

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Obama calls for new war authorization

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama used his State of the Union address Tuesday to again urge Congress to pass an authorization for war against the Islamic State.

The newest request from Obama comes more than five months after U.S. and allied forces began a concerted air campaign in Iraq and Syria to “degrade and ultimately defeat” Islamic State militants. So far, lawmakers have approved billions of dollars to pay for the offensive and green-lighted an administration plan to train moderate Syrian rebels but have not weighed in with guidelines on how the war should be waged.

Obama made the request for an authorization, touted successes against Russia and urged the hiring of veterans during his sixth State of the Union speech, which called 2014 a “breakthrough year for

America” and focused heavily on reducing income inequality.

The president said the United States and the coalition are stopping the Islamic State’s advance but called for patience.

“It will require focus, but we will succeed,” Obama said. “And tonight, I call on this Congress to show the world that we are united in this mission by passing a resolution to authorize the use of force against ISIL. We need that authority.”

The White House maintained after the start of operations in Iraq and Syria in August that the war could be waged without approval from Congress by relying on earlier war authorizations passed in 2001 and 2002 to fight al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein.

The president appeared to change course in November after Democrats lost in the mid-term elections and said he would welcome an updated authorization. The White House and lawmakers have been at odds over whether the process should

begin with a formal detailed request from the president.

### Foreign, military policy

Obama said that the U.S. has learned “costly lessons” in the wars launched after 9/11. But he said the current military strategy of avoiding a new ground war against the Islamic State through steady bombing and a proxy army is succeeding.

“Instead of getting dragged into another ground war in the Middle East, we are leading a broad coalition, including Arab nations, to degrade and ultimately destroy this terrorist group,” he said. “We’re also supporting a moderate opposition in Syria that can help us in this effort, and assisting people everywhere who stand up to the bankrupt ideology of violent extremism.”

### Veterans

In the days leading up to the speech, veterans groups said

they were hoping to hear the president speak on health care improvements. Obama said the country is working to ensure vets have access to the highest quality care and also gave a nod to veteran employment.

“Already, we’ve made strides towards ensuring that every veteran has access to the highest quality care,” he said. “We’re slashing the backlog that had too many veterans waiting years to get the benefits they need, and we’re making it easier for vets to translate their training and experience into civilian jobs.”

The president made a passing reference to the troubles at the Department of Veterans Affairs national system of hospitals and clinics and a massive overhaul bill he signed in August.

He also mentioned that an initiative called Joining Forces headed by first lady Michelle Obama and Jill Biden helped almost 700,000 vets and military spouses find jobs.

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## Paris terrorist attack spurs EUCOM to boost security

BY JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. military installations across Europe are increasing security in the wake of the recent terrorist attack in Paris and disrupted plots in Belgium, Germany and France, U.S. European Command said Wednesday.

“U.S. European Command directed its component commands to implement additional force-protection measures and random security enhancements at facilities across the EUCOM area of responsibility,” said Navy Capt. Greg Hicks, EUCOM spokesman. “We continually assess threats to our forces with

and alongside our host-nation counterparts and take appropriate measures based on those assessments.”

Hicks declined to elaborate on the specific steps being taken or to offer an assessment of the threat.

Typically, enhanced force-protection measures can vary from base to base. They can include such actions as more stringent inspections of cars entering installations, random bag checks and increased security patrols.

“We must be cognizant of the increased risk of counter demonstrations/revenge attacks,” said a Jan. 15 advisory issued to the Army community in Ger-

many, which also called for enhanced measures. “While the current focus may be situated around events in France and Belgium, similar violence may occur within other countries in the USAREUR area of operations or worldwide.”

Air Force wing commanders have also made security enhancements, said Capt. Sheryll Klinkel, a spokeswoman for U.S. Air Forces in Europe-U.S. Air Forces Africa. She said commanders have the authority to increase security measures at their installations on the basis of local conditions.

Some Defense Department schools on base are also taking steps to bolster security, such

as Kaiserslautern High School, where officials advised parents on Wednesday that security had been elevated to force protection “Bravo plus.” Parents are advised to carry multiple forms of identification when picking up children, and the school has implemented other security measures, including random backpack checks.

Force-protection bulletins have urged troops to remove from their cars any stickers or decals that identify them as servicemembers or Americans.

Stars and Stripes reporter Jennifer Svan contributed to this report.  
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# McCain plans to fight DOD spending cuts

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Sen. John McCain opened the first Armed Services Committee meeting of the session as chairman Wednesday and fulfilled expectations by criticizing the Obama administration and warning about impending military budget cuts.

The Arizona Republican and new chairman called President Barack Obama's State of the Union comments about overseas military successes "wishful thinking" and asked foreign policy luminaries Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski to testify about "mindless" caps on defense spending.

The GOP gained major control in the Senate after

November elections, putting McCain back in charge of the chamber's top military oversight committee and fueling speculation that the senator would use the position to criticize the president and Defense Department priorities.

McCain said the president gave an overly upbeat assessment in Tuesday's speech of improving global security despite growing concerns over Russia, China and Islamic extremists in the Middle East and Africa.

"That news came as a surprise to anyone who has been paying attention to what has been happening around the world," he said.

Obama touted his foreign policy and military strategy abroad, saying that his admin-

istration's sanctions have left the Russian economy in tatters as punishment for meddling with Ukraine, and that its practice of backing foreign local forces in lieu of supplying ground forces is effectively combating terrorism.

Meanwhile, McCain and his party have begun an effort to lift budgetary spending limits that allow the DOD only a modest \$1.7 billion increase this year. Caps will remain in place into the next decade and keep defense spending increases at about 2 percent.

The Senate Armed Services Committee under McCain is planning more foreign policy hearings with high-profile intellectuals and former officials such as Wednesday's duo of Scowcroft, a retired lieutenant

general who was national security adviser to President George H.W. Bush, and Brzezinski, national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter.

McCain opened the hearing Wednesday by asking Scowcroft and Brzezinski about the mandatory budget cuts, which are part of a larger agreement struck in Congress to reduce the federal deficit over the coming years. Other areas of the federal budget also face the caps.

"It is a terrible way to determine force structure, strategy or anything like it," Scowcroft said. "It is undermining our ability to do what we need to do to remain alert for the contingencies in the world."

## Japan 'fighting against time' to free hostages held by militants

*The Associated Press*

TOKYO — Japan is doing all it can to free two hostages the Islamic State group is threatening to kill unless it receives \$200 million, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Wednesday, vowing never to give in to terrorism.

Abe returned to Tokyo from a six-day Middle East tour slightly ahead of schedule and convened a Cabinet meeting soon after.

"We are fighting against time, and we'll make an all-out effort and use every diplomatic route that we have developed to win the release of the two," he said.

Abe said he was consulting with leaders in the region. A convoy carrying Japanese Vice-Foreign Minister Yasuhide Nakayama left the embassy in Jordan's capital, Amman, on Wednesday for an unknown location in the city. He was dispatched from Abe's Middle East entourage to handle the situation.

The Islamic State group demanded the \$200 million ransom in a video posted online Tuesday that showed a knife-brandishing masked militant standing over the kneeling captives. It gave a deadline of 72 hours, which the video's release time suggests would come sometime Friday.

Abe and other Japanese officials have not said directly whether Japan will pay ransom for the captives, freelance journalist Kenji Goto, 47, and Haruna Yukawa, 42, the founder of a private security company.

Government spokesman Yoshihide Suga confirmed Japan believes the threat is authentic.

"Japan's aim is not to kill the Muslim people, as the militant group claims it to be," Suga said. "We strongly urge them not to harm the two Japanese and release them immediately."

Abe has limited choices, among them to openly pay the extremists or ask an ally such as the United States to attempt a risky rescue inside Syria.

Japan's military operates only in a self-defense capacity at home.

But officials are adamant that Japan will continue to provide nonmilitary aid to the region.

"We will never give in to terrorism," Abe said.

In past international hostage situations involving Japanese captives, at least one has been killed while most have been released. It is unclear how many times Japan paid ransom. The only confirmed case was in Kyrgyzstan in 1999.

Japanese media reported Wednesday, citing unnamed officials, that Goto's wife received an email on her mobile phone in December demanding a ransom of more than \$17 million.

She exchanged several emails with the unknown person, whose email address was similar to one used by the Islamic State group, the Kyodo News service and other media reported.

## Rebels, president make deal in Yemen

*The Associated Press*

SANAA, Yemen — Yemen's state news agency is reporting that the country's embattled president has reached an agreement with Shiite rebels to end a violent standoff in the capital.

The SABA news agency said the agreement late Wednesday called for the armed Houthi rebels to pull out from around President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi's home and the presidential palace, which they besieged Tuesday. SABA said the deal also calls for them to release a top aide to Hadi they had kidnapped in recent days.

SABA said the agreement also included a clause that would answer the rebels' demands to amend the constitution and expand their representation in the parliament and in state institutions.

# Deflate-gate: NFL continues ball inquiry

*The Associated Press*

The NFL says its investigation into whether the New England Patriots used under-inflated footballs in the AFC championship game is ongoing after a report late Tuesday claimed the league found 11 balls were not properly inflated.

Troy Vincent, the NFL executive vice president for football operations, told The Associated Press the "investigation is underway and we're still awaiting findings."

Vincent was responding to an ESPN report that cited anonymous league sources saying 11 of the Patriots' 12 allotted game footballs were under-inflated by 2 pounds per square inch of air. ESPN did not say how that occurred.

Vincent said earlier Tuesday he expected the probe to be concluded by the end of the week. The last thing the NFL wants after a difficult season off the field is a potential cheating scandal that disrupts Super Bowl week. New England faces the

Seattle Seahawks on Feb. 1 in Glendale, Ariz.

The Patriots, who beat the Indianapolis Colts 45-7 for the AFC title, said they were cooperating with the league, and a Seahawks spokesman said the team would defer to the league on the matter.

The NFL began looking into the issue not only because doctoring the footballs could provide a competitive advantage, but because it would compromise the integrity of the game.

Deflating a football can change the way it's gripped by a player or the way it travels through the air. Under NFL rules, each team provides balls each game for use when its offense is on the field. The balls are inspected before the game by the officiating crew, then handled during the game by personnel provided by the home team.

Social media responses were quick late Tuesday night and into Wednesday morning.

"11 of 12 balls under-inflated can any-

one spell cheating!!! (hash)Just Saying" was the tweet from Hall of Fame receiver Jerry Rice.

"So we get to play the game again or nah? ???" tweeted Colts cornerback Darius Butler.

Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers said on ESPN radio in Milwaukee that he didn't like how referees who inspected balls before games take air out of the game balls.

"I have a major problem with the way it goes down, to be honest with you," Rodgers said. "The majority of the time, they take air out of the football. That, for me, is a disadvantage."

"My belief is that there should be a minimum air-pressure requirement but not a maximum," Rodgers said. "There's no advantage, in my opinion. We're not kicking the football. There's no advantage in having a pumped-up football."

Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said the investigation was the least of his worries. And tight end Rob Gronkowski tweeted a

photo of himself spiking the ball with the words: "WARNING GRONKING MAY CAUSE DEFLATION."

Patriots coach Bill Belichick on Tuesday deferred questions about the investigation, saying reporters should ask league officials. Belichick earlier said he wasn't aware there was an issue until Monday, and promised to "cooperate fully with whatever the league wants us to, whatever questions they ask."

Belichick, of course, was fined \$500,000 in 2007 for having an assistant spy on the New York Jets' defensive signals.

Colts coach Chuck Pagano said he did not notice issues with the football and didn't specify when asked whether the Colts had reported the issue to officials.

"We talk just like they talk to officials (before the game)," he said. "We have an opportunity to talk to the officials about a lot of things."

## Nadal, Sharapova survive

*The Associated Press*

MELBOURNE, Australia — Rafael Nadal dropped to his knees, clasping his hands tightly and appearing to be on the verge of tears as he celebrated a win at the Australian Open.

The 14-time Grand Slam champion has played some epic matches on Rod Laver Arena, including an almost six-hour final. This was a comeback second-round win over U.S. qualifier Tim Smyczek, a player ranked No. 112 who had never beaten a top 10 player.

The 6-2, 3-6, 6-7 (2), 6-3, 7-5 win Wednesday was a breakthrough of sorts for the third-seeded Nadal, who came into the first major of the season after playing just four tournaments since Wimbledon due to a right wrist injury and appendix surgery.

At the end of the third game of the third set, Nadal called for assistance and was given medication for stomach pain. At times in the match he was doubled over in pain, seemingly on the verge of sickness or exhaustion.

Yet he pulled through, earning the only break of the fifth set in the 11th game and then serving it out — after wasting three match points — in 4 hours, 12 minutes.

Smyczek pushed Nadal to the limits, and played fair. When a spectator screamed out as Nadal tossed the ball for his serve at 30-0 in the last game, the American insisted Nadal replay the serve.

"Very tough night for me. Just first of all I want to congratulate Tim — he's a real gentleman," Nadal said. "What he did in the last game is ... not a lot of people will do something like this at 6-5 in the fifth set."

No. 2-ranked Maria Sharapova saved two match points before escaping with a 6-1, 4-6, 7-5 second-round win over fellow Russian Alexandra Panova, a qualifier ranked No. 150.

Roger Federer dropped the first set and needed medical advice on his sore right pinkie finger — scolding a camera operator by saying "Do you have to be that close?" — before beating Simone Bolelli 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 to reach the third round.

Sharapova made 51 unforced errors as she went

for the lines, but kept swinging hard and saved some of her best ground strokes for when she needed them.

She faced match point twice in the 10th game of the third set, stepping into a return winner on a weak second serve and later ripping a forehand winner deep into the corner against Panova, who entered the Australian Open without a single match win at five previous majors.

The only Grand Slam champion remaining in her half of the draw, Sharapova next plays No. 31 Zarina Diyas.

In a late match that started just before midnight because of the extended Nadal five-setter, French Open finalist and third-seeded Simona Halep beat Jarmila Gajdsova 6-2, 6-2.

No. 7 Eugenie Bouchard, who reached the semi-finals or better at three of the four majors in 2014, needed just 54 minutes to beat Kiki Bertens 6-0, 6-3. Also advancing were No. 10 Ekaterina Makarova, No. 21 Peng Shuai and No. 22 Karolina Pliskova.

Federer was bothered by pain in his right hand, and took a medical timeout after the first set, before recovering to beat No. 48 Bolelli.

Three-time Australian Open finalist Andy Murray wasn't bothered by anything, particularly the parochial crowd, as he beat Melbourne's Marinko Matosevic 6-1, 6-3, 6-2.

Seventh-seeded Tomas Berdych advanced along with No. 10 Grigor Dimitrov, No. 14 Kevin Anderson and No. 24 Richard Gasquet.

Seven of the men's seeds were defeated — among them, 2006 Australian Open finalist Marcos Baghdatis beat No. 20 David Goffin and Bernard Tomic had a late 6-7 (5), 6-4, 7-6 (6), 7-6 (5) win over No. 22 Philipp Kohlschreiber.

Australian teenager Nick Kyrgios — who was a wild card ranked No. 144 when he beat Nadal in the fourth round at Wimbledon last year — beat No. 23 Ivo Karlovic in a four-set match featuring a combined 65 aces, 40 by the loser.

## Kearse breaks out

*The Associated Press*

RENTON, Wash. — Jermaine Kearse was having an NFC championship game to forget.

The first two times Kearse even got his fingers on a pass from Seattle quarterback Russell Wilson, the ball ended up in the hands of a Green Bay defensive back. Those two deflected interceptions were sandwiched around two other attempted passes from Wilson to Kearse that were also picked off.

Four targets. Four interceptions. Four miserable moments for Kearse and the Seahawks.

"I just told myself not to feel sorry for myself, to keep pushing through," Kearse said. "Things aren't always going to be perfect, things aren't always going to go your way, but it tells a lot about a person's character on how they respond when things aren't going well. Things are easy when things are going well, but how do you respond when they're not?"

Kearse's response was a moment that will be remembered in Seattle Seahawks history in the same regard as Richard Sherman's deflection in the NFC championship game against San Francisco a year earlier. In the same end zone as Sherman's play, Kearse caught Wilson's 35-yard TD toss 3:19 into overtime to send Seattle to its second straight Super Bowl.

Wilson noticed Green Bay with all of its defenders near the line of scrimmage and no safety covering the middle of the field. He made a check with Kearse. Kearse's job was simply to beat cornerback Tramon Williams to the inside, keep position to the post and wait for Wilson's pass to arrive.

"I've seen him make so many plays before. When you see a guy that makes so many plays in practice, so many plays throughout big-time games, NFC championship game last year ... Doug Baldwin, too, you just continue to trust those guys," Wilson said. "They show me every day in practice and so when somebody messes up or I mess up or don't throw the ball right, whatever happens, I'm just going to keep coming back to them."

Two of the four interceptions that were intended for Kearse were Wilson's fault. He underthrew Kearse on a deep pass into double coverage early in the second quarter and later was short with a throw to the front corner of the end zone. Seattle coach Pete Carroll said he believed Wilson misjudged the wind on both of the underthrown passes.

But the other two interceptions hit Kearse in the hands. The most costly — it appeared — was the pass that was deflected to Green Bay safety Morgan Burnett with 5:04 left and Green Bay holding a 19-7 lead. Kearse couldn't even get to all the negative reactions on Twitter from the first four quarters. There was too much praise for his one catch of the day.



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# Giroux lifts Flyers over Pens in OT

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Claude Giroux scored 3:57 into overtime, lifting the Philadelphia Flyers over the Pittsburgh Penguins 3-2 in a fight-filled game Tuesday night.

After a throwback clash that featured one ejection and 93 penalty minutes, perhaps this one should have been decided by the judges' scorecards rather than goals.

Philadelphia wing Zac Rinaldo was tossed and faces a likely suspension for plowing Kris Letang into the glass. Flyers All-Star and NHL scoring leader Jake Voracek threw a series of fists in his first fight of the season. And Pittsburgh forward Steve Downie gave a flippant wave to a jeering crowd as he skated to the locker room after his role in a brawl.

Heated rivals for years, the teams fought four times in the second period for a total of 66 penalty minutes.

Pittsburgh's Beau Bennett and Philadelphia's Chris VandeVelde scored

in the third to make it 2-all. Luke Schenn also scored for the Flyers, and Chris Kunitz tied it with a short-handed goal.

**Lightning 4, Canucks 1:** Alex Killorn had two goals, Valtteri Filppula added a goal and an assist, and Tampa Bay took over the top spot in the Eastern Conference with a victory over visiting Vancouver.

**Rangers 3, Senators 2 (OT):** Carl Hagelin deflected in Derek Stepan's slick backhand pass 2:55 into overtime to give host New York a comeback victory over Ottawa.

**Oilers 5, Capitals 4 (SO):** Teddy Purcell scored the decisive goal in a shootout after Edmonton rallied from a two-goal deficit late in regulation, and the Oilers ended Washington's seven-game home winning streak.

Purcell beat Capitals goalie Braden Holtby in the fourth round of the shootout after Viktor Fasth stopped Eric Fehr.

**Red Wings 5, Wild 4 (SO):** Gustav Nyquist and Pavel Datsyuk scored in a shootout, and host Detroit outlasted Minnesota after the Wild rallied from three goals down in the third period.

**Canadiens 2, Predators 1 (OT):** P.K. Subban scored on a power play 4:09 into overtime, lifting Montreal over visiting Nashville.

Carey Price was back in the Montreal net after missing two games with an upper-body injury. He made 37 saves.

**Blackhawks 6, Coyotes 1:** Andrew Shaw broke out of a scoring slump with two goals to help host Chicago beat struggling Arizona.

Patrick Kane had a goal and two assists, and rookie Teuvo Teravainen had a goal and an assist.

**Bruins 3, Stars 1:** Tuukka Rask made 36 saves, and Dougie Hamilton had a goal and an assist to lead Boston past host Dallas.

# Thunder top Heat to get above .500

The Associated Press

MIAMI — Just about every statistic was what the Miami Heat would have wanted.

They kept Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook off the foul line for the most part, watched Oklahoma City's two stars combine to miss every three-pointer they tried, limited both to under 20 points and held the Thunder far below their typical scoring output of late.

And even that wasn't enough. Durant and Westbrook both scored 19 points and the Thunder beat the Heat 94-86 on Tuesday night — the win putting Oklahoma City over the .500 mark for the first time this season.

"We did a great job of keeping our composure, just playing through the defense," Thunder coach Scott Brooks said.

The stats that doomed the Heat: A 21-11 difference in turnovers, a 22-9 disparity in points off turnovers, and the Thunder getting up 92 shots to Miami's 68.

"To leave a real competitive defensive game like that on the table is pretty disappointing," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

Westbrook grabbed 10 rebounds, Durant added eight rebounds and eight assists, Reggie Jackson scored 16 points and Anthony Morrow added 12 for Oklahoma City — who were nine games under .500 in late November, when Durant was still sidelined with a broken foot.

The Thunder are 13-5 with Durant in the lineup, and now winners of 18 of their last 26 — but Durant said getting over the .500 mark meant "nothing."

"We have to keep pushing," Durant said. "We're not worried about it. We didn't come in here and rejoice because we're over .500."

**Spurs 109, Nuggets 99:** Kawhi Leonard had 17 points and 15 rebounds in another strong outing since returning from a hand injury, leading San Antonio to its fourth straight win.

Tony Parker scored 18 points and Tim Duncan added 16, all in the second half, to help the Spurs beat the Nuggets for the fifth straight time.

# Harrisons help Kentucky hold off Vandy

The Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — With Kentucky's slim lead threatened by a Vanderbilt squad that wouldn't go away, Aaron Harrison coolly stepped up to drain the clutch three-pointer that has become a familiar sight for the top-ranked Wildcats.

Twin brother Andrew Harrison provided a little more cushion with a layup a minute later before Aaron sealed Tuesday night's hard-fought 65-57 victory with two free throws that kept the Wildcats perfect on a night that featured plenty of blemishes.

All of those flaws were forgotten thanks to the Harrisons' 11 combined points down the stretch, with nine coming from Aaron.

"He's as good as any player in the country the way he played in the second half," Kentucky coach John Calipari said of his sophomore guard.

Aaron Harrison, whose clutch threes earned Kentucky three straight NCAA tournament wins last spring, finished with 14 points, all in the second half. Andrew Harrison added five points as Kentucky (18-0, 5-0 Southeastern Conference) sur-

vived its third tight game in five league contests.

"I just wanted to do everything I could to help the team win," said Aaron Harrison, who made four of seven from the field including two threes. "I knew I had to get my energy together and I did in the second half, which helped me play better."

Kentucky needed that resolve to put away Vanderbilt (11-7, 1-4).

The Wildcats didn't lead by double digits until early in the second half.

"I thought we did some good things," Vanderbilt coach Kevin Stallings said. "We just didn't do quite enough. There's really no consolation in doing some good things and can't do enough to win. I thought we rebounded for the most part fairly effectively."

**No. 6 Wisconsin 82, No. 25 Iowa 50:** Frank Kaminsky had 13 points and 11 rebounds, and host Wisconsin relied on tough defense to rout Iowa.

Sam Dekker added 17 points and eight boards for the Badgers (17-2, 5-1 Big Ten), who won their second straight since losing starting point guard Traevon Jackson to a

foot injury.

**No. 9 Iowa State 77, Kansas State 71:** Monte Morris hit a floater with 37 seconds left and host Iowa State held off Kansas State, moving into a tie for first place in the Big 12.

Jameel McKay had 15 points off the bench for the Cyclones (14-3, 4-1), who joined No. 11 Kansas atop the league. Iowa State beat Kansas in Ames 86-81 on Saturday.

**Davidson 77, No. 22 Dayton 60:** Freshman Peyton Aldridge had 22 points and senior Tyler Kalinoski added 21, and the sharp-shooting host Wildcats earned their first win over a ranked opponent this season.

Davidson was 12-for-23 from three-point range, helping to erase a 26-point loss to Richmond three days earlier.

**San Diego State 77, Air Force 45:** Ageel Quinn hit five three-pointers and finished with 17 points to lead San Diego State.

DeLovell Earls scored eight points off the bench to lead Air Force (8-10, 1-6). The Falcons were outrebounded 33-19.

# Aoki brings humor, personality to World Series champs

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Nori Aoki is offering a bold challenge to World Series MVP Madison Bumgarner, one of his new San Francisco Giants teammates.

"I've heard that Madison likes to wrestle, I think I'm going to initiate the wrestling," the left fielder joked Tuesday.

Aoki brings more than just a big personality and sense of humor to the World Series champions. Manager Bruce Bochy is projecting him as the team's starting left fielder, while noting Aoki's versatility allows him to fill in for Angel Pagan in center field and Hunter Pence in right as needed. Pagan will begin spring training next month as the leadoff hitter, another job Aoki can handle with his speed and ability to steal bases.

Aoki finalized his \$4.7 million, one-year contract Monday and was formally intro-

duced a day later at AT&T Park. Both sides appear hopeful he could stick around beyond this season.

Bochy figures Aoki might reconsider the wrestling match once he lines up next to the 6-foot-5, 235-pound Bumgarner.

Aoki, 33, receives a \$4 million base salary this year, and the Giants have a \$5.5 million option for 2016 with a \$700,000 buyout. The option would become mutual if Aoki has 550 plate appearances this year, and he would receive the buyout if he exercises the option and the team declines.

In other baseball news:  
■ Outfielder Colby Rasmus has agreed to an \$8 million, one-year contract with the Houston Astros.

The deal was announced Tuesday, a day after Houston dealt last year's starting center fielder, Dexter Fowler, to the Chicago Cubs.

The 28-year-old Rasmus batted .225

with 18 homers and 40 RBIs last season after hitting 22 home runs with 66 RBIs in 2013.

## Boxer Taylor pleads not guilty to charges

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Boxing champion Jermain Taylor is free after he pleaded not guilty to pointing a gun at a man's head and threatened to shoot three small children at an Arkansas parade.

Pulaski County Sheriff's Capt. Carl Minden said Wednesday that Taylor needs to surrender after his bond was revoked in an earlier firearms case. Minden said if Taylor doesn't surrender, deputies will "go get him."

Taylor was arraigned Tuesday on charges of aggravated assault, endangering the welfare of a minor and marijuana posses-

sion. He was released on \$50,000 bond.

## Cardinals lineman pledges \$1.6M to Miami

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — Calais Campbell's fallback plan for a career was to work in advertising, which he studied at the University of Miami.

Fortunately for him, football is working out just fine.

Fortunately for the Hurricanes, he's also now giving back.

The Pro Bowl defensive lineman from the Arizona Cardinals announced Wednesday that he has pledged \$1.6 million to the school with the purpose of perpetually funding a scholarship for a defensive lineman.