

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Probe: Solider slain in Niger not captured

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — An American soldier killed in an ambush in Niger with three comrades but recovered days later wasn't captured alive by the enemy or executed at close range, The Associated Press has learned, based on the conclusion of a military investigation. It found evidence he apparently fought to the end.

Dispelling a swirl of rumors about how Sgt. La David T. Johnson, 25, of Miami Gardens, Fla., died, the report has determined that he was killed by enemy rifle and machine gun fire as he fled the attack by an offshoot of Islamic State about 120 miles north of Niamey, the capital of the African country. The attack took place Oct. 4; Johnson's body was recovered two days later.

U.S. officials familiar with the findings spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity to describe details of an investigation that has not been finalized or publicly released.

A 12-member Army Special Forces unit was accompanying 30 Nigerien forces when they were attacked in a densely wooded area by as many as 50 militants traveling by vehicle and carrying small arms and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

The officials familiar with the investigation said Johnson was hit as many as 18

times from a distance by a volley of machine gun rounds, and that he was returning fire as he and two Nigerien soldiers tried to escape.

All told, four U.S. soldiers and four Nigerien troops were killed in the ambush. Two U.S. and eight Nigerien troops were wounded.

The bodies of three U.S. Green Berets were located on the day of the attack, but Johnson's remains were not. The gap in time led to questions about whether Johnson was killed in the assault and was not found, or if he was taken away by the enemy.

According to the officials, a medical examination concluded that Johnson was hit by fire from M4 rifles — probably stolen by the insurgents — and Soviet-made heavy machine guns. It is believed he died in the attack.

The officials said Johnson was found under thick scrub brush where he tried to take cover. There were no indications he was shot at close range or had been bound or taken prisoner, as several media reports have suggested.

A U.S. Africa Command began its investigation with a team headed by Army Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier, the command's chief of staff. The team visited locations in Niger

to collect evidence and information about the attack, and soon will submit a draft of Cloutier's report to Marine Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, head of Africa Command. Waldhauser could ask for additional information. The final report is expected to be released next month.

The officials familiar with the report's conclusions said that during the attack, Johnson and two Nigerien soldiers tried to get to a vehicle to escape, but were unable to do so, became separated from the others and were shot as they were running for safety.

The report concluded that Johnson, who was athletic and a runner, was in the lead and got the farthest away, seeking cover in the brush. Officials said there were a number of enemy shells around Johnson, and evidence that he appeared to fight to the end. His boots and other equipment were stolen later, but he was still wearing his uniform.

As news of the ambush came out, the U.S. military sent in rescue teams to search for Johnson, not making his status public in the hope he might have gotten away and was still alive and hiding. The Pentagon only acknowledged that he was missing after his body was located two days later by local forces.

## Upcoming COLA cuts irk some Japan-based troops

BY LEON COOK

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Some troops are seeing red over plans to cut an allowance that compensates them for the high cost of living in Japan by as much as half.

A table laying out projected adjustments to the cost-of-living allowance, also known as COLA, was shared recently on social media by U.S. Naval Forces Japan. Servicemembers are expected to see the changes in their Jan. 15 paychecks.

Officials project a small hike for personnel at Naval Air Facility Atsugi and Camp Zama and no change for those assigned to Camp Fuji. However, there will be COLA decreases for many other personnel in Japan, according to the table.

For example, an E-6 servicemember with six years of service and two dependents living off post can expect a 30 percent COLA drop if they are assigned to Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo. Yokosuka-based servicemembers will see their allowance cut nearly in half.

The news provoked a flurry of negative comments from servicemembers and their families.

"There is no way junior enlisted can handle this kind of cut," Brenda Walker, a personal trainer with Morale, Welfare and Recreation at Yokosuka, said Friday. "And with giving such little warning, how are families able to prepare?"

Officials at the Defense Travel Management Office cited "decreases in recreation and transportation" costs as reasons for the drop at Yokosuka, home of the Navy's

7th Fleet.

Some on social media felt the cut would be especially hard for those living at Ikego, a housing area about seven miles from Yokosuka Naval Base. The fastest and most direct route between Ikego and Yokosuka is the Yokohama-Yokosuka Toll Road, which costs 310 yen, or about \$2.75, each way, according to Navy Installations Command. Local roads take longer and consume more fuel, and taking public transit costs about the same.

In addition to daily commuting costs, these personnel either shop on the local economy or go to their parent base for items not carried by a Navy Exchange mini-mart at Ikego.

Others complained about rising prices at on-base commissaries.

# China still island-building as tensions ease

BY SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

Beijing has continued its island-building and militarization in the South China Sea, even as it enters negotiations with neighboring countries that also hold claims over disputed territory there.

“International attention has shifted away from the slow-moving crisis in the South China Sea over the course of 2017, but the situation on the water has not remained static,” the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative said in a report released Thursday.

Satellite images recently released by the Washington-based think tank show that during the past year, China has built addi-

tional infrastructure — including hangars, bunkers, missile shelters and radar — covering more than 70 acres on man-made islands in the Spratly and Paracel chains to equip larger outposts to be air and naval bases.

The U.S. and others have accused Beijing of further militarizing the region and altering geography to bolster its sweeping claims across a region where \$5 trillion in global trade transits each year. China says the islands, which were built up using sand dredged from the sea bottom and then equipped with airstrips and military installations, are mainly for civilian purposes and to boost safety for fishing and maritime trade.

The report comes as China

joins negotiations with Southeast Asian nations — including fellow island claimants Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei — on a “code of conduct” for the South China Sea. Tensions over the issue with the U.S., which occasionally conducts freedom-of-navigation patrols near those islands, also have eased, despite Washington’s criticism of Beijing’s conduct. Adm. Harry Harris — head of U.S. Pacific Command and a vocal critic of Beijing’s activities in the sea — has referred to the islands as China’s “great wall of sand.”

China’s land-reclamation efforts in the Spratly and Paracel chains appeared to be complete by mid-2017, the report said.

“But Beijing remains committed to advancing the next phase of its build-up — construction of the infrastructure necessary for fully-functioning air and naval bases on the larger outposts,” it added.

New facilities shown in the images “account for about 72 acres ... of new real estate at Fiery Cross, Subi, and Mischief Reefs in the Spratlys, and North, Tree, and Triton Islands in the Paracels,” the report said.

In October and November, China deployed J-11B fighter jets and Y-8 transport aircraft to Woody Island, its military and administrative headquarters in the South China Sea, it added.

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

## Hodges retires as commander of US Army Europe

BY DAN STOUTAMIRE  
*Stars and Stripes*

WIESBADEN, Germany — The Army general who oversaw the most significant buildup of U.S. troops and infrastructure since the end of the Cold War retired Friday after more than three years in command.

Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges took the reins of U.S. Army Europe in late 2014 in the wake of the Russian intervention in Ukraine and immediately began managing an intensive NATO and U.S. program to beef up its deterrence on the alliance’s eastern flank.

Since then, tank and helicopter brigades have rotated through Europe, and military vehicles and equipment have been prepositioned in Germany, the Netherlands and Poland. In addition, the alliance has stationed four battle groups along the Russian frontier — one each in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

“We do not want to be in a state of perpetual confrontation. We want Russia to once again be a part of the international democratic community, a great nation that contributes to stability and security in Europe and around the world,” Hodges said

before his retirement ceremony at USAREUR headquarters in Wiesbaden.

“But Russia must abide by its agreements and international law and norms and respect the sovereignty of European nations. Then we can get back to playing hockey again,” he said.

Countering Russian expansionism hasn’t been an easy task. Drawdowns after the Cold War and during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan reduced the number of permanent forces in Europe to just 30,000 troops, and the last U.S. tanks were withdrawn from the Continent.

One of Hodges’ catchphras-

es was the need to make that 30,000 appear to be 300,000. He has followed that up with an emphasis on mobility and cooperation with NATO allies.

Under Hodges’ tenure, frequent exercises in Eastern Europe and Germany stretched thin the two remaining combat brigades in Europe — the 2nd Cavalry Regiment and the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The addition of the heel-to-toe rotational program — now in its second year — has helped with manpower. But if the Army expands further, Hodges said, he’d like to see some of those resources come to Europe.

## Departing Pentagon official sought to release data on UFOs

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — Just before leaving his Defense Department job two months ago, intelligence officer Luis Elizondo quietly arranged to secure the release of three of the most unusual videos in the Pentagon’s secret vaults: raw footage from encounters between fighter jets

and “anomalous aerial vehicles” — military jargon for UFOs.

The videos, all taken from cockpit cameras, show pilots struggling to lock their radars on oval-shaped vessels that, on screen, look vaguely like giant flying Tic Tacs. The strange aircraft — no claims are made about their possible origins or make-up — appear to hover

briefly before sprinting away at speeds that elicit gasps and shouts from the pilots.

Elizondo, in an internal Pentagon memo requesting that the videos be cleared for public viewing, argued that the images could help educate pilots and improve aviation safety. But in interviews, he said his ultimate

intention was to shed light on a little-known program Elizondo, himself, ran for seven years: a low-key Defense Department operation to collect and analyze reported UFO sightings known as the Advanced Aviation Threat Identification Program, which was confirmed officially for the first time Saturday by a Pentagon spokesman.

# Mueller obtains thousands of Trump transition team emails

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian contacts with President Donald Trump's campaign has gained access to emails sent and received by Trump officials before the start of his administration, according to people familiar with Trump's transition organization.

But the investigators did not directly request the records from Trump's transition group, Trump for America, and instead obtained them from the General Services Administration, a separate federal agency that stored the material, according to those familiar with the Trump transition organization.

Thousands of emails pertain to 13 senior Trump transition officials. Many of the emails that Mueller's investigators have now include national security discussions about pos-

sible international aims as well as candid assessments of candidates for top government posts, said those familiar with the transition. They spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

On Saturday, Kory Langhofer, general counsel for the transition group, sent a letter to two congressional committees arguing the GSA improperly provided the records to Mueller's investigators. In the letter to the Republican chairmen of the House Oversight and the Senate Homeland Security committees, Langhofer contends the disclosure was "unauthorized," and it considers the documents private and privileged and not government property.

Langhofer also said then-GSA General Counsel Richard Beckler, who was hospitalized in August and has since died, had assured the transition in June

that any request for records from Mueller would be referred to the transition's attorneys.

But late Saturday, another GSA official present for the conversation told BuzzFeed News that there was nothing improper about the disclosure of the emails to Mueller's team. The GSA has provided office space and other aid to presidential transitions in recent years and typically houses electronic transition records.

GSA Deputy Counsel Lenny Loewentritt told BuzzFeed that the transition was informed that by using government devices, the agency wouldn't hold back records from law enforcement. Transition officials signed agreements that warn them that materials kept on the government servers are subject to monitoring and auditing, he told BuzzFeed, and there's no expectation of privacy.

# SpaceX capsule is back at ISS

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — A recycled SpaceX capsule is back at the International Space Station, just in time for Christmas.

NASA astronauts used the space station's big robot arm to grab the Dragon capsule out of orbit Sunday. It's the second visit for this particular supply ship, which made a delivery for NASA back in 2015 as well, and only the second time a Dragon has had a repeat performance 250 miles up.

"It's a great day to see Dragon back at ISS again," Mission Control radioed.

Replied spaceman Joe Acaba: "It's a beautiful spacecraft, and we're looking forward to digging into it and getting some science on board."

Acaba assisted Mark Vande Hei in capturing the Dragon as the two spacecraft raced over the Pacific, midway between Australia and New Guinea. Flight controllers in Houston then took over, securing the capsule to its berthing spot just over two hours later.

SpaceX launched the Dragon from Cape Canaveral on Friday using a previously flown Falcon rocket. It was the first time SpaceX had flown a recycled rocket with a recycled capsule on top — which is at the heart of the company's effort to drive down launch costs.

The Dragon holds nearly 5,000 pounds of station goods, including lab mice and barley seeds, the latter a Budweiser experiment.

As for Christmas presents, NASA isn't saying, in true Santa style.

But NASA does acknowledge it will electronically send up a copy of the newly released "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" movie as a special holiday treat for the astronauts.

SpaceX plans to keep its Dragon at the orbiting outpost until mid-January. The Dragon is the only supply ship capable of returning experiments to Earth; all the others burn up on re-entry.

# Flames threaten Calif. enclave

Associated Press

MONTECITO, Calif. — Firefighters trying to prevent one of the biggest fires in California's history from consuming homes in Santa Barbara and the nearby wealthy enclave of Montecito were hoping less powerful wind gusts would help them Sunday after they managed to stop it from burning thousands of residences.

Crews took advantage of calmer winds overnight, clearing brush and digging containment lines above hillside neighborhoods, fire information officer Lisa Cox said.

"Everything's holding really well," Cox said. While gusts were expected to ease somewhat, even the lower intensity winds are still extremely dangerous, she said.

The fire that started nearly two weeks ago has burned at least 700 residences and killed a firefighter, but Cox said firefighters saved thousands of homes from being destroyed.

Some evacuations were lifted to the east in Ventura County where the blaze erupted.

Mandatory evacuations remained in place around Montecito and neighboring Summerland as firefighters sprayed water onto hot spots sparked by wind-blown embers. A portion of

the city of Santa Barbara was under mandatory evacuation. At the city's zoo, workers put some animals into crates and kennels to ready them for possible evacuation.

In downtown Santa Barbara, Maya Schoop-Rutten, owner of Chocolate Maya, said she saw through the window of her chocolate shop smoke suddenly appear Saturday after strong winds blew through.

Restaurants and small stores on normally bustling State Street were shuttered Saturday.

"It's a ghost town," Schoop-Rutten said. "It's very, very eerie."

The 420-square-mile blaze called the Thomas Fire was moving rapidly westward and crested Montecito Peak, just north of Montecito. Known for its star power, the enclave boasts the mansions of Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres and many other celebrities.

There was a spot of good news down the coast. Emergency officials announced that the same fire that was burning about 25 miles southeast of Montecito was 40 percent contained.

The firefighter who was killed, Cory Iverson, 32, died Thursday of burns and smoke inhalation, according to autopsy results. A funeral procession was planned for him Sunday.

# Putin thanks Trump for CIA tip

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin called U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday to thank him for a CIA tip that helped thwart a series of bombings in St. Petersburg, the Kremlin said.

Putin expressed gratitude during the call for information provided by the CIA that allowed Russia's top domestic security agency to track down and arrest a group of suspects that was planning to bomb Kazan Cathedral and other crowded sites, the Kremlin said.

The Kremlin added that Putin asked Trump to convey gratitude to the CIA and assured him that Russian law enforcement agencies would hand over any information they get about potential terror threats against the United States, as they have done in the past.

The conversation was the

second phone call between the two leaders since Thursday, when Trump thanked Putin for his remarks "acknowledging America's strong economic performance," according to the White House.

During the first call, they also discussed ways to work together to address North Korea's nuclear and ballistic weapons program, the White House said.

The Federal Security Service, or FSB, announced Friday that seven suspected followers of Islamic State had been arrested for allegedly planning to carry out terror attacks in St. Petersburg this weekend.

The agency said the suspects were plotting a suicide bombing in a church and a series of other explosions in the city's busiest areas this coming weekend on ISIS's orders. It said a search of a St. Petersburg apartment found explosives, automatic weapons and

extremist literature.

Russian news reports said that the Kazan Cathedral was the prime target.

Russian TV stations ran footage of FSB operatives outside an apartment building detaining a suspect, who was later shown confessing that he was told to prepare homemade bombs rigged with shrapnel.

The reports included footage of a metal container, which the suspects used as a laboratory for making explosives, according to the FSB. Another video showed operatives breaking the doors and raiding an apartment used by other suspects.

Last week, the FSB said it also arrested several ISIS-linked suspects in Moscow, where they allegedly were plotting a series of suicide bombings on New Year's.

In April, a suicide bombing in the St. Petersburg's subway left 16 dead and wounded more than 50.

# Australian charged with being agent for N. Korea

Associated Press

SYDNEY — A South Korean-born Sydney man was charged Sunday with acting as an economic agent for North Korea in Australia; he allegedly tried to broker sales worth tens of millions of dollars for Pyongyang that included components used in ballistic missiles.

The Australian Federal Police said naturalized Australian Chan Han Choi, 59, used encrypted communication to broker sales and to discuss the supply of weapons of mass destruction. His actions contravened both United Nations and Australian sanctions against North Korea, police said.

Police said the man was acting to generate income for Pyongyang by arranging the sale of computer software used for guiding ballistic missiles as well as expertise from North Korea to other "international entities."

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said he had been briefed by AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin on the "very, very serious matter" and warned anyone thinking of assisting North Korea that "the AFP will find you."

"North Korea is a dangerous, reckless, criminal regime threatening the peace of the region," Turnbull said. "It supports itself by breaching U.N. sanctions, not simply by selling commodities like coal and other goods, but also by selling weapons, by selling drugs, by engaging in cybercrime."

Despite sanctions, cash-strapped North Korea last month test-fired its most powerful missile that may be able to target the U.S. mainland.

Choi is facing six charges related to brokering the sale of missile componentry and expertise from North Korea to other international entities, and attempting to transfer coal from North Korea to entities in Indonesia and Vietnam.

# Rural Zimbabweans missed Mugabe drama

Associated Press

LUPANE, Zimbabwe — Good luck convincing some of Zimbabwe's far-flung residents that they have a new president despite last month's dramatic ouster of Robert Mugabe after 37 years in power.

"Don't be silly, no one has that kind of power to remove Mugabe. He will die in office, that one," said Sokuluhle Dube, 76, selling cooked goat meat at a cattle auction far from the capital, Harare. "I don't think you are a journalist, maybe you are a spy," she told The Associated Press as her friends nodded in agreement.

As new leader Emmerson Mnangagwa tries to revive a shattered economy, the changes his government hopes to hurry along are bumping up against a rural lifestyle where news travels by word of mouth — and clearly not all news has arrived.

In this district disconnected from phone lines, many people are only remotely aware of the momentous events leading to Mugabe's resignation, including the military's takeover, the hundreds of thousands marching in the capital and the impeachment proceedings that finally led the 93-year-old president to step down.

Instead, the local buzz was about the cattle auction in Lupane's Gomoza village, where hundreds gathered to buy and sell. In the fair-like atmosphere, others bargained over items ranging from bicycles to sorghum beer as music blared from loudspeakers.

The work of recovering from years of mismanagement, a severe cash shortage and unemployment so severe that millions have left the country is an even more towering challenge in Zimbabwe's agricultural regions, where infrastructure is often shaky or absent.

In Gomoza, one store advertises mobile phone money transactions that are impossible because there is no mobile phone coverage.

Fixed telephone lines are down, and signals for local television and radio are nonexistent. The dusty road to the village is dominated by donkeys drawing carts, the main mode of transport.

The scene resembles many parts of Zimbabwe that have been left behind by years of underdevelopment and often rely on international aid organizations to get by.

The place hummed with small-scale activity, with little interest in the country's recent turn in the international spotlight.

"What change? Maybe for you in the cities," said Ishmael Mguni, who danced to music pouring from battery-operated speakers. No other power was available.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Deputy honored over 'AK-47 Bandit' case

**NE** LEXINGTON — A Dawson County Sheriff's deputy has been honored for his work in helping capture a man suspected of being the so-called "AK-47 Bandit."

Beatrice radio station KWBE reported that in a ceremony Monday, Deputy Chad Byrne was presented with a plaque in recognition of his "outstanding service and attention to detail on June 20, 2017."

That was the day Byrne was on patrol when he heard the bulletin that a Kansas Highway Patrol trooper had been shot by a man in a stolen pickup. Byrne stationed himself south of Lexington on Highway 238 in case the fleeing truck drove that way. He later spotted the suspected truck, called for backup and helped arrest Richard Gathercole, suspected of robbing banks in Nebraska, California, Idaho, Iowa and Washington state. Gathercole got the nickname "AK-47 Bandit" because that's the weapon police believed he carried in the robberies.

## Woman recovering after raccoon attack

**MA** ANDOVER — A Massachusetts woman is recovering after being attacked by a rabid raccoon outside a convenience store.

Police in Andover said the 75-year-old woman was bitten on her left leg about 10 a.m. Thursday. She was treated and released from a local medical facility.

Police said they were able to capture the animal, which they said was extremely aggressive.

It was euthanized at a local animal hospital and tests showed it had rabies.

## 'Cop watcher' pleads guilty to gun charge

**OR** PORTLAND — A so-called "cop watcher" who angered Portland police and prosecutors by showing up at their homes has pleaded guilty in federal court to using a firearms despite a felony record.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported Christopher Ryan Ponte, 36, pleaded guilty Friday, admitting that he joined co-workers Jan. 28 at a campsite in Estacada and held and fired three guns that belonged to others.

Ponte was convicted a year earlier of felony possession of a stolen vehicle.

Under a plea deal, prosecutors and Ponte's defense lawyer will recommend that Ponte face a year and one day in prison when he's sentenced in April.

## Wildlife officials try to control invasive iguanas

**FL** MIAMI — Florida wildlife managers are stepping up efforts to control the state's booming population of wild, invasive iguanas.

The Miami Herald reported that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has hired a trapper to try to control the iguana population on public land in the Florida Keys. It is holding workshops to teach home-owners how to trap and ward off the reptiles.

While iguanas have been in Florida since the 1960s, FWC exotic species coordinator Kristin Sommers said there has been a noted increase in "human conflicts."

Iguanas have been burrowing into sewer lines and even appearing in people's toilets.

In the Keys, the animals damage natural areas and consume

plants important to dwindling species such as butterflies.

Iguanas also can spread salmonella by defecating in people's swimming pools.

## Investigator: Man killed, brought to faked scene

**MS** VAUGHAN — Investigators say a central Mississippi accident scene appears to have been staged — and the dead man found there likely was murdered.

The body of Roger Lee Scruggs Jr., 44, was found Dec. 2 under a bridge in a rural area of Yazoo County west of Vaughan. An overturned all-terrain vehicle was found in a creek, making it look as if the Brandon man crashed into the creek and was tossed off the ATV.

But Yazoo County Sheriff's Department Investigator Terry Gann told local media that detectives now believe Scruggs was killed somewhere else and his body was brought to Yazoo County.

## Woman arrested after 3 dogs found in freezer

**FL** PIERSON — Sheriff's deputies checking the home of a Florida woman and her small child made a gruesome discovery: three dead dogs in her freezer, and a house covered in filth and cockroaches.

The Daytona Beach News-Journal reported that Victoria Kanger, 35, was arrested Thursday and charged with child neglect.

Volusia County sheriff's deputies said they found heaps of trash inside the home, and were overwhelmed by the odor of urine and feces.

Authorities said a 5-year-old girl living in the home sat on a couch crawling with roaches. She directed the deputies to the dogs in the freezer.

Kanger told authorities she froze the dogs because she didn't have a shovel to bury them.

## AG warns of scam over phony federal grants

**OH** COLUMBUS — The Ohio Attorney General's Office is warning of a scam involving phony offers for federal grants.

A release from the office said it has received dozens of reports of the scam from across the state.

The release said scammers often begin with a phone call or a Facebook message claiming a person was selected for a grant for being a good citizen, paying taxes, or not having a criminal record. They tell the person to pay a few hundred dollars to cover processing fees or taxes to receive the grant that never comes.

State officials said about 50 people overall this year have reported losses ranging between \$200 and \$48,000 to grant scams.

## Airline apologizes over discarded breast milk

**AZ** MESA — A Mesa mother said she had to throw out breast milk she had packed for a flight after American Airlines tried to charge her \$150 to carry it aboard.

According to Sara Sarlow, she called the airlines ahead of time to confirm that the breast milk container that she would be travelling with was an item that could be carried on for free.

Sarlow said that on the day of the flight, she was told that she would have to pay \$150.

American Airlines has sent Sarlow an apology, saying that the employee made a mistake.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# KC dominates Chargers for West lead

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs played so well without Marcus Peters last week that some wondered whether they were better off without the talented yet volatile All-Pro cornerback.

Peters provided quite an answer to that question Saturday night.

Returning from a one-game disciplinary suspension, Peters picked off Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers twice and caused another fumble in a dazzling performance. Kansas City added another interception of Rivers and rolled on offense to a 30-13 victory and a stronghold on the AFC West lead.

“Marcus went out there and played lights-out football,” said Chiefs safety Ron Parker, who had the other pick. “I think he came back with an ego. He wanted to prove to us that he missed us.”

He proved it with his actions, even if he didn’t want to say it in words.

Peters refused to speak to reporters this week, then declined to speak again after the

game, even though players can be subject to fines if they do not handle media responsibilities.

There were plenty of others in the Chiefs’ locker room willing to speak for him, though.

“Definitely not surprised,” said Chiefs quarterback Alex Smith, who threw for 231 yards and two scores. “He’s such a competitor on top of what kind of player he is. He’s got amazing ability, he has such great feel for the game — just a heck of a competitor.”

But that competitiveness had boiled over in recent weeks, and led to embarrassing incident in New York when he chucked an officials’ flag into the stands during a loss to the Jets. Those antics, and a blowup with an assistant coach on the team bus, earned him a one-game suspension from coach Andy Reid.

“He has a chip on his shoulder. That’s how he plays the game,” Chiefs cornerback Darrelle Revis said. “Coming back from his suspension, really contributing to this win, it’s big.”

Kareem Hunt had 155 yards rushing and a touchdown, and hauled in seven

catches for 51 yards and another score, as Kansas City (8-6) beat the Chargers (7-7) for the eighth straight time.

Now, they need only win one of their final two games to clinch the AFC West and a playoff berth.

The Chargers, meanwhile, have to win out and get a lot of help if they want to reach the postseason, a disappointing turn of events for a team that had already dug out from a 0-4 start.

“At this point we don’t control our own destiny,” Chargers coach Anthony Lynn said. “We lost that today. We can win out but we need some help. All we can control is these next two weeks.”

**Tyreek the freak:** Chiefs WR Tyreek Hill showed off his speed on a 64-yard touchdown catch, beating Chargers CB Casey Hayward. It was Hill’s seventh touchdown reception of the season. “He almost overthrew me,” Hill said of Smith’s throw. “I went to the sidelines and gave him crap for it.”

**Injury woes:** Chargers LB Denzel Perryman (hamstring),

S Adrian Phillips (ankle), DT Corey Liuget (knee) and LT Russell Okung (groin) were among those to go down Saturday night. RB Austin Ekeler also hurt his hand after fumbling the ball away in the second half. “We had a bunch of guys come out of the game today,” Rivers said. “That’s not an excuse but that certainly didn’t help.”

**Still climbing:** Rivers’ lone touchdown pass went to Antonio Gates, the 86th time he’s connected with his trusty tight end. That broke a tie with the 49ers’ Steve Young and Jerry Rice for the second-most connections between a quarterback and pass-catcher, trailing only Peyton Manning and Marvin Harrison. The longtime Colts teammates connected for 112 touchdowns.

**Looking ahead:** The Chiefs can clinch the AFC West with a win over the Dolphins next Sunday, while the Chargers head to the Meadowlands to face the Jets with fading postseason hopes. “Just keep going,” Rivers said. “We’ve got two games left. Finish it the right way.”

# Lions force Bears out of their comfort zone

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Detroit Lions came up with a scheme to shut down Chicago’s running game and force Bears rookie quarterback Mitchell Trubisky to throw a lot.

The plan worked perfectly.

Chicago averaged less than 3 yards a carry and Trubisky threw three interceptions Saturday night, setting the Lions up for a 20-10 win that keeps them in the playoff picture.

The Bears ran for a season-high 232 yards in their last game, a 33-7 win at Cincinnati, and had 222 yards rushing in a three-point loss to Detroit last month.

“We came out and punched them in the face,” Detroit cornerback Darius Slay said. “That was the difference.”

When Detroit narrowly escaped the Windy City with a win, Jordan Howard had 125 yards rushing and a score.

In the rematch, he was limited to 37 yards on 10 carries and that played a part in the Bears being forced to try to move the ball through the air a lot.

Trubisky had season highs in completions (31), attempts (46), yards passing (314) and interceptions (three) including two to Slay and one to safety Quandre Diggs in the end zone early in the fourth quarter.

“Last week we had a little juice, executed, had things rolling,” he said. “It seemed like the opposite.”

Here are some other takeaways:

**Postseason positioning:** The Lions (8-6) need to win their last two games, at Cincinnati and against Green Bay, and will need some favorable results by other teams to earn a second straight and third playoff appearance in four years. Carolina (9-4), New Orleans (9-4) and Atlanta (8-5) are all ahead of the Lions in the NFC playoff race, and they all beat Detroit to own a potential tiebreaker.

“What we did this week won’t matter if we don’t win next week,” Detroit receiver Golden Tate said.

**Conservative coaching:** Fox was questioned about an eyebrow-raising decision in each half. He punted on a fourth-and-1 from the Chicago 45 early in the second

quarter, trailing 6-0.

“It’s not a no-lose situation because if we don’t make it, they’ve got the ball at our 45,” he said. “Like I said, you could go for it, but you have to know that it can come back and bite you.”

After Trubisky threw a 9-yard touchdown pass to Benny Cunningham to make it 20-10 with 2:32 left, cutting Chicago’s deficit to 10, Fox chose not to try an onside kick.

“We knew we had to score twice,” Fox said. “So, we felt we could stop them, score and then go for the onside kick the second time. That’s how you generally play that.”

**On target:** Matthew Stafford, who threw two touchdown passes, completed 25 of 33 passes for 237 yards without a turnover. He connected on 76 percent of his passes after having an 82-percent completion percentage over the previous two games.

“He’s been on a tear lately,” coach Jim Caldwell said. “He’s been playing well for a while. He hangs in there, delivers the ball. He’s got some receivers making plays for him, too.”

# Oklahoma upsets No. 3 Wichita State

Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. — No one had to convince Oklahoma's players that Saturday's game at No. 3 Wichita State presented a measuring stick of sorts.

Sooners star guard Trae Young believes the 91-83 victory "will open a lot of eyes in the college basketball world," and fellow freshman Brady Manek agreed.

"That's probably the biggest crowd I've ever played in front of," Manek said. "We just showed that we can play on a big stage against a great team."

Young, the nation's leading scorer, led the way. He finished with 29 points and 10 assists, but it was his 16 points on 6-for-9 shooting in the game's first 9 minutes that set the tone for the Sooners (8-1).

Young has scored at least 28 points in seven straight games.

Manek scored 16 of his 21 points in the first half for Oklahoma. Christian James and Kamron McGusty each had 13 points for the Sooners.

Darral Willis came off the bench to lead the Shockers (8-2) with 20 points and 12 rebounds. Landry Shamet had 17 points,

Conner Frankamp scored 14 and Shaquille Morris added 10 for Wichita.

"We let them get comfortable in the first half," Wichita State coach Gregg Marshall said, "and you can't do that against a team that talented and that well-coached."

**No. 2 Michigan State 86, Oakland 73:** Cassius Winston scored 19 points, and No. 2 Michigan State went on a 12-2 run late in the second half to hold off Oakland.

**No. 6 Miami 59, George Washington 50:** Dewan Huell scored 15 points and Lonnie Walker IV had 13, helping unbeaten Miami to the road win.

**No. 8 Kentucky 93, Virginia Tech 86:** Kevin Knox scored 21 points, and host Kentucky outlasted Virginia Tech for its most significant victory this season.

**No. 10 Xavier 68, East Tennessee State 66:** Trevon Bluett's jumper with 6.3 seconds left completed host Xavier's rally from a 22-point second-half deficit.

**No. 12 Gonzaga 89, North Dakota 83 (OT):** Josh Perkins scored 20 points and Zach Nor-

vell Jr. added 19 as host Gonzaga won in overtime.

**No. 13 Kansas 73, Nebraska 72:** Svi Mykhailiuk hit a three-pointer from the corner with 23.2 seconds left, and visiting Kansas held on to break out of a mini slump.

**Rutgers 71, No. 15 Seton Hall 65:** Corey Sanders scored eight of his season-high 22 points during host Rutgers' game-ending 17-2 run, leading the Scarlet Knights to their biggest victory since Steve Pikiell became coach last year.

**No. 16 Virginia 80, Davidson 60:** Nigel Johnson scored 22 points and Devon Hall had a career-high 20, helping host Virginia to the victory.

**No. 17 Purdue 82, Butler 67:** Carsen Edwards scored 18 points, Vincent Edwards and Isaac Haas had 15 apiece, and Purdue got its second win in the seven-year history of the Crossroads Classic in Indianapolis.

**Indiana 80, No. 18 Notre Dame 77 (OT):** Juwan Morgan scored 19 of his career-high 34 points in the last 8½ minutes, helping Indiana erase an eight-point deficit and beat Notre Dame in overtime.

Morgan scored all of Indiana's points in an 8-0 run to close regulation and the first four in OT.

**Oklahoma State 71, No. 19 Florida State:** Mitchell Solomon scored on a tip-in with 6 seconds left and then took a game-clinching charge at the other end of the court, and visiting Oklahoma State knocked Florida State from the unbeaten ranks.

**Clemson 71, No. 22 Florida 69:** Marcquise Reed threw a 75-foot pass to Elijah Thomas for a dunk that put Clemson ahead to stay with 37 seconds left in the Orange Bowl Classic.

**No. 23 Arizona 89, New Mexico 73:** In his second game back from a broken foot, Rawle Alkins scored a career-best 26 points to lead visiting Arizona.

**No. 24 Texas Tech 73, Rice 53:** Keenan Evans scored 13 points, Zhair Smith added 12 and Texas Tech won in the Red Raiders' first game since 1999 at Lubbock Municipal Coliseum, their old home court.

**No. 25 Cincinnati 77, UCLA 63:** Kyle Washington scored 19 points and Jacob Evans III had 16, powering Cincinnati to the road win.

## Boise State holds off Oregon in Las Vegas Bowl

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Cedrick Wilson caught 10 passes for 221 yards and a touchdown, Kekaula Kaniho returned an interception 53 yards for a score and No. 25 Boise State beat Oregon 38-28 in the Las Vegas Bowl on Saturday.

Brett Rypien threw for 362 yards and two touchdown passes — with two interceptions — to help the Broncos (11-3) break a three-game losing streak against Power 5 opposition. Ryan Wolpin rushed for two touchdowns.

Troy Dye and Tyree Robinson each scored a defensive touchdown, and Justin Herbert was 26 of 36 passing for 233 yards with two touchdowns and

two interceptions for the Ducks (7-6) in new head coach Mario Cristobal's debut.

### Celebration Bowl

**North Carolina A&T 21, Grambling State 14:** North Carolina A&T won its fourth Historically Black College and University national title and did it while going unbeaten for the first time.

Lamar Raynard scored on a 1-yard sneak with 38 seconds left and the Aggies (12-0) won their second Celebration Bowl in three years.

### New Orleans Bowl

**Troy 50, North Texas 30:** Brandon Silvers passed for four touchdowns and ran for another and Troy produced five

turnovers.

### Cure Bowl

**Georgia State 27, Western Kentucky 17:** At Orlando, Fla., Conner Manning threw for 276 yards and a touchdown to lead Georgia State to a winning record with the first bowl victory in the school's eight-year football history.

Manning threw a 42-yard touchdown pass to Roger Carter, Demarcus Kirk scored on a 26-yard run, and Kyler Neal finished a 16-play drive that put Georgia State (7-5) up 27-10.

### New Mexico Bowl

**Marshall 31, Colorado State 28:** Keion Davis rushed for 141 yards, including a 68-yard touchdown run, and Marshall

had two other big scoring plays.

Chase Litton threw for 262 yards and two touchdowns, helping the Thundering Herd (8-5) hold off the Rams (7-6). Tyre Brady had 165 yards receiving and gave the Thundering Herd the lead in the second quarter with a 76-yard touchdown reception.

### Camellia Bowl

**Middle Tennessee 35, Arkansas State 30:** At Montgomery, Ala., Brent Stockstill passed for 232 yards and two touchdowns and Middle Tennessee came up with some key stops.

The Blue Raiders (7-6) ran out most of the final five minutes with a series of short passes from Stockstill after losing much of an 18-point lead.

**Briefly****League takes over Panthers' Richardson investigation***Associated Press*

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The NFL is taking over the investigation of allegations of workplace misconduct by Carolina Panthers owner Jerry Richardson.

NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said Sunday in an email to The Associated Press that the league will handle the investigation rather than the team, as originally planned.

Panthers spokesman Steven Drummond said Sunday the team requested the league take over the investigation.

"We thought it would be best for transparency reasons," Drummond told The Associated Press.

The investigation was originally going to be led by the law firm of Quinn Emanuel Urquhart and Sullivan, LLP, and overseen by Erskine Bowles, a minority owner with the Panthers.

The team announced Friday the 81-year Richardson was under investigation, but declined to provide any details.

**Dodgers get Kemp back in 5-player trade**

Matt Kemp is returning to the place where he began his major league career, reacquired by the Los Angeles Dodgers on Saturday as part of a five-player trade with the Atlanta Braves that creates more financial flexibility for the reigning NL champions.

The Dodgers sent first baseman Adrian Gonzalez, oft-injured starting pitchers Scott Kazmir and Brandon McCarthy, infielder Charlie Culberson and cash to Atlanta for the 33-year-old Kemp.

Gonzalez agreed to waive his no-trade clause after receiving assurance from the Braves that he would be designated for assignment since they are already set at first base with Freddie Freeman.

**NBA roundup****Cavs beat short-handed Jazz***Associated Press*

CLEVELAND — LeBron James had 29 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his 60th career triple-double and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the short-handed Utah Jazz 109-100 on Saturday night.

James had his fifth triple-double of the season and third in his last four games. He had 10 points in the fourth quarter, was 9-for-15 from the field and 10-for-10 at the foul line.

Cleveland has won 17 of 18 overall and 11 straight at Quicken Loans Arena.

Center Rudy Gobert (sprained ligament and bone bruise in left knee) and forward Derrick Favors (left eye laceration) were out for Utah. Both were injured during Friday night in a win in Boston.

Rookie Donovan Mitchell led the Jazz with 26 points, making 10 of 15 from the field. Utah made 17 of 34 three-point attempts.

**Rockets 115, Bucks 111:** James Harden scored 31 points, Chris Paul had 25 and Houston beat visiting Milwaukee for its 13th straight victory.

The winning streak is the Rockets' longest since a franchise-best 22 straight in 2007-08.

**Knicks 111, Thunder 96:** Carmelo Anthony got the cheers from the Madison Square Garden crowd, but New York got the win, shutting out its

former All-Star in the second half and beating Oklahoma City for its fourth straight victory.

Michael Beasley tied his season high with 30 points in place of injured Kristaps Porzingis, and Doug McDermott, one of the players acquired for Anthony, added 11 of his 13 after halftime to help the Knicks break open the game. Anthony scored all 12 of his points in the first half.

**Celtics 102, Grizzlies 93:** Kyrie Irving scored 20 points, Jayson Tatum had 19 points and nine rebounds and visiting Boston pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat Memphis.

**Spurs 98, Mavericks 96:** LaMarcus Aldridge had 22 points and 14 rebounds and host San Antonio scored the final 13 points of the game, rallying to beat Dallas.

**Suns 108, Timberwolves 106:** Isaiah Canaan hit three free throws with 6 seconds to play in his first game with Phoenix and the visiting Suns rallied to beat Minnesota.

**Trail Blazers 93, Hornets 91:** CJ McCollum had 25 points, Damian Lillard flirted with a triple-double and Portland beat Charlotte for its third straight road victory.

**Heat 90, Clippers 85:** Josh Richardson scored a career-high 28 points to help host Miami beat Los Angeles.

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra became the franchise's victory leader with 455, passing Pat Riley.

**NHL roundup****Capitals rally past Ducks in OT***Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Following a game that probably should have left Barry Trotz frazzled, the Washington Capitals' coach walked into the interview room and smiled.

"Well, that was fun," Trotz said Saturday night after Washington rallied from a two-goal deficit in the third period and beat the Anaheim Ducks 3-2 in overtime.

Alex Ovechkin scored on a slap shot at 1:58 of the extra session to give the Capitals their sixth straight win at home.

"I was tired, obviously," Ovechkin said. "But I'll take it. We showed our character. Everybody in this room believes we can come back."

**Oilers 3, Wild 2:** Milan Lucic

had a goal and assist as Edmonton held off host Minnesota.

**Rangers 3, Bruins 2 (OT):** Mats Zuccarello scored a power-play goal 1:56 into overtime to lift visiting New York to a victory over Boston.

**Hurricanes 2, Blue Jackets 1:** Noah Hanifin scored the tiebreaking goal in the second period to lift host Carolina.

**Flyers 2, Stars 1 (OT):** Shayne Gostisbehere scored two goals, including the game-winner 3:50 into overtime to lead host Philadelphia to its sixth straight victory.

**Islanders 4, Kings 3 (OT):** Jordan Eberle scored 1:54 into overtime to lift host New York to a victory over Los Angeles.

**Blues 2, Jets 0:** Carter Hutton made a career-high 48 saves

in his ninth career shutout as St. Louis beat visiting Winnipeg.

**Penguins 4, Coyotes 2:** Olli Maatta scored with 14 seconds left and Pittsburgh ended a three-game losing streak with a victory over host Arizona.

**Senators 3, Canadiens 0:** Craig Anderson stopped 28 shots for his 40th career shutout, leading host Ottawa to a victory over Montreal in the NHL 100 Classic outdoor game.

**Lightning 6, Avalanche 5:** Anton Stralman scored twice to help visiting Tampa Bay overcome a hat trick by Colorado's Gabriel Landeskog for the team's seventh straight win.

**Predators 2, Flames 0:** Pekka Rinne stopped 32 shots for his 46th career shutout and Nashville beat host Calgary.