

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Navy reviews to lose written comments

BY JOSHUA KARSTEN
AND ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

The Navy's new annual performance evaluation will be missing several exclamation points, lots of capital letters and a rating block system that some sailors said allows lesser performers to advance because they aren't being compared broadly enough with their peers.

The Navy's Performance Evaluation Transformation will scrap a written comments section in which phrases like *****ROCKSTAR SAILOR WITH UNSURPASSED TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW!!!!***** have become boilerplate, and not just for actual rock-star sailors.

It also will eliminate a "forced distribution" system that sailors say can stymie promotions for outstanding sailors who

work with outstanding peers, while favoring average sailors with little competition in their workplaces.

Sailors will be compared across the entire Navy within their pay grades and ratings using a "specific defined standard," said Capt. John Sedlock, the transformation lead at Navy Personnel Command in Millington, Tenn.

Sailor scores under the new system "provide a more realistic measurement of the Sailor's performance and broader differentiation, not just how they rank against peers within the command," Sedlock said.

Sailors who discussed the changes with Stars and Stripes generally welcomed them, but with some reservations about the system replacing it, which is still in testing. Another previously announced aspect of the new system — input from sub-

ordinates and peers within the annual evaluations — drew a mix of reviews, as did a smartphone app that allows sailors to test some of the program's new coaching and self-assessment features.

"The evaluation system needed to break away from the word game (making mediocre sound fantastic and good leaders sound bad because of personal vendettas, conflicts, and leadership differences), forced distribution for seniority benefit, and writing styles that may or may not grasp your ratings attention at a board," Chief Petty Officer Wendell Harrison, a boatswain's mate from Sigonella, Italy, said in an email.

However, commands have over the years adapted to the hyperbole of the 18-line maximum, written comment section known as Block 43, often learning to read between the lines.

The block also gives commands an opportunity to learn what impact a sailor made beyond numeric values, said Petty Officer 1st Class Sylvia Nealy, stationed in Bahrain.

"On the flip side, sailors will NOT have the opportunity to add false and unnecessary 'fluff' in their evaluation while exaggerating the truth," Nealy wrote in an email.

Nealy said the end of forced distribution will give high performers a better shot at promotion. The current system includes a block where sailors receive either an "early promote," a "must promote," "promotable" or a lesser mark. The top 20 percent of sailors in a department, which may have only one sailor or dozens, generally are eligible for the early promote ranking.

Family of 4 Marines, 1 airman share bond of service, love

BY JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — Lyle Gilbert didn't consider a military career until he felt the pull of patriotism after scores of U.S. troops were killed and injured in the 1986 La Belle disco bombing in West Berlin.

Today, he's a Marine Corps major whose example has led four of his children into military service — three as fellow Marines.

"For me there was no other alternative than to join the Marines. I never visited another recruiter," said Gilbert, the director of communication strategy at MCAS Iwakuni, alluding to the toughness, image and ethos embodied by the Corps.

His eldest daughter, Marine

Capt. Sarah Rhodes, 29, is a company commander at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C. She is a communication strategy officer by trade, just like her father. Marines in that field serve as military journalists, broadcasters, photographers and public relations specialists.

Rhodes' younger sister, Marine Sgt. Jordan Gilbert, 25, is also in communication strategy and stationed on Okinawa.

Maurice Murrain, 19, whom the couple adopted at 12, graduated Air Force basic training Sept. 28.

Tyler Gilbert, 18, who graduated recruit training Nov. 30, was a member of the same recruit company and battalion his father graduated from 32 years ago. He is now headed to Camp

Lejeune, N.C., where he will attend combat engineer school.

The Gilberts trace their Marine Corps heritage to Lyle's father, Dominic, who served in the 1950s. He also worked behind a camera and today would be considered a communication strategy Marine like his son and granddaughters.

Rhodes was the first of her siblings to sign on the dotted line, in 2012, and said she joined because of the examples set by her parents. Her mother and biological father were in the Army, and she grew up around the Marine Corps and participated in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps while attending high school on Okinawa.

"I loved everything about the uniform," Rhodes said. "That feeling of pride started me on

the path to joining the Marine Corps."

Jordan Gilbert was next, in April 2013. She was recently selected for promotion to staff sergeant and will sew on her new rocker this year.

The Gilberts' sons graduated from MCAS Iwakuni's Matthew C. Perry High School together earlier this year and were best friends growing up. So much so, that the Gilberts adopted Murrain in 2012 before moving to Okinawa.

No digest Tuesday

Stars and Stripes will not produce a print edition or news digest on Tuesday.

Afghanistan: Remembering the fallen of 2018

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Fourteen American servicemembers were killed in Afghanistan in 2018 as the longest war in U.S. history began its 18th year in October.

Many of the servicemembers who died in Afghanistan this year were from elite units. The deadliest single incident occurred in November, when four troops were killed by a roadside bomb in central Ghazni province.

Sgt. 1st Class Mihail Golin

Army Special Forces Sgt. 1st Class Mihail Golin, 34, was killed in a New Year's Day firefight in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province. Golin, of Fort Lee, N.J., was assigned to the Fort Carson, Colo.-based B Company, 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group. The weapons sergeant was born in Latvia and moved to the U.S. in 2004. He enlisted in the Army in 2005. He was on his fourth deployment to Afghanistan when he was killed.

Spc. Gabriel D. Conde

Army Spc. Gabriel D. Conde, 22, of Loveland, Colo., was killed by small-arms fire on April 30 during a firefight in Kapisa province. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, stationed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska.

Cpl. Joseph Maciel

Army Cpl. Joseph Maciel, 20, was killed in an apparent insider attack in Tirin Kot district in Uruzgan province on July 7. Originally from South Gate, Calif., Maciel was assigned to the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade. Maciel served in the Army for two years and was assigned to Fort Benning, Ga.

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz

Army Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Andrew Celiz, 32, died of a wound sustained while evacuating a wounded Afghan soldier in eastern Paktia province on July 12. The mortar platoon sergeant was from Summerville, S.C., and was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga.

Staff Sgt. Reymund R. Transfiguracion

Green Beret Staff Sgt. Reymund Raro-

gal Transfiguracion, 36, from Waikoloa, Hawaii, died on Aug. 8 from improvised explosive device wounds received the day before while on patrol in southern Helmand province. Transfiguracion was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington.

Sgt. Maj. Timothy Bolyard

Army Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Bolyard, 42, was killed by an insider attack at a forward operating base in eastern Logar province on Sept. 3. Originally from Thornton, W.Va., Bolyard was described as a soldier who always kept his cool under pressure. He was a senior noncommissioned officer in 3rd Squadron, 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade, at Fort Benning, Ga., and received six Bronze Star medals, including two with valor, during a 24-year career and seven deployments.

Staff Sgt. Diobanjo S. Sanagustin

Army Staff Sgt. Diobanjo S. Sanagustin, 32, died from a noncombat injury at Bagram Air Field on Sept. 4. The native of National City, Calif., joined the Army as an infantryman in 2007. He deployed three times — to Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. He was assigned to the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. He was a squad leader in Bravo Company.

Spc. James A. Slape

Army Spc. James A. Slape, 23, of Morehead City, N.C., was killed by an IED blast in southern Helmand province on Oct. 4. He was posthumously promoted to sergeant. At the time of his death, Slape was clearing an area of explosives. He was assigned to the 430th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 60th Troop Command, North Carolina Army National Guard, based in Washington, N.C.

Maj. Brent Taylor

U.S. Army National Guard Maj. Brent Taylor, 39, was killed during an insider attack in Kabul on Nov. 3. Taylor was the mayor of North Ogden, Utah, at the time of his death. He had a "profound influence" on the community, according to a statement by the local government. Taylor served twice in Iraq as a convoy security commander and then as an adviser to the Iraqi intelligence agency. He had previously deployed to Afghanistan as a combat adviser to the Afghan Border Police.

Sgt. Leandro A.S. Jasso

Army Sgt. Leandro A.S. Jasso, 25, was mortally wounded during a firefight with al-Qaida forces in western Nimruz province on Nov. 24. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, and was on his third deployment to Afghanistan. Jasso enlisted in the Army in 2012 and became an accomplished soldier completing the Basic Airborne Course, earning the Combat Infantryman's Badge and the Ranger tab.

Staff Sgt. Dylan J. Elchin

Air Force Staff Sgt. Dylan J. Elchin, 25, was killed by a roadside bomb in central Ghazni province on Nov. 27, an attack that claimed the lives of three other U.S. servicemembers. Elchin, of Hookstown, Pa., was the only airman killed in Afghanistan in 2018 and was on his first deployment. He was a combat controller assigned to the 26th Special Tactics Squadron at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M.

Capt. Andrew P. Ross

Army Capt. Andrew Patrick Ross, 29, also was killed by the roadside bomb in central Ghazni province that day. Ross, of Lexington, Va., was assigned to 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C. The West Point graduate had more than seven years of service in the Army and was on his second overseas tour.

Sgt. 1st Class Eric M. Emond

Army Sgt. 1st Class Eric Michael Emond, 39, was another servicemember killed by a roadside bomb in central Ghazni province on Nov. 27. The Boston native had served more than two decades in the Army and Marine Corps and was on his seventh overseas tour when he died. Emond was assigned to 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C. He helped found Massachusetts Fallen Heroes, which supports veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and Gold Star families from his home state.

Sgt. Jason M. McClary

Army Sgt. Jason Mitchell McClary, 24, of Export, Pa., died on Dec. 2 in Landstuhl, Germany, from wounds sustained during the Nov. 27 roadside bomb attack in Afghanistan's central Ghazni province, where the three other U.S. troops were killed. McClary, an infantryman, was assigned to 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

Trump reaffirms his wall pledge

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Despite public equivocations by three confidants, President Donald Trump is insisting he wants to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

“An all concrete Wall was NEVER ABANDONED,” tweeted Trump, whose demand for congressional funding to construct one has caused a budgetary standoff. “Some areas will be all concrete but the experts at Border Patrol prefer a Wall that is see through (thereby making it possible to see what is happening on both sides).”

Trump’s comments on Monday came after officials, including his departing chief of staff, indicated that the president’s signature campaign pledge to build the wall would not be fulfilled as advertised.

Trump sparked chants of “Build that wall!” at rallies before and after his election and more recently cited a lack of funding for a border wall as the reason for partially shutting down the government. At times he has also waved off the idea that the wall could be any kind of barrier.

However, White House chief of staff John Kelly told the Los Angeles Times in an interview published Sunday that Trump abandoned the notion of “a solid concrete wall early on in the administration.”

Along the same lines, White House counselor Kellyanne Conway called discussion of the apparent contradiction “a silly semantic argument.”

Sen. Lindsey Graham, the South Carolina Republican who is close to the president, emerged from a Sunday lunch at the White House to tell reporters that “the wall has become a metaphor for border security” and referred to “a physical barrier along the border.” Graham said Trump was “open-minded” about a broader immigration agreement, saying the budget impasse presented an opportunity to address issues beyond the border wall. But a previous attempt to reach a compromise that addressed the status of “Dreamers” — young immigrants brought to the U.S. as children — broke down last year as a result of escalating White House demands.

Graham said he hoped to end the shutdown by offering Democrats incentives to get them to vote for wall funding.

The partial government shutdown began Dec. 22 after Trump bowed to conservative demands that he fight to make good on his vow and secure funding for the wall before Republicans lose control of the House on Wednesday. Democrats have remained committed to blocking the Republican president’s priority, and with neither side engaging in substantive negotiation, the effect of the partial shutdown was set to spread. The shutdown has forced hundreds of thousands of federal workers and contractors to stay home or work without pay.

Trump defends Syria exit as Putin, Erdogan fill void

Bloomberg

President Donald Trump defended his decision to withdraw from Syria as the fulfillment of a campaign promise, pushing back against criticism from lawmakers in his own party that the abrupt change in policy harms U.S. interests and cedes influence to Russia and Iran.

“I campaigned on getting out of Syria and other places,” Trump said Monday on Twitter. “Now when I start getting out the Fake News Media, or some failed Generals who were unable to do the job before I arrived like to complain about me & my tactics, which are working. Just doing what I said I was going to do!”

With the U.S. preparing its exit, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have assumed the lead in shaping Syria’s future. At a meeting in Moscow between the two countries’ foreign ministers and intelligence chiefs on Saturday, they agreed to coordinate next steps and professed a common interest in clearing the country of terrorist groups.

But that doesn’t mean Russia and Turkey are completely aligned. The Syrian war has often pitted them on opposite sides, with Russia backing Syrian Presi-

dent Bashar Assad while Turkey was the most vocal proponent of overthrowing and replacing him.

To further complicate the issue, while Trump said that NATO ally Turkey has promised to clear out what’s left of Islamic State in Syria, Erdogan has also been looking for an opportunity to hit back at a U.S.-backed Kurdish group in Syria, the YPG, which led some of the most intense fighting against ISIS. Turkey views the YPG as a menace to its internal security and classifies it as a terrorist organization.

Trump’s decision left the YPG exposed to an invasion by Turkey’s army, the second-largest in NATO, and prompted the resignation of his defense secretary, Jim Mattis.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, a member of the Senate Armed Forces Committee from South Carolina, has been implying that his efforts to persuade Trump to slow down the withdrawal were working, telling CNN on Sunday that “if we leave now, the Kurds are going to get slaughtered.”

Trump already has backed away from the notion of an immediate withdrawal, saying a week ago that the pullout of U.S. troops from the area would be “slow & highly coordinated.”

Warren closer to a presidential run

Bloomberg

Sen. Elizabeth Warren took a major step on Monday toward an all-but-certain 2020 White House run, seeking to become the Democratic nominee to challenge President Donald Trump on a message of economic equality and fighting corruption.

The Massachusetts progressive said in a New Year’s Eve email and video message to supporters that she’s launching an exploratory committee for a presidential run, which would give her a potential early edge in fundraising and organization. She said American families were “under attack from every direction,” due to a government that’s “bought and paid for by a bunch of billionaires and giant corporations that think they get to dictate the rules.”

Warren previewed her populist message in a recent interview with Bloomberg News.

“I’m in this fight for hard-working families. And that means reducing the student loan debt burden, increasing our Social

Security payments for those who depend most on it, and the overarching piece, reducing corruption in government,” the senator said.

Warren, who handily won a second six-year Senate term in November, has become a polarizing figure due to her aggressive criticisms of Wall Street, her support for raising taxes on rich Americans to mitigate income inequality, and her push to regulate large corporations that she often depicts as preying on ordinary people. But that same advocacy has endeared her to a progressive base full of voters who are hungry for a sharp left turn by the Democratic Party.

“She was doing populist economics before everybody thought it was cool. So she has a background and message that has met its moment,” said Mary Anne Marsh, a Democratic consultant based in Boston, who argued that Warren is a front-runner because “she’s spent the better part of the last 18 months laying the groundwork for this moment.”

Several states set to raise minimum wage

Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — At Granny Shaffer's restaurant in Joplin, owner Mike Wiggins is reprinting the menus to reflect the 5, 10 or 20 cents added to each item.

A two-egg breakfast will cost an extra dime, at \$7.39. The price of a three-piece fried chicken dinner will go up 20 cents, to \$8.78. The reason: Missouri's minimum wage is rising.

Wiggins said the price hikes are necessary to help offset an estimated \$10,000 to \$12,000 in additional annual pay to his staff as a result of a new minimum wage law taking effect Tuesday.

"For us it's very simple. There's no big pot of money out there to get the money out of" for the required pay raises, Wiggins said.

New minimum wage requirements will take effect in 20 states and nearly two dozen

cities around the start of the new year, affecting millions of workers. The state wage hikes range from an extra nickel per hour in Alaska to a \$1-an-hour bump in Maine, Massachusetts and for California employers with more than 25 workers.

Seattle's largest employers will have to pay workers at least \$16 an hour starting Tuesday. In New York City, many businesses will have to pay at least \$15 an hour as of Monday. That's more than twice the federal minimum of \$7.25 an hour.

A variety of other new state laws also take effect Tuesday. Those include revisions to sexual harassment policies stemming from the #MeToo movement, restrictions on gun sales following deadly mass shootings and revamped criminal penalties as officials readjust the balance between punishment and rehabilitation.

The state and local wage laws come amid a multiyear push by unions and liberal advocacy

groups to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour nationwide. Few are there yet, but many states have ratcheted up wages through phased-in laws and adjustments for inflation.

In Arkansas and Missouri, voters this fall approved ballot initiatives raising the minimum wage after state legislators did not. In Missouri, the minimum wage will rise from \$7.85 to \$8.60 an hour on Tuesday as the first of five annual increases that will take it to \$12 an hour by 2023.

At Granny Shaffer's in Joplin, waitress Shawna Green will see her base pay go up. But she has mixed emotions about it.

"We'll have regulars, and they will notice, and they will bring it to our attention, like it's our fault and our doings" that menu prices are increasing, she said. "They'll back off on something, and it's usually their tips, or they don't come as often."

Economic studies on mini-

mum wage increases have shown that some workers do benefit, while others might see their work hours reduced. Businesses may place a higher value on experienced workers, making it more challenging for entry-level employees to find jobs.

The federal minimum wage was last raised in 2009. Since then, 29 states, the District of Columbia and dozens of other cities and counties have set minimum wages above the federal floor. Some have repeatedly raised their rates.

The new state minimum wage laws could affect about 5.3 million workers who are currently earning less than the new standards, according to the liberal-leaning Economic Policy Institute, based in Washington, D.C. That equates to almost 8 percent of the workforce in those 20 states but doesn't account for additional minimum wage increases in some cities.

2018 in a word: List calls for ban of 'collusion,' 'yeet,' 'optics'

Associated Press

DETROIT — No collusion! (Or at least a lot less of it.)

That's according to a Michigan school's latest "List of Words Banished from the Queen's English for Mis-use, Over-use and General Uselessness."

The politically charged term at the center of special prosecutor Robert Mueller's investigation into whether President Donald Trump's campaign coordinated with Russia is among 18 entries on Lake Superior State University's 44th annual list, which was released Monday.

University spokesman John Shibley said the school received about 3,000 votes through its website and Facebook pages. Although Trump has repeatedly tweeted that there was "no collusion" and "collusion" was among the top-three vote-getters — along with "wheelhouse" and "in the books" — its inclusion should not be interpreted

as a political statement by the list-makers. Rather, voters apparently were just irritated by hearing and reading the word so often in the past year, he said.

"I can usually read a political nomination when I see it," he said. "If I saw a string of trolls trying to pack the ballot box for political reasons, I would have caught it."

The other words or expressions to make the list are "wrap my head around," "grapple," "optics," "eschew" and "thought leader." Also submitted by the public for the pyre of popular parlance: "platform," "ghosting," "yeet," "litigate," "crusty," "legally drunk," "importantly" and "accoutrements."

Two other political entries also made it: "Most important election of our time" and "OTUS" acronyms such as POTUS — for President of the United States. The acronyms that have found their way

onto cable news shows date back to the late 19th century when POTUS and SCOTUS (Supreme Court of the United States) were used as telegraph codes, according to Merriam-Webster. FLOTUS, for the first lady, first appeared in the 1980s.

Among the newest terms — yet one the curators feel has outlived its usefulness — is "yeet," which variously refers to the name of a dance, a taunt, an excited acknowledgement or throwing something. Other words are commonly known in one setting, such as "litigate" among lawyers but get trotted out by some politicians and pundits for hashing out "any matter of controversy," according to one submission.

The list is meant to be in fun, but it's bound to raise some hackles.

There was a "whiff" of legal concern back in 1994 when officials from the Los Angeles

Lakers objected to the list's inclusion of "three-peat," Shibley said. The team's coach at the time, Hall of Famer Pat Riley, owned the trademark. Eventually, the team officials dropped their objections after determining that its inclusion on the list wasn't "commercially flagrant."

Some members of the public were upset at the 2002 inclusion of "9-11," which received thousands of votes for banishment, Shibley said. It was deemed by nominators as "too much (of) a shorthand" for the tragic terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, but people misunderstood and thought the school was "thumbing our noses at 9/11," he said.

Shibley said that with the rise of social media and ever-more-divisive politics, people have even "shorter fuses," which means he and his colleagues tread carefully. After all, the aim of the list isn't to inflame but to entertain.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Fires, shootings appear to be part of family feud

MS MONTICELLO — A southwest Mississippi sheriff said a family feud appears to have spurred multiple shootings and two fires over the last week.

No one's been reported injured, but Lawrence County Sheriff Lessie Butler told The Daily Leader of Brookhaven that he fears violence will lead to someone dying. The problem, Butler said, is that no one will tell his deputies who's responsible.

The trouble began Dec. 21 with reports of shots fired in the Oma community, about 12 miles north of Monticello. Then a home burned down early the next morning. More shots were reported later that morning, and a mobile home burned on Christmas.

Then last Wednesday, deputies were told a crowd had gathered at the first fire's site, but no one was around when authorities arrived.

Suspect in theft does TV interview, arrested

NY ROCHESTER — A New York bartender's TV interview led to his arrest after sheriff's deputies recognized him as the suspect in a grand larceny case.

The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle reported that Anthony Lamarca was arrested Friday after appearing on WUHF's "Good Day Rochester" the day before.

The Ontario County Sheriff's Office said Lamarca had been wanted for third-degree grand larceny for more than a year.

Lamarca was interviewed for a segment about the New Year's Eve party at the Rochester restaurant where he works.

Man says kick, stomps save him from coyote

SC FORT MILL — A South Carolina man said some swift kicks and stomps saved him from a coyote attack.

John Somjak said he was taking corn cobs to a wildlife camera he set up in the woods behind a friend's home in Fort Mill when the coyote ran toward him at about 4:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Somjak told The Herald, of Rock Hill, that he dropped the sack of corn cobs but the coyote ignored it and kept coming.

So Somjak said he kicked the animal under the chin and stomped it several times. He thought it was dead, but after returning to get a knife, the coyote charged him again. Somjak said he used the knife to kill the animal.

Inmate who escaped from prison caught

CA SAN QUENTIN — California authorities on a nearly four-day manhunt for an inmate who walked away from San Quentin State Prison captured him Saturday.

Officials from the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation said they took Shalom Mendoza, 21, into custody at a fast-food restaurant without incident. He was taken to the Salinas Valley State Prison.

A resident alerted authorities after seeing Mendoza at the restaurant in Paso Robles, more than 200 miles southeast of the prison.

He's suspected of carjacking a vehicle in a store parking lot less than a mile from the prison after fleeing a work assignment outside the prison walls. He was reported missing at just after 9:30 p.m. last Wednesday.

Wind knocks over tree at park, killing woman

TN GATLINBURG — A woman from Texas was killed by a tree knocked down by high winds in Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee.

Park spokesman Mike Litterst said Saturday that Laila Jiwani, 42, was hiking with her husband and three children on Porter Creek Trail on Thursday when the tree fell.

Litterst said one of the children was injured. The spokesman said the 6-year-old was airlifted to a hospital with injuries that weren't life-threatening.

In a Facebook post, Jiwani's husband, Taufiq, wrote that their son suffered a broken leg and superficial head injuries during a "simple/safe" hike.

140 people evacuated from chairlift at resort

MT KALISPELL — A Montana ski resort says it safely evacuated 140 people from a chairlift after a mechanical problem prompted operators to stop the lift.

The Flathead Beacon reported that it took 2½ hours to remove everyone from Whitefish Mountain Resort's Chair 5 on Saturday.

Resort officials said they decided to evacuate the passengers because of the time the repairs would require.

Some of people were lowered from the lift with cables and harnesses. Resort officials said temperatures were in the high teens and winds were blowing at about 10 mph at the time.

The resort said no one was injured. The ski patrol carried out the evacuation.

Dog alerts sleeping owners of house fire

NH BARNSTEAD — Officials say a dog saved a New Hampshire couple when a fire swept through a home that had no working smoke detectors in the town of Barnstead.

Deputy Fire Chief John Drew said the occupants were sound asleep but were alerted to the impending disaster by their deaf dog.

He said the entire house was ablaze by the time firefighters arrived early Saturday, and he told WMUR-TV: "That dog saved their life."

Drew said several other pets died in the blaze and the home was destroyed.

Marker for lynching spot vandalized again

GA VALDOSTA — A marker identifying the location of one of the most gruesome lynchings in Georgia history has been vandalized for a second time.

The Valdosta Daily Times reported the Mary Turner and the Lynching Rampage historical marker was riddled with bullet holes for the second time in five years. An email sent to the newspaper Thursday by Mark Patrick George, Mary Turner Project coordinator, said the marker was shot 13 times in the last two to three months. It was shot five times in July 2013.

The marker is dedicated to 13 lynching victims killed in Lowndes and Brooks counties.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Ravens edge Browns to win AFC North

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The Baltimore Ravens flipped the script and put one heck of an ending on a regular season that featured countless surprises and plot twists.

Getting two rushing touchdowns from rookie quarterback Lamar Jackson and a late defensive stand, Baltimore squeezed past the Cleveland Browns 26-24 Sunday to reach the playoffs as AFC North champions.

Kenneth Dixon accounted for 117 of Baltimore's season-high 296 yards on the ground, Jackson had 90 and the rejuvenated Ravens (10-6) broke a three-year playoff drought with their sixth win in seven games. Baltimore will open the postseason Sunday afternoon at home against the Los Angeles Chargers.

"It feels good, a home playoff game," cornerback Marlon Humphrey said. "Somehow it happened."

A year ago, Baltimore missed the playoffs by losing its finale at home to the Bengals, who rallied with a last-minute touchdown.

Remembering that disappointment, most of the announced crowd of 70,925 was on its feet as the Browns moved closer to field-goal range with the clock winding down. A 19-yard completion from Baker Mayfield to former Ravens top draft pick Breshad Per-

riman and a 16-yarder to Jarvis Landry pushed the ball to the Baltimore 39 with 1:20 left.

Following three straight incompletions, the Ravens blitzed Mayfield on fourth down and linebacker C.J. Mosley picked off a pass to clinch it. Baltimore finished a half-game ahead of the Pittsburgh Steelers, who beat Cincinnati 16-13.

"There were some nerves," tight end Hayden Hurst said. "I felt confidence that at some point one of those guys would make a big play and sure enough, C.J. did."

After killing off the final seconds, the Ravens danced into their locker room, donned caps proclaiming them AFC North champs, and mugged for selfies and shots of each other.

"If you want to write a book about this season, probably no one would believe it," coach John Harbaugh said.

It's been quite a turnaround for the Ravens, who were 4-5 before Jackson took over for injured Joe Flacco, the team's starting quarterback since 2008. Flacco was behind center in 2012, when Baltimore captured its last division crown and ultimately won the Super Bowl.

The Jackson-led running attack was too much for Cleveland (7-8-1), which was denied its first winning season since 2007. After trailing 20-7 at halftime and 26-17

with 7:20 left, the Browns could not recover against the franchise that left Cleveland after the 1995 season.

Mayfield threw three touchdown passes — including a 48-yarder to Landry — to finish with 27, an NFL record for a rookie.

"I'll make sure I say something about it on the plane ride home," interim coach Gregg Williams said. "Everybody needs a pat on the back, even where you're as competitive as that young man. And he is competitive."

Although Mayfield pierced the NFL's top-ranked defense for 376 yards, he was intercepted three times.

"Obviously, very disappointed for us to not get the win, but it's a great team. It's a playoff team," Mayfield said. "We want to be in their spot this time next year."

Jackson gave Baltimore a 17-7 lead with touchdown runs of 25 yards and 8 yards, his first multi-score game in the NFL. Late in the first half, however, the former Louisville star lost a fumble when trying to reach over the goal line.

Jackson ran 20 times overall. As a passer, he went 14-for-24 for 179 yards.

"It's exciting to watch him play. He's a leader now," said Ravens rookie Gus Edwards, who chipped in with 76 yards rushing.

Luck lifts Colts past Titans, into final playoff spot

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Indianapolis Colts have Andrew Luck healthy and throwing the ball all over the field.

That's more than enough with an injured Marcus Mariota stuck watching from the Tennessee sideline.

Luck threw for 285 yards and three touchdowns and the Colts beat the Titans 33-17 on Sunday night for the final spot in the postseason as the AFC's No. 6 seed.

With the Texans winning the AFC South title earlier with a victory over Jacksonville, that left the Colts and Titans playing for the second wild-card berth and a visit to Houston on Saturday.

"It's been a lot of fun," Luck said. "It's been a journey, that's for sure. I think what this team is doing is enjoying the journey."

Luck remained perfect

against Tennessee, notching his 11th victory for the most wins by a quarterback since at least 1970 to win his first 11 starts against one franchise. He helped the Colts (10-6) — under first-year coach Frank Reich — end their postseason drought by winning for the ninth time in 10 games after a 1-5 start.

"I mean you're 1-5, and that's special," Reich said. "It not only takes the whole team for 10 weeks, so that's very special."

The Titans (9-7) snapped a four-game winning streak with Mariota sidelined by neck and foot injuries. They missed a second straight playoff berth under first-year coach Mike Vrabel.

"We made a decision that Marcus wasn't going to play tonight," said Vrabel, who gave no details on when the decision was made nor the seriousness of his injury. "We'll continue to evaluate him and try to worry about his health and every one

of those guys' health — Marcus included."

The Colts intercepted two of Blaine Gabbert's passes in the final 9:05 to finish off their 13th win in the last 15 games in the series.

Marlon Mack ran for 119 yards and a TD for the Colts. Adam Vinatieri kicked field goals of 53 and 25 yards. The NFL's oldest active player missed his final extra point.

Derrick Henry, who took the Titans' first offensive snap out of the wildcat, finished with 93 yards.

Tennessee was missing three defensive starters with four-time Pro Bowl defensive tackle Jurrell Casey placed on injured reserve Monday and linebacker Brian Orakpo scratched for a third straight game. That left the Titans unable to pressure Luck even with the Colts missing center Ryan Kelly because of a neck injury.

And Luck simply shredded a Tennessee defense that came in as the NFL's No. 2 scoring defense giving up just 18 points a game and sixth against the pass.

Titans linebacker Jayon Brown almost singlehandedly kept the Colts from putting the game away before halftime.

Brown returned an interception 22 yards for a touchdown in the second quarter. After Adoree Jackson inexplicably grabbed at a bouncing punt that put the Colts at the Tennessee 9, the Colts had a TD run by Mack erased by a holding penalty on center Evan Boehm. Two plays later, Brown stripped Mack of the ball and recovered it.

Ryan Succop kicked a 38-yard field goal that pulled Tennessee to 17-10 at halftime. Gabbert threw a 22-yard TD pass to Luke Stocker to pull the Titans to 24-17 late in the third quarter.

Bears keep Vikings out of postseason

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — While taking the NFC North champion Chicago Bears to the playoffs for the first time in eight years, coach Matt Nagy has displayed an energetic personality and aggressive mindset throughout his debut.

Even with their postseason position all but set, the Bears refused to let up. They kept the rival Minnesota Vikings out of the playoffs in the process.

Fueled by that relentless defense and 109 rushing yards and two touchdowns by Jordan Howard, the Bears beat the Vikings 24-10 on Sunday for their first sweep of Minnesota since 2011.

“I love winning. I think it’s fun to win,” Nagy said. “So when you win, whoever it is, who cares? Let’s just play ball.”

With the 24-0 win by Philadelphia at Washington, the Vikings (8-7-1) watched the Eagles claim the last wild-card spot and went home wondering what happened

to their offense after signing Kirk Cousins for \$84 million guaranteed to be the franchise quarterback.

Tarik Cohen scored the last touchdown on a short run with 7:46 left to cap a 16-play drive for the Bears (12-4), who posted their best regular-season record since the 2006 team finished 13-3 and reached the Super Bowl. They’ve won nine of their last 10 games and, instead of the Vikings will host the Eagles in the first round.

“We’re growing. We’re getting stronger by the week,” Nagy said. “This will be a new challenge for us, but we’re excited. We’ll be ready.”

The Bears began the afternoon with an opportunity, albeit unlikely, to get a first-round bye with a victory and a loss by the Los Angeles Rams, who wound up beating San Francisco 48-32. Nagy was unmoved by the big early lead taken by the Rams, though, keeping quarterback Mitch Trubisky in the entire game and only holding out the starters who were already pre-

viously injured.

“Every time we step on the field we want to win,” Trubisky said. “I think it just shows the maturity of this team that we weren’t looking ahead. We weren’t thinking about sitting out. We just do exactly what’s asked.”

After spending the majority of the last two decades trying to keep up with Green Bay, the Vikings have overtaken the Packers only to have their other primary rival, the Bears, surge to the top of the division. Most problematic since coach Mike Zimmer took over has been the struggle to move and protect the ball against Akiem Hicks, Khalil Mack, Kyle Fuller and the rest of that Chicago defense, which established a franchise record for fewest rushing yards allowed in a season.

Done in by three-and-outs on their first four possessions, the Vikings finished with only 164 total yards.

“They’re pretty good,” Zimmer said, “so give them credit.”

NFL roundup

QB Foles leads Eagles back to the playoffs

Associated Press

LANDOVER, Md. — Nick Foles’ magic stretched all the way back to Minnesota.

Foles did it again, leading the Philadelphia Eagles to a 24-0 victory over the Washington Redskins and the defending Super Bowl champions earned the NFC’s final wild-card berth.

The Eagles (9-7) will play at the Bears (12-4) next weekend.

Foles tied Philip Rivers’ NFL record by completing 25 straight passes and threw two touchdown passes before a chest injury forced him out of the game. Nate Sudfeld fired a 22-yard TD on his only pass.

Foles, the Super Bowl MVP in Philadelphia’s win over New England last February, is 6-0 in must-win games filling in for Carson Wentz.

Foles stepped in after Wentz was sidelined by a back injury earlier this month and guided Philadelphia to an upset on the road against the Rams as a 13½-point underdog. He set a franchise record for yards passing in a game with 471 in a

32-30 comeback win last week against Houston.

Steelers 16, Bengals 13: Ben Roethlisberger passed for 287 yards and a touchdown, newly acquired kicker Matt McCrane booted three field goals and yet the host Steelers still fell short of the postseason.

Texans 20, Jaguars 3: The host Texans clinched the AFC South title as Deshaun Watson threw for 234 yards and ran for a touchdown, and DeAndre Hopkins had 147 yards receiving.

Patriots 38, Jets 3: Tom Brady threw for three first-half touchdowns and New England clinched its ninth straight first-round bye in the playoffs. The Patriots (11-5) finished the season as the NFL’s only undefeated team at home, where they’ll have at least one playoff game.

Chiefs 35, Raiders 3: The Chiefs finally clinched their third consecutive AFC West title and the No. 1 seed in the playoffs, and Patrick Mahomes and the rest of host Kansas City’s offense continued to shatter records. Mahomes threw for 281 yards, highlighted by

a 67-yard TD pass to Tyreek Hill and an 89-yard TD toss to Demarcus Robinson. That gave the first-year starter 5,097 yards and 50 touchdown passes, joining Peyton Manning as the only QBs to hit 5,000 and 50 in the same season.

Rams 48, 49ers 32: Brandin Cooks and Josh Reynolds caught two touchdown passes apiece from Jared Goff, and the host Rams secured a first-round playoff bye.

Cowboys 36, Giants 35: Dak Prescott threw a 32-yard fourth-down touchdown pass to Cole Beasley on a play that was reversed by video replay and added a winning 2-point conversion pass to Michael Gallup with 1:12 to play for visiting Dallas.

Chargers 23, Broncos 9: Philip Rivers and the Los Angeles Chargers recovered from a slow start for their first win in Denver since 2013.

Seahawks 27, Cardinals 24: Sebastian Janikowski made a 33-yard field goal on the final play, wrapping up the No. 5 seed in the NFC playoffs and a matchup at Dallas for host Seattle.

Lions 31, Packers 0: Matthew Stafford threw for 266 yards and two scores to T.J. Jones and kicker Matt Prater tossed a touchdown pass after faking a field-goal try. Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers never returned after walking to the locker room early in the second quarter, having suffered a concussion.

Panthers 33, Saints 14: Undrafted rookie Kyle Allen passed for 228 yards and two touchdowns before injuring his shoulder against a host Saints squad looking ahead to the playoffs.

Falcons 34, Buccaneers 32: Matt Ryan’s first career reception went for a touchdown and the visiting Atlanta quarterback also threw for 378 yards and two TDs.

Bills 42, Dolphins 17: Bills rookie Josh Allen had a career-best three touchdown passes and scored two more rushing, and defensive tackle Kyle Williams closed his 13-year career in Buffalo with a catch and a win.

Briefly

Lewis out as Bengals coach after 16 seasons

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — The Bengals fired coach Marvin Lewis on Monday, ending a 16-year stay in Cincinnati that included seven playoff appearances without so much as one win.

The move ends the second-longest head coaching tenure in the league. New England's Bill Belichick is wrapping up his 19th season with another postseason berth. He's won five Super Bowls and made eight appearances in the title game, both NFL records.

Lewis leaves Cincinnati with a postseason record of 0-7, the worst in NFL history. The Bengals haven't won a playoff game since the 1990 season, tied with Washington for the fifth-longest stretch of futility in league history.

A third straight losing season punctuated by plummeting attendance prompted change-resistant Mike Brown to finally cut ties with Lewis, whose loyalty and close working relationship with the owner brought him repeated contract extensions even as the playoff losses piled up.

They described their parting Monday as a mutual decision.

The Bengals (6-10) lost in Pittsburgh 16-13 on Sunday and finished last in the AFC North for only the second time under Lewis. Attendance at Paul Brown Stadium has fallen to the second lowest in the league, ahead of only the Los Angeles Chargers, who are playing in a small, temporary stadium.

In other NFL news:

■ Miami Dolphins coach Adam Gase has been fired and executive vice president of football operations Mike Tannenbaum has been demoted after the team missed the playoffs for the 15th time in 17 years.

Ross made the moves Monday following a 7-9 season. Gase went 23-26 with the Dolphins, and a 42-17 loss Sunday at Buffalo sealed his fate. Tannenbaum, who held his job for four years

and was involved with several disappointing drafts, was re-signed within the organization.

■ The Arizona Cardinals have fired Steve Wilks after just one season as head coach.

Wilks' firing Monday followed a 3-13 season, the franchise's worst record in 18 years and the worst in the NFL this season.

■ Vance Joseph was fired as coach of the Denver Broncos on Monday after back-to-back double-digit losing seasons.

Joseph was dismissed with two years and about \$6 million left on his contract after completing a 6-10 season.

■ Todd Bowles' tenure with the New York Jets began four years ago with plenty of promise. It ended with too many losses and no playoff appearances.

The team announced the long-expected decision that it moved on from Bowles on Sunday night, a few hours after the Jets wrapped up their season with a 38-3 loss at New England.

■ Coach Jon Gruden found another former television analyst to help him on his rebuild of the Oakland Raiders.

The Raiders hired former NFL Network draft guru Mike Mayock as their new general manager on Monday, a person familiar with the move confirmed.

UCLA fires Alford amid 4-game skid

LOS ANGELES — Steve Alford has been fired as UCLA basketball coach after six seasons, with the Bruins mired in a four-game skid that included losses at home to Belmont and Liberty.

Athletic director Dan Guerrero said Monday that assistant Murry Bartow will serve as interim coach through the end of the season.

UCLA is 7-6 and in danger of missing the NCAA Tournament despite a talented roster that includes sophomore Kris Wilkes and freshman Moses Brown.

NBA roundup

Towns, T-wolves top Heat

Associated Press

MIAMI — Karl-Anthony Towns scored 34 points and grabbed 18 rebounds, leading six Minnesota players in double figures as the Timberwolves defeated the Miami Heat 113-104 on Sunday night.

Towns added seven assists and six blocked shots for the Timberwolves. The only other player in NBA history to have that many points, rebounds, assists and blocks in the same game was Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, for the Los Angeles Lakers against Phoenix on Nov. 14, 1975. Abdul-Jabbar had 35 points, 19 rebounds, nine assists and eight blocks in that game.

Robert Covington scored 16 and Taj Gibson added 14 for Minnesota. The Wolves also got 13 apiece from Andrew Wiggins and Dario Saric, while Tyus Jones scored 12.

Dwyane Wade led Miami with 21 points. Josh Richardson scored 17, Derrick Jones Jr. added 16 and Hassan Whiteside grabbed 13 rebounds for the Heat.

Raptors 95, Bulls 89: Kawhi Leonard scored 27 points, Pascal Siakam had 20 points and 12 rebounds and host Toronto recorded its seventh consecutive victory over Chicago.

Magic 109, Pistons 107: Evan Fournier's running jumper in the lane as the buzzer sounded gave Orlando a win over visiting Detroit.

Mavericks 105, Thunder 103: Teenage rookie Luka Doncic scored 25 points and young backcourt mate Dennis Smith Jr. hit the go-ahead layup in the final minute for host Dallas.

Trail Blazers 129, 76ers 95: C.J. McCollum scored 35 points to break out of a brief shooting slump and Portland topped visiting Philadelphia.

Lakers 121, Kings 114: Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored a season-high 26 points, Josh Hart added 22 and host Los Angeles won for the first time since LeBron James was sidelined with a groin injury.

NHL roundup

Pirri lifts Vegas over Arizona

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Brandon Pirri has had a late December to remember for the Vegas Golden Knights.

The journeyman forward had a goal and assist in the Golden Knights' 5-1 win over the Arizona Coyotes on Sunday night, and has five goals as part of his seven points in the six games he's played for Vegas this season.

Pirri failed to register a point in only one of those games. He's been a regular since Dec. 20.

"It's a lot of fun playing here because everyone's contributing," Pirri said. "Things are going good. I've always believed in myself and I'm getting the opportunity. When you

get the opportunity you have to reward the people that put you in this spot and at the same time I have to reward myself. I put in a lot of work."

Paul Stastny also had a goal and an assist and Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 29 shots for Vegas. Reilly Smith, Cody Eakin and Ryan Carpenter also scored to help Vegas win its third straight and extend its points streak to six games.

The Golden Knights have won five of six games against Arizona since Vegas entered the NHL last season.

"We played hard, we played quick. We were good with the forecheck, we were good with the puck and we didn't make a lot of mistakes," forward Jonathan Marchessault said.