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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Nearly \$500M LCS draws lawmakers' scrutiny

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — If President-elect Donald Trump is going to go line by line through the Pentagon's budget looking for waste, the first place Rep. Jackie Speier thinks he should examine is the littoral combat ship program.

When the program began some 15 years ago, the Navy planned to purchase 55 ships for \$220 million each. But now with repeated problems, cost overruns and delays, it plans to buy 40 ships, each costing \$478 million, according to the Government Accountability Office.

Speier, who called the ship a "dud" at House Armed Services Committee hearing Thursday, isn't the only one taking aim at the program. Earlier this month, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., said it "is an unfortunate, yet all too common, example of defense acquisition gone awry."

Bashing contractors and service secretaries for cost overruns is a longstanding tradition on Capitol Hill, a rite of passage that's part accountability and part political theater. But Trump's election, and his vows to further scrutinize major defense acquisition programs, have sent shock waves through the industrial base — and the politicians who represent the districts where those programs produce jobs.

Earlier this week, Trump tweeted that the cost of buying a pair of new presidential planes known as Air Force One was too high, and that the order with Boeing should be canceled. His spokesman said it was a warning that Trump planned to "focus on

keeping costs down across the board with regard to government spending."

The Air Force One program has only just begun, and is still in the development stages. So, unlike the littoral combat ship, "it hasn't had a chance to have any cost overruns yet," Todd Harrison an analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The ship, known as the LCS, could offer an early test of Trump's views. Defense analysts think the program could figure prominently because Trump has said he wants to strengthen the military and to increase the size of the Navy's fleet to 350 ships. But it also is the kind of program that could draw scrutiny.

That's because, like many major Pentagon weapons systems, from aircraft carriers to the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, it's had all sorts of cost and schedule problems. The ship comes in two variants, one that's more narrow and able to maneuver quickly, another that has a larger deck for manned and unmanned aircraft. The prime contractor on the former is Lockheed Martin, and for the latter is Austal, which took the program over from General Dynamics.

"LCS's failure followed predictably from an inability to define and stabilize requirements, unrealistic initial cost estimates, and unreliable assessments of technical and integration risk made worse by repeatedly buying ships and mission packages before proving they are effective and can be operated together," McCain said.

Speier, D-Calif., pointed to multiple en-

gine failures, cracks in the hull, software malfunctions, and said, "we have a ship that the Chinese don't even want to copy."

J. Michael Gilmore, the Pentagon's director of operational test and evaluation, said that as part of his office's review of the ship, it surveyed many of the sailors charged with testing the ship's capabilities. And he read aloud some of those comments Thursday. "The tasking would be easier to complete if the equipment didn't constantly break," he read. "As equipment breaks, we are required to fix without any training."

Then he told the congressional panel, "Those are not my words. Those are the words of the sailors who are doing the best they could to accomplish the mission we gave them in the testing."

Sean Stackley, the Navy's assistant secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, said the "experience of the LCS, it broke the Navy." But he said that in more recent years, the program has stabilized and "we retooled the entire way we do business when it comes to acquisition programs. And I think we are trying to pull best practices in."

Vice Admiral Thomas Rowden told the House committee Thursday that the Navy is "already seeing the benefits of our new approach on the waterfront." The ships have spent 500 days at sea, testing with other nations and performing humanitarian and relief operations, he said.

"The ship works," Stackley said. "We have reliability issues. We'll get through those, but the ship works."

US official: 50K Islamic State militants killed in 2 years

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S.-led coalition has killed 50,000 Islamic State militants in the past two years in Iraq and Syria, a senior U.S. military official said Thursday, describing a conservative total that is a bit larger than what others have stated before.

U.S. leaders routinely have expressed reluctance to disclose specific numbers, and note that the Islamic State group has been able to replace fighters rapidly, particularly early on.

In August, Lt. Gen. Sean MacFarland said about 45,000 combatants have been

taken off the battlefields.

Speaking to a small group of reporters Thursday, the military official said coalition airstrikes could be more aggressive in places like Mosul, where Iraqi troops are battling to retake the city, but civilian casualties are a risk.

The official would not detail any specific proposals for increasing the fight that may be under discussion with the Obama administration, but said there are some things under consideration, including sending additional resources. Lacking authorization to discuss the matter publicly, the official spoke on condition of anonymity.

Asked for details, the official said there are enough special operations forces currently deployed, but a key issue under discussion is what forces may be needed to help the Iraqi troops hold Mosul once Islamic State fighters are pushed out of the city.

Air Force Col. John Dorrian, a spokesman for the U.S. military in Iraq, echoed suggestions that the ongoing military campaign is reducing the numbers and capabilities of the Islamic State group.

"Unfortunately we're seeing younger fighters; perhaps adolescent age, rather than adults," Dorrian said.

Mattis waiver tied up in shutdown fight

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A last-minute budget showdown on Friday tripped up an effort to speed Gen. James Mattis' consideration as defense secretary.

The partisan fight over a four-month spending bill threatened to briefly shut down the government, but it appeared unlikely to derail an included measure for Mattis, who needs a special waiver from Congress to be nominated because he has been retired from the Marines for less than seven years.

The measure would limit Senate debate over the Mattis waiver when Congress reconvenes next month. President-elect Donald Trump announced earlier this month he will nominate the retired general to lead the Pentagon.

The overall \$1.07 trillion budget bill would keep military and government funding on autopilot through April and would avert a shutdown at midnight

Friday, when the current stop-gap spending measure expires. But Democrats were threatening to delay passage until Sunday over health benefits for coal miners.

The health benefits for miners in West Virginia and elsewhere are set to expire at the end of the month. The spending bill, which was passed Thursday by the House, provides a four-month extension, but West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin and other Democrats want the miners to receive a full year of coverage.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said he has retired coal miners in his state and had hoped for a longer extension of the benefits, but that Democrats should vote "yes" and revisit the issue next year.

The spending bill is must-pass legislation, and House lawmakers already had left Washington, so eventual passage was almost certain.

Law requires any defense

secretary nominee to be out of active-duty service for at least seven years and was designed to maintain civilian control of the military, though past defense secretaries, such as Chuck Hagel, had prior service experience.

Mattis, 66, retired from the Marine Corps in 2013 after leading U.S. Central Command.

The changes to the spending bill proposed by Republicans speed up a three-year waiver for Mattis through the Senate Armed Services Committee and caps debate on the Senate floor to 10 hours. The waiver bill also would have to be passed by the House.

If the waiver becomes law, the Senate then could hold a committee nomination hearing and a floor vote to confirm Mattis, who has broad public support.

The general spent more than four decades in the Marine Corps and has infantry leadership experience that includes leading troops during the wars

in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But the Republican move to fast-track a waiver riled Democrats, including Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, of New York; Rep. Ruben Gallego, of Arizona; and Sen.-elect Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., who said they are concerned about violating the principle of civilian control of the military.

Duckworth, a wounded war veteran who won election to the Senate in November, called it "dangerous procedural gamesmanship" that could undermine the military.

"The American people deserve a transparent and thorough debate on the merits of eroding civilian leadership of the strongest military this world has ever known," Duckworth said Thursday in a released statement. "Needlessly expediting this process abdicates Congress' responsibility to fully and fairly consider the importance of the military's subservience to civilians."

Army reopens probe into detainee's death

The Washington Post

The Army's Criminal Investigation Command has reopened its investigation of an Afghanistan War hero who Army officials said confessed to killing an unarmed Taliban detainee.

The service is again scrutinizing former Maj. Matthew Golsteyn after he appeared in a Fox News interview in October and acknowledged he killed a Taliban bomb-maker who was held as a detainee during the bloody battle of Marja in February 2010. The bombmaker was not on a list of targets that U.S. forces had been cleared to kill.

Golsteyn first acknowledged killing the detainee during a polygraph test while he was interviewing for a job with the CIA in 2011. A lengthy military probe followed. Army documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act show the service investigated Golsteyn on charges of murder and conspiracy but did not have any evidence to prosecute.

Golsteyn led a team from 3rd Special Forces Group, of Fort Bragg, N.C., that had a

unit of Marines deployed alongside it during the Battle of Marja in February 2010. Two Marines under his command — Sgt. Jeremy McQueary, 27, and Lance Cpl. Larry Johnson, 19 — were killed and three more were wounded Feb. 18 after a metal door booby-trapped with explosives detonated.

Two days later, Golsteyn watched a Taliban marksman nearly hit another Marine who was manning a rooftop observation post on their base. He launched a mission to hunt the shooter down, slogging through a muddy field under fire to help a wounded Afghan soldier, returning fire with an antitank weapon, and coordinating repeated airstrikes by F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets and a Predator drone. He was awarded a Silver Star, and service officials later recommended an upgrade to the more prestigious Distinguished Service Cross.

Army documents show Golsteyn's unit launched a search for bomb-making supplies and detained the man Golsteyn confessed to killing. A tribal leader working with the Americans identified the detainee as a member of the Taliban but worried the

detainee knew who had singled him out.

Golsteyn told the CIA during his polygraph test that he "had no qualms" about killing the detainee "because he couldn't have lived with himself if [the suspected bomb-maker] killed another Soldier or Marine," Army documents said. During Golsteyn's interview with the CIA, according to investigators, he described taking the bomb-maker off the base, shooting him and burying his remains in a shallow grave. Golsteyn added that later that night, he and two other soldiers dug up the remains, brought them back to their base and burned them in a pit used to dispose of trash.

Golsteyn and his attorneys have long maintained that the Army's characterization of events is filled with exaggerations and leaps of logic. No other servicemembers would serve as witnesses against Golsteyn, even when investigators offered immunity from prosecution. Then-Army Secretary John McHugh stripped Golsteyn of his valor award in fall 2014, and the Army also revoked his Special Forces tab and reassigned him as a conventional infantry soldier.

Russia: Trump will be a good ally

Bloomberg News

Russia reached out to President-elect Donald Trump, calling him a better ally in fighting terrorism than Barack Obama.

The Kremlin isn't waiting out the final six weeks of the Obama presidency and sees future relations with the U.S. as dependent on the "balance of our vested national interests," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Friday in Hamburg. He suggested that a Trump administration will align more closely with Russian objectives.

"The commitment to fighting terrorism has been expressed much more clearly than the concrete actions of the Obama administration," Lavrov told reporters at a meeting of the 57-nation Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the German city.

Trump made overtures to President Vladimir Putin on the campaign trail, calling for an alliance with the Kremlin to fight Islamic State in Syria and Iraq and hinting at easing sanctions against Russia. Putin has framed his support for Syrian President Bashar Assad as a campaign against terrorism.

Lavrov, who held talks with Secretary of State John Kerry on the sidelines of the OSCE meeting, expressed optimism about reaching a deal with the U.S. that could end the Syrian government's Russian-backed bombardment of Aleppo. U.S. and Russian diplomats and military experts will meet in Geneva on Saturday to thrash out a deal as forces backing Assad tighten their grip on the rebel stronghold.

Lavrov described the proposed deal as allowing anti-Assad militants under siege in eastern Aleppo to leave the city with their weapons, either to the Turkish border or to rebel-controlled Idlib southwest of Aleppo. He questioned whether the Obama administration had leverage over the rebel faction and said Turkey might be a more promising interlocutor.

"Maybe this channel of cooperation will be more productive than the one with the Americans," Lavrov said.

Kerry said Thursday he was "hopeful" a breakthrough could be reached. He'll attend a meeting of European and Arab allies on Saturday in Paris to discuss Syria.

DOD chief: US to stay by Afghanistan's side

Associated Press

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Friday that the United States will stick with Afghanistan for years to come as a new U.S. president takes over what is already America's longest war.

In a joint appearance in Kabul with Afghanistan's president, Ashraf Ghani, Carter said the U.S. cannot afford to give up on Afghanistan after more than 15 years of U.S. involvement, the deaths of more than 2,200 U.S. troops, and the expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars.

"The interests we are pursuing here are clear and enduring," he said, citing the goals of preventing another 9/11-like attack on American soil and helping Afghanistan attain enough stability to remain a long-term security partner for the U.S. and the West. The war began as a response to the 9/11 attacks.

"To have a stable security partner that is eager and willing to work with the United States is an asset for the future for us," Carter said.

Carter was making his last

planned trip to Afghanistan before handing off his Defense Department responsibilities to his successor. President-elect Donald Trump has nominated retired Marine Gen. James Mattis for the post.

Trump has not said if or how he will alter the U.S. course in Afghanistan, but has denounced what he calls U.S. nation-building projects.

The U.S. has about 10,000 troops in Afghanistan to train and advise Afghan security forces combating a resilient Taliban insurgency. U.S. special operations forces are hunting down al-Qaida and Islamic State militants.

Carter's visit comes amid concerns that despite improvements in Afghan government defenses, Taliban forces are gaining leverage and are continuing to use neighboring Pakistan as a sanctuary.

By U.S. estimates, the Afghan government controls slightly less than two-thirds of the country's population.

The Taliban holds sway over about 10 percent, and the remainder of the population is "contested."

Fast-food executive tapped to lead Labor Department

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump plans to add another wealthy businessperson and elite donor to his Cabinet, saying he would nominate fast-food executive Andrew Puzder as Labor secretary.

Puzder heads CKE Restaurants Holdings, the parent company of Carl's Jr., Hardee's and other chains. In 2010, he published a book called "Job Creation: How it Really Works and Why Government Doesn't Understand It."

"Andy will fight to make American workers safer and more prosperous by enforcing fair occupational safety standards and ensuring workers receive the benefits they deserve, and he will save small businesses from the crushing burdens of unnecessary regulations that are stunting job growth

and suppressing wages," Trump said in a statement.

The Californian was one of Trump's earliest campaign financiers, serving as a co-chairman of his California finance team and organizing fundraisers well before most major donors got on board with the eventual Republican nominee. Together with his wife, Puzder contributed \$150,000 in late May to Trump's campaign and Republican Party partners, fundraising records show.

Union leaders decried Puzder as a secretary who would look out for millionaires — but not workers.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said in a statement that Puzder's "business record is defined by fighting against working people."

Incoming Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer said there's reason to be

skeptical about Puzder.

"Turning the Labor Department over to someone who opposes an increase in the minimum wage, opposes the overtime rule that would raise middle class wages, and whose businesses have repeatedly violated labor laws might be the surest sign yet that the next Cabinet will be looking out for the billionaires and special interests, instead of America's working class," Schumer said in a statement.

Trump's recent appointments have reflected his desire to turn to business leaders — who also were campaign donors. Trump tapped former WWE chief executive and top campaign contributor Linda McMahon to lead the Small Business Administration. He also selected his campaign's national finance chairman Steven Mnuchin, a former Goldman Sachs executive and hedge fund investor, as Treasury secretary.

Court sees confession in SC church shooter case

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Dylann Roof hesitated for about 20 seconds when an FBI agent asked him what he was doing on the night nine black church members were killed during Bible study.

“Uh, I did it,” Roof said in a video recording of the questioning, which was played for the public for first time Friday at his death penalty trial. After waiving his rights and about a minute of small talk, the agents pressed Roof gently — asking him exactly what he did. He paused another 30 seconds or so.

“I killed them,” Roof said. As he talked more, he chuckled and said, “Well, I killed them, I guess.”

Only the first few minutes of Roof’s confession was shown before the court took a break. The rest of the blurry video will be shown throughout the third day of testimony. Roof is accused of opening fire inside a basement room of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on June 17, 2015, just as members of the Bible study closed their eyes for a final prayer.

In an opening statement earlier this week, assistant U.S. Attorney Jay Richardson said Roof not only confessed, but gave chilling details on his preparation and his motivation for the attack when he spoke to law enforcement.

There were hints about that in the first minutes of the confession. Roof told the agents he didn’t start firing as soon as he entered.

“I was sitting there thinking about whether I should do it or not. That’s why I sat there for 15 minutes. I could have walked out,” Roof said.

Church surveillance videos indicate Roof was inside closer to 45 minutes.

Roof, as he has for much of the trial, hardly looked up as the confession played.

S. Korea president impeached

BY KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — President Park Geun-hye was stripped of power and handed her office to the prime minister Friday after lawmakers voted overwhelmingly to impeach her over an influence-peddling-and-corruption scandal that led to weeks of mass protests.

It was a stunning outcome to a weeks-long saga during which Park, 64, faced growing calls to resign amid allegations she colluded with longtime friend Choi Soon-sil to extort millions of dollars and other favors from South Korea’s biggest companies.

South Koreans also are angry over the increasingly outrageous details that have emerged about the influence Choi wielded in the halls of power.

“I’d like to say that I’m deeply sorry to the people, because the nation has to experience this turmoil because of my negligence and lack of virtue at a time when our security and

economy both face difficulties,” Park said at a Cabinet meeting after the vote.

She offered similar apologies in three previous nationwide addresses, but they failed to quell the fury that has drawn millions into the streets of Seoul and other major cities to demand her resignation for six Saturdays in a row.

The voting process was shown live on TV, with thousands of protesters gathered outside the domed National Assembly building.

Park will be suspended until a final decision is made by the Constitutional Court, which will have up to 180 days to decide. Six of the nine justices must support the decision to unseat her, then new elections would have to be held within 60 days.

Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn appealed for stability as he took over as interim leader, including as commander-in-chief of the military, after formal documents were hand delivered.

“Humbly upholding the will of the people, I will run state affairs in a correct and transpar-

ent manner,” he said. “Above all, the government will strive to maintain rock-solid security readiness.”

Government officials also scrambled to minimize any vacuum of power as the country faces a growing nuclear weapons threat from North Korea as well as uncertainty over future relations with the U.S. under the incoming Trump administration.

Defense Minister Han Min-koo ordered the military to tighten vigilance amid fears that North Korea could try to take advantage of the crisis and stage a provocation.

“North Korea could raise military tension in an attempt to worsen the political crisis in the South and test President-elect Donald Trump, as Pyongyang has no idea of his policy toward the North,” Han was quoted as saying by the Yonhap news agency.

Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se ordered diplomats in overseas missions to stay focused on their duties and to reassure the host countries that Seoul maintains its foreign policy lines.

Feathered dinosaur tail found in amber

Los Angeles Times

While browsing amber markets in Myanmar, scientists discovered the feathers and partial tail of a tiny, baby dinosaur that lived some 99 million years ago.

The find, described in the journal *Current Biology*, offers a rare window onto the structure and organization of dinosaur feathers — one that could help shed new light on their evolution.

Scientists have long studied feathers that pop up in the fossil record in part because they want to understand the origins of birds. Birds are thought to be the only living descendants of dinosaurs — and questions of how and when their ancestors first developed flight (and the feathers that enabled it) remain confounding mysteries.

In recent years, paleontologists also have realized that many dinosaurs were not scaly (a la “Jurassic Park”) but feathered like birds. However, their plumage’s original purpose (for example, for insulation or for camouflage) remains up for debate. Researchers want to understand the origin of feathers, as well as to figure out how they eventually evolved for flight.

But there are limits to what they can learn from studying feathers in isolation, without seeing how they were positioned and organized on the body — and without knowing which species the feathers came from. And those preserved plumes found with fossilized skeletons are typically compressed flat in the rock, which makes it difficult to know what the animal looked like in

three dimensions.

This new fossil, encased in amber, solves all of those issues. Co-lead author Lida Xing of the China University of Geosciences discovered the fossil at an amber market in Myanmar last year. Because of its bushy appearance, the seller believed the tail to be some kind of trapped plant — but Xing believed differently and asked the Dexu Institute of Paleontology to purchase it.

“It wasn’t until Lida took a close look at it that he realized there were feathers coming off the side of the little filaments running through the amber,” said co-lead author Ryan McKellar, a paleontologist with the Royal Saskatchewan Museum in Regina, Canada. “That’s when the real fun began, from a research standpoint.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

'Seeing eye camel' guides blind horse

ME WINSLOW — A horse and a camel at a Maine petting zoo have formed an unlikely friendship.

The 5-year-old camel, Caesar, at the Pony X-Press Zoo in Winslow has become a guide for Dolly the horse, who is blind.

The zoo's Ed Papsis told WGME-TV Dolly's probably the only horse with "a seeing eye camel."

He said Caesar needed the company of another animal, and Dolly needed a guide, so the two were put together, and they bonded. Dolly relies on the camel and follows him around. She whinnies for him if he's not nearby, and he bellows back for her.

Mom wants Santa fired for fat-shaming

NC FOREST CITY — A North Carolina mother wants a local St. Nick kicked to the curb for fat-shaming her son.

Ashley Mayse told WLOS-TV that her son started crying when the Santa Claus at Forest City's Main St. told him, "Lay off the hamburgers and french fries" during a visit Saturday.

Anthony Mayse, 9, said the comment made him feel disrespected. The Santa is employed by Forest City, and Ashley Mayse said he should get a pink slip instead of coal in his stocking this year.

The town manager said Santa apologized to both a supervisor and the Mayse family.

Christmas tree farmer returns lost ring

NJ WHITE TOWNSHIP — A Christmas tree farmer found and returned a

wedding ring a New Jersey man lost roughly 15 years ago.

David Penner said his wedding band slipped off his finger during a visit to Wyckoff's Tree Farm in White Township. Penner thought he had lost the ring forever. But in April, John Wyckoff, a third-generation tree farmer, found it in the soil.

An NJ.com report on the discovery last week spurred a call from Penner's sister-in-law, who connected the two men.

The reunion is bittersweet for Penner, who lost his wife of 42 years in September. With the ring's return, he said he feels a part of her is back.

Man gets stuck after going into storm drain

CA SAN BERNARDINO — It was a different kind of hang-up for a San Bernardino man who climbed into a storm drain to retrieve a friend's cellphone and couldn't get out.

The San Bernardino Sun reported that Ronnie Wayne removed a manhole cover and climbed into the drain Tuesday night after his friend dropped the phone.

After he became stuck in the narrow space, his friend bought some rope from a nearby store and tried to pull him out.

Firefighters were called after the rope broke and sent Wayne, 51, tumbling farther down the drain. It took about 40 minutes to free him. Authorities said Wayne had only minor cuts and declined medical attention.

Trail runner gets lost, found after 12 hours

FL NORTH PORT — A Florida woman who became lost during a half-marathon trail run was found after wandering around a

25,000-acre park for nearly 12 hours.

The Sarasota Times-Herald reports Melissa Kitcher was in good spirits after being found Sunday evening. She said she made a wrong turn more than 3 miles into the 13.1-mile run.

Race director Thierry Rouillard said he had no idea Kitcher was still on the trail until her husband called Sunday afternoon, hours after the Trail Hog run finished. Sarasota County Sheriff's Office deputies began searching soon after.

Vandals damage 'Zombie Nativity'

OH CINCINNATI — A suburban Cincinnati man said someone vandalized the "Zombie Nativity" scene he puts up annually, beheading the ghoulish-looking Mary figure and flipping the greenish baby Jesus into the yard.

Jasen Dixon said someone damaged the handmade scene early Tuesday at his home in Sycamore Township, northeast of Cincinnati. He has since repaired the scene and said he'll keep rebuilding it if necessary.

Police: Black cat rats out fugitive suspect

PA EPHRATA — A Pennsylvania police department said a black cat was lucky for one of its officers tracking down a fugitive.

The Ephrata Police Department posted on its Facebook page that officers were searching for Jonathan Michael Steffy, 23, over an outstanding bench warrant.

They found him in a backyard, but he fled. As they searched, one officer noticed a black cat in a nearby yard staring intently at a shed. The officer checked that shed, but

it was empty. The officer again saw the cat, and it became apparent it was staring at a different shed behind the officer.

The officer opened that shed and found Steffy.

Woman tries to run over ex-boyfriend

PA CONNELLSVILLE — State police said holiday music was blaring from a woman's car as she tore up the yard of her ex-boyfriend's home, nearly running over the man and his family.

Mary Jo Smith, 47, was charged with multiple offenses stemming from Monday's incident.

Alan McCutcheon, 64, said he was setting up a Christmas light display outside of his Fayette County home when Smith yelled "Merry Christmas" and made several passes through his yard. Police said Smith tried to hit him along with his wife and adult daughter. No one was injured.

Orangutan causes \$200K damage at zoo

MO ST. LOUIS — A rock-loving orangutan named Rubih went ape on the observation windows of her St. Louis zoo enclosure, forcing nearly \$200,000 in repairs and the temporary closure of the exhibit.

Zookeepers said the 12-year-old female orangutan repeatedly tapped and banged rocks against four 7-foot-tall windows over several months, causing considerable damage. The windows were replaced in mid-November, and the exhibit is expected to open later this month, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

From wire reports

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Rookie Hill spurs Chiefs past Raiders

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Tyreek Hill didn't know what to do when he started hearing thousands of people in Arrowhead Stadium chanting his name, even as he stood all alone on the frozen turf waiting for the punt.

"Just give them what they want," Hill thought to himself.

So he did, the rookie speedster taking the punt back 78-yards for a game-changing touchdown. It followed shortly after he had hauled in a 36-yard touchdown grab, spurring Kansas City to a 21-13 victory over the Oakland Raiders on a frosty Thursday night and into control of the AFC West.

"It gave me chills on the sideline," said Chiefs quarterback Alex Smith, who had 261 yards passing with a touchdown and an interception. "The whole stadium is chanting his name and he answers — that was one of the coolest things I've seen, for sure."

The Chiefs (10-3) and Raiders (10-3), longtime, bitter rivals, are now tied atop the division, but Kansas City has the tiebreaker by virtue of two head-to-head wins this season.

"This was as big as it gets for a regular-season game," Smith said. "We don't get caught up in all the must-win stuff, that's not how we operate, but we knew the stakes for sure."

Charcandrick West added a touchdown run and Travis Kelce had five catches for 101 yards as the Chiefs returned from a back-to-back road wins to beat Oakland for the seventh time in eight meetings.

It came at a big cost, though: The Chiefs lost Derrick Johnson for the rest of the season after the star linebacker ruptured his left Achilles just before halftime.

"I felt a little bit of a letdown when it happened," Chiefs coach Andy Reid acknowledged, "but the last thing D.J. would have wanted was a letdown."

Derek Carr was just 17-for-41 for 117 yards passing for Oakland, but the ugly line wasn't entirely his fault. Seth Roberts dropped just about everything thrown at him, Amari Cooper couldn't adjust to a long throw for a would-be touchdown early in the fourth quarter, and several more passes were dropped to the rock-hard turf of Arrowhead Stadium on a night when wind chills approached single digits.

Latavius Murray led the Raiders with 103 yards rushing and a touchdown.

"I liked our effort, just didn't like the execution," said Jack Del Rio, who remained winless in four tries against Kansas City as the Raiders' coach. "In all three phases we came up a little short."

That includes the way they defended Hill, one of the game's bright young stars.

He scorched the Raiders for a 36-yard TD

reception before bringing his punt back, in the process becoming the first rookie since Gale Sayers in 1965 with touchdowns on the ground, through the air and on punt and kickoff returns in a single season.

"I didn't know that," he said. "I mean, that's great, but I'm not the only one on that field doing it. Without those guys blocking for me, and Alex throwing me the rock, none of that stuff would happen."

It was still 21-3 when Johnson went down, and his injury seemed to briefly deflate the Kansas City defense. Oakland proceeded to march 92 yards for its lone touchdown just before halftime.

But the Raiders kept coming up empty with their chances in the second half.

Smith threw a pick on the second play of the third quarter, but Oakland had to settle for a field goal. And when Smith was strip-sacked by Khalil Mack on the next play, the Raiders again had to try a field goal — only this time, holder Marquette King couldn't get the snap down.

The Raiders' last chance came with about two minutes left, when a questionable pass interference penalty and a fourth-and-4 conversion got them deep into Kansas City territory. But after a false start on fourth-and-1, Carr's pass toward the end zone was batted incomplete.

The Chiefs went on to pick up the first down they needed to put the game away.

Cowboys face Giants with chance to avenge sole loss

Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — Ezekiel Elliott called himself average after the New York Giants held him to less than 3 yards per carry in a loss in his NFL debut with Dallas.

The rookie running back hasn't had to describe himself that way since the 20-19 loss in Week 1. The Cowboys haven't lost, either.

"It was definitely frustrating because it was not how I imagined it," said Elliott, who gets another shot at the Giants as Dallas (11-1) chases a franchise-record 12th straight win and the NFC East title Sunday night. "But I think it definitely helped shape me into the player I am today and put a chip on my shoulder early this season to go out there and get things right."

Fellow rookie Dak Prescott

also debuted as the replacement for the injured Tony Romo. He left an impression with the Giants (8-4) despite the loss, which ended when the clock ran out with Dallas scrambling to get into position for a field goal after receiver Terrance Williams didn't get out of bounds on a completion.

Three months later, New York doesn't exactly seem surprised that Prescott has led the Cowboys to a comfortable division lead with a strong chance to secure home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs.

After admittedly focusing on Elliott and forcing a new quarterback to beat them, the Giants realize it might not be quite as easy to keep Elliott somewhere around the season low of 51 yards he had in the first meeting, while preventing big plays

downfield from Prescott.

"You saw all of those tools in the beginning, but I feel like he has hit his stride, he understands what defenses are doing," linebacker Jonathan Casillas said. "Maybe he didn't show that in Week 1. Now you are seeing him step into the mold and take full control of this offense."

Of course, the Giants will still have their eyes on Elliott, the NFL's leading rusher with 1,285 yards.

"You really don't change much week to week, no matter the opponent," defensive tackle Damon Harrison said. "It is still the same thing for the defensive line: stop the run, set the edge, build the wall. But when you play a back like Ezekiel, then you have to do some minor tweaks in your assignments."

Prescott started his NFL-record streak of 176 pass attempts without an interception to begin a career against the Giants, throwing 45 times in the opener, but with just one completion of more than 17 yards.

The 23-year-old believes he's grown plenty since that opener.

"Every aspect of my game, knowledge, footwork, seeing the defense, just everything," said Prescott, who has 19 touchdowns with just two interceptions. "Eleven games later or whatever it is, just to be on the better side and knowing how close we were to winning that game. I think the loss was good for us at the time, so just to be able to come back and I guess revenge that loss, it will be fun."

Pro path eased for academy athletes

The Baltimore Sun

Keenan Reynolds led Navy to four bowl games and four victories over Army. He became just the fourth Midshipman to have his football number retired.

But Reynolds' long-term legacy could be tied just as powerfully to a policy change he helped inspire.

A few weeks after the Ravens picked the former Navy quarterback in the sixth round of the 2016 NFL draft, the Department of Defense modified its requirement that service academy graduates perform two years of active duty before applying for reserve status.

Going forward, Reynolds and others would be allowed to apply for the reserves immediately after graduation.

Though such exemptions are granted only case by case, the shift opened the doors for future generations of players to attend the Navy, Army and Air Force academies without setting aside their dreams of NFL or other professional sports careers.

With Army and Navy set to

renew their rivalry at M&T Bank Stadium on Saturday, coaches and officials from both academies said they do not expect a seismic change in the types of athletes they recruit. The lofty academic requirements and the day-to-day rigors of academy life will still dissuade most high school stars with pro dreams.

But the path from Army-Navy to playing on Sunday is smoother than it was in the days of Roger Staubach or Napoleon McCallum.

"I don't think this is something that's going to open the world up," Army athletic director Boo Corrigan said. "But will it open it up to some? Absolutely."

Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo said the policy change, combined with Navy's success in the American Athletic Conference, has "definitely helped" with recruiting.

But as much as he enjoys winning, he doesn't want the mission of Navy's program to change substantially.

"If we were like Ohio State, with 15 guys a year going to the NFL, I don't think that would be right," Niumatalolo said. "That's not what these guys signed up for. They came here to serve our country. But if it's something where there's one guy every couple of years, I think it's great exposure."

It's not as if he's suddenly pitching NFL dreams to every potential Midshipman.

"We're up front with them," Niumatalolo said. "We tell them it's all case by case. We don't guarantee them, 'Hey, if you come here, you'll go to the NFL,' because we'd be lying."

Army coach Jeff Monken, whose team is headed to a bowl game for just the second time in 20 years, said he hopes to see Army-Navy alumni make the NFL more regularly.

"We've got good players, and they've got good players," he said. "I think it can only help the academies and only help the armed services."

Corrigan said the new policy is a natural evolution, given

the greater academic diversity at the academies, which didn't even offer majors a few generations ago.

"There are so many different paths through West Point and through the Naval Academy that now this becomes a separate path," he said. "At the end of the day, what are you talking about? Maybe a cadet every couple of years potentially getting to that point? Certainly you don't take that off the table in recruiting. But there's something different about these young men and women who come to the academies that maybe makes them want to serve."

He added that those singular athletes — Corrigan pointed to Army women's basketball star Kelsey Minato, who tried out for the WNBA this year — help a wider swath of people see the academies as viable options.

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus advocated for the change precisely because he saw Reynolds as an ideal face for his branch of service.

Jok scores 23 as Iowa knocks off No. 25 Iowa State

Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Iowa State spent the past 61 weeks in the Top 25.

After getting crushed by Iowa, the Cyclones' run as a ranked team is likely finished.

Peter Jok scored 23 points and the Hawkeyes upset 25th-ranked Iowa State 78-64 on Thursday night, snapping a three-game losing skid against their in-state rival.

Isaiah Moss had 14 points to help the Hawkeyes (5-5), who start three freshmen, beat a Power Five opponent for this first time this season.

"I felt like we had the potential to be better than we were playing," said Iowa coach Fran McCaffery, whose once-reeling team lost to Nebraska-Omaha 98-89 last weekend. "What we're able to do is grow and

learn."

Iowa shot 59 percent in the first half, including 6-for-10 from 3-point range, and jumped ahead by as much as 46-29. The Cyclones (6-3) slowly chipped away at that deficit in the second half, but a 7-0 run by the Hawkeyes after Iowa State got to 60-53 finished them off.

"We were bad," Iowa State coach Steve Prohm said. "We lost that game in the first half."

Matt Thomas scored 14 points to lead the Cyclones, who were just 8-for-30 from 3-point range. Ball movement was again an issue for Iowa State, which had just nine assists on 25 made baskets — although it did miss about a dozen layups.

"We have to play a certain way. We have to play with great pace. We have to play with great spacing. We have to play with great ball movement.

That's when we're really good," Prohm said.

UT Arlington 65, No. 12 Saint Mary's 51: At Moraga, Calif., Kevin Hervey scored 15 points and the Mavericks beat a Top 25 team for the first time in program history, shocking the previously unblemished Gaels.

UT Arlington (8-3) had gone 0-28 against ranked opponents dating to their first try in February 1967 before their big upset at McKeon Pavilion, where Saint Mary's had won eight straight and 23 of 24.

But Saint Mary's (6-1) never clicked against the scrappy UTA team while returning from a break for final exams for its first game since a win at Stanford on Nov. 30.

Erick Neal added 13 points and eight assists in UTA's seventh straight victory.

Jock Landale had a rare poor shooting performance, limited to 14 points on 3-for-10 from the floor and the Gaels had a season-low 11 assists.

Saint Mary's trailed 49-30 with 11:50 to play, then used an 11-3 spurt to get back to 52-41. UTA kept answering on both ends with key baskets and rebounds — such as a contested three-pointer from the top by Drew Charles with 7:42 remaining.

The Mavericks, from the Sun Belt Conference, used quick, crisp passing to create open looks from the perimeter and the paint to outplay the Gaels early. Three times this season — their three previous losses — the Mavericks squandered double-digit halftime leads in road losses at Minnesota, Florida Gulf Coast and Arkansas.

Bulls hand Spurs their first road loss

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Dwyane Wade scored 20 points, and the Chicago Bulls handed San Antonio its first road loss after a 13-0 start, hanging on to beat the Spurs 95-91 on Thursday night.

San Antonio fell one win shy of matching the NBA's best road start set by the Golden State Warriors last season. The Spurs cut an 18-point deficit midway through the third quarter to four in the closing minutes, only to come up short.

Kawhi Leonard scored 24 for San Antonio. Patty Mills added 16 points, hitting four of six 3-pointers. Former Bull Pau Gasol had 13 points and 10 rebounds in his first game in Chicago since signing with San Antonio in the summer, but the Spurs lost a road game for the first time since Oklahoma City knocked them out in the Western Conference semifinals last season.

Warriors 106, Jazz 99: Stephen Curry scored 26 points and visiting Golden State controlled Utah from start to finish.

Curry had 14 points during a 29-1 run that made it 29-5. The Jazz's only lead of the game was 4-2.

Kevin Durant added 21 points and 11 rebounds for Golden State.

76ers 99, Pelicans 88: Ersan Ilyasova scored 23 points, Sergio Rodriguez added 16, and visiting Philadelphia snapped a franchise-record-tying 23-game road losing streak, beating New Orleans.

The Pelicans became the first team to lose at home to the Sixers since last season when Orlando fell to Philadelphia on Jan. 20.

Joel Embiid had 14 points, four blockes and three steals. Nik Stauskas also scored 14 points.

Anthony Davis had 26 points

and 11 rebounds, and Langston Galloway added 19 points for New Orleans. The Pelicans labored through shooting droughts and made only 12 of 40 shots during the second half.

Grizzlies 88, Trail Blazers 86: Marc Gasol scored 36 points and Toney Douglas made two free throws with less than a second left to lift Memphis past visiting Portland.

Douglas had 11 points, scoring the game's final six points to seal the Grizzlies' fifth straight victory.

CJ McCollum led the Trail Blazers with 24 points, and Damian Lillard had 19 on 6-of-18 shooting. Evan Turner had 15 points and 10 rebounds.

Wizards 92, Nuggets 85: Bradley Beal scored 26 points and host Washington overcame a sluggish start in front of a sparse, silent crowd and with a malfunctioning scoreboard.

John Wall scored only 15 points one game after a career-best 52, but 9 came in the fourth quarter for Washington. The Wizards trailed by as many as 14 in the first half.

Raptors 124, Timberwolves 110: DeMar DeRozan had 27 points and Kyle Lowry added 25 to help their team hand Minnesota its 13th straight loss in Toronto.

Lowry was 5-for-7 from three-point range and had 11 assists, and Jonas Valanciunas had 20 points and 10 rebounds for his team-leading sixth double-double of the season.

Zach Lavine scored 29 points for the Timberwolves, and Toronto-area native Andrew Wiggins had 25. Center Karl-Anthony Towns added 17 points and 11 rebounds. The Timberwolves last won at the Air Canada Centre on Jan. 21, 2004.

Flyers rally from 2 goals down, win seventh straight

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — After leaning on Steve Mason throughout most of the past three weeks, the Philadelphia Flyers bailed out their goaltender with a strong offensive display.

Michael Raffl scored with 1:29 remaining to cap Philadelphia's rally from two goals down in the third period to beat the Edmonton Oilers 6-5 Thursday night for the Flyers' seventh straight win.

Claude Giroux had two goals and one assist, and Mark Streit, Pierre-Edouard Bellemare and Jakub Voracek also scored for the Flyers.

"It's a sign of good things, hopefully," said Mason, who stopped 28 shots to win his sixth straight and improve to 11-8-3. "When your goalie's not making saves that you need, but the guys are still battling in front, from a personal standpoint, it's huge to see that."

Raffl's sixth of the season came after he brushed off a check by Klefbom and lifted a shot over Gustavsson. The Flyers trailed 5-3 before scoring three times in a 12-minute stretch.

"Once we got to 5-4, I just tried to lock it down as best I could," Mason said. "There's nights where you're just not feeling as sharp as you'd like to."

Leon Draisaitl had a goal and two assists, Connor McDavid had a goal and an assist, and Andrej Sekera, Benoit Pouliot and Oscar Klefbom also scored for the Oilers, who have blown leads in four straight games. Jonas Gustavsson finished with 25 saves.

"I'm not too sure what it is. It's definitely something we need to find out real fast here," McDavid said of the Oilers' late-game collapses. "I think as a group we're still trying to learn how to win games. We did a good job of it early, and

there's definitely a certain talent to being able to win games and close it out. I think maybe we're still trying to figure that part out right now."

With the score tied 3-3 after two periods, Pouliot and Klefbom scored 2:05 apart to give the Oilers a two-goal lead 5:12 into the third.

Voracek's snap shot on a power play pulled the Flyers to 5-4 at 6:31 and Giroux tied it with 7:49 remaining.

Canadiens 5, Devils 2: Carey Price lost his temper after being bumped twice in his crease and made 19 saves to help host Montreal beat New Jersey.

Penguins 5, Panthers 1: Sidney Crosby got his 18th goal and added an assist to lead visiting Pittsburgh over Florida.

Flames 2, Coyotes 1 (OT): Dougie Hamilton scored 1:09 into overtime, Chad Johnson stopped 27 shots and visiting Calgary beat Arizona.

Islanders 3, Blues 2: An-

ders Lee's second goal of the game with just over seven minutes remaining lifted host New York over St. Louis.

Hurricanes 3, Kings 1: Derek Ryan scored twice, Cam Ward made 21 saves and visiting Carolina beat Los Angeles.

Stars 5, Predators 2: Jamie Benn scored his 200th career goal and added two assists, and host Dallas beat Nashville.

Rangers 2, Jets 1: Kevin Hayes scored a power-play goal with 1:09 left in the third period to lift visiting New York over Winnipeg.

Avalanche 4, Bruins 2: Matt Duchene scored his 10th goal and John Mitchell got his first, lifting visiting Colorado over Boston.

Canucks 5, Lightning 1: Jayson Megna and Jack Skille both had two goals, Ryan Miller made 38 saves before leaving with six minutes left in the third period and visiting Vancouver beat Tampa Bay.