

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## AFRICOM seeks probe of raid in Somalia

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command has requested an outside investigation into an August raid in Somalia by U.S. special operations forces, which have been accused of civilian casualties in connection with the incident.

AFRICOM chief Gen. Thomas Waldhauser asked the Navy Criminal Investigative Service to look into the Aug. 25 incident after new reports emerged from locals who said civilians were targeted during an operation U.S. troops conducted alongside Somali forces, AFRICOM said Thursday.

“Gen. Waldhauser referred the matter to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service to ensure a full exploration of the facts, given the gravity of the allegations,” spokeswoman Robyn Mack said. “AFRICOM takes all allegations of misconduct seriously and will leverage the expertise of appropriate organizations to ensure such allegations are fully and impartially investigated.”

NCIS specializes in law enforcement investigations.

The past several months have been challenging for the U.S. special operations forces in Africa. In October, four soldiers were killed in an ambush in Niger, an incident that is also under investigation. In addition, NCIS is investigating the death of an Army Green Beret who was strangled while on assignment in Mali this year. Two Navy SEALs have been placed on administrative leave in connection with the case.

## NASA: Navy missed key factors in pilot oxygen system failures

By CLAUDIA GRISALES  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Navy missed a series of key factors in its investigation into the causes behind a rash of midair, oxygen-related failures in F/A-18s, that led to the deaths of at least four pilots, a NASA team concluded in a recently released report.

The 258-page report, which is slated to be the focus of an upcoming House Armed Services Committee subpanel hearing, signals the Navy has plenty of work to do to create safer flying conditions for its pilots.

The findings raised an alarm for at least one key lawmaker Thursday.

“I know that hundreds of dedicated people in the Navy are working very hard to address this problem but the report points out that we have a long way to go and that in some areas we can do much better,” said Rep. Niki Tsongas, D-Mass., who helped spearhead the push for the study. “I am hopeful that the Navy will carefully examine the findings of this report and act on them as quickly as possible.”

Tsongas is the ranking Democrat for the House Armed Services subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, which plans to hold a hearing on the matter in January.

The chairman of the panel, Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, agreed that much work remains after reading the report, which was delivered to his committee last week.

“There is no doubt this remains a complex problem to solve that requires a well-coordinated ‘systems approach’ to include all factors such as the aircraft, the pilot, and the environment,” Turner said. “These incidents have a direct effect on overall readiness. These episodes affect the confidence of our pilots and their ability to perform, because it is not just these events occurring, it is also the anxiety of these events occurring in succession.”

In an April hearing, Adm. John Richardson, chief of naval operations, said the Navy already had made plenty of progress in addressing fixes.

“We’ve improved training” for pilots and others, Richardson testified. “And we’re making sure that we are listening and they all feel like they can be talking to leadership so we understand where their anxieties and concerns are.”

The NASA report is the result of a provision in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act directing that an independent review be conducted

of recurring “physiological episodes” for Navy pilots. In turn, the Navy asked for the assistance of NASA, which began investigating the problem in March.

A physiological episode, which entails pilot impairment as the result of a lack of oxygen or other contributing factors, can involve decompression sickness, disorientation, hypoxia, cognitive impairment, numbness, pain and the inability to read or interpret data and instrumentation, among other factors, the report states. The episodes, also known as PEs, can have deadly consequences, with incidences of some pilots passing out midflight, leading to fatal crashes.

In June, the Navy said in a review that four pilot deaths were tied to oxygen system failures in the cockpits of F/A-18 Hornets. The review had said reports of oxygen failures in the Hornets had increased from 57 in 2012 to 125 in 2016. By June 2017, the figure already had reached 52.

“While the Navy has introduced a number of corrective actions to address what was believed to be the primary causes of these events, PEs are still occurring,” according to the report from the NASA’s Engineering and Safety Center.

The Navy focused on aircraft fixes, instead of its pilots and crew, missing critical factors in its probe, the NASA team found.

The physiological episodes “do not happen to planes, they happen to people,” the NASA team said in the report.

“For a long time the Navy made the assumption that the (physiological episode) resulted from a defect in one or more components of the aircraft” and the aircraft would be taken out of service, the report states. “No serious attention was paid to the interface of the human and the machine, or how they function during flight.”

The Navy fixes included changes to the aircraft, such as relocating the cabin pressure gauge to make it more visible when pilots wear night-vision goggles, updated maintenance and operating procedures, and improved cabin-pressure diagnostic-testing equipment. By 2012, a new system was introduced to track aircraft with histories of oxygen problems.

Still, the NASA team also discovered lingering concerns regarding the design and specifications of the F/A-18 aircraft related to aircrew life support, Tsongas said.

“It places particular attention on the aircraft’s oxygen-generation and cabin-pressure systems, raising significant questions regarding both,” she said.

## Fired AF leader under probe over misconduct

*Belleville (Ill.) News-Democrat*

A commander at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., who was ousted from his job this week is under investigation for sexual misconduct, according to a news release from the base.

Col. John Howard was commander of the 375th Air Mobility Wing until Monday, when Lt. Gen. Giovanni Tuck, commander of the 18th Air Force, replaced him, saying he lost confidence in Howard's ability to lead the wing. The vice commander for the wing, Col. W. Chris Buschur, replaced Howard as commander.

Details about the suspected misconduct will not be released while the investigation continues, according to the release, "to ensure the integrity of the process."

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations will lead the investigation, according to 18th Air Force spokesman Capt. Ryan DeCamp.

Tuck said in a prepared statement he and other officials continue to "ensure we have a strong support structure around all airmen, to include Col. Howard, who are affected by this case."

Howard was transferred to a position in the United States Transportation Command, though the 18th Air Force spokesman said he could not comment on the nature of the colonel's new job.

# DOD named in lawsuit over requests for sex assault data

BY DIANNA CAHN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Advocates filed a lawsuit Wednesday against the U.S. government to obtain data that they say is critical to protecting troops and veterans from sexual assault and from retaliation by those accused of assault.

Charging that the military is obfuscating and illegally denying its requests for information, the nonprofit Protect Our Defenders joined forces with the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center in asking a U.S. district judge to compel all four branches to release the data under the Freedom of Information Act, which is meant to ensure public information is accessible to anyone who asks for it.

"The military wants people to accept when they say they have the sexual assault problem under control just on their word and do not want us or any other organization to pull back the curtain and look at the data," said retired Col. Don Christensen, president of Protect Our Defenders and former chief prosecutor of the Air Force. "The data shows consistently that they don't have it under control. The process isn't as efficient as what they claim and there's no reason to believe they are following congressionally mandated requirements."

"We want to hold the military's feet to the fire," he said.

The lawsuit against the departments of

Defense and Homeland Security, is the first of its kind by the nonprofit, which is dedicated solely to ending sexual assault in the military. It was filed by students and professors at the Yale Law School Veterans Legal Services Clinic to compel the government to conduct a reasonable search and produce what Protect Our Defenders called "wrongfully withheld records."

The Defense Department declined to comment Wednesday, saying it does not comment publicly on ongoing litigation.

The lawsuit outlines a history of discrimination against women in the military that culminates in a "persistent and pervasive culture of harassment and discrimination. High rates of rape, sexual assault and harassment constitute a major obstacle to women's advancement in the armed forces and civilian life."

According to Defense Department statistics, an estimated 14,900 servicemembers — 8,600 women and 6,300 men — were sexually assaulted in fiscal year 2016 and many of them were assaulted more than once. Of those servicemembers, 58 percent of women and 60 percent of men who reported being assaulted said they faced retaliation and many of them reported being ostracized or retaliated against by higher ranking officials within their chain of command.

Meanwhile, the prosecutions and convictions in sexual assault cases fell from prior years, according to Protect Our Defenders.

## Ex-official: AF Academy downplays sex assault reports

*Associated Press*

DENVER — A former U.S. Air Force Academy official who was harshly criticized for her handling of sexual assaults said the school made her a scapegoat and that commanders are downplaying the number of attacks.

Teresa Beasley told "CBS This Morning" that she faced retaliation for arguing that the school was under-reporting sexual assaults and that victims were facing retaliation.

The academy released a report last month accusing Beasley of mismanaging the school's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, which she ran for a decade. The report said the office was crippled by infighting, rumors and shoddy record-keeping and that it was derelict in its duties.

The report said Beasley should be fired, but she resigned. She had overseen the office since 2007.

Beasley told CBS that the school wanted to fire her because she challenged commanders over their treatment of victims.

"You have to stand up to people who mistreat others and who oppress others. And I did that. And they didn't like it," she said.

The academy has struggled for years to address assaults and other sexual misconduct, and has been accused before of badly mistreating victims.

Lt. Col. Allen Herritage, a spokesman for the academy, disputed Beasley's claim that she was a scapegoat. He told The Associated Press on Wednesday that other staffers in her office were disciplined, but he declined to say what action they faced, citing privacy laws.

Herritage said the academy identified Beasley by name because she already had discussed the issues publicly. He acknowledged that some cadets face retaliation from other cadets for reporting sexual assault.

Beasley alleged the academy did not include 16 sexual assaults in its report to the Defense Department and Congress for the 2014-15 school year because of a technicality — the cadets declined to sign a form. She said the academy did not want to include those reports because they would have resulted in a record number of assaults.

Dominic Angiello, an attorney at the academy, told the AP that the school included the 16 assaults in its initial report, but the Defense Department removed them because the signed forms are required to document attacks.

## Monument to chaplains dedicated at Hawaii's Punchbowl cemetery

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

HONOLULU — It's no surprise that Richard Stenbakken would describe Wednesday's dedication of a 1,600-pound monument honoring chaplains at the Punchbowl cemetery as "a miracle."

After all, Stenbakken spent 23 years as a chaplain in the Army, then took early retirement to work on recruiting and vetting chaplains for the armed services.

The claim of divine intervention, however, arises because he spent the past two years garnering support, maneuvering through red tape and producing an 88-page application, only to see the planned dedication ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific practically derailed at the last minute by late shipping and forest fires.

"Believe me, getting that stone here as late as it got in, and getting it finished in time — every step along the way was a miracle," he said. "I mean se-

riously a miracle."

The \$3,000 monument was funded by the National Conference on Ministry in the Armed Forces and the Jewish Welfare Board.

During the dedication, Maj. Gen. Paul Hurley, chief of chaplains of the U.S. Army, said the monument would "tangibly mark what it is, and why it is, chaplains are here," which he described as "our holy and sacred business of caring for these souls and their wellbeing."

Many chaplains have died in pursuit of that mission.

According to the 1994 book "Battlefield Chaplains: Catholic Priests in World War II," 100 chaplains in the Army and the Marines were killed in action during World War II.

"Anyone who has ever worn the cloth of our nation, that represented their faith tradition, has stood in the breach and made a difference and said to God, 'I will hold your people in my hand.' That's why we're here today," said John Lea III, a retired Navy chaplain, during the ceremony.

## First lady hopes giving spirit goes on into new year

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Melania Trump said Wednesday at a holiday toy drive sponsored by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve that she hopes the giving spirit that Americans displayed during a season of devastating hurricanes will continue over Christmas and into the new year.

She said the holidays are about family, service and gratitude — not gifts.

The first lady accompanied President Donald Trump on several trips to survey hurricane damage in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, and he has said she was affected deeply by what she saw. Last week,

the first lady returned to Corpus Christi, Texas, with Karen Pence, the wife of Vice President Mike Pence, to follow up on recovery efforts after Hurricane Harvey flooded the region in late August.

"On a personal note, as my first year as first lady comes to an end, I have had the privilege to witness the spirit and resilience of so many people in our country," Melania Trump said during brief remarks at the drive for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program. "After this year's devastating hurricane season, I hope everyone watching at home will consider giving back through programs like Toys for Tots."

## New Republican tax accord a boon to business, wealthy

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Generous tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans would be delivered in a sweeping overhaul of the tax laws, under a new agreement crafted by Republicans in Congress.

Middle- and low-income families would receive smaller tax cuts, though President Donald Trump and Republican leaders have billed the package as a huge benefit for the middle class. The agreement reached Wednesday by House and Senate GOP leaders also calls for scrapping a major tax requirement of the "Obamacare" health care law, a step toward the ultimate GOP goal of unraveling the law.

The agreement combines key elements of separate tax bills recently passed by the House and the Senate, striking compromises on some of them. The Republicans are pushing to deliver final legislation to Trump before Christmas as the first major legislative accomplishment of his presidency.

At the White House, Trump was eager to receive it. "The cynical voices that opposed tax cuts grow smaller and weaker, and the American people grow stronger, he said. "This is for people of middle income, this is for companies that are going to create jobs. This is for very, very special people, the great people of America."

The business tax cuts would be permanent, but reductions for individuals would expire after a decade — saving money to comply with Senate budget rules. In all, the bill would cut taxes by about \$1.5 trillion during the next 10 years, adding billions of dollars to the nation's mounting debt.

The legislation, still being finalized, would cut the top tax

rate for the wealthiest earners — Trump among them — from 39.6 percent to 37 percent, would slash the corporate income tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent and would allow homeowners to deduct interest only on the first \$750,000 of a new mortgage.

The top tax rate currently applies to income above \$470,000 for married couples, though lawmakers are reworking the tax brackets.

The standard deduction would be nearly doubled, to \$24,000 for married couples.

Details of the agreement were described by Republican senators and congressional aides. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss private negotiations publicly.

Republicans view passage of the legislation as a political imperative, proving to voters they can govern as the GOP fights to hold onto its majorities in the House and the Senate in next year's elections. Republicans say they expect the package to increase economic growth, generating additional tax revenue and lessening the hit to the budget deficit. Independent economists aren't as optimistic.

Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen said Wednesday that she and her Fed colleagues, who set interest rate policy, expect a "modest lift" to economic growth from the tax package.

Negotiators have removed several controversial provisions from the tax bill, including one that would have eliminated the deduction for interest on student loans and another deduction for medical expenses, said two congressional aides. Also, the bill no longer would start taxing graduate-school tuition waivers, the aides said.

## PBS suspends Smiley show amid claims of misconduct

*The Washington Post*

PBS is “indefinitely” suspending distribution of the late-night talk show “Tavis Smiley” after multiple misconduct allegations emerged against the show’s host, PBS announced Wednesday.

While a statement from a PBS spokeswoman did not say what sort of misconduct was alleged, PBS News Hour, on its website, said the allegations involved “sexual misconduct.”

“PBS engaged an outside law firm to conduct an investigation immediately after learning of troubling allegations regarding Mr. Smiley,” a PBS spokesperson said.

“This investigation included interviews with witnesses as well as with Mr. Smiley.

The inquiry uncovered multiple, credible allegations of conduct that is inconsistent with the values and standards of PBS, and the totality of this information led to today’s decision.”

The news first was reported by *Variety* on Wednesday afternoon.

The “Tavis Smiley” show is produced by independent production company TS Media.

# Hayek: Rebuffing Weinstein led to nightmare on ‘Frida’

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — In one of the most vivid accounts yet among allegations of abuse and harassment by Harvey Weinstein, Salma Hayek says the disgraced movie mogul turned the making of her 2002 passion project, the Frida Kahlo biopic “Frida,” into a nightmare after the actress refused Weinstein’s relentless advances.

“For years, he was my monster,” Hayek wrote in an op-ed published Wednesday by *The New York Times*.

Her refusals — of massages, showers and sex — enraged him, she wrote.

“I don’t think he hated anything more than the word ‘no,’” wrote Hayek.

Hayek, who regularly starred in films released by Weinstein’s Miramax in the 1990s, credited Weinstein with helping her start her career. But she said that the movie mogul would turn up at her door “at all hours of the night, hotel after hotel, location after location.”

When Hayek brought “Frida,” which she was producing, to Miramax to distribute, Weinstein made outrageous demands as payback.

Hayek said he insisted on rewrites, more financing and, most heinously to her, a sex scene with full frontal nudity. He even threatened to kill her, she said.

In order to finish what was a labor of love for Hayek, she agreed. But she said she had a nervous breakdown while shooting the scene. “My body wouldn’t stop crying and convulsing,”

wrote Hayek.

“It was not because I would be naked with another woman,” she wrote. “It was because I would be naked with her for Harvey Weinstein.”

Even still, Weinstein initially refused to give the movie a theatrical release. He eventually relented after pressure from director Julie Taymor and Hayek. It went on to gross \$56.3 million worldwide and landed six Oscar nominations, winning two.

In a statement through a spokesperson Wednesday, Weinstein denied Hayek’s depiction of their relationship and said the battles on “Frida” were “creative friction.”

“All of the sexual allegations as portrayed by Salma are not accurate and others who witnessed the events have a different account of what transpired,” said the statement.

“Mr. Weinstein does not recall pressuring Salma to do a gratuitous sex scene with a female costar and he was not there for the filming,” read the statement. “However, that was part of the story, as Frida Kahlo was bisexual and the more significant sex scene in the movie was choreographed by Ms. Hayek with Geoffrey Rush.”

Dozens of women have accused Weinstein of sexual harassment, and numerous women have said he raped them. Weinstein, who is under investigation for sexual assault in four cities, has denied all allegations of nonconsensual sex.

## Coroner: Ky. state lawmaker’s death ‘probably suicide’

*Associated Press*

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Dan Johnson, a Republican state lawmaker in Kentucky who defiantly denied allegations that he sexually assaulted a teenage girl in the basement of his home, died in an apparent suicide, the county coroner said.

The sexual assault accusations came amid a sexual harassment scandal involving other Republican lawmakers that unfolded at the state Capitol.

Bullitt County Coroner Dave Billings said Johnson died of a single gunshot wound Wednesday night on a road in Mount Washington, Ky. Billings said Johnson had stopped his car at the end of a bridge in a secluded area, then got out and walked to the front of the car. He said an autopsy is scheduled for Thursday morning.

“I would say it is probably suicide,” he

said.

Johnson was elected to the state legislature in 2016, part of a wave of Republican victories that gave the GOP control of the Kentucky House of Representatives for the first time in nearly 100 years. He won his election despite Republican leaders urging him to drop out of the race after local media reported on some of his Facebook posts comparing Barack and Michelle Obama to monkeys.

The pastor of Heart of Fire church in Louisville, Johnson sponsored a number of bills having to do with religious liberty and teaching the Bible in public schools. But he was mostly out of the spotlight until Monday, when the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting published an account from a woman saying Johnson sexually assaulted her in the basement of his home in 2013.

At the time, the woman told police, who

investigated the incident but closed the case and did not file charges.

On Tuesday, Johnson, 57, held a news conference in the pulpit of his church, which he began by leading friends and family in singing a portion of the Christmas carol “O Come All Ye Faithful.” He said the allegations against him were “totally false” and said they were part of a nationwide strategy of defeating conservative Republicans. He referenced Republican Alabama U.S. Senate candidate Roy Moore, who faces accusations of sexual misconduct from multiple women.

Shortly before 5 p.m. Wednesday, Johnson posted a message on his Facebook page that asked people to care for his wife. He wrote that PTSD “is a sickness that will take my life, I cannot handle it any longer. It has won this life, BUT HEAVEN IS MY HOME.” The post appears to have been removed.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Hero dog credited with saving owner from fire

**LA** BOUTTE — A Louisiana man said he escaped a catastrophic fire only thanks to the action of his dog.

Calvin Baldwin told WVUE-TV that his dog, Rusty, stood on the end of a sofa and started scratching Baldwin's arm to wake him up during the Sunday morning fire at his home in Boutte. Baldwin said he awoke to see smoke, grabbed Rusty and left the house.

The fire left the inside of the home charred and the roof partially collapsed.

Baldwin said all his personal belongings in the house he had shared with his late wife have been destroyed.

### Police: Man strips, jumps on car after crash

**VA** FAIRFAX — Fairfax County police said a man stripped off his clothes and jumped onto a passing vehicle after a car accident near Washington Dulles International Airport.

A statement from the Fairfax County Police Department said the bizarre incident occurred Tuesday and caused "major traffic delays" during rush hour around the airport.

The man, who was not immediately identified, is facing multiple charges.

Officials said the naked suspect was found on Dulles airport property after fleeing the accident scene. He was taken to the hospital with minor injuries.

### 'Christmas Story' house may become Lego set

**NY** SYRACUSE — A central New York family is campaigning for their care-

fully crafted re-creation of the house from "A Christmas Story" to become an official Lego set.

WSTM-TV in Syracuse reported Jason Middaugh's small family project to re-create the house from the classic holiday film turned into a six-month undertaking. Middaugh said he and his family, who live in Marcellus, scoured the internet to find the 2,000 pieces needed to construct the home.

Lego reviews set proposals when 10,000 people support a project on their special site. The Middaugh family's "A Christmas Story" set has received nearly 9,000 endorsements. The real home from the movie is in Cleveland.

### Episcopal priest to get probation for road rage

**FL** STUART — The rector of an Episcopal church in North Carolina accused of pointing a gun at another vehicle in Florida is set to receive a year of probation.

The Palm Beach Post reported Tuesday that Martin County prosecutors reached a deal with the Rev. William Rian Adams, 35. He is scheduled to plead no contest Friday to a misdemeanor charge of improper exhibition of a firearm. He had been facing two felony counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

State troopers said a pickup driver was following Adams' Corvette closely on Florida's Turnpike in July and tried to pass the car. Authorities said Adams pointed a handgun at the truck.

### Rare barn owls hatch late brood of chicks

**IN** BEDFORD — A pair of rare barn owls are tending to an unusually late brood

of chicks in their southern Indiana nest that's outfitted with a webcam.

The Department of Natural Resources said the mother owl laid a second clutch of eggs in late September, which is quite late in the nesting season.

DNR staffers recently inspected the nest and found three healthy chicks and two much smaller chicks.

DNR nongame bird biologist Allisyn Gillet said the healthy chicks will likely survive until fledging if they find sufficient food in the coming weeks.

Barn owls have a distinctive, heart-shaped face and are so-named because they often build their nests in barns. They are an endangered species in Indiana.

### Jail guard catches man falling from 2nd story

**NV** PAHRUMP — Two sheriff's deputies were credited Tuesday with preventing a man from suffering serious injuries when he let himself fall backward from a second-story rail in what officials called an apparent suicide attempt last week inside a Nevada county jail.

Neither the inmate nor the deputy who caught him, Joshua Armendariz, were seriously hurt in the Dec. 5 incident inside the Nye County Detention Center in Pahrump, sheriff's Lt. David Boruchowitz said.

Boruchowitz said another jail deputy, Ann Horak, tried to prevent the man from falling.

The inmate was identified as a Las Vegas resident in his mid-20s who Boruchowitz said was arrested Sept. 24 and threatened suicide while serving a 90-day sentence for convictions on speeding, driving without a valid license and failure to provide proof of insurance charges.

### Chunk of ice falls onto home, tears roof

**CA** RIVERSIDE — San Bernardino homeowners say a block of ice fell out of the sky, tore through their roof and landed in their bedroom.

The Press-Enterprise reported Claudell Curry and Odell Marie Curry said their home shook violently as a chunk of ice the size of a car engine fell into their home last weekend.

The couple are thankful they did not go to bed before the ice fell.

Last month, a chunk of ice fell into a home in Chino, 25 miles west of San Bernardino, also damaging the roof.

Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Ian Gregor believes the ice that fell onto Chino home could have formed on the outside of a passenger airliner.

### Officials rescue birds from farmstead

**IA** IOWA CITY — Iowa City Animal Services say more than 200 birds were rescued following a large-scale animal welfare investigation on an abandoned farmstead in eastern Iowa.

The Press-Citizen reported that animal services is now caring for 110 ducks and geese, 76 chickens and 49 pigeons.

Johnson County Sheriff Lonny Pulkrabek said an investigation at an abandoned farmstead southeast of Solon turned up more than 20 crates, kennels and small sheds on the land containing hundreds of birds.

Pulkrabek said the 70-year-old owner of the property admitted to owning the birds and voluntarily relinquished them.

From wire reports

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# Steelers healthy this time for Patriots

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Two snaps in, Le'Veon Bell knew he was done, that the groin injury that the Pittsburgh Steelers running back tried to ignore during his team's run to the AFC championship game last January could be ignored no longer.

Bell tried to grind it out. Emphasis on tried.

By the middle of the second quarter he was on the sideline for good, a chilly bystander as the New England Patriots ran away with a 36-17 win on their way to yet another Super Bowl title.

"It sucked for me," Bell said.

The rest of the short-handed Steelers, too.

Eleven months later a rematch looms at Heinz Field when the Patriots (10-3) visit the AFC North champions on Sunday, a showdown that will find Pittsburgh's "Killer B's" on the field together against New England for the first

time.

Martavis Bryant missed both games last season while serving a yearlong suspension. Ben Roethlisberger sat out a 27-16 regular-season home loss to the Patriots last fall while recovering from a knee injury.

Neither Bell nor Bryant played in the 2015 season opener in New England after running afoul of league policy.

This time around Pittsburgh has no health issues, no discipline issues and no excuses. The unit that spent a large portion of September and October searching for a rhythm has found it over the past month.

The Steelers are averaging 33.25 points over their past four games, including 39 last Sunday night against Baltimore that clinched Pittsburgh's third division title in four years and seemed to answer any lingering questions about Roethlisberger's commitment level.

The 35-year-old who looked every bit his age while throw-

ing five picks in a loss to Jacksonville that no longer looks as surprising as it did at the time became the first player in NFL history to throw for 500 yards three times when he lit up the NFL's third-ranked pass defense for 506 and two touchdowns.

Roethlisberger just laughed Wednesday when asked if he needed to ice his right arm after throwing a franchise-record 66 times against the Ravens and downplayed the idea he had a point to prove after getting off to a slow start. His production relies heavily on the moving parts around him. And he knows it.

"I'm only going to be as good as the line is playing and receivers are catching," Roethlisberger said. "When we're all clicking, things are going for everybody."

Of course, it helps when Roethlisberger has everybody at his disposal. That wasn't the case in Foxborough in Janu-

ary when Roethlisberger found himself throwing to Cobi Hamilton and Sammie Coates, both of whom are no longer around.

It wasn't even the case against the Ravens. Wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster watched at home wearing a helmet while serving a one-game suspension for an illegal blindside hit against Cincinnati's Vontaze Burfict. It was a learning experience for Smith-Schuster in more ways than one.

While Smith-Schuster pledged to be more mindful going forward and stressed the taunting penalty he drew for standing over Burfict is not who he is, he also became acutely aware of how effective the Steelers can be without him. Roethlisberger connected with seven players during Pittsburgh's eighth straight victory. And while Antonio Brown put up his weekly eye-popping numbers (11 receptions for 213 yards), tight end Jesse James caught a career-high 10 passes.

## Foles is hardly an ordinary backup QB for Eagles

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Nick Foles is stepping into a pressure situation with a team that has enormous expectations in a city desperate for its first Super Bowl title.

He's no ordinary backup quarterback.

Foles had tremendous success as a starter for the Philadelphia Eagles in 2013 and he experienced failure as the No. 1 quarterback for the St. Louis Rams in 2015. He's won an offensive MVP award at a Pro Bowl, been traded, released and contemplated retirement.

Now, he's the man leading the NFC East champions.

Foles is no Carson Wentz, who was having an MVP-caliber season before he tore his left ACL. But, he's a capable quarterback who won't be overwhelmed by the spotlight.

"He's matured as a quarterback, his leadership ability, his

understanding of our offense, of defenses," Eagles coach Doug Pederson said Wednesday. "We always knew he was a smart, intellectual quarterback."

Pederson was here as an assistant when former coach Andy Reid selected Foles in the third round of the 2012 draft. Foles started six games that season for a 4-12 team.

He began 2013 as the backup to Michael Vick in Chip Kelly's first season in Philly. Foles replaced Vick after he was injured in October, had a sensational season and led the Eagles to their most recent playoff appearance — a home loss to New Orleans.

Foles threw 27 TDs and only two picks in 10 starts and posted a passer rating of 119.2, third-highest in league history. He tied an NFL record with seven TD passes in a game at Oakland in November 2013.

Foles wasn't quite as spectac-

ular in 2014, but the Eagles were 6-2 in his eight starts. He tossed 13 TDs, 10 interceptions and missed the final eight games after breaking his collarbone.

Kelly traded him to St. Louis for Sam Bradford in March 2015 and Foles went 4-7 on a 7-9 team. He was released by the Rams and reunited with Reid in Kansas City as Alex Smith's backup. Foles filled in nicely when Smith was injured last season and led the Chiefs to a victory in his only start.

He returned to Philadelphia to back up Wentz on an \$11 million, two-year contract.

"I think with experience and age, you gain knowledge and wisdom," Foles said.

"Obviously life changes and you just sort of see the game a little more clearly. Even stepping into the game like the other night, you're in the fourth quarter, you're on the road, it's a big game.

"And you really just go back to your training, you go back to your experiences in life. You know how to sort of live in that moment to execute the plays to help your team win."

Foles rallied the Eagles to a 43-35 win against the Los Angeles Rams by guiding the offense to field goals on consecutive drives after Wentz went down.

He'll get his first start at the New York Giants (2-11) on Sunday against an aggressive defense led by interim coach Steve Spagnuolo.

The Eagles can secure a first-round bye with a win. They'll lock up the NFC's No. 1 seed with two wins in their final three games or one win and one loss by the Vikings (10-3).

"It starts with that chemistry," Foles said. "The teams that I have been on that have been really good have had that, and this is one of them."

## NBA roundup

## OKC wins in George's return to Indiana

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Paul George made a winning return to Indiana, hitting the clinching free throws with 10.7 seconds left in the Oklahoma City Thunder's 100-95 victory over the Pacers on Wednesday night.

Steven Adams had 23 points and 13 rebounds, and Russell Westbrook finished with 10 points, 17 rebounds and 12 assists in his ninth triple-double this season. The Thunder have won two straight on the road.

Former Oklahoma City guard Victor Oladipo led the Pacers with 19 points and Bojan Bogdanovic had 15. Indiana had a chance to tie after getting the ball back with 15.2 seconds left, but committed a turnover and then fouled George. The Pacers' winning streak ended at four.

But the highly anticipated matchup between George and Oladipo, the key components in last summer's blockbuster trade, didn't go as expected.

George was booed loudly during introductions and every time he touched the ball. Fans only cheered for George when

he was called for a foul or made a mistake and it seemed to take a toll on the four-time All-Star. He finished with 12 points on 3-for-14 shooting, had two rebounds and four turnovers.

Oladipo, the reigning Eastern Conference player of the week, didn't have a typical night either. He was 9-for-26 with five rebounds and six assists.

**Rockets 108, Hornets 96:** Chris Paul scored a season-high 31 points, James Harden added 21 and Houston beat visiting Charlotte to extend its NBA-best winning streak to 11 games.

The Rockets have won 17 of their last 18 games to improve to 22-4, the best record in the league.

**Celtics 124, Nuggets 118:** Kyrie Irving had 33 points and host Boston shot a season-high 60 percent from the field to rout Denver in the Celtics' highest-scoring game of the season.

Irving added seven assists in his return after missing a blow-out loss Monday night in Chicago because of a bruised left quadriceps. It was his eighth game this season with 30 or more points.

**Wizards 93, Grizzlies 87:**

Bradley Beal scored 18 points and John Wall had 13 in his return from a sore knee to help Washington hold off visiting Memphis.

Beal scored 11 points in the fourth quarter, hitting three three-pointers. Otto Porter Jr. added 14 points, and Marcin Gortat had 12. Wall missed nine games, with Washington going 4-5 in his absence.

**Trail Blazers 102, Heat 95:** Damian Lillard scored seven of his 18 points in the final 3:16, and Portland overcame a 16-point second-half deficit to beat host Miami and snap a five-game losing streak.

Lillard had only one field goal in the first 31 minutes. But he converted a three-point play put the Trail Blazers ahead to stay, 98-95, and sank two free throws on their next possession for a five-point lead.

**Pelicans 115, Bucks 108:** DeMarcus Cousins had 26 points and 13 rebounds and New Orleans beat visiting Milwaukee.

The Pelicans turned the ball over 21 times, with nine committed by Cousins, but the mercurial All-Star center came through in the clutch with a

couple of soaring dunks — one on a putback and another on a cut down the lane — and added a three-pointer with 22 seconds left that put it virtually out of reach.

**Bulls 103, Jazz 100:** Nikola Mirotic scored 29 points, Kris Dunn hit a clutch jumper with 22 seconds left and host Chicago beat Utah for its fourth straight win.

Mirotic made 11 of 18 shots from the field and grabbed nine rebounds in his best performance since he returned last week after missing the start of the season with facial fractures.

**Raptors 115, Suns 109:** DeMar DeRozan matched his season high with 37 points and visiting Toronto beat Phoenix for its seventh victory in eight games.

DeRozan scored 18 points in the third quarter and Toronto led by as many as 15 before the Suns rallied in the fourth.

**Clippers 106, Magic 95:** Lou Williams scored 31 points, DeAndre Jordan had 16 points and 20 rebounds and Los Angeles beat Orlando to open a four-game trip.

## Top 25 basketball roundup

## Brunson helps No. 1 Villanova rout Temple

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jalen Brunson helped Villanova continue its remarkable reign of Philadelphia.

Brunson had 22 of his career-high 31 points in No. 1 Villanova's dominating first half and Omari Spellman scored 27 to help lead the Wildcats to an 87-67 rout of Temple on Wednesday night.

"He was incredible," Villanova coach Jay Wright said of Brunson.

Donte DiVincenzo added 12 points for Villanova (11-0), which won its unprecedented 22nd straight Big 5 game.

The Wildcats, who moved into the top spot in the rankings for the third straight

season this week, looked like the best team in the country in a dominating opening 20 minutes.

With his dad Rick — a former Temple standout and current assistant coach of the Minnesota Timberwolves who played nine seasons in the NBA — sitting two rows behind the Villanova bench, Brunson led the way.

The 6-foot-2 junior point guard made 8 of 10 shots, including 5 of 7 three-pointers, and added four assists while controlling the opening 20 minutes.

"I try to keep the same mindset, try to set the tone defensively and play my game, be aggressive, try to be a killer," Brunson said. "Today was one of those nights."

**No. 9 Texas A&M 113, Savannah St. 66:** Tyler Davis recorded a double-double before halftime and the host Aggies put seven players in double figures.

D.J. Hogg led the balanced scoring for Texas A&M (9-1) with 18 points. Davis overpowered the smaller Tigers (3-8) near the basket, finishing with 17 rebounds and 14 points on 5-for-9 shooting.

**No. 24 Texas Tech 82, Kennesaw St. 53:** Keenan Evans scored 16 points and the host Red Raiders got their first win as a ranked team in eight years.

The Red Raiders were ranked 22nd two weeks ago when they lost to Seton Hall and fell out of the Top 25. They returned after handing then-No. 22 Nevada its first loss.

## NHL roundup

## Senators snap 5-game losing streak

Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario — Craig Anderson and the Ottawa Senators are happy to be home.

Anderson made 27 saves to stop his seven-game losing streak and Ottawa snapped its five-game skid Wednesday night with a 3-2 win over the New York Rangers.

"I think when that final buzzer went there was a sigh from a lot of people, fans included," Senators forward Zack Smith said. "It was a good feeling. They're a good team over there with a good goaltender so it was a big confidence boost for us."

Bobby Ryan, Cody Ceci and Smith scored for the Senators (10-13-7), who returned from a seven-game road trip and im-

proved to 2-10-2 in their past 14 overall.

It was only their second victory in regulation since Nov. 11, which was the last time Anderson had won.

"Probably not enough traffic," New York defenseman Ryan McDonagh lamented. "We had a lot of shots but he saw a lot of them. ... He played really well."

Michael Grabner and Pavel Buchnevich scored for the Rangers (16-12-3), who dropped to 4-7-0 on the road. Henrik Lundqvist had 27 saves, becoming the 15th goalie in NHL history to reach 20,000 for his career.

**Stars 5, Islanders 2:** Tyler Pitlick scored twice and Jamie Benn had a goal and two as-

sists, leading visiting Dallas.

Alexander Radulov and Remi Elie also scored for the Stars, who won their second straight after a three-game skid. Kari Lehtonen stopped 32 shots for his 300th career victory, and John Klingberg had two assists.

**Bruins 3, Red Wings 2 (OT):** Brad Marchand assisted on the tying goal late in regulation and scored the game-winner 35 seconds into overtime to give Boston a victory over host Detroit.

The Bruins managed only two shots on goal in the first period but twice rallied from a one-goal deficit for their ninth win in 11 games. Detroit has dropped 10 of 11, although the Red Wings have earned a point

in five of those losses.

**Predators 7, Canucks 1:** P.K. Subban scored two strange goals, including one from center ice, and visiting Nashville routed skidding Vancouver.

Craig Smith had a goal and two assists, while Filip Forsberg and Kevin Fiala each added a goal and an assist. Viktor Arvidsson and Calle Jarnkrok provided the rest of the offense for Nashville (19-7-4), which got 25 saves from Pekka Rinne.

Ryan Johansen chipped in with two assists in his return to the lineup after missing three games with an upper-body injury as the Predators improved to 12-2-2 over their last 16 games.

## Martinez waiting to see his value at winter meetings

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — J.D. Martinez has a chance to see in person what his monster year is worth.

The free agent star who hit .303 with 45 home runs was ready for a meet-and-greet session with teams at the winter meetings. The Boston Red Sox wanted to see him, having hit the fewest homers in the majors last season.

"The only reason I think you have players talk to owners, presidents and general managers is there's a request to really get to know the player," agent Scott Boras said Wednesday. "They get to ask questions that they can never ask because they're never in front of the player."

St. Louis added a power bat, swinging a deal for Marlins outfielder Marcell Ozuna, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press. The move came just a few days after Miami slugger Giancarlo Stanton turned down a trade to the Cardinals.

The Los Angeles Angels also stayed busy, acquiring veteran second baseman Ian Kinsler from Detroit for two minor leaguers. The rebuilding Tigers received 18-year-old right-hander Wilkel Hernandez and 23-year-old outfielder Troy Montgomery.

The bullpen carousel continued to turn, too.

Side-arming Joe Smith moved to World Series champion Houston, which wanted a right-hander tough on righty hitters after Luke Gregerson went to St. Louis.

Seattle appeared to close in on Juan Nicasio, who led the National League with 76 appearances. The New York Mets reached a deal with righty Anthony Swarzak, a person familiar with the talks told the AP.

Minnesota boosted its rotation — for late 2018, at the earliest. The Twins agreed to a \$10 million, two-year contract with former New York Yankees righty Michael Pineda, who had Tommy John surgery last July.

Martinez totaled 104 RBIs

and a 1.066 OPS with Detroit and Arizona, and his season included a four-homer game for the Diamondbacks. The 30-year-old lives in Florida and was going to hit the meetings before they end Thursday.

The Red Sox need power, a feeling heightened by the Yankees completing a trade for Stanton this week, less than a month after he won the NL MVP award by leading the majors with 59 home runs and 132 RBIs.

Ozuna joined Stanton and second baseman Dee Gordon as All-Stars traded by Miami as new CEO Derek Jeter and the Marlins cut payroll.

"Ozuna is one of those names that you have to have great respect, especially as much we see him," Cardinals manager Mike Matheny said.

An All-Star the last two seasons, the 27-year-old Ozuna set career bests this season with a .312 average, 37 homers and 124 RBIs. He is eligible for salary arbitration and likely will earn more than \$10 million.

The Cardinals quickly found

a bopper after Stanton invoked his no-trade clause and blocked a deal.

"I was just very impressed the fact that we were involved in those conversations," Matheny said. "Unfortunately, that didn't work, but I think that just kind of parlayed into, OK, now what are we going to do?"

Ozuna's acquisition could prompt the Cardinals to make another trade, with outfielder Stephen Piscotty perhaps heading to Oakland.

While right-handers Yu Darvish and Jake Arrieta remain the top free-agent starters on the market, CC Sabathia also is available.

The 37-year-old lefty, who went 14-5 with a 3.69 ERA last season for the Yankees, met this week with Toronto.

"He's a workhorse, man," Blue Jays manager John Gibbons said. "He's always pitched well against us. One of the great competitors in the game for a number of years. I thought he looked strong last year."