

STARS AND STRIPES®

Wednesday, January 10, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Calif. mudslides death toll climbs to 15

Associated Press

MONTECITO, Calif. — The death toll from the mudslides that struck Southern California climbed to 15 on Wednesday as rescue crews searched for anyone trapped, injured or dead in the onslaught that smashed homes and swept away cars.

The drenching rainstorm that triggered the disaster cleared out and was no longer a hindrance as searchers made their way across a landscape strewn with boulders and covered shoulder-high in places with mud the consistency of wet cement.

“Right now our assets are focused on determining if anyone is still alive in any of those structures that have been damaged,” Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown said.

Brown said that several dozen homes were destroyed or severely damaged, and that there are probably many more in similar condition in areas still inaccessible.

At least 15 people were confirmed dead,

Santa Barbara County spokeswoman Yaneris Muniz said early Wednesday as the search continued.

At least 25 people were injured, 50 or more had to be rescued by helicopters, and an undetermined number of others were missing, authorities said. Four of the injured were reported in severely critical condition.

The search was set to expand with the arrival of a major search-and-rescue team from nearby Los Angeles County and help from the Coast Guard and the National Guard.

Most of the deaths occurred in and around Montecito, a wealthy enclave of about 9,000 people northwest of Los Angeles that is home to such celebrities as Oprah Winfrey, Rob Lowe and Ellen DeGeneres.

Winfrey’s home survived the mudslides. In an Instagram post on the same day many Democrats were talking about her for president because of her rousing speech at the Golden Globes, she shared photos of the deep mud in her backyard

and video of rescue helicopters hovering over her house.

“What a day!” Winfrey said. “Praying for our community again in Santa Barbara.”

A mud-caked 14-year-old girl was among the dozens rescued on the ground Tuesday. She was pulled from a collapsed Montecito home where she had been trapped for hours.

“I thought I was dead for a minute there,” the dazed girl could be heard saying on video posted by KNBC-TV before she was taken away on a stretcher.

The mud was unleashed in the dead of night by flash flooding in the steep Santa Ynez Mountains, where hillsides were stripped of vegetation last month by the biggest wildfire on record in California, a 440-square-mile blaze that destroyed 1,063 homes and other structures.

Burned-over zones are especially susceptible to destructive mudslides because scorched earth doesn’t absorb water well and the land is easily eroded when there are no shrubs.

Authorities had been bracing

for the possibility of catastrophic flooding because of heavy rain in the forecast for the first time in 10 months. Evacuations were ordered beneath recently burned areas of Santa Barbara, Ventura and Los Angeles counties.

But only an estimated 10 to 15 percent of people in a mandatory evacuation area of Santa Barbara County heeded the warning, authorities said.

U.S. Highway 101, the link connecting Ventura and Santa Barbara, looked like a muddy river and was expected to be closed for two days.

The worst of the rainfall occurred in a 15-minute span starting at 3:30 a.m. Tuesday. Montecito got more than a half-inch in five minutes, while Carpinteria received nearly an inch in 15 minutes.

“All hell broke loose,” said Peter Hartmann, a dentist who moonlights as a news photographer for the local website Nooz-hawk.

Mattis apologizes to Japan for Okinawa aircraft mishaps

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND HANA KUSUMOTO

Stars and Stripes

CAMP SCHWAB, Okinawa — The United States has apologized to the Japanese government for a recent rash of military aviation mishaps that have sparked fear and anger on the southern island prefecture of Okinawa.

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis delivered the apology over the phone Tuesday to his Japanese counterpart, Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera, a Ministry of Defense spokesman said Wednesday.

Mattis provided details on re-

cent emergency landings by two Okinawa-based Marine Corps aircraft — an AH-1Z Viper helicopter on Monday and a UH-1Y Venom on Saturday — and vowed to address the “important” issue of aircraft safety.

During their call, Onodera reportedly asked Mattis, a retired Marine four-star general, to take additional measures to prevent future mishaps.

Onodera told reporters the Defense Ministry has requested that U.S. Forces Japan commander Lt. Gen. Jerry Martinez conduct safety checks and maintenance on all U.S. military aircraft in Japan.

A spate of U.S. military aircraft mishaps on or around the southern Japanese island prefecture have led to heightened safety concerns among Okinawans.

On Dec. 13, a CH-53E Super Stallion’s window inexplicably became separated from the aircraft and landed on an elementary school sports field adjacent to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma’s fence line. More than 50 schoolchildren were playing at the time, and one boy was slightly injured from a pebble that flew up during impact.

On Dec. 7, a plastic part thought to belong to a U.S. mili-

tary helicopter landed on the roof of a local day care facility, leading to protests in front of U.S. military facilities.

In October, a 1st Marine Aircraft Wing Super Stallion made an emergency landing in a farmer’s field outside Okinawa’s Northern Training Area after an inflight fire. The helicopter was an almost total loss.

The incidents have drawn the ire of Okinawa’s small but potent protest movement and its anti-base Gov. Takeshi Onaga and served as a rallying cry in the fight against relocating Marine air operations within the prefecture.

Mattis reveals personal side on troop visits

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — On a summer morning in a desolate corner of Iraq's western desert, Jim Mattis learned he'd narrowly evaded an assassination attempt.

A Sunni Arab man had been caught planting a bomb on a road shortly before Mattis and his small team of Marines passed by. Told the captured insurgent spoke English, Mattis decided to talk to him.

After Mattis offered a cigarette and coffee, the man said he tried to kill the general and his fellow Marines because he resented the foreign soldiers in his land. Mattis said he understood the sentiment but assured the insurgent he was headed for Abu Ghraib, the infamous U.S.-run prison. What happened next explains the point of the story.

"General," the man asked Mattis, "if I am a model prisoner do you think someday I could emigrate to America?"

In Mattis' telling, this insurgent's question showed he felt

"the power of America's inspiration." It was a reminder of the value of national unity.

Mattis, now the Pentagon boss and perhaps the most admired member of President Donald Trump's Cabinet, is a storyteller. And at no time do the tales flow more easily than when he's among the breed he identifies with most closely — the men and women of the military.

The anecdote about the Iraqi insurgent, and other stories he recounted during a series of troop visits shortly before Christmas, are told with purpose.

"I bring this up to you, my fine young sailors, because I want you to remember that on our worst day we're still the best going, and we're counting on you to take us to the next level," he said. "We've never been satisfied with where America's at. We're always prone to looking at the bad things, the things that aren't working right. That's good. It's healthy, so long as we then roll up our sleeves and work together, together, together, to make it

better."

The stories tend to be snippets of Mattis' personal history, including moments he believes illustrate the deeper meaning of military service.

On a trip last month to the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and three domestic military installations, Mattis revealed himself in ways rarely seen in Washington, where he has studiously maintained a low public profile. With no news media in attendance except one Associated Press reporter, Mattis made clear during his troop visits that he had not come to lecture or to trade on his status as a retired four-star general.

"Let's just shoot the breeze for a few minutes," he said at one point.

Mattis used stories to emphasize that today's uncertain world means every military member needs to be ready to fight at a moment's notice.

Regardless of how much they resonate with his young audience, Mattis' stories illustrate how he sees his military experience as a way to connect with troops who often feel dis-

tant from their political leaders. They also are a reminder Mattis' boss is one of the most politically divisive figures in recent history.

Speaking to troops and family members at an outdoor movie theater at Guantanamo, Mattis pointed directly to the political battles.

"I'm so happy to be in Guantanamo that I could cry right now, to be out of Washington," he said, adding jokingly that he wouldn't mind spending the rest of his tenure away from the capital. He said as soon as he gets back in the company of uniformed troops, he is reminded of why the military can set a standard for civility.

"Our country needs you," he said, and not just because of the military's firepower. "It's also the example you set for the country at a time it needs good role models; it needs to look at an organization that doesn't care what gender you are, it doesn't care what religion you are, it doesn't care what ethnic group you are. It's an organization that can work together."

Moon credits Trump for role in Korea talks

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's president gave his U.S. counterpart, President Donald Trump, credit for playing a "very big" role in bringing the two Koreas together for breakthrough talks the day before.

Moon Jae-in was responding to a question about Trump's claim that his tough talk against North Korea created the right environment for Tuesday's meeting between senior officials from both sides in the border village of Panmunjom.

"I think the contribution of President Trump was very big in accomplishing inter-Korean talks. I'd like to express my gratitude," Moon said Wednesday during a nationally tele-

vised press conference.

The South Korean president faces a delicate balance in his efforts to pursue peace with the North while vowing to work with the United States and other allies to pressure the communist state to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Tuesday's meeting ended after about 12 hours with North Korea agreeing to send a high-level delegation to next month's Winter Olympics in the South Korean resort village of Pyeongchang, a key goal of Moon's.

The countries also agreed to hold military talks aimed at easing hostilities in front-line areas, and they restored the second military hotline in a week.

Moon told reporters that

he's very encouraged that the inter-Korean dialogue has been restored and said he would be willing to hold a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un under the right conditions.

Moon, who took office in May promising to pursue peace with the North, stressed that he would continue to work closely with the U.S. and other allies toward the ultimate goal of denuclearizing the divided peninsula.

The U.S. welcomed the meeting but noted it will hold close consultations with South Korean officials to ensure the North's participation in the Olympics doesn't violate U.N. Security Council sanctions.

The positive tone was tempered by remarks by chief North Korean delegate Ri Son

Gwon, who said Tuesday that his country's nuclear weapons are aimed at the United States, not South Korea.

"All our state-of-the-art strategic weapons like atomic bombs, hydrogen bombs and intercontinental ballistic rockets are completely targeting the United States. They are not targeting our compatriots" in the South, Ri said in media footage released from Panmunjom.

North Korea has long insisted its goal is to develop a nuclear weapon that could target the U.S. mainland as a self-defensive measure. It has demonstrated rapid progress in its missile program with a series of tests over the past two years, including three underground nuclear explosions since January 2016.

Army secretary talks about quality of life in South Korea

By **MARCUS FICHTL**
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Soldiers won't have to move as often, spouses will find it easier to get jobs and there will be access to cheaper produce if the new Army secretary has his way.

Secretary of the Army Mark Esper addressed those issues with soldiers, civilians and family members during a town hall meeting this week at the Eighth Army's new headquarters south of Seoul.

Esper — a Gulf War veteran and former Raytheon lobbyist who took the Army's top job in November — said he hopes to give troops the choice of staying longer at duty stations.

Soldiers stationed overseas often miss career milestones such as attending professional schools or specialized training that peers at home can hit more easily, he said.

"You should not be penalized

by what the Army needs you to do," he told troops gathered at Camp Humphreys' Freedom Chapel. "It's the complete opposite of what we should be doing."

Dependents at the meeting said they felt penalized by six-month waits for background checks needed to work at on-post schools and child development centers.

That can be a problem for families' finances and makes it tough to staff services at Humphreys, which has increased in population from 12,000 to 26,000 and will soon be home to more than 40,000 personnel.

Esper said he's looking at decentralized background checks for spouses seeking on-post employment. Keeping families at bases longer will help spouses pursue their careers and cut down on the number of times military children change schools, he said.

Some at the meeting complained about high grocery

prices at on-post commissaries and a rule limiting families to a single vehicle that they say discourages people from shopping at local markets.

Korea Defense Commissary Agency chief Wayne Walk told them that on-post prices are as low as they can go. The commissary's requirement is to maintain a 30 percent average savings on produce, he said at the meeting.

Walk conceded that commissaries set prices based on local brick-and-mortar stores — not open-air markets where produce can be found much cheaper.

Esper suggesting allowing small grocers to set up stalls on-post.

Col. Scott Mueller, Humphreys' commander, suggested that such a solution may be in the works. He told those in attendance that the Pyeongtaek mayor's office had recently asked about allowing local grocers to sell on base.

Soldier killed in Iraq is ID'd

By **CHAD GARLAND**
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. soldier who died while supporting the anti-Islamic State coalition in Iraq has been identified as Spc. Javion Shavonte Sullivan.

Sullivan, of Fort Mill, S.C., died Monday in Iraq's Al Anbar province in a noncombat incident, the Pentagon said late Tuesday.

His death is under investigation.

He joined the Army to "make a better life for his family, fight for his country," Patricia Hackett, the soldier's aunt, told a local Fox News affiliate in South Carolina.

"It was just something he wanted to do."

The 24-year-old was married to the love of his life, Rayven, who he had been with for more than a decade, his aunt said.

The couple's daughter Mahogany, 3, will carry on Sullivan's loving spirit, she said.

"He's gone, but looking at her, she's his twin," she said. "We will always see Javion in Mahogany."

Sullivan was assigned to the Fort Hood, Texas-based 16th Signal Company, 11th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade, which provides communications support to III Corps operations.

He is the first U.S. servicemember to die while supporting the anti-ISIS campaign this year, and the 22nd since Operation Inherent Resolve began in the fall of 2014.

Over the past three years of fighting, ISIS has lost nearly all the territory it once controlled in Iraq and Syria.

U.S. officials believe about 1,000 fighters are now operating in small cells in the desert near the Iraqi-Syrian border and in some of the cities that security forces have retaken and are continuing to clear and secure.

Thousands of U.S. and international troops continue to support the fight through training, advice, intelligence and precision fire support.

US seeks dismissal of recruit death lawsuit

DETROIT — The U.S. government is asking a judge to dismiss a \$100 million lawsuit over the death of a Marine recruit from Michigan. The government says military injuries or deaths can't be turned into federal litigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Zak Toomey says Raheel Siddiqui's death was a "tragedy," and the U.S. Marine Corps has taken it "extremely seriously."

Siddiqui, 20, died in 2016 in Parris Island, S.C.. The Marine Corps said he took his own life by jumping from a stairwell after a confrontation with a drill instructor. The Corps also said it uncovered widespread hazing of recruits and young drill instructors dating back to 2015.

A judge is meeting both sides on Jan. 18.

From The Associated Press

Navy recruiter suspected of using role to lure victim

The (Portland, Ore.) Oregonian

A Beaverton, Ore., man is in jail on suspicion of using his role as a Navy recruiter to lure at least one minor into sexual relations.

The Clackamas County Sheriff's Office arrested Sean William Kelly, 27, on Monday. Kelly faces charges that include second-degree sex abuse, third-degree sex abuse, luring a minor and sexual delinquency of a minor.

Police said the victim, a student, met Kelly while he was working for the Navy in an Oregon City, Ore., recruitment office.

Dan Rachal, a spokesman for the regional Navy recruit-

ment office based in Portland, Ore., said Kelly will remain in the Navy while the service conducts its own investigation.

Kelly entered the Navy in 2009 in Illinois, Rachal said. He was assigned to the Portland area as a recruiter June 10, 2015, and worked out of recruiting offices in Oregon City and Vancouver.

While Kelly is still on the Navy's payroll, he's no longer in the field recruiting, Rachal said.

Rachal declined to comment on Kelly's case, as it is ongoing, but he said the Navy takes such allegations seriously and will cooperate with authorities.

Democrats' report warns about Russian interference in Europe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A new report by congressional Democrats warns of deepening Russian interference throughout Europe and concludes that even as some Western democracies have responded with aggressive countermeasures, President Donald Trump has offered no strategic plan to bolster their efforts or safeguard the U.S. from again falling victim to the Kremlin's systematic meddling.

The report is the first from Congress to comprehensively detail Russian efforts to undermine democracies since the 2016 presidential election. It wastes no time in calling out Trump personally for what it describes as a failure to respond to Russia's mounting destabilization activities in the U.S. and worldwide.

The report was obtained by The Associated Press in advance of its public release Wednesday.

"Never before has a U.S. president so clearly ignored such a grave and growing threat to U.S. national security," the report warns.

No Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

signed on to the 200-plus page report released by Maryland Sen. Ben Cardin, the committee's top Democrat.

But even without GOP backing, the report's recounting of Russian operations in 19 European nations foreshadows the still-unpublished Senate Intelligence Committee's bipartisan inquiry into Russia's role during the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Cardin said in a statement that he commissioned the report so Americans can see the "true scope and scale" of Russian President Vladimir Putin's efforts to undermine democracy.

"While President Trump stands practically idle, Mr. Putin continues to refine his asymmetric arsenal and look for future opportunities to disrupt governance and erode support for the democratic and international institutions that the United States and Europe have built over the last 70 years," Cardin said.

Cardin's inquiry lays blame directly on Putin for a "relentless assault to undermine democracy and the rule of law in Europe and the United States." Concerned that Trump has failed to identify Russian ag-

gression as a national rallying point, the report urges a "stronger congressional voice" in pro-democracy efforts and funding.

The report calls for committee hearings and other bipartisan efforts to aid European nations in countering Russian aggression.

Some changes suggested by the report have garnered GOP interest, including the use of financial sanctions aimed at Russia and pressuring social media companies to be more transparent about Russian political messaging.

So far, the president has shown little interest in addressing Russia's activities. During a November trip to Asia, where he met with Putin, Trump said "he said he didn't meddle" and added, "I really believe that when he tells me that, he means it."

Other administration officials have been more skeptical of Russian behavior. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has said the U.S. is prepared to deter Russian aggression in Europe. The U.S. agreed last year to allow sales of anti-tank weapons to Ukraine.

Bannon ousted at Breitbart

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon is stepping down as chairman of Breitbart News Network after a public break with President Donald Trump.

Breitbart announced Tuesday that Bannon would step down as executive chairman of the conservative news site, less than a week after Bannon's explosive criticisms of Trump and his family were published in a new book.

A report on the Breitbart website quotes Bannon saying, "I'm proud of what the Breitbart team has accomplished in so short a period of time in building out a world-class news platform."

Trump lashed out at Bannon for comments made in Michael Wolff's "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House," which questions the president's fitness for office. As Trump aides called Bannon disloyal and disgraceful, the president branded his former chief strategist as "Sloppy Steve" and declared that "he lost his mind" when he was pushed out of the White House in August.

The president was livid about Bannon's remarks — not just at the insults about his family, but also at his former strategist's apparent intent to take credit for Trump's election victory and political movement, according to a White House official and two outside advisers not authorized to speak publicly about internal conversations.

After days of silence amid withering criticism from his former colleagues and his largest benefactor, Bannon tried to make amends. He issued a statement Sunday praising the president's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., whom he was quoted accusing of treasonous behavior in the book. Bannon did not apologize for his criticism of the president's daughter and son-in-law, Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner.

Judge blocks end of 'Dreamer' program

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal judge Tuesday night temporarily blocked the Trump administration's decision to end a program protecting young immigrants from deportation.

U.S. District Judge William Alsup granted a request by California and other plaintiffs to prevent President Donald Trump from ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program while their lawsuits play out in court.

Alsup said lawyers in favor of

DACA clearly demonstrated that the young immigrants "were likely to suffer serious, irreparable harm" without court action. The judge also said the lawyers have a strong chance of succeeding at trial.

DACA has protected about 800,000 people who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children or came with families who overstayed visas. The program includes hundreds of thousands of college-age students.

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced in September that the program would

be phased out, saying former President Barack Obama had exceeded his authority when he implemented it in 2012.

On Tuesday, the Department of Justice said the judge's decision doesn't change the fact that the program was an illegal circumvention of Congress, and it is within the agency's power to end it.

"The Justice Department will continue to vigorously defend this position, and looks forward to vindicating its position in further litigation," department spokesman Devin O'Malley said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officer sentenced for drinking at gun range

OH CINCINNATI — A Cincinnati police officer pleaded guilty to a probation violation for drinking alcohol during firearms training at a gun range.

WXIX-TV reported that the judge told Officer David Jenkins, 46, “You need to get a handle on it” before sentencing him Monday to continue his probation, undergo an alcohol treatment program and wear an alcohol monitoring device.

Court records show Jenkins had a 0.053 blood alcohol level at the training Dec. 20. He was on probation at the time for a disorderly conduct conviction.

He pleaded guilty to the charge after his arrest in March for carrying an AR-15 rifle and acting as a police officer while off duty and drunk.

Former firefighter sentenced for arson

MT HELENA — A former seasonal Montana firefighter who acknowledged that he deliberately sparked dozens of wildfires five years ago has been sentenced to 35 years in prison for starting another blaze in 2016.

The Independent Record reported that Helena resident James Frederick Maw was sentenced Monday. Maw lit 20 fires in 2013 in Montana, causing nearly \$1 million in damage.

He was arrested in the York-Nelson area in full firefighting gear holding a trigger-operated lighter. He initially said he was a contract firefighter but later said he started the fires because he enjoyed the camaraderie of firefighting and needed the financial payoff.

He received a 40-year suspended sentence for the 2013

offenses. While on probation, he was arrested in April 2016 for lighting a fire on a ranch where he worked.

Officer who used racial slurs fired

CT HARTFORD — A Connecticut police officer caught on camera using racial slurs while being arrested on a drunken driving charge has been fired from his department.

The Hartford Police Department said Robert Lanza, 44, was fired Monday. He had been under investigation since his arrest last year in Plainville.

Police said video and audio recordings show Lanza using several racial slurs.

They said he also warned the Plainville officers arresting him not to come to Hartford.

Biologist protected from shark by whale

ME BRUNSWICK — A Maine marine biologist said footage of her swimming with a humpback whale shows the large mammal protecting her from a tiger shark.

Nan Hauser, of Brunswick, president of the Center for Cetacean Research and Conservation, told the Portland Press Herald she was in the Cook Islands when she came face to face with a 25-ton humpback whale, which approached her and began nudging her around the water. She said the whale also shielded her with a fin.

She said that after the encounter, she noticed a tiger shark was swimming nearby.

Hauser said whales are “altruistic” and often hide seals from predators, but she has never experienced or read about anything like this before.

Vandals deface cafe advertising billboard

NH SOMERSWORTH — A billboard in New Hampshire that has raised eyebrows among Somersworth residents has been vandalized for a second time.

The billboard advertises the cafe Teatotaller and originally featured a male model eating a breakfast sandwich with the text, “I like my men like I like my coffee — with breakfast at Teatotaller.” Foster’s Daily Democrat reported that the original ad had graffiti stenciled over it sometime in September 2017.

A new advertisement, featuring the same model and the words “Chai curious?” replaced the old advertisement a few months later, but someone threw eggs at the billboard in the past few weeks. Cafe owner Emmett Soldati said they are still assessing the situation.

Father, son charged in theft of workers’ tips

NJ WEST MILFORD TOWNSHIP — New Jersey police said a father and son spoiled the holidays for West Milford sanitation workers by stealing the holiday tips left out by township residents.

The 54-year-old father and his 28-year-old son, both of Hewitt, were each charged with two counts of theft Friday for taking cash-filled envelopes left outside local homes.

The Record reported that the envelopes were left on top of garbage cans on the morning of Dec. 22 as holiday tips for the township’s contracted sanitation workers.

Police said the two stole a total of \$40, and that the father was additionally charged with a disorderly person offense.

Man knocks ice chunk off house, gets pinned

PA ERIE — Fire officials said a Pennsylvania man was lucky to survive being pinned by a huge chunk of ice that he knocked off the side of his house.

The Erie Times-News reported that Erie firefighters rescued the man Monday, chipping away at the 6-by-10-foot ice block and lifting it off the man’s legs.

He suffered only minor injuries to his right leg.

Officials said the man was trying to dislodge ice from the side of his house by hitting it with a shovel when the massive chunk suddenly fell.

The man fell backward onto a wood pile, which bore the brunt of the ice’s impact. Fire Chief Guy Santone said the man was “extremely lucky.”

Editor fired for tweets about license option

VT BURLINGTON — The editor of Vermont’s largest newspaper has been fired after a series of tweets about a state proposal to add a third gender option to driver’s licenses.

Gannett, the owner of the Burlington Free Press, said former editor Denis Finley violated the company’s social media guidelines.

Finley was criticized after tweeting about the possibility of adding a third gender option on driver’s licenses.

On Jan. 5, he tweeted: “Awesome! That makes us one step closer to the apocalypse.”

From wire reports

Your objective source for military news
updated 24/7 from bases
around the world.
Now online at www.stripes.com.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Curry power: Team feels star's effects

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Curry pumped his fists and flexed his biceps. He dangled that signature mouthpiece from his teeth in sheer delight.

Oh, and he knocked down some of those familiar way-back three-pointers, too.

Yes, Golden State's sharp-shooting star is feeling it again, and he's proud to be, in his words, "that presence that kind of gets us going."

In a 32-point, nine-assist performance against Denver on Monday, Curry wound up 9-for-17 overall while making five of 10 three-pointers. But he's a menace for opposing defenses even without his best shot.

Curry's mere existence on the court makes every Warrior better. Teammate Draymond Green shot 42.1 percent from the field while Curry missed 11 games with a sprained right ankle. In the five games since Curry's return, Green has hit 55.6 percent. Klay Thompson and Andre Iguodala have also shot better since Curry came back.

"That's why he's a two-time MVP in this league, that's why we have two championships," Green said. "He's become the superstar that he has even on a night where it wasn't quite his night, he filled the stat sheet up like that and impacted the game. Even if he didn't have 32 points and nine assists, what he brings to our offense and all the attention that he draws that gets me open shots ... he creates a lot of mismatches on the floor for the defense."

The reigning Western Conference player

of the week, Curry has scored 29 or more points in seven straight games. He's gone over 30 points in six of those seven games and 12 times overall this season.

He's been practically unstoppable since returning from injury, averaging 35.2 points over that span as well as 5.6 rebounds, 5.6 assists and 1.4 steals in 32.4 minutes. Curry also has four or more three-pointers in seven straight games.

The Warriors have needed his steady hand with playmaking sidekick and Finals MVP Kevin Durant sitting out the past three games with a strained right calf. Durant is expected back for Wednesday's home game against the Clippers.

Curry also had six turnovers Monday night, so coach Steve Kerr hardly considered it one of his star's best games.

That's fine with Curry.

"Every game's not going to be pretty. I love being held to that high standard. That's what kind of keeps me motivated," he said. "When you can look at that line and find things that I can do better, which nobody needs to tell me that I already know."

The good news is Curry's footwork hasn't been hampered by the ankle injury. It's something David West and Green respect in particular, even if it's not the showiest talent for the shoot-from-anywhere point guard.

"I think people get caught up in the flashy stuff, but his footwork is incredible," West said. "I think that's the one thing that kind of gets lost in it. If you're a basketball person you understand that footwork is sort of the foundation. I don't think we've

seen the type of footwork he has. He gets his feet set on every single shot, he's never out of range."

Curry works hard on that footwork in the offseason. It's what allows him to have such a quick release, even if he's catching the ball on the move or with his body facing half-court.

"If you've got slow feet or shaky balance, it throws your rhythm off and your consistency," he said. "I wouldn't say I have like wide-receiver feet, where they've got the quick jabs and they can change direction up like that. I just feel like I'm always in balance, and that's what helps me get my shot off quick and stay in a solid rhythm through my shot and be able to handle the ball and try to be creative."

Curry will try to dazzle again Wednesday night for the Warriors, who look to extend their winning streak to six games.

"He's fast with the ball but he's not the fastest guy in the world. He's pretty strong but he's not the strongest guy in the world, but his footwork is so good that for what speed he may not have, it makes him way faster because of how good his footwork is," Green said. "He's probably faster than someone that may be faster than him because he kind of dances. He should go on 'Dancing with the Stars.'"

Curry chuckled about that idea. Alas, he loves his day job, and his first choice for a second career would be as part owner for his hometown Carolina Panthers.

"I will not take Draymond's advice and go on 'Dancing with the Stars,'" he said. "I'll just keep shooting jump shots."

NBA roundup

Heat snap Raptors' home win streak at 12

Associated Press

TORONTO — Wayne Ellington made a go-ahead driving layup with less than a second remaining, and the Miami Heat stopped Toronto's 12-game home winning streak with a 90-89 victory over the Raptors on Tuesday night.

It was the only basket of the second half for Ellington, who finished with 15 points.

Goran Dragic had 24 points and 12 rebounds as Miami extended its season-best winning streak to five. Bam Adebayo had 16 points and a career-high 15 rebounds and Hassan Wh-

iteside collected 13 points and 15 boards for the Heat, who had dropped their previous five visits to Toronto.

The Raptors were without point guard Kyle Lowry after the three-time All-Star bruised his tailbone during Monday's overtime win at Brooklyn.

DeMar DeRozan scored 25 points as the Raptors lost for the first time in six games and failed to break the franchise record for consecutive home victories.

Trail Blazers 117, Thunder 106: CJ McCollum had 27 points and seven assists,

and the Trail Blazers beat the Thunder in the opener of a four-game trip.

Shabazz Napier added 21 points and Jusuf Nurkic had 20 points and eight rebounds for Portland, which moved past Oklahoma City into second in the Northwest Division standings with its seventh win in its last nine games against the Thunder.

Mavericks 114, Magic 99: Dirk Nowitzki and rookie Dennis Smith Jr. each scored 20 points, and host Dallas stopped a three-game slide.

Wesley Matthews had 16

points for the Mavericks, who got their first win since Dec. 31 against Oklahoma City. Harrison Barnes and Yogi Ferrell scored 15 points apiece, and J.J. Barea had 12 assists and eight points.

Lakers 99, Kings 86: Julius Randle had 22 points and 14 rebounds, and Lonzo Ball added 11 rebounds and 11 assists as Los Angeles defeated Sacramento.

Brook Lopez scored 18 points and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope had 16 for the host Lakers, who have won two straight following a nine-game losing streak.

Gruden welcomed back to coach Raiders

Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — Jon Gruden finally decided the time was right to finish what he nearly achieved in his first stint in Oakland and deliver another Super Bowl title to the Raiders.

Nearly 16 years after he was traded to Tampa Bay following a crushing loss in the “Tuck Rule” game in New England and after a six-year courtship by Raiders owner Mark Davis, Gruden is officially back in Oakland where he started his head coaching career 20 years ago.

Gruden was introduced Tuesday in front of a large crowd that included nearly 50 former Raiders and nine Pro Football Hall of Famers as the coach Davis believes can carry Derek Carr and the Raiders back to the top.

The Raiders nearly got there in Gruden’s first stint from 1998-2001 but the team lost to Baltimore in the 2000 AFC title game and followed that with the memorable loss in the snow against the Patriots that still haunts the franchise.

Gruden was then traded to Tampa Bay the following month for four draft picks and \$8 million. He beat Oakland in the Super Bowl the next season but always identified with the Raiders.

“For my career to end that night in New England, it still ticks me off,” Gruden said. “I’m so thrilled to be back here. I hope people understand the emotion inside. I feel there’s unfinished business. I also feel a lot of loyalty and I feel a lot of responsibility to get the Raiders going again. It’s been a while since we consistently performed at a high level. That’s all I care about.”

“I’m going to do everything I can to help this team get right again.”

Davis said he had been trying to bring Gruden back for six years ever since taking over the franchise after his father’s death. He said he thought he had been close four times before and the opportunity was finally right this year after more than a dozen cross-country recruiting trips to Tampa, Fla.

Davis said he first got an inkling Gruden might be ready to return when he met with him during the season when the Raiders spent a week in Florida to talk about how to fix a team that was struggling after winning 12 games a year ago under Jack Del Rio.

Talks became even more serious when they met on Christmas Eve before the Raiders played in Philadelphia in a game Gruden worked for ESPN. That led Davis to decide

to cut ties with Del Rio and finalize a deal with Gruden.

Gruden will get a 10-year contract worth about \$100 million, a person familiar with the deal said on the condition of anonymity because terms had not been released.

“Everybody knows I’ve been infatuated with him or whatever to get him here, but they really didn’t know how deep our conversations were going, how far along we were in that to make it happen,” Davis said. “Somebody asked me, what was harder — to get the 31 votes to move to Las Vegas? Or to get Jon Gruden? And by far to get Jon Gruden was the toughest.”

Gruden returns to the sideline after nine seasons as an announcer at ESPN. He said he’s eager to take over a team with a promising young quarterback in Carr.

Gruden said he hopes the familiarity with new offensive coordinator Greg Olsen, who had that role in Carr’s rookie season in 2014, will help Carr bounce back after regressing this season from the form that made him an MVP candidate in 2016.

The Raiders had major drops in scoring (26 to 18.8), yards per game (373.3 to 324.1) and committed twice as many turnovers (14 to 28) this season as Carr took a major step back in

his development after signing a \$125 million, five-year extension in the offseason.

“I think he’s got huge upside,” Gruden said. “With Greg Olsen and the system we will put in place that will demand a lot from him, I think that’s going to unlock the greatness in him. I’m very, very excited to have him as our quarterback.”

Gruden also has hired former Cincinnati defensive coordinator Paul Guenther and former Dallas special teams coordinator Rich Bisaccia for those roles on his new staff.

Gruden brings intensity to the sideline and the meeting rooms that made him a fan favorite in his first stint, earning him the nickname “Chucky” after the character in the 1980s slasher movie “Child’s Play.”

Some of Gruden’s former players said the new Raiders are in for something they’ve never experienced before.

“Either you buy in or you’re not going to be a part of it,” said Hall of Famer Jerry Rice, who played one year for Gruden. “I hope these players are ready because they’re going to get Chucky. They’re going to get him. Now how they deal with that is a different story, but Chucky’s going to come out.”

Panthers fire offensive coordinator Shula

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Panthers coach Ron Rivera fired longtime offensive coordinator Mike Shula on Tuesday, saying the team’s offense needs a “different perspective.”

Along with Shula, the Panthers also cut ties with quarterbacks coach Ken Dorsey two days after a playoff loss to the New Orleans Saints.

“I believe we need some different ideas going forward,” Rivera said at a news conference.

Shula spent seven seasons with Carolina, working as the quarterbacks coach before

being promoted to offensive coordinator in 2013.

Carolina was 11-5 this season and finished 19th in total offense, but again struggled moving the ball through the air and was 28th in passing. The Panthers were 12th in scoring.

Rivera said the Panthers already have “a few” candidates in mind, and strongly hinted it will be someone with NFL experience, not a college coach, from outside the organization.

Among some of the potential candidates that make sense are Norv Turner, whose son Ron was hired as an offensive consultant by the Panthers last

June, and Rob Chudzinski, who worked as the team’s offensive coordinator in 2011 and 2012 before taking over as the head coach of the Cleveland Browns.

Rivera was a defensive coach under Turner with the Chargers from 2007-10.

“It signals an opportunity that we are looking to get better and continue to grow,” Rivera said.

“That is what the move was made for. Something different, something additional can give us the boost that I’m looking for that can help us get to the ultimate goal, and that is winning the Super Bowl.”

The news came one day after Rivera seemed to give his entire coaching staff an endorsement.

Rivera was vague on exactly what bothered him about the offense this past season and prompted the change in thinking, but when asked about the team’s lack of an identity he said, “you want to be able to understand this is who we are and this is what we do.”

Rivera said he still expects the Panthers will use the read option with quarterback Cam Newton, who was the team’s leading rusher last season with 754 yards.

College basketball roundup

Marquette hammers No. 13 Seton Hall

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — For all the attention Marquette receives for its three-point shooting, coach Steve Wojciechowski would rather have his team attack the rim.

Andrew Rowsey scored 31 points and set the tone early by driving the lane, and the Golden Eagles used a 16-0 run in the second half to pull away from No. 13 Seton Hall 84-64 on Tuesday night.

Sam Hauser added 14 points for the Golden Eagles (12-5, 3-2 Big East). He hit four of nine from three-point range, including one with 5:25 left for a 73-55 lead.

Energized Marquette outthrust Seton Hall (14-3, 3-1) and held its own in the paint against the Pirates' dominant center, Angel Delgado (12 points, 10 rebounds). The Golden Eagles set a quick tempo to beat the Pirates on both ends of the floor.

No. 2 West Virginia 57, Baylor 54: Jevon Carter sank the go-ahead three-pointer with 57.5 seconds left and the host Mountaineers escaped with a victory over the Bears.

West Virginia (15-1, 4-0 Big 12) struggled to make shots the entire game but extended the nation's longest winning streak

to 15, the Mountaineers' best since winning 22 straight in 1988-89.

No. 3 Virginia 68, Syracuse 61: Kyle Guy scored 22 points, De'Andre Hunter added 15 and host Virginia beat Syracuse.

Guy made five three-pointers for Virginia (15-1, 4-0 Atlantic Coast Conference). The Cavaliers attempted a season-high 27 threes and made nine. Devon Hall added 13 points, eight assists and seven rebounds for Virginia.

No. 5 Purdue 70, Michigan 69: Isaac Haas made a tie-breaking free throw with four seconds remaining and visiting Purdue remained unbeaten in the Big Ten.

The Boilermakers (16-2, 5-0) have won 12 in a row, while the Wolverines (14-4, 3-2) had their seven-game winning streak snapped. Purdue is 5-0 in conference play for the first time since 1989-90.

No. 9 Oklahoma 75, No. 8 Texas Tech 65: Trae Young scored 22 of his 27 points in the second half to help host Oklahoma top Texas Tech.

Young, a freshman point guard who leads the nation in scoring and assists, shot just 1-for-12 in the first half. He went 6-for-11 in the second to help the Sooners bounce back from

a loss to No. 2 West Virginia on Saturday.

No. 12 Kansas 83, Iowa State 78: Malik Newman scored a career-high 27 points, Svi Mykhailiuk added 23 and host Kansas staved off an upset bid by pulling away in the closing minutes.

Devonte Graham added 11 points for the Jayhawks (13-3, 3-1 Big 12), most of those coming in crunch time, when he shook off a 1-for-11 start from the field to knock down three big jumpers.

No. 20 North Carolina 96, Boston College 66: Luke Maye had career highs of 32 points and 18 rebounds, and host North Carolina's small lineup got off to a fast start in an easy win against Boston College.

Cameron Johnson added 14 points and 11 rebounds for the Tar Heels (13-4, 2-2 Atlantic Coast Conference), who avoided their first three-game losing streak since January 2014.

No. 21 Kentucky 74, Texas A&M 73: PJ Washington made a steal that led to Kevin Knox's go-ahead layup with 2:28 left, then added four points down the stretch to help host Kentucky rally past Texas A&M.

Trailing 59-53 with 8:43 remaining, the Wildcats clawed back to tie the game three times

before Washington stole a high pass and fed Knox for a 69-67 lead.

No. 22 Auburn 85, Mississippi 70: Desean Murray had 16 points and eight rebounds to help host Auburn erase a 10-point halftime deficit and beat Mississippi.

Auburn (15-1, 3-0 Southeastern Conference) won its 13th straight game and opened 3-0 in conference play for the first time since 2002-03. The Tigers had lost 10 straight against Ole Miss.

No. 24 Tennessee 92, Vanderbilt 84: Grant Williams scored a career-best 37 points as Tennessee rallied from a 10-point deficit in the second half to beat host Vanderbilt.

The sophomore forward avoided foul trouble, and Vanderbilt couldn't handle the 6-foot-7, 241-pound Williams around the basket. Admiral Schofield tied his career high with 22 points.

No. 25 Creighton 85, Butler 74: Marcus Foster scored 21 of his 23 points in the first half, and Martin Krampelj had 14 points and 14 rebounds for his third straight double-double.

The host Bluejays (14-3, 4-1 Big East) won for the ninth time in 10 games.

NHL roundup

Capitals down Canucks, extend winning streak to five

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — John Carlson, Lars Eller and Evgeny Kuznetsov scored to help the Washington Capitals beat the Vancouver Canucks 3-1 on Tuesday night for their fifth consecutive victory.

Backup goaltender Philipp Grubauer stopped 37 of 38 shots for his third win of the season. It was Washington's NHL-best 10th straight home win.

Daniel Sedin scored and Jacob Markstrom made 33 saves for the Canucks, who have lost five in a row. Vancouver has gone 2-11-2 in its past 15 games to go from third in the Pacific Division to 14th in the 15-team Western Conference.

Kuznetsov made it 3-1 in the second when he batted the puck out of the air on his own rebound.

Blackhawks 8, Senators 2: Patrick Kane had a goal and

four assists for a career-high five points, powering Chicago to the road win in Ottawa.

Lightning 5, Hurricanes 4: Tyler Johnson had three goals for host Tampa Bay, and Jake Dotchin scored a tiebreaking goal midway through the third period.

Panthers 7, Blues 4: Vincent Trocheck had two goals and an assist, helping visiting Florida snap a three-game losing streak.

Jets 7, Sabres 4: Kyle Connor had two goals and an assist and Nikolaj Ehlers also scored twice, leading visiting Winnipeg to its third straight victory.

Predators 2, Oilers 1: Viktor Arvidsson had a goal and an assist, helping host Nashville to its 11th consecutive win against Edmonton.

Flames 3, Wild 2 (OT): Dougie Hamilton scored 2:39 into overtime to lift visiting Calgary over Minnesota.