

STARS AND STRIPES®

Friday, December 16, 2016

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Chinese grab US submersible in disputed sea

BY TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Chinese ship has seized an underwater, unmanned U.S. research vessel, the Pentagon said Friday.

China seized the submarine at midday Thursday after pulling alongside the USNS Bowditch, a U.S. oceanographic survey ship, as it was stopped in international waters of the South China Sea, said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman. The ship was near the Philippines, about 50 nautical miles northwest of Subic Bay, when the submarine was seized, Davis said.

The Bowditch was stopped in the water, retrieving two unmanned submarines, when a Chinese Dalang III class ship

“came alongside of it, put a small boat in the water, went out and seized one of these [unmanned vessels], itself,” Davis said.

“There were multiple attempts made over bridge-to-bridge radio to demand it back,” Davis said. The Chinese ship “acknowledged the communications on bridge-to-bridge radio — it wasn’t a radio problem — but they ignored the request for it to be returned and took it.”

“The Department of Defense has called upon China to immediately return” the seized vessel, Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said in a statement.

The Bowditch did not have uniformed U.S. personnel on it and the Defense Department civilians on board are assigned to Military Sealift Command. While the

seized submarine was unmanned, it “still retains the protections under international law as a sovereign, immune vessel of the United States of America,” Davis said.

The information that the Bowditch’s underwater vessels collect includes water salinity, temperature and other data that are used to assist in Navy sonar communications, he said.

The Bowditch had made a port call to the Philippines in recent days, Davis said. The seized vessel, he said, is something that could be purchased on the commercial market for approximately \$150,000 and had no classified systems on it.

copp.tara@stripes.com
Twitter:@TaraCopp

Army says some misconduct trends increasing

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sexual misconduct and harassment allegations against senior Army leaders increased this year and more were substantiated than in 2015, according to a closely held report by the Army Inspector General.

The memo obtained by The Associated Press also said the most frequent charge lodged against senior officers on active duty, in the National Guard, the Reserves and the senior executive service in the past budget year was reprisal, with nearly 50 such allegations as of Sept. 30.

The total number of cases is small, but they represent some of the more serious misconduct concerns faced by the military. And they underscore the fact that transgressions are occurring in the higher ranks, not rooted simply in the younger enlisted force.

Sexual misconduct — which includes assault, harassment and improper affairs — and

professional reprisals or retaliation have long been identified by the Pentagon as thorny problems with no easy solutions. The Army and the other military services have beefed up training and education across the military and the civilian force and have developed a number of new programs aimed at stemming the problems and getting more victims to come forward and to seek aid or treatment.

Whether the increase in allegations suggests a growing problem or just that victims are more willing to step forward isn’t clear.

The latest Army memo, however, noted that reprisal is the “number one allegation” that the inspector general’s office investigates and that a growing percentage of the cases are substantiated. Some 10 percent of the reprisal allegations were substantiated in 2016, “a significant increase” from prior years, it said.

“This is very concerning,” said the memo sent last month

to top Army leaders. “The burden is on you to clearly explain and justify any unfavorable action you take against a soldier or civilian employee.”

The report was aimed at identifying both positive and negative trends in misconduct cases across the Army leadership. It focused on charges made against officers who hold the rank of one- to four-star general, senior civilian executives and colonels who have been approved for promotion to brigadier general.

It said there were seven allegations of sexual misconduct substantiated in the past fiscal year, compared to two cases in 2015.

Most of this year’s cases involved charges against senior Army National Guard officials. There were eight allegations of sexual misconduct or harassment against National Guard members, four of them substantiated. In the regular Army, there were three allegations of sexual misconduct. The number substantiated was not

provided.

“These types of cases have a significant negative impact on the Army and its image,” said the report. “Please be careful to ensure that your behavior does not create any perception of an improper relationship, as even a perception can adversely impact the environment of your organization.”

The good news, the report said, is that the number of overall charges against senior officials dipped, and the number of those who had at least one charge substantiated against them decreased from 39 in 2015 to 30 this year. Travel violations and ethical misconduct, which includes inappropriate political activities or endorsements, both declined.

The report said that while it is difficult to document, a program of training and briefings for senior officials “has helped leaders avoid common pitfalls and eliminate confusion regarding policies and regulations.”

Bergdahl prosecutors to cite wounding of 2

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

FORT BRAGG, N.C. — Army prosecutors told a military judge Friday they only intend to present evidence that two specific servicemembers were wounded while searching for accused deserter Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl when he is court-martialed next year.

However, there is evidence other troops were injured while looking for Bergdahl after he walked off Observation Post Mest in eastern Afghanistan, lead prosecutor Army Maj. Justin C. Oshana told the judge, Army Col. Jeffery R. Nance, during a pretrial hearing Friday at Fort Bragg, N.C.. But prosecutors only plan to introduce documentation of injuries to National Guardsmen Sgt. 1st Class Mark Allen and Spc. Jonathan Morita, who were wounded in a firefight with the Taliban in June 2009 during a mission to find Bergdahl in the days after his disappearance.

Bergdahl, 30, has admitted he left his post without permission before he was captured and spent five years in Taliban captivity in Afghanistan. The Army has 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.

Defense attorneys are seeking to bar

prosecutors from presenting evidence of the injuries to Allen, who was permanently disabled by a gunshot to the head, and Morita, who suffered broken bones in his hand. Bergdahl’s disappearance was only one of many issues that led to their wounds, Army Maj. Oren Gleich, one of Bergdahl’s defense attorneys, argued Friday. He said poor, hasty planning of the operation was a larger factor in the incident.

Nance has yet to determine whether he will allow prosecutors to present evidence of the injuries at trial. He said he would rule on the issue “as soon as possible.”

Among his concerns, Nance said, is whether evidence that servicemembers were injured would be necessary for prosecutors to prove Bergdahl endangered his fellow troops, an important aspect of the misbehavior charge. He said prosecutors might only need to present evidence that a mission was planned to find Bergdahl that risked injury or death to servicemembers.

Prosecutors have “to be able to put in some evidence of endangerment,” Nance said. “The question for me is how far on the spectrum should they be able to go.”

Oshana described the injuries as “the best and most direct evidence that we have to prove” Bergdahl is guilty of the charge.

To date, prosecutors have made no mention in court of any deaths among servicemembers searching for Bergdahl. After the soldier was freed in a controversial

swap for five senior Taliban leaders who had been held at the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba in May 2014, several news reports cited former soldiers reporting five to seven servicemembers were killed looking for him. Those reports were later dispelled by former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, who testified to lawmakers there was no evidence anyone had died in the search-and-rescue operations.

Also on Friday, Nance declined to hear testimony from government officials responsible for reviewing massive caches of classified information, which have been the basis for delaying the start of the trial twice.

Oshana said that through Friday, prosecutors had turned over 26,739 documents to Bergdahl’s lawyers and were preparing to share 3,130 more documents in the coming weeks. But he also said he expected to receive another 3,500 documents from U.S. Central Command that could take additional time to vet.

The trial is scheduled to begin April 18, but Nance assured Bergdahl’s attorneys that they would have proper time to inspect the documents before the trial, thus leaving open the possibility it could be delayed further.

Bergdahl is expected to return to court Feb. 13 for another pretrial hearing, but Nance said it was possible he would schedule the next hearing sooner, on Jan. 23.

Obama vows reprisal in alleged Russia meddling

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama is promising that the U.S. will retaliate against Russia for its suspected meddling in America’s election process, an accusation the Kremlin has vehemently denied.

As the White House grew more bullish about suggesting President Vladimir Putin was personally involved, Obama said he’d spoken directly to Putin about his concerns about Russian meddling. He said whenever a foreign government tries to interfere in U.S. elections, the nation must take action “and we will at a time and place of our own choosing.”

From The Associated Press

Scaparrotti meets with Ukraine troops

BY ALEX HORTON
Stars and Stripes

SAN ANTONIO — The top U.S. commander in Europe visited Ukrainian front-line troops and defense officials as tensions with Russia continue, the Pentagon announced Thursday.

Army Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti, commander of U.S. European Command, met with Ukrainian Minister of Defense Stepan Poltorak and Chief of the General Staff Viktor Muzenko during the span of two days, a news release stated. They met to discuss security cooperation, military reform and ways to improve relationships between the two nations,

the release stated.

Scaparrotti also visited troops involved in ongoing combat operations against Russian troops and their proxy forces, the release stated, as the conflict simmers. The war began in spring 2014 after political upheaval in Ukraine led to separatist groups battling for territory in the Donbass region bordering Russia.

Ukrainian troops have engaged in bloody campaigns against Russian-backed forces since April 2014. In some cases, the battles are reminiscent of World War I trench warfare and artillery barrages mixed with modern battlefield fixtures such as drones and GPS-aided mortar positions.

More than 2,400 Ukrainian troops have been killed in the conflict.

The visit is Scaparrotti’s second in a month, following his outing at Joint Military Training Group-Ukraine, where approximately 350 U.S. troops conduct training with Ukrainian counterparts.

Scaparrotti’s visit comes after Congress approved the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, which includes \$150 million to train and equip Ukrainian forces. That builds on \$250 million of “nonlethal aid” in 2015, which included night-vision equipment, counter-radar technology, body armor and vehicles.

Syria, rebels trade blame over halt of evacuations in Aleppo

Associated Press

BEIRUT — The Syrian government and rebels exchanged accusations Friday over the suspension of evacuations from eastern Aleppo just hours after they resumed on Friday.

It wasn't immediately clear how long the suspension would last nor if it would delay the cease-fire deal under which tens of thousands of residents and rebel fighters are being evacuated to opposition-controlled areas in the surrounding countryside.

The suspension appears to be linked to the evacuation of thousands from two predominantly Shiite northwestern villages besieged by rebels. Syrian state media said rebels shelled a road that was supposed to be used by people evacuating.

Lebanon's Hezbollah-run Al-Manar TV reported that the Syrian army stopped the evacuation because the rebels had violated the cease-fire deal.

The opposition's Syrian Observatory for Human Rights,

however, said the Iran-backed Hezbollah fighters had cut the road to protest a lack of progress in the evacuations from Foua and Kfarya.

The evacuations seal the end of the Syrian rebels' most important stronghold and mark a watershed moment in the country's civil war.

In announcing the suspensions, Syrian state TV also claimed the rebels had tried to take captives with them.

The Lebanon-based pan-Arab Al-Mayadeen TV aired images Friday of green, public buses reportedly returning evacuees to eastern Aleppo after the road was closed.

But despite the closure, scores of people and patients apparently were evacuated before the evacuation was suspended, according to the World Health Organization.

As of 7 a.m. on Friday, a total of 194 patients had been evacuated and taken to hospitals in rebel-controlled areas of Aleppo province, nearby Idlib province or across the border into

Turkey, said WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic.

Before the operation was suspended, dozens of green, public buses and ambulances were parked in the southern Aleppo neighborhood of Ramouseh to evacuate more people from eastern Aleppo.

Syrian state TV said that since the early hours of the day, four convoys have left Aleppo. It said some of the evacuees were using their own vehicles to leave.

There have been contradicting reports of how many people were evacuated from Aleppo on Thursday. Syrian state TV said that more than 9,000 people were evacuated on Thursday alone. Syrian state TV said the evacuees included 3,475 men, 3,137 women, 2,359 children and 108 wounded people.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said about 4,000 civilians were taken out on Thursday. The Syrian state news agency said 2,300 opposition fighters and their families left Aleppo the previous night.

Mosul-area towns still awaiting aid

Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq — The bodies of two dead Islamic State fighters have been lying on the sidewalk in front of Muhammad Jassim's house in eastern Mosul for the past week. Both of the corpses were burned, abused and decapitated, one was partially covered by a pastel floral bedsheet.

"This isn't something we want our children to see," Jassim said, coming out into the street to approach a group of Iraqi special forces officers touring the recent territorial gains. "I asked them to please take the bodies away, the smell is terrible."

As Iraqi forces settle into a routine of slow, steadier progress inside Mosul, more civilians remain trapped living along front lines for longer. Jassim's Mishraq neighborhood was declared liberated from the Islamic State group nearly a week ago, but remains too dangerous for most aid groups to visit, as it lies just a few hundred yards from ongoing clashes.

Thursday, a mortar landed across the street from Jassim's home and killed three of his neighbors.

As the operation to retake Mosul enters its third month, Iraqi forces control two pockets of territory in Mosul: a cluster of neighborhoods on the city's southeast held by the Iraqi army's 9th division and neighborhoods on the city's east held by the special forces.

"We've received nothing," Jassim said. Around the corner from his home, a group of men filled plastic buckets with water from a burst pipe in a crater left by an airstrike.

Iraqi forces repeatedly have faced punishing Islamic State counterattacks in Mosul's dense residential neighborhoods after swift advances left the Iraqi forces vulnerable.

"We are so thankful for these soldiers," Jassim said of the half-dozen black, armored Humvees, "but what we really need now is a medical center."

US steps up fight to cut sales of antiquities stolen by Islamic State

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government on Thursday stepped up efforts to cut the sale of antiquities stolen by the Islamic State group, filing a civil action to recover looted items that appeared in photographs found during a 2015 U.S. Special Operations raid in Syria.

The lawsuit, filed in Washington, marks the first time the U.S. Justice Department has gone to court to seize cultural artifacts the Islamic State holds or once held, U.S. authorities said. The new legal approach comes amid a growing international push to counter black

market trading of historical treasures from Syria, Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East.

The filing steps up pressure on art dealers, auction houses and buyers, and is "a warning to those who traffic in precious antiquities and who seek to profiteer from ISIL's exploitation of the cultural heritage of areas under its control," U.S. Attorney Channing D. Phillips of the District said in a statement.

The government sought the forfeiture of four objects dated to as early as 330 B.C: a gold ring from Deir Ezzor, Syria, two gold Roman-era coins and a stone carving from northern Syria.

The objects were identified in a trove of photographs and documents captured in the first Delta Force ground raid in eastern Syria in May 2015, which resulted in the death of its target, militant leader Abu Sayyaf. That July, the U.S. returned to Iraq hundreds of objects recovered in the raid.

It is not known where the four items cited in the lawsuit are, but photographs and documents found in the raid displayed the four items in a fashion customarily used to present items for sale on the international market, the U.S. alleges. At least one was bought in U.S. dollars, the legal action states.

Charleston shooter convicted

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The Confederate flag is gone from South Carolina's Statehouse. The bullet holes have been patched in Emanuel AME's fellowship hall. And now, Dylann Roof will likely spend the rest of his days in prison for killing nine black worshippers at the Charleston church.

A federal jury convicted Roof on all 33 counts Thursday. Those same jurors will decide in another phase of the trial starting Jan. 3 if he faces the death penalty or life in prison for hate crimes at a historic African-American church whose founder led a failed slave revolt.

When that testimony starts, Roof will be his own attorney, having again fired defense lawyers who fear Roof is taking over because he doesn't want them to present embarrassing evidence in their efforts to spare his life.

A stunning crime when it happened on June 17, 2015, became more revolting during six days of testimony. Roof fired 77 shots in the fellowship hall. More than 50 hit someone. Each of the nine people killed were struck at least five times. The medical examiner said the angles of some of the bullets seemed to show someone was holding a gun over victims lying still with

their arms pulled against them. A prosecutor said they were executed like animals.

Roof didn't hesitate to explain his racist beliefs during his confession to FBI agents and left a journal full of his views, such as blacks being inferior to whites. He also left behind carefully chosen pictures of himself holding the .45-caliber Glock he used in the killings, posing at historic Civil War and African-American sites and holding the Confederate flag.

As the verdict was read, Roof just stared ahead, much as he did the entire trial.

Roof's lawyers presented no witnesses and tried in vain to introduce evidence that problems with Roof's mental health led to the killings. But U.S. Judge Richard Gergel said that kind of evidence is only permissible in the upcoming penalty phase, when Roof will represent himself.

In his closing argument, Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathan Williams mocked Roof for calling himself brave, saying the real bravery came from the victims who tried to stop him.

Williams' 50-minute closing argument filled the court with tension. At times, the prosecutor raised his voice, saying Roof was a cold, calculated killer. Some family members of vic-

tims dabbed their eyes with tissues, and jurors appeared emotional when Williams, after apologizing to them, showed crime scene photos of each person killed alongside a small picture of them while alive.

Those pictures included the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, 41; Myra Thompson, 59; Cynthia Hurd, 54; Depayne Middleton Doctor, 49; Daniel "Dapper Dan" Simmons, 74; Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, 45; Ethel Lance, 70; Susie Jackson, 87; and Tywanza Sanders, 26.

Defense lawyer David Bruck conceded Roof committed the slayings, but he asked jurors to look into his head and see what caused him to become so full of hatred, calling him a suicidal loner who never grasped the gravity of what he did.

Survivor Felicia Sanders thinks Roof is a coward because he refused to look at her as she testified. She refused to say after the verdicts were read Thursday if she wants Roof to die for his crimes. But she left a news conference with reporters smiling. It's her way to honor her nine friends killed in their church.

"I wear a smile, because if you look at the pictures of all nine, they're smiling," Sanders said.

Northeast in dangerous deep freeze

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. — Low temperatures and high winds have put the Northeastern U.S. in a deep freeze.

Dangerous wind chills of 20 to 30 below zero in parts of the region made for some crippling conditions Friday.

"You are talking about 30 degrees below normal highs. That is pretty darn cold," said National Weather Service meteorologist James Brown, in Maine. "This is pretty much a piece of Arctic air that came off the North Pole and came into New England."

Forecasters said a storm will follow the frigid weather, bringing chances for snow, sleet and freezing rain across much of the country. Some schools closed early Thursday.

"We're not strangers to these sorts of bitter temperatures on Mount Washington's summit" in New Hampshire, senior weather observer Mike Carmon said in the weather observatory's blog. "However, over the last few winters, it's generally late January or February before we experience this sort of polar air outbreak."

The wind chill was down to 85 below at the summit early Friday.

In upstate New York, along the Lake Ontario shore, wind gusts approached 70 mph, and the National Weather Service issued a blizzard warning effective through early Friday morning.

Below-normal temperatures are expected this weekend and into Monday across the entire northern half of the country, from the Pacific Northwest to Maine and as far south as Oklahoma, Arkansas and Virginia, according to the Climate Prediction Center.

Up to half a foot of snow could fall from the Upper Mississippi Valley to the Northeast on Friday and Saturday, and areas east of the Appalachian Mountains could see freezing rain and sleet on Saturday.

Yahoo hack highlights vulnerability of data

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The revelation of Yahoo Inc.'s latest hack underscores what many Americans have known for years: All those emails, photos and other personal files stored online can easily be stolen, and there's little anyone can do about it.

The only saving grace is that the attackers apparently did not exploit the information for fraud. But their true motives remain a mystery.

While there are a number of straightforward measures all users should take to protect themselves, relatively few people actually do. And in this case, doing so wouldn't really

have mattered. Even the most scrupulous individual countermeasures could only limit the damage.

"Yahoo users could have had immaculate computer security and still been the victim here," said Will Ackerly, chief technology officer at Virtru, a computer security firm he co-founded after working for eight years at the National Security Agency. "Short of using encryption, there's no way to keep your email from being compromised in this kind of hack."

The mega breach disclosed Wednesday exposed more than a billion user accounts, the largest such attack in history. The company said the attack hap-

pened in August 2013, although Yahoo discovered it only recently. Worse, the company's announcement followed a similar announcement in September about a 2014 hack that Yahoo ascribed to an unnamed foreign government. That breach affected 500 million accounts.

Some experts believe the record-breaking amount of data stolen in the breach announced Wednesday also points to state-sponsored hackers in search of a specific target, which could be why three years later the data still hasn't been spotted for sale on the web. And neither Yahoo breach has yet been linked to online fraud or any specific repercussions for Yahoo users.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Notorious jewel thief, 86, strikes again

GA ATLANTA — Police just outside Atlanta say a notorious 86-year-old jewel thief has struck again.

Dunwoody police said Doris Payne was arrested Tuesday at a Von Maur department store. A police report said Payne put a \$2,000 necklace in her back pocket and tried to leave the store.

Authorities have said Payne has lifted pricey baubles from countless jewelry stores around the world over six decades. She was the subject of a 2013 documentary, "The Life and Crimes of Doris Payne."

When asked about her exploits in an interview with The Associated Press earlier this year, she said simply: "I was a thief."

Town without police after officers resign

IN BUNKER HILL — Bunker Hill no longer has a police department after the town marshal and four reserve deputies resigned over complaints about mismanagement and unethical requests from the town council.

Town Marshal Michael Thomison submitted his letter of resignation, along with resignation letters from his four unpaid deputies, during the regular meeting of the town board Monday evening, the Kokomo Tribune reported.

Thomison alleged that the town board asked him to be involved in illegal, immoral and unethical actions, including requesting confidential information and asking him to conduct criminal background checks on other board members.

Miami County Sheriff Tim Miller said county deputies will ensure residents are protected until a new marshal is hired.

Workers find woman's cash in heap of trash

NY LONG BEACH — A Long Island woman was reunited with \$5,000 in cash that she accidentally threw in the trash thanks to a little luck and the help of several sanitation workers.

Krishna Nadalall, 45, said his mother, Bayban, had set aside an envelope containing the cash for her mortgage payment, but she couldn't find it Tuesday morning.

Hysterical over the loss, the Long Beach woman called Nadalall to tell him she mistakenly threw the money away.

Nadalall, a sanitation worker himself, gathered three co-workers to help sift through the loads of trash compiled at the Merrick Transfer Station.

The group was able to recoup all but \$40 of the money after some of the bills fell out of the envelope along the way.

City pond stuffed to the gills with goldfish

DE WILMINGTON — A Delaware city is spending more than \$300,000 to evict thousands of goldfish and restore the pond they took over.

Sean Duffy is director of the water division for Wilmington's Public Works Department. The News Journal quoted him as saying that when officials received a complaint from the pond's neighbors and checked on the goldfish population, they realized they were "heading toward a catastrophe."

Duffy said the city started draining the pond and removing fish and overgrown plants three weeks ago. He estimates they've relocated about 4,000 fish. He said officials don't know what caused the infestation, but the city will stock the

pond with native fish to head off a population explosion if goldfish are ever introduced again.

Man trying to move ambulance arrested

NH MANCHESTER — Authorities say a New Hampshire man was arrested after he tried to move a parked ambulance that was blocking his car.

Matthew Duval, of Manchester, was charged Tuesday with disorderly conduct and unauthorized use of a vehicle. He's due in court next month.

WMUR-TV reported that firefighters and paramedics were inside a home helping a patient; they had unlocked the ambulance so firefighters could grab supplies.

Authorities said Duval, 40, couldn't get his vehicle around the ambulance, so he got in it and tried to move the ambulance himself. Workers heard the back-up "beeping" sound and called police.

City books \$629 hotel rooms for homeless

NY NEW YORK — A report said New York City paid a rate of \$629 a night to house homeless people at a Manhattan hotel on two days in September.

The report, issued Wednesday by Comptroller Scott Stringer, said the city booked 30 rooms at that rate on Sept. 19 and Sept. 20.

According to the mayor's office, Manhattan hotel costs rose on those days because of United Nations meetings.

The report said over a year, there were 815 bookings at two midtown Manhattan hotels for \$400 a night or more. The average daily rate paid by the city is around \$194.

Home hit by golf balls despite court order

PA EASTON — A couple that lives next to a Pennsylvania golf course said errant balls are still hitting their property despite a court order.

The (Allentown) Morning Call said Jerzy and Halina Wisniewski returned to court Wednesday with 50-some golf balls they say came from the Morgan Hill Golf Course since October.

That's when the couple got a court injunction, which prompted the course to relocate some tees to keep golfers from hooking balls onto the couple's property.

The couple's attorney said the course should have done more to stop the balls.

But course attorney Erv McLain said thick woods separate the course from the property and suspects the couple hopes the course will buy them out.

Police uniform stolen from courthouse

PA PHILADELPHIA — Police in Philadelphia are searching for the thief who stole parts of an officer's uniform from a bench outside a courtroom at the Criminal Justice Center.

The 25th District officer took off his uniform jacket, badge and hat while preparing to testify in a courtroom on the building's fifth floor Wednesday morning.

Police said the officer left his belongings on the bench and found that they were missing when he returned 15 minutes later.

Investigators said the suspect was only on the floor for about seven minutes. He was last seen heading toward Broad Street.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

On a mission to provide credible reporting and daily news to America's military, wherever they serve.

Mobile apps available: www.stripes.com/apps.

Seahawks top Rams, lock up division

Associated Press

SEATTLE — For all the flaws, the Seattle Seahawks are back where they always expected to be — in the postseason and champions of the NFC West.

“I think it’s a huge significance in terms of consistency,” Seattle coach Pete Carroll said. “It’s something that we really do take great pride in because of the implications for the playoffs.”

Russell Wilson threw three touchdown passes, Tyler Lockett had 130 yards receiving and a score, and the Seahawks won the NFC West with a 24-3 victory over the Los Angeles Rams on Thursday night.

Seattle claimed its third division title in four seasons, assuring itself of at least one home game in the playoffs and keeping the pressure on Detroit in the competition for the No. 2 seed in the NFC and a first-round bye. Seattle also snapped a three-game losing streak to the Rams.

Seattle became the first team in the NFL to clinch its division, the result of playing in the NFC West in a season where no one was particularly good. The Seahawks have their shortcomings, which were shown again against the Rams. Seattle simply had more tools than anyone else in the division to overcome its flaws.

It wasn’t a completely smooth evening for the Seahawks. Richard Sherman was seen yelling toward coaches on the sideline in the third quarter moments before Doug Baldwin’s 1-yard touchdown catch. Sherman said he was expressing his displeasure toward Carroll with the decision to

throw on first-and-goal from the 1, a pass by Wilson that was nearly intercepted.

“We’ve already seen how that goes. I’m sure you guys have seen that play enough times,” Sherman said.

It wasn’t an impressive display by Seattle (9-4-1), but was far better than Sunday when the Seahawks were blown out by Green Bay with Wilson throwing five interceptions.

Wilson was good enough against the listless Rams. After slogging through the first half, Wilson threw a 1-yard touchdown pass to Doug Baldwin late in the third quarter for a 17-3 lead, then put the game away on a 57-yard touchdown strike to Lockett on the second play of the fourth quarter.

Wilson finished 19-for-26 for 229 yards, but also threw a careless interception at the goal line midway through the fourth quarter. Seven of those passes went to Lockett, whose previous career high was 104 yards. Luke Willson also had an 8-yard TD catch in the first half.

Another mostly forgettable Thursday night game was made at least somewhat more entertaining by the Seahawks and their highlighter green uniforms that drew wild opinions all over social media. The “Action Green” uniforms had very little action in the first half, before a second-half effort that assured another banner would be raised at CenturyLink Field.

A tumultuous few days for the Rams (4-10) after the firing of Jeff Fisher as head coach culminated in their fifth straight loss and first under interim coach John

Fassel. The Rams’ defensive front caused problems for Seattle in the first half but the Los Angeles offense provided zero help.

“It’s just a lesson for me that you always have to be ready to adapt and take on responsibilities that you didn’t anticipate,” Fassel said. “But it’s an experience that of course I’ll never forget.”

Jared Goff was 13-for-25 for 135 yards before leaving in the fourth quarter to be checked for a possible concussion. The Rams finished with 183 total yards, but 90 of those came in the fourth quarter.

Quiet Gurley: Los Angeles running back Todd Gurley was again unable to get started in the running game, continuing a frustrating second season. Gurley was held to 38 yards on 14 carries. He did have a 22-yard run late in the second quarter that set up Greg Zuerlein’s 36-yard field goal, but it was just his second run of 20 yards or more this season. Gurley had 11 runs of 20 or more yards last year.

“There is no reason Gurley should get hit the way he gets hit sometimes because we don’t set up a block for him,” offensive lineman Rodger Saffold said.

Sack attack: After getting no pressure on the quarterback in the past three weeks, the Seahawks rediscovered their pass rush.

Seattle had two sacks in the first half and finished with four after the Seahawks had five total sacks in the previous five weeks. Cliff Avril was the main culprit with 1½ sacks, giving him a career-high 11½ for the season.

Dolphins looking to clinch winning season

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Matt Moore last started an NFL game in the 2011 season finale, when the Miami Dolphins beat the New York Jets and Todd Bowles was his coach.

Well, Bowles is on the other sideline now, and the veteran quarterback is stepping in for Ryan Tannehill on Saturday night at MetLife Stadium when the AFC East rivals meet for the second time this season.

“I have a lot of respect for Matt,” said Bowles, the Jets coach who served as Miami’s interim coach for the final three games in 2011. “He hasn’t played in a while, obviously. Tannehill’s been playing good

for them. Matt’s a competitor. I know he can throw the football and he’ll be ready to play.”

Tannehill is sidelined with a strained left knee, which will sideline him for the first time in his NFL career.

With the Dolphins (8-5) looking to clinch their first winning season since 2008, Moore will be under center after leading Miami on the winning drive last Sunday against Arizona.

“I’ve done this before,” the 32-year-old Moore said. “I’m just trying to jump in and have these guys and myself really not miss a beat.”

It’s been a busy week for Moore, whose wife gave birth to their son Wyatt on Monday. Now, the quarterback is try-

ing to keep the Dolphins in the playoff hunt. Miami is in the thick of things in the AFC, but is on the outside looking in for the final wild card because of tiebreakers with Denver (8-5).

“If you’re a Miami fan, you’ve been looking forward to it for a long time,” wide receiver Jarvis Landry said. “Just being here and to just see how things have evolved, where we came from and where we have the position to be heading to, it’s amazing. It’s something that definitely makes you jump out of bed in the morning and come to work with a smile on your face.”

Meanwhile, the Jets (4-9) are hoping to play spoiler and looking to avoid being swept by the Dolphins in a season series

for the first time since 2009. Bryce Petty will make his second straight start for New York after leading the Jets to a 23-17 overtime win at San Francisco.

Postseason scenarios: The Dolphins have a chance to end a seven-season playoff drought, but players insist they’re paying little attention to the standings.

“We’re somewhere in the middle, the top, the bottom. Who knows?” defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh said. “We all understand what’s ahead of us and what we need to do.”

To make the playoffs, Miami needs to win one more game than the Broncos the rest of the way, meaning if Denver goes 2-1, the Dolphins would need to go 3-0.

Colorful broadcaster Sager dies at 65

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Craig Sager never once thought about giving up as he battled cancer for more than two years.

“Man, life is too beautiful, too wonderful, there’s just too many things,” he said in late August. “It’s not just you. It’s your family and kids and all. Fight. Fight until the end. Fight as hard as you can.”

The end for the beloved TNT broadcaster came Thursday when the man known as much for his outrageous wardrobe as his relationships with the NBA’s elite succumbed to the disease he fought so hard to overcome. Turner Sports announced his death without disclosing details. He was 65 and had worked basketball games for TNT for nearly a quarter-century.

“There will never be another Craig Sager,” Turner President David Levy said. “His incredible talent, tireless work ethic and commitment to his craft took him all over the world covering sports.”

His son, Craig Jr., posted a loving video tribute to his father, tweeting: “We packed a lifetime and then some into these 28 years together.”

Sager’s passing brought out condolences from every corner

of the NBA and Hall of Famer Larry Bird expressed what many were feeling.

“He was as identifiable with the NBA as any player or coach,” Bird said. “The league will not be the same without him.”

Magic Johnson echoed those sentiments on Twitter.

“The NBA family lost a legend who changed the way sideline reporters did their job. RIP Craig Sager,” Johnson said.

It wasn’t just the NBA community that mourned his passing, with Vice President Joe Biden and Drake expressing sadness at the loss.

Sager had two bone marrow transplants with his son as the donor before undergoing a third one from an anonymous donor at the end of August in Houston to fight an aggressive form of leukemia. To no one’s surprise, he was characteristically cheerful.

“It really isn’t all that painful, not physically,” he said then. “I think the hardest toll is mentally and emotionally. I have this thing of positive thinking. I think if you think something is going to be right and you think positive then you feel that way and if you feel that way you’ll act that way. I try not

to get down.”

Sager announced in April 2014 that he had been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, and he missed the playoffs and much of the following season as he underwent the first two transplants. Sager revealed in March 2016 that his leukemia was no longer in remission. He said doctors told him the typical prognosis was three to six months to live.

He was overwhelmed by how news of his fight spread and people across the world started talking about the Sager Strong campaign.

“At first was our family’s fight,” Sager said. “Then because of TV and TNT and people seeing me in the stands and I talk to people and then it got bigger and then that inner circle became an endless world to tell you the truth.”

Sager then started gaining inspiration from everyone who shared their story or reached out to show support.

“They saw that I refused to give up and I refused to give in and that I’m still fighting it and they saw a lot of inspiration in what I was doing,” he said. “Now I feel I’m not only fighting for what I want and what my family wants, but for every-

body out there who has cancer or will.”

His battle brought out the soft side of Gregg Popovich, the prickly San Antonio Spurs coach with whom he had many memorable exchanges during in-game interviews.

Sager never faulted Popovich for his gruff attitude during those interviews, saying “he’s trying to win a game. He doesn’t want to talk to some reporter.”

“Later, he said, ‘You’re still going to be media on the court, but off the court can I call you and see how you’re doing?’ I said: ‘Heck yes,’” Sager recalled in August. “Just keep treating me the way on the court you always do. He said: ‘I wouldn’t want it any other way.’”

After learning Sager had died, Popovich spoke somberly for close to two minutes before a game in Phoenix.

“A day like this, basketball has to take a back seat, as we all think about somebody who was very unique, very special,” Popovich said. “Whether you really knew Craig or not, you got the feeling that he was a very special person in a lot of different ways, and right now I just feel for his family.”

Minnesota players opt to boycott all football activities

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — One by one, the entire Minnesota football roster walked out of the locker room and onto the practice facility turf to face a waiting media gathering.

Wearing their maroon game jerseys with gold numbers, they lined up behind 10 of their teammates who were suspended earlier this week after an internal university investigation into an alleged sexual assault.

Three senior leaders stood in front of the group and delivered a defiant rebuke of the university’s policies, saying they would not participate in football activities until the school president

and athletic director apologized and revoked the suspensions. If that meant they did not play in the upcoming Holiday Bowl against Washington State, they appeared poised to stand firm.

“All these kids’ reputations are destroyed,” senior quarterback Mitch Leidner said Thursday. “Their names are destroyed. It’s extremely difficult to get back and it’s very unfair for them and that’s why we’re sticking together through this thing.”

Two assistant coaches and former Minnesota Vikings star cornerback Antoine Winfield, whose son Antoine Winfield Jr. was one of the players sus-

pending, were there watching while head coach Tracy Claeys tweeted his support. A program that has toiled in the bottom half of the Big Ten for decades was suddenly thrust into the national spotlight.

The Gophers voiced their displeasure with a lack of communication from President Eric Kaler and athletic director Mark Coyle after the decision was made to suspend the players indefinitely. Four of those players were suspended earlier in the season for three games after becoming part of a sexual assault investigation. No arrests were made, no charges were filed and a restraining

order put in place by the woman was removed on Nov. 2.

But this week the school’s Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action recommended suspending those four players and six others, saying they violated the school’s standards for conduct. Ray Buford Jr., KiAnte Hardin, Dior Johnson, Tamarion Johnson and Carlton Djam were all recommended for expulsion.

Antoine Winfield Jr., Kobe McCrary, Seth Green and Mark Williams were recommended for one-year suspensions, and Antonio Shenault was recommended for probation by the EOAA.

Antetokounmpo, Bucks roll past Bulls

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 30 points and Jabari Parker added 28 to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to a 108-97 victory over the Chicago Bulls on Thursday night.

Milwaukee led the entire game and held a 24-point advantage early in the fourth quarter but had to hold on to snap a three-game losing streak, its longest of the season.

Antetokounmpo has totaled 88 points and 35 rebounds in his last three games, and Parker has reached at least 27 points in four of his past five.

Chicago lost for the fifth time in seven games and dropped its third straight on the road despite 21 points from Jimmy Butler and 20 from Dwyane Wade. The Bulls also got 19 points from Taj Gibson in the opener of a home-and-home between the teams on back-to-back nights.

Warriors 103, Knicks 90: Klay Thompson scored 25 points, JaVale McGee added a season-best 17 and host Gold-

en State put on another spectacular passing display to beat the undermanned New York Knicks.

Kevin Durant had 15 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists, and Stephen Curry pulled down a season-high 10 rebounds to go with eight points and eight assists against a New York team missing stars Carmelo Anthony and Derrick Rose.

The Warriors had 36 assists on their initial 36 baskets — all 26 in the first half — and all 11 players who appeared in the first half scored in Golden State's fifth straight win over New York. The Warriors wound up with 41 assists and held a 57-49 rebounding advantage.

Justin Holiday had 15 points off the bench for the late-arriving Knicks, whose second bus was delayed coming from San Francisco in a downpour.

Anthony said he bruised his shoulder diving for a ball Sunday against the Lakers. Rose had a sore lower back.

Pelicans 102, Pacers 95: Anthony Davis had 35 points, 16 rebounds and five blocked

shots, rookie Buddy Hield scored a career-high 21 and New Orleans defeated visiting Indiana.

Davis highlighted a dynamic performance with two three-pointers and a couple of driving dunks. He was at his best during a pivotal 15-0 Pelicans run inside the final 5 minutes, when he converted a three-point play on a dunk, hit a three, added four free throws and blocked two shots.

Jrue Holiday, who started the surge with a driving layup, had 16 points.

Myles Turner scored 26 on 11-of-14 shooting for Indiana, but the Pacers missed eight straight shots during a 4-minute scoring drought late in the fourth quarter.

Spurs 107, Suns 92: Kawhi Leonard had 18 points and 10 rebounds, and Pau Gasol added 18 points and nine boards to lead San Antonio over host Phoenix.

The Spurs (21-5) withstood the Suns' attempt to push the tempo after San Antonio had

played Wednesday. San Antonio held the Suns to 40 percent shooting and improved to an NBA-best 14-1 on the road.

After the Suns grabbed a 77-76 lead with 10:08 to play, the Spurs responded with an 11-0 run to take control for good.

Devin Booker's 17 points led the Suns, who missed a chance to win consecutive games for only the second time this season.

Nuggets 132, Trail Blazers 120: Danilo Gallinari scored 20 of his 27 points in the first half and Denver led big early before holding on late to beat visiting Portland.

Gary Harris scored 18 in his return to the Nuggets' lineup. It was the Nuggets second win in the last 15 games against the Trail Blazers, who got 40 points and 10 assists from Damian Lillard. CJ McCollum scored 23 for Portland, which has lost five of six.

The Nuggets snapped a three-game skid at Pepsi Center, where they are 4-7 this season.

Ducks edge Bruins 4-3 for 7th win in last 9 games

Associated Press

BOSTON — Anaheim coach Randy Carlyle felt his decision was simple: Call the timeout.

It worked out very well for his team Thursday night.

Josh Manson and Rickard Rakell scored second-period goals to lead the Ducks to a 4-3 victory over the Boston Bruins.

Trailing 2-0 after the Bruins scored both goals in a 13-second span, Carlyle called time out and his team came charging back.

"You're always looking for ways to motivate and stall the opposition when the momentum is all in their favor," he said. "You hope it does. Sometimes you do it and it doesn't have any affect and you look like a dummy. 'Why'd you do it?'"

Andrew Cogliano and Kevin Bieksa also scored for the

Ducks, who won for the seventh time in nine games.

Blackhawks 5, Islanders 4: At New York, Richard Panik scored the tiebreaking goal with 6:13 left in the third period for Chicago.

Panik's eighth of the season gave Chicago its fourth victory in five games and eighth in the last 10 meetings with the Islanders.

Rangers 2, Stars 0: At Dallas, Rick Nash scored an unassisted, short-handed goal in the third period and two New York goalies combined for the shutout.

Nash broke up a pass by Jamie Benn near the Rangers' blue line, skated down the ice and put a snap shot past Dallas goalie Antti Niemi at 7:08.

Coyotes 3, Maple Leafs 2 (SO): Former Toronto forward Peter Holland scored the

shootout winner for visiting Arizona.

Traded to the Coyotes last week, Holland was the only one of the three shooters for each team to score in the tiebreaker.

Kings 4, Red Wings 1: At Detroit Nic Dowd had a tiebreaking goal late in the second period and Tyler Toffoli scored twice in the third for Los Angeles.

Derek Forbort scored 21 seconds into the game on the Kings' first shot and Dowd scored off his own rebound with 17 seconds left in the second period. Toffoli scored with 6:10 left in the game.

Wild 5, Predators 2: At Nashville, Tenn., Devan Dubnyk made 34 saves, Eric Staal scored twice and Minnesota won its sixth straight.

Dubnyk's best save came with 8:30 remaining in the

third period when he denied Ryan Johansen from the left faceoff dot with the Predators on a power play and Minnesota holding a one-goal lead.

Blues 5, Devils 2: Vladimir Tarasenko had a goal and two assists and Alex Pietrangolo scored the go-ahead goal for host St. Louis.

Jori Lehtera, Nail Yakupov and Patrik Berglund also scored for the Blues, who overcame an early two-goal deficit. Jake Allen made 24 saves as St. Louis improved to 13-1-3 on home ice.

Jets 4, Panthers 3 (SO): Mathieu Perreault scored the deciding goal in the sixth round of the shootout for host Winnipeg.

Perreault did some slow stickhandling before flipping a forehand shot past Roberto Luongo to end Winnipeg's four-game losing streak.