

STARS AND STRIPES®

Monday, December 19, 2016

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Osprey flights resume after Okinawa crash

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND CHIYOMI SUMIDA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Marine Corps has resumed MV-22 Osprey flights on Okinawa about a week after one of the controversial tilt-rotor aircraft crashed following an aerial refueling accident off Camp Schwab.

Air refueling drills will cease while pilots return to the classroom and log time in a flight simulator, Japanese government officials said.

The helicopter-plane hybrids were grounded after pilots ditched the \$90 million aircraft in shallow water last Tuesday just off Camp Schwab in northern Okinawa after a nighttime refueling at sea with a C-130 severed a heavy hose and damaged the Osprey's propeller.

The pilots were lauded for risking their lives rather than flying over Okinawan homes en route back to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, though local opposition flared up.

An investigation is ongoing. However, U.S. military officials said there is no reason to further restrict Osprey flights because mechanical failure was not a factor.

"After a thorough and careful review of our safety procedures, checklists and aircraft, I am highly confident that we can continue safe flight operations of the MV-22 in support of our alliance partner and obligations," Marine Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson, III Marine Expeditionary Force commander, said in a statement.

Officials in Tokyo, who said they agreed with the U.S. military's assessment, welcomed the pause in aerial refueling, though Okinawa Gov. Takeshi Onaga remained adamantly opposed. During a news conference Monday, he renewed demands for canceling all Osprey flights in and around Okinawa and for the immediate withdrawal of the aircraft from the southern island prefecture.

"Flight operations resumed without adequate explanation in advance," said Onaga, who won election on an anti-base platform. "Such a high-handed attitude seriously damages the mutual trust of our relationship."

Report: Marines withheld suicide investigation results

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The results of an investigation into the suicide of a Marine that suggested his unit might have a "drug problem" and highlighted a hostile work environment were withheld from the Marine's family for an "unacceptably long time" spanning months, according to documents and letters obtained by The Washington Post.

Cpl. Jonathan M. Gee, 22, hanged himself early Aug. 29, 2015, at the Marine Corps' Henderson Hall, near the Pentagon, after a night of partying, the investigation found. He and another Marine had been thrown out of the EchoStage concert hall in Washington hours before, when they were discovered with cocaine in a restroom stall, the investigation's report said. Gee was found the next afternoon.

The investigation initially was completed in January, but its release was "unnecessarily delayed" after it was sent from Gee's unit — the Headquarters and Service Battalion for Marine Corps headquarters — to Marine lawyers at Quantico, Va., according to a letter the service sent last month to Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo. The report was approved in May by a commanding officer, Col. Joseph Murray, but the results were withheld from the Gee family until September.

"The review and endorsed investigation should have been forwarded to our Casualty Branch so they could notify the family that the investigation was available upon request," said a letter to McCaskill signed by Col. Andrew M. Regan, commander of Gee's battalion. "High personnel turnover during this period contributed to the inexcusable delay in forwarding the investigation to the Casualty Branch."

The investigation's completion also was delayed by the need for an autopsy and a toxicology report, Regan's letter added. Those showed that Gee had alcohol in his system along with several prescription drugs that can cause suicidal thoughts when mixed with it, including an insomnia medication and several anti-anxiety drugs.

A Marine spokesman, Maj. Clark Carpenter, said that although the delays were

regrettable and the service is sorry for any distress it caused the family, they were "in no way" intentional.

"We remain committed to providing the maximum amount of transparency, even in tragic situations like this," he said.

On top of the delays, the family also was frustrated by a miscommunication that left uncertain whether Gee's remains would arrive in his hometown of St. Charles, Mo., in time for his funeral and was saddened by the misspelling of his first name as "Jonathon" on his transfer case, said Janele Riggs, his older sister.

"Have some respect, you know? We just lost a family member," Riggs said in an interview. "Don't spell his name wrong. It was just so frustrating."

The Marine Corps only recently became aware of the spelling mistake and considers it "deeply regrettable," Carpenter said. A Marine official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the case, said that a mortician prepared Gee's remains and that the service "had no means to identify the spelling error prior to delivery of the remains to the family."

McCaskill has met with Marine officials and said that they have pledged to address her concerns.

"The Gees have gone through more than any family should in the wake of their son's death last year," she said. "Compounding their grief were a lack of transparency and extended delays from the Marine Corps that were unacceptable and avoidable. The Gees — and any family with loved ones who sign up to serve this country — need and deserve answers in a timely fashion."

Gee worked in the support section for Lt. Gen. James B. Laster, director of Marine Corps staff, and primarily wrote condolence letters for families of deceased Marines. He was known to be gregarious and was looking forward to getting out of the military and moving back to his hometown, according to Riggs and the investigation.

But Gee had several stressful situations in his life, including a painful back condition and a toxic work environment in which a senior enlisted Marine "targeted" several junior members in the office, the investigation found.

Billionaire West Point grad is Trump pick for Army chief

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Billionaire New York businessman and Army veteran Vincent Viola is President-elect Donald Trump's pick to serve as the Army's top civilian, Trump's transition team announced Monday.

Trump said Viola's business acumen was just as important as his Army background in choosing him to lead the largest of the military services. Viola and the president-elect met Friday at Trump Tower in New York.

"Whether it is his distinguished military service or highly impressive track record in the world of business, Vinnie has proved throughout his life that he knows how to be a leader and deliver major results in the face of any challenge," Trump said in a statement. "He is a man of outstanding work ethic, integrity, and strategic vision, with an exceptional ability to motivate others."

Viola joins retired Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis, whom Trump has nominated for secretary of defense, as the only Pentagon appointments announced by Trump so far.

Viola is a 1977 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in New York who served as an infantry officer on active duty and later in the Army Reserves. He retired as a major, according to his biography.

Since his military days, Viola has worked as

a trader on the New York Mercantile Exchange and, in 2008, he founded Virtu Financial, a high-frequency electronic trading firm, which became publicly traded in 2015.

In 2013, he purchased the Florida Panthers, an NHL franchise, for \$240 million.

In the Monday statement, Trump called Viola "living proof of the American Dream."

Viola was born to Italian immigrant parents and was raised in Brooklyn. His father worked as a truck driver and served in the U.S. Army in World War II, which Viola has said helped inspire his own service.

According to Forbes, Viola is worth about \$1.8 billion, which puts him among the 400 wealthiest Americans. Viola has remained involved in national security policy since his time in the military, primarily through Army and West Point-related philanthropic work, according to the Trump statement.

His selection must be confirmed by the Senate. He would replace Army Secretary Eric Fanning, who has served in the position since May. Fanning's nomination was blocked for six months by some Republicans in a protest of President Barack Obama's desire to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

As Army secretary, Viola would oversee an organization with a Fortune-10 sized company with a base budget of about \$125 billion.

Texas vet strikes deal with Chili's

The Dallas Morning News

Ernest Walker, the Army veteran whose free meal was taken away by a Chili's restaurant manager who doubted his military service, has reached an agreement with Brinker International, the restaurant's parent corporation.

Walker went to a Chili's in Cedar Hill, Texas, on Veterans Day to take up the restaurant's offer of a free burger. He said a manager there wouldn't accept proof of his military service after another customer questioned whether Walker had served because he is black.

As the veteran began recording the exchange with his cellphone, the manager grabbed Walker's leftovers and walked away.

Chili's apologized to Walker for his experience and placed the manager on leave. The company donated to Walker's new veterans' campaign called Feed a Million Soldiers, which aims to help veterans deal with the challenges of moving from military to civilian life. It also donated to the Feed Our Vets organization.

China drone seizure could point to plan to expand claims

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

China's capture of a Navy underwater drone in front of the USNS Bowditch last week continued an emerging South China Sea tradition: a Chinese faceoff with an unarmed U.S. vessel during a White House transition.

An order directed toward the Bowditch in 2001 by a Chinese frigate created a diplomatic and military stir, as did a gaggle of ships surrounding the USNS Impeccable in 2009.

However, Thursday's incident carried a broader message, suggesting that China's disputed claim to about 90 percent of the

South China Sea could be expanded even more.

China hasn't denied the Pentagon's assertion that a Dalang III-class salvage ship seized the oceanographic drone about 50 nautical miles from the Philippines.

The location puts it within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, in international waters. Yet China's state-controlled media has labeled the drone's position as within Chinese territory.

Beijing signaled it could redefine its ambiguous South China Sea claim in a July position paper, when the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague ruled that China's "nine-

dash line" maps circling most of the sea did not conform to international law.

China continues to rely on "historical discovery" to back its claim to hundreds of rocks, islands and shoals in the sea that also are claimed by several of its neighbors. Its claim of jurisdiction on the high seas clashes with the Navy's oft-repeated mission statement to sail and fly wherever international law allows.

It's also unlikely that the Chinese ship didn't know what it was looking at when it seized the U.S. drone.

The drone is an unarmed, low-powered glider, which

typically has clear U.S. markings. The Chinese have similar drones — they're also the same yellow color.

A Defense Ministry spokesman chastised the U.S. for dramatizing the seizure and demanded that the U.S. cease "close-in reconnaissance."

The White House responded to the incident through state and defense department spokesmen, rather than through higher-profile senior officials.

The U.S. called for the return of the drone, known technically as an unmanned underwater vehicle. China has said it will do so, though no date has been announced.

As evacuation resumes, UN to send monitors to Aleppo

Associated Press

BEIRUT — The Security Council on Monday approved the deployment of U.N. monitors to Aleppo, Syria, as the evacuation of fighters and civilians from the last remaining opposition stronghold in the northern city resumed after days of delays.

France said the monitors were needed to prevent “mass atrocities” from being committed by Syrian government forces, especially militias. But thousands already have been evacuated, and the operation likely will be over before the observers arrive.

Another evacuation is underway in two rebel-besieged Shiite villages, where the sick and wounded were being allowed out until gunmen torched several buses being used for the operation on Sunday. That evacuation has since resumed.

The resolution adopted Monday morning calls for the United Nations and other institutions to monitor evacuations from eastern Aleppo and demands that U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urgently consult Syria and other parties on security and arrangements for the immediate deployment of the monitors.

France and Russia, who submitted rival draft resolutions, announced agreement on a text after more than three hours of closed-door consultations on Sunday.

The resolution also demands that all parties allow unconditional and immediate access

for the U.N. and its partners to deliver humanitarian aid and medical care, and “respect and protect all civilians across Aleppo and throughout Syria.”

The evacuation of more than 2,000 sick and wounded from the besieged Shiite villages of Foua and Kfarya was tacked on to the deal at the last minute. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the pan-Arab Al-Mayadeen TV said 10 buses left with civilians on Monday.

Also, there are plans to evacuate hundreds of people from Madaya and Zabadani, two besieged, rebel-held villages near the Lebanese border. The Observatory and Mayadeen said 15 buses entered the two villages on Monday.

Among those evacuated Monday was Bana Alabed, 7, and her mother, Fatemah, who tweeted the horrors of living through the government’s assault on eastern Aleppo. Their account had some 326,000 followers.

Speaking to the activist-run Qasioun News Agency in the Aleppo countryside, Fatemah said she was glad to have finally reached safety but expressed regret that she was forced out of her home city and said she did not want to become a refugee.

“I left my soul there,” she said.

The Observatory and Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu later said that since midnight Sunday, some 4,500 people have been evacuated from eastern Aleppo.

Russian ambassador shot dead in Turkey

The Washington Post

MOSCOW — A gunman in Turkey wearing a business suit and a tie opened fire Monday on Russia’s ambassador, killing the diplomat and wounding several others at a photo exhibit in the Turkish capital, officials said. The gunman was killed as panicked people scattered for cover in the gallery.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. But video posted on social media purported to show a Turkish-speaking attacker decrying violence in Syria, where Russia is a key backer of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

In Moscow, Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said Ambassador Andrei Karlov died after being hit in the back by gunfire. Earlier, the ministry said efforts to treat Karlov were delayed as gunfire raged.

Photos from the gallery showed the suspected attacker, wearing a dark suit and a tie, gripping a pistol as he stood near the fallen ambassador.

The gunman later was killed, the Russian official said.

“We consider this to have been a terrorist attack,” Zakharova said. “Terrorism will not pass. We will fight it decisively.”

Several other people were wounded in the gallery attack, but their identities were not immediately made public.

Russia and Turkey, which is a foe of Assad, recently joined to broker a deal to evacuate civilians and rebel fighters from the last opposition enclaves in Aleppo, a major Syrian city that has been under relentless attacks from Syrian forces and their allies.

“Allah Akbar! Do not forget Aleppo!” said the gunman, according to the widely circulated video. “Do not forget Syria! Do not forget Aleppo! Do not forget Syria! As long as our lands are not safe, you will not be safe!”

Karlov started his diplomatic career during the Soviet era in 1976 and previously had served at Russian embassies in Seoul and Pyongyang, North Korea. He took the post in Ankara in July 2013, according to the embassy’s website.

Turkey has been hit by a series of attacks in recent years blamed on groups including the Islamic State and Kurdish separatists, who have battled the government for decades for greater autonomy in Turkey’s southeastern regions.

In Washington, State Department spokesman John Kirby condemned Monday’s attack.

Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the attack appeared to be spurred by Turkish cooperation with Russia in Aleppo.

Jordan: Gunmen who killed 10 planned more attacks

Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — Gunmen who killed 10 people, including a Canadian tourist, in a series of shootings apparently had planned additional attacks, Jordan’s interior minister said Monday, citing explosives belts found in the attackers’ hideout.

Sunday’s shootings were the bloodiest and most high-profile attacks in Jordan in recent memory. At one point, security forces and the armed men were locked in a standoff at a popular tourism site, a Cru-

sader castle in the central town of Karak.

In all, seven members of the Jordanian security forces, two local civilians and the Canadian tourist, an elementary school teacher identified as Linda Vachter, 62, were killed. Thirty-four people were wounded, including Vachter’s adult son, Chris.

Four gunmen were killed in the confrontation.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the shootings.

Jordan faces homegrown extremism,

with hundreds of Jordanians fighting alongside Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria and several thousand more supporting the extremist group in the kingdom. Jordan is a key U.S. ally and a member of a U.S.-led military coalition fighting the Islamic State group.

Jordanian Interior Minister Salameh Hammad told reporters Monday that the explosives belts suggest the attackers might have prepared to carry out additional assaults.

Law lets injured vets recoup errant taxes

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Thousands of veterans injured in combat soon could be able to recoup taxes erroneously collected from their disability severance pay due to a new law signed by President Barack Obama.

About 13,800 veterans separated from the military due to their injuries might have been affected, the nonprofit group National Veterans Legal Service Program estimates. Due to an accounting error, as much as \$78 million in taxes was deducted over decades from the lump sum payments.

Federal law considers the severance payments tax-exempt. But the nonprofit group said the Defense Finance and Accounting Service system was automatically making deductions since 1991, meaning troops injured in conflicts spanning from the Gulf War to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan might have been taxed thousands of dollars improperly.

"Many of them I spoke to were hearing of this issue for the first time," said Tom Moore, an attorney and manager of the Lawyers Serving Warriors project at the nonprofit group.

The average tax payment was \$5,650, he said.

The deductions were uncovered and investigated by Moore and the National Veterans Legal Service Program and now have been stopped by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service. They had initially pursued a class-action lawsuit but realized the only clear solution was a new law backed by Congress.

The Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act signed by Obama on Friday requires the Defense Department to calculate what money is owed to whom and to provide veterans the option to reclaim the taxes.

The lump-sum severance money was paid to veterans who were injured in combat but did not rate permanently disabled. The amounts depended on rank and length of service at the time.

The average total payment was about \$22,000 — severance ranged between about \$12,000 and \$100,000 — and was taxed at 25 percent, Moore said.

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., and Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., pushed the legislation in Congress.

"It is unbelievable that Congress needed to act to clear up this issue. Severance pay for servicemembers who suffered combat-related injuries should not be taxed under any circumstance," Warner said in a released statement.

Electors meet amid push to reject Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — And you thought Election Day was in November.

Electors gathered in every state on Monday to formally elect Donald Trump president even as anti-Trump forces tried one last time to deny him the White House.

Protests were planned for state capitals, but they are unlikely to persuade the Electoral College to dump Trump. An Associated Press survey of electors found very little appetite to vote for alternative candidates.

Republican electors said they have been deluged with emails, phone calls and letters urging them not to support Trump. Many of the emails are part of coordinated campaigns.

"The letters are actually quite sad," said Lee Green, a Republican elector from North Carolina. "They are generally freaked out. They honestly believe the propaganda. They believe our nation is being taken over by a dark and malevolent force."

Wirt A. Yerger Jr., a Republican elector in Mississippi, said, "I have gotten several thousand emails asking me not to vote for Trump. I threw them all away."

A joint session of Congress is scheduled for Jan. 6 to cer-

tify the results of the Electoral College vote, with Vice President Joe Biden presiding as president of the Senate. Once the result is certified, the winner — likely Trump — will be sworn in on Jan. 20.

The Electoral College was devised at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. It was a compromise between those who wanted popular elections for president and those who wanted no public input.

The Electoral College has 538 members, with the number allocated to each state based on how many representatives it has in the House plus one for each senator. The District of Columbia gets three, despite the fact that the home to Congress has no vote in Congress.

To be elected president, the winner must get at least half plus one — 270 electoral votes. Most states give all their electoral votes to whichever candidate wins that state's popular vote. Maine and Nebraska award them by congressional district.

The AP tried to reach all of the electors and interviewed more than 330 of them, finding widespread aggravation among Democrats with the electoral process but little expectation Trump would be derailed.

Poker pro, friend must repay \$10.1M to casino

Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Poker pro Phil Ivey and a companion must return more than \$10 million they won from an Atlantic City, N.J., casino while playing cards that were arranged in a certain way to give the players an edge.

A federal judge previously had ruled Ivey and companion player Cheng Yin Sun didn't meet their obligation to follow gambling regulations on four occasions in 2012 by having a dealer at the Borgata arrange Baccarat cards so they could tell what kind of card was coming next.

Last week, the judge ordered the pair to return \$10.1 million to the casino. The

order by U.S. District Court Judge Noel Hillman essentially returned both sides to where they were before Ivey and Sun began gambling at the Borgata.

The sum includes money that Ivey won playing craps with some of the money he won at the card table.

"This case involves the whims of Lady Luck, who casts uncertainty on every hand, despite the house odds," Hillman wrote in his opinion. "Indeed, Lady Luck is like nectar to gamblers, because no one would otherwise play a game he knows he will always lose."

He added that deciding the case involved "voiding a contract that was tainted from the beginning and breached as soon as it

was executed."

The judge rejected a request by the casino to use a formula for calculating damages that could have seen the restitution go as high as \$15.5 million. That method, assessing how much the casino could have won had Ivey and Chen not engaged in a style of play known as edge-sorting, was deemed too speculative.

The Borgata claimed the pair exploited a defect in cards that enabled them to sort and arrange good cards. The casino says the technique violates state casino gambling regulations. But Ivey asserts his win was simply the result of skill and good observation.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman gets jail for stealing dad's pension

NY ALBANY — A 64-year-old Florida woman has been sentenced to six months in jail and five years probation for stealing more than \$148,000 in New York pension benefits paid to her father after he died.

According to the comptroller and attorney general's offices, Renee Kanas of Tamarac failed to notify the state workers' retirement system of her father's death in 2010. She took his benefits for almost five years through their joint bank account, spending some on Caribbean cruises.

As part of her plea, she agreed to pay the \$148,000 back to the state. Authorities said she already has paid back \$45,000 through the sale of her Florida home.

Store seeks customer so it can apologize

PA YORK — A Pennsylvania soap shop has posted a surveillance photo of a customer on its Facebook page, but not because they think she's a shoplifter.

Instead, the Sunrise Soap Company told the York Daily Record that employees want to apologize to the woman for giving her less-than-excellent customer service.

The store's Facebook post says the store owes "this patient, kind, sweet customer a free lip balm, a free soap, a free hug and a big apology."

Candy Gingerich, an employee of the store in downtown York, said first-time customers are supposed to get a free soap sample and product information. But the woman who came into the shop on Dec. 13 missed out on that part of the customer experience.

They're hoping the woman or

her friends will see the Facebook picture.

Police: Boyfriend cut in fight over hair, nails

FL FORT MYERS — Authorities arrested a Florida woman they say cut her boyfriend because he wouldn't pay for her to have her hair and nails done for her birthday.

Fort Myers police said Crystal Garlin, 32, was upset and grabbed a knife as they argued. Police said her boyfriend cut his wrist trying to take the knife away Dec. 9.

The News-Press reported he declined medical treatment.

Garlin had a different story for police. She said there was an argument outside the home with a relative and that her boyfriend tried to break up the fight, then locked the house and left. Garlin said he cut his hand later trying to climb through a broken window.

She was charged with battery causing great bodily harm and released.

'Frozen' woman police rescue is a mannequin

NY HUDSON — Police in New York broke a car window to rescue a woman who turned out to be an extremely realistic mannequin.

The unusual incident happened Friday morning in the city of Hudson.

The Times Union of Albany reported that a caller told police there was an elderly woman "frozen to death" in a parked car.

Officers rushed to the scene and found what appeared to be a woman sitting in a car's front passenger seat wearing an oxygen mask.

A sergeant broke a rear window, opened the door and discovered that the woman was a realistic mannequin.

The car owner arrived and said he uses the dummy for his job selling medical training aids.

The police chief said the owner was "incredulous" that police broke the window to rescue the mannequin.

Man repeatedly picks up, drops son's house

ME PARSONSFIELD — Authorities say a Maine man used a front-end loader to repeatedly pick up and drop his son's mobile home during a family dispute and only stopped when he learned his 7-year-old grandson was inside.

The York County sheriff's department said John Bubar, 50, was involved in a dispute with his son, Michael, 27, Dec. 11 over rent payments and debris in the yard.

The son and his family live in a mobile home on John Bubar's property in Parsonsfield.

Authorities said the elder Bubar damaged the mobile home with a front-end loader and a backhoe. Bubar was arrested on a charge of domestic violence reckless conduct with a dangerous weapon.

Women hit by wedding drone sue groom, firm

NH BRENTWOOD — Two women are suing a groom and the event company that ran his wedding reception after they allege he flew a drone that hit them in the head at the New Hampshire event.

Kneena Ellis, of Seabrook, and Kelly Eaton of Peabody, Mass., claim in their Dec. 1 suit that they suffered permanent physical and emotional injury as a result of the Aug. 8 incident.

The suit says Barry Billcliff had flown the drone to take pictures at his wedding reception

at Searles Castle in Windham.

It says the drone struck the women while they were on the dance floor. The suit says they suffered concussions.

Billcliff told the Boston Herald he owns the drone, but wasn't operating it when it crashed. Scott Robb II, vice president of Searles Castle, said he never gave Billcliff permission to fly the drone.

Town OKs reading of law to block pot sales

ME OAKLAND — Oakland officials have approved the first reading of an ordinance that would block marijuana retail stores and social clubs in the town.

The Morning Sentinel reported the town council wants to make Oakland a "dry" town for recreational marijuana to buy time as the state figures out regulations and rules.

Unofficial results from the Maine secretary of state's office indicated the state referendum legalizing pot for people 21 or older narrowly passed. The vote is being recounted. Most Oakland residents voted against the measure.

Ex-officer guilty in case tied to framing

HI HONOLULU — A retired officer will be sentenced for his part in a case that was dropped against a man who says authorities attempted to frame him for stealing the Honolulu police chief's mailbox.

Attorney William Harrison said Niall Silva, 52, takes full responsibility for signing off on false documents and lying in court and before a grand jury.

Prosecutor Michael Wheat said Silva cooperated and likely will get much less than the five-year prison term he's facing April 3.

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.

Raiders make playoffs; Pats clinch title

Associated Press

Jerry Rice was on the roster the last time the Oakland Raiders made the playoffs.

That's how long it's been — way back in the 2002 season.

The Silver and Black matter again, thanks in large part to up-and-coming QB Derek Carr, pass-rusher extraordinaire Khalil Mack and kicker Sebastian Janikowski. The Raiders clinched a postseason berth Sunday by beating the San Diego Chargers 19-16 on Janikowski's fourth field goal of the game, a 44-yarder with a little more than 2½ minutes remaining.

"One thing we know for sure: We are on our way," coach Jack Del Rio told his players in the locker room after they improved to 11-3, alone in first place in the AFC West. "We just punched our ticket to the playoffs!"

The winning drive started on the Raiders 34 and included a 27-yard run by Latavius Murray and a 22-yard pass from Carr to Seth Roberts.

Carr scrambled on third-and-8 at the Chargers 29 and thought he got the first down, but was ruled to have gone out of bounds a yard short. The Raiders challenged and the refs agreed, giving them the first down at the 21.

An incompleting and a sack forced the Raiders to turn to their 17-year veteran kicker, who delivered.

Reggie Nelson intercepted a pass from Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers with 1:37 to go to seal it.

A backdrop to this season's success has been all the talk about how much longer the team will stay in Oakland. Owner Mark Davis — whose father, Al, was famous for proclaiming, "Just win, baby" — says he plans to move the Raiders to Las Vegas, where a nearly \$2 billion stadium project has been approved.

There is a Feb. 15 deadline for Davis to apply for the right to uproot his club. The window to petition for that begins whenever the Raiders' season ends — and for the first time in

a while, no one knows exactly when that will be.

Janikowski is the only player from the team's previous playoff run who is still on the roster. Since reaching the Super Bowl 14 years ago, the Raiders have gone through some dark times.

As Carr noted on Twitter: "We have come a long way from an 0-10 start a couple years ago!"

Sure have.

The frequent failures of teams like the Raiders really make what Bill Belichick and the New England Patriots have done all that more remarkable: They set an NFL record with an eighth consecutive division title after a 16-3 victory over the reigning Super Bowl champion Denver Broncos. New England also is the only team to win 13 division championships in a 14-year span.

"You see guys that have played in this league a while, been really good players, and just haven't won division championships and things like that," Patriots safety Devin McCourty said, "and to see their excite-

ment, to see how excited they are. ... It's a great feeling."

Tom Brady overcame a slow start to lead the Patriots (12-2) to a rare victory in Denver, dealing a crushing blow to the Broncos' playoff hopes.

Brady missed his first six passes for only the second time in his career; the first was way back on Oct. 12, 2003, against the Giants.

Brady returned to the site of his worst beating, a 20-18 loss in the AFC championship 11 months ago when he was hit a career-high 23 times. This time, he brought a power run game and a much-improved O-line with him.

The result was just his third victory in Denver in 10 tries, and it was the Broncos' hopes of defending their title that took a beating. The Broncos (8-6) lost for the third time in four games and were supplanted by the Dolphins for the sixth and final playoff spot in the AFC race with two weeks remaining.

Cowboys answer kettle call Former receiver carries Packers

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Ezekiel Elliott figured he probably had a fine coming from the NFL for jumping into an oversized Salvation Army red kettle to celebrate a touchdown in a bounce-back victory for the Dallas Cowboys.

Owner and general manager Jerry Jones sure hoped his rookie running back would be fined.

"My dream is that the NFL would fine the daylights out of him, and I'm going to take them to the Supreme Court," Jones joked after the Cowboys (12-2) moved closer to home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs with a 26-20 victory over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sunday night.

"And we're going to get the Salvation Army a lot of notice there."

All-time NFL rushing leader and former Dallas star Emmitt Smith sure noticed, laughing and clapping from a suite along with plenty of Elliott's teammates after Elliott made a beeline for one of the kettles following a 2-yard run, jumped in and

crouched down far enough to disappear.

The four large kettles — two beyond each end zone — are staples at Dallas games from the Thanksgiving game to the end of the season with one of the team's most visible charities. A donation is coming.

"Actually I'm going to match whatever they fine me with a donation to the Salvation Army," said Elliott, who rushed for a career-high 159 yards to push his NFL-leading total to 1,551.

The league, perhaps conscious of its reputation among critics as the "No Fun League," announced Monday morning that it would not fine Elliott for his celebration.

Elliott tweeted that although the NFL elected not to fine him that he would still be making a donation to the Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army hoped others would do the same.

"Zeke made an important contribution for the @dallascowboys," they tweeted Sunday night. "Can you contribute to the millions in need?"

Associated Press

For a wide receiver, Ty Montgomery sure looked like a good running back.

Montgomery was just about unstoppable for Green Bay, running for a career-high 162 yards and two touchdowns to help the surging Packers beat the Bears 30-27 in one of the coldest games in Chicago on Sunday.

The temperature was 11 degrees, with a wind chill of -4.

Montgomery broke tackles and outran defenders. At times, it took three or four Bears to bring him down. It added up to quite an afternoon for Montgomery after coach Mike McCarthy announced during the week that his switch to running back is a full-time move.

"Some things worked out today," Montgomery said. "I'm very grateful, but it don't always work out like that. Today I'm glad they did."

Things also worked out for the Packers (8-6), although they blew a 17-point lead in the fourth quarter.

Chicago's Connor Barth kicked a tying field goal in the closing minutes, but Mason Crosby booted a 32-yarder as time expired.

Ravens stop Philadelphia

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The Ravens survived a desperate comeback bid by the Eagles, stopping a two-point conversion attempt with 4 seconds left Sunday.

On a wet and windy day, the Ravens maintained control of their playoff possibilities. If Baltimore defeats Pittsburgh on Christmas Day and Cincinnati in the regular-season finale, the Ravens will enter the postseason as AFC North champions.

Baltimore (8-6) led 27-17 with just over six minutes left when Joe Flacco threw an interception inside the Philadelphia 10 to give the Eagles (5-9) another chance.

Rookie Carson Wentz directed a drive that produced a field goal with 2:22 remaining.

The Eagles got the ball back at their 41 with 1:39 to go. A 24-yard completion to Zach Ertz and a pass interference call against rookie Tavon Young set up a 4-yard run by Wentz that got Philadelphia within a point.

Bills 33, Browns 13: The stumbling Browns are two losses short of becoming the NFL's second team to go 0-16 in a season.

LeSean McCoy had a season-best 153 yards rushing and scored twice, and host Buffalo kept its slim playoff hopes alive.

The Browns dropped to 0-

14, matching the second-worst start to a season set by the 1976 Tampa Bay Buccaneers and 1980 New Orleans Saints. The 2008 Detroit Lions are the only NFL team to go without a win in a 16-game season.

Giants 17, Lions 6: EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Odell Beckham Jr. made another one-handed TD catch to delight replay fanatics, the defense turned in another stifling performance and the Giants inched closer to their first playoff berth since 2011.

Steelers 24, Bengals 21: Chris Boswell tied the Steelers record with six field goals, and Ben Roethlisberger threw a TD pass in the fourth quarter.

The Steelers (9-5) have won five straight and can clinch the AFC North title with a victory at home next Sunday against Baltimore. As a first step, they rallied from a 14-point deficit — kick by kick — and eliminated Cincinnati.

Titans 19, Chiefs 17: Ryan Succop kicked a 53-yard field goal into the wind as time expired to give the visiting Titans a victory on a frigid afternoon.

Succop, who spent the first part of his career with Kansas City, came up short on his first try at the winner, but Chiefs coach Andy Reid had called a timeout just before the snap.

Given a second chance, Succop knocked it through with a couple of feet to spare.

Colts 34, Vikings 6: Andrew Luck threw for 250 yards and two touchdowns, Robert Turbin rushed for two touchdowns, and Mike Adams forced a fumble and added an interception for the host Colts (7-7).

Texans 21, Jaguars 20: Tom Savage threw for 260 yards in relief of Brock Osweiler, and Lamar Miller scored host Houston's only TD with less than three minutes remaining.

Osweiler threw interceptions on consecutive possessions in the second quarter to help Jacksonville (2-12) build a 13-0 lead.

Saints 48, Cardinals 41: Drew Brees snapped out of a two-game funk to throw for 389 yards and four touchdowns in the highest-scoring game in the NFL this season. Brees, who had no TDs and six interceptions his previous two games, completed 37 of 48 with no picks for visiting New Orleans.

Falcons 41, 49ers 13: Devonta Freeman ran for three touchdowns, Matt Ryan passed for two more and the host Falcons clinched their first winning season since 2012.

Freeman rushed for 139 yards and capped his big day with a 34-yard TD run.

Bradley fired by Jaguars

Associated Press

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. — Gus Bradley's biggest regret is not sticking around to see the Jacksonville Jaguars win consistently.

Bradley met with local media for more than 35 minutes Monday, the day after he was fired as head coach. He expressed no hard feelings toward the franchise and got emotional near the end of the session. He sat in silence for 15 seconds when asked his one regret from a four-year failure.

"I'd just like to be here with this team when it's successful," Bradley said. "The regret I have is not seeing these players [win]. When you go through something that's hard and then you come through it and you have success and you say, 'That's why we do it. Look at where it took you.'"

Owner Shad Khan fired Bradley following the team's ninth consecutive loss Sunday, ending one of the least successful coaching tenures in NFL history. Bradley went 14-48 in four seasons in Jacksonville, the worst winning percentage (.225) of any NFL coach with at least 60 games.

Some thought general manager Dave Caldwell also would be shown the door, but Khan said Caldwell will "be charged with exploring all options to hire the best head coach possible to lead what I feel is an extremely talented team and reward a very loyal and patient fan base in Jacksonville."

Caldwell named offensive line coach Doug Marrone the team's interim coach for the final two games. Marrone went 15-17 in two seasons (2013-14) as Buffalo's head coach.

Blue Jackets give Tortorella 500th win

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — The Columbus Blue Jackets made John Tortorella sweat a little for his 500th NHL victory.

Columbus squandered leads of 2-0 and 3-2 in the third period before Seth Jones scored 46 seconds into overtime Sunday to lift the Blue Jackets to a 4-3 victory over the Vancouver Canucks 4-3 for their ninth straight win.

Tortorella became the first U.S.-born coach to reach 500 victories, and while he downplayed the accomplishment, Columbus captain Nick Foligno said it was a special moment when he handed the 58-year-old the game puck in a boisterous locker room.

"I have been so privileged to have the opportunity to coach as many games as I have in the league," Tortorella said after becoming the 24th coach in NHL history to reach 500 wins. "To get

this opportunity with this club when there are so many other people dying to get in, that's what I'm so grateful for. Not numbers, just having the opportunity."

Rangers 3, Devils 2 (SO): Kevin Hayes scored the deciding goal in the shootout, lifting host New York over rival New Jersey.

Bruins, 1, Kings 0: Jimmy Hayes scored early in the first period and Tuukka Rask made 18 saves for his fourth shutout of the season to lead host Boston.

Blackhawks 4, Sharks 1: Ryan Hartman, Vinnie Hinostroza and Patrick Kane scored in the third period as host Chicago won its fifth straight.

Jets 4, Avalanche 1: Nikolaj Ehlers scored twice to lead host Winnipeg past Colorado.

Senators 6, Islanders 2: Mark Stone had a goal and two assists, Zack Smith scored twice and visiting Ottawa won its second straight.

Spurs retire Duncan's No. 21

Beal lifts Wizards

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Tim Duncan brought more than gaudy numbers night after night for 19 seasons with the San Antonio Spurs.

Fittingly, while the Spurs retired Duncan's No. 21 on Sunday night, those stats rarely came up.

"I don't even want to talk about rebounds or points and all that sort of things," coach Gregg Popovich said. "This individual made it possible for everybody that we brought in to be a part of this culture and be a part of the program."

Duncan's jersey was raised to the AT&T Center rafters in a ceremony following a 113-100 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans. His number now hangs not far from banners celebrating the five NBA championships he and the Spurs won during his career.

"I've gotten just an amazing response and just an overwhelming amount of love from these guys of what I meant to them," Duncan said during a five-minute speech. "It doesn't even explain how much they meant to me. I got so much more from you guys, from my teammates, than they can explain that they got from me. I know that."

With his son, daughter and girlfriend by his side, Duncan listened and laughed as Tony Parker and Manu Ginobili ribbed and praised their longtime teammate.

Ginobili and Parker teased Duncan about his attire after he chose to wear black slacks and a sports coat instead of his normal jeans and a T-shirt. Duncan was clearly out of his comfort level, and it had nothing to do with the suit. The Virgin Islands native spent his career avoiding the spotlight, and the retirement ceremony put him squarely in it. Duncan was left speechless at points by cheers and shouts of "we love you!" He pounded his heart with the microphone as the crowd roared.

The ceremony even left him and Popovich — two guarded fixtures during San Antonio's two-decade run of dominance — fighting back tears.

"Thank you coach Pop for being more than a coach," Duncan said, pausing to choke back emotions, "for being like a father to me. Thank you."

Duncan became the eighth player to have his jersey number retired by the Spurs, joining James Silas, George Gervin, Johnny Moore and former teammates David Robinson, Sean Elliott, Avery Johnson and Bruce Bowen.

"This stretch for the Spurs of 25 years of excellence, Tim is at the center of the whole thing," Robinson said. "I don't know that there's another athlete that's as appreciated by a city as Tim."

Duncan helped San Antonio to its only championships and was twice league MVP.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Bradley Beal scored 41 points while Markieff Morris had 12 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter as the Washington Wizards beat the Los Angeles Clippers 117-110 on Sunday.

John Wall added 18 points and 11 assists for the Wizards. They closed with a 22-8 run to win their third straight game and fifth in their past six.

Blake Griffin scored 26 points for the Clippers, but was held scoreless during a fourth quarter in which coach Doc Rivers was ejected.

DeAndre Jordan added 13 points and 17 rebounds, and Chris Paul had 13 points and 12 assists. Los Angeles had won four in a row.

Washington shot 80 percent from the floor in the fourth after already coming back from an 11-point deficit in the third.

Jazz 82, Grizzlies 73: Gordon Hayward scored 22 points and Rudy Gobert had 21 points, 12 rebounds and three blocks, helping visiting Utah win a defensive battle.

Spurs 113, Pelicans 100: LaMarcus Aldridge had 22 points and San Antonio won its fourth straight overall and fourth consecutive at home.

Raptors 109, Magic 79: DeMar DeRozan scored 31 points and Jonas Valanciunas added 16 points and 13 rebounds, helping Toronto beat host Orlando.

76ers 108, Nets 107: Joel Embiid scored 17 of his career-high 33 points in the third quarter and hit a pair of free throws with 12.5 seconds left to lead host Philadelphia over Brooklyn in a matchup of two of the league's worst teams.

Celtics 105, Heat 95: Isaiah Thomas scored 23 points before getting ejected and Avery Bradley added 20 as Boston built a huge early lead on the way to beating host Miami.

Mavericks 99, Kings 79: Rookie Dorian Finney-Smith scored a season-high 17 points, leading six Dallas players in double figures at home.

No. 8 Zags top Tennessee, stay perfect

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Mark Few wondered how his eighth-ranked Gonzaga Bulldogs would handle a nine-day break for exams, traveling cross country and playing in front of a heavily orange crowd.

Tennessee coach Rick Barnes saw enough Sunday to think Few and Gonzaga still might be undefeated when March rolls around.

Nigel Williams-Goss scored 20 points, and Gonzaga remained unbeaten by holding off Tennessee 86-76.

"I thought they did good, especially the way we started the first half," Few said. "Usually when you come out of finals like this, you're a little bit concerned about losing rhythm. We had some pretty good rhythm going into finals. Gave them several days off, I was a little bit worried about that. They responded."

Gonzaga (11-0) hadn't played since beating Akron on Dec. 10 and looked strong as it scored the first eight points and never trailed. The Bulldogs led 27-6 on a jumper by Zach Collins with 12:06 left, 43-29 at halftime and 64-48 midway through the second half.

Tennessee (6-5) went on a 10-3 run and got within 75-71 on a jumper by Robert Hubbs III with 2:26 left.

Josh Perkins then hit a jumper as Gonzaga held on for its fourth straight win in the five games between these teams.

"Obviously we weren't perfect, but to come in here and beat a good Tennessee team by double digits, and pretty much control the entire game, I thought we did a good job," Williams-Goss said. "But there's room to grow."

This was billed as the Battle of Broadway played at Bridgestone Arena, so technically it was a neutral court — except

for all the fans wearing Tennessee orange in the seats. Those fans got very loud as the Vols made their run.

Barnes wasn't happy with how the Vols started, and he's tiring of coming close in losses.

"It's one thing being talked about as being a scrappy team that fights all the time, but at some point in time we've got to want to be more than that," he said. "We've got to want to play 40 minutes, and we haven't done that at any point in time this year."

No. 4 Baylor 107, John Brown 53: If there was ever a game for host Baylor's depth to show, it was against an overmatched NAIA school. All 11 Bears who played scored at least one basket, and Johnathan Motley had 20 points and nine rebounds.

Baylor (11-0) shot 59 percent from the floor, including an 11-for-21 clip from three-point range.