikings 18, Seahawks 11:** Marcus Sherels intercepted Trevone Boykin's pass and returned it 53 yards for a touchdown with 1:23 left and visiting Minnesota beat Seattle.

With Boykin trying to lead Seattle to another late comeback for a second straight week, Sherels stepped in front of his pass intended for E.Z. Nwachukwu and went untouched for the deciding score.

Boykin got Seattle to the Minnesota 5 in the closing seconds, before taking a sack and was unable to connect with Antwan Goodley in the end zone on the final play.