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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US ship fires warning shots near Iran boat

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A U.S. Navy ship fired three warning shots Wednesday to fend off Iranian fast boats' harassing behavior in the northern Persian Gulf in a third incident of "unprofessional" Iranian actions near American warships in two days, a Pentagon spokesman said.

The USS Squall, a coastal patrol ship, fired the shots into the water after other standard methods to de-escalate the situation — including firing warning flares and attempting to make radio contact — failed, said Peter Cook, the Pentagon press secretary.

The USS Tempest, a Cyclone-class patrol ship, also was harassed in the same incident in which the Iranian boats sped to within about 200 yards of the American

vessels.

It was one of three "unsafe and unprofessional" encounters Tuesday and Wednesday with Iranian ships in the region, Cook said.

On Tuesday, four Iranian gunboats sped within 300 yards of the U.S. guided-missile destroyer USS Nitze in the Strait of Hormuz. On Wednesday, the USS Stout, another destroyer, was harassed by Iranian warships, apparently the same vessels that approached the Squall, Cook said.

"These were incidents that the crews deemed unsafe," he told reporters Thursday at the Pentagon. "These are incidents that carry a risk of escalation and we don't desire any kind of escalation. Our ships have been operating in that part of the world for years."

But Iran's defense minister warned that Iranian forces would respond to any for-

eign ships entering its territorial waters.

"If any foreign vessel enters our waters, we will give them a warning, and if it is an act of aggression, we will confront them," Gen. Hosein Dehghan told Iranian media Thursday.

Cook said all of the incidents occurred in international waters that cannot be claimed by the Iranians. Their actions, he added, "serve no purpose other than to raise tensions in an important part of the world."

"We are conducting ourselves ... in a safe and professional manner and we will continue to do that," Cook said. American sailors "will continue to take the steps they need to protect themselves, their ships and our interests in the region."

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Prosecutors: Vet lied way to Purple Heart, \$750K

The Washington Post

The rocket exploded under the Army Humvee and launched the vehicle into the air.

It was August 2005, two years into Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Darryl Lee Wright was on patrol with the Idaho National Guard in Kirkuk, a city in northern Iraq.

Wright recalled later that he was "violently thrown and knocked unconscious from the percussion of the rocket's impact."

The blast, he would say, was massive: "Rubble and debris from the impact showered the sky for scores of meters."

The attack left Wright with post-traumatic stress disorder and a brain injury, he told federal agencies. As a result, he would lie in the fetal position in his bed most days, unable to hold down a job, to cook meals or to button his shirt.

But the story, prosecutors

say, was a lie.

Wright did serve in Iraq, court documents say, and he was patrolling in Kirkuk at the time of an August 2005 attack.

But the rocket aimed at his Humvee missed by more than 300 feet, according to an official Army report. No one was injured by the small explosion, the Army concluded.

The military's report included statements from Wright, who "made no mention of sustaining injury or otherwise suffering any effects from the explosion."

Prosecutors say Wright ramped up the drama in his retelling of the event to various federal agencies to get hundreds of thousands of dollars in disability payments.

To give his lie some heft, court documents say, Wright persuaded military officials to award him a Purple Heart and a Combat Action Badge.

In his application for the

badge, he included a picture of a charred military vehicle that investigators later determined had nothing to do with the not-so-near-miss he was involved in.

The story helped Wright bilk the federal government — at one point receiving more than \$10,000 per month.

Following an investigation that involved no fewer than 10 federal and state agencies, Wright was indicted in what the Justice Department described as an "extensive benefits fraud scheme." Federal prosecutors initially said Wright, now 49, bilked the government out of \$250,000; the government now says the figure is more than \$750,000.

He pleaded guilty in February to two counts of wire fraud and faces up to 20 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000. He was scheduled to be sentenced Thursday in federal court in Tacoma, Wash.

The Associated Press reported that Judge Benjamin Settle said Thursday that he wants to hear additional testimony about Wright's mental health before issuing punishment. The judge said a mental health expert hired by the defense had suggested that Wright suffers from a condition in which he concocts his own reality and believes it is acceptable to lie or falsify documents to match that reality.

In their sentencing memo, federal prosecutors David Reese Jennings and Gregory Gruber were unequivocal in their opinion about Wright.

"Darryl Wright has engaged in a long-lasting, persistent, epic offense," they wrote, according to the AP. "He sullied the reputations of people, institutions, and agencies.

"Worst of all, he hurt the heroes who fully deserve recognition, respect, and honor," they wrote.

Feds: Ending homelessness among veterans is 'tough goal'

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Federal agencies now say they cannot predict the end of homelessness among veterans, a national crisis that President Barack Obama hoped to stop by 2015.

Obama announced Aug. 1 that veteran homelessness in the country had decreased 47 percent since 2010.

"We knew that those were all going to be tough goals to achieve," said Ann Oliva, deputy assistant secretary for special needs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. "But we thought they were doable, and if we made the right policy decisions and had the right data and resources we needed, we could progress, which is what we did."

Yet Oliva said she couldn't give a date when homelessness for veterans across the country

would end, though agencies attempt to put more resources toward the effort and more cities are meeting federal benchmarks that show progress in housing homeless veterans.

Though the 2015 goal was missed, Randy Brown of the nonprofit National Coalition for Homeless Veterans said Obama attracted attention to the issue and created a sense of urgency behind the effort, which increased funding to record highs.

The latest point-in-time count, which are compiled every January, showed there were about 40,000 homeless veterans left to house, and 13,000 of those veterans live on the streets, according to VA and HUD estimates released Aug. 1.

Oliva said the count didn't include veterans who are newly homeless or who have vouchers and can't find housing.

Communities declaring they

have ended homelessness for veterans is based on a set of criteria that the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness established. The criteria aims at ensuring veteran homelessness is "brief, rare and non-recurring."

Brown said the criteria should be thought of as minimum standards.

A key is being able to house veterans quickly. Communities must find veterans permanent housing within 90 days after they're identified as homeless.

Austin is the latest of about 30 cities and counties to meet the benchmarks. The first city to do so was New Orleans in early 2015.

In June, HUD and the VA said \$38 million would be made available for vouchers and ongoing clinical and supportive services from the VA. On Monday, the agencies announced they would add nearly \$1 million.

Clinton: Trump unleashes GOP's fringe

Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H. — Hillary Clinton said Donald Trump has unleashed the "radical fringe" within the Republican Party, including anti-Semites and white supremacists, dubbing the billionaire businessman's campaign as one that will "make America hate again."

Trump defended his hard-line approach to immigration while trying to make the case to minority voters that Democrats have abandoned them.

The back-and-forth accusations came Thursday as the two candidates vie for minorities and any undecided voters with less than three months until Election Day. Weeks before the first early voting starts, Trump faces the task of revamping his image to win over those skeptical of his candidacy.

In Reno, Clinton said of Trump, "He's taking hate groups mainstream and helping a radical fringe take over one of America's two major political parties," she said.

Trump tried to get ahead of the Democratic nominee, addressing a crowd in Manchester, N.H., just minutes before Clinton.

"To Hillary Clinton, and to her donors and advisers, pushing her to spread her smears and her lies about decent people, I have three words," he said. "I want you to hear these words, and remember these words: Shame on you."

Trump, who also met Thursday in New York with members of a new Republican Party initiative meant to train young — and largely minority — volunteers, has been claiming that the Democrats have taken minority voters' support for granted. "They've been very disrespectful, as far as I'm concerned, to the African-American population in this country," Trump said.

Voters conflicted on immigration

Associated Press

AKRON, Ohio — Dean Green, 57, supports Donald Trump partly because of the GOP presidential nominee's tough, deport-them-all stance on illegal immigration. But the Republican paused as he complained about U.S. immigration policy and acknowledged deporting all 11 million people in the U.S. illegally would separate families.

"I don't want to break up families," Green said.

Polls often show that majorities favor letting people illegally in the U.S. stay and also back tougher laws to deport them.

"The electorate is conflicted and that's a fundamental problem," said Whit Ayres, a Republican pollster. "This is such an emotional issue that reason and facts have very little to do

with how people stand."

Trump is now either caught up in, or trying to exploit, that contradiction as he considers "softening" his controversial immigration stance. He won the GOP primaries on the strength of an aggressive immigration policy, calling for the immediate deportation of the estimated 11 million people in the U.S. illegally and construction of a Mexican border wall. But as he struggles to overcome record lows with minority voters, he has sounded a softer tone.

Todd Schulte, president of FWD.us, which advocates for an immigration overhaul that would let people in the country illegally remain here while increasing border security, said, "Opposition is not just toxic with Latinos and Asians and African-Americans, but with

white voters," Schulte said.

Immigration has created complications for both parties. During the Democratic primary, as she courted groups that favor a softer stance on immigration, Clinton had to disavow her prior opposition to providing driver's licenses for people here illegally and also her support for deporting Central American children who flooded the border in 2014.

But the Democrat's contradictions are dwarfed by those in the GOP. During the GOP primary Trump slammed rivals like former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Ohio Gov. John Kasich for backing "amnesty" — letting people here illegally remain. But in exit polls in 20 primary states, 53 percent of Republican voters supported letting those immigrants stay.

Cleanup underway after twisters

Associated Press

KOKOMO, Ind. — In a central Indiana city where trees were sheared off at their stumps by one of several tornadoes in the region, residents began the hard work Thursday of cleaning up destroyed or damaged homes and businesses.

The EF-3 tornado that swept through the south side of Kokomo, Ind., on Wednesday afternoon, packing winds as high as 152 mph, toppled a Starbucks coffee shop and tore apart numerous homes. One of them belonged to Mark Martinez, 45, who was out picking up his daughter from school and returned to find everything but the bedrooms on one side of his house destroyed.

His daughter was distraught because their dog was still inside the rubble of the home. After some digging, Martinez found the dog alive.

He said he hadn't mentally processed the events.

Indiana Gov. Mike Pence chatted with and hugged residents in a neighborhood where the damage seemed to skip some homes altogether. Pence credited quick thinking and early warnings of the approaching storm for the lack of serious injuries. Howard County Sheriff Steve Rogers said only 10 to 15 residents in the city 40 miles north of Indianapolis had minor injuries.

"It's a miracle, and it's a testament to good common sense," Pence said.

Cheryl Swyers said she huddled in a hallway closet with her 2-year-old granddaughter as the tornado struck.

"It sounded like it lasted forever, but I'm sure it wasn't," Swyers said. "The house shook. You could hear things flying around outside."

The Kokomo tornado was one of several that swept through central and northern Indiana and northwest Ohio on Wednesday.

In Ohio, damage was reported in four counties, including Van Wert County, where officials said at least two tornadoes touched down about 2 miles apart, tearing roofs off homes and flattening barns.

As of Thursday afternoon, the National Weather Service confirmed that at least seven tornadoes hit Indiana during Wednesday's outbreak, five of them in central Indiana and two in northeastern Indiana. But surveys were continuing, and the storm tally was expected to rise, said Mike Ryan, a weather service meteorologist in Indianapolis.

Utility companies reported about 25,000 homes and businesses in the Kokomo area lost electricity from the storm, though power was restored to more than half by Thursday afternoon.

Obama expands monument in Hawaii

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama will expand a national monument off the coast of Hawaii, creating a safe zone for tuna, sea turtles and thousands of other species in what will be the world's largest marine protected area.

Obama's proclamation will quadruple in size a monument originally created by President George W. Bush in 2006. The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument will contain some 582,578 square miles.

Obama will travel to the monument next week to mark the designation and cite the need to protect public lands and waters from climate change.

The monument designation bans commercial fishing and any new mining. Recreational fishing will be allowed through a permit, as will be scientific research and the removal of fish and other resources for Native Hawaiian cultural practices.

The regional council that manages U.S. waters in the Pacific Islands voiced disappointment with Obama's decision, saying it "serves a political legacy" rather than a conservation benefit.

It said it recommended other expansion options that would have minimized impacts to the Hawaii longline fishery, which supplies a large portion of the fresh tuna and other fish consumed in Hawaii.

The Pew Charitable Trusts helped lead the push to expand the monument. It says research shows that very large, fully protected marine reserves are necessary to rebuild fish populations and diversity of species.

Slain nuns leave void in Miss. community

Associated Press

DURANT, Miss. — In the Mississippi community they served, two nuns found slain in their home "would do anything for anybody," friends said.

The women, both 68 and nurse practitioners, were found dead Thursday when they didn't report to work at a clinic where they provided medical care for children and adults who couldn't afford it.

They were identified as Sister Margaret Held and Sister Paula Merrill.

Dr. Elias Abboud, who worked with the sisters for years and helped build the Lexington Medical Clinic, said he's not sure what will happen to the facility in light of their deaths.

"I think the community is going to be different after this.

You need somebody with that passion to love the people and work in the underserved area," Abboud said.

"For somebody to come and do this horrible act, we are all shocked," he added.

Authorities did not release a cause of death, but Rev. Greg Plata said police told him the nuns were stabbed.

"They were two of the sweetest, most gentle women you can imagine. Their vocation was helping the poor," said Plata, who oversees a Catholic church the sisters attended.

Maureen Smith, a spokeswoman for the Catholic Diocese of Jackson, said there were signs of a break-in at the home, and the nuns' car was taken.

The abandoned Toyota Corolla was found undamaged late Thursday barely a mile

from the home and was being towed to the state crime lab near Jackson, Mississippi's capital, according to Mississippi Department of Public Safety spokesman Warren Strain.

Abboud said the clinic provided about 25 percent of all medical care in the county, which has a population of about 18,000, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates for July 2015.

The two nuns provided almost all the care at the clinic.

Lisa Dew, the clinic's manager, said, "I think their absence is going to be felt for a long, long time. Holmes County, it's one of the poorest in the state," Dew said. "There's a lot of people here who depended on them for their care and their medicines. It's going to be rough."

Authorities didn't release a motive.

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French court strikes down 'burkini' ban

Bloomberg

France's top court struck down a push by local governments to ban the "burkini," saying the Muslim-style full-body swimming outfits don't create a public threat that justifies impinging on freedom of religion.

The decision dealt specifically with a law in Villeneuve-Loubet on the Riviera but sets a legal precedent against similar bans in at least 31 beach towns, mostly run by rightist mayors. The case was brought by a human-rights organization and a group that monitors anti-Islamic speech.

"The contested ban seriously impinged on the principle of equality of citizens before the law, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience and freedom of movement and was manifestly illegal," the Council of State said.

The local bans, as well as video footage of police standing over a woman on a beach as she removed a long-sleeved shirt, split the government and were widely covered by media around the world. The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau were among leaders who criticized the prohibitions.

More than 200 people have been killed in terrorist attacks in France since the beginning of 2015, and a presidential election less than eight months

away.

The debate over how to balance the lifestyle choices of some Muslims and France's concept of secularism frequently pops up, from a 2004 law banning headscarves in schools to a 2010 law forbidding face-covering veils to a debate over whether schools should always offer pork-free lunches.

Prime Minister Manuel Valls, from the Socialist Party, on Thursday reiterated his support for the bans, saying on BFM TV that they were taken in the interest of public order. "The burkini is a political sign of religious proselytizing that shuts in women," he said.

But Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem said on European radio that she's opposed to laws that "set loose racist talk." Health Minister Marisol Touraine posted on her blog that how women dressed on the beach didn't "threaten public order or the values of the Republic."

Politicians on the right were more united in backing the bans. Former President Nicolas Sarkozy, who on Aug. 22 announced his candidacy for the 2017 presidential elections, called for a national prohibition on burkinis Thursday during his first rally in the south of France, as well as banning Muslim headscarves in all public buildings and workplaces.

11 slain, 78 hurt in Turkey car bombing

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Kurdish militants on Friday attacked a police checkpoint in southeast Turkey with an explosives-laden truck, killing at least 11 police officers and wounding 78 other people, officials and the state-run news agency said.

The attack struck the checkpoint 50 yards from a main police station near the town of Cizre, in the mainly Kurdish Sirk province, which borders Syria, the Anadolu Agency reported.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which was the latest in a string of bombings targeting police or military vehicles and facilities. Authorities have blamed the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, for those attacks.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim confirmed the death toll, saying it was a suicide attack carried out with an explosives-laden truck. He vowed to "destroy the terrorists."

"No terrorist organization can take the Turkish Republic hostage," he told reporters in Istanbul. "We will give these scoundrels every response they deserve."

Television footage showed

black smoke rising from the mangled truck. The three-story police station was gutted from the powerful explosion.

According to Sirk governor's office, three of the wounded were civilians. The Health Ministry sent 12 ambulances and two helicopters to the site.

Violence between the PKK and the security forces resumed last year after the collapse of a fragile, two-year peace process between the government and the militant group. Hundreds of security force members, militants and civilians have been killed since.

Turkey also has seen a rise of deadly attacks that have been blamed on Islamic State militants, including a suicide bombing at a Kurdish wedding in southeast Turkey last week that killed 54 people and an attack on Istanbul's main airport in June that killed 44 people.

Turkey sent tanks across the Syrian border this week to help Syrian rebels retake a key Islamic State-held town.

Since hostilities with the PKK resumed last summer, more than 600 Turkish security personnel and thousands of PKK militants have been killed, according to the Anadolu Agency. Human rights groups say hundreds of civilians also have been killed.

EpiPen maker refuses to budge on \$608 price

Associated Press

The maker of EpiPens offered patients more help to pay for its costly emergency allergy shots but didn't budge Thursday on the \$608 price.

The announcement from Mylan N.V. triggered a new round of condemnation from politicians and consumer groups, who accuse the company of price-gouging on a potentially life-saving treatment.

Critics stressed that insurers, employers and taxpayers will still foot most of the cost for EpiPens. Over time, that drives up insurance premiums and the country's bur-

geoning health care tab.

"Everybody suffers except the Mylan investors," said Sabrina Corlette of Georgetown University's Health Policy Institute.

This week, Mylan joined other drugmakers such as Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc. and Turing Pharmaceuticals, who've been blasted for mammoth price increases.

Mylan CEO Heather Bresch defended her company's price hikes Thursday, telling CNBC that lowering the price was not an option. Bresch said the company receives only \$274 of the \$608 for a twin-

package of EpiPens. She said insurers, pharmacies, prescription benefit managers and distributors divvy up the rest.

Instead of a price cut, Mylan said it was expanding programs that help people pay for EpiPens or give them out free. It doubled the limit for eligibility for its patient assistance program, so a family of four making up to \$97,200 would pay nothing out of pocket. It also said it will offer \$300 copay cards, up from the current \$100 per-prescription savings. That would cut the bill in half for patients who have to pay full price.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Suspect catches ride on school bus

FL BRADENTON — Deputies in Florida arrested a shirtless burglary suspect after they he allegedly caught a ride on a school bus.

The Bradenton Herald-Tribune reported that when Erik Hall, 27, boarded a school bus without a shirt Tuesday morning, the driver thought he was a student.

Authorities said the driver told Hall to put on a shirt. Hall, who didn't comply and sat down, later told the driver he wasn't a student and that he just needed a ride.

The driver pulled into a school, waved down an administrator, and school resource officers questioned Hall. He was released, but deputies learned later he was a suspect in a burglary.

Deputies tracked him down, and he's now charged with trespassing on school property.

Man stabbed after drinking wife's beer

PA UNIONTOWN — Police said a Pennsylvania woman stabbed her husband with scissors because he drank one of her beers while she slept.

Tracey Lee Giffin, 45, faces charges including aggravated assault.

Police said the couple had been drinking Sunday evening. Giffin went to bed but woke up to find her husband had one of her beers.

Police said an angry Giffin stabbed her husband and cut him on the neck, chest and head with the scissors. They said she also bit him on the arms and a thumb.

Woman drives SUV through grocery store

OR SPRINGFIELD — A woman was arrested after driving her SUV into a grocery store and down the aisles, police said.

Springfield police said a woman tried to purchase \$2,200 of gift cards and became upset

when her check bounced and Safeway employees would not complete the transaction.

The Register-Guard reported that she angrily left the store Tuesday afternoon and returned just after midnight Wednesday. Police said she parked in front of the store and was yelling about wanting her gift cards.

Police said the woman then drove the SUV through the store entrance, up and down an aisle, and out the other side of the Safeway. No one was injured.

Police arrested her at her home.

Man in superhero costume stole beer

NY SALAMANCA — Do superheroes drink beer?

WIVB-TV in Buffalo reported that police in western New York said they're looking for a man who was wearing a Batman costume and a Captain America mask when he walked out of a convenience store Tuesday with two 18-packs of beer without paying.

Police in Salamanca said the store's surveillance cameras show the man wearing the combined outfit as he carries an 18-pack in each hand.

The man, described by police as in his 20s, apparently made his getaway on foot.

70 Confederate flags stolen from cemetery

GA BRUNSWICK — Police near Georgia's coast are investigating a report that 70 Confederate flags were stolen from the graves of soldiers who fought in the American Civil War.

The local Sons of Confederate Veterans traditionally place the flags on Confederate soldiers' graves in Oak Grove Cemetery on Confederate Memorial Day in April. They were reported missing on Aug. 18.

A local leader of the group, James Carter, said he believes the replicas of the third official flag of the Confederate States of America were targeted because they include the familiar battle

emblem.

"You wouldn't go through any other cemetery removing American flags from graves," Carter told The Florida Times-Union.

Actually, the American Legion advises its members to remove flags from graves as soon as possible after displaying them each Memorial Day. And in federal cemeteries, groups displaying U.S. or Confederate flags at gravesites are required to remove them no later than the first business day after the holiday.

Boy, 5, uses allowance to buy lunch for police

NJ WINSLOW TOWNSHIP — A New Jersey boy picked up the tab for lunch for his police department.

William Evertz Jr., 5, saved his allowance for seven months and went to a Subway store on Wednesday to get sandwiches for officers in Winslow Township. His mother said he wanted the officers to rest so they could protect the town.

Police made the boy an honorary officer and gave him a special shirt and badges. He also got a ride home in a police car with lights and siren.

Entomologist returns book 60 years late

IN LINTON — A Purdue University entomology professor returned a copy of "The Moths of the Limberlost" that he checked out 60 years ago at age 8.

WTWO-TV in Terre Haute, Ind., reported that Larry Murdock checked out the book from the Linton Public Library in western Indiana in 1956. He said he found the book in a box and that returning it "was the right thing to do." He also paid a \$436.44 fine.

Murdock said he thought "maybe after all those years there are kids out there who might get some benefit" from the book.

Linton library officials said they used the money to buy new computers for the children's section.

Wine lovers order over 13K bottles

SD SIOUX FALLS — Wine connoisseurs enjoying access to their favorite varieties under South Dakota's consumer-direct wine shipping law have had over 13,800 bottles sent to their doors since January.

A state law that went into effect in January allows South Dakotans to buy up to 12 cases of wine per year from wineries in the state and around the country.

The Revenue Department said 1,158 cases had been shipped by the end of June. The department reported on the law's rollout to a legislative committee this week.

Jason Evans, deputy director of the property and special taxes division, said implementation of the new law has gone well, but some concerns have come up, including issues with reporting and collecting the right information to determine if wine is coming from licensed or unlicensed wineries.

Teacher makes rap video for students

IL SKOKIE — A 25-year-old who starts his first year as a student teacher this fall wrote a rap welcoming his fourth-graders.

Dwayne Reed's video was posted on YouTube this week and by Friday morning had more than 522,000 views. Reed will teach at Stenson Elementary School in the Chicago suburb of Skokie. He told the Chicago Tribune he made the video so students understand "the person that is going to be leading you this semester is so pumped about serving you."

The video's chorus has Reed singing, "Welcome to the fourth grade. So happy to meet you. Can't wait till I see you. We're gonna have a good time."

Stenson Principal Sue O'Neil said the school encouraged Reed, and she finds the video "uplifting and creative."

From wire reports

Ravens' Flacco set to return after nine-month absence

BY DAVID GINSBURG
Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — It's time to find out how Joe Flacco will respond to taking a hit on his surgically repaired left knee.

Flacco will start at quarterback for the Baltimore Ravens on Saturday night against the Detroit Lions, his first game action since tearing his ACL and MCL nine months ago in a game against the St. Louis Rams.

The injury ended Flacco's run of 137 straight starts. Following surgery and intensive rehabilitation, he returned to the practice field on the first day of training camp.

Wearing a protective brace on his knee and a red jersey that serves as a do-not-touch warning to his teammates, Flacco has fared well this summer.

But he hasn't taken a blow to the knee. How he holds up in the pocket against Detroit is far more significant than completion percentage or touchdown throws.

"I don't need to get hit, no," Flacco said Thursday. "But if I do, it's not a bad thing either. Hopefully, it's the same as it's

always been."

Flacco is the franchise career leader in yards passing (28,322), touchdown throws (162) and 300-yard games (26). He was also the Super Bowl MVP in 2012.

His value to the Ravens is immeasurable. So someone asked coach John Harbaugh if he was confident Flacco could absorb a shot to the knee on Saturday.

"If I wasn't, he wouldn't be out there," Harbaugh said.

But the coach acknowledged, "Football is always risky for everybody. That's just the way it works. You have to weigh the benefits with the risk."

That point is, the Ravens don't want to wait until the Sept. 11 regular season opener against Buffalo to get a read on the status of their most important player.

"Joe's the quarterback. He's not going to break," Harbaugh said. "He's going to play and we're planning on him playing really well, just like he has in practice. But it will be his first game action in a long time. I'm sure that's going to be a factor, but I'd rather have it in this game than two weeks from now against the Bills."

Flacco agreed.

"I really don't feel like I need to play in (preseason) games to get ready to play Game One, but I want to put myself through that whole process," he said. "I just think I'll be better for it. That's the reason for the whole thing."

Flacco said watching the Ravens' first two preseason games from the sideline was "tough." He probably could have played, but what was the point?

None of the starters will participate in the exhibition finale in New Orleans on Sept. 1, so this game will serve as Flacco's only tuneup for his ninth NFL season.

"That's really what I'm looking forward to, just getting back out there in live action," he said. "Being in a real huddle and just seeing everybody's eyes and how excited they are to be out there."

It's likely no one in that huddle will be more pumped as the guy calling the plays.

"I'm looking forward to getting out there," Flacco said. "I'm excited about it. It's been a while obviously. I had to go through a little bit to get here to this point where I can go back out there and play with my guys."

Browns deal Mingo to Patriots

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Barkevious Mingo never really fit in with the Browns.

The Patriots will try to find an ideal spot for him.

A major disappointment in Cleveland, Mingo, the No. 6 overall pick in the 2013 draft was traded to New England on Thursday.

The Browns received a fifth-round pick in the 2017 draft for the linebacker.

Mingo, a former LSU standout, has recorded just seven sacks in three seasons and spent much of last season on special teams.

Mingo's size — 6-foot-4, 240 pounds — and speed have made him intriguing, but Cleveland's coaching staff couldn't find the best way to utilize him. The Browns moved the 25-year-old Mingo from outside linebacker to inside earlier this summer.

The Browns now own Philadelphia's 2017 first-round pick, Tennessee's 2017 second-round pick, New England's 2017 fifth-round pick, Indianapolis' 2017 seventh-round pick and Philadelphia's 2018 second-round pick. Cleveland has conditionally surrendered its 2017 fourth-round pick to Philadelphia and its 2017 sixth- or seventh-round pick to San Francisco.

While the Browns have had trouble finding somewhere to play Mingo, he has shown a diverse skillset while getting 97 tackles and seven sacks in 46 games.

The Patriots don't have a great deal of depth behind veteran linebackers Dont'a Hightower, Jaime Collins and Jonathan Freeny, so Mingo could possibly make an impact there.

There's also an opportunity for him on the outside, with two of the Patriots' pass rushers that were projected to have key roles this season — Rob Ninkovich and Jabaal Sheard — working their way back from injuries.

Romo gives Dallas injury scare

BY TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Three plays were all it took for Dallas to get yet another injury scare surrounding Tony Romo.

The quarterback lasted just 90 seconds into the Cowboys' 27-17 preseason loss to the Seattle Seahawks on Thursday night before leaving with what appeared at first to be a potentially significant injury, but ended up being minor.

Romo walked off the field without assistance, threw passes on the sideline and lobbied for a return to the game. Dallas

coach Jason Garrett opted to play it safe and Romo donned a baseball hat as a spectator the rest of the night.

Backup QB Dak Prescott was solid playing against most of Seattle's starting defense, finishing 17-for-23 for 116 yards, including a 17-yard TD pass that Jason Witten snatched away from K.J. Wright.

Russell Wilson and Seattle's No. 1 offense played into the second half, scoring on four of its final five possessions, including a pair of TD tosses by Wilson, who finished 16-for-21 for 192 yards.

Dolphins 17, Falcons 6: At Orlando, Fla., running back Arian Foster had a 2-yard touchdown run in Miami's victory over Atlanta.

Dolphins quarterback Ryan Tannehill completed 20 of 29 passes for 155 yards while leading the Dolphins to a score in one of two red zone opportunities.

Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan, meanwhile, took a step back from his showing last week against Cleveland. He completed 12 of 22 passes for 129 yards, no touchdowns and one interception.

Lochte faces charge by Brazilian police

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazilian police charged American swimmer Ryan Lochte on Thursday with filing a false robbery report over an incident during the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

A police statement said Lochte would be informed in the United States so he could decide whether to introduce a defense in Brazil. The indictment will also be sent to the International Olympic Committee's ethics commission, it said.

"The investigation was concluded on Thursday and Olympic American swimmer Ryan Lochte was indicted for the crime of falsely reporting a crime," the statement said.

It said the case was turned over to a special Brazilian court that has jurisdiction over crimes related to major sporting events. The court, which was established before Brazil

hosted soccer's 2014 World Cup, is authorized to receive cases straight from the police when lesser charges are involved, without a need for prosecutors.

The swimmer's spokeswoman, Melissa Nathan, said Lochte had no comment.

During the games, Lochte initially said that he and fellow swimmers Jack Conger, Gunnar Bentz and Jimmy Feigen were robbed at gunpoint in a taxi by men with a police badge as they returned to the Olympic Village from a party Aug. 15.

Video surveillance emerged showing the athletes getting into a confrontation with security guards at the gas station when their taxi pulled over to let them use the restroom. While there have been conflicting versions over whether the guards pulled their weapons on the swimmers, Lochte has since acknowledged he was highly intoxicated and that his behavior led to the confrontation.

Lochte left Brazil shortly

after the incident. Three days later, local authorities took Conger and Bentz off an airliner heading to the United States so they could be questioned about the robbery claim. They were later allowed to leave Brazil, as was Feigen, after he also gave testimony. Feigen, who initially stood by Lochte's testimony, was not charged.

Under Brazilian law, the penalty for falsely filing a crime report carries a maximum penalty of 18 months in prison. Lochte could be tried in absentia if he doesn't return to face the charge.

The United States and Brazil have an extradition treaty dating back to the 1960s, but Brazil has a long history of not extraditing its own citizens to other nations and U.S. authorities could take the same stance if Lochte is found guilty.

That is currently the case of the head of Brazil's football confederation, Marco Polo del Nero, who faces charges in

the wide-ranging scandal entangling international soccer's ruling body, FIFA. He has not traveled outside Brazil for more than a year to avoid being arrested by U.S. authorities somewhere else.

The charges in Brazil raise questions about the future for Lochte, who is planning to take time off from swimming but wants to return to compete in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. He has 12 Olympic medals, second only to Michael Phelps among U.S. male Olympians.

Lochte lost four major sponsors early this week over the controversy, including Speedo USA and Ralph Lauren. But on Thursday he picked up a new sponsor — Pine Bros. Softish Throat Drops. Pine Bros. said people should be more understanding of the swimmer and said he will appear in ads that say the company's product is "Forgiving On Your Throat."

Clemson's Watson says he's ready for spotlight glare

Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — Deshaun Watson doesn't need much more than his tight circle of family, friends and teammates when prepping for the season, even one where the Clemson quarterback could very well be the face of college football.

Watson led the Tigers to a 14-0 record, an Atlantic Coast Conference championship and the national championship game before falling to Alabama 45-40 in the title contest in January.

Watson, who threw for 405 yards and four touchdowns in an eye-popping performance against the Crimson Tide, became the first FBS player to throw for 4,000 yards and rush for 1,000. His poise, calm demeanor and transcendent ability have him a Heisman Trophy favorite and Clemson a championship contender set for a return to the College Football

Playoffs.

"I don't really have to say a whole lot to 'D-Dub.' He's dialed in," Clemson coach Dabo Swinney said. "He's just a guy that's hungry to be the best."

He'll try and guide the second-ranked Tigers, who start Sept. 3 at Auburn, to the title — and do it with the glare of the spotlight following his every move.

"I feel good. I'm confident and comfortable," Watson said. "I trust my guys."

Still, it's not always easy performing to expectations.

Just three years ago and not too far down the road, South Carolina defensive end Jadeveon Clowney was supposed to have the biggest impact on the game after the world watched him pop off Michigan runner Vincent Smith's helmet in the Outback Bowl a season earlier.

Instead, Clowney was out-schemed and a tad slower than a year earlier, even pulling

himself out of a game shortly before kickoff — and touching off a brief flap with his coach Steve Spurrier — due to injury.

Clowney had a disappointing season, finishing with three sacks — 10 fewer than the year before.

"Anytime you have a big freshman or sophomore year and you come back for your third year, you hear a lot of people talking about, just don't get hurt and just get ready for the NFL," ESPN broadcaster Kirk Herbstreit said.

Watson, at 6-foot-2, 216 pounds, has an eye on the NFL. He is widely considered the likely overall No. 1 pick in next year's draft. He said in January after Clemson returned from its championship loss he would look to the NFL if he earned his degree by December — he's scheduled to graduate at the end of this semester — and helps the Tigers achieve their goals.

Watson has purchased \$5 million in catastrophic injury insurance, allowable by NCAA rules. Mentally, he's ready to soak in what could be his final college season.

"I knew the role and the expectations that come with" playing quarterback, he said. "It's nothing I can't handle."

He's certainly handled most everything on the field.

Watson needed surgery to fix his torn ACL in December 2014 and faced untold questions about his health and durability, fears he erased by starting all 15 games and enduring more than his share of hits because of his running ability.

Herbstreit, the former Ohio State quarterback, said Watson is hard-wired to compete.

"I don't think any agents or anybody's going to be able to get to him and tell him to take it easy," he said.

Watson hasn't slowed down since the loss to Alabama.

Moore flirts with no-no in Giants' win

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — San Francisco lefty Matt Moore lost his no-hit bid with two outs in the ninth inning on a soft, clean single by Corey Seager, and the Giants beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 4-0 Thursday night.

Moore's try ended on his 133rd and final pitch — he missed most of the last two seasons after Tommy John surgery. He was immediately pulled after Seager's hit plopped onto the grass in shallow right field.

Giants center fielder Denard Span sprinted for two outstanding catches, including a leadoff grab in the ninth, to give Moore a chance.

Moore earned his first win for the Giants since they got him in a trade with Tampa Bay on Aug. 1.

Moore nearly gave San Francisco a major league record five straight years with a no-hitter. And he almost became the first Giants pitcher to no-hit the archrival Dodgers since 1915, when New York's Rube Marquard stopped Brooklyn.

Nationals 4, Orioles 0: Max Scherzer allowed two hits over eight innings, Bryce Harper had a two-run double and host Washington avoided a four-game home-and-home sweep by Baltimore.

Scherzer (14-7) struck out 10 and did not walk a batter. He retired 12 straight after Adam Jones' fourth-inning double and 21 of 22 before Mark Trumbo's leadoff single in the eighth.

Jayson Werth's solo home run staked Washington to a 1-0 lead. Daniel Murphy's RBI double in the eighth came before Harper's second hit helped the Nationals pull away.

The Nationals had lost four straight including three in a row to the Orioles, who won twice in Baltimore before the teams shifted to Washington.

Mets 10, Cardinals 6: St. Louis pitcher Adam Wainwright lost his glove trying to tag out Yoenis Cespedes and lost the game, too, when Alejandro De Aza homered and drove in five runs for visiting New York. Seth Lugo (1-2) pitched five scoreless innings for his

first big league win. The Mets took two of three to win their first series at Busch Stadium since 2008.

Brandon Moss hit two home runs for the Cardinals and Jedd Gyorko and Stephen Piscotty also connected.

The Mets led 3-0 in the fifth when Wainwright (9-8) and Cespedes were involved in a bizarre play.

Cespedes tried to go from first to third on a bloop single by James Loney. When several Cardinals chased the ball, Wainwright covered third base. Cespedes slid and his cleat pinned Wainwright's glove to the bag — he would've been out, but when Wainwright pulled away his hand, the mitt stayed stuck under Cespedes' foot. Because Wainwright didn't control the ball, Cespedes was called safe in a ruling upheld by replay. Moments later, De Aza hit a three-run homer to make it 7-0.

Braves 3, Diamondbacks 1: Matt Wisler, called up from Triple-A in time to start for Atlanta, didn't allow host Arizona a hit for six innings.

The 23-year-old Wisler (5-11) allowed a run and two hits with four strikeouts and three walks in eight innings. Jim Johnson pitched the ninth inning for his 12th save.

Paul Goldschmidt broke up Wisler's no-hit bid with a leadoff single in the seventh. Goldschmidt scored on Chris Owings' groundout.

Robbie Ray (7-12) was the loser.

Angels 6, Blue Jays 3: Albert Pujols reached the 100-RBI mark for the 13th time, the fifth player in history to achieve the feat, Mike Trout had three hits and drove in four runs, and visiting Los Angeles beat Toronto.

Jered Weaver pitched 5²/₃ innings to snap a three-start losing streak and help the Angels win consecutive games for the first time since Aug. 2-3.

The Angels also prevented J.A. Happ from becoming the first 18-game winner in the majors. After winning 11 straight decisions, Happ (17-4) suffered

his first loss since June 10 at Detroit. He allowed four runs and six hits in five innings.

Rangers 9, Indians 0: Cole Hamels allowed only two singles over eight innings for his 14th victory, Carlos Gomez hit a three-run homer in his first at-bat with host Texas and the AL-best Rangers beat Cleveland in the opener of a four-game series matching division leaders. Hamels (14-4) retired 19 straight batters after Francisco Lindor's two-out single to left in the first. The only other baserunner for the Indians was Carlos Santana after a leadoff hit in the eighth, though he was stranded at second after advancing on a passed ball.

Royals 5, Marlins 2: Alcides Escobar homered and drove in two runs to lead surging Kansas City past host Miami.

Salvador Perez and Kendrys Morales also drove in runs. The defending champion Royals have won 15 of 18 to pull within four games of the second AL wild card spot.

Edison Volquez (10-10) pitched five innings and allowed two runs, both unearned, and three hits.

The Royals' bullpen, which has been a successful formula for the reigning two-time AL pennant winners, pitched four scoreless innings to push its franchise-record scoreless streak to 38²/₃ innings — the best in the majors since 2002-03, when San Francisco tossed 39¹/₃ straight.

Pirates 3, Brewers 2 (10): Andrew McCutchen hit a home run and a pair of RBI singles, including the tiebreaker in the 10th inning, and Pittsburgh beat Milwaukee to stop a nine-game skid at Miller Park.

McCutchen has 44 RBIs in 56 career games at Miller Park, his highest total at any opposing park.

McCutchen homered into the second tier of seats in left field off Wily Peralta in the first for his 18th home run of the season. He then hit an RBI single that beat the shift in the third.

Pinch-hitter John Jaso blooped a single off Carlos Torres (2-3), advanced on a sacri-

fice, took third on a ground out and scored on McCutchen's liner through the right side of the infield.

Rays 2, Red Sox 1: Enny Romero earned his first major league save, relieving with two outs in the ninth inning and fanning visiting Boston slugger David Ortiz to give Tampa Bay a four-game split.

After Tyler Sturdevant struck out Hanley Ramirez and Jackie Bradley Jr. to begin the ninth, Romero was summoned. Romero sent Ortiz to the ground with a high-and-tight 1-2 fastball, then got him to look at strike three. A day earlier, the 40-year-old Ortiz reached 30 home runs and 100 RBIs.

White Sox 7, Mariners 6: Todd Frazier tied it with an RBI single in the seventh inning and lifted host Chicago past Seattle with a line drive down the left-field line in the ninth.

Adam Eaton led off the ninth with a bloop single off Nick Vincent (3-4) and went to second on Tim Anderson's sacrifice. Jose Abreu was walked intentionally before Frazier's liner over third scored Eaton, leading to a pileup of players behind the pitcher's mound.

David Robertson (4-2) worked around a walk and two incidents of fans running on the field in the ninth that delayed play for several minutes.

Tigers 8, Twins 5: James McCann had a three-run homer and finished with four hits, Daniel Norris pitched into the seventh inning and Detroit completed a sweep for host Minnesota's seventh straight loss.

The Tigers are 10-2 against the Twins this year. They have won eight in a row at Target Field.

Norris (2-2) struck out five in 6 1/3 innings, allowing six hits without a walk in his longest and strongest start this season. He took a shutout in the sixth, surrendering RBI singles by Robbie Grossman and Eduardo Escobar over his last two innings.

Francisco Rodriguez struck out two in a perfect ninth for his 35th save.