

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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3 Marines facing courts-martial in hazing

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The Marine Corps general dealing with accusations of rampant abuse and hazing of recruits at its Parris Island training facility announced Tuesday that he has recommended charges and special courts-martial for three Marines and a preliminary hearing for a fourth.

It is the first public legal step the Marine Corps has taken since the service disclosed in September that it was considering possible punishments for up to 20 Marine leaders at Parris Island. The decisions came amid three investigations into allegations of widespread abuse of recruits by drill instructors.

The investigations became public after the March 18 death of 20-year-old recruit Raheel

Siddiqui, of Taylor, Mich. A Marine Corps spokesman said the charges announced Tuesday were not related to the Siddiqui case but involved two other investigations of suspected abuse at Parris Island.

In a statement late Tuesday, Maj. Gen. James Lukeman said all the Marines are presumed innocent until proven guilty and that the charges being referred were accusations only. Lukeman also said he has “taken the allegations of misconduct very seriously” and that he will work to ensure the safety of recruits and that the integrity of the Marine Corps training program remain “our priority.”

Lukeman, the head of the Marine Corps Training and Education Command at Quantico, Va., also identified the three Marines charged with multiple

violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice:

■ Staff Sgt. Matthew Bacchus was charged with violating a lawful order, maltreatment and making a false official statement.

■ Staff Sgt. Jose Lucena-Martinez was charged with failure to obey a lawful order and making a false official statement.

■ Sgt. Riley Gress was charged with failure to obey a lawful general order, cruelty and maltreatment and making a false official statement.

The maximum punishment facing the three if convicted in the special courts-martial is 12 months confinement and a bad conduct discharge.

Lukeman said he has called for an Article 32 hearing involving an unnamed fourth Marine,

who is accused of failure to obey a lawful order, cruelty and maltreatment, and making a false official statement.

Bacchus and Gress served in Afghanistan while Lucena-Martinez served in the Marine Corps recovery operation responding to the devastating Haiti earthquake of 2010. All four Marines hold positions at Parris Island, said a spokesman for Lukeman, Capt. Joshua Pena.

Other accusations of maltreatment uncovered in the probes included name-calling, beatings, physical exercises ordered until recruits injured themselves, and even one case in which a recruit was reportedly placed inside a clothes dryer as he was derided for his Muslim faith.

Marine Corps grounds Ospreys on Okinawa

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Marines on Okinawa have temporarily grounded the MV-22 Osprey pending a review of aircraft safety and procedures after one of the helicopter-plane hybrids went down just offshore during a nighttime training mission.

The Osprey was damaged about 10 p.m. Tuesday when a propeller cut a thick refueling hose on an Air Force C-130 tanker, Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson, III Marine Expeditionary Force commander, told a news conference Wednesday.

The pilot knew the aircraft was in trouble, and instead of risking a crash over a residential area on its way back to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, decided to travel the

approximately 18 miles to the coast and set down just offshore by Camp Schwab.

The five crewmembers on board — including two who were injured in the crash — were rescued by airmen from Kadena Air Base’s 33rd and 31st Rescue Squadrons. They were taken to the naval hospital at Camp Foster for treatment. Both suffered serious injuries that included broken bones but are expected to recover.

The incident is under investigation.

“We apologize to the Okinawan people who will perhaps lose faith in the Osprey,” Nicholson said. “We hope they will not. This is not a mechanical issue with the Osprey.”

Nighttime refueling is a critically important skill for pilots and is done at sea for that very

reason, said Nicholson, who applauded the pilot’s “heroic” decision — while his aircraft was shaking violently — to bring the aircraft down close to shore without endangering Okinawan lives.

The Marine Corps typically suspends flights temporarily after such crashes. Shortly after Tuesday night’s incident, a request to do so was conveyed by Japanese Minister of Defense Tomomi Inada.

Regardless of the investigation’s findings, the crash will likely become a lightning rod for Okinawa’s protest movement, which seeks a smaller American presence on the tiny Japanese island. They adopted the aircraft as a symbol of their resistance when it arrived in Okinawa in 2012.

“I have been calling for can-

cellation of the deployment of the Ospreys to Okinawa because of a strong concern among the public about the safety of the aircraft,” said Gov. Takeshi Onaga, who won election on an anti-base platform. “I am greatly shocked that the fear became the reality.”

The aircraft had several high-profile crashes in its development history but has since been lauded for its speed, cargo capacity, durability and versatility.

The Osprey, which was left where it landed, has started to break up in Okinawa’s volatile surf, Marine officials said. Steps have been taken to collect debris and prevent environmental damage, such as an oil spill.

Child abuse reporting questioned

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Abused or neglected Army children might be “falling through the cracks” of a broken reporting system, according to a study sponsored by the service.

The agency responsible for investigating and remedying child abuse and neglect in Army families substantiates significantly fewer medically diagnosed abuse cases than civilian child protective services did in cases involving Army children, raising questions about under-reporting or lack of communication between the two sectors, said the study published Saturday in the journal *Child Abuse & Neglect*.

Between 2004 and 2007, civilian child protective services substantiated 44 percent of medically diagnosed child abuse cases involving children of soldiers, the study said. However, the Army’s Family Advocacy Program, tasked with investigating and treating such cases, substantiated only 20 percent during that period.

“For many years, the U.S. Army has reported rates of child abuse well below that of

the civilian population,” Dr. Dave Rubin, senior author of the study and director of PolicyLab at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, said in a statement. “This study calls those reports into question. Yet, the U.S. Army can only report cases they know about, and our findings suggest that they may not be aware of the majority of their cases.”

PolicyLab partnered with the Family Advocacy Program for the study. The researchers cautioned that the data are limited by the age of the cases studied, most of which are more than a decade old.

The Department of Defense’s Family Advocacy Program, established in 1981, is tasked with preventing, reporting and treating spousal and child abuse in military families throughout the armed forces.

The Army FAP investigates 6,000 to 8,000 child abuse reports each year, the study said. Some cases are referred to FAP by civilian health care professionals who have diagnosed abuse of children.

“The unique stressors experienced by military families related to deployments and relocations have raised concern

that military families may be at increased risk for child maltreatment, particularly during times of frequent and prolonged combat-related deployments,” the study said. “Failures of reporting suspected child maltreatment to FAP could result in vulnerable children and families not receiving FAP services and contribute to undercounting of child maltreatment in the U.S. military.”

Civilian health care providers are required to report suspected child abuse cases to a child welfare agency, and FAP was created as an “extra layer” of support for military families, Rubin said. “However, FAP can only provide these supports if both military and civilian health care providers either report cases directly to them or if Child Protective Services reports all cases they receive involving a military child back to FAP.

“Unfortunately, what is implied by the low number of substantiated abuse cases by U.S. Army FAP compared to known substantiation rates in the civilian population is that some children are falling through the cracks of a broken system.”

Japanese man saved by 3 medics

BY LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Three Army medics jumped into action to save a local man’s life while in Japan for the annual Yama Sakura drills.

Sgt. Mario Ratto, Spc. Sandy Rushing and Pfc. Jonathan Fish — all I Corps soldiers assigned to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. — were exploring the city of Kumamoto on an evening pass when they noticed a crowd gathered around an elderly Japanese man lying in the street.

“There was blood on the ground, and he was just lying there face down ... He was not moving at all — I thought the guy was dead,” Rushing said in an Army statement.

The soldiers said they checked the man’s injuries and rolled him onto his back, making sure to keep his spine stable.

“We then saw that his airway was obstructed — he had fallen on his face and broken some teeth and had quite a bit of blood everywhere,” Rushing said.

The medics repositioned the man’s airway and cleared the broken teeth from his mouth before he regained consciousness.

“He kept trying to fall asleep,” said Rushing, who speaks Japanese. “So, I kept telling him wake up, keep your eyes open and look at me.”

The group kept the man awake and blocked oncoming traffic until Japanese paramedics arrived.

“I thought my two soldiers responded really well,” Ratto said of Fish and Rushing. “They did everything they were supposed to do — they just performed excellently. If anything like this ever happened again, I wouldn’t think twice that my soldiers couldn’t handle it.”

Fish took the praise in stride. “I did my job — I did what I’ve been trained to do,” he said. “I just hope the guy is [OK].”

Pentagon revises rules of war

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has revised its rules of war to put more emphasis on the need to reduce civilian casualties and avoid “excessive harm” to people and property when planning and conducting attacks.

The changes to the Law of War manual include a new section that lays out the need for commanders to weigh any potential military advantage gained by an attack against the potential for collateral civilian injuries or deaths. It says the military should take “feasible precautions” when planning and conducting attacks.

Precautions laid out in the manual reflect what commanders have been doing on the battlefield, including in Iraq and Syria, amid increased scrutiny of civilian casualties in the fight. But the changes formalize the current policies, updating the document that was released in June 2015.

The updated manual was released Tuesday.

“Protecting civilians in armed conflict is critical, and it’s important that our legal guidance is clear and practical,” said Defense Department General Counsel Jennifer O’Connor. “This version of the manual provides greater clarity and also reflects important develop-

ments, such as the president’s recent executive order on civilian casualties.”

The new version provides more details on the need to identify areas where military targets are more likely to be located and civilians less likely to be present. It lays out examples of when the military has made decisions to forego an attack because of potential civilian casualties.

And it makes clear that subordinates should not comply with orders that are “clearly illegal,” including instances when a commander might order an attack that could be expected to result in excessive civilian casualties.

Cease-fire falls apart in Aleppo

Associated Press

BEIRUT — A cease-fire deal between rebels and the Syrian government in the city of Aleppo effectively collapsed on Wednesday, with fighter jets resuming deadly air raids over the opposition's densely crowded enclave in the east of the city.

The attacks threatened to scuttle plans to evacuate rebels and tens of thousands of civilians out of harm's way, in what would seal the opposition's surrender of the city.

The evacuation was supposed to begin at dawn but shelling resumed in the morning hours and buses meant to be used in the pullout of rebels and civilians returned to their depots empty. Activists and fighters trapped in the opposition's last sliver of territory in Aleppo said pro-government forces had struck their district with dozens of rockets since midmorning.

They said aircraft resumed bombing shortly after noon. Some shells fell near and around the one remaining hospital in the one-square mile enclave. It was nearly impossible for the

rescuers to account for the dead because of the continued bombings, they said.

"They began to strike as if there's no such thing as a 'cease-fire' or 'civilian evacuation,'" said media activist Mahmoud Raslan.

It was not clear whether the planes were Syrian or Russian. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group reported at least six people had been killed.

Syrian President Bashar Assad, speaking in an interview with Russia Today, said the cease-fire was designed to stop his government's advance in the city and "keep the terrorists and save them."

In excerpts of the interview aired Wednesday, Assad said western countries pressured Russia for the cease-fire when rebels appeared to be on the verge of losing the territory they have held since 2012.

A legal adviser to the rebels accused Iran of foiling the Russia- and Turkey-brokered deal by imposing new conditions on the rebels. Along with Russia, Iran backs Assad's government

and has committed advisers and elite Revolutionary Guard forces to the government's war. Turkey backs some of the rebel groups fighting to topple Assad.

Osama Abo Zayd, the adviser, said Iran demanded the remains of Iranians killed in Aleppo be returned and that Iranian hostages held in rebel-controlled Idlib province be released. He said the conditions were "exclusively sectarian and crippling." The Syrian government, meanwhile, withdrew its green-colored buses from the evacuation point at the edge of the city's opposition enclave.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the emergency meeting late Tuesday that he had received "credible reports" of civilians killed by pro-government forces as they swept into the last rebel areas in Aleppo.

Bashar al-Ja'afari, Syria's U.N. ambassador, denied any mass killings or revenge attacks, but added it was Syria's "constitutional right" to go after "terrorists," a blanket government reference to all opposition fighters.

Serviceman killed in Syria to be laid to rest

By DIANNA CAHN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The first American serviceman killed in the Syrian conflict will be laid to rest Thursday at Arlington National Cemetery. As his family prepared for the private burial, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced a ramp-up of the U.S. involvement in the Syria fight with the deployment of 200 more troops.

Senior Chief Petty Officer Scott Dayton, 42, was a Navy bomb technician killed on Thanksgiving Day in northern Syria. He was one of about 300 U.S. special operations forces trainers, advisers and explosive ordnance disposal team members in Syria tasked with training local forces to defeat the Islamic State group.

He was killed by an improvised bomb in Ayn Issa, about 35 miles north of the terrorists' stronghold Raqqa.

Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve has "reached a critical milestone," Carter said, with American and local forces waging a two-pronged campaign to take Islamic State-controlled Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria.

Dayton, from Woodbridge, Va., was assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Two in Virginia Beach. He had earned 19 awards during his 23 years in service, the Navy said.

Dayton is the fifth U.S. servicemember killed since the U.S. launched its campaign against the Islamic State group in 2014. U.S. special operators first deployed to Syria in October 2015.

Bergdahl to return to court Friday

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The military judge overseeing the court-martial of accused Army deserter Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl on Friday will hear from government officials responsible for reviewing massive caches of classified information, which have been the basis for delaying the start of the trial twice.

The judge, Army Col. Jeffery R. Nance, ordered "an accountable representative for any organization" that has not finished vetting sensitive data related to the former Taliban captive's court-martial to testify Friday when Bergdahl returns to a Fort Bragg, N.C., courtroom for a pre-trial motions hearing.

Nance will also hear arguments about a motion by prosecutors to include evidence at trial that shows two soldiers

were injured during a July 2009 mission to recover Bergdahl in the days after the soldier walked off his post in eastern Afghanistan and was captured.

Bergdahl, 30, has admitted to Army investigators that he willingly left Observation Post Mest without permission, seeking to cause a disturbance that would place him in front of Army brass to air concerns about his chain of command. The soldier was released in May 2014 in a controversial swap for five senior Taliban leaders who had been detained at the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

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.

Bergdahl's trial is scheduled to begin April 18, but the date remains in question because of the large amount of classified data — at least 1.3 million pages — that must be cleared by government agencies before prosecutors can turn it over to Bergdahl's defense attorneys.

Prosecutors will also have a second chance to convince Nance that evidence showing two soldiers were injured searching for Bergdahl should be included at trial. Nance heard testimony about the soldiers' injuries at a pre-trial hearing in November, but he expressed skepticism that such evidence should be heard by jurors.

Bergdahl remains on active duty in a desk job at Joint Base San Antonio in Texas. He has yet to enter a plea on the charges against him.

Probe: Flynn shared info, but wasn't disciplined

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A secret U.S. military investigation in 2010 determined that Michael T. Flynn, the retired Army general tapped to serve as national security adviser in the Trump White House, “inappropriately shared” classified information with foreign military officers in Afghanistan, newly released documents show.

Although Flynn lacked authorization to share the classified material, he was not disciplined or reprimanded after the investigation concluded that he did not act “knowingly” and that “there was no actual or potential damage to national security as a result,” according to Army records obtained by *The Washington Post* under the Freedom of Information Act.

Flynn has previously acknowledged that he was investigated while serving as the U.S. military intelligence chief in Afghanistan for sharing secrets with British and Australian allies there.

The Army documents provide the first official account of the case, but they are limited in scope because the investigation itself remains classified. Former U.S. officials familiar with the matter said that Flynn was accused of telling allies about the activities of other agencies in Afghanistan, including the CIA. The Army files call into question Flynn's prior assertion that he had permission to share the sensitive information.

During the presidential race, Flynn campaigned vigorously for Republican nominee Donald Trump and drew attention for his attacks against Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton for mishandling classified material. Clinton was investigated by the FBI for allowing classified information to be transmitted on her private email server when she ran the State Department. No charges were filed against the former secretary of state.

Flynn did not respond to requests for comment.

Rep. Zinke, a retired SEAL, picked for interior secretary

Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — Rep. Ryan Zinke of Montana made no secret of his ambitions to join a Donald Trump Cabinet, and yet his nomination as Interior Department secretary is in some ways an unlikely fit for the retired U.S. Navy SEAL.

Zinke, 55, was an early supporter of the president-elect and publicly expressed his interest in a Cabinet post when Trump visited Montana in May.

Like other Western states, Montana's wide-open, rugged landscape has a huge federal presence. The Interior Department and other U.S. agencies control almost a third of its land and even more of the underground “mineral estate” that holds vast amounts of coal, oil and natural gas.

As with several other Trump Cabinet nominees, Zinke has advocated for increased energy drilling and mining on those lands and expressed skepticism about the urgency of climate

change.

The Republican lawmaker also has been a vocal supporter of keeping public lands in the government's hands. That's a central political issue in Montana, where hunting and fishing access is considered sacrosanct.

Zinke met Monday with Trump, according to two people with knowledge of the matter. A person close to Zinke confirmed the Tuesday offer.

He hadn't yet accepted when he left Tuesday for his home in the mountain town of Whitefish, according to two of those people. All three spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the transition process publicly.

Energy development, land management and hunting fall under the Interior Department's jurisdiction. However, those were second-tier issues for Zinke during his successful re-election campaign this fall against Democrat Denise

Juneau.

In interviews with *The Associated Press* during that campaign, Zinke repeatedly identified his top priorities as national security, more thorough vetting of refugees to screen out terrorists, the repeal of the Affordable Care Act and improving the U.S. economy.

Only after listing those did he list his desire to increase coal mining and oil and gas exploration, protect public lands and provide more resources for American Indian tribes, another Interior responsibility.

News of his selection was welcomed by Montana's Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and at least one conservation group, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

Other groups slammed the selection. The Northern Plains Resource Council accused Zinke of “shortchanging the public” with his opposition to pending Obama administration moves to reform the federal energy leasing program.

6 vets groups seek meeting with Trump

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The country's six largest veterans service organizations discussed Tuesday making an appeal to President-elect Donald Trump for an in-person meeting to talk about veterans issues.

The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, American Veterans and Disabled Veterans of America collectively represent millions of veterans and are known informally in Washington as the “Big Six.” Though they've met twice with Trump's transition team, they have not been invited to meet with Trump directly, said Joe Chenelly, executive director of

American Veterans.

“The Big Six are trying to reach out in a formal way today,” Chenelly said Tuesday. “We know time is not our friend right now; it's working against us. Every day is really important right now.”

Tom Berger, with Vietnam Veterans of America, said a letter to Trump was “making its rounds” among leaders of the six organizations, but he wasn't certain whether it would be sent to Trump on Tuesday.

Chenelly said the groups should have greater input on what happens with the Department of Veterans Affairs under the new administration and who is selected as the next VA secretary. Chenelly also said he wasn't confident the information that they have provided

to Trump's team was properly recorded.

Thirty-one veterans groups attended a meeting with Trump's transition team in November, and each was allotted three minutes to talk about issues important to them, Chenelly said. The Big Six provided more input during a two-hour meeting Friday.

Several members of the transition team didn't attend either meeting, he said.

“We really don't know a lot about who the conduit is, how the information flows, how it's recorded, how it's being presented to [Trump],” Chenelly said. “We do feel like we need to speak directly with President-elect Trump, and we're expressing that to him now.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man warming himself by stove set ablaze, dies

NJ EAST ORANGE — Authorities said a fatal fire was sparked by a New Jersey man whose clothes caught fire while he was trying to keep himself warm by a stove.

Officials said Kouadio Loboue, 64, was sitting in a walker near the stove in his home in East Orange on Sunday afternoon to keep warm. His clothes caught fire, and the blaze spread to the rest of the house.

Loboue was declared dead at the scene.

Nativity scene's Mary taken from owner's yard

NH MANCHESTER — The owners of a Nativity scene have a message for whoever stole Mary from their yard last week. A handwritten, cardboard sign next to the Nativity in Manchester reads: "Please help! Mary Missing, Joseph Doesn't Want to be a Single Dad!"

Shirl Kula said she and her husband have put up the set almost every Christmas in the 16 years they've lived in their home, and they consider it a gift to the neighborhood. She said she's not looking to punish whoever took Mary; she simply wants her back.

Jesus isn't in his cradle, but he hasn't been stolen. Kula and her husband wait until midnight each Christmas to put him out.

Killer heading back to prison after court ruling

DE DOVER — A convicted killer granted probation earlier this year is heading back to prison after Delaware's Supreme Court reversed a ruling that freed her.

Catherine Culp was released from prison after a Superior

Court judge concluded that her model conduct and extensive rehabilitation efforts demonstrated "extraordinary circumstances" justifying a sentence modification.

Culp was convicted in 2001 in the death of her boyfriend and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

She filed a motion for modification of her sentence last year, 12 years after a similar motion was denied. In a ruling last week, the justices agreed with prosecutors that the judge was barred from considering Culp's second motion for sentence modification.

The ruling means Culp, now 56 and living in Florida, will return to prison.

Deputy pays for hotel for woman and her son

GA MACON — A deputy in Macon is trying to stop a woman and her son from becoming homeless.

WMAZ-TV reported that sheriff's deputy Johnny Rowe went to perform a wellness check on a woman at a hotel Dec. 7. He found the woman crying because she didn't have the money to pay for the room any longer.

Rowe told the station she was talking about how she thought her son would be better off without her and that she didn't know what else to do. The deputy didn't want her and her son to be on the street so he decided to pay for the room for the rest of the week out of his own pocket.

Police: Woman dies days after hammer attack

MD PRINCESS ANNE — Authorities said a woman died days after she and her two children were critically injured in a hammer attack.

Princess Anne police Chief

Tim Bozman said by telephone Monday that police were notified that Airealle Sells died over the weekend.

Police said in a statement that her 8-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son are in critical but stable condition.

Sells' ex-boyfriend, Sharef Dontre Hayward, 26, of Baltimore, was charged with attempted murder. Bozman said investigators are consulting with the Somerset County State's Attorney's Office for modification of charges against Hayward.

Bozman said Hayward stabbed Sells, 25, and then assaulted her and the children with a hammer.

Media outlets reported that Sells was granted a protective order against Hayward a day before the attack.

Image on holiday fest ride is called racist

CT GREENWICH — A holiday festival in Greenwich is being criticized for a children's ride that includes what some festivalgoers saw as a racist caricature that depicts a black cannibal in a loin cloth trying to cook a white man.

The Greenwich Time reported the images appeared on the "Safari Train" at the Sam Bridge Nursery's Reindeer Festival. The black man is depicted with oversized red lips and a bone in his hair.

Lauren Lodato, who is studying for a graduate degree in early childhood education, said she complained to management after visiting the festival. She said it perpetuates inappropriate stereotypes.

Event organizer TMK Sports and Entertainment said the train is "telling a story" and "absolutely not racially inappropriate."

The train's owner, Marenna Amusements, says they have never had a complaint.

\$69K in unclaimed casino jackpots seized

NJ ATLANTIC CITY — New Jersey gambling regulators have seized more than \$69,000 in unclaimed jackpots won by gamblers at three casinos who couldn't prove they were old enough to gamble legally or who left the premises without cashing in.

The move by the state Division of Gaming Enforcement included seizures from two casinos that are now closed — Trump Plaza and the Trump Taj Mahal — which accounted for most of the seized money. The third seizure came from the Tropicana.

The forfeited money goes to a state fund for programs for senior citizens and the disabled.

Facebook posts could affect \$2M jury verdict

WI MILWAUKEE — A juror's Facebook posts during a federal civil rights trial could jeopardize a \$2 million verdict awarded to a man who claimed he was illegally strip-searched by a Milwaukee police officer.

Jurors last month found that former officer Michael Vagnini had violated Willie Newman's civil rights during a 2010 arrest.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported the city's lawyers have asked the judge to question jurors under oath after the city said it found one juror had posted about the trial on Facebook and also had shared a post by an anti-police activist. If the judge determines that outside information entered the deliberations, he could throw out the verdict.

From wire reports

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Tomlin trying to avoid Bengals drama

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Mike Tomlin's got enough to worry about without having to remind his team to keep its cool on Sunday in Cincinnati.

The last time Tomlin and the Pittsburgh Steelers visited Paul Brown Stadium, they exited with a bizarre 18-16 wild-card victory in January that included a shot by Cincinnati linebacker Vontaze Burfict on wide receiver Antonio Brown and Steelers linebacker coach Joey Porter goading the Bengals into an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty that put Pittsburgh into chip-shot range for the winning field goal.

And that was after Ben Roethlisberger left — then returned — with a sprained right shoulder and linebacker Ryan Shazier's helmet-to-helmet hit on Cincinnati running back Giovanni Bernard eventually led the NFL to an offseason rule change.

That's a lot of drama. So much that Tomlin isn't going to waste time on playing principal for his red-hot team, which has won four straight to rise to first in the AFC North at 8-5 with three weeks to go in the regular season.

"I understand the history, particularly the recent history," Tomlin said Tuesday. "But we can't concern ourselves with that. We're going to come and come to play, and

play in the manner in which we always play."

Burfict sat out Cincinnati's 24-16 setback to the Steelers in Week 2 while serving a suspension brought about by his crushing helmet-to-helmet hit on Brown, who was forced to sit out Pittsburgh's loss to Denver in the divisional round of the playoffs. His presence will likely up the intensity over the relatively tame first meeting.

"We'll deal with him whenever it gets to that," Steelers guard Ramon Foster said.

Foster doesn't expect Brown to take the field looking for payback, figuring the chance to effectively end whatever marginal chance the Bengals (5-7-1) have of getting back in the AFC North while setting up a potential division clincher at home on Christmas against Baltimore is incentive enough.

"I don't think he'll let it linger on because he knows we have more important things to do than give up yardage or penalties or game checks," Foster said.

In a way, Brown has become a secondary option during Pittsburgh's run back to relevance. The Steelers have put the ball and their postseason hopes in the hands of running back Le'Veon Bell. An All-Pro two years ago, Bell has upped his play to a record-setting level. His 298 total yards in last week's win over Buffalo marked the

second-highest total in team history.

Asked in what ways Bell has improved, Tomlin — who rarely dishes out expansive platitudes — painted a picture of a 24-year-old who is approaching the height of his considerable powers.

"Just understanding how to play the position, the nuances of the position, the protection of the ball and the protection of himself," Tomlin said. "He's a guy who's got some talent. But equally or more importantly than that talent, he's got a desire to be great and some work ethic to boot. He's a much better conditioned athlete today than he was in 2014. So I mean it when I say 'all areas.'"

Bell's had more than a bit of help from the offensive line and fullback Roosevelt Nix, who played extensively in the second half and enthusiastically took on opposing linebackers to give Bell a little more room to move. Nix missed the first five weeks with a back injury but has watched his role expand from special teams enforcer to plowing the road for Bell.

"Over that time, we've seen consistent increase in his level of play in not only offense, but special teams. He's solidified himself as a solid special teams contributor a year ago," Tomlin said. "So it's good to see him back to that level of production of which he was last week."

Fassel, Rams quickly adjusting for Seattle

Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — The Los Angeles Rams barely had time to process the news that head coach Jeff Fisher was being fired before starting preparations to play the Seattle Seahawks on Thursday night.

That was especially true for interim coach John Fassel.

Fassel found out an hour before he was set to lead a special teams meeting Monday that Fisher had been fired after going 31-45-1 since becoming head coach of the Rams in 2012. He met with Fisher to get his blessing to take over for the final three weeks before sit-downs with Executive Vice President Kevin Demoff, general manager Les Snead, and the team's medical staff. Fassel then oversaw an hour-long walk-through as the Rams began on-field preparations to

face the NFC West leaders.

Fassel did not even have time to let his father, former New York Giants head coach Jim Fassel, know he was now in charge of an NFL team.

"A lot has happened in a little amount of time," said Fassel, who has been the Rams' special teams coordinator for five seasons. "It will be an interesting couple days. It happened fast. Football, you got to be able to adapt and react and this is one of those situations you can't ever really prepare for."

Even as Rams players expressed their disappointment with Fisher's firing and regret that their performances in recent weeks had cost the job of a coach who was well-liked and respected in the locker room, everyone understood the need to pivot quickly on a short week.

"Can't help but feel some type of responsibility, but Seattle's

not going to care how we feel. Our last three opponents aren't going to care how we feel," safety T.J. McDonald said. "We just know we got to go out and keep playing, keep fighting and get better every week."

The Rams have actually fared quite well against the Seahawks in recent years, winning three straight games and four of the last five. The Rams' first game back in Los Angeles after 22 years was a 9-3 win over the Seahawks in September during which the Rams allowed just 67 yards rushing and sacked quarterback Russell Wilson twice.

"Usually it's a knock-down, drag-out all the way to the last play and we see that same type of game coming," linebacker Alec Ogletree said.

Leaning on that familiarity is critical, as there simply isn't enough time to make dra-

matic changes. The Rams had one more practice Tuesday before traveling to Seattle on Wednesday.

Fassel acknowledged it felt strange taking on a more prominent role with the offense and defense.

"I kind of had to find my place, where I'm supposed to be," Fassel said. "I'm used to being with the specialists or bouncing around and talking to the guys on the sideline. No manual for it and I just tried to find my spot."

In spite of the turmoil and short turnaround, defensive tackle Aaron Donald expects the Rams to respond well.

"We're playing a team we know and it's usually a dogfight when we play these guys, so we know what to expect," Donald said. "We got the mindset of going in there and trying to get a win."

MLB players blast hazing restrictions

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Huston Street believes in some of baseball's oldest, tried-and-true traditions, and the reliever knows team building can be a real benefit, so he considers the elimination of rookie dress up in the new labor deal the loss of "a healthy ritual."

The Los Angeles Angels closer, like many players expressing their views Tuesday, disagrees with Major League Baseball's ban on the hazing ritual of dressing up rookies in costumes that could be considered offensive, including women's outfits.

"An effort to show our child-like spirit, or humble ourselves in wearing something funny as

a team building moment, is now gone," Street wrote in an email to The Associated Press, "but rest assured some other ritual will rise, will be kept far more secret and hopefully it's as safe and harmless as uncomfortable clothes."

Baseball owners and players ratified their five-year labor contract Tuesday, which contains a new Anti-Hazing and Anti-Bullying Policy formulated by management, rules the union agreed not to contest.

New York Mets rookie outfielder Brandon Nimmo was among the last group to participate this past season. In September, he had to wear a wig and dress in the style of the 1992 movie "A League of Their Own" while fetching coffee and

doughnuts in Philadelphia.

"I guess I'm sad to see that go. I'm glad that I got to partake in it last year. Wouldn't trade that," Nimmo said at the team's Citi Field holiday party. "I felt like it just kind of brought the team closer together, let's have a little fun together."

Yet for baseball officials, the decision goes far beyond just good-natured fun.

Billy Bean, a big league infielder and outfielder from 1987-95 who came out as gay in 1999, spoke with MLB's labor lawyers as the policy was developed as part of his role as vice president for social responsibility and inclusion.

"To me it's important to be cognizant of the images that our players project to our fans, and

I think where for many where it would seem that it's common sense that it's just all in good fun and being silly, there are many sides to the story and I just think that it's a responsible thing to do," he said during a telephone interview. "Many players didn't like this tradition but were afraid to speak up."

Still, players were stunned.

Many took to social media to express disappointment.

"Seriously?! Had to wear a Hooters outfit going through customs in Toronto and wore it proudly (because) I was in the Show," former Boston star Kevin Youkilis wrote before deleting the tweet, adding "Way more important topics and problems in the world that need attention."

Top-ranked Villanova completes sweep of Philadelphia

Associated Press

VILLANOVA, Pa. — Josh Hart shined again as a player of the year candidate in front of a slew of NBA stars that had to know he will join them next season.

"Josh Hart, everyone!" teammate Kris Jenkins yelled as the Wildcats entered the media center.

Hart raised his arms in triumph.

"The guy who made the shot right behind me," Hart said.

Jenkins' national title game-winner earned Villanova a trip to the White House. Once a player meets the president, he's not as much in awe when Joel Embiid, Kyle Lowry and DeMar DeRozan are watching from courtside.

"If President Obama's here, I wouldn't mind too much," Hart said.

Hart shook off a slow start to score 26 points and lead No. 1 Villanova to its 17th straight win, 78-57 over Temple on Tuesday night.

Unlike Obama, the Wildcats could be back in the White House next season.

Already the top team in the

country, the Wildcats (11-0) again staked their claim as the best in Philadelphia. The Wildcats romped to their 18th straight Big 5 victory, and finished 4-0 this season against the Owls, Saint Joseph's, Penn and La Salle. The Wildcats fattened their season record against Philly teams and haven't lost any game since they fell to Seton Hall in the Big East championship game.

National championship game star Daniel Ochefu, now with the Washington Wizards, rallied the crowd before tipoff and Lowry was honored with a framed Team USA jersey in his return to campus.

The crowd loved cheering Villanova's former stars.

They're simply infatuated with Hart.

Hart bypassed a shot at the NBA and returned for his senior season to improve his draft stock and help the Wildcats become the first repeat champions since Florida in 2006-07.

He missed his first five shots after missing four total shots in a 37-point effort last week against Notre Dame. He hit a runner at the first-half buzzer to spark a sensational second

half: Hart made consecutive threes that made it 49-31 and blew the game open.

Hart was about as well-rounded offensively as any AP College Basketball Player of the Year candidate this season. He attacked the rim and converted three-point plays and absolutely dominated when needed against a Temple program with a recent history of knocking off nationally ranked Wildcat teams.

He scored a whopping 22 points in a 9-minute stretch that sent the crowd into a frenzy.

"The beauty is, he didn't know that, I didn't know that," coach Jay Wright said of that scoring spurt.

No. 22 Oregon 81, Montana 67: Chris Boucher had 23 points and a career-high 19 rebounds to lead the host Ducks.

Dylan Ennis added 22 points for Oregon (9-2), which won its seventh straight and extended the nation's third-longest home winning streak to 32 games. Payton Pritchard had 12 points.

Oregon took control of the game with a 9-0 run midway through the second half for its first double-digit lead. The

Ducks shot 51.7 percent (30-for-58) for the game but struggled at the free-throw line, hitting just 15 of 25.

Ahmaad Rorie, who played his freshman season at Oregon before transferring in 2015, led the Grizzlies (3-8) with 19 points.

No. 25 Cincinnati 96, Texas Southern 58: Freshman Jarron Cumberland scored a career-high 18 points — all in the second half — as the host Bearcats pulled away to their most lopsided victory of the season.

Cincinnati (8-2) was coming off a 75-65 loss at Butler on Saturday. The Bearcats used their pronounced height advantage to take control on defense, repeatedly misdirecting shots. The Tigers made only 30 percent from the field.

Demontrae Jefferson scored 13 points for Texas Southern (4-6), which is in a stretch of 16 straight road games to open the season.

Jacob Evans III had a jumper, a layup and a three-pointer during a 13-0 run that put Cincinnati in control late in the first half. The Bearcats led by as many as 41 points.

Trail Blazers snap 4-game losing streak

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Damian Lillard called it a breakthrough.

Coming off a one-point loss to the Clippers the night before, the Portland Trail Blazers snapped a four-game losing streak with a 114-95 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Tuesday night.

Lillard had 17 points and nine assists before sitting in the fourth quarter. Mason Plumlee added 18 points for the Blazers, who led by 26 points in Portland's first game back after a 1-4 road trip.

Russell Westbrook was off his league-leading average of 31.1 points a game with 20 for the Thunder, who have lost two of their last three after a six-game winning streak. Westbrook also sat for the final quarter.

Portland was coming off a 121-120 loss at Los Angeles on Monday night to extend the season's longest losing streak.

"We had a chance to win that

game, but we came up short," Lillard said about the game against the Clippers. "I think all of those things we went through, and then staying with it, and the build up, tonight felt like kind of a breakthrough from all those experiences."

The Thunder were without Victor Oladipo because of a right wrist sprain, forcing Oklahoma City's first starting lineup change of the season. Jerami Grant, acquired by the Thunder in a trade with Philadelphia at the start of the season, got his first start for Oklahoma City and finished with 11 points.

"I didn't think that we shot the ball particularly well today," Thunder coach Billy Donovan said. "I thought that we had fairly decent looks, but we didn't shoot the ball well, and I thought some of that bled into our defense a little bit."

The Blazers didn't have Al-Farouq Aminu, who has a sore back, instead starting Noah Vonleh. But Vonleh got into foul

trouble, collecting three in the first quarter.

Westbrook's three-pointer put the Thunder up 25-16 early, but Portland came back to take a 32-31 lead on Allen Crabbe's layup before the end of the first quarter. CJ McCollum made a three-quarter court shot, but he didn't beat the buzzer.

Cavaliers 103, Grizzlies 86: Kevin Love scored 29 points, J.R. Smith found his aim — for one half — and LeBron James added 23 points as host Cleveland won its fifth straight.

Memphis rested center Marc Gasol for the first of back-to-back games against the defending NBA champions.

Timberwolves 99, Bulls 94: Zach LaVine scored 24 points, Andrew Wiggins added 23 and Minnesota won in coach Tom Thibodeau's return to Chicago.

The Timberwolves wiped out a 21-point deficit and got Thibodeau a victory in his first game in Chicago since the Bulls fired him in an acrimonious split in 2015.

Warriors 113, Pelicans 109: Stephen Curry scored 30 points, Kevin Durant added 27 to go with a big block on Anthony Davis in the final minute and Golden State held off host New Orleans.

Draymond Green recorded a triple-double with 12 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists, and it was the last of his four steals — on Davis in the waning seconds — that sealed the victory.

Suns 113, Knicks 111 (OT): Eric Bledsoe scored the go-ahead points on a driving, left-handed layup with 30 seconds to play and host Phoenix gave New York its second loss in eight games.

Bledsoe scored eight consecutive points late in OT and finished with 31, his third consecutive 30-point game.

Magic 131, Hawks 120: Serge Ibaka scored 29 points, Elfrid Payton reached career highs with 26 points and 14 assists and visiting Orlando snapped a three-game losing streak.

Darling stops 33 shots, helps Chicago hold off Rangers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Scott Darling is more comfortable in his second full NHL season and he's been coming up big for the Chicago Blackhawks with starting goalie Corey Crawford out.

Darling stopped 33 shots, Artem Anisimov scored the tie-breaking goal late in the second period and the Central Division-leading Blackhawks beat the New York Rangers 2-1 on Tuesday night.

Darling has started the last six games while Crawford has been recovering from an appendectomy. Darling has been stellar over the last four games, allowed just three goals on 116 shots while helping the Blackhawks go 3-0-1.

"You just get into a rhythm, you get comfortable, not as nervous," said Darling, who upped his record to 7-2-2 this season. "You can just relax and have

fun out there. ... Last year was my first full year. I was still nervous about my role, my position within the organization. Coming back now, I'm not one of the new guys, I've been here for 2½ years."

The Rangers had some chances in the final minutes, but Darling stopped Mats Zuccarello's slap shot with about 3 minutes to go, and then a tip-in attempt by Jimmy Vesey less than a minute later.

"The guys did a good job of keeping a lot of it from the outside," Darling said. "They had their chances and so did we. ... It was a fun game, a great hockey game and a big two points."

Trevor van Riemsdyk also scored, Artemi Panarin had two assists and Anisimov had one as Chicago got even with New York following a 1-0 overtime loss at home to the Rangers last Friday.

Jesper Fast scored for the

Rangers and Antti Raanta, starting for the fourth straight game, made 24 saves. Raanta had won three consecutive starts, including shutouts in the last two. New York had won four of its last five.

Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews was activated from injured reserve earlier in the day after missing nine games with an upper-body injury.

Capitals 4, Islanders 2: Matt Niskanen scored two goals in the third period to lift visiting Washington over New York for its fifth straight victory.

Hurricanes 8, Canucks 6: Justin Faulk scored the go-ahead goal 5:56 into the third period and host Carolina rallied from three goals down to beat Vancouver.

Sabres 6, Kings 3: Jack Eichel scored two goals in 2:08 of the second period and assisted on another to lead host Buffalo past Los Angeles.

Blue Jackets 3, Oilers 1: Sam Gagner had a goal and an assist, and visiting Columbus won its seventh straight game by beating Edmonton.

Stars 6, Ducks 2: Dan Hamhuis opened host Dallas' five-goal third period against Anaheim with his first of the season on his 34th birthday.

Wild 5, Panthers 1: Devan Dubnyk made 29 saves and host Minnesota defeated Florida for its fifth straight victory.

Predators 6, Blues 3: Mike Fisher scored twice and host Nashville erased a three-goal deficit to beat St. Louis.

Sharks 3, Maple Leafs 2 (SO): Logan Couture scored the only goal in a shootout, and visiting San Jose rallied to beat Toronto.

Coyotes 4, Red Wings 1: Jamie McGinn scored twice in visiting Arizona's victory over Detroit.