

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Afghanistan ISIS branch claims attack

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — As Afghanistan's Shiites mourned their dead and held funeral services Thursday, Islamic State claimed responsibility for the horrific suicide bombing in Kabul that targeted a Shiite neighborhood the previous day, killing 34 students.

Grieving families gathered to bury their dead, but even amid the somber atmosphere there was no respite from violence, underscoring the near-daily, persistent threats in the war-battered country.

Two gunmen besieged a compound belonging to the Afghan intelligence service in a northwestern Kabul neighborhood early Thursday, opening fire as Afghan security forces

moved in to cut them off. The standoff lasted for nearly six hours before police killed the gunmen and secured the area. ISIS, in a posting on its Amaq News Agency, claimed more than 200 people were killed or wounded in Wednesday's suicide bombing.

The bomber, who had walked into a classroom in a one-room building at a Shiite educational center in the neighborhood of Dasht-e-Barchi where he set off his explosives, was identified as "the martyrdom-seeking brother Abdul Raouf al-Khorasani." Afghanistan's ISIS affiliate is known as The Islamic State in Khorasan Province, after an ancient name of the area that encompassed parts of present-day Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The bombing also wounded 57 students, according to Health Ministry spokesman Wahid Majroh. Earlier Thursday, the ministry revised the death toll from the attack to 34, not 48. Most of the victims were young men and women, high school graduates preparing for university entrance exams in the educational center.

Kabul hospitals were completely overwhelmed in the immediate aftermath of the attack as officials collected data on the casualties, leading to the confusion and the initial wrong toll.

Dasht-e-Barchi is populated by members of Afghanistan's minority ethnic Hazaras — a Shiite community that has in the past been targeted by similar large-scale attacks.

ISIS, which considers Shi-

ites to be heretics, frequently targets them, attacking their mosques, schools and cultural centers. In the past two years, there have been at least 13 attacks on Shiites in Kabul alone.

Fifteen of the victims' bodies were taken Thursday to a Hazara community compound in Kabul where a mass funeral service was being held. The remaining victims were taken to their villages to be buried there, said Gulam Hassan, the cousin of one of the victims.

Amnesty International on Thursday denounced the attack, calling it a war crime.

"The deliberate targeting of civilians and the targeting of places of education is a war crime," said Samira Hamidi, Amnesty's South Asia campaigner.

## USS Reagan sailor gets 3 years in prison for sex crimes

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A USS Ronald Reagan sailor convicted of six sex crimes, including attempted sexual assault of a child, was dishonorably discharged Thursday and sentenced to three years in prison.

A panel of seven jurors found Petty Officer 1st Class Gilbert Sandoval, 32, guilty on Wednesday of attempted sexual assault of a child, attempted sexual abuse of a child, indecent communication to a child, attempted production of child pornography, inducing a child under the age of 12 to engage in sexual activity and indecent language.

After sentencing deliberations that lasted more than five hours Thursday, the jurors also decided Sandoval — a boatswain's mate attached to the

aircraft carrier — would have his rank reduced to E-1 and forfeit 36 months of pay as part of his punishment.

Authorities arrested Sandoval in March after he messaged two undercover Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents — one posing as a 14-year-old girl and the other pretending to be a mother seeking a man to rape her 7-year-old daughter — on the anonymous messaging app Whisper.

Between March 20 and 22, Sandoval sent sexual text messages to each investigator and made plans to have sex with the girls, according to evidence.

NCIS agents ultimately confronted and arrested Sandoval when he traveled to Yokosuka's family housing area to meet the 14-year-old for sexual acts during his lunch break March 22.

Prosecutor Lt. Michael McBride had asked jurors

— known as court members in military proceedings — to sentence Sandoval to 11 years in prison.

"These are not victimless crimes," McBride said during closing arguments Thursday. "For the accused, these were real people ... real people he would do real things to."

Defense attorney Lt. Jim Howland argued that Sandoval should not be punished the same as those who harmed real children.

The defense presented evidence before his sentencing Thursday that showed Sandoval's state of affairs when he committed the crimes. He was suffering through the end of a marriage and straining financially.

"I want somebody who appreciates me and I'll appreciate them back," Sandoval had messaged the 14-year-old in

March.

McBride, however, argued that "a failing marriage does not excuse" Sandoval's crimes. The prosecutor also said Sandoval was "smart" and a "hard worker" who was selected to become chief petty officer but threw it all away with his actions.

Referencing a Stars and Stripes article published Wednesday about Sandoval's conviction, the defense argued that the sailor should receive a lesser sentence because even without prison time, he would suffer "shame that's going to follow him wherever he goes" and had already lost his source of income and "the honor of wearing a uniform."

It was unclear Thursday where Sandoval would serve out his sentence. He will be required to register as a sex offender upon release.

# POWs lost on Japan's 'hellships' remembered

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

NATIONAL MEMORIAL CEMETERY OF THE PACIFIC, Hawaii — At 101 years old, Ben Skardon still has vivid memories of the deprivation and cruelty he experienced as a prisoner of war of the Japanese in the Philippines during World War II.

But of all those dark moments in the more than three years of captivity, it was time aboard the "hellships" that was bleakest.

The freighter Enoura Maru had been used to transport horses before the wretched POWs were crammed into the same manure-filled bottom hold of the ship. The horses had been fed oats, and the starved men scratched through the droppings in search of single, undigested grains to eat.

On Wednesday, a stone was dedicated at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific memorializing the roughly 400 men who died while POWs aboard a single journey from the Philippines to Japan on three separate hellships in 1945.

The remains of many of the men who died on the ships rest in 20 graves marked "Unknown" at the Honolulu cemetery, also called the Punchbowl.

A series of ships — the Oryoku Maru, Enoura Maru and Brazil Maru — transported what began as a group of 1,600 POWs to mainland Japan to be used as slave labor. The ships were unmarked as carrying prisoners.

U.S. Navy aircraft bombed and sank the Oryoku before it left the Philippines. The survivors were transferred to the Enoura, which was bombed while docked in Takao Harbor, Formosa — now Kaohsiung Harbor, Taiwan — on Jan. 9, 1945.

The survivors were then loaded onto the Brazil. Only 548 of the original 1,600 were alive by the time the ship reached Japan. Only 403 survived to liberation in September 1945.

"For the handful of survivors, like my father, the experience was so horrific, so indescribable, that it was easier, safer, to say nothing and to keep their memories to themselves and unknown to the rest," said Jan Thompson, president of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society, which spearheaded the effort to memorialize the men in the 20 graves.

"Today, we're going to change all this," she said. "From officer to enlisted, from chaplain to corpsman, from Merchant

Marine to civilian, all are to be recognized, all are to be remembered and none will ever again be unknown."

Skardon, who lives in Clemson, S.C., is one of only two living survivors of the Oryoku, Enoura and Brazil; he was unable to attend Wednesday's ceremony but sent a letter that was read aloud.

The only former POW to attend was Daniel Crowley, a 96-year-old who defended Corregidor and was eventually sent by hellship to work in copper mines in Japan.

Among those who perished on the Enoura was Clarence White, a death that came after a long ordeal of captivity, said his daughter, Nancy Kragh, a member of the memorial society. White was among the thousands of U.S. troops surrendered to Japanese forces at Bataan on April 9, 1942, then forced into the infamous death march to a crowded prison camp.

The Japanese began routinely shipping prisoners back to mainland Japan to be used as slave labor in mines and factories. As the tide of war turned against Imperial Japan, its ships became easier targets for Allied submarines and carrier-launched aircraft.

Inexplicably, the Japanese

did not mark most ships as carrying POWs, even though doing so would have protected their own troops aboard from enemy attack.

In December 1944, White was among the 1,600 prisoners loaded into the lower holds of the Oryoku in Manila Bay.

Shortly before dawn the ship had made it north only to Subic Bay when it was bombed and strafed by Navy planes. Several hundred POWs died in the attack, while others swam ashore from the sinking ship.

Most were recaptured, including White, and were then loaded into the Enoura.

On Jan. 9, 1945, the ship — unmarked as carrying prisoners — was attacked by Navy bombers while at Formosa.

"About 300 men died in the bombing," Kragh told Stars and Stripes. "My dad was one of them." He bled to death over the course of two days from shrapnel wounds.

The corpses of those dead, as well as another 100 who died of starvation and disease, "were loaded into cargo nets, taken ashore and dumped into a mass grave," she said.

The bodies were exhumed in 1946-47, she said, and 27 of the men were identified. They were buried in 1949 at the Punchbowl as unknowns.

## Researchers locate WWII destroyer's sunken stern near Alaska

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Seventy-five years ago this week, 19-year-old Seaman 2nd Class Daryl Weathers was aboard the USS Abner Read in the bay off the Aleutian Islands patrolling for Japanese submarines when an explosion — likely an enemy mine — ripped apart the destroyer.

Weathers, now 94, told the story from his home near Los Angeles and remembered it happening in the early morning hours, about 2 a.m., while

he was operating a radar. He recalled it took a few minutes before the back half of the boat, where men were inside sleeping, detached and sank.

That day — Aug. 18, 1943 — 71 sailors died, 70 of whom were lost at sea. Some sailors were trapped in their sleeping compartments and others fell victim to the ice-cold water, where it was impossible to survive longer than a few minutes, Weathers said.

"We recovered a few men and lost a lot," he said Wednesday.

"I was up on the bridge standing radar watch. Otherwise, my bunk was right down there, 10 feet from where the ship broke off, so I probably wouldn't have survived that explosion."

Now, 75 years later, the location of their underwater grave is finally known. A group of researchers seeking to document the little-known World War II campaign that took place in the Alaskan region found a 75-foot section of the USS Abner Read on July 17. It was 290 feet deep near the island of Kiska.

Researchers are hoping the discovery brings some awareness about the Aleutian Islands campaign to the American public. For families of the sailors who died, they want the finding to offer some solace.

Weathers, presumed to be the last person alive who was aboard the destroyer when it was hit, was surprised anyone would go looking for it.

"There's nothing up there but cold and fog and storm and wind," he said. "It's completely the end of the world."

# 1,700 troops help fight western wildfires

By ROSE L. THAYER

*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — Nearly 1,500 California National Guardsmen and 200 active-duty soldiers are fighting wildfires in four western states, according to a report from the National Guard.

In California, where 760,000 acres have burned or are burning, 969 guardsmen have been activated, Maj. Gen. Matthew Beevers, the assistant adjutant general of California Joint Force Headquarters, said Wednesday at a Pentagon briefing on the guard's monthlong firefighting operations. Troops are using 22 aircraft and more than 100 vehicles to combat the largest wildfire the state has seen, he said. Members of the Nevada National Guard also have been sent to help in California.

The largest of the 21 fires listed at the website for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, known as Cal Fire, is the Mendocino Complex Ranch Fire. It covers nearly 315,000 acres and is about 60 percent contained.

Two California guardsmen — Staff Sgt. James Brown and Sgt. Julian Ross — spoke at the briefing and described conditions in California of high winds, “firenadoes” and heavy smoke. Both men have been flying manned and unmanned aircraft through the fires to provide medical assistance, water buckets and near real-time video feeds of conditions on the ground.

Brown, an incident and awareness assessment coordinator, said the Air National Guard is using unmanned MQ-9 Reapers, RC-26 surveillance aircraft and UH-72 Lakota helicopters to provide situational

awareness to firefighting crews.

“We are able to see exactly where the fires are, whether that be burned infrastructure, damaged homes, even if it's out in the middle of a forest, we see all the trees in relation to that fire line,” Brown said. “Fortunately, we are able to use sensors to be able to make call-outs and protect individuals who may be under threat.”

“It is very beneficial to Cal Fire chiefs ... that they are able to see exactly where their fire lines are at any given time up to 24 hours a day.”

The Army National Guard is contributing medevac teams that are trained to provide medical assistance and water bucket drops, said Ross, a pilot on the medevac task force. He described flight conditions as similar to those in a combat zone, without shooting.

## Poland renews call for US military base

*Associated Press*

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's president voiced hope for a permanent U.S. military presence in his country, speaking as the nation put on a large military parade on its Armed Forces Day holiday Wednesday replete with tanks and people marching in historic uniforms.

Poland is fearful of Russia's renewed aggression, and President Andrzej Duda said that a permanent presence by the U.S. Army would “deter every potential aggressor.”

The U.S. military, on its own and as part

of a NATO effort, began rotating troops in and out of Poland and other nervous countries on NATO's eastern flank, including Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, after Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

Poland has recently been lobbying for a permanent U.S. base and more American forces. There hasn't yet been a response on whether Washington will agree to a move that would be expensive and sure to infuriate Moscow.

Some of the troops from the U.S. and other allied countries also marched in the parade. Poland considers the U.S. its key

protector, with some doubts about whether Europe's NATO members really would ever come to its defense.

Duda said if the economy allows, he also wants Poland to increase its own defense spending to 2.5 percent of GDP by 2024, above the current 2 percent NATO target, which Poland already meets.

The parade is part of a national holiday observed every Aug. 15 that celebrates Poland's defeat of Russian Bolsheviks in 1920 near Warsaw — celebrated as a near-miraculous victory for a country that has seen more than its share of defeat and occupation in past centuries.

## ‘Queen of Soul’ Aretha Franklin dies at age 76

*Associated Press*

Aretha Franklin, the undisputed “Queen of Soul” who sang with matchless style on such classics as “Think,” “I Say a Little Prayer” and her signature song, “Respect,” and stood as a cultural icon around the globe, has died at age 76.

Publicist Gwendolyn Quinn tells The Associated Press through a family statement that Franklin died Thursday at 9:50 a.m. at her home in Detroit. The statement said “Franklin's official cause of death was due to advanced pancreatic cancer of the neuroendocrine type, which was confirmed by Franklin's oncologist, Dr. Philip Phillips of Karmanos Cancer Institute” in Detroit.

The family added: “In one of the darkest

moments of our lives, we are not able to find the appropriate words to express the pain in our heart. We have lost the matriarch and rock of our family. The love she had for her children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and cousins knew no bounds.”

The statement continued: “We have been deeply touched by the incredible outpouring of love and support we have received from close friends, supporters and fans all around the world. Thank you for your compassion and prayers. We have felt your love for Aretha and it brings us comfort to know that her legacy will live on. As we grieve, we ask that you respect our privacy during this difficult time.”

Franklin, who had battled undisclosed health issues in recent years, had in 2017

announced her retirement from touring.

A professional singer and accomplished pianist by her late teens, a superstar by her mid-20s, Franklin had long ago settled any arguments over who was the greatest popular vocalist of her time. Her gifts, natural and acquired, were a multi-octave mezzo-soprano, gospel passion and training worthy of a preacher's daughter, taste sophisticated and eccentric, and the courage to channel private pain into liberating song.

She recorded hundreds of tracks and had dozens of hits over the span of a half century, including 20 that reached No. 1 on the R&B charts. But her reputation was defined by an extraordinary run of top 10 smashes in the late 1960s.

# Jurors begin deliberations in Manafort trial

Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Jurors began their deliberations Thursday in the trial of former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, who prosecutors say earned \$60 million advising Russia-backed politicians in Ukraine, hid much of it from the IRS and then lied to banks to get loans when the money dried up.

Manafort's defense countered that he wasn't culpable because he left the particulars of his finances to others.

The financial fraud trial calls on the dozen jurors to follow the complexities of foreign bank accounts and shell companies, loan regulations and tax rules. It

exposed details about the lavish lifestyle of the onetime political insider, including a \$15,000 jacket made of ostrich leather and \$900,000 spent at a boutique retailer in New York paid via international wire transfer.

It's the first courtroom test of the ongoing Russia probe led by special counsel Robert Mueller. While allegations of collusion are still being investigated, evidence of bank fraud and tax evasion unearthed during the probe has cast doubt on the integrity of Trump's closest advisers during the campaign.

Peter Carr, spokesman for the special counsel's office, declined to comment.

"When you follow the trail of Mr.

Manafort's money, it is littered with lies," prosecutor Greg Andres said in his final argument, asking the jury to convict Manafort of 18 felony counts.

In his defense, Manafort's attorneys told jurors to question the entirety of the prosecution's case as they sought to tarnish the credibility of Manafort's longtime protege — and government witness — Rick Gates.

Defense attorney Richard Westling noted that Manafort employed a team of accountants, bookkeepers and tax preparers, a fact he said showed his client wasn't trying to hide anything. Westling also painted the prosecution's case as consisting of cherry-picked evidence that doesn't show jurors the full picture.

# Brennan calls Trump decision 'desperate'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former CIA Director John Brennan said Thursday that President Donald Trump yanked his security clearance because his campaign colluded with the Russians to sway the 2016 election and is now desperate to end the special counsel's investigation.

In an opinion piece in *The New York Times*, Brennan cites press reports and Trump's own goading of Russia during the campaign to find Democrat Hillary Clinton's missing emails.

Trump himself drew a direct connection between the revocation of Brennan's clearance and the Russia probe, telling *The Wall Street Journal* the investigation is a "sham," and "these people led it!"

"So I think it's something that had to be done," Trump said.

Brennan wrote that Trump's claims of no collusion with Russia are "hogwash" and that the only question remaining is whether the collusion amounts to a "constituted criminally liable conspiracy."

"Trump clearly has become more desperate to protect himself and those close to him, which is why he made the politically motivated decision to revoke my security clearance in an attempt to scare into silence others who might dare to challenge him," he wrote.

Brennan's loss of a security clearance was an unprecedented act of retribution against a vocal critic and politicizes the federal government's security clearance process. Former CIA directors and other top national security officials are typically allowed to keep their clearances, at least for some period, so they can be in a posi-

tion to advise their successors and to hold certain jobs.

Trump said Wednesday he is reviewing the security clearances of several other former top intelligence and law enforcement officials, including former FBI Director James Comey. All are critics of the president or are people whom Trump appears to believe are against him.

Democrats called it an "enemies list," a reference to the Nixon White House, which kept a list of President Richard Nixon's political opponents to be targeted with punitive measures.

There was no reference to the Russia probe in a White House statement Wednesday in which Trump denounced Brennan's criticism of him and spoke anxiously of "the risks posed by his erratic conduct and behavior."

# Church sex abuse victims still wait for a reckoning

Associated Press

Six Roman Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania joined the list this week of those around the U.S. that have been forced to face the ugly truth about child-molesting priests in their ranks.

But in dozens of other dioceses, there has been no reckoning, leading victims to wonder if the church will ever truly take responsibility or be held accountable.

"It happens everywhere, so it's not really so much a question of where has it happened, but instead, where has word gotten out; where is information about it accessible?" said Terry McKiernan, founder of BishopAccountability.org, a Massachu-

setts-based nonprofit group that tracks clergy sexual abuse cases.

Since the crisis exploded in Boston in 2002, dioceses around the country have dealt with similar revelations of widespread sexual abuse, with many of them forced to come clean by aggressive plaintiffs' attorneys, assertive prosecutors or relentless journalists.

In a few instances, namely in Tucson, Ariz., and Seattle, dioceses voluntarily named names.

Dioceses in Boston; Los Angeles; Seattle; Portland, Ore.; Denver; San Diego; Louisville, Ky.; and Dallas have all paid multimillion-dollar settlements to victims.

Fifteen dioceses and three Catholic religious orders have filed for bankruptcy to deal with thousands of lawsuits.

Still, only about 40 of the nearly 200 dioceses in the U.S. have released lists of priests accused of abusing children, and there have been only nine investigations by a prosecutor or grand jury of a Catholic diocese or archdiocese in the U.S., according to BishopAccountability.org.

In many of the dioceses that have been examined, the numbers have been staggering: in the six Pennsylvania dioceses, 300 abusive priests and more than 1,000 victims since the 1940s; in Boston, at least 250 priests and more than 500 victims.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## School quits playing 'Dixie' at games

**AL** ARAB — An Alabama high school is ending its tradition of playing "Dixie" at football games.

City school superintendent John Mullins said he made the decision to quit playing the song at Arab High School. Mullins told WHNT-TV the song has negative connotations that conflict with the system's core values including unity.

School bands throughout the South used to play "Dixie," but the practice ended as the region got farther away from legalized racial segregation.

Students and staff at the school will vote on a new fight song after this football season. In the meantime, the band will play another song.

## Items with ties to Elvis sold at auction

**TN** MEMPHIS — A gold record, photos and jewelry were among the more than 200 items sold at an auction of memorabilia related to the late singer Elvis Presley.

The highest-priced item sold at The Auction at Graceland on Sunday was a 1942 Beretta 9 mm pistol given to Elvis as a gift in December 1970. Price tag: \$51,250.

The auction took place during Elvis Week, the annual celebration of his life and career. Presley died in Memphis 41 years ago, on Aug. 16, 1977.

Graceland said the auction brought in \$800,000.

## Museum hopes lesson breaks world record

**VT** ST. JOHNSBURY — A Vermont museum has high hopes that it broke a world record for the largest astron-

omy lesson.

The Fairbanks Museum in St. Johnsbury said 1,701 people attended its Aug. 10 lesson. The Caledonian-Record reported the event had been in the works since February.

Guinness World Records said the largest astronomy lesson consists of 1,104 participants, and was achieved in Kalamunda, Australia, on Feb. 28, 2015.

The museum showed special planetarium shows before Bobby Farlice-Rubio, one of Fairbanks' educators, taught the lesson.

The data will soon be sent to Guinness for approval and verification.

## Pregnant woman accused of shoplifting

**NC** PINEVILLE — A manager at an office supply store in North Carolina was fired after a pregnant woman shopping there was confronted about what she was concealing beneath her shirt. "Twins," she said.

Sherell Bates told WSOC-TV she was paying for back-to-school supplies when a police officer had her step aside and explain what was under her shirt.

Bates said she responded that she's 34 weeks pregnant with a boy and a girl, but he didn't believe her. So she lifted up her shirt to expose her belly.

Staples said the manager apologized and her purchases were refunded.

## Lunch ladies accused of taking \$479K

**CT** NEW CANAAN — Two sisters who were former cafeteria workers were charged with stealing nearly half a million dollars from Connecticut schools over the last five years.

Police said Joanne Pascarello, 61, of Stratford, and her sister, Marie Wilson, 67, of Wilton, turned themselves in to New Canaan police after warrants were issued for their arrest.

The two were charged with larceny and defrauding a public community for allegedly stealing \$478,588 from Saxe Middle School and New Canaan High School from 2012 to 2017. Board of Education officials did not reply to a request for comment.

## Firefighter rappels from bridge for dog

**NJ** PATERSON — A New Jersey firefighter rappelled from a bridge to rescue a dog stranded at the base of a waterfall.

Paterson firefighters were called to Great Falls on Sunday. Fire Capt. Scott Parkin made his way down to the animal and lured it with food. Parkin put a net over the dog before it was lifted to safety.

The young pit bull was taken to Ramapo-Bergen Animal Refuge in Oakland, where it's in stable condition.

Parkin said his father rescued a dog from the same spot in 1975.

## Ring returned to man after 45 years in pond

**MA** MIDDLEBORO — A man in Massachusetts was reunited with his class ring decades after it was lost.

A gold ring slipped off the finger of Glenn Pelrine in a Middleboro pond as he water-skied one summer day in 1973. He thought the ring, engraved with his signature from the Franklin Institute in Boston, was lost forever. The Patriot Ledger reported Carl Reed Jr. was metal-detecting over the

water when the detector came upon something in four feet of water. He dug in and pulled out Pelrine's ring.

After wiping away 45 years of muck, an employee at a jewelry store was able to read Pelrine's name and found him on Facebook.

## Reward offered for info on bird eggs

**AL** DAUPHIN ISLAND — Federal authorities are offering a reward for help identifying anyone who removed eggs from a protected shorebird nesting site near Dauphin Island.

WPMI-TV reported that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering \$2,500. Many Least Tern chicks died after the eggs were left out in the hot sun.

The television station reported that people removed the eggs over the Fourth of July weekend to make space for a volleyball net and tents on a barrier island at the mouth of Mobile Bay.

## Car fire in drive-thru spreads to bank

**PA** GREEN TREE — Authorities in western Pennsylvania said a car fire in a bank drive-thru near Pittsburgh spread to the bank building, destroying both the vehicle and the structure.

Officials said a customer's sedan caught fire at the First Commonwealth Bank in Green Tree.

Fire Chief Don Gaupp said the blaze eventually set the entire bank on fire, collapsing the roof and gutting the interior.

He said, "[The building] is made up of all 2-by-4 trusses, so it went up pretty quick." The bank was closed at the time.

From wire reports

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Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# NFL players have new way to keep cool

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee Titans running back Dion Lewis has been so focused on football with his new team that he didn't realize until a few days into training camp just how special the benches on each sideline really are.

Now he takes a couple of minutes whenever possible during practice to sit and cool off.

Literally.

"It's great," said Lewis, who spent the past three years with New England. "It's real hot ... so whenever you use anything to make you cool down a little bit, I think it's a great tool. It's been here for the whole time, but I just realized it like, probably, last week. So definitely take advantage of that whenever I get a chance."

Keeping football players cool during the sweltering days of training camp is critical, especially in the wake of the heat-related death of Minnesota offensive tackle Korey Stringer

in August 2001 and the June death of Maryland offensive lineman Jordan McNair. An attorney for the McNair family says a preliminary death certificate indicates the cause of death was heatstroke.

Old-fashioned tubs filled with water and bags of ice await NFL players, even for teams staying at their headquarters this time of year. A few minutes provides a quick, but very wet, recovery once practice is over.

The Titans and New Orleans Saints both decided to give players a chance to cool off during practice, improving both safety and the workouts.

With a new coach in Mike Vrabel, the Titans put a bench on each side of their three practice fields, giving players a chance to recover when the temperature during morning practices can feel like 90 degrees.

"I don't think our players have done a good enough job of taking advantage of it, but we're trying it out," Vrabel said.

"Going to Miami and Jacksonville in the early games here, if there's anything we can do to keep our guys as fresh as possible on the sideline, we're going to try."

In hot and humid Jacksonville, the Jaguars have had such cooling benches for years in the shade and near huge fans to use during breaks.

The New Orleans Saints have used a cooling tent for years, even when holding training camp at Millsaps College in Jackson, Miss. With the tent kept off to the side of the football fields, it wound up too far away for the Saints to slip over during practices.

This August, an 18-wheeler dropped off what looks like a massive storage trailer. Inside, it's actually a chilly 25 degrees featuring dim lighting and black padded folding chairs.

The Saints can walk in for a quick refresher or sit down to drop the body temperature. If needed, coach Sean Payton can put a whole position group

inside at once, especially effective for big men such as offensive or defensive linemen.

"As bodies go in there, it goes to 28," Payton said. "But it's almost three times colder than a tent."

Payton said colleges such as LSU and Alabama are among those already using the cooling trailer. Being in muggy Louisiana, the Saints didn't have to go far to find a company that could help them out.

Payton said when the temperatures soar, teams can't cool players down enough. The trailer allows New Orleans to keep the Saints refreshed enough to practice, not just survive until the final horn signals a blissful end.

"You want to not just be running plays, and then you also have an answer if someone is going through a second-level heat illness or God forbid something more serious," Payton said.

## Chargers RB Gordon poised to stand out in the crowd

Associated Press

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Melvin Gordon got into an argument recently with a fan who insisted he was Todd Gurley.

The Los Angeles Chargers' durable running back doesn't look a whole lot like his Los Angeles Rams counterpart. That didn't dissuade the fan, he recalled with a grimace.

"I'm just starting to figure out that people just see a man with dreads and muscles and be like, 'Oh, he's such and such,'" Gordon said. "Because I get called Derrick Henry, too, and I don't even look close to Derrick Henry, or Todd. ... Sometimes you can be understandable, but when you argue with me about being that person, that's when it's an issue."

Heading into his fifth season in the Chargers' backfield and his second year in LA, Gordon is poised to make sure everybody knows his name this fall.

Gordon got better as last season went on for the Chargers, becoming fresher and more dangerous during their late surge into the playoff race. Looking back, Gordon realizes he improved because he got healthier — so he took steps to make sure he would be fresh from the start of training camp.

"I'm trying to do the most I can, because you never know," Gordon said. "I feel good. I haven't been feeling like this in a while now, for about a couple of years, and I've just been having to push through it. I think that little time I took off kind of helped me out a lot."

Gordon stayed away from the Chargers during part of organized team activities this year, altering his offseason preparations to keep himself fresh. He picked up a nagging knee injury early last season while pushing himself to impress

first-year coach Anthony Lynn, and his season picked up speed only when the knee began to heal. His final five games of the season were outstanding, and he finished as the NFL's seventh-leading rusher with a career-high 1,105 yards and eight touchdowns.

Gordon credits his improved health for the surge, but also his mental toughness.

"I've always felt like it's a mindset really toward the end of the year, how you approach it," Gordon said. "Some guys go through those first eight weeks of the season, guys that are excited to play, excited to put on the uniform, but then it gets old. Then guys are trying to stay healthy, and then guys that were coming in trying to make those tackles aren't really trying to make those tackles anymore. To me, my mindset is, I'm going to make you pay. You think it's going to be a breeze

your last eight weeks, and I'm going to turn it up."

Gordon has steadily evolved as a versatile back in his four NFL seasons since leaving Wisconsin. He also caught 58 passes for 476 yards last year, and he didn't fumble all year until the season finale.

"I thought he was healthy. That's the biggest difference that I saw on Melvin," Lynn said. "He looked healthy. He had some juice, and he's a strong guy, has a lot of stamina. As the season went on, he just got stronger."

Along with his improved health, Gordon also expects to get a boost from the addition of center Mike Pouncey, a punishing run-blocker for the Miami Dolphins for the past seven seasons. The Chargers had one of the NFL's worst yards-per-carry averages last season (3.8), and Pouncey could be a key to unlocking longer runs.

# Cardinals' Johnson seeks big contract

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Even though he says he's not paying that much attention to it, David Johnson says he's "very encouraged" about ongoing contract talks between his agent and the Arizona Cardinals.

"They said they're going to continue to talk and hopefully we can get a deal done soon," he said.

The standout running back held out during the team's three-day minicamp but has been a full participant in training camp, and had a pair of impressive runs to start Saturday night's preseason 24-17 victory over the Los Angeles Chargers.

"I'm letting my agent handle it," he said. "I really want to focus on football because I don't want to hinder my play on the field."

Johnson said he believes the Cardinals and the team's fan

base know how good he is, but he believes others around the NFL may have forgotten. He's out to remind them and prove he's worth a big contract.

An All-Pro selection in 2016, when he led the NFL in yards from scrimmage and touchdowns, Johnson fractured his left wrist in the 2017 season opener and hadn't played since — until those two carries against the Chargers.

The injury is what is holding up a contract, he believes.

"I didn't play last year," Johnson said. "I was hoping that my production from my second year and what I did get in the first year would help out, but the NFL is what have you done for me lately. So hopefully I can prove it."

Johnson, a third-round draft pick out of Northern Iowa in 2015, is set to make \$1.9 million in this the fourth and final year of his rookie contract. That's far, far below what other big-

time running backs will earn.

Johnson said he was "a little anxious but not rusty" when he made his return to the game.

In each of his two carries, the big, fast back gained 14 yards behind a revamped offensive line that cleared the way for him.

"The biggest thing I was pumped up about is how easy it was for me to get through the holes," Johnson said. "They were gaping holes. The guys up front blocked very well for me."

New coach Steve Wilks wants an offense that emphasizes power running and that's what he got from the first unit in its only series against LA, which culminated with a 2-yard TD run by Johnson's hard-running backup, rookie Chase Edmonds.

New quarterback Sam Bradford, who completed his only pass for 6 yards, said the Cardinals established just what

they wanted to in that opening series.

"We've talked all preseason, really all camp, about coming out and establishing our physicality in being able to run the football," Bradford said after practice Tuesday. "For us to be able to come out and do what we did I think is extremely encouraging just because it's something that has been an emphasis and something that has been talked about so much."

What the Cardinals didn't see is Johnson as a receiver. He caught 80 passes for 879 yards two seasons ago (along with 1,239 yards rushing in 293 attempts).

"I want to be on the field as much as possible," Johnson said, "third downs have me split out at receiver. Not just third downs, but any play whenever we think I have an advantage over the defender, hopefully I can be split out or coming out of the backfield as a receiver."

## DE Burns re-energized by Seminoles' new scheme

Associated Press

Brian Burns believes his drop in sack totals from his freshman year to 2017 was more about him than opponents.

The Florida State defensive end had just 4½ sacks a year after he had a breakout 9½-sack debut season in 2016. But the 6-foot-5, 231-pound pass rusher is almost incredulous when asked if he thought offensive linemen had figured out how to defend him.

"Figure me out? No," Burns said. "It has everything to do with me. My freshman year I was going off pure athleticism doing what I could do. Coming into my sophomore year I was doing the same, and it didn't work. But over the course of the season, I matured and learned to grow up, and I learned there's other necessities that's a part of this game that I have to take as far as watching film, taking care of my body."

Burns became a "student of

the game" and learned not to lean on quickness off the edge. Burns earned more playing time in 2017 and as a result his tackle totals jumped to 48 (from 23) and he accumulated 13½ tackles for loss (up from 9½). He also knocked down four passes, forced three fumbles and recovered another fumble.

With the exception of the sack totals, it wasn't a bad second year — especially considering how he wrapped up 2017. Burns had two sacks and two forced fumbles in the loss at Clemson and 1½ sacks in the win at Florida, both of which were November games.

"That's why you've seen those flashes at the end of the season, because I was growing up," Burns said.

He could continue to grow in new defensive coordinator Harlon Barnett's scheme, which has a four-man front and will feature more aggressive, attacking principles than what

Charles Kelly implemented in prior years. While no team in the Atlantic Coast Conference has the caliber of defensive line that Clemson features, the Seminoles' group should be able to frustrate opposing quarterbacks. Burns leads a group that includes sophomore end Joshua Kaindoh, senior tackle Demarcus Christmas and sophomore tackle Marvin Wilson.

Burns said that Kelly's defense was more "conservative" whereas Barnett's is more "get in your face," something he thinks will be evident when the Seminoles open at home against Virginia Tech on Sept. 3.

"It's a defense that allows you to play rather than think, so we're able to play fast, physical and aggressive, and everything is pin your ears back and go," Burns said. "We're going to get after it, and it's not really that hard to adjust to."

Defensive ends coach Mark Snyder, who has been the head

coach at Marshall and a defensive coordinator at Texas A&M, Ohio State and South Florida, said he compares Burns' pass-rush capabilities to that of former Aggies star Myles Garrett, who was the No. 1 overall pick by the Cleveland Browns in 2017.

"His get-off and his bend reminds me of Myles Garrett," Snyder said. "That's the only guy I've been around that can do what Brian can do rushing the quarterback. But I've had other guys that were probably a little bit better against the run. That's our challenge with him. Let's get better at that aspect of it."

After learning through his second year at Florida State, there is a sense that Burns' athleticism, knowledge and maturity blended with his talent could deliver a level of production that's similar to or beyond what he offered as a freshman.

# Cardinals stretch winning streak to 8

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Austin Gomber learned plenty about pressure during a 15-game stint in the St. Louis Cardinals' bullpen earlier this season.

The left-hander used that experience to his advantage on Wednesday night.

Gomber tossed six shutout innings in his fourth start of the year, Marcell Ozuna homered and the Cardinals won their season-high eighth straight game, 4-2 over the Washington Nationals.

The Cardinals, who are 18-9 since the All-Star break, captured their sixth successive series after taking the first three of the four-game set.

Gomber gave up three hits, struck out six and walked four. He wriggled out of a pair of jams while nursing a 1-0 lead.

"I think being in the bullpen

kind of helped me in these situations," Gomber said. "Even when the bases get loaded, I never feel any panic. It's just something that you've got to become more comfortable with."

Gomber ended his 99-pitch outing by striking out three successive batters after giving up a leadoff double to Bryce Harper in the sixth.

"This guy gets after it," St. Louis interim manager Mike Shildt said. "He's not going to back down from anyone."

Gomber (3-0) struck out Michael A. Taylor looking with the bases loaded to end the fourth. He retired Anthony Rendon on a flyball with runners on first and third in the fifth.

Daniel Murphy homered in the ninth for Washington, which has lost four in a row and seven of nine to fall below .500 and nine games behind the first-place Atlanta Braves in

the NL East. The current skid began with a loss to the Cubs on a two-out, walk-off grand slam.

"When you're in a playoff race, we've got to score first, we've got to score early," Nationals manager Dave Martinez said. "We can't squander the opportunities that we get and we've been doing that."

Ozuna homered in the second inning, his 14th of the season and his first since July 30, covering 62 plate appearances.

Harrison Bader and Yadier Molina added run-scoring hits for St. Louis, which improved to 19-9 since Mike Matheny was fired and replaced by Shildt on July 15.

Bud Norris pitched the ninth to pick up his 23rd save in 27 opportunities.

St. Louis infielder Matt Carpenter extended his on-base streak to 33 games with a walk in the fifth. It's the lon-

gest current streak in the majors. Carpenter left the game in the seventh after he was hit on the hand by a pitch from Matt Grace, but X-rays were negative.

Carpenter does not expect to miss any time.

"The pain and swelling started to go down a bit," Carpenter said. "I definitely dodged a bullet there."

Washington starter Jeremy Hellickson (5-3) left in the fifth inning after he fell on his wrist on a play at the plate following a wild pitch. Hellickson gave up three runs, two earned, on three hits in 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings. He struck out two and walked two.

Hellickson realizes the Nationals' chances of making the postseason are dwindling.

"We're going to need a lot of help, that's for sure," Hellickson said. "We've made it pretty tough on ourselves here."

## MLB roundup

### Acuna hit by opening pitch in Braves' win over Marlins

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Slugging rookie Ronald Acuna Jr. was hit by a pitch before he could take the Marlins deep again, but Dansby Swanson filled the power void for Atlanta, hitting a two-run homer that led the Braves to a 5-2 win over Miami on Wednesday night.

Acuna, who had hit leadoff homers in the last three games and homered in five straight overall, didn't get a chance to extend the streak. Jose Urena plunked him on the left elbow with a fastball on his first pitch of the day, triggering a melee. Benches and bullpens for both teams emptied onto the field twice after the pitch. No punches were thrown.

Urena and Braves manager Brian Snitker were ejected.

Acuna instead became the 11th batter to be hit by a pitch from Urena this season, tied for the most in the National

League. Trainer George Poulis hovered over Acuna, who sat on the ground near the batter's box while players swarmed near the mound. Acuna left the game in the second inning. He took his position in left field and then walked off the field. There was no immediate update on Acuna's apparent injury.

**Mariners 2, Athletics 0 (12):** Light-hitting Dee Gordon homered off Yusmeiro Petit (5-3) in the 12th inning to break a scoreless tie and visiting Seattle beat Oakland to avoid a three-game sweep.

**Dodgers 4, Giants 3 (12):** Brian Dozier's sacrifice fly in the 12th inning gave host Los Angeles the victory over San Francisco, ending a five-game losing streak.

**Phillies 7, Red Sox 4:** Wilson Ramos had three extra-base hits and three RBIs, helping host Philadelphia beat Boston in his first game with his new team.

**Cubs 8, Brewers 4:** Anthony Rizzo homered, drove in three runs and stole two bases in his return to the cleanup spot, and host Chicago beat Milwaukee to restore a three-game lead in the NL Central.

**Mets 16, Orioles 5:** Kevin Plawewski hit his first career grand slam during a nine-run sixth inning, Brandon Nimmo went 5-for-5 with three RBIs and visiting New York pounded Baltimore.

**Rays 6, Yankees 1:** Mallex Smith hit a two-run homer, rookie Brandon Lowe got his first two major league hits and visiting Tampa Bay beat New York.

**Astros 12, Rockies 1:** Evan Gattis and Tyler White hit two homers each, Yuli Gurriel added a two-run shot and host Houston routed Colorado to snap a five-game skid.

**Blue Jays 6, Royals 5:** Curtis Granderson hit a grand slam, Marco Estrada pitched

effectively into the seventh inning and visiting Toronto beat Kansas City.

**Twins 6, Pirates 4:** Logan Forsythe had three RBIs, the bullpen tossed 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> shutout innings and host Minnesota beat Pittsburgh.

**Angels 3, Padres 2:** Rene Rivera hit a go-ahead homer in the ninth inning in his return from a long stay on the disabled list, and visiting Los Angeles completed a three-game sweep of San Diego.

**White Sox 6, Tigers 5:** Jose Abreu and Matt Davidson each hit two-run home runs to lift visiting Chicago past Detroit.

**Indians 4, Reds 3:** Melky Cabrera lofted a go-ahead two-run homer into the left-field seats in the sixth inning, and visiting Cleveland beat Cincinnati for its fifth straight victory.