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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Kurds capture 2 US citizens in Syria

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

Kurdish-led forces battling Islamic State militants in Syria say they captured five foreign fighters, including an American who once sought to become an English teacher in the jihadi group's Iraqi capital.

That man, reputed to be a Texan named Warren Christopher Clark, 34, was one of two alleged U.S. citizens captured in a counterterrorism raid near the Iraqi border, where U.S.-backed forces are continuing to battle a pocket of the terrorists, the Syrian Democratic Forces said in a news release Sunday.

The group of jihadis had been preparing to attack masses of civilians fleeing the area, the SDF said. Also captured were two Pakistani fighters and an Irish man.

Officials with Operation Inherent Resolve, the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, were aware of the SDF news release but could not confirm the information it con-

tained, a spokesman said via email.

"The incident is under investigation," said Army Col. Scott Rawlinson, the spokesman.

While nearly all of the territory ISIS once claimed in Syria has been liberated and President Donald Trump has called for a withdrawal of Americans from the country in the coming months, the U.S. and its allies continue to battle a remaining pocket of fighters along the Middle Euphrates River Valley.

In Iraq, where the government declared victory over the group in late 2017, ISIS fighters have launched insurgent attacks, ambushes and kidnappings, and some officials have warned of a possible resurgence of the group, which has long drawn hundreds of foreign fighters to its ranks.

Clark, who has one glass eye, had sought a nonmilitary role with the group, according to researchers with George Washington University's Program on Extremism, which in a February report named him as one of

at least 64 Americans from 16 states who had traveled to Iraq and Syria since 2011 to join jihadi groups, mainly ISIS.

Under the alias Abu Muhammad al-Ameriki, Clark had submitted an application seeking to join ISIS as an English teacher in Mosul, which had served as the Iraqi capital of ISIS' physical caliphate from the summer of 2014 until it was liberated by U.S.-backed and trained Iraqi forces in summer 2017.

Using the application's resume and sources in Texas, researchers identified Clark as a University of Houston graduate who had converted to Islam in 2004 and was radicalized after viewing jihadi videos online, NBC News reported last year.

He had worked as a substitute teacher in Texas before traveling to Saudi Arabia to teach English for two years and then going to Turkey.

The second American the SDF captured was identified as Zaid Abed al-Hamed, 35, who reportedly went by the alias Abu Zaid al-Ameriki. He does not appear

to have been one of the fighters, mainly U.S. citizens and legal residents, who had been identified in the Program on Extremism report.

As with Clark, Al-Hamed's Arabic nom de guerre, or "kunya," contains a term traditionally used to identify Americans, but several fighters dubbed with the same term and appearing in jihadi propaganda materials since 2011 were not mentioned in the February report because their true names or backgrounds could not be verified, wrote Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, Seamus Hughes and Bennett Clifford, the report's authors.

Some 300 Americans tried to leave or did leave the U.S. to fight in Iraq or Syria since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the report said, citing the FBI. Of the 64 that were named, the whereabouts or status of 28 were publicly unknown, more than 20 were believed to have died overseas, 12 were apprehended and three had returned to the U.S. without facing charges.

USS Fort McHenry en route to tense Black Sea region

BY SCOTT WYLAND

Stars and Stripes

The dock-landing vessel USS Fort McHenry transited the Dardanelles Strait en route to the Black Sea on Sunday, making it the first U.S. Navy ship to enter the tense region since Russia seized three Ukrainian vessels in November in the Kerch Strait.

Navy officials say the Fort McHenry is conducting a regularly scheduled Black Sea operation. It is the first Navy ship to enter the Black Sea since August, when the USS Carney, an

Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, and the fast-transport vessel USNS Carson City worked separate missions there.

"We routinely operate in the Black Sea consistent with international law and the Montreux Convention and will continue to do so," said Cmdr. Kyle Raines, 6th Fleet spokesman. "We also continue our call for Ukraine and Russia to seek a diplomatic resolution to their dispute."

The Fort McHenry is a transport vessel equipped with defensive weaponry such as machine guns, small cannons and short-range anti-missile

systems. It has little offensive capability.

Russia has viewed any U.S. naval ship in the Black Sea as an intrusion since it seized the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

But maintaining Black Sea patrols after the Kerch Strait incident is important to show a commitment to protecting partners against Russian aggression, said Michael Petersen, director of the Naval War College's Russia Maritime Studies Institute.

"The U.S. has committed to upholding international law, which Russia has consistently

violated in the Black Sea," Petersen wrote in an email exchange last week.

The U.S. and NATO allies have denounced Russia opening fire on three Ukrainian vessels near the Sea of Azov and detaining 24 crewmembers, but they have shown little interest in taking direct action against Russia.

Ukraine is not a NATO member, so allied nations are not compelled to defend it against an aggressor like Russia, Petersen said. That makes Ukraine more vulnerable to Russia, he added.

UCMJ reforms in effect as new year begins

Stars and Stripes

Changes to the way military justice is dispensed aim to expand the rights of the accused, increase protections for junior servicemembers and make the criminal justice system more transparent.

The revisions, part of the Military Justice Act of 2016, took effect Wednesday, an Air Force statement said. They are the broadest changes to the Uniform Code of Military Justice in decades.

Significant changes include a right by convicted servicemembers to appeal a sentence greater than six months and

the criminalization of sexual activity between a person with special trust and a “specially protected” junior member. Specially protected applies to a recruit or trainee, according to the statement. Positions of trust include most anyone who has authority over them: officers, noncommissioned officers, recruiters and instructors.

Among other changes, two more crimes were added to the UCMJ: retaliating against someone for reporting or planning to report a crime and fraudulent use of a credit or debit card.

The new year also brought changes to the Manual for

Courts-Martial. Among them, convicted servicemembers sentenced to serve more than six months in confinement may appeal their convictions if they are not already automatically reviewed.

Most court-martial documents will be publicly accessible under a system like those used in civilian courts, according to the Air Force secretary’s statement.

Other changes to the Manual for Courts-Martial allow a convicted servicemember to choose a judge alone to impose the sentence rather than the court-martial panel that heard the case.

The changes also give military judges the authority to issue investigative subpoenas before the case is referred to a charging authority, issue warrants for electronic communications and enforce certain victims’ rights.

In addition, courts-martial panels — the group of officers and enlisted servicemembers who hear the case — are set at eight members for general courts-martial that do not include capital punishment as a potential sentence and four members for special courts-martial.

Bolton outlines US plan, terms for Syria withdrawal

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — President Donald Trump’s national security adviser said Sunday that the American military withdrawal from northeastern Syria is conditioned on defeating the remnants of Islamic State and on Turkey assuring the safety of U.S.-allied Kurdish fighters.

John Bolton said there is no timetable for the pullout but insisted the military presence is not an unlimited commitment.

“There are objectives that we want to accomplish that condition the withdrawal,” Bolton told reporters in Jerusalem.

Those conditions, he said, included defeating what’s left of ISIS in Syria and protecting Kurdish militias who have fought alongside U.S. troops against the extremist group.

Bolton said the U.S. is insisting that its Kurdish allies in Syria are protected from any planned Turkish offensive — a warning he was expected to deliver to Turkey’s president,

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, this week.

He said that in upcoming meetings with Turkish officials he will seek “to find out what their objectives and capabilities are, and that remains uncertain.”

Bolton said the U.S. has asked the Kurds to “stand fast now” and refrain from seeking protection from Russia or Syrian President Bashar Assad’s government.

Bolton said U.S. troops would remain at the critical area of

al-Tanf, in southern Syria, to counter growing Iranian activity in the region.

He defended the legal basis for the deployment, saying it’s justified by the president’s constitutional authority.

The U.S. is also seeking a “satisfactory disposition” for roughly 800 ISIS prisoners held by the U.S.-backed Syrian opposition, Bolton said, adding that talks were ongoing with European and regional partners about the issue.

Former Defense Secretary Harold Brown dies at age 91

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Harold Brown, who as defense secretary in the Carter administration championed cutting-edge fighting technology during a tenure that included the failed rescue of hostages in Iran, has died at age 91.

Brown died Friday, said the Rand Corp., the California-based think tank which Brown served as a trustee for more than 35 years.

Brown was a nuclear physicist who led the Pentagon to

modernize its defense systems with weapons that included precision-guided cruise missiles, stealth aircraft, advanced satellite surveillance and improved communications and intelligence systems. He successfully campaigned to increase the Pentagon budget during his term, despite skepticism inside the White House and from Democrats in Congress.

That turbulent period included the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian hostage crisis. An effort in April 1980 to rescue the hos-

tages failed when one of the helicopters on the mission struck a tanker aircraft in eastern Iran and crashed, killing eight U.S. servicemen.

“I considered the failed rescue attempt my greatest regret and most painful lesson learned,” Brown wrote in his book “Star Spangled Security.”

Brown faced numerous obstacles when he took the job as Pentagon chief, including pressure to reduce the defense budget both from within the administration and from influential congressional Democrats.

Wary of the growing Soviet threat, Brown sought to withstand the pressure to cut defense and, gradually, managed to increase spending.

And he cited the technological advances in defense systems, especially weapons systems such as precision-guided cruise missiles, stealth aircraft and advanced satellite surveillance.

Brown later maintained that his extensive work with the Soviets on the arms race was not wasted.

Sides trade blame as shutdown continues

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A first round of talks between White House officials and congressional aides has made little progress toward ending the government shutdown, with each side accusing the other of giving no ground.

More discussions were planned for Sunday, while President Donald Trump, who did not attend the negotiating session, was scheduled to be at Camp David for a retreat with White House staff on border security and other topics.

With the talks stalled, House

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said House Democrats intend to start passing individual bills to reopen agencies. The first would be the Treasury Department, to ensure people receive their tax refunds.

Democrats said the White House did not budge on the president's key demand, \$5.6 billion to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. The White House said money was not discussed in depth, but the administration was clear about the need for a wall and the goal of resolving the shutdown all at once, not piecemeal.

Acting chief of staff Mick

Mulvaney told NBC's "Meet the Press" that he believes Democrats "think they're winning the PR battle and they're willing to drag this out because they think it hurts the president." Democrats familiar with the meeting said the White House position was "untenable."

A White House official said the meeting included a briefing on border security by Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen. Democrats sought written details from the Department of Homeland Security on their budget needs; the White House said it would provide that.

Mulvaney said Trump was willing to forgo a concrete wall for steel or other materials.

The president has suggested his definition of the wall is flexible, referring to slats and other "border things." Democrats have made clear they see a wall as immoral and ineffective and prefer other types of border security funded at already agreed upon levels.

Trump had campaigned on the promise that Mexico would pay for the wall. Mexico has refused. He's now demanding the money from Congress.

Nev. inmate whose execution was postponed found dead

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A twice-convicted murderer who had repeatedly said he wanted to die by lethal injection was found dead in his death-row prison cell from an apparent hanging, officials said Saturday.

Scott Raymond Dozier, 48, was found unresponsive in his solo death row cell at the state's maximum-security prison in Ely, Department of Corrections spokeswoman Brooke Santana told The Associated Press.

Dozier had said repeatedly he wanted to die rather than live the rest of his life in prison. Nevada officials said he tried to kill himself several times after two scheduled lethal injections were postponed.

"I've been very clear about my desire to be executed ... even if suffering is inevitable," Dozier said in a handwritten note to a state court judge who postponed his execution in November 2017 over concerns the untried drug regimen could leave him suffocating, conscious and unable to move.

But his bid to become the first Nevada inmate put to death since 2006 was called off twice amid court fights over a three-drug combination that

had never been used in the U.S.: the sedative midazolam, the powerful opioid fentanyl and a muscle-paralyzing agent called cisatracurium.

The starts-and-stops in Dozier's case propelled Nevada to the top of a national debate about the death penalty and shed light on extraordinary efforts some states take to try to obtain drugs from pharmaceutical companies that insist they don't want their products used for executions.

Last month, state lawyers revealed in a separate federal lawsuit over Dozier's treatment behind bars that he had tried several methods to kill himself in recent months, including attempting to obtain drops of a deadly drug on a piece of paper sent through prison mail.

The state insisted the isolation was to protect Dozier from self-harm, but his lawyers argued he was deteriorating due to unconstitutional treatment.

Dozier's lawyers also revealed that he apparently cut his neck and wrist with a razor in October.

Dozier was not on suicide watch Saturday, Santana said. He was found at 4:35 p.m. at the prison in Ely, about 250 miles north of Las Vegas.

Woman in vegetative state for 10 years has reportedly given birth

Associated Press

PHOENIX — A woman said to have been in a vegetative state for at least a decade at a private health care facility in Phoenix reportedly gave birth recently, triggering a police investigation and reviews by state agencies in a situation that the state governor's office called "deeply troubling."

Azfamily.com, a news website for television stations KPHO and KTVK, first reported late Thursday that, according to sources not identified by the website, a woman gave birth Dec. 29 living at a Hacienda HealthCare facility where the staff was unaware that she was pregnant.

According to some reports, the woman was a victim of a near-drowning more than 10 years ago. Her identity hasn't been reported, and it's not known if she has family or a guardian.

Sources quoted in the reports said the woman was heard to be moaning and that the baby's head was starting to emerge when a nurse came in.

"None of the staff were aware that she was pregnant until she was pretty much giving birth," azfamily.com quoted a source familiar with the situation as

saying. That person said the baby was said to be alive and healthy.

Following the azfamily.com report, Hacienda Health Care and state officials issued brief statements about the situation, expressing concern and describing reviews being conducted and steps being taken. But they did not specifically confirm the reported pregnancy and birth.

A Phoenix Police Department spokesman, Sgt. Tommy Thompson said only that "the matter is under investigation."

Hacienda said it in a statement it was cooperating with law enforcement and reviewing its security protocols after becoming aware of a "deeply disturbing incident and "an unprecedented matter."

According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, an agency that regulates health care facilities, the 60-bed Hacienda facility was required to tighten security procedures to protect patients in wake of the report.

"We are aware of this situation and are actively working with local law enforcement in their criminal investigation," the department said in a statement.

2 British soldiers hurt in Syria ISIS attack

Associated Press

BEIRUT — A missile attack by Islamic State in eastern Syria killed at least one Kurdish fighter and wounded two British soldiers embedded with them, according to reports Sunday, amid fierce fighting in the strategic area near the Iraqi border.

The Kurdish-run Rudaw news agency said the two British soldiers were in stable condition.

British special forces are known to be on the ground in northern Syria, although the British government does not provide details about their

presence. There was no immediate confirmation or comment from the United Kingdom.

The injuries would be the first known casualties sustained by Western anti-ISIS coalition forces since President Donald Trump announced in late December his intention to pull out some 2,000 U.S. troops in Syria, declaring that ISIS has been defeated. The abrupt decision surprised U.S. allies and angered his own national security advisers who disagree with the claim of ISIS' defeat. U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned shortly afterward.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights, a group that monitors the Syrian civil war, said in a report Sunday that the ISIS attack occurred the previous day in the village of Shaafa, in eastern Deir el-Zour province, amid fierce clashes between the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by the U.S.-led coalition, and ISIS militants.

It said a Kurdish fighter was killed and three were wounded, including the two British soldiers who were airlifted by the coalition for treatment.

The SDF in December captured the last town held by ISIS in Syria, but the militants still

hold small pockets of territory in Deir el-Zour province, and there are concerns the group would take advantage of an American troop pullout to regroup.

Meanwhile, the SDF announced Sunday that its fighters had captured five foreign jihadis while combating ISIS in eastern Syria. A spokesman for the group, Mustafa Bali, said they included two Americans, two Pakistanis and one Irish citizen.

SDF forces are believed to be holding hundreds of ISIS foreign fighters in detention centers in northern Syria.

Cardinal's trial comes amid calls for reckoning in France

Associated Press

LYON, France — The Roman Catholic Church faces another public reckoning when a French cardinal goes on trial Monday for his alleged failure to report a pedophile priest who confessed to preying on Boy Scouts and whose victims want to hold one of France's highest church figures accountable.

Nine alleged victims of the Rev. Bernard Preynat have summoned Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, 68, as a defendant in France's most prominent clergy sex abuse case yet. Another archbishop, a bishop and the Vatican official in charge of sex abuse cases also are among the defendants ordered to court in the southeastern city of Lyon to answer allegations of a cover-up.

Barbarin sought counsel on how to handle abuse accusations against Preynat from the Vatican official, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, who recommended disciplinary measures while "avoiding a public scandal." However, Ladaria won't be present during the three-day trial since the Vatican has invoked his diplomatic immunity.

It could not extend the same protection to Barbarin, the archbishop of Lyon since 2002.

Barbarin, who maintains his innocence, encouraged Preynat's alleged victims to take their reports of being abused during the 1970s and 1980s to judicial authorities. Preynat, who is in his 70s, wrote letters to some families confessing the abuse and is to be tried separately on sexual violence charges involving 10 children.

The victims' allegation of a cover-up that allowed Preynat to be in contact with children until his 2015 retirement was thrown out in 2016 for insufficient evidence. They took the matter into their own hands and put it back on the docket through a direct approach available as a recourse in France.

The difficulty in bringing the case to trial reflects the challenges that victims of clergy abuse encounter. It also comes as demands are soaring for a public reckoning for both abusers and those in the church hierarchy who hid such acts.

For his part, Barbarin "expects to be acquitted," his lawyer, Jean-Felix Luciani, said in an interview.

He said his client "never obstructed justice" because the statute of limitations had passed on the acts in question by the time Barbarin was informed.

Russia brushes off talk of US prisoner exchange

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia's deputy foreign minister has brushed off suggestions that an American being held in Moscow on suspicion of spying could be exchanged for a Russian citizen.

Paul Whelan, 48, a former U.S. Marine who also holds Canadian, British and Irish citizenship, was detained in Moscow in late December. His arrest has led to speculation that Russia could be using him to bargain for a Russian woman who has pleaded guilty to acting as a foreign agent in the United States.

The brother of Paul Whelan told The Associated Press that he can't help but question whether the events are connected.

"You look at what's going on and you wonder if this is just a large game of pieces being moved around," David Whelan told the AP via Skype from Newmarket, Ontario. "You start to wonder if all of these things are connected. But at the same time, they could just be arbitrary events."

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Saturday that discussing a possible swap involving Whelan and Maria Butina would be premature because Whelan hasn't

been formally charged, according to Russian news agencies.

"As to the possibility of exchanges of one sort of another, it's impossible and incorrect to consider the question now when an official charge hasn't even been presented," Ryabkov was quoted as saying by state news agency RIA-Novosti.

Some Russian news reports earlier cited unnamed sources as saying Whelan had been indicted on espionage charges that carry a possible prison sentence of 20 years. Russian officials haven't given details of Whelan's suspected activities, and he was initially identified only as an American. His concurrent Canadian, British and Irish citizenships became known on Friday.

U.S. Ambassador Jon Huntsman Jr. visited Whelan on Wednesday in Moscow's Lefortovo Prison, a 130-year-old facility noted for strict conditions. Britain, Canada and Ireland have applied for consular access to him.

Whelan was discharged from the Marines for bad conduct. He works as the global security director for a U.S. automobile parts manufacturer and lives in Michigan.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Rogue wolf pack takes down its eighth cow

OR MEDFORD — Authorities said gray wolf OR-7's Rogue Pack has been blamed for killing another cow at a ranch in southwest Oregon, marking the eighth confirmed livestock kill attributed to the pack since late October.

The Mail Tribune reported that the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said a livestock owner found an injured calf on New Year's Day on a ranch in the Boundary Butte area where the Rogue Pack has killed before.

Rancher Ted Birdseye, in northeastern Jackson County, said he has lost five cows and a guard dog to the wolf pack over the past 13 months.

Woman arrested for allegedly biting jogger

CA OAKLAND — Authorities arrested a woman they allege bit a jogger who pepper-sprayed her dog at a San Francisco Bay Area park.

Alma Cadwalader, 19, of Oakland, was arrested Friday by police with the East Bay Regional Park District. Authorities said Cadwalader's dog tried to attack the jogger Thursday on a trail in Anthony Chabot Regional Park. The jogger used pepper spray to fend off the animal.

Police said Cadwalader then confronted the jogger, tackling and punching her, and bit the woman's forearm, leaving "significant wounds."

She was booked on suspicion of battery with serious bodily injury, false imprisonment with violence and robbery for allegedly taking the jogger's pepper spray.

Stolen penguin statue returned to museum

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — A large purple penguin statue that was swiped from a hotel in Oklahoma City was returned after police released surveillance camera images of a man with the \$3,000 piece of art tucked under his arm.

Oklahoma City police on Friday said the statue, which disappeared Dec. 30, from the 21c Museum Hotel, had been "returned home."

No arrests have been announced.

Hotel staff speculated that it was stolen by someone visiting a guest. Surveillance images show a man carrying the artwork by its head.

Police: Woman, 32, posed as teen student

NY CAIRO — A 32-year-old woman faces felony charges for posing as a homeless teenager to enroll in and attend classes at a high school in the Catskill Mountains, authorities said Friday.

Michaelann Goodrich presented herself as a 15-year-old to enroll in the Cairo-Durham school district 40 miles southwest of Albany last month, School Superintendent Anthony Taibi said.

Officials were skeptical of her story when Goodrich enrolled on Dec. 19 under the name "Riley Madison," but they were required by federal law to accept her because she claimed she was homeless, Taibi said.

School officials contacted the sheriff's office to launch an investigation.

In the meantime, Goodrich rode on a school bus, attended classes and had lunch at school on Dec. 21, before the holiday break, Taibi said.

Suspect in sneaker robbery surrenders

MA TYNGSBOROUGH — A New Hampshire man sought by police in Massachusetts for allegedly stabbing a teen during an attempt to steal a pair of expensive sneakers turned himself in.

Tyngsborough police said Dequan Hagen, 19, of Nashua, was arrested on several charges, including armed robbery, home invasion and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon.

Police said Hagen went to a 17-year-old boy's home Thursday to buy the Adidas Yeezys, which can sell for hundreds of dollars.

Police said Hagen tried to flee without paying, then got a knife from his car, forced his way back into the home and stabbed the teen in the abdomen. The teen is expected to survive.

Accused thief tells reporters: 'Go Eagles'

PA PITTSTON — A Pennsylvania man accused of breaking into a music store and stealing guitars told reporters he had one thing to say: "Go Eagles."

WNEP-TV reported Dale Sourbeck, 49, of Pittston, was charged Thursday with burglary and other offenses.

Police allege Sourbeck used a hammer to break into the Rock Street Music store in Pittston around 3 a.m. Thursday. Investigators said he was captured on surveillance cameras taking two guitars. Police allege Sourbeck returned to the store with a mask on and grabbed three more guitars.

As Sourbeck was escorted from the Pittston police department, a reporter asked if there was anything he wanted to say. He replied, "Go Eagles."

Bank robbery suspect strips and surrenders

CA SOLANA BEACH — Authorities are holding a man they say tried to rob a San Diego County bank, then told frightened customers to call 911, stripped to his underwear and awaited arrest.

Clint Gray, 35, was arrested Thursday at a Wells Fargo branch in Solana Beach.

Derek Stevenson told the San Diego Union-Tribune that he was one of three customers inside the bank when the man entered shortly after the branch opened, shouted that it was a robbery and ordered everyone to the ground.

As staff and customers complied, the man told people to call 911, began stripping to his underwear, then sat in a chair near the front door until deputies arrived. Authorities said the robber had no weapon and no cash was taken.

Teacher acquitted over puppy fed to turtle

ID PRESTON — A southeast Idaho teacher accused of feeding a live puppy to a snapping turtle in front of students has been acquitted of misdemeanor animal cruelty.

Media outlets reported a Franklin County jury found Robert Crosland not guilty Friday.

The charge was filed in June after allegations surfaced that Crosland put the puppy into an aquarium with a turtle at Preston Junior High in March. Crosland pleaded not guilty in July.

During the trial, the jury heard Crosland say in a recorded interview with investigators that he thought he was doing the right thing because the puppy was sick and likely to die.

From wire reports

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Dallas stifles Seattle for wild-card win

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Dak Prescott saw an opening up the middle, then three defenders between him and the first down.

The Dallas quarterback found a way to get there, and get his first playoff victory two years after a sensational rookie season ended in disappointment.

Ezekiel Elliott rushed for 137 yards and the go-ahead touchdown in the fourth quarter, Prescott scored on a sneak after his dazzling head-over-heels run and the Cowboys hung on for a 24-22 wild-card win over the Seattle Seahawks on Saturday night.

The win for the Cowboys (11-6) was the first for Elliott and Prescott after losing a divisional game in their playoff debut as first-year stars two years ago. Dallas will play at either New Orleans or the Los Angeles Rams in the divisional round next weekend.

“It’s really just a chance to keep going on, simple as that,” Prescott said. “Me and this whole team, we want to win it all. You can’t do that without taking care of the first one. A lot of excitement, but my goal is bigger than just one playoff win.”

The loss ended a run of nine straight victories in playoff openers for the Seahawks (10-7). The Elias Sports Bureau says it was the longest streak in NFL history.

Leading 17-14, Prescott faced third-and-14 from the Seattle 17 with the 2-minute warning approaching. He took off up the middle on a QB draw, barged through a trio of defenders 6 yards short of the first and went down at the 1 when he was flipped head-first by Tedric Thompson.

Prescott, who also had an 11-yard scoring pass to Michael Gallup in the first half, scored on the next play in the eighth win in nine games for the Cowboys.

“He’s just a rare guy,” coach Jason Garrett said. “His leadership, his toughness, just his way, his spirit. It’s like none other. Somehow, some way, he’s going to figure this thing out for us.”

Dallas’ defense, ranked in the top 10 most of the season, stifled the NFL’s No. 1 rushing offense and mostly kept quarterback Russell Wilson under control and handed him his first loss in four wild-card games.

The Seahawks had finished the regular season with six wins in seven games to secure Wilson’s sixth playoff trip in seven years despite a roster overhaul and 0-2 start.

“This has been a special, special year,” Wilson said. “Just the growth of our team, the men in the locker room, just the way that we’ve played together, just eliminating the doubters and the things that people thought that we could only do.”

Prescott, the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year in 2016 when the Cowboys lost to Green Bay at home as the top seed in the NFC, threw for 226 yards, and his sneak for what appeared to be a clinching score because Dallas burned more than five minutes while taking 24-14 lead.

But Tyler Lockett’s 53-yard catch set up a quick Seattle touchdown — Wilson’s 7-yard scoring pass to J.D. McKissic. The Seahawks got within two on their second two-point conversion following an injury to Sebastian Janikowski.

The missing kicker left the Seahawks no good options on an onside kick with 1:18

remaining. Punter Michael Dickson’s drop kick was caught by Cole Beasley at the Dallas 31, sealing the first playoff win for the Cowboys since beating Detroit in the wild-card round in the 2014 season.

After Wilson ran for 4 yards for a touchdown and Mike Davis’ two-point conversion run put Seattle up 14-10 late in the third quarter, Prescott led a 67-yard drive to put the Cowboys back in front for good.

A 34-yard pass to Amari Cooper, who had seven catches for 106 yards, led to Elliott’s 1-yard plunge after an apparent touchdown by the quarterback was overturned on replay.

Prescott then had a chance to give the Cowboys a 10-point lead, but K.J. Wright made a juggling interception in the end zone.

Dallas’ defense came through again, though, forcing a punt and giving Elliott a highlight play before Prescott added his. The NFL rushing leader stiff-armed Shaquill Griffin on a 17-yard run to get inside the 20.

Seattle got a double dose of bad news at halftime when Janikowski missed a 57-yard field goal on the final play and injured his left hamstring. He yelled as he grabbed the back of his leg and limped to the locker room, unable to return.

Still, the Seahawks took their first lead basically because the 40-year-old’s injury forced them to try.

Facing fourth-and-5 in Janikowski’s range from the Dallas 39, Doug Baldwin made a toe-dragging catch on the sideline for 22 yards. After Wilson’s TD run, the Seahawks pushed their lead to 14-10 on Mike Davis’ run.

Colts continue turnaround, top Texans

Associated Press

HOUSTON — A year ago, Andrew Luck was at home struggling with an injured shoulder that cost him the entire season.

On Saturday he wrote a happy ending to the latest chapter of his comeback season, throwing for 222 yards and two touchdowns and the Indianapolis Colts raced out to a big lead and cruised to a 21-7 win over the Houston Texans in the wild-card game.

Luck put on a show in his hometown in a stadium where he’d attended games throughout childhood and played in them

since high school, throwing for 191 yards and two touchdowns before halftime to help the Colts (11-6) build a 21-0 lead.

He denied feeling “at home” at NRG Stadium, but conceded to having warm feelings for the city he grew up in and where his grandparents and many friends still reside.

“But it’s still an away stadium,” he said. “It was very loud, very energetic, but fun to win, certainly.”

Running back Marlon Mack had 148 yards and a touchdown for Indianapolis, which advances to face the top-seeded Kansas City Chiefs in the divisional

round next weekend.

“We know we have an elite quarterback and we can throw it for 400 and win when we have to,” Indianapolis coach Frank Reich said.

“But the margin for error in playoff football when you try to do it that way is very thin. When you can win like this — running the football and stopping it — that’s just everything.”

Houston (11-6), which overcame a 0-3 start to win the AFC South, gave up too many big plays and couldn’t get anything going on offense in the first half to fall into the huge hole.

Deshaun Watson, who was

sacked an NFL-leading 62 times in the regular season, was sacked three times and hit eight more times in a disappointing playoff debut. He finished with 235 yards passing with a touchdown and an interception.

“Just a lack of execution on our part,” Watson said. “We didn’t make plays. I didn’t make plays. Communication was a little off. You just got to give the Colts the credit.”

The Colts, who opened the season 1-5, continued an impressive run by winning their fifth straight and for the 10th time in 11 games.

College basketball roundup

No. 1 Duke rolls past Clemson

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Zion Williamson took two dribbles in the open court, and inspiration struck: This was the perfect time to show off his 360-degree dunk.

In a freshman season full of highlight-reel plays for No. 1 Duke, this one might have been the most breathtaking.

“I said, ‘You know what? I’m wide open. Why not?’” Williamson said. “I did it, got high enough and it was almost like a layup.”

Williamson had 25 points and 10 rebounds in addition to that spectacular dunk, and the Blue Devils beat Clemson 87-68 on Saturday night in their Atlantic Coast Conference opener.

“There’s no ceiling on how many times he can twirl,” coach Mike Krzyzewski quipped, “as long as he puts the damned thing in.”

RJ Barrett, the ACC’s leading scorer, finished with 13 points while freshman point guard Tre Jones had 10 points and a season-best nine assists. Jack White added 12 points and Marquise Bolden had 11 for the Blue Devils (12-1, 1-0), who shot 48 percent and turned 19 Clemson turnovers into 27 points.

New Mexico 85, No. 6 Nevada 58: Anthony Mathis had 27 points to lead the host Lobos.

New Mexico (8-6, 2-0 Mountain West) knocked the Wolf Pack (14-1, 1-1) from the ranks of the undefeated and sent fans streaming onto the court.

Vance Jackson came off the bench for a double-double, with 18 points and 10 rebounds, and added seven assists and three steals for the Lobos.

Jordan Caroline scored 17 for Nevada, which looked out of sorts throughout. Brothers Caleb and Cody Martin combined for 4-for-21 shooting from the field and 17 points.

Alabama 77, No. 13 Kentucky 75: Tevin Mack scored 22 points, and the host Crimson Tide topped the Wildcats in the Southeastern Conference open-

er for both teams.

Dazon Ingram scored all 11 of his points after halftime, including some key free throws in Alabama’s fifth consecutive win.

PJ Washington scored on a dunk with 5 seconds to play and Kentucky (10-3) quickly fouled John Petty, who made one of two from the line.

Kira Lewis Jr. had 12 points for the Tide (10-3, 1-0).

Washington led the Wildcats (10-3, 0-1) with 15 points.

Iowa State 77, No. 5 Kansas 60: Marial Shayok scored 24 points, and the host Cyclones routed the Jayhawks for their fifth straight win.

Freshman Tyrese Haliburton had 14 points for Iowa State (12-2, 2-0), which opened Big 12 play with back-to-back wins for the first time since 2015.

Quentin Grimes scored 19 points for Kansas, and Dedric Lawson had 13 points and 12 rebounds. The Jayhawks (12-2, 1-1) committed a season-high 24 turnovers.

No. 3 Tennessee 96, Georgia 50: Jordan Bowden scored 20 points and the host Vols opened Southeastern Conference play by trouncing the Bulldogs for their eighth consecutive victory.

Tennessee (12-1, 1-0) recorded the most lopsided triumph in the series’ 156-game history, surpassing a 105-69 Volunteers victory on Feb. 1, 1975.

Derek Ogbeide scored 17 points for Georgia (8-5, 0-1), which had won three in a row.

No. 4 Virginia 65, No. 9 Florida State 5: Kyle Guy scored 21 points and the host Cavaliers limited Florida State to 15 field goals.

Guy scored 18 in the first half as Virginia (13-0, 1-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) opened a 42-23 lead. Braxton Key had 20 points for the Cavs, who are off to their best start since the 2014-15 team won its first 19 games.

Phil Cofer scored nine points for the Seminoles (12-2, 0-1),

No. 7 Gonzaga 91, Santa Clara 48: Rui Hachimura scored 25 points and the No. 7 Bulldogs opened the defense of their West Coast Conference regular-season title.

Brandon Clarke added 16 points for Gonzaga (14-2) in its 18th consecutive victory over the Broncos since 2011. Josh Perkins had six points, five rebounds, five assists and four steals. The Bulldogs have won 23 straight WCC openers.

No. 8 Michigan State 86, No. 14 Ohio State 77: Cassius Winston scored 25 points, Nick Ward added 21 and the visiting Spartans earned their eighth straight win.

The second half was tied six times before Michigan State (13-2, 4-0 Big Ten) took the lead on a Ward foul shot, and a layup by Kenny Goins put them up by three with 3:28 left.

No. 10 Virginia Tech 77, Boston College 66: Nickeil Alexander-Walker scored 25 points to lead the host Hokies to their eighth consecutive victory.

No. 11 Texas Tech 63, Kansas State 57: Davide Moretti scored 19 points and Matt Mooney added 14 to help Texas Tech hold off Kansas State.

No. 15 North Carolina 85, Pittsburgh 60: Cam Johnson scored 15 points in his homecoming, and the Tar Heels rolled to a road win.

No. 23 Oklahoma 74, Oklahoma State 64: Kristian Doolittle had 16 points and eight rebounds, helping the host Sooners.

Brady Manek scored 15 points and Christian James added 14 points and 11 rebounds for Oklahoma (12-2, 1-1 Big 12).

Army 77, Lafayette 69: Cayne Edwards scored 16 points, Tommy Funk had 11 points and 10 assists and the host Black Knights pulled away to snap a three-game skid.

Utah State 79, Air Force 62: Sam Merrill and Neemias Queta had double-doubles and the host Aggies never trailed.

Bison win seventh FCS title

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS

Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — A perfect ending for North Dakota State coach Chris Klieman and quarterback Easton Stick, and yet another championship for the Bison.

Stick had three touchdown runs and threw for two more scores and the Bison beat Eastern Washington 38-24 on Saturday for their record seventh FCS title, the fourth in five years with Klieman as head coach before he takes over at Kansas State.

“It was a special journey — 15-0, end it with a national championship. ... The story’s complete,” said Klieman, 69-6 as head coach and part of all of those titles, three as defensive coordinator. “That’s something that movies are made out of, dreams are made out of, books are written about.”

North Dakota State (15-0) has won all seven FCS titles over the past eight seasons.

Stick, who succeeded Carson Wentz as NDSU’s quarterback, threw for 198 yards and ran for 121 in his 49th victory to become the winningest FCS quarterback. Stick leaves with school records for total yards (11,216), passing yards (8,693) and 129 total touchdowns (88 passing, 41 rushing) — the last score a title-sealing 46-yard run with 1:16 left.

“This place is special,” Stick said. “Quarterback’s a unique position. You’re only as good as players you’re surrounded with. ... I’m so thankful for every guy I played with because as a freshman you come in and you just want to be a part of it.”

As a redshirt freshman three years ago, Stick was 8-0 starting when Wentz was hurt. That included three playoff games before Wentz returned for the championship game only a few months before the Philadelphia Eagles made him the No. 2 overall pick in the 2016 draft.

NBA roundup

Leonard, Siakam lead Raptors past Bucks

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Kawhi Leonard and Pascal Siakam each scored 30 points, with Siakam setting a career high, and the Toronto Raptors beat the Milwaukee Bucks 123-116 on Saturday night in a matchup of the top two teams in the NBA standings.

Serge Ibaka added 25 points and nine rebounds, Fred VanVleet had 21 points, and Danny Green 12 points and nine rebounds. The Raptors slowly took charge in the second and third quarters and withstood the Bucks' comeback attempt in the fourth.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 43 points and 18 rebounds for Milwaukee. Malcolm Brogdon added 15 points, and Khristian

Milton and Eric Bledsoe each had 14. The Bucks had won five straight. Milwaukee was coming off a 144-112 victory over Atlanta on Friday night.

Warriors 127, Kings 123: Stephen Curry scored 20 of his 42 points in the fourth quarter and had 10 three-pointers, and Golden State held off host Sacramento.

Kevin Durant added 29 points, nine assists and five rebounds, and Klay Thompson scored 20 points to help the Warriors complete a three-game sweep of the season series.

Trail Blazers 110, Rockets 101: Jusuf Nurkic had 25 points and 15 rebounds, and Portland snapped James Harden's 40-point streak and visiting

Houston's six-game winning streak on Saturday. Harden finished with 38 points, falling just short of his sixth straight game with 40 or more.

CJ McCollum added 24 points and Damian Lillard finished with 17 points and 12 assists for the Blazers, who have won three of their last four games.

Nuggets 123, Hornets 110: Nikola Jokic scored a season-high 39 points and grabbed 12 rebounds, Paul Millsap added 18 points and Western Conference-leading Denver beat Charlotte for its 10th straight win at home.

76ers 106, Mavericks 100: Joel Embiid had 25 points and 12 rebounds, and Ben Simmons added 20 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists to

help Philadelphia beat visiting Dallas.

Jazz 110, Pistons 105: Donovan Mitchell scored 24 of his 26 points in the second half, and Utah rallied from an 18-point, second-quarter deficit to beat host Detroit.

Spurs 108, Grizzlies 88: Derrick White scored 19 points, LaMarcus Aldridge added 18 and San Antonio overcame a sluggish start to beat visiting Memphis, handing the Grizzlies their fifth straight loss.

Pelicans 133, Cavaliers 98: Jrue Holiday and Julius Randle both scored 22 points and New Orleans handed host Cleveland its ninth straight loss.

NHL roundup

Short-handed Sharks put a stop to Lightning's streak

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Missing three regular defensemen, the San Jose Sharks got a complete team effort and handed the Tampa Bay Lightning their first regulation loss in 5½ weeks.

Evander Kane scored two goals to reach 200 for his career as the Sharks beat Tampa Bay 5-2 on Saturday night, snapping the NHL-leading Lightning's 16-game point streak.

Logan Couture, Joe Pavelski and Lukas Radil also scored for San Jose. Brent Burns had three assists, Erik Karlsson added two to extend his assists streak to 12 games, and Martin Jones stopped 19 shots.

"It's hard to take three guys out of your lineup and survive it," Sharks coach Pete DeBoer said. "That's as dangerous a group as there is in the league up front, particularly their top two lines. ... We knew coming in that we would need everyone's best effort in order to have a chance to win tonight, and we got that from everybody."

The Sharks were without defensemen Justin Braun (knee), Marc-Edouard Vlasic (wrist) and Radim Simek (concussion). Braun was placed on injured reserve.

Bruins 2, Sabres 1: Chris Wagner

and David Backes scored, Tuukka Rask stopped 31 shots and host Boston earned its fourth straight victory.

Rask was looking for his first shutout of the season, but former Bruins' defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen beat him with a wrist shot on the glove side with 2:38 left in regulation.

Kings 4, Oilers 0: Jonathan Quick earned his 300th victory, Anze Kopitar scored his 300th goal and host Los Angeles climbed out of last place in the overall NHL standings.

Kyle Clifford, Tyler Toffoli and Jeff Carter scored during a dominant first period, while Kopitar added his milestone goal in the third period.

Islanders 4, Blues 3: Jordan Eberle and Johnny Boychuk scored 11 seconds apart in the third period to lead visiting New York.

Anders Lee and Matt Martin also scored for the Islanders, who won their season-high sixth in a row and ninth in 10 games.

Blue Jackets 4, Panthers 3 (OT): Seth Jones scored 18 seconds into overtime and visiting Columbus won for the seventh time in nine games.

Brandon Dubinsky, Josh Anderson and Anthony Duclair also scored for the Blue

Jackets. Sergei Bobrovsky made 27 saves.

Maple Leafs 5, Canucks 0: Michael Hutchinson stopped 28 shots for his first shutout in more than two years and Auston Matthews had a goal and two assists to lead host Toronto.

Predators 4, Canadiens 1: Craig Smith scored two goals in the win for visiting Nashville.

Mattias Ekholm and Viktor Arvidsson also scored for the Predators. P.K. Subban had two assists.

Wild 4, Senators 3: Jared Spurgeon scored twice as Minnesota dealt host Ottawa its seventh consecutive setback.

Jordan Greenway and Zach Parise also scored for the Wild (20-17-3), who improved to 2-0 on a four-game trip.

Flames 3, Flyers 2 (OT): TJ Brodie scored 1 minute, 59 seconds into overtime after Matthew Tkachuk tied it with 4:17 left in regulation to lead visiting Calgary.

Tkachuk assisted on the winner in the 3-on-3 extra session. Philadelphia's Jordan Weal turned the puck over in the Flyers' offensive zone to set up a 2-on-1 break. Tkachuk sent a cross-ice pass to Brodie, who beat Carter Hart to lead the Pacific Division leaders.