

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Mosul fight shows power, limits of air ops

The Washington Post

IRBIL, Iraq — On Nov. 29, Iraqi forces were struggling to push their way deeper into Mosul. It had been five weeks since the operation to recapture the militant-held Iraqi city had begun, and the punishing counterattacks from Islamic State fighters suggested a lengthier battle than some had hoped.

The Iraqi forces, however, had ample help overhead. Forty-three U.S. and allied strike aircraft, including B-52 bombers, Marine Harriers, Air Force F-15 Eagles and F-22 Raptors circled, ready to strike targets where militants were, for instance, assembling car bombs or staking out artillery positions.

In addition to the jets, more than a dozen surveillance aircraft, including armed Reaper and Predator drones, quietly gathered imagery of the events below, while Apache attack aircraft flew sorties in support of ground troops and jammer aircraft sought to block militant communications.

The result: more than 80 precision munitions fired, destroying four car bombs, four mortar systems and an Islamic State compound, along with other militant targets.

The slew of military aircraft above Mosul that day offers a snapshot of the ongoing air operation that the United States

and its allies have mounted in an effort to defeat the Islamic State in one of its last remaining major strongholds.

“Their objectives and us protecting them — that was a good day,” said Air Force Brig. Gen. Matthew Isler, who oversees coalition air and cyberoperations for Iraq, referring to support for Iraqi forces.

It also was a noteworthy day, American officials said, because U.S.-supported ground forces took no casualties. Since the beginning of the operation on Oct. 17, Iraq’s military, especially its U.S.-built counterterrorism force, has taken heavy losses, often from suicide bombs or sniper fire, raising questions about Iraq’s ability to sustain a prolonged assault.

The air operation is a central aspect of a military campaign that has cost \$12.5 million per day in Iraq and Syria and that has destroyed countless military vehicles, command centers and fighting positions.

Since strikes began in the late summer of 2014, U.S. and allied aircraft have conducted more than 16,000 strikes in both countries. U.S. military officials estimate that 50,000 Islamic State fighters have been killed.

But even such a massive air operation has not been able to extinguish a resilient Islamic State force in and around Mosul and

other militant strongholds. As Iraqi forces have pressed more deeply into the city, fighters have inflicted heavy casualties on Iraqi forces and remaining residents, slowing the battle’s progress and damaging the morale of local fighters.

In recent months, U.S. and allied officials have sought to accelerate air operations in the Islamic State campaign in an attempt to make greater progress against the group, but the pace remains slower than that of other recent conflicts.

The United States and its allies have flown an average of 20 strike sorties per day in Iraq and Syria since 2014, said Dave Deptula, a retired senior Air Force official who is dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies. That’s far fewer than the initial period of the 2003 Iraq War, with almost 800 strike sorties per day; the 1999-2000 Kosovo air operation, with almost 300 sorties per day; or the 1991 Desert Storm operation, with more than 1,200 sorties per day.

Deptula said the nature of the mission against the Islamic State, and especially the battle for Mosul, requires a different kind of air operation. “Desert Storm was a whole-country operation,” Deptula said. “Mosul is a very small subset of that. ... Every conflict situation is different.”

Mattis, Trump have different takes on nuclear weapons

The Washington Post

President-elect Donald Trump has called for the United States to “greatly strengthen and expand” its nuclear capability, but his nominee to run the Pentagon has suggested it’s time to question whether the U.S. still needs so many nuclear weapons and three separate ways to deliver them.

Note to readers

Stripes Lite will not publish on Sunday.

Retired Gen. James Mattis, testifying as a national security expert before the Senate Armed Services Committee last year, said the United States must “clearly establish the role” of nuclear weapons in modern society.

“Do they serve solely to deter nuclear war?” the retired four-star Marine said. “If so, we should say so, and the resulting clarity will help to determine the number we need.”

Currently, U.S. nuclear policy leaves open the door to the use of nuclear weapons in response to some conventional or chemical attacks. But if their function

were narrowed further — only to deterring nuclear war — that might lead the country to continue to scale down its arsenal of 4,500 warheads. Recent efforts to reduce nuclear stockpiles worldwide have stalled in part due to chilly U.S. relations with Russia.

Mattis added that it was time to ask whether it was “time to reduce the triad to a diad,” a reference to the long-running debate about whether the United States must continue to keep and maintain its decades-old arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles. Doing so, Mattis said, could reduce the “false

alarm danger,” in which a nuclear war is set off by mistake. Currently, the Pentagon can launch nuclear attacks using ICBMs, missiles launched from submarines and ordnance dropped by bombers.

Trump tweeted Thursday that the United States “must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes.” The message was posted after Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow needs to “strengthen the military of its strategic nuclear forces,” developing arms that can avoid missile defense systems.

Will president-elect roll back clock at DOD?

Female and LGBT troops fear exclusion if Trump conducts war on 'political correctness'

Foreign Policy

Women and transgender troops in the U.S. military, seeking to defend their hard-fought access to combat roles against attacks from conservatives in Congress, are worried President-elect Donald Trump will overturn revolutionary Defense Department policies as part of his declared war on so-called "political correctness."

The Pentagon personnel changes, pushed through by Defense Secretary Ash Carter over the last year, have been portrayed by Trump and his incoming security advisers as ill-advised "social engineering" imposed on the armed forces. That puts the newly won rights for women and transgender troops at risk, activists say, and calls into question the fate of the groundbreaking policy changes that were years in the making.

Kate Germano, a recently retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel, said women in the military are deeply anxious that newly opened career paths could be cut off under Trump's administration and that the tone of the next White House could undermine the status of female troops.

"Here we have a soon-to-be commander in chief who has a pattern of groping women, who has a pattern of judging women based solely on their looks and on their physical attributes, and he's going to be in charge of the military," said Germano, the chief operating officer at Service Women's Action Network, or SWAN, which provides support for women in the military. "We have reason to be concerned."

Many Republican lawmakers strongly opposed the changes to Pentagon personnel policies, and some plan to press the issue.

"The feeling is that the president-elect is prepared to look at all the bad decisions or dramatic policy changes that don't serve to make the military more lethal or effective," Joe Kasper, a spokesman for Rep. Duncan

Hunter, R-Calif., told Foreign Policy when asked to respond to the fate of women in combat and transgender troops.

The California congressman, a retired Marine and Iraq War veteran who backed Trump early in his candidacy, has vocally opposed opening combat jobs to women and integrating transgender troops into the military. If Team Trump is "true to their word about restoring the warrior mentality, then policies like ground combat integration and transgender advancement should get first look," Kasper said.

Jumping into action

But it's unclear whether the Republican leadership and the new administration will place a high priority on reviewing the personnel changes. Other concerns—including Russian hacking, Chinese moves in the South China Sea, the fight against the Islamic State group and plans to dramatically increase the defense budget—may dominate the first months, if not years, of the Trump administration.

Activist groups that supported the personnel changes are taking no chances and holding meetings with lawmakers to preserve the policies. Just days after the Nov. 8 election, the Palm Center advocacy group posted a statement from more than 30 retired generals and admirals warning the Trump administration against reversing recent changes to policies for transgender troops, arguing for purely merit-based criteria.

"More than half a century of history and research has made clear that an inclusive military that prioritizes talent and ability over social judgment and personal prejudice is an essential ingredient of an effective fighting force," the statement said.

But retired Marine Gen. James Mattis, Trump's nominee to lead the Defense Department, has voiced skepticism about the Obama administration's policies. In a new book

co-edited with Foreign Policy contributor Kori Schake, Mattis criticized civilian leaders for pushing a "progressive agenda" that he said could weaken the force.

"We fear that an uninformed public is permitting political leaders to impose an accretion of social conventions that are diminishing the combat power of our military," Mattis and Schake wrote.

Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Joseph Dunford, a general who has served with Mattis, shares his fellow Marine's misgivings about the personnel changes. As head of the Marine Corps, Dunford recommended in 2015 to hold off integrating women into some combat infantry roles. And when Carter unveiled the decision to open the door to female troops, Dunford refused to participate in the announcement.

Trump's election alarmed the LGBT community in and outside the military, partly because of hard-line conservative language in the Republican Party platform—which opposes same-sex marriage and supports the idea of "conversion therapy" for gay and transgender children—and partly because of Vice President-elect Mike Pence's long track record of opposing gay rights.

No law required

Rescinding or revising the Pentagon's personnel policies applying to women or transgender troops would not require new legislation. The next defense secretary will have authority to change the policies and needs to notify Congress only 30 days in advance.

"This is not a change that would require a great deal of footwork or legwork on the part of DOD," Germano said.

The debate over what effect changing the policy would have on the armed forces has long moved past the point of "what ifs." According to figures provided by the Army, 25 female

officers have already gone to work in the infantry and armor branches since December 2015—career paths once closed to women. Twenty more female officers are currently enrolled in combat officer courses, all of whom are projected to graduate in 2017 and begin commanding soldiers.

And as of this month, 178 women have signed enlistment contracts and "requested branch assignments into the infantry and armor career fields," said Lt. Col. Jennifer Johnson, an Army spokeswoman. They all will begin training in February, weeks after Trump is sworn in on Jan. 20.

As a result, rolling back the clock might not be so easy.

"This is about as done and dusted as you can get," said Aaron Belkin, of the Palm Center. "It's pretty darn hard to force people back in the closet after they've been honest about who they are."

Matt Thorn, the executive director of OutServe-SLDN, an advocacy group for LGBT servicemembers, estimates that as many as 12,000 to 14,000 transgender troops are currently serving in the U.S. military. He said fewer than 100 have asked for gender conversion treatment.

With hundreds of women starting to fill combat jobs, and transgender troops allowed to serve openly, "it would be more disruptive to roll them back than it was to implement them" in the first place, Thorn said.

"I don't know how they legally can do it," he added, noting that the chiefs of the military services—even if they opposed the LGBT policy change in the first place—are well aware of the potential lawsuits and other hurdles they would face if the new rules were scuttled.

"These individuals have come out, and women have worked very hard to get into their position," Thorn said. "What do you do with everybody once you roll (the policies) back?"

Obama moves to split NSA and cyberwarfare command

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — With weeks to go in his tenure, President Barack Obama on Friday moved to end the controversial “dual-hat” arrangement under which the National Security Agency and the nation’s cyberwarfare command are headed by the same military officer.

It is unclear whether President-elect Donald Trump will support such a move. A transition official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the next administration’s plans, said only that “cybersecurity has been and will be a central focus of the transition effort.”

Pressure had grown on Obama to make such a move on the grounds that the two jobs are too large for one person to handle, that the two organizations have fundamentally different missions and that U.S. Cyber Command, or Cybercom, needed its own leader to become a full-fledged fighting force.

“While the dual-hat arrangement was once appropriate in order to enable a fledgling Cybercom to leverage NSA’s advanced capabilities and ex-

perience, Cybercom has since matured” to the point where it needs its own leader, Obama said in a statement accompanying his signing of the 2017 defense authorization bill.

Cybercom’s mission is, when ordered, to disrupt and destroy adversaries’ networks. It is also to defend the nation against incoming threats to critical systems and to protect the military’s computers from cyberattack.

The NSA also has a defensive mission — to protect the government’s classified networks — but is better known for its role in conducting electronic spying on overseas targets to gather intelligence on adversaries and foreign governments.

Cybercom, established in 2009 inside the NSA headquarters at Fort Meade, Md., has long depended on the spy agency’s capabilities. NSA and Cybercom personnel sit side by side and use the same networks that were built by the NSA.

“The two organizations should have separate leaders who are able to devote themselves to each organization’s respective mission and responsibilities, but should continue to

leverage the shared capabilities and synergies developed under the dual-hat arrangement,” Obama wrote.

Defense Secretary Ashton Carter and Director of National Intelligence James Clapper Jr. earlier recommended to Obama that the two organizations have separate heads.

Obama had been on the verge of ending the dual-hat leadership in late 2013 but was persuaded to hold off when senior officials, including the NSA’s director at the time, Army Gen. Keith Alexander, argued that the two agencies needed one leader to ensure that the NSA did not withhold resources from Cybercom.

Others, including a presidential review commission, recommended that each of the two groups have its own leader and that the NSA director be a civilian. Since its inception in 1952, the NSA has been led by military officers.

The bill that Obama signed bars the splitting of the leadership role until the defense secretary and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff jointly certify that to do so would not diminish Cybercom’s effectiveness.

Obama didn’t ban Christmas cards for GIs

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A widely shared story claiming President Barack Obama ordered a ban on Christmas cards sent to the military is not true.

The story appeared Dec. 12 on the website tdtalliance using banners and logos from Fox News. The network never aired the story.

Obama never issued such an order, White House spokesman Carl Woog said, “This story is not true and appears to be yet another example of so-called fake news.” Woog said.

The story claims that the White House said traditional Christmas greetings will upset Muslims in host countries and will have to be returned to the sender.

The White House’s holiday website includes a link offering Americans the chance to send digital messages of thanks to active-duty military members.

Obama also said during his end-of-year press conference that “few embody those values and ideals like our brave men and women in uniform and their families. So I just want to close by wishing all of them a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.”

Defense bill could spur new space-based arms race

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama signed legislation Friday that, by striking a single word from longstanding U.S. nuclear defense policy, could heighten tensions with Russia and China and launch the country on an expensive effort to build space-based defense systems.

The National Defense Authorization Act, a year-end policy bill encompassing virtually every aspect of the U.S. military, contained two provisions with potentially momentous consequences.

One struck the word “limited” from language describing the mission of the country’s homeland missile defense system. The system is designed to thwart a small-scale attack by a non-superpower such as North Korea or Iran.

A related provision calls for the Pentagon to start “research, development, test and evaluation” of space-based systems for missile defense.

Together, the provisions signal that the U.S. will seek to use advanced technology to defeat both small-scale and large-scale

nuclear attacks. That could unsettle the decades-old balance of power among the major nuclear states.

The authorization act also includes a 2.1 percent pay raise for troops next year.

Huge bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress approved the policy changes over the past month, with virtually no public debate.

Leading defense scientists said the idea that a space-based system could provide security against nuclear attack is a fantasy.

“Even if we darken the sky with hundreds or thousands of satellites and interceptors, there’s no way to ensure against a dedicated attack,” L. David Montague, a retired president of missile systems for Lockheed Corp. and co-chair of a National Academy of Sciences panel that studied missile defense technologies at the request of Congress, said in an interview. “So it’s an opportunity to waste a prodigious amount of money.”

He called the provisions passed by Congress “insanity, pure and simple.”

US abstains from UN panel vote on Israel

The Washington Post

The U.N. Security Council on Friday passed a resolution demanding Israel cease settlement activity on Palestinian territory in a unanimous vote that passed when the United States abstained rather than use its veto, as it has done in the past.

The resolution declares settlements constructed on land Israel has occupied since the 1967 war, including in East Jerusalem, to have “no legal validity.” It said settlements threaten the viability of the two-state solution.

The United States’ abstention Friday was a rare rebuke to Israel, and it reflected mounting frustration in President Barack Obama’s administration over settlement growth that the U.S. considers an obstacle to peace. With President Obama’s time in office due to end in less than a month, his decision not to veto was a last-minute, symbolic statement of a sense of exasperation that the time has come for two states to be carved out of the contested land.

The administration’s move also defied Donald Trump’s

call on Thursday for the United States to veto the resolution. The incoming Trump administration has signaled that there will be a shift in U.S. policy toward Israel.

Trump has supported moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He has appointed David Friedman, a bankruptcy lawyer who believes Israelis should annex and settle the West Bank, as the next U.S. ambassador to Israel.

It is unclear what, if any, impact this resolution will have. Resolutions reflect the opinion and will of the 15 members of the Security Council, but legal scholars differ about how binding they are.

About 400,000 Jews live in roughly 150 settlements in the West Bank on land that the Palestinians want for a future state east of the line formed after the 1967 war. An additional 200,000 Israelis live in East Jerusalem, which Palestinians want to become the capital of their future state. Many Israelis consider the settlements to be in the ancestral homeland of the Jews and refer to them by

their biblical names, Judea and Samaria. Most nations consider the settlements illegal. U.S. diplomats characterize them as illegitimate and say they exacerbate tensions between Israelis and the Palestinians who live nearby, thereby undercutting efforts to advance peace.

Throughout the year, the administration has been increasingly vocal in its exasperation. The State Department has issued several sharp criticisms of settlement construction, in July calling them “provocative and counterproductive.” Since then, more than 2,600 housing units have been built in settlements.

The international community has shown increasing impatience with the intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Proposals have been put forth in the past year by Egypt, France and a group made up of the European Union, the United Nations, Russia and the United States. Israel has blamed the impasse on Palestinian refusal to recognize the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state. Palestinians blame Israel for occupying lands they con-

sider rightfully theirs.

The 14-0 vote, with only the United States abstaining, followed an intense campaign from Israel to derail it. It was to have been voted on Thursday, but Egypt withdrew its sponsorship after the country’s president spoke by phone with Trump, who got involved at Israel’s request. Friday’s resolution was sponsored by New Zealand, Malaysia, Venezuela and Senegal.

The resolution’s passage brought a swift reaction, particularly in Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday that he welcomed Trump replacing Obama, whose administration, he said, had “colluded” in a diplomatic assault on Israel.

“Israel rejects this shameful anti-Israel resolution at the UN and will not abide by its terms,” Netanyahu said in a statement released by his office. “The Obama administration not only failed to protect Israel against this gang-up at the UN, it colluded with it behind the scenes.”

Not everyone kicking up heels over Rockettes’ Trump inauguration gig

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Radio City Rockettes will be dancing at President-elect Donald Trump’s inauguration next month, but not everyone is kicking up their heels at the booking.

One of the famed dancers took to Instagram to say she was “embarrassed and disappointed” by the gig, triggering calls for a boycott by some on social media. Critics have posted the phone numbers of the dancers’ union and the Rockettes’ employer to urge complaints.

But Madison Square Garden Co., which employs the dancers, said Friday no dancers are being compelled to attend the event.

“For a Rockette to be considered for an event, they must voluntarily sign up and are never told they have to perform at a particular event, including the inaugural,” the company said in a statement. “It is always their choice. In fact, for the coming inauguration, we had more Rockettes request to partici-

pate than we have slots available.”

Many on social media believed attendance was mandatory, including Julissa Sabino, a performer who is part of the union, who tweeted that the issue “breaks my heart” and urged supporters to “help these ladies.” Autumn Withers, a former Rockette, supported a boycott, saying “take a knee, ladies!”

The American Guild of Variety Artists, which represents the Rockettes, has not publicly responded. Many Rockettes — there are 80 women employed for the Christmas show, split into two casts — are employed year-round and also appear in a summer show that debuted this year.

The dancers who choose to attend will join The Mormon Tabernacle Choir at the swearing-in ceremony on Jan. 20. Earlier this month, Trump’s inaugural committee announced that “America’s Got Talent” star Jackie Evancho will be singing the national anthem at the ceremony.

Law enforcement warned of possible attacks over holiday

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal authorities warned law enforcement authorities across the nation Friday that Islamic State sympathizers are continuing to call for attacks on churches and other holiday gathering sites.

The warning was issued after a publicly available list of U.S. churches was posted on a militants’ social media site. It also came after Monday’s attack at a Christmas market in Berlin that left 12 dead and 56 injured.

FBI spokesman Andrew Ames said the agency will work closely with federal, state and local law enforcement should there be any potential threat.

Separately on Friday, police in Australia detained five men suspected of planning a series of Christmas Day attacks using explosives, knives and a gun in the heart of Melbourne.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

2 men arrested after chase over ninja sword

NJ NEWARK — Authorities said two men were arrested after one chased the other after he stole his ninja sword at a New Jersey train station.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey said that Leon Cureton, 61, was arrested Thursday morning after he took a katana-type sword wrapped in a black garbage bag from Fernando Pellot, 29.

Pellot then chased after Cureton through Newark Penn Station before police stopped the two men.

Cureton was charged with theft and receiving stolen property and was being held on a bench warrant from New York at the Essex County Correctional Facility.

Pellot was charged with unlawful possession of a weapon.

Numerous violations found in jail kitchen

PA PITTSBURGH — Health officials inspected the kitchen of the Allegheny County Jail after more than two dozen inmates suffered nausea and vomiting.

An inspector with the county health department found several violations, including kitchen knives in a soiled area, old food debris in a slicer, water leaks and food trays that aren't easy to clean.

Allegheny County Health Department Director Karen Hacker told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette it's not clear whether the rash of health complaints has anything to do with the kitchen violations. The department is planning to test inmate stool samples to pin down a cause.

Man thrown out of bar climbs back in

PA BETHLEHEM — Authorities said a Pennsylvania man thrown out of a bar after throwing a drink scaled a deck behind the establishment and took a seat again.

Police in Bethlehem said Nnaemeka Sam-Otuh was arrested Thursday morning after the incident at the Tally Ho Tavern.

WFMZ-TV reported that a bouncer at the bar told police he threw the Allentown man out, but that he then climbed the deck to return. Bouncer Craig Cobian told police that Sam-Otuh began fighting with him and threatened to kill him.

Alleged mobster claims use of torch in threat

IL CHICAGO — Federal authorities said a purported Chicago-area mob associate facing gun charges bragged about threatening people with a blow-torch.

Documents filed Thursday in federal court say Charles Russell of Schaumburg has a criminal record, including a stint in prison for murder. Agents say he claimed in one wiretapped call to be a mobster.

The criminal complaint says Russell spoke to an informant about breaking into someone's home safe. He said: "I bring my butane torch, put it on the bottom of their feet. ... They open it."

Officials: Rambo the pet alligator can stay

FL LAKELAND — A Florida woman is allowed to keep her 6-foot-long pet alligator at home following a fight with state wildlife officials over the growing size of the reptile.

A spokesman for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said Thursday that the agency had reached an agreement with Mary Thorn, allowing her to keep her 125-pound reptile named Rambo at home.

Wildlife officials say alligators that measure more than 6 feet must have 2.5 acres of land.

Rambo has earned local celebrity status in Lakeland, which is between Tampa and Orlando. The alligator has been with Thorn for more than 11 years and wears clothes. Rambo was recently captured wearing a Santa hat.

Holiday items stolen; man arrested on roof

NH NASHUA — Police say a man accused of stealing Christmas gifts and ornaments in a New Hampshire home break-in might not have escaped up the chimney like the Grinch but was found on his rooftop.

Police said they got a call Monday from a Nashua homeowner who told them his back door had been kicked in and there was an unknown man in his house. They say the homeowner confronted the man, who fled with the gifts and ornaments.

They said a short time later they found and arrested Carl Kirsch, who was hiding on his roof a couple of blocks away.

Kirsch has been charged with burglary.

Fans love dad's video on annoying kid visit

ME CAPE ELIZABETH — Clothes all over the house, milk left out of the fridge, loud gatherings with friends. These are some of a Maine dad's complaints about

his college daughter being home for Christmas.

Dan Howard, of Cape Elizabeth, has posted a humorous two-minute video on Facebook in which he describes scenes that are likely familiar to any parent with a child home from college. The video has more than 2.8 million views.

Howard shares tales of carrying his daughter's heavy luggage through the airport and being unable to sleep as she bakes cookies and cupcakes at 3 a.m. with her friends. He ends by jokingly wondering if he can get Uber to take her back to school early.

Wife uses app to find spouse's missing body

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A Northern California woman found her missing husband's body before the authorities by using a smartphone app, officials said.

The unidentified Pacifica woman reported him missing Dec. 16 and used an app to trace her husband's cellphone to San Mateo on Dec. 17, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Investigators believe Jayesh Patel's Mercedes fell about 30 feet from an elevated ramp at the interchange of Highway 101 and state Highway 92 in San Mateo late Friday or early Saturday. His wife located the crumpled car underneath the interchange and called police Saturday, the California Highway Patrol said.

First responders had to use the "jaws of life" to tear off the crushed car's doors and remove Patel's body, CHP's Redwood City division spokesman Officer Art Montiel said. It's not clear what caused Patel, 49, to lose control of the Mercedes.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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Navy falls on game-ending field goal kick

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Louisiana Tech senior quarterback Ryan Higgins was bawling like a baby even before Jonathan Barnes' game-ending kick went through the uprights to win the Armed Forces Bowl.

"As soon as (the holder) put the ball down, I felt like the kick was money," Higgins said. "Each person that I hugged after that, it was just getting worse and worse. I just couldn't be happier to send my class and this team out on a high note."

Higgins threw for 409 yards and four touchdowns, two each to Trent Taylor and Carlos Henderson, and Barnes' 32-yard field goal broke the game's fourth tie as the Bulldogs beat Navy 48-45 on Friday.

"Excellent win would be an understatement," coach Skip Holtz said.

"If you want to be a kicker, you live for that," Barnes said. "I'm lucky to be able to share it with a bunch of guys that are like my brothers."

The Bulldogs (9-5) drove for

the winning score after Navy freshman quarterback Malcolm Perry ran 30 yards for a touchdown on his only play. Higgins was then 4-for-4 for 58 yards on the final drive.

Navy (9-5), which was trying for its first consecutive 10-win seasons, instead ended with its third straight loss. The Midshipmen lost the American Athletic Conference title game before its first loss to Army since 2001.

"They made a few more plays than we did," coach Ken Niumatalolo said.

Taylor, the 5-foot-8 senior, set an Armed Forces Bowl record with his 12 catches for 233 yards, including a 51-yard TD just before halftime for a 31-24 lead, and joined Troy Edwards as the only Bulldogs with more than 4,000 career receiving yards. Henderson, a junior, had 10 catches for 129 yards and finished this season with 19 TDs.

Perry, whose TD with 3:46 left tied the game at 45-45, came in after Zach Abey took a shot to the ribs on a play that led to a targeting ejection by

Tech defensive tackle Jordan Bradford.

Abey, who made only his second start, ran for 114 yards and two scores and threw for 159 yards and another touchdown.

Takeaway: Louisiana Tech: The Conference USA runner-up Bulldogs won their third straight bowl and reached nine wins for the third consecutive season, the first time as a Division I team to do that. After falling behind 21-17 early in the second quarter, the Bulldogs regained the lead on Henderson's 3-yard TD and never trailed again.

Navy: After being held to 270 yards rushing in the previous two losses, this was more like the Midshipmen triple-option offense. They had 459 total yards, 300 on the ground. Even so, it was a bitter end for Navy, which had won three straight bowl games — a streak that started with an Armed Forces Bowl victory three years ago.

Penalized Navy: The Midshipmen's 70 yards on penalties (seven) were their most under Niumatalolo. "We've been coaching nine years

and we led the country in the least amount of penalties. I told those (officials) after this game we would be leading the country," he said. "I thought there were a lot of bad calls." Jarid Ryan had an apparent third-down interception in the end zone in the fourth quarter that was instead called pass interference.

Henderson highlights: Both of Henderson's TDs were short (3 and 4 yards) and impressive. On his 3-yarder in the first half, he made a two-handed grab over the defender and got both feet in bounds. With just over 4 minutes left in the game, he had a leaping 4-yard catch when he reached around with his right hand for the catch in the back corner of the end zone.

High Marks: The 93 combined points made for the highest-scoring Armed Forces Bowl, surpassing California's 55-36 win over Air Force last year. ... Navy's Chris High twice had tying TD runs (24 yards and 9 yards) on long Navy drives in the second half.

Chunn, Trojans 'D' hold off Bobcats

Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — The Troy Trojans polished off their best season as an FBS program thanks largely to a defense that kept taking the ball away.

Jordan Chunn had three short touchdown runs and the Trojans intercepted four passes and recovered a fumble in a 28-23 win over Ohio in the Dollar General Bowl on Friday.

The Trojans (10-3) finished off their first 10-win season since moving up to the FBS in 2001, thanks largely to a defense that came up with three big fourth-quarter stops. The first Sun Belt Conference team to crack the Top 25, Troy forced 18 turnovers in its last five games.

"Tonight in a lot of ways was a microcosm of our season,"

second-year coach Neal Brown said. "We're sitting here 10-3 and quite honestly it wasn't always pretty. We've won a bunch of different ways."

This time it was mainly a defense that hounded quarterback Greg Windham into mistakes and kept delivering stops.

The result was a win in the program's first bowl game since 2010.

The Bobcats (8-6) settled for field-goal attempts twice in the fourth quarter, making one, and got one more chance from their own 15 with 2:20 left and no timeouts. They managed one first down, but Windham couldn't throw for another one under heavy pressure.

Ohio coach Frank Solich said the average gain per completion was "a good reason to stick with him."

"All those turnovers we had weren't all his fault," said Solich, who fell to 4-9 in bowl games as a head coach. "Obviously, he'd like to have a few plays back. It's kind of a tough way to go. I thought Greg showed great toughness and I felt like he gave us our best chance of winning."

Louie Zervos had made a 37-yard field goal with 4:01 left to cut Troy's lead to 28-23. They had first down from the 12 before a personal foul penalty against lineman Jake Pruehs. Solich said he wasn't sure what happened to prompt the flag.

"I'm anxious to take a look at that play on film," he said. "It was obviously a huge call in the game. I'm going to study that quick and hard."

Chunn found little room to run except near the goal line against the nation's sixth-

ranked run defense. He had 56 yards on 20 carries to earn offensive MVP honors.

Deondre Douglas gained 113 yards on six catches. Ohio's Jordan Reid had 12 catches for 162 yards.

Troy's fourth interception came courtesy of 315-pound defensive tackle Trevon Sanders. One play later, Chunn powered in for a touchdown and a 28-17 third-quarter lead.

Linebacker Justin Lucas made another big one when he was closing in on Windham when the ball came right to him to set up Troy's third touchdown. He earned game MVP honors.

Rashad Dillard was credited with three pressures on Windham and was the defensive MVP.

Old Dominion earns first bowl victory

Associated Press

NASSAU, Bahamas — David Washington came to Old Dominion a year before the program started its transition to the Football Bowl Subdivision.

Five years later, he led the Monarchs to a victory in their first bowl game.

Washington threw three touchdowns passes, Ray Lawry ran for 133 yards and Old Dominion beat Eastern Michigan 24-20 on Friday in the Bahamas Bowl.

Old Dominion (10-3) didn't play football for 69 years before restarting the program in 2009. The Monarchs started at the FCS level and made the transition to the FBS in 2013, where they play in Conference USA.

"I know I haven't been here since the program started, but I've been here five years," Washington said. "So it kind of feels like my baby. We just took it to a bowl game and won the bowl game so it's just really

special."

Eastern Michigan (7-6) lost in its first bowl appearance since 1987. The Eagles were led by Brogan Roback, who completed 26 of 46 passes for 300 yards, two touchdowns and one interception. Roback threw for at least 300 yards in six of his final seven games.

"We were moving the ball," Roback said. "We just weren't really finishing."

Old Dominion had a 10-0 halftime lead, but Eastern Michigan rallied to tie it at 17 late in the third quarter on Paul Fricano's 24-yard field goal.

The Monarchs took the lead for good on Washington's third touchdown pass, which went for 5 yards to Jonathan Duhart and put Old Dominion up 24-17.

"We played really good football at times, but it just wasn't quite good enough to win," Eastern Michigan coach Chris Creighton said. "It's a heart-broken locker room right now. We've had a wonderful week

here. This isn't the way we wanted it to end."

ODU controlled the game in the first half and an impressive 47-yard touchdown throw from Washington to Zach Pascal gave the Monarchs their 10-0 halftime advantage.

Washington — who was a receiver earlier in his collegiate career — evaded multiple defenders on the play, before stepping up and throwing to Pascal in the end zone.

Old Dominion has beaten Eastern Michigan in each of the past three seasons, including 17-3 in 2014 and 38-34 in 2015.

ODU plays a close game: Old Dominion beat Eastern Michigan in its closest game of the season. All of the Monarchs' previous 12 games — wins and losses — were decided by at least 10 points.

Another good game: The Bahamas Bowl has featured three interesting games in its three-year history. Western

Kentucky won the inaugural game in 2014 against Central Michigan 49-48, barely holding on after giving up 34 fourth-quarter points. Last year, Western Michigan and Middle Tennessee were tied at 24 going into the fourth quarter before Western Michigan pulled away for a 45-31 win.

Up next

Eastern Michigan: The Eagles took a huge step forward this season after winning just one game last year, but taking another step will be a challenge in 2017. EMU must replace a lot of talent on both the offensive and defensive lines, including star defensive end Pat O'Connor.

Old Dominion: The Monarchs must find someone to replace Washington, who was steady all season. Old Dominion will have a few more holes to fill — particularly at linebacker — but returns quite a bit of talent on both sides of the ball.

No. 23 Southern Cal beats Wyoming, stays unbeaten

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Southern California coach Andy Enfield hopes this isn't the only time his team wins a tournament championship in Las Vegas this season.

The undefeated Trojans took their last non-conference test Friday night and it turned out to be an extremely difficult one against a stubborn Wyoming team.

With 30 seconds left in overtime, USC had the ball in a tie game.

Jordan McLaughlin dribbled down the clock, drove through traffic in the lane and made a left-handed layup with 4.5 seconds left that gave No. 23 USC a 94-92 win in the title game of the Las Vegas Classic at the Orleans Arena.

"It wasn't a set play. It was a clear-out," Enfield said. "We said make a play and if you do, shoot or pass it to someone

open. He made a spectacular move to the basket."

Wyoming's Jeremy Lieberman missed a potential game-winning three-pointer from the top of the key at the buzzer, and USC (13-0) remained one of six unbeaten teams in Division I. The Trojans finished without a blemish during the non-conference portion of their schedule.

McLaughlin, the Classic's MVP, had 22 points, seven rebounds and five assists.

Jonah Matthews led the Trojans with 26 points and six steals, and De'Anthony Melton added 16 points and eight rebounds.

Haydon Dalton, who had 18 points and 18 rebounds for Wyoming, forced overtime by hitting an improbable three-pointer with 2.3 seconds left after Melton missed the front end of a 1-and-1 with 15 seconds left and USC leading 90-87.

Jason McManamen and Jus-

tin James led Wyoming (10-3) with 23 points apiece. McManamen was 6 of 14 from three-point range.

"USC is a good team and they deserved to be ranked in the country," Wyoming coach Allen Edwards said. "We got guys that came off the bench that played well. It was a good challenge. We've been playing well."

No. 11 West Virginia 92, Northern Kentucky 61: Tarik Phillip scored 16 points and the host Mountaineers pulled away from the Norse on Friday.

West Virginia (11-1) shot 52 percent from the field, overcoming a slow start on the way to their seventh straight win. Teyvon Myers had 13 points, Esa Ahmad scored 12 and Jevon Carter finished with 11.

Northern Kentucky jumped to a 12-4 lead early in the first half, but West Virginia led 36-29 at halftime. The Mountain-

eers then opened the second half with a 12-2 run, and the Norse (9-4) never recovered.

Carson Williams led Northern Kentucky with 12 points.

No. 14 Wisconsin 90, Florida A&M 37: Reserve D'Mitrik Trice scored 14 points and Vitto Brown added 11 and eight rebounds for the host Badgers.

The game came after an eight-day layoff for the Badgers (11-2) as they finished final exams. But they showed few signs of rust.

They led Florida A&M (2-11) by 10 points 5 minutes into the game, pushed the lead to 20 with less than 4 minutes to go in the half and had it up to 38 midway through the second half before coach Greg Gard pulled all of his starters.

Florida A&M, playing on consecutive nights, struggled on offense, shooting just 26 percent. Elijah Mays and Brendon Myles led Florida A&M with nine points each.

Westbrook's 14th triple-double leads OKC

Associated Press

BOSTON — With the clock running down and the Thunder falling behind, Russell Westbrook turned unstoppable.

The Oklahoma City point guard had his 14th triple-double of the season and his third straight 40-point game, scoring 45 points with 11 assists and 11 rebounds on Friday night to lead the Thunder to a 117-112 victory over the Boston Celtics.

Westbrook scored the last seven points of the first half and Oklahoma City's last 15 in the game, including eight straight during a 10-0 run that gave the Thunder the lead for good.

Enes Kanter and rookie Domantas Sabonis scored 20 points for Oklahoma City, which had lost three of its previous five games.

Isaiah Thomas had 34 points and 10 assists and Al Horford scored 23 points for Boston, which had won a season-high

four straight games.

But Westbrook took control when it mattered, converting a three-point play to give the Thunder the lead with just under 3 minutes left, and then making two long three-pointers in the final 75 seconds to ice it.

Warriors 119, Pistons 113: Draymond Green made a tie-breaking dunk with 1:31 left and Kevin Durant overcame foul trouble to score 32 points, lifting Golden State past host Detroit.

Cavaliers 119, Nets 99: LeBron James scored 19 points, Kevin Love added 14 points and 15 rebounds, and Cleveland rolled past visiting Brooklyn.

Grizzlies 115, Rockets 109: Mike Conley scored 24 points and Zach Randolph and Marc Gasol each added 16 to help host Memphis beat Houston.

Pelicans 91, Heat 87: Anthony Davis had 28 points, a career-high 22 rebounds and four

blocked shots, and New Orleans overcame a 14-point deficit to beat visiting Miami.

Spurs 110, Trail Blazers 90: Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points and San Antonio handed host Portland its fifth straight loss despite resting key players.

Kings 109, Timberwolves 105: DeMarcus Cousins scored 21 of his 32 points in the second half and visiting Sacramento rallied to beat Minnesota.

Hornets 103, Bulls 91: Nic Batum had 20 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his first triple-double of the season and seventh overall to help host Charlotte beat Chicago.

Raptors 104, Jazz 98: Kyle Lowry took advantage of a depleted Utah guard corps by scoring a season-high 36 points, including 19 in the fourth quarter, to lead visiting Toronto.

Magic 109, Lakers 90: Elfrid Payton had 25 points

and nine assists and Orlando blocked nine shots in the first quarter in a victory over visiting Los Angeles.

Hawks 109, Nuggets 108: Paul Millsap capped a 9-0 run in the final 1:43 with two free throws and Atlanta rallied to beat host Denver.

Bucks 123, Wizards 96: Giannis Antetokounmpo had a career-high 39 points to help Milwaukee rout visiting Washington.

Mavericks 90, Clippers 88: Harrison Barnes made a 10-foot running jumper with 3.7 seconds left for the last of his team-high 24 points as Dallas beat host Los Angeles.

Suns 123, 76ers 116: Eric Bledsoe scored 16 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter and had 11 assists, leading Phoenix past visiting Philadelphia to snap a four-game losing streak.

Blue Jackets beat Habs, stretch winning streak to 12

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Columbus Blue Jackets gave their fans quite a gift two days before Christmas — a 12-game winning streak and the best record in the NHL.

Columbus defeated the Montreal Canadiens 2-1 on Friday night to maintain the best record in the NHL and improve to 23-5-4 — its best start in franchise history. The Blue Jackets have not lost since Nov. 26.

Montreal, which outshot Columbus 37-24, fell to 21-9-4.

The win was a league-leading 20th for goalie Sergei Bobrovsky, who kept Columbus in the game despite an apathetic third period in which the Blue Jackets took just five shots.

"To secure these types of games when your team is not dead on ... it's your goaltender," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella said. "It's the most important position in hockey. We have probably one of the best goalies in the league here, so it

has helped us quite a bit during this little streak."

Bobrovsky has allowed two goals or less in nine of his 10-game winning streak.

"I prepare myself to work and try to help the guys as much as I need," Bobrovsky said. "Guys work hard and it's fun to watch them. It's good for me to step up some nights and help them."

Sam Gagner put Columbus on the board at 17:50 of the first period, 16 seconds into a Canadiens bench minor for too many men on the ice. Gagner took a pass from Nick Foligno, off a Cam Atkinson rebound, and directed it past Montreal goalie Al Montoya for his 15th of the season and sixth power-play goal.

The Jackets wasted no time making it 2-0 with Brandon Saad's 13th goal of the season just 1:22 into the second period, with assists from Foligno and Alexander Wennberg.

Wild 7, Rangers 4: Mikko Koivu, Nino Niederreiter and Marco Scandella scored in a

strong burst early in the second period, and visiting Minnesota earned its franchise-record 10th straight win.

Penguins 4, Devils 1: Sidney Crosby scored his NHL-leading 24th goal and host Pittsburgh rebounded nicely after getting blown out by Columbus on Thursday.

Maple Leafs 4, Coyotes 1: Arizona captain Shane Doan scored his 400th goal in his 1,500th game, and Toronto rookie Auston Matthews had an assist in his first NHL game in his hometown.

Capitals 4, Lightning 0: John Carlson scored two goals, Alex Ovechkin also scored and Braden Holtby stopped 23 shots for his third shutout of the season, leading host Washington to the win against short-handed Tampa Bay.

Sharks 3, Oilers 2 (OT): Kevin Labanc scored his second goal of the night 3:24 into overtime and host San Jose beat Edmonton for its sixth victory in seven games.

Stars 3, Kings 2 (OT): Esa Lindell scored 1:07 into overtime, sending host Dallas past Los Angeles.

Avalanche 2, Blackhawks 1 (OT): Nathan MacKinnon scored 25 seconds into overtime to lift Colorado to the road win.

Red Wings 4, Panthers 3 (SO): Thomas Vanek and Frans Nielsen scored in the shootout, helping visiting Detroit rally past Florida.

Hurricanes 3, Bruins 2 (OT): Teuvo Teravainen scored 3:01 into overtime and Carolina won for the ninth time in its last 10 home games.

Islanders 5, Sabres 1: Ryan Strome had a goal and an assist, Thomas Greiss made 28 saves and host New York beat Buffalo.

Flames 4, Canucks 1: Defenseman Mark Giordano scored two goals less than 10 minutes apart in the second period to help host Calgary beat Vancouver.