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Federal shutdown, finger-pointing begin

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Americans awoke Saturday to learn that quarreling politicians in Washington had failed to keep their government in business, halting all but the most essential operations and marring the anniversary of President Donald Trump's inauguration.

It was a striking display of Washington dysfunction, and the finger-pointing came quickly. Trump tweeted that Democrats "wanted to give me a nice present" to mark the start of his second year in office.

The Republican-controlled Congress scheduled an unusual weekend session to begin considering a three-week version of a short-term spending measure and to broadcast to the people they serve that they were at work as the closure commenced. It seemed likely that each side would push for votes aimed at making the other party look culpable for shuttering federal agencies.

Trump spoke with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., early Saturday to discuss next steps, while Chief of Staff John Kelly also worked the phones. Top White House

negotiators, legislative affairs Director Marc Short and budget Director Mick Mulvaney went to Capitol Hill to meet with House Republicans.

Democrats say they oppose the three-week plan, which they view as a way to stall negotiations over the future of the "Dreamers" — the young immigrants brought to the U.S. as children and facing possible deportation when their protection expires in March. Republicans declared they would not reopen talks until the government shutdown ends, a strategy aimed at trying to erode Democratic cohesion.

"Negotiations will not go on until we open the government up and start being serious about the fundamental issue that is before us all," Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., said Saturday.

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said Saturday on the House floor that Trump had earned an F for "failure in leadership." She said Republicans are "so incompetent and negligent that they couldn't get it together to keep the government open."

Closure begins

The fourth government shutdown in a quarter-century

began at the stroke of midnight Friday, shortly after Senate Democrats blocked a four-week budget extension and a flurry of last-minute negotiations could not beat the clock.

The closure began at the start of a weekend, so many of the immediate effects will be muted for most Americans. Damage could build quickly if the closure is prolonged. And it comes with no shortage of embarrassment for Trump and political risk for both parties as they wager that voters will punish the other at the ballot box in November.

Trump said Democrats "could have easily made a deal but decided to play Shutdown politics instead." In a series of tweets hours after the shutdown began, the president tried to make the case for Americans to elect more Republicans to Congress in November "in order to power through this mess." He noted that there are 51 Republicans in the 100-member Senate, and it often takes 60 votes to advance legislation.

Social Security and most other safety-net programs are unaffected by the lapse in federal spending authority. Critical government functions will continue, with uniformed service-

members, health inspectors and law enforcement officers set to work without pay. But if no deal is brokered before Monday, hundreds of thousands of federal employees will be furloughed.

After hours of closed-door meetings and phone calls, the Senate scheduled its late Friday night vote on a House-passed plan. It gained 50 votes for approval to 49 against, but 60 were needed to break a Democratic filibuster.

Democrats balked in an effort to put pressure on the White House to cut a deal to protect immigrants brought to the country as children and now here illegally — commonly called "Dreamers" — before their legal protection runs out in March.

Democrats are laying fault for the shutdown on Republicans, who control both chambers of Congress and the White House and have struggled with building internal consensus. Republicans are holding Democrats responsible after they declined to provide the votes needed to overcome a filibuster over their desire to force the passage of legislation to protect some 700,000 younger immigrants from deportation.

China: US warship violated sovereignty in South China Sea

Associated Press

BEIJING — The Chinese government on Saturday accused the U.S. of trespassing in its territorial waters when a U.S. guided missile destroyer sailed near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said China would take "necessary measures" to protect its sovereignty after the USS Hopper sailed within 12 nautical

miles of Scarborough Shoal on Wednesday evening without China's permission.

Scarborough is a tiny, uninhabited reef that China seized from the Philippines in 2012. Known in Chinese as Huangyan Island, it lies about 120 miles west of the main Philippine island of Luzon, and about 370 miles southeast of China.

Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said a Chinese missile frigate moved to identify and verify the U.S. vessel and

warned it to leave the area.

"We hope that the U.S. respects China's sovereignty, respects the efforts by regional countries and do not make trouble out of nothing," Wu said in a statement on the ministry's website.

The South China Sea has crucial shipping lanes, rich fishing grounds and potential oil, gas and other mineral deposits.

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea and has carried out extensive land

reclamation work on many of the islands and reefs it claims, equipping some with air strips and military installations.

The United States does not claim territory in the South China Sea but has declared it has a national interest in ensuring that the territorial disputes there are resolved peacefully in accordance with international law.

The Navy regularly sails through the area to assert freedom of navigation.

USS Fitzgerald home for repairs

The (Biloxi, Miss.) Sun Herald

The USS Fitzgerald awaited off the shore of Pascagoula, Miss., on Friday morning as its crew and people from the community gathered to witness its arrival.

Tugs guided it in, past the other ships under construction at Ingalls Shipbuilding, as people waved flags and about 50 crewmembers wearing USS Fitzgerald hats shouted a salute from the beach.

Piggy-backed aboard a transport ship, the Fitzgerald passed the other Navy and Coast Guard ships under construction at Ingalls. It will be repaired at a spot where people passing on the U.S. 90 bridge can see it for the next 18 months to two years.

“We are the only U.S. Navy ship homeported in Pascagoula, Mississippi,” said Cmdr. Garrett Miller.

The Fitzgerald was damaged in June off the coast of Japan during a collision with a container ship. Miller said assessments are still underway to determine the costs of repairing and modernizing the ship.

“We regularly improve our ships,” he said, and the Fitzgerald was scheduled for a midlife electrical modernization in 2019. “We combined the repairs as well as the modernization,” he said.

Miller has a crew of 58 with the ship in Pascagoula now and said that will increase to a full complement of 320 when the repairs are complete and the USS Fitzgerald returns to service.

Seven crewmembers died during the collision, and Miller said, “That will be part of the legacy of this ship.” He added, “I will be sure they’re memorialized properly on the ship.”

These sailors gave their lives for their shipmates, he said. “It’s important to remember their sacrifice. They saved a lot of their shipmates.”

Among those who witnessed the Fitzgerald’s arrival were local veterans and those who built and rebuilt the USS Cole after it was badly damaged in a terrorist attack.

“I worked on the Cole from the day it arrived to the day it left,” said Tom Ehlers, of Pascagoula, who retired from Ingalls after 43 years.

Response of sub crew is praised

Associated Press

NEW LONDON, Conn. — A submarine commander is praising the way his crew responded when a sailor intentionally shot himself aboard the Groton, Connecticut-based vessel.

The USS North Dakota was about 170 miles from the base on Jan. 12 when the petty officer shot himself in the shoulder with a government-issued rifle.

The submarine’s skipper, Cmdr. Mark Robinson, said in a post on its Facebook page that the crew acted heroically to treat the sailor and transfer him from the cramped sub to a tugboat at sea at night, The Day of New London, Conn., reported. The newspaper said the post has since been deleted.

The sailor’s shipmates held a phone in front of his face so he could watch music videos as the submarine brought him back toward shore, Robinson wrote.

It took about seven hours from the time the sailor shot himself until he was loaded into an ambulance in New London.

The submarine met with up with the tugboat near midnight in heavy seas at the mouth of the Thames River. Robinson wrote that several sailors lashed themselves to the deck of the submarine to make a “human safety net” for the paramedics who assisted the transfer.

The crew disassembled parts of the sub to make it easier to carry the sailor out in a stretcher, and firefighters, with help from the crew, ultimately hoisted him out through a weapons hatch.

The sailor has been recovering from surgery at a hospital in New Haven.

The newspaper reported that five submariners took their lives in 2017.

Turkish jets bombard Syrian city

Associated Press

KOCABEYLI, Turkey — Turkish jets bombed the Kurdish-controlled city of Afrin in northern Syria on Saturday, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan promised to expand Turkey’s military border operations against a Kurdish group that has been the U.S.’s key Syria ally in the war on the Islamic State group.

The raids came on the heels of a week of sharp threats by the Turkish government, promising to clear the Kurdish People’s Protection Units, or YPG, from Afrin and its surrounding countryside, also called Afrin. Turkey’s military is calling the campaign Operation Olive Branch.

Turkey says the YPG — a group it considers a terrorist organization — is an extension of an outlawed Kurdish rebel group that it is fighting inside its own borders, and it has found common cause with Syrian opposition groups who view the YPG as a counter-revolutionary force in Syria’s multi-sided civil war.

Associated Press journalists at the Turkish border saw jets bombing positions in the direction of Afrin, as a convoy of armed pick-up trucks and buses believed to be carrying Syrian opposition fighters traveled along the border. Video from Turkey this week showed the military moving tanks to the frontier.

Rojhat Roj, a YPG spokesman, confirmed the strikes, saying they were the first by the Turkish military on the city. He said ten civilians were wounded, three seriously.

The Russian Defense Ministry said, mean-

while, that it was pulling back troops that had been deployed near Afrin, two days after Turkey’s military and intelligence briefs travelled to Moscow to discuss the planned operation.

The YPG is the driving force behind a coalition of north Syrian forces allied with the U.S. to battle the Islamic State group. With U.S. support, including around 2,000 embedded forces, the coalition now controls close to a quarter of Syrian territory, concentrated mostly to the north and east of the Euphrates River.

Turkish leaders were infuriated when the U.S. military six days ago announced that it was going to create a 30,000-strong border force with the Kurdish fighters to secure northern Syria. Days later, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced the U.S. would maintain a military presence with the Kurds for the foreseeable future.

Speaking in the city of Kutahya in western Turkey, Erdogan announced an expansion to Turkish operations in Syria, promising to move on the Kurdish-controlled town of Manbij and its surrounding countryside after completing operations in Afrin. The operation would force out the Kurdish militia from all positions west of the Euphrates River.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said the strikes on Afrin marked the start of a campaign to “eliminate the PYD and PKK and Daesh elements in Afrin,” referring to the Kurdish Democratic Union Party and the Kurdistan Worker’s Party respectively, and using an Arabic name for ISIS.

'Most unconventional'

During his first year in office, Trump altered how the nation and presidency are viewed

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A bleak description of “American carnage.” A forceful rollback of his predecessor’s achievements. A blatant falsehood from the White House podium.

And that was just the first 24 hours.

In his first year in office, President Donald Trump proved to be a singular figure, casting aside norms and traditions, fighting with Republicans and Democrats alike and changing how the nation and the presidency are viewed at home and abroad.

Seemingly, each day spawned several can-you-believe-it headlines that would have defined a previous president’s term. But in the hyperaccelerated Trump news cycle, many were forgotten by the next morning.

Appropriate for a former reality TV star, Trump’s first year was can’t-miss drama, full of unforgettable characters, surprise casting changes and innumerable plot twists. It came against the backdrop of a deeply polarized nation, a looming nuclear threat, whispers about the president’s fitness for office and, for good measure, the shadow of the Russia investigation.

The reviews weren’t kind. Trump’s first-year approval rating stood at 39 percent, the lowest of any president. But viewers couldn’t look away. “He is a compulsively watchable political character,” said Jon Meacham, presidential historian and biographer. “The country elected the most unconventional president in our history, and he has proven to be just that.”

Trump was the first president to be elected without any government or military experience. And from the first moments of Trump’s inauguration, it was clear that Washington had never seen anything like this before.

His inaugural speech was a dark pitch to the nation’s forgotten, suggesting a retreat from the world under the slogan of “America First.” It soon

led to an uproar over the White House press secretary’s wild claims about the inauguration crowd size.

Soon, other crowds were the story.

Millions of people flooded streets around the globe for the “Women’s March” to protest Trump’s presidency. That set the template for the so-called #Resistance, which swarmed airports just days later when the White House suddenly announced its travel ban on visitors from several Muslim-majority countries.

Sweeping mandate

Despite losing the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes, the president forged forward as if elected with a sweeping mandate, aiming his policies directly at his base — with moves such as the rollback of environment regulations and civil rights protections — and blaming Democrats for any Washington failure.

Always eager to have a foe, Trump governed as he campaigned. Trump frequently instigated fights and rarely let a slight go unanswered via his favorite weapon, his Twitter account.

He used the 140-character — and later, up to 280 — bursts to target foes, traffic in conspiracy theories, salute the programming on Fox News, rattle Congress and unnerve world capitals. In March, he even made the unsubstantiated claim that his predecessor had wiretapped Trump Tower, and he labeled President Barack Obama a “bad (or sick) guy.”

The trail of tweets has roiled the capital for 12 months. Across Washington, phones would buzz with alerts anytime Trump tweeted. Republicans found themselves to be targets of Trump’s tweet just like Democrats, particularly when their efforts to repeal Obama’s health care law failed not once but twice.

Some tweets drew puzzlement — none more than the president’s late-night posting of the nonsensical word “covfefe.”

The discussion about sexual harassment at the height of the #MeToo movement toppled many powerful men, but while Trump’s own accusers resurfaced, the White House never changed its story: The women were lying.

That was just one of many moments in which Trump appeared almost eager to foment divisions, including racial ones.

This month, Trump was denounced for dismissing African nations as “shithole countries” when he urged a limit on immigration from that continent.

More divisively, he blamed “both sides” for the violence between neo-Nazis and anti-hate group protesters that left one woman dead in Charlottesville, Va.

While Trump was rewriting the rules of behavior within the Oval Office, his agenda was largely lifted from the Republican playbook and his first-year victories thrilled the GOP orthodoxy. He appointed conservative judge Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court, rolled back business regulations, presided over a massive tax cut and, the White House argued, fostered an environment that freed the stock market to boom.

First-year crises

Like any president, Trump faced crises during his first year.

Most ominously, North Korea escalated its nuclear weapons development program while Trump responded with unprecedentedly bellicose rhetoric. He warned of “fire and fury” that could wipe out Pyongyang. At the United Nations, he insulted North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as “Little Rocket Man.” Trump took to Twitter to suggest that his nuclear button was bigger than Kim’s.

The anniversary of his inauguration coincided with a government shutdown, and he scoffed that Democrats “wanted to give me a nice present.”

He traveled overseas four times, upbraiding allies at NATO for not paying enough, basking in the flattery of Chi-

nese President Xi Jinping and touching a mysterious, glowing orb with Saudi King Salman.

His responses to domestic tragedies were uneven. He paid tribute to the 58 victims of a shooting at a country music concert in Las Vegas but made no effort to toughen gun control laws. When Hurricane Maria crushed Puerto Rico, leaving half the island without power for months, Trump feuded with a local mayor and, during a visit, distributed paper towels to survivors by shooting them like they were basketballs.

Befitting a man whose reality show ended with a firing each week, in Trump’s first year his administration’s upper-level officials have had a turnover rate of 34 percent, much higher than any other in the past 40 years. Gone were chief of staff Reince Priebus, chief strategist Steve Bannon, press secretary Sean Spicer and, after just 11 eventful days, communications director Anthony Scaramucci.

But the circumstances of two exits above all may define not just Trump’s first year in office but those to follow.

National security adviser Mike Flynn was fired less than a month into the term for lying to Vice President Mike Pence about his contacts with foreign officials. In May, Trump fired FBI Director James Comey, who had been leading the investigation into possible collusion between Trump’s campaign and Russian officials during the 2016 election.

That dismissal led to the appointment of special counsel Robert Mueller, whose probe into possible collusion and obstruction of justice has hovered over the White House. Flynn pleaded guilty to lying to FBI agents and is now cooperating with Mueller. Trump himself may at some point be interviewed.

Said Douglas Brinkley, presidential historian at Rice University: “He’s not like anything we’ve seen before, and this is the question: What are the consequences going to be?”

Tabloid: Porn star's 2011 interview held after lawsuit threat

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A tabloid magazine held back from publishing an adult film star's 2011 account of an alleged affair with Donald Trump after the future president's personal lawyer threatened to sue, four former employees of the tabloid's publisher told The Associated Press.

In Touch magazine published its 5,000-word interview with the pornographic actor Stormy Daniels on Friday — more than six years after Trump's longtime attorney, Michael Cohen, sent an email to In Touch's general counsel saying Trump would aggressively pursue legal action if the story was printed, according to emails described to the AP by the former employees.

At the time, Trump was a reality TV star on the NBC show "The Apprentice."

The ex-employees spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to discuss their former employer's editorial policies.

Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, signed a source contract with the magazine, which said a friend and Clifford's ex-husband corroborated her account of a 2006 tryst. She also passed a lie detector test, the magazine said.

In the interview, Daniels claims she and Trump had a sexual encounter after meeting at a golf tournament in Lake Tahoe, Nev., a year after Trump's marriage to his third wife, Melania.

Cohen has denied Trump had any relationship with Clifford. He didn't immediately return a message seeking comment Friday.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that Cohen brokered a \$130,000 payment to Daniels in October 2016 to prohibit her from publicly discussing the alleged affair be-

fore the presidential election. Other news organizations have since reported Clifford was in discussions with them about telling her story.

Cohen hasn't addressed his role negotiating the supposed payment, but he provided the Journal a statement from "Stormy Daniels" in which she denied receiving any "hush money" from Trump.

A lawyer for Clifford, Keith Davidson, didn't return an email message seeking comment. In the statement provided by Cohen, Clifford called allegations of a sexual relationship with Trump "completely false."

It wasn't immediately clear why the magazine didn't publish its interview during the 2016 presidential campaign despite reminders from former employees that the transcript was still available in the company's networks, two former employees said.

A spokeswoman for In Touch, which is published by Bauer Media Group, claimed it only learned of its earlier interview after the Journal's report. She wouldn't comment on the magazine's decision not to publish in 2011.

Despite Clifford's first-person details on Trump, former employees said the decision not to run the story in 2011 was a justifiable business decision at the time because Trump didn't have the same star appeal as more famous celebrities.

Cohen emailed In Touch's general counsel, Greg Welch, threatening to sue over the story in October 2011 — the same day Clifford's attorney sent a similar letter to Los Angeles-based blogger Nik Richie, who first posted Clifford's allegations to his website, The Dirty, according to emails provided by Richie.

Mom, wife who had 2nd online life found slain

Associated Press

CALERA, Ala. — Kathleen Dawn West described herself as a full-time wife and mom on Facebook but lived another life on other social media platforms, calling herself an exhibitionist and posting risqué photos with a chance for subscribers to see sexier images for \$15.99 a month.

West, 42, was found dead outside her home near Birmingham, Ala., and authorities are now faced with a question: Did West's online activities play a role in her death?

Police have classified West's death as a homicide, but they haven't said how she died. What appears to be the remainder of a blood stain darkens the asphalt across the street from the two-story brick home she shared with her husband and middle school-age daughter.

No charges had been filed by Friday, six days after she died.

On Facebook, West posted lots of selfies, and commenters

often mentioned her attractiveness. But there also were photos of her wedding to longtime husband William Jeffrey West and images of West and her daughter playing in the snow last month.

But West, a Florida native with blonde hair and a resemblance to Marilyn Monroe, seemed like a different person on other online accounts.

With a personal description that included "exhibitionist," West had a private Instagram account with nearly 52,000 followers that linked to a paid site that featured adult content and "naughty fun."

Similar content was posted on Twitter, where West's presence began in March 2016.

The posts continued until the morning before her death, when West tweeted a link to sell a woman's wool jacket. A few days earlier, she had posted a lingerie photo showing her bare buttocks that linked to her adult site.

Prosecutors: Woman mad at US actions abroad set fires at Minn. university

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — A woman whom prosecutors said was angry about supposed U.S. military actions abroad was charged Friday with setting several fires at a Minnesota university.

A criminal complaint said Tnuza Jamal Hassan, 19, a former student at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, admitted to investigators Wednesday that she started the fires, including one in a dormitory that housed a day care center. She's charged with first-degree arson.

"Hassan stated she started the fires because she's been reading about the US military destroying schools in Iraq or Afghanistan and she felt that she should do exactly the same thing," the complaint said.

"She said that her fire-starting was not as successful as she wanted."

Hassan was held Friday night in the Ramsey County Jail on \$100,000 bail.

The fires were small and quickly contained. Nobody was injured, and damage was limited to furnishings, the school said in a statement. A sprinkler system prevented the dormitory fire from spreading beyond a chair to the day care center, where 33 children and eight adults were present.

The complaint also said she wrote a letter to her roommates containing "radical ideas about supporting Muslims and bringing back the caliphate." It said the letter scared the roommates, who turned the letter over to campus security.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ex-lawmaker gets 18 years on drug charges

MT BILLINGS — A former Montana House majority leader was sentenced to 18 years in federal prison for his central role in a multistate methamphetamine trafficking ring.

U.S. District Judge Susan Watters sentenced Michael Lange, 57, on Thursday.

According to prosecutors, he arranged for deliveries of at least 20 and possibly up to 50 pounds of the drug from California for sale in Montana and Wyoming.

He pleaded guilty in September to drug conspiracy and distribution charges.

Highway worker shot at while plowing snow

IN BIRDSEYE — State Police said a southern Indiana man shot at a highway worker plowing snow.

Police said Thursday's gunfire shattered the snowplow's window, and the driver suffered minor facial cuts from flying glass.

According to State Police, the Dubois County highway worker noticed a man standing near a mailbox just before the shooting.

Officers surrounded a home in the town of Birdseye and tried for hours to communicate with the suspect. SWAT team members broke down the home's front door about 11 p.m. and arrested Virgil Lee Crews, 76.

He faces preliminary criminal recklessness and battery charges.

Prosecutor: Woman stole gold to pay bills

MA ATTLEBORO — A woman charged with stealing \$40,000 worth of gold from her employer to pay for

her sick mother's medical expenses has avoided jail.

The Sun Chronicle reported that Carmelita Francis, 40, on Thursday pleaded to sufficient facts for a guilty finding on larceny charge and was sentenced to two years of probation and 20 hours of community service. The case was continued without a finding, meaning the charge will be dismissed if she stays out of legal trouble during probation.

Prosecutors said Francis stole gold discs manufactured for the U.S. Mint while working at an Attleboro precious metals manufacturer. The gold was recovered at a Rhode Island pawn shop.

2 dogs save elderly woman from freezing

MI NORVELL TOWNSHIP — A pair of labradoodles saved an elderly Michigan woman from freezing to death outside.

Lonnie and Susan Chester told the Jackson Citizen Patriot that their dogs, Adam and Eva, began acting strangely Sunday. The animals were insisting to be let outside in the early morning, something they don't usually do.

Before Lonnie Chester could fully open the door of their Norvell Township home, the dogs bolted outside. They ran to a woman in her 80s who was freezing on the ground in only a night gown.

Lonnie Chester brought the woman inside, covered her in blankets and called police.

The woman's family arrived at the house shortly after rescue crews arrived.

City allows emotional support farm animals

DE WILMINGTON — Residents of one Delaware city will now be able

to keep farm animals as emotional support animals.

WDEL-FM reported the ordinance passed the Wilmington City Council on a 9-3 vote Thursday. City code previously barred residents from harboring wild and domesticated animals "suitable for slaughter or for the production of milk, eggs and fiber," including chickens, pigs and donkeys.

Residents must obtain certification to keep the animals, which aren't allowed to leave their homes.

Family pleads guilty to drug charges

MA SPRINGFIELD — A Massachusetts couple and their adult daughter have pleaded guilty to running a drug operation out of their apartment.

The Republican newspaper reported that Antonio Perez, 55, of Springfield, agreed Thursday to accept a state prison sentence of up to six years, so his wife and daughter could serve 2 years in jail instead of prison.

Perez, his wife, Magdalena Rodriguez, 44, and his daughter Yashira Perez, 24, as well as a 44-year-old man who lived in the unit all pleaded guilty to possession of cocaine with intent to distribute and possession of heroin with intent to distribute.

Police raided their apartment in March and found hundreds of bags of heroin, as well as cocaine, cash, a gun and items used to package and distribute drugs.

Couple donate supplies in memory of son

ME SCARBOROUGH — A Maine couple whose son died in a cargo ship accident have delivered more than 30,000 pounds of supplies

to victims of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

The Portland Press Herald reported Deb and Robin Roberts delivered food, water and personal hygiene products to the stricken island in December. The Wilton couple's son, Michael Holland, died in 2016 when the cargo ship El Faro sank in Hurricane Joaquin while sailing from Jacksonville to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

They collected supplies in November at the Scarborough Wal-Mart. Tote Services, El Faro's owner, helped the couple transport the goods.

Over 1,000 starfish wash up on beaches

SC FRIPP ISLAND — Shannon Turbeville was walking the beach on Fripp Island on a Sunday evening when she stumbled upon a not-so-typical sight — more than 1,000 starfish cluttered the sand.

Other social media reports show large clusters of starfish (also called sea stars) and sand dollars washed up on other Lowcountry beaches this weekend.

According to Jessica Miller, Naturalist at Fripp Island Resort, the island sees mass starfish strandings every winter that sees unusually cold temperatures.

"All those little marine animals that are ectothermic (cold blooded) like starfish, sea cucumbers, and snails can lose mobility and get dislodged from the sea floor if it gets too cold," Miller said. She said groups of jellyfish are washed to shore by the masses for the same reason.

She added that the stranded animals may or may not be dead when they wash ashore, but it's nothing to worry about

From wire reports

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Brady mum on status for AFC title game

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Tom Brady is staying mum on his status for the AFC championship game after suffering a right hand injury earlier in the week.

Brady said a bit contentiously only “We’ll see” on Friday when asked whether he would play in Sunday’s conference title game against Jacksonville.

The quarterback wore red gloves and responded to several other questions about how much he practiced or how he sustained the injury by saying “I’m not talking about that.”

Brady is listed as questionable for Sunday after being a limited participant in practice Friday. He was also limited on Wednesday. He sat out practice Thursday, but wore a glove on his injured hand during the stretching period open to reporters. He usually only wears a glove on his non-throwing hand.

One thing Brady was clear about was the test he expects from a Jaguars unit ranked second in the NFL in total and

scoring defense.

“It’s a very unique challenge,” Brady said. “I think their front three, their linebackers, are very instinctive and very fast. And great cover guys in the secondary. Ball-hawking defense. They strip it off you, they sack you. ... So they’re a good defense.”

Brady appeared on the Patriots’ weekly injury report several times during the latter half of this season with injuries to both his Achilles tendon and his left shoulder. The four-time Super Bowl MVP has never missed a playoff start during his 18-year career.

“Tom always tends to show up in big games. This is a big game,” receiver Danny Amendola said. “(He’s) super tough. The toughest. He’s a warrior, he’s a competitor and there’s really only one reason why he’s here, and that’s to play football.”

Jacksonville is preparing like Brady will be in the huddle as usual Sunday. Jaguars defensive tackle Marcell Dareus said typical methods of rattling

a quarterback don’t apply when it comes to him.

“You can hit Brady, but hitting him isn’t what’s going to get to him. It’s constantly being that gnat in his face. He just hates that gnat just always around,” said Dareus, who might be more familiar than any Jacksonville player with Brady, having spent six-plus seasons with the Bills.

“You sack him he’s going to get up and just keep rolling. He’s that competitive spirit, like, ‘OK, you got me. Now I’m fixing to go throw this touchdown the next play. Forty yards. You happy about that sack? But there you go.’ That’s just his mentality. I like it. I love playing against the guy. He’s phenomenal to watch.”

If for some reason Brady can’t go — no, the Earth won’t stop rotating on its axis and New England still would show up to play — the Patriots would look to backup Brian Hoyer. His last playoff start was the antithesis of a Brady performance. For Houston in its 2015 AFC wild-card matchup with

Kansas City, Hoyer completed 15 of 34 passes for 136 yards, with no touchdowns and five turnovers (four interceptions) in a 30-0 loss.

Hoyer, a former Patriot, was acquired in midseason when the Patriots traded Jimmy Garoppolo to San Francisco.

“I’m always preparing to play because the truth of reality is you never know when your name’s gonna be called,” he said Thursday.

The Patriots haven’t called any QB’s name in the postseason other than Brady’s since the 1990s.

Including the playoffs, the Jaguars scored eight defensive touchdowns this season, three more than any other team. Cornerback Jalen Ramsey had four interceptions during the regular season and also had one in the wild-card win over Buffalo.

He also fully expects to see Brady on the field Sunday.

“He’s going to be out there, he’s going to play, he’s going to play to his best of ability and do what he does,” Ramsey said.

Good defense matters more than good QB in playoffs

Associated Press

Four of the five teams that gave up the fewest points during the regular season are the last four left with a shot at the Super Bowl, something that had never happened since the NFL-AFL merger nearly a half-century ago.

And three of the four toughest to gain yards against are still around, too.

Still think that all a team needs to succeed in the modern game is an elite QB? Go ahead and take a close look at Sunday’s matchups for the conference championship games.

Sure, Tom Brady (assuming his injured right hand is good to go) and the New England Patriots will be playing for the AFC title, just like they always do, but they’ll be going up against Blake Bortles and the Jackson-

ville Jaguars. Over in the NFC, the Philadelphia Eagles will send Nick Foles out to face the Minnesota Vikings and Case Keenum, hardly a marquee matchup between quarterbacks, and one set up by injuries to other signal-callers.

What this quartet of teams does have in common is solid defense, showing once again that while everyone is paying so much attention to one side of the ball, it’s the other that might truly matter the most. The more league rules and officiating tend to favor offenses, the more figuring out ways to slow that down is imperative.

Minnesota gave up 15.8 points per game. Jacksonville was No. 2 at 16.8, followed by No. 4 Philadelphia’s 18.4 and No. 5 New England’s 18.5.

“There’s teams that have re-

ally good defenses that aren’t talked about,” Patriots linebacker Kyle Van Noy said. “We’re one of them.”

It’s the first time since the 1970 merger there has been that sort of defensive dominance among the NFL’s final four. The closest was at the end of the 2010 season, when teams that ranked No. 1 (Steelers), No. 2 (Packers), No. 4 (Bears) and No. 6 (Jets) in points allowed reached the conference title games.

“The most heralded guys on the field are the quarterbacks. So I would say, nine times out of 10, your detail goes into your offensive planning and things like that,” said Jacksonville’s leading tackler, Telvin Smith, who returned a fumble 50 yards for a touchdown last weekend. “Offense sells tickets, and defense

wins championships. I’m happy I’m on the defensive side.”

He is part of a young, talented and speedy D that rose to prominence quickly via a combination of shrewd drafting (linebackers Smith and Myles Jack, defensive ends Yannick Ngakoue and Dante Fowler Jr., cornerback Jalen Ramsey) and free-agent signings that panned out (defensive lineman Calais Campbell, cornerback A.J. Bouye, safeties Barry Church and Tashaun Gipson).

Take a look at the regular-season rankings in various defensive categories, and you can’t miss the Jaguars. That helps explain how they made it this far with Bortles, whose 84.7 rating ranked 22nd among QBs with at least 100 pass attempts and whose 13 interceptions were exceeded by only six players.

NBA roundup

Raptors score rare victory over Spurs

Associated Press

TORONTO — Kyle Lowry turned in his best game since returning from injury, turning it on in the fourth quarter to help his Toronto Raptors grind out another home win.

Lowry scored nine of his 24 points in the final period, DeMar DeRozan added 21 and the Raptors beat San Antonio 86-83 on Friday night to snap a four-game losing streak against the Spurs.

Jonas Valanciunas had 15 points and 11 rebounds as the Raptors improved to 17-3 at home, the second-best home record in the NBA behind San Antonio's mark of 19-2.

Lowry made eight of 16 shots, going 4-for-9 from three-point range, in his third game after missing three with a bruised tailbone.

Raptors coach Dwane Casey said Lowry looked stronger than he had in his previous two outings.

"I thought he had a lot of bounce," Casey said.

Lowry got the Raptors off to a quick start, making a three-

pointer on his first shot of the game.

"Just being aggressive," he said. "It's that time of year when everyone is kind of hitting a little bit of a rut, a little bit of a lull. We've got to continue to get better and take the step on the journey to making us a better team."

LaMarcus Aldridge had 17 points and 14 rebounds, Pau Gasol scored 15 points and Patty Mills had 13 as San Antonio lost for the fourth time in six road games. The Spurs are 11-15 away from home.

It had been more than two years since Toronto last beat San Antonio. The Raptors won 97-94 at home on Dec. 9, 2015.

"They're a well-rounded group," DeRozan said of the Spurs. "Everybody understands their roles and they play extremely hard."

San Antonio guard Manu Ginobili missed his second straight game because of a sore right thigh. Ginobili returned to Texas after the Spurs won at Brooklyn on Wednesday.

The Spurs shot 34 percent, making 31 of 91 attempts.

Grizzlies 106, Kings 88:

Dillon Brooks scored a career-best 22 points, Ben McLemore had a season-high 21 and host Memphis beat skidding Sacramento for its third consecutive win.

The game marked Zach Randolph's first return to Memphis since spending eight years as a key figure in the Grizzlies' success. The power forward received a standing ovation when he was introduced with the starting lineups. The team showed a tribute video between the first and second quarters.

Randolph finished with four points and six rebounds for the Kings, who have lost seven straight.

Wizards 122, Pistons 112:

Bradley Beal and Kelly Oubre Jr. had 26 points apiece, and Washington scored 45 in the third quarter before holding off host Detroit.

Andre Drummond had 14 points, 21 rebounds and eight assists for the Pistons, who have lost four straight.

Nets 101, Heat 95:

DeMarre Carroll scored 26 points, Spencer Dinwiddie had 15 and

Brooklyn beat visiting Miami.

The Nets snapped a five-game skid at Barclays Center and a seven-game home losing streak to the Heat.

Suns 108, Nuggets 100:

Devin Booker scored 30 points and T.J. Warren had 25 to lead Phoenix past host Denver.

Josh Jackson and Isaiah Canaan added 16 points apiece off the bench for Phoenix, which snapped a seven-game losing streak to the Nuggets that stretched back to Nov. 20, 2015.

Lakers 99, Pacers 86: Reserve guard Jordan Clarkson sparked an undermanned team with 33 points to lead Los Angeles over visiting Indiana.

The Lakers, missing three injured starters, snapped a two-game skid despite making just two of 14 free throws. They shot 14.3 percent from the line, a franchise low.

Knicks 117, Jazz 115: Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 31 points and New York rallied to beat host Utah.

Hardaway was 6-for-7 from behind the arc as the Knicks shot 55 percent from three-point range.

Bridges powers No. 9 Michigan State past Indians

Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Miles Bridges made a three-pointer and bounced on his toes with joy, enjoying a game he and Michigan State desperately needed.

Bridges scored 22 points to help the ninth-ranked Spartans respond to adversity with an 85-57 win over Indiana on Friday night.

The Spartans (17-3, 5-2 Big Ten) had a confidence-boosting performance after going from a top-ranked team to a reeling one. They were slumping after a 16-point loss at Ohio State, an overtime win over Rutgers and an 82-72 setback to Michigan at home.

"I was just trying to prove that we weren't soft and that we can compete with any team," Bridges said. "We were trying to prove a point."

Michigan State took control with an 18-0 run midway through the first half, led by as much as 23 and was ahead 42-23 at halftime.

"We were aggressive and played our game," Bridges said. "We had a great sense of urgency."

Nick Ward had 18 points and 13 rebounds, Cassius Winston had 10 points, eight assists and only one turnover and Jaren Jackson had 10 points, six rebounds and three blocks for the Spartans.

The Hoosiers (11-8, 4-3) lost

for the first time in four games, falling into a fourth-place tie with the Wolverines and Nebraska.

Indiana's Robert Johnson had 21 points and the rest of his teammates struggled offensively. Josh Newkirk scored 14, but missed 12 of 17 shots.

"If those two guys can continue to play well, I think we'll be OK," coach Archie Miller said.

The Hoosiers were held to 34 percent shooting.

"It wasn't a good offensive showing and they had a lot to do with it," Miller said.

Famous fan

Alex Rodriguez, who was in Detroit for the North American

International Auto Show, attended the game. He wore an "Izzzone" T-shirt while standing in the student section behind coach Tom Izzo, his staff and players.

"I've always been a big fan of Izzo," Rodriguez said.

Izzo became very fond of Rodriguez after hearing him talk to his team at its shootaround and in the locker room after the victory.

Rodriguez told the Spartans it bothers him that he ranks fifth on the all-time list with 2,287 career strikeouts.

"He talked about how many times he failed," Izzo recalled. "What a great message for a team that came off a disappointing week of basketball."

NHL roundup

Ekblad, Panthers spoil Gallant's return

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Aaron Ekblad helped the Panthers get a big win and spoil former coach Gerard Gallant's return to Florida.

Ekblad scored 40 seconds into overtime to give the Panthers a 4-3 victory over Gallant's new team, the Vegas Golden Knights, on Friday night.

Ekblad grabbed a rebound off a shot by Aleksander Barkov in the high slot and fired it past Malcolm Subban into the net.

"One of their players batted it out (of the net) and right on my stick," Ekblad said. "Got lucky it sat nice and didn't bounce over."

Gallant, fired by the Panthers in November 2016, was hired to coach the expansion Golden Knights last April. Making his first visit back since his dismissal, Gallant got a standing ovation during a scoreboard video tribute in the first period. Gallant acknowledged the tribute with a wave of his hand.

"I don't get too emotional,"

Gallant said. "I enjoyed my time here, we had a good run, and the fans treated me well."

Barkov scored his league-leading fifth short-handed goal of the season and had two assists. Evgenii Dadonov and Jamie McGinn also scored and James Reimer stopped 33 shots.

"It was a good start for the second half of the season," Barkov said. "We got a lucky bounce right on Ekblad's stick. He's not going to miss from that spot."

William Karlsson had a goal and an assist, and James Neal and David Perron also scored for Vegas. Subban finished with 22 saves.

Dadonov broke a 2-2 tie when he poked in a rebound at 3:35 of the third. Barkov's shot from the high slot bounced off Subban's glove out to Dadonov to the right of the crease and he pushed the puck into the net. Dadonov has three goals in the past two games.

Neal tied the score at 3 with 2:09 left in the third when he roofed a shot past Reimer from in front.

"It was good to get that tying goal, and then in the overtime I liked our chances," Neal said. "It was a tough loss but we'll be better next game."

With the score tied 1-1 in the first, Barkov put the Panthers ahead on his short-handed goal. Vincent Trocheck's shot was blocked as he rushed the net but Barkov was able to poke in the rebound from the corner of the net with 4:05 left. The Panthers lead the NHL with nine short-handed goals.

The Golden Knight tied the score on Karlsson's goal at 6:57 of the second. Shea Theodore made a nice feed across to Karlsson, who swept the puck past Reimer. Karlsson leads Vegas with 25 goals.

Ducks 2, Kings 1: Ryan Kesler deflected home Francois Beauchemin's shot for the tiebreaking goal with 7:39 to play and host Anaheim won its second Freeway Faceoff in seven days.

Adam Henrique scored early in the third period and John Gibson made 23 saves for the Ducks, who have won six of nine overall.

Rookie Alex Iafallo evened it for Los Angeles moments after Henrique's goal, but Kesler's long deflection sent the puck bouncing past Jonathan Quick. Anaheim then hung on in a frantic final minute to even the archrivals' season series at two games apiece.

Quick stopped 29 shots in the Kings' sixth consecutive loss, extending their longest skid of the season.

Canadiens 3, Capitals 2: Max Pacioretty had two goals and an assist to help Montreal break a three-game losing streak.

Paul Byron also scored for the Canadiens. Antii Niemi, playing in place of Carey Price, who had been in goal for eight consecutive games, stopped 24 shots.

John Carlson and Lars Eller scored for the Capitals, and Philipp Grubauer finished with 22 saves.

The Capitals, who returned from a five-day bye with an overtime loss at New Jersey on Thursday night, have lost back-to-back games for the second time this season.

Australian Open

Kerber eliminates Sharapova in third-round match

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — It was expected to be the match of the round. Angelique Kerber ensured it never became a contest.

The 2016 Australian Open winner routed Maria Sharapova 6-1, 6-3 in the third-round match on Saturday night, meaning she'll be the only Grand Slam champion in the fourth round of the women's draw.

Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic were almost as ruthless in their straight-sets third-round wins, not unusual for a pair with a combined 31 Grand Slam titles. Whereas, women's

No. 1 Simona Halep took a longer route — equaling a mark in Melbourne for endurance.

Five-time major winner Sharapova was back at Melbourne Park for the first time since 2016, when a failed doping test led to a 15-month ban from tennis.

Sharapova's tournament was over in one hour and four minutes, a vast contrast to top-ranked Halep's 4-6, 6-4, 15-13 win in 3:45 over American Lauren Davis in the opening match on Rod Laver.

Halep will play Naomi Osaka, who beat 18th-seeded Ash Barty 6-4, 6-2. No. 20 Barbora Strycova beat U.S.

qualifier Bernarda Pera 6-2, 6-2, leaving U.S. Open finalist Madison Keys as the only American woman to reach the fourth round.

Keys advanced 6-3, 6-4 over Ana Bogdan and will next play No. 8 Caroline Garcia, who beat Aliaksandra Sasnovich 6-3, 5-7, 6-2.

Six-time Australian Open champion Djokovic continued his comeback from six months out with an injured right elbow, beating No. 21 Albert Ramos-Vinolas 6-2, 6-3, 6-3.

Federer entered the Australian Open last year under similar circumstances, com-

ing off an extended break for a knee injury, and went on to win the title. His defense moved through another round with a 6-2, 7-5, 6-4 win over No. 29 Richard Gasquet.

Second-seeded Federer's next opponent is former world junior No. 1 Marton Fucsovics, who beat Nicolas Kicker in straight sets.

Djokovic will next face Hyeon Chung, who took out a Zverev for the second time this week. Chung beat fourth-seeded Alexander Zverev 5-7, 7-6 (3), 2-6, 6-3, 6-0 six days after a win over No. 32 Mischa Zverev in the first round.