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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Trump boasts of bigger nuke 'button'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump boasted Tuesday that he has a bigger and more powerful “nuclear button” than North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The president’s Tuesday evening tweet came in response to Kim’s New Year’s address, in which he repeated fiery nuclear threats against the U.S. He said he has a “nuclear button” on his office desk and warned that “the whole territory of the U.S. is within the range of our nuclear strike.”

Trump mocked that assertion, writing, “Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!”

Earlier Tuesday, Trump sounded open to the possibility of

an inter-Korean dialogue after Kim made a rare overture toward South Korea in his address. But Trump’s ambassador to the United Nations insisted talks would not be meaningful unless the North was getting rid of its nuclear weapons.

In a morning tweet, Trump said the U.S.-led campaign of sanctions and other pressure were beginning to have a “big impact” on North Korea.

He referred to the recent, dramatic escape of at least two North Korean soldiers across the heavily militarized border into South Korea. He also alluded to Kim’s comments Monday that he was willing to send a delegation to the Winter Olympics, which will be hosted by South Korea next month.

“Soldiers are dangerously fleeing to South Korea. Rocket man now wants to talk to South Korea for first time. Perhaps

that is good news, perhaps not — we will see!” Trump said.

In response to Kim’s overture, South Korea on Tuesday offered high-level talks on Jan. 9 at the shared border village of Panmunjom to discuss Olympic cooperation and overall ties.

North Korea did not immediately react to the South’s proposal. If there are talks, they would be the first formal dialogue between the Koreas since December 2015. Relations have plunged as the North has accelerated its nuclear and ballistic missile development that now poses a direct threat to America, South Korea’s crucial ally.

The U.S. administration, however, voiced suspicions that Kim was seeking to drive a wedge between Seoul and Washington. Pyongyang could view a closer relationship with Seoul has a way for reducing its growing international isolation and relief

from sanctions that are starting to bite the North’s economy.

“We won’t take any of the talks seriously if they don’t do something to ban all nuclear weapons in North Korea,” U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley told reporters at the United Nations. “We consider this to be a very reckless regime. We don’t think we need a Band-Aid, and we don’t think we need to smile and take a picture.”

While Trump ratcheted up the tension Tuesday night, he doesn’t actually have a physical nuclear button.

The process for launching a nuclear strike is secret and complex, and involves the use of a nuclear “football,” which is carried by a rotating group of military officers everywhere the president goes and is equipped with communication tools and a book with prepared war plans.

Army takes action against accused general

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army says “appropriate administrative action” has been taken against a two-star general faulted for mistreating a congressional staffer, but the service refused to specify the steps it took against Maj. Gen. Ryan Gonsalves.

“The matter is now closed,” Army spokeswoman April Cunningham said in a statement.

Gonsalves, who served as commander of the Fort Carson, Colo.-based 4th Infantry Division until August, had been in line for a promotion. In July, he was nominated by the Army for a third star, but the White House rescinded the nomination on Nov. 27, after an inspec-

tor general’s probe.

The allegations against Gonsalves centered on complaints that he failed to treat a female congressional staffer with “dignity and respect” during an October 2016 meeting at his Fort Carson headquarters.

Gonsalves is now serving as a special assistant to the commander of the Fort Hood, Texas-based III Corps. Special adviser postings in the Army can function as brief stopping points while a general awaits promotion or is stuck in limbo while under investigation.

The Army did not say whether Gonsalves would be offered a promotion in the future or whether his current assignment would be his last.

“Following the completion of

the Inspector General’s investigation of Major General Ryan Gonsalves, appropriate administrative action was taken,” Cunningham said.

The IG says it was able to substantiate an accusation that Gonsalves called the congressional staffer “sweetheart” during a meeting about the 4th Infantry Division’s mission, which amounted to a violation of Army command policy.

The IG complaint also said that Gonsalves took issue with the staffer’s youth and told her she should take detailed notes on why the military needed funding “since she was a Democrat and did not believe in funding the military,” the IG report said.

Another staffer at the meeting confirmed that Gonsalves used the word “Democrat.” He said that he was “shocked” by use of the word but did not regard the overall tenor of Gonsalves’ political comments as derogatory.

Generals are expected to refrain from overt expressions of partisanship while in uniform.

Gonsalves denied making disrespectful remarks about political affiliation during the meeting, and five other witnesses testified they didn’t hear the general make such remarks. As a result, the IG determined that the evidence did not support a conclusion that Gonsalves comments were “objectively disrespectful.”

Air Force boosts connections in Kabul

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — The Air Force hopes to boost morale and performance here by improving Wi-Fi access to make it easier for servicemembers to stay in touch with stateside family.

That should allay the concerns of some people back home.

Technological advances in the 17 years since the start of the Afghan War have enabled deployed troops to connect with loved ones like never before, but friends and family in the States occasionally take that for granted — sometimes panicking when they haven't heard from their deployed loved ones in a day or two.

Afghanistan may be a war zone, but troops here say the reasons for a missed phone call are often the more mundane deployment challenges of long work days or limited internet access. It's usually nothing to worry about.

"No word is good word," said Sgt. Seth Killingsworth, one of the Marines responsible for security on the sprawling U.S.

base north of Kabul. He had just finished a Christmas morning video chat from his office with his wife in Escondido, Calif., via Apple's FaceTime app, but he said such connectivity's not guaranteed. "Just because we have it here, don't expect that. It might just be letters like back in the day."

To help ensure airmen get their FaceTime with home, the Air Force increased bandwidth at Bagram by 800 percent in November, to 5-megabit-per-second connection speeds for each device. The speed was bumped up again to 10 megabits per second in December as part of a \$1.4 million contract with a local service provider.

That's a little over half the average connection speed in the United States, according to Akamai Technologies, a Cambridge, Mass.-based content-delivery and cloud-services provider, but it's fast enough to watch HD-quality video on Netflix or make a group call to several friends and family members on Skype.

Speedier connectivity will help airmen stay mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually fit — the four "do-

main" of the Air Force's Comprehensive Airman Fitness program — said Lt. Col. Kevin Childs, commander of the 455th Expeditionary Communications Squadron, which is responsible for the upgrades.

While the Comprehensive Airman Fitness Wi-Fi is available only to the nearly 1,800 airmen at Bagram assigned to the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, around 1,600 other U.S. and coalition servicemembers, civilians and contractors can access free wireless internet service at USO and Morale, Welfare and Recreation lounges, and paid connections elsewhere.

Personal mobile internet modems, along with SIM cards from local providers and prepaid voice and data plans, can also be purchased at a shop in the base exchange. Troops regularly line up to check their balances or top off their plans.

Compared with a deployment to Bagram in 2012-13, staying in touch has gotten "a ton better," said Tech. Sgt. Tarah White, a communications installer who's pulled fiber and copper cable as part of the network overhaul on this deployment. On her pre-

vious deployment she had to constantly load up on prepaid calling cards. "This time, I haven't had to use them at all," she said.

The improved link to home was especially helpful when her mother was in and out of the hospital and she had to help make decisions about her care. She's also been able to stay in touch with her boyfriend, who's deployed in Iraq.

"I can text him in the morning, text him goodnight and he gets it," White said.

Deployed troops in Iraq have noted better communications than just a few years ago, when costs or limited availability meant shorter and less frequent calls and internet access.

Despite spotty coverage, soldiers in a makeshift camp on the edge of the battle for Mosul last Christmas were able to text their families. At established bases, more bandwidth-intensive activities were possible, such as video calls.

Servicemembers at Bagram who can't access the speedier Air Force Wi-Fi get by on the hodge-podge of other networks.

DOD IDs Green Beret killed Monday in Afghanistan

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A U.S. soldier killed in a New Year's Day firefight in eastern Afghanistan, the first U.S. combat fatality of 2018, has been identified as Green Beret Sgt. 1st Class Mihail Golin.

Golin, 34, of Fort Lee, N.J., was a Special Forces weapons sergeant assigned to Fort Carson, Colo.-based B Company, 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group.

New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker identified Golin in a statement Tuesday, but the Pentagon did not release the slain soldier's name until Wednesday.

Golin was the 16th U.S. servicemember killed in Nan-

garhar province since the beginning of 2015. It's there that U.S. and Afghan forces have been aggressively battling an affiliate of Islamic State known as ISIS-Khorasan. The Taliban also operates in the province.

Four other servicemembers were wounded in Monday's fighting. Two had returned to service as of Tuesday, and the others were being treated in stable condition, the military said.

Gen. John W. Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said in a statement Tuesday that he was deeply saddened by Golin's death and offered his sympathy to the fallen soldier's family and friends.

Golin's daughter and mother live in Englewood, Colo., and his father lives in Brooklyn, the

news website NJ.com reported, citing a casualty announcement provided to members of Congress and governors.

Golin was born in Riga, Latvia, in 1983 and moved to the United States in October 2004, according to a biography provided by Lt. Col. Robert Bockholt, a spokesman for the U.S. Army's Special Operations Command.

After enlisting in the Army in 2005 and completing basic training and advanced individual training, Golin was assigned as an infantryman with 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne) at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

He later volunteered for training to become a Green Beret and

completed the Army's Special Forces Qualification Course in November 2014, after which he was assigned to 10th group.

His deployment to Afghanistan in September 2017 with the 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), was his fourth. He served in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and served twice in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

A recipient of the Purple Heart Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Golin was also awarded an Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters and an Army Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters, among others.

Vet accused of inflating service

BY STEPHEN CARLSON

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Papotia Reginald Wright started the 8th Special Forces Regiment New York Honor Guard more than a year ago to perform burial services for veterans. But according to investigations by multiple groups, the supposed Special Forces veteran vastly inflated his military service, including medals for valor, and his group has since shut down.

Wright claimed to be a retired command sergeant major from Special Forces and used his fraudulent claim to run a veterans service organization with no official nonprofit status in Brooklyn, N.Y., according to the state Attorney General's office. Military records seen by Stars and Stripes show he served in the Army in 1982-90 as a truck driver who never ranked higher than a specialist — a far cry from his claims of combat service.

Photographs show Wright in full dress uniform at promotional events including a New York Giants game. Most of his decorations — a Bronze Star, Purple Heart and others — are allegedly fake, according to Steve Antson from Guardians

of the Green Beret, a watchdog group that works to expose people pretending to be part of Special Forces.

According to federal law under the Stolen Valor Act, it is a crime to lie about military awards for monetary or other tangible benefits.

Wright, who goes by "Reggie," told Stars and Stripes that his rank is honorary, not an attempt to mislead. "Because I started the unit (the Honor Guard), I was the top NCO there," he said. Wright has said he never claimed to be in Special Forces specifically, but that he drove trucks for the 75th Ranger Regiment and 5th Special Forces Group as an attachment.

As part of the Army's Authorized Provider Partnership Program, organizations like Wright's can perform military honors for funerals of former military personnel or honor guard ceremonies for events. "When they couldn't take up the slack, we were called," Wright said.

According to its now-defunct Facebook page, the "8th Special Forces Regiment New York Honor Guard is a Veteran Service Organization (VSO) that renders final honors to Veterans with an Honorable Discharge or

General Discharge with Honorable conditions."

The name is an apparent reference to the 8th Special Forces Group, which conducted counterinsurgency operations and training in the backdrop of the Cold War in Latin America. The unit was disbanded in 1980.

The Guardians of the Green Beret said they have been aware of the Honor Guard for about two months after being alerted by another watchdog organization called Guardian of Valor that Wright was exaggerating his military service to promote the Honor Guard.

Wright claimed he had been part of the "Black Hawk Down" incident in Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1993 that led to the deaths of 18 U.S. servicemembers, Antson said. Wright's service ended in 1990, according to his personnel record.

The Honor Guard website was taken down after accusations of fraud were made. Its Facebook page states in its last post on Nov. 29 that "information has been posted on the Internet which we were not aware of until this month of November 2017. As a result we will look into the matter, therefore we will be closing our social media until further notice."

Marines honored for saving comrade

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

CAMP COURTNEY, Okinawa — Marine Sgt. Justin Erler and Cpl. Matthew Dungan remained solemn as Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals were pinned on their chests Wednesday at III Marine Expeditionary Force headquarters on Okinawa.

Erler, Dungan and a third Marine — Lance Cpl. Eduardo Rosario — are credited with saving the life of Marine Master Sgt. Hector Trujillo. The 44-year-old father of three was struck by a vehicle on Dec. 1 while rendering aid to injured Japanese motorists on the Okinawa Expressway. He is still in critical condition at Naval Medical Center San Diego, where he was airlifted shortly after the incident.

Trujillo "is alive today, absolutely, 100 percent because of the actions of these two individuals (Erler and Dungan)," III MEF commander Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson said during the ceremony. "That is the only reason he is alive ... these are two great young Marines that stood up and made a difference when it counted."

Though Trujillo's condition has slowly improved and he is now breathing on his own and responding to his wife, Maria, the fact that he is still recovering from grievous injuries hardly left his rescuers in the mood for celebrating.

"You feel the pride in [receiving a medal like this], but more than anything ... knowing that in those situations, somebody is willing to respond like the master sergeant did; it means more than a medal," Dungan said.

Erler said of the medals, "We feel like we're wearing a piece of the master sergeant."

Rosario was given a challenge coin symbolizing excellence for his actions that day.

Hatch to retire, leaving opening for Romney

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch, of Utah, said Tuesday he will not seek re-election after serving more than 40 years in the Senate, opening the door for 2012 GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney to run for his seat.

Hatch, 83 and the longest-serving Republican in the Senate, opted for retirement despite a full-court press from President Donald Trump to stay in Washington, particularly as Romney's ambition for the seat became apparent.

Romney was a vocal critic of Trump's during the 2016 election and could be a potential thorn in the president's side in

the Senate. He also has drawn the ire of Trump's former White House adviser, Steve Bannon, who recently derided Romney as a draft dodger who "hid behind" his Mormon religion to avoid serving in the Vietnam War.

Hatch said he decided to retire at the end of his seventh term after "much prayer and discussion with family and friends" over the holiday break. He said he's always been a fighter, "but every good fighter knows when to hang up the gloves."

"Only in a nation like ours could someone like me — the scrappy son of a simple carpenter — grow up to become a United States Senator," he

added.

Trump had been open in recent months about pressuring Hatch to stay in the Senate, and his private lobbying campaign was bolstered by a public love fest, with Trump inviting Hatch with him on Air Force One in December when he shrunk the boundaries of two Utah monuments.

"Congratulations to Senator Orrin Hatch on an absolutely incredible career. He has been a tremendous supporter, and I will never forget the (beyond kind) statements he has made about me as President," Trump tweeted Tuesday. "He is my friend and he will be greatly missed in the U.S. Senate!"

VA document: Gunman had fled mental ward

Associated Press

DENVER — The gunman who killed a Colorado sheriff's deputy escaped from the mental health ward of a VA hospital in Wyoming in 2014 but was located and returned, according to a Department of Veterans Affairs document obtained by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The document was provided to the AP by a congressional aide on condition of anonymity because the aide was not authorized to release it. The document was first reported by The Denver Post.

The gunman, Matthew Riehl, fatally shot Douglas County Deputy Zackari Parrish and wounded four other officers Sunday, Colorado authorities said. Riehl was killed by a SWAT team.

The VA document said Riehl was hospitalized at the veterans medical center in Sheridan, Wyo., in April 2014 after a psychotic episode. The document said he es-

caped but was found and brought back.

The VA issued a statement saying it "cannot ordinarily discuss the specific care of any veteran without a privacy release." A spokeswoman for the Sheridan VA hospital did not respond to an after-hours phone message and email.

In addition to Riehl's hospitalization in Sheridan, the VA document said he had an "urgent contact for mental health" with another VA facility in July 2015. It did not describe the nature of the contact or say where that facility was, but it was in the department's Eastern Colorado Health Care System, which includes a hospital in Denver and nine clinics in other cities.

The document said Riehl was on multiple medications in 2015 stemming from an earlier hospitalization, but it did not say what those medications were or why they had been prescribed.

The document identified Riehl as an Army veteran who was honorably dis-

charged. It said his records did not list any military service-related psychiatric disorders.

Colorado authorities said Riehl served in Iraq.

Officials said Riehl, 37, was armed with a rifle and ambushed the officers at his apartment in Highlands Ranch, 16 miles south of Denver.

Four deputies, including Parrish, were shot in the initial gunfire. A police officer was wounded later.

The wounded officers managed to get away but had to leave Parrish behind because of their injuries and the ongoing gunfire. Two people in nearby apartment units were also wounded.

The SWAT team arrived about 1½ hours after the confrontation began, and Riehl was killed in a gunfight. Authorities said Riehl fired more than 100 rounds during the prolonged standoff.

Winter storm brings ice and misery to Southeast

Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. — A brutal winter storm scattered a wintry mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain from normally balmy north Florida up the Southeast seaboard Wednesday, adding to the misery of a bitter cold snap as bridges iced over and cars spun out on slickened overpasses.

The Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport, which serves much of the Georgia and South Carolina coasts, announced in a statement Wednesday morning that it had closed as ice and snow fell on the Georgia coast.

The storm also prompted officials to close Charleston International Airport in South Carolina on Wednesday morning.

The airport said in a twitter message that Joint Base Charleston has closed the runways because of ice. The airport shares runways with the U.S. Air Force at the North Charleston facility.

The airport said flight operations would not resume until the Air Force determines the

runways are safe for aircraft and passengers.

The National Weather Service said the snow and freezing rain was expected to spread up the coast to the Carolinas amid warnings that icy roads and low visibility could make driving treacherous. Accumulations of 3 to 5 inches were possible in eastern North Carolina.

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal declared a state of emergency through Friday for 28 counties because of the frigid weather.

In other parts of the U.S., dangerously cold temperatures have been blamed for at least a dozen deaths as well as freezing a water tower in Iowa and halting ferry service in New York.

With Chicago-area wind chills expected between minus 35 and minus 20 degrees, forecasters warned of frost bite and hypothermia risks and urged residents to take precautions.

Plunging temperatures in Texas brought rare snow flurries as far south as Austin, and accidents racked up on icy roads across the state.

Ex-hostage charged with sexual assault

Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario — Canadian Joshua Boyle, his American wife and their children endured a long captivity in Afghanistan before they were rescued last fall and returned to Canada. Now he's facing 15 charges including sexual assault, forcible confinement and administering a noxious drug.

Boyle, his wife, Caitlan, and their three children were freed in October in Pakistan, five years after the couple was abducted by a Taliban-linked militant group while on a backpacking trip in neighboring Afghanistan. The children were born in captivity.

Court documents obtained Tuesday say the charges include eight counts of assault, two accounts of sexual assault, two counts of unlawful confinement and one count of causing someone to "take a noxious thing, namely Trazodone," an antidepressant. There is also a charge of uttering a death threat and a charge of misleading a police officer. The purported acts allegedly occurred between Oct.

14 and Dec. 30 after Boyle returned to Canada.

A publication ban bars reporting any information that could identify the alleged victims.

A hearing on the case was scheduled for Wednesday in Ottawa, but Boyle's lawyer told The Associated Press that Boyle would not attend in person. He said Boyle was in custody.

Ottawa police declined to comment. Eric Granger, Boyle's attorney, said he had not yet seen the court documents.

In a statement to the Toronto Star, Boyle's wife wrote, "I can't speak about the specific charges, but I can say that ultimately it is the strain and trauma he was forced to endure for so many years and the effects that that had on his mental state that is most culpable for this."

"Obviously, he is responsible for his own actions," she added, "but it is with compassion and forgiveness that I say I hope help and healing can be found for him. As to the rest of us, myself and the children, we are healthy and holding up as well as well we can."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Family given more than 100 gifts after theft

CT CHESHIRE — Police and community members in Connecticut banded together to restore a family's holiday spirit after a Grinch stole their presents on Christmas Day.

Cheshire officers collected donated presents for the Maher family and delivered more than 100 gifts to them Saturday aboard emergency vehicles with lights and sirens blaring.

The Republican-American reported that the family spent Christmas Day with relatives in Waterbury and had loaded their car with presents when someone stole their vehicle. The purloined loot included most of the presents for Tracey and David Maher's three sons, ages 8, 6 and 4. No arrests have been announced.

The Cheshire Police Benevolent Association led the gift donation effort. So many presents came in that officers ended the collection early and will donate extra gifts to local organizations.

Sheriff: Look out for rogue cow on the move

VA YORKTOWN — A Virginia sheriff's office has issued a lookout alert for a wily creature loose in the woods — a cow.

WVEC-TV reported that the York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office tweeted Monday that an "elusive bovine" is roaming a wooded area.

Animal control officials have devised a plan to catch the cow and deliver it to a rescue facility.

The sheriff's office has put out bales of hay where the heifer has been bedding down and asked anyone who sees the cow to call emergency dispatch.

Mummers Parade goes on despite frigid temps

PA PHILADELPHIA — Thousands of marchers braved bone-chilling temperatures and wind chills to take part in Philadelphia's annual Mummers Parade, the oldest continuous folk parade in the country.

Organizers had considered postponing the event because of concerns over the brutal weather conditions. But they voted to go ahead with the New Year's Day parade.

Temperatures were in the single digits when the parade started. Concerns had been raised that the frigid temperatures could be dangerous for parade participants.

Heating tents and warm buses were set up along the route for the Mummers.

Firefighters free frozen swan stuck for hours

VA RICHMOND — Firefighters in Virginia's capital freed a swan stuck for hours in a frozen pond.

News outlets reported that Richmond firefighters and animal control freed the swan as temperatures remained well below freezing Monday. Firefighters put a boat into the frozen pond and broke up the ice around the swan, which eventually climbed up the embankment and headed into the neighborhood.

Men discover sports artist's work in storage

KS TOPEKA — Two men in Topeka have found several signed works by prominent sports artist Ted Watts among the contents they purchased in a storage unit.

Joseph Joslin Sr. and Mike Schoep said they came across some of Watts' works after responding in October to an ad by a woman offering to sell everything in her unit at a self-storage business. The men bought all the storage unit's content for \$600, the Topeka Capital-Journal reported.

They found the unit had a box containing black-and-white drawings by Watts that include a depiction of the 1956 World Series in Major League Baseball.

Police rescue seal pup waddling on highway

MA YARMOUTH — A baby seal that wandered far from the ocean has been returned to the sea with the help of some police officers on Cape Cod.

Yarmouth police said the seal pup was found waddling on Route 6A in Yarmouth Port late Friday.

Police and Amazing Animal Ambassadors were able to put the seal in a cage and hold onto it until wildlife officials arrived. Police said on Facebook on Saturday that the pup was given a clean bill of health and has been released back to the ocean.

Authorities said they have nicknamed the seal "Houston" after Kevin A. Houston, a U.S. Navy SEAL from Cape Cod who was killed in Afghanistan.

Woman marries just hours before her death

CT HARTFORD — A Connecticut woman fighting breast cancer got married at a hospital 18 hours before she died.

Heather Mosher was dressed in her wedding gown and lying

in bed wearing an oxygen mask as she and David Mosher said "I do" on Dec. 22 at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford. She died the next day.

The East Windsor couple fell in love after meeting at a swing-dancing class in 2015.

He told news organizations that on the day he planned to propose to her, Dec. 23, 2016, she was diagnosed with cancer. He went through with the proposal.

They originally planned to marry Dec. 30 but doctors urged them to do it sooner. Dec. 30 ended up being the day of her funeral.

Mental illness blamed in killing of a puppy

FL HOLLYWOOD — An attorney says mental illness has plagued a man accused of stabbing a puppy and leaving it to die in a suitcase in Florida.

Brendan Evans, 31, is being held at the Broward County jail on multiple animal cruelty charges. He was arrested Nov. 15, about a month after police say he stabbed the pit bull and stuffed it into a suitcase. The dog died at an animal hospital.

In a Sun Sentinel report, Evans' attorney, Sarah Anne Mourer, said her client sought treatment for mental illness at over a dozen hospitals in Florida and Virginia.

A police report said investigators found mutilated animals in his freezer, knives covered in dried blood and notes referencing demons in Evans' home.

Evans faces up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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Cards' Palmer retires after 15 seasons

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Coach Bruce Arians once said he and quarterback Carson Palmer would ride away into the sunset together like a pair of old desert cowboys.

Well, they have.

Palmer, who turned 38 last week, announced his retirement after 15 NFL seasons on Tuesday in an open letter released by the Cardinals, one day after Arians said he was leaving his long coaching career.

"Over the years, I've had teammates who decided to hang it up and I would ask them how they knew when it was time to walk away," the letter began. "The answer was almost always the same: You just know. For me, it is time now. Why? Quite simply, I just know."

Palmer missed the last nine games of what would be his final season with a broken left arm.

He called his long professional career "the most incredible experience of my life."

Palmer and Arians were together the past five seasons, and they included some of the

best days of the quarterback's career.

Palmer was a Heisman Trophy winner at USC and the No. 1-overall pick by Cincinnati in 2002. He threw for 46,247 yards, 12th-most in NFL history, in a career with the Bengals, Oakland and Arizona.

"When I entered the league, I was a 23-year-old kid," Palmer wrote. "I'm leaving a 38-year-old husband and father of four with memories and experiences that I will treasure for the rest of my life. And like most things in life, it feels like it all passed in a blink of an eye."

Acquired by the Cardinals for only a sixth-round pick and a swap of seventh-rounders, Palmer's strong arm was a great fit for Arians' "no risk it, no biscuit" big-play passing game.

Palmer twice came back from torn ACL injuries. The first occurred in his playoff debut for Cincinnati in 2005. He was hurt on his first pass, a 66-yard completion. The second came in the sixth game of the 2014 season.

Palmer returned from that one to have probably the best

year of his career. In 2015, he set season franchise records and career highs for yards passing (4,671) and touchdowns (35) while leading the Cardinals to a 13-3 record. He earned his only playoff win in four tries that season, in overtime over Green Bay.

"My family and I are beyond grateful for everything the game has given us as well as the love and support we've felt from fans everywhere we've been," he said. "That's been especially true in Arizona, where we never expected to end up but wound up being such a special place for us."

Cardinals center A.Q. Shipley, through Twitter, congratulated Palmer on "one hell of a career."

"My favorite all-time teammate is walking away on his terms," Shipley said. "Not many people have that opportunity. It's been an honor and a privilege to block for you and be your teammate. Enjoy retirement brother!"

Palmer, with a career 62.5 percent completion rate, leaves as the only quarterback to throw for more than 4,000

yards in a season with three teams. He did it twice for Cincinnati, once for Oakland and three times with Arizona.

Palmer spent seven years with the Bengals, leaving in a dispute with owner Mike Brown that led him to hold out to start the 2011 season.

He eventually was dealt to Oakland for a first-round draft pick in 2012 and second-round pick in 2013. Palmer started nine games for the Raiders that season. He put up big numbers with the Raiders but there was little success in wins and losses. Oakland eventually deemed him expendable and sent him to Arizona without much in return.

Palmer said he would "especially miss the grind" of being an NFL player.

"It's the part I don't think people fully appreciate," he wrote, "maybe because many NFL players make the game look so easy and effortless. The mental and physical preparation it takes to compete — week in and week out, year in and year out — is draining and grueling but has always been my favorite part."

Lewis, Urlacher, Moss among Hall of Fame finalists

Associated Press

Star linebackers Ray Lewis and Brian Urlacher are among four first-time eligible former players selected among the 15 modern-era finalists for the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Class of 2018.

Receiver Randy Moss and guard Steve Hutchinson also made the cut to the finals as first-year eligibles.

They join center Kevin Mawae, tackles Joe Jacoby and Tony Boselli, receivers Isaac Bruce and Terrell Owens, safeties John Lynch and Brian Dawkins, guard Alan Faneca, running back Edgerrin James, cornerbacks Ty Law and Everson Walls for consideration.

The seniors committee has nominated guard Jerry Kramer and linebacker Robert Bra-

zile. The contributor's nominee is Bobby Beathard, a former general manager and administrator for five franchises. The finalists were announced Tuesday.

Voting by the Hall of Fame selectors will be Feb. 3 in Minneapolis. Inductions will be in August at the Canton, Ohio, shrine.

The modern-era finalists were determined by a vote of the selection committee from a list of 108 nominees that was earlier reduced to 27 semifinalists during a year-long process.

Kramer was a mainstay of the great Green Bay offensive lines from 1948-68 and is famous for his block that led Bart Starr into the end zone for the winning touchdown in the Ice Bowl 50 years ago. Brazile

was an outstanding linebacker with the Houston Oilers from 1975-84.

This is the second year as a finalist for Bruce, Boselli, Dawkins, James, Law and Mawae. In their third try are Faneca, Jacoby and Owens. Lynch is in his fifth year as a finalist. Walls made the final round for the first time in his 20th year of eligibility. Jacoby is also in his 20th year.

2018 Hall of Fame Finalists

2018 modern-era finalists for the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Class of 2018. Number of times the individual has been named a finalist in parentheses:

Tony Boselli, OT — 1995-2001 Jacksonville, 2002 Houston (2)
Isaac Bruce, WR — 1994-2007 LA/St. Louis Rams, 2008-09 San Francisco (2)
Brian Dawkins, S — 1996-2008 Philadelphia, 2009-2011 Denver (2)
Alan Faneca, G — 1998-2007 Pittsburgh, 2008-09 NY Jets, 2010 Arizona (3)
Steve Hutchinson, G — 2001-05 Se-

attle, 2006-2011 Minnesota, 2012 Tennessee (1)

Joe Jacoby, OT — 1981-1993 Washington (3)

Edgerrin James, RB — 1999-2005 Indianapolis, 2006-08 Arizona, 2009 Seattle (2)

Ty Law, CB — 1995-2004 New England, 2005, 2008 NY Jets, 2006-07 Kansas City, 2009 Denver (2)

Ray Lewis, LB — 1996-2012 Baltimore (1)

John Lynch, FS — 1993-2003 Tampa Bay, 2004-07 Denver (5)

Kevin Mawae, C/G — 1994-97 Seattle, 1998-2005 NY Jets, 2006-09 Tennessee (2)

Randy Moss, WR — 1998-2004, 2010 Minnesota, 2005-06 Oakland, 2007-2010 New England, 2010 Tennessee, 2012 San Francisco (1)

Terrell Owens, WR — 1996-2003 San Francisco, 2004-05 Philadelphia, 2006-08 Dallas, 2009 Buffalo, 2010 Cincinnati (3)

Brian Urlacher, LB — 2000-2012 Chicago (1)

Everson Walls, CB — 1981-89 Dallas, 1990-92 NY Giants, 1992-93 Cleveland (1)

Contributor Finalist

Bobby Beathard, general manager/personnel administrator

Senior Finalists

Robert Brazile, LB — 1975-1984 Houston Oilers

Jerry Kramer, G — 1958-1968 Green Bay Packers

Arizona fires Rodriguez after six years

Associated Press

Arizona has fired football coach Rich Rodriguez after a notice of claim was filed with the state attorney general's office alleging he ran a hostile workplace.

The Arizona Daily Star revealed the notice of claim on Tuesday after making a public-records request. The paper said the claim was filed last Thursday by a former employee. A notice of claim is a legal document that signals a lawsuit will be filed.

The Daily Star reported that the notice was filed after the University's Office of Institutional Equity retained outside counsel to investigate allegations of sexual harassment from a former employee. The investigation, which concluded last week, did not find enough to fire Rodriguez, but the university became concerned with

the "climate and direction" of the program.

Arizona athletic director Dave Heeke announced Rodriguez's firing in a statement issued by the school and said the separation terms of his contract will be honored.

"After conducting a thorough evaluation of our football program and its leadership, both on and off the field, President Robbins and I feel it is in the best interest of the University of Arizona and our athletics department to go in a new direction," Heeke said. "We'll move through the coaching search in an effort to identify a head coach that will build a solid foundation for our program and create an identity of Arizona football that the university, Tucson and southern Arizona communities can be proud of. We're excited about the future of our football program and we look forward to introducing our

new head coach at the completion of the search process."

Rodriguez arrived in Tucson after an ugly split with Michigan, where he coached for three seasons. He had an immediate impact on the Wildcats, leading them to four straight bowl games.

Arizona took a step back last season, losing eight straight games to finish 3-9. The Wildcats were one of college football's more surprising teams this season after opening 6-2. They fell flat after that, losing four of their final five, including a 38-35 setback against Purdue in the Holiday Bowl.

Rodriguez was 43-39 in six seasons at Arizona.

Auburn RB Johnson to enter NFL Draft

AUBURN, Ala. — Auburn tailback Kerryon Johnson has decided to skip his senior sea-

son and enter the NFL Draft.

The Southeastern Conference offensive player of the year announced his decision Tuesday in a Twitter post.

Johnson ran for 1,391 yards and 18 touchdowns this season despite missing two games with an injury. He had one three-game SEC stretch when he scored 11 touchdowns.

Johnson ran for 167 yards in an upset of Georgia, which topped the playoff rankings at the time. He had 30 carries for 104 yards against then-No. 1 Alabama, but was limited in the SEC championship game rematch with the Bulldogs by a shoulder injury.

He ran 22 times for 71 yards in a Peach Bowl loss to UCF on Monday.

Johnson thanked Auburn fans "for all the endless support that has not always been deserved."

NHL roundup

Ovechkin's overtime goal lifts Caps over Hurricanes

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Washington Capitals felt they gave away two goals. Alex Ovechkin got them right back when it mattered most.

Ovechkin scored his NHL-leading 26th goal 1:57 into overtime and the Capitals beat the Carolina Hurricanes 5-4 on Tuesday night for their third straight win.

"It's almost like whenever he decides to end it, he can just go do it," linemate Devante Smith-Pelly said.

Ovechkin also tied it with 7:15 left in regulation, with Nicklas Backstrom assisting on both goals. Alex Chiasson, Smith-Pelly and Dmitry Orlov each scored for the Capitals, who went to overtime for the sixth time in eight games and have won four of those.

Teuvo Teravainen and Elias Lindholm scored in the third

period, and Victor Rask had two goals for the Hurricanes, who trailed by two midway through the second. They rallied to take a short-lived lead midway through the third before Ovechkin struck twice to snap their six-game home winning streak.

After Sebastian Aho hit the post in OT for Carolina, Ovechkin headed the other way and fired a shot from the right circle that beat Cam Ward to end it.

"If we're sitting here and (Aho's shot) goes in, it's a whole different situation," Carolina coach Bill Peters said. "But it didn't, and then Ovie made a good play, and that's what he does, right?"

Golden Knights 3, Predators 0: Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 29 shots in his second shutout of the season, leading host Vegas past Nashville for its eighth straight victory.

Penguins 5, Flyers 1: Phil

Kessel and Conor Sheary scored in a four-goal second period to lead visiting Pittsburgh past scuffling Philadelphia.

Bruins 5, Islanders 1: Patrice Bergeron had the go-ahead goal in the second period and surging Boston scored three times in the third to pull away from host New York.

Lightning 2, Maple Leafs 0: Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 30 shots for his NHL-best sixth shutout of the season to lead visiting Tampa Bay over Toronto.

Blues 3, Devils 2 (SO): Carter Hutton stopped 24 shots through overtime and both New Jersey attempts in the shootout to lift host St. Louis.

Blue Jackets 2, Stars 1: Oliver Bjorkstrand scored twice 78 seconds apart early in the third period and visiting Columbus stopped a three-game losing streak with a win over Dallas.

Sharks 4, Canadiens 1:

Timo Meier scored twice and visiting San Jose rebounded from its worst loss of the season with a victory over slumping Montreal.

Wild 5, Panthers 1: Matt Cullen and Eric Staal each scored twice as host Minnesota stopped Florida's five-game winning streak.

Avalanche 3, Jets 2 (OT): Erik Johnson scored on a breakaway with 9.9 seconds remaining on the clock in overtime to lift host Colorado over Winnipeg.

Kings 5, Oilers 0: Jonathan Quick made 32 saves for his third shutout of the season, Dustin Brown scored twice and visiting Los Angeles blanked Edmonton.

Ducks 5, Canucks 0: Ryan Miller made 31 saves in his return to Vancouver, earning his second shutout this season with Anaheim and the 41st of his career.

NBA roundup

Thomas returns, leads Cavs to victory

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Isaiah Thomas had one last wait.

Sitting on the scorer's table, Thomas could see the end of his seventh-month odyssey in front of him. And when the buzzer finally sounded and the Cleveland crowd erupted for a player it barely knows, Thomas took the last few steps onto the court and completed a trip he hopes to never take again.

He was all the way back.

Thomas showed flashes of what made him an All-Star in his long-awaited debut for the Cavaliers, who snapped a three-game losing streak by beating the Portland Trail Blazers 127-110 on Tuesday night.

"It's been a long journey for me," Thomas said. "I couldn't really see the light at the end of the tunnel. For that day to come the first couple days of 2018, it's going to be a special year."

It was a special night for Thomas, who scored 17 points

and played 19 minutes in his first game in seven months, an impressive return to action for the dynamic point guard traded to Cleveland last summer. He added three three-pointers and three assists before leaving with 8:10 remaining and the Cavs up by 12.

Before leaving the floor, Thomas got a hug from LeBron James and one from Cavs coach Tyronn Lue, who pulled him close and offered two perfect words.

"Welcome back," Lue said.

James scored 24 points, Kevin Love had 19 and Jae Crowder added 15 for the Cavs, who were coming off losses at Golden State, Sacramento and Utah.

Damian Lillard scored 25 for the Blazers after missing five games with a hamstring injury. Jusuf Nurkic added 23 and CJ McCollum had 19 for Portland.

Thomas hadn't played since May 19 because of a torn la-

brum in his hip that ended his 2017 postseason with Boston.

Spurs 100, Knicks 91: LaMarcus Aldridge scored 29 points, Kawhi Leonard had a season-high 25 and visiting San Antonio beat New York to give Gregg Popovich sole possession of fifth place on the NBA's coaching wins list.

Manu Ginobili finished with 12 points — three of them coming on what appeared to be a pass that went into the basket without everyone noticing.

Popovich has 1,176 victories, all with the Spurs. The five-time champion broke a tie with his friend George Karl.

The Spurs won for the fourth time in five games.

Michael Beasley had 18 points for the Knicks.

Suns 104, Hawks 103: Devin Booker sank three free throws to put his team ahead with 12.3 seconds to play, Marquese Chriss blocked Taurean Prince's shot at the rim with 7

seconds to go and Phoenix rallied from down 10 in the final 2½ minutes to beat visiting Atlanta.

Booker scored eight of his 34 points in the final 37 seconds as the Suns finished with a 15-4 run. T.J. Warren scored 31 and Chriss had 17 points, 11 rebounds and two blocks for Phoenix.

Hornets 131, Kings 111: Dwight Howard had 20 points and eight rebounds, Kemba Walker added 12 points and 10 assists and visiting Charlotte built a big early lead and beat Sacramento.

Zach Randolph had 24 points and 10 rebounds for Sacramento.

Clippers 113, Grizzlies 105: Lou Williams scored 33 points off the bench to lead host Los Angeles over Memphis for its fourth consecutive win.

Blake Griffin added 21 points for the Clippers.

College basketball roundup

No. 5 Xavier downs Butler, stretches streak to 10

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — With their balance, depth and wealth of experience, No. 5 Xavier aims to turn its very good start into something special in the Big East.

J.P. Macura scored 15 of his 20 points in the first half to get Xavier rolling, and Trevon Bluiett had 21 points as the Musketeers won their 10th in a row, beating Butler 86-79 on Tuesday night.

The Musketeers (15-1, 3-0 Big East) matched their highest ranking in school history on Monday. A day later, they matched the best start in school history, getting ahead by 14 points and holding on against the team that's pulled off the biggest upset so far in the

conference.

The last time the Musketeers did something comparable was 2015-16, when they also opened 15-1 and won 12 straight games. They finished with 28 wins but lost in the second round of both the conference and the NCAA tournaments.

No. 18 Texas Tech 85, No. 10 Kansas 73: Keenan Evans scored 15 points, Norelse Odiase and Justin Gray had 12 apiece, and the Red Raiders never trailed in winning at Allen Fieldhouse for the first time in 18 tries.

Florida 83, No. 11 Texas A&M 66: At College Station, Texas, Egor Koulechov scored 19 points and Keith Stone added 18 as the Gators built a big lead early and cruised to victory.

The short-handed Aggies

(11-3, 0-2), who were playing without three starters, dropped their second straight game after starting the season 11-1 and rising to No. 5 in the AP poll.

No. 16 TCU 81, Baylor 78 (OT): Vladimir Brodziansky had 18 points, including the go-ahead three-pointer in overtime, as the visiting Horned Frogs (13-1, 1-1 Big 12) bounced back from their first loss.

Mississippi State 78, No. 22 Arkansas 75: Brothers Nick and Quinnadary Weather- spoon scored 22 points apiece for the host Bulldogs.

Auburn 94, No. 23 Tennessee 84: Bryce Brown and Jared Harper each scored 18 points as the visiting Tigers erased an early 14-point deficit for their 11th straight victory.

Army 86, Loyola (MD) 75: Alex King scored 18 points, Matthew Wilson added 15 for the host Black Knights.

Tucker Blackwell scored 13 points, Luke Morrison added 10, and Babacar Thiombane blocked a season-high four shots for Army (8-5, 1-1 Patriot League), which shot 53.6 percent from the field.

Navy 78, Lehigh 66: George Kiernan had a career-high 27 points, including four three-pointers, and Shawn Anderson scored nine of his 11 points in the final six minutes to help the host Midshipmen pull away late.

Navy (10-5, 1-1 Patriot League) hit eight of eight free throws during a 13-0 run to seal it.