

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, December 18, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## GAO: Sailors still report long work hours

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Navy crews in Japan have seen a drastic improvement in training certification numbers, but some sailors report no change to heavy workloads cited last year as a contributing factor in two deadly ship collisions, according to a Government Accountability Office report.

The report, published last month, said the Navy in Japan had “improved markedly” the number of surface ship crews with lapsed training certifications over the past year.

In September 2017, about 41 percent of guided-missile cruisers and destroyers based in Japan were operating despite expired certifications. As of November, that number was down to 3 percent.

These certifications are given in crucial areas such as damage control, surface warfare and navigation once crews complete required trainings and meet qualifications for their rates. They signify that a ship’s crew has met Navy standards and is ready to deploy.

After three ships based in Japan were involved in collisions last year — two of which killed a total of 17 sailors — the Navy made it

more difficult to issue waivers to allow ships to operate on lapsed training certifications. A new policy requires multiple, high-level officials to approve a waiver.

The waiver change was among several other changes implemented over the past year to prevent future crashes. Post-collision reports attributed inadequate training and lack of sleep for crews as contributing factors in the fatal wrecks, which experts said were preventable.

John Pendleton, director of Defense Capabilities and Management for the GAO, testified at a congressional hearing on Navy and Marine Corps readiness last week about his findings from a recent visit to Japan. He attributed the improvement from the “alarming rate” of waivers to the implementation of the Afloat Training Group Western Pacific.

“The Navy has [increased certification numbers] by pouring resources into what’s called the Afloat Training Group, and that means that folks are going out and working with the ship crews to make sure that they’re trained and certified before they deploy,” Pendleton said at the hearing.

The ATGWP oversees maintenance, training and certification for the Navy’s ships in the Pacific. It was launched this year in Yokosuka to have an on-site team dedicated to working closely with ship com-

manders to ensure ship and crew standards are met.

While the renewed emphasis on training addressed one causal factor identified in the collision reports, Pendleton said it did little to improve another factor: sailor exhaustion.

“The Navy has stepped up training to make sure that ship crews are [trained] before they [deploy] and they have committed to provide dedicated training time going forward,” he told Congress. “However, this is keeping the sailors very busy.”

Pendleton testified that he held 10 discussion sessions with sailors on two Yokosuka-based ships during which many reported heavy workloads and 100-hour work weeks.

“I’m concerned that this reveals an underlying problem still facing the Navy — that it simply is not putting enough sailors on the ships to cover the workload,” Pendleton said at the hearing. “We reported on this last year; the Navy is working to develop ship-manning requirements both at-sea and in-port and we eagerly await the results to those studies as I suspect a number of hard-working sailors do, as well.”

The assessment and updates are due to Congress in February, and Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer testified at the hearing that the deadline will be met.

## Army helps GIs on refunds after leave mixup

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — The Army has negotiated refunds for the majority of the 250 soldiers on rotation in Europe who had bought airline tickets to go home for the holidays before learning the leave granted by their unit hadn’t been approved at higher levels.

“The command and refund coordinators have been working nonstop to rectify the situation, and it is still an ongoing process,” said Elisia Lukasik, a U.S. Army Europe spokeswoman.

The 4th Combat Aviation Bri-

gade out of Fort Carson, Colo., is deployed to Europe in support of the U.S. military’s effort to reinforce NATO’s eastern flank. In November, many troops made vacation plans. The problem: Whatever informal approval soldiers received from their command had not cleared U.S. Army Europe.

USAREUR policy states that deployed units are not authorized ordinary leave and that special exceptions must be granted. However, due to mission requirements an exception was not supportable, USAREUR determined. The troops are spread out on missions stretch-

ing from the Baltics and Poland to Germany.

To resolve the situation and ease the financial burden on soldiers, the Army assigned refund coordinators to each of the brigade’s battalions to help soldiers secure refunds. There are still some unresolved cases.

“Currently, the refund coordinators are working diligently on about 50 refunds. All others have been fully refunded or a refund is expected,” Lukasik said in a statement. “The command truly regrets the undue stress this has created for our soldiers and their families and will continue to work with each

soldier to address their individual situation.”

The 4th CAB is nearing the end of a nine-month deployment in Europe. The rotations are part of the military’s Atlantic Resolve campaign, which aims to deter potential Russian aggression against allies.

The troops are deployed at a time of heightened tensions in Europe. Russia’s attack last month on three Ukrainian naval vessels in the Black Sea and subsequent capture of about 25 Ukrainian sailors prompted condemnations from the U.S.-led NATO alliance.

# Japan OKs defense guidelines

BY HANA KUSUMOTO  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance is more important than ever for Japan's national security as challenges with China, cybersecurity and elsewhere continue to evolve, according to new defense guidelines approved Tuesday by the Cabinet.

The "severity and uncertainty" of these challenges "is increasing with extremely high speed," said the National Defense Program Guideline, which sets guidance for Japan's defense strategy.

This is the second guideline revision under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe since 2013.

To counter increased military operations by China near East China Sea islands claimed by both nations, the guideline also supports converting an Izumo-class flat-top helicopter destroyer to accommodate F-35B stealth fighters. Japan plans to acquire 42 of the short takeoff and vertical-landing aircraft in the next 10 years.

The guideline calls for turn-

ing the self-defense forces' attention to threats posed to the nation's cybersecurity and from space. It also re-emphasizes the U.S.-Japan alliance as vital to Japan's national security.

"To further strengthen relations with the U.S., which shares the same universal values and strategic interests with our country, has become important more than ever for our national security," the guideline stated.

Japan will actively support U.S. military operations, such as defending U.S. ships and aircraft, according to the guideline. For example, a recent change to Japanese law allows its self-defense forces to provide logistical support to U.S. forces.

Japan needs to quickly build a new defense capability that promotes the integration of conventional ground, sea and air defenses with new areas of space and cyber, according to the revised guideline.

"Rapid expansion of new areas, such as space, cyber and electromagnetic waves, is fundamentally changing the ideal

state of national security, which had placed importance on dealing with physical areas such as land, sea and air," it stated.

The guideline also calls for all three self-defense forces to jointly address cyber defense and for the Japan Air Self-Defense Force to deal specifically with space.

Converting the Izumo carrier to handle F-35Bs will extend the self-defense forces' operational reach, defense officials said.

The only Japanese air bases — Naha Air Base and the Maritime Self-Defense Force base on Iwo Jima — have runways of 7,800 feet or longer, where conventional fighters can land. There has been frequent foreign military activity in the East China Sea and western Pacific Ocean, government officials said.

Operational flexibility will increase if short-takeoff, vertical-landing capable aircraft could operate from an Izumo-class platform when conducting air-defense operations in remote areas, the official said.

## More border troops return to home base

BY ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — Another 1,000 active-duty servicemembers have returned to their home bases from a deployment to the southwest border of the United States, bringing the number of troops on the ground there to roughly 3,150, Pentagon officials announced Monday.

There are 1,050 servicemembers in Texas, 900 in Arizona and 1,200 in California working with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, said Col. Rob Manning, a Pentagon spokesman. The reduction of active-duty forces along the southern border began last week when about 750 servicemembers began returning to their home bases. The Defense Department has not announced which units have returned to which installations.

The deployment to the U.S.-Mexico border began Oct. 31 and was intended to last through Dec. 15. With numbers peaking at 5,900, it's unclear how many troops will remain through the extended mission scheduled to end Jan. 31. The original intention was to "harden" and protect the border as a caravan of Central American migrants traveled through Mexico to seek asylum in the United States.

The military will continue providing engineering and military police force protection at designated ports-of-entry in California and Arizona, but drawdown most forces in Texas, officials at U.S. Army North said. About 2,300 National Guard soldiers are also deployed to the border to support a separate mission with Border Patrol agents.

During the deployment, military engineers have placed about 70 miles of wire obstacles and movable barriers at 22 ports, military police units have conducted more than 10,000 hours of unit training and combined rehearsals with Border Patrol agents and military rotary wing aviators have flown more than 740 hours, officials at U.S. Northern Command posted to Twitter.

## Services honor soldiers killed in Afghan blast

BY CHAD GARLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

Sgt. Jason McClary was the driver of a military vehicle in central Afghanistan when he was hit by a roadside bomb last month that fatally wounded him and three special operations troops.

"He got the full blast," said his mother, JoLynn Maoli, Pittsburgh's KDKA reported Monday as friends gathered to remember the 24-year-old veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. "I just took a deep breath and fell to the floor."

A funeral was held Tuesday morning for McClary, who died of his wounds on Dec. 2 at a military hospital in Germany. Burial with full military honors would

follow at the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies. His was the second funeral this week for a soldier killed by the blast, the deadliest attack on U.S. forces in Afghanistan this year.

Friends, family and others gathered to remember him at his hometown church on Monday ahead of the funeral.

"This is a very sad day," Frank Persia of American Legion Post 711 told KDKA. "It's just a heartache."

Some, like Cheryl Staubauch, came out to show support for the family of a "local boy."

"He sacrificed it all, he sacrificed it all for us," she told the local television station. "He took that step for his country to keep us free."

Also on Monday, 900 people

gathered at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Glen Allen, Va., for the funeral of Green Beret Capt. Andrew P. Ross, media reports said. Ross died of his wounds on Nov. 27, the day of the blast that also killed Army Sgt. 1st Class Eric Michael Emond and Air Force Staff Sgt. Dylan J. Elchin.

A memorial service for Emond was held Saturday in Southern Pines, N.C., according to the University of Massachusetts Medical School, where his father-in-law, Barry Feldman, is an assistant professor of psychiatry.

Emond, who was on his seventh deployment, was a "consummate soldier who aimed ... to make a positive impact in the world," Feldman said in a university release.

## Vet McSally named to McCain's Senate seat

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Arizona's governor has named Rep. Martha McSally to replace Sen. Jon Kyl in the U.S. Senate seat that belonged to Sen. John McCain.

Republican Gov. Doug Ducey announced Tuesday that McSally will take over after Kyl's resignation becomes effective Dec. 31. McSally last month lost a race for Arizona's other Senate seat to Democratic Rep. Kyrsten Sinema.

"With her experience and long record of service, Martha is uniquely qualified to step up and fight for Arizona," Ducey said in a statement. "I thank her for taking on this significant responsibility and look forward to working with her and Senator-elect Sinema to get positive things done."

McSally will serve until the 2020 election, when voters will elect someone to serve the final two years of McCain's term.

Kyl was appointed after McCain's death from brain cancer in August. He previously served in the Senate for Arizona and had said he would only commit to serving until the end of 2018.

The intense interest in the seat was a factor in Ducey's convoluted decisions. He initially appointed Kyl while the governor himself was campaigning for re-election. By picking Kyl, Ducey dodged tough political decisions that could have complicated his own re-election bid.

McSally is a two-term congresswoman who was long considered for the Senate by the state's GOP establishment. The first female combat pilot, McSally once sued the U.S. military so she would not be required to wear a head covering while stationed in the Middle East.

She rose to the rank of colonel in the Air Force before entering politics.

# Trump directs DOD to establish 4-star unified Space Command

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Tuesday directed the Pentagon to establish a new combatant command charged with overseeing all of the U.S. military's space operations across all of its branches.

Trump ordered the formation of U.S. Space Command, a four-star unified command to lead military space operations and develop the Pentagon's space warfighting plans and techniques, in a directive sent to the Defense Department. Pentagon officials said they would immediately work to build the new command, the department's 11th combatant command.

In his order, Trump charged Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to recommend leaders for Space Command. Pentagon officials said they expected such recommendations to be made within "the next several weeks," but they declined to

provide names of flag officers under consideration.

"The (Defense) Department will move expeditiously to establish U.S. Space Command once a commander is appointed," said Army Lt. Col. Joe Bucino, a Pentagon spokesman.

Pentagon officials have yet to determine where Space Command will be headquartered or how quickly the new command will be fully operational, he said.

The directive had been expected. While some lawmakers have pushed back against Trump's plans to build a Space Force, a sixth branch of the military, Pentagon officials, including Mattis, have long championed the establishment of a combatant command focused on space, especially as competitor nations have advanced their own space capabilities and shown interest in using them for military purposes.

For example, China has recently displayed the ability to hit satellites with missiles, and

Russia has vowed to develop space-based laser weaponry.

Vice President Mike Pence, in a speech Tuesday morning from the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., declared "a new era of American national security in space."

He said Trump would soon sign a new space policy directive in which the administration would lay out its plans for building a Space Force. While establishing Space Command does not require congressional legislation, lawmakers would have to approve the formation of a new military branch.

While the Air Force has responsibility for the vast majority of the Pentagon's space operations — including operating 77 of the military's more than 100 satellites — all five branches have space programs. It remains unclear whether the Space Force would be a fully independent branch of the military or if it would take on a form similar to the Marine Corps, which is part of the Navy.

## GAO finds extreme drop in VA anti-suicide efforts

By NIKKI WENTLING  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A federal investigation found the money and effort expended by the Department of Veterans Affairs on suicide prevention outreach dropped significantly in 2017 and 2018, despite it being touted by the past two VA secretaries as their top clinical priority.

Following a yearlong investigation, the Government Accountability Office reported Monday that the VA has cut back since 2016 on suicide prevention outreach. Of the \$6.2 million budget obligated for suicide prevention outreach in fiscal year 2018, the agency had spent only \$57,000, or less than 1 percent, by September. Agency officials told investigators they would end up spending a total of \$1.5 million by Oct. 1, the end of

the fiscal year. The remainder, \$4.7 million, went unused.

The number of social media posts, public service announcements, billboards and radio, bus, Facebook and print advertisements declined in 2017 and 2018, as did the effort on suicide prevention month.

"VA has stated that preventing veteran suicide is its top clinical priority, yet [the Veterans Health Administration's] lack of leadership attention to its suicide prevention media outreach campaign in recent years has resulted in less outreach to veterans," the GAO report states.

Suicide among veterans is disproportionately higher than the rest of the U.S. population, with an estimated 20 veterans dying by suicide each day, according to VA data. Among veterans younger than 35, the number of

suicides has increased substantially in recent years.

Rep. Tim Walz, of Minnesota, the ranking Democrat on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, requested the GAO investigation. He said Monday that the findings conveyed "a deeply troubling level of incompetence" by President Donald Trump's administration.

"At a time when 20 veterans a day still die by suicide, VA should be doing everything in its power to inform the public about the resources available to veterans in crisis," he said in a statement. "Unfortunately, VA has failed to do that, despite claiming the elimination of veteran suicide as its highest clinical priority."

The VA had increased its suicide prevention outreach efforts from 2013 to 2016.

# White House backs off shutdown threat

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate's top Republican and Democratic leaders began negotiating Tuesday after the White House indicated President Donald Trump does not want a federal government shutdown over his demand for \$5 billion for the border wall with Mexico.

During a meeting on Capitol Hill, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky, proposed \$1.6 billion for border fencing, as outlined in a bipartisan Senate bill, plus an additional \$1 billion that Trump could use on the border, according to a senior Democratic aide unauthorized

to speak about the private meeting.

Democrats are likely to reject that, the aide said, characterizing the additional \$1 billion as a "slush fund."

But the meeting between the top leaders offered the first signs of a movement after days of impasse as the clock ticks down toward Friday's funding deadline.

Without a resolution, more than 800,000 government workers could be furloughed or sent to work without pay, disrupting government operations days before the Christmas holiday.

Democratic leader Rep. Nancy Pelosi, of California, called it a "good sign" that the White House appeared to be backing off

its demands. Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, of New York, have proposed \$1.3 billion. That money would not be for a wall but for border fencing.

As she entered a meeting in Schumer's office, Pelosi said the "slush fund" is not acceptable. "What they might want to do with that \$1 billion dollars is problematic," Pelosi told reporters. "Right now, what they've offered, we have not accepted."

The White House showed a willingness to budge earlier Tuesday as it became apparent the president does not have support in Congress for funding the wall at the \$5 billion level he wants.

## 2 Chicago police officers struck, killed by train

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Two Chicago police officers were fatally struck by a train as they investigated a report of gunshots on the city's far South Side.

Eduardo Marmolejo, 37, and Conrad Gary, 31, were pursuing a person heading toward the train tracks when they were hit shortly after 6 p.m. Monday as the commuter train passed through the area, police Superintendent Eddie Johnson said. Police said the officers were chasing the suspect on foot.

"There was no stop at that lo-

cation so the train was probably going somewhere between 60 and 70 miles per hour," Johnson said during a news conference.

Johnson said an individual was taken into custody and a weapon was recovered. He said the investigation was still in the early stages and that more details would be released later.

Marmolejo had been with the department for 2½ years and Gary for 18 months, Johnson said.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who also spoke at the news conference, said the city had

lost "two young men, both fathers with young families."

"There are no words that can express the grief, the sense of loss. It just knocks you back on your heels," he said.

Chicago police use ShotSpotter technology, or sensors that monitor for the sound of gunfire and alert police. Johnson said the two officers went to the scene Monday after a ShotSpotter alert went out.

"It just highlights again how dangerous this job can be. I often say that the most dangerous thing a police officer can do

is take a weapon off of an armed individual," Johnson said.

The train that struck the officers was operated by a commuter rail line that links northern Indiana and Chicago, according to media reports. In 2002, Chicago police officer Benjamin Perez was fatally struck by a commuter train while conducting surveillance on narcotics activity on the city's West Side.

Two other Chicago officers besides Marmolejo and Gary have been killed in the line of duty this year.

## Ex-CBS CEO Moonves denied \$120 million severance

Associated Press

NEW YORK — CBS Corp. announced Monday that former CEO Les Moonves will not receive his \$120 million severance package after the board of directors concluded he violated company policy and was uncooperative with an investigation into sexual misconduct allegations.

The decision, which came after a five-month outside investigation, capped the downfall of one of television's most influential figures, the biggest entertainment powerbroker to see his career derailed amid the #MeToo movement against sexual misconduct.

A lawyer for Moonves said the board's conclusions "are without merit" but did not say whether the former CEO would challenge it in arbitration.

Moonves was ousted in September after allegations from women who said he subjected them to mistreatment including forced oral sex, groping and retaliation if they resisted.

"This is an important reminder that harassment happens everywhere and that in this moment, even someone who has been perceived as untouchable will be held accountable," said Fatima Goss Graves, a co-founder of the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund, which provides legal assistance to victims of assault, harassment or abuse. "I hope other corporations are learning that lesson."

New York-based CBS said at the time of Moonves' departure that it had set aside \$120 million in severance for him but warned that he would not get the money if the board concluded it had cause to termi-

nate him.

"We have determined that there are grounds to terminate for cause, including his willful and material misfeasance, violation of company policies and breach of his employment contract, as well as his willful failure to cooperate fully with the company's investigation," the CBS said in a statement.

The board did not provide details. Earlier this month, The New York Times said a draft report from the outside investigation found that Moonves deleted numerous text messages and was "evasive and untruthful at times."

Andrew Levander, an attorney for Moonves, said his client "vehemently denies any nonconsensual sexual relations and cooperated extensively and fully with investigators."

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Poacher ordered to repeatedly watch 'Bambi'

**MO** SPRINGFIELD — A Missouri poacher was ordered to repeatedly watch the movie "Bambi" as part of his sentence for illegally killing hundreds of deer.

The Springfield News-Leader reported that David Berry Jr. was to watch the Walt Disney movie the first time before Sunday and at least once each month during his one-year jail sentence in southwest Missouri's Lawrence County. He was convicted there of taking wildlife illegally. He also was sentenced last week to 120 days in jail in nearby Barton County for a firearms probation violation.

Lawrence County Prosecuting Attorney Don Trotter said the deer were killed for their heads, with their bodies left to rot.

### Auto museum to close; will auction vehicles

**MS** TUPELO — An automobile museum in Mississippi is closing next year, with the co-founder saying it's no longer "sustainable" for her and some volunteers to operate.

The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal reported the co-founder of the Tupelo Automobile Museum, Jane Spain, plans to sell all 178 vehicles the museum owns, with the proceeds for a charitable education foundation her late husband Frank Spain envisioned.

The museum opened in 2002 but the newspaper reported it's never had the numbers of visitors needed to be self-supporting.

The auction is set for April 25-27. Among the vehicles in the collection is an 1886 Benz three-wheeled car, a 1918 Stanley Steamer, a 1929 Dusenber Model J and a 1957 Corvette.

### Crew rescues llama amid heavy rains

**MD** HIGHLAND — A special operations crew tasked with helping drivers escape floodwaters in Maryland also took on a more unique task: rescuing a llama.

News outlets reported the llama's owner reported the animal was trapped in a pasture that had flooded overnight. Howard County Department of Fire and Emergency Rescue services spokeswoman Denise Weist said the water "was deep enough that there was no way it was going to cross."

So the rescue crew got to work, fastening a rope to the llama's harness and walking it through the waist-high water.

### Shatterproof glass thwarts robbers

**MI** GRAND RAPIDS — A brazen daylight robbery turned into a bizarre bungle as would-be robbers were thwarted by shatterproof glass at a jewelry store near Grand Rapids.

Mlive.com reported that two men entered a Jared Galleria of Jewelry store Saturday during business hours with several employees and customers present.

They wore hoods and what were described as ski masks.

Grandville police Sgt. Christine Merryweather said the men used a hammer to try to smash a jewelry case but could not penetrate the shatterproof glass. They then fled the scene in a dark SUV.

### City wins auction for historic Route 66 sign

**IL** SPRINGFIELD — The city of Springfield is the winning bidder for a his-

toric neon sign that's one of the city's remaining Route 66 landmarks.

The State Journal-Register reported an online auction was held for the Sunrise Donuts sign, which went up along Route 66 in 1949.

At one point the top bidders were in Chicago and California. But Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau director Scott Dahl revealed Friday the city made the winning bid of \$22,000. The money will come from city hotel-motel tax.

Dahl says buying the sign "ensures our visitors will continue to experience Springfield's story as it relates to Route 66." Plans for the 6-by-8-foot sign weren't announced.

### Building to be converted into Tubman museum

**NJ** CAPE MAY — Officials announced plans to convert a New Jersey church building into a Harriet Tubman museum.

The Press of Atlantic City reported developers signed an agreement with the Macedonia Baptist Church in Cape May on Sunday to renovate the church's old parsonage and turn it into a museum honoring the abolitionist.

Developer Robert Mullock said Tubman spent time in Cape May during the 1850s.

Church trustee chairperson Lynda Towns said they hope for the project to be complete by 2020 when federal officials plan to release the new \$20 bill featuring Tubman's face on the front.

### Panel rejects request to remove statue

**AZ** TUCSON — A statue of Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa is remaining

in downtown Tucson following an effort by a conservative watchdog group to remove it.

The Arizona Daily Star reported members of the Public Art and Community Design Committee last week unanimously rejected a removal request by Washington, D.C.-based Judicial Watch.

The group claims city records do not indicate that a public hearing was held to hear complaints about the statue before it was unveiled in 1981.

The committee said the request did not meet any of the 10 criteria used to consider removing public art.

### Bullied boy named Trump gets support

**DE** CLAYMONT — An anti-bullying organization is offering some encouragement to a middle-school student who has been teased because his last name is Trump.

The News Journal reported that Pennsylvania-based national nonprofit Teach Anti Bullying awarded Joshua Trump the Teach Anti Bullying Medal of Courage at a ceremony in his Delaware home Saturday.

Brandywine School District officials said Joshua's parents raised concerns about their son's safety with staff at Talley Middle School in Wilmington. School officials said they have offered support for Joshua, including mentoring and a name change in the database so that all staff refer to him by his father's surname, Berto, instead of his mother's surname, Trump.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# 12-2 Saints grinding out tough wins

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — On a night when the high-powered offense was stuck in neutral, the New Orleans Saints still found a way to grind out a 12-9 win over Carolina behind their ever-improving defense.

That could bode well for these Saints (12-2) as they prepare to make a run at the Super Bowl.

For years, they've relied on star quarterback Drew Brees to score a lot of points, put up big yardage and win games for them. But suddenly the Saints have a defense that is not only keeping them close when the offense sputters, but might be one of the best in the NFL. New Orleans has not allowed more than 17 points in any of its last six games.

"That's what the great teams find a way to do," said Brees, who was limited to 203 yards passing and intercepted once Monday night. "Despite what happens in the first three quarters or maybe the mistakes that

were made prior to that, they just make the plays you need to make to win the game."

Brees likes that the Saints have found many different ways to win, even though not all of them have been pretty. The 12 points against the Panthers marked the fewest for New Orleans in a victory since 1998.

For most of the season the Saints relied on an electrifying offense, scoring 40 points or more six times. But recently it is the defense that has stepped up to make big plays.

"There's a lot to be said for that — finding ways to win," Brees said. "Battle-tested. These last two weeks, we've had to win in the fourth quarter, had to come back and win in the fourth quarter. On the road, divisional games, those are going to be hard-fought. Those are going to be tough and the great teams find a way. Our guys believe we're all going to step up, we're going to do this together, somebody's going to make a play."

The Saints didn't make a lot of plays Monday, but they made enough.

There was Eli Apple's interception of Cam Newton's pass in the end zone with 10 seconds left before halftime. There was Von Bell's strip of wide receiver D.J. Moore on an inside handoff and A.J. Klein's recovery, which led to the go-ahead score. There were four players who sacked Newton — and none were named Cam Jordan. Alvin Kamara had a 50-yard kickoff return.

The little plays all add up.

"We are playing hard and playing for each other," Apple said.

Unlike some of the NFL's other top teams — namely, the Rams and Chiefs — the Saints found a way to grind it out without their "A" game on offense this week.

It didn't matter that the offense failed to gain more than 30 yards on seven of its first eight drives. It didn't matter because New Orleans could

count on its defense.

Jordan called it the best he's ever played on.

"I believe in us, game in and game out, first quarter to fourth quarter," Jordan said. "If it comes down to a crucial play, I believe in us. If we need a turnover, I believe in us."

New Orleans has already wrapped up the NFC South title and can clinch home-field advantage throughout the playoffs with a victory in either of its last two games, both at home, against Pittsburgh and Carolina.

Looking for their second Super Bowl championship in a decade, the well-rounded Saints might just be the favorites heading into the postseason.

"We were just trying to stack weeks because you know you want to play your best ball in December," said Bell, who also had seven tackles and a sack. "That's what people remember and going into this last stretch we wanted to finish strong."

## It may be time for Panthers to end Newton's season

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — It's come to the point in the season where the Carolina Panthers must make the difficult decision of whether to sit Cam Newton.

With the postseason a long-shot at best following a six-game losing streak and the former league MVP seemingly unable to throw the ball more than 20 yards down the field due to a lingering shoulder injury, coach Ron Rivera may weigh the benefits of shutting down Newton for the rest of the season.

"I'm not looking forward to that conversation," Newton said after Carolina's 12-9 loss to the Saints.

Newton has been limited in practice for the better part of the season, often not throwing at all on Wednesdays and Thursdays during the week so

he can rest the shoulder. His timing is off with his receivers and he doesn't have the same zip on the ball as he did when he led the Panthers to the Super Bowl in 2015 and combined for 45 touchdowns.

He said he doesn't know exactly what the issue is with his shoulder — only that it's not getting better or worse.

He mentioned the possibility of it being the labrum or the rotator cuff, which he had repaired in March 2017. In the meantime, he's been taking anti-inflammatories, getting massages and trying acupuncture. He said there hasn't been a night that's gone by without having some type of work done on his shoulder.

Nothing is working.

Without a diagnosis, Newton has just kept on playing.

"I've been eager to find out for weeks and weeks what it

is," Newton said. "Did you find something? What am I supposed to do? What do I have to do? It's a lot of soreness and tension in the joint."

He previously mentioned the possibility of surgery in the offseason, but was noncommittal on Monday night.

Rivera said after the game he'll likely head into next week's game against Atlanta — which is essentially meaningless in terms of the postseason — the same way he has the previous 14 games. He'll evaluate Newton's status later in the week after meeting with team doctors.

"I'm not going to guess as to what he's going through," Rivera said. "I would never do that. The young man is a courageous guy who fights and tries to do the best he can for us."

Center Ryan Kalil said "nobody is more frustrated than

Cam."

"I've played a long time with the guy and he takes it personal. It's been a frustrating season, needless to say," Kalil said.

He called Newton one of the toughest players he's ever played with.

"I've seen the guy take hits and get his body up, game after game, season after season," Kalil said. "Hits that I have seen him take other guys wouldn't get up from. He fights through a lot of stuff."

Said middle linebacker Luke Kuechly: "I think it's just the epitome of this team. You have guys that are banged up, you got guys who aren't feeling 100 percent, but they continue to go out there and fight."

Newton was 16 of 29 for 131 yards against the Saints. He finished with a 52.5 passer rating, by far the worst of the season. He was sacked four times.

## Sports briefs

# Highly rated Georgia QB transferring

Associated Press

Georgia freshman quarterback Justin Fields has informed Bulldogs coaches he plans to transfer, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Monday night.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because Fields, the former five-star recruit, had yet to formally notify No. 6 Georgia of his intention to leave. Under new NCAA rules, players no longer request permission from a school to transfer. Now an athlete submits a notification paperwork, which results in the athlete's name being placed in an NCAA-run database of available transfers.

Another person with access to the database told AP that Fields' name was not listed as of Monday night. That person spoke on condition of anonymity because the database is not public.

USA Today first reported Fields intends to transfer.

Georgia spokesman Claude Felton told the AP in an email the school and coach Kirby

Smart would have no comment Monday night on Fields.

NCAA rules would require Fields to sit out next season if he transfers, though he could request a waiver to become immediately eligible if he can show some sort of hardship he would endure by staying at Georgia.

Fields was one of the most highly rated recruits in the country in the signing class of 2018. The Georgia native from Kennesaw decided to stay in his home state and sign with the Bulldogs, despite the presence of quarterback Jake Fromm on the roster.

Fromm led Georgia to a Southeastern Conference championship and an appearance in the national title game last season as a freshman. This year Fields was expected to push Fromm for playing time, but he was firmly entrenched as a backup.

Fields played in all 12 games, completing 27 of 39 passes for 328 yards with four touchdowns, and he ran for 266 yards and four touchdowns, but his most significant playing time came

in lopsided victories against nonconference opponents.

## Tagovailoa 'probably ahead of schedule'

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Alabama coach Nick Saban says quarterback Tua Tagovailoa is "probably ahead of schedule" in recovering from ankle surgery.

The Heisman Trophy runner-up has been practicing for the top-ranked Crimson Tide, which began preparations Friday for an Orange Bowl semifinal matchup with Oklahoma.

Tagovailoa had surgery on his left ankle shortly after the Dec. 1 Southeastern Conference game during which he sustained a high ankle sprain on the first drive against Georgia. He played much of the way on the injury but had his worst game of the season.

Tagovailoa left in the fourth quarter after his own offensive lineman came down on his right foot.

Saban says Tagovailoa has been able to take a lot of prac-

tice repetitions, throw from the pocket and run. He doesn't think the quarterback has "100 percent change of direction yet."

## Stanford RB Love to skip bowl game

STANFORD, Calif. — Stanford running back Bryce Love will skip the Sun Bowl to prepare for the NFL Draft.

Love announced his decision on Monday to sit out the bowl game for the Cardinal (8-4) on Dec. 31 against Pittsburgh (7-6). Love says he wants to be completely healthy for the 2019 draft.

Love had a rough senior season after deciding to bypass the 2018 draft after finishing as Heisman Trophy runner-up. He was slowed by injuries and finished with 739 yards on 166 carries. That was down significantly from the previous season when he ran for 2,118 yards and averaged 8.1 yards per carry. Love also set an FBS record with 13 runs of at least 50 yards.

## College basketball roundup

# Coming out of break, Vanderbilt upsets Arizona State

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Vanderbilt used a 12-day break for final exams to figure out how to play without freshman Darius Garland.

Saben Lee scored 14 points to lead five players in double figures and sharp-shooting Vanderbilt beat No. 18 Arizona State 81-65 on Monday night.

Vanderbilt snapped an eight-game skid against ranked opponents that dated to an overtime win over Florida in the 2017 Southeastern Conference Tournament. The Commodores (7-2) also beat Arizona State for

the first time in five tries on the Sun Devils' first visit to Memorial Gym.

They did it without Garland, a touted freshman who tore the meniscus in his left knee in a loss to Kent State on Nov. 23.

"It's huge for us," Vanderbilt junior forward Yanni Wetzell said. "We obviously lost a critical piece a couple weeks back and to get this win that just shows the resilience of this team and that we can put the next man up mentality. And I think we definitely showed that tonight."

The Commodores had a big night from beyond the arc, hit-

ting six of 12 from deep in the first half and 12 of 28 for the game.

Aaron Nesmith added 13 points off the bench for Vanderbilt. Wetzell had 12, and Matt Ryan and Joe Toye had 11 each. The Commodores' bench outscored Arizona State's 36-21.

Arizona State, which moved up two spots in the AP Top 25 earlier Monday, has lost two of three.

"We got to get back home, get back to the drawing board, watch the film and see how we can be more effective offensively," Arizona State coach Bobby Hurley said. "It's hard to

put that much pressure on your defense, especially on the road. We didn't make shots. We shot 32 percent, and that's not going to win you a lot of games."

**No. 11 Florida State 85, Southeast Missouri 68:** Trent Forrest scored a career high 23 points and freshman Devin Vassell added 16 as the host Seminoles recovered from a sluggish first half.

Forrest shot 8-for-12 from the floor, and had a team-high eight rebounds and four assists to help Florida State (9-1) win its fourth straight and its 30th straight non-conference home win.

## NBA roundup

## Antetokounmpo, Bucks outlast Pistons

Associated Press

DETROIT — Giannis Antetokounmpo was called for two quick fouls, and with 9:02 remaining in the first quarter, he went to the bench.

When he returned, there was still plenty of time for the Milwaukee star to make an impact.

“No matter how many fouls I have, I’ve got to be aggressive. If I get the third one, I get the third one,” Antetokounmpo said. “Whenever I stop being aggressive, I don’t make plays.”

Antetokounmpo made plenty of plays down the stretch, finishing with 32 points and 12 rebounds, and the Bucks held on for a 107-104 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Monday night when Blake Griffin missed a last-second three-pointer.

Griffin actually missed two threes in the final 14 seconds. The Detroit star already had a triple-double after three quarters, but it was a difficult fourth for him. Griffin finished with 19 points, 11 assists and 10

rebounds, but he also had 10 turnovers.

**Rockets 102, Jazz 97:** James Harden scored 47 points to help host Houston hold off Utah for its fourth straight win.

It was the Rockets’ first victory over the Jazz in three meetings this season. Their current winning streak comes after a three-game skid.

Houston led by double digits early in the fourth quarter, but poor shooting left the Rockets tied with about two minutes left. A three-pointer by Harden put Houston back on top and he added two free throws with about a minute remaining to make it 99-94.

**Warriors 110, Grizzlies 93:** Stephen Curry had 20 points and seven rebounds to lead host Golden State past Memphis.

Curry became the fifth player in Warriors history to score 15,000 points during the regular season — joining Wilt Chamberlain, Rick Barry, Paul Arizin and Chris Mullin.

Kevin Durant had 23 points and passed Larry Bird (21,791)

for 33rd place on the NBA’s career scoring list.

**Trail Blazers 131, Clippers 127:** Damian Lillard scored 22 of his 39 points in a dominant third quarter and visiting Portland defeated Los Angeles.

Lillard hit five of his six three-pointers in the third when the Trail Blazers outscored the Clippers 42-28.

Tobias Harris matched Lillard with a career-high 39 points for the Clippers, who have lost four in a row for the first time this season.

**Spurs 123, 76ers 96:** Rudy Gay had 21 points and LaMarcus Aldridge and DeMar DeRozan each added 20 as host San Antonio defeated Philadelphia.

The Spurs bounced back after squandering a 21-point lead in a loss to Chicago on Saturday night and held an opponent to less than 100 points for the fifth straight game.

**Thunder 121, Bulls 96:** Paul George scored 16 of his 24 points in the final five minutes of the first half and host Oklahoma City rolled past Chicago.

George’s outburst came in

the last 4:47 of the second quarter as the Thunder outscored the Bulls 23-7 and built a 64-44 lead at the break. He scored just one point in the second half.

Russell Westbrook had 13 points, 16 rebounds and 11 steals for his 111th career triple-double.

**Timberwolves 132, Kings 105:** Karl-Anthony Towns had 14 points and 14 assists in just 21 minutes, Andrewiggins scored 17 and host Minnesota got a big boost from its bench in beating road-weary Sacramento.

Minnesota led by 36 in the first half against Sacramento, which was coming off a 120-113 victory at Dallas a night earlier.

**Suns 128, Knicks 110:** Devin Booker tied his season high with 38 points, T.J. Warren scored 17 of his 26 during his team’s 41-point third quarter and Phoenix beat host New York for its third straight victory.

Deandre Ayton finished with 21 points and 13 rebounds for the Suns.

## NHL roundup

## Ducks rally from two goals down to beat Pittsburgh

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Anaheim Ducks would love to stop playing from behind. It’s just not happening. And somehow it’s not a problem, either. Particularly on the road.

The Ducks spotted the Pittsburgh Penguins two first-period goals and then roared back for a 4-2 victory on Monday for their ninth win in 10 games. Adam Henrique and Ryan Getzlaf each had a goal and an assist as Anaheim got its sixth straight road win, tied for the second-longest in franchise history.

“Sometimes when you get in other buildings, it’s tough when

a couple bounces don’t go your way early,” Getzlaf said. “It’s a little bit of an uphill battle. I thought tonight, we did a good job of just staying with our plan, executing with the puck a little bit better obviously in the second period. We got going as the game went on.”

Ondrej Kase and Kiefer Sherwood also scored for the Ducks, who have won three straight over the Penguins. John Gibson, a Pittsburgh native, stopped 28 shots, including the final 24 he faced. He called Anaheim’s dominant second period — when the Ducks scored three times to move in front — perhaps its best of the season.

Gibson did the rest of the work in the third, turning aside two Pittsburgh power plays to win his in hometown for the second consecutive year.

Evgeni Malkin got his 11th goal of the season for Pittsburgh and Bryan Rust added his sixth but the Penguins couldn’t cool off the Ducks. Casey DeSmith finished with 32 saves but lost for only the third time in his last 11 starts after letting a two-goal lead slip away for a third straight game. Pittsburgh recovered to beat Boston and Los Angeles last week. Not this time.

**Blue Jackets 1, Golden Knights 0:** Nick Foligno scored

40 seconds into the third period, Sergei Bobrovsky made 28 saves and host Columbus beat Vegas.

**Islanders 4, Avalanche 1:** Goaltender Thomas Greiss bottled up Colorado’s fast-flying offense and Johnny Boychuk scored his first goal of the season for visiting New York.

**Senators 4, Predators 3 (OT):** Thomas Chabot scored 21 seconds into overtime and host Ottawa recovered after blowing a three-goal lead.

**Bruins 4, Canadiens 0:** Jaroslav Halak stopped 22 shots for his third shutout of the season and visiting Boston beat Montreal.