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Carter: Coalition needs to stay in Iraq

Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — The American military, along with its international partners, will need to remain in Iraq even after the expected defeat of the Islamic State group, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Saturday.

Carter said the U.S. and its coalition partners must not stop after completing the current campaign to expel the Islamic State group from Mosul.

He said the militants are on a path to lasting defeat.

“But there will still be much more to do after that to make sure that, once defeated, ISIL

stays defeated,” he said, using an alternative acronym for the Islamic State group. “We’ll need to continue to counter foreign fighters trying to escape and ISIL’s attempts to relocate or reinvent itself. To do so, not only the United States but our coalition must endure and remain engaged militarily.

“In Iraq in particular, it will be necessary for the coalition to provide sustained assistance and carry on our work to train, equip and support local police, border guards and other forces to hold areas cleared from ISIL,” he said.

He did not say how long this continued U.S. military pres-

ence might be necessary or how many troops would be required. At any rate, those decisions are likely to fall to the Trump administration after it takes office in January.

In describing recent Pentagon actions to put a stranglehold on the Islamic State group worldwide, Carter said the Obama administration has directed the secretive Joint Special Operations Command to prioritize destroying the militant group’s ability to conduct attacks in the West.

Carter said that, in his final weeks in office, he is focused on ensuring a smooth transition to his successor. Earlier this week,

President-elect Donald Trump announced that he intends to nominate retired Marine Gen. James Mattis to be his defense secretary.

Carter congratulated Mattis, who is a former commander of U.S. Central Command overseeing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“I’ve worked with Jim for many years. He’s a friend, and I hold him in the highest regard,” Carter said.

Carter made his remarks at the Reagan National Defense Forum at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum.

Syrian army tells rebels to leave Aleppo or die

Associated Press

ALEPPO, Syria — The Syrian army on Sunday ordered rebels in Aleppo to leave the city or face “inevitable death” as a series of airstrikes on an opposition-held town elsewhere in the country killed 21 people, including three children.

Pro-government forces have been pushing deeper into besieged eastern Aleppo, taking back neighborhoods the rebels have held since 2012. The opposition has buckled after months of siege and waves of devastating airstrikes, and could soon be driven from Syria’s largest city. It would mark their biggest defeat since the conflict began in 2011.

Army spokesman Brig. Gen. Samir Suleiman said government forces would “continue fighting until they restore stability and security to all neighborhoods.” He said the army has retaken more than half

the neighborhoods in eastern Aleppo, and that special forces would lead the battle in the city’s historic district.

Government and allied Lebanese, Iraqi and Iranian fighters swiftly captured the city’s northeast in recent days, and the opposition’s remaining enclave is collapsing. The United Nations estimates that more than 31,000 people have fled to areas held by the government or Kurdish forces, or deeper into the embattled city.

Elsewhere in Syria, activists reported a series of airstrikes in the opposition-held town of Kafranbel, some 50 miles from Aleppo. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed 21 dead, including members of the local religious police force. Russia’s military said last month it was resuming airstrikes on Idlib province, where Kafranbel is located.

Chaos erupts in Mosul as government delivers aid

Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq — Chaos erupted in eastern Mosul on Sunday when hundreds of civilians overwhelmed aid trucks distributing food and water.

The Iraqi government sent truckloads of food, heating oil and drinking water to residents in areas retaken from the Islamic State group in and around Mosul after aid groups warned of shortages in Iraq’s second-largest city, which has been the target of a major offensive since October.

“There is no justice,” said Abu Ahmed, who asked that his full name not be used out of security concerns. “Some people took so many bags of food and others got nothing.”

While the trucks bore banners identifying them as distributing aid on behalf of the local government, there were no government or security officials present during the melee

that ensued on the eastern edge of the city.

Men, women and children fought over bags of flour and baskets of apples.

“We are desperate; this is the first time I’ve seen aid trucks,” Abu Ahmed said.

Diaa Sallal, a senior Iraqi relief official, said the supplies were being delivered to the towns of Bartella and Qayyarah, near Mosul, as well as two outlying Mosul neighborhoods. Sallal, reached by telephone in Iraq’s northern Kurdish region, gave no further details.

Iraq’s government called on civilians to remain in their homes during the operation to retake Mosul, fearing a mass exodus. But as the battle has ground on, with Iraqi forces making slow progress in street-by-street battles, supplies of food and water have dwindled.

Heavy clashes flared in eastern Mosul on Sunday.

Navy lauds Japan push to protect pilots from lasers

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The laser light glaring through the cockpit of Lt. J.D. Davis' Super Hornet jet was no cheap office pointer.

Davis approached Naval Air Facility Atsugi earlier this year just before 8 p.m., dropping below 3,000 feet, when a steady, green laser coming from the ground began tracking him for about 20 seconds.

This wasn't the first time someone shined a laser at Davis while he was flying, though this beam was far more intense than one he experienced over Texas.

He averted his eyes to avoid the distraction, as well as potential vision impairment, and notified the flight leader shortly before the next pilot was targeted.

"What it does is take you away from your primary duty of flying a jet," Davis told Stars and Stripes. "Your attention is now focused on, 'What is that thing I'm seeing that I'm not typically used to seeing?'"

Lasers repeatedly have been pointed at pilots landing at Atsugi in recent years, with reports occurring as frequently

as 12 times in a month, said Lt. Cmdr. Amanda Jimenez-Myers, an aerospace optometrist treating Carrier Air Wing 5 pilots.

Lasers have been an increasing problem for commercial pilots in Japan as well, but until this year, little has been done to discourage anyone from shining them at pilots, whether out of curiosity or harmful intent.

On Nov. 30, Kanagawa Prefecture police arrested a 55-year-old man on charges of "forcibly obstructing business" for pointing a green laser at a low-flying Atsugi patrol plane, Jiji Press reported.

The broad charge will soon be focused to include more explicit regulations on hazardous laser use.

On Dec. 21, the Japanese government will start enforcing revisions to aviation laws that will make pointing a laser at an aircraft punishable by a fine of up to 500,000 yen, or \$4,500, a spokesman for the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism said Nov. 28.

"We are very pleased to hear that the Japanese government is taking measures to curb this dangerous behavior," U.S. Naval Forces Japan said in response to a Stars and Stripes query. "The use of high-powered la-

sers against civil aviation, as well as U.S. Forces Japan and Japan Self-Defense Forces aircraft, is not only hazardous for the aircrew and passengers, it could also be catastrophic for people on the ground."

As Japan takes steps to curb laser use, incidents continue to rise in other parts of the world among U.S. military pilots.

In March, two crewmembers flying a U.S. F-15E Strike Eagle were temporarily disoriented by a laser beam as they descended toward RAF Lakenheath in England, military officials reported.

In July, the pilots of an Air Force C-17 were blinded by a laser beam from the ground on final approach to Ramstein Air Base, according to German police.

U.S. and Japanese officials are hoping that the new law, along with some added media attention, will prevent laser use.

"We're flying these aircraft over a highly densely populated area of Japan," Davis said. "Taking a pilot's attention away with a laser is creating more of a situation than one might understand on the ground."

Futenma noise award upheld

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND CHIYOMI SUMIDA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Judges have upheld a lower court's ruling last year to award \$8.4 million to a group of Okinawans who said they suffered from aircraft noise from Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

Thursday's decision came just weeks after judges awarded a separate group of plaintiffs \$22.6 million for similar complaints.

The suit that was ruled on Thursday was filed in 2012 by 2,220 Okinawans seeking about \$11 million for "intense" noise, sleep deprivation and psychological damage associated with living near Futenma.

In siding with the plaintiffs, a three-judge panel from the Naha Branch of Fukuoka High Court dismissed the Japanese government's argument that some residents were aware of the noise when they moved to the area.

"Victims generally enter an affected area for certain personal needs and have no intention of taking advantage of pollution," Chief Judge Toshiro Tamiya said in the decision.

If divided equally, the plaintiffs stand to collect nearly \$4,000 each, before attorney's fees. The Japanese government is responsible for paying.

After the ruling, the plaintiffs said they filed suit so their government would become aware of their plight.

The panel declined those plaintiffs' request to suspend flight operations at the air base, though the group has said it will appeal.

Navy christens newest attack sub

Associated Press

GROTON, Conn. — Annie Mabus smashed a bottle of sparkling wine from a Denver vineyard against the Navy's newest attack submarine Saturday, christening it the Colorado as the vessel prepares to join a fleet expected to number more than 300 ships by 2019.

The 377-foot-long submarine will become the USS Colorado when it is commissioned as the

15th in the Virginia class of attack submarines, each costing \$2.7 billion. The vessels are equipped to carry out warfare against submarines and surface ships, as well as conduct surveillance and deliver Special Operations troops.

Mabus joined her father, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, and others for the ceremony at Electric Boat shipyard in Groton, Conn. The bottle of Balis-

treri Vineyards wine had been chilled before the ceremony in a bucket of water from the Colorado River.

The Colorado is the fourth U.S. Navy ship to be named for the state. The first was a three-masted frigate launched at Norfolk Navy Yard in 1856. The most recent was a 1923-commissioned battleship that won seven battle stars during World War II.

Vets 'just trying to help' protesters in ND

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

CANNON BALL, N.D. — Army veteran Ryan Kiesling, 30, said he can appreciate the Standing Rock Sioux tribe's view on the sanctity of water.

After returning home from deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, other veterans suggested Kiesling try surfing to help with the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

"That really helped me," said Kiesling, who served as an Army cavalry scout from 2007 to 2013. "I just go out there in the ocean and sit on the water, and it's the water that really helps."

Far from the ocean, Kiesling arrived Saturday at one of the larger Dakota Access Pipeline protest camps in North Dakota to help save another body of water — Lake Oahe.

Several thousand people at the camps are protesting the \$3.8 billion Dakota Access Pipeline. They claim the oil pipeline, if ruptured, could contaminate drinking water in Lake Oahe, a large reservoir on the Missouri River about a half-mile from Standing Rock Indian

Reservation.

The protesters, who call themselves "water protectors," have developed the mantra "water is life."

Kiesling said they're right.

"The ocean, the water, it was my savior," he said. "The 'water is life' thing, it really stuck with me. It's something I believe in."

Veterans are gathering at points across the country to travel to Standing Rock. They're answering a call from organizers Michael Wood Jr. and Wesley Clark Jr. — veterans who have said former servicemembers are uniquely equipped to handle what's become a tense and sometimes violent standoff between protesters and law enforcement.

In the past two days, veterans have been arriving in the hundreds. More than 2,000 in total are expected Sunday through Wednesday.

The veterans' arrival comes at a tense time at Standing Rock. It coincides with a deadline set by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for oil pipeline protesters to leave some of the land around the construction site, and it comes just after the governor

ordered protesters to evacuate. The situation has prompted responses in the last few days from members of Congress and U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch.

The pipeline would stretch 1,172 miles underground, moving crude oil from North Dakota to Illinois.

In addition to fear of a possible pipeline leak, Sioux tribe members also have said the construction infringes on sacred grounds.

Energy Transfer Partners LP applied in 2014 to build the pipeline. By last March, it had secured approvals from the four states in which the pipeline would pass. A group of Native Americans has been protesting since April.

On Saturday, the temperature at the reservation topped out in the mid-20s, and some snow was hardening into ice. More snow is expected Monday, according to the National Weather Service in Bismarck. Temperatures are supposed to drop into the single digits by midweek, with strong northern winds.

As of Saturday morning, the group, dubbed "Veterans

Standing for Standing Rock," had raised more than \$1 million through a GoFundMe web page. Some of the money will be used to help veterans travel to the site, and other money will go toward the purchase of supplies to help protesters withstand the winter.

However, the veterans' presence at the site has drawn criticism over the last few days from other veterans.

On Thursday, a North Dakota veterans group sent a letter to organizers Wood and Clark, saying their involvement in the protest would reflect poorly on all veterans.

The letter was written by the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council, which accuses oil pipeline protesters of instigating violence, stealing from local stores and restaurants and harming or destroying private and government property.

"By aligning yourselves with protesters who have committed these atrocities and continue to do so, you are going to greatly diminish the good image of yourself as a veteran, veterans organizations, and veterans as a whole," the letter reads.

Controversial bill expands aims of US missile defense

CQ Roll Call

WASHINGTON — In a potentially momentous departure from long-standing law, the fiscal 2017 defense policy bill Congress will send President Barack Obama in the coming days would expand the aims of America's strategic missile-defense policy.

In 1999, Washington enacted a law that expressed the purpose of U.S. defenses against intercontinental ballistic missiles as "limited." The concern then was that endorsing a more expansive system would lead to fielding of an unnecessarily costly shield and would confirm fears in Russia and China that incipient U.S. anti-missile systems were aimed at taking out those nations' nuclear deterrents.

Now, the new defense policy measure will remove the word "limited" and will replace it with the word "robust."

Trent Franks, R-Ariz., the House's main advocate for making the change, said in a statement to CQ Roll Call that he is "deeply encouraged" by the conference outcome.

"This signals a clear, bipartisan shift in how Congress thinks about missile defense, and it will allow the U.S. to close the growing capability gap rather than lagging behind the missile threat," Franks said.

But arms control groups consider the change in language worrisome. They worry that Russia and China will read the change as confirmation of their fears about the threat America's anti-missile systems pose

to Moscow and Beijing — and those fears, in turn, could lead to a cycle of military action and reaction.

The defense authorization conference report appears to attempt to allay such fears. "The conferees note, nothing in this legislative provision requires or directs the development of missile defenses against any country or its strategic nuclear forces."

Critics still believe the change will be potentially destabilizing. Stephen Young, a senior analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists, called the policy revision a "serious mistake."

Young told CQ it would "send a signal to Russia and China that the United States is not interested in strategic stability, but is focused instead on pursuing

military options that could easily provoke reactions that will ultimately harm U.S. security."

Kingston Reif, a defense expert with the Arms Control Association, also warned that the arcane change in policy language could have real-world effects.

"The provision flies in the face of years of bipartisan executive and legislative branch policy on the role and purpose of U.S. national missile defenses," Reif said in a statement to CQ Roll Call. "While the language does not direct or impose changes to current U.S. missile defense programs and budgets, the clear purpose is to remove legislative barriers to configuring U.S. ballistic missile defenses not only against Iran and North Korea, but Russia and China as well."

Green Party drops bid for Pa. recount

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Green Party-backed voters dropped a court case Saturday night that had sought to force a statewide recount of Pennsylvania's Nov. 8 presidential election, won by Republican Donald Trump, in what Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein had framed as an effort to explore whether voting machines and systems had been hacked and the election result manipulated.

The decision came two days before a court hearing was scheduled in the case. Saturday's court filing to withdraw the case said the Green Party-backed voters who filed the case "are regular citizens of ordinary means" and cannot afford the \$1 million bond ordered by the court by 5 p.m. Monday. However, Green Party-backed efforts to force recounts and to analyze election software in scattered precincts were continuing. Stein plans to make an announcement about the Pennsylvania recount Monday outside the Trump Tower in New York, aides said.

The court case had been part of an effort spearheaded by Stein to force recounts in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, three states with a history of backing Democrats for president that were narrowly and unexpectedly won by Trump over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

A recount began Thursday in Wisconsin, while a recount could begin next week in Michigan. Trump's victory in Pennsylvania was particularly stunning: the state's fifth-most electoral votes are a key steppingstone to the White House, and no Republican presidential candidate had captured the state since 1988.

Stein had said the purpose of Pennsylvania's recount was to ensure "our votes are safe and secure," considering hackers' probing of election targets in other states and hackers' accessing of the emails of the Democratic National Committee and several Clinton staffers.

Trump picks get mixed reviews

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump's move to pack his administration with military brass is getting mixed reviews, as Congress and others struggle to balance their personal regard for the individuals he's choosing with a broader worry about an increased militarization of American policy.

No fewer than three combat-experienced retired Army and Marine leaders, with multiple deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, are on tap for high-level government jobs normally reserved for civilians. Others are entrenched in Trump's organization as close advisers.

Retired Army Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn will serve as the president's national security adviser, and Trump announced retired Marine four-star Gen. James Mattis on Thursday night as his secretary of defense. In addition, retired Marine Gen. John Kelly is a likely pick to head the Department of Homeland Security.

All three had high-profile military careers leading top commands, and they are known for their willingness to offer blunt policy assessments publicly and privately. But their strategic advice could be colored by their years on the battlefield watching soldiers and Marines fight and die battling insurgents in the mountains of Afghanistan and the deserts of Iraq.

The men Trump has chosen are familiar faces on Capitol Hill, having made frequent trips in their former jobs, and lawmakers are expressing personal respect. But some temper that with a wariness about the wisdom of putting so many military leaders at the helm of the country's national security when the nation was founded on the idea of civilian control.

In particular, some Democrats oppose passing

a law overriding a prohibition on an officer leading the Defense Department before he has been out of the military for seven years. That law has been waived only once in American history, for George Marshall in 1950. Flynn's appointment does not require congressional approval, and there is no similar law for Homeland Security.

Mattis retired from the Marine Corps in June 2013, and Kelly retired early this year. Flynn retired in 2014 after being pushed out of his job as head of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

"While I deeply respect General Mattis' service, I will oppose a waiver," said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., a member of the Armed Services Committee. "Civilian control of our military is a fundamental principle of American democracy, and I will not vote for an exception to this rule."

Rep. Adam Smith, ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, echoed that concern, saying that while Mattis served with distinction, "civilian control of the military is not something to be casually cast aside."

It is unlikely, however, that those trepidations will threaten Mattis' nomination. He has broad support from Republicans, who hold the majority in both chambers, including from John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Still, national security experts raise concerns about the possibility of a greater reliance on military solutions to international problems.

Jon Soltz, who leads the liberal political action committee VoteVets, said that people with military service are needed in Washington, but "it is somewhat concerning that Donald Trump continues to eye recently retired generals for some of the most important traditionally civilian positions in government."

Death toll in warehouse fire rises to 24

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Officials said the death toll has risen to 24 in a fire that ripped through a late-night dance party in a converted warehouse in Oakland, and they expect that number to climb as the search continues.

Alameda County sheriff's Sgt. Ray Kelly announced the new figure early Sunday. Only about 20 percent of the charred remains of the building have been searched. Oakland Battalion Fire Chief Melinda Drayton said fire crews worked through the night to clear debris from the gutted building.

The search for bodies is expected to continue at least 48 hours.

The building known as the "Ghost Ship" was an artist workspace and illegal home for a rotating cast of a dozen or more residents, according to those who lived there or visited often.

Former residents said it was also a death trap with few exits, a rickety makeshift staircase, piles of driftwood and a labyrinth of electrical cords. The ground floor had five recreational vehicles and other nooks used as living spaces that were rented out to tenants, while the upstairs had space for concerts like the deadly party that drew up to 100 people Friday night.

With few lights, the place could be pitch black. One staircase led to a boarded-up door.

The water and electricity were stolen from neighbors and often didn't work.

"If you were not familiar with the building and the way that it was, if you were going there for a party, you wouldn't be aware of the maze that you have to go through to get out," said Danielle Boudreaux, a former friend of the couple who ran the warehouse.

Boudreaux identified the operators of the collective as Derick Ion Almerna and Micah Allison. She said she had a falling out with Almerna when she persuaded Allison's parents and sister about a year ago that the warehouse was a dangerous place for the couple's three children to live.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man gets 20 years for soliciting 5 murders

CA SANTA ANA — An Orange County man has been sentenced to 20 years in federal prison for soliciting the murders and assaults of a federal judge, two prosecutors and two FBI agents.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said John Walthall, 61, of Laguna Beach, was sentenced Friday.

Prosecutors said Walthall targeted the judge, prosecutors and agents for their involvement in his 2009 conviction in a fraud scheme that duped an elderly couple out of \$5.5 million. Walthall was sentenced to 14 years in that case.

Prosecutors say Walthall approached fellow prisoners about kidnapping and killing those involved in the case.

Couple shoo moose bonding with cows

VT SHELDON — A Vermont couple say their effort to shoo away a moose that appeared to be bonding with their farm's two cows was successful.

Sharyn Abbott and her husband, Tim, returned to their Sheldon farm recently and found a female moose in the pasture with their two Belted Galloway cows, Precious and Primrose.

The Abbotts told NECN the moose looked healthy. Tim Abbott said it seemed like the moose simply wanted to hang out with the cows.

Ho ho? Oh no! Too warm for wonderland

MA BOSTON — City officials postponed the weekend opening of a

European-style "Boston Winter" outdoor wonderland because it's unseasonably warm.

City Hall Plaza was being transformed into a North Pole — complete with an ice-skating path tucked among chocolate fountains and wooden chalets selling Christmas ornaments. But hours before it was to open to the public, Mayor Marty Walsh temporarily called it off.

Walsh tweeted: "Warm weather in December (climate change?) caused ice skating path to melt, postponing today's opening. Sad!"

Organizers said they've nudged the grand opening to Wednesday.

Man stuck in pizzeria vent freed, charged

NY PENFIELD — A man rescued from an oven vent at a western new York pizzeria is facing burglary charges.

The Monroe County Sheriff's Office said deputies arrived at Pontillo's Pizzeria in suburban Rochester at 3:45 a.m. Friday after someone reported a man yelling for help. They found Richard Graham, 53, of Rochester, stuck in ductwork that led from an oven to a roof vent.

After Penfield firefighters pulled him out, Graham was checked out at a hospital before being arraigned in town court on burglary and criminal mischief charges. The sheriff's office said Graham caused more \$2,000 in damage to the restaurant.

Graham, a repeat offender, was sent to jail without bail.

Woman stabs man who drank her blood

MO SPRINGFIELD — Police said a

19-year-old Missouri woman allowed her intoxicated boyfriend to drink her blood, then stabbed the wannabe vampire during a subsequent argument.

Victoria Vanatter, of Springfield, pleaded not guilty Nov. 28 to charges of first-degree domestic assault and armed criminal action in the Nov. 23 incident.

Police said Vanatter told them she agreed her boyfriend could slice her arm with a box cutter and drink her blood. But then the two argued and Vanatter stabbed her boyfriend in the shoulder.

When police arrived at their home, they discovered the bloodied couple and "I'm sorry" inside a heart scrawled in blood on the wall. Both were treated at a hospital. Vanatter was jailed on \$150,000 bond.

Macaw appears in mug shot with owner

OR HILLSBORO — A 4-year-old macaw named Bird has become an instant celebrity after appearing in a posed booking mug shot in Oregon with his owner.

The Washington County Sheriff's Department said Craig Buckner left Bird in a tree outside court while he went in for an appearance Thursday.

Sgt. Bob Ray said Buckner was arrested unexpectedly after he failed a urine drug test — and Bird would not come down from the tree for anyone else. Bird was 30 feet up the tree and it was getting dark and rainy. So deputies took Buckner outside and uncuffed one of his hands. Bird immediately flew down to Buckner.

Ray said Bird stayed with deputies for several hours and feasted on peanuts until they reached a friend who could retrieve it.

Med school doctor resigns over remark

CO DENVER — A doctor who made a racist remark on Facebook about first lady Michelle Obama has resigned her job at the Denver Health Medical Center.

The University of Colorado told the Denver Post that it's also in the process of terminating Dr. Michelle Herren's nonpaid medical faculty appointment.

The Post reported Herren responded to a Facebook post praising the first lady with the comment, "Monkey face and poor ebonic English!!! There! I feel better and am still not racist!!! Just calling it like it is!"

Herren is a pediatric anesthesiologist. She told KMGH-TV her remarks were taken "out of context" and she didn't realize the term "monkey face" was offensive.

Airborne marksmen paid to kill feral hogs

LA NATCHITOCHEs — The Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation says farmers are paying to join a U.S. Department of Agriculture program that brings marksmen to shoot from helicopters at feral hogs.

It says the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has been using aerial gunning to kill hogs in wildlife refuges, and invited farmers to participate for a fee.

The program expansion is in the Natchitoches Soil and Water Conservation District. The federation's news release doesn't say how much farmers pay.

Conservation district Chairman Sidney Evans said about 40,000 acres of farmland were enrolled in the first year, and hunters and trappers removed more than 1,200 hogs.

From wire reports

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PSU rallies to Big Ten title

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — As Penn State's band played and Lucas Oil Stadium rocked, thousands of fans clad in their traditional white shirts chanted "We Are Penn State."

It might have been more fitting if had it been "We are Penn State — and we are back."

Five years after a child sex abuse scandal tainted the reputation of the school and its football program along with the legacy of late coach Joe Paterno, quarterback Trace McSorley put the Nittany Lions squarely back in the national spotlight Saturday night with an epic 38-31 come-from-behind victory over No. 6 Wisconsin in the Big Ten championship game. It was the largest comeback in the six-year history of the game.

Before coach James Franklin left the field, he was already

lobbying the playoff committee to put No. 8 Penn State in the final four.

"What I do know is that we just won the toughest conference in college football," he said. "We've won nine straight. They say you're allowed to overcome minor setbacks. We've done that. It's up to you, committee."

On Sunday, the committee chose Washington as the No. 4 team in the playoff.

Since rebounding from a 39-point thumping against Michigan on Sept. 24, Penn State (11-2, No. 7 CFP) won every game, handed No. 2 Ohio State its only loss of the season and on Saturday rallied from a 21-point first-half deficit to end the Badgers' six-game winning streak. Penn State also finished as co-champs of the Big Ten East, a division many considered the toughest in the nation,

and now has its first conference crown in eight years.

While McSorley, who was named the game's MVP after a record-breaking performance, had even higher hopes, he let his coach lobby for a playoff spot.

"Coach said what he needed to say, I'm going to enjoy this moment with my teammates," McSorley said before leaving the stage on the field.

It was certainly a moment worth savoring.

McSorley finished 22-for-31 for 384 yards with four TD passes, breaking the title game records for yards and TD passes. He also broke the school's single-season records for yards passing and touchdown passes.

Saeed Blacknall caught six passes, two for touchdowns, and finished with a championship-game record 155 yards..

Playoffs set: Ala.-Wash., OSU-Clemson

Associated Press

Alabama will play Washington and Ohio State is set to face Clemson in the College Football Playoff semifinals.

The selection committee stayed with the same top four Sunday as it had going into championship weekend, leaving out No. 5 Penn State even though the Nittany Lions won the Big Ten title game and beat Ohio State earlier in the season.

The Buckeyes (11-1) are the first team to reach the playoff in its three-year history without winning their conference.

The unbeaten Crimson Tide (13-0) is in the playoff for the third straight season and is the top seed for the second time. They will play the fourth-ranked Huskies (12-1) in the Peach Bowl in Atlanta on Dec. 31.

Alabama has played Washington four times previously, twice in bowls and not since 1986. Huskies fans were holding up signs at games late in the season, proclaiming "We want Bama."

"Sometimes you got to be careful what you wish for," Washington coach Chris Petersen said on ESPN. "I didn't hold up that sign."

No. 2 Ohio State is making its second playoff appearance and No. 3 Clemson (12-1) is in for the second consecutive season. The Buckeyes and Tigers will meet at the Fiesta Bowl in Glendale, Arizona, on Dec. 31.

Ohio State and Clemson have played twice before, both in bowl games. The last time was 2014.

The one difference from last week's top four and the final one was Clemson and Ohio State switched spots. So the Tigers will wear the home jerseys in University of Phoenix stadium instead of the Buckeyes.

Selection committee chairman Kirby Hocutt said the decision came down not to Penn State and Ohio State but the Nittany Lions (11-2) and Pac-12 champion Washington.

Mayfield, No. 7 Sooners tops in Big 12

Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. — With his best receiver sidelined, Baker Mayfield still boosted his Heisman Trophy resume.

Mayfield passed for 288 yards and three touchdowns, and No. 7 Oklahoma defeated No. 11 Oklahoma State 38-20 on Saturday in a matchup that decided the Big 12 champion and likely guaranteed the Sooners a trip to the Sugar Bowl.

Mayfield performed well throughout, despite finishing the game without Biletnikoff Award finalist Dede Westbrook. The speedster caught four passes for 111 yards before being knocked out of the game in the second quarter on a crushing hit by Oklahoma State safety Jordan Sterns. Mayfield threw two touchdown passes after Westbrook left the game, and the offense didn't miss a beat, finishing with 629 yards.

"He was just fantastic, he was just exactly what he needed to be," Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops said of Mayfield. "He gave our guys chances to make

plays, he handled the ball great himself, had a few key runs for us, threw the ball. The guy's really, really talented. To be able to do what he did, there's not many guys who could do what he did today."

Mayfield finished fourth in the Heisman balloting last year, but he didn't get an invitation to New York for the ceremony. He wants to go this year, and he wants Westbrook to get an invitation, too.

After the game, Mayfield wore a pin from the school with both his and Westbrook's names on it. Mayfield crossed out his own name with a marker to make sure Westbrook wasn't forgotten.

"Dede is the best player in the country," Mayfield said. "I still want to hold Dede's hand all the way to New York."

Mayfield should be a Heisman front-runner heading into next season, too. He said after the game that he plans to return for his senior season.

"Coming back, be here for another year," he said. "Opportunity for a three-peat (Big 12). The ultimate goal is why I

came here — to win a national title."

Samaje Perine rambled for 239 yards on a career-high 37 carries and Joe Mixon caught a touchdown pass and busted a 79-yard touchdown run for the Sooners (10-2, 9-0 Big 12, No. 9 College Football Playoff).

San Diego State 27, Wyoming 24: Rashaad Penny rushed for 117 yards and two touchdowns, and Donnell Pumphrey added 110 yards and one TD as the Aztecs beat the host Cowboys for their second consecutive Mountain West Conference championship.

No. 14 West Virginia 24, Baylor 21: Skyler Howard threw two touchdown passes and ran for another score as the host mountaineers held on in the Big 12 regular-season finale for both teams.

Justin Crawford rushed for 209 yards to help West Virginia (10-2, 7-2) to their 10-win regular-season since 2007. The Mountaineers came from 11 points down in the first half to hand Baylor (6-6, 3-6) its sixth straight loss after a 6-0 start.

Temple stops Navy in AAC title game

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Soon after coach Matt Rhule received the obligatory drenching on the sideline, confetti rained down on the Temple football team and the players jumped with excitement during a celebration that was nearly five decades in the making.

For the first time since 1967, the Owls are league champions.

Phillip Walker threw two touchdown passes, Temple's defense stuffed Navy's running game and the Owls claimed their first American Athletic Conference title with a 34-10 victory Saturday.

After Temple (10-3) scored touchdowns on its first three possessions, protecting the 21-0 lead became substantially easier when No. 20 Navy (9-3, No. 19 CFP) lost standout quarterback Will Worth to a second-quarter ankle injury.

Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo said Worth is done for the season, along with running backs

Toneo Gulley and Darryl Bonner, both of whom left with first-half injuries.

Although the defeat took Navy out of the running for the Cotton Bowl, the Midshipmen are expected to play in the Armed Forces Bowl after facing Army next Saturday.

The Owls extended their winning streak to seven and earned their first league title since finishing atop the Middle American Conference some 49 seasons ago.

"If it means one thing, it means a promise has been fulfilled," said Rhule, who vowed to build a winner at Temple despite going 2-10 in 2013, his first season. "The true thing for me about this is just to have these players to be able to call themselves champions. When you win this conference, you've done something special."

Temple lost to Houston in last year's AAC Championship game. This time, the Owls dominated from the outset.

"It showed we have a really

good team that is capable of doing a lot of good things," said Walker, who went 16 for 25 for 199 yards.

Not only did Temple open with TD drives of 75, 59 and 70 yards, but the defense quashed a Navy attack that was averaging 61 points over its previous three games.

"They just played better. It wasn't a magic wand," Niumatalolo said. "They just hit us in the mouth and we hadn't been hit in the mouth for a long time. Normally, we hit other people in the mouth. To Temple's credit, they hit us in the mouth. We were dazed the whole game. It's like they hit us with an overhand right."

The Midshipmen had scored on 34 of 38 drives — including 33 touchdowns — before being denied on their first three possessions by Temple. Worth was injured at the end of the third drive and did not return.

That spelled doom for an offense that produced more than 500 yards in each of its last three

games. Navy finished with 306 yards, 168 on the ground.

Backup quarterback Zach Abey went 7-for-13 for 104 yards and two interceptions.

"I missed some reads, wish I had some plays back," he said.

The result was the end of Navy's 15-game home winning streak.

Middle linebacker Jarred Alwan led the Owls defense with 13 tackles, and Sean Chandler contributed eight tackles and forced a fumble.

Temple took the suspense out of the game with an early show of offensive firepower. After Walker completed a 13-yard pass for Keith Kirkwood on fourth-and-7 from the Navy 28, Jahad Thomas ran for a 15-yard score.

A 22-yard touchdown pass to Ventell Bryant made it 14-0, and Walker followed a Navy turnover with a perfectly thrown long pass that Kirkwood caught in stride for a 56-yard score.

The injury to Worth occurred on Navy's next possession.

Watson, Clemson earn shot at redemption

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Deshaun Watson's mission is not over.

The Heisman Trophy hopeful and third-ranked Clemson Tigers are ready to return to the College Football Playoff and try to resolve some unfinished business from last season.

Watson bolstered his candidacy for the sport's biggest individual award by passing for three touchdowns and running for two more to lead the Tigers (12-1) a 42-35 victory over No. 19 Virginia Tech in the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game Saturday night.

Winning consecutive league titles for the first time in 28 years sent Dabo Swinney and his players back to the four-team College Football Playoff for the second straight year, providing Watson with an opportunity to resolve unfinished business from last January, when the Tigers lost to Alabama in the national championship game.

Clemson was No. 2 in Sunday's rankings. The Tigers will play No. 3 Ohio State on Dec. 31 in the Fiesta Bowl with a trip to the national championship game on the line.

"What a blessing to be a part of this journey," Swinney said, flanked by Watson. "This guy is the best player in the country, and it isn't close."

The Clemson star completed 23 of 34 passes for 288 yards, including TDs of 21 and 10 yards to Jordan Leggett and 15 yards to Hunter Renfrow for a 42-28 lead midway through the fourth quarter. He also rushed for 85 yards on 17 attempts for the Tigers. They've won back-to-back ACC titles for the first time since winning three straight from 1986-88.

Watson's Virginia Tech counterpart, Jerod Evans, was just as impressive. The 6-foot-3, 238-pound ran for two touchdowns and rallied the Hokies from a 21-point deficit to make it close at the end.

The Hokies (9-4) scored on three straight possessions, trimming what was once a 35-14 deficit to seven points on Evans' 5-yard run early in the fourth quarter and Cam Phillips' 26-yard TD reception with just under 6 minutes remaining.

"We've been there before. We were down 17 in the Notre Dame game and we were able to rally together to fight back," Hokies

receiver Isaiah Ford said. "So we were confident we could come back."

Virginia Tech got the ball back with a chance to force overtime. Evans drove his team to the Clemson 23, where the drive stalled when Tigers cornerback Cordrea Tankersley intercepted a pass on fourth-and-6.

"They got here for a reason," Swinney said of Virginia Tech. "We just couldn't put them away."

Virginia Tech didn't take solace in playing Clemson close.

"They showed up here to win the ballgame. It's a pretty somber locker room because of that," coach Justin Fuente said.

"Obviously, we came up a little short, but it wasn't because we weren't out there competing," Fuente added. "I think our kids poured their heart and soul into this and are going to learn some life lessons from this endeavor."

Evans finished 21-for-35 for 264 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions. He rushed for 46 yards on 21 carries, and joined Travon McMillian in scoring two TDs on the ground.

UCLA upsets No. 1 Kentucky

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Only briefly did UCLA appear vulnerable against top-ranked Kentucky in its charged environment that has made the Wildcats one of the hardest teams to beat at home.

Each time the 11th-ranked Bruins coolly responded with a timely basket or rebound, a consistent combination that grabbed momentum and eventually the game from the Wildcats.

Isaac Hamilton scored 19 points, T.J. Leaf had 17 with 13 rebounds and UCLA shot 53 percent to beat Kentucky 97-92 on Saturday.

"I don't think there was anything about them today that was a feeling-out process," said UCLA coach Steve Alford, whose team regained the lead for good late in the first half. "We talk about, 'Don't go in and jab around the ring to see if you belong. You're 8-0. You're playing well. Trust that you belong.' That was the key thing that guys did from the tip."

No. 2 Villanova 88, Saint Joseph's 57: Josh Hart had 16 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his first career triple-double to lead the hosts.

No. 4 Kansas 89, Stanford 74: Frank Mason III scored 20 points and Devonte Graham finished with 15 for the host Jayhawks.

No. 5 Duke 94, Maine 55: Luke Kennard scored a career-best 35 points and freshman Jayson Tatum finished with 10 points.

No. 25 West Virginia 66, No. 6 Virginia 57: Esa Ahmad hit a tie-breaking three-pointer with

1:28 remaining and the Mountaineers closed the game on an 11-2 run.

No. 9 Baylor 76, No. 7 Xavier 61: Manu Lecomte scored 24 points and the host Bears took over in the second half.

No. 8 Gonzaga 69, No. 16 Arizona 62: At Los Angeles, Przemek Karnowski scored 18 points and the Bulldogs defeated the Wildcats.

No. 10 Creighton 82, Akron 70: at Omaha, Neb., Marcus Foster scored 17 of his season-high 27 points in the opening half.

No. 14 Louisville 79, Grand Canyon 70: Deng Adel scored 15 points, V.J. King and Ray Spalding added 14 each.

No. 15 Purdue 90, Morehead St. 56: Freshman guard Carsen Edwards scored 16 points for the host Boilermakers.

No. 17 Wisconsin 90, Oklahoma 70: The host Badgers put the game away with a 20-3 run in the second.

No. 18 Butler 82, Central Arkansas 58: Kelan Martin finished with 30 points and six rebounds for the host Bulldogs.

Providence 63, No. 21 Rhode Island 60: Jalen Lindsey scored nine of his 13 points in the second half for the host Friars

No. 22 Syracuse 77, North Florida 71: Andrew White scored a season-high 26 points and Frank Howard had 10 points for the host Orange.

No. 23 Oregon 128, Savannah State 59: Tyler Dorsey scored a career-high 29 points and the host Ducks set a school scoring record.

Jackets set mark

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Columbus Blue Jackets led 13 seconds in and then poured on a flurry of shots — and still needed a late rally and shootout to beat Mike Smith and the Arizona Coyotes.

Columbus pummeled Smith with a franchise-record 60 shots, Alexander Wennberg scored with 2:16 left in the third period and the Blue Jackets beat the Coyotes 3-2 in a shootout Saturday night.

Boone Jenner put Columbus ahead early off a pass from Jack Johnson, but then Smith stopped 47 consecutive shots until Wennberg's tying tally.

Columbus is the first NHL team with 60 shots in a game since Toronto against the Islanders on Nov. 23, 2009.

Devils 5, Predators 4 (OT): Michael Cammalleri's second goal with 18 seconds remaining in overtime capped visiting New Jersey's comeback.

Oilers 3, Ducks 2 (OT): Leon Draisaitl scored 3:16 into overtime for host Edmonton.

Stars 3, Avalanche 0: Kari Lehtonen had 23 saves for his first shutout of the season and Dallas beat host Colorado.

Senators 2, Panthers 0: Erik Karlsson and Derick Brassard scored 19 seconds apart in the first period for host Ottawa.

Bruins 2, Sabres 1: Tuukka Rask made 35 saves to help Boston beat host Buffalo.

Jets 3, Blues 2 (OT): Patrik Laine set up Bryan Little for an OT goal against host St. Louis.

Lightning 2, Capitals 1 (SO): Brian Boyle scored in the fourth round of the shootout for host Tampa Bay.

Canucks 3, Maple Leafs 2 (SO): Markus Granlund and Bo Horvat scored in the shootout for host Vancouver.

Flyers 3, Blackhawks 1: Rookie defenseman Ivan Provorov scored two goals for host Philadelphia.

Rangers 4, Hurricanes 2: Chris Kreider scored twice less than 5 minutes apart for host New York.

Penguins 5, Red Wings 3: Phil Kessel scored twice as the host Penguins rallied.

Resilient Warriors recover to top Suns

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Nope, Stephen Curry didn't know the last time Golden State dropped two in a row during the regular season.

Draymond Green? Negative.

That's because it's been quite a while: April 2015, to be exact.

"Let's see, I think it was my second year in the league. My third year?" Green pondered. "We didn't lose two in a row last year."

The Warriors realize how remarkable it is, that brilliant, NBA-best ability to bounce back. You bet, this bunch gets mad about losing.

Curry scored 20 of his 31 points in the third quarter and Golden State ran its NBA-record streak of regular season games without consecutive losses to 106 by beating the Phoenix Suns 138-109 on Sat-

urday night.

Eric Bledsoe scored 13 of his 27 points in the second quarter and Devin Booker had 21 points for the Suns, who had no answer for the Warriors' 62.8-percent shooting and a 66.7-percent clip from long range (14-for-21).

Grizzlies 103, Lakers 100: Troy Daniels scored a career-high 31 points as host Memphis hung on for a victory over Los Angeles after Julius Randle missed three free throws with 5.9 seconds left.

Timberwolves 125, Hornets 120 (OT): Andrewiggins scored 29 points, while Karl-Anthony Towns added 27 points and 15 rebounds as visiting Minnesota erased a 10-point, fourth-quarter deficit to beat Charlotte in overtime.

Raptors 128, Hawks 84: DeMar DeRozan had 21 points and Kyle Lowry and Patrick

Patterson each added 17 in host Toronto's victory over Atlanta.

Mavericks 107, Bulls 82: Wesley Matthews scored 20 of his 26 points in the second half in host Dallas' win.

Celtics 107, 76ers 106: Isaiah Thomas scored 12 straight Boston points late in the fourth quarter and tied his season high with 37 points to lead the Celtics past host Philadelphia.

Trail Blazers 99, Heat 92: Damian Lillard scored 19 points and CJ McCollum added 17, including a pair of key late baskets, to rally host Portland.

Jazz 105, Nuggets 98: Gordon Hayward matched his season high with 32 points as host Utah beat Denver.

Bucks 112, Nets 103: Matthew Dellavedova scored 12 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter, helping Milwaukee hold off visiting Brooklyn.