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'Swinging general' demoted from Army

USA Today

WASHINGTON — The Army has stripped Maj. Gen. David Haight of three ranks following revelations that he had a decade-long extramarital affair and had lived a "swinger lifestyle," Army Secretary Eric Fanning said Friday.

A board of his peers called for Haight to be busted to lieutenant colonel, a demotion that will cost him nearly \$43,000 per year in pension pay. Fanning, in an interview, said he had accepted the recommendation after a panel of three officers reviewed Haight's conduct — and his secret second life — and de-

termined that lieutenant colonel was the last rank in which he had served satisfactorily.

"He's going to be retired as a lieutenant colonel," Fanning said. "Pretty big drop."

Haight's attorney, Army Lt. Col. Sara Root, said Haight deeply regrets the affair but strenuously denies that it affected his service through multiple combat tours.

Haight, a decorated infantry soldier and Army Ranger, had served as the director of operations for U.S. European Command until the spring. An Army investigation determined that he had had an 11-

year-long affair with Jennifer Armstrong, a government employee, and had misused his government cellphone to stay in contact with her.

The Army reprimanded Haight and hauled him back to Washington. He was placed in a job with few responsibilities while the board determined his rank for retirement. Haight had been allowed to maintain his clearance to view classified material until the day after USA Today published the story about his secret life, and had raised questions about his susceptibility to espionage.

Haight's dark life as a phi-

landerer — a violation of military law — and his "swinger lifestyle" came to light in August after USA Today obtained the report of an internal investigation and interviewed Armstrong. Haight's career, studded with achievement and on a trajectory for greater rank, crashed and burned.

Haight met Armstrong while on a combat tour in Iraq.

The dangerous dalliances put Haight at risk of blackmail and espionage, particularly in his sensitive post in Europe, where Russian military aggression and spying are growing concerns, government officials told USA Today.

Marines field smartphones for deadlier, more accurate support

BY ALEX HORTON

Stars and Stripes

SAN ANTONIO — The Marine Corps is fielding smartphone-type devices to make fire support deadlier and more accurate, the service said Friday.

Marine forward observers and air-combat controllers on the ground will use the Target Handoff System Version 2 to quickly establish enemy positions and send up detailed GPS coordinates to interconnected networks of air, artillery and naval fire support, a news release stated, with operational use as early as March.

The system automatically generates target coordinates identified by a Marine on the ground using a laser range-finder and video uplink. The data automatically plots the information on a pre-installed map. The information is linked to a nearby Fire Support Coordination Center, which evaluates the data and determines which mode of fire support is suitable.

That automation eliminates

the need for manual targeting input, the release stated, allowing a Marine under fire to concentrate on security and to observe changes in the enemy position and adjust fire, if necessary.

"Instead of doing geometries with a protractor, we can do it much quicker on a tablet. And we can see it real time," said Capt. Jesse Hume, an artillery officer and the THS V.2 project officer for Marine Corps Systems Command. He said automation and digital uplinks will speed up the kill chain — the term used by the military for identifying a target, relaying necessary information to commanders and ordering a target destroyed.

The system distributes carbon copies of fire missions to approval agencies and ground commanders, Hume said, which allows close and immediate coordination instead of working up and down several layers of command.

The system also mitigates concern about friendly casual-

ties, Hume said. Its map also will plot friendly units, and a warning message will pop up if they get close to a position marked for a possible strike, he said.

Similar warnings will come up if previously confirmed no-strike sites, such as hospitals or schools, are called up as targets, which could help reduce civilian casualties from fire missions, Hume said.

The devices, which he said are modified and encrypted Samsung Galaxy S2 smartphones, will be fielded by forward observers, air controllers and joint terminal attack controllers.

Forward observers are typically assigned to combat units as eyes on the ground to call up enemy positions for artillery strikes.

Joint terminal attack controllers are vital battlefield troops responsible for the close coordination of airstrikes while managing aircraft traffic, from fighter jets to gunships and unmanned drones. They are among the few U.S. troops in

combat in Iraq and Syria due to their specialized skills in coordinating air and artillery strikes.

The THS V.2 is a slimmed-down update to an existing model; it weighs 10 pounds — half as much as the first iteration — and is aided by commercially available smartphones to make a smaller unit.

The previous model's size and weight made it impractical on the battlefield, and it was not previously utilized, Hume said. But he expects the THS V.2 to be fielded in March.

While Hume could not say what specific battlefield the system will see first, he said it would be available to all combat forces, including U.S. troops stationed at Kara Soar Base in northern Iraq, which provides artillery support for Iraqi troops with four 155 mm Howitzer cannons in the ongoing Mosul offensive against the Islamic State group. Other positions utilize guided High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems.

Bergdahl judge blocks evidence of wounds

Associated Press

FORT BRAGG, N.C. — Prosecutors were rebuffed from harnessing the most contentious issue surrounding the court-martial of Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl when a judge ruled out any evidence that soldiers were wounded while searching for him.

The judge, Army Col. Jeffery Nance, decided Friday to disallow any such evidence because, he said, the risk is too great that military jurors would act on emotion rather than logic, creating an unfair bias against the defendant.

Nance wrote that there's "ample" other evidence supporting the argument that Bergdahl's comrades undertook dangerous search missions in Afghanistan that brought them into contact with the enemy.

"However, the government may not put on evidence of actual injuries suffered by any service members in conducting operations to recover the accused," he wrote.

Bergdahl is charged with desertion and

misbehavior before the enemy; the latter could put him in prison for life. Bergdahl has said he walked off his post in 2009 to alert higher-ups to what he felt were problems with his unit.

Questions about whether soldiers were injured or killed while searching for Bergdahl have long surrounded the case. President-elect Donald Trump is among the critics who repeated claims that lives were lost.

However, a general who investigated Bergdahl's disappearance has testified that he found no evidence that servicemembers died searching for him.

Prosecutors have focused on soldiers wounded during a firefight involving a half-dozen U.S. servicemembers embedded with 50 members of the Afghan National Army about a week after Bergdahl left his post. An officer involved in that mission has testified that its sole purpose was to find him.

The group was attacked near a town in

Afghanistan on July 8, 2009. U.S. Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Mark Allen was shot in the head, and prosecutors say he uses a wheelchair and is unable to communicate. Another soldier had hand injuries because of a rocket-propelled grenade.

But Nance wrote that "the accused is not charged with causing anyone's injury or death. He is charged with endangering the command. While there are similarities in those consequences, they are distinct."

His ruling described his concern that jurors would be unfairly prejudiced by the injuries.

"The accused is not to be convicted because, while searching for him, his comrades were horrifically injured. Even (perhaps especially) hardened combat veterans of many deployments who might sit on this panel would be hard pressed not to be affected by the horrific injuries to SFC Allen, in particular," he wrote. "Since the danger can be avoided, I deem it should be."

US strikes destroy weapons seized by Islamic State group

By TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S.-led airstrikes on Thursday destroyed multiple tanks and weapons seized by Islamic State fighters when the terrorist group recaptured the Syrian city of Palmyra, the Pentagon said Friday.

The Islamic State group seized the weapons — including an air defense system — when it attacked Russian and Syrian forces left to guard Palmyra and the nearby Tiyas Military Airbase, a senior defense official confirmed on the condition of anonymity.

The Russian and Syrian weapons, which the terrorist group captured earlier this week, troubled U.S. officials because of the potential danger they posed for pilots of the U.S.-led Operation Inherent Resolve coalition flying missions in Syria and the approximately 300 U.S. special operators assisting Kurdish forces on the ground in the northern portion

of the country. At a news briefing Wednesday, the top U.S. commander for Iraq and Syria, Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, said Russian forces needed to secure the area again.

"If they don't, we will," Townsend told reporters at the Pentagon.

On Thursday, U.S.-led coalition airstrikes hit 14 tanks, three artillery systems, two Islamic State-held buildings, two tactical vehicles and a different air-defense artillery system located near Palmyra and around Tiyas Military Airbase, an airfield once used by the Syrian air force that was overrun by the terrorist group.

The U.S. official said the air-defense system remains in an Islamic State group-controlled area and likely would be targeted again if it is moved.

Russian aircraft also conducted strikes against the Islamic State group in and around Palmyra, the official said.

China: Military in contact with US on drone issue

Associated Press

BEIJING — China said Saturday that its military was in contact with its American counterparts on "appropriately handling" the Chinese navy's seizure of a U.S. Navy unmanned underwater glider, one of the most serious incidents between the two militaries in years.

The one-sentence comment by the foreign ministry offered no details on what discussions were underway or why China on Thursday seized the drone, which, according to the Pentagon, was being operated by civilian contractors to conduct oceanic research. The U.S. said it issued a formal diplomatic complaint over the seizure and demanded the drone's return.

"According to (our) understanding, the U.S. and Chinese sides are working on appropriately handling this matter through channels between the two militaries," the foreign

ministry told The Associated Press in a faxed statement.

China's defense ministry did not immediately respond to questions on the issue.

The drone was seized while collecting unclassified scientific data about 57 miles northwest of Subic Bay, near the Philippines in the South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said Friday.

The USNS Bowditch, which is not a combat ship, was stopped in international waters Thursday afternoon and recovering two of the gliders when the Chinese ship approached, Davis said. The two vessels were within about 500 yards of each other.

According to the Pentagon, as the Chinese ship left with the drone, which is about 10 feet long, its only radio response to the U.S. vessel was, "We are returning to normal operations."

Trump's Cabinet picks signal bold shift

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Propelled by populist energy, President-elect Donald Trump's candidacy broke long-standing conventions and his incoming Cabinet embodies a sharp turn from the outgoing Obama administration.

A look at the expected shift in the federal government:

■ **State Department:** Trump's decision to nominate Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson as secretary of state means the department could be run by a lifelong oil executive with deep ties to Russia and no government experience. Outgoing Secretary of State John Kerry spent much of his tenure seeking agreements to fight climate change, to restrain Iran's nuclear program and to pressure foreign adversaries through financial penalties. But if Tillerson wins Senate confirmation, he would have a big say over whether the Trump administration withdraws from the Paris climate treaty and the Iran nuclear pact, along with the future of U.S. relations

with Russia.

■ **Defense Department:** James Mattis retired from the Marine Corps as a four-star general in 2013 and had been a battlefield commander most of that time. That contrasts with current Defense Secretary Ash Carter, who worked for years at the Pentagon and in academia but never served in uniform. To take the defense secretary job, Mattis needs Congress to pass a law allowing him to serve. Current law requires a Pentagon chief to be out of the military for at least seven years to uphold the commitment to civilian control of the military.

■ **Treasury Department:** Obama's Treasury Department was in crisis mode from the moment he took office, dealing with massive job losses and the meltdown of the housing market. Eight years later, Trump has nominated Steven Mnuchin to lead the department, turning to a former Goldman Sachs executive who invested in a bank that foreclosed on thousands of homeowners after the housing crisis. Democrats are expected to press Mnuchin on his role in

IndyMac, which was rebranded OneWest, and the deal that left the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. responsible for taking as much as 80 percent of the losses on former IndyMac assets.

■ **Energy Department:** Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry once famously struggled to name three federal departments he would eliminate if elected president, muttering "oops" during a 2011 presidential debate. Perry is now preparing to run one of those agencies, the Energy Department, after more than 14 years as governor. Perry presided over his state's vast oil and gas industries and leading wind-energy sector. He is currently on the boards of two petroleum companies seeking approval for the Dakota Access Pipeline project.

■ **Justice Department:** Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, Trump's pick for attorney general, has supported tough immigration enforcement policies and said the Justice Department's civil rights division should not be used as "a sword to assert inappropriate claims that have the effect of promot-

ing political agendas." Before he entered the Senate, his nomination to become a federal judge was scuttled in 1986 amid accusations that he made racially charged remarks as a U.S. attorney. He would succeed Attorney General Loretta Lynch, who has dealt with police-involved shootings and has pushed a lawsuit against North Carolina over a bathroom bill that officials said discriminated against transgender individuals.

■ **Labor Department:** Outgoing Labor Secretary Tom Perez was an outspoken advocate for raising the federal minimum wage and helped push a federal rule to make more workers eligible for overtime pay. Trump's choice to run the department is fast-food executive Andy Puzder, the CEO of CKE Restaurants Holdings, the parent company of Carl's Jr., Hardee's and other chains. Puzder has said that large increases in the minimum wage would lead to job losses, and he wrote in a May 2016 op-ed that the overtime rule would be "another barrier to the middle class rather than a springboard" for workers.

NC governor signs bill that limits power of Dems

The News & Observer (Raleigh, N.C.)

RALEIGH, N.C. — North Carolina legislators wrapped up their work Friday on a pair of proposals that would deprive the incoming governor of a substantial part of his authority to make appointments and would reduce Democrats' power over election regulation. A short time later, Gov. Pat McCrory signed into law the bill dealing with elections.

The special session came to a close two days after the Republican-controlled legislature ended a special session convened to deal with disaster relief.

At least 39 protesters were arrested Friday at the legislative building as a group of hundreds chanted slogans blasting a "power grab" by Republican lawmakers. The arrests came in addition to about 17 arrests Thursday, according to General Assembly Police Chief Martin Brock.

Those arrested, who accuse the GOP majority of using Hurricane Matthew victims as pawns in a ploy to seize power from Democratic Gov.-elect Roy Cooper, included civic leaders, clergy and University of

North Carolina staff.

The House approved the elections proposal on a vote of 67-23 on Friday before final approval by the Senate and governor. Senate Bill 4 also provides for political party affiliation to be listed on ballots next to the names of candidates for the state Supreme Court, and gives the majority-Republican state Court of Appeals a role in constitutional challenges to laws.

McCrory, a Republican, has not said whether he will sign another controversial bill, House Bill 17, which would make Cooper's appointment of Cabinet officials subject to approval by the state Senate and reduce the number of appointees who serve at the pleasure of the governor.

The same measure would move some authority from the State Board of Education to the Republican just elected as state schools superintendent, Mark Johnson. And it would prevent the governor from appointing members of the boards of trustees for University of North Carolina system schools.

Steve Leonard, a UNC-Chapel Hill professor of political science and former chairman of the UNC system Faculty Assembly, wrote

to McCrory, warning that the bill could result in "severe sanctions" by the university's accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. He said that's because the legislature has "clear and direct intent to insert 'undue political influence'" in the selection of campus board of trustee members.

Republicans said they were merely reverting appointment of trustees to what is described in the state constitution, which says the general assembly "shall provide for the selection of trustees."

Democrats disputed Republican claims that SB 4 would create a bipartisan commission merging the current State Board of Elections, State Ethics Commission and the lobbying-regulation functions of the secretary of state's office.

Democrats said it couldn't be called bipartisan because they weren't involved in creating the proposal. Republicans call it bipartisan because it would create a state board and county elections boards composed of members equally split between the parties.

CIA: Strong consensus on motive for Russian hacks

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — There is “strong consensus” among U.S. intelligence services that Russia orchestrated hacks and on-line leaks in part to help Donald Trump win the White House, the head of the CIA told agency employees in a message Friday.

FBI Director James B. Comey and Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper Jr. agree with a CIA assessment that top Russian officials oversaw a covert plan to expose internal communications from Hillary Clinton’s campaign and the Democratic National Committee and influence the outcome of the U.S. elections, CIA Director John Brennan wrote in a message, according to a

U.S. official.

“Earlier this week, I met separately with FBI James Comey and DNI Jim Clapper, and there is strong consensus among us on the scope, nature, and intent of Russian interference in our presidential election,” Brennan wrote. The message was first reported by The Washington Post.

In recent days, lawmakers had said there was disagreement between the FBI and CIA over Russia’s intentions in hacking into the email accounts and computer systems of top Democratic Party officials.

Friday’s message appeared designed to put to rest concerns inside the CIA that other intelligence agencies didn’t support

the agency’s conclusions.

President Barack Obama has ordered intelligence officials to conduct a review of Russia’s actions during the 2016 elections before Obama leaves office Jan. 20.

President-elect Donald Trump has repeatedly denied Russia was behind the leaked emails and mocked the CIA’s assessment that top Russian officials intervened to help him get elected.

“The three of us also agree that our organizations, along with others, need to focus on completing the thorough review of this issue that has been directed by President Obama and which is being led by the DNI,” Brennan wrote.

US sees rise in overdose deaths

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. — Drug overdose deaths have increased by 33 percent in the past five years across the country, with some states seeing jumps of nearly 200 percent.

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 30 states saw increases in overdose deaths resulting from the abuse of heroin and prescription painkillers, a class of drugs known as opioids. New Hampshire saw a 191 percent increase while North Dakota, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine had death rates jump by over 100 percent.

Last year, more than 52,000 people died from drug overdoses, with almost two-thirds involving prescription or illegal opioids. Deaths from synthetic opioids, including illicit fentanyl, rose 73 percent, to 9,580. And prescription painkillers took the highest toll but posted the smallest increase. Abuse of drugs such as Oxycontin and Vicodin killed 17,536, an increase of 4 percent.

In comparison, the number of people who died in car crashes was 37,757, an increase of 12 percent. Gun deaths, including homicides and suicides, totaled 36,252, up 7 percent.

The CDC report also included death certificate data for opioid overdoses in 28 states, finding that 16 saw a jump in death rates from synthetic opioids including illicit fentanyl.

The Northeast has been hit hard by the drug crisis, with New Hampshire among those suffering the most. This year, overdose deaths were expected to top 500. The state’s congressional delegation was among those supporting a bill providing \$1 billion in funding to states to fight heroin and opioid abuse.

Heroin, fentanyl and prescription painkillers are the primary drivers of addiction in recent years.

Duterte on aid issue: ‘Bye-bye, America’

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — President Rodrigo Duterte threatened Saturday to terminate a pact that allows U.S. troops to visit the Philippines, saying, “Bye-bye, America,” as he reacted with rage to what he thought was a U.S. decision to scrap a major aid package over human rights concerns.

A U.S. government aid agency, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, said earlier in the week that its board deferred a vote on a renewal of the development assistance package for the Philippines “subject to a further review of concerns around rule of law and civil liberties.”

The agency has clearly not voted to scrap or approve the aid package, but Duterte unleashed an expletive-laden tirade upon his arrival in his southern hometown of Davao after back-to-back visits to Cambodia and Singapore.

“I understand that we have been stricken out of the Millen-

nium Challenge. Well, good, I welcome it,” Duterte said with apparent sarcasm.

“But you know, America, you might also be put to notice. Prepare to leave the Philippines, prepare for the eventual repeal or the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement,” he said, referring to a 1998 accord that governs American forces visiting the Philippines for joint combat exercises.

Duterte, 71, who describes himself as a left-wing politician, has made similar threats before and after taking office in June, but he and his officials have walked back on many of his public statements, causing confusion.

While calling Americans “sons of bitches” and “hypocrites,” Duterte praised China as having “the kindest soul of all” for offering what he said was significant financial assistance. “So, what do I need America for?” he asked.

The U.S. government, along with European Union and U.N. officials, has raised concerns

about Duterte’s crackdown on illegal drugs, which has left more than 2,000 suspected drug users and dealers dead in purported gunbattles with police. More than 3,000 other deaths are being investigated to determine if they were linked to illegal drugs.

In his news conference, Duterte was asked pointedly how many crime suspects he had killed in the past when he was still a crime-busting city mayor amid his vague, contradicting accounts of his exploits. The former government prosecutor again gave contrasting replies.

“Maybe one, two, three ... I’m saying, maybe my bullets hit them, maybe not, but after the burumbumbum, they’re all dead,” Duterte said.

Duterte, who has had a difficult relationship with President Barack Obama, said he would change his mindset if President-elect Donald Trump appeals to him. “I have talked to Trump, he was very nice, very courteous,” he said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officers: Stolen baby Jesus taken to hospital

PA BETHLEHEM — Police say a woman stole baby Jesus from a Nativity scene in Bethlehem and dropped the figurine off at a hospital with a note explaining that the baby had been “neglected” by his parents, “Joseph and Mary Christ.”

Police say Jacqueline Ross, 49, told them it was a joke, but they aren’t laughing. She was identified from surveillance video and is jailed on charges of theft and institutional vandalism.

Police say she went to the hospital early on Dec. 4 just minutes after stealing the \$2,700 figurine from Payrow Plaza.

Computer on bean bag started blaze in dorm

VT CASTLETON — Fire investigators say a fire in a dorm room at Vermont’s Castleton University was caused by a computer that had been left on a bean bag chair.

There were no injuries reported in the Thursday fire at the Adams Hall dormitory at Castleton.

When firefighters arrived they found heavy smoke in the dorm and the fire in a fourth floor suite. The residents of the room were not home.

The investigation found that the computer overheated on the bean bag chair, which was under a bunk bed enabling the fire to spread quickly.

Elvis impersonator suing over his arrest

MS OXFORD — An Elvis impersonator is suing the federal government for the third time alleging wrongful arrest in connection

with letters laced with poison ricin sent to President Barack Obama and others in 2013.

The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal reported Paul Kevin Curtis filed his latest suit earlier this week in U.S. District Court. He says federal prosecutors jailed him for five days despite finding no evidence he sent the letters to Obama, U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker and Lee County Judge Sadie Holland.

James Everett Dutschke of Tupelo eventually pleaded guilty in the case and was sentenced to 25 years in prison. Prosecutors said Dutschke tried to frame Curtis, a rival with whom he often feuded online.

Suspected ‘Buckeye Bandit’ is indicted

OH COLUMBUS — A man who authorities believe is the so-called “Buckeye Bandit” suspected of robbing numerous central Ohio banks since 2013 has been indicted on additional federal bank robbery charges.

Federal prosecutors said Ikechi Emeaghara, 27, was indicted Thursday in Columbus on seven armed bank robbery charges. He previously was indicted on one armed robbery count in November. His attorney, Kia Wrice, declined to comment Thursday.

Police say they shot and wounded Emeaghara in October when he pulled a gun on officers after a bank robbery in Columbus.

Court records say police found more than \$53,000 in cash bound by bank straps, a baseball cap and a mask.

The suspect was dubbed the “Buckeye Bandit” because he typically wore an Ohio State University shirt and hat during the robberies.

Jewelry store thief hid pricey rings in mouth

NY MASSAPEQUA PARK — Police arrested a Connecticut man who they say stole expensive rings from two Long Island jewelry stores by distracting employees and hiding the items in his mouth.

Joseph Castro, 52, was charged with two counts of third-degree grand larceny and drug possession after Nassau County detectives caught him with heroin in Massapequa Park on Tuesday.

Police say Castro stole nine rings collectively valued at more than \$22,000 from two stores in Bellmore and Massapequa between Sept. 9 and Sept. 28. Detectives said while he was in the Bellmore store he managed to slip eight rings into his mouth.

Couple expecting toy plane gets assault rifle

NY OCEANSIDE — A Long Island couple was horrified when a UPS delivery that they thought was a Christmas present for their granddaughter turned out to be a package containing an assault rifle.

Newsday reported Joel Ber- man, 66, opened the keyboard-sized case containing the gun in front of his wife and 6-year-old granddaughter Wednesday night at his home in Oceanside.

Inside the foam-lined case was a semi-automatic rifle along with a scope, a stand, an ammo clip and copies of an Arizona man’s driver’s license and concealed-weapons permit.

The couple called police, who picked up the weapon and filed a UPS claim on their behalf.

A UPS spokesman said he was unaware of the incident.

Sweet rewards for 100 millionth visitor

PA HERSHEY — Hershey’s Chocolate World is gearing up for its 100 millionth visitor.

The free attraction in eastern Pennsylvania offers a behind-the-scenes look at the history of the iconic chocolate company and now the media group LNP reported officials are planning to commemorate the milestone visit.

Chocolate World’s website says more than 99.92 million people have visited.

When the 100 millionth visitor is identified, that person will receive a year’s supply of Hershey’s candy and free admittance to Chocolate World attractions for a year.

Also, anybody who posts a social media picture hash-tagged #100MillionMemories gets a free chocolate bar during a future visit.

FBI notes rise of gang violence in Anchorage

AK ANCHORAGE — The FBI says it has seen an uptick in gang activity in Anchorage, with most of the crime centered on drugs.

KTVA-TV reported that FBI agent Mike Watson described Anchorage as a “melting pot” for various types of gangs, which have been active in the city for years.

Watson said people from across the country come to Alaska’s largest city to participate in the illegal activity because of the high prices for drugs there. He says dealers can make up to five times the profit selling drugs in Anchorage compared to California.

From wire reports

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Steelers' Tomlin brushes off accolades

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The moment called for celebration, maybe even a hint of introspection. Mike Tomlin was having none of it.

Minutes after becoming just the eighth coach in NFL history to collect 100 victories in his first 10 seasons on the job, a one-sided 27-20 clinic in snowy Buffalo last Sunday that moved the Pittsburgh Steelers all alone atop the AFC North, Tomlin wasn't exactly in the mood to think about What It All Means.

"It means I've been here awhile," he said with typical directness.

And that's it.

So what if five of the other seven coaches to get to the century mark — Don Shula, Joe Gibbs, Tony Dungy, John Madden and Mike Ditka — in their first decade are in the Hall of Fame? So what if the triumph made the Steelers the only franchise to have three coaches reach the 100-win plateau?

Tomlin doesn't do big picture. Never has. He doesn't do hype or noise either. The only step the 44-year-old focuses on

is the next one. It's that kind of focus that helped him carve out his own identity in a veteran locker room after replacing Bill Cowher in 2007. It's that kind of focus that's helped Pittsburgh navigate the seemingly impossible in an era overridden with parity. He's won a Super Bowl, been to another and still hasn't posted a single season with a losing record, remarkable considering the Steelers went through a generational shift on the fly without bottoming out.

Yet in some corners of one of the league's most ardent fan bases, it's not enough. Hop on social media after a loss — and heck, sometimes after wins — and do a hashtag search under #FireTomlin. There's a cottage industry every Sunday on his decision making, whether it's his clock management or his love of attempting 2-point conversions when conventional wisdom says send the kicking team out instead.

It's noise Tomlin blocks out, something he chalks up to simply part of the gig while leading a franchise whose hallway is filled with more Lombardi Trophies than any other team in the NFL. Tomlin's players,

however, hear it. Loudly.

"At the end of the day, if you don't got haters, you ain't doing something right," center Maurkice Pouncey said. "He's a winning coach and next thing you know, he loses and he's the worst coach in America. I mean, come on."

As if to prove his point, Pouncey motions toward the door of the team's practice facility. The criticism always comes from outside that door. Never inside it. While cornerback William Gay calls Tomlin a "player's coach," he cautions it doesn't mean what you think it means.

"It's like that father/son thing," said Gay, part of Tomlin's initial draft class in 2007. "You will get your butt whipped or get in trouble if you do something wrong. But if you don't do nothing wrong, he will applaud you, he will love on you."

The longest tenured Steelers haven't seen much of a change in Tomlin since the day the team hired the largely unknown 34-year-old to replace the popular and highly successful Cowher. In a profession where coaches seem to age at warp speed, there isn't a speck

of gray in Tomlin's hair. Don't let his energy and youthfulness fool you. When it's time to go to work, the easy smile that pops up when he's needling his players disappears.

"I think we felt like Mike was somebody that could command the attention of the room day in and day out," Steelers president Art Rooney II told The Associated Press. "I think he's done that. He has the attention of the players and I think over the years he's understood when to push the buttons and when to back off, all the little nuances you think you learn in time. There's no doubt in my mind he's learned and continued to improve and somebody that's always looking to improve."

And adapt, too.

He lets his players be themselves, at least within reason. He's never publicly called out Brown for his over-the-top touchdown celebrations, even though they occasionally draw a 15-yard penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct. Yes, Tomlin would prefer Brown to tone it down. It's not worth taking him to task in front of the whole world to do it.

Vikings' Peterson says he'll play Sunday against Colts

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Adrian Peterson has always called himself a quick healer. Now he says he's ready to come back from his latest knee surgery even sooner than he originally thought.

Peterson told Dash Radio on Friday that he plans to return to the Minnesota Vikings backfield on Sunday against the Indianapolis Colts. His surprise announcement comes four days after he reiterated that he was targeting the game against Green Bay on Dec. 24 as his first game back after having surgery on a torn meniscus in his right knee.

"It really boils down to how I feel," Peterson told the internet radio station, of which he is an

investor. "What it really came down to me in my heart knowing, especially after these past two days, that I can go out there and be productive."

Peterson practiced Wednesday for the first time since he was injured in Week 2 against the Packers. He practiced on Thursday and Friday as well and was not listed on the team's injury report, further evidence that he is fully healthy.

"I was really uncertain," Peterson said of starting the week. "I had been cutting on my own on the field, but it's different when you have guys to avoid and you're playing the actual game of football."

Peterson said he spoke to coach Mike Zimmer, head athletic trainer Eric Sugarman and his wife as he contem-

plated making the return one week sooner than he initially expected.

In the end, he said he couldn't imagine sitting out one more week, watching the Vikings (7-6) lose and possibly be eliminated from the postseason race without him on the field. Peterson said he didn't expect the Vikings would lose to the Colts (6-7) at home without him, but he wanted to make sure he was out there to help.

It's a big lift for the Vikings, whose offense has struggled to score points and sustain drives in short-yardage situations. Peterson had just 50 yards on 31 carries behind a porous offensive line in the first two weeks, but adding a player with his playmaking ability to a unit that is last in the league in rushing

offense can only help matters.

Now the only thing that remains to be seen is how quickly Peterson can get back to the explosive runner he has always been. By the time the Vikings and Colts kick off on Sunday, three months will have passed since Peterson's injury and it could take some time for him to work his way back up to playing speed.

It also marks a bit of a risk for Peterson from the standpoint of his long-term future. The 31-year-old is set to make \$18 million next season and his contract will almost certainly need to be renegotiated if he wants to remain in Minnesota. Another injury over these final three weeks or subpar production could cost him if he hits the open market.

Player boycott threatens Holiday Bowl

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The University of Minnesota football team is threatening to boycott one of the nation's best known and most lucrative second-tier bowl games over the suspension of 10 players accused of participating in a sexual assault.

Prosecutors decided there was not enough evidence to file criminal charges, and the players thought the matter was behind them. But a separate school investigation concluded Wednesday that the athletes violated a policy adopted last year that defines sexual assault as anything without a "clear and unambiguous" expression of consent.

Now, less than two weeks before the Golden Gophers' scheduled Dec. 27 face-off with Washington State, the walkout threatens to upend the Holiday Bowl.

On Thursday, the entire team

gathered to tell reporters they will not practice or play unless the suspensions are revoked. Several players also are facing possible expulsion.

"All these kids' reputations are destroyed," senior quarterback Mitch Leidner said. "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."

In a joint statement issued Friday, University President Eric Kaler and athletic director Mark Coyle called the suspensions "a values-based decision," not a legal judgment.

The administration said they had offered to meet with players Friday, but the offer had not been accepted.

Sexual misconduct already has been a sensitive subject for the university and for its athletics department. Former ath-

letic director Norwood Teague resigned in August 2015 amid allegations of sexual harassment. His replacement, Coyle, was brought in with orders not to tolerate such behavior and played a key role in the decision to suspend the players.

University officials have declined to say why the players were suspended or provide any details of the internal investigation, citing student privacy rules. But an attorney for several of the suspended players and the father of one of them confirmed the action was taken in connection with an alleged sexual assault in an apartment near campus in the early hours of Sept. 2, after the Gophers won their season-opener.

According to police reports, the woman who made the complaint attended a few parties before ending up in the off-campus apartment of players Carlton Djam and Tamarion

Johnson. The reports said she accompanied Djam and a male whose name was redacted to Djam's room, where she had sex with both of them.

After the unnamed male left, she said Tamarion Johnson entered the room and that she had sex with him, too. She said she remembered seeing several people watching.

"She described it as a line of people, like they were waiting for their turn ... She recalls yelling for them to stop sending people in the room because she couldn't handle it," one of the reports said.

The woman said she recalled at least three other men forcing themselves on her, including players Dior Johnson and Ray Buford Jr. She told police the sexual contact between her and Djam and the unnamed man may have been consensual, but that it was not consensual with the others.

Mary Hardin-Baylor captures NCAA Division III title

Associated Press

SALEM, Va. — Blake Jackson knew that, more than usual, Mary Hardin-Baylor's fortunes were going to be in his control with the NCAA Division III title at stake.

The dual-threat quarterback embraced it, running for 119 yards and a touchdown and leading the Crusaders to a 10-7 victory over Wisconsin-Oshkosh in the Amos Alonzo Stagg Bowl on Friday night for their first football national championship.

"I like the pressure. I like the challenge," the senior said. "Thank you to the coaches for believing in me."

Jackson carried 28 times for the Crusaders (15-0), and completed 16 of 27 passes for 171 yards with an interception. The Crusaders virtually ignored running back Markeith Miller, who arrived with nearly 1,500 yards rushing, but gained just 11 on nine carries.

"We had trouble running the ball," coach Pete Fredenburg, who started the Crusaders' program 19 years ago, said. "Blake took up the slack. We felt like he was going to have to be the catalyst for our offense."

Jackson's touchdown came on a 1-yard run with 3:16 left in the second quarter, and was the final score of the game.

"There was a ton of athletes out there tonight on both sides of the ball," Titans coach Pat Cerroni said. "Great athletes, but No. 7 (Jackson) was exceptional."

Dylan Hecker ran 2 yards to give the Titans (13-2) a 7-0 lead after just 6:22, but Oshkosh could never find that rhythm again. The Titans drove to the Crusaders 35 in the final minute, but Matt Cody intercepted Brett Kasper's fourth-and-10 pass from the 35 to clinch the victory.

"Don't drop it," Cody said he thought as the clinching play came spiraling toward him.

Kasper finished 20-for-33 for 185 yards with two interceptions. The Titans were held to 30 rushing yards on 29 attempts.

The Titans were playing in the championship game for the first time. Mary Hardin-Baylor lost in its only previous appearance in 2004.

FCS semifinals

James Madison 27, North Dakota State 17: Khalid Abdullah had 180 yards rushing, added 51 yards receiving and a touchdown and the visiting Dukes snapped the Bison's 22-game postseason winning streak.

James Madison (13-1) will play in the national championship game on Jan. 7 in Frisco, Texas.

Abdullah's 180 rushing yards are the most NDSU has given up since the 2010 playoffs.

"Good football player. We missed some fits," said NDSU head coach Chris Klieman.

"You miss some fits against a guy like that and he is going to make you pay."

"Man (offensive line) blocked so well out there today I felt like anybody could have ran through the holes they made," said Abdullah. "I probably could have put my mom in. She could have ran through some of those holes that big Matt Frank created. I'm just proud of them."

After NDSU defensive end Brad Ambrosius was called offside on a fourth-and-19, the Dukes took a 20-17 lead on a 45-yard field goal from Tyler Gray with 11:46 to go.

"We were staggering pretty good," said coach Mike Houston. "I felt like that field goal got the momentum back in our direction and took some pressure off of us."

A 25-yard touchdown pass from Bryan Schor to John Miller with 6:59 left made it 27-17.

Houston sets record, wins 9th straight

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Houston Rockets didn't seem too impressed with their latest entry in the NBA record book.

The Rockets made an NBA-record 24 three-pointers, led by Eric Gordon's 7-for-12 effort, and beat the New Orleans Pelicans 122-100 Friday night.

"We just played how we play," said James Harden, who shot 6-for-12 on threes and finished with 29 points. "It didn't feel no different. We shot the basketball, open threes and, you know — they went in."

Harden also had 11 rebounds and 13 assists for his sixth triple-double of the season and 15th of his career — passing Hakeem Olajuwon for the most in franchise history.

"The best player in Rockets history — The Dream," Harden said. "For me, it's an unbelievable accomplishment. Credit to my teammates for knocking down their shots. I'm just trying to make an impact on the game, that's all."

Ryan Anderson made Houston's 24th three-pointer of the

game with 32 seconds remaining, and the Toyota Center crowd erupted in celebration of the record.

Gordon confidently predicted that the best is yet to come.

"I wouldn't doubt before the season's over that we'll break that record again," Gordon said. "I think it'll happen again, for sure. A lot of teams like to load up and not let us get layups and force us to shoot threes, so why not?"

In picking up their ninth straight win, the Rockets attempted 61 threes — making 39.3 percent — to shatter their own record of 50 set earlier this year. They broke the NBA record for threes made in a game, shared by Houston in 2013 and Orlando in 2009.

"They've added another dimension to the game because of their ability to be able to shoot the way they do," Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni said.

Trevor Ariza added 20 points and Patrick Beverley had 13 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for Houston.

Anthony Davis scored 19

points in 22 minutes for New Orleans and rested much of the second half after Houston built a lead as big as 24 points. Pelicans coach Alvin Gentry later said Davis was kicked in his lower leg and was limping so he held him from playing in the fourth quarter.

Clippers 102, Heat 98: Blake Griffin scored 20 points, Chris Paul and J.J. Redick each added 17 and visiting Los Angeles held off Miami for its fourth consecutive win.

Hawks 125, Raptors 121: Dwight Howard had 27 points and 15 rebounds, Dennis Schroder scored 24 points and Atlanta snapped host Toronto's four-game winning streak.

Wizards 122, Pistons 108: John Wall had 29 points and 11 assists, leading a Washington offense that committed a season-low five turnovers against visiting Detroit.

Bucks 95, Bulls 69: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 22 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds, and visiting Milwaukee routed Chicago for a sweep of their home-and-home series.

Lakers 100, 76ers 89: Julius Randle scored nine of his 25 points in a dominant first quarter and Los Angeles snapped an eight-game losing streak with a victory over host Philadelphia.

Celtics 96, Hornets 88: Isaiah Thomas scored 16 of his 26 points in the second half and Al Horford had 18 points and five blocked shots as Boston beat visiting Charlotte to stop a three-game slide.

Magic 118, Nets 111: Nikola Vucevic had 21 points and 10 rebounds in his return to the lineup, Evan Fournier also scored 21 and Orlando beat Brooklyn to snap a six-game home losing streak.

Kings 96, Grizzlies 92: DeMarcus Cousins scored 22 points, Kosta Koufos had 16 points and 13 rebounds, and visiting Sacramento weathered a late Memphis rally.

Jazz 103, Mavericks 100: Rodney Hood pulled up for a three-pointer in transition with 0.8 seconds left that gave host Utah the win after a furious rally by Dallas in the fourth quarter.

Capitals win shootout, stretch winning streak to six

Associated Press

RALEIGH, North Carolina — The Washington Capitals keep picking up victories and points. The problem: So is just about everyone else in the brutal Metropolitan Division.

Washington earned its sixth straight win by beating the Carolina Hurricanes 4-3 on Friday night after T.J. Oshie and Evgeny Kuznetsov scored in the shootout.

Four of the division's top five teams — including Washington — entered Friday night on winning streaks of five or more games.

"I think more important than the six games, we want the point," Oshie said. "We can see the standings — they're posted up in the room — but we're working on our game right now.

We had a tough start, and we're building our identity each night. I think the points are following that because we're playing some good hockey, so we want to continue that and the points, I think, will follow."

Kings 1, Penguins 0 (OT): Tyler Toffoli scored a minute into overtime, helping Los Angeles end host Pittsburgh's seven-game winning streak.

The Kings have won three of four overall and four straight against the Penguins. Toffoli got his eighth goal, and Peter Budaj stopped 39 shots for his third shutout of the season.

Sharks 4, Canadiens 2: David Schlemko, Patrick Marleau, Timo Meier and Melker Karlsson scored to chase Carey Price in the second period, and visiting San Jose beat Montreal.

Looking for his 250th victory, Price was pulled after conceding the four goals on 18 shots. Al Montoya made five saves in relief.

Panthers 3, Avalanche 1: At Denver, Reilly Smith scored a short-handed goal to break a third-period tie, and Florida beat reeling Colorado.

Jason Demers had a goal and an assist, and Michael Matheson also scored for the Panthers. James Reimer made 30 saves.

Jaromir Jagr didn't assist on any of the Florida goals and remains three points behind Mark Messier for second place on the NHL's career scoring list. Jagr has 1,884 points and now returns home for five games as he tries to pass the Hall of Famer.

Sabres 3, Islanders 2 (OT):

Rasmus Ristolainen scored 42 seconds into overtime to give host Buffalo a victory over New York.

Johan Larsson and Matt Moulson also scored, and Ristolainen had his team-leading 19th assist to help the Sabres win their second straight game. Robin Lehner made 33 saves.

Canucks 4, Lightning 2: Bo Horvat scored the winning goal off a lucky bounce in the third period, helping Vancouver beat visiting Tampa Bay.

Ryan Miller had 25 saves and Brandon Sutter, Luca Sbisa and Alexandre Burrows also scored for Vancouver. Loui Eriksson and Markus Granlund added two assists.

Victor Hedman and Cory Conacher scored for Tampa Bay, which has won only twice in its last 10 games.