

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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President visits Marine Corps in Hawaii

Associated Press

KANEOHE BAY, Hawaii — President Barack Obama is one of the most powerful men in the world. He's commander in chief of one of its mightiest militaries, too.

In spite of all that, Obama feels inadequate from time to time. Especially when he's vacationing in Hawaii and working out alongside strapping Marines at their gym.

"The only problem I've got when I'm here is having to work out with Marines in the gym," Obama said during his annual Christmas Day visit with U.S. troops at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay. "Because I generally feel like your commander in chief is in pretty good shape, and then I get next to some guy, you know, curling 100 pounds, and it makes me feel small."

Obama works out at the base gym just about every day when he vacations here. With New

Year's Day approaching, though, he told the troops he's inspired "to work harder so I can keep up with you next year."

The 6-foot-1 Obama is known to enjoy a daily workout whether he's at home in the White House, traveling or on vacation. He also plays golf practically every weekend in Washington when the weather cooperates, and he swings his clubs just about daily during extended vacations on Martha's Vineyard, Mass., or here in Hawaii.

The Christmas visit with the troops has become a yearly tradition for the Obamas during their annual vacation on Oahu.

Obama said it's one of their favorite things to do because they get a chance to "say, 'Thank you,' on behalf of the American people." This year's visit came four days after six U.S. servicemembers were killed in a suicide attack in Afghanistan. Obama praised the six individuals as "outstanding, brave men and women."

Troops celebrate the holiday in Afghanistan

BY HEATH DRUZIN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — In a sign of how long America has been at war, Navy Chief Tiffany Voels, 35, has to go way back to 2002 for her first of four Christmases downrange. Back then, she was on a ship in support of operations in Afghanistan.

"I knew I'd still be in the service in 2015, but I didn't think I'd be in Afghanistan," she said on Friday after sitting down to Christmas dinner at Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul.

Voels was one of hundreds of troops and contractors from all over the world who

dug into turkey, ham and prime rib at the base of the international military coalition that remains in Afghanistan more than 14 years after the U.S. invasion of the country shortly after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The toughest part is being away from her husband and four children back in Fort Worth, Texas, Voels said.

"But I think for the most part, we've created our own little family, so it's all right," she said. "I don't think anything can replace the hugs from your significant other or kids but there are worse places to be."

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More severe weather plagues Ala., Miss., Tenn.

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Residents in northern Alabama were warned to be alert for moderate to severe flooding Saturday, a day after a tornado briefly touched down in the state's most populous city but caused only a hint of damage.

The flooding is the result of heavy downpours that have been thrashing the southeastern U.S. since Wednesday, bringing record rainfalls in some areas. The city of Mobile, for example, was walloped with 4 inches of rain Wednesday, smashing the previous record of 2.2 inches set in 1990.

Unseasonably warm weather

last week helped stimulate the high winds, tornadoes and torrential precipitation that by Saturday had left at least 15 people dead and dozens of families homeless.

Among the dead were eight people from Mississippi, including a 7-year-old boy who perished while riding in a car that was swept up and tossed by storm winds.

Six people were killed in Tennessee, including three who were found in a car submerged in a creek, according to the Columbia Police Department. The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency said the victims were a 19-year-old woman and two 22-year-old men.

One person died in Arkansas, and dozens of homes were damaged or destroyed.

Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley announced Saturday that he would visit weather-damaged areas in Coffee County. A statement from the governor's office said about 190 roads across Alabama were closed due to flooding.

The National Weather Service warned residents to avoid driving in areas where flooding was expected. Major flooding is forecast for Big Nance Creek, which runs through the town of Courtland in northern Alabama.

The creek is not expected to fall below flood stage until

early Monday.

A flood warning was also in effect for the Coosa River, swollen by up to 8 inches of rain during the past week, and threatening the city of Gadsden.

The Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles are bracing for what forecasters are calling a "historic blizzard," but the areas under threat are lightly populated.

Between 6 and 15 inches of snow is in the forecast for the region, which includes Amarillo and Lubbock. High winds will drive wind chills as low as 10 below zero and will cause low visibility due to blowing and drifting snow.

Airstrike kills Syrian rebel leader

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Militant groups in Syria on Saturday mourned the death of a powerful rebel commander killed the previous day in an airstrike near Damascus — a high-profile attack that may shift the balance of power in rebel-held suburbs of Damascus.

Zahran Allouch, the head of the Army of Islam group, was killed in an airstrike that targeted the group's headquarters during a meeting on Friday. He was killed instantly along with other commanders from the ultraconservative Ahrar al-Sham and Faylaq al-Rahman groups.

His assassination — a month before peace talks are scheduled to begin between the Syr-

ian government and opposition rebel groups — is a blow to insurgents fighting to topple President Bashar Assad and a boost to government forces who have been bolstered by the Russian military intervention in Syria in the past few months.

Syrian government forces have been on the offensive in several parts of the country since Russia began its military campaign in late September to shore up Assad's forces.

The Army of Islam took part earlier this month in an opposition meeting held in Saudi Arabia to agree on an opposition delegation that would negotiate with Assad's government representatives in peace talks planned for late January in Ge-

neva. The Syrian government describes the group as "terrorists" and has said it will not negotiate with such factions.

The Syrian army claimed responsibility for the airstrike that killed Allouch, although many among the opposition blamed Russia.

The Army of Islam group swiftly appointed Essam al-Buwaydhani, a field commander known as Abu Hammam, as the new leader of the group, replacing Allouch.

In a video posted on the Internet late Thursday, a spokesman for the Army of Islam said Allouch's killing "will only increase our fight" against Assad's government and the Islamic State group.

Terror-linked charges reach record in US

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has charged at least 60 individuals this year with terrorism-related crimes, an unprecedented number that officials attribute to a heightened threat from the Islamic State and the influence of social media on potential recruits.

Last week alone, prosecutors charged three people and convicted two others on terrorism-linked charges. One of those charged was Enrique Marquez Jr., a friend and neighbor of Syed Rizwan Farook, the male gunman who was killed in a firefight with police in the aftermath of the San Bernardino, Calif., shooting rampage this month. That terrorist attack killed 14 people.

A second was Mohamed Elshinawy, a Maryland man accused of receiving at least \$8,700 from the Islamic State overseas and planning to use the money to carry out attacks in the United States. He told prosecutors that a childhood friend had connected him through social media with an Islamic State operative.

The third was Jalil Aziz, a Pennsylvania man who was arrested on suspicion of providing material support to the Islamic State by spreading its propaganda on social media and for seeking to help the group's supporters travel to Syria to fight. Aziz also encouraged other Islamic State supporters he communicated with to use U.S.-based encrypted messaging applications, prosecutors said.

"The common connection we're seeing is — in almost every case — a tie to social media," said John P. Carlin, assistant attorney general for national security, at a conference last month hosted by the news site Defense One. He also pointed out that many of the cases involve young people, who are at ease building relationships online. More than 55 percent of those charged are younger than 25. Most troubling, Carlin said, about one-third are 21 or younger.

DOD-run drone strikes stir controversy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Putting the U.S. military in charge of drone strikes in Iraq and Syria has effectively reduced congressional scrutiny of those sensitive operations, leaving some activists, lawmakers and U.S. intelligence officials fearful of increased civilian casualties.

For the past decade, the CIA ran the American effort to find and kill al-Qaida members with drones, mostly in Pakistan and Yemen, outside of declared war zones. But the frequency of those strikes has plummeted to about one per month. The main counterterrorism focus now is the war against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, where military special operations forces are flying drones that hunt and kill a senior militant every two days.

The shift reflects both legal and philosophical considerations. When he announced a framework for targeted killing two years ago, President Barack Obama argued that the military, not a secret intelligence agency, should be the primary instrument of lethal force against terrorists.

But one byproduct of the change, American officials say, is that congressional staffers no longer examine the details of each individual drone strike.

Some CIA officials, lawmakers and outside activists worry that the new arrangement creates a greater risk of mistakes, given that drone strikes regularly target key militants who don't wear uniforms and embed themselves in civilian populations.

"Congress ought to be exercising equally rigorous oversight irrespective of which agency or department uses lethal force," said Raha Wala, senior counsel at Human Rights First.

"We are talking about some of the most legally, politically and diplomatically fraught counterterrorism operations, whether they occur in or out of a war zone."

The Associated Press interviewed a variety of legislative and executive branch officials for this story, nearly all of whom declined to be named because they weren't authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

As the CIA's drone war in Pakistan ramped up in 2010, the spy agency was conducting

more than two attacks per week. Intelligence committee staffers with security clearances began driving to CIA headquarters to watch video of each drone strike in Pakistan and Yemen as they reviewed the intelligence documents undergirding the decisions to press the button. The staffers scrutinized civilian casualty claims and whether the decision to fire adhered to Obama's rule that there should be near certainty that no civilian would be harmed.

Because CIA drone strikes are covert, the CIA must disclose them to the House and Senate intelligence committees. The military does not face the same legal requirement, and drone strikes in Iraq and Syria are scrutinized less frequently by committees that have shown great deference to the armed forces.

Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, who serves on both the armed services and intelligence committees, said he was satisfied with the level of oversight of military drone strikes.

"I can't say it's identical, but it's not that different" from the intelligence committee scrutiny, he said.

Pittsburgh 'O' running at peak efficiency

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Steelers' offense has put on a show over the last six weeks like at no other time in franchise history.

Nobody is enjoying watching the offense pile up the points more than the Pittsburgh defense. It has the best seat in the house for the high-scoring attack that frees the defense to get after opponents as they try to play catch-up.

"We have an offense that does a great, great job," safety Will Allen said. "It's hard to stop those guys."

The Steelers scored 24 straight points last Sunday to rally for a 34-27 victory over the Denver Broncos, who lead the NFL in points and total yards allowed.

The win enabled the Steelers (9-5) to control their fate when it comes to making the playoffs; they will qualify for the postseason by winning their last two games, Sunday at Baltimore (4-10) and at Cleveland (3-11) on Jan. 3.

The Steelers could also clinch a berth Sunday if they win and the New York Jets (9-5) lose at home to the AFC East champion New England Patriots (12-2).

While the six-time Super Bowl-winning franchise has built much of its history on the foundation of strong defense, it is the offense that is leading the charge now. The Steelers have scored at least 30 points in a team-record six straight games, going 5-1 in that span to help overcome a 4-4 first half of the schedule.

"Our offense is unstoppable," defensive end Cam Heyward said. "To have an offense that can go up and down with anybody, it doesn't matter who's out there. It's pretty special."

The offense helps take pressure off a defense that has had its ups and downs. Pittsburgh is fifth in the NFL in rushing defense with 89.4 yards allowed a game, but 31st against the pass, giving up an average of 279.1 yards.

"You really don't see themselves rest on their laurels or patting themselves on the back," Heyward said of the offense. "They're trying to continue to score. You appreciate that as a defense because they give some leeway at times."

The Steelers seemingly should be able to keep putting up big numbers against the injury-ravaged Ravens and woeful Browns.

Antonio Brown has 64 catches for 868 yards in the last six games, leading the league in both categories in that span, while quarterback Ben Roethlisberger has averaged 365.8 yards and thrown 13 touchdown passes.

The Steelers are also healthy. Everyone practiced fully Friday and no one was listed as doubtful or questionable on the injury report.

"We understand if we want to get to where we want to get to, we have to win these games," Heyward said. "The thing we embrace is that we are in control."

Parity or mediocrity?

Associated Press

The NFL likes to call it parity. This season, it looks closer to mediocrity.

From the porous offensive lines to the suspect quarterbacking and poor tackling, from the inconsistent officiating to the multitude of key injuries, the 2015 season has been filled with the unwatchable.

Yes, the playoff races, particularly for the AFC wild card, have been intriguing. Carolina's chase for perfection has been worthy of headlines. The performances by the league's top players — particularly the ones making substantial breakthroughs such as Cam Newton and Doug Baldwin on offense, Khalil Mack and Ziggy Ansah on defense — have been mesmerizing.

There's also the noteworthy, if maddening, race to relocate to Los Angeles involving the Rams, Raiders and Chargers.

As for the rest, well, let's hope the playoffs and Super Bowl go in a different direction than we've witnessed since September.

One team not concerned with the post-season for the 16th straight time — remarkable in itself that anyone could miss the playoffs that many years in a row — is Buffalo. The Bills under Rex Ryan epitomize how disappointing the level of play has been in so many cities. They brought in a high-profile coach and upgraded their talent level. They paid huge salaries to hold on to some key players.

And they flopped. "I mean, I could tell you the common thread is this: that when you have high expectations and you don't reach those things, that obviously you're going to have a little more questioning," Ryan says.

Here's what has been most worth questioning through 15 of the 17 weeks on the schedule:

Parity: If what the NFL wants is nearly every team in contention to win a division

or grab a wild card when the calendar turns to December, it came close to that goal in 2015.

If what it wants is high-quality football from many of those teams, sorry.

It's worthwhile to praise the work of the Panthers and Patriots, Cardinals, Broncos and Bengals, who pretty much for the entire season have risen above the morass. Second-half surges by the Chiefs, Steelers and Seahawks have been impressive.

But also recall that Kansas City lost five in a row, going into a funk after blowing a game against Denver. Seattle wasted the best home-field advantage in the sport, falling twice at CenturyLink Field and basically being handed a win over Detroit by incorrect officiating. Pittsburgh was 4-4 and somehow lost to Baltimore at home.

Most disturbing, even laughable, has been the level of play and coaching throughout the NFC East and AFC South. It's still possible both wretched divisions will be won by teams without winning records, who then deservedly will be underdogs as hosts to a wild card in the playoffs.

The league can brag all it wants about how packed together so many clubs are. It's sort of like finding a slew of fast-food restaurants together along a busy roadway.

Blocking and tackling: Shield your eyes.

These basic skills appear to have gone the way of the chip shot extra point (one of the good things about this season, incidentally). One reason quarterbacking has been so spotty (see below) is the inability of linemen, tight ends and running backs to provide protection.

No area requires bonding more than the O-line, but even some units that enjoy that continuity have underperformed. If the Broncos disappear quickly in the race to the Super Bowl, the lack of solid blocking could be the determining factor.

On the other side, it might be difficult to find a dozen fundamentally strong tacklers in the entire NFL. In their, uh, defense, the rules about what's a legal hit have made some of them gun-shy or confused. But the very basics of wrapping up and keeping the head out of the play have been lost.

Quarterbacking: Someone recently wondered why the league doesn't simply expand to get teams into Los Angeles — or the cities abandoned through relocation — and maybe even into London in the near future. One good reason: Where will NFL-quality quarterbacks come from?

And what is NFL-quality for the position today? It's seems fair to say that half of the 32 teams aren't sure what they have behind center, and a bunch of those don't like what they have.

There is hope with the likes of Jameis Winston, Marcus Mariota, Derek Carr, Teddy Bridgewater and Blake Bortles as the new wave, and with Newton and Russell Wilson in the MVP conversation. But future eliteness for QBs is unpredictable — see Matt Ryan — and when the aging crop of stars leaves, it's hard to see the college game producing an ample number of replacements.

Officiating: For decades, it's been fashionable for fans to blame the officials for losses, while team owners, general managers and coaches have bitten their tongues and tried to shrug off officiating problems.

Not anymore. There's a growing sentiment that game officials have lost their way, and the NFL will need to look long and hard into how it handles who is blowing the whistles; how to simplify the rule book; and how to better use the ever-improving technology.

One thing the NFL must hope as this season of mediocrity winds down is that a wrong call doesn't decide that big game Feb. 7.

Raiders hold off Chargers in OT

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Philip Rivers' last pass fell incomplete near Charles Woodson's feet and the celebration began. Woodson got a Gatorade shower and then led the fans in a chant of "Raiders! Raiders!"

What was Woodson's final game in Oakland — and might have been the last for the Raiders as well — was far from pretty but it ended in a victory.

Sebastian Janikowski kicked a 31-yard field goal in overtime and the Raiders got a defensive stop to seal a 23-20 victory over the San Diego Chargers on Thursday night.

"I guess it had to end like that," Woodson said. "It was a little much for me. I would have rather it had been a lopsided victory and we blew them out. That's the way it goes sometimes."

Derek Carr threw a touchdown pass and led the winning overtime drive for the Raiders (7-8), who could be moving to the Los Angeles area after the season. It also made Woodson a winner in his final home game with the Raiders before retiring after his 18th NFL season.

"This is my last game in the Coliseum but just know I'll never leave you," Woodson told the crowd. "Go Raiders!"

The Raiders won despite 15 penalties, including five on their overtime drive, and being held to one first down of the second half on a 3-yard touchdown drive.

But Oakland did move the ball in overtime after winning the toss. Three straight penalties left the Raiders with a second-and-29 but San Diego's Denzel Perryman bailed them out when he was called for a personal foul for hitting a defenseless Michael Crabtree in the head.

Seth Roberts then made a juggling 33-

yard catch and run to put the Raiders on the 10. After Woodson lost 3 yards on a reverse when San Diego covered a possible pass to Carr in the end zone, Janikowski hit the go-ahead field goal.

"Charles is one of the greatest players to ever put on a uniform," coach Jack Del Rio said. "He's a great Raider. To be able to send him out the right way, to be able to cap off a special evening like this, our last home game of the year ... I'm just really proud of the effort."

The Chargers (4-11) were unable to muster a first down and lost their seventh straight division game. Rivers threw for 277 yards and a TD for San Diego, also possibly on the move to the Los Angeles area.

"It's been the story of the year, just losing close games," Rivers said. "Doesn't make it any easier losing another one like that."



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Warriors win Finals rematch

The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Even when all those long-range shots aren't falling like usual, the defending-champion Golden State Warriors showed they are quite comfortable grinding out wins.

Draymond Green had 22 points and 15 rebounds and the Warriors got defensive in their NBA Finals rematch against Cleveland, beating the Cavaliers 89-83 on Friday.

"It's good to have one of those every so often," guard Stephen Curry said. "If our defense shows up, we're in pretty good shape to win games. We just show our versatility and try to win different ways."

Curry added 19 points, Klay Thompson had 18, and the Warriors improved to 28-1 by winning their 32nd straight regular-season home game. Instead of doing it with three-pointers, defending champion Golden State maintained its edge over Cleveland by limiting the Cavaliers to 32 percent shooting.

The Warriors were held under 100 points at home for the first time in more than a year in the regular season, however it happened five times in the playoffs.

"It's good to practice and get experience in that type of game as well where it's low scoring, getting stops, knocking down free throws and executing in the half court," interim coach Luke Walton said. "It's great experience for us."

LeBron James scored 25 points to lead the Cavaliers. They had their six-game winning streak snapped.

"We gave ourselves a chance," James said. "If we play like that defensively, we're going to be a very tough team to beat. Offensively, we just didn't have it. No one had it."

The Cavaliers were short-handed when they lost the final to the Warriors in six games, missing power forward Kevin Love the entire series with a shoulder injury and losing point guard Kyrie Irving to a knee injury late in the first game.

Having both those players healthy for

the rematch did little to help Cleveland. Love scored just 10 points on 5-for-16 shooting, and Irving missed 11 of 15 shots in a 13-point game.

With those two struggling, the Warriors built a 10-point lead midway through the fourth quarter following a jumper by Thompson and a layup from Green.

But James responded with a pair of dunks and a blocked shot on Thompson before Love's tip-in made it 81-77 with just over 2 minutes to play.

James missed two free throws after Cleveland got another stop and Curry responded with a pair of layups around J.R. Smith's three-pointer to make it 85-80 with 57.6 seconds to play.

James shot an air ball from three with 12.7 seconds to play to end Cleveland's comeback attempt.

"Tonight our defense was absolutely unbelievable for all 48 minutes," Warriors center Andrew Bogut said. "To keep them to the 80s, they never really got in a flow where they could really attack us."

There was an increased intensity at the start of the seventh Christmas Day rematch of the previous season's finals with fans on edge far more than for most regular season games.

The officials let both teams play through contact early and the Warriors led 45-42 at the half.

Clippers 94, Lakers 84: In Los Angeles, Chris Paul scored 23 points and the Clippers beat the Lakers to end a three-game skid.

Kobe Bryant scored 12 points for the Lakers in his NBA-record 16th and final Christmas Day game. He played 26 minutes and sat out the entire fourth quarter.

J.J. Redick had 14 points, and DeAndre Jordan added nine points and 14 rebounds for the Clippers. They have won eight straight against the Lakers and 12 of the last 13 meetings.

Rookie D'Angelo Russell led the Lakers with 16 points.

Heat 94, Pelicans 88 (OT): Chris Bosh

had 30 points and 10 rebounds, Dwyane Wade added 19 points to move into No. 3 on the NBA's Christmas Day list and host Miami survived some shaky moments to beat New Orleans.

Hassan Whiteside grabbed 17 rebounds for the Heat, an NBA-best 10-2 on the holiday.

Wade's tough jumper with 1:45 left in overtime gave him 273 points on Christmas, one more than Shaquille O'Neal for No. 3, and Bosh followed that about a minute later with a three-point play.

Anthony Davis led the Pelicans with 29 points and 15 rebounds. But he missed a contested jumper on New Orleans' final possession of regulation, and the Heat took control in the extra session.

Rockets 88, Spurs 84: James Harden had 20 points and Houston slowed visiting San Antonio.

The improved Houston defense held the Spurs to a season low in points to snap their season-best seven-game winning streak.

Houston used an 8-2 run to take a 78-71 lead with about 5 minutes left. Tim Duncan made a hook shot after that, but Harden hit a three-pointer. After Duncan's layup, Harden brought the crowd to its feet with an off-balance three-pointer from the corner that made it 84-75.

Kawhi Leonard had 20 points to lead San Antonio.

Bulls 105, Thunder 96: Jimmy Butler scored 23 points and Pau Gasol had 21 points and 13 rebounds in Chicago's victory over host Oklahoma City.

Derrick Rose added 19 points, and Taj Gibson had 13 points and 10 rebounds to help the Bulls snap a three-game losing streak.

Kevin Durant had 29 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for Oklahoma City, and Russell Westbrook added 26 points, eight assists and seven rebounds. The Thunder had won three straight and nine of 10.

No. 3 OU rolls past Harvard

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Oklahoma left Harvard behind with a big run at the start of the second half.

Buddy Hield scored 34 points and Jordan Woodward had 28 — both career highs — to help No. 3 Oklahoma beat Harvard 83-71 in the Diamond Head Classic title game.

Down 37-35 at halftime, Oklahoma opened the second half with a 17-0 run. It was the first time this season that the Sooners trailed at the intermission.

"I thought the key was our opening 7, 8 minutes of the second half," Sooners coach Lon Kruger said. "I thought defensively we created some good opportunities to transition from and then Harvard fought back after that — which is no surprise."

The Sooners (11-0) shot 50 percent from the field (27-for-54) and made nine three-pointers. Woodward was 4-for-7 from beyond the arc, and Hield 3-for-5. Hield was 11-for-14 overall from the field and 9-for-10 from the free-throw line, and Woodward was 9-for-13 from the field and 6-for-7 from the line.

Ryan Spangler added 15 rebounds and eight points.

Zena Edosomwan scored a career-high 25 points on 10-for-20 shooting and had 16 rebounds for Harvard (5-7). The Crimson had won three straight.

Spangler hit consecutive three-pointers in the early second-half run. Woodward made consecutive threes with about 15 minutes left to stretch the lead to 58-39, capping a 23-2 run.

"It was just us coming out after we were stagnant (in the first half)," Hield said about his team's start to the second half. "We had a good halftime talk, we came out with a lot of energy, Ryan popped two threes real quick to give us a spark and we were able to go from there."

Oklahoma took its largest lead at 62-42 with 13:25 remaining on Hield's reverse layup in transition.

However, Harvard made a run of its own. Edosomwan's basket after a spin move started a 12-0 run that was capped by Edosomwan's three-point play that made it 62-54 with 8:16 left.

Edosomwan scored seven straight Harvard points to cut it to 70-65 at the 4:27 mark, but Oklahoma closed with a 13-6 run.

"It was a tough stretch for us right there coming out of halftime," Harvard coach Tommy Amaker said. "We knew transition defense was going to be key and they turned their defense up and really got after it and it was like a jail break to the other end of the floor. They're explosive and I think they displayed that in that stretch there, which was critical and it really knocked us back."

Hield, the reigning Big 12 Conference player of the year, scored at least 25 points for the fifth consecutive game.

It was the first meeting between the teams, but not the first between the two coaches. Harvard's Tommy Amaker and Oklahoma's Kruger faced off on Dec. 5, 1999, when Kruger's Illinois squad beat Amaker's Seton Hall team 71-61.

Hield, who set a tournament record with 86 points in Oklahoma's three games, was named the most valuable player. He broke the previous mark of 79 points set by Washington State's Klay Thompson in 2010. Auburn's Kareem Canty, BYU's Chase Fischer, Hawaii's Roderick Bobbitt and Harvard's Edosomwan also were selected to the all-tournament team.

Aztecs flatten Bearcats in Hawaii Bowl

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Rashaad Penny returned the opening kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown and San Diego State routed Cincinnati 42-7 in the Hawaii Bowl on Thursday.

The Aztecs (11-3) won their final 10 games to match the longest winning streak in school history.

Penny had his third kickoff return for a score this season — and second 100-yarder — and broke the Hawaii bowl record for the longest return before a sparse crowd of 14,537 at Aloha Stadium.

San Diego State rushed for 207 yards, topping the 200-yard mark for the 10th consecutive game, and finished with 336 yards of total offense.

Donnell Pumphrey, the Mountain West offensive player of the year, had 99 yards on 25 carries. He threw a 16-yard touchdown pass to Dakota Gordon and had a 1-yard scoring run early in the fourth quarter. Gordon also had a 1-yard run and finished with four catches for 58 yards.

Cincinnati finished 7-5. Redshirt freshman Christian Chapman made his second straight start with starter Maxwell Smith out with a knee injury. Chapman threw a 14-yard touchdown pass to Mikah Holder to cap an 85-yard, nine-play drive on San Diego State's first offensive possession.

The touchdown came a play after Cincinnati defensive Alex Pace left with

an undisclosed injury. He appeared to be favoring his left arm and did not return.

Chapman was 8-for-11 for 113 yards and did not have an interception.

The Aztecs led 14-0 after the first quarter, the ninth time this season they held an opponent scoreless in the opening quarter.

Cornerback Damontae Kazee had his eighth interception of the season to set up Pumphrey's 33-yard halfback-option pass to Gordon, with the fullback bouncing off a defender before crossing the plane of the end zone. That made it 21-0 late in the first half.

Cincinnati turned it over on downs midway through the third quarter when it attempted and failed a fake field goal, which gave the Aztecs possession at its 33. Eight plays later, Gordon found the end zone on his 1-yard plunge.

Pumphrey capped an 11-play, 85-yard drive that took nearly 7 minutes off the clock early in the fourth quarter to make it 35-0.

Bahamas Bowl: Jamauri Bogan rushed for 215 yards and four touchdowns, powering the Broncos past the Lightning in Nassau, Bahamas, for their first bowl victory.

Western Michigan (8-5) had lost its previous six bowl games. The Broncos ended a four-game winning streak by Middle Tennessee (7-6).

Bogan broke a tie game with a 1-yard

touchdown with 6:12 left, setting up the score with a 61-yard burst. He added another 1-yard score with five minutes remaining after Rontavious Atkins' 29-yard interception return to the Middle Tennessee 4. Bogan also had a 62-yard touchdown and a 46-yard score. He averaged 11.3 yards per carry.

Western Michigan's Corey Davis finished with eight catches for 183 yards and a touchdown. Daniel Braverman had five receptions for 101 yards and a score.

Richie James had two touchdown catches and one touchdown run for Middle Tennessee. Brent Stockstill threw for 327 yards and three touchdowns to go with his interception. Stockstill was 26-for-39 and finished his redshirt freshman season with 327 completions to break the NCAA freshman record held by Jared Lorenzen, who completed 321 passes for Kentucky in 2001. Western Michigan's Zach Terrell was 18-for-26 for 297 yards with two touchdowns and an interception.

One year after Western Kentucky and Central Michigan combined for 12 touchdown passes in the inaugural Bahamas Bowl — a 49-48 Western Kentucky victory — Western Michigan and Middle Tennessee produced a similar shootout.

Thursday's matchup featured six touchdowns of 40-plus yards. The game already was tied 17-all by the end of the first quarter.