

# STARS AND STRIPES<sup>®</sup>

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## US arming Ukraine makes allies nervous

*Tribune Washington Bureau*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's long-delayed decision to provide Ukraine with defensive lethal weapons signaled a new willingness to oppose Russian intervention in its neighbor, but has made European allies nervous that a recent increase in fighting could escalate.

The State Department said Friday that the administration would supply the government in Kiev with Javelin anti-tank missiles to destroy armored vehicles used by Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, and to raise the cost of Russia's intervention in the conflict. The Trump administration said ear-

lier that it also would permit sales of some small arms to Ukraine from U.S. manufacturers.

Ukraine long had sought the portable infrared-guided Javelins to blunt the insurgents' advances. But some U.S. officials worried that providing the weapons could provoke the Kremlin to step up its military role and ruin any chance of easing tensions with Moscow.

Kurt Volker, Trump's special envoy for Ukraine, recently warned that the deadliest fighting since February had erupted in eastern Ukraine. More than 10,000 people have been killed since mid-2014, when Russian military forces seized the Crimean Peninsula and began

supporting armed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The Pentagon and State Department had recommended supplying the anti-tank missiles earlier this year. Officials in Washington and Kiev stressed that the anti-tank missiles are defensive in nature.

"American weapons in the hands of Ukrainian soldiers are not for offensive (use), but for stronger rebuff of the aggressor (and) protection of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians," Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said on Facebook. "It is also a trans-Atlantic vaccination against the Russian virus of aggression."

Heather Nauert, the State

Department spokeswoman, appeared to downplay the move. "U.S. assistance is entirely defensive in nature, and as we have always said, Ukraine is a sovereign country and has a right to defend itself," she said.

Russia, which has officially denied supporting the insurgents in eastern Ukraine, called the decision "dangerous" and said the U.S. was acting as "an accomplice in fueling a war."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron did not overtly criticize the decision but urged all combatants to abide by the much-violated 2015 cease-fire deal known as the Minsk Agreements.

## Pilots prepare at Misawa range for threats

BY SETH ROBSON

*Stars and Stripes*

DRAUGHON RANGE, Japan — The seeds of victory over Islamic State in Iraq and Syria were sown on a desolate beach in northern Japan. Now, Air Force and Navy pilots are there preparing for a more sophisticated enemy: North Korea.

Draughon Range encompasses 1,900 acres of sand dunes and forest near Misawa Air Base. It's where Air Force and Navy pilots train to defeat enemy air defenses — a mission that would be crucial to any fight on the Korean Peninsula.

The suppression of enemy air defense, or SEAD, mission was born during the Vietnam War and has evolved to use Navy EA-18 Growlers capable of jamming enemy radar and Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons charged with destroying radar and missile launchers with precision bombing.

"We find, fix and target radars and missiles and provide access for other aircraft," said 35th Fighter Wing Commander Col. Scott Jobe. He leads Misawa's two squadrons of F-16s — jets that would be among the first to cross the Demilitarized Zone if a war were to happen.

North Korea, which has conducted provocative underground nuclear blasts and missile tests this year, is a primary focus for the Misawa pilots, Jobe said.

Misawa pilots practice countering the North Korean air-defense systems daily, weather permitting, Jobe said. Growlers fly over the range, jamming radar signals sent out by training emitters while other Misawa planes play the role of enemy aircraft. The Air Force also uses computers to simulate threats.

The North Koreans are equipped with older SA-2 and SA-5 missile systems provided

by the Soviets during the Cold War. They aren't as sophisticated as those fielded by China and Russia, but are still a threat, Jobe said.

Exactly how many missiles the North Koreans have is classified; however, Jobe said they're useless without radar.

ISIS never had much in the way of air defenses. However, the group's fanatical fighters took brutal revenge on downed pilots, burning them alive in cages and posting videos of the killings online.

This was the threat that Misawa pilots faced when they deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Inherent Resolve in 2014 and 2015.

Ahead of that mission, the pilots completed SERE — survival, evasion, resistance and escape — training at Draughon and were well aware of the risks of flying over enemy territory.

"There are many more threats to worry about, espe-

cially if you have to eject from your aircraft [such as] evading from the enemy, surviving in the desert landscape, coordinating for recovery," said F-16 pilot Capt. Danielle Kangas, who deployed to the Middle East from Misawa in 2015.

To prepare pilots for the downrange missions, Misawa pilots practiced bombing with the pinpoint accuracy they'd need to strike the militants, whose positions were surrounded by civilian homes in cities such as Mosul and Raqqa.

The small bombing area at Draughon was the ideal place to train for an operation where there was also limited airspace. Air Force Joint Terminal Attack Controllers, or JTACs, from around the Pacific came to Draughon to prepare for battle in Iraq and Syria. They practiced identifying the enemy from the ground, marking the targets with lasers and directing pilots over the radio.

# Oyster reefs protect key bases

Associated Press

MIDDLETOWN, N.J. — Earle Naval Weapons Station, where the Navy loads some of America's most sophisticated weapons onto warships, suffered \$50 million worth of damage in Superstorm Sandy. Now the naval pier is fortifying itself with some decidedly low-tech protection: oysters.

The facility has allowed an environmental group to plant nearly a mile of oyster reefs about a quarter-mile off its shoreline to serve as a natural buffer to storm-driven wave damage.

Other military bases are enlisting the help of oysters, too. In June, environmental groups and airmen established a reef in the waters of Eglin Air Force Base Reservation in Florida, and more are planned nearby. Oysters also help protect Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia. Three oyster reefs protect the USS Laffey museum in South Carolina. And military installations in Alabama and North Carolina have dispatched their enlisted personnel to help build oyster reefs in off-base coastal sites.

They are among hundreds of places around the U.S. and the world where oyster reefs are being planted primarily as storm-protection measures. A bill just introduced in Congress would give coastal communities \$100 million over the next five years to create "living shorelines" that include oyster reefs.

"Having a hardened structure like that oyster reef will absorb some of that wave energy," said Earle spokesman Bill Addison. "All the pipes and cables that are on the pier now, all of that was washed away and had to be rebuilt. And there was a lot of flooding that came into the base. Will this protect us against all of that? No, but it will do a significant amount of good to protect the base and the complex and our surrounding communities."

The NY/NJ Baykeeper group has been experimenting with oysters at the Navy pier since 2011, originally as a way to see if the shellfish, through their natural filtering ability, might help improve water quality in the murky Raritan Bay. In summer 2016, the group planted the oyster reef primarily as a storm protection measure — a trend

that has taken hold around the world within the past decade or so, according to Bryan DeAngelis, a program coordinator for The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island.

Environmentalists say "living shorelines" including oyster colonies are far preferable to, and cheaper than, armoring the coast with steel seawalls or wooden bulkheads that invariably accelerate erosion of the sand in front of such manmade structures.

"Waves are affected by the roughness of the bottom," said Boze Hancock, a marine restoration scientist with The Nature Conservancy who has studied and participated in oyster projects around the world. "Picture a wave trying to roll over a huge sponge, compared to one rolling over an asphalt parking lot. The 'sponge,' or rough, uneven oyster reef, sucks the energy out of the wave as it rolls toward the shore."

Rep. Frank Pallone Jr., D-N.J., recently introduced The Living Shorelines Act, which would make coastal communities eligible for federal grants for oyster reefs and wetlands plants.

# Guardsmen on islands await pay

The (St. Thomas) Virgin Islands Daily News

ST. THOMAS — Members of the Virgin Islands National Guard, who responded alongside police officers and firefighters during the twin hurricanes of 2017, have not been paid for months, officials said Friday.

The problem stems from the nature of the response to the hurricane, said Master Sgt. and National Guard spokeswoman Karen Williams. Because V.I. National Guardsmen are technically federal employees working as contractors for the local government, they have higher requirements for documentation than the average government employee, Williams said.

"Most of us were paid until the end of September," she said.

However, paychecks have not yet cleared for October or November, Williams said.

The frantic nature of the response also contributed to the delay, Williams said.

# US asks Japan to restrict drone flights

By SETH ROBSON  
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The U.S. military has asked the Japanese government to stop people from buzzing its military bases with remote-controlled aircraft that may pose safety and security risks.

Adm. Harry Harris, head of U.S. Pacific Command, asked for action on the drone flights during a meeting with Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera in November, the Asahi newspaper reported Wednesday.

Small, remotely piloted aircraft that have been operated by individuals over Camp Schwab

— a Marine Corps facility on Okinawa — pose a security and safety hazard, said Air Force Col. John Hutcheson, a U.S. Forces Japan spokesman.

"I wouldn't say it's happening every day but it's frequent enough to be a significant concern," he said. "Oftentimes we can see the people flying [drones] but they are off the grounds of the installation."

Harris told Japanese officials that there is a risk of a drone colliding with a military aircraft, Asahi reported.

There was an incident where a U.S. military helicopter had to make a sharp turn to avoid hitting a drone, the newspaper reported.

The small aircraft don't appear to be a significant issue at other U.S. installations in Japan; however, there are rules for operating them on base. At Yokota — USFJ's headquarters in western Tokyo — battery-powered toy drones are allowed at sports fields on the west side while larger recreational drones can be flown from an eastside taxiway.

After a drone crashed onto the roof of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's residence in April 2015, Japan banned them from flying over airports, densely populated areas and above 492 feet without permission.

Another law bans drone

flights over important facilities such as the National Diet building, Imperial Palace, nuclear power plants and embassies.

However, those rules don't apply to U.S. military facilities. Officials are worried that terrorists, who have used drones in attacks in Iraq, might use one to strike an American base, Asahi reported.

Following Harris' request, the Japanese government is looking at revising its laws to cover U.S. bases, the report added.

"We have been working with the Ministry of Defense on solutions to this problem," Hutcheson said.

## Israel's rail line soon may have a Trump station

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel's transportation minister is pushing ahead with a plan to extend Jerusalem's soon-to-open high-speed rail line to the Western Wall, where he wants to name a future station after President Donald Trump.

Yisrael Katz's plan, currently in the initial planning stage, involves constructing two underground stations and excavating more than 2 miles of tunnel beneath downtown Jerusalem and under the politically and historically sensitive Old City. The Western Wall is the holiest site where Jews can pray.

Transportation Ministry spokesman Avner Ovadia said Wednesday the project is estimated to cost more than \$700 million and, if approved, would take four years to complete.

Katz's office said in a statement that the minister advanced the plan in a recent meeting with Israel Railways executives, and has fast-tracked it in the planning committees.

Katz said a high-speed rail station would allow visitors to reach "the beating heart of the Jewish people — the Western Wall and the Temple Mount." He proposed naming the future station after Trump "for his brave and historic decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital" earlier this month.

Trump's announcement has enraged the Palestinians and much of the Muslim world. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution last week rejecting the U.S.' recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, with several traditional American allies voting in favor of the motion.

The Western Wall train proposal will likely face opposition from the international community, which doesn't recognize Israeli sovereignty over east Jerusalem and the Old City, which Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed. The Palestinians seek east Jerusalem and the Old City, home to Muslim, Christian and Jewish holy sites, as capital of a future state.

Digging railway tunnels to the Western Wall would also entail excavating in Jerusalem's Old City, where religious and political sensitivities — as well as layers of archaeological remains from the city's 3,000-year history — could prove a logistical and legal quagmire.

Despite the likely opposition to the project, Ovadia said he expects the plans to be approved in the coming year, barring major complications. The Tel Aviv-Jerusalem high-speed line is expected to open next spring.

## Osprey dubbed 'Chilly Willy' is at Wright-Patterson to aid research

Dayton (Ohio) Daily News

A Marine Corps aircraft dubbed "Chilly Willy" that spent frigid, icy winters in experimental flights in Canada will take a deep dive into medical research at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

Aerospace researchers will use the MV-22 Osprey for ergonomic and musculoskeletal studies on crewmembers at the Naval Medical Research Unit-Dayton, said Navy Capt. Rees Lee, the unit's commanding officer at Wright-Patterson.

"There's no substitute to understanding how a human being integrates into an aircraft without the actual aircraft," Lee said. "I'd love to say that virtual reality has advanced to the point that we don't need physical aircraft, but we're not there yet."

"The big thing with this aircraft (is) because this tilt-rotor technology is unique, it puts unique pressures on the body," Lee said. The Osprey adjusts its twin propellers to take off and land like a helicopter and fly like a conventional airplane.

The plane landed Dec. 19 at the airstrip next to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at Wright-Patterson. The aircraft arrived from Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., at the end of nearly 15 years of experimental flight testing, including three winters in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia.

The tilt-rotor turboprop was to be rolled into a hangar at the Air Force School of

Aerospace Medicine. The engines and other parts of the plane will be removed. Aviation medical personnel at the school will train to load patients into the Osprey in a dual use of the unique airplane, Lee said.

The Navy's interest is finding out how injuries occur to crewmembers aboard the aircraft, which will be a "workhorse" transporting troops in the Marine Corps for decades, according to Lee.

The Ohio State University Spine Research Institute will work with the Navy on ergonomic research aboard the ground-based MV-22, Lee said.

"One of the major medical complaints of aircrew is neck and back pain," he said. "If we can mitigate that, provide either changes to the aircraft itself or how people move within the aircraft, that can significantly mitigate musculoskeletal stress and back pain injury."

The tilt-rotor has other uses within the military:

- The Navy plans to fly CMV-22B planes, which costs \$88.9 million today, to haul passengers and cargo to aircraft carriers at sea by the 2020s.

- The Air Force's \$90 million version, called the CV-22, flies in the service branch's Special Operations Command.

The MV-22 is the first aircraft the Navy research unit has brought to Wright-Patterson, Lee said. The unit relocated from the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Fla., several years ago.

## Japan finalizes US' return of land

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Japanese government has finalized the reversion of the largest swath of land from U.S. to Japanese control since 1972.

Officials celebrated handing back the land to private and municipal landowners during a ceremony Monday in the village of Kunigami, an Okinawa Defense Bureau spokesman said. "I believe that the formal hand-over of around [9,900 acres] of land to the landowners today set a direction toward mitigating the impact on the local communities," Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera told reporters.

The land, which was once part of the U.S. military's Northern Training Area, was included in the approximately 18,640 acres

given back to Japan in December 2016. Since then, Japanese defense officials have been busy testing the area's soil and water for pollution while also checking for unexploded ordnance. None has been found so far.

Roughly 8,410 acres of that land are nationally owned; 1,426 acres are owned by Okinawa prefecture and about 42 acres are owned by Kunigami. The final 32 acres belong to 88 private landowners.

The Northern Training Area is the largest U.S. military site on Okinawa. Nearly 10,000 acres — roughly the size of two Kadena Air Bases — was given back last year after the Marine Corps built six helicopter landing zones in a consolidated area to facilitate the land's return, which was first agreed upon in 1996. The land is mostly undeveloped jungle.

# Midwest, Northeast face bitter cold

Associated Press

ERIE, Pa. — As snow continues to pile up in Erie, Pa., which already has nearly 63 inches on the ground, forecasters warn of frigid, sub-zero arctic air and dangerously cold wind chills in much of the U.S.

A storm in Erie brought 34 inches of snow on Christmas Day, an all-time daily snowfall record, and another 24.5 inches by Tuesday night. More than 62.9 inches have fallen on the

city since Dec. 23, with an additional 2 to 4 inches predicted Wednesday.

The city issued a snow emergency, citing “dangerous and impassable” roads, and asked residents to stay off the streets. State police and the state Department of Transportation are urging people to avoid travel, citing poor visibility and deteriorating conditions.

Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper declared a disaster emergency to allow “needed

resources to be obtained.”

Wind chill advisories or warnings are in effect for all of North Dakota and Wisconsin, as well as swaths of South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan and Indiana.

Wind chill advisories were also in effect for parts of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and New York.

Meteorologists warn frostbite is possible with as little as 30 minutes of exposure.

# Construction halted at 9/11 church

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Construction on a Greek Orthodox church to replace one that was crushed in the Sept. 11 attacks has been temporarily suspended amid rising costs and questions over how donations have been managed.

The St. Nicholas National Shrine next to the World Trade Center memorial plaza was to replace a tiny church obliterated when the trade center’s south tower fell in 2001. The new building was designed by renowned architect Santiago Calatrava, who created the soaring white bird-like mall and transit hub nearby called the Oculus.

But unlike the transit hub, built largely with federal transportation dollars, the church is being funded through donations including from the Greek government, Greek Orthodox church members around the world, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston and the Italian city of Bari, whose patron saint is St. Nicholas.

In September, the estimated cost was \$50 million. But according to The New York Times, which first reported the work suspension, the cost had jumped to an estimated \$72 million to \$78 million as of this month.

Two firms — PricewaterhouseCoopers and BakerHostetler — were hired to perform an independent investigation into the construction, according to a Dec. 9 statement posted on the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

The stoppage was ordered by the construction company on the project, Skanska USA, the statement said.

Skanska, part of Stockholm-based Skanska AB, said it had extended payment deadlines and discussed alternatives with the archdiocese to try to keep the project going but ultimately had to halt construction.

# FEMA sells needed disaster trailers at discount prices despite demand

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — The federal government typically spends up to \$150,000 apiece — not counting utilities, maintenance or labor — on the trailers it leases to disaster victims, then auctions them at cut-rate prices after 18 months of use or the first sign of minor damage, The Associated Press has learned.

Officials have continued the practice even amid a temporary housing shortage in Texas, where almost 8,000 applicants are still awaiting federal support nearly four months after Hurricane Harvey landed in the Gulf Coast.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency briefly halted trailer sales following Harvey but resumed them in November, online records show. Since then, at least 115 units manufactured this year have been sold for pennies on the dollar, and many of the online auctions have listed such things as dirty mattresses, missing furniture, pet odors or loose trim as the lone damage.

“I don’t care what shape it’s in; it beats sleeping on a dirt floor,” said Christy Combs, who moved with her husband, four children and five dogs into a tent after their rented apartment in Aransas Pass, Texas, was left uninhabitable by floodwater.

FEMA has no written policy or regulation requiring disposal of used trailers, but an official confirmed to AP that it’s a longstanding internal policy and that seldom are the housing units given to another family in need after the initial 18-month stint.

“Because of the challenges associated with damaged units, and the costs of life-cycle maintenance, and because we are required to maintain a ready reserve for disasters, FEMA, by practice, doesn’t return used units to our reserve inventory,” said Jenny Burke, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which oversees FEMA.

Burke was unable to explain why FEMA leases new units for only 18 months before consigning them to the General Services Administration’s online auction.

The agency’s experience after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 could provide one explanation for a strict policy governing what kind of housing can go to storm victims. Some 144,000 FEMA trailers became symbols of the troubled federal response after some victims who lived in them for years won millions of dollars from lawsuits claiming the units leached high levels of cancer-causing formaldehyde.

FEMA spokesman Bob Howard stressed the units being

used now are much higher quality than those and don’t have formaldehyde problems, meeting U.S. Housing and Urban Development standards for mobile homes.

Harvey survivors in Texas have received 859 trailers so far, but another some 7,900 applicants are in need of some type of temporary housing assistance, whether rent, home repairs or trailers, Howard said.

FEMA’s policy of selling off its used trailers left the agency with a standing inventory of only 1,700 units as an unusually active hurricane season battered southeast Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands this year.

Federal records show that FEMA has awarded about \$278 million in competitive-bid contracts to trailer manufacturers even as it has continued to sell off used units. One record showed an expected delivery date of February 2018.

More than 100 2017 model trailers were sold in the two days leading up to Harvey’s landfall Aug. 25, the AP reported.

On Aug. 28, FEMA ordered the auctions halted “to evaluate the overall condition of recently deactivated units,” said Burke, adding that some were eventually deployed to support disaster response, although none that “required refurbishment.”

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Woman arrested after brawl at toy giveaway

**MI** DETROIT — A 39-year-old woman is accused of pulling a knife on another woman during a brawl at a Christmas toy giveaway in Detroit.

WXYZ-TV and WWJ-AM estimate that a few hundred people were waiting in line on the city's northwest side Saturday night when the fight between adults broke out. No injuries were reported.

WXYZ-TV reported that the woman was arrested and the two children who were with her were collected from a police precinct by relatives.

## Stolen car crashes into police cruiser

**CT** WESTPORT — Connecticut police said five people were arrested after a stolen car crashed into a police cruiser while an officer was looking for the suspects.

Westport police said the officer was responding to reports of possible burglary suspects in a neighborhood along Long Island Sound about 5 a.m. Tuesday when his cruiser was struck by the stolen car. The officer went to the hospital briefly but returned to the scene to help catch the suspects.

Dogs found three suspects in the freezing temperatures, and two other people were arrested later in the morning.

## Dog missing 3 weeks reunited with family

**NC** ASHEVILLE — A dog missing for nearly three weeks was reunited with his family in North Carolina just in time for Christmas.

Vivian Weir Dugan told the Asheville Citizen-Times on

Monday that she and her husband, Jack, averted "a miserable Christmas" when their 7-year-old Australian Shepherd mix Whitney was found on Christmas Eve.

Whitney had gone missing in Hendersonville, more than 10 miles away from his Arden home. A man recognized him from a lost pets Facebook group. The Dugans had pursued multiple tips to no avail.

## USS Constitution to mark battle anniversary

**MA** BOSTON — A ceremony aboard the USS Constitution will commemorate the 205th anniversary of a battle the warship fought in 1812.

The Friday ceremony to mark the anniversary of the battle between the USS Constitution and the HMS Java will include a gun salute from the world's oldest commissioned warship afloat and a moment of silence.

The battle with the British Royal Navy ship left the Constitution damaged, but the ship prevailed in what's considered a turning point for the naval fight in the War of 1812.

The Constitution earned the nickname "Old Ironsides" during the war with Britain.

## Police: Thief damaged church, stole furniture

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia police are searching for the suspect who they say stole from a church and vandalized the building over the weekend.

WPVI-TV reported members of the Historic Jones Tabernacle African Methodist Episcopal Church discovered on Sunday the church had been broken into. Police said the suspect took antique chairs, candelabras and stained glass windows.

Authorities said there was about \$10,000 worth of damage to the church.

## Giant peach, massive moonpie to ring in '18

**GA** ATLANTA — There will be a new site this year for Atlanta's New Year's Eve Peach Drop, one of several large events planned across the South, organizers say.

For the first time, the peach will drop from the 120-year-old Flatiron Building downtown on Sunday, the Atlanta mayor's office announced. The new site is a few blocks from Underground Atlanta, where the Peach Drop has been held in recent years.

Atlanta's Flatiron Building, which opened in 1897, is Atlanta's oldest standing skyscraper.

In Alabama, the "Moonpie Over Mobile" New Year's Eve celebration in downtown Mobile will feature entertainment by funk musician George Clinton. A giant 600-pound electric Moonpie will be lowered as the final seconds of 2017 are counted down, organizers said. A laser light show and fireworks are also planned.

## Dog-friendly ski trail open near Bozeman

**MT** BOZEMAN — Cross-country skiers can now get some exercise with their dogs on a new trail near downtown Bozeman.

The Bozeman Daily Chronicle reported the Bridger Ski Foundation and Run Dog Run created the nearly 0.6-mile-long dog loop in Lindley Park with a donation from the Split Rock Foundation. Dogs are allowed to be off-leash but owners are urged not to allow their dogs to run through the rest of the park.

## Lost ring found in panel of 1957 Chevy

**SC** SPARTANBURG — A Brunswick, Ga., man returned a championship high school football ring to the family of a South Carolina coach.

W.L. Varner's family never knew the ring from the coach's 1977 title at Woodruff High School was lost. They assumed it was among a number of mementos destroyed in a fire 10 years later that destroyed his office.

But the Herald-Journal of Spartanburg reported Joe Thomas found the ring in the passenger door panel of a 1957 Chevrolet Suburban.

Varner owned the Suburban. Thomas bought it 13 years ago and the ring fell out earlier this year when he used a screwdriver to pry the door away from a fender.

## Ice sculptures nearly ready for viewing

**NH** LINCOLN — Hand-crafted ice castle sculptures are expected to be ready for public viewing in Lincoln next week.

The castles, which have been under construction for weeks thanks to the continuing cold weather, include art that is made up of 25 million pounds of ice spiraling to heights around 40 feet. The ice is embedded with color-changing LED lights set to a musical soundtrack.

The castles will continue growing during the season until they melt in March. Walls that stand 8 to 20 feet could reach up to 60 feet in the next month.

The New Hampshire sculpture is one of five being built by the Ice Castles company. The others are in Midway, Utah; Dillon, Colo.; Stillwater, Minn.; Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Edmonton, Alberta.

From wire reports

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# Perry takes over QB duties for Navy

*The (Annapolis, Md.) Capital*

Malcolm Perry is now officially the starting quarterback, but he is not the one and only answer to Navy's ongoing offensive struggles.

Navy's patented triple-option offense did not operate smoothly during the second half of the season and a change at quarterback will not fix all the problems. That was the message of offensive coordinator Ivin Jasper, who cited a mixture of missed assignments, penalties and turnovers as major reasons why the Midshipmen were unable to sustain drives.

"Things just weren't going right with the offense. I wasn't coaching great and the group wasn't playing great," Jasper said. "I'm the first to admit that I didn't do the best job I could this season."

Seasonlong starter Zach Abey had success running the ball inside, but sometimes struggled with reading defenses and implementing the perimeter element of the triple-option. The junior has amassed 1,325 rushing yards — the sixth-best single-season total in program history.

"It wasn't just Zach. We didn't play very well overall. We didn't play well up front, didn't play well at slotback, didn't play well at wide receiver. Everything just went bad," Jasper said. "This is nothing against Zach, who has done all we've asked. It just comes down to looking at what helps us win football games and we feel this

Perry proved during two previous starts at quarterback that his game-breaking ability can overcome or mask other issues. The sophomore sensation rushed for 282 yards and four touchdowns against SMU, then added 250 yards and a score versus archrival Army.

Jasper and head coach Ken Niumatalolo have since determined that Perry is the future at quarterback and his tenure begins Thursday in the Military Bowl.

"We feel Malcolm is the quarterback that gives us the best chance to win football games

from here on out," Jasper said. "Malcolm is now a full-time quarterback so his thought process needs to be solely that of a quarterback. Now it's my job to get him ready going forward."

Navy's coaching staff entered this season believing Abey could do a superb job at quarterback and that Perry could contribute as a starting slotback. Things seemed fine through five games as Abey rushed for 870 yards and nine touchdowns while leading the Midshipmen to an unbeaten start.

Perry had 346 yards rushing and 98 yards receiving at that point in the season, but had only touched the ball 32 times on offense — an average of less than seven per game. By contrast, Abey had a whopping 146 carries through five games, prompting many observers to wonder why the staff wasn't doing more to get the ball into the hands of its most dangerous weapon.

Things began to go south for the Navy offense during a 30-27 loss to Memphis, which stacked the box with nine defenders to take away the inside running game. Abey made several bad decisions on perimeter option plays, including a couple of poor pitches, and the Midshipmen continuously attempted to pound the ball up the middle against a wall of defenders.

Other opponents employed a similar defensive game plan featuring an eight-man front and suddenly the offense went stagnant. Navy averaged just over 23 points in five of the final six games of the regular season. Of course, the one good game for the offense during that stretch came when Perry ran wild to lead a 43-40 win against SMU.

"It's just the way the season went. We started off great, then the wheels came off," Jasper said. "In one of the key games that we had to win, Malcolm gave us a spark and was a difference-maker."

Abey started at Notre Dame when Perry was sidelined with an ankle injury and did so again at Houston with Perry return-

ing to slotback. Niumatalolo and Jasper decided to unveil the secret weapon for the second time in the season against Army and Perry was spectacular again.

Watching Perry run for 532 yards and five touchdowns as a quarterback made the coaching staff realize he needed to play the position that handles the ball on every play.

"When you have a player that can make everyone else better because of what he can do with the football in his hands, that's the guy you have to go with," Jasper said. "Malcolm has a tremendous upside because he can make plays with his legs."

Perry's speed on the outside automatically forces opponents to respect the perimeter element of Navy's triple-option. Having Perry at quarterback gives defensive coordinators one other wrinkle to worry about as he has proven adept at running the zone option out of the shotgun formation.

"Having Malcolm at quarterback definitely gives opponents more to prepare for because he's good under center and in the gun. Hopefully, that will help us out moving forward," Jasper said. "We'll put some things in specifically for Malcolm to take advantage of his abilities, but we're not going to change too much. We'll continue to do what we do on offense."

The 5-foot-9 Perry is generously listed at 185 pounds, which he probably does not weigh at this point in the season. Jasper acknowledged that it will be important for the youngster to bulk up a bit during the offseason in order to withstand the pounding an option quarterback takes over the course of a 12-game season.

"We do need to put some weight and strength on Malcolm. I'd like to see him at around 195," Jasper said. "That's about what Keenan (Reynolds) weighed, and people forget that Keenan carried the ball 300 times one year. We can do that with Malcolm."

Perry smiled and nodded his head when asked if he remem-

bers the first day his dad gave him the keys to the car. In essence, that is what the Navy coaching staff is now doing — turning the controls of the offense over to the Tennessee native.

"I just want to come out to practice and get better every day, learn from my mistakes and do whatever I can to put my team in the best position to win," Perry said.

Perry was asked last week if it was awkward to be taking the starting job away from Abey, who statistically enjoyed a solid season. Niumatalolo has not decided whether Abey will remain at quarterback or switch to another position, stating that he and Jasper will discuss the situation during the offseason.

"I really don't think about it like that. We're all good friends in that room and do whatever the coaches say. We all have each other's back," Perry said of overtaking both Abey and backup Garret Lewis on the depth chart. "Zach has helped me out a lot as far as learning what I need to learn. Zach just wants the team to win."

Navy needs to get back to running the complete triple-option, which calls for the quarterback being able to read defenses at the line of scrimmage and make split-second decisions. Jasper could simply call a triple-option play and know that Reynolds would know whether to give the ball to the fullback, keep it himself or pitch to the slotback based off how the defense lined up and reacted.

"I know I still have a lot to learn about the offense. That is definitely the main focus for the offseason," Perry said. "I'm definitely capable of getting to that field general type of position."

Abey took a pounding while averaging more than 30 carries per game during Navy's 5-0 start, which produced a No. 25 national ranking. The Pasadena resident was bothered by nagging shoulder and hip injuries for an extended period of time and needed a two-week layoff in order to get back to full strength.

## College football roundup

# Delton, Kansas State cruise past UCLA

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Bill Snyder stood on a makeshift stage in the middle of a baseball stadium with a roof, a sparkling trophy at his side depicting a football sailing through cactus uprights.

If this was the end of his storied coaching career at Kansas State, it sure was a great way to go out.

Alex Delton ran for 158 yards and accounted for four touchdowns, leading the Wildcats to a 35-17 Cactus Bowl victory over UCLA on Tuesday night in what could be Snyder's final game.

"We've got so many people to be proud of at Kansas State University and it starts with our players, quite obviously," Snyder said.

Delton replaced Skylar Thompson late in the first quarter and scored on runs of 68 yards, 3 yards and 1 yard. Alex Barnes added 117 yards and a touchdown for the Wildcats, who rushed for 345 yards.

Kansas State (8-5) struggled in the first half against UCLA's potent offense, but shut down the Bruins in the second to give Snyder his 210th — and possibly last — win with the Wildcats.

UCLA (6-7) played without top NFL prospect Josh Rosen, who's recovering from a concussion, and built a 10-point halftime lead without its star quarterback.

The Bruins' offensive success didn't carry over into the second half and their defense had a hard time containing Delton, saddling interim coach Jedd Fisch with a loss in his last game before Chip Kelly takes over the program.

"We handled a ton of adversity this year and a ton of change," Fisch said. "After the [USC] week, they continued to play as hard as possible."

Snyder turned around one of the nation's worst programs after taking over in 1989, leading the Wildcats to eight straight bowl appearances after un-retiring in 2008.

He says he has not decided whether he will return for a 27th season or retire again to spend time with his family.

The 78-year-old coach made a quarterback change in the first quarter after Thompson threw an interception. Delton had an immediate impact, bursting up the middle for a 68-yard touchdown run.

Snyder opted to go for it on

fourth-and-goal from the 1 in the third quarter, and Delton came through again, bulling his way through a massive pile — with some help from his teammates.

Kansas State's Denzel Goolsby recovered Bolu Olorunfunmi's fumble at the Bruins 24-yard line on the next play from scrimmage, and Delton hit Dominique Heath for an 8-yard touchdown to give the Wildcats the lead.

"That was possibly the play of the ballgame," Snyder said.

### Heart of Dallas Bowl

#### Utah 30, West Virginia 14:

Zach Moss took a third-down handoff and quickly burst through the line and into an opening in the middle of the field. The Utes were off and running to another bowl victory.

Moss ran for 150 yards, including a career-long 58-yard run for a touchdown on Utah's opening drive on the way to a win over West Virginia. The Utes are now 11-1 in postseason games under Kyle Whittingham, who matched Alabama's Nick Saban for the most bowl wins by an active coach.

Utah sophomore quarterback Tyler Huntley scored twice, both on 2-yard keepers,

but they led for good in their fifth straight bowl victory after Moss broke free on a drizzly and chilly day in Cotton Bowl Stadium.

"It was very important for us to come out of the gates with a big play early on and set the tone," said Moss, who like Huntley still has two seasons left with the Utes (7-6).

West Virginia (7-6) finished the season with its third straight loss. The Mountaineers had only 153 total yards without junior quarterback Will Grier, who broke a finger Nov. 18, and 1,000-yard rusher Justin Crawford, a senior who bypassed the bowl game in advance of the NFL Draft.

### Quick Lane Bowl

**Duke 36, N. Illinois 14:** At Detroit, Daniel Jones threw for two touchdowns and ran for one as the Blue Devils throttled the Huskies.

Jones finished with 338 yards of offense, while Shaun Wilson and Brittain Brown added touchdowns for Duke (7-6).

"We knew Northern Illinois had a lot of success rushing the passer this year, but our offensive line really controlled things," Jones said. "That really opened things up."

## Patriots sign Harrison 3 days after Steelers waive him

Associated Press

James Harrison is no longer the odd man out or the oldest man in the locker room.

The ex-Steelers star signed a one-year deal with the New England Patriots on Tuesday, three days after his unceremonious departure from Pittsburgh.

The 39-year-old linebacker posted a photo on Instagram showing himself with 40-year-old quarterback Tom Brady in New England's locker room, writing that he finally has "a teammate that's older than

me!"

The AFC North champion Steelers released the five-time Pro Bowl linebacker and 2008 NFL defensive player of the year on Saturday to make room for right tackle Marcus Gilbert, who is returning from a suspension for violating the league's performance-enhancing substance policy.

"We make the decisions we feel give us the very best chance to win," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said Tuesday when asked why the team didn't release a different player to make room for Gilbert. "We

needed the people we kept. We needed to activate Marcus Gilbert. Really, it's nothing more than that."

A day before, Tomlin had said following Pittsburgh's 34-6 win over Houston that clinched a first-round playoff bye that difficult decisions such as this are "just life in football."

To make room on their roster, the Patriots released linebacker Trevor Reilly.

Harrison, who is the Steelers' career leader in sacks, piling up 80½ during his 14 seasons with the Steelers and 82½ during his career, briefly retired in Sep-

tember 2014 following a forgettable 2013 season in Cincinnati but returned when the Steelers ran into injury trouble.

He collected at least five sacks every season between 2014 and 2016 and signed a two-year deal last spring that would have kept him in Pittsburgh through his 40th birthday.

But Harrison's playing time dipped significantly this season — he has just one sack. He was active in just five games despite being injury-free and with the Steelers turning more toward outside linebackers Bud Dupree and rookie T.J. Watt.

# Smart directs quick turnaround at UGA

Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — One year ago, it was difficult to see the foundation for success Kirby Smart was building at Georgia.

This year's spot in the College Football Playoff seemed like a distant dream when the Bulldogs finished 8-5 in Smart's 2016 debut as coach. Among the low points were home losses to Vanderbilt and Georgia Tech.

Wide receiver Terry Godwin says players expected this year's turnaround. He insists players' belief in Smart never wavered.

"Of course not," Godwin said Tuesday. "As a player, we never had any doubts in that locker room. We knew once everything got clicking and rolling and everyone bought in and knew what they were supposed to do and knew their as-

signments, it was going to be a special year, and that's what it turned out to be."

Smart has guided No. 3 Georgia to a 12-1 record, its first Southeastern Conference championship since 2005 and a Rose Bowl playoff game against No. 2 Oklahoma on Jan. 1. The Bulldogs are two wins from their first national championship since 1980.

It was most important that Smart won over the players he inherited from former coach Mark Richt. The crucial vote of confidence in Smart came after last season when four top players — running backs Nick Chubb and Sony Michel and linebackers Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy — announced they would return for their senior seasons instead of entering the NFL Draft.

"For everybody to stay ... it

felt special because we knew coming into the season we were going to have something special," Godwin said. "With coach Smart bringing that grudge and physicality, it just went with our swagger and we knew that with this team staying together and those guys coming back we were going to have something special this year. That's what we're doing."

Smart celebrated on the field with his players as confetti fell from the roof of Atlanta's new Mercedes-Benz Stadium after Georgia beat Auburn 28-7 in the SEC championship game Dec. 2.

Then Smart went to work to make sure his players understood there are bigger games ahead.

The coach is turning up the volume to make his point.

"That's probably why you

hear my voice is hoarse right now," Smart said Monday. "I'm trying to make sure they understand that you can't acknowledge the pats on the back. You can't embrace that. You can't feel good about yourself because obviously ... winning the SEC championship is a great honor and they'll have that for a long time. It will be on these walls for a long time, but they can't be satisfied."

Smart's winning formula has been no surprise.

The former longtime Alabama defensive coordinator has helped build one of the nation's top defenses, led by Butkus Award winner Roquan Smith. The Crimson Tide won four national championships with Smart serving as Nick Saban's top defensive coach, and now Georgia's defense is thriving with similar speed and depth.

## NBA roundup

# Alley-oop slam in final second lifts Suns over Grizzlies

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Tyson Chandler learned of the Suns' crafty inbounds play when Jay Triano took over as coach early this season. With 0.6 seconds left in a tie game Tuesday night, Triano said Phoenix was going to run it.

Dragan Bender and Chandler did the rest.

Bender threw a perfect pass at the rim from the opposite sideline, Chandler jumped over the Grizzlies' Brandan Wright to slam it down with 0.4 seconds remaining, and the Suns beat Memphis 99-97.

Triano described his plan.

"I told our guy [Bender] to shoot the ball in the basket and all Tyson has to do is touch it on the way down or grab the rim and have it hit your knuckle and go in," Triano said, explaining the no-goaltending-from-out-of-bounds rule that made the basket good.

"My job was to punch it in,"

Chandler said.

Devin Booker scored 32 points in his return from a three-week injury absence before fouling out in the final minute.

**Bulls 115, Bucks 106:** Nikola Mirotic came off the bench to score 24 points in 28 minutes and visiting Chicago won for the eighth time in 10 games.

The surge coincides with the return of Mirotic, who missed the beginning of the season after suffering facial fractures in a fight with teammate Bobby Portis.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 28 points to pace Milwaukee, which has lost five of seven.

**Mavericks 98, Raptors 93:** J.J. Barea scored 20 points, including a clinching layup in the final seconds, and host Dallas ended another six-game winning streak by Toronto.

The Mavericks held DeMar DeRozan and the Raptors to season lows in shooting percentage as Toronto lost for just

the second time in 14 games, with each loss coming after six straight wins.

**Pistons 107, Pacers 83:** Tobias Harris scored 30 points to help host Detroit rout Indiana.

The victory moved the Pistons (19-14) past the Pacers (19-15) and into second spot in the NBA's Central Division.

**Heat 107, Magic 89:** Josh Richardson scored 20 points, Wayne Ellington had 12 of his 18 points in a dominant fourth quarter and host Miami beat struggling Orlando.

Tyler Johnson added 17, Kelly Olynyk scored 15 and Goran Dragic had 14 for the Heat, who outscored the Magic 39-21 in the fourth — the biggest margin by Miami in a final quarter this season.

**Spurs 109, Nets 97:** Kawhi Leonard scored 21 points, LaMarcus Aldridge added 20 and host San Antonio won its first game of the season with every player healthy and available.

The Spurs are third in the Western Conference at 24-11 despite being without Leonard and/or Tony Parker for 30 games this season.

**Nuggets 107, Jazz 83:** Jamal Murray scored 13 of his 22 points in the first quarter and host Denver overcame the ejection of Nikola Jokic to beat Utah.

Jokic had 13 points and seven rebounds before getting tossed in the fourth quarter. Despite the rout, Jokic got tangled up with Jonas Jerebko early in the fourth and was called for a flagrant 2 foul and ejected from the game.

**Clippers 122, Kings 95:** Montrezl Harrell scored 22 points and Lou Williams added 21, both off the bench, to lead host Los Angeles to a rout of Sacramento.

Jamil Wilson had 17 points for the Clippers, whose bench outscored their Kings counterparts, 72-43.