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Few Navy leaders court-martialed for failures

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Navy's decision to pursue charges of negligent homicide against the former commanders of the USS Fitzgerald and the USS John S. McCain has little precedent, according to a Navy scholar who has extensively scrutinized cases of command failure.

"Operationally, we don't take commanding officers to court-martial," said Capt. Michael Junge, a military professor at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. "We do nonjudicial punishment, and we administratively remove them from the ship. We dust our hands off and we move on."

On Tuesday, the Navy said it would convene Article 32 hearings to consider courts-martial for Cmdr. Bryce Benson, who commanded the USS Fitzgerald, and Cmdr. Alfredo Sanchez, former commander of the USS John S. McCain, for their roles in two deadly collisions last year.

On June 17, seven sailors died after the Fitzgerald crashed into a civilian merchant ship about 60 miles southwest of Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan. The McCain collided with an oil tanker near Singapore on Aug. 21, leaving 10 sailors dead.

Benson and Sanchez, along with several junior officers, also are facing charges of dereliction of duty and endangering a

ship.

In the past 40 years, only two commanders have been court-martialed and convicted for operational decisions they made, Junge said.

No commanding officer has been convicted in the past 30 years at court-martial for an operational failing, he said.

Take, for example, a deadly crash involving a U.S. submarine on Feb. 9, 2001. The Los Angeles-class USS Greeneville surfaced in waters a few miles off the southern coast of Oahu, Hawaii, smashing into the Ehime Maru, a Japanese ship used to train high-schoolers to fish. Nine people on the ship were killed, including four students.

In a public court of inquiry, the Navy found Cmdr. Scott Waddle and several other Greeneville crewmembers at fault for the collision. The court recommended no court-martial for the officers involved because the inquiry had found no "criminal intent or deliberate misconduct." Waddle was given nonjudicial punishment, and then retired with an honorable discharge.

Numbers provided by Junge underscore how infrequently commanding officers are court-martialed.

"Every year, there are fewer than 200 officers across the Navy who go to court-martial," he said. "There are 56,000 officers in the Navy. There are roughly, I'd say, 1,200 commanding officers at all ranks."

The most recent courts-martial of commanding officers were in 2015 and 2011 for charges related to sexual assault and rape, Junge said. Before those, you'd have to go back to 1990 to find a case of a court-martialed commanding officer — one that has much in common with the Fitzgerald and McCain collisions.

In November 1989, the destroyer USS Kinkaid collided with a Panamanian merchant ship in the Strait of Malacca, which ripped a wide hole into the side of the American vessel and crushed the ship's navigator, who was asleep in his bunk, Junge said. More than a dozen other sailors were injured.

Although the ship's commander, John Cochrane, was asleep in his cabin throughout the chain of decisions made by other officers that led to the collision, he was court-martialed for negligence but was acquitted.

The Article 32 hearings are the military world's version of a civilian grand jury, a body that determines whether enough evidence exists to warrant holding a trial.

A brief Navy statement, however, "did not provide a good, coherent explanation of the rationale" underpinning the decision to pursue courts-martial of the Fitzgerald and McCain commanders, Junge said.

The Navy did not respond to a request by Stars and Stripes for such an explanation.

Lawmakers battle in final hours to avert shutdown

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Congress is barreling toward yet another deadline to keep the federal government up and running.

Funding is slated to run out by late Friday evening and without a temporary budget deal, the government will shut down, triggering a disruption to many federal operations and services, including military pay and programs.

As of Thursday afternoon, lawmakers were struggling to reach a bipartisan deal.

"Risks are increasing substantially for a government shutdown, as it's not clear who has the leverage or how to get to the votes on a short-term continuing resolution," said Lauren Fish, a defense strategies research associate for the Center for a New American Security, a Washington think tank. "Everyone thinks someone else will be left taking the blame for a shutdown, so political expediency is increasing the risks."

To pass a stopgap budget bill, Republicans need votes from Democrats, who are holding out

for an extension to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program, which is facing a March 5 deadline.

Rhetoric related to the negotiations has escalated in recent days, as President Trump was accused of making disparaging remarks about Haiti and African nations. And those matters were complicated further when he tweeted Thursday that the Children's Health Insurance Program, another key concern for Democrats, should not be part of a short-term deal.

A shutdown would force the

federal government to send nonessential workers home without pay and to close national parks and museums, and would trigger new administrative delays. It also would affect the Department of Defense.

A 16-day shutdown in October 2013 caused a rash of military programs to come to a sudden halt, including pay stoppage for military and civilian personnel and the disruption of base services such as commissaries. In addition, death gratuity payments for 30 Gold Star families were also disrupted.

US watches as Koreas unify for Olympics

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — If only for an Olympic moment, North and South Korea have come together in talks that have eased tensions after months of saber rattling that threatened to propel the divided peninsula into a new war.

The two longtime adversaries agreed Wednesday to form a combined women's ice hockey team and to march together under a unified flag at the opening ceremony of the Winter Games, which will begin Feb. 9 in a South Korean resort town.

North Korean cheerleaders, pop stars and taekwondo competitors also will be part of a 550-member delegation joining the Pyeongchang Olympics.

The détente has raised hopes for reconciliation between the sides, but observers say it's likely temporary and could come at a cost to U.S.-led efforts to pressure the North Korean regime to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono called it a "charm offensive" by the North and warned the world not to be naïve about the communist state's motives in agreeing to participate in the quadrennial competition.

Left on the sidelines, the United States has cautiously welcomed the talks while vowing to maintain its campaign of maximum pressure and sanctions against the North.

"We see this as an opportunity for the regime to see the value of ending its international isolation by denuclearization. We still are very much focused and hope that that happens," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said Wednesday.

Inter-Korean negotiations have unfolded with surprising speed since North Korea's leader offered an olive branch in his New Year's speech. That was a sharp turnaround from

the 2017 address in which Kim Jong Un said his country was entering the "final stages" of test-launching an intercontinental ballistic missile, prompting President Donald Trump to tweet "it won't happen!"

A year later North Korea has test-fired three ICBMs, including two that flew over Japan, and conducted its sixth and most powerful underground nuclear test while engaging in a bitter war of words with Trump.

But the regime also has been hit with punishing economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure that officials say are starting to bite.

Marine fatally stabbed at Camp Pendleton identified

The San Diego Union-Tribune

The Marines have identified the student stabbed to death during a Tuesday incident at Camp Pendleton but provided few other details about the ongoing investigation.

Pfc. Ethan Barclay-Weberpal, 18, was pronounced dead at the School of Infantry inside Camp Pendleton on Tuesday morning. Another Marine student is in custody.

According to Marine Corps Training and Education Command spokesman Capt. Joshua Pena, Barclay-Weberpal was assigned to the school's Lima Company, Headquarters and Services Battalion.

He was being reclassified after he attempted to pass the Basic Reconnaissance Course.

"The name of the Marine in confinement, also assigned to the same unit, will not be released at this time," Pena said by email.

First responders were called to Area 52, the sprawling section of Camp Pendleton where the School of Infantry is housed, about 7:45 a.m. on Tuesday following reports of an injured person.

Pena referred all further

questions to Naval Criminal Investigative Service. Spokesmen there declined to comment, except to note that Pena's command would release the name of the suspect.

Identifying himself on his Facebook page as the father of the slain Marine, Scott Weberpal of Whitewater, Wis., said that he was being "inundated with message requests, friend requests, and media inquiries" but could not get to all of them.

"It's with excruciating sadness and tears in my eyes that I'm writing this - my only son, my own blood, Marine PFC Ethan Andrew Barclay-Weberpal, was killed yesterday morning at Camp Pendleton, CA," Weberpal wrote. "He was stabbed by another Marine. There are few details at this time as there is an ongoing investigation. Arrangements are pending and I will post an update when I know more."

NCIS continues to probe another death at the School of Infantry. Pfc. Michael Philomeno Giannattasio, 22, of Armada, Mich., was found unresponsive during land navigation training on the Basic Reconnaissance Course in August.

Ex-cashier gets 2 years for stealing \$100K from Yokosuka base casino

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A former base worker has been sentenced to two years in prison for stealing nearly \$100,000 from a Yokosuka casino in 2015.

Cynthia Lopez Creseni, 60, a Philippine citizen, was sentenced Jan. 12 by a U.S. District Court in Kansas City, Mo. She will be returned to her home country after her incarceration.

Creseni previously told a Naval Criminal Investigative Service agent in Kansas that she repeatedly stole money while working as a cashier at a slot-machine room near Chili's, according to an affidavit.

NCIS officials long suspected Creseni's involvement after being notified of missing cash in March 2015, the affidavit said. It was Creseni who initially reported \$112,300 missing from a safe after she returned from a vacation in the U.S. As lead cashier, she was responsible for \$227,300 during the

time of the theft.

She denied involvement and fled to the Philippines.

In July 2015, Creseni entered the U.S. and overstayed her visitor visa, which led to her arrest at an unspecified date by the Department of Homeland Security, according to the affidavit.

Meanwhile, NCIS filed subpoenas to obtain Creseni's phone and internet records.

NCIS special agent Gerald Martin found and interviewed Creseni on Jan. 24 at a fast-food restaurant in Overland Park, Kan., where she confessed to the thefts, according to Martin's affidavit.

Creseni first stole \$1,000 to help a sick relative in the Philippines, the affidavit said.

Creseni borrowed money from a bank and from other people charging her interest, which fueled further thefts, according to the affidavit. She spent the money on family members, plane tickets and an apartment in Yokosuka.

Ansari story sparks debate on #MeToo

Associated Press

The #MeToo movement has been embraced by legions of women as a vital step toward countering widespread sexual abuse and misconduct. This week, more so than at any point in the movement's brief history, there's visceral discussion about its potential for causing harm.

The catalyst was the publication by Babe.net of an account by a woman identified as "Grace" detailing her 2017 encounter with comedian Aziz Ansari. The article intimated Ansari deserved inclusion in the ranks of abusive perpetrators, yet many readers — women and men — concluded the encounter amounted to an all-too-common instance of bad sex during a date gone awry.

Ansari has said he apologized immediately after the woman told him about her discomfort during an encounter he believed to be consensual.

"Too many women have joined #MeToo too quickly and unthinkingly," said Carole Lieberman, a Beverly Hills psychiatrist and author of the relationship books "Bad Boys" and "Bad Girls."

"Though they may have wanted to be in solidarity with other women, the stories of dates gone wrong or women scorned have detracted from women who have been raped or seriously sexually assaulted," she said.

Online and in person, many women are talking about experiences comparable to Grace's account — encounters with men who initially seemed wonderful, but turned pushy, if not criminally abusive, when things became sexual.

Sarah Hosseini, who writes about sex for Bustle, Romper, Scary Mommy and Ravishly, said the #MeToo movement might actually benefit from the Grace/Ansari controversy, and the movement is big enough for another layer in the discussion.

"There is some really murky and confusing sexual territory here that we haven't really talked about yet collectively as a society," she wrote.

Winter storm effects linger in South

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Several Southern states were dealing Thursday with the lingering effects of a slow-moving winter storm that dumped up to 12 inches of snow in central North Carolina, dusted the Deep South and killed at least 10 people.

From Charlotte to Raleigh, North Carolina's five most populous cities all saw significant snow from a system that followed a west-to-east path across the state — and moved more slowly than forecasters had predicted. One foot of snow was reported in Durham County by early Thursday morning. Winston-Salem and Greensboro each had about 7 inches.

Elsewhere, icicles hung from a statue of jazz musicians in New Orleans on Wednesday, and drivers unaccustomed to ice spun their wheels across Atlanta, which was brought to a near-standstill by little more than an inch of snow.

At least four people died in Louisiana, including a man knocked off a portion of Interstate 10 in New Orleans when a pickup spun out on ice, and an 8-month-old baby in a car that slid into a canal in suburban New Orleans. The baby's mother was in critical condition.

Two others died along an icy stretch of I-75

southeast of Atlanta when a driver lost control and hit them, one of them inside a stopped car and the other standing beside it, authorities said.

One person died in a weather-related traffic accident in West Virginia. In the Houston area, a homeless man was found dead behind a trash bin, apparently of exposure, while an 82-year-old woman with dementia succumbed to the cold after walking away from her home. Also, a woman was discovered dead in a snowy park near City Hall in Memphis, Tenn. The temperature was about 10 degrees when she was found.

In North Carolina, state troopers responded to 1,600 crashes while Charlotte police reported another nearly 200 by late Wednesday. Gov. Roy Cooper said state officials weren't aware of any fatalities. About 10,000 homes and businesses were without power early Thursday.

The cold drove soaring electrical usage in parts of the South, where many homes rely on electricity for heating and hot water. A regional electricity grid manager, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, asked Wednesday that customers in most of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and a slice of eastern Texas reduce their power usage Thursday morning after usage Wednesday hit a winter record.

Federal responsibility unclear in alerts

Associated Press

HONOLULU — A timeline shows Hawaii officials botched efforts to immediately correct a false missile alert last weekend, taking more than 20 minutes to contact federal authorities for approval they didn't need and then taking another 15 minutes to cancel the alert that was sent to mobile devices statewide.

The astonishing error and dismal response have prompted both state and federal investigations and left one of the state's U.S. senators wondering aloud if top brass at the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency should be replaced.

"I think (Gov.) David Ige has a tough decision in front of him, and it's his call," Sen. Brian Schatz told reporters Wednesday. Either way, the state has a long road ahead in restoring the public's confidence in the alert system, the Democrat said.

Nearly 40 minutes passed between the time Hawaii officials fired off the bogus alert about an incoming missile and the moment the notice was canceled.

The confusion raises questions about whether any state should be solely responsible for notifying the public of such an event. The debate comes as North Korea claims it is testing weapons that could deliver nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles to Hawaii, Guam and even the U.S. mainland.

Hawaii is the only state in the nation with a preprogrammed alert that can be sent quickly to wireless devices if a ballistic missile is heading toward the U.S. FEMA said Hawaii did not require its approval to cancel the alert on Saturday.

U.S. Reps. Colleen Hanabusa and Tulsi Gabbard, both of Hawaii, have asked the House Armed Services Committee to hold a hearing on the issue.

The two networks that were activated in Hawaii were the Wireless Emergency Alert and the Emergency Alert System, both of which use a federal system to send messages to people in certain geographic areas.

The systems can be used by state and federal agencies for weather events, natural disas-

ters, law enforcement notifications and alerts issued by the president.

Signal carriers allow people to block alerts from state and law enforcement agencies, but not those issued by the president.

FEMA has the ability to send alerts to targeted audiences but has not yet taken on that responsibility, said Daniel Gonzales, a senior scientist at Rand Corp. who was contracted by Homeland Security to study the Wireless Emergency Alert.

Gonzales said under the current system, it makes sense for states to handle alerts because they may be more familiar with local needs. But he acknowledged that because no state except Hawaii has a prepared message, it could take other states as long as 30 minutes to create, enter and distribute a missile alert.

In addition, there is uncertainty about how long it takes for an alert to make its way to all cellphones because the nationwide system has never been tested, Gonzales said.

Trump protecting anti-abortion health care providers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Moving to solidify its credentials with social conservatives, the Trump administration is creating an office to protect the religious rights of medical providers, including those who oppose abortion.

The announcement Thursday by the Department of Health and Human Services drew immediate criticism from Democrats who said it could undermine the rights of women, gays and transgender people.

The new division will be part of the HHS Office of Civil Rights, which enforces federal anti-discrimination and privacy laws. The administration said it will focus on enforcing conscience and religious protections already part of federal law. No new efforts to expand such protections were announced.

“President Trump promised the American people that his administration would vigorously uphold the rights of conscience and religious freedom,” acting HHS Secretary Eric Hargan said in a statement. “That promise is being kept today.”

Religious and social conservatives are a core constituency for the Trump administration. President Donald Trump will address via satellite Friday’s annual anti-abortion march in Washington.

Democratic Sen. Patty Murray, of Washington, was quick to criticize the administration’s decision to create the new office.

“This would be yet another attempt to let ideology dictate who is able to get the care they need,” Murray said in a statement.

Amazon names 20 finalist cities in search for HQ2

The Seattle Times

SEATTLE — Amazon on Thursday narrowed the field in its search for a second headquarters city, plucking 20 finalists from among the 238 proposals the retail giant received in October.

The list included several cities widely seen as favorites, including Atlanta, Austin, Texas, and Boston.

Also included in Amazon’s short list were dark horse candidates including Nashville and Montgomery County, Md.

In a news release disclosing the list, Amazon didn’t outline its rationale behind its selections.

The company has said it plans to make a final decision on its so-called HQ2 sometime this year, and could occupy the first portion of a new campus as soon as 2019.

Amazon surprised the world, and its hometown of Seattle, in September when it announced it was looking for a second headquarters city somewhere in North America, which Chief Executive Jeff Bezos said would be a “full equal” to its massive, existing campus. The online retail giant said it could spend \$5 billion, and could hire as many as 50,000 employees, at the new campus over an up to 17-year build-out.

Many observers viewed Amazon’s

search as a sign that the company’s ambitions had outgrown Seattle, and most likely would seek a different labor force outside the Pacific Northwest. But a handful of municipalities in the area, including Tacoma, Spokane, Portland, and a consortium of King and Snohomish County cities, raised their hands anyway. None made it through the first round of cuts; Los Angeles is the only West Coast representative.

The 20 finalists are Atlanta; Austin, Texas; Boston; Chicago; Columbus, Ohio; Dallas; Denver; Indianapolis; Los Angeles; Miami; Montgomery County, Md.; Nashville; Newark, N.J.; New York; Northern Virginia; Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; Raleigh, N.C.; Toronto; and Washington.

The initial announcement of the HQ2 search set off a frenzy among elected officials and corporate recruitment shops across the continent, with dozens of municipalities immediately announcing their interest. Some jockeyed for position with gifts, publicity stunts and earnest appeals on how unique their homes are.

The company’s public wish list for its second home included proximity to a population center of more than a million people, a nearby international airport, access to mass transit, and a business-friendly environment and tax structure.

Science panel backs lower drunken-driving threshold

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Most women would need to draw the line at two drinks, and men at two or three if states follow a blueprint by a prestigious scientific panel for eliminating the “entirely preventable” 10,000 alcohol-impaired driving deaths in the U.S. each year.

The U.S. government-commissioned report by a panel of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine made multiple recommendations, including significantly lowering drunken-driving thresholds. It calls for lowering the blood-alcohol concentration threshold from 0.08 percent to 0.05 percent. All states have thresholds of 0.08 percent. A Utah law passed last year that lowers the state’s threshold to 0.05 percent doesn’t go into effect until Dec. 30.

The amount of alcohol required to

reach 0.05 percent would depend on several factors, including the person’s size and whether the person has eaten recently. The report cites studies indicating most women heavier than 120 pounds would reach 0.05 percent after two drinks. Men weighing up to about 160 pounds likely would reach the lower threshold at two, and those over 180 pounds at three.

The panel, in its 489-page report, also recommended that states significantly increase alcohol taxes and make alcohol less conveniently available, including reducing the hours and days alcohol is sold in stores, bars and restaurants. Research suggests a doubling of alcohol taxes could lead to an 11 percent reduction in traffic crash deaths, the report said.

It also calls for cracking down on sales to people younger than 21 or who are already intoxicated to discourage binge drinking, and putting limits on alcohol marketing

while funding anti-alcohol campaigns similar to those against smoking.

All the proposals are likely to draw fierce opposition from the alcohol and restaurant industries. The American Beverage Institute took out full-page newspaper ads opposing Utah’s new law that featured a fake mugshot under a large headline reading, “Utah: Come for vacation, leave on probation.”

The recommendation in the academies’ report for lowering the blood-alcohol threshold would “do nothing to deter” repeat offenders and drivers with high blood-alcohol levels, who represent the “vast majority” of alcohol-impaired-driving deaths, the Distilled Spirits Council said in a statement. The council said it also doesn’t support the report’s recommendations for “tax increases and advertising bans, which will have little or no impact on traffic safety.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officers fired for trading pizza for free parking

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Salt Lake City said it has fired four parking enforcement officers who took free pizza from a downtown pizzeria in exchange for not writing parking tickets for the owner and his employees.

KUTV-TV reported that City Director of Public Service Lisa Shaffer said that the city investigated after one parking enforcement officer admitted to the scheme. That officer and three others were fired.

One fired officer, Jeff Clegg, said for two years he and his colleagues would only give warnings to the owner and employees of Sicilia Pizza and would void parking tickets they received.

Sicilia Pizza owner Amrol Hararah denied the deal.

Landmark restaurant closes after 107 years

MD FREDERICK — A landmark restaurant in Frederick closed after a 107-year run in the western Maryland city.

The Frederick News-Post reported Barbara Fritchie Restaurant, known especially for its turkey dinners and pies, closed Jan. 1. Owner John Burner cited the costs of maintaining and refurbishing the restaurant.

The restaurant employed 30 people, a mix of part- and full-time workers. It dates to 1910 and had operated in several locations.

Police: Rejected fan punches horse

PA PHILADELPHIA — A Pennsylvania man accused of having punched a police horse in the face after

being ejected from an Eagles game because he was intoxicated and didn't have a ticket was charged with assault.

Philadelphia police said Tuesday that Taylor Hendricks, 22, of Whitehall approached a mounted police officer and started punching the horse in the face, neck and shoulder after being turned away from Saturday's playoff game between the Philadelphia Eagles and Atlanta Falcons. Police said some blows also landed on the officer's legs.

Court records indicate that Hendricks is charged with aggravated assault, trespassing and taunting a police animal.

Police say the horse and the officer weren't injured.

Man jailed for biting off chunk of wife's nose

CT HARTFORD — A Connecticut man who bit off a chunk of his wife's nose, permanently disfiguring her, has been sent to prison for more than six years.

The Hartford Court reported that Rodwell Clay, 55, was sentenced Tuesday after pleading under the Alford doctrine to a first-degree assault charge. That means while he does not agree with all the state's allegations, he acknowledges there is enough evidence to convict.

Prosecutors say Clay bit his wife in their Bloomfield home in August 2015. The couple has since divorced.

Clay was sentenced to 15 years in prison, with 6½ to serve, and three years' probation.

Town's famed waitress retires after 61 years

PA STATE COLLEGE — A waitress who has been a feature of a Pennsylvania restaurant for more than six decades has worked her

final shift in State College.

Emma Gunsallus, 81, retired from The Corner Room on Tuesday, where she worked as a waitress for 61 years. The Centre Daily Times reported Gunsallus worked her first shift at the restaurant in the 1950s and has not missed a shift since.

Body found encased in concrete in crawl space

CO DENVER — A woman was taken into custody after her father's body was found encased in concrete in the crawl space under his home.

KUSA-TV reported that the body of William Mussack, 69, was found Jan. 10, one month after friends and family stopped hearing from him.

Court records said Mussack sent a text to his son Dec. 7 saying he might have been drugged by his daughter, Dayna Jennings, 45.

Authorities became suspicious of Jennings as the investigation progressed and obtained a search warrant for the home she and Mussack shared.

She's been charged with first-degree murder after deliberation and tampering with a deceased human's body.

Mom, daughter fight off thieves with cocoa, bag

VA WOODBRIDGE — Police in Washington, D.C.'s, suburbs said two would-be carjackers fled from their intended victims when a splash of hot cocoa and a dash of resourcefulness entered the mix.

Prince William County police said in a statement that a woman, 50, exited a 7-Eleven convenience store Saturday night with some purchased items when two men, one with a handgun, approached and demanded her vehicle.

Police said the woman struck one man with her bag before

her daughter, 22, threw her hot chocolate toward both men.

Officials: Firetruck used without permission

KS WICHITA — The Wichita Fire Department said rappers didn't have permission to use a fire truck in a music video that had explicit language and made references to drugs.

The Wichita Eagle reported that the video was posted to YouTube in October and shows musicians Blue Scrilla and Pj rapping both inside of and in front of the firetruck. Wichita Fire Marshal Stuart Bevis said the vehicle was used as back-drop when it wasn't in use.

Bevis said the department filed a report with police. No charges have been filed.

Man arrested over body found wrapped in plastic

MI ROCKWOOD — A man was arrested after his girlfriend's body was found wrapped in a sheet and plastic in a home southwest of Detroit.

Prosecutors said Jeffrey Thomas, 50, was charged Tuesday with concealing the death of an individual. They identified the victim as Jennifer Butkowski, 32.

The case is being treated as a homicide.

Police said a man jumped from a window at the Rockwood home shortly after midnight Sunday and told officers a gunman was inside, holding children as hostages. No gunman or children were found.

Rockwood Police Chief Randy Krause told The Detroit News the suspect had "blood on his hands, arms and legs."

Police told the Monroe News that the woman had been dead for about two weeks.

From wire reports

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Eagles' Pederson staying aggressive

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Nick Foles threw a deep pass into the wind on the first play from scrimmage against the Falcons, LeGarrette Blount scored the only touchdown on fourth down and wide receiver Nelson Agholor ran 21 yards on a new play. The Philadelphia Eagles (14-3) are aggressive no matter what.

They'll need that approach when they face the Minnesota Vikings (14-3) and their top-ranked defense in the NFC championship game on Sunday.

"You'd probably call me unorthodox with some of the decisions I've made on fourth downs and going for it, 2-point conversions, things like that," Eagles coach Doug Pederson said Wednesday.

"Sometimes you just don't do the norm, you just don't do what everybody expects you to do and sometimes that can help you. I'm calculated by it, but at the same time, I'm going to make sure that I'm putting our guys in a good position."

Foles underthrew the long pass to Torrey Smith to start the divisional playoff game, but a pass interference call gave the Eagles a 42-yard gain to the Falcons 25.

Jay Ajayi fumbled on the next play or perhaps the game wouldn't have come down to a defensive stand at the end to preserve Philadelphia's 15-10 win.

"Take a shot," Pederson said explaining his decision to throw long into a stiff wind.

On the touchdown drive early in the second quarter, Philadelphia faced third-and-3 from the Falcons 24. Foles faked a pitch to running back Corey Clement and handed off to Agholor on an inside counter with Pro Bowl right tackle Lane Johnson pulling out and leading the way. Agholor took it to the Falcons 3. It was the first time Pederson called the play this season.

"Coach has just had a knack of seemingly calling those at the right time," offensive coordinator Frank Reich said.

"It comes up different every week. We really work well as a staff together in game planning. Sometimes we think we

like something and we go out on the practice field and it doesn't quite look like it's ready. So, we have to keep it in the crock pot for another week or start over with a new recipe."

Three plays later, tight end Trey Burton lined up at fullback and Blount followed his block into the end zone for a 1-yard TD run. Pederson didn't think twice about going for it instead of kicking a game-tying field goal.

"The ball was just inside the 1-yard line, and we had confidence to go for it in that situation," Pederson said. "We were real close and the guys did a great job."

During the regular season, only Green Bay (28) went for it on fourth down more than Philadelphia (26). The Eagles converted 17 times for 65.4 percent, third-best behind New Orleans (80 percent on 12-for-15) and Jacksonville (76.9 percent on 10-for-13). Minnesota is 1-for-7 on fourth down, fewest attempts in the league.

"You always want to be aggressive," Foles said. "I love Coach's calls."

Van Noy's versatility is key to Pats' defense

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Not being in the limelight has never bothered Kyle Van Noy.

He didn't start an NFL game until his third season when he was with the Detroit Lions, and even then was thought of as a role player.

So now being considered one of the leaders on a Patriots defense that is on the cusp of making a return trip to the Super Bowl seems somewhat out of place for the fourth-year linebacker as he heads into Sunday's AFC championship game against Jacksonville.

"I've been in so many situations since I've been here," Van Noy said of the increased role he's had in New England.

"I mean going deep in the playoffs last year and then playing all of the games this year. ... Each and every game there's different situations, different scenarios that come up. So I would say that my awareness has gone up a lot since I've been here."

The same could be said about his value.

When linebacker Dont'a Hightower went down with a season-ending torn pectoral muscle in the Patriots' win over the Falcons in Week 7, it left a void in the side of a defense that entered 2017 young and inexperienced up front.

New England had already given up 30 or more points three times to that point and was ranked 23rd in the NFL in scoring defense, allowing 23.7 points per game.

Van Noy began the season starting at outside linebacker alongside Elandon Roberts in the middle and Hightower at the other outside spot.

But when Hightower went down, the coaching staff asked Van Noy to handle multiple roles, playing both on the edge and in the middle of the field at times.

Safety and defensive captain Devin McCourty said that the 26-year-old showed glimpses of that versatility even last season.

It's why it wasn't strange for him to see Van Noy tackle the responsibility of receiving the

defensive play call from the sideline, another role that he's inherited with Hightower out.

He flourished in them all, and over the final nine weeks of the season New England got stingier on defense.

By the end of the season it was allowing just 18.5 points per game — the fifth-best mark in the league.

Van Noy missed three of the final four games with a calf injury, but still finished the regular season third on the team with 73 tackles and second with 5½ sacks. Van Noy's sack total was just a half-sack short of Hightower's career-high of six in 2014.

"It helps our defense out a lot, and he's one of a lot of guys on our defense that have been able to play different positions that allow us to do different things defensively," McCourty said. "He's been a leader, he's run the huddle kind of since he's been in there."

Coach Bill Belichick said continuity and execution has improved all over the defense, with lots of contribu-

tions from Van Noy and others such as Trey Flowers, Marquis Flowers, Adam Butler, Deatrich Wise Jr. and Ricky Jean Francois.

"Some of the guys that are playing now weren't playing. If we had had this conversation in the middle of the season, you wouldn't be asking about them," Belichick said.

"They've stepped into different roles and they've worked together more, gotten a better feel for each other, execution's better, so it's good."

Van Noy said any success he's had is simply a product of his environment.

"There are a lot of superstar defensive players that aren't even talked about," he said. "When I was with the Detroit Lions there was a guy named DeAndre Levy who never made a Pro Bowl, but who everybody knew, if you played football, who he was. There are situations like that all the time. And there's teams that have really good defenses that aren't talked about. We're one of them."

Australian Open

Wawrinka, Muguruza out in 2nd round

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Stan Wawrinka left it as late as possible before deciding his knee might just be good enough to get him through the Australian Open.

The 2014 champion was being way too ambitious. A 6-2, 6-1, 6-4 loss to No. 97-ranked Tennys Sandgren in the second round was his earliest exit in a decade at Melbourne Park.

“I only had surgery five months ago,” said Wawrinka, who still has a visible scar running down his left knee. “To be that far already, it’s more than what we could have expected.”

On a searing hot day at Melbourne Park when the temperature hit 104 degrees, No. 9 Wawrinka, No. 7 David Goffin and No. 13 Sam Querrey were the three seeded players to fall in the men’s draw.

Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza was among the five seeded women to lose on Day 4. And crowds were down on the previous two days. The

forecast is for hotter weather on Friday.

Six-time champion Novak Djokovic survived the round, but complained of the “brutal” heat in a comeback four-set win over an ailing Gael Monfils that extended his record to 15-0 in their career head-to-heads.

The temperature had dropped to 84 by the time defending champion Roger Federer wrapped up his 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (4) win over Jan-Lennard Struff just after 11:30 p.m. on Rod Laver Arena.

Wawrinka appeared lethargic and generally didn’t threaten 26-year-old Sandgren, who had never beaten a top 10 player. His wins in the first two rounds here make Sandgren 2-0 at majors.

Wawrinka won here in 2014, at the French Open the following year and the U.S. Open in ’16. Until this week, he hadn’t played since Wimbledon last July.

“When you won three Grand Slams, you don’t feel great on the court like today,” he said.

“But I need to take what I can to be positive with everything, with the big picture.”

Muguruza also struggled with her fitness in the build up to the Australian Open, hampered at two warmup tournaments by cramping and a thigh problem.

Blisters from the hot court surface didn’t help her in a 7-6 (1), 6-4 loss to No. 88-ranked Hsieh Su-wei, who has been No. 1 in doubles but had a career-high ranking of 23rd in singles.

That left only Maria Sharapova, Angelique Kerber and French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko as Grand Slam winners in the women’s draw.

Sharapova and Kerber will meet in the third round, meaning only one of the remaining Australian Open winners can reach the second week.

Sharapova beat No. 14-seeded Anastasija Sevastova 6-1, 7-6 (4) to avenge a fourth-round loss in last year’s U.S. Open.

Kerber, the 2016 champion, had a 6-4, 6-1 win over Donna Vekic before the Mar-

garet Court Arena crowd sang “Happy Birthday” to celebrate her 30th birthday.

Still aiming for a first major, top-ranked Simona Halep, a two-time French Open finalist, held off 2014 Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard 6-2, 6-2..

Ninth-seeded Johanna Konta lost in straight sets to U.S. lucky loser Bernarda Pera, who is ranked No. 123 and making her Grand Slam debut. She didn’t even know she had a spot in the main draw until another player withdrew on Monday.

U.S. Open finalist Madison Keys opened with four straight aces and won the first 11 games in a 6-0, 6-1 win over No. 92-ranked Ekaterina Alexandrova.

The heat peaked during Djokovic’s 4-6, 6-3, 6-1, 6-3 win over Monfils. Both players slouched over in the shade between points, earning warnings about time delays from the chair umpire.

NHL roundup

Bruins make Julien’s return to Boston forgettable

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Bruins showed former coach Claude Julien what a changed style looks like in Boston.

David Pastrnak and Ryan Spooner each scored an early goal, Tuukka Rask stopped 21 shots and the Bruins beat Montreal 4-1 Wednesday night in Canadiens coach Julien’s return to Boston for the first time since he was fired nearly a year ago.

Dismissed last Feb. 7 in his 10th season, Julien — who led the Bruins to the 2011 Stanley Cup championship — was replaced by assistant and current Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy, who opted for more up-tempo,

charge-into-the-zone play from his defensemen as opposed to Julien’s mostly defensive-minded style.

“We’re trying to play with pace and have guys that can play that way,” said Bruins defenseman Adam McQuaid, who was back after missing 36 games with a broken leg. “It’s an advantage that way. I think everyone tries to play at their strength. We’ve been a little bit more up-tempo.”

The surging Bruins have earned at least a point in 14 straight games (10-0-4), their longest stretch since going 15-0-1 in March 2014.

Julien was bothered by the play of his team, which had

played well lately, going 2-0-2 after a five-game losing streak.

“We laid an egg — not good enough,” he said. “Obviously, it’s a disappointing loss, especially with the situation we’re in.”

Brad Marchand added a power-play goal in the third period, David Krejci had an empty-netter and Patrice Bergeron had two assists for Boston, which posted its second win over the Canadiens in five days. The teams meet again in Montreal on Saturday night.

Jakub Jerabek scored his first NHL goal for Montreal, and Carey Price made 28 saves.

Ducks 5, Penguins 3: Rickard Rakell and Adam Hen-

rique scored 1:35 apart to give their team the lead during its four-goal second period, and host Anaheim went on to beat Pittsburgh.

Chris Wagner and Ondrej Kase also scored for Anaheim in the middle period, and Hampus Lindholm added an empty-netter in the final second of the game. John Gibson stopped 30 shots to help the Ducks improve to 7-3-1 in their last 11 games.

Anaheim scored four goals in a period for first time since doing it in the third period at Buffalo last Feb. 9.

Jake Guentzel, Phil Kessel and Evgeni Malkin scored for the Penguins, who snapped a four-game winning streak. Tristan Jarry made 28 saves.

NBA suspends Ariza and Green

Associated Press

Trevor Ariza said nothing happened. The NBA strongly disagreed.

Ariza and Gerald Green will both be suspended for Houston's next two games, with the NBA coming down hard on both Wednesday for what the league said was their "hostile, verbal altercation" with several players in the Los Angeles Clippers' locker room earlier this week.

No other players were disciplined, including Rockets guards James Harden and Chris Paul — both of whom left the Houston locker room with hopes of defusing the situation, the league said.

"You guys had a lot of different stories about what happened, none of them which were true," Ariza said Wednesday in Houston, before the league announced the suspensions. "Everybody's entitled to their own opinion. The people that were there know exactly what happened and know exactly what did not happen."

So what happened?

"Nothing happened," Ariza said. "That's what happened. Nothing." Later, though, he conceded "obviously, that's not all that happened."

The NBA said that Ariza and Green went into the Clippers' locker room to confront a Los Angeles player. The NBA didn't reveal specifics of what went on in the locker room, and didn't

disclose the name of the player that Ariza and Green wanted to confront.

The final minutes of the game — which was Paul's first time facing the Clippers in Los Angeles as an opponent since the trade that sent him to Houston over the summer — were marred by some on-court feistiness, including the Clippers' Blake Griffin appearing to exchange words with Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni.

Griffin and Ariza were also ejected with 1:03 remaining from a game that had five technical fouls, and then the postgame incident.

"It's over," Paul said. "It's in the past. We're moving on."

Speaking before his team played Denver on Wednesday night, and after the suspensions were announced, Clippers coach Doc Rivers said that his team never had any concern that Griffin would be facing any discipline from the league.

Griffin spoke to the league Tuesday as part of its investigation.

"I thought the whole thing, in this day and time, was much ado about nothing," Rivers said. "Other than the locker room stuff. That should never happen. But the talk and all that back and forth during the game — everyone talks. I'm fine with that. You just have to choose not to react."

NBA roundup Warriors on a roll

Associated Press

CHICAGO — When the Splash Brothers are making their shots, even Kevin Durant is content with a supporting role.

Klay Thompson scored 38 points, Stephen Curry added 30 and the Warriors beat the Chicago Bulls 119-112 on Wednesday for their franchise record-tying 14th straight road win.

The sharpshooting guards can still put on a show. Thompson was 7-for-13 from three-point range and Curry was 6-for-11 from behind the arc.

Thunder 114, Lakers 90: Carmelo Anthony scored 27 points to help host Oklahoma City beat Los Angeles.

Hawks 94, Pelicans 93: Kent Bazemore hit a jumper with 2.1 seconds left as host Atlanta rallied from 19 points down to defeat New Orleans.

Spurs 100, Nets 95: LaMarcus Aldridge scored 34 points, Patty Mills made seven three-pointers and visiting San Antonio responded to the latest absence of Kawhi Leonard.

Hornets 133, Wizards 109: Michael Kidd-Gilchrist scored 21 points, Dwight Howard had another double-double and host Charlotte used a record-setting first half to beat Washington.

Clippers 109, Nuggets 104: Blake Griffin had 20 points and 12 rebounds, and host Los Angeles held off Denver for its season-high sixth straight win.

Grizzlies 105, Knicks 99: Tyreke Evans had 23 points, including three free throws in the closing seconds, along with 10 assists to lift host Memphis.

Raptors 96, Pistons 91: Jonas Valanciunas had 17 points and 16 rebounds, C.J. Miles scored 21 points and host Toronto beat Detroit.

Jazz 120, Kings 105: Donovan Mitchell scored 23 of his 34 points in the second half and Utah beat host Sacramento.

Heat 106, Bucks 101: Hassan Whiteside had a season-high 27 points with 13 rebounds and six blocks to lead Miami.

College roundup

Villanova crushes Georgetown

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Top-ranked Villanova led by as many as 44 points — 44! — and gave Georgetown coach Patrick Ewing a rude welcome back to the schools' rivalry, handing the Hoyas their worst loss in more than 40 years, 88-56 on Wednesday night.

Jalen Brunson led the way with 18 points and seven assists for Villanova (17-1, 5-1 Big East), which finished 17-for-33 on threes, while Georgetown went 4-for-15.

Mikal Bridges scored 17 for the Wildcats, winners of seven consecutive games against the Hoyas, Villanova's longest streak in a series that dates to 1922.

SMU 83, No. 7 Wichita State 78: Shake Milton hit five three-pointers en route to a

career-best 33 points and SMU beat host Wichita State.

Texas 67, No. 8 Texas Tech 58: Kerwin Roach II scored 20 points in a surprise return to the lineup and host Texas got another home win over a Top 25 opponent in a week.

No. 11 Xavier 88, St. John's 82: Kerem Kanter had 22 points and led a late run that swept host Xavier to a victory over St. John's that gave Chris Mack the Musketeers record for career coaching wins.

No. 14 Arizona 79, California 58: Deandre Ayton had 20 points and 11 rebounds, and No. 14 Arizona overcame a slow, sloppy start to beat host California.

Stanford 86, No. 16 Arizona St. 77: Oscar Da Silva scored eight of his 14 points in the final four minutes and host Stanford

held on to beat Arizona State.

Alabama 76, No. 17 Auburn 71: John Petty scored 27 points, Dazon Ingram added 16, and short-handed host Alabama defeated Auburn.

Creighton 80, No. 19 Seton Hall 63: Marcus Foster scored 25 points and reserve Ronnie Harrell Jr. had a career-high 18, and host Creighton never trailed against Seton Hall.

Missouri 59, No. 21 Tennessee 55: Kevin Puryear had 12 points and 10 rebounds, and host Missouri rallied in the second half to beat Tennessee.

No. 24 TCU 96, Iowa St. 73: Vladimir Brodziansky had 26 points and host TCU snapped a three-game losing streak with a victory over Iowa State while playing for the first time without injured starting point guard Jaylen Fisher.