

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Senate GOP, Dems reach shutdown deal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress sped toward reopening the government Monday as Senate Democrats dropped their objections to a temporary funding bill in return for assurances from Republican leaders that they will soon take up immigration and other contentious issues.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's commitment to quickly tackle the issue of immigrant "Dreamers" was contingent on Democrats providing enough votes now for a stop-gap spending measure lasting a little less than three weeks. The measure needed 60 votes, and Democrats provided 33 of the 81 it got. Eighteen senators, including members of both parties, were opposed.

Before the government can reopen, the Senate must vote on final passage, the House must approve it, in turn, and President Donald Trump must sign the measure.

Democrats climbed on board after two days of negotiations that ended with new reassurances from McConnell that the Senate would consider immigration proposals in the coming weeks.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer lent his backing to the agreement during a speech on the chamber's floor.

"Now there is a real pathway to get a bill on the floor and through the Senate," he said of legislation to halt any deportation efforts aimed at "Dreamers," who were brought to the country as children and are now here illegally.

The White House downplayed McConnell's commitment and said Democrats caved under pressure.

"They blinked," principal deputy press secretary Raj Shah told CNN.

Earlier Monday, McConnell raised hopes for a quick end to

Delay, cancellations at installations overseas

From staff reports

Defense Department civilians overseas began receiving furlough notices Monday morning as the federal government shutdown began impacting bases around the world.

The furloughs — expected to include more than 50 percent of the DOD's roughly 742,000 civilian personnel — meant that some base services and activities were curtailed or canceled until an agreement on federal spending is reached.

Essential services like schools, overseas commissaries and mental health counseling remained open, as well as revenue-generating services like base exchanges and other nonappropriated fund programs.

However, services at libraries and at housing and other offices were delayed or closed at various bases due to staffing shortages. Extracurricular activities and high school sports were canceled, though some practices

remain scheduled.

Hospitals and clinics remained open, although some have not confirmed appointments beyond this week.

Temporary duty official travel was curtailed and scheduling changes between duty stations was delayed in some areas.

American Forces Network television, which initially shut down, is continuing with one sports and one news channel.

Thus far, most service-members who spoke with Stars and Stripes said they weren't severely impacted.

"Being in the military it hasn't affected us personally," Navy Petty Officer 1st Class April Watson, 40, of Brooklyn, N.Y., said at Yong-san Garrison in Seoul, South Korea. "You still have to continue to work ... whether we're caught in the middle or not, I still have to perform and serve regardless if I'm getting a paycheck or not because this is something that I signed up for."

the shutdown, saying, "I hope and intend" to reach agreement soon on immigration and other contentious issues — if the Democrats agreed to the stop-gap spending measure lasting a little less than three weeks.

A block of liberal Democrats — some of them 2020 presidential hopefuls — stuck to their opposition. Sens. Elizabeth Warren, of Massachusetts; Dianne Feinstein, of California; Kirsten Gillibrand, of New York; and

Cory Booker, of New Jersey, voted no, as did Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.

Feinstein said she wasn't persuaded by McConnell's assurances and did not know how a proposal to protect the more than 700,000 younger immigrants would fare in the House.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, of Wisconsin, told "Fox and Friends" Monday that if the Senate approved a temporary spending bill to reopen the gov-

ernment through Feb. 8, the House would approve it, too.

The Senate vote came as most government offices cut back drastically or even closed on Monday, as the major effects of the shutdown were first being felt with the beginning of the workweek.

McConnell said he hoped to reach bipartisan solutions on immigration, border security, disaster aid, military funding and more by Feb. 8. If not, he said, "it would be my intention to take up legislation" addressing those issues.

The Senate over the weekend inched closer but ultimately fell short of a deal that could have reopened the government before the beginning of the workweek.

On Sunday night, Democrats appeared to be holding out for a firmer commitment from McConnell.

"We have yet to reach an agreement on a path forward," Schumer said then.

There were hours of behind-the-scenes talks over the weekend between the leaders and rank-and-file lawmakers over how to end the display of legislative dysfunction, which began at midnight Friday after Democrats blocked a temporary spending measure. Democrats have sought to use the spending bill to win concessions, including protections for roughly 700,000 younger immigrants.

Republicans appeared increasingly confident that Democrats were bearing the brunt of criticism for the shutdown and that they would ultimately buckle. The White House and GOP leaders had said they would not negotiate with Democrats on immigration until the government reopened.

Trump on Monday accused Democrats of prioritizing services and security for noncitizens over U.S. citizens. "Not good," his tweet said.

US Navy leader retires early amid fallout

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The head of the Navy's Surface Forces retired early from the service last week amid continuing fallout after a pair of ship collisions last year killed 17 sailors.

Vice Adm. Thomas Rowden was replaced Thursday by Vice Adm. Richard Brown during a low-key ceremony at SURFOR's headquarters in San Diego. Rowden announced his early retirement last week in a statement to the fleet.

"This was a difficult decision to make, but I make it

with the best interest of the Surface Warfare community and the Navy in mind," he said. "The Surface Warfare community will be in good hands as [Brown] is a superb and talented naval officer."

Rowden's retirement came as a result of an independent investigation into the USS Fitzgerald and USS John S. McCain collisions by Adm. James Caldwell, according to a USNI news report. The probe recommended unspecified disciplinary actions against Rowden that forced him to depart earlier than his planned retirement on Feb. 2.

Brown previously led

Navy Personnel Command and served as chief of naval personnel.

"I am honored to assume command of Naval Surface Forces and command of Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet," he said in a Navy statement. "I am humbled by the opportunity to lead the Surface Force and its brave Sailors."

Rowden is the latest leader to be fired or forced into early retirement after the fatal collisions.

Last year, the Navy relieved the leaders of both ships as well as the head of the 7th Fleet. The leaders of Task Force 70 and Destroyer Squadron 15, which

oversee the fleet's destroyers and cruisers, were also relieved of their duties.

Last September, Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Scott Swift announced he would retire at an unspecified date after being told he would not be the Navy's pick to take over Pacific Command after Adm. Harry Harris retires this year.

Commanders of the Pacific Fleet, which oversees U.S. naval forces from California to India, are often nominated to head PACOM. Swift took command of the Pacific Fleet in May 2015 after Harris' promotion.

Snow brings closings to US bases in Japan

BY LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Some U.S. bases in and around Tokyo closed all but essential operations Monday after the heaviest snowfall in four years slammed the densely populated area around the Japanese capital.

At Camp Zama, the home of U.S. Army Japan in Kanagawa Prefecture, officials announced that normal base operations would cease at 11 a.m. in anticipation of the snowstorm — the first of 2018.

On-base day care centers stayed open only for the children of mission-essential personnel, and Zama American High School dismissed students at 11:20 a.m.

Officials at nearby Naval Air Facility Atsugi announced a 1 p.m. closure for all but mission-essential tasks and personnel.

Significant amounts of snow had already fallen, and children were building snowmen by the time Yokota Air Base, in western Tokyo and home to the 5th Air Force and U.S. Forces Japan,

announced a 3 p.m. closure.

The announcement covered all 374th Force Support Squadron and Army and Air Force Exchange facilities except one convenience store scheduled to close at 5 p.m.

By Monday evening, more than 5 inches of snow had fallen on central Tokyo, already surpassing the level of a February 2014 snow. A Yokota weather advisory predicted 7 inches of snow would accumulate on the base by the time the storm passes early Tuesday. The accumulated snowfall is the first at some of the bases since Thanksgiving Day in 2016.

Winter snows are routine and sometimes heavy in northern Japan and the mountains of the main island Honshu but are less frequent and intense in the Kanto Plain around the capital, one of the world's most densely populated regions and home to thousands of U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines.

Japan's Kyodo news agency said airlines canceled about 250 flights Monday, many of them to or from Tokyo's Haneda airport.

China again faults US for maritime tensions

The Washington Post

BEIJING — Beijing has a message for the Trump administration: The more ships you send to contested waters of the South China Sea, the more we will bolster our presence there.

The warning, delivered in a People's Daily commentary published Monday, came days after the USS Hopper sailed within 12 nautical miles of Scarborough Shoal, a reef China seized from Philippine control in 2012. "A U.S. ship wantonly provoking trouble is reckless," it read.

It is not the first time Beijing has tried to blame Washington for maritime tensions — it's a bit of a recurring theme — but the ship's operation and the blustery response may signal an ominous shift in U.S.-China ties.

In his first year in office, President Donald Trump was focused on getting China to rein in North Korea and said little on the South China Sea. But many analysts predicted his administration would take a tougher line in 2018 — and that may now be underway.

The United States called last week's operations "routine and

regular," but from a Chinese perspective, both the timing and the location are significant.

This was the first so-called Freedom of Navigation Operation in months and the first such passage near the Scarborough Shoal.

In the wake of the operation, China showed no sign of changing or softening its stance. Over the weekend, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Beijing was "strongly dissatisfied" with the Hopper's passage, and China will take necessary measures to "firmly safeguard its sovereignty."

Monday's editorial put it this way: "If the relevant party once more makes trouble out of nothing and causes tensions, then it will only cause China to reach this conclusion: to earnestly protect peace in the South China Sea, China must strengthen and speed up the building of its abilities there."

Ian Storey, an expert on the South China Sea and a senior fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, said the timing seemed calibrated to show China that the United States is now ready to "do something a bit different."

Kabul hotel attack survivors tell of ordeal

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Survivors of the Taliban attack on Hotel Inter-Continental Kabul recounted on Monday the ordeal of the deadly, 13-hour weekend standoff that claimed 18 lives, including 14 foreigners.

The siege ended Sunday with Afghan security forces saying they had killed the last of six Taliban militants who stormed the hotel in suicide vests late the previous night looking for foreigners and Afghan officials to kill.

More than 150 people were rescued or managed to escape, including 41 foreigners. Eleven of the 14 foreigners killed were pilots and employees of KamAir, a private Afghan airline.

A statement by KamAir later said some of its flights were disrupted because of the attack.

Six Ukrainians, two Venezuelan pilots for KamAir and a citizen from Kazakhstan were among those killed in the attack on the hotel,

Mohammad Humayun Shams, the telecommunications director of eastern Laghman province, who was visiting Kabul and staying at the hotel, said he was able to escape by jumping into a tree from a hotel window as the attackers roamed the hallways, killing people.

“It was the worst night of my life,” Shams said, adding that as he ran, he didn’t know who were the police and who were the

Taliban — they all had the same type of uniforms.

Afghan authorities have not confirmed the attackers wore police uniforms. Security officials said 34 provincial officials were at the hotel for a conference organized by the Telecommunication Ministry.

On Monday, Afghan security forces remained positioned on all the roads leading to the hotel, barring everyone from accessing to the area.

Jawad Zia, the director of the hotel, which is not part of the InterContinental chain, said dozens of the hotel rooms were damaged in the attack.

“We have damaged rooms in each floor of the hotel,” he told The Associated Press over the

phone.

Among Afghans killed in the attack was a telecommunications official from western Farah province; Waheed Poyan, Afghanistan’s newly appointed consul general to the Pakistani city of Karachi; and Ahmad Farzan, an employee of the High Peace Council, a commission created to facilitate peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban and other opposition groups.

Along with Shams, five other hotel guests, including a foreigner, managed to jump into the tree. From there, they climbed down to the ground, and Shams called the police.

They were told to stay put until the police came to take them away — hours later.

US Afghan force may grow by 1K

The Washington Post

The U.S. Army is readying plans that could increase the total force in Afghanistan by as many as 1,000 U.S. troops this spring beyond the 14,000 already in the country, senior military officials said.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has not signed off on the proposals for the new forces, which are part of a broader strategy to bolster Afghan forces so they can pound the Taliban during the upcoming fighting season.

The possible increases have the support of the Army’s senior leadership, which has been working to determine the mix of troops required to execute a strategy centered on a new combat formation.

The discussions at the Pentagon underscore the complex task the U.S. military faces as it prepares to deploy newly created combat advisory teams to some of the most violent, remote and heavily contested areas of Afghanistan.

The Obama administration, as part of its plan to wind down the Afghanistan War in 2015, limited advisers to higher headquarters far from the fighting. The new strategy that President Donald Trump approved in August would push U.S. advisory

teams to the battalion level, far closer to the front lines.

“This is a concept that got accelerated for Afghanistan, and it has been quite a process,” a senior military official said of the plan to send the U.S. Army’s first-ever Security Force Assistance Brigade to Afghanistan early this spring. “It has been a roller coaster.”

The official, who is involved in the troop planning, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss military planning.

Military officials said some troops, particularly at the headquarters level, might come out of Afghanistan as new forces move into the theater and that they expect the total force this spring to be about 15,000 troops.

Trump’s plan for the war increased the number of troops from 8,500 when he took office to about 14,000 today. The president also lifted restrictions on U.S. warplanes, triggering a major spike this winter in airstrikes aimed at Taliban formations and its leadership.

A spokesman for Gen. John W. Nicholson Jr., the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said U.S. Forces Afghanistan had not specifically asked for an increase in troop levels,

suggesting the increase, if approved, would be considered an adjustment under the current plan rather than an increase associated with a shift in strategy.

The White House might want to weigh in on any plan to send additional troops to Afghanistan, according to U.S. officials.

Even as he signed off on the new war strategy, Trump has expressed misgivings about sending more resources into a conflict that has been grinding on with few signs of progress.

Senior administration officials said the president has been known to affect an Indian accent and imitate Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who in an Oval Office meeting last year told him, “Never has a country given so much away for so little in return” as the United States in Afghanistan.

To Trump, Modi’s statement was proof that the rest of the world viewed the United States as being duped and taken advantage of in Afghanistan, these officials said.

Despite those misgivings, Trump has largely left execution of the war plan to the Pentagon, with little of the intense oversight that occurred during the Obama administration.

Turks advance on Kurdish enclave

Associated Press

HASSA, Turkey — Intense fighting flared Monday as Turkish troops and their allies advanced on a Kurdish enclave in northwestern Syria, the third day of Ankara’s offensive to oust a U.S.-allied Kurdish militia from the area, according to the militia and a war-monitoring group.

Skirmishes between Turkish troops and Kurdish fighters also broke out farther east in Syria, threatening to widen the scope of the new front in the Syrian war that pits Turkey against Washington’s main ally in the region.

The Turkish ground and air offensive on Afrin began Saturday, raising tensions in the already complicated Syrian conflict and threatening to further strain ties between Turkey and the U.S., both NATO allies. Turkey says it aims to create a 20-mile-deep “secure zone” in Afrin, the Kurdish-controlled enclave on its border.

A NATO statement said it has been in touch with Turkey over the offensive. NATO said Turkey has suffered from terrorism and has the right to self-defense but urged Ankara to do so in a “proportionate and measured way.”

Pence, Netanyahu meet in Jerusalem

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Vice President Mike Pence kicked off his visit to Israel with a Monday morning meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in which he said it was an honor to be in “Israel’s capital, Jerusalem.”

Netanyahu told Pence it was the first time a visiting dignitary could utter those three words along with him, and he thanked Pence for President Donald Trump’s “historic” recognition of Jerusalem. The Israeli leader also lauded the American-Israeli alliance, which he said has “never been stronger.”

The brief exchange was part of an exceptionally warm welcome for Pence in Israel, which has praised the Trump administration’s decision last month to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. The decision has infuriated the Palestinians, with whom Pence is not meeting, and upset America’s Arab allies as well.

Pence placed his right hand over his heart as an honor guard greeted him with the American national anthem. White House Mideast envoy Jason Greenblatt, U.S. Ambassador David Friedman and the

Israeli ambassador to Washington, Ron Dermer, joined the ceremony, and Pence chatted briefly with Israeli soldiers before beginning his meeting with Netanyahu.

Pence said he was grateful to be representing Trump and that his decision to designate Jerusalem as the Israeli capital would “create an opportunity to move on in good faith negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.”

The vice president said he was hopeful “we are at the dawn of a new era of renewed discussions to achieve a peaceful resolution to a decadeslong conflict.”

Prior to his arrival, Pence visited Egypt and Jordan, where he was warned by King Abdullah II that he had to “rebuild trust and confidence” after the Jerusalem move.

Pence was to deliver a speech to the Israeli Knesset, or parliament, later in the day.

After the Jerusalem announcement, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said he would not meet Trump administration officials and called off a meeting with Pence that had been scheduled for mid-December.

In a new expression of that

snub, Abbas overlapped with Pence in Jordan from Saturday evening to midday Sunday, when the Palestinian leader flew to Brussels for a meeting with European Union foreign ministers. There, Abbas was expected to urge EU member states to recognize a state of Palestine in the pre-1967 war lines and to step up involvement in mediation.

In Brussels, the EU’s top diplomat, Federica Mogherini, said the aim was “to support an international framework to accompany direct negotiations” despite the U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Mogherini said “the only pragmatic, realistic solution for Jerusalem has to come through direct negotiations.”

Nabil Abu Rdeneh, an Abbas adviser, reiterated that the United States “is no longer acceptable as a mediator” in the conflict.

Netanyahu called Pence “a great friend of Israel” and said there was “no alternative for American leadership” in the peace process.

“Whoever is not ready to talk with the Americans about peace — does not want peace,” he said at a meeting of ambassadors in Jerusalem.

Thousands flee volcano in Philippines

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines’ most active volcano ejected a huge column of lava fragments, ash and smoke in a thunderous explosion Monday, sending thousands of villagers back to evacuation centers and prompting a warning that a violent eruption may be imminent.

The midday explosion sent superheated lava, molten rocks and steam between 2 and 3 miles into the blue sky, and then some cascaded down Mount Mayon’s slopes and shrouded nearby villages in darkness, said Renato Solidum, of the Philippine Institute of Seismology and Volcanology, and other officials.

From the crater, the deadly debris billowed about 1.8 miles down on the southern flank of Mayon toward a no-entry danger zone. There were no immediate reports of deaths or injuries, officials said.

The explosion was the most powerful since the volcano started acting up more than a week ago.

Due to its relatively gentle eruption last week, thousands left emergency shelters and returned to their communities in Legazpi city outside the danger zone. But Monday’s blast sent nearly 12,000 fleeing back to evacuation centers, raising the number of people in those shelters to more than 30,000, Yucot said.

Authorities on Monday raised the alert level to 4 on a scale of 5, which means an explosive eruption is possible within hours or days. A danger zone around Mayon was expanded to 5 miles from the crater, which means thousands of villagers will have to leave their homes, officials said.

Airplanes were ordered to stay away from the crater and ash-laden winds, and several flights were canceled.

Volcanic ash fell in about a dozen towns in coconut-growing Albay province, where Mayon lies, and in nearby Camarines Sur province.

‘Executed’ N. Korean diva in spotlight

Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea — Just a few years ago, she was reportedly executed by a North Korean firing squad. Now, Pyongyang’s top pop diva is a senior ruling party official and a surprise headliner in the run-up to the South Korean Winter Olympics.

Hyon Song Wol, the photogenic leader of Kim Jong Un’s hand-picked Moranbong Band, has made two excursions across the Demilitarized Zone as a negotiator and advance team leader working out the details of Kim’s surprise offer for the North to participate in the Pyeongchang Games.

South Korea’s media have been treating her like a true celebrity.

On Monday, as she wrapped up her latest visit and prepared to return to Pyongyang, the South’s Yonhap news agency reported a large crowd waited outside her hotel for a glimpse of her eating breakfast. Journalists, it noted, received only a “subtle smile” in response to their questions before she was whisked away with the North Korean delegation.

Not all South Koreans welcomed her or North Korea’s plan to join the Games.

After a visit to the eastern city of Gangneung, Hyon was

met at the Seoul railway station by about 150 to 200 activists.

The demonstrators later burned Kim’s photo, a North Korean flag and a “unification flag” the rival Koreas plan to carry during the opening ceremony.

North Korea is expected to send 22 athletes, a demonstration taekwondo team, several hundred members of an all-female cheering group and the 140-member Samjiyon Band to the games.

Hyon will lead the Samjiyon Band, which is made up of an orchestra with dancers and vocalists.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Men arrested after road rage incident

ID COEUR D'ALENE — Authorities in northern Idaho said two Montana men were taken into custody following a road rage incident that included shots fired.

Coeur d'Alene police told the Coeur d'Alene Press that Kenneth C. Gieber, 20, of Polson, and Shawn K. Tate, 25, of Missoula, were booked into jail Thursday on suspicion of aggravated assault with a firearm.

Police said the person in the vehicle being shot at was unhurt but the vehicle might have been struck by gunfire.

Police said they searched the suspects' vehicle and found a handgun as well as coins worth \$25,000 that are connected to a stolen-property case in Montana.

Police captain on leave for shoving teen

KS WICHITA — Wichita police said an off-duty captain accused of pushing a teenage referee during a youth basketball game has been placed on paid administrative leave.

The Wichita Eagle reported that the confrontation happened Jan. 13 in the town of Augusta. A video of the confrontation has been shared thousands of times since it was posted to Facebook.

Officer Charley Davidson said the captain is on paid administrative leave pending a police investigation and an internal review.

Naked man disrupts traffic on major road

PA PHILADELPHIA — Authorities captured a naked man who they said walked into and out of traffic on a major highway in Philadel-

phia and threw various items at vehicles.

The man first was spotted about 12:15 p.m. Saturday on the southbound side of Interstate 95. Authorities said he was wandering between the shoulder of the road and the right lane.

The highway's two right lanes were shut down briefly as police tried to apprehend the man, who eventually was taken into custody. His name has not been released.

Officers help deliver baby in heavy traffic

NY NEW YORK — Two New York Police Department traffic officers helped deliver a baby after being flagged down by the baby's father.

Authorities said officers Tiffany Phillips and Carlos Guadalupe were directing traffic in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood Jan. 16 when they were flagged down by a desperate motorist. The man told the officers his wife was going into labor.

Phillips said they ran to the car to find the woman ready to give birth, and Phillips coached her through delivery as Guadalupe ran to a nearby hotel to get towels. Phillips drove the couple's car to Bellevue Hospital, where the mother and her new child were doing fine.

Man gets prison term of up to 1,425 years

WV HUNTINGTON — A West Virginia man convicted of 40 counts of sexual assault has been sentenced to up to 1,425 years in prison.

The Herald-Dispatch reported Michael Daniel Vega, 50, was sentenced Thursday to 440 to 1,425 years in prison plus an additional 50 years of supervised release. Cabell County Assistant prosecutor

Joe Fincham said it's the longest non-life-sentence in the state's history.

Vega was convicted in November of sexually assaulting three girls and is accused of assaulting others. He'll begin the sentence after he finishes a five-to-25-year sentence he received in another county on similar charges. Vega also was fined \$240,000.

FedEx driver accused of drunken driving

ID SPIRITLAKE — Police in northern Idaho said they arrested a FedEx driver and impounded his delivery van after he underwent a field sobriety test.

Spirit Lake police told the Bonner County Daily Bee they arrested David Lenon, 41, of Athol, about 7 p.m. Thursday.

Police said they received a report the van was being operated erratically on westbound Highway 54. They contacted Lenon after finding his van stopped at an Idaho Transportation Department depot in Spirit Lake.

Police said they smelled alcohol and arrested Lenon after he underwent a DUI evaluation.

Teen killed when boulder hits him

SC GREENVILLE — Authorities in South Carolina said a teenager from Florida was killed when a boulder rolled down a hill and killed him while he was climbing near some falls.

Greenville County Senior Deputy Coroner Jeff Fowler said Jacob Bridges Acker, 18, of Neptune Beach, was hiking with a group Friday beside Wildcat Branch Falls.

The statement said that while Acker attempted to climb next to the falls, a large boulder

shifted, rolled down a hill and struck him.

City officials oppose 'food desert' term

MD BALTIMORE — "Food deserts" are areas where people don't have easy access to healthy, affordable food, but don't use that term in Baltimore. City officials prefer to call them "healthy food priority areas."

The Baltimore Sun reported Mayor Catherine Pugh cited concerns over accuracy. Pugh said Wednesday the original term implies there's no food whatsoever. Instead, Pugh said, there's an imbalance between healthy and unhealthy foods in these priority areas.

Qualifying neighborhoods rank poorly in food store quality and are more than a quarter-mile from supermarkets, among other criteria.

Hundreds of animals seized from home

IA VINTON — Authorities seized hundreds of animals from an eastern Iowa residence that's also home to four children.

Officials executed a search warrant Jan. 16 at the Vinton house and garage. The animals found included rabbits, rats, mice, hedgehogs, turtles, birds, guinea pigs, gerbils and a hall python. Several carcasses were scattered through the residence in various states of decomposition or stored in a freezer.

No charges have been reported. Officials said the children's parents have been cooperating with state and local authorities.

Volunteers from the Cedar Valley Humane Society and other rescue groups removed the animals.

From wire reports

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Reporting
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and Military News

Pats, Eagles advance to Super Bowl

Associated Press

Tom Brady and the New England Patriots are going back to the Super Bowl in search of a sixth title.

They'll face a Philadelphia Eagles team looking for the franchise's first Lombardi Trophy.

Brady led the Patriots (15-3) back from a 10-point, fourth-quarter deficit to beat the Jacksonville Jaguars 24-20 in the AFC championship game Sunday.

Starting his 36th playoff game, Brady shook off an injury to his right hand and the loss of top target Rob Gronkowski to rally the Patriots to their record 10th Super Bowl appearance.

The Patriots will try to match the Pittsburgh Steelers' six Super Bowl trophies when

they face the Eagles (15-3) on Feb. 4 in Minneapolis.

Nick Foles, the backup QB who was thrust into the starting role when Carson Wentz blew out his left knee last month, led Philadelphia to a 38-7 rout of the Minnesota Vikings in the NFC championship game.

Foles threw for 352 yards and three touchdowns, showing poise and moxie in going 26-for-33.

The Vikings were hoping to become the first NFL team to serve as host to a Super Bowl in its own stadium, but they followed up their "Minneapolis Miracle" with a "Flop in Philly."

So, they'll clear out their lockers long before the Eagles and Patriots and their fans take over U.S. Bank Stadium for

Super Bowl 52 in two weeks.

Odds makers like the chances of Brady winning a sixth Super Bowl ring, making the Patriots nearly a touchdown favorite to beat the Eagles.

The Patriots and Eagles, who last won an NFL title in 1960, several years before the first Super Bowl, met in the Super Bowl after the 2004 season with the Patriots prevailing 24-21.

It was New England's 13th win in 14 games since their 2-2 start. Their only stumble since September was a 27-20 loss at the Dolphins on Dec. 11.

Brady, wearing a black bandage on his right hand after needing stitches to close a cut that happened on a play during practice earlier in the week, showed no signs of being hampered.

And, with the game — and the season — possibly on the line, the Patriots star came up big again.

"I've had a lot worse," Brady said. "I didn't know that on Wednesday. It was a crazy injury. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday was a little scary. Then I started getting some confidence and today we did just enough to win."

Brady finished 26 of 38 for 290 yards and two touchdowns to Danny Amendola.

It's the eighth Super Bowl appearance for Brady and coach Bill Belichick, who have won five times — including last year's 34-28 overtime rally against the Falcons.

"It's pretty amazing," Brady said. "Just to be on a team that wins these kinds of games, it's just a great accomplishment."

Vikings disappoint

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Vikings would have traveled anywhere to play in their first Super Bowl since 1977.

This year, though, the game is in their stadium. They won't be in it.

"I mean, we would've loved to play in the Super Bowl if it was in China," coach Mike Zimmer said Sunday night after the Philadelphia Eagles humbled Minnesota 38-7 for the NFC championship. "But we didn't play good enough to win. I know that's cliché but it's true."

After the Vikings (14-4) took a 7-0 lead on the game's opening drive, it was all Philadelphia (15-3). One place the Eagles dominated was third downs, converting 10 of 14 against the league leader on defense in that category.

Two of those conversions were for touchdowns on Nick Foles' passes to Alshon Jeffery for 53 and 5 yards.

Was Zimmer surprised by how his team couldn't handle

such situations?

"No. Actually most of the things they did, we practiced," he said. "They ran them just a little better than we covered them."

Philly also won the turnover battle 3-0, another significant contribution to one of Minnesota's worst playoff defeats.

"One of the things we preached coming in was turnovers," said Case Keenum, who threw a pick-6 to Patrick Robinson that tied the game 7-7 and began the Eagles' onslaught. "They took care of the football and we didn't."

It all made for a long night two weeks before Minneapolis hosts the Super Bowl that the Eagles and Patriots now have reached.

"They're all hard to swallow," Keenum said of the loss. "Once you get a game away from playing in the Super Bowl, that's going to be hard to swallow. The way it happened, I mean, they played really well and we didn't. It's unfortunate."

Jags come up short

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Jacksonville linebacker Myles Jack put his thumb and forefinger about an inch apart as it sank in for him that the Jaguars had fallen just short — just like the Falcons and the Seahawks and the Rams and so many other Patriots opponents had before.

"Close, man. We were almost there," he said after New England came back to beat Jacksonville 24-20 on Sunday for the franchise's 10th AFC championship.

"On the one hand, we could have won the game. But on the other, Tom Brady is Tom Brady," Jack said. "We got Tom Bradyed again."

Entering the game as a 9½-point underdog, the Jaguars opened a 20-10 lead early in the fourth quarter against the defending Super Bowl champions. No team had ever rallied from a double-digit, fourth quarter in the AFC title game.

But then, no team has Bill Belichick on the sideline, Brady

lining up behind the center and a résumé full of big-game comebacks going back to their first Super Bowl win 16 years ago.

"That's what those guys do, and they do it very well," Jaguars coach Doug Marrone said. "And that's why they're moving on."

Blake Bortles completed 23 of 36 passes for 293 yards and a touchdown, Leonard Fournette ran for 76 yards and a touchdown and Allen Hurns had six catches for 80 yards for Jacksonville (12-7).

Bortles, who had never won a playoff game before this month, had outplayed Brady through three quarters, with a quarterback rating of 121.9 to the five-time NFL champion's 87.5.

But Bortles said he didn't allow himself to start thinking about making it to the Super Bowl.

"I don't think you can, especially when playing Tom Brady and the Patriots," he said. "Because they're going to score. They're going to find a way to put pressure on you."

NBA roundup

Pacers halt Spurs' home winning streak

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Victor Oladipo scored 19 points and the Indiana Pacers defeated San Antonio 94-86 on Sunday night, snapping the Spurs' 14-game home winning streak.

The Spurs lost at home for the third time this season and the first since Nov. 10 against Milwaukee.

"It's just a great win for this young team to come into San Antonio, where they only lost two games," Pacers coach Nate McMillan said.

The Pacers became the first Eastern Conference team in three years to sweep a season series from the Spurs.

"We did a great job just getting stops and moving the ball," Oladipo said. "They're a tough team to play against. Well-coached team, great players over there, it was a tough-fought team win. We've just got to build on it."

Pau Gasol had 14 points to lead San Antonio.

With Manu Ginobili, Rudy Gay and Kawhi Leonard out with injuries, the Spurs opted to bring Tony Parker off the bench for just the 14th time in 1,165 career games.

Parker responded with 12 points and five assists, but LaMarcus Aldridge struggled without the veteran point guard, scoring a season-low 10 points.

"Thaddeus (Young) did a really nice job of making LaMarcus work," McMillan said. "You don't stop those guys, but he was physical and made it tough for him to score. The rest of our guys did a good job defending and just keeping them in front."

Magic 103, Celtics 95: At Boston, Elfrid Payton had 22 points and Orlando won for just the third time in 20 games, overcoming Kyrie Irving's 40 points.

Orlando had lost 10 in a row on the road overall since early December.

Irving sat out Boston's pre-

vious game to rest a sore left shoulder. Despite his efforts, the Celtics dropped their season-worst third straight home game.

Evan Fournier added 19 and Aaron Gordon had a double-double with 11 points and 12 rebounds for the Magic.

Lakers 127, Knicks 107: Jordan Clarkson had 29 points and 10 assists, Julius Randle added 27 points and 12 rebounds, and host Los Angeles got its sixth win in eight games.

Kyle Kuzma added 15 points for the Lakers (17-29), who continued their midseason surge. Rookie point guard Alex Caruso set career highs with nine points and eight assists, making the most of extensive playing time in the absence of injured Lonzo Ball.

Kristaps Porzingis, Tim Hardaway Jr. and Michael Beasley scored 17 points apiece for the Knicks, who have lost 12 of 16. New York slipped to 2-2 on its seven-game trip.

The Knicks couldn't keep up down the stretch with the Lakers, whose up-tempo offense flowed throughout their highest-scoring game in two weeks.

Nets 101, Pistons 100: Spencer Dinwiddie's jumper with 0.9 seconds left lifted visiting Brooklyn and handed Detroit its fifth straight loss.

After Andre Drummond's basket put the Pistons ahead with 4.7 seconds left, Dinwiddie took the inbounds pass, drove to 14 feet and drained a jumper against his former teammates.

Caris LeVert split a pair of free throws with 13.7 seconds left, giving the Nets a 99-98 edge.

Langston Galloway misplayed the ensuing inbounds pass, but was able to knock the ball to Drummond. Detroit's center nearly traveled in a rare drive from outside the three-point arc, and flipped in a go-ahead shot.

Dinwiddie finished with 22 points. Tobias Harris led the Pistons with 20.

NHL roundup

Knights move atop league with victory

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Golden Knights are giving Vegas an incredible, odds-beating story in their first year on the ice.

With a roster built on everybody else's spare parts, this expansion team has the whole league playing catch-up.

James Neal and Jonathan Marchessault scored to help the Golden Knights beat the Carolina Hurricanes 5-1 on Sunday night, giving the first-year franchise the best record in the NHL.

The Golden Knights are 31-11-4, good for 66 points. That's one ahead of Tampa Bay, which had the night off. Vegas is two wins shy of tying the record for wins by an expansion team, shared by the Anaheim Ducks and Florida Panthers in 1993-94.

Just don't expect the veteran-heavy Golden Knights to get caught up in their unexpected standing.

"It's an interesting story, and it's still being written," forward Colin Miller said.

Miller had a goal and two assists, and Marc-Andre Fleury made 27 saves for Vegas. The Golden Knights finished 2-1-1 on this road trip, including a 4-1 win Thursday at the Lightning.

Pierre-Edouard Bellemare and Brendan Leipsic also scored for Vegas, which avenged a 3-2 shootout loss to Carolina in December. Neal got his 21st goal of the season, and Marchessault had his 17th.

This trip to Raleigh went much better for Vegas coach Gerard Gallant than his last. In his previous visit in November 2016, he was fired at the arena by the Florida Panthers. While the team bus took away his players, Gallant was left to wait for a taxi.

"I'm happy to be where I'm at, with the team I'm with,"

Gallant said.

Tough to be upset from atop the NHL world. Not that Gallant is getting caught up in that just yet.

"Every guy in our room knows there's a long part of the season left," Gallant said. "We can't worry about looking at the standings."

Jacob Slavin scored for the Hurricanes late in the first period on a power play. Goalie Scott Darling was lifted after allowing three goals on eight shots in the first.

Sharks 6, Ducks 2: Mikkel Boedker had two goals and an assist, Joe Thornton had a goal and an assist, and San Jose beat host Anaheim.

Marc-Edouard Vlasic, Kevin Labanc and Melker Karlsson also scored for the Sharks, who have won five of six. Aaron Dell stopped 33 shots.

Rickard Rakell and Ryan Getzlaf scored for Anaheim. John Gibson stopped only 17 of 22 shots and was replaced after giving up his fifth goal. Anaheim had a four-game home winning streak snapped.

Flyers 2, Capitals 1 (OT): Travis Konecny scored 27 seconds into overtime, and surging Philadelphia beat host Washington.

Konecny found space in the middle of the offensive zone and his shot deflected off Washington's T.J. Oshie and past Braden Holtby for his eighth of the season.

Washington has dropped three in a row. Alex Ovechkin scored his NHL-best 29th goal, and Holtby made 21 stops.

Jets 1, Canucks 0: Connor Hellebuyck made 29 saves for his fourth shutout of the season, and host Winnipeg beat Vancouver to extend its home winning streak to six games.

Patrik Laine scored his team-leading 21st goal in the first period.

Three USA Gymnastics officials resign

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — Three key leaders at USA Gymnastics resigned Monday as more women and girls told a judge about being sexually assaulted at the hands of a sports doctor who spent years with Olympic gymnasts and other female athletes.

The resignations of chairman Paul Parilla, vice chairman Jay Binder and treasurer Bitsy Kelley were announced in Indianapolis while a judge in Lansing, Mich., heard a fifth day of statements from women and girls who said they were molested by Larry Nassar.

“We support their decisions to resign at this time,” said Kerry Perry, president and CEO of USA Gymnastics, which is the national governing body for gymnastics. “We believe this step will allow us to more effectively move forward in implementing change within our organization.”

The board positions are volunteer and unpaid, but the resignations add to the months of turmoil. Steve Penny quit as president last March after critics said USA Gymnastics failed to protect gymnasts from abusive coaches and Nassar.

The group last week said it was ending its long relationship with the Karolyi Ranch,

the Huntsville, Texas, home of former national team coordinator Martha Karolyi and her husband, Bela. Some Olympians said they were assaulted there by Nassar.

Nassar, 54, has admitted molesting athletes during medical treatment when he was employed by Michigan State University and USA Gymnastics. He has already been sentenced to 60 years in prison for child pornography crimes.

Under a plea deal, he faces a minimum prison sentence of 25 to 40 years in the molestation case. The maximum term could be much higher.

Djokovic out of Australian Open

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Six-time champion Novak Djokovic was stunned in straight sets by Hyeon Chung not long after Tennys Sandgren upset No. 5 Dominic Thiem at the Australian Open.

The season-opening major often throws up unexpected results, but the back-to-back upsets Monday resulted in a longshot of a quarterfinal: Chung, the first Korean to reach the last eight at a Grand Slam, vs. 97th-ranked Sandgren, who had never won a match at a major or beaten a top 10 player until last week.

The 58th-ranked Chung relentlessly attacked Djokovic — who is playing his first tournament since Wimbledon because of an injured right elbow — in the 7-6 (4), 7-5, 7-6 (3) fourth-round win.

He ripped 47 winners, including a forehand on the slide and at full stretch on the baseline that put him within two points of victory.

Chung credited the usually athletic Djokovic, who needed a medical timeout in the second set for a massage on his sore elbow, for the inspiration.

“When I’m young, I’m just trying to copy Novak because he’s my idol,” Chung said. “I can’t believe this tonight. Dreams come true tonight.”

Djokovic, who winced and grimaced throughout the match

— particularly when stretching for backhands, said he’d need to reassess the treatment for his elbow. But he said he didn’t want his injuries to detract from Chung’s win.

“Amazing. Amazing performance,” Djokovic said. “Impressive. Whenever he was in trouble, he came up with some unbelievable shots. Just from the back of the court, you know, he was like a wall.”

The 26-year-old Sandgren, who entered the season’s opening major ranked 97th, missed a match point in the fourth set but held on for a 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (4), 6-7 (7), 6-3 win over Thiem. It followed up his earlier victory over 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka.

“I don’t know if this is a dream or not — all you guys are here, so maybe it’s not,” he said in an on-court TV interview after his 3-hour, 54-minute fourth-round win. “I’m not in my underwear, so maybe it’s not a dream.”

Sandgren is only the second man in 20 years to reach the quarterfinals on his debut at Melbourne Park.

He converted half of his eight break-point chances, and fended off 10 of the 12 he faced against Thiem, and hit 63 winners against 38 unforced errors in the biggest win of his life.

“Trying to keep riding the wave,” said Sandgren, who was named after his great-grandfather and is from Tennessee.

Defending champion Roger Federer had no real difficulties in reaching the Australian Open quarterfinals for the 14th time, accounting for Marton Fucsovics 6-4, 7-6 (3), 6-2.

The 19-time major winner had never played Fucsovics but had beaten his coach — Attila Savolt — here in the second round in 2002.

Federer will renew a lengthy rivalry next against Tomas Berdych, who returned to the quarterfinals for the seventh time at Melbourne Park with a 6-1, 6-4, 6-4 win over Fabio Fognini.

Angelique Kerber, the only Grand Slam singles winner remaining in the women’s draw, was up earlier, and got a serious wakeup call.

For a while it appeared Kerber’s progression could unravel against No. 88 Hsieh Su-wei, a former top-ranked doubles player with a double-handed grip on both sides, until she regained momentum for a 4-6, 7-5, 6-1 win. That earned Kerber a quarterfinal spot against U.S. Open finalist Madison Keys.

Keys returned to the quarterfinals here for the first time in three years with a 6-3, 6-2 win over No. 8-seeded Caroline Garcia, and is yet to drop a set.

Top-seeded Simona Halep, who had to rally from triple match point down to advance through the third round, beat Naomi Osaka 6-3, 6-2.

Top 25 roundup Cavs win 10th straight

Associated Press

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — Kyle Guy scored 17 points, and No. 2 Virginia beat Wake Forest 59-49 on Sunday night for its 10th straight win.

De’Andre Hunter added 16 points to help the first-place Cavaliers (18-1, 7-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) extend their longest winning streak since 2015-16 and open league play with seven victories for the second time in four years. Virginia shot nearly 46 percent in the second half while holding Wake Forest to 30 percent shooting after halftime.

Bryant Crawford scored 11 points, and Mitchell Wilbekin and Brandon Childress added 10 apiece for the Demon Deacons (8-11, 1-6), who kept it close against a highly ranked Virginia team for the second time in three years but still managed to lose their fifth straight.

No. 23 Michigan 62, Rutgers 47: Moe Wagner scored 16 points and Duncan Robinson added 12 to lift host Michigan over Rutgers.

No. 25 Miami 86, North Carolina State 81: Bruce Brown Jr. scored 19 points and visiting Miami shot 58 percent from the field.