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Trump picks Mattis for defense secretary

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump announced Thursday he will nominate retired Marine Corps Gen. James “Mad Dog” Mattis as the next secretary of defense.

Trump made the announcement at a rally in Cincinnati, calling Mattis “the closest thing we have to Gen. George Patton of our time.”

The choice would bring a seasoned, widely respected battlefield commander and strong critic of Iran and Russia to the military’s top civilian position.

Congress will have to approve a waiver because Mattis, who retired in 2013, has not been out of uniform for the required seven years.

If confirmed by the Senate, Mattis, 66, who fashioned a reputation among Marines as a warrior monk during four decades of infantry leadership would replace Ash Carter, a physicist, academic and long-time Pentagon civilian who was tapped by President Barack

Obama to lead the Defense Department in 2015.

Trump called Mattis “the real deal” and a “true general’s general” in recent tweets.

Mattis is likely to draw support from across the political spectrum.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, has endorsed Mattis, saying he is one of the finest military officers of his generation and inspires special admiration among servicemembers.

Since his retirement in 2013, Mattis has often warned Iran poses a top security threat and called Russia a predatory state, which might be at odds with Trump as he moves toward a closer, collaborative relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Mattis, who retired from the Marine Corps in 2013 after leading U.S. Central Command, was known during his military service for his quotable and colorful battlefield advice to Marines — language that also ruffled feathers at times.

“I come in peace. I didn’t bring artillery. But I’m pleading with you, with tears in my eyes: If you f--- with me, I’ll kill you all,” he reportedly told Iraqi tribal leaders as the United States was trying to quell sectarian violence after the 2003 invasion.

After leading troops in Afghanistan after 9/11, Mattis commanded the 1st Marine Division during the invasion of Iraq and, later, during the first battle of Fallujah in 2004, which became pivotal as Iraq descended into a sectarian insurgency. Mattis made news headlines during the Iraq invasion when he suddenly relieved Marine Col. Joe Dowdy of battlefield command after Dowdy made a dash with his forces toward Baghdad.

Despite his tough talk, Mattis often appealed to infantry Marines to use critical thinking and telling them to consider how the use of violence can turn local populations against U.S. forces.

Mattis experienced the difficulty of winning Iraqi hearts

and minds firsthand in 2004 after a U.S. strike on a gathering at an Iraqi village caused controversy. Witnesses said the gathering was actually a wedding party at which up to 45 civilians were killed. But the U.S. military in Iraq denied the claim, saying it was a foreign fighter safe house.

While talking to Marines in San Diego in 2005, he criticized the treatment and abuse of women in Afghanistan and said, “Actually it’s quite fun to fight them, you know. It’s a hell of a hoot,” he said, according to CNN. “It’s fun to shoot some people. I’ll be right up there with you. I like brawling.”

The comment caused some laughter from the crowd of Marines at the time and raised some public eyebrows from people who thought it was overly harsh, CNN reported. The Marine commandant at the time said he spoke with Mattis about choosing his words more wisely but backed the lieutenant general, calling Mattis “one of this country’s bravest and most experienced military leaders.”

House OKs troop raise in defense policy bill

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House on Friday passed an annual defense policy bill that includes the largest troop pay raise in six years and puts the brakes on an Army drawdown.

The vote means the \$619 billion National Defense Authorization Act — along with the 2.1 percent raise and an order to keep 476,000 soldiers in the Army — cleared its first legislative hurdle after being unveiled this week. Now, it is headed for a Senate vote next

week and then must be signed by President Barack Obama.

The pay raise will kick in Jan. 1 if the bill is signed into law, despite an executive order by Obama in August to set raises at 1.6 percent in 2017 to save money.

Military raises have been kept below the 2.1 percent called for in federal law and the average rate of increases for private-sector wages since 2011 when defense spending began to dip.

Congress has passed defense budget caps in recent years amid pressure from fiscal hawks

to reduce federal spending. The Obama administration said the lower troop pay raise would save \$336 million in 2017.

The NDAA bill also calls for \$3.2 billion for more servicemembers and to bolster military capabilities, such as Marine Corps and Air Force aviation, that lawmakers say are overstressed by reduced spending in recent years.

It freezes the Army’s effort to cull its end strength from 492,000 to 450,000 over three years to save \$7 billion. Reserve forces would go up by

4,000 and the Marine Corps would get 3,000 more troops.

Some of the spending might be on hold for months.

Republican lawmakers have decided to put off trying to pass the spending legislation that pays for new NDAA policies until the end of March so President-elect Donald Trump will have input on federal spending.

The military and federal government will be forced to run on current funding levels until then — legislation called a continuing resolution — despite objections from the Pentagon.

House defense budget bill extends visas for Afghans who aided US

BY DIANNA CAHN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Tucked more than a thousand pages into the pending national defense policy bill unveiled this week is a provision that is a matter of life and death.

For the past six years, the special immigrant visa program was a lifeline for Afghan interpreters and other foreign employees who worked with U.S. forces or officials and are getting death threats from the Taliban and others.

That program is set to expire this year and almost didn't make into the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act that passed the House on Friday.

In the original House version of the defense budget, the program was extended but was modified to severely limit eligibility requirements, and it did not include authorization for new visas. The Senate defense bill didn't contain the special immigrant visa program at all.

But during months of negotiation between the House and Senate over the final language for the defense policy bill, the program was reintroduced and expanded beyond the House version. NDAA section 1214 now allocates 1,500 new visas and broadens criteria to define "eligible" Afghans as translators for the State Department or the U.S. military and employees who performed "sensitive and trusted activities" for the U.S. government.

Supporters of the program welcomed the inclusion of 1,500 new visas but say that's not nearly enough. Officials say 9,000 visas already have been provided, and there are more than 10,000 Afghans still trying to obtain them.

"It's no exaggeration to say that this is a matter of life and death, as Afghans who served

the U.S. mission continue to be systemically hunted down by the Taliban," said Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., who, led the efforts to extend the program along with Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz.

"I'm very relieved that additional visas will be made available in this legislation," Shaheen said. "However, the number of visas needed for those in danger far surpasses what's provided in this bill. The United States promised to protect these Afghans, and I will do everything in my power to make sure Congress doesn't renege on that promise."

On Thursday, 29 veterans canvassed Congress advocating support for efforts to expand the number of visas — whether through other areas of the budget or through congressional committees.

"American servicemembers cannot complete their mission without translators, engineers, security guards, embassy clerks, logisticians, cultural advisors and soldiers who have served with and risked their lives alongside them," said Scott Cooper of Human Rights First, which launched the Veterans for American Ideals initiative. "Thousands of these men and women and their families now face grave threats for working to advance U.S. interests. We cannot turn our back on them now."

The veterans are asking Congress to include 4,000 more special immigrant visas in the new budget once the current Continuing Resolution expires Dec. 9.

The House voted to authorize the NDAA on Friday. The Senate will vote on it next week. McCain declined to comment on the issue until the Senate vote.

Obama backs women registering for draft

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration has declared its support for requiring women to register for the military draft, a symbolic but significant shift that reflects the U.S. military's evolution from a male-dominated force to one seeking to incorporate women at all levels.

President Barack Obama has been considering whether to adopt the position since December 2015, when Defense Secretary Ash Carter ordered the military to open all jobs to women, including the most arduous combat posts.

"As old barriers for military service are being removed, the administration supports — as a logical next step — women registering for the Selective Service," said Ned Price, a spokesman for the White House's National Security Council, using the formal name for the military draft.

The White House emphasized that the administration remains committed to an all-volunteer military — meaning women, like men, wouldn't be forced to serve unless there were a national emergency like

a major world war. Changing the policy would require an act of Congress, and there are no signs lawmakers plan to move swiftly to alter the law.

Obama, who will leave office in less than two months, has less leverage over Congress and the broader Washington agenda than he did earlier in his presidency. Like his embrace of gay marriage in 2012, Obama's announcement appeared aimed more at influencing the public debate about women in the military in the coming years than forcing an immediate policy change.

The Defense Department echoed Obama's position, first reported by USA Today. Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said that Carter believes the inclusion of women throughout the military's echelons has strengthened the military's might.

"He thinks it makes sense for women to register for Selective Service, just as men must," Cook said.

But a \$611 billion defense policy bill now up for a vote in the House stripped out language that would have required women to register for the draft.

Marine colonel is charged with sexually abusing child

Associated Press

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. — A Marine colonel based at Camp Lejeune has been charged with sexually abusing a child.

Col. Daniel Wilson, of Mason, Wash., faces three counts of sexually abusing a child, four counts of assaulting a child younger than 16, one count of failure to obey an order or regulation, and nine counts of conduct unbecoming an officer, Lt. Col. Mike Armistead said Wednesday.

Wilson, 55, was formally notified of the allegations Nov. 15. A preliminary military hearing has not yet been scheduled, and a four-month investigation is ongoing, Armistead said Thursday.

According to the release, the Wilson joined the military in 1981 and was promoted to colonel in 2010. He was assigned to Camp Lejeune's II Marine Expeditionary Force unit in April as operations officer. He was reassigned to administrative duties.

Peril rising for EOD techs in militant battle

BY ALEX HORTON

Stars and Stripes

SAN ANTONIO — Insurgent bomb makers honed their craft as John Ismay slept.

Ismay, a former Navy explosive ordnance disposal technician who served in Iraq during the surge, went to sleep early in the morning after working through the night, combing intelligence reports to keep up with guerilla explosive experts dreaming up innovative ways to kill U.S. troops.

By the time he woke up and read details of recent attacks emerging at his operations center near Tikrit, their tactics already had evolved.

“They changed that fast,” Ismay said.

Across Iraq and Afghanistan, bomb technicians like Ismay were watching the evolution of improvised explosive warfare in real time. Both battlefields became laboratories for insurgent groups to craft improved practices utilized by Islamic State group fighters entrenched in Mosul and Raqqa.

The two most recent U.S. deaths in the fight against the Islamic State group were bomb technicians, placing a spotlight on the use of improvised explosive devices on the battlefield and the servicemembers charged with keeping

fellow troops safe from their destruction.

Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Scott C. Dayton was killed in Syria on Nov. 24 near Ain Issa, roughly 45 miles north of the Islamic State group’s self-proclaimed capital of Raqqa. He was killed by an explosion inside a house, a Navy official told the Wall Street Journal. Dayton is the first U.S. servicemember killed in the Syria operation.

Dayton’s death came weeks after Navy Chief Petty Officer Jason Finan was killed in his vehicle by an IED after warning other troops about a roadside bomb near Mosul on Oct. 20. Finan was attached to Navy SEALs advising elite Iraqi counterterrorism troops, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said after his death.

The devices are no longer just weapons that killed and maimed thousands of Americans during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have become a strategy unto themselves — a way to slow troop movements and to paralyze convoys, to suck up billions of dollars in research and development and to shape the battlefield to the insurgents’ advantage.

The specific circumstances of the U.S. deaths remain unclear. But they point to the risks bomb technicians have taken in the fight against the Islamic State group as they become a front-

line fixture.

Lt. Gen. Steven Townsend, the commander of Operation Inherent Resolve, said Monday that EOD techs “will be at increased risk” during the campaigns in Iraq and Syria.

EOD techs are “bringing capabilities, and explosive disposal is one of those capabilities [Iraqi troops] are lacking in, and we’re trying to build that up,” Townsend said.

Iraqi troops have uncovered numerous IED factories that produced bombs on an industrial scale, flooding the battlefield with an endless supply of improvised munitions, Reuters and Agence France-Presse recently reported. The Mosul offensive has been slowed by houses rigged to explode and hundreds of suicide car bombs ramming checkpoints and army convoys.

Front-line danger to EOD techs is not a recent phenomenon. The names of Dayton and Finan will be etched into a memorial wall at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., for fallen bomb technicians since World War II, joining 131 others killed since Sept. 11, 2001. About 250 more have been wounded.

But the Pentagon’s reliance on special forces troops to carry out combat missions in Syria and Iraq is a shift to more austere conditions, far from long tails of logistical support and on

distant battlefields mined and booby-trapped by insurgents, Ismay said.

The shift is important in terms of how EOD techs are utilized and supported, said Brian Castner, a former Air Force bomb technician and author of “All the Ways We Kill and Die,” a book about the hunt for bomb makers in Iraq following his two deployments in 2005 and 2006.

While Castner stressed many of the details surrounding the deaths of Dayton and Finan are unclear, he said special operations missions can spike the risk for EOD technicians.

“You don’t have time and distance to do much” when maneuvering quickly, he said. “You don’t have robots, and you’re a lot closer to the device than you should be.”

Castner called close proximity to explosives a “nonoptimal situation.”

The fluid nature of those missions also means EOD techs are limited in what they can carry. A 100-pound-plus load after armor, ammunition and water leaves less room for explosives and detonation cord. Space is also at a premium for supplies in small, mobile vehicles such as the pickup trucks utilized by special operations troops.

“Take a robot, or take food, water, explosives and ammo. You’re going to take the second one,” he said.

General says no need for more troops in Afghanistan

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States has enough troops and combat authority in Afghanistan to help government forces defeat the Taliban and other terrorist groups there, the top American military commander in the country said Friday.

“My assessment of our current capabilities is that we have adequate resources to conduct this mission at a moderate level of risk going forward,” Army Gen. John Nicholson told reporters while he was visiting the Pentagon. “This is acceptable

for what we need to conduct our mission.”

The United States is conducting two major operations inside Afghanistan: the NATO-led Resolute Support mission to train Afghan forces, and its mostly unilateral counterterrorism mission to target terrorist organizations including al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

Nicholson did not say Friday what advice he would provide to President-elect Donald Trump about the war in Afghanistan.

The 15-year-old war never appeared to be a prior-

ity throughout the presidential campaign, and Trump has voiced few opinions publicly about what the United States’ role would be there during his administration.

Some Republican lawmakers have expressed concerns that progress in Afghanistan — as well as in the fight against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria — has been hindered by troop caps and rules of engagement imposed by President Barack Obama’s administration.

There are about 9,800 American troops in Afghanistan, but

that number will drop to 8,400 by Jan. 20. Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Mo, the chairwoman of Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, said Thursday that she hoped the Trump administration would review troop levels. She said the caps made the military rely too heavily on the use of expensive, private civilian contractors for a variety of jobs including aircraft maintenance.

Nicholson said progress displayed by the Afghan security forces throughout 2016 shows the United States has a good policy in place in Afghanistan.

Condemned mountain lion in Calif. gets reprieve

Associated Press

MALIBU, Calif. — A California mountain lion placed under a death sentence for killing nearly a dozen alpacas owned by a Malibu, Calif., woman was granted a reprieve when the woman announced she wouldn't act on a state-issued permit giving her the right to kill the animal.

A neighbor had offered to shoot the big cat, known as P-45, for Victoria Vaughn-Perling, but she told reporters it was never her intention to have the cougar killed. Instead, she said, she hoped game officials would capture it and get it away from her ranch.

She also indicated public outrage might have played a role in her decision, adding she was "surprised by the vitriol."

Vaughn-Perling had planned to attend a community meeting Wednesday to discuss the lion problem until she feared she would begin to get death threats. Pro-lion people shouted over park rangers, booed speakers and challenged one rancher to a fight.

"Remember those movies where they showed the mobs, and it's all the townspeople and they're carrying torches and pitchforks and hoes and shovels, and the person behind is bringing the rope with the hangman's noose? That's what it was like," area resident Mary Dee Rickards said. "She buckled under the pressure and, frankly, I can't blame her."

It's not uncommon for ranchers to kill wild animals that threaten their livestock in rural areas, but the densely populated Los Angeles area's relationship with them is more complicated.

Much of the sprawling Santa Mountain range provides habitat and wild game for the free-ranging predators, but it also includes such densely populated areas as Malibu, the Hollywood Hills and parts of the San Fernando Valley.

US economy adds 178K jobs in Nov.

The Washington Post

The U.S. economy added 178,000 jobs in November, and the unemployment rate fell to 4.6 percent from 4.9 percent the previous month, according to new government data released Friday morning.

The first employment report after a contentious presidential election in which the candidates expressed diverging views of the health and direction of the economy showed a job market that is continuing to steadily strengthen from the recession.

Economists surveyed by Bloomberg News had expected U.S. employers to create 180,000 new jobs last month — roughly in line with the average number added in the first 11 months of the year.

The unemployment rate fell to levels not seen since August 2007, before a bubble in the U.S. housing market began to burst. The fall was driven partly by the creation of new jobs and partly by people retiring and otherwise leaving the labor force.

The labor force participation rate ticked down to 62.7 percent last month.

Average hourly earnings declined by 3 cents to \$25.89. The decrease pared back large gains

seen in October, but over the year, average hourly earnings are still up 2.5 percent, the Bureau of Labor Statistics said.

The data release comes ahead of the Federal Reserve's Dec. 13-14 meeting, at which the central bank is expected to announce its first interest rate increase in a year.

Although wages fell slightly in November, many economists view the steady wage gains of the earlier months as a sign that a tightening labor market is allowing workers to demand higher pay, increasing pressure on the Fed to head off inflation by hiking interest rates.

President-elect Donald Trump has promised to spend heavily to rebuild America's infrastructure, plans that may also increase inflationary pressure in coming months.

The November jobs report was also one of the final snapshots of the economy under President Barack Obama's administration.

While some economists note that America's labor force participation rate remains low, and broader measures of unemployment are still elevated, the data captured an economy that has undeniably bounced back from Obama's first months in office, when the private sector was shedding roughly 800,000 jobs per month and the unemployment rate was at 10 percent.

Signs point to recovery after Tenn. fires

Associated Press

GATLINBURG, Tenn. — The charred city of Gatlinburg is still days away from reopening after devastating and deadly wildfires, but all around the city, communities in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee are welcoming back residents and visitors.

In Pigeon Forge, the Comedy Barn rented an electronic billboard message that said it was open. A hotel flier urged guests to check out the scenic Cades Cove loop: "Take a drive and remember what you love about the Smokies!"

Dollywood, the amusement park named after country music star and native Dolly Parton, will reopen Friday afternoon after it was spared any damage.

"Sevierville, Pigeon Forge and Sevier County is open for business," Sevier County Mayor Larry Waters said Thursday. "We want people to know that they can visit these areas ... and we encourage them to do that."

The Associated Press was allowed exclusive access to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park on Thursday. Video from the visit showed a forest of bare trees standing amid a scorched landscape and fire crews sawing up a tree stump.

In Gatlinburg, the center of the devastation, residents and business owners get their first chance Friday to see whether their properties withstood the blaze that killed 11 people and damaged hundreds of homes and businesses. Officials there hope to open the city's main roads to the public by Wednesday.

Authorities said after following up on dozens of leads of missing people, most had been accounted for. They did not say whether they believe anyone else is still missing or may have died.

The mayor said the searches were winding down and were expected to be completed Friday.

Nearly 24 hours of rain fell Wednesday and helped dampen the wildfires. But fire of-

icials struck a cautious tone, saying people shouldn't have a false sense of security because months of drought have left the ground bone dry, and wildfires can rekindle.

The trouble began Monday when a wildfire, likely caused by a person, spread from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park into the Gatlinburg area as hurricane-force winds toppled trees and power lines, blowing embers in all directions.

"We had trees going down everywhere, power lines, all those power lines were just like lighting a match because of the extreme drought conditions. So we went from nothing to over 20-plus structure fires in a matter of minutes. And that grew and that grew and that grew," Gatlinburg Fire Chief Greg Miller said.

More than 14,000 residents and visitors in Gatlinburg were forced to evacuate, and the tourist city has been shuttered ever since. At least 700 buildings in the county were damaged.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Monsters, Santa captured by cameras

KS GARDNER — Trail cameras placed in an eastern Kansas park have captured images of people costumed as monsters and even Santa Claus instead of just wildlife.

Gardner police said they found the images Monday while checking the two cameras, which had had been put up last month to investigate reports of mountain lions. No mountain lions were detected. But interspersed among skunk and coyote images were photos of people hamming it up over a three-night period while dressed in a half dozen costumes.

People are seen wrestling and crawling around while dressed as lions. One image shows a person who appeared to be attired as a gorilla, while another captures a person using a walker.

Cpl. Robert Huff said it was “pretty comical” and “creative.”

Woman finds lost rings in dump truck

NY NEW YORK — It took two hours of sifting through more than 200 bags of garbage at a New Jersey trash-transfer station before a New York City woman was reunited with three rings she mistakenly discarded.

The New York Daily News reported the 34-year-old woman was preparing Thanksgiving dinner when she removed the rings and placed them on a paper towel by the sink.

The jewelry, which included the woman’s diamond-studded wedding band and engagement ring, accidentally wound up in the trash and was picked up by garbage collectors on Friday.

By the time the woman contacted the city Department of Sanitation, the rings were

among 13 tons of waste in a collection truck.

Sanitation officials said the rings were found because junk mail identified the woman’s trash.

District temporarily pulls classic novels

VA ACCOMAC — A Virginia school district is considering if two classic books are inappropriate for students after a parent filed a formal complaint.

Local news media outlets report that an Accomack County Public Schools parent filed a complaint against the use of “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” and “To Kill a Mockingbird” because of their use of racial slurs.

The district has temporarily suspended the use of the books while officials examine the issue. A committee that includes a principal, librarian and others will now review the books and make a recommendation to the superintendent.

Man has had license suspended 46 times

NY CORTLANDVILLE — A New York man whose driver’s license has been suspended nearly four dozen times was arrested for speeding on Interstate 81 south of Syracuse.

Darwin Barnes, 51, was pulled over by New York State Police in Cortland County around 10 p.m. Wednesday after, according to troopers, he was observed going 95 mph in a 65 mph zone.

State police said the trooper who stopped Barnes found the Rochester man didn’t have a valid license. A check of Barnes’ driving record showed his license has been suspended a total of 46 times.

Barnes was charged with

first-degree aggravated unlicensed operation of a vehicle, a felony.

Pair sought who stole dump truck, an ATM

PA MOSCOW — Police are trying to find two people who stole a dump truck from a housing development then used it to drag an ATM out of a grocery store in northeastern Pennsylvania.

Police in Covington Township said the men attached a chain to the machine at Bill’s ShopRite grocery shortly before 2 a.m. Tuesday.

The theft, captured on surveillance video, shows the men were driving a truck from Thornhurst Country Club Estates. Officials there confirmed the vehicle is a \$70,000 plow and dump truck that was stolen sometime between 1 p.m. Monday and 1:30 a.m. Tuesday.

The truck has since been recovered, as has part of the ATM. Police haven’t said how much money was stolen.

Man crashes car while livestreaming drive

RI PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island State Police said a man who was streaming a dangerous drive on Facebook Live was seriously injured when he crashed into a garbage truck and a concrete barrier.

Police said Onasi Olio-Rojas, 20, of Pawtucket, was driving east on U.S. Route 6 in Providence on Wednesday when he lost control.

The video, posted on Olio-Rojas’ Facebook page, shows him driving at speeds exceeding 100 mph and weaving through traffic.

Police said Olio-Rojas hit the truck as it got on the highway, then crossed three lanes and hit the barrier.

Rescue crews extricated him from the car. The truck driver wasn’t hurt.

Beaver knocks over Christmas decorations

MD CHARLOTTE HALL — Even beavers are getting in the holiday spirit.

That’s what one sheriff’s office discovered this week when it spotted a curious beaver checking out Christmas decorations at a dollar store south of Washington.

The St. Mary’s County Sheriff’s Office in Maryland said the beaver walked through the door at the Dollar General on Monday, wandered into the Christmas section and knocked a few items over before being safely removed by animal control.

Sheriff’s office spokeswoman Jennifer Stone said the animal has been released to a wildlife rehabilitator.

Man to prostitutes: Don’t walk by house

WV BLUEFIELD — Frustrated with the prostitutes who he says walk in front of his home day and night, a West Virginia man has put up signs urging them to take their business elsewhere.

Jeffery Blankenship told the Bluefield Daily Telegraph that prostitutes walk along his street at all hours seeking clients.

Three weeks ago, he began putting up anti-trespassing signs outside of his home, including one that reads, “Attention prostitutes. ... Do not walk by this house 1000x a day waving your hand.”

The signs also warn he has set up video surveillance equipment and sends any footage of suspected illegal activity to the police.

From wire reports

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Unlikely hero helps Dallas to 11th win

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS— Kyle Wilber came to his locker to start getting dressed when a hoard of media gathered around him.

“They must think I’m Dak,” Wilber said, referring to rookie quarterback Dak Prescott.

This time, a third-string linebacker who has bounced from position to position during five years in Dallas took center stage over any of the Cowboys’ numerous playmakers.

Wilber stripped Vikings punt returner Adam Thielen and recovered the ball at the Minnesota 8-yard line in the fourth quarter, setting up a touchdown in a 17-15 victory over the Vikings for the Cowboys’ 11th straight win.

“That’s what coach (Jason Garrett) em-

phasizes to us. Make a play on the ball, make a difference on special teams,” Wilber said. “I’m just trying to do my job.”

On a night when the powerful Cowboys running game had a hard time getting going against a determined Vikings defense, Wilber’s big play made all the difference. The Cowboys were held to season lows in points, yards (264) and first downs (13) and trailed 9-7 when Wilber punched the ball out.

“Just didn’t do my job well enough,” Thielen said. “Just bad ball security and the ball got out on me.”

Dez Bryant caught an 8-yard touchdown pass from Prescott on the next play to help the Cowboys (11-1) squeak it out. Bryant finished with four catches for 84 yards, including a 56-yarder that set up a 1-yard TD by Ezekiel Elliott in the first half.

Sam Bradford threw a 3-yard touchdown pass to Jerick McKinnon with 25 seconds to play, but his 2-point conversion throw sailed over Thielen’s head, leading to the sixth loss in seven games for the Vikings (6-6).

“We’ll have to win out,” Vikings linebacker Anthony Barr said of the team’s playoff chances. “I was hoping to get this win today and go on a run, but hopefully it starts next week.”

Bullet dodged: The Cowboys had two turnovers in the game — a strip sack of Prescott by Robison and a fumble from receiver Lucky Whitehead. They were their first two giveaways in five games. “It’s not the best game we’ve played all year, but when it mattered we made the plays we needed to and got the win,” Elliott said.

League allowing customized cleats for charity

Associated Press

DENVER — Players wearing calico cleats during NFL games this weekend won’t have to worry about the league’s fashion police flagging them for fines over their choice of footwear.

More than 500 players will lace up customized cleats reflecting their charitable causes during Week 13 as part of the league’s “My Cleats, My Cause” campaign. Afterward, the stylish shoes will be auctioned to raise money for those charities.

“One of the great NFL traditions is how our players passionately support important causes in their communities and around the globe every year,” NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said. “They are incredibly creative by nature so we are not surprised how they are seizing the opportunity this week with expressions of their charitable commitments on their cleats, online and through social media.”

This marks the first time players can wear custom cleats during the game without facing fines.

“I’m excited,” said the always fashionable Von Miller, who will wear black-and-white cleats flecked with letters from

an optometrist’s eye chart to highlight Von’s Vision, which provides eyeglasses to underprivileged youths.

“Especially in a cookie-cutter league, you’ve got to wear your uniform a certain way, your socks a certain way, your helmet, gloves, everything a certain way,” said Miller, a star linebacker for the Denver Broncos. “To have an opportunity to express yourself through your cleats is pretty dope.”

Miller, who sports a tattoo on his left arm honoring his long-time sponsor, Adidas, wears custom cleats every week that are designed by Los Angeles artist Kickasso. But he only wears them during warmups because NFL rules prohibit players from wearing shoes during games that are not black or white with a team color.

Miller debuted the Kanye West-designed Adidas Yeezy cleats while stretching on the field before the season opener, and then switched to a different pair of shoes 90 minutes before kickoff, as required. Houston receiver DeAndre Hopkins wore his pair of Yeezys in the popular turtle dove color during a game and said he was fined \$6,000 by the NFL. He said he’d only wear them again “if Kanye wants to

pay the fine.”

Hopkins won’t have to worry about that this weekend when he’ll wear custom cleats to raise awareness for domestic violence.

Players are increasingly wearing custom-designed cleats before games to make a statement, fashion or otherwise.

Giants receiver Odell Beckham Jr. has worn “Back to the Future” cleats advertising hover boards among his many other creative designs. Washington wide receiver DeSean Jackson wore cleats in a game with a yellow “caution” tape design in violation of league rules.

The king of the specialized shoes is Steelers receiver Antonio Brown, whose custom cleats have featured images of his kids, Muhammad Ali, Arnold Palmer and Jose Fernandez. Some have run afoul of the league’s rules, like the ones with his children, which he was told to take off at halftime.

Brown’s cleats this weekend highlight Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and teammate Ben Roethlisberger is joining in on the footwear fun to raise awareness for police and fire departments with K-9 units and service dogs.

Many players worked with Nike, Under Armour and Adidas to design the cleats they’ll wear in games this weekend. Others used their own designers.

The Giants and the Texans worked with an independent customizer to design cleats for their players.

Greg Olsen’s cleats will raise awareness for congenital heart defects by telling the story of his son, T.J., who survived a heart defect as a baby. Eric Berry’s tell the story of his battle with cancer and are designed to help raise awareness for Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. David Johnson’s cleats promote an anti-bullying initiative.

“I think it’s a great thing,” Roethlisberger said. “I think it’s an awesome opportunity for guys in the NFL to showcase a foundation, a cause, whatever it is. There are so many great causes out there people don’t know much about. Obviously the league puts its stamp on one or two things but there’s so many things out there guys want to be known and want to be made aware of a cause or opportunity or whatever and this is an awesome opportunity to do it.”

“I hope the league will continue to do it.”

Navy can make history with AAC title win

What's at stake

An independent before joining the AAC in 2015, Navy is seeking the first conference championship in the program's 136-year history. The Midshipmen also have a chance to conclude their season playing in the Cotton Bowl. Temple is looking to win its first AAC title after falling to Houston 24-13 in last year's championship game.

Key matchup

Temple defense vs. Navy's triple option: The key to beating the Midshipmen is containing their prolific running attack. No one has been up to the task lately, as Navy has scored 42, 66 and 75 points over the past three weeks. Temple, however, has yielded a total of 10 points in its last three games and has won six in a row, thanks primarily to a defense that has three shutouts and is allowing only 273.4 yards per game.

Players to watch

Temple: DL Haason Reddick leads the NCAA with 21½ tackles for a loss — one short of the school record of 22½ by former NFL star Dan Klecko (2002). Reddick had an AAC record-tying five tackles for a loss against Memphis and ranks second in the AAC with 9½ sacks.

Navy: QB Will Worth has accounted for 198 points this season (25 rushing TDs, eight passing TDs), tied for the second most in school history. Worth has compiled 2,544 yards of total offense (1,181 rushing and 1,363 passing), 32 short of Keenan Reynolds' school record, set in 2015.

Facts & figures

Navy has won 15 straight at home, tied with Houston for the longest active streak in the nation. ... Navy has scored on 34 of its last 38 drives, 33 for TDs ... Owls QB Phillip Walker owns school records for career attempts (1,385), completions (805), touchdowns (71), yards (10,074) and wins by a starting quarterback (27).

From The Associated Press

Bearcats upset No. 19 Cyclones

By LUKE MEREDITH

Associated Press

AMES, Iowa — Iowa State is playing defense better than it has in years.

The Cyclones' offense has been uncharacteristically sluggish at times though, putting their school-record streak in the Top 25 in jeopardy.

Jacob Evans III made two free throws with 20 seconds left in overtime and Cincinnati upset No. 19 Iowa State 55-54 on Thursday night, the Cyclones' second straight loss.

Kyle Washington had 13 points and 10 rebounds and Evans had 11 points for the Bearcats (6-1), who also snapped Iowa State's 37-game non-conference home winning streak.

Cincinnati outrebounded the smaller Cyclones 46-34. It shot just 3-for-21 from three-point range and 35.5 percent overall, but its defense stifled Iowa State — which just 11 days ago scored a program-best 130 points.

"To win it when you go 3-for-21 from three, on the road against a great team like that, and they still win the game? It says a lot about the character of our team," Cincinnati coach Mick Cronin said.

Gary Clark and Kevin Johnson also scored 11 points each for the Bearcats.

Monte Morris had 15 points for the Cyclones (5-2) and Matt Thomas scored 13.

Iowa State's Naz Mitrou-Long, who has hit a number of game-winning threes in his career,

had one rim out at the regulation buzzer. He did not score.

"I thought they really competed. Showed a lot of toughness, a lot of grit," Iowa State coach Steve Prohm said. "They were going to try to control the tempo. The biggest key is just we weren't able to get enough good, quality shots on the offensive end. That's something I've got to look at and do better with."

The Cyclones have dropped their last two by a total of three points after a 5-0 start. But Iowa State had its worst offensive output since 2013 on Thursday, scoring its fewest points in an overtime game in 11 years.

"They were just tougher than us," said Darrell Bowie, who had 11 points with seven rebounds for Iowa State.

Poll implications: Iowa State has been ranked in 60 consecutive polls, third-best nationally behind Kansas and Arizona. That could end on Monday — though losing on a neutral floor to Gonzaga by two last week and by one to the tough-minded Bearcats certainly doesn't mean the Cyclones are in trouble quite yet.

Ball movement: It was the key to the game, because Cincinnati had it and Iowa State didn't.

"If you move the ball, and you move people around, you're a much harder team to block out," Cronin said when asked about his team's dominance on the offensive glass.

The Cyclones had just five assists on 22 baskets — an extremely low number for a team with Morris, an AP preseason All-America.

No. 8 Gonzaga routs Delta Devils

Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Josh Perkins and Silas Melson had 15 points apiece as No. 8 Gonzaga remained undefeated and kept Mississippi Valley State winless with a 97-63 victory Thursday night.

All of Perkins' points came on five first-half threes.

Nigel Williams-Goss chipped in 13 points, five assists and three steals for the Bulldogs (7-0).

The Delta Devils (0-9) had an energetic start, but the Bulldogs' nine threes built a 21-point halftime lead.

Two three-pointers by Williams-Goss and six points from Jordan Mathews helped the Bulldogs go up five just 4 minutes into the first half.

Freshman center Zach Collins had two early dunks, both

of which he flushed while being fouled.

Rashaan Surles led the Delta Devils with 13 points.

No. 20 South Carolina 68, Vermont 50: PJ Dozier had a career-high 21 points and the host Gamecocks improved to 7-0 for a second straight season.

Dozier, a 6-foot-6 sophomore, helped the Gamecocks to a 13-1 run at the start of the second half. Maik Kotsar had eight points in the charge while Dozier had a three-pointer and a thunderous finish to an alley-oop pass that had the crowd on its feet as South Carolina took a 49-32 lead.

The Catamounts (6-3) could not respond to taller, quicker South Carolina.

Dozier had three of the Gamecocks' four three-pointers in besting his previous high

of 17 points, set in the season opener against Louisiana Tech.

No. 24 Florida 91, North Florida 60: At Jacksonville, Fla., Chris Chiozza had 16 points and nine assists, and Justin Leon added 13 points for the Gators.

It was Florida's first game as a ranked team during coach Mike White's two seasons in Gainesville.

Dallas Moore tried to wreck it. North Florida's all-time leading scorer finished with 31 points on 12-for-21 shooting. He kept the Ospreys (3-6) in the game early, but couldn't keep pace with Florida's inside-out attack.

The Gators pounded the ball inside (38 points in the paint), scored 38 points off turnovers and made 9 of 19 shots from three-point range.

Rockets top Warriors in double-OT

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — James Harden notched his fourth triple-double of the season with 29 points, 15 rebounds and 13 assists, and the Houston Rockets outlasted the Warriors 132-127 in double overtime Thursday night to end Golden State's 12-game winning streak.

Harden put his team ahead on a 30-footer with 3:12 left in the second overtime and hit a pair of free throws with 2:10 to go following a flagrant foul on Draymond Green.

Eric Gordon followed Harden's free throws with a floating jumper and scored 23 off the bench as Houston snapped an eight-game skid to the Warriors, who lost MVP Stephen Curry with 3:25 left in the last extra session when he was whistled for a charge. Curry scored his team's first six points in the initial overtime and finished with 28 points and five assists.

Clippers 113, Cavaliers 94: J.J. Redick scored 23 points, Blake Griffin matched a career high with 11 assists and visiting Los Angeles bounced back from a brutal loss with a victory over Cleveland, which has lost two straight for the first time as defending NBA champion.

Chris Paul scored 16 and DeAndre Jordan had 15 rebounds for the Clippers.

Hornets 97, Mavericks 87: Kemba Walker scored 18 points and host Charlotte beat Dallas for its third win in the last four games.

Grizzlies 95, Magic 94: Marc Gasol scored 25 points, including a pair of free throws with 12.2 seconds remaining to give Memphis a victory over visiting Orlando.

Bucks 111, Nets 93: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 23 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, Jabari Parker scored 22 points and Milwaukee beat host Brooklyn.

Heat 111, Jazz 110: Goran Dragic scored 27 points and Miami continued to play better on the road.

Blackhawks push past Devils

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Marian Hossa may be playing like the most experienced member of the Chicago Blackhawks, but he doesn't show signs of being one of the team's oldest players.

The 37-year-old forward is as crafty as ever and seems to have plenty of gas left in the tank — even when Chicago rolls beyond regulation time.

Hossa scored his team-leading 12th goal through a screen at 1:31 of overtime to lift the Blackhawks to a 4-3 victory over the New Jersey Devils on Thursday night.

Hossa's shot through traffic from high in the slot beat Cory Schneider on the glove side, moments after New Jersey's Mike Cammalleri hit the post on a prime chance against Chicago's Corey Crawford.

"(Patrick Kane) took the puck, just gave it to me and I tried to hold it and maybe see my options," said Hossa, who will turn 38 on Jan. 12. "And I didn't see anything so I tried to shoot through the screen.

"I don't think goalie saw much. It wasn't a hard shot but I just tried to shoot it at the net."

It worked, and the Western Conference-leading Blackhawks won their second straight as they

played beyond regulation for the third consecutive time. Chicago is 3-0-1 in its last four.

Hossa's heroics allowed the Blackhawks to overcome a hat trick by New Jersey's Travis Zajac in a high-tempo game with few stoppages.

Zajac's third goal of the game at 8:49 of the third tied it 3-all after scores by Chicago's Artem Anisimov and Niklas Hjalmarsson late in the second period had put the Blackhawks ahead.

Marcus Kruger also connected for Chicago to end a 22-game drought.

The Devils have dropped four straight, but coach John Hynes isn't upset with his team's energy level.

"We competed, we played with passion, our quality of play was very good," Hynes said. "We have to clean up some penalties but I think if we have the competition level, the passion we played we have something to really build on."

Zajac completed his second career hat trick from the low edge of the left circle after taking a slick cross-ice pass from Cammalleri. He fired into a wide open net before Crawford could react.

Zajac, who had a two-goal game on Oct. 25 against Arizona, has eight goals this season.

Barkov, Florida top Wings in OT

Associated Press

DETROIT — Tom Rowe's first two games in charge of an NHL team lasted longer than regulation, making him sweat it out to earn his first taste of success.

Aleksander Barkov scored on a breakaway 2:04 into overtime to lift the Florida Panthers to a 2-1 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday night, giving their interim coach his first victory.

The Panthers outplayed Detroit after a rough start. They lost 2-1 in a shootout at Chicago in Rowe's debut on Tuesday night.

"In between periods I was saying, 'We deserve it,'" Rowe recalled.

Rowe said equipment manager Teddy Richards gave him the game puck as a keepsake. Rowe coached Florida's AHL affiliates in Portland and San Antonio and was an assistant with Carolina before moving into the Panthers' front office and then behind the bench to re-

place the fired Gerard Gallant.

"Big win, first for him," Panthers captain Derek MacKenzie said. "Hopefully, there's many more."

The Red Wings extended their point streak to five games after losing four straight and nine of 11, but were fortunate to get anything positive out of a night in which they struggled at both ends of the ice.

Blues 5, Lightning 4: Vladimir Tarasenko scored three goals and Kevin Shattenkirk added two as host St. Louis won its third straight.

Sabres 4, Rangers 3: Jack Eichel scored two goals in the third period, and host Buffalo earned its second straight victory.

Penguins 6, Stars 2: Sidney Crosby had a goal and two assists, leading host Pittsburgh to a rout of Dallas.

Blue Jackets 3, Avalanche 2: Boone Jenner scored the winning goal with 11:03 remaining, Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 18 shots and visiting Columbus

beat slumping Colorado.

Kings 4, Coyotes 3: Trevor Lewis scored off a turnover with 4:05 left and visiting Los Angeles held on to beat Arizona.

Ducks 3, Canucks 1: Ondrej Kase scored his first NHL goal, John Gibson made 27 saves and visiting Anaheim earned its third consecutive victory.

Islanders 3, Capitals 0: Shane Prince, Brock Nelson and Jason Chimera produced three goals in less than 4½ minutes of the third period, leading visiting New York to its first three-game winning streak of the season.

Bruins 2, Hurricanes 1 (SO): Ryan Spooner and David Pastnak scored in a shootout, lifting host Boston over Carolina.

Flyers 3, Senators 2 (OT): Claude Giroux scored his second goal of the game 40 seconds into overtime, sending visiting Philadelphia past Ottawa.

Oilers 6, Jets 3: Mark Letestu and Leon Draisaitl each had two goals and an assist, powering visiting Edmonton past Winnipeg.