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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump declares Jerusalem Israel's capital

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defying dire, worldwide warnings, President Donald Trump on Wednesday broke with decades of U.S. and international policy by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Despite urgent appeals from Arab and European leaders and the risk of anti-American protests and violence, Trump declared that he was ending an approach that for decades has failed to advance the prospects for peace. He also for the first time personally endorsed the concept of a "two-state solution" for Israel and the Palestinians, provided both sides agree to it.

"I have determined that it is time to officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel," he said in a White House address, calling it "overdue"

and in the best interests of the United States. He said recognition acknowledged the "obvious" that Jerusalem is the seat of Israel's government despite the disputed status that is one of the key elements in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"This is nothing more or less than the recognition of reality," he said.

Trump also directed that the State Department begin the process of moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as required by U.S. law. Officials said, however, that the move will take years to complete.

Trump maintained that his decision would not compromise the city's geographic and political borders, which will still be determined by Israel and the Palestinians.

Ahead of Trump's speech, Arab and Muslim leaders spoke

about the potential for violence. In Gaza, hundreds of Palestinian protesters burned American and Israeli flags. They also waved Palestinian flags and banners proclaiming Jerusalem as their "eternal capital," language that Israelis similarly use for their nation.

In Beirut, a few hundred Palestinian refugees staged a protest in the Bourj al-Barajneh camp, some of them chanting "Trump, you are mad."

The Lebanese newspaper An-Nahar compared the U.S. president to the late British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, who 100 years ago famously promised Palestine as a national home to the Jewish People, in what is known as the Balfour declaration.

The English-language Daily Star newspaper in Lebanon published a full-page photo of the Old City of Jerusalem

capped by the Dome of the Rock beneath the headline: "No offense Mr. President, Jerusalem is the capital of PALESTINE."

The Arab League said it will hold an emergency meeting for foreign ministers on Saturday, and Turkey announced it would host a meeting of Islamic nations next week to give Muslim countries' leaders an opportunity to act together and coordinate following Trump's move.

Jerusalem includes the holiest ground in Judaism. It's also home to Islam's third-holiest shrine and major Christian sites, and any perceived harm to Muslim claims to the city has triggered protests in the past, in the Holy Land and beyond.

Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its capital, while the Palestinians claim the city's eastern sector, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, as the capital of a future independent state.

DOD: About 2,000 US troops in Syria, 5,200 in Iraq

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — About 2,000 American troops are operating in Syria, the Pentagon announced Wednesday, acknowledging a number four times larger than it had previously disclosed.

Army Col. Rob Manning, a Pentagon spokesman, said American troops will remain in Syria for the foreseeable future, even as Islamic State nears defeat there and in Iraq, countries where the militants once controlled vast areas of land. The United States will take a "conditions-based" approach to removing its forces from Syria, he said, aiming to stabilize areas liberated from ISIS control and bolster local groups to govern as it supports

United Nations-led peace talks in Geneva.

Manning announced the new official figure for American servicemembers in Syria on Wednesday, saying Defense Secretary Jim Mattis wants to increase transparency about where and how troops are deployed. As part of that effort, the Pentagon announced in August it had about 3,000 more troops in Afghanistan than acknowledged under then-President Barack Obama.

In Syria, under Obama administration accounting practices known as Force Management Levels, the Pentagon acknowledged only 503 troops in Syria, though officials privately admitted there were significantly more forces there.

Manning also said Wednesday that the United States has

about 5,200 troops in Iraq, essentially the same force size as the Pentagon acknowledged under Obama.

The Pentagon declined to say why it took three months longer to disclose more accurate troop counts for Iraq and Syria than Afghanistan. Manning said the delay was in an effort to "get it right."

The Pentagon's new public numbers reflect an approximation of deployed troops as of Wednesday, Manning said. U.S. forces in Syria and Iraq are "trending downward," he added, without specifying whether the 2,000 troops in Syria included the 400 Marine artillerymen that the Pentagon announced last week would soon leave the country.

"We seek to balance informing the American public with

the imperative of operational security and denying the enemy any advantage," he said. Manning declined to say how many American troops were in Syria or Iraq at the height of urban combat operations — those in Raqqa or Mosul, for example — that required larger presence of U.S. combat advisers.

ISIS has lost about 97 percent of the land it once controlled across Syria and Iraq, Manning said Wednesday, but small pockets of fighters remain in both countries.

"Important work remains to ensure lasting defeat" of ISIS, he said. "We will be in Syria as long as it takes to make sure that ISIS is not afforded the ability to re-establish safe havens and plan and conduct attacks."

Pearl Harbor warship wreckage found

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Just days before the 76th anniversary of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, marine researchers found and explored the undersea wreckage of the U.S. ship that was the first to fire upon a Japanese vessel that day.

On Dec. 1, the crew of the research vessel Petrel sent an underwater drone 650 feet below to explore and document the remnants of the USS Ward, according to a statement by the USS Ward Expedition.

The Ward has rested unseen at the bottom of Ormoc Bay — just off the island of Leyte, Philippines — since it was destroyed

by kamikaze planes in 1944. It was the end of the line for a ship that played a historic role in the beginning of World War II.

On Dec. 7, 1941, the Wickes-class destroyer was patrolling the entrance to Pearl Harbor. Just after 6:30 a.m., the officer of the deck spotted the periscope of a Japanese 80-foot midget submarine trailing the cargo ship USS Antares into the harbor, which was home to the Pacific Fleet.

The Ward fired on the sub and dropped several depth charges.

“We have attacked, fired upon and dropped depth charges on a submarine operating in defensive sea areas,” the Ward’s commander radioed a few minutes after the sub rolled over.

The submarine was sunk al-

most two hours before the first wave of Japanese fighters and bombers attacked the island of Oahu and decimated the Pacific Fleet’s Battleship Row.

The Ward’s shots are regarded as the first fired by America during World War II, even though the United States did not officially declare war on Japan until the next day.

After Pearl Harbor, the Ward sailed to the West Coast and was converted into a high-speed transport. It returned to the war, ferrying troops and equipment to island battles in the Solomons.

Three years later to the day, on Dec. 7, 1944, the Ward was attacked near Leyte by several Japanese kamikazes — suicide aircraft loaded with explosives.

One slammed into the ship’s hull, igniting a fire that could not be contained. The crew was ordered to abandon ship, and the Ward was intentionally sunk by a fellow Navy ship.

The Petrel is owned by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen. The 250-foot ship is one of the few capable of exploring waters as deep as 3.5 miles.

Searchers verified the wreckage by cross-referencing historic drawings and schematics of the Ward.

Allen has also spearheaded expeditions that discovered the wrecks of the USS Indianapolis in August and the Japanese battleship Musashi in 2015.

Army OKs direct commissioning for cybersecurity field

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army has approved a program to recruit experienced cybersecurity experts directly into the service as cyber officers in an attempt to bolster a growing field that military leaders see as vital to national security.

U.S. Army Cyber Command will directly commission five civilians in the coming months, aiming to bring its first batch of officers into military training by February, said Lt. Gen. Paul Nakasone, the Army’s Cyber Command chief. The pilot program, approved by the Pentagon and Congress, seeks to bring in five new officers each year for five years.

“It’s an ability for us to go after some of the most technical and adept talent out there that would like to serve our nation,” Nakasone told reporters Tuesday at the Pentagon.

The candidates the Army is hoping to attract should have at least a bachelor’s degree and real-world experience in computer science or similar fields such as data science or industrial control systems, said Nakasone

and Maj. Gen. Patricia Frost, the service’s cyber director for operations and planning. Candidates should be skilled in teamwork and innovative thinkers who are prepared to help the Army shape its defensive and offensive cyberoperations for years.

“So it’s, what are you bringing that’s a new idea to gain us the advantage in the cyberspace domain?” Frost said.

Earlier this year, the Army began developing the pilot program based on other direct-commission programs for medical doctors, lawyers and chaplains, which place experts in those fields into the Army at a rank that is commensurate with their experience in the civilian workforce.

However, at least initially, candidates chosen to directly commission into the service will start their Army career as second lieutenants. In other fields, the services have allowed direct commissions at ranks as high as colonel. Nakasone said that could change as the Army examines its processes during the pilot program.

Candidates seeking to apply to the program can do so on the Army’s recruiting website,

goarmy.com. The requirements for consideration include U.S. citizenship, a four-year college degree, the ability to obtain and maintain a Top Secret security clearance and the ability to meet Army physical fitness standards, Nakasone said. Applicants must be younger than 41 years of age.

Individuals selected for the pilot program will spend six weeks in the direct commission course at Fort Sill in Oklahoma and then attend the 12-week Cyber Basic Officer Leader Course at Fort Gordon in Georgia. Most cyber officers will be stationed either at Fort Gordon or Fort Meade in Maryland, Nakasone said.

Direct commissioning will allow candidates chosen to forgo the Army’s 10-week Basic Combat Training Course, receive an expedited security clearance and expedited promotion to first lieutenant. It also guarantees placement as a cyber officer, whereas recruits who commission through other routes, such as Officer Candidate School or ROTC, cannot be guaranteed a slot within the cyber corps, Nakasone said.

The Marine Corps, Air Force and Navy will offer similar pilot

programs in the cyber field, officials said.

The pilot programs all follow on former Defense Secretary Ash Carter’s 2016 commitment that the Pentagon would broaden its direct commission program, seeking to attract leaders with proven track records in the private sector, especially in fields like cybersecurity with a need for rapid improvement. Congress has given the Pentagon through 2020 to study the potential of expanding direct commissioning programs.

The Army is looking at incentives that it could offer people interested in the program, Nakasone said, but the biggest attraction for people interested should be uniformed service in a critical field.

“Every single day you’re going to go toe-to-toe with the best hackers in the world, and you are defending our nation,” he said. “Whether it’s against a nation-state or a non-nation-state actor or terrorists, if you want that opportunity come join us ... to go against the best in the world, because you won’t do that necessarily in another place.”

PACOM: GIs' families to stay in S. Korea for now

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The U.S. military has no plans to begin evacuating U.S. families from South Korea, a spokesman said Wednesday following Sen. Lindsey Graham's suggestion that it was getting too dangerous to keep noncombatants on the divided peninsula.

The South Carolina Republican's remarks that he believes it's time to start withdrawing family members of the some 28,500 U.S. troops stationed in the country caused concern among many who fear being separated from their loved ones more than saber rattling from North Korea.

Pacific Command said the safety and welfare of servicemembers, employees and family members is a top priority and contingency plans are in place.

"We currently have no intent to initiate departures for military dependents, whether on a voluntary or mandatory basis, and no intent to modify the policy authorizing military dependents to accompany military members being stationed in

South Korea," spokesman Navy Lt. Cmdr. Dave Benham told Stars and Stripes in an email.

"Our personnel forward deployed to South Korea remain in a consistent state of readiness through various training exercises, which include annual NEO training," he added, referring to drills that occur on a regular basis to prepare families for a possible noncombatant evacuation operation.

That was welcome news for many American family members and other civilians working with the military, which has maintained a presence on the peninsula since the 1950-53 Korean War.

"I'm not going anywhere if I can't bring my family with me," said Shamika Maxon, a budget analyst who works on the Army's Yongsan Garrison in Seoul.

She said relatives and friends in the United States have expressed concern for her safety, but she doesn't feel the danger and is reassured that her South Korean colleagues don't either.

"I look to them and how they are reacting ... and I don't see any difference with their behavior," she said.

Video shows strike on Taliban leader

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. military has released a video of a strike that killed the leader of the Taliban's elite "Red Unit" last week in Helmand province.

The 15-second black-and-white strike video released Tuesday shows cross hairs centered on a speeding vehicle that suddenly erupts in a white flash and sparks.

The flaming vehicle slows and rolls to a stop near the edge of the frame.

The military said in a statement that the strike, conducted Friday in Helmand's Musa Qala district, killed Mullah Shah Wali, commander of the crack Taliban unit, and his deputy and three others. It said the Red Unit is responsible for planning numerous bombings and coordinating assaults against civilians and Afghan and allied troops.

Wali coordinated operations

and resupplied Taliban fighters with munitions and explosives throughout the province.

Helmand, site of some of the bloodiest fighting in the 16-year Afghanistan War, is the most productive area for poppy cultivation, which fuels the Taliban's opium trade and finances its insurgency.

Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said Wali's death will disrupt the Taliban's activities in Helmand, including its narcotics trafficking and its ability to attack Afghan forces.

U.S. forces have been targeting the insurgents' revenue streams since last month, when U.S. and Afghan warplanes began bombing Taliban-controlled opium production facilities in Helmand under new rules granted under President Donald Trump's strategy for the region.

Trump's strategy is meant to shift the balance in the war, which has ground to a stalemate in recent months.

Jail, hard labor sought for anti-US base protester on Okinawa

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japanese prosecutors are reportedly requesting a prison sentence of 2½ years with hard labor for the anti-U.S. base protest leader whose recent five-month detention drew international attention and condemnation from human rights groups.

Hiroji Yamashiro, 64, chairman of The Okinawa Peace Activity Center, was arrested Oct. 16, 2016, and charged with a string of protest-related offenses — from cutting barbed wire at a U.S. installation to obstructing police and businesses.

He was released in March on a \$64,000 bond while awaiting trial.

Yamashiro and his group are committed to halting U.S. military expansion within the island prefecture, including the relocation of air operations from Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to Camp Schwab in the remote northern recesses of Okinawa.

The sentencing recommendation was made by prosecutors during closing arguments Monday at Naha District Court, members of The Okinawa Peace Activity Center told Stars and Stripes after the hearing.

The defense is scheduled to give its closing argument on Dec. 20. A verdict is expected sometime around March.

A spokesman for Naha District Public Prosecutors' Office on Wednesday declined to confirm the sentencing recommendation. He also declined to discuss de-

tails of their closing statements.

A spokesman for The Okinawa Peace Activity Center called the sentencing recommendation unnecessarily harsh.

Yamashiro has become a lightning rod for Okinawa's small but passionate protest movement, which is backed by an anti-base governor and popular support, in the years since he joined the group in 2000. He is often seen at protests directing action with a bullhorn.

After his initial arrest for cutting a strand of barbed wire on a perimeter fence at Okinawa's Northern Training Area while protesting the construction of U.S. military helicopter landing pads, prosecutors added other charges after Yamashiro was accused of blocking a Camp Schwab construction gate

with more than 1,000 concrete blocks.

During his incarceration, Yamashiro was kept in solitary confinement with no natural light after guards covered up his windows, he told Stars and Stripes last summer. He also said he was denied access to his doctor, denied treatment for a cavity and that guards kept the lights on in his cell at all times and removed towels and items he placed over his face to help himself sleep.

Groups such as Amnesty International and Veterans for Peace took up his cause, and protests demanding his freedom sprang up on the island and in the U.S., until he was released on bond. Yamashiro then spoke at the U.N., toured Japan and continued his protest efforts.

Bannon blasts GOP leaders at Moore rally

Associated Press

FAIRHOPE, Ala. — Populist firebrand Steve Bannon savaged national Republican leaders in a call to rally voters behind embattled Senate candidate Roy Moore as the battle for the GOP's soul spilled into a dirt-floor barn deep in rural Alabama.

Bannon, known best for his former role as President Donald Trump's chief strategist, called GOP leaders in Congress "cowards" Tuesday night and attacked the party's 2012 presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, as a draft dodger as he defended Moore, who is fighting several allegations of sexual misconduct and a Washington establishment that wants him to lose the Dec. 12 election.

"The days of taking it silently are over," Bannon declared at a rally that drew hundreds of Moore supporters to a local farm in the southwestern corner of the state.

"They want to destroy Judge Roy Moore. You know why? They want to take your voice away," Bannon said. "If they can destroy Roy Moore, they can destroy you."

Even if he isn't well-known in this heavily Republican county, Bannon's appearance was a welcome development for Moore, who has been shunned by the Republican Party's biggest stars. Trump agreed to campaign later in the week in

nearby Florida, but many national GOP leaders say the allegations against Moore are credible and he shouldn't serve in the Senate.

Earlier in the day, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said that Moore, if elected on Dec. 12, would "immediately have an issue with the Ethics Committee" — a process that could lead to his ultimate expulsion from the Senate. Some Republicans, including Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner, have already promised expulsion.

Another Republican, Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake, sent a \$100 check to Moore's Democratic opponent, Doug Jones, on Tuesday. He tweeted a picture of the check and the words, "Country over party."

Romney said this week that Moore would be "a stain on the GOP and the nation." "No vote, no majority is worth losing our honor, our integrity," Romney tweeted.

Moore, 70, is facing multiple allegations of sexual misconduct, including accusations that he molested two teenage girls and pursued romantic relationships with several others while in his 30s. He has denied the allegations.

Moore didn't address the allegations directly Tuesday night. Instead, he cast himself as a political outsider fighting the establishment in both parties, just like Trump did one year ago.

Time's Person of the Year is 'Silence Breakers'

The Washington Post

Time magazine has named its 2017 Person of the Year as "The Silence Breakers" — the women (and some men) who came forward with stories of sexual harassment and assault, forcing a nationwide reckoning.

The magazine calls them "The Silence Breakers" — "the voices that launched a movement."

Among them are actresses Ashley Judd and Rose McGowan, whose stunning accusations against Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein helped lead to his downfall; activist Tarana Burke, the creator of the #MeToo movement; and Alyssa Milano, the actress who amplified it.

"The galvanizing actions of the women on our cover ... along with those of hundreds of others, and of many men as well, have unleashed one of the highest-velocity shifts in our culture since the 1960s," Time's editor in chief, Edward Felsenthal, said in a statement to "Today."

These "silence breakers" have forced a national reckoning on sexual harassment.

As Katrina vanden Heuvel wrote in The Washington Post:

"More women are emboldened to talk, and more are being heard. The risks for abusers — particularly public figures — are rising. We know the roots of this extraordinary moment; where the moment leads remains to be seen."

In its Person of the Year cover story, Time notes that "this moment is borne of a very real and

potent sense of unrest. Yet it doesn't have a leader, or a single, unifying tenet. The hashtag #metoo (swiftly adapted into #BalanceTonPorc, #YoTambien, #Ana_kaman and many others), which to date has provided an umbrella of solidarity for millions of people to come forward with their stories, is part of the picture, but not all of it."

"This reckoning appears to have sprung up overnight," according to the magazine. "But it has actually been simmering for years, decades, centuries. Women have had it with bosses and co-workers who not only cross boundaries but don't even seem to know that boundaries exist. They've had it with the fear of retaliation, of being blackballed, of being fired from a job they can't afford to lose. They've had it with the code of going along to get along. They've had it with men who use their power to take what they want from women."

"These silence breakers have started a revolution of refusal, gathering strength by the day, and in the past two months alone, their collective anger has spurred immediate and shocking results: nearly every day, CEOs have been fired, moguls toppled, icons disgraced. In some cases, criminal charges have been brought."

"Emboldened by Judd, Rose McGowan and a host of other prominent accusers, women everywhere have begun to speak out about the inappropriate, abusive and in some cases illegal behavior they've faced."

US charges Mexican man after acquittal for murder

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — U.S. authorities on Tuesday charged a Mexican man with new immigration and gun violations less than a week after a San Francisco jury acquitted him of murder in the shooting death of Kate Steinle, a case that helped fuel a fierce national debate on immigration.

A federal grand jury in San Francisco indicted Jose Ines Garcia Zarate on Tuesday on one count each of felon in possession of a firearm and of "being an alien illegally and

unlawfully in the United States" in possession of a gun and ammunition, according to the indictment.

A San Francisco jury last week convicted him of a state charge of felon in possession of a firearm after acquitting him of murder and assault in the July 1, 2015, shooting.

The state conviction carries a maximum sentence of three years in jail. He has been in jail since the day of the shooting. His public defender, Matt Gonzalez, said Garcia Zarate will ask a judge to toss out the state

conviction. Garcia Zarate is to be sentenced in state court Dec. 14.

San Francisco District Attorney George Gascon on Tuesday defended his office's handling of the case. He said he still believed Garcia Zarate should have been convicted of Steinle's murder.

Legal experts have said prosecutors overreached by asking for a first-degree murder conviction because the fatal shot ricocheted off the ground, supporting Garcia Zarate's defense that the shooting was an accident.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man tried to lick woman's shoes

NC KNIGHTDALE — A North Carolina man is accused of trying to kiss and lick a woman's shoes at a Walmart.

News outlets reported Knightdale police arrested Nahshon Luther Homes, 25, on Monday and charged him with misdemeanor sexual battery. The arrest warrant said Holmes attempted to "satisfy his sexual arousal by laying underneath the victim and in between her legs in an attempt to lick her shoes against her will."

Knightdale Police Chief Lawrence Capps said the shopper was talking with another person when she noticed a man on his back who was trying to slide to get close to her.

48 pounds of meth found in car at border

AZ SAN LUIS — Authorities at the Port of San Luis arrested a 25-year-old woman attempting to cross the Arizona border with 48 pounds of methamphetamine worth about \$144,000.

The unidentified woman was traveling with four young children Monday when U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials referred her vehicle for a secondary inspection.

A drug-sniffing dog alerted officers to multiple packages of suspected narcotics in the vehicle's rocker panels. Authorities seized the drugs and vehicle while the four children were turned over to a family member.

Judge: Bikini barista stands can continue

WA SEATTLE — A federal judge has ruled in favor of a group of bikini

baristas in Everett who sued the city over new dress code ordinances.

Multiple news outlets reported U.S. District Court Judge Marsha Pechman on Monday extended an injunction that prevents the city of Everett from enforcing the two laws.

That injunction means the coffee stands can continue to operate while the lawsuit filed by seven bikini baristas and the owner of a chain of coffee stands called "Hillbilly Hot-ties" continues.

Patient's tattoo poses dilemma for doctors

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — An unconscious patient in an emergency room at a Miami hospital posed a vexing ethical dilemma for doctors. The 70-year-old man's blood pressure was dropping and he wasn't breathing well, but a tattoo across his chest read "Do Not Resuscitate."

Doctors at Jackson Memorial Hospital weren't sure if the tattoo truly reflected the man's wishes. Dr. Gregory Holt, a University of Miami assistant professor who worked on the case, said doctors kept the man alive while referring the matter to an ethics team.

Holt, who helped write a case study published last week in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, said the ethics team eventually decided the tattoo reflected the man's wishes.

DUI suspect dances on car, tries to flee

NV RENO — Police said a Nevada woman was arrested on suspicion of drunken driving after she drove down a highway the wrong way, danced atop her vehicle and attempted to flee officers on a kid's scooter.

The Gazette-Journal reported that Sparks police Saturday went to a call for a wrong-way driver and found Sabra Bewley's vehicle on a hill next to Pyramid Highway. Officers said Bewley, 27, was erratic and danced on top of her vehicle before attempting to get away.

She was arrested on suspicion of a second drug-related DUI, resisting arrest, possession of a controlled substance, trafficking MDMA, possession of a controlled substance with the intent to sell and destruction of property.

Man arrested after robbery yielded \$1

UT PROVO — A Utah man was arrested after his robbery of a hotel yielded \$1.

The Daily Herald reported a Provo police officer responded to a report of a robbery last weekend at a Fairfield Inn.

Authorities said when the hotel employee showed the man that there was only \$1 in the cash register, the man took the bill and threw it at the employee before leaving.

Police arrested the suspect on suspicion of second-degree felony robbery, third-degree felony of possession of another's identifying documents and class B misdemeanor of interference with an arresting officer.

Stray llama on the loose is captured

CO FORT COLLINS — Officials announced the capture of a llama that had been wandering around Bobcat Ridge Natural Area since spring.

The Coloradoan reported Fort Collins Natural Areas staffers wrote Sunday on Facebook and Twitter that the "elusive stray llama" had been captured after first being spotted by hikers in

late May or early June.

Natural areas staffers took to social media in mid-October with pleas for help reuniting the woolly creature with its owner after other attempts failed.

Bobcat Ridge Ranger Karl Manderbach said the llama currently is shut in one of the natural area's sheds because it tried to squeeze under the corral's fence.

Woman spots missing puppy in newscast

CA SAN DIEGO — A California woman had given up hope she would find her 9-month-old puppy until she spotted the animal in a newscast of a high-speed chase.

The San Diego Union-Tribune reported Salina Hurtado said her puppy, Catalina, went missing soon after Thanksgiving.

Hurtado said she watched a local television news anchor detail a pursuit in Valley Center, where a dog was shot when deputies fired at a man accused of trying to run them over in a stolen van. The dog was a white pit bull with a distinctive brown spot similar to Catalina.

Hurtado called the TV station and found out the puppy had been taken to the County of San Diego Animal Services shelter in Carlsbad for treatment.

Zoo gorilla finds grass greener with the hogs

TX HOUSTON — A gorilla at the Houston Zoo is back where she belongs after she managed to get out of the zoo's gorilla exhibit and into an adjacent hog exhibit.

A 28-year-old western lowland gorilla named Holli was found last weekend with red river hogs. The animals share a zoo habitat but are separated.

From wire reports

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Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Holiday season filled with big NFL games

Associated Press

The accepted mantra throughout the NFL that stretches to its fandom is that each game in the schedule is equally important.

Then we get to late November and all of December and forget that bromide.

It's happening again, and there's nothing wrong with it.

Think about how huge Kansas City's stunning win at New England to kick off the season seemed to be. Doesn't look so momentous right now with the Chiefs nose-diving in the AFC West while the Patriots do their usual tsunami over the AFC East.

The league and many of the pundits who follow it couldn't find enough hyperbole for the first Sunday night, the Giants at Dallas.

Well, the Giants are in range for a top-three draft choice — and just benched Eli Manning, if you can imagine — and the Cowboys likely can't afford another loss and make the playoffs.

So while there are games throughout September and October, it's not until Thanksgiving hits that we can truly define what the *big* games are.

And beginning last week,

they've arrived.

The Vikings are involved in a bunch of them, even though coach Mike Zimmer keeps espousing the company line.

"Go out and win as many games as you can and try to get in (the playoffs) and play as many games as you can at home," Zimmer says. "But we have to win and we have to take one game at a time. Talking about it doesn't do anything."

Actually, talking about it is all kinds of fun. So here are the games that should really matter and are worth getting excited about through Christmas.

Week 14

New Orleans at Atlanta; Minnesota at Carolina; Seattle at Jacksonville; Oakland at Kansas City; Philadelphia at Los Angeles Rams; Baltimore at Pittsburgh.

WOW!

The nastiest rivalry in the NFL, Ravens-Steelers, in the Sunday night game, possibly Baltimore's last chance to make any headway in the AFC North. A win and Pittsburgh will wrap up its third division title in four years.

Another road go-round for the Vikings in the NFC South,

where that division's most-heated rivalry has the Saints at the Falcons. We'll know a whole lot more about that sector after these games — and perhaps a whole lot more about how strong the Vikings are.

"I think every game is a statement game for us," says Adam Thielen, who has developed into a top receiver for Minnesota. "I think we got to keep going because we got a tough schedule ahead of us."

While both the Raiders and Chiefs have hit mediocrity, their matchups always are noteworthy for intensity. AFC West leadership will still be in question.

The Raiders are fortunate even to have a chance after trailing Kansas City by three games just one month ago before the Chiefs went on their own four-game skid. The AFC West is the first division since the 1970 merger where every team had a four-game losing streak at some point in a season.

The Seahawks and Jaguars both will need this game, whether for division title hopes or wild-card chances. And the Eagles are staying out west after the Seattle contest for a matchup of the top two selec-

tions in the 2016 draft: No. 1 Jared Goff vs. No. 2 Carson Wentz.

Week 15

New England at Pittsburgh; Los Angeles Chargers at Kansas City; Los Angeles Rams at Seattle.

Very possible division deciders in KC and Seattle. Plus, by far, the AFC's most intriguing confrontation, most likely with home-field advantage for the conference championship game on the line.

Week 16

Minnesota at Green Bay; Atlanta at New Orleans; Los Angeles Rams at Tennessee.

OK, the Vikings probably will be playoff-bound and the Packers won't, but hopefully we'll get a glimpse of Aaron Rodgers again, back from his broken collarbone.

Falcons-Saints for the second time in three weeks, with lots on the line. And maybe a playoff-relevant home contest for the Titans against a Rams team headed to the postseason.

And these don't even consider the final weekend of all divisional matchups.

Discipline handed down for Steelers-Bengals hits

Associated Press

CINCINNATI—Two players carted off, two others suspended, many fines to follow. One of the NFL's nastiest rivalries set new lows in prime time, forcing fans to avert their eyes.

What's to be done about this long-running animosity between the Steelers (10-2) and Bengals (5-7)? Do the teams encourage the mayhem by downplaying it? Do the NFL and the networks promote it by showing it in prime time every season?

Those questions were raised in the aftermath of a game so brutal that it made viewers cringe. Pittsburgh rallied for

a 23-20 victory at Paul Brown Stadium on Monday night, its sixth straight win over the Bengals.

What it'll be remembered for, though, is how it felt more like a street brawl at times. The NFL responded by suspending Steelers receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster and Bengals safety George Iloka for one game each on Tuesday, and fines for other players are expected later in the week.

"I'll acknowledge there were some unfortunate things in that game that we don't need in our game — by both sides," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said Tuesday.

It's been going on for years, with grudges deepening.

Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict — a focal point for much of the animosity — left the field on a cart with a concussion after Smith-Schuster leveled him with a blindside hit. The receiver then stood over the fallen linebacker to taunt him.

As Smith-Schuster apologized for taunting after the game, receiver Antonio Brown yelled: "Karma! It's called karma!"

The NFL's letter to Smith-Schuster informing him of the suspension said the egregious hit and the taunting "fell far below the high standards of

sportsmanship expected of an NFL player."

Iloka hit Brown in the head after his touchdown catch tied the game in the fourth quarter. Brown wasn't hurt, but the NFL suspended the Bengals safety for the type of flagrant hit that has "no place in our game."

Those moments have defined the rivalry since 2015, when Burfict made a twisting tackle on Le'Veon Bell that left the Steelers running back with a torn knee. Burfict celebrated — the Bengals say he was just happy to make a big play — but Bell and the Steelers took umbrage.

Taggart leaving Oregon for Florida St.

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Willie Taggart is returning to the Sunshine State, this time as head football coach at Florida State.

Taggart has agreed to become Florida State's next coach, replacing Jimbo Fisher. Taggart told his Oregon players during a team meeting on Tuesday that he is leaving.

Florida State called a news conference for Wednesday morning to introduce Taggart.

The 41-year old Bradenton native coached at South Florida for four seasons before going to Oregon. Fisher resigned Friday to accept the opening at Texas A&M.

Taggart has a 47-50 career record, including 7-5 this season, but is known as a rebuild-er. He arrived in Eugene after four years at South Florida, where he guided the Bulls from a 2-10 record his first year to a 10-2 mark last year and a spot in the Birmingham Bowl.

Before that he spent three seasons as head coach at his

alma mater, Western Kentucky, inheriting a winless program that he turned around with back-to-back winning seasons.

The Seminoles have entered new territory following Fisher's departure.

Taggart, and Odell Haggins — Fisher's replacement on an interim basis — are the first black head football coaches at Florida State. Haggins will hold the position for two games before turning over the reins to Taggart.

Haggins led the Seminoles (6-6) to a 42-10 win over Louisiana-Monroe in Saturday's regular-season finale. He will coach the Seminoles in the Dec. 27 Independence Bowl against Southern Mississippi.

This was the first time Florida State had to conduct a coaching search since 1975.

Bobby Bowden was the Seminoles' coach for 34 seasons and put the program on the map with two national championships. Fisher was hired as offensive coordinator in 2007 and was also named as the head-

coach-in-waiting. He took over in 2010 following Bowden's retirement.

When Taggart was hired by Oregon, he said he had three basic tenets: "Make no excuses, blame no one, do something." "Do Something" became his tagline for his first season with the Ducks.

Oregon started this past season 4-1 and even briefly popped into the AP rankings, but starting quarterback Justin Herbert broke his collarbone and the Ducks floundered, going 1-4 without him.

Herbert returned for the final two games of the season, both wins that got the Ducks into a bowl game in Taggart's lone season. Co-offensive coordinator and offensive line coach Mario Cristobal will be the interim head coach when Oregon faces Boise State in the Las Vegas Bowl on Dec. 16.

Taggart will be tasked with restoring a Florida State program that has failed to live up to expectations the last two seasons.

Since winning 33 of 34 games between 2013 and '15, including a national championship, The Seminoles are 20-12, including 10-10 in the ACC.

Florida State was ranked third in the Top 25 preseason poll but lost quarterback Deondre Francois in the opener against Alabama and was beset by other injuries. The Seminoles won their final three games to finish 6-6 and extend their bowl streak to 36 consecutive seasons.

Taggart's contract with Oregon was for \$16 million over five years that includes a \$3 million buyout if he left before Jan. 31, 2018. He was offered a four year, \$20 million extension a week ago when it appeared that the Florida State job would be open.

His first job at Florida State will be salvaging a recruiting class that saw six prospects over the past week announce that they were reopening their searches of where to attend college.

College basketball roundup

Bridges leads No. 4 Villanova past No. 12 Gonzaga

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mikal Bridges had his coming-out performance as one of top players in the nation, scoring a career-high 28 points to lead No. 4 Villanova over No. 12 Gonzaga 88-72 Tuesday night in the Jimmy V Classic at Madison Square Garden.

Bridges, a 6-foot-7 junior guard, had shown Villanova (9-0) what he could do this season with three games of 20-plus points that already signaled he might be the Big East champs' best player.

No. 1 Duke 124, St. Francis (Pa.) 67: At Durham, N.C., freshman Marvin Bagley III had 21 points and 11 rebounds, and the Blue Devils (11-0) scored 71 points in the first half of their rout of the Red Flash

(3-5).

No. 3 Michigan State 62, Rutgers 52: At Piscataway, N.J., Miles Bridges scored 21 points and the Spartans (8-1, 2-0 Big Ten) overcame their worst offensive performance of the season with a victory over the surprising Scarlet Knights (6-3, 0-2).

No. 6 Wichita State 95, South Dakota State 85: At Wichita, Kan., Landry Shamet had 21 points and eight assists, Shaquille Morris added 20 points and the Shockers (7-1) rallied to beat the scrappy, hot-shooting Jackrabbits (7-4).

Arizona 67, No. 7 Texas A&M 64: At Phoenix, Deandre Ayton had 13 points and 10 rebounds, and the Wildcats (6-3) held on to beat the Aggies (7-1). Tyler Davis led the Aggies with 21 points and 10 rebounds.

Ball St 80, No. 9 Notre Dame 77: Tayler Persons hit a three-pointer from the left wing with 1.7 seconds remaining and the visiting Cardinals (5-4) shocked the Fighting Irish (7-2).

No. 10 Miami 69, Boston University 54: At Coral Gables, Fla., freshman Lonnie Walker IV scored a season-high 26 points and the Hurricanes (8-0) surged in the second half to beat the Terriers (3-4).

No. 18 West Virginia 68, No. 15 Virginia 61: At Morgantown, W.Va., Jevon Carter had 23 points and 10 rebounds, Lamont West scored 22 and the Mountaineers (8-1) sent the Cavaliers (8-1) to their first loss.

Nebraska 78, No. 14 Minnesota 68: At Lincoln, Neb., Glynn Watson Jr. scored 20 of

his 29 points in the second half and the Cornhuskers (7-3, 1-1 Big Ten) opened up a 16-point lead early in the second half en route to a victory over the Golden Gophers (8-2, 1-1).

No. 20 TCU 94, SMU 83: At Fort Worth, Texas, Kenrich Williams had 27 points to lead five TCU players in double figures as the Horned Frogs (9-0) extended the nation's longest winning streak to 14 games with a victory over the Mustangs (7-3).

Texas Tech 82, No. 22 Nevada 76 (OT): At Lubbock, Texas, Keenan Evans scored 25 of his career-high 32 points in the second half and overtime and the Red Raiders (7-1) rallied from 11 points down in the second half to beat the Wolf Pack (8-1).

NBA roundup

Westbrook rallies Thunder past Jazz

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Russell Westbrook scored 34 points in his seventh triple-double of the season, and the Oklahoma City Thunder rallied from 17 points down in the second half to defeat the Utah Jazz 100-94 on Tuesday night.

Westbrook finished with 14 assists and 13 rebounds. Paul George scored 21 points, Steven Adams had 20 points and nine rebounds and Carmelo Anthony added 14 points and eight rebounds for the Thunder, who won their third straight.

Rookie Donovan Mitchell scored 31 points and Joe Ingles added 16 for the Jazz, who had won six straight and scored at least 106 points in each game.

The Jazz led 47-39 at half-time, and they opened things up even more early in the third quarter. A driving layup by Alec Burks put the Jazz up 72-

55 as the Thunder continued to misfire on open shots.

Westbrook closed out the third quarter strong and helped the Thunder cut Utah's lead to 80-68 by the end of the period. He scored 11 points in the quarter.

"Russell Westbrook, the MVP of the league, got going," Utah coach Quin Snyder said. "I thought in the third quarter, he gave them a lot of energy and gave them points."

The Thunder finally took the lead on a layup by Westbrook with about four minutes remaining.

Wizards 106, Trail Blazers 92: Bradley Beal scored a career-high 51 points, and visiting Washington bounced back from a demoralizing loss the night before to beat Portland.

"I've been thinking way too much," Beal said. "Tonight I was just playing freely and having fun."

Beal made 21 field goals, also a career high, and the Wizards led by as many as 23 points. He hit five three-pointers.

"You never go into a game thinking one of your best players or best guards in the league is going to get 50, but he has the ability to get high numbers when he's aggressive," coach Scott Brooks said. "We gave him space to work."

Damian Lillard finished with 30 points, eight rebounds and nine assists for the Blazers, who have lost three straight at home after returning from a 4-1 trip.

Portland was hurt midway through the final quarter when center Jusuf Nurkic limped off the court and to the locker room after appearing to injure his right ankle. He had 15 points and nine rebounds before leaving.

The Wizards were coming off a 116-69 loss Monday night at

Utah, the second-largest losing margin in franchise history.

Raptors 126, Suns 113: Kyle Lowry had 20 points and 10 assists, DeMar DeRozan scored 20 points and Toronto beat Phoenix, improving its NBA-best home record to 9-1.

Suns guard Devin Booker had to be carried off the floor by two teammates after suffering an apparent leg injury with 2:40 remaining and Phoenix trailing by 11. Booker froze in pain while playing defense and did not move as trainers came out to examine him.

Booker, who scored a season-high 46 points Monday in a win at Philadelphia, shot 0-for-7 in the first half. He finished 4-for-15 with 19 points.

The Raptors, who have scored 100 or more points in 10 consecutive games, almost reached triple digits in three quarters Tuesday. Toronto led 97-79 heading to the fourth.

NHL roundup

Lundqvist-less Rangers find way to get past Penguins

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Ondrej Pavelec didn't know he was getting just his third start in the last six weeks until late Tuesday afternoon, when New York Rangers star goaltender Henrik Lundqvist came down with the flu.

The short prep time against the two-time defending Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins seemed to suit Pavelec just fine. Pavelec stopped a season-high 41 shots and the Rangers took advantage of a fortunate bounce to edge the Penguins 4-3.

"It was a good hockey game, I think," Pavelec said after beating Pittsburgh for just the third time in 17 career starts. "Not so much fun for the goalies, but we got the win. So, that's huge for us."

And huge of Pavelec, who came in just 1-4 on the season and has been a spectator during Lundqvist's recent resurgence. Yet he withstood a steady barrage from Pittsburgh and had more than a little luck. The Penguins hit a handful of posts, including one by Evgeni Malkin in the final seconds that would have forced overtime.

Boo Nieves, Jesper Fast, Mats Zuccarello and Pavel Buchnevich scored for the Rangers. Buchnevich provided the game-winner when his centering pass deflected off Pittsburgh's Kris Letang and by Tristan Jarry 11:12 into the third period.

"It's about finding a way to win on the road, we did that," Rangers forward J.T. Miller said.

Devils 4, Blue Jackets 1:

Stefan Noesen, Taylor Hall and Jesper Bratt each had a goal and an assist, and Cory Schneider made 41 saves to lift visiting New Jersey over Columbus.

Lightning 6, Islanders 2: Yanni Gourde scored two of host Tampa Bay's three goals late in the second period against New York.

Red Wings 5, Jets 1: Justin Abdelkader and Gustav Nyquist scored in a dominant first period, and host Detroit snapped a seven-game slide with a victory over Winnipeg.

Predators 5, Stars 2: Juuse Saros made a career-high 43 saves and his teammates scored four times in the second period as visiting Nashville cooled off Dallas.

Blues 4, Canadiens 3: Brayden Schenn scored three goals and visiting St. Louis

ended a three-game skid by beating Montreal.

Sabres 4, Avalanche 2: Jack Eichel had a goal and two assists, Evander Kane broke a third-period tie and visiting Buffalo beat Colorado to stop a four-game skid.

Kings 5, Wild 2: Marian Gaborik scored two third-period goals to lead host Los Angeles past Minnesota for its sixth straight victory.

Golden Knights 4, Ducks 3 (SO): Alex Tuch scored the game-winning goal in the first shootout, and Malcolm Subban stopped all three attempts he faced during the tiebreaker as host Vegas topped Anaheim.

Canucks 3, Hurricanes 0: Jacob Markstrom made 30 saves for his first NHL shutout and host Vancouver blanked Carolina.