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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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SOCOM to take lead on countering WMDs

The Washington Post

U.S. Special Operations Command will take a new, leading role coordinating the Pentagon's effort to counter weapons of mass destruction, reinvigorating a long-running debate about how the U.S. military should handle threats posed by everything from nuclear weapons to chemical agents such as mustard and sarin.

The decision was approved by President Barack Obama at Defense Secretary Ash Carter's request in August but is still taking shape in the Pentagon and could be finalized in January, defense officials said. Numerous aspects of the mission to counter WMDs will shift to Special Operations Command from U.S. Strategic Command, which then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld assigned to the mission in 2005.

The decision means yet another job for SOCOM, whose elite troops have been used heavily by Obama to strike the Islamic State and other militant groups. The command will coordinate the development of a "coherent" Defense Department response to WMDs, said a senior military official, who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonym-

ity because of the sensitivity of the mission. SOCOM will not be granted new legal authorities for the mission but will have new influence in guiding how the DOD responds to threats of WMDs.

Pentagon spokesman Gordon Trowbridge said the decision shows how seriously the Pentagon takes countering weapons of mass destruction.

The move follows long-standing complaints that Strategic Command, which oversees space operations, missile defense and nuclear missions, has not devoted enough personnel and emphasis to the job. It also comes as others question whether SOCOM has been given too much power, in part due to a decision first acknowledged by Carter in October to have Joint Special Operations Command, the most secretive part of SOCOM, coordinate all U.S. efforts to track foreign fighters globally.

One senior defense official who has worked on the mission to counter WMDs said Strategic Command "has rarely invested the necessary political and intellectual capital" to push for issues pertaining to countering weapons of mass destruction. The official attributed that to

the Pentagon not having U.S. forces designated specifically to countering weapons of mass destruction and an "overall low sense of priority as compared to its other missions."

The question, the senior defense official said, is whether SOCOM will effectively address all concerns about weapons of mass destruction given its focus on potential terrorism involving the weapons.

A defense official with knowledge of the discussions said the decision amounts to a "rebalancing of priorities" as other missions under Strategic Command's control, including cyberwarfare, take resources. Strategic Command commanders, the official said, are "busy cats, and they have huge responsibilities in terms of managing our strategic response."

Trowbridge said the Pentagon is still working out the details about how the transition will work. Strategic Command currently oversees several efforts involved in the mission to counter weapons of mass destruction and works closely with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Va. The agency's missions include lethality testing of biological weapons at White

Sands Missile Range in New Mexico and arms inspections in former Soviet.

But SOCOM has long had a hand in efforts to counter weapons of mass destruction and trains extensively to respond in case what is called a "loose nuke" ends up in the hands of terrorists. According to the book "Relentless Strike," a best-selling history of Joint Special Operations Command published last year, virtually every joint readiness exercise the unit ran by the 1990s involved the counterproliferation of nuclear weapons, with special attention paid to the seizure of weapons that enemies might hide in underground lairs.

That mission has continued to evolve since. The same senior U.S. military official who acknowledged SOCOM plans to coordinate the mission to counter weapons of mass destruction did not disclose how but said SOCOM has forces in countries surrounding Russia and is "leaning into being more prepared for the future" with North Korea. Kim Jong Un's regime continues to develop nuclear weapons and has a variety of weapons stashed in mountain-side caves and a robust special operations force of its own.

Eisenhower steams away with unexpected guests

BY AARON KIDD
Stars and Stripes

The USS Dwight D. Eisenhower steamed away with some unexpected passengers after a port visit this week in southern France.

Three Marseille police officers, who were working security for the aircraft carrier, found themselves stuck on the moving vessel Tuesday after stepping aboard for a last-minute tour, according to a report from U.S. Naval Institute News.

The officers, who did not speak English,

spent about an hour on the Ike before heading back to port on a tug boat, the report said.

A Marseille official told a French newspaper the officers "will be subject to disciplinary sanctions," USNI News said.

The Eisenhower last made unusual headlines in September after a sailor unexpectedly gave birth to a baby girl while the carrier was underway in the Arabian Gulf.

Formula, diapers and an incubator for the baby's evacuation were flown to the ship, Cmdr. Bill Urban, 5th Fleet spokesman, told Stars and Stripes.

The sailor hadn't reported being pregnant, and the chain of command wasn't aware she was expecting a baby, he said.

The Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group is heading home to Virginia after a seven-month deployment to the 5th and 6th Fleet area of operations.

The Navy said the group spent five months in the Middle East supporting operations against the Islamic State group, and the past two months in the Mediterranean Sea conducting maritime security operations and supporting the coalition air campaign for Operation Inherent Resolve.

Trump urges stronger US nuclear capability

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump has reopened the debate over nuclear proliferation, calling for the United States to “greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability” until the rest of the world “comes to its senses” regarding nuclear weapons.

His comments Thursday on Twitter came hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin said strengthening his country’s nuclear capabilities should be a chief military objective in the coming year.

The president-elect’s statement also followed his meetings a day earlier with top Pentagon officials and defense contractors.

Trump did not expand on the actions he wants the U.S. to take nor say why he raised the issue Thursday. On Friday, a spokesman said Trump is putting other countries on notice.

“It was in response to a lot of countries: Russia, China and others are talking about expanding their nuclear capability,” spokesman Sean Spicer said on Fox News.

On NBC’s “Today,” Spicer said, “We’re not going to sit back and watch other nations threaten our safety.

“... But just to be clear: The president isn’t saying we’re going to do this. He said, ‘unless they come to their senses.’ It’s a warning to them that this president isn’t going to sit idly by.”

MSNBC reported Friday that Trump said: “Let it be an arms race because we will outmatch them at every pass and outlast them all.” The network’s “Morning Joe” host, Mika Brzezinski, said Trump made the statement in a phone call with her.

Spokesman Jason Miller said Thursday the president-elect had been referring to the threat of nuclear proliferation, “particularly to and among terrorist organizations and unstable and rogue regimes.” Miller said Trump sees modernizing the nation’s deterrent capability “as a vital way to pursue peace through strength.”

If Trump were to seek an expansion of the nuclear stockpiles, it would mark a sharp shift in U.S. national security policy. President Barack Obama has made nuclear non-proliferation a centerpiece of his agenda, calling in 2009 for the U.S. to lead efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons — a goal he acknowledged would not be accomplished quickly or easily.

Berlin attack suspect killed by Italian police

Associated Press

MILAN — The Tunisian man suspected in a deadly attack on a Christmas market in Berlin was killed early Friday in a shootout with police in Milan during a routine patrol outside a train station.

Italian police said Anis Amri traveled at least some of the journey from Germany through France and into Italy by train. French officials refused to comment on his passage through France, which has increased surveillance on its trains after French attacks and the Berlin massacre.

Italian Premier Paolo Gentiloni praised the two young police officers for their courage in taking down Amri during a check of ID papers while he was alone outside the deserted station. But he also called for greater cross-border police cooperation, suggesting Europe’s open-border policy had enabled Amri to easily move around despite being Europe’s No. 1 fugitive.

Amri was identified with the help of fingerprints supplied by Germany.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for Monday’s attack outside Berlin’s Kaiser Wilhelm Memo-

rial Church in which a truck plowed into a Christmas market, killing 12 people and injuring 56 others. It also claimed the Milan shooting.

In Berlin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she has ordered a comprehensive investigation into all angles of the case after it emerged that German authorities had tracked Amri for months on suspicion of planning an attack.

Milan, Rome and other cities have been on heightened alert since the attack, with increased surveillance and police patrols. Italian officials stressed that the officers who stopped Amri didn’t suspect he was the Berlin attacker, but rather grew suspicious because he was a North African man, alone outside a deserted train station at 3 a.m.

Amri, 24, who had spent time in prison in Italy, was stopped by two officers during a routine patrol in the Sesto San Giovanni neighborhood of Milan early Friday. He pulled a gun from his backpack after being asked to show his identification and was killed in an ensuing shootout.

One of the officers, Christian Movio, 35, was shot in the right shoulder and underwent surgery for a superficial wound and was in good condition.

Obama scraps registry for some Muslim immigrants

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration on Thursday officially scrapped the last vestiges of a U.S. registration system for Muslim immigrants. If President-elect Donald Trump now wants to introduce an expanded version of the program, he will have to start from scratch.

The post-9/11 registration program for immigrant men arriving mainly from the Islamic world hasn’t been enforced since 2011. Although it never prohibited travel for men and boys from the more than 20 affected countries, including Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, Trump’s suggestions about banning Muslim immigrants from the U.S.

have led to fears that it could be reinstated and used for new and enhanced purposes.

The decision to erase it from the books entirely marks one of President Barack Obama’s last administrative actions on immigration and will at least slow any Trump effort to introduce even tougher requirements, as has been suggested by a top adviser.

The registration program is “not only obsolete,” said Neema Hakim, spokesman for the Homeland Security Department, “its use would divert limited personnel and resources from more effective measures.”

The registration system started about a year after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist at-

tacks, requiring men and boys from a variety of mostly Middle Eastern countries to register with the federal government upon their arrival in the United States. Such people already in the country had to register with immigration authorities inside the U.S.

Registration, which also applied to immigrants from North Korea, included fingerprints and photographs. People also were required to notify the government if they changed addresses.

Trump has never publicly spoken about the program but has made clear his desire to take a far tougher approach toward immigration than Obama.

Hearings to begin in hazing cases

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The first public military court proceedings involving allegations of abuse and hazing at the Marine Corps' recruit training facility at Parris Island in South Carolina are set to begin in January, the Marine Corps announced on Thursday.

Marine Corps spokesman Capt. Joshua Pena said arraignments for two Marines facing midlevel, or special courts-martial, in connection with the hazing accusations are Jan. 6 at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia.

A third hearing known as an Article 32 is to be Jan. 5 at the same installation for a third Marine potentially facing a court-martial. Such a preliminary hearing is similar to a civilian grand jury proceeding and helps determine if a court-martial is to be held or other types of military punishments might be considered. Education Command and its commander, Maj. Gen. James Lukeman, has responsibility for developing and overseeing the service's training regime.

The cases arose from three investigations into accusations of hazing and abuse at the 100-year-old training installation, considered hallowed ground for its role in making civilians into Marines.

The investigations came to light following the March 18 death of recruit Raheel Siddiqui, 20, of Taylor, Mich., who fell several stories to his death in a barracks stairwell following an altercation with an unidentified drill instructor. His family does not accept the Marine Corps' finding that he committed suicide.

In September, the Marine Corps disclosed it was considering possible punishments for up to 20 Marine leaders at Parris Island in connection with hazing and abuse allegations.

Pena said none of the three hearings set in January are directly related to the Siddiqui case but involved two other investigations of suspected abuse that were undertaken in the wake of Siddiqui's death.

The two Marines being arraigned are Staff Sgt. Matthew Bacchus, who has been charged

with violating a lawful order, cruelty and maltreatment, and making a false official statement.

The second is Sgt. Riley Gress, who has been charged with failure to obey a lawful general order, cruelty and maltreatment, and making a false official statement.

The third Marine facing the Article 32 hearing has not yet been identified.

Maj. Gen. James Lukeman, Marine Corps Training and Education Command commander, said the Marines are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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

About 500 drill instructors are assigned to the Parris Island post.

All recruits from east of the Mississippi River train at the installation near Beaufort, S.C.

TV: Aleppo shelled after evacuation

BEIRUT — Syrian rebels outside Aleppo on Friday shelled a neighborhood in the northern city, killing three people in the first bombardment since government forces took control of the whole city after opposition fighters in the eastern parts withdrew, state TV reported.

The shelling, which also wounded 10 people, underscored the challenge ahead for President Bashar Assad's forces after retaking full control of the country's largest city and former commercial hub for the first time in four years.

The rebel surrender in Aleppo ended a brutal chapter in Syria's nearly six-year civil war, and marked Assad's most significant victory since an uprising against his family's four-decade rule began in 2011.

But large parts of the war-shattered country remain outside his control, including rural areas in Aleppo province south and west of the city where opposition fighters still operate.

Syrian TV said Friday's rockets, which hit the southwestern neighborhood of Hamadaniyeh, were fired by insurgents based southwest of Aleppo.

Navy to pay Ingalls \$1.46B for new ship

PASCAGOULA, Miss. — The Navy will pay Huntington Ingalls \$1.46 billion to design and build an amphibious assault ship.

The contract, announced Monday, adds another \$1.19 billion to the \$270 million already awarded to Ingalls for advance work.

The USS Fort Lauderdale, an amphibious transport dock, is scheduled to be done in 2021. Ingalls has completed 10 ships in the class. An 11th, the USS Portland, is scheduled for sea trials in 2017.

The 684-foot-long ship is designed to launch and pick up Marines using landing craft, and will also support helicopters and tiltrotor aircraft.

From The Associated Press

Trump suggests he'd ditch F-35

The Washington Post

President-elect Donald Trump piled on fresh criticism of the Pentagon's most sophisticated aircraft on Thursday, suggesting that he might abandon the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter in favor of an alternate plane due to high costs.

In a message on Twitter, Trump said that cost overruns in Lockheed Martin's \$400 billion program to develop the stealth aircraft had prompted him to ask Boeing, another major defense manufacturer, to "price-out a comparable F-18 Super Hornet."

Trump tweeted, "Based on the tremendous cost and cost overruns of the Lockheed Martin F-35, I have asked Boeing to price-out a comparable F-18 Super Hornet!"

Trump has blasted the F-35 before, saying the cost is "out of control" and promising that his administration would find savings in military hardware purchases. His criticism of Bethesda, Md.-based Lockheed and another major aircraft firm has roiled the defense industry and laid a marker for a hard line from the White House in dealings with major players doing business with the government.

Even before Trump launched his public assault, the F-35, the Pentagon's most expensive weapons program, has come in for widespread criticism for design flaws and spiraling costs.

This fall, Pentagon and officials from Lockheed failed to agree on a mutually acceptable price for the latest batch of planes. And last month, Canada said it might buy F/A-18 Super

Hornets until it decides whether to go ahead with planned F-35 purchases. A number of U.S. allies, including Israel, have agreed to buy F-35s.

Trump has also assailed Boeing, another major aircraft manufacturer, over the high cost of a new Air Force One plane. Its chief executive later met with the president-elect and promised to give the U.S. government a break on the aircraft.

Anderson W. Branch/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

President-elect Donald Trump said on Twitter that, due to the cost of Lockheed Martin's program to develop the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, he asked Boeing to "price out a comparable F-18 Super Hornet."

CENTCOM cites US strikes' toll on al-Qaida in Yemen

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Twenty-eight al-Qaida linked fighters were killed in nine U.S. military airstrikes across Yemen since September, U.S. Central Command announced Thursday.

The strikes occurred between Sept. 23 and Dec. 13 and targeted the group's Arabian Peninsula affiliate, which has taken advantage of civil war in Yemen to gain its own territory. Pentagon officials have said the group used the area to plot terrorist attacks on Western targets.

"Strikes against [al-Qaida] in Yemen pressure the terrorist network and hinder their ability to attack the U.S. and our allies," said Army Maj. Josh T. Jacques, a Central Command spokesman.

Some of the airstrikes had been announced, including an Oct. 21 drone strike that the Pentagon said killed one of the group's senior leaders and four other fighters. Abu Hadi al Bayhani, an experienced operations planner, was killed in that attack in a remote area of Marib Governorate in central Yemen.

The other strikes announced Thursday were:

- Sept. 23, in Marib Governorate near al-Bayda, four killed.

- Sept. 29, in al Baydah Governorate, two killed.

- Oct. 6, in Shabwah Governorate, two killed.

- Oct. 18, in Shabwah, six killed.

- Nov. 20, in al Baydah, one killed.

- Nov. 24, in al Baydah, two killed.

- Nov. 30, in Hadramawt Governorate, three killed.

- Dec. 13, in Marib, three killed.

Yemen's civil war has lasted nearly two years, since Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, who control much of northern Yemen, began fighting the recognized Yemeni government. Saudi Arabia and other American allies have backed Yemen's official government in the conflict.

The United States has long targeted al-Qaida fighters in Yemen. Earlier this year, the U.S. military deployed a small team of special operators to the country to provide medial and intelligence support to Emirati forces fighting the group.

Militants pushed back in Afghanistan

By E.B. BOYD
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. military and its Afghan partners have managed to push back the Islamic State's presence in the country from nearly a dozen districts to just two or three, the military's top spokesman in Afghanistan told C-SPAN on Thursday.

A year ago, U.S. commanders estimated the strength of the Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan to be between 1,500 and 3,000 members, said Brig. Gen. Charles Cleveland.

Today, he said, it is about 1,000. "We think we've significantly reduced that presence."

In January, President Barack Obama gave U.S. troops in Afghanistan the authority to engage in combat against Islamic State fighters. Earlier this month, Gen. John Nicholson, the international coalition's top military commander in Afghanistan, said U.S.-led counterterrorism operations and Afghan government forces had killed 12 of the organization's top leaders in the country. Those included

Hafiz Saeed Khan, the group's emir, or senior leader.

Overall, U.S. troops in Afghanistan conducted more than 350 operations against the Islamic State and al-Qaida this year, Cleveland told C-SPAN. More than 200 al-Qaida members were killed or captured, he said.

In October, the Pentagon announced it had conducted strikes against the top al-Qaida official in Afghanistan, Faruq al-Qatani, along with another senior leader, Bilal al-Utubi.

While the bulk of U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan are focused on training the Afghan army and police, a smaller contingent is authorized to conduct operations against terrorist groups. The goal is to prevent them from gaining a foothold in Afghanistan and using it as a base of operations for attacks against the United States and its allies.

"Mission number one for us is trying to protect our homeland by being able to aggressively target those who wish to do us harm," Cleveland said.

Islamic State targeting Mosul residents as they flee

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

SHAQOLY, Iraq — A coalition aircraft swooped over the Mosul neighborhood, and Qusai and his family made their move.

"When we saw the plane was in the sky and ISIS shooting at it, we knew it was time to go," he said, using an acronym for the Islamic State group. The militants would not be paying attention to his escaping family, said the father of three, including a newborn.

In recent weeks, fleeing civilians like Qusai, 29, have become targets of militant snipers and frequent victims of indiscriminate bombing attacks in residential areas of Mosul, according to Human Rights Watch, which this week reported findings based on interviews with more than 50 Iraqis forced to flee their homes.

Thirty-one gave firsthand accounts of 18

mortar or sniper attacks, car bombings or detonations of improvised explosive devices by the militants that killed or wounded civilians.

Militants have justified the attacks, which are considered war crimes, telling those who refused to retreat with them that they were "unbelievers" and valid targets, the civilians told the nongovernmental group. But the civilians said they feared being used as human shields if they went along.

"If ISIS really cared about the people trapped in its so-called caliphate, it would let them flee to safety," Lama Fakih, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, told the Associated Press. "Instead, it is indiscriminately or deliberately killing and wounding people for refusing to be human shields."

The report said Iraqi troops deployed

in populated neighborhoods and coalition strikes in dense residential areas of Mosul also had caused civilian casualties. The effort to oust the Islamic State group from the city of 1 million has proved complicated for the Iraqi forces, who seek to minimize casualties.

About 120,000 civilians have fled, but several Iraqi army officials said those who remain are the major obstacle in the fight, now in its ninth week. Snipers, mortar attacks and car bombs are other challenges troops frequently have cited.

Iraqi commanders have been reviewing their initial strategy, which involved telling civilians to stay in place and to avoid known militant locations, according to several reports.

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

More people leaving Hawaii for mainland

HI HONOLULU — Federal figures show more people are leaving Hawaii for the mainland than coming to live in the state.

The U.S. Census Bureau's latest population estimates show 10,000 more people left Hawaii than moved in from the mainland over the last year. About 30,000 more people left between 2010 and 2016, Hawaii News Now reported.

The number of people leaving the state has increased over the years. From 2014 to 2015, about 6,700 people left for the mainland, up from just 941 in 2010.

The population loss this year was countered by local births and migrants from other countries.

Aide suspended over soda incident

KY LOUISVILLE — An instructional assistant at a Louisville school has been suspended for allegedly dumping a can of soda over a nonverbal special-needs student.

The Courier-Journal reported Rebecca Pevlor, a special-needs instructional assistant at Churchill Park School, has been suspended indefinitely without pay since August after Pevlor, according to staff members, poured soda over a student in response to the student drinking Pevlor's soda.

Witnesses also said Pevlor dumped a different student onto the floor because he'd sat in Pevlor's seat.

Jefferson County Public Schools officials have investigated both incidents and have recommended that Pevlor be terminated.

Pevlor allegedly said soda spilled on the student when Pe-

vlor tried to pull the soda from the student's hand. She said the other student chose to fall on the floor when she pulled on his chair.

Yoda the tortoise saved from fire

ID IDAHO FALLS — Firefighters have rescued a Russian tortoise named Yoda at an eastern Idaho elementary school after a heating device caused his habitat to start smoldering.

The Idaho Falls Fire Department said it responded early Wednesday to a fire alarm at Fairview Elementary School in Idaho Falls and found the building filled with smoke.

Crews discovered a smoldering fire in Yoda's 30-gallon enclosure and saved the tortoise.

Bonneville School District Superintendent Charles Shackett said a heating pad meant to keep Yoda warm caused the problem. The tortoise is fine and back home with his owner, a teacher.

Shackett said he encourages pets in the classroom but will review animal habitat policies.

Santa Claus arrested after skipping court

IL WATERLOO — Santa Claus was arrested in southern Illinois — but not in front of kids.

Authorities say Cody Alexander, a federal fugitive, was discovered portraying Santa outside a business in Waterloo on Monday night. He's been wanted since failing to appear in federal court in East St. Louis on Dec. 15.

Monroe County Sheriff Neal Rohlfing told the Belleville News-Democrat that Alexander was taken inside a real estate business and arrested. He's facing a mail theft charge.

Alexander could have his

bond revoked when he appears in federal court Friday. Rohlfing said he'll get a free ride to court "but not on a reindeer."

Traffic signs: Santa sees when you speed

ME SCARBOROUGH — State officials in Maine want Interstate 295 travelers to know Santa isn't only watching as they sleep.

The Portland Press Herald reported the state Department of Transportation on Wednesday changed the message on its variable-message signs between Scarborough and West Gardiner to say: "Santa sees you when you are speeding."

Spokesman Ted Talbot said the humorous message was an idea to make the heavily traveled interstate safer. It will remain displayed until after Christmas.

City discovers it has noise ordinance

MS BAY ST. LOUIS — City leaders in Bay St. Louis have been trying to find ways to quiet music coming from bars in the Depot District late at night and discovered they already have a loud music ordinance that just needs to be enforced.

The Sun Herald reported that several residents this week told city council members that the music is preventing them from sleeping. They also said drunken bar patrons are stumbling around homes, using profane language and getting into fights.

The newspaper reported that bar and tavern owners worry restrictions might drive the crowds away and hurt business.

After recent debate at a city council meeting, City Attorney Trent Favre pointed out a noise

ordinance enacted years ago, and said police could enforce that existing law.

'Whatever' is 2016's most annoying word

NY POUGHKEEPSIE — A poll has found that the most annoying word or phrase used in casual conversation in America is "whatever."

The Marist College poll released Wednesday indicates the word irritates 38 percent of Americans.

The pollsters offered up five options for most annoying word or phrase: "Whatever;" "No offense, but;" "Ya know, right;" "I can't even;" and "huge."

"No offense, but" is second with 20 percent. In third place is, "You know, right," which is irksome to 14 percent of people, tied with "I can't even." "Huge" grates on the nerves of 8 percent. Last year, "whatever" topped the list at 43 percent.

Traffic stop ends with warning, necktie fix

WI MENOMONIE — A Wisconsin police officer who stopped a speeding college student late for a presentation ended up tying his necktie for him.

WBAY-TV reported the Menomonie Police Department posted dash cam video of the traffic stop on its Facebook page Tuesday.

The video shows Officer Martin Folczyk pulling up behind the student in a parking lot. The student explained he was speeding because he was late to give a presentation and was trying to find a friend who could tie his necktie.

Folczyk made a knot for the student and adjusted it after the student put it on.

The officer sent the student on his way with a warning.

From wire reports

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Eagles prevent Giants from clinching

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Because they couldn't win on the road, the New York Giants ensured they won't open at home if they make the playoffs.

Three of Eli Manning's career-high 63 passes were intercepted, including one that Malcolm Jenkins returned for a touchdown, and the Philadelphia Eagles beat the Giants 24-19 Thursday night to snap a five-game losing streak and prevent New York from clinching a playoff spot.

"We didn't play well enough," said Manning, who completed 38 passes for 356 yards and one TD. "I got off to a bad start and spotted them a 14-0 lead."

The loss gave Dallas the NFC East title — and home-field advantage throughout the conference playoffs. The Giants (10-5) still own the top wild-card position and will end their four-season playoff drought this weekend if Detroit, Green Bay, Tampa Bay or Atlanta loses.

If not, they get in with a win at Washington next week.

"We need to be confident," Manning said. "We can get healthy and get a little break these next couple days and come back and practice and play better football."

After Darren Sproles gave the Eagles

(6-9) a 7-0 lead on a 25-yard TD run, Jenkins picked off Manning and ran it back 34 yards for a 14-0 lead. Jenkins got another interception in the second half, the second time he's had two picks in a game in his eight-year career.

"I want to be wherever the ball is," Jenkins said. "If I play deep too long a lot of times, I get bored."

Carson Wentz threw a touchdown pass to Nelson Agholor and later shook off a late hit that forced him to miss his first snaps of the season. The rookie quarterback even threw a lead block on a double reverse after he passed concussion tests.

Then the defense delivered a stop on fourth down before Terrence Brooks clinched the win with an interception at the Eagles 5.

"My name was called and I made the most of it," said Brooks, who had not played a defensive snap this season before getting in for two plays against the Giants.

Here's some things we learned in Philadelphia's win over the Giants:

Lane's impact: Eagles right tackle Lane Johnson returned from a 10-game suspension for violating the NFL's policy on performance-enhancing drugs and immediately showed why he's so valuable. He wiped out the left side of New York's defen-

sive line twice on big gains on the offense's first series, including a block on Landon Collins to clear a path for Sproles on his TD run. The Eagles are 4-1 with Johnson, 2-8 without him.

"It was huge to get Lane back," Wentz said. "That was a big spark for us."

Waiting game: The Giants couldn't do the deed themselves Thursday night and now must wait for the weekend's action. They have plenty of opportunity to qualify for the postseason while opening holiday gifts.

If the Falcons (9-5) lose at Carolina, New York is in. If the Packers (8-6) lose to Minnesota, New York is in.

Should Tampa Bay fall at New Orleans, the Giants advance. And if Detroit (9-5) is beaten by Dallas, the Giants are playoff-bound.

Beckham's numbers: Earlier this season, when the Giants beat the Eagles 28-23, Odell Beckham Jr. had only four receptions for 46 yards, though he scored twice. At the Linc, he made 11 catches for 150 yards, but didn't find the end zone.

Beckham has 96 catches for 1,323 yards. His career highs are 97 receptions, set last season, and 1,450 yards.

"I think anytime you get the ball in his hands," Giants coach Ben McAdoo said, "you have a chance to go for a touchdown."

No guarantees in chase for postseason berth

Associated Press

The New York Giants have given teams chasing playoff berths a fresh reminder to take nobody for granted, especially division rivals.

As a result, the Dallas Cowboys' only challenge now as the NFC East champs and the NFC's top seed is handling the final two regular-season games before a first-round bye.

The Giants only had to beat Philadelphia on Thursday night to clinch at least a wild-card berth, yet Eli Manning was intercepted three times in a 24-19 loss. That started a big celebration by the Cowboys' faithful with Dallas now assured of staying in Texas throughout the postseason.

Five division titles remain up for grabs with two weeks left in the season.

Dallas can help out the Giants, the only team to beat the Cowboys all season, by defeating Detroit on Monday night, which would clinch a wild-card berth for New York.

New England, AFC East title in hand, needs a little help to claim home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs this week. The Patriots first must beat the Jets,

then wait to see if the Colts can win in Oakland. The Raiders can win the AFC West title and grab their own first-round bye by beating the Colts with Denver beating Kansas City on Sunday night.

Seattle is trying to earn the NFC's other first-round bye. The NFC West champs must beat Arizona and also need Atlanta to lose or tie and then wait to see if Detroit can win in Dallas on Monday night.

Three division titles have been clinched, with eight playoff berths still up for grabs, and the Pittsburgh Steelers can wrap up the AFC North title by beating Baltimore on Christmas.

The Houston Texans will know before kicking off Saturday night if a win over Cincinnati will give them their second straight AFC South crown. They need Tennessee to lose earlier Saturday to Jacksonville to avoid playing the Titans on Jan. 1 for the division title.

Atlanta heads to Carolina trying to clinch both a playoff berth and the NFC South title, needing both a win and a New Orleans victory over Tampa Bay to win the division. If they don't get that, the Falcons could still clinch at least a wild card this weekend.

Green Bay needs a win over Minnesota

and help to clinch a playoff berth Saturday. But the Packers only need to win their final two games to take the NFC North title.

The Lions are trying to hang on in that division, and they can clinch the crown Monday night if Green Bay loses to Minnesota. The Lions could have a playoff berth in hand if Washington and Tampa Bay already have lost and Atlanta wins at Carolina. If not, the Saints beating Tampa Bay can allow Detroit to clinch at least a wild-card spot with a win or a tie in Dallas.

Kansas City already squandered one chance to clinch a playoff berth. Now the Chiefs can assure themselves of at least an AFC wild card by beating Denver on Christmas night, putting the Broncos on the verge of elimination. The Chiefs also can clinch a spot if Baltimore loses earlier Sunday.

The Miami Dolphins need a win, with Denver losing or tying. The Dolphins also can leave Buffalo with a tie and clinch if Baltimore, Denver and Houston lose, or with losses by Baltimore, Denver and Tennessee.

Jameis Winston and the Buccaneers also can clinch a playoff berth by beating New Orleans combined with losses by Green Bay, Detroit and Washington.

FCS-bound Idaho outlasts Colorado State

Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho quarterback Matt Linehan made a strong statement with his play on the field Thursday night in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl. He was just getting started.

Moments after earning MVP honors in the Vandals' 61-50 victory over Colorado State, Linehan explained what the victory meant to him and the program after the school made the controversial decision to move down to FCS starting in 2018. In April, the Sun Belt informed the school it was dropping Idaho after the 2017 season.

"We belong in FBS — period!" Linehan said in a radio interview with ESPN. "That's what I believe. That's what everyone believes. We know we can compete. We belong here. No matter what anyone thinks,

even our tone-deaf president. Maybe he doesn't think we belong here, but I think we belong here."

Linehan's emotional words matched his play. He was 21-for-31 for 381 yards with four touchdowns and no interceptions. Linehan, whose father Scott Linehan is the offensive coordinator for the Dallas Cowboys, also ran for another score in the third-highest scoring game in bowl history.

The bowl record for points is 125 in Marshall's 64-61, double-overtime victory over East Carolina in the 2001 GMAC Bowl. Idaho and Colorado State broke the Potato Bowl scoring record set in 2009 in Idaho's 43-42 victory over Bowling Green.

Linehan, who toned down his comments and apologized to university President Chuck Staben in the postgame press

conference, still reveled in the season-ending win.

"No matter what was said to begin the year, I think all these guys believed we could get to this point," Linehan said. "We spent so much time dealing with adversity and tough losses. I think we were just tired of losing."

Idaho (9-4) matched its highest victory total since moving to FBS in 1996.

"I couldn't be more proud of our players," coach Paul Petrino said. "They were focused on winning the football game and that helped them come out and play well early. They were told there were a bunch of things they weren't supposed to be able to do, but they did it anyway."

Petrino shied away from wading in on the school's decision, but that didn't stop him from politicking.

"You'd hope we made a statement," he said. "We were 2-0 against Mountain West teams year. We'd look pretty good in that conference. But I can only control what I can control, and that's to be as good of a coach as I can be."

Colorado State (7-6) finished with a bowl loss for the second straight year.

"We tried some different things this year in preparation," Colorado coach Mike Bobo said. "You want to finish up strong. That onus falls on me. That's the position I'm in as the head coach."

After a scoreless first quarter, it appeared that both teams had dug in for a defensive battle. But that quickly dissipated as the teams started rolling up points.

The 84 points in the second half are the most combined in a half in any bowl game.

No. 3 Kansas puts away UNLV, stretches streak to 11

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Asked what he thought about his team's first true road game, Kansas coach Bill Self didn't mince words.

"I don't think much," Self said.

Josh Jackson scored 21 points, Svi Mykhailiuk had 20 and Frank Mason III added 13, as the third-ranked Jayhawks fought off UNLV's second-half rally and held on for a 71-53 victory Thursday night, extending their winning streak to 11 games.

The Jayhawks (11-1), who got 12 rebounds and four points from Landen Lucas, haven't lost since a season-opening 103-99 overtime setback to Indiana, in Honolulu.

UNLV (7-6) was led by Tyrell Green's 12 points, with Jalen Poyser and Uche Ofoegbu adding 10 points each. It was the Runnin' Rebels' third loss to a Top 25 team in their last five games.

"I thought we actually played really good early, and I thought we defended and rebounded pretty well early," Self said.

"We didn't play very well the second half. They were obviously better than us in the second half. If you tell us before the game you would win by 18 on the road, you definitely take that. We had a chance to play much better than that."

UNLV opened the second half on a 15-7 run, cutting into Kansas' lead, making it 49-35 with 14:30 to go. In that span, the Jayhawks shot just 30 percent, while the Rebels hit 6 of 7 (85.7 percent).

Moments later, Jackson shifted momentum back in Kansas' direction when he drove baseline for a vicious slam dunk to push the Jayhawks ahead 56-40, while igniting a 6-0 run. Kansas extended its lead to 64-44, while the Rebels missed eight of nine shots.

But UNLV wasn't done, as an 8-0 run by the Rebels cut the lead to 12 with a little less than 4 minutes remaining.

Mykhailiuk's slashing layup down the right side of the key ended Kansas' scoring drought, which he followed up with a three-pointer a minute later to essentially seal the victory.

"We won, and it was a good game, but I don't think we played really good," Mykhailiuk said. "We made some stops, but we had to play really, really hard to get the win."

Kansas, which is 5-1 away from Allen Fieldhouse, finished the game shooting 44 percent (28-for-63), while UNLV shot 35 percent (19-for-55). The Jayhawks scored well below their average, as they came into the game averaging 88.0 points and had scored 89 or more in each of their previous six.

No. 16 Indiana 97, Austin Peay 62: James Blackmon Jr. scored 24 points and Robert Johnson added 20 for the host Hoosiers.

No. 19 Saint Mary's 74, South Carolina St. 47: Jock Landale had 20 points and 11 rebounds and the host Gaels pulled away with a big second half.

No. 23 USC 83, Missouri St. 75: At Las Vegas, Elijah Stewart scored 21 points to lead his team into the championship game of the Las Vegas Classic and keep the Trojans one of six unbeaten teams in Division I.

No. 24 Cincinnati 93, Marshall 91 (OT): Troy Caupain rebounded his missed shot and made a short jumper with 0.7 seconds left in overtime for the host Bearcats.

Service academies

Hartford 63, Navy 54: Jason Dunne hit four three-pointers and scored 18 points and had five steals as the host Hawks defeated the Midshipmen.

Hartford (5-8), winner of three straight, knocked down 11 of 30 three-pointers and held Navy to 3-for-23 (13 percent).

Tom Lacey had 12 points and 11 rebounds for Navy (5-7) and George Kiernan had 10 points.

Air Force 77, UC Davis 67: Frank Toohey scored 17 points and the host Falcons held off the Aggies to end a three-game losing streak.

Jacob Van and reserve Dane Norman added 13 points apiece for Air Force (7-6), which hit 10 of 21 three-pointers.

Air Force shot 56 percent in the second half (15-for-27), including 7-for-12 from three-point range. The Aggies shot 39 percent for the game.

Jagr passes Messier on career points list

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Jaromir Jagr broke a tie with Mark Messier for No. 2 on the NHL career points list. Afterward, he was upset about the two standings points the Florida Panthers let slip away with a 3-1 loss to Boston.

“You want to win the hockey game,” Jagr said. “The best thing is to put this behind us, and the whole team can now be concerned about winning. ... I’ve learned that hockey is a team game. Only team victories count. I wish it had happened in the first period, or it was a goal to give us the lead.”

Florida interim coach Tom Rowe understands Jagr’s team-first mentality.

“(Jagr’s) upset. He’s second in history in NHL scoring and he doesn’t even care about that right now,” Rowe said. “The two points were more important to him.”

Jagr got point No. 1,888 with an assist with 6:40 left to break the tie with Messier.

“I appreciate everything ... over my hockey career, and I

thank the fans,” Jagr said in a brief ceremony during which he was given a golden stick.

Only Wayne Gretzky, with 2,857 points, has more than Jagr. Aleksander Barkov was credited with the goal that deflected off the 44-year-old Czech star.

In a video, Gretzky offered congratulations. “You play the game the right way,” he told Jagr.

The game was stopped for a celebration, and Jagr came onto the ice to accept the commemorative golden stick from the Panthers. He waved to the crowd, got congratulatory stick-taps from both teams, and the game — his 1,663rd in the NHL — resumed.

The Bruins, whom Jagr played 22 games for back in 2013, were fine with the brief stoppage of play to honor No. 68.

“He deserves that attention. We didn’t mind that at all,” Boston coach Claude Julien said. “He played for us so it was nice to be a part of it.”

Frank Vatrano, Patrice

Bergeron and David Backes scored for Boston, and Tuukka Rask made 29 saves.

Rask improved to 18-3-1 against Florida, while Boston is 16-2-1 in its last 19 games against the Panthers.

Rask was thrilled to have been a part of a night that not only included the win but also Jagr’s history-making achievement.

“You don’t get to be (on the ice) with that kind of a legend very often so it was great to see that,” Rask said. “I’m very happy for him; it’s great.”

Kings 4, Predators 0: Peter Budaj made 28 saves to lead visiting Los Angeles over Nashville.

Blue Jackets 7, Penguins 1: Scott Hartnell had his ninth career hat trick and host Columbus scored four times in a head-spinning, third-period flurry to blow out Pittsburgh.

Lightning 5, Blues 2: Alex Killorn scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period, Jonathan Drouin added two late goals and host Tampa Bay rallied from a 2-0 deficit to beat

St. Louis.

Wild 4, Canadiens 2: Eric Staal’s short-handed goal in the third period broke a tie and sent host Minnesota past Montreal for a ninth straight win that tied the team record.

Senators 2, Ducks 1 (OT): Mike Hoffman scored a power-play goal at 4:03 of overtime to give host Ottawa a victory over Anaheim.

Devils 4, Flyers 0: Cory Schneider made 16 saves in his first shutout of the season and host New Jersey beat Philadelphia to stop a seven-game losing streak.

Hurricanes 2, Sabres 1: Jeff Skinner and Justin Faulk scored in visiting Carolina’s victory over Buffalo.

Maple Leafs 6, Avalanche 0: Nazem Kadri scored twice, Frederik Andersen stopped 38 shots for his first shutout this season and visiting Toronto routed last-place Colorado.

Jets 4, Canucks 1: Nikolaj Ehlers scored twice in the third period and added an assist as visiting Winnipeg beat Vancouver.

Thomas scores 28 points to help Celtics hold off Pacers

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Isaiah Thomas loves the fourth quarter, and he finished with a flourish Thursday night.

Thomas scored 14 of his 28 points in the final period, leading the Boston Celtics to a 109-102 victory against the Indiana Pacers.

“Fourth quarter ain’t for everybody,” Thomas said. “That’s when it really matters. I just embraced the opportunity. ... I love when the game is close — I want to be that type of guy. I just do what I’ve always done, I guess.”

Avery Bradley and Jae Crowder each scored 15 points for the Celtics, who have won four in a row. Marcus Smart had 12 points, and Amir Johnson and Kelly Olynyk finished with 11 apiece.

Boston outscored Indiana 29-

9 in the second quarter, turning a nine-point deficit into a 51-40 halftime lead. The Pacers pulled within four late in the game, but were unable to catch the Celtics down the stretch.

“We got ourselves into a big hole in the second quarter, and that’s hard to crawl out of,” said Paul George, who scored 19 points for Indiana. “We made them take contested shots, but all of their guys can shoot three-pointers, which makes them hard to guard. The Celtics set the tempo, and it’s up to us to match that.”

Jeff Teague led Indiana with 31 points and eight assists. CJ Miles also scored 19 points.

Heat 115, Lakers 107: Justise Winslow and Hassan Whiteside each had 23 points and 13 rebounds, and host Miami rallied from 19 points down to beat Los Angeles.

Winslow set a career high for points and tied a career best in rebounds for the Heat, who raised Shaquille O’Neal’s No. 32 jersey to the rafters at halftime.

Warriors 117, Nets 101: Kevin Durant had 26 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, and visiting Golden State turned an ugly start into an easy finish.

Klay Thompson added 23 points for the Warriors, who opened a three-game road trip that leads into their NBA Finals rematch in Cleveland on Christmas. They didn’t look ready while falling behind by 16 at halftime, but were back to their sometimes unstoppable selves while outscoring the Nets by 32 points over the final 24 minutes.

Clippers 106, Spurs 101: Chris Paul scored 19 points be-

fore injuring his left hamstring to lead host Los Angeles to a win over San Antonio.

Paul added seven rebounds and six assists before leaving the game late in the third quarter. The Clippers used their bench in the fourth quarter to seal the victory, only the Spurs second road loss this season.

The Spurs had started the season 15-1 on the road. Kawhi Leonard led the Spurs with 27 points and nine rebounds, while Pau Gasol added 19 points and eight rebounds.

Knicks 106, Magic 95: Derrick Rose scored 19 points, Kyle O’Quinn had 14 points and a career-high 16 rebounds, and New York got the win at home.

Carmelo Anthony and Willy Hernangomez each had 15 points for New York, which has won two in a row since a three-game losing streak.