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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Accidents raise questions of whether Navy is stretched thin

The Washington Post

Constant deployments, a shrinking number of ships and high demands on crews have frayed the Navy, according to naval experts and current and former Navy officers, leading to four major incidents at sea this year and the deaths of 17 sailors.

The collision of the USS John S. McCain and an oil tanker on Aug. 21 — which left 10 sailors dead — was the culmination of more than a decade of nonstop naval operations that has exhausted the service.

Government reports, congressional probes and internal concerns all have pointed to systemic problems related to long deployments, deferred maintenance and shortened training periods within the Navy's surface fleet that seem to have coalesced in the Pacific, specifically at the Japan-based 7th Fleet.

Bryan McGrath, a former destroyer commander and deputy director of the Center of American Seapower at the Hudson Institute, said there's no "silver bullet" for the Navy's issues and that for the past 15 years, the surface fleet has been in decline.

"The biggest problem is that the Navy recognized this and started to make changes, but at the same time the operational requirements became more pressurized," McGrath said. "The Pacific fleet has really been pressurized in a way that has harmed the surface forces' proficiency in very basic things."

In January, the guided missile cruiser USS Antietam ran aground in Tokyo Bay, leading to the commander's dismissal.

In May, the cruiser USS Lake Champlain collided with a South Korean fishing boat. Roughly a month later, the USS Fitzgerald collided with a container ship in its approach to Tokyo Bay. Seven sailors died and the destroyer's commanding and executive officers were relieved.

The combined death toll eclipses the number of battlefield casualties in Afghanistan this year, which stand at 11.

In a written message to his officers, Adm. Scott Swift, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, pointed out that the rash of incidents occurred during "the most basic of operations."

"History has shown that continuous operations over time causes basic skills to at-

rophy and in some cases gives commands a false sense of their overall readiness," he wrote after the McCain collision.

Following that accident, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson ordered a 24-hour stand-down and a fleetwide review of training and seamanship, including a separate probe of Pacific operations.

The Antietam, McCain and Fitzgerald are all in the 7th Fleet based in Yokosuka, Japan, raising questions over whether there are particular problems in that command. The 7th Fleet is responsible for 48 million square miles in the Pacific and Indian oceans, the Navy said. Swift also dismissed its commander, Vice Adm. Joseph Aucoin.

The spate of accidents also comes amid the Pentagon's shifting of forces to the Pacific, where it will permanently station 60 percent of its naval and combat air power assets. The Trump administration is also considering plans to expand the Navy to 350 ships. There are currently 276 deployable ships on Navy rolls.

The Navy has been strained by fewer ships taking on more missions. A 2015 study by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments found that deployed ships remained at a constant level of 100 between 1998 and 2014, even though the fleet shrank by about 20 percent.

Pressure on the fleets decreased by 2015, yet the Navy still had three-quarters of operational ships constantly deployed as maintenance and fundamental skills such as navigation and ship-to-ship communication wilted, the report's authors said.

The Navy's missions in the Pacific to challenge Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea as well as ramped-up patrols and cruises to guard against North Korean attacks have utilized destroyers such as the McCain and the Fitzgerald as centerpiece warships, said Ridzwan Rahmat, a defense analyst with IHS Jane's who is an expert on naval operations in Asia.

"This particular platform is being stretched in terms of capability and crew," he said.

A dearth of ships is felt more sharply in the Pacific, where deployments are more frequent and strenuous than in other seas, said Rob McFall, a former Navy officer who served as the operations officer for the

Missing McCain sailors' bodies recovered

BY TYLER HLAVAC

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Navy and Marine Corps divers have recovered the remains of the 10 missing USS John S. McCain sailors killed in a collision last week, the Navy said Monday.

The Yokosuka-based guided-missile destroyer was traveling to Singapore for a routine port visit when it collided with a Liberian-flagged oil tanker, injuring five sailors and leaving 10 missing.

The Navy previously announced it had recovered the bodies of Petty Officer 3rd Class Dustin Louis Doyon, 26, of Connecticut, and Petty Officer 3rd Class Kenneth Aaron Smith, 22, of New Jersey.

Monday morning's statement said the following sailors' remains had been found aboard the ship:

- Petty Officer 1st Class Charles Nathan Findley, 31, of Missouri.
- Petty Officer 1st Class Abraham Lopez, 39, of Texas.
- Petty Officer 2nd Class Kevin Sayer Bushell, 26, of Maryland.
- Petty Officer 2nd Class Jacob Daniel Drake, 21, of Ohio.
- Petty Officer 2nd Class Timothy Thomas Eckels Jr., 23, of Maryland.
- Petty Officer 2nd Class Corey George Ingram, 28, of New York.
- Petty Officer 3rd Class John Henry Hoagland III, 20, of Texas.
- Petty Officer 3rd Class Logan Stephen Palmer, 23, of Illinois.

Fitzgerald until 2014.

Typical deployments for stateside ships occur in predictable, two-year cycles, with about six months underway and 18 months of maintenance, training and workups, McFall said.

The cycle is more unforgiving in the Pacific. Deployments vary on mission, but a common routine is three months out, six months in port as the mission to reassure regional allies balloons in importance, McFall said.

Car bomb rips through busy Baghdad market

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A car bomb destroyed a busy market area in eastern Baghdad on Monday morning, killing at least 12 people, Iraqi officials said.

The explosives-laden car went off at the wholesale Jami-la market in Baghdad's Shiite district of Sadr City, a police officer said. The explosion also wounded 28 other people, he added, saying the death toll was expected to rise further.

A medical official confirmed the casualty figures. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity.

A plume of thick black smoke billowed from the area, and people were running away in panic. At the site, twisted metal and shards of glass littered the pavement, along with vegetables and other goods sold at the market.

"It was a thunderous explosion," said Hussein Kadhim, 35, a porter and father of three whose right leg was wounded.

"It sounds that the security situation is still uncontrollable and I'm afraid that such bombings will make a comeback."

Islamic State quickly claimed responsibility in an online statement on its media arms, the Aamaq news agency. The Associated Press could not verify the authenticity of the statement. Sunni militants consider Shiites to be apostates, and Shiite-dominated areas are prime targets for ISIS.

The bombing came as U.S.-backed Iraqi forces are in final stages of recapturing from ISIS the northern town of Tal Afar about 93 miles from Syria's border.

On Sunday, the Iraqi military said it had "fully liberated" Tal Afar's town center from ISIS militants. On Monday, the troops fought at the outskirts of al-Ayadia district, about 6 miles northwest of Tal Afar where most of the militants fled.

3 missing after Japanese Seahawk crashes into sea

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A Japan navy helicopter crashed into the Sea of Japan on Saturday during nighttime takeoff and landing exercises, a Defense Ministry spokesman said, spurring a frantic search for survivors.

The SH-60J Seahawk from the Asagiri-class destroyer Setogiri lost contact around 10:48 p.m., about 50 miles off Tappizaki, Aomori prefecture, the spokesman said. Search-and-rescue operations began immediately, and one survivor from the four-person crew was plucked from the sea.

Authorities have also recovered what appear to be the helicopter's rear rotor and its flight recorder, the spokesman said. Search efforts continued Mon-

day morning, and an investigation is underway.

"The whereabouts of the three missing personnel have not been confirmed, but a piece of the aircraft has been recovered," the spokesman said. "We are doing our best to find the missing personnel."

The Japanese military has dispatched five vessels and 10 aircraft to search for the missing crew, the spokesman said. Japan's Coast Guard has also sent two patrol boats. No U.S. forces are involved in the search.

The commander in chief of the Self-Defense Fleet has grounded all Seahawk helicopters until further notice.

The Setogiri belongs to Escort Flotilla 3 of the Japanese navy's Maizuru District, the spokesman said.

ACLU sues Trump over transgender ban

By NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The American Civil Liberties Union and two LGBT rights groups filed lawsuits Monday against President Donald Trump over his new ban on transgender servicemembers.

Lambda Legal and OutServe-SLDN filed a challenge in U.S. District Court on behalf of a current transgender servicemember and two transgender individuals who want to join the military. It argues the ban violates the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause, as well as due process and free speech.

The ACLU filed its complaint on behalf of five current transgender troops, citing violations of equal protection and due process. The lawsuits ask that the courts issue an order preventing the Defense Department from implementing the ban.

An Aug. 25 White House memorandum, signed by Trump, gave Defense Secretary Jim Mattis six months to implement a policy barring transgender people's entry into the military. It also directs Mattis to stop spending on sex-reassignment surgeries, except for servicemembers already in treatment. The Pentagon previously provided sex-change operations to transgender servicemembers when deemed medically necessary.

"It is an unconscionable and unconstitutional breach of trust for the president to single out brave transgender servicemembers and able recruits for discrimination," said Sarah McBride, press secretary for Human Rights Campaign, which joined Lambda Legal and OutServe in their complaint. "The harm that this administration is causing to both these courageous Americans and our national security must be stopped."

Transgender servicemembers were granted the right to serve openly in June 2016, under

President Barack Obama's administration. Trump first made known his intentions to reverse the policy and ban transgender servicemembers in a three-part tweet on July 26. He cited costs and disruption to military units in justifying his decision.

The ACLU included screenshots of those tweets in its lawsuit. The organization argued Trump's decision was not based on studies or consultation with military officers. The ACLU accused Trump of using it to gain political points with conservative legislators to get more votes for his proposed wall on the Mexico border.

Researchers behind a 2016 Rand Corp. study estimated there were 2,450 active-duty transgender servicemembers and 1,510 in the reserves.

The ACLU lawsuit includes servicemembers at various stages of sex reassignment. Army Staff Sgt. Kate Cole, 27, is going through hormone therapy and is scheduled in a few weeks for surgery deemed medically necessary for her transition, according to the lawsuit. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Teagen Gilbert, 31, was planning to seek approval for sex-reassignment surgery. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Brock Stone, 34, is close to finalizing his transition and was expecting to have surgery in 2018.

Cole, Gilbert and Stone have all completed deployments in Afghanistan.

The Lambda Legal and OutServe lawsuit was filed on behalf of Ryan Karnoski, 22, of Seattle and a 16-year-old in Corpus Christi, Texas — both of whom are transgender and want to join the military.

Another plaintiff, Staff Sgt. Cathrine Schmid, 33, has served in the Army for more than 12 years and has applied to become a warrant officer. According to the lawsuit, she was informed after Trump's tweets that her application was put on hold.

NRA attacks media in bid to keep gains

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The election of President Donald Trump and Republican control of Congress meant the National Rifle Association probably could rest easy that gun laws wouldn't change for at least four years. But the NRA has begun a campaign not against pending legislation but what it sees as liberal forces bent on undoing the progress it's made.

Using the hashtags #counterresistance and #clenched-fistoftruth, the NRA has put out a series of videos that announce a "shot across the bow," and say the gun-rights group is "coming for you" and that "elites ... threaten our very survival."

"The times are burning and the media elites have been caught holding the match," NRA spokeswoman Dana Loesch says in one video aired on NRATV, the gun lobby's web video site, as it shows footage of people fighting police, breaking storefront glass and burning the American flag.

Later, she specifically calls out The New York Times: "We've had it with your narratives, your propaganda, your fake news. We've had it with your constant protection of your Democrat overlords, your refusal to acknowledge any truth that upsets the fragile construct that you believe is real life. And we've had it with your tone-deaf assertion that you are in any way truth- or fact-based journalism," Loesch says. "Consider this the shot across your proverbial bow. ... In short? We're coming for you."

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, said the tone and language is "overwrought rhetoric" that could lead to violence. Critics of the NRA contend the organization is relying on the "fake news" mantra started by Trump to whip up its followers after a dip in gun sales that has taken place since Trump succeeded President Barack Obama.

Trump rolling back limits on surplus military gear for police

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will revive a program that provides local police departments with surplus military equipment, such as high-caliber weapons and grenade launchers, despite concerns armored vehicles and other gear were inflaming confrontations with protesters.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the program to roaring applause Monday at a national convention of the Fraternal Order of Police.

The plan will "ensure that you can get the lifesaving gear that you need to do your job and send a strong message that we will not allow criminal activity, violence, and lawlessness to become a new normal," Sessions told the cheering crowd.

Trump plans to sign an order undoing Obama-era limitations on police agencies' access to camouflage uniforms, bullet-proof vests, riot shields, firearms, ammunition and other

items.

Groups across the political spectrum have expressed concern about the militarization of police, arguing the equipment encourages and escalates confrontations with officers. But many law enforcement agencies and policing organizations see it as needed to ensure officers aren't put in danger when responding to active shooter calls and terrorist attacks.

Congress authorized the Pentagon program in 1990, allowing police to receive surplus equipment to help fight drugs, which then gave way to fighting terrorism.

President Barack Obama issued an executive order in 2015 that severely limited the program, partly triggered by public outrage over the use of military gear during protests in Ferguson, Mo., following the shooting death of Michael Brown, 18. Police responded in riot gear and deployed tear gas, dogs and armored vehicles. At

times they also pointed assault rifles at protesters.

Obama's order prohibited the government from providing grenade launchers, bayonets, tracked armored vehicles, weaponized aircraft, and firearms and ammunition of .50-caliber or greater to police.

As of December, the agency overseeing the program had recalled at least 100 grenade launchers, more than 1,600 bayonets and 126 tracked vehicles — those that run on continuous, tank-like tracks instead of wheels.

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund said in a statement Sunday night that it is "exceptionally dangerous and irresponsible" for the administration to lift the ban.

Most police agencies rarely require military equipment for daily use but see a need to have it available, said Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum.

Anarchists swarm Calif. anti-hate rally

Associated Press

BERKELEY, Calif. — An anti-hate rally was disrupted when scores of anarchists wearing black clothing and masks stormed the demonstration in Berkeley and attacked several supporters of President Donald Trump. But police were able to head off any wider violence.

Thousands gathered Sunday in response to a planned anti-Marxism demonstration that was canceled amid concerns demonstrators might be attacked. The counterdemonstration was largely peaceful for several hours until the antifa, or anti-fascists, overran police barricades around the protest area. The violence was swift but brief, and among those targeted was Joey Gibson, leader of the right-wing organization Patriot Prayer that had called off a

demonstration a day earlier in San Francisco.

Berkeley Police Chief Andrew Greenwood said officers were told not to actively confront the anarchists. He applauded officers' restraint, saying it forestalled greater violence. Six people suffered injuries, including two who were hospitalized, and one officer was injured while making an arrest and several others were hit with paint.

There were 13 arrests on various charges, including assault with a deadly weapon.

"The potential use of force became very problematic" given the thousands of peaceful protesters in the park, Greenwood said. Once anarchists arrived, it was clear there would not be dueling protests between left and right, so he ordered his officers out of the park and al-

lowed the anarchists to march in.

There was "no need for a confrontation over a grass patch," Greenwood said.

Several hours later, the demonstration broke up without any further incidents.

The anti-Marxist rally in Berkeley was organized by Amber Cummings, a transsexual supporter of Trump. Citing the potential for violence, she canceled the event but said she would show up on her own. She was not seen there, though Gibson vowed to come and when he did, anarchists set upon him.

They pepper-sprayed him and chased him as he backed away with his hands held in the air. Gibson rushed behind a line of police wearing riot gear, who set off a smoke bomb to drive away the attackers.

Water rises to roof lines in Houston

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Floodwaters reached the roof lines of single-story homes Monday, and people could be heard pleading for help from inside as Harvey kept pouring rain onto Houston after a chaotic weekend of rising water and rescues.

The nation's fourth-largest city was still largely paralyzed, and there was no relief in sight from the storm that spun into Texas as a Category 4 hurricane, then parked itself over the Gulf Coast. With nearly 2 feet of rain still expected, authorities worried whether the worst was yet to come.

Water gushed from two reservoirs overwhelmed by Harvey as officials sought to release pressure on two dams that were at risk of failing from the immense floodwaters that have filled the city. The move aimed at protecting the downtown business district risked flooding thousands more homes.

Meanwhile, authorities continued plucking people from the floodwaters — at least 2,000 so far, according to Police Chief Art Acevedo. At least 185 critical rescue requests were still pending Monday morning. The goal is to rescue those people by the end of the day, he said.

With rain falling unabated, he said there was nowhere left for the water to drain.

"I'm not sure where the water is going because it's just so much that we can't really absorb more in the ground at this point," he told MSNBC's "Morning Joe."

Harvey, which made landfall Friday as a Category 4 hurricane and then lingered just off the coast as a drenching tropical storm, sent devastating floods pouring into Houston on Sunday. The rising water forced a mass evacuation of parts of the city and overwhelmed rescuers who could not keep up with constant calls for help.

As many as 50 counties are affected by the flooding, Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Brock Long said Monday. The rain and floods have been blamed for at least two deaths.

Emergency vehicles made up most of the traffic Monday

Governor activates full Texas National Guard

BY DIANNA CAHN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Texas Gov. Gregg Abbott activated the entire Texas National Guard on Monday, bringing the number of deployed Guardsmen to 12,000 as floodwaters in the Houston area continue to rise and more people evacuate growing flood zones.

The move quadruples the 3,000 Texas Guard personnel already working to help residents in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey as the subsequent tropical storm continues to drop water over Houston and the region.

"The Texas National Guard is working closely with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and federal troops to respond urgently to the growing needs of Texans who have fallen victim to Hurricane Harvey, and the activation of the entire Guard will assist in the efforts already under way," Abbott said in a statement.

As of Monday morning, rescue teams from the Texas National Guard, the Coast Guard and other state-controlled agencies have responded to more than 3,000 cases and rescued about 1,500 people — 300 by air and 1,200 in rescue boats, said Petty Officer 1st Class Seth Johnson, the Coast Guard spokesman in Houston. The Texas Coast Guard, working with other civilian agencies, has 25 helicopters involved in the response effort — 18 from the Coast Guard and the rest from Customs & Border Protection and the Department of Public Safety. On the way are 22 helicopters — nine Coast Guard, eight Navy and five from Customs.

Nine flood-response punt teams, operating 21 flat-bottomed rescue boats, are deployed in the Houston area and eight teams are on

the way with more boats, he said.

The Texas Guard has 16 helicopters in the area — 10 UH-60 Black Hawks, four UH-72 Lakotas and two CH-47 Chinooks — while seven fixed-wing Coast Guard and National Guard aircraft are aiding in the response. There are also more than 450 vehicles: 200 Humvees, 218 high-water vehicles, 15 wreckers and 19 fuelers, said Pentagon spokesman Army Col. Rob Manning.

National Guard aircraft from other states are being sent upon request from Texas. Those include a C-130 transport aircraft, three HH-60 Pave Hawks and two C-17s from the New York Air National Guard and six helicopters from Utah, Nebraska and North Carolina National Guard units.

On Sunday, Abbott worked with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to establish a Texas National Guard dual-status command, allowing a single commander over federal and state forces to oversee the response to the devastation. Texas has not yet requested that active-duty forces be mobilized to assist, but the move suggests that is a possibility, said Air Force Capt. Chase McFarland, a spokesman for U.S. Northern Command.

McFarland said NORTHCOM has pre-positioned forces in the region to be ready should the request come.

"In a case like this, we try to look at pre-positioning certain forces we expect or think the state will ask for," McFarland said. "That way ... we are already there and ready to go."

Manning said the pre-positioned Defense Department assets — nine search-and-rescue rotary aircraft, two fixed-wing aircraft, pararescue teams and command-and-control elements — are deploying to Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth.

in downtown Houston. The business district was virtually deserted. Many traffic signals did not work; most businesses were closed. Residents living near the Addicks and Barker reservoirs — created to prevent flooding in downtown Houston — were warned Sunday that a controlled release would cause additional street flooding that could spill into homes. The rising water and continuing rain put pressure on the dams, which could fail if the pressure is not relieved.

Harris and Fort Bend county officials advised residents to pack their cars Sunday night and to leave in the morning.

Heavy rain raises fears in Louisiana

MOSS BLUFF, La. — Bands of heavy rain from Harvey lashed southwestern Louisiana on Monday, ratcheting up fears of destructive flooding in some storm-weary communities.

Floodwaters covered roads and crept toward homes in Brenda Bradley's neighborhood in Moss Bluff, a Lake Charles suburb in Calcasieu Parish.

Bradley, 72, and her husband, Jimmie, had stacked

sandbags at their doors. The rising water was lapping at the steps to their back porch Monday morning.

"We've got to try to save what we can," Bradley said. "We're in our 70s and there's no way we can lift all (our) furniture up."

President Donald Trump issued a federal emergency declaration on Monday for five parishes in southwestern Louisiana: Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis and Vermillion.

From The Associated Press

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man gets 8-16 years in case with severed hand

PA EASTON — A man convicted in a home invasion robbery during which an accomplice's hand was severed has been sentenced to eight to 16 years in prison.

A Northampton County judge on Friday imposed the eight-year minimum term that prosecutors had agreed to recommend when Ronald Mumbauer Jr., 44, pleaded guilty in June to aggravated assault and burglary.

Authorities alleged he was one of three men involved in the July home invasion in Northampton during which the resident said he defended himself with a machete after finding masked men in his basement.

William Andrews Jr., 55, whose severed hand was reattached later, was sentenced to 13 to 30 years on aggravated assault, burglary and related convictions.

Man who fled wearing only a towel arrested

PA PITTSBURGH — Allegheny County authorities said they apprehended a man who jumped from a window onto a rooftop below wearing only a bath towel to escape sheriff's deputies serving a warrant.

Deputies arrested Dale Taylor Jr., 31, and his girlfriend, Serena Alston, 37, in Butler County on Saturday. Authorities said Taylor fled into a backyard Friday night when deputies sought him at a Pittsburgh home.

While searching the house Saturday, Deputy Carlos Jativa, 29, suffered serious injuries when he fell from a 15-foot concrete wall. He was in stable

condition at a hospital after undergoing surgery.

Taylor and Alston, both of Wilksburg, were taken to county jail. Taylor is being held without bond on the warrant for forfeiting bond in connection with a court case and a Wilksburg arrest warrant. They also face charges for the escape.

Woman, 87, fights off assault with walker

CA STOCKTON — Authorities in central California said an 87-year-old woman used her walker to fight off a man who tried to sexually assault her while she slept.

Stockton police Officer Joe Silva said the woman woke earlier this month to the intruder lifting her nightgown.

Silva said the man fled after she screamed and fended him off with her walker. Neighbors came to the woman's aid after hearing the commotion.

The Sacramento Bee reported Friday that police are still searching for the suspect, and that the woman received minor injuries.

Governor nixes plan to boost trampoline safety

IL CHICAGO — Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner has rejected a plan aimed at regulating trampoline parks, citing a "new mandate on businesses" in the state.

The Republican vetoed the proposal Friday, one of many bills he acted on.

The plan would have let the state establish new fees, rules and regulations, including requiring trampoline courts to meet operation and maintenance standards.

Proponents say the new rules would improve safety as the in-

door jumping trend has spread and injuries have soared. Opponents objected to the costs.

Former city attorney faces drug charge

NE OMAHA — A former Council Bluffs, Iowa, assistant city attorney has been indicted on drug charges in Nebraska.

The Omaha World-Herald reported that Don Bauermeister, 44, of Omaha, was charged by a federal grand jury with possessing with intent to distribute about 13 pounds of marijuana.

Bauermeister had been a city employee since February 2003, but resigned in mid-June.

The indictment was handed down Thursday. The allegation covers a period from November 2016 to Jan. 9.

Baby elephant said to be regaining appetite

PA PITTSBURGH — Officials at the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium said a baby elephant's appetite is improving following insertion of a feeding tube to help it gain much-needed weight.

Zoo spokesperson Tracy Gray said the still-unnamed female calf is taking in more food through the tube "and she's also taking more bottles."

On Saturday, the zoo posted on a blog devoted to the elephant that the baby had taken a short walk "and we're beginning to see her feisty personality return."

The baby was born prematurely in May at the International Conservation Center in Somerset County and was rejected by the mother, forcing the zoo to feed it with a bottle.

Officials said teething then led to diminished appetite, leaving the calf in critical con-

dition and prompting insertion of the feeding tube.

Popular giraffe dies unexpectedly at zoo

CA PALM DESERT — A popular giraffe has died unexpectedly at a Southern California zoo.

Officials said Pona, a 17-year-old male, was found dead Friday at the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens in Palm Desert.

The Desert Sun newspaper said a necropsy will be conducted to determine the cause of death.

Born at the San Diego Wild Animal Park in 2000, Pona came to the Living Desert about two years later.

He was the zoo's tallest giraffe, standing 18 feet, and he weighed just over 2,000 pounds.

Giraffes in captivity can live up to 28 years.

Wayward bull corralled on major highway

NJ HAMILTON TOWNSHIP — State police helped capture a wayward bull that was found walking along a major highway in New Jersey.

The animal was spotted around 8:15 a.m. Sunday on Interstate 195, near the exit for Route 130 in Hamilton Township.

Troopers helped slow traffic in the area while civilians armed with lassos helped corral the bull and eventually got it into a trailer without incident or injury. The animal then was returned to its owner.

It wasn't immediately clear how the bull escaped or how it ended up along the roadway.

From wire reports

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Targeting rule not going anywhere

Associated Press

In these times when so much divides Americans, the targeting penalty brings college football fans together.

Just about all of them hate it.

The targeting foul turns 10 this season, though the real rage against it did not start until 2013 when player ejections became part of the penalty. The rule remains unchanged despite an offseason discussion of whether to eliminate ejections for certain infractions, and the effort to protect players is spreading: The NFL competition committee earlier this year approved automatic ejections for egregious hits to the head.

Targeting can be a difficult call for officials, a split-second evaluation of a high-speed collision. The 15-yard penalty that comes with it can drastically swing a game and losing a player to an ejection is a dramatic step. It does remain a relatively rare call. Even last year, when targeting fouls reached new highs in total (144) and per game (0.17), the number still amounted to only one every 5.83 FBS games played.

For many involved with college football, this seems a small price to pay to attempt to make the game safer — especially as studies on the toll football takes on the body and brain continue to yield worri-

some results.

While it is impossible to quantify whether ejecting players has led to a decrease in the rate and number of head and neck injuries, those who play a part in shaping college football's rules say they can see a difference in the way the game is being played.

"We can see clear changes in behavior of the players," said Rogers Redding, the national coordinator of officials. "By that I mean, we see less of players just launching themselves like a missile at a guy's head. We still see it sometimes, but you also see a lot of times when they're coming in lower. They're getting their heads out of the way. They're making contact at the chest or in the side, not going high."

Another telltale sign: Dangerous hits that in the past would produce high-fives and chest-bumps by players now are no longer cause for celebration.

"Now what you'll see is, you'll see a player make a hit like this and one of the early reactions is he'll grab his helmet and say, 'Oh, my goodness what have I done,'" Redding said.

Targeting is not just about trying to curtail concussions. What has been lost in the constant focus on concussions in football is that the targeting rule was put in place

as a response to research that showed the number of catastrophic head, neck, spine and brain injuries at all levels of football spiked in the 2000s.

Since 2013, when the automatic ejection was added, all targeting calls are subject to video review and can be overturned. Last season, replay officials were given the discretion to call obvious targeting fouls that were missed by field officials. There were 28 targeting fouls called in FBS last season by replay officials.

Redding said he believes the reason targeting fouls have increased from 0.04 per game in 2013 to 0.17 last year is because officials have become more comfortable with making the call.

During the offseason, officials decided the occasional hard-luck foul that leads to a player getting ejected was not enough reason to modify a rule designed to take dangerous hits out of the game. The penalty is punitive, but necessary if changing behavior is going to continue, said Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby, who also heads the football oversight committee.

"As much as some people don't like it, it's making the game safer," Bowlsby said. "I don't believe it's sissified the game. I don't think it's diminished the quality of play. I think it's made the game safer."

BIG 12 PREVIEW

Oklahoma could face conference title rematch

Associated Press

Either Oklahoma or Texas has won the past seven Big 12 championship games.

When the conference title game resumes this season after a six-year hiatus, the Red River rivals could be facing each other for the second time that season. Or maybe it will be a rematch between the Sooners and Oklahoma State, though they wouldn't play consecutive weeks since the regular Bedlam game is now set for the first Saturday of November and not at the end of the regular season.

The championship game is back in the Big 12, which was left out of the College Football Playoff in two of the first three years.

"We've been responsive to what we heard from the CFP," Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said, referring to that "13th data point" the title game creates for the league.

But the league didn't return to divisions, which it had through 2010 when there were 12 teams. So the top two teams in the Big 12 standings will play again in the title game — a guaranteed rematch in the only power five league with a round-robin schedule. That could mean the first-ever December game between Oklahoma and Texas, both with new coaches and teams that haven't faced each other twice in the same season since 1903.

Oklahoma, with Heisman

Trophy finalist quarterback Baker Mayfield back for his senior season, will be going for its third consecutive Big 12 title — and 11th overall.

"I've always envisioned it being more like this. Of course, you get the pressure with it," said 33-year-old Lincoln Riley, a first-time head coach after Bob Stoops' surprising retirement in June. "If you don't enjoy that sense of pressure and those expectations, then it's probably not the place for you."

The favorites

Oklahoma is a heavy favorite in the Big 12 as usual, even with the unexpected coaching change, the loss of another

Heisman finalist (big-play receiver Dede Westbrook) and the early departures of two running backs (Samaje Perine and Joe Mixon) to the NFL. Mayfield is among nine returning offensive starters, and six of the top eight tacklers are back. The Sooners go into the season with a 10-game winning streak, the longest among FBS teams.

Oklahoma State has never won a Big 12 title or played in the championship game, but goes into coach Mike Gundy's 13th season with quarterback Mason Rudolph (4,091 yards passing, 28 touchdowns, four interceptions), receiver James Washington (71 catches, 1,380 yards, 10 TDs) and running back Justice Hill (1,142 yards rushing).

ACC PREVIEW

Clemson vulnerable after losing stars

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Clemson coach Dabo Swinney understands why preseason questions about the Tigers focus more on who's gone from last year's team instead of who is filling those roles.

The reigning national champions have big holes — the kind that could clear a path for Florida State or Louisville to climb atop the Atlantic Coast Conference's heavyweight division and win the league title in 2017.

"Guys, there's change every year," Swinney said during last month's ACC media days. "It's a new team."

The Tigers' thrilling 35-31 comeback win against Alabama did more than give Clemson its second national title. It capped a four-year run that has the ACC — a league best known for basketball — on level footing these days with the football-power Southeastern Conference. The ACC has won two national championships and has two Heisman Trophy winners in that span, including reigning trophy winner Lamar Jackson of Louisville.

Now it's up to the ACC to maintain its newly claimed stature.

The Tigers (14-1) have played in two straight national title games but must replace star players such as quarterback Deshaun Watson and linebacker Ben Boulware. They've ceded the league-favorite status to the Seminoles (10-3), who return 18 starters on offense and defense. And the Cardinals (9-4) lurk right behind with Jackson's return with the chance to join Ohio State's Archie Griffin as the only two-time Heisman winners.

And that's all in the Atlantic Division, part of an imbalanced alignment that has made the league's Coastal Division a perennial undercard.

Clemson extended a six-year

run by the Atlantic champ as winner of the league title game. FSU and Clemson each have won three. The Coastal, meanwhile, has had a revolving door of division champions that included Virginia Tech last year, North Carolina, Georgia Tech and Duke — and looks just as likely to have more uncertainty this fall.

The marquee game should be FSU's visit to Clemson on Nov. 11, with the winner of that game winning the past six league crowns.

"That game has turned into one heck of a game every year," said FSU coach Jimbo Fisher, who led the Seminoles to the 2013 national title. "Whoever wins it has a chance to win it all, not only win the ACC, but win a national championship."

The favorites

Atlantic: Florida State. The Seminoles lost league-leading rusher Dalvin Cook, but sophomore quarterback Deondre Francois is back while the defense returns 11 starters. That list includes safety Derwin James, who was regarded as one of the nation's defensive backs before missing all but two games last year with a knee injury.

Coastal: Miami. The Hurricanes return running back Mark Walton and eight defensive starters, though they need to find a new quarterback to replace Brad Kaaya if they want to reach their first ACC title game. Virginia Tech is picked second and also has to find a new quarterback as the Hokies try to become the first repeat winner since 2011.

On the hot seat?

Boston College's Steve Addazio guided the Eagles to a bowl win, but they're a combined 2-14 in the ACC the past two seasons.

Johnson rebounds, hangs on to win Northern Trust

Associated Press

OLD WESTBURY, N.Y. — For a guy who can make golf look easy, Dustin Johnson can't remember a victory more difficult.

He was five shots behind Jordan Spieth through five holes of the final round at The Northern Trust. He caught up to him in five holes, setting up a classic duel between two of the biggest names in golf that came down to the very end at Glen Oaks Club.

And then it became hard again for Johnson.

He turned away in disgust when his tee shot on the 18th hole peeled away to the right, up a slope and into thick grass. Johnson couldn't figure out how to get it out of a nasty lie to an elevated green guarded by two deep bunkers, so he surprised even Spieth by laying up and trusting his wedge game. Only when he climbed the hill and saw his ball 18 feet from the hole — Johnson thought it would be closer — did he wonder if this wouldn't be his day.

"I knew I was going to have to make it when I walked up there," Johnson said. "I thought I hit a better shot than that. I thought my par putt was going to be much closer. It ended up being the right distance, I guess. I mean, it went in."

That was the moment when Johnson did to Spieth what Spieth seems to do to everybody. He made a big putt.

The ball swirled into the back of the cup, and they were headed for a sudden-death playoff, a bonus hole for the fans who were treated to a great show in the FedEx Cup playoff opener that starts the chase for the \$10 million prize.

And that allowed Johnson to make good on a pledge.

Walking off the 18th tee in regulation, he had told Austin Johnson, his brother and cadie, that if he could get into a playoff, he would take on the water down the left side of the

18th fairway instead of playing a more conservative shot out to the right.

By the time they got to the 18th tee for the playoff, the wind had switched.

"I was hoping he was not going to notice that," Spieth said with a smile.

No such luck, and it might not have mattered. Johnson smashed his drive so far that it cleared the entire lake and settled in the far end of the fairway 341 yards away.

"At that point," Spieth said, "I have to try and make par best I can, and I'm just hoping. I'm at such a disadvantage."

Spieth hit a 7-iron that looked great until it rolled out to the back collar, 25 feet away. Johnson hit a 60-degree wedge for the second time on the 18th hole, with one big difference. Moments earlier, it was his third shot in a desperate attempt to make par. This time, it was his second shot after the longest drive on the 18th all week. He stuffed that to just inside 4 feet, and when Spieth missed, Johnson calmly rapped in his short birdie putt.

He smiled. He lightly pumped his fist, as he does for just about every win. And then he breathed a heavy sigh of relief.

"That was the first time that I really had to work hard for my win," he said.

In his 16 victories on the PGA Tour, only one other time had he made a birdie on the final hole to win by one shot. That was at Pebble Beach in 2010 when a simple birdie from the bunker on the par-5 18th gave him a one-shot victory over David Duval and J.B. Holmes.

In that respect, it felt great.

Sweeter still was the timing of the victory, his fourth of the year but the first since he injured his back from slipping down the stairs in his socks and having to withdraw from the Masters the following day.

O's pounce early, sweep AL East leaders

Associated Press

BOSTON — Outfielder Adam Jones knows the Orioles will need more than a four-game winning streak to get back to the playoffs.

"We can start that right now," he said after Baltimore beat the AL East-leading Red Sox 2-1 on Sunday to complete a three-game sweep. "Let's put our heads down and get at it."

Jones and Trey Mancini hit back-to-back RBI doubles against Doug Fister in the first inning, and the Orioles held on despite allowing 16 baserunners.

It was the fourth straight loss for Boston, matching its longest losing streak of the season. The Red Sox lead over the New York Yankees was cut to 2½ games — the closest the division race has been since Aug. 3.

The Orioles are eight games back in the division but two games out of a wild-card spot. The AL has eight teams within 3.5

games fighting for two wild-card spots; the Orioles are fifth, a half-game behind Seattle.

"As long as you're not mathematically eliminated, you've got a chance," Jones said as Baltimore heads into a three-game series against the Mariners. "You want to play teams that are just as hungry as you, that are fighting for something, like you."

One outing after his shocking one-hitter, in which he gave up a leadoff homer and held the Indians hitless the rest of the way, Fister (3-7) again struggled in the first inning before settling down. But this time the Red Sox couldn't erase the early deficit, stranding 13 and batting 1-for-13 with runners in scoring position.

"More than anything, a day of frustration," Red Sox manager John Farrell said. "We did a very good job of creating opportunities, when you consider the number of base on balls and the number of base hits. But they scattered them."

Wade Miley (8-10) allowed one run on

seven hits and three walks, striking out three in five innings. It's the sixth straight start in which Miley allowed three runs or fewer, but he's only made it past the fifth inning twice.

Brad Brach got the last five outs for his 17th save as the Orioles won their fourth in a row.

Double fisted

Fister gave up two runs on three hits in the first, including a leadoff single to Tim Beckham and then, with two outs, two straight run-scoring doubles.

Then he held the Orioles to two more hits before leaving with a 2-1 deficit. He walked two and struck out seven and also had a balk when he went into his motion but failed to deliver the pitch in the first inning.

"I kind of gave ourselves a little bit of a hole to dig into," he said. "I caught my cleat and just held onto it. I made a couple of bad pitches in the first inning and they made me pay for it."

Roundup

Stanton's 50th helps Marlins top Padres

Associated Press

MIAMI — Giancarlo Stanton hit his 50th home run to break an eighth-inning tie, helping the Miami Marlins sweep the San Diego Padres with a 6-2 victory on Sunday.

Stanton became the first National League player to reach 50 homers since Prince Fielder hit 50 for Milwaukee in 2007. Stanton's 17th homer in August tied him for the second-most in MLB history in the month, behind Rudy York's 18 in 1937.

With the score 2-all, Dee Gordon singled to lead off the eighth. Stanton then drove a 2-1 pitch from Clayton Richard (6-13) into the hedge in center field.

The All-Star slugger also walked, doubled home a run and singled in four plate appearances, hiking his average to .296. He increased his RBI total to 108, a career high.

The Marlins' three-game sweep and fourth consecutive victory overall gave them 13 wins in the past 16 games.

Twins 7, Blue Jays 2: Byron Buxton homered three times and set a career high with five RBIs, powering visiting Minnesota to host Toronto.

Indians 12, Royals 0: Yan Gomes hit a grand slam to highlight Cleveland's nine-run second inning, and the AL Central-leading Indians completed a three-game shutout sweep of Kansas City.

Phillies 6, Cubs 3: Rookie Rhys Hoskins homered for the fifth straight game and made a diving catch to start a game-changing triple play in the fifth inning, leading host Philadelphia to the victory.

Hoskins led off the eighth with a drive to left-center to give him 11 home runs in his first 18 games, becoming the fastest in major league history to reach 11 homers.

Brewers 3, Dodgers 2: Jimmy Nelson took a no-hit bid into the sixth inning and visiting Milwaukee beat Yu Darvish in his return from the disabled list.

Yankees 10, Mariners 1:

Masahiro Tanaka finally flourished under the sun, Starlin Castro had four hits and host New York took advantage of a record five errors by Seattle in the first inning.

Astros 7, Angels 5: Brian McCann tripled with the bases loaded in the eighth inning, rallying Houston to the road win.

Jose Altuve sparked the winning rally with a two-out single. Josh Reddick then singled and Yuli Gurriel walked before McCann's drive just got over a leaping Mike Trout in center field, giving Houston a 7-5 lead.

Diamondbacks 11, Giants 0: Patrick Corbin pitched seven-plus innings in his fourth straight win, J.D. Martinez homered twice and host Arizona pulled away for the victory over San Francisco.

Athletics 8, Rangers 3: Matt Olson and Matt Chapman hit consecutive homers in the second inning, and host Oakland completed a three-game sweep of Texas.

Mets 6-4, Nationals 5-5: Sean Doolittle allowed a run

before improving to 13-for-13 in save opportunities with Washington and the host Nationals took advantage of four straight walks by Mets pitchers to salvage a doubleheader split.

Amed Rosario hit a solo homer in the eighth inning to lift New York to a win in the first game.

Rays 3, Cardinals 2 (10): Logan Morrison hit his second homer of the game in the 10th inning, sending visiting Tampa Bay over St. Louis.

Rockies 3, Braves 0: Jon Gray pitched five-hit ball into the seventh inning and Mark Reynolds hit a two-run homer, leading visiting Colorado to the victory over Atlanta.

White Sox 7, Tigers 1: Lucas Giolito threw seven scoreless innings to earn his first major league victory for host Chicago.

Pirates 5, Reds 2: At Cincinnati, John Jaso and Starling Marte each drove in two runs as Pittsburgh earned its second straight win.