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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Navy likely to face further provocations

Politics, new tactics may be factors in Iran's swarming of US ships in Gulf

BY ROBERT H. REID

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. Navy warships are likely to face further harassment by Iranian vessels in the Persian Gulf as Iran's hard-liners seek to bolster their position ahead of next year's Iranian election while the U.S. is absorbed in its own electoral campaign.

Some analysts also believe the three incidents Tuesday and Wednesday, during which Iranian fast boats swarmed around U.S. warships in the northern Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz in the southern end, were to practice "swarm tactics" for attacking larger and better armed American vessels.

In one of the incidents, the USS Squall, a coastal patrol ship, fired shots in the water to warn the Iranians.

The latest incidents serve as a reminder that tensions remain high between the United States and Iran despite last year's international agreement to curb Iran's nuclear program and lift crippling international sanctions.

Last December, Iranian ships fired rockets near U.S. warships in the Strait of Hormuz and flew an unarmed drone over the aircraft carrier the USS Harry Truman.

The following month Iran briefly detained 10 U.S. Navy sailors and forced them to kneel for propaganda pictures after they strayed into Iranian waters.

All this led Adm. John Rich-

ardson, chief of naval operations, to ponder whether the U.S. was facing a tense "new normal" in the Persian Gulf.

"We have to be mindful that we don't become complacent as things get steadily busier, steadily more engaging, and that we're thoughtful about how we approach those challenges," Richardson told reporters after the most recent incidents.

U.S. officials have not speculated publicly about Iran's possible motives, pointing out that such harassment has been common in the Gulf for decades.

According to the Navy, about 10 percent of its encounters with Iranian ships since the beginning of 2015 have been "unsafe and unprofessional."

The Iranians themselves brushed aside U.S. criticism, saying Tehran reserves the right to investigate the intentions of any vessel operating close to its shores.

Two conservative Middle East defense analysts, Stephen Bryen and his wife, Shoshana Bryen, believe the latest incidents were actually tests of new "swarming boat tactics" for engaging U.S. warships.

Writing on the U.S. News and World Report website, the Bryens said the tactics involve a number of fast boats armed with missiles and torpedoes attacking enemy ships from multiple directions.

"Recently, the Iranians added another dimension to the swarming boats: a vessel known as the Ya Mahdi, a remotely piloted fast patrol boat that can fire rockets or be stuffed with explosives," they

wrote.

The fast boats are maneuverable and can operate at up to 75 knots, they wrote. Some are built mostly with Fiberglas, which makes them difficult to detect with radar.

Whatever Tehran's recent intentions, Iran's behavior in the Gulf is often determined by internal Iranian politics, which can be confusing and opaque.

That often leads to actions which appear at odds with public statements by factions within the leadership that pursue agendas different from the hard-line Revolutionary Guard, whose naval units carried out the latest incidents.

"In particular, the provocations may have a domestic political dimension aimed at those within President Hassan Rouhani's government who advocate better relations with the West," wrote Farzin Nadimi, a U.S.-based analyst writing on the website of The Washington Institute, a private think tank.

Nadimi wrote that the Revolutionary Guard may be trying to bolster its image as the protector of Iran's coastal borders to justify its substantial share of the defense and research budget.

Some analysts also believe the hard-liners could be maneuvering for a political comeback in next May's presidential election.

Rouhani was elected in 2013 on a pledge to end Iran's international isolation and reverse the economic decline brought about by international sanctions and mismanagement by his hard-line predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Rouhani's allies also won important gains in parliament at the expense of the hard-liners in April's legislative election.

Rouhani has not announced whether he will seek a second term. But some of his policies have come under fire from the real power in Iran, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is close to the Revolutionary Guard and openly hostile to the U.S.

Khamenei has said that the nuclear deal with the West and subsequent lifting of international sanctions, the signature achievement of the Rouhani administration, has failed to benefit ordinary Iranians.

A major U.S. incident, which Iran's state-controlled media would blame on the Americans, could bolster the hard-liners and portray Rouhani's policies as a failure.

"In the meantime, observers should not be surprised if the naval harassment continues in the coming weeks," Nadimi wrote. "Washington should, therefore, be especially vigilant. ..."

All this comes at a time when the Obama administration is in its final months. The new U.S. president will be chosen in November, but it will take months afterward before the new chief executive's team is fully in place.

"The Persian Gulf is the Iranian nation's home," Khamenei said in a speech last May. "We must be present in that region, hold war games and demonstrate power. ... It is the Americans who should explain why they have come here from the other side of the world and stage war games."

Drones take to sea as Navy aims to tap tech

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — This fall, an unusual vessel will begin sea trials off the coast of California.

The 51-foot-long Boeing Echo Voyager will have no crew. It will glide underwater for days or weeks, quietly collecting data from the ocean floor to send back to crews on ships or on land.

Ever since the start of the war in Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S. military has relied more and more on flying drones to take on dangerous air missions. But increasingly, drones are taking to the sea as well.

The U.S. Navy has proposed about \$319 million for the development and purchase of underwater drones in President Barack Obama's budget for the coming fiscal year. It envisions them gathering intelligence on opponents, detecting and neutralizing mines, hunting submarines and charting the ocean floor.

Last year, the Navy created the first deputy assistant secretary position focused on managing the development of unmanned systems, including underwater, surface and aerial efforts.

Recent advances in autonomy, data transmission and miniaturized computing power coincide with the military's increased interest in finding ways to integrate unmanned systems into its war planning.

It's part of a much broader strategy to leverage artificial intelligence to stay one step ahead of rivals, as the Pentagon did

with guided weapons in the 1990s.

"As tensions continue to grow with China and Russia, two militaries that have sophisticated and very large navies, there is a growing interest in making use of unmanned technology in the maritime sphere," said Arthur Holland Michel, co-director of the Center for the Study of the Drone at Bard College in New York.

The potential for naval drones to operate free of human operators was shown this year when the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency unveiled its Sea Hunter, a largely autonomous, unmanned anti-submarine vessel.

The prototype 132-foot-long Sea Hunter is designed to sail on its own for as long as three months, to find a submarine using sonar and other sensors and to trail it while sending location data to human operators. The vessel completed its first performance trials off San Diego in late July, its builder, Reston, Va., company Leidos said.

Underwater drones face different challenges than their aerial counterparts. For one, communication is more difficult, making it hard for an autonomous vehicle to report information it might pick up underwater.

That hurdle is being worked on by Liquid Robotics, a Sunnyvale, Calif., firm that makes the Wave Glider. The unmanned vehicle floats on the surface and uses wave and solar power to propel itself and its sensors for as long as a year. The drone functions as a kind of gateway between underwater

acoustic communications and air-based radio transmissions. The vehicle's sensor computer connects a surface radio modem and antenna with an underwater acoustic modem, allowing information to be transmitted quickly back and forth.

Other underwater vehicles have towed long antennas, but that is a much slower method of transmitting data, said Graham Hine, senior vice president of global partner development at Liquid Robotics.

"We're thinking it would be the router of the ocean," he said. "Once you start to network things and then have ubiquitous communications and positioning, things start to get interesting."

The Wave Glider can carry a range of acoustic sensors that listen for vessels on the sea or piece together a picture of the ocean floor. Originally developed by company co-founders Roger Hine and Joseph Rizzi to listen to whale songs, it caught the interest of the Navy, which has worked with the company since 2008, Graham Hine said. Two years ago, the company struck a partnership with Boeing Co. to develop a military version, the Sensor Hosting Autonomous Remote Craft, or SHARC, that combines the Wave Glider platform with Boeing's sensor technology.

Boeing sees the platform as a potential communication conduit between underwater vehicles and aircraft, ships or satellites. It is working with the Navy's research lab to develop additional capabilities for SHARC.

Fort Hood opens housing on post to nonmilitary

*Austin (Texas)
American-Statesman*

FORT HOOD, Texas — Rents start at \$995 per month. The schools are good. And the neighborhood is safe — after all, it's on one of the largest U.S. military installations in the world.

In the mornings, residents driving along Tank Destroyer Boulevard or Hell on Wheels Avenue will see "TROOP CROSSING" signs and might come across columns of jogging soldiers. In the evenings, they'll be serenaded by taps playing from loudspeakers, and the occasional explosion in the distance.

Dealing with a low occupancy

rate as the Army shrinks after the peak of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Fort Hood has, for the first time, opened rental units on the post to people unaffiliated with the military.

The shift, triggered by a provision in the Army's contract with a private company that runs the post's family housing program, has caused concern among some soldiers about whether the presence of outsiders will introduce a new security risk at Fort Hood, where two high-profile shootings took place in the past decade.

Brian Dosa, Fort Hood's director of public works, said the Army has received "mixed re-

actions" from soldiers.

"We would prefer to have strictly military families living in our villages," Dosa said. "But I don't think it's a major impact ... that we now have some civilians. The numbers are pretty small."

Just like their soldier-neighbors in the family housing areas, the newcomers are allowed to keep guns in their homes, Fort Hood spokesman Chris Haug said. (Single soldiers living in the barracks cannot keep guns at home.)

Haug said the gun policy isn't a security risk because there are rigorous safeguards for the new residents, who must

go through two layers of background checks — one by the housing company and another by the Fort Hood Directorate of Emergency Services — and register any firearms they bring on post with Fort Hood authorities.

"They've had two background checks for everyone in their family over the age of 18. That's more than your neighbor has," Haug said.

Thirty-four other U.S. military installations already have brought in nonmilitary residents, and there have been no major security issues, said Mack Quinney, project director for the housing company.

US: Attacks have diminished Islamic State

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon and U.S. intelligence agencies now view the Islamic State group as a shrinking and demoralized military force, a sharp shift from the seemingly invincible extremist army that declared an Islamist caliphate two years ago.

The revised assessment comes after surprisingly swift and relatively bloodless victories this summer near Syria's border with Turkey and in Iraq's Sunni heartland, two areas where the Islamic State group appeared entrenched.

The rapid recapture last week of Jarabulus, Syria, the militants' last garrison by the Turkish border, helped close off a boundary region that was crucial for movement of recruits, supplies and money in and out of the group's quasi-state.

It also was the latest fight to suggest the Sunni militants no longer are willing to fight to hold territory against a sustained assault. Only one fighter was reported killed in the assault led by Turkish tanks. Several hundred others apparently fled.

Partly as a result, U.S. officials have hinted that the long-delayed assault on Mosul, the Islamic State group's self-declared capital in Iraq, may be launched this fall. The city of 1 million has been increasingly cut off by advancing Iraqi and

Turkey-backed Syrian rebels advance on Kurds

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Turkey-backed Syrian rebels seized a number of villages and towns from Kurdish-led forces in northern Syria on Sunday amid Turkish airstrikes and shelling that killed at least 35 people, mostly civilians, according to rebels and a monitoring group.

Turkey sent tanks across the border to help Syrian rebels drive the Islamic State group out of the frontier town of Jarabulus last week

in a dramatic escalation of its involvement in the Syrian civil war. The operation is also aimed at pushing back U.S.-allied Kurdish forces. The fighting pits a NATO ally against a U.S.-backed proxy that is the most effective ground force battling the Islamic State in Syria.

Turkey's military said its warplanes killed 25 Kurdish "terrorists" and destroyed five buildings used by the fighters in response to attacks on Turkish-backed rebels in the Jarabulus area.

Kurdish ground forces.

Michael Knights, Iraq fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said taking back Mosul, along with the Syrian towns of Deir ez Zor and Raqqa, will mark the end of the caliphate.

"After the fall of those cities, [the Islamic State group] will be just another terror group," he said. "They might be able to throw a couple car bombs in city centers and mount small-arms attacks, but they will no longer engage in heavy fighting on a daily basis. In other words, we'll be back to where we were

in 2013."

But most experts, including U.S. intelligence officials, warn that the Islamic State group's ability to inspire or organize terrorist attacks abroad is unimpaired and may even pose a greater threat as foreign sympathizers are unable to reach the cut-off caliphate.

"Despite the progress, it is our judgment that (the group's) ability to carry out terrorist attacks has not to date been significantly diminished," Nicholas Rasmussen, head of the National Counterterrorism Center, told the House Home-

land Security Committee.

Militants still detonate car bombs or launch suicide attacks in Baghdad. They could devolve into the kind of sectarian insurgency that turned Iraq into a slaughterhouse after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, or morph into a stateless global terrorist network like al-Qaida became after 2001.

As in other insurgencies, militants may be running from battles now to survive and fight again.

The Islamic State group still has vast sway. It controls half the area it seized in Iraq in 2014 and 70 percent of its territory in Syria, according to U.S. estimates, and continues to haul in millions of dollars from taxes, fees and extortion.

Current U.S. intelligence estimates say the group now fields as few as 16,000 fighters — half its army of a year or so ago. But U.S. officials point to undeniable progress two years and more than 14,000 airstrikes after President Barack Obama first ordered a bombing campaign against Islamic State targets.

"The number of fighters on the front line has diminished," Lt. Gen. Sean MacFarland, commander of U.S. forces against the militant group until last week, said in a teleconference from Baghdad. "They've diminished not only in quantity, but also in quality."

Italy checking quake-damaged buildings for possible code fraud

Associated Press

AMATRICE, Italy — Bulldozers with huge claws pulled down dangerously overhanging ledges Sunday in Italy's quake-devastated town of Amatrice as investigators worked to figure out if negligence or fraud in building codes had added to the quake's high death toll.

The quake that struck before dawn Wednesday killed 290 people and injured hundreds as it flattened three medieval towns in central Italy. Giuseppe Saieva, the prosecutor in the regional capital of Rieti, said the

high human death toll "cannot only be considered the work of fate."

Investigations are focusing on a number of structures, including an elementary school in Amatrice that crumbled despite being renovated in 2012 to resist earthquakes at a cost of \$785,000. No one was in the school at the time, but many were shocked that it did not withstand the magnitude-6.2 quake.

After an entire first-grade class and teacher were killed in a 2002 quake in San Giuliano di Puglia, Italian officials

had vowed to ensure the safety of schools, hospitals and other critical institutions.

Questions also surround a bell tower in Accumoli that collapsed, killing a family of four sleeping in a neighboring house, including a baby of 8 months and a 7-year-old boy. That bell tower also had been recently restored with special funds allocated after Italy's last major earthquake, which struck nearby L'Aquila in 2009.

Italy's national anti-terrorism prosecutor, Franco Roberti, also vowed to work to prevent the mafia from infiltrating in

public works projects to rebuild the earthquake zone.

"This risk of infiltration is always high," he said in comments Sunday in the La Repubblica newspaper. "Post-earthquake reconstruction is historically a tempting morsel for criminal groups and colluding business interests."

Roberti said that although he does not wish to prejudge the outcome of the investigation into the area's damaged buildings, the high number of public buildings to collapse in the quake raises suspicions.

Wake set for slain Miss. nuns

Associated Press

DURANT, Miss. — Friends and colleagues who knew two nuns killed in their Mississippi home were gathering Sunday to remember them as authorities continue to investigate the harrowing crime that shocked people in the small communities where the women committed their lives to helping the poor.

Rodney Earl Sanders, 46, of Kosciusko, Miss., has been arrested and charged in the deaths of Sister Margaret Held and Sister Paula Merrill. The county sheriff said Sanders confessed to the killings, although many people are struggling to comprehend why anyone would want to take the two women's lives.

A wake was scheduled to be held Sunday at the St. Thomas Church in Lexington, where the women led Bible study. That will be followed by a mass Monday in Jackson.

The women's bodies were found in their Durant, Miss., home after they failed to show up for work Thursday at a health clinic in Lexington.

Willie March, the sheriff of Holmes County, where the killings occurred, said Saturday that police work and tips from the community led police to Sanders. Authorities have said Sanders was a person of interest early in the investigation.

March said he had been briefed by Durant police and Mississippi Bureau of Investigation and was told that Sanders confessed to the killings and gave no reason for the crimes.

Durant police could not be reached for comment Saturday. Warren Strain, a spokesman for the Department of Public Safety which includes the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation, said the organization would neither confirm nor deny that Sanders confessed.

Sanders was convicted last year of a felony DUI, said Grace Simmons Fisher, a spokeswoman for the Mississippi Department of Corrections. He is currently on probation.

Sanders also was convicted of armed robbery, was sentenced in 1986 and served six years, Fisher said.

Authorities have not given any details on why they think Sanders killed the women or whether he knew them, but they do say they believe he acted alone.

Merrill's nephew, David Merrill, speaking by telephone from Stoneham, Mass., said Saturday the family was "thankful" Sanders is off the streets.

But the family still has to deal with the loss.

Merrill said he agrees with the idea of forgiveness and that is something his aunt would want for whoever killed her, but he's not sure if he's capable of completely forgiving.

NBA's Wade speaks out after cousin fatally shot

Associated Press

CHICAGO — NBA star Dwyane Wade's cousin was an innocent bystander, police said, pushing her baby in a stroller near a Chicago school where she intended to register her children when she was fatally shot Friday.

Nykea Aldridge's famous relative, who grew up in Chicago's suburbs, tweeted to his nearly 6 million followers about her death, saying Friday it was an "act of senseless gun violence" and posting Saturday morning that Chicago needs "more help & more hands on deck."

The 32-year-old mother of four recently relocated to an area on the city's South Side, her family said. She was near the school when two males walked up and fired shots at a third man but hit Aldridge in the head and arm.

Police said Saturday afternoon that two "people of interest" were being questioned by detectives, but no one has been charged in the shooting.

Chicago has been plagued by gun violence for years, especially in a few South and West Side neighborhoods. In July alone, there were 65 homicides — the most that month since 2006.

Outside the emergency room where Aldridge was pronounced dead, Wade's mother, Jolinda Wade, clutched her sister and spoke for the family as mourners stood in a circle holding hands and praying. She said she'd participated in an ESPN town hall meeting on gun violence "never knowing that the next day we would be the ones that would actually be living and experiencing it."

"We're still going to try to help and empower people like the one who senselessly shot my niece in the head," Jolinda Wade said. "We're going to try to help these people to transform their minds and give them a different direction."

Asymptomatic man spreads Zika sexually

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. health officials on Friday reported the first case of Zika spread through sex by a man with no symptoms of the disease.

In the other 21 U.S. cases of sexual transmission, the virus was spread by someone who at some point had symptoms.

The report details the case of a Maryland man who went to the Dominican Republic, where there is a Zika outbreak. He didn't get sick during the trip or when he returned. But his sex partner, who hadn't traveled, did get Zika and recovered.

Doctors believe its spread from an infected person with no symptoms is extremely rare;

they have smaller amounts of the virus in their blood.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises couples to use condoms for two months after a partner without symptoms has returned from a Zika outbreak area. For men with symptoms, the CDC advises condoms for at least six months.

USPS workers accused of theft, embezzlement

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Authorities have charged dozens of Southern California postal workers and their associates with mail theft, embezzlement and other crimes as part of an investigation into criminal activity at the U.S. Postal Service.

A total of 33 defendants were charged in 28 cases, according to a statement released Friday by the United States attorney's office for the Central District of California.

In addition to mail theft and embezzlement, some of the cases involve bank fraud and false statements; a few allege crimes by people who are not USPS employees.

The suspected mail theft manifested itself in a variety of bizarre and disturbing forms, according to prosecutors.

Postal carrier Sherry Naomi Watanabe, 48, was found to have more than 48,000 pieces of mail at her residence, the Justice Department said. That mail was supposed to have been

delivered on her route.

In another case, Nicole Elwood, 45, was charged with mail theft on suspicion of stealing medications sent to veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Most of the defendants were charged in indictments that were returned by federal grand juries last week, officials said. Defendants charged as part of the sweep will be arraigned in the U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, Santa Ana and Riverside, they said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Traces of meth found in 3 classrooms at school

AZ PHOENIX — Traces of methamphetamine have been found at a suburban Phoenix high school.

KPHO-TV reported that air and surface testing detected a trace amount of the drug in three classrooms at Mountain Pointe High School in Ahwatukee.

The testing was done between Aug. 17 and Aug. 19 after an apartment occupied by a former live-in security guard had an unknown odor. Principal Bruce Kipper said the amount found was less than 100 nanograms.

An independent toxicologist said the amount is not enough to cause any effects. But nobody will be allowed back into those classrooms until they are professionally cleaned and retested.

Restaurateur responds to burger worm claims

KY MAYFIELD — A McDonald's franchisee says he's been unable to substantiate claims by two customers who reported finding worms in food at the fast-food chain's restaurants in two Kentucky communities.

Michael Love, owner-operator of the two restaurants, said inspections of the restaurants by health officials did not uncover any of the problems raised by the customers.

Mayfield resident Madison Stephens told WPSD-TV that she visited the local McDonald's and purchased food for herself and her 1-year-old son. She said that as she was about to bite into her hamburger, a live worm fell out.

At the McDonald's in Draffenville, about 25 miles away from Mayfield, Lacey Jo Lovett said she also found a worm in her burger.

Stephens said she contacted

McDonald's about the incident, and they sent her a \$10 gift card.

Woman's tollway chase of cat prompts warning

TX HOUSTON — Highway experts say a cat chase on a busy Houston-area tollway should serve as a warning about what not to do when animals get loose in traffic.

Surveillance video from the Harris County Tollway Authority shows an unidentified woman trying to trap a cat on a road full of cars and trucks. She appears unaware of the danger around her and the darting cat.

A toll road crew eventually arrived and helped the woman capture the kitty after traffic was stopped or slowed for about 10 minutes.

Grand jury: Woman justified in killing ex

NJ BELVIDERE — A grand jury in New Jersey has found a woman was justified in killing her former fiance who drove from Florida in a bid to rekindle the relationship armed with a pistol, knives, zip ties and duct tape.

Gage Theard, 24, left Milton, Fla. — where he was attending Navy flight school — on March 17. He contacted Rachel Morrissey, 20, and asked to see her to discuss their breakup.

Officials said Theard forced his way into Morrissey's Allamuchy home, bound and assaulted her and placed the blade of a knife against her neck.

Theard then showed Morrissey how to use his handgun and directed her to shoot him in the head. When she refused, authorities said he threatened to kill her before turning the gun on himself.

Morrissey told authorities she shot him once in the rear shoulder blade area in an attempt to escape. When he began

to rise and yell, she fired again, striking Theard in the shoulder area, and called police.

Missing potbellied therapy pig is found, goes home

PA ALIQUIPPA — A missing potbellied pig that serves as a therapy animal has been returned to its Pennsylvania owners.

Owner Katie Manni said Charlotte the pig has been found. The Vietnamese potbellied pig had last been seen July 11.

Charlotte served as a therapy animal at Beaver Elder Care and Rehab Center in Hopewell Township. She helped cheer up residents there.

Manni and her fiance, Edward Perry, got Charlotte in February, when she was 6 weeks old.

The pig was left in a car with a pair of pugs for about 10 minutes in July while Perry ran into the center to get keys from Manni, who directs nurses there. When he returned, the pig was gone.

Woman admits subway crickets, worms a stunt

NY NEW YORK — A woman who caused chaos aboard a subway train by releasing a container of crickets and worms says it was all a prank.

Zaida Pugh told the New York Post she had the episode videotaped "to show what homeless people go through."

The NYPD said it's still looking into whether Wednesday's incident was staged and whether Pugh and the woman on the train are the same person. If so, she could face charges.

Pugh told the Post on Friday that a friend intentionally flipped the container over. She said the passengers attacking her also were part of the stunt.

Startled passengers had

crickets on their arms and worms wriggled on the floor.

Someone pulled the emergency brake, halting the train for 30 minutes. Pugh said that wasn't planned.

Panel says decorative port-a-potties can stay

MA WILLIAMSBURG — The health board in a small Massachusetts town says it can't order a resident to remove the port-a-potties flanking his driveway despite the objections of neighbors.

The toilets at Chris Duval's Williamsburg home have been haphazardly spray-painted orange.

Duval told The Daily Hampshire Gazette the toilets are "empty, fiberglass shells" that he finds "decorative."

The board took no action on the port-a-potties because the town has no bylaws regarding their regulation.

Smoothie cafe worker diagnosed with Hep A

VA MANASSAS — An employee at a smoothie cafe has been diagnosed with Hepatitis A.

Health officials said the employee of Tropical Smoothie Cafe in Gainesville became sick in July but wasn't diagnosed until later. Officials said customers who ate or drank anything at the location between Aug. 12 and 18 could have been exposed and may benefit from getting vaccinated.

The cafe's owner said he conducted a deep clean of the restaurant after the diagnosis.

Officials said the case is being investigated as part of a group of 35 recent cases that could be linked to the Tropical Smoothie Cafe chain.

The infections have been linked to frozen strawberries from Egypt.

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Williams on cusp of Grand Slam record

Associated Press

Despite everything that Serena Williams has won and done, her sense of self can still fluctuate based on the outcome of a particular match.

Doesn't always seem to matter that she owns a record-tying 22 major singles titles heading into the U.S. Open, which begins Monday with a retractable roof at Arthur Ashe Stadium for the first time.

Not necessarily a big deal to her that she's spent the past 3½ years entrenched at No. 1 and is the oldest woman ever to top the WTA rankings.

And there are times when the 34-year-old American basically forgets that she transcends her sport and has become a cultural icon away from the tennis court.

Williams is devastated when she is dealt a setback, such as last year's "Did that really happen?!" loss to Roberta Vinci in the U.S. Open semifinals, ending an attention-grabbing, pressure-piling bid for the first calendar-year Grand Slam by anyone in more than a quarter-century. Williams acknowledges she measures herself constantly.

"Unfortunately, I definitely do, which I

don't think is normal. I definitely feel like when I lose, I don't feel as good about myself," she said.

"But then I have to, like, remind myself that: 'You are Serena Williams!' You know? Like, 'Are you kidding me?'" Williams continued, laughing and leaning forward. "And it's those moments that I have to just, like, come off and be like, 'Serena, do you know what you've done? Who you are? What you continue to do, not only in tennis, [but also] off the court? Like, you're awesome.' That really just shows the human side of me. I'm not a robot."

She is at the stage of her career where history is in the offing nearly every time a racket is in her right hand. So while the stakes are different from what they were at Flushing Meadows in 2015, Williams does have something significant to play for yet again.

After equaling Steffi Graf for the most Grand Slam titles in the professional era (which dates to 1968) by winning Wimbledon last month, Williams now can break that tie by earning No. 23 in New York. Only Margaret Court owns more major singles trophies, with 24, but more than half of that total came against amateur

competition.

Not that Williams was immediately ready to think about topping Graf after pulling even with her at the All England Club.

"One thing I learned about last year is to enjoy the moment," Williams said. "I'm definitely going to enjoy this."

Good thing, too, because not everything has gone smoothly since that most recent triumph. Slowed by a bothersome right shoulder, Williams lost in the third round of singles and first round of doubles at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics — she was a 2012 gold medalist in both events — and then pulled out of a hard-court tuneup event.

Williams is assured of remaining at No. 1 until the end of the U.S. Open, which will bring her current streak to 186 weeks in a row, tying another mark held by Graf. Depending on what happens in the tournament, Williams could be overtaken in the rankings by No. 2 Angelique Kerber (who beat Williams in the Australian Open final in January), No. 3 Garbine Muguruza (who beat Williams in the French Open final in June) or No. 4 Agnieszka Radwanska.

"It's definitely intriguing," Roger Federer said about tracking the women vying for No. 1. "It's nice to see this race."

Several established stars among early Heisman hopefuls

Associated Press

A handful of familiar faces could make this a Heisman race for the ages.

Four, count 'em, four of the top six finishers from last year's Heisman Trophy voting are back for another season. Clemson's prolific quarterback Deshaun Watson is among them, along with a trio of stars that includes Stanford running back Christian McCaffrey, Oklahoma quarterback Baker Mayfield and LSU running back Leonard Fournette.

The scrutiny and hype for the foursome will be intense from day one. Watson says it comes with the territory of being one of the nation's top players.

"That's something I already knew before," Watson said. "I'm a confident player and I expect to be in this position. That's why I work, that's why I grind."

Though it's uncommon for so much Heisman-caliber talent

to return for another season, it's not unprecedented.

A recent example is 2011, when Stanford quarterback Andrew Luck, Oregon running back LaMichael James, Boise State quarterback Kellen Moore, Oklahoma State receiver Justin Blackmon and Michigan quarterback Denard Robinson returned after finishing two through six in the voting behind Auburn's Cam Newton in 2010.

Interestingly, none of them won. Instead, it was Baylor quarterback Robert Griffin III who came out of nowhere to take home the trophy. Luck was the runner-up for a second straight season.

Watson, who helped lead Clemson to the College Football Playoff title game before a loss to Alabama, finished third in the voting in 2015 behind Alabama's Derrick Henry and McCaffrey.

McCaffrey is an obvious Heisman front-runner since

he was second last season. The 6-foot, 200-pound junior broke the NCAA single-season record with 3,864 all-purpose yards in 2015.

A little more on the early favorites:

Fournette: LSU's bruising runner was probably the favorite to win the Heisman midway through last season before his production slipped in the final month. The 6-1, 230-pound junior still finished with 1,953 yards rushing and 22 touchdowns. The Tigers return a talented team, and likely will play several high-profile games that can showcase his talent to a national audience. It remains to be seen if LSU's passing game will be good enough to take some of the load off Fournette.

Mayfield: The 6-1, 210-pound Mayfield started as a walk-on at Texas Tech before transferring to the Sooners. After sitting out a season because of NCAA transfer rules, he won the starting job last fall

and completed more than 68 percent of his passes for 3,700 yards, 36 touchdowns and only seven interceptions.

McCaffrey: The Stanford star had one of the best overall seasons in college football history in 2015, finishing with 2,019 yards rushing, 1,070 yards on kick returns, 645 yards receiving and 130 yards on punt returns. He even threw two touchdown passes. McCaffrey might be hard-pressed to match those numbers, but another big season is certainly expected.

Watson: The 6-2, 210-pound junior was fantastic as the Tigers made it to the national title game. He completed nearly 68 percent of his passes for 4,104 yards, 35 touchdowns and 13 interceptions while also running for 1,105 yards and 12 touchdowns. Clemson is loaded again and is expected to have a great shot at winning the ACC and making it to the College Football Playoff again.

Romo out indefinitely with back injury

Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — Tony Romo is out with yet another back injury and it's unknown when he will return, although Dallas Cowboys coach Jason Garrett says he expects his star quarterback to play this season.

Garrett said on Saturday that Romo sustained a broken bone in his back when he was hit from behind by Seattle's Cliff Avril and slid awkwardly on the third play of a preseason game.

Romo tried to get back into Thursday's game and said afterward he was OK. But Garrett said the 36-year-old Romo woke up on Friday with stiffness, and an exam revealed Romo's fourth back injury in less than four years. The injury will not require surgery.

Garrett wouldn't rule out Romo for the regular-season opener on Sept. 11 against the New York Giants. Rookie Dak Prescott, a fourth-round pick who has had a strong preseason, is the presumed starter, although Garrett wouldn't acknowledge that either.

"If you guys remember, he has played with fractures in his back before," Garrett said, referring to Romo's quick return from a small fracture in his back in 2014.

"So that probably more than anything else is what is not giving us a timetable. We've heard a wide range of possibilities in terms of when he would be able to play."

The Cowboys plunged from 12-4 in 2014 to 4-12 last season, when Romo missed 12 games with a twice-broken left collarbone.

Dallas went 1-11 without him.

Romo had back surgery twice in 2013, the first time during the offseason and again in December after rupturing a disk in Week 16 against Washington and missing the finale that the Cowboys lost with a playoff berth on the line.

In 2014, the four-time Pro Bowl player sustained a small fracture in his back and missed a loss to Arizona before leading the Cowboys to the NFC East title and their first playoff win since 2009.

Garrett said Romo's injury won't end his season.

"It's not related to the other back issues that he's had," Garrett said. "There is a specific to the hit he took the other night in the game."

Watson out with torn Achilles

Kaepernick sits during anthem

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick is refusing to stand for the national anthem before games because he believes the United States oppresses blacks and other minorities.

Kaepernick sat on the team's bench Friday night during the anthem before the Niners played host to the Green Bay Packers in an exhibition game. He later explained his reasoning in an interview with NFL Media.

"I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color," Kaepernick said. "To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder."

NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said Saturday that "players are encouraged but not required to stand during the playing of the national anthem."

The 49ers issued a statement after Pro Football Talk initially reported on Kaepernick's stand, saying that Americans have the right to protest or sup-

port the anthem.

"The national anthem is and always will be a special part of the pregame ceremony," the team said. "It is an opportunity to honor our country and reflect on the great liberties we are afforded as its citizens. In respecting such American principles as freedom of religion and freedom of expression, we recognize the right of an individual to choose to participate, or not, in our celebration of the national anthem."

Coach Chip Kelly said Saturday that he had not talked with Kaepernick about his actions or comments but said that Kaepernick also did not stand for the national anthem before last week's game in Denver when he was injured and did not play.

"We recognize his right to do that," Kelly said. "It's not my right to tell him not to do something. That's his right as a citizen."

Kaepernick, who is biracial, was adopted and raised by white parents. He has been outspoken on his Twitter account on civil rights issues and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Kaepernick is not the first U.S.-based athlete to use the anthem for protest. In 1996, NBA player Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf

refused to stand for the anthem, saying the United States had a history of tyranny and doing so would conflict with his Islamist beliefs. The NBA initially suspended Abdul-Rauf for his stance before it was lifted when he said he would stand and pray silently during the song.

Kaepernick said he is not worried about any potential fallout from his protest.

"This is not something that I am going to run by anybody," he told NFL Media. "I am not looking for approval. I have to stand up for people that are oppressed. ... If they take football away, my endorsements from me, I know that I stood up for what is right."

Kaepernick's agent did not immediately return a request for comment.

Kaepernick is in competition to win back the starting quarterback job in San Francisco that he lost to Blaine Gabbert last season. He made his first appearance of the preseason on Friday night after missing two games with a tired shoulder. He finished 2-for-6 for 14 yards and added 18 yards on four runs.

Kelly said Kaepernick is still in the running to win the starting job and his protest won't affect the decision.

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Ravens tight end Benjamin Watson has torn his right Achilles tendon and is likely lost for the season.

The injury occurred on Baltimore's first offensive play in a preseason game against the Detroit Lions on Saturday night.

Watson appeared to trip while running a pattern and slumped to the turf. After he finally got up, he had to be helped off the field.

Signed as a free agent in March, Watson was expected to be a key element in the Ravens' passing game. He had 74 catches for 825 yards and six touchdowns last season with New Orleans.

The 35-year-old broke into the league in 2004 with New England and played with Cleveland from 2010 through 2012 before going to the Saints.

He has 434 catches for 4,963 yards and 38 touchdowns in 163 games.

After Watson's injury, promising rookie running back Kenneth Dixon left in the second quarter with a sprained knee in Baltimore's 30-9 victory.

Urias, Seager help Dodgers edge Cubs

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Julio Urias allowed one run over six innings, Corey Seager set a Dodgers franchise record for a shortstop with his 23rd home run and Los Angeles defeated the Chicago Cubs 3-2 on Saturday to even the series between NL division leaders.

Urias (5-2) pitched better at home than the last time he faced the Cubs. The rookie left-hander made his second career start in Chicago on June 2 and gave up six runs — five earned — and eight hits in five innings while serving up three homers.

This time, he allowed six hits and tied a career high with eight strikeouts and two walks.

Kenley Jansen pitched a perfect ninth for his 38th save a day after allowing a run on a wild pitch in the ninth in a 6-4, 10-inning loss.

The Cubs' four-game winning streak ended behind the shortest outing of the season from Jason Hammel (13-7). He gave up three runs and five hits in 2¹/₃ innings.

Seager tied the game at 1 in the first, giving him the most homers by a Dodgers shortstop

in franchise single-season history. He broke the old mark of 22 set by Glenn Wright in 1930.

Red Sox 8, Royals 3: Dustin Pedroia had four hits to extend his streak to 11 straight at-bats before bouncing into a double play with a chance to tie the major-league record and host Boston beat Kansas City.

Pedroia's streak, which stretched over three games, ended in the eighth inning. Johnny Kling of the Cubs set the record of 12 in 1902, Pinky Higgins of the Red Sox matched it in 1938, and Detroit's Walt Dropo accomplished the feat in 1952.

Braves 3, Giants 1: Matt Kemp hit a three-run homer and Mike Foltynewicz pitched 7²/₃ strong innings, leading visiting Atlanta past San Francisco.

Yankees 13, Orioles 5: Rookie Gary Sanchez kept up a most remarkable run, homering for the third straight game to help host New York rout Baltimore.

Rockies 9, Nationals 4 (11): Charlie Blackmon hit two home runs, including the go-ahead shot in the 11th inning, and visiting Colorado beat Washing-

ton to snap a four-game losing streak.

NL MVP Bryce Harper was ejected in the 10th after getting called out on strikes.

Mets 12, Phillies 1: Yoenis Cespedes hit a three-run homer, Kelly Johnson had a pinch-hit grand slam and Noah Syndergaard pitched two-hit ball over seven innings to help host New York rout Philadelphia.

Angels 3, Tigers 2: Detroit stars Victor Martinez and J.D. Martinez were ejected, along with manager Brad Ausmus and hitting coach Wally Joyner in a series of balls-and-strikes disputes as the Tigers' five-game winning streak ended in a loss to visiting Los Angeles.

Rangers 7, Indians 0: Mitch Moreland's grand slam capped a bizarre, five-run first inning for host Texas and A.J. Griffin pitched six strong innings in the victory over Cleveland.

Blue Jays 8, Twins 7: Melvin Upton Jr. hit an RBI triple and continued home on a misplay in the eighth inning, completing AL East-leading Toronto's rally from a five-run deficit against visiting Minnesota.

Athletics 3, Cardinals 2: Khris Davis hustled home

on an infield grounder in the eighth inning and Oakland rallied for two runs to beat host St. Louis.

Reds 13, Diamondbacks 0: Anthony DeSclafani threw a four-hitter and Scott Schebler homered twice in Cincinnati's blowout victory over host Arizona.

White Sox 9, Mariners 3: Jose Abreu hit the first of Chicago's four runs, and Jose Quintana threw 7²/₃ solid innings in the White Sox's victory over visiting Seattle.

Padres 1, Marlins 0: Ryan Schimpf homered, Clayton Richard pitched seven innings and visiting San Diego beat Miami to snap a four-game losing streak.

Astros 6, Rays 2: Rookie Alex Bregman homered and had three RBIs, and Dallas Keuchel threw seven solid innnins in Houston's victory over visiting Tampa Bay.

Pirates 9, Brewers 6: Pinch-hitter Gregory Polanco had a tiebreaking three-run double and Pittsburgh overcame a four-run deficit to beat host Milwaukee.

Rosberg wins wild Belgian Grand Prix

Associated Press

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS, Belgium — Nico Rosberg won an incident-packed Belgian Grand Prix featuring a chaotic start, wild overtaking, a heavy crash, safety cars and a red flag.

The Mercedes driver's win on Sunday saw him close the gap to nine points on teammate Lewis Hamilton, who finished third behind Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo as the resurgent Australian driver secured a third straight podium finish.

Rosberg started from pole position with teen driver Max Verstappen also on the front row.

Verstappen, 18, the youngest driver to start on the front

row, was overtaken by Kimi Raikkonen and Sebastian Vettel, and then aggressively tried to go for the inside heading into the first turn.

The impeded Ferraris were squeezed wide and, as a consequence, Raikkonen came across and nudged into the side of Vettel.

German driver Nico Hulkenberg was a season's best fourth ahead of Mexican Sergio Perez and Vettel, while Fernando Alonso was seventh, Raikkonen ninth and Verstappen 11th.

Verstappen and Raikkonen were involved in another incident as Verstappen appeared to nudge him wide.

Raikkonen — who is twice Verstappen's age — let his frus-

tration out, saying "his only interest is to push me off the track."

Then, as they battled for 13th place, Verstappen zig-zagged in front of him as he tried to hold position, prompting Raikkonen to use an expletive when describing Verstappen's driving as "ridiculous."

In other auto racing news:

■ Michael McDowell edged teammate Brendan Gaughan by 0.534 seconds in overtime Saturday at Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wis., for his first career NASCAR Xfinity Series win.

Brennan Poole was third, while pole-sitter Alex Tagliani finished seventh in the 194-mile race.

■ Brett Moffitt passed Timothy Peters and William Byron on the final lap to win the NASCAR Truck Series race at Michigan International Speedway on Saturday.

Peters finished second, Daniel Hemric was third and Byron finished fourth.

■ After a last-lap pass of James Hinchcliffe, Graham Rahal held on to win at Texas Motor Speedway on Saturday night in the closest finish for an IndyCar race at the high-banked, 1½-mile oval.

Rahal won by eight-thousandths (0.008) of a second, crossing the line only inches and side-by-side with Hinchcliffe, with Tony Kanaan right behind them.