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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US strikes target Islamic State in Libya

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
AND TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. warplanes struck Islamic State encampments in Libya overnight, killing more than 80 terrorists and destroying their makeshift training camps near Sirte, a town the group once dominated, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Thursday.

“These strikes were directed against some of [the Islamic State group’s] external plotters who were actively planning operations against our allies in Europe,” Carter said on his last day in office.

U.S. Africa Command recommended two Air Force B-2 stealth bombers carry out the strikes because of their ability

to loiter over a target and to deliver dozens of precision munitions, Carter said.

The bombers flew 34 hours from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri and hit the two camps simultaneously, dropping more than 100 munitions, Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James said.

The bombers were accompanied by armed MQ-9 drones and were assisted by special operators to target the desert encampments about 45 kilometers southwest of Sirte, where last month Libya’s Government of National Accord, with the assistance of American air power, drove out the remnants of the Islamic State group.

The U.N. has recognized the GNA as Libya’s proper governing body.

The airstrikes were requested by the GNA and were authorized by President Barack Obama in his final days as commander in chief, said Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook.

Video released by the Pentagon showed suspected members of the Islamic State group in one of the encampments moving weapons that appeared to be rocket-propelled grenades and artillery shells from pickup trucks into the camp.

A second video showed one of the camps being obliterated by bombs. Air Force spokesman Col. Pat Ryder said the B-2s — each capable of carrying some 40,000 pounds of munitions — dropped more than 100 500-pound bombs during the roughly 30-minute attack.

Carter said the U.S. military had been watching the camps, which had popped up as Islamic State fighters fled from Sirte, “for some time.”

The GNA declared victory over the Islamic State group in Sirte in December.

The terrorist group had controlled nearly all of the city, where it had aimed to establish a headquarters for its operations in Africa.

Cook declined to say whether the United States was watching any other Islamic State-affiliated groups in Libya.

Planning for the Thursday attack had been underway for some time with U.S. Africa Command to target the camps, James said.

VA OKs paying for in vitro fertilization

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Disabled veterans hoping to start families received a boost Thursday when the Department of Veterans Affairs began covering the costs of in vitro fertilization.

The policy change comes after Democrats in Congress pushed through legislation last year to temporarily lift a two-decade ban on the common treatment, which could help thousands of veterans and their spouses conceive.

The new benefits will last until fall 2018 when the legislation expires.

“It’s a huge deal and it’s great because there’s some 2,000 people who have been waiting,” said Sarah Dean, the associate legislative director for the

group Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Some troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan suffered blast wounds to their genitals and spines that make it difficult or impossible to have children without medical help. Conservatives in Congress with religious concerns over discarded embryos had long opposed covering IVF treatment, which involves collecting eggs from a woman’s ovaries and fertilizing them with sperm in a laboratory.

The VA was banned from providing the coverage since 1992, and veterans had been left to pay IVF costs that can average more than \$10,000 per pregnancy attempt.

Dean said members of Paralyzed Veterans of America have

emptied their bank accounts trying to have children.

Now, the new VA policy allows counseling and IVF for veterans and their spouses if they have service-connected disabilities that make then unable to have children without treatment, according to an excerpt published Wednesday in the federal register.

Dean said the coverage allows three rounds of IVF and mirrors the policy of the Defense Department, which provides the fertility treatment to troops.

The temporary repeal of the VA ban was included in a budget bill and gives a 20-month window for veterans to attempt to start families using the procedure.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.,

said she will push to make the benefits permanent.

“On behalf of all of the military families who have sacrificed so much on our behalf, I will keep working to permanently repeal the ban and make sure this country never turns its back on those who served,” Murray said in a released statement.

Sen. Jon Tester, the top Democrat on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, called the IVF ban an “unjust policy” and the VA announcement to offer the procedure a step in the right direction.

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Manning to lose benefits after discharge

USA Today

WASHINGTON — Army Pvt. Chelsea Manning, the national-security leaker and transgender soldier, will lose her entitlement to military health care benefits under the terms of the sentence that President Barack Obama commuted, according to the Army.

Obama's commutation Tuesday will allow Manning to leave the Army's prison at Fort Leavenworth on May 17, about six years before she would have been eligible for parole.

The Army has been providing her with treatment for gender dysphoria, including hormone treatments.

She had been a candidate for gender-re-

assignment surgery, which would have been paid for under the Pentagon's new policy for transgender troops.

But the terms of the 35-year sentence the court-martial imposed includes a "dishonorable discharge," which the commutation did not affect, Army spokeswoman Cynthia Smith said Wednesday.

"If Pvt. Manning is discharged with a dishonorable discharge, she will lose her entitlement to (military) benefits, including gender-transition care at (military) medical treatment facilities," Smith said.

Manning can appeal the discharge determination, Smith said. If that appeal is denied, Manning will then be dishonorably discharged from the Army.

A dishonorable discharge would also bar Manning, formerly known as Bradley, from receiving benefits from the Veterans Affairs Department.

The VA has been providing treatment to veterans for gender dysphoria for several years.

Manning's fight for treatment has galvanized supporters of transgender rights. She and her lawyers successfully obtained counseling, hormone treatments and the right to wear some women's clothing.

Last year, she twice attempted to commit suicide.

Manning will undergo a 40-hour transition program provided to all inmates prior to her release, Smith said.

Obama sought to reduce sentence viewed as 'nuts'

The Washington Post

From the moment a military judge handed down a 35-year prison term for Chelsea Manning in 2013, President Barack Obama and some administration officials saw the sentence as excessive. "Nuts," said one person close to Obama.

They said Manning, an Army private charged with disclosing troves of secret files to WikiLeaks, should be punished for her crime. But while Obama, a former law professor, was known for his tough stance on government leakers, he also had advocated for changing America's often harsh, inconsistent sentencing practices.

Long before Manning's attorneys submitted a second clemency request in November, Obama had considered the notion of "proportionate sentences" in evaluating the soldier's case, as he had in decisions to grant clemency to more than 1,300 drug offenders.

The key question for the president was how much time Manning should serve. He and his advisers looked at other government leak cases, which indicated that 35 years was the longest sentence ever imposed for a leak conviction.

By the time the second request came in, Manning had served six years, much of that time subjected to harsh treatment and solitary confinement.

In his decision to commute

Manning's sentence, made public this week, Obama knew he would face criticism, the person close to the president said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. "But he felt strongly it was the right thing to do."

The 11th-hour announcement was a stunning end to a legal saga that began six years earlier with the arrest of Manning, then a 22-year-old intelligence analyst in Baghdad.

The revelations contained in the more than 700,000 documents Manning provided to WikiLeaks captured worldwide attention, revealing for the first time details of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and diplomats' secret and sometimes snarky reports about the countries where they served. They also rattled American officials, who feared the disclosures would undermine U.S. security and alienate allies.

Manning pleaded guilty to most of the charges facing her in a military court and in 2013 received a lengthy sentence for a series of offenses, including violations of the Espionage Act. Soon afterward, Manning, formerly known as Bradley Manning, announced her intention to live as a woman and requested hormone therapy to begin a gender transition.

On Wednesday, Obama addressed his decision to commute Manning's sentence, effective

May 17, in the final news conference of his presidency. "Let's be clear: Chelsea Manning has served a tough prison sentence," he said.

"It made sense to commute — and not pardon — her sentence," he continued. "I feel very comfortable that justice has been served and that a message has still been sent."

Obama's announcement adds to the list of executive actions opposed by President-elect Donald Trump. "It sends a very troubling message when it comes to the handling of classified information and to the consequences to those who leak information that threatens the safety of our nation," Sean Spicer, a spokesman for Trump, said.

Obama's decision, ending an extended campaign by Manning supporters to secure her release, also divided the most senior levels of the U.S. government. From the start, military officials had seen Manning's actions as treasonous, a breach of the oath servicemembers take to safeguard U.S. security.

When the White House asked Defense Secretary Ash Carter for his opinion, he recommended against commutation, one defense official said. The secretary, like others in the Pentagon, viewed the airing of leaks as highly damaging to the U.S. military in particular and worried about the effect clemency would have on military

discipline.

Typically, petitions to reduce federal sentences go to the Pardon Attorney's Office in the Justice Department, where Justice officials make recommendations to White House Counsel Neil Eggleston about which requests should be granted. Manning's clemency request, meanwhile, would typically go through the Army because the trial occurred in a military court.

Although Manning's attorneys submitted the November clemency request to the Army, the Justice Department and the White House counsel's office, the White House handled the deliberation.

On Tuesday, after the commutation was announced, White House officials said Obama's decision was motivated in part by the fact that Manning had apologized for her actions.

"Chelsea Manning is somebody who accepted responsibility for the crimes she committed," one official said.

Obama on Wednesday dismissed the idea that his act of clemency was aimed at securing the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who has taken refuge in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. Although Assange had promised to submit to extradition if Manning was pardoned, U.S. officials have said he is unlikely to face charges here.

Senate tees up final Mattis vote this week

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Confirmation of retired Marine Gen. James Mattis as defense secretary could occur this week following a vote in favor of his nomination Wednesday by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The committee, led by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., voted 26-1 to send Mattis' nomination to the full Senate, which has the final say on approving Cabinet appointments. It could hold a final confirmation vote Friday immediately after Donald Trump is sworn into office and officially nominates Mattis.

"I think it is really a testimony to the man because so many members of the committee had known him when he was [commander of U.S.] Central Command and they know of his reputation," McCain said after the vote. "You know he's a very unique individual."

Mattis, 66, has wide support in the Senate — the only "no" vote Wednesday was from Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y. — and he is expected to be confirmed easily, which could make him the first career military officer in nearly 70 years who has required a special waiver from Congress to take the Pentagon's top civilian job.

Last week, Congress approved the waiver, which is required by law because Mattis has not been retired at least seven years. Gillibrand opposed bending the rule, saying put-

ting a recently retired general in charge could erode civilian control of the military.

Mattis is known for his intellect, colorful quotes and widespread admiration from rank-and-file troops. During his more-than-four-decade career, Mattis led special operators into Afghanistan after 9/11, commanded the 1st Marine Division during the 2003 invasion of Iraq and led CENTCOM until he retired in 2013.

His confirmation hearing before the Armed Services Committee last week went relatively smoothly despite some apparent policy differences with Trump on the NATO alliance and Russia. Trump again said during the weekend that NATO is "obsolete" and he criticized member states for not paying enough for defense. During his campaign, he suggested the U.S. might not come to the aid of allies who do not pay. Trump also has said his administration will extend the same trust — at least in the beginning — to Russian President Vladimir Putin as it does to German President Angela Merkel, a top ally.

But Mattis said he would strongly back the U.S. treaty commitments and named Putin's Russia as a top adversary that is working to break the alliance. "NATO from my perspective — and I served once as the NATO alliance supreme allied commander — is the most successful military alliance in modern world history, maybe ever," Mattis testified to the committee.

Obama has advice for successor, calm words for America

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Barack Obama stepped behind the White House podium for the last time Wednesday, fielding questions from the crush of journalists crammed in for the occasion and offering assurances to Americans watching on TV.

But at times, his answers seemed aimed at an audience of one: the man who will replace him at noon Friday.

Obama gently chided Donald Trump's suggestion that the U.S. might end its sanctions on Russia over Ukraine in exchange for nuclear stockpile reductions, saying it was in America's interest to make sure "we don't confuse why these sanctions have been imposed with a whole set of other issues."

And, with Trump vowing to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, a move that could further inflame tensions in the Middle East, Obama warned that when "sudden, unilateral moves" are made in the region, the results can be explosive.

Obama also defended his decision to cut nearly three decades off convicted leaker Chelsea Manning's prison term, a move Trump's team has strongly criticized.

With no elections left to win

nor legislative battles to fight, Obama used his parting words to deliver one set of messages to his successor, a man who is his opposite both temperamentally and politically. Obama said he expected a new president, particularly one from the opposing party, to "test old assumptions," but he also suggested it would be important for the next administration to "understand that there are going to be consequences, and actions typically create reactions."

The very fact that Obama was holding the afternoon news conference in the White House briefing room served as a symbolic counter to Trump. The president-elect's aides have raised the prospect of moving daily news briefings out of their traditional West Wing home, sparking fears of attempts to eventually push reporters out of the White House altogether.

Obama specifically addressed that worry. "Having you in this building has made this place work better," he declared.

"You're not supposed to be sycophants; you're supposed to be skeptics," Obama said to the reporters he has often criticized for hyping scandals and hopscotching from story to story too quickly.

Perry says he regrets call to eliminate Energy Department

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry said Thursday he regrets his infamous statement about abolishing the Energy Department and insisted that the federal agency performs a critical function.

Perry, President-elect Donald Trump's choice to head the department, told a Senate committee that if confirmed he will

be a passionate advocate for the department's core missions and will seek to draw "greater attention to the vital role played by the agency."

In remarks for his confirmation hearing, Perry also said he believes the climate is changing.

"I believe some of it is naturally occurring, but some of it is also caused by man-made activity," Perry said in his

prepared testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. "The question is how do we address it in a thoughtful way that doesn't compromise economic growth, the affordability of energy or American jobs."

In 2011, at a Republican presidential primary debate, Perry was something of a punchline who famously forgot the department was the agency he

pledged to eliminate.

Perry, who served 14 years as Texas governor, was for "all of the above" on energy production before President Barack Obama embraced the strategy. Years before the Democratic president endorsed all types of energy production — from oil and gas to renewable sources like wind and solar power — Perry was putting the policy into practice in Texas.

Avalanche buries hotel in Italy; 30 missing

MILAN — Rescue workers were met with an eerie silence Thursday when they reached a four-star spa hotel struck by an avalanche in a mountainous earthquake-stricken region of central Italy. At least 30 people were missing, including at least two children, authorities said.

Guests at the three-story Hotel Rigopiano in the central Abruzzo region alerted emergency workers of the disaster on Wednesday, following a series of quakes in the region.

"Help, we're dying of cold," one couple wrote rescuers, according to the ANSA news agency. Another man, identified by news reports as Fabio Salzetta, sent a SMS message saying he had escaped with a maintenance worker, but that others were trapped inside.

Corriere della Sera quoted the text message as saying, "Some walls were knocked down." And: "I'm outside with a maintenance worker but you can't see anything of the hotel, there's only a wall of snow in front of me."

When rescuers on skis arrived in the early morning hours of Thursday, they found just two people alive, according to news reports. Civil protection authorities said 30 people were missing.

The ANSA news agency quoted a rescuer as saying there were fatalities, but details weren't immediately available. Just one body was reported removed from the hotel by late morning Thursday.

One of those saved was Giam-paolo Parete, 38, who told rescuers he had gone outside to get something from the car, which was untouched by the avalanche, but that his wife and two children were buried inside, the news agency ANSA reported.

Rescue efforts were hampered by the large snowfall in recent days, making it difficult to clear roads for heavy vehicles and ambulances to get through.

Cold extreme, even for Alaska

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Cynthia Erickson woke up early, hoping her four furnaces were working.

She owns a grocery store and the building that houses the post office in the village of Tanana, Alaska, which ranked as the coldest place in the state Wednesday. The official temperature at the airport with a single gravel runway was minus 54 degrees. Nearby, along the Yukon River, it was 5 degrees colder.

"Fifty-nine below on Front Street in Tanana, Alaska," she said, laughing. "It's just miserable. I hate everybody who lives in a warm place."

A cold snap gripping interior Alaska is both-ering even longtime residents such as Erickson. She didn't see a customer until 25 minutes after she opened her store, where the furnace was operating.

Planes were not flying in the village 130 miles west of Fairbanks, Alaska's second-largest city. The cold also kept cars off the road, Erickson said. People instead were walking, bundled up like the little brother in the movie "A Christmas Story."

She's hoping for a break in the weather — perhaps a balmy minus 20. Temperatures are forecast to remain cold into Friday.

A very cold, low-pressure trough moved into Alaska from Siberia, said Christopher Cox, lead meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Fairbanks.

Fairbanks International Airport reached minus 50 Wednesday, the first time since Jan. 29, 2012, Cox said.

The city craves clouds when it gets so cold. From November through January, Cox said, sunlight has virtually no effect on temperatures. Clouds, however, provide an insulating layer reflecting back heat generated by the Earth's crust.

"Think of it as a blanket," Cox said. "If you have no clouds, there's nothing to stop that radiation from escaping to outer space."

Last winter, the low in Fairbanks never reached minus 30, but that's not typical. Fairbanks averages 11 to 12 days of temperatures that reach 40 below zero or colder, Cox said.

Schools operated as usual. Children enjoy recess outside until it hits minus 20, according to Fairbanks school district policy.

The extreme cold takes a toll on cars and water pipes. Tires flatten on the bottom, leading to a bumpy ride until they snap back into shape. Changing a tire, and spinning a metal lug nut, can frostbite a bare finger. If a furnace fails, water pipes can freeze and then burst when they're thawed.

The mental wear and tear may be the worst part. Erickson said she had to look at summer pictures of boats, blueberries and kids swimming to help her make it through the day.

"The only good thing about this is when you're 53 years old and you get hot flashes, you stay warm," she said

Iran high-rise collapse kills 30 firefighters

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — A high-rise building in Tehran engulfed by a fire collapsed Thursday, killing at least 30 firefighters and injuring some 75 people, state media reported.

The disaster struck the Plasco building, an iconic structure in central Tehran just north of the capital's sprawling bazaar. Firefighters, soldiers and other emergency responders dug through the rubble, looking for survivors.

Iranian authorities did not immediately release definitive casualty figures.

Iran's state-run Press TV announced the firefighters' deaths, without giving a source for the information. Local Iranian state television said 30 civilians were injured in the disaster, while the state-run IRNA news agency said 45

firefighters had been injured.

Firefighters battled the blaze for several hours before the collapse. The fire appeared to be the most intense in the building's upper floors before the collapse. Those floors were home to garment workshops where tailors cook for themselves and use old kerosene heaters for warmth in winter.

Police tried to keep out shopkeepers and others wanting to rush back in to collect their valuables.

Tehran's mayor, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, said there were "no ordinary civilians" trapped under the rubble. However, witnesses said some people had slipped through the police cordon and had gone back into the building.

IRNA reported that Iranian President Hassan Rouhani ordered Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli to

investigate and to report the cause of the incident as soon as possible.

He also ordered the ministry to care for the injured and to take immediate action to compensate those affected by the disaster.

The building came down in a matter of seconds, shown live on state television, which had begun an interview with a journalist at the scene. A side of the building came down first, tumbling perilously close to a firefighter perched on a ladder and spraying water onto the blaze.

Among those watching the disaster unfold was Masoumeh Kazemi, who said she rushed to the building because her two sons and a brother had jobs in the garment workshops occupying the upper floors of the high-rise.

"I do not know where they are now," Kazemi said, crying.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man accused of stealing SWAT gear arrested

CT MILFORD — Milford police arrested a man suspected of stealing an M4 rifle, a ballistic vest and night-vision goggles from an unlocked vehicle belonging to a member of the Bridgeport police SWAT team.

Police said Justin Parsell, 26, was apprehended following a brief foot chase Tuesday. Authorities said the SWAT gear stolen Jan. 4 has been recovered.

Parsell faces charges including theft of a firearm, possession of a silencer and possession of a high-capacity magazine. He remains jailed on \$150,000 bond.

Police said the vehicle and gear belonged to Officer William Simpson. He has been placed on restrictive duty pending an internal investigation.

Video of giant alligator draws crowds to reserve

FL LAKELAND — Video of a massive alligator caught walking through a Florida nature reserve in front of stunned onlookers has prompted crowds of people hoping to catch their own glimpse.

The video taken by a visitor to the Circle B Bar Reserve on Sunday shows the gator, estimated to be about 12 feet long, lumbering across a trail.

WFLA-TV reported officials are concerned the increased attention brought on by the video could pose a danger to the alligators. Polk County Natural Resources Director Jeff Spence said if a person is involved in an incident with a gator, the animal most will likely have to be killed.

He said they don't want to have to do that "because someone is doing something they

shouldn't."

7-Eleven launches breakfast pizza

TX IRVING — 7-Eleven is offering a breakfast pizza.

The convenience store chain said that it combines the convenience of eating leftover pizza for the first meal of the day with traditional breakfast foods.

The chain announced the creation Tuesday. It has a biscuit crust topped with bacon, sausage, ham, scrambled eggs, cheese and cream gravy.

The Irving-based company said hot pizza has become one of its biggest ready-to-eat sellers, and mornings are the busiest time of day in its stores.

During test runs, 7-Eleven said the breakfast pizza became its second-most-popular pizza with customers.

7 lighthouses to get radio-activated signals

ME HARPSWELL — The Coast Guard said it's replacing obsolete foghorns by installing radio-activated sound signals at seven lighthouses along Maine's coastline.

Lt. David Bourbeau told the Portland Press Herald the sound signals will be installed in May at Halfway Rock, Martinus Rock and Mount Desert Rock. They'll also be installed on Great Duck Island, Petit Manan Island, Libby Island and at the Little River Lighthouse.

Sailors can activate the lighthouse sound signals using a marine radio. The signal shuts off after an hour.

Bourbeau said the device will reduce the negative effects that continuous-sound signals — such as those from foghorns — have on wildlife and migratory bird populations.

After search, missing hunter is found in jail

AL ATHENS — Searchers spent time looking for a missing hunter in northern Alabama until officers realized he was actually in jail.

Relatives of Randy Keith Holt, 50, of Hartselle reported the man missing Monday afternoon after he failed to return from a hunting trip. Holt didn't have a cellphone with him, so no one could contact him or track him.

The Limestone County Sheriff's Department, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, firefighters, dog handlers, a helicopter and others joined in a search.

But officers realized Holt was in the Limestone County Jail once they heard his last name. He had been arrested for public intoxication near the search site before the manhunt began.

Jail worker pleads guilty to affair with inmate

MA PITTSFIELD — A former mental health clinician at the Berkshire County jail has been sentenced to three years of probation for having a sexual relationship with an inmate.

The Berkshire Eagle reported that Valerie Soules, 63, of Pittsfield, also was sentenced Tuesday to perform 200 hours of community service after pleading guilty.

Prosecutors said the year-long affair came to light as the result of an unrelated investigation at the jail.

The affair occurred from October 2014 until September 2015.

Soules' lawyer said his client fell in love with the inmate.

Cowboy loses thumb at national stock show

CO DENVER — A Wyoming cowboy has got his thumb back after losing the digit while roping a steer at the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

KCNC-TV reported Monday that Justin Johnson was competing in a team rodeo event when the incident happened a week earlier.

The cowboy and rancher from outside Casper said he roped a steer by its hind feet and was trying to wrap the rope around the saddle horn when his thumb got stuck. The rope then sliced it off.

Johnson, 48, said his son later found the thumb still in his roping glove.

The cowboy is recovering after doctors reattached his thumb at a Denver hospital.

Woman pinned by felled pump at station dies

NY SHIRLEY — A woman getting gas at a Long Island station died after getting pinned between her car and the gas pump after another driver knocked it over.

Suffolk County police said Rosalie Koenig, 62, of Mastic, N.Y., was pronounced dead Sunday at Stony Brook University Hospital.

Authorities said the woman was pumping gas at a station on William Floyd Parkway when a woman in another car attempted a turn into the station and knocked over a gas pump, which fell over and wedged Koenig against her car.

That driver was arrested for driving while impaired by drugs. It was unclear if the charges had been changed in the wake of Koenig's death.

From wire reports

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Pudge, Rock, Bags make Hall of Fame

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bags and Rock and Pudge are heading to Cooperstown.

After a vote that could prove to be a turning point how Steroids Era stars are viewed, Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens could be joining them in the next few years.

Jeff Bagwell, Tim Lincecum and Ivan Rodriguez were elected to baseball's Hall of Fame on Wednesday, earning the honor as Trevor Hoffman and Vladimir Guerrero fell just short of the necessary 75 percent.

Bonds and Clemens, their careers tainted by allegations of steroids use, were passed over for the fifth straight year by the Baseball Writers' Association of America but each received a majority of votes for the first time.

"They were just awesome," Bagwell said. "Their demeanor, the way they went about their business, was just amazing, and I respect them."

On the ballot for the seventh time after falling 15 votes short last year, Bagwell appeared on 381 of 442 ballots for 86.2 percent. Players needed 332 votes this year.

"Anxiety was very, very high," Bagwell said. "It's a

weird thing to be a Hall of Famer. I wrote it on a ball tonight. It was kind of crazy, so it was cool."

In his 10th and final year of eligibility, Raines was at 380 (86 percent). He was just the fifth player elected in his final year of eligibility after Red Ruffing (1967), Joe Medwick (1968), Ralph Kiner (1975) and Jim Rice (2009).

"Last night was probably the worst night I've had out of the 10 years," Raines said. "I knew I was close, but I wasn't sure."

Raines started at 24.3 percent in 2008 and jumped from 55 percent in 2015 to 69.8 percent last year. He said modern metrics boosted his chances from days when voters considered primarily whether players had 3,000 hits, 500 homers or 300 wins.

"I think social media played a big role," he said. "There are some things that I did that a lot of the guys that's already in the Hall of Fame didn't actually do. So I think it kind of made them look a lot at me a lot closer and they looked a lot deeper, and I think the more they looked, I think the better it turned out for me."

Rodriguez, at 45 the youngest current Hall member, received 336 votes (76 percent).

"I've been having trouble sleeping for three days," he said.

Rodriguez, the 52nd player elected in his first year of eligibility, joins Johnny Bench in 1989 as the only catchers voted in on their first ballot.

Hoffman was five votes short and Guerrero 15 shy.

"Falling short of this class is disappointing," Hoffman said in a statement. "I am truly humbled to have come so close. I hope to one day soon share a Hall of Fame celebration with my family, friends, teammates and all of San Diego."

Edgar Martinez was next at 58.6 percent, followed by Clemens at 54.1 percent, Bonds at 53.8 percent, Mike Mussina at 51.8 percent, Curt Schilling at 45 percent, Lee Smith at 34.2 percent and Manny Ramirez at 23.8 percent.

Players will be inducted July 30 during ceremonies at Cooperstown along with former Commissioner Bud Selig and retired Kansas City and Atlanta executive John Schuerholz, both elected last month by a veterans committee. Some voters said the election of Selig, who presided over the Steroids Era, transformed their view of whether tainted stars should gain entry to the Hall.

Bagwell was a four-time All-Star for Houston, finishing with a .297 batting average, 401 homers and 1,401 RBIs. Among 220 Hall of Fame players, he is the 50th whose entire big league career was with one club.

Raines, fifth in career stolen bases, was a seven-time All-Star and the 1986 NL batting champion who compiled a .294 average and .385 on-base percentage. He spent 13 of 23 big league seasons with the Montreal Expos, who left Canada to become the Washington Nationals for the 2005 season, and joins Andre Dawson and Gary Carter as the only players to enter the Hall representing the Expos.

Rodriguez, a 14-time All-Star who hit .296 with 311 homers and 1,332 RBIs, was never disciplined for PEDs but former Texas teammate Jose Canseco alleged in a 2005 book that he injected the catcher with steroids. Asked whether he was on the list of players who allegedly tested positive for steroids during baseball's 2003 survey, Rodriguez said in 2009: "Only God knows."

Rodriguez displaced Pedro Martinez as the youngest of the record 74 living Hall members.

Bonds, Clemens creep above 50 percent

Associated Press

Hall of Fame voters are still sharply divided on Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens.

The electorate is changing, however, and that could be good news for both.

Bonds and Clemens inched past the 50-percent mark for the first time Wednesday, each appearing on about 54 percent of ballots cast by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. For a fifth straight year, Bonds and Clemens fell short of the 75 percent needed for induction, but their support is slowly climbing.

Bonds and Clemens remain on the outside looking in because of drug suspicions, but they could continue to gain ground as more new voters are welcomed into the process.

"I think, just generationally, people in their 20s and 30s look at this different than people in their 50s and 60s," said Sam Mel-

linger of the Kansas City Star, a first-time voter who supported Bonds and Clemens. "Maybe we're missing something — I'm not one of these people that thinks, like, I'm right and they're wrong. It's just different viewpoints."

A writer can receive a Hall of Fame vote when he or she has been an active member of the BBWAA for 10 consecutive years, so newcomers are always on the way. In 2015, the Hall of Fame eliminated voters who had been inactive for more than 10 years — a move that further boosted the influence of newer voters.

The closest thing to a Hall of Fame exit poll is Ryan Thibodaux's online vote tracker, which has charted over half the ballots from this year's election. Of the 14 first-time voters identified on the site as of Wednesday night, 13 supported Bonds and Clemens.

One of those first-time voters was Mike Harrington of The Buffalo News, who said he supported Bonds after former Commissioner Bud Selig was elected by a veterans committee. Selig presided over the era in which drug suspicion became so rampant.

"The last few years in my Sunday column in The Buffalo News, I refused to use Barry Bonds' name. In my column, it became kind of a trademark. I just referred to him as No. 25," Harrington said. "So now people see my article in The Buffalo News — 'Wait a minute, how did you vote for Bonds and Clemens?' I explained in my column a couple weeks ago: To me, I felt, the Bud Selig thing was a tipping point."

Bonds and Clemens are back on the ballot next year, along with newcomers Chipper Jones, Jim Thome, Andruw Jones, Scott Rolen, Johan Santana and Omar Vizquel.

Wild-card entry Istomin stuns Djokovic

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — It started badly for Novak Djokovic, who needed 24 serves, six break-point saves and 15 minutes just to hold his first game in the second round.

This was not the close-to-invincible Djokovic that fans were used to seeing at the Australian Open, where he has won a record-equaling six titles, including five in the previous six years.

In his earliest loss at a Grand Slam tournament since 2008, Djokovic lost 7-6 (8), 5-7, 2-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4 on Thursday to No. 117-ranked Denis Istomin, a 30-year-old wild-card entry from Uzbekistan.

"All the credit to Denis for playing amazing. He deserves to win," Djokovic said of their

4-hour, 48-minute match. "He was the better player in the clutch moments.

"Obviously, I was not pleased with my performance overall, but I have to congratulate my opponent. Whenever he needed, he came up with a big serve, big play."

Djokovic hadn't dropped a set to Istomin in six previous matches. But he lost the 85-minute first set in a tiebreaker and then seemed to get the momentum back, only for Istomin to finish stronger.

Istomin's only previous win in 33 matches against top-10 players was in 2012 versus then-No. 5 David Ferrer.

"It is the biggest win for me. It means so much," Istomin said.

Serena Williams, who like Djokovic was ranked No. 2 and

is a six-time Australian Open champion, kept her chase for an Open-era record 23rd major title on track with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Lucie Safarova.

After winning a rematch of the 2015 French Open final against Safarova, Williams will play fellow American Nicole Gibbs in the third round.

Third-ranked Agnieszka Radwanska didn't last much longer than Djokovic, losing her second-round match to Mirjana Lucic-Baroni 6-3, 6-2. Radwanska reached the semifinals in Melbourne last year; Lucic-Baroni hadn't won an Australian Open match since 1998 until her first-round win this week.

No. 28 Alize Cornet and No. 31 Yulia Putintseva were the only other seeded women to lose on Day 4.

Among those advancing were U.S. Open finalist Karolina Pliskova, WTA Finals champion Dominika Cibulkova, 2016 Australian Open semifinalist Johanna Konta, No. 14 Elena Vesnina, No. 16 Barbora Strýcova, former No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki and No. 22 Daria Gavrilova, representing Australia's last hope in the women's draw.

Djokovic was the only one of the men's seeded players to lose on a day capped by Rafael Nadal's 6-3, 6-1, 6-3 win over 2006 finalist Marcos Baghdatis.

He'll play No. 24 Alexander Zverev next. Others advancing included No. 3 Milos Raonic, No. 6 Gael Monfils, No. 8 Dominic Thiem, No. 11 David Goffin, No. 13 Roberto Bautista Agut, No. 15 Grigor Dimitrov and No. 18 Richard Gasquet.

Woodward, Oklahoma knock off No. 7 West Virginia

Associated Press

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — Jordan Woodward's return from a leg injury has infused some hope in Oklahoma's season.

Woodard's layup with 2.2 seconds left in overtime lifted the Sooners to an 89-87 victory over No. 7 West Virginia on Wednesday night.

Woodard scored 18 of his 20 points after halftime in his second start since missing four games.

After scoring 27 points in a win over Texas Tech on Saturday, Woodard made a jumper with 3.1 seconds left in regulation that tied it at 77-77, then made two baskets in the final minute of overtime.

Oklahoma (8-9, 2-4 Big 12) has won two straight for the first time since late November.

"Our team confidence is definitely going to take another step after getting a win on Saturday, and today on the road," Woodard said.

West Virginia (15-3, 4-2) lost for the first time at home this season, one week after blowing out then-top ranked Baylor in

Morgantown.

"We ran into a team that got their best player back," West Virginia coach Bob Huggins said. "I'm at a loss."

Freshman Kameron McGusty added 17 points for Oklahoma in just his third start of the season. Sophomore Jamuni McNeace had a career-high 14 points, Rashard Odomes added 13 and freshman Kristian Doolittle scored six of his 12 points in overtime.

"Jordan was outstanding all night long and he got a lot of help from a lot of different people, too," Oklahoma coach Lon Kruger said. "It's tough to do that on the road against a really good team."

After Jevon Carter tied it with a free throw with 7.8 seconds left in overtime, Woodard drove the lane and scored as he fell for the winning points.

No. 10 Florida State 83, No. 15 Notre Dame 80: Jonathan Isaac scored 23 points, including 17 in the second half, as the host Seminoles moved into a three-way tie atop the Atlantic Coast Conference at the one-third mark in conference play.

Steve Vasturia scored 18

points, including four 3-pointers, for the Fighting Irish (16-3, 5-1), who were 15 of 21 from long distance. Notre Dame had its seven-game winning streak snapped.

No. 16 Virginia 71, Boston College 54: Devon Hall scored 13 points and Isaiah Wilkins had 11 points and nine rebounds for the visiting Cavaliers.

None of Virginia Tech's players logged more than 25 minutes as they rested up for next week's games against No. 15 Notre Dame and top-ranked Villanova. Virginia (14-3, 4-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) beat BC for the fourth straight time.

No. 24 South Carolina 57, No. 19 Florida 53: Sindarius Thornwell scored 15 of his 20 points in the second half for the host Gamecocks.

Florida went 0 of 17 from three-point range, ending a streak of 850 consecutive games with a long-range basket that was the longest in the NCAA. The Gators last went 0-from-behind the arc in an 80-61 loss to Kentucky in 1992.

No. 20 Cincinnati 81, Temple 74: Kyle Washington

scored 10 of his 16 points in the second half, rallying the host Bearcats to their ninth straight win.

Cincinnati extended its best winning streak in three seasons and completed a series sweep of the Owls (10-10, 1-6).

Academies

Holy Cross 85, Army 76: Karl Charles scored a career-high 24 points and the visiting Crusaders rallied from a 17-point second half deficit to beat the Black Knights.

Mac Hoffman hit 9 of his 10 shots for 20 points to lead Army (8-11, 2-5), which was outscored 46-20 over the final 16:56.

Navy 75, Lehigh 72: George Kiernan scored 18 points with four three-pointers as the host Midshipmen hit 11 of 23 three-pointers to beat the Mountain Hawks for their fourth straight win.

Nevada 83, Air Force 76: D. J. Fenner scored a career-high 30 points as the Wolf Pack held on against a late rally by the visiting Falcons to win on Wednesday night.

Jacob Van scored 17 points for the Falcons (9-10, 2-4).

McDavid's OT goal gives Oilers win

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Connor McDavid earned his 100th career NHL point — but his 102nd was an even bigger deal.

McDavid scored the winning goal in overtime as the Edmonton Oilers won their fourth game in a row, 4-3 over the Florida Panthers on Wednesday night.

McDavid, who also had two assists in the game, got a breakaway late in overtime and got the puck away with 2.6 seconds left. Florida's James Reimer made the glove save, but the puck was ruled to be across the line via video review.

"I thought it went in, just because he was already in his net, basically," McDavid said. "It was definitely nice to beat the clock for once. I've had two goals kind of called back due to the clock. It was definitely good to be on the right side."

Zack Kassian, Mark Letestu and Jordan Eberle also scored for the Oilers, who have their longest winning streak since December 2015.

Eberle snapped an 18-game scoring drought with his ninth of the season late in the third.

"The frustrating thing is that I have had so many chances and just haven't been able to finish," he said. "It was nice to be able to contribute in that fashion, at a time when we needed the goal to get a chance at the two points."

Vincent Trocheck, Michael Sgarbossa

and Greg McKegg had goals for the Panthers, who have lost two straight.

"We came into an extremely tough building with a lot of elite players and our guys played their hearts out," Panthers coach Tom Rowe said. "We obviously have four major guys out of our lineup and for us to come here and do what we did and get a point and have a chance to win the game right to the end says an awful lot about our team."

Nick Bjugstad, Jonathan Huberdeau, Aleksander Barkov and Alex Petrovic are all out with injuries.

Edmonton started the scoring six minutes in off a steal as McDavid fed Kassian on a 2-on-1, and he beat Reimer. It was McDavid's 100th career point, coming in his 92nd NHL game.

McDavid got his 101st point with seven minutes to play in the opening frame, making a perfect feed on the power play to bank the puck in off the skate of Letestu.

Florida got one back with three minutes to play in the first as Trocheck picked the top corner on Oilers goalie Cam Talbot for his team-leading 17th goal.

Sgarbossa swatted in a rebound for the Panthers in front of Edmonton's net for his first NHL goal to make it 2-2 with 1:25 remaining in the second period.

Red Wings 6, Bruins 5 (SO): Thomas Vanek and Frans Nielsen scored in a shootout, lifting host Detroit to a comeback win

over Boston.

The Red Wings rallied from 3-0 and 4-1 deficits in the first period, and with 3:04 remaining in regulation, Gustav Nyquist scored to pull them into a tie.

Sharks 3, Kings 2: Brent Burns, Joe Pavelski and Tommy Wingels scored in San Jose's seventh win at Staples Center in its last eight trips, topping Los Angeles.

Joe Thornton had two assists and Martin Jones made 22 saves for the defending Western Conference champion Sharks, who wrapped up their regular-season series against their biggest rivals with three victories in five games.

Jets 6, Coyotes 3: Ondrej Pavelec made 30 saves in his season debut, and host Winnipeg halted a four-game losing streak with goals from six players.

It was Pavelec's first NHL game this season after the veteran goalie was sent to the American Hockey League's Manitoba Moose at the end of training camp. The 29-year-old Pavelec was recalled Tuesday to start instead of Connor Hellebuyck and Michael Hutchinson, who each struggled during the team's winless skid (0-3-1).

Penguins 4, Canadiens 1: Eric Fehr and Jake Guentzel scored in the second period to lead visiting Pittsburgh past Montreal.

Defensemen Ian Cole and Olli Maatta also scored for Pittsburgh, which won its second game in a row after a three-game skid.

Durant dazzles as Warriors top Thunder

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Kevin Durant dazzled against his old team with a season-best 40 points, and the Golden State Warriors beat Oklahoma City 121-100 on Wednesday night despite Russell Westbrook's 21st triple-double for the Thunder.

Westbrook had 27 points, 15 rebounds and 13 assists in an improved showing from his 20-point outing on 4-for-15 shooting when OKC first faced Durant in the other jersey here 2½ months ago and watched him dismantle the Thunder from every which way.

In his two games against OKC, Durant has scored 79 points on 28-for-40 shooting. Durant also had 12 rebounds Wednesday.

Stephen Curry added 24 points and eight assists, and Klay Thompson had 14 points after he arrived back in the Bay Area just in time to play after a short absence dealing with a personal family matter.

Westbrook was knocked down by Golden State center Zaza Pachulia late in the first half, and Pachulia glared at Westbrook as he stood over him. Pachulia received a flagrant 1 foul and Westbrook promised after the game there would be payback at some point.

Pacers 106, Kings 100: Paul George scored 24 points, Jeff Teague had 22 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds, and Indiana used a big second half to rally for the road win.

DeMarcus Cousins had 25

points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for Sacramento, which lost Rudy Gay to a torn left Achilles tendon in the third quarter. It was Cousins' fifth career triple-double.

76ers 94, Raptors 89: Joel Embiid scored 26 points, Ersan Ilyasova added 18 and host Philadelphia won for the seventh time in nine games.

With Embiid leading the way, the Sixers are no longer the NBA's laughingstock. They're only 14-26 but have rejuvenated a city that has patiently waited for a winner through three miserable seasons.

Knicks 117, Celtics 106: Derrick Rose matched his season high with 30 points, helping slumping New York to the road win.

Wizards 104, Grizzlies 101: John Wall had 25 points and 13 assists, and Washington earned its 13th consecutive home win.

Rockets 111, Bucks 92: James Harden had 38 points, eight assists and six rebounds, powering host Houston's win.

Hornets 107, Trail Blazers 85: Kemba Walker scored 23 points, Roy Hibbert provided a huge boost off the bench, and host Charlotte stopped a five-game slide.

Pistons 118, Hawks 95: At Auburn Hills, Mich., Reggie Jackson scored 26 points to lead balanced Detroit to the win.

Pelicans 118, Magic 98: Anthony Davis had 21 points and 15 rebounds, and host New Orleans cruised past short-handed Orlando.