

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## House approves waiver for Mattis

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The House voted Friday to give Gen. James Mattis a legal waiver for his recent military service, all but clearing the way for the retired Marine to be confirmed as defense secretary.

The special one-time exemption for Mattis, who has not

been retired for seven years as required by law, had already passed overwhelmingly in the Senate but was opposed by House Democrats, who were angered when President-elect Donald Trump's transition team canceled the general's scheduled testimony.

However, opponents were unable to stop the waiver, which cleared the chamber by a 268-151 vote.

The White House said Friday that President Barack Obama would sign the waiver into law, according to media reports.

With waiver in hand, the 66-year-old Mattis could be confirmed by the Senate when Trump is sworn into office Jan. 20, a move that will likely cause cheers from the military community with which the general remains deeply popular.

Indeed, Mattis, who retired in 2013, has been a rare point of bipartisan agreement and optimism as Trump prepares to take office following his surprising election victory and tumultuous transition.

"I know of no one more respected and more admired in the field of national security today than Gen. Mattis," said Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

## Lockheed agrees to lower cost of F-35, create jobs

BY JULIE JOHNSON  
AND TERENCE DOPP  
*Bloomberg*

Lockheed Martin Corp.'s chief told President-elect Donald Trump it's close to a deal with the Pentagon to lower costs "significantly" for the next production lot of its F-35 fighter jet and will boost hiring at the Texas factory where the advanced aircraft is made.

Marillyn Hewson, chief executive officer of the world's largest defense contractor, said she assured Trump in a Friday meeting that "I certainly share his views that we need to get the best capability to our men and women in uniform, and we need to get it at the lowest possible price."

Lockheed Martin and the F-35, the costliest U.S. weapons system, have been favorite Trump targets on Twitter, injecting new uncertainty into contracting practices at a time when defense spending is expected to rise. "The F-35 program and cost is out of control," Trump wrote in a December tweet. "Billions of dollars can

and will be saved on military (and other) purchases after January 20th," inauguration day.

After previous, inconclusive discussions with Trump, Hewson's comments Friday may hit the sweet spot that has prompted approving tweets from the next president following his meetings with other corporate executives — both promising to cut costs to taxpayers and create jobs.

After her brief visit to Trump Tower in New York, Hewson told reporters the company is close to a deal that would break an impasse with the Pentagon over the 10th and largest-yet order for the F-35 Lightning II.

The contractor also plans to add 1,800 jobs in Fort Worth, Texas, where the F-35 is assembled, Hewson said. Lockheed has 98,000 employees, according to its website.

The Pentagon provided the company with a \$1.28 billion down payment in November to continue production while the two sides hammer out a contract valued at as much as \$7.19 billion for 90 aircraft.

## Iraq makes swift gains against Islamic State

BY SUSANNAH GEORGE  
*Associated Press*

MOSUL, Iraq — Iraqi forces have won a string of swift territorial gains in Mosul in the fight against the Islamic State group after months of slow progress. Government troops retook the eastern edge of a third bridge in Mosul Saturday and a cluster of buildings inside Mosul University, according to a senior Iraqi officer overseeing the operation.

Iraqi forces now control the eastern sides of three of the city's five bridges that span the Tigris river connecting Mosul's east to west. Warplanes from the U.S.-led coalition bombed the city's bridges late last year in an effort to isolate Islamic State fighters in the city's east by disrupting resupply routes.

At Mosul University, senior commanders said Iraqi forces have secured more than half of the campus Saturday amid stiff resistance, but clashes were ongoing into the afternoon. Iraqi forces entered the university from the southeast Friday morning, and by nightfall had

secured a handful of buildings, Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil and Lt. Gen. Abdul-Wahab al-Saadi said on a tour of the university Saturday.

"We watched all the IS (Islamic State) fighters gather in that building, so we blew it up," said special forces Sgt. Maj. Haytham Ghani, pointing to one of the blackened technical college buildings where charred desks could be seen inside. "You can still see some of their corpses," he added.

As Iraqi forces have closed in on the Tigris river, which roughly divides Mosul into eastern and western halves, their pace has quickened.

Islamic State defenses in the city's east appear to be thinning, and unlike in the surrounding neighborhoods, Iraqi officers said they believe Mosul University and recently retaken government buildings are largely empty of civilians — allowing them to use air cover more liberally.

# 300 US Marines headed back to Helmand

By E.B. Boyd  
*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — When about 300 Marines deploy to Helmand this spring, they will be returning to a province where hundreds of U.S. servicemembers died over more than a decade to subdue the Taliban. Now the situation has deteriorated so significantly there are fears the province could fall to the Taliban.

The Taliban nearly overran Helmand's capital, Lashkar Gah, several times over the last two years, including twice last summer and fall. Afghan forces have repeatedly dispatched elite fighting units and NATO and Afghan airstrikes to keep the Taliban at bay.

Earlier this month, the district center in Sangin, where many Marines and British soldiers lost their lives, was again under siege, and local residents report the fighting there is continuing.

The incoming U.S. Marine force, dubbed Task Force Southwest, will be led by Brig. Gen. Roger Turner, who previously commanded Regimental Combat Team 5 on a combat tour in southern Helmand in 2011-2012.

The deployment marks the first time U.S. Marines, who had responsibility for Helmand from 2009 to 2014, will be back in the province since NATO forces pulled out two years ago.

Brig. Gen. Charles Cleveland, chief spokesman for the U.S.-led NATO coalition, said the return of the Marines does not signal any significant change in the way NATO will be advising Afghan forces in Helmand.

A 300-member Marine team will replace an Army unit that has been advising and assisting Afghan forces. The Marine force will include more senior leaders to interface with their Afghan counterparts — a shift based on “lessons that we’ve learned,” Cleveland said.

But the Marines will find a far more challenging situation than the one they left when

they handed over responsibility to Afghan forces.

After NATO pulled out in 2014, the Taliban upped their fight to retake Helmand, their primary stronghold in the country. Today, most of the province is under their control.

The Taliban's gains have netted them more than territory; Helmand is the center of the lucrative opium poppy trade, and Taliban control has opened smuggling routes to neighboring Pakistan.

Should government forces lose the province entirely, the Taliban would gain a launch pad to threaten Kandahar, the largest city in the south. That could make them less interested in peace talks with the Afghan government and, ultimately, scuttle the stalled peace process.

The crisis of confidence resulting from such a loss could rupture the tenuous alliances knitted over the past 15 years among the country's myriad factions, warlords and ethnic groups, experts say, which in turn could plunge Afghanistan back into civil war.

## ‘A top concern’

“Helmand continues to be a top concern,” Gen. John Nicholson, commander of the U.S.-led coalition, said at a news briefing in December.

Much of the crisis in Helmand stems from the same problems of corruption and inefficiency that have dogged the international mission in Afghanistan since the Taliban fell in the U.S.-led invasion of 2001.

In a speech Wednesday in Washington, the Pentagon's chief Afghanistan watchdog said the Afghan army division stationed in Helmand “disintegrated” just a year after NATO pulled out.

John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan, or SIGAR, said corruption and poor leadership left the army and police unable to defend the province.

It “seemingly caught every-

one by surprise,” Sopko said.

The security forces began struggling after foreign combat troops left at the end of 2014. NATO dispatched a handful of advisers back to the province in February 2015. That summer, a slightly larger “expeditionary” advising team went in as well.

But the Taliban kept up the pressure, and by the fall of 2015, the situation had worsened. Insurgents had seized control of Musa Qala and Naw Zad and were laying siege to army bases. By Christmas, even Lashkar Gah was under attack.

## Too fragile

Earlier that fall, President Barack Obama decided Afghanistan remained too fragile for a complete pullout, and he authorized 5,500 troops to stay on past 2016.

NATO subsequently dispatched to Helmand an Army advising task force consisting of several hundred troops.

Meanwhile, the Afghan National Army's 215th Corps underwent a restructuring in which the unit's commander and other top leaders were replaced.

A NATO spokesman told The Associated Press at the time that the unit was rife with “corruption, incompetence and ineffectiveness.”

Army and police roles were inflated by “ghost soldiers” who did not exist but whose salaries were siphoned off by corrupt officers. Supplies like fuel and ammunition were diverted for sale elsewhere, sometimes even to the Taliban.

Undermanned and under-resourced, checkpoints were easily overrun, allowing the Taliban to scoop up gear abandoned by fleeing troops. In February, The New York Times reported that insurgents had seized between 50 to 100 U.S.-supplied Humvees and were using them in attacks on Afghan forces.

Even with the restructuring, leadership problems in the 215th Corps persisted, the

unit's commander was replaced again.

“It is troubling,” Sopko said in his remarks Wednesday, “that the commander hand-picked to clean up the security forces' act in Helmand had to be replaced so soon after his appointment.”

SIGAR is responsible for ensuring that U.S. reconstruction funds, including those underwriting Afghan forces, are spent effectively and not wasted.

This past year, the Afghan security forces, with input from NATO, architected a conservative approach to the fighting, one focused on protecting population centers and major roads while avoiding battles in less important locations.

A report released by SIGAR last week in conjunction with Sopko's talk suggested that strategy may have contributed to Taliban gains. In less critical areas, the report said, Afghan forces will “disrupt insurgent operations when resources permit, but will no longer seek to hold on or fight for those areas.”

Today, the Taliban outright controls half of Helmand's districts, according to Omar Zwak, the provincial governor's spokesman. In the rest of the province, they control everything but district centers themselves. In some of those places, government convoys can't pass overland, and the centers must be resupplied by air.

According to local residents, the Taliban now enjoy freedom of movement, traveling about in easily identifiable convoys with seemingly little fear of being hit from the skies. They are also able to cut off major roadways and supply routes, including the important thoroughfare that connects Lashkar Gah to Kandahar.

“People are living in fear,” said Haji Ghulam Nabi, a tribal leader living in Lashkar Gah. “There is a lot of uncertainty about what will happen next.”

Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report.

## Kidnapped baby found 18 years later

Associated Press

WALTERBORO, S.C. — Neighbors knew them for years as a church-going mother and her polite teenage daughter before police swarmed Gloria Williams' home in this small, quiet South Carolina city.

Williams, 51, was arrested on kidnapping charges. Then came the real shocker: Police identified the victim as the 18-year-old woman Williams had raised as her daughter. Investigators said DNA analysis proved she had been stolen from a hospital in Jacksonville, Fla.

She grew up as Alexis Manigo, but has now learned she was born as Kamiyah Mobley. Jacksonville Sheriff Mike Williams described her as being in good health but overwhelmed.

Tesha Stephens, a cousin of Gloria Williams', said the young woman had much to think about.

"She's probably going to have to take this day-by-day," Stephens told reporters.

Mobley got to spend a few emotional moments with Gloria Williams, who is also charged with interference with custody, after her arrest. She cried "Momma" through the caged window of a security door after Williams waived extradition to Florida, according to WXJT-TV.

Meanwhile, the young woman's birth family cried "tears of joy" after a detective told them their baby had been found. Within hours Friday, they were able to reconnect over FaceTime.

"She looks just like her daddy," her paternal grandmother, Velma Aiken, of Jacksonville, told The Associated Press after they were able to see each other for the first time. "She act like she been talking to us all the time. She told us she'd be here soon to see us."

Mobley was only eight hours old when she was taken from her young mother by a woman posing as a nurse at University Medical Center. A massive search ensued, with helicopters circling the hospital and the city on high alert. Thousands of tips came in over the years, but she had disappeared.

Some months ago, the young woman "had an inclination" that she may have been kidnapped, the sheriff said. Authorities didn't say why she suspected this.

The woman has been provided with counseling, the sheriff said. Aiken is thrilled to know that they can speak with each other as much as they want.

"I always prayed, 'Don't let me die before I see my grandbaby,'" said Aiken. "My prayer was answered."

## Chicago pledges to improve police force

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Chicago officials are pledging to revamp the city police department following a scathing federal report, but a change in presidential administrations could spell uncertainty for negotiating a court-enforceable improvement plan with the Justice Department.

A report released Friday in the final days of Attorney General Loretta Lynch's tenure found that police in the nation's second-largest department had violated the constitutional rights of residents for years, including the frequent use of excessive force, shooting at people who did not pose imminent threats and using stun guns on others only because they refused to follow commands.

The report's conclusions were unsparing, blaming "systemic deficiencies" within the department and the city, including insufficient training and a failure to hold bad officers accountable for misconduct. Officers endangered civilians, caused avoidable injuries and deaths, and eroded community trust that is "the cornerstone of public safety," said Vanita Gupta, head of the Justice Department's civil rights division.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel said the results of the investigation were "sobering" and pledged to make changes beyond those the city already has adopted, including de-escalation training and stricter use-of-force policies. Federal authorities and city officials signed an agreement that offers a broad outline for reform, including improved transparency, training and accountability for bad officers. The DOJ and the city will negotiate a final settlement to be enforced by the courts.

Lynch said the report lays "the groundwork for the difficult but necessary work of building a stronger, safer, and more united Chicago for all who call it home."

She insisted that talks between Chicago and the federal government about police reforms would continue regardless "of who is at the top of the Justice Department."

The Justice Department criticized the city for setting up barriers to getting to the bottom of police misconduct, including provisions in union agreements, a failure to investigate anonymous complaints or those submitted without a supporting affidavit, and a "pervasive cover-up culture."

## More winter storms coat US's midsection in ice

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — States across the nation's midsection braced for another round of winter storms expected to add to thick ice that already glazed roads, grounded flights and prompted class cancellations amid warnings that people stay home.

Winter storms are typically associated with heavy snowfall, but the one that began hammering the southern Plains and Midwest on Friday dumped freezing rain — a condition even harder for road crews to treat. A slick roadway was suspected in a fatal wreck

Friday in Missouri, where long stretches of Interstate 44 and Interstate 55 were ice-covered.

More freezing precipitation was expected in parts of the central corridor throughout most of the holiday weekend.

While many motorists heeded warnings to avoid road travel Friday, Butch Shadrick said his towing service in Missouri's St. Clair, said his fleet of five trucks handled at least eight calls for travelers who found themselves in ditches or other wrecks. That was after storms left about a quarter of an inch of sleet on that region, with the

accumulation expected to double into Saturday.

In Kansas, the state's National Guard mobilized in advance of Saturday's storm, designating roughly 200 guardsmen to patrol key roads and help motorists stranded by icy conditions. The teams of soldiers also were to provide emergency transportation for law enforcers and other emergency responders, while staying ready to make warming stations available at local armories as needed.

The forecast prompted the NFL to move the AFC divisional playoff game between the

Pittsburgh Steelers and Kansas City Chiefs to Sunday evening to allow more time to treat roads and parking lots.

Forecasters issued ice storm warnings from the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles into southern Illinois, with up to 1 inch of ice expected in some locations.

Missouri Department of Transportation crews were working 12-hour shifts to treat roads and highways, said Linda Wilson Horn, a MoDOT spokeswoman. She said some of the freezing rain washed the chemicals away as it melted.

# Report: Pot health effects are good, bad and unknown

Associated Press

NEW YORK — It almost certainly can ease chronic pain and might help some people sleep, but it's also likely to raise the risk of getting schizophrenia and might trigger heart attacks.

Those are among the conclusions about marijuana reached by a federal advisory panel in a report released Thursday.

The experts also called for a national effort to learn more about marijuana and its chemical cousins, including similarly acting compounds called cannabinoids.

The current lack of scientific information "poses a public health risk," said the report, released by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. Patients, health care professionals and policy makers need more evidence to make sound decisions, it said.

Several factors have limited research. While the federal

government has approved some medicines containing ingredients found in marijuana, it still classifies marijuana as illegal and imposes restrictions on research. So scientists have to jump through bureaucratic hoops that some find daunting, the report said.

Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for a variety of medical uses, and eight of those states plus the district also have legalized it for recreational use.

The report lists nearly 100 conclusions about marijuana and its similarly acting chemical cousins, drawing on studies published since 1999.

It found strong evidence, for example, that marijuana can treat chronic pain in adults and that similar compounds ease nausea from chemotherapy, with varying degrees of evidence for treating muscle stiffness and spasms in multiple

sclerosis.

But it said there's not enough research to say whether they're effective for treating cancers, irritable bowel syndrome, epilepsy, or certain symptoms of Parkinson's disease, or helping people beat addictions.

There may be more evidence soon: a study in Colorado is investigating the use of marijuana to treat PTSD.

Among the potential harms, the committee concluded:

■ Strong evidence links marijuana use to the risk of developing schizophrenia and other causes of psychosis, with the highest risk among the most frequent users.

■ Some evidence suggests a small increased risk for developing depressive disorders, but there's no evidence either way on whether it affects the course or symptoms of such disorders, or the risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder.

## 'Familia' rules black market doughnuts

Los Angeles Times

JUAREZ, Mexico — The addicts pull up just after nightfall near a sedan parked along a busy street in this border city best known for murder.

One by one, they fork over fistfuls of cash to Sonia Garcia, who reaches into the trunk of her car and hands over the trafficked goods.

"The original — glazed — are the most popular," Garcia explains.

In Juarez, Garcia, 51, and her two sons make up the "Krispy Kreme Familia," as they are known on their Facebook page. They are the undisputed kings of the Krispy Kreme black market.

Several times a week, one son crosses the border to El Paso and drives to the Krispy Kreme shop there, where the bulk purchase price is about \$5 a dozen. He returns to Mexico with around 40 boxes of doughnuts.

In Juarez, Garcia and another son sell the doughnuts nightly from two locations for \$8 a dozen.

The business survives because of the obsession many Mexicans have developed with Krispy Kreme's signature recipes.

"I don't know why, but these are just softer and better," Garcia said as she manned the business. She had her trunk open, filled with about a dozen boxes, and had hung a banner reading "Krispy Kreme Donas" — the Spanish word for doughnut.

On the recent night, as rush hour gridlock had slowed traffic to a standstill on a main Juarez street, Juanita Gabriela Gaytan hopped out of her car and made a beeline for Garcia's sedan.

When asked her favorite flavor, Gaytan seemed stumped: "I really like them all."

Gaytan said she was bringing the doughnuts home for her family.

"I don't come here that often," she said, and then paused. "Well, maybe two or three times a week."

## Millennials lag behind boomer parents

Associated Press

SOUTH MILWAUKEE, Wis. — Baby Boomers: your millennial children are worse off than you.

With a median household income of \$40,581, millennials earn 20 percent less than boomers did at the same stage of life, despite being better educated, according to a new analysis of Federal Reserve data by the advocacy group Young Invincibles.

The analysis, released Friday, shows millennials have half the net worth of boomers. Their home ownership rate is lower, while their student debt is drastically higher.

Andrea Ledesma, 28, said her parents owned a house and were raising kids by her age.

Not so for her. Ledesma graduated from college four years ago. After moving through a

series of jobs, she now earns \$18,000 making pizza at Classic Slice in Milwaukee, shares a two-bedroom apartment with her boyfriend and has \$33,000 in student debt.

Her mother Cheryl Romanowski, 55, was making about \$10,000 a year at her age working at a bank without a college education. In today's dollars, that income would be equal to roughly \$19,500.

Romanowski said she envies the choices that her daughter has in life, but she acknowledged that her daughter has it harder than her.

The analysis of the Fed data shows the extent of the decline. It compared 25 to 34 year olds in 2013, the most recent year available, to the same age group in 1989 after adjusting for inflation.

Education does help boost

incomes. But the median college-educated millennial with student debt is only earning slightly more than a baby boomer without a degree did in 1989.

The median net worth of millennials is \$10,090, 56 percent less than it was for boomers.

Whites still earn dramatically more than Blacks and Latinos, reflecting the legacy of discrimination for jobs, education and housing.

Yet compared to white baby boomers, some white millennials appear stuck in a pattern of downward mobility. This group has seen their median income tumble more than 21 percent to \$47,688.

Median income for black millennials has fallen just 1.4 percent to \$27,892. Latino millennials earn nearly 29 percent more than their boomer predecessors to \$30,436.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Robbery suspect found hiding in manure

**UT** PAYSON — A man accused of attempted armed robbery was found hiding from authorities in a corral full of cow manure.

KSL-TV reported that Lt. Bill Wright with the Payson Police Department said the man and a woman allegedly tried to rob a Payson Subway sandwich shop from the drive-through window on Tuesday.

Wright said employees refused to comply and the suspects drove south on Interstate-15 toward Mona. Officers found the suspects' vehicle and the individuals pulled over near a farm and tried to run from police.

The woman surrendered to police but the man ran and hid. He was found in a corral full of manure.

## Officers acquitted of theft, can work again

**MI** DETROIT — Detroit's police chief said two members of an elite police unit can return to work after being acquitted of stealing money from people they stopped on the street.

A jury acquitted Officers Charles Lynem and Chancellor Searcy last week.

Chief James Craig told WXYZ-TV there will be a transition period for the officers before they return to the streets. They had been suspended without pay.

Lynem and Searcy were partners in Detroit's Tactical Response Unit. The charges in October 2015 followed a year-long investigation. They were accused of taking money from three people, starting with a 33-year-old man who was ar-

rested in March 2013 at a gas station.

They faced charges including embezzlement, larceny, misconduct and falsely reporting a felony charges.

## Zoo: Oldest aardvark in captivity in US dies

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — The Philadelphia Zoo said the oldest aardvark in captivity in the United States has died.

The zoo announced on Wednesday AJ was 28 years old and died of heart failure.

AJ arrived at the zoo in 1989 and was born at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden on Nov. 4, 1988.

The zoo said AJ will be remembered for his love of back rubs. It also said he preferred ants and termites over crickets and mealworms.

The Philadelphia Zoo's female aardvark, Sunshine, is 12 years old.

## Deer reduction plan for battlefield gets OK

**MD** SHARPSBURG — Maryland wildlife regulators are giving federal sharpshooters a green light to kill white-tailed deer at the Antietam National Battlefield to curb damage to vegetation at the Civil War site near Sharpsburg.

The Associated Press obtained a copy of the permit Wednesday through a Public Information Act request. It was signed Jan. 3.

The Department of Natural Resources authorized sharpshooters from the Agriculture Department's Wildlife Services unit to kill 243 deer through March 31, mostly after dusk.

An accompanying plan said some park trails may be closed to visitors at times.

The National Park Service said the meat will be donated to food banks.

Sharpshooters began killing deer at the Monocacy National Battlefield near Frederick in December. The multiyear program aims to reduce the deer herds to sustainable levels.

## Hospital fined over actions of pharmacist

**PA** ABINGTON — A hospital outside of Philadelphia is paying more than \$500,000 in fines after a pharmacist exploited a loophole to steal drugs for illegal use.

The U.S. Justice Department last week announced the \$510,000 in fines against Abington Memorial Hospital.

The fine comes after former pharmacist Renata Dul pleaded guilty in 2015 to possession with intent to distribute drugs.

She was sentenced to six years in prison.

An internal investigation by the hospital found that Dul had stolen more than 35,000 units of a controlled substance, including the addictive painkiller oxycodone.

Dul used a loophole in the software that tracked prescription medications and altered or destroyed records.

The hospital reported the incident to the Drug Enforcement Agency and has made changes since.

## Jet car owner given OK to sue museum

**IL** CHICAGO — A federal judge has ruled Craig Breedlove, who set a land speed record at the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah in 1964, can sue Chicago's Museum of Sci-

ence and Industry for allegedly damaging the jet car.

The Chicago Tribune reported the judge this month ruled that Breedlove, 79, can move forward with his claim the museum caused more than \$395,000 in damage to his Spirit of America car.

The car was on display at the museum for 50 years. It was returned to Breedlove in October 2015.

Breedlove's previous lawsuit was dismissed. However, Breedlove's amended complaint, filed in October, included supporting documents on standards and best practices from the American Association of Museums.

Museum spokeswoman Renee Mailhiot said in an email last week the institution takes its responsibility to care for its collection seriously.

## Crews extinguish blaze at fire station

**CA** BUENA PARK — Orange County fire-fighting crews responded to a pre-dawn blaze at one of their own stations that destroyed a fire truck.

Officials said nobody was hurt in the fire that broke out around 4:30 a.m. Thursday at the fire station in Buena Park near the Knott's Berry Farm amusement park.

County Fire Authority Capt. Larry Kurtz said more than 50 firefighters worked in pounding rain to extinguish the flames, which heavily damaged the station and destroyed at least one truck inside.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

From wire reports

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# Has shotgun outlived its usefulness?

Associated Press

Might be hard to believe while watching Aaron Rodgers, Russell Wilson or Ben Roethlisberger in the playoffs this weekend, but it wasn't all that long ago that the shotgun formation was something of a curiosity in the NFL, used less than once every five plays in 2006.

In today's pass-heavy era populated by players who became accustomed to spread offenses in high school and college, most teams use it most of the time: This season, 60 percent of offensive snaps began with the quarterback 5 yards or so behind the line of scrimmage.

During their first 10 plays in the wild-card round, the four winners — Rodgers' Packers, Wilson's Seahawks, Roethlisberger's Steelers and Brock Osweiler's Texans — used the shotgun a combined 67.5 percent.

Still, the case could be made that the shotgun — a novelty when Tom Landry's Dallas Cowboys went to it primarily

for third downs and 2-minute drills in the 1970s, then popularized more recently after Bill Belichick's New England Patriots had success with it in the 2000s — has reached a tipping point, and it's time for teams to be more judicious about the formation.

For the season, 78.9 percent of passing plays and 32.5 percent of running plays started in the shotgun, according to data provided to the AP by TruMedia Networks, whose chairman is Tony Khan, the son of the Jacksonville Jaguars' owner.

"Some teams, it seems like they're in shotgun all the time," Hall of Fame quarterback Warren Moon said. "And it won't go away. Until somebody figures out how to slow it down, you'll keep seeing a lot more shotgun going on."

That might very well be.

After all, as Moon and others point out, a big explanation for the rise of the shotgun is that quarterbacks arrive in the pros having spent their formative years operating that way. By taking a shotgun snap, instead of being handed the ball

directly by the center, a QB has an easier time reading an opponent's defensive alignment. He also gets more time to find someone to throw to before a rusher is in his face.

Four of the five teams that used the shotgun most ranked among the 10 poorest-performing offenses. One example: The San Francisco 49ers were in the shotgun 77.6 percent of the time (add in the pistol, with a smaller gap between center and QB, plus a running back hidden in the backfield, and the figure tops 90 percent) and were 31st of 32 clubs in average yards.

At the other end of the spectrum: Under offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan, Atlanta accumulated 415.8 yards per game, No. 2 in the NFL, while being in the shotgun a league-low 37.5 percent of plays.

"Every time you're under center, you've got a lot more run options and a lot more play-action options and a lot more movement options off of your runs," Shanahan said. "Your play choices are endless. You can do everything. Once you get into the 'gun, certain things

are, like, cut in half. Play-action is not as good because it happens quicker. You can't hold the ball out there for as long and stuff. It just eliminates being as balanced."

According to the 2016 data, though, teams actually put up better running numbers in the shotgun (4.95 yards per carry) than out of it (3.82). And passing was more efficient out of snaps under center, with a 63.6 completion percentage and 7.99 yards per pass attempt vs. 62.8 percent and 6.93 yards from the shotgun.

The key, it turns out, might be moderation: With Tom Brady running the show for Belichick, the Patriots never started less than 43.4 percent, or more than 55.6 percent, of their plays from the shotgun in any season from 2011-15, reaching at least the AFC title game every time.

"In the NFL, and football in general, it's whatever the hot flavor of the month is, and it goes through the trends," Moon said. "This is a trend that became pretty popular."

## Packers offense better equipped to go without Nelson

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — The Green Bay Packers offense appears to be in better shape than last season to be successful without Jordy Nelson.

They struggled to hit big plays when Nelson missed the 2015 season with a knee injury.

Now, Nelson is out again for Green Bay's divisional round playoff game on Sunday against the Dallas Cowboys, this time because of injured ribs. But the win over the New York Giants in the wild-card game last week showed that they can withstand the loss of quarterback Aaron Rodgers' top receiver.

Nelson, who had an NFL-best 14 touchdown catches in the regular season, left with about 11 minutes left in the second quarter with the Packers trail-

ing 3-0 to New York.

Green Bay ended up winning 38-13, an impressive output against a Giants defense that had been playing well going into the playoffs.

"Compared to a year ago a lot of things are different," coach Mike McCarthy said Wednesday. "Obviously our production is a lot higher than where we were a year ago. The development of a number of our younger players is higher than a year ago. I would say we're definitely better prepared than we were a year ago."

As expected, Nelson missed practice to focus on rehab, a plan continued on Thursday. He was ruled out of the game on Friday.

"It would be very tough," receiver Geronimo Allison

said Wednesday night when asked what it might feel like to play with broken ribs. "Those ribs down there where you're breathing at, it would be tough, especially if you take a shot in there again."

Allison, an undrafted rookie free agent, might be one of those backups asked to step up, just as he did when Randall Cobb missed the final two games of the regular season with an ankle injury.

Allison, who had eight catches for 157 yards and a score while Cobb was out, has added depth to the receiving corps. Davante Adams has emerged as a go-to option after catching 12 touchdown passes in a breakout regular season.

Cobb provides energy and postseason experience. The Packers can also create match-

up problems with athletic tight end Jared Cook, and receiver-turned-running back Ty Montgomery out of the backfield.

"We're a different offense, though," Rodgers said. "We're doing a lot of different things than we were last year, a lot of things better. I think our offensive line is playing better. Our scheme has advanced, and we're getting more contributions from the tight end at this point."

"Davante is a legit receiver in this league, and obviously Randall Cobb, who is established as well."

Cobb, who said he was still playing through pain, was a full participant in practice on Wednesday. Another receiver, Jeff Janis, missed practice with a quadriceps injury.

# Chargers hire Lynn day after relocation

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Chargers hired Anthony Lynn as their head coach Friday night, one day after announcing their relocation to Los Angeles.

The 48-year-old Lynn is a respected veteran assistant who spent the last two seasons with the Buffalo Bills. He moved up during this season from running backs coach to offensive coordinator to interim head coach, presiding over the Bills' final game after Rex Ryan was fired.

Lynn attracted extensive interest on the NFL job market, and the Chargers took a break from planning their move out of San Diego to secure a deal with him. Lynn becomes the first black coach in franchise history.

"This is really a dream come true," Lynn said in a statement. "I want all of our fans to know that we're going to start by putting together a great staff, and we're going to put together a team with the heart and will of a champion. I know there's a lot of work to be done, and I'm going to give everything I have

to the Chargers, the Spanos family and the City of Los Angeles."

Lynn replaces Mike McCoy, who was fired on Jan. 1 after going 27-37 in four seasons.

The coaching change coincided with the franchise upheaval caused by owner Dean Spanos' decision to leave San Diego after 56 years to move two hours north, where the Chargers will play next season at the 30,000-seat StubHub Center in Carson before sharing the Los Angeles Rams' palatial Inglewood stadium in 2019.

Along with hiring a coaching staff and implementing a new philosophy on both sides of the ball, Lynn will have to do much of his work in likely temporary surroundings until the Chargers complete their relocation. Their training complex is expected to be in the Orange County city of Costa Mesa.

"Anthony has a commanding presence and brings a no-nonsense approach," Chargers general manager Tom Telesco said. "He is going to be a great leader, and we're confident he's going to lead the Chargers

to great success that our fans have come to expect out of this organization."

Lynn inherits a Chargers team that won only nine games over the past two seasons following 11 consecutive years in which they made six playoff appearances and never won fewer than seven games. McCoy's Chargers repeatedly struggled in late-game situations despite a fairly talented roster, and San Diego missed the playoffs this year for the sixth time in seven seasons.

Ryan promoted Lynn to offensive coordinator in mid-September after firing Greg Roman. After Ryan was fired, Lynn ran the team for a loss to the New York Jets.

Lynn helped to build a powerful running game in Buffalo, and he will have many ingredients for another ground-and-pound unit in Los Angeles. The Chargers are taking along talented running back Melvin Gordon, who rushed for 997 yards and scored 12 touchdowns last season, behind an offensive line that struggled with injuries this season.

Lynn was a running back in the NFL for seven seasons despite going undrafted out of college, and he was with the Denver Broncos when they won consecutive Super Bowls in 1998 and 1999. He is also the first former Texas Tech player to become an NFL head coach.

Lynn was a running backs coach for the previous 13 seasons, including the past eight spent working under Ryan with the Bills and Jets. Lynn also held the title of assistant head coach with the Jets in 2014, his sixth season in New York.

He also coached running backs under Jack Del Rio in Jacksonville, Bill Parcells in Dallas and Romeo Crennel in Cleveland.

"He's had a number of great coaching influences in his life," said John Spanos, the Chargers' president of football operations. "As a former player who won two Super Bowls, Anthony knows firsthand what championship pedigree is all about. We couldn't be more excited to have him lead our franchise into this exciting new era of Chargers football."

## Capitals blast Blackhawks, stretch streak to 8 games

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Jay Beagle can't explain his offensive success against the Chicago Blackhawks.

It's much easier to see why his Washington Capitals are rolling against everybody.

Beagle scored twice to solidify his status as a Blackhawks killer and Washington blew out Chicago 6-0 on Friday night to win its eighth consecutive game. In a showdown of the NHL's hottest teams, the Capitals looked the part and the Blackhawks fell flat, ending their winning streak at four.

During their eight-game run to move near the top of the league standings, the Capitals have snapped five opposing winning streaks of three or more.

**Blue Jackets 3, Lightning 1:** Joonas Korpi made 31 saves in his first game of the season, Nick Foligno had a go-ahead power-play goal in the third period and visiting Columbus beat Tampa Bay.

Columbus, 2-3 since ending a 16-game winning streak, also got goals from Josh Anderson and Boone Jenner. Korpi played in place of Sergei Bobrovsky, who also missed Tuesday's game at Carolina due to illness.

**Maple Leafs 4, Rangers 2:** William Nylander and James van Riemsdyk scored in the first period, Frederik Andersen stopped 34 shots and visiting Toronto beat New York.

Connor Brown and Connor Carrick also scored to help the Maple Leafs win for the seventh time in nine games (7-1-1).

Toronto moved four points behind Philadelphia for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference. Tyler Bozak and Mitch Marner had two assists each.

**Hurricanes 5, Sabres 2:** Jeff Skinner had two goals and an assist, Brock McGinn also scored twice and host Carolina beat Buffalo.

Carolina swept its three-game series against Buffalo and won its third straight game overall. The Hurricanes are 14-4-1 at home, including 13-1-1 in the last 15 games in Raleigh.

**Devils 2, Flames 1:** Kyle Palmieri had a goal and an assist and visiting New Jersey hung on to beat Calgary.

New Jersey snapped a four-game skid after Palmieri scored 6:22 into the game and then assisted on Taylor Hall's

goal with 1:29 left in the first period. Keith Kinkaid stopped 31 shots while filling in for Devils starter Cory Schneider.

**Islanders 5, Panthers 2:** John Tavares scored three goals for his sixth career hat trick and visiting New York snapped a three-game losing streak with a win over Florida.

Nick Leddy had a goal and two assists, and Jason Chimera also scored for the Islanders. Thomas Greiss made 26 saves.

**Coyotes 4, Jets 3:** Rookie Brendan Perlini scored twice, Oliver Ekman-Larsson and Radim Vrbata each had three assists and host Arizona scored four first-period goals and held on for a win over Winnipeg.

Perlini's fifth and sixth goals of the season came in the first, as did all three of Ekman-Larsson's and Vrbata's assists.

# Timberwolves top OKC, win third straight

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Russell Westbrook piled up another triple-double in a season full of them.

The Minnesota Timberwolves' improving defense made sure he had a fourth double that he wanted nothing to do with.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 29 points and 17 rebounds and Ricky Rubio added 14 points and 14 assists to help the Timberwolves to their third straight victory, 96-86 over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Friday night.

Andrew Wiggins scored 19 points and Brandon Rush had 11 for the Timberwolves, who have won three in a row for the first time all season. The Wolves held the Thunder to 38.8 percent shooting and scored 33 points off of 19 Oklahoma City turnovers.

"There's nothing better than a talented player with confidence," Towns said. "Those are the most dangerous players. I think right now we have a lot of confidence. So right now we're just rolling with it."

Westbrook had 21 points, 12 assists and 11 rebounds for his 19th triple-double of

the season. But he also had 10 turnovers in Oklahoma City's first loss in four games. Enes Kanter had 21 points and eight rebounds for the Thunder.

"Just some miscues, my fault on my passes," Westbrook said. "Some were open, some was not. But it happens."

**Cavaliers 120, Kings 108:** Kyrie Irving scored 26 points, Kyle Korver added 18 in his most productive game since joining his new team last week and visiting Cleveland tuned up for Monday's NBA Finals rematch with Golden State by beating Sacramento.

**Grizzlies 110, Rockets 105:** Tony Allen scored a season-high 22 points, Mike Conley added 17 and Memphis overcame a 15-point, third-quarter deficit to beat host Houston.

Harden had 27 points and nine assists for the Rockets. They lost consecutive games for the first time this season.

**76ers 102, Hornets 93:** Joel Embiid scored 24 points, blocked three shots and led Philadelphia past visiting Charlotte for its third straight victory.

The Sixers have their first three-game

winning streak since winning four straight in 2013-14. Led by Embiid, the 76ers have won five of six games overall to improve to 12-25.

**Celtics 103, Hawks 101:** Isaiah Thomas hit a jumper with 2 seconds left and scored 28 points, Al Horford made a triumphant return and Boston snapped host Atlanta's seven-game winning streak.

**Raptors 132, Nets 113:** DeMar DeRozan scored 28 points, Kyle Lowry added 20 and Toronto had its highest-scoring game of the season and handed visiting Brooklyn its ninth straight loss.

**Magic 115, Trail Blazers 109:** Nikola Vucevic scored a season-high 30 points and Orlando beat host Portland to snap a four-game losing streak.

**Bucks 116, Heat 108:** Jabari Parker had 24 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 19 to help Milwaukee beat visiting Miami.

**Jazz 110, Pistons 77:** Rodney Hood was 7-for-8 from three-point range and scored a season-high 27 points in host Utah's victory over Detroit.

# Teams sign stars to big-money contracts

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Chicago Cubs ace Jake Arrieta, Washington star Bryce Harper and Baltimore standouts Manny Machado and Zach Britton got big-money deals Friday as more than 100 major leaguers reached agreements for 2017 and left just 27 players on track for salary arbitration.

After helping lead the Cubs to their first World Series title since 1908, Arrieta agreed to a one-year deal for \$15,637,500. He can become a free agent after this season.

"The timeline is kind of coming to an end, as far as, you know, leading up to free agency," Arrieta said. "As of now, we got one more season as a Cub, and I'm really happy about that."

Harper, who slumped after winning the 2015 NL MVP award, agreed at \$13,625,000, leaving himself with one more year of arbitration eligibility before he can go on the open market.

Machado, the Orioles' slug-

ging third baseman and Gold Glove winner, got \$11.5 million, while Britton, who led the AL in saves, accepted \$11.4 million. Like Harper, both can become free agents after two more seasons.

Colorado Gold Glove third baseman Nolan Arenado agreed to a \$29.5 million, two-year contract, one of just two multiyear deals among the 119 players who settled Friday. Third baseman Yangervis Solarte agreed to a \$7.5 million, two-year contract with San Diego, which hopes to finalize a long-term agreement with first baseman Wil Myers next week.

Only a handful of players are likely to go before three-person arbitration panels next month. Players won three of four hearings last year, their first winning record since 2011. Management has a 302-224 advantage since arbitration started in 1974.

Other notable deals Friday were reached by 2015 AL Cy Young Award winner Dallas Keuchel of Houston (\$9.15 mil-

lion), Kansas City first baseman Eric Hosmer (\$12.25 million), Chicago White Sox third baseman Todd Frazier (\$12 million), New York Mets starters Matt Harvey (\$5,125,000) and Jacob deGrom (\$4.05 million).

Mets closer Jeurys Familia, who led the major leagues in saves last year, agreed at \$7,425,000 — but he may not get all of it. He faces a possible suspension at the start of the season under the sport's domestic violence policy.

Among the players who didn't settle, the largest amount asked for in arbitration was \$8 million by Kansas City left-hander Danny Duffy, who was offered \$7.25 million.

The largest gaps involved Boston left-hander Drew Pomeranz (\$5.7 million vs. \$3.6 million) and Yankees setup man Dellin Betances (\$5 million vs. \$3 million).

In other MLB news:

■ When the World Series champion Chicago Cubs visit President Barack Obama at the White House on Monday, star

pitcher Jake Arrieta won't be with them.

Arrieta said he needs to be home — his mother-in-law is recovering from brain surgery, son Cooper is having a tooth pulled that day.

The decision, Arrieta insists, has nothing to do with politics.

A day after Donald Trump beat Hillary Clinton in the presidential election, Arrieta tweeted it was "Time for Hollywood to pony up and head for the border." The ace offered to help with the packing, too.

Arrieta, who said he didn't vote, on Friday suggested his message in November was misinterpreted.

■ A person with knowledge of the deal says the Texas Rangers and right-hander Tyson Ross have agreed on a \$6 million, one-year contract.

The 29-year-old Ross is 32-53 with a 3.64 ERA in 153 career appearances, including 102 starts. He made 64 starts for the Padres over two seasons in 2014-15, earning 23 of his wins.