

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

President-elect targets F-35s

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump is vowing to corral the “out of control” cost of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. But congressional Republicans and Democrats, aware of the tens of thousands of jobs the aircraft generates in 45 states, will be wary of any plans by Trump to cut the program.

A Monday morning tweet from Trump targeting the F-35 doesn't explain exactly how he'll save billions of dollars in military purchases while also honoring a campaign vow to rebuild the armed forces.

Once Trump is in office, he can propose deep cuts to the F-35 or even elect to cancel the program altogether. But Congress, not the president, controls the government's purse strings and makes the final decisions about the budget.

Built by defense giant Lockheed Martin, the nearly \$400

billion price tag for the F-35 makes the program the Pentagon's most expensive weapons acquisition ever. Despite the huge cost, the program has strong bipartisan support in Congress, where lawmakers view the aircraft as essential to national security.

Lockheed Martin's stock tumbled after Trump's tweet, wiping out nearly \$2 billion of the company's market value.

The company's shares fell \$6.42, or 2.5 percent, to close at \$253.11 Monday.

The F-35 program made up 20 percent of Lockheed's total 2015 revenue of \$46.1 billion. U.S. government orders made up 78 percent of its revenue last year.

“Whoever has this airplane will have the most advanced air force in the world. That's why we're building the F-35. That's why it's important to not only the U.S., our partners and our partners like the Israeli air

force to have this airplane,” said Jeff Babione, general manager of the F-35 program, at a base in Israel.

Israel and several other U.S. allies are also buying the F-35, expanding the program's international footprint. Defense Secretary Ash Carter visited Israel on Monday as Tel Aviv received the first two next-generation F-35 fighter jets.

The F-35, which uses stealth technology to avoid being detected by radar, is being built in different configurations to be used by the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. The Navy's version, for example, is designed to take off and land on an aircraft carrier.

Current plans call for the United States to buy 2,457 F-35s. Close to \$13 billion will be needed annually between 2016 and 2038 to hit that procurement number, according to the Government Accountability Office.

Trump takes aim at DOD, industry ties

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Just over a year after Northrop Grumman won the multibillion-dollar contract to build a next-generation stealth bomber, the company appointed Mark Welsh, who was serving as Army Chief of Staff at the time of the contract award, to its board.

The appointment, announced Friday, is not unusual in Washington, where former high-ranking Pentagon officials often go to work for the defense industry after their military service.

But it comes as President-elect Donald Trump is highlighting the potential conflicts of interests in the “revolving door” between the Pentagon and industry, as he vows to clean up Washington.

In an interview on Fox News Sunday, Trump said there should be a “lifetime restriction” of top defense officials going to work for defense contractors.

“The people that are making these deals for the government, they should never be allowed to go to work for these companies,” he said. “You know, they make a deal like that and then a year later, or two years later, or three years later you see them working for these big companies that made the deal.”

As Air Force chief of staff, Welsh, a former four-star general, had “no involvement in the (bomber) source selection process and provided no input into the decision to award the bomber contract to Northrop Grumman,” Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek said in a statement. She said all “departing federal employees are subject to post-government employment conflict of interest restrictions,” but they “do not prohibit General Welsh from joining Northrop Grumman.”

Tweet hits USAF's aging fighter fleet

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — When President-elect Donald Trump attacked the F-35 fighter jet over the plane's high costs, it added another element of uncertainty to the Air Force's plan to reconstitute a fleet that has aged faster than expected after 15 years of war.

“We're really in a pickle right now,” said Lt. Gen. John Cooper, who oversees the Air Force's aircraft maintenance and logistics needs.

The Air Force has 1,971 fighter jets in its inventory, according to the Pentagon's annual aviation inventory report released in March. According

to the Air Force, 1,225 of those fighters are F-15s and F-16s.

Air Force leadership is counting on the F-35 to replace the aging F-15s and F-16s.

“The F-35 will be the core of our fighter force,” Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James said at a Washington conference in August. The service intends to buy 1,763 of the 2,457 F-35s that the Pentagon plans to acquire.

The F-15 and F-16 have been on constant rotations to the Middle East for decades, starting in the 1990s for Operation Southern Watch and Operation Northern Watch, which monitored Iraq after the first Gulf War. Then, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom increased demand

on the Air Force's fighter jets. When those operations ended their combat phases, the service “planned on coming home,” Cooper said.

“But things like [the Islamic State group] popped up, Russia resurgence, China resurgence,” he said. As a result, “we're as deployed now as at the height of the Iraq conflict.”

The heavy use on both aircraft has caused structural issues in the F-15s canopies and in both jets' wings.

Over time, metal cracks on the jets' canopies that enclose pilots in the cockpit have required replacement. More so, structural problems in the wings have required the Air Force to replace hundreds of sets of fighter jet wings, he said.

Aleppo mass killing reported; Syrian troops nearing victory

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Pro-government forces reportedly killed 82 civilians “on the spot” as they closed in on the last rebel enclave in Syria’s Aleppo Tuesday, the U.N. human rights office said, while world leaders and aid agencies issued dramatic appeals on behalf of trapped residents.

That and other reports of mass killings, which could not be independently confirmed, reinforce fears of atrocities in eastern Aleppo in the final hours of the battle for the city, which has been split between rebel and government control since 2012.

Several residents and opposition activists have told The Associated Press that government forces carried out summary killings of rebels in the streets in neighborhoods captured on Monday, but the Syrian military flatly denied the claims, saying such allegations were “a desperate attempt” to try to gain international sympathy.

None of the residents reached by AP witnessed the alleged killings. Their statements re-

flected the deepening chaos in the remaining rebel-held areas. Mohammed Abu Rajab, the administrator of the last remaining clinic in rebel-held parts of the city, said people who were killed or wounded are being left in the streets.

Aref al-Aref, a nurse and activist in eastern Aleppo, said civilians had taken cover in a medical center in one of the last rebel holdouts after its staff evacuated two days earlier. He said the army killed them, but pressed for details, he said he only heard it from others.

The U.N. children’s agency said in a statement on Tuesday that there could be more than 100 unaccompanied children trapped in buildings under fire in eastern Aleppo, citing a report from an unnamed doctor in the city. UNICEF regional director Geert Cappalaere said UNICEF is concerned over the unverified reports of “extrajudicial killings of civilians, including children.”

The U.N.’s human rights office said it has received reports of pro-government forces killing at least 82 civilians in four neighborhoods of the rapidly

shrinking rebel enclave, including 11 women and 13 children. Spokesman Rupert Colville said the reports recount pro-government forces entering homes and killing civilians “on the spot” in the former rebel enclave.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement late Monday that he is alarmed over reports of “atrocities” against a large number of civilians, including women and children, in the past hours in Aleppo. While stressing that the United Nations is not able to independently verify these reports, the U.N. chief said he conveyed his grave concern to the relevant parties.

The appeals for sparing civilian lives came a day after the Syrian military announced it now holds 99 percent of the former rebel neighborhoods of Aleppo, signaling an impending end to the rebels’ four-year hold over parts of the city. Retaking Aleppo would be Assad’s biggest victory yet in the civil war. Aleppo has long been regarded as a gateway between Turkey and Syria.

DOD: Raqqa strike killed 2 who planned Paris attack

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—Two members of the Islamic State group involved in planning the deadly November 2015 terrorist attack in Paris were among three militants killed last week in an airstrike in Syria, the Pentagon said Tuesday.

The men—identified as Salah Gourmat, Sammy Djedou and Walid Hamman—were riding in a vehicle in Raqqa when they were killed, said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman. All three were planning more attacks on Western targets, Davis said.

Information collected recently from territory retaken from the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria helped the U.S.-led coalition with targeting the Dec. 4 drone strike inside Raqqa, the terrorist group’s de facto capital in Syria, Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said.

Meanwhile, the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces have moved within about 15 miles of Raqqa from the north, and they have launched a second attack from the northwest that is moving slowly toward the city, Davis said. Those operations are designed to prepare Raqqa for an eventual assault to remove the Islamic State group.

Cook said Tuesday that Gourmat and Djedou were involved in the planning of the Nov. 13 attack on Paris that left 130 people dead and 350 wounded. They were close associates of Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, one of the Islamic State group’s top leaders in propaganda and terrorist operations planning, who was killed in a coalition airstrike in August.

Elite Russian unit seen fighting in Syria

The Washington Post

On Sunday, Russian state-run television ran a segment showing what appears to be one of Russia’s most elite military units fighting in Syria, putting an often secretive special operations detachment in the limelight, albeit briefly.

Footage of Russian troops in Syria is extremely uncommon. The nine-minute segment is composed of various clips, some of it focused on training, likely in Russia, while other parts take place in Syria. The unit is probably Russia’s Special Operations

Command, or KSO, a group akin to the U.S. military’s elite Delta Force that has existed for only a few years.

While Russian special operations forces are commonly known as Spetsnaz, those troops often operate attached to large units, acting more as elite infantry detachments than anything else. The KSO is different, according to Michael Kofman, an analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses, because it is a dedicated military special operations unit, created after the Russians had watched the U.S. military’s

success with its own Special Operations Command over the past two decades.

While modeled similarly to the West’s elite military units, one of the key differences between the KSO and say, SEAL Team 6, is that the KSO was not created to conduct counterterrorism missions, Kofman said. Instead, the KSO focuses on more traditional special operations missions, including disrupting enemy forces, coordinating and calling in airstrikes and collecting battlefield intelligence.

Experts: Pardon for Bergdahl not likely

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A presidential pardon to spare ex-Taliban captive Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl from facing a court-martial on charges he deserted and endangered his fellow soldiers appears unlikely in the final weeks of President Barack Obama's tenure, according to experts.

Not only has Obama granted few pardons, the president also has demonstrated no interest in meddling with the military justice system in which Bergdahl has been entangled since his release in May 2014 by insurgents in Afghanistan, several experts on presidential pardons and military law told *Stars and Stripes*.

Bergdahl, 30, has admitted to Army investigators that he willingly left his post in eastern Afghanistan in June 2009 and was quickly abducted by Taliban

fighters. Last year, the Army charged him with "misbehavior before the enemy by endangering the safety of a command, unit or place" and "desertion with intent to shirk important or hazardous duty." The more serious misbehavior charge carries a potential life sentence. His trial is scheduled for April.

But because Bergdahl's court-martial will occur during the administration of President-elect Donald Trump, the soldier's attorneys have petitioned the White House for a pardon. Eugene Fidell, Bergdahl's lead lawyer, has said his client cannot receive a fair trial with Trump as commander in chief after the president-elect criticized Bergdahl on several occasions during the campaign. Trump referred to Bergdahl as a "no-good traitor" at nationally televised rallies and opined that he should have been executed.

Fidell said he is preparing, if necessary, to file a motion to

dismiss the case on the basis of Trump's comments soon after the Jan. 20 inauguration. Beyond that, Fidell has declined to discuss the pardon request.

While Obama has granted commutations — or reductions of convicted offenders' sentences — at a historic rate, he has shown little interest in granting pardons.

Obama has approved only 70 pardon requests in his eight years in office, the second-fewest granted since John Adams, the nation's second president. Obama has denied more than 1,600 pardon requests during his presidency, according to the Justice Department.

A former military lawyer who is now a law professor, Richard D. Rosen, said the pardon request was a smart move because it highlights the comments made by Trump about the case.

Nonetheless, he said he did not think Obama should grant

it because the charges against Bergdahl are "serious," and a military jury should be capable of judging him fairly despite what Trump has said.

"I think Bergdahl ought to be tried," said Rosen, who teaches at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

But Rachel VanLandingham, an associate professor of law at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles and a former Air Force judge advocate, said Obama should at least "seriously consider" granting Bergdahl a pardon.

She said the president should consider whether or not Bergdahl should ever have been in the Army. The soldier had washed out of the Coast Guard's initial entrance training three years before he enlisted in the Army. An Army investigation later determined he was suffering from mental health issues when he walked off Observation Post Mest in Afghanistan.

Report: Court to allow construction of Futenma replacement to resume

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japan's Supreme Court will reportedly dismiss an appeal by Okinawa's governor Dec. 20 without hearing oral arguments, setting the stage for construction to resume in the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

Multiple Japanese media outlets reported the decision Monday, citing anonymous sources familiar with the case. Japanese politicians, including Okinawan Gov. Takeshi Onaga, then appeared to confirm them.

"It is regrettable that a ruling is to be rendered without a hearing," Onaga, who won election on an anti-U.S. bases platform, said in an interview Monday night with Japanese broadcaster NHK. While Onaga said he would abide by the court's decision, he vowed to find other ways

to disrupt the project, which was approved by his predecessor. He did not offer specifics.

"I will never allow construction of a new military base at Henoko," Onaga said. "If the central government resumes construction, I will block it by employing every possible means (other than canceling the landfill permit)."

Onaga appealed to Japan's Supreme Court in September after a three-judge panel of the Fukuoka High Court decided he acted illegally when he revoked a permit to reclaim land in northern Okinawa for the move. The landfill work would allow a new runway to be built into Oura Bay at the remote northern Marine base of Camp Schwab. Futenma would then close and air operations would move to Schwab.

Doubts about China's claim of nuclear-capable bomber

By ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — If America straps a warhead to a Chevy Silverado, does it own a nuclear-capable truck?

Technically yes, though the United States arguably has far more efficient ways of maintaining its nuclear deterrent.

The same might be said for the "nuclear-capable" Chinese H-6K bombers that flew around Taiwan and over disputed areas within the South China Sea, according to some analysts.

Fox News first reported the flights earlier this month, citing unidentified U.S. officials in each case.

Many security experts interpreted the flights as a Chinese show of strength in light of President-elect Donald Trump's overtures to Taiwan.

However, the H-6K's description as a nuclear weapons car-

rier touched off a debate over the reports Tuesday.

"No, China's H-6 bomber is not nuclear-capable," wrote Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, Calif., on Twitter.

Lewis cited a report that China retrofitted an H-6 variant in 1965 to deliver an atomic bomb but said the program never got beyond the test phase.

He then pointed to the 2016 China Military Power Report prepared by the Pentagon for Congress. The report cites Chinese publications and officials talking of China's intentions to build a long-range "strategic" bomber, as well as a strategic deterrence mission reportedly assigned to China's air force in 2012.

But for now, the report concluded that China doesn't have a nuclear-capable bomber.

Tillerson tapped for State

Associated Press

NEW YORK — President-elect Donald Trump announced Tuesday he has picked Exxon-Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson to be secretary of state, calling him “among the most accomplished business leaders and international deal makers in the world.”

But Tillerson has close ties to Russia and President Vladimir Putin, which is certain to draw scrutiny and fuel a potential Senate confirmation fight. Leading Republicans have already expressed anxieties as they contend with intelligence assessments saying Russia interfered with the U.S. presidential election to help Trump.

Trump says he sees Tillerson’s ties with Moscow as a selling point, along with his “vast experience at dealing successfully with all types of foreign governments.”

“Rex Tillerson’s career is the embodiment of the American dream. Through hard work, dedication and smart deal making, Rex rose through the ranks

to become CEO of ExxonMobil, one of the world’s largest and most respected companies,” the billionaire real estate mogul said in a pre-dawn news release from Trump Tower in New York.

Tillerson “knows how to manage a global enterprise, which is crucial to running a successful State Department,” Trump said.

In an accompanying statement, Tillerson said he was “honored” by his selection and shares Trump’s “vision for restoring the credibility of the United States’ foreign relations and advancing our country’s national security.”

Sen. Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that will hold confirmation hearings in January, called Tillerson “a very impressive individual” with “an extraordinary working knowledge of the world.” Corker, who had been considered for the secretary of state job, said Trump called him Monday to inform him of the pick.

Reince Priebus, Trump’s incoming chief of staff, said Tuesday that Tillerson was chosen because he is “a diplomat that happens to be able to drill oil.” Tillerson has “had to maintain relationships across the world in many places that aren’t the easiest places to have relationships,” Priebus said on MSNBC.

For weeks, Trump has teased out the secretary of state decision process publicly, often exposing rifts in his organization. Besides Corker, he also considered former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, a one-time vocal Trump critic. Romney wrote on Facebook on Monday that it “was an honor to have been considered” for the job.

If confirmed, Tillerson would face immediate challenges in Syria, where a civil war rages on, and in China, given Trump’s recent suggestions that he could take a more aggressive approach to dealing with Beijing.

Perry picked to head Energy Dept.

The Washington Post

President-elect Donald Trump has picked Rick Perry to head the Energy Department, said two individuals familiar with the decision, seeking to put the former Texas governor in control of an agency whose name he forgot amid a presidential debate even as he vowed to abolish it.

Perry, who ran for president for the past two election cycles, is likely to shift the department away from renewable energy and toward fossil fuels, whose production he championed as governor while serving for 14 years.

The Energy Department was central to the 2011 gaffe that ended his first presidential bid. After declaring that he wanted to eliminate three federal agencies during a presidential debate in Michigan, Perry froze after mentioning the Commerce and Education Departments. “The third one, I can’t. Sorry. Oops.”

Later during the debate, Perry offered: “By the way that was the Department of Energy I was reaching for a while ago.”

Despite its name, most of the Energy Department’s budget is devoted to maintaining the nation’s stockpile of nuclear warheads and to cleaning up nuclear waste at sites left by military weapons programs. The department runs the nation’s national laboratories, sets appliance standards and hands out grants and loan guarantees for everything from basic research to solar cells to capturing carbon dioxide from coal combustion.

Environmentalists take a dim view of Perry.

“There is no doubt that Rick Perry is completely unfit to run an agency he sought to eliminate — and couldn’t even name. Perry is a climate change denier, opposes renewable energy even as it has boomed in Texas, and doesn’t even believe CO2 is a pollutant,” said League of Conservation Voters Gene Karpinski in a statement.

Uber warns: Don’t have sex in car

The Washington Post

Uber has at times described itself as a ride-hailing service that “brings people together” — “a fun and social new way” to get people from place to place.

But some of Uber’s passengers have perhaps become a bit too friendly in the back seat.

In its first guidelines specifically directed toward passengers, Uber wants people to remember: Don’t have sex while riding in the car.

“That’s no sexual conduct with drivers or fellow riders,” it wrote in its new Community Guidelines, published Thursday.

It added: “No matter what.”

The company’s “no-sex rule” was one of many examples of poor behavior that could cause riders to lose access to Uber.

The app-based car service instructed passengers not to

touch or “flirt” with other people in the car — but neglected to expand on what constituted flirting. “We all value our personal space and privacy,” the company wrote. “It’s OK to chat with other people in the car. But please don’t comment on someone’s appearance or ask whether they are single.”

In a statement, it reminded riders to follow the “universal truth” taught by all parents — treat people as you would like to be treated yourself. This means remembering not to leave trash in the car, not to vomit in the back seat after drinking too much alcohol or not to ask a driver to break the speed limit to get to a destination more quickly.

“This is important because when drivers use Uber they do more than simply drive: they’re sharing their own car, their

space, their time and a slice of who they are with passengers,” the company wrote.

If it becomes aware of problematic behavior, Uber will contact a passenger to investigate the claims, and depending on the nature of the incident, it could put a hold on a passenger’s account.

There’s a much more serious side to some of Uber’s rules, as well.

“Any behavior involving violence, sexual misconduct, harassment, discrimination, or illegal activity while using Uber can result in the immediate loss of your account,” it wrote.

Uber’s guidance comes after a series of incidents — particularly those involving alleged sexual assaults — from the past year have at times shed a negative light on the company.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Driver swerves to save one, kills another

CA FARMERSVILLE — Police in Central California say a driver's split-second decision to avoid hitting a woman in the street ended in the death of a man on the sidewalk.

Police say the accident on Sunday happened in the small community of Farmersville, 50 miles southeast of Fresno.

Officers say that a man driving a car swerved to miss a woman crossing the street on foot. The driver lost control, driving onto the sidewalk, where he hit the 37-year-old man, who died at the scene.

Police say the driver and the woman in the street were not injured.

Officers say both survivors provided statements and were released.

The investigation is ongoing.

Church surprises pizza delivery man with big tip

GA RIVERDALE — A Riverdale church surprised a local pizza deliveryman with a big tip.

WXIA-TV reported the congregation at Living Waters International Church had ordered pizzas Sunday morning and decided that they would all chip in for a tip for whoever brought the pizzas.

The delivery man was welcomed to the front of the church where Pastor James Rowland explained what was happening.

Church members learned that the deliveryman is an expectant father and after he left, they continued collecting money and returned later that day to the pizza shop to deliver more money to him. It's unclear how much was collected.

Police help man stage marriage proposal

AL MOBILE — Mobile police helped stage a man's arrest so he could kneel down and propose to his terrified girlfriend.

News outlets report that Daiwon McPherson tricked his girlfriend, Shawna Blackmon, into thinking that he had fled from officers and had a gun.

On Friday night, two officers converged on McPherson, Blackmon and their friends as they stood outside of a gas station.

A video shows officers pulled out stun guns and demanded McPherson get onto the ground. McPherson followed their orders and held out a ring for Blackmon, who quickly went from being scared to overjoyed.

Mobile Police spokesman Terrence Perkins says the officers were holding unloaded stun guns during the stunt.

Police made sure the scene was safe by informing all other on-duty officers before the fake call went out.

Cellphone lights used in surgery during outage

OH WESTLAKE — An untimely power outage during a northeast Ohio man's skin cancer surgery forced staff to cauterize his wound using only a surgical head lamp and cellphone lights to see.

Cleveland.com reported Joe Coughlin was being stitched up after a suspicious lesion was removed from his abdomen at a University Hospitals dermatology office in Westlake last Tuesday when the lights went out.

The cautery device being used on Coughlin had a battery backup, but the surgical staff still couldn't see.

Cellphone lights were used to illuminate the area of Coughlin's incision and the procedure was successfully completed.

Fake dentist pulled 10 teeth, made dentures

FL BRADENTON — Authorities say a Florida man faces charges after he extracted 10 teeth without anesthetic and made dentures during house calls to save people money.

The Bradenton Herald reported Robert "Robbie" Rheinlander claimed he was a dentist in South Carolina before moving to Florida. He was arrested on a charge of practicing dentistry without a license.

A couple told a Manatee County Sheriff's detective in September that Rheinlander extracted the woman's tooth, leaving a tooth fragment that caused medical problems. When they researched Rheinlander, they found he wasn't a dentist.

Woman charged with stealing packages

CT SHELTON — Police are thanking alert neighbors for notifying them about a woman spotted allegedly stealing packages delivered by UPS from homes in Shelton.

The Connecticut Post reported that officers went to the Aspetuck Village Condominiums for reports of a so-called "porch pirate" taking packages left outside by UPS.

The woman was gone before police arrived, but based on witness descriptions, including the license plate of her car, police tracked her down on Route 8 about 45 minutes later.

Officers conducting the traffic stop saw several allegedly stolen packages in plain view. Police say they also located drug paraphernalia in the

vehicle.

The driver, Andrea Guliuzza, 33, of Waterbury, was charged with multiple counts of larceny and held on bail pending arraignment.

GPS leads family to snowbound night

OR CAVE JUNCTION — A Portland family spent the night in their snowbound car in southern Oregon after following their GPS' directions.

The Daily Courier reported that a husband, wife, 9-year-old child and their dog took Happy Camp Road up near Page Mountain Sno-Park, 20 miles southeast of Cave Junction, only to become snowbound.

Lt. Travis Snyder of the Josephine County Sheriff's Office said the route through Happy Camp is the most direct way to get to Willow Creek, where the family said they were headed, but it is not advised in the winter, since Josephine County Public Works doesn't plow past the Sno-Park.

Church group buying goats for Haiti families

MS VICKSBURG — A Vicksburg church group is buying dozens of goats for families in Haiti hurt by the recent hurricane.

The Vicksburg Post reported that a group of 4- and 5-year-olds at First Baptist Church Vicksburg started gathering the donations anticipating they might be able to buy a few goats.

Instead, church member Jessica Green said the effort has grown so much that they're going to be able to buy 60 goats for families affected by Hurricane Matthew.

From wire reports

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Pats win, inch closer to playoff berth

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — By the time the Patriots took the field Monday night against the Ravens, they knew they'd have to wait at least another week to wrap up their eighth consecutive playoff berth.

It didn't stop New England from producing a postseason-quality effort.

The Patriots overcame a pair of miscues on special teams and provided some timely offense late to beat the Baltimore Ravens 30-23 on Monday night.

New England enters its final three regular-season games in great position for an eighth straight AFC East crown.

"We just gotta keep it rolling," Patriots safety Devin McCourty said. "That's whether you want to call it a playoff game, must-win, or any of that stuff. Once you get into December and toward the end of December, every game is important. There's really no rebounding and trying to fix things. You want to try and play your best ball every time you go out there and play."

Of course, that kind of consistency is common practice for New England's 39-year-old quarterback.

Tom Brady carved up the NFL's top-ranked defense for

406 yards passing and three touchdowns, saving his best for last with a 79-yard strike to Chris Hogan in the fourth quarter.

He became just the fourth NFL quarterback with at least 450 career touchdown passes.

"We weren't clicking early, but that happens in football," Brady said. "I'm glad we found a way to make some plays. A lot of guys contributed. ... It was a big win for us."

For the Ravens, it will be a short turnaround as they try to salvage their playoff hopes over the final three weeks. It begins with their final regular-season home game against the Eagles on Sunday, followed by road tests at Pittsburgh and Cincinnati.

Baltimore is currently one game behind the Steelers in the AFC North.

"It doesn't really matter what our record is," quarterback Joe Flacco said. "We've just got to win our games."

Focused on Philly

Coach John Harbaugh said coming up short against the Patriots won't deter the Ravens from doing all they can to stay in the division hunt. That begins, he said, with putting all their focus into the matchup

with Philadelphia.

"We know where we stand and the situation we are in. And that we basically have to win three games, you know, and (we are) certainly fully capable of doing that. That's what we intend to do, but all the focus goes to the next game," Harbaugh said.

Blount force

Patriots running back LeGarrette Blount picked up a pair of milestones in the game, topping 1,000 yards for the season and collecting his 14th touchdown. A 1-yard TD run in the first quarter gave the Patriots a 9-0 lead and tied the franchise record set by Curtis Martin in 1995 (and matched by Martin in '96).

Blount ended the game with 1,029 yards this season, topping the 1,007 from his rookie season with Tampa Bay in 2010. He's the first 1,000-yard rusher for the team since Stevan Ridley had 1,263 in 2012.

Sayonara, Cyrus

Cyrus Jones continues to have problems returning kicks.

After dancing away from the football in the first half to avoid a fumble, he touched a bouncing punt with his foot in the second and allowed the Ravens

to recover at the New England 3. Two plays later, the Ravens scored to make it 23-10.

It was the fifth fumble of the season for Jones, who sat out four times in six weeks as a healthy scratch because of his earlier struggles to hold onto the ball.

"We turned the ball over three times tonight. Three situations that I would say were pretty preventable," Belichick said. "We'll work on it with everybody. It's everybody's job to protect the ball who handles it."

Scoring defense

New England's defense was the first unit to get on the scoreboard Monday night. Patriots punter Ryan Allen pinned the Ravens at their own 1, and on the next play, Kenneth Dixon was swarmed in the end zone and brought down by Malcolm Butler for a safety.

It was the Patriots' third safety of the season — a franchise record. They also had one on Oct. 9 against Cleveland when Browns quarterback Cody Kessler fumbled the ball out of the end zone, and the following week when Dont'a Hightower sacked Andy Dalton in the end zone.

Rams fire Fisher, promote Fassel to interim coach

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Jeff Fisher's tenure in Los Angeles didn't last one full season.

The Rams fired Fisher on Monday and elevated special teams coordinator John Fassel to interim coach. The Rams are 4-9 heading into Thursday night's game at NFC West-leading Seattle.

Fisher had been the team's coach since 2012, and compiled a 31-45-1 record with the Rams. He oversaw the move from St. Louis to Los Angeles this past offseason.

The lack of success on the

field, capped by a 42-14 home rout by Atlanta on Sunday, spelled the end for Fisher, who is tied with Dan Reeves for most regular-season losses in NFL history with 165. Fisher has the lowest winning percentage (.512) among coaches with 130-plus losses.

Los Angeles has scored a league-low 194 points this season.

"Making a decision such as this, especially during the season, is one of the most difficult in sports," Rams owner Stan Kroenke said.

"I have great respect for Jeff as a coach, person, father and

friend. He has worked tirelessly despite some challenging circumstances. He played an integral role in helping this team make history in returning the NFL to Los Angeles, and we always will be grateful for his commitment and dedication to our organization."

Fisher, 58, went 147-126 as coach of the Houston Oilers/Tennessee Titans and helped that franchise in its relocation. He led the Titans to the 1999 AFC championship.

Long respected in league circles for his work on the NFL's competition committee, Fisher never found success — or a

franchise quarterback — with the Rams, who went 7-8-1, 7-9, 6-10 and 7-9 in his four full seasons.

They traded up for the first selection in this year's draft and took California's Jared Goff, but he rode the bench for much of the season behind journeyman Case Keenum as Los Angeles jumped out to a 3-1 start. Fisher finally turned to Goff in Week 11 and the Rams have lost all four of his starts.

"Some of the performances the past few weeks have been a little bit more lopsided," said Kevin Demoff, the Rams' executive vice president.

Tide place four on AP All-America team

Associated Press

No. 1 Alabama placed four players on The Associated Press All-America team, most of any school, and Louisville quarterback Lamar Jackson and fellow Heisman Trophy finalists Jabrill Peppers of Michigan and Dede Westbrook of Oklahoma were also first-team selections.

The Crimson Tide and No. 2 Ohio State tied for the most players on the three All-America teams released Monday with six. No. 3 Clemson had five players on the three teams, but none on the first team. Washington, which has a spot in the College Football Playoffs along with Alabama, Ohio State and Clemson, had two players on the second team.

Jackson won the Heisman Saturday, finishing well ahead of Clemson's Deshaun Watson and Oklahoma's Baker Mayfield. The three quarterbacks lined up similarly on the All-America teams with Watson second-team and Mayfield third-team.

The Crimson Tide's top-ranked defense placed three players on the first team, one at each level: Defensive lineman Jonathan Allen; linebacker Reuben Foster; defensive back Minkah Fitzpatrick.

Fabulous Freshman: Houston defensive tackle Ed Oliver is the first freshman to be selected to the first-team since

2011 when Clemson's Sammy Watkins made it as an all-purpose player and LSU punter Brad Wing also was picked.

Oliver had 19 tackles for loss to help lead a defense that ranks second in the nation in rushing defense at 2.83 yards per carry.

Promotions: Ohio State center Pat Elflein was one of three players who made the second team last season to make the first team this season. Florida State running back Dalvin Cook and Michigan cornerback Jourdan Lewis also earned promotions.

There were no players who repeated as first-team All-Americans.

Demotions: Watson went from first-team All-America last season as a sophomore to second this year and Stanford running back Christian McCaffrey did the same. McCaffrey was first-team as an all-purpose player last year and a second-team pick at running back this season.

First-timer: Western Michigan receiver Corey Davis is the first player in school history to be an AP first-team All-American.

Conference Call: Players on first team broken down by conference

SEC — 8
Big Ten — 7
Pac-12 — 4
ACC — 2
Big 12 — 2

American — 1
MAC — 1

FIRST TEAM

Offense: Quarterback — Lamar Jackson, sophomore, 6-foot-3, 205 pounds, Louisville

Running backs — D'Onta Foreman, junior, 6-2, 249, Texas; Dalvin Cook, junior, 5-11, 213, Florida State

Tackles — Cam Robinson, junior, 6-6, 310, Alabama; Ryan Ramczyk, junior, 6-6, 314, Wisconsin

Guards — Cody O'Connell, junior, 6-8, 354, Washington State; Dan Feeney, senior, 6-4, 305, Indiana

Center — Pat Elflein, senior, 6-3, 300, Ohio State

Tight end — Evan Engram, senior, 6-3, 235, Mississippi

Wide receivers — Dede Westbrook, senior, 6-0, 176, Oklahoma; Corey Davis, senior, 6-3, 213, Western Michigan

All-purpose player — Curtis Samuel, junior, 5-11 197, Ohio State

Kicker — Zane Gonzalez, senior, 6-1, 195, Arizona State

Defense: Ends — Myles Garrett, junior, 6-5, 270, Texas A&M; Derek Barnett, junior, 6-3, 265, Tennessee

Tackles — Jonathan Allen, junior, 6-3, 291, Alabama; Ed Oliver, freshman, 6-2, 290, Houston

Linebackers — Reuben Foster, senior, 6-1, 228, Alabama; Zach Cunningham, junior, 6-2, 230, Vanderbilt; Jabrill Peppers, junior, 6-1, 205, Michigan

Cornerbacks — Jourdan Lewis, senior, 5-11, 186, Michigan; Adoree' Jackson, junior, 5-11, 185, Southern California

Safeties — Malik Hooker, sophomore, 6-2, 205, Ohio State; Minkah Fitzpatrick, sophomore, 6-1, 200, Alabama

Punter — Mitch Wishnowsky, sophomore, 6-2, 220, Utah

SECOND TEAM

Offense: quarterback — Deshaun Watson, junior, Clemson

Running backs — Donnell Pumphrey, senior, San Diego State; Christian McCaffrey, junior, Stanford

Tackles — Connor Williams, sophomore, Texas; Orlando Brown, sophomore, Oklahoma

Guards — Billy Price, junior, Ohio State; Will Hernandez, junior, UTEP

Center — Tyler Orlosky, senior, West Virginia

Tight end — Jake Butt, senior, Michigan

Wide receivers — Zay Jones, senior, East Carolina; John Ross, junior, Washington

All-purpose player — Quadree Henderson, sophomore, Pitt
Kicker — Daniel Carlson, junior, Auburn

Defense: Ends — DeMarcus Walker, senior, Florida State; Harold Landry, junior, Boston College

Tackles — Carlos Watkins, senior, Clemson; Montravius Adams, senior, Auburn

Linebackers — Raekwon McMillan, junior, Ohio State; T.J. Watt, junior, Wisconsin; Tim Williams, senior, Alabama

Cornerbacks — Rasul Douglas, senior, West Virginia; Desmond King, senior, Iowa

Safeties — Budda Baker, junior, Washington; Jamal Adams, junior, LSU

Punter — Cameron Johnston, senior, Ohio State

THIRD TEAM

Offense: Quarterback — Baker Mayfield, junior, Oklahoma

Running backs — Saquon Barkley, sophomore, Penn State; Aaron Jones, junior, UTEP

Tackles — Mike McGlinchey, senior, Notre Dame; Forrest Lamp, senior, Western Kentucky

Guards — Nico Siragusa, senior, San Diego State; Quenton Nelson, junior, Notre Dame

Center — Ethan Pocic, senior, LSU
Tight end — O.J. Howard, senior, Alabama

Wide receivers — Amba Etta-Tawo, senior, Syracuse; Austin Carr, senior, Northwestern

All-purpose player — Christian Kirk, sophomore, Texas A&M

Kicker — Gary Wunderlich, junior, Mississippi

Defense: Ends — Hunter Dimick, senior, Utah; Jordan Willis, senior, Kansas State

Tackles — Christian Wilkins, sophomore, Clemson; Solomon Thomas, junior, Stanford

Linebackers — Kendall Beckwith, senior, LSU; Jimmie Gilbert, senior, Colorado; Ben Boulware, senior, Clemson

Cornerbacks — Teez Tabor, junior, Florida; Cordrea Tankersley, senior, Clemson

Safeties — Nathan Gerry, senior, Nebraska; Weston Steelhammer, senior, Air Force

Punter — Michael Dickson, sophomore, Texas

Rodriguez, Seton Hall knock off No. 16 South Carolina

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After his team blew a four-point lead in the closing seconds, Seton Hall coach Kevin Willard provided simple instructions.

Get the ball to Desi Rodriguez, and then get out of the way.

Khadeen Carrington set up Rodriguez for a tiebreaking layup with 11.6 seconds left and Seton Hall beat No. 16 South Carolina 67-64 in the Under

Armour Reunion at Madison Square Garden on Monday night.

The Pirates went ahead when Rodriguez took an inbound pass from Carrington and drove along the baseline for the basket.

"[Willard] told me to look for Desi coming off the baseline," Carrington said. "He had the big guy on him. I knew he could take him. I gave it to him and I spaced out. I just let him go."

Seton Hall led 64-60 after

a foul shot by Rodriguez with 1:49 left, but the Gamecocks rallied and tied it on two free throws by Justin McKie with 34.3 seconds remaining.

Willard said it was dead silent in the huddle when he called a timeout with 17 seconds remaining. That worked for him.

"It's not a democracy in timeouts," Willard said. "There's definitely a dictatorship. Sometimes they get to say things — not with 10 seconds left after we just gave up a four-point

lead. These guys do a good job listening for the most part. It was a pass to Desi and everybody get out of the way."

After the layup, PJ Dozier missed a three-pointer for the Gamecocks, and Myles Powell knocked down one free throw for Seton Hall (8-2).

"He almost gave me a heart attack," Carrington said of Dozier's missed three-pointer.

The Pirates trailed by nine early in the second half before rallying.

Rockets earn seventh straight victory

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Houston Rockets overcame their inability to make defensive stops by running over the Brooklyn Nets on the offensive end.

James Harden had 36 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds to lead the Rockets to their seventh straight win, 122-118 over the Nets on Monday night.

“There’s 82 games — every game isn’t going to be perfect,” Harden said. “You’ve got to figure out ways to win, and that’s what we did tonight.”

Eric Gordon scored 24 points on 6-for-10 shooting on three-pointers, and Ryan Anderson added 19 for the Rockets. Houston shot 17-for-43 on threes, making at least 10 for an NBA-record 24th straight game.

Brook Lopez scored 26 points and Sean Kilpatrick added 17 for the Nets.

“They made some plays and we didn’t,” Brooklyn coach Kenny Atkinson said. “It could’ve gone either way.”

Brooklyn’s Joe Harris tied the game at 118 with a layup with less than 40 seconds remaining.

Gordon gave Houston a two-point lead with a free throw with 11.9 seconds left, and the Rockets came up with a key steal on the ensuing inbound pass.

Clippers 121, Trail Blazers 120: Blake Griffin had 26 points and 12 rebounds, Chris Paul had 21 points and 14 assists and host Los Angeles held off Portland to sweep the season series.

J.J. Redick finished with 19 points, hitting all eight of his free throws — including three in the closing seconds to push Los Angeles’ lead to four points.

The game got testy in the final minutes. Portland center Mason Plumlee was given a flagrant foul for elbowing Griffin in the face on a layup. With 11 seconds left, Portland forward Evan Turner and Los Angeles center DeAndre Jordan were ejected after a brief skirmish under the Clippers’ basket.

Heat 112, Wizards 101: Goran Dragic scored a season-high 34 points, Hassan Whiteside had 17 points and 16 rebounds and host Miami beat Washington to snap a five-game slide.

Dragic scored 13 points in the fourth for the Heat, and James Johnson scored 14 off the bench.

John Wall scored 30 points and Bradley Beal added 29 for Washington.

Raptors 122, Bucks 100: DeMar DeRozan scored 30 points, Terrence Ross added 25 and host Toronto beat Milwaukee for the sixth straight time.

Jonas Valanciunas had 13 rebounds and

11 points for his Raptors-leading seventh double-double of the season.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had a team-high 30 points and Jabari Parker chipped in with 27 as Milwaukee lost its third straight.

Pacers 110, Hornets 94: Paul George and Myles Turner scored 22 points each to lead host Indiana past Charlotte.

Jeff Teague had 16 points, 11 assists and five rebounds, and Rodney Stuckey added 14 points for the Pacers, who have won two straight since returning home from a five-game road trip.

Kings 116, Lakers 92: DeMarcus Cousins had 31 points, 16 rebounds and five assists and host Sacramento used a big third quarter to send slumping Los Angeles to a seventh straight defeat in a game featuring seven technical fouls.

First-year Lakers coach Luke Walton was ejected at the 4:14 mark of the first quarter after two technicals in succession for arguing, and he had to be held back by his players near midcourt as he became enraged after Cousins knocked over Julius Randle with no foul called.

Mavericks 112, Nuggets 92: Wesley Matthews scored 25 points and last-place host Dallas enjoyed a rare blowout, beating listless Denver.

Penguins crush Coyotes

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — A year into the job, Pittsburgh Penguins coach Mike Sullivan’s daily message to his team has not changed. Just as he did when he took over an underachieving group last December, Sullivan wants the Penguins to “play the right way.”

Play smart defensively. Push it up the ice. Don’t get caught up trying to make the fancy play. Just take the shot. Lots of them preferably. Repeat as necessary.

At the moment, there may be no team in the NHL doing it as well as the defending Stanley Cup champions.

Sidney Crosby left briefly after taking a stick to the face then returned to pick up his NHL-leading 21st goal and the Penguins crushed the Arizona Coyotes 7-0 on Monday night for their sixth straight victory.

Pittsburgh has outscored the opposition 36-14 during the run, including Crosby’s latest highlight reel score when he swatted a puck out of midair to make it 5-0.

“I mean when you’re winning, it’s fun,” Crosby said. “I think we’ve done a good job of limiting other team’s chances. When you’re doing that, you’re creating offense and giving yourself a chance, so I think we’ve done a good job at that.”

Bruins 2, Canadiens 1 (OT): Ryan Spooner scored in overtime and his goal withstood a video review, lifting visiting Boston over Montreal.

Spooner got his goal 3:20 into OT on a partial breakaway off a nice give-and-go with Torey Krug. Montreal challenged, claiming Spooner was offside, but the goal stood.

Austin Czarnik also scored for the Bruins.

Jackson is Player of Year

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — For someone who is not completely comfortable in the spotlight, Lamar Jackson has come to embrace it all: the speeches, the truckload of trophies, even all those tweets about his outfits.

But after a week of awards shows and interviews, the Louisville sophomore quarterback is just hungry to just get back to the place that made him the most decorated college football player of the year.

“It feels like I haven’t played football in a year, I’ve been away so long,” Jackson said. “I can’t wait to get back out there, put on those pads and grind.”

Jackson, 19, returns to Louisville as The Associated Press college football Player of the Year, the latest addition to his haul of postseason awards.

The youngest Heisman Trophy winner received 42 of 61

first-place votes from AP’s panel of media voters. Jackson received 153 points overall, more than twice that of Clemson quarterback and runner-up Deshaun Watson (73). Alabama defensive lineman Jonathan Allen finished third (32). Watson received 10 first-place votes and Allen three.

Jackson’s runaway selection seemed fitting in a season in which he outraced defenders and into the record books.

“His ability to picture plays is something that he really worked on and got better at,” Louisville coach Bobby Petrino said. “One of the things that is really neat was how he became a leader during the season.”

The 6-foot-3, 205-pound Jackson has passed for 3,390 yards with 30 TDs and rushed for a school-record 1,538 and 21 scores.