

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

Saturday, December 29, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Trump threatens again to close border

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and Democrats are trading blame for the partial government shutdown but doing little substantive talking with each other as the disruption in federal services and public employees' pay slogs into another weekend.

Trump upped the brinkmanship by threatening anew to close the border with Mexico to press Congress to cave to his demand for money to pay for a wall. Democrats vowed to pass legislation restoring the government as soon as they take control of the House on Thursday, but that won't accomplish anything unless Trump and the Republican-controlled Senate go along with it.

The effects to the public of the impasse grew as the Environmental Protection Agency, which had the money to function a week longer than some agencies, implemented its shutdown plan at midnight Friday night. EPA spokeswoman Molly Block said many of the agency's 14,000 employees were being furloughed while disaster-response teams and certain other employees deemed essential would stay on the job.

Also running short on money: the Smithsonian Institution, which said its museums popular with visitors and locals in the capital will close starting midweek if the partial shutdown drags on. But federal flood insurance policies will continue to be issued and renewed, in a reversal prompted by pressure from lawmakers, said Repub-

lican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida.

Trump appeared no closer to securing money for his signature border wall, which he vowed during the campaign that he would make Mexico pay for. He's failed to do so. Now Democrats are adamant that they will not authorize money for the project, calling it wasteful and ineffective.

Trump tweeted: "We will be forced to close the Southern Border entirely if the Obstructionist Democrats do not give us the money to finish the Wall & also change the ridiculous immigration laws that our Country is saddled with." He also threatened to cut off U.S. aid to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, among countries he deems have not done enough to combat illegal immigration.

Coast Guard lands brief pay reprieve for servicemembers

By **SETH ROBSON**
AND **ROSE L. THAYER**
Stars and Stripes

Coast Guard servicemembers will receive their paychecks Monday despite an earlier announcement saying they'd miss out due to the federal government shutdown, officials said Friday.

"I am pleased to announce the Administration, the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard have identified a way to pay our military workforce on 31 December," Coast Guard Vice Commandant Adm. Charles Ray said in message to servicemembers.

Earlier in the week, a Coast Guard spokesman had indicated that pay would stop during the shutdown, which began Dec. 21 and shows no signs of ending soon.

"I recognize that this changes course from previously provided guidance on military pay, however, this is outstanding news for our military workforce," Ray said.

Though the other military

service branches — Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines — are part of the Department of Defense, which has been unaffected by the shutdown, the Coast Guard falls under the Department of Homeland Security, one of several federal agencies whose budget was not approved beyond Dec. 21.

There are about 42,000 active-duty Coast Guard members. In addition, about 7,400 civilian Coast Guard employees are on furlough and another 1,300 are continuing to work without pay.

The Coast Guard's one-time action applies to servicemembers who were on active duty in December and reservists who drilled before the lapse in appropriation, Ray said.

Information posted on the Coast Guard's official website says the service generally lacks the authority to pay its members during a government shutdown. However, research and legal analysis determined that it can execute pay and allowances for December.

"If you were an active-duty military member in Decem-

ber, then you will receive your monthly paycheck on Dec. 31, 2018. That paycheck will include all of the normal pay and allowance benefits," the website says.

"If you were a reservist that served on active duty during the month of December, you will also receive your monthly paycheck ... if you were a reservist that conducted reserve training prior to Dec. 21, 2018, then you will receive the appropriate pay and allowance entitlements on Dec. 31, 2018," it adds.

However, the website warns that servicemembers' Jan. 15 paychecks are not guaranteed.

"Meeting active duty and reserve military payroll for January 2019 will require a fiscal year 2019 appropriation, a continuing resolution, or passage of an alternative measure," the website says.

An agreement to end the shutdown hangs on a standoff between the White House and Democrats on Capitol Hill over funding for a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico. President Donald Trump has said he will not sign a spending resolution

without border wall funding. Congressional Democrats are refusing to relent to the president on this issue.

During any single pay cycle, about \$150 million is required to pay all Coast Guard military and civilian employees, according to the financial counseling and employee assistance programs' welcome message.

But the program does not have the resources to help everyone and the goal is to assist at least the 21,000 servicemembers ranked E-5 and below, said retired Rear Adm. Cari Thomas, chief executive officer for Coast Guard Mutual Assistance.

"Our mission is to care for our own," she said. "It is hard when the Coast Guard that you love doesn't have the ability to pay you. It impacts you, your family, and your home. I have lived through earlier government shutdowns, and know first-hand how much life at home impacts your life at work. That is why we help those who help the public."

Afghan momentum on peace, election slows

The Washington Post

KABUL — Just 10 days ago, Afghanistan finally seemed to be moving forward. Peace negotiations with the Taliban were gaining traction and the country's neighbors were playing a newly positive role. National polls had been set for April, and President Ashraf Ghani appeared strongly positioned for re-election. The U.N. special representative for Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto, was so optimistic that he told the U.N. Security Council that the chance of settling the Afghan conflict "has never been more real in the past 17 years than it is now."

Today, it is a very different story. The forward momentum has all but stopped, the news has all been bad, and the country's political future seems more uncertain than ever.

Afghan officials, stunned by President Donald Trump's plan to call back thousands of U.S. troops, have retreated into silence and frantic maneuvering to shore up the government. The election has been thrown into doubt and seems likely to be postponed for months. A brutal, unclaimed terrorist assault on two government ministries in the capital left 43 people dead Monday, and the Taliban's

leverage in future power-sharing seems stronger than ever.

"The state of play in Afghanistan is becoming increasingly volatile," said Michael Kugelman, an Afghanistan expert at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington. The new uncertainties about peace talks and elections, plus "looming U.S. troop withdrawals and a relentless Taliban insurgency," have created a "powder keg," he said in an email Friday.

Several Afghan observers expressed similar concerns, warning that the potential double whammy of a prolonged-but-weakened government and a politically strengthened, still-aggressive insurgency could create a power vacuum filled with violence and political turmoil.

"Unfortunately, the timing of the troop cutbacks has fallen right when there was an effort to convince the Taliban to accept a settlement, and at a crucial phase in a new political transition," analyst Haroun Mir said. Now, he said, "the Taliban will have no reason to make meaningful concessions," and it will be equally difficult to hold credible elections on time or to extend the current administration's tenure.

Technically, the election has nothing to do with the peace talks, but the imbroglio over its timing, initially due to concerns over security and fraud, became linked to the talks last month, as U.S. officials pushed for speedy negotiations with the insurgents. Some Afghans and foreign donors urged that the presidential polls be delayed, and a variety of Afghans said an interim caretaker government should be set up to oversee the peace process.

Ghani, then widely viewed as the front-runner and adamantly opposed to an interim government, insisted that the polls be held in April as mandated by the constitution. The national elections commission vacillated for weeks, changing its mind several times. Early this week, the panel indicated that the polls might be delayed by three to four months, but no announcement was made.

At the same time, the abrupt White House decision to cut half of the 14,000 U.S. troops, most serving as trainers and advisers to Afghan forces, upended both the pre-electoral political calculus here and the growing sense of momentum in the peace process, especially after a third round of talks in Abu Dhabi to which half a

dozen foreign countries extended support and Taliban leaders sent senior delegates.

When news of Trump's plan broke here, it appeared to many Afghans and others that the Taliban, which had been waging an aggressive ground campaign and killing record numbers of Afghan forces for months, was being handed one of its major longtime demands — that foreign forces leave the country — without having to give up anything in return. There were media reports of Taliban fighters celebrating at the news and predicting that victory was close at hand.

American military officials here have insisted that no matter how large or small their troop numbers, U.S. support for Afghanistan will remain steadfast.

But Afghanistan's military and police forces have struggled with mixed success to overcome long-term morale and institutional problems that foreign advisers can only partly address. Although Ghani has said nothing publicly in response to Trump's decision, he moved swiftly to shore up his security team, appointing two hard-line former intelligence chiefs as his new ministers of defense and interior.

Nielsen visits Texas border after second child's death

Associated Press

ELPASO, Texas—Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen on Friday visited the Texas border city where an 8-year-old Guatemalan boy was detained with his father before dying in government custody.

DHS spokeswoman Katie Waldman said earlier in the week that Nielsen was scheduled to tour multiple stations and substations, and was also scheduled to meet with emergency medical technicians and medical professionals, as well as local officials.

The trip came four days after the death of 8-year-old Felipe Gomez Alonzo. Felipe was the second Guatemalan child to die in government custody in three weeks.

Nielsen has called the death "deeply concerning and heart-breaking" and requested medical help from other government agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard. As Nielsen made the trip to Texas, New Mexico's Democratic senators, Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, sent her a letter Friday seeking answers about the boy's death.

"The timeline, action and

factors that led to Felipe's death are still developing, but the information that has become public so far is alarming and demands immediate attention and investigation," the letter says.

Felipe and his father, Agustin Gomez, were apprehended by border agents on Dec. 18 near the Paso del Norte bridge connecting El Paso to Juarez, Mexico, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

After an agent noticed Felipe coughing, father and son were taken to an Alamogordo hospital, where Felipe was diagnosed

with a common cold and found to have a fever of 103 degrees Fahrenheit, CBP has said.

Felipe was held for observation for 90 minutes, according to CBP, before being released with prescriptions for amoxicillin and ibuprofen.

But the boy fell sick hours later on Monday and was re-admitted to the hospital. He died just before midnight.

New Mexico authorities said late Thursday that an autopsy shows Felipe had the flu, but more tests need to be done before a cause of death can be determined.

Lawyer says ex-cardinal groped client in confession

Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican's sexual abuse case against ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick has expanded significantly after a man testified that the retired American archbishop sexually abused him for years starting when he was 11, including during confession.

James Grein testified Thursday in New York before the judicial vicar for the New York City archdiocese, who was asked by the Holy See to take his statement for the Vatican's canonical case, said Grein's attorney Patrick Noaker.

The testimony, which lasted about an hour, was difficult and stressful, but Grein was proud to have done it, Noaker said.

"He wants his church back. He felt that in order to accomplish that end, he had to go in and testify here and tell them what happened, and give the church itself the chance to do the right thing," Noaker said in a telephone interview Friday.

Grein initially came forward in July after the New York archdiocese announced that a church investigation determined an allegation that McCarrick had groped another teenage altar boy in the 1970s was credible.

Grein's claims, first reported by The New York Times, are more serious. He has alleged that McCarrick first exposed himself to Grein when he was 11 and then sexually molested him for years thereafter.

Noaker said in the testimony Thursday, Grein also gave "chilling" details about alleged repeated incidents of groping during confession — a serious canonical crime on top of the original offense of sexually abusing a minor.

Grein had previously not made public those claims, but Noaker confirmed his testimony to The Associated Press. Grein also allowed McCarrick's defense lawyers to listen to his testimony by telephone.

Wild weather in South, Midwest

Associated Press

A powerful winter storm that brought blizzard warnings Friday across the Upper Midwest was blamed for at least three fatal crashes while flash flooding from rains in the South swept away cars and forced dozens of water rescues.

In northern New England, a mix of snow, sleet, freezing rain and rain added up to make for dangerous driving Friday for post-holiday travelers.

Much of the Dakotas and part of Minnesota were under a blizzard warning after many areas got a foot of snow or more Thursday.

A collision between a small bus and an SUV in Minnesota killed a 47-year-old woman on the bus and injured nine others Thursday. A second person died in central Minnesota after being struck on a road by a pickup with a plow blade.

Another storm dumped up to 12 inches of rain in Louisiana and Mississippi, sweeping away cars and forcing some residents to be rescued from their homes before the rains

moved into Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and western North Carolina on Friday.

The National Weather Service posted flash flood watches and warnings for much of the South from Louisiana into southwest Virginia.

"We had an extreme flash flooding event," said Glen Moore, the emergency management director in Forrest County, in southwestern Mississippi, which saw 9 inches of rain fall over 12 hours through early Friday.

Authorities had to rescue residents from about 25 area homes in Forrest County, Moore said.

Mississippi officials warned that flood levels on some rivers in the state could be high, especially if the forecast for more rain through Tuesday holds up.

Rain-fed rivers were rising Friday in some New Orleans suburbs north of big Lake Pontchartrain.

There was one death in Tennessee where a woman fell into a rain-swollen creek near Chattanooga. Authorities who recovered the woman's body

Friday morning about three hours after she lost her footing said she had been camping in a cave with friends and they were trying to leave the area when she fell into the water.

Rescue workers in north Georgia used a ladder and ropes to get to a woman and baby stranded in a truck inundated by rising waters Friday. Dramatic video posted to Facebook showed crews working to reach the truck as water reached the vehicle's windshield.

The storm system was blamed for a death in Louisiana earlier this week when a tree fell on a camper.

Forecasters said up to 5 inches of rain was possible in northern Alabama and central and north Georgia.

Water also flooded more than a dozen homes in St. Charles Parish, La., and a Trader Joe's store near New Orleans lost power during the storm, prompting it to donate perishable grocery items to a food bank.

Some areas of the Midwest were seeing spring-like conditions.

Utah adopts nation's strictest DUI threshold

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — New Year's Eve revelers in Utah could find themselves with more than a hangover as 2019 dawns. If they drink and drive, they could end up on the wrong side of the nation's newest and lowest DUI threshold.

The 0.05 percent limit goes into effect Sunday, despite protests that it will punish responsible drinkers and hurt the state's tourism industry by adding to the reputation that the predominantly Mormon state is unfriendly to those who drink alcohol. The state's old limit was 0.08 percent, the threshold in most states.

For Utah lawmakers, the change is a safety measure aimed at encouraging people not to drive at all if they've been drinking.

The change was easily approved in 2017 by the Legislature, which is mostly Mormon and mostly Republican, and signed into law by Gov. Gary Herbert, also a Republican and member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The religion teaches its members to abstain from drinking alcohol.

The change means that depending on things such as food intake, a 150-pound man could be over the 0.05 limit after two beers in an hour, while a 120-pound woman could exceed it after a single drink in that time, according to figures from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The National Transportation Safety Board also backs the change, and many in the hospitality industry worry that other states will follow suit. Utah was among the first to adopt the

now-standard 0.08 threshold decades ago, and lawmakers in four states — Washington, Hawaii, Delaware and New York — have floated measures to lower their DUI limit in recent years. None has passed.

NTSB member Bella Dinh-Zarr countered that fears about the law are overblown. Nearly 100 countries have a similar limit, and it hasn't correlated with less drinking per-capita. Federally funded research indicates the standard could save some 1,500 lives a year if adopted around the U.S., she said.

Utah's law takes effect as the state basks in the news that the U.S. Olympic Committee chose Salt Lake City over Denver as a future bid city, most likely for the 2030 Winter Olympics. State tourism officials say they're not concerned about the law driving away visitors.

Blue collar worker shortage in US

Bloomberg

A surprise shortage of blue collar workers is changing the contours of the U.S. labor market, boosting their pay, narrowing wage inequality and drawing more women into those jobs.

The shortfall is being driven by a shrinking supply of manual and low-pay service workers as the labor force becomes more educated and less willing to take on such jobs, according to a new Conference Board study.

“The divergence between blue collar and white collar supply is going to persist and even become bigger through 2030,” Gad Levanon, chief economist for North America at the New York-based research group and one of the authors of the report, said in an interview.

That is likely to keep upward pressure on labor costs in such industries as construction, transportation and accommodation and food services. It also has implications for inflation and for the Federal Reserve as Chairman Jerome Powell and his colleagues try to sustain the 9½-year-old expansion without overheating the economy. Un-

employment at 3.7 percent is the lowest since 1969 and running well below Fed estimates for its long-run sustainable rate.

“The acute shortage of talent in the blue collar space is very, very pronounced,” said Peter Quigley, executive vice president at Kelly Services Inc., a staffing company with branches in all 50 states.

Manufacturers and other companies with physically demanding jobs are finding it tough to fill those positions when baby boomers retire. “It’s harder and harder to attract younger people into those jobs, either because they’re pursuing education alternatives or the stigma associated with light industrial work,” Quigley said.

The supply of lower-skilled workers is also being squeezed by growth in the number of Americans who’ve claimed disability benefits and dropped out of the labor force. Exacerbated by the opioid epidemic, that’s much more concentrated in the population without a bachelor’s degree, the Conference Board report says.

Tighter restrictions on immigration are also playing a role and will continue to do so

in the future, said Moody’s Analytics’s Chief Economist Mark Zandi. Many of those foreign workers are lower-skilled and in industries such as construction and farming.

Automation and off-shoring were widely expected to devastate demand for industrial workers and depress their pay, especially when compared with their more educated counterparts. But that hasn’t happened, at least so far, according to the Conference Board: Blue collar and low-pay services jobs have grown as rapidly as total employment since the economy began recovering in June 2009.

For much of this expansion, manufacturers and other companies have been slow to ramp up capital spending and step up automation, opting instead to take on more workers to meet rising demand for their products and services.

The combination of surprisingly robust demand for blue collar workers and their limited supply is forcing companies to increase pay at the bottom end of the scale. Minimum wage increases have also helped those less well-off.

Pelosi taps Florida Dem to lead climate change panel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi on Friday appointed Florida Rep. Kathy Castor to lead a special committee on climate change that will be reinstated in the new Congress.

Pelosi, the likely House speaker, said Castor brings experience, energy and “urgency to the existential threat of the climate crisis” facing the United States and the world. Castor is set to begin her seventh term representing the Tampa Bay area and serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

“Congresswoman Castor is a proven champion for public health and green infrastructure, who deeply understands the scope and seriousness of this threat. Her decades of experience in this fight, both in Florida and in the Congress, will be vital,” Pelosi said.

Castor said in a statement that she was honored to lead the panel and pledged to “act with urgency to reduce carbon pollution” and “unleash” American ingenuity to create clean-energy jobs.

“The costs of the changing climate and extreme weather events pose greater risks every day to American families, businesses and our way of life,” Castor said. She added that the new panel “will tackle the crisis head-on. Failure is not an option.”

The climate panel is similar to one that Pelosi created when Democrats last controlled the House from 2007 to 2011. It was eliminated by then-Speaker John Boehner when Republicans took the majority.

The membership and exact scope of the panel remains to be determined, but Pelosi said it will play a key role in shaping how Congress responds to the threat of global warming while creating good-paying, “green” jobs.

Shiite rebels cede control of key Yemeni port

Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — Yemen’s Shiite rebels Saturday handed over control of the main port in the Red Sea city of Hodeida to the country’s navy and coast guard under U.N. supervision, security officials said, in a significant step in the implementation of a deal reached during peace talks in Sweden earlier this month.

The handover is the first in a series of confidence-building measures agreed to in Sweden that could pave the way for a political settlement of Yemen’s 4-year-old war pitting the Iran-aligned rebels known as Houthis against the internationally recognized government backed since 2015 by a

Saudi-led coalition.

The rebels control most of northern Yemen, including the capital Sanaa, while their war foes control much of the south, including the Arabian Sea port city of Aden, where the exiled government is located.

The two sides have observed a cease-fire in Hodeida for more than a week, ending months of fierce fighting between the two sides for control of Hodeida. A U.N. team led by a Dutch officer arrived last week in the city to monitor the cease-fire. The U.N. team is led by retired Dutch Maj. Gen. Patrick Cammaert.

Some 70 percent of Yemen’s imports come through Hodeida, and the Sweden deal is designed in part to facilitate

the arrival of relief supplies to push Yemen back from the brink of famine. The fighting has killed tens of thousands of people, and has driven millions to hunger. The U.N. calls it the world’s worst humanitarian disaster.

The two sides also agreed in Sweden to exchange prisoners of war in a deal involving thousands captured from both sides. The implementation of that deal is yet to begin and may run into difficulties.

Government officials maintain that the Houthis are denying the presence in their detention facilities of nearly 3,000 from a total of some 8,500 prisoners whose names were submitted to the rebels.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

2 plead guilty to racist graffiti on high school

MD GLENELG — Two Maryland teenagers pleaded guilty to writing racist and Nazi graffiti on their Glenelg High School over the summer.

The Baltimore Sun reported Joshua Shaffer and Seth Taylor, both 19, pleaded guilty to a hate crime charge Thursday as part of a deal.

Prosecutors said Shaffer wrote racist graffiti targeting the Glenelg High School principal, who is black. Shaffer was sentenced to 18 weekends at a detention center followed by supervised probation and community service, among other requirements.

Prosecutors said Taylor spray-painted “KKK” and swastikas around the school and was sentenced to nine weekends at the center.

Man drops stolen TV from getaway scooter

FL DAVIE — Police said two Florida men stole a flat-screen television from a South Florida Walmart store and dropped it as they fled on a motorized scooter.

Davie police said on Twitter that Michael Patrick Flanagan, 36, was arrested Wednesday.

Video surveillance showed a man taking the 43-inch Vizio flat screen television valued at \$348 on Dec. 16. In a tweet, the agency said the “clumsy” pair almost crashed as they made their getaway. They left the TV on the ground.

Stolen dog returned home a year later

NJ WALL — A New Jersey man was reunited with his dog more than a year after the pooch was stolen from his

car.

The dog-napping occurred in Virginia when the owner was on vacation. The Yorkie, named Buddah, was recently taken in as a stray by Richmond Animal Care and Control.

NJ.com reported the dog’s microchip showed its owner lived in Wall Township. The owner, only identified as John T., wasn’t able to drive to Virginia, so volunteers from the shelter drove the dog to New Jersey on Thursday.

‘Sniffles,’ dog with no nose, up for adoption

FL ORLANDO — Sniffles may have no nose but he has a big heart, and an animal rescue organization is looking to find the 12-year-old Florida pooch a permanent home.

Those efforts have gotten the former stray dog in Orlando national news media attention.

While living on the streets in Puerto Rico, Sniffles was attacked by larger dogs and lost his nose in the fight. He was later taken in by an animal rescue group, and his injuries required three surgeries.

Poodle and Pooch Rescue of Florida said they’ve had 200 inquiries.

Customers draw guns on men stealing tools

WA MARYSVILLE — Authorities said two men were surrounded by customers with guns while attempting to steal tools from a Washington store.

The Daily Herald reported the men, ages 22 and 23, allegedly took four nail guns, each worth more than \$400, from the Coastal Farm & Ranch store in Marysville.

The men walked out of the store and got into a Honda Civic, only to be surrounded by

about six customers with guns raised.

Court documents said the driver pulled forward, causing one man confronting him to land on the hood.

Documents said another customer shot at the driver’s side front tire, while a third fired twice at the rear tire.

Marysville police found the theft suspects’ car unoccupied about three blocks away, with two flat tires and the tools inside.

Woman in Rudolph mask robs business

CO FORT COLLINS — Police in northern Colorado said a woman wearing a Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer mask robbed a business in Fort Collins the week before Christmas.

The Fort Collins Coloradan reported police posted surveillance video of the suspect on their Facebook page, along with a parody of the famous Rudolph song.

It ends with, “Rudolph the Red Nosed Criminal, we need your help with her I.D.”

Man’s wish for 2 front teeth comes true

MO KANSAS CITY — A Kansas man’s wish for two front teeth for Christmas is coming true.

The Kansas City Star reported that a local church and friends helped raise money for Olathe man Evans Kamuru’s dental implants.

Kamuru wrote on Facebook that one front tooth broke off when he was using his teeth to cut tape and wrap presents last Christmas season. He said the other one broke in January when he was eating a waffle.

His friends created a group to help raise money for implants.

Lenexa’s Gospel Outreach Center chipped in \$15,000 this month, and a dentist offered a discount.

Traffic stop leads to head-butting of officer

NY NEW YORK — Authorities said a suspected drunken driver head-butted a state trooper and his wife threw her shoes and underwear in protest after they were pulled over on Long Island.

New York State Police said Michael Nelson, 38, struck the trooper several times while being arrested on an intoxicated driving charge last weekend on the Southern State Parkway in Hempstead.

Nelson’s 29-year-old wife was arrested after police said she got out of their 2017 Mercedes-Benz and tried obstructing his arrest.

In addition to throwing objects, troopers said Alexandra Nelson was spitting at them.

Driver who ignored sign might have to pay

VT PITTSFORD — A Vermont fire department may bill a woman who drove onto a closed flooded road and had to be rescued.

Pittsford Fire Chief Bill Hemple told the Rutland Herald that crews responded to a driver who was stranded in Pittsford. Hemple said the woman had climbed to her car’s roof. Firefighters backed a utility truck up to the disabled vehicle and rescued the woman.

State law allows rescue agencies to bill people who are rescued after disobeying road closures.

Hemple said he’s still considering whether he’ll fine the motorist. According to Hemple, the fine could exceed \$1,000.

From wire reports

On a mission to provide objective reporting to America’s military, wherever they serve.
Read us online at www.stripes.com.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Foles content with role in Philadelphia

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Nick Foles plays with a strong sense of inner peace because he doesn't allow success or failure to define him.

Win or lose, he's the same guy.

"My identity is rooted in Christ, not in my accomplishments," Foles said a few days before he leads the Philadelphia Eagles (8-7) against the Washington Redskins (7-8) in another big game.

The Eagles will earn the NFC's final wild-card berth if they win Sunday and the Vikings (8-6-1) lose at home against the Bears (11-4).

Foles has performed well at quarterback in high-pressure situations the past two seasons while filling in for Carson Wentz. He's 5-0 in must-win games and earned Super Bowl MVP honors in a win over New England last February.

"Playing in the Super Bowl is really a big stage but I remem-

ber staying in the moment, not worrying about the clock, not worrying about the score," Foles said. "It was peaceful, which it shouldn't be, but it was."

He said he hasn't mastered his "stay-in-the-moment" philosophy but he's working on it daily.

"I still have to remind myself," Foles said. "There are times you get overwhelmed, you get excited thinking about all the things you want to accomplish. ... I'm still learning. I don't have it conquered."

The Eagles were on the verge of playoff elimination when a back injury forced Wentz out of the lineup earlier this month, but Foles came to the rescue again.

He helped the 13½-point underdog Eagles beat the Los Angeles Rams 30-23 on the road, and set a franchise record with 471 yards passing in a 32-30 comeback win over Houston last week.

Teammates have raved about

Foles' leadership skills and confidence.

"He's extremely calm. He's always exuding positivity," tight end Zach Ertz said. "He's playing at an extremely high level. We love playing for him."

Foles doesn't get flustered when things go wrong. He doesn't call out guys on the sideline or argue with coaches.

"There will be mistakes. I might throw a pick. I might fumble," he said. "But what are we gonna do? That's where we need to react and be confident and be positive."

Staying consistent on and off the field is important to Foles.

"When I step in the huddle, I'm not going to change, when we're at a restaurant or out in public (I'm not going to change)," he said. "I want to be who I am. I want to be genuine, and I think that's a powerful thing."

Foles is 22-7 as a starter for the Eagles over two stints since his rookie season in 2012. He has experienced plenty of highs

and lows — he was traded by the Eagles in 2015 and released by the Rams in 2016 — during his seven seasons in the NFL and now faces an uncertain future.

The Eagles are committed to Wentz as their franchise quarterback so they're expected to decline an option to pay Foles \$20 million in 2019, allowing him to become a free agent. Foles became emotional talking about the possibility he has played his last game in Philadelphia.

"This city means a lot to me, this team means a lot to me, wearing that jersey means a lot to me," he said. "I'm very grateful for every opportunity to play here, to play in front of our fans, to wear that jersey no matter what. No one can ever take that away from me."

Wherever Foles goes, fans in Philadelphia will always consider him a hero for winning the franchise's first Vince Lombardi Trophy.

Everything's on the line for Colts, Titans in finale

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Andrew Luck is a win away from putting the Indianapolis Colts back into the playoffs for the first time since 2014 while doing something no NFL quarterback has managed since at least 1970.

Beat an opponent 11 straight games.

Luck has won his first 10 games against the Tennessee Titans, matching Hall of Famer John Elway, who went 10-0 against the Patriots. Another victory Sunday night would leave Luck all alone in dominating another team with an AFC wild-card berth at worst for the Colts (9-6).

Not that Luck is counting on past success, especially after the Colts needed a late TD to edge the Giants 28-27 for their eighth victory in nine weeks.

"What happened previously

and what happened in previous years, it doesn't matter," Luck said. "What happened last weekend does not matter. It's a new cycle."

Tennessee safety Kevin Byard refuses to ponder why Luck has tormented the Titans so. The Titans are 2-3 against the Colts in Byard's three seasons — Luck missed 2017 with a shoulder injury — and four straight wins have Tennessee (9-6) a win away from a second straight postseason berth.

By kickoff, they'll all know exactly what's at stake. The AFC South title will be up for grabs if Houston loses to Jacksonville. Even crazier for the Titans, a No. 2 seed with a first-round bye would be available if the Texans, Patriots and Ravens all lose. That's more than enough to keep the Titans focused.

Some things to know about

the final game of the NFL's regular season:

Mariota's status: The Titans may not know if quarterback Marcus Mariota will play against the Colts. Mariota was knocked out of the Titans' 25-16 victory over Washington last weekend with a stinger — the same injury that kept him out of a 38-10 loss Nov. 18 in Indianapolis. Mariota, who is listed as questionable for the game, is optimistic he'll play instead of backup Blaine Gabbert.

"This is what it's about," Mariota said. "You're playing for everything. I'm doing everything I can day and night, and just trying to make sure that I can be ready."

One-sided: This division rivalry has been one of the most lopsided in football over the past 15 years.

Since losing three straight against the Titans from 2000-02, Indianapolis is 25-6. While

the Titans often came up short against University of Tennessee grad Peyton Manning, they have been even worse against Luck. It's not just Luck and Manning who have been problematic for the Titans. Matt Hasselbeck and Dan Orlovsky, now both ESPN commentators, also beat the Titans in backup roles. Hasselbeck also played for the Titans from 2011-12.

Defending Henry: One difference from the last game between these teams is Derrick Henry. The Titans running back leads the NFL with 532 yards rushing and eight TD runs in December, though he had nine carries for 46 yards against the Colts in November.

"He's as good as advertised," Colts linebacker Anthony Walker said. "He's big, he's explosive, and when he gets outside he's a problem in the open field. Definitely, have to get him before he gets going."

Bowls roundup

Dungey, Syracuse pound West Virginia

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Syracuse sent Eric Dungey out a winner, and got a good look at its future.

Dungey capped his record-setting college career by throwing for 303 yards, Abdul Adams and Trishton Jackson combined to score three touchdowns in their Syracuse debuts and the 17th-ranked Orange got their first 10-win season since 2001 by topping No. 15 West Virginia 34-18 in the Camping World Bowl on Friday.

“The trophy is really, really heavy,” Syracuse coach Dino Babers said. “And I’m glad we got it.”

The Orange ended with a flourish, too: Down 18-17 going into the final quarter, they scored 17 points in the first 5:01 of the fourth.

“Just very thankful,” Dungey said, talking through tears. “I’ve been through a lot. ... All I want to do is compete. I’ll get grief for crying, but I’ve been through a lot here. All I can say is I’m very thankful.”

Adams rushed for two first-

half scores, and Jackson hauled in a TD pass from Dungey on the first play of the fourth quarter for Syracuse (10-3), which survived a game that featured eight lead changes. Adams (from Oklahoma) and Jackson (from Michigan State) are transfers who had to sit out a year, which by NCAA rule was satisfied at the end of the first semester.

Their touchdowns counted; their year will not. Under the new NCAA rule on redshirting, Adams and Jackson still have two remaining seasons of eligibility, and both are expected to play big roles for the Orange in 2019.

“It’s going to be fun to watch Syracuse in the future,” Dungey said.

Jack Allison, making his first collegiate start because West Virginia star quarterback Will Grier elected to skip the bowl game and focus on preparing for the NFL, completed 17 of 35 passes for 277 yards for the Mountaineers (8-4). Besides Grier, West Virginia was also without two of his three top targets this season — Gary

Jennings was ruled out long ago with an ankle injury, and Marcus Simms was a surprise scratch.

Alamo Bowl

No. 12 Washington State 28, No. 25 Iowa State 26: At San Antonio, Gardner Minshew II threw two touchdown passes and ran for another score and the Cougars stopped the Cyclones on a late two-point conversion.

Minshew passed for 299 yards to help Washington State (11-2) set a school record for wins in a season.

Minshew’s biggest play came out of desperation and it set up the winning score.

Iowa State (8-5) rallied from down 21-10 at halftime to 21-20 early in the fourth quarter before running back David Montgomery fumbled on the Cyclones 30.

Music City Bowl

Auburn 63, Purdue 14: At Nashville, Tenn., Jarrett Stidham threw for 373 yards and five touchdowns in his final college game and the Tigers

routed the Boilermakers.

Auburn (8-5) rolled in the finale of a season that opened with a top-10 ranking, stumbled a bit in the middle and concluded with a record-setting performance. It was the Tigers’ first postseason victory since beating Memphis in the 2015 Birmingham Bowl.

Auburn scored the most points by a Southeastern Conference team in a bowl, topping Alabama’s 61-6 victory over Syracuse in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 1, 1953. The Tigers had a chance to match the most points ever in a bowl at 70, most recently by Army in the Armed Forces Bowl last week, but they took a knee at the Purdue 1 with 1:01 left.

Auburn scored TDs on its first eight possessions. It tied the Music City Bowl records for most points and TDs set by West Virginia in 2000 — with 5:36 left in the first half. By halftime, Auburn led 56-7 with the most points scored in any half in program history after holding the ball for only 11 minutes.

College basketball roundup

No. 7 Gonzaga rolls to victory over North Alabama

Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Gonzaga came out refreshed and focused after a weeklong Christmas break.

Zach Norvell Jr. scored 20 points, and the seventh-ranked Bulldogs started with a 29-1 run against North Alabama in a 96-51 victory on Friday night, Gonzaga’s 13th straight win at home.

Brandon Clarke had 16 points, 12 rebounds, four blocks and three steals for Gonzaga (12-2), which was ranked No. 1 for two weeks earlier this season. Rui Hachimura added 14 points, Josh Perkins scored 13 and Corey Kispert had 10.

Christian Agnew scored 18 for North Alabama (3-11), which is in its first year of Division I basketball.

No. 10 Virginia Tech 85, Maryland-Eastern Shore 40: Ahmed Hill scored 20 points and host Virginia Tech shot nearly 66 percent as it drubbed Maryland-Eastern Shore 85-40 for the Hokies’ sixth consecutive victory.

Kerry Blackshear Jr. added 15 points and Wabissa Bede scored 14 for the Hokies (11-1), who continued their best start to a season in 100 years.

No. 11 Texas Tech 71, Texas-rio Grande Valley 46: Jarrett Culver scored 19 points, first-time starter Deshawn Coprew had 13 points and 10 rebounds and the host Red Raiders pulled away from the Vaqueros in their final tuneup before Big 12 Conference play.

No. 18 Marquette 84, Southern 41: Markus Howard scored 23 of his 26 points

in a hot-shooting first half, and the Golden Eagles overpowered the visiting Jaguars.

No. 20 North Carolina State 97, Loyola-Maryland 64: Torin Dorn scored 17 points and the host Wolfpack wrapped up their nonconference schedule by beating the Greyhounds.

Service academies

Air Force 72, UC Riverside 60: Ryan Swan scored 16 points, Lavelle Scottie added 13 and the host Falcons cruised to a victory over the Highlanders on Friday.

Swan was 5-for-8 from the field and made a pair of three-pointers and Scottie was 4-for-11 shooting for the Falcons (5-7), who shot 25-for-45 (55.6 percent) from the field.

NBA roundup

Davis' 48 points help Pelicans top Mavs

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Anthony Davis hit a go-ahead, fall-away jumper with 43.9 seconds left and scored a season-high 48 points to outduel rookie Luka Doncic and lift the New Orleans Pelicans over the Dallas Mavericks 114-112 on Friday night.

Davis was fouled on the shot and made the free throw for a two-point lead. Dallas got two more possessions, but Doncic had a layup blocked by Jrue Holiday, Dennis Smith Jr. missed a three-pointer and the Mavericks couldn't get off a shot on a final possession with four seconds left.

Davis also grabbed 17 rebounds and New Orleans snapped a five-game skid. The Pelicans dominated in the paint, scoring 70 points, including 22 from Julius Randle.

Doncic scored 34 points, hitting 7 of 10 three-pointers.

Clippers 118, Lakers 107: Lou Williams scored a season-high 36 points, and the Clippers scored 22 consecutive points during the second half in a victory over the depleted Lakers.

Danilo Gallinari added 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Clippers, who held the Lakers without a field goal for more than six minutes late in the first meeting of the season between the Staples Center co-tenants and Los Angeles rivals. The Clippers have won 22 of their last 25 meetings with the Lakers, yet still trail the 16-time NBA champions 146-70 in the overall series.

Kyle Kuzma scored 24 points and Lonzo Ball had 19 for the Lakers, who played without LeBron James, Rajon Rondo and JaVale McGee.

Magic 116, Raptors 87:

Nikola Vucevic had 30 points and 20 rebounds and host Orlando snapped a four-game losing streak with a rout of Toronto.

Bulls 101, Wizards 92: Zach LaVine scored 24 points, including 11 straight in the third quarter, as Chicago defeated short-handed host Washington.

Hornets 100, Nets 87: Kemba Walker scored 29 points and made seven three-pointers, Tony Parker had 17 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter and Charlotte avenged a double-overtime loss to visiting Brooklyn earlier this week.

Heat 118, Cavaliers 94: Justise Winslow had 24 points and 11 rebounds, Bam Adebayo made all eight shots and scored 18 points, and host Miami beat Cleveland.

Pacers 125, Pistons 88: Domantas Sabonis got his league-leading 15th double-double as a reserve, Darren Collison scored 19 points and Indiana routed visiting Detroit.

Hawks 123, Timberwolves 120 (Ot): Kent Bazemore scored 23 points, John Collins added 21 and Atlanta blew a big lead but outlasted host Minnesota in overtime.

Thunder 118, Suns 102: Russell Westbrook scored 40 points, 15 in the game's final 6½ minutes, and visiting Oklahoma City pulled away to beat Phoenix.

Nuggets 102, Spurs 99: Jamal Murray scored 31 points, Monte Morris hit two big free throws with 7.2 seconds remaining and Denver held off San Antonio to extend its home winning streak to eight.

NHL roundup

Tatar scores twice to power Canadiens past Panthers

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Tomas Tatar never thought his game was off track, and he showed that for the Canadiens in their first game after the holiday break.

Tatar scored twice, including the go-ahead goal in the third period, and the Canadiens beat the Florida Panthers 5-3 on Friday night.

The left wing scored on a turnover in the first minute and broke a 2-2 tie with a shot that beat goalie Roberto Luongo on the near post in the third period. Tatar had been on a six-game point drought over a nine-day period this month.

"I never really thought (my play) was out. We were winning. It's a team effort every night and it doesn't really matter who's going to score, who's going to produce the most,"

Tatar said.

Jonathan Drouin had a goal and an assist, and Nicolas Deslauriers and Artturi Lehkonen also scored for the Canadiens, who won their third straight.

Henrik Borgstrom, Denis Malgin and Keith Yandle scored for the Panthers, who ended a two-game winning streak, and Mike Hoffman had two assists.

Montreal's Antti Niemi, in for the injured Carey Price, and Luongo each stopped 23 shots.

Montreal scored twice in the first three minutes. Tatar capitalized on a turnover by defenseman Mike Matheson behind Florida's net to backhand in his 13th goal just 35 seconds in, and Victor Mete's long shot struck Deslauriers and flew by Luongo for his second goal at 2:51.

The lackluster play has not

been characteristic of Florida, which had won four of five.

Florida bounced back with two goals in the frenzied period.

Islanders 6, Senators 3: Mathew Barzal had two goals and an assist to help host New York rally for a win over Ottawa.

Josh Bailey had a goal and an assist, and Anders Lee, Johnny Boychuk and Casey Cizikas also scored for New York, which came back from a pair of two-goal deficits to win for the fifth time in six games.

Thomas Greiss gave up three goals on 17 shots before he was pulled 6:11 into the second period. Robin Lehner, who began his career with Ottawa, came on and stopped all 10 shots he faced to improve to 7-0-3 against his former team.

Mark Stone, Matt Duchene and Cody Ceci scored for Ot-

tawa, which has lost six of eight (2-5-1). Mike McKenna finished with 33 saves as the Senators fell to 4-13-1 on the road.

Maple Leafs 4, Blue Jackets 2: John Tavares scored two goals, Garret Sparks had 27 saves and visiting Toronto beat Columbus.

Mitch Marner had a goal and assisted on both Tavares' tallies, and Frederik Gauthier also scored to power the Maple Leafs to their fifth straight win, matching the longest streak of the season.

Nick Foligno and Artemi Panarin scored for Columbus, and Sergei Bobrovsky had 25 saves. The Blue Jackets, playing on the second night of a back-to-back, saw their five-game winning streak snapped as they try to stay close to Washington at the top of the Metropolitan Division.