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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Navy: Pings may be from missing aircraft

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The Navy appears to have detected “pings” from a KC-130J tanker and F/A-18D Hornet involved in a deadly midair collision last month off Japan’s southern coast, according to III Marine Expeditionary Force.

The aircraft out of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni crashed into the Philippine Sea on Dec. 6 during nighttime training about 200 miles south of Muroto Cape on Shikoku Island.

Five crewmembers from

the tanker and the pilot of the jet were killed. The Hornet’s weapons officer, who has not been identified, was the sole survivor.

A search by U.S. and Japanese forces for the lost aviators that spanned 35,000 square nautical miles was called off Dec. 11.

However, the Okinawa-based III MEF said in a statement Monday that signals detected in late December are thought to mark the location of the aircraft.

“A team of deep water salvage experts led by United States Navy’s Supervisor of

Salvage and Diving ... deployed from Yokosuka and arrived on scene Dec 18,” the statement said. “There, the highly skilled operators searched for the aircrafts’ emergency relocation towed pinger locator (TPL-25) system.”

Signals were detected Dec. 19 and by Dec. 21 the team was able to confirm three distinct pingers at a depth of approximately 9,843 feet, III MEF said in the statement.

Two of the pingers are thought to mark the location of the KC-130 and the third is associated with the F/A-18, the

statement said.

“Pending the next phase of recovery, salvage and reclamation efforts, we cannot with full confidence state that the aircraft themselves have been found,” the III MEF statement said. “We remain hopeful that the location of the flight data recording device coincides with the location of the aircraft.”

Future salvage efforts will be weighed by an overall risk assessment encompassing weather, sea state, water depth, underwater currents and seabed environment, the statement said.

Trump faces pressure from calendar to end shutdown

Bloomberg

President Donald Trump says he’s prepared to keep part of the U.S. government shut down for more than a year if necessary to get the money he wants for a wall on the Mexican border.

He plans to deliver a prime-time address Tuesday night on what he calls a border “crisis.”

But a series of deadlines over the next seven weeks will increase pressure on Trump to cut a deal to end a shutdown that could soon become the longest in history. Hundreds of thousands of workers at nine Cabinet departments and other agencies will soon start to miss paychecks, and the longer the standoff continues, the more consequences Trump and Congress will face — including shuttered courts, filth piling up in national parks and delayed tax refunds.

Later in the year, unrelated issues will compound the shutdown’s problems—the U.S. debt limit will need to be increased,

and Congress will have to strike a deal with Trump to prevent steep, automatic cuts in federal spending. Here are some key upcoming dates and why they could shorten the shutdown:

■ **Jan. 11, missed paychecks.** For about 800,000 federal workers on furlough or working without pay, this is the date they’ll miss their first paycheck. That milestone will significantly escalate the political pain of the shutdown.

While federal workers are not allowed to strike, many can be expected to eventually walk off the job and go work elsewhere — a challenge for maintaining services like the Transportation Security Administration — essential for air travel.

■ **Jan. 12, record shutdown.** The longest shutdown on record was in 1995. The government was closed for 21 days because President Bill Clinton and congressional Republicans, in charge of both chambers for the first time in more than 40 years, couldn’t agree on a spending plan.

■ **Jan. 21, Davos trip.** Trump is scheduled to travel to Davos, Switzerland, to address global political and business leaders at the World Economic Forum, and he may have to do so while the self-styled deal-maker can’t get his own government reopened.

■ **Jan. 29, State of the Union.** Trump will give his second State of the Union address in the House chamber — with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, of California, sitting behind him. The backdrop of a government shutdown would cast a pall on what is usually a highlight of the year for any president.

■ **Late January and February, tax returns.** If history is any guide, taxpayers could see their refunds from the Internal Revenue Service held hostage if the shutdown extends into the filing season, which begins soon. In previous shutdown contingency plans, the IRS would accept tax returns but would be prohibited from

issuing refunds, which averaged about \$2,899 per check in 2018.

The agency has yet to release an updated version of its shutdown plan during a filing season but will likely do so in the coming days.

■ **March 1, debt limit.** The current suspension of the U.S. debt limit expires. With extraordinary measures, the U.S. government could likely continue normal operations into the summer. Still, March 1 becomes another pressure point for the impasse to be resolved, and the longer a shutdown continues, the more likely other budget items — like a deal to prevent automatic spending cuts in 2020 — get wrapped into the talks.

■ **All year, census.** The Census Bureau is shuttered, preventing work on the decennial count of every American — data crucial to allocate federal spending and redraw congressional districts. A shutdown hurts the Trump administration’s ability to conduct the census on its terms.

Trump denies changes to Syria exit plan

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Monday pushed back against media reports that he had altered the timeline for removing U.S. troops from Syria, denying his administration had issued a series of contradictory statements about plans for ending America's role in the war.

"We will be leaving at a proper pace while at the same time continuing to fight ISIS and doing all else that is prudent and necessary!" the president said in a message on Twitter, referring to the Pentagon's ongoing operation to defeat Islamic State.

His comment, which differed from earlier promises of a swift departure for the more than 2,000 U.S. troops stationed in

Syria, was the latest iteration of an evolving road map for concluding the military mission there.

Trump's statement came a day after national security adviser John Bolton, speaking to reporters during a tour of the Middle East, said the troop departure would occur only after ISIS militants are fully routed.

Both his comments and Trump's conflict with officials' initial statements following the president's unexpected Dec. 19 announcement that all troops would come home in short order. Trump also declared victory against ISIS, contradicting military assessments.

"Our boys, our young women, our men, they're all coming back and they're coming back now. We won," Trump said in a video message on Twitter.

That abrupt pronouncement upended plans for a continued presence in Syria, where U.S. troops work with Syrian Kurdish forces battling militants in the eastern part of the country.

The unexpected move shocked allies, and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned after clashing with Trump over the plans.

While officials said Trump had initially ordered a 30-day departure, the White House later agreed to an exit within 120 days, which would permit troops more time to break down bases and safely remove equipment and personnel.

In recent days, White House and State Department officials have appeared to back away from plans for an immediate departure and from assertions

that the battle against the militants was over.

Instead, they have suggested the drawdown would be conditioned on the conclusion of fighting with ISIS and on a promise from Turkey, a NATO ally, that it would not attack Syrian partner forces, which Ankara views as an offshoot of a terrorist group.

But Trump, commenting on Twitter on Monday, denied any change had occurred.

"The Failing New York Times has knowingly written a very inaccurate story on my intentions on Syria," Trump said, referring to stories from numerous publications, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, which noticed the shifting plans. "No different from my original statements," he said.

Bolton in Turkey for negotiations on fate of Kurds

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — U.S. national security adviser John Bolton is set to press Turkey for assurances that it won't attack the Kurdish fighters in Syria — which he said is now a condition for the withdrawal of American troops from northeastern Syria.

Bolton arrived Monday for negotiations with the NATO ally about the safety of the Kurds, who have fought alongside American forces against Islamic State in Syria and fear a military assault from Turkey should the U.S. pull out.

His visit comes a day after Bolton said guarantees about the safety of the Kurds were a "condition" of the withdrawal of about 2,000 troops in the region that President Donald Trump ordered last month.

The talks are likely to be contentious, as Turkey considers the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG, a terrorist group linked to an insurgency within its borders and has threatened to mount a campaign against the groups. Bolton, who

Kurds await US clarification

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Syria's Kurds are awaiting clarification from the U.S. over America's plans to pull out its troops from Syria following comments made by a top White House aide that appeared to counter earlier comments by President Donald Trump, a Syrian Kurdish official said Monday.

Speaking to *The Associated Press* from northern Syria Monday, Badran Ciya Kurd said the Kurds have not been informed of any change in the U.S. position and were in the dark about the latest comments by U.S. national security adviser John Bolton and what they indicated.

"We have not been formally or directly notified. All

what we heard were media statements," he said.

Bolton, on a visit to Israel on Sunday, said U.S. troops will not leave northeastern Syria until Islamic State militants are defeated and American-allied Kurdish fighters are protected.

Ciya Kurd said Bolton, through his comments, acknowledged that Turkey was killing the Kurds and that he wants guarantees that would not happen.

Nawaf Khalil, who heads the Europe-based Center for Kurdish Studies, said that "President Trump's statement regarding withdrawal of troops led to confusion and mistrust of the American side." He added that Bolton's statement "came to fix what should not have been said."

is expected to meet Tuesday with Turkish officials including President Recep Tayyip Erdo-

gan, said the U.S. would oppose any such move against its allies in the fight against ISIS.

"We don't think the Turks ought to undertake military action that's not fully coordinated with and agreed to by the United States," Bolton said Sunday. Trump has made clear that he would not allow Turkey to kill the Kurds, Bolton added. "That's what the president said, the ones that fought with us."

Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar lashed out at Bolton on Monday, saying on Twitter that Turkey's fight isn't against Kurds but against Kurdish rebels and ISIS militants who pose a threat to all ethnic groups.

"Our fight is against YPG, PKK and IS (Islamic State) terrorists who are a threat against our Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen brothers and all ethnic and religious groups," he said. PKK is the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Turkey's presidential spokesman, with whom Bolton will meet Tuesday, called allegations that his country planned to attack the U.S.-allied Kurds in Syria "irrational" and said Turkey was fighting terrorism for national security.

Pentagon denies reports of cutbacks to Somalia mission

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The Pentagon on Monday denied reports of a looming drawdown in Somalia, saying there is no plan to cut back the mission in a country where U.S. Africa Command continues to carry out airstrikes.

“There have been no recent policy changes regarding U.S. operations in Somalia,” Pentagon spokeswoman Cmdr. Candice Tresch said in a statement. “We continue to support the Federal Government of Somalia’s efforts to degrade al-Shabab.”

The denial comes after NBC reported Friday that planning is underway to pull back in Somalia, where U.S. special operations troops have been a steady presence for several

years. The U.S. also conducts regular airstrikes against the militant group al-Shabab.

The network reported that the Pentagon wants to curtail airstrikes and hand the mission off to the CIA. “I would say we’re running out of targets,” an unnamed U.S. defense official told NBC.

The Pentagon says it has about 500 military personnel in Somalia, where AFRICOM conducted 47 airstrikes in 2018 and 35 the year before.

AFRICOM launched its first airstrike of 2019 in Somalia on Wednesday.

Citing unnamed defense officials, NBC said it was unclear how many troops would remain in the country if the plan goes into effect. The reported shift away from Somalia is at odds with a recent Pentagon

announcement that it will cut back 10 percent of its force in Africa but leave largely intact its mission in Somalia.

The U.S. also recently re-established a permanent diplomatic presence in the country.

Overall, U.S. counterterrorism policy is in a state of flux. In addition to plans to reduce some missions in Africa, the Trump administration reportedly has plans to cut 7,000 troops in Afghanistan and downsize significantly in Syria.

On Sunday, National Security Adviser John Bolton told reporters in an apparent policy reversal that there was no rush out of Syria. Elimination of all Islamic State militants and a promise from Turkey not to harm Kurdish partners were preconditions for any American withdrawal, Bolton said.

Man who killed his wife fights restitution to Coast Guard

Erie (Pa.) Times-News

Christopher S. Leclair is serving life in prison for murdering his wife on Lake Erie.

He’s fighting a different aspect of his sentence in court: the \$700,000 restitution he was ordered to pay to the U.S. Coast Guard for the massive search that began when he falsely reported his wife had fallen overboard off his fishing vessel.

In a court filing, Leclair’s lawyer asked Erie County President Judge John J. Trucilla in Pennsylvania to cancel the restitution because the Coast Guard’s claim was “an estimate and not the actual cost of the search and rescue operation.”

Trucilla ordered Leclair to pay a total of \$705,974 for the 30-hour search for Karen Leclair, 51. A jury found that Christopher Leclair shot his wife in the head while the couple was out on their fishing vessel, the Doris-M, on June 10, 2017.

He went back out on Lake Erie the next day and reported in a distress call that his wife had fallen overboard and gone missing, according to trial testimony.

According to a previous estimate provided by the Coast Guard, the amount included two C-130 planes, two Coast Guard helicopters, two boats and manpower costs for people involved in the search.

A boater spotted Karen Leclair’s body about 6 miles off the coast of Dunkirk, N.Y., on July 4, 2017. Her body had been tied with rope and weighted down with an anchor.

Leclair’s lawyer, Bruce Sandmeyer, argued in his motion that the personnel costs should not be included in the restitution because, he wrote, members of the military are paid a flat salary regardless of the work they perform.

Trucilla is scheduled to hold a hearing Wednesday on the request to cancel the restitution order, court records show.

China protests US warship as trade talks begin

Associated Press

BEIJING — Chinese and American officials began talks Monday aimed at ending a bruising trade battle between the world’s two biggest economies as Beijing complained over the sighting of a U.S. warship in what it said were Chinese waters.

It was unclear if the ruckus over the warship might disrupt the working level talks being held at the Chinese Commerce Ministry. The two sides have provided scant information about the discussions.

Both sides have expressed optimism over the potential for progress in settling their tariff fight over Beijing’s technology ambitions. Yet neither has indicated its stance has changed since a Dec. 1 agreement by Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping to postpone further increases.

Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said Monday during a routine

briefing that Chinese military aircraft and naval vessels were dispatched to identify the U.S. vessel and warn it to leave the area near disputed islands in the South China Sea.

“We have made stern complaints with the U.S.,” Lu said. He said the warship, which he said was the destroyer the USS McCampbell, had violated Chinese and international law, infringing on Chinese sovereignty and undermined peace and stability.

“As for whether this move has any impact to the ongoing China-U.S. trade consultations ... to properly resolve existing issues of all kinds between China and the U.S. is good for the two countries and the world,” Lu said.

But he added, “The two sides both have responsibility to create necessary and good atmosphere to this end.”

A Pentagon spokesman, Lt. Col. David Eastburn, said, “The United States will continue to

fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows.”

The American side in the trade talks is being led by a deputy U.S. trade representative, Jeffrey D. Gerrish, according to the U.S. government. The delegation includes officials from the Agriculture, Energy, Commerce, Treasury and State departments.

The talks went ahead despite tensions over the arrest of a Chinese tech executive in Canada on U.S. charges related to possible violations of trade sanctions against Iran.

Trump imposed tariff increases of up to 25 percent on \$250 billion of Chinese imports over complaints Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology. Beijing responded by imposing penalties on \$110 billion of American goods, slowing customs clearance for U.S. firms and suspending issuing licenses in finance and other businesses.

Secret Russia-inspired campaign in 2017 Ala. election shocks Dems

The Washington Post

A secret effort to influence the 2017 Senate election in Alabama used tactics inspired by Russian disinformation teams, including the creation of fake accounts to deliver misleading messages on Facebook to hundreds of thousands of voters to help elect Democrat Doug Jones in the deeply red state, according to a document obtained by *The Washington Post*.

But unlike the 2016 presidential campaign when Russians worked to help elect Donald Trump, the people behind the Alabama effort — dubbed Project Birmingham — were Americans. Now Democratic operatives and a research firm known to have had roles in Project Birmingham are distancing themselves from its most controversial tactics.

Jones' narrow, upset victory over Republican Roy Moore in all likelihood resulted from other factors, political analysts say. Moore spent much of the special-election campaign battling reports in *The Post* that he had decades earlier made unwanted sexual advances toward teenage girls.

Recent revelations about Project Birmingham, however, have shocked Democrats in Alabama and Washington. And news of the effort has under-

scored the warnings of experts who long have said that threats to honest, transparent political discourse in the age of social media are as likely to be domestic as foreign.

As the scandal has expanded, with calls for federal and state investigations and Facebook also conducting a review, the tactics described in the Project Birmingham document have come under intense scrutiny. Those included a “false flag” effort that generated phony evidence that automated Russian accounts called bots had supported Moore on Twitter and the creation of a misleading Facebook page, aimed at Alabama conservatives, that sought to undermine Moore by encouraging them to vote for a rival Republican through a write-in campaign.

But all those who have acknowledged playing a role in Project Birmingham have denied knowing the full extent of the activities described in the document. Project Birmingham got its funding from internet billionaire Reid Hoffman, who emerged as a leading underwriter of Democratic causes after the 2016 election. Hoffman said he did not know how his funds were used until details began to emerge in *The New York Times* and *The Post*.

Park service to tap fees to pay workers

The Washington Post

The National Park Service will take the unprecedented step of tapping entrance fees to pay for expanded operations at its most popular sites, officials said Sunday, as the partial federal government shutdown threatens to degrade some of the nation's iconic landmarks.

Under a memorandum signed Saturday by the Interior Department's acting secretary, David Bernhardt, and obtained by *The Washington Post*, park managers will be permitted to bring on additional staff to clean restrooms, haul trash, patrol the parks and open areas that have been shut during the more than two-week budget impasse. In a statement Sunday, National Park Service Deputy Director P. Daniel Smith acknowledged that the administration's practice of keeping parks open but understaffed has become unsustainable at some sites.

“As the lapse in appropriations continues, it has become clear that highly visited parks with limited staff have urgent needs that cannot be addressed solely through the generosity of our partners,” Smith said. “We are taking this extraordinary step to ensure that parks are protected and that visitors can continue to access parks with

limited basic services.”

The move, which some critics said could be illegal, shows the extent to which the Trump administration's decision to keep the national park system open to visitors is straining its capacity and potentially exposing public lands to long-term damage. During such shutdowns under the Clinton and Obama administrations, the Park Service chose to block access to its sites rather than leave them open with a skeleton staff on board. As trash has begun to mount and key habitat has been imperiled, this administration is struggling to manage the problems.

Congressional Democrats and some park advocates question whether the park fee move is legal because fees collected under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act are expressly designated to support visitor services instead of operations and basic maintenance. The new secretarial order authorizes parks that have “available balances” of these fee funds to spend them on operations that include trash collection and sanitation, road maintenance, campground operations, law enforcement and emergency operations, and entrance staff “as necessary to provide critical safety operations.”

‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ steals the show at Golden Globes

Associated Press

Thunderbolt and lightning rocked the 76th Golden Globes where a string of upsets culminated with the Freddie Mercury biopic “Bohemian Rhapsody” winning best picture, drama, over another movie about musicians: Bradley Cooper's much more heavily favored “A Star Is Born.”

“A Star Is Born” came into Sunday's ceremony in Beverly Hills, Calif., as the presumed heavyweight and Oscar favorite. But Cooper's remake went

home with just one award, for the song “Shallow.” Instead, the night's final two awards went to “Bohemian Rhapsody” — the popular but poorly reviewed drama about Queen's frontman — and best actor-winner Rami Malek for his full-bodied, prosthetic teeth-aided performance as Mercury.

Few nominees were considered more of a sure thing than Lady Gaga as best actress in a drama. But Glenn Close pulled off the shocker in that category, too, for her performance in

“The Wife,” as the spouse of a Nobel Prize-winning author.

Christian Bale won in the best actor in a musical or comedy category for his portrayal of former Vice President Dick Cheney in Adam McKay's “Vice.”

Co-host Sandra Oh won for her performance on the drama series “Killing Eve.”

Mahershala Ali won best supporting actor for “Green Book.” Peter Farrelly's interracial road trip through the early '60s Deep South won best film,

comedy or musical, and best screenplay.

Olivia Colman won best actress in a comedy/musical for her Queen Anne in the royal romp “The Favourite.”

“Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” won for best animated film. Ryan Murphy's “The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story” won for both best limited series and Darren Criss' lead performance.

For its sixth and final season, FX's “The Americans” took best drama series.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Hawk swoops in for bargains, shuts store

MS NEW ALBANY — A north Mississippi store was shut down for 90 minutes after an unexpected shopper swooped in for some bargains.

The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal reported that shoppers and employees were evacuated from a Walmart in New Albany on Wednesday after a red-tailed hawk entered the store and began flying around.

Union County Emergency Management Director Curt Clayton, who was contacted by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, downed the bird with a tranquilizer gun.

He said the bird may have entered the store through large doors in the garden department.

The hawk was removed from the store and released unharmed.

City to spend \$125K on traps to battle rats

MI WARREN — One Detroit-area community is digging deep in its pockets to battle rats.

Warren Mayor Jim Fouts said the city is spending \$125,000 on bait traps along the fence lines of Interstate 696. He worries that rats fleeing construction on the freeway will scurry into city neighborhoods.

Fouts said in a news release that the pounding and excavation causes rats to seek shelter, food and water elsewhere.

A contractor has placed bait boxes and individual traps. They are checked every two weeks.

Girl with brain tumor gets mermaid wish

FL BOCA RATON — A young Memphis, Tenn., girl who is battling brain cancer had her dream realized in Florida, where she spent the day with mermaids.

Ta'liyah Baldwin, 5, has been undergoing chemotherapy at St. Jude's Children's Hospital since being diagnosed in November 2017 with an inoperable brain tumor. Her family said the treatments leave her lethargic and cause her to have trouble walking.

Shanquindra Baldwin said all her daughter talks about is mermaids, so she contacted the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

The Sun Sentinel reported the organization sent the family to Florida, where the little girl spent Saturday at the Boca Beach Club with two women dressed as mermaids.

They even had a pair of custom-fitted fins for Ta'liyah to wear as she splashed around the pool.

2 get probation in sham marriage plot

IA WATERLOO — An eastern Iowa man has been turned over to immigration authorities and his sister sentenced to probation after they set up a sham marriage to keep the man in the United States.

The Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier reported that Selmir Salkanovic, 27, of Waterloo, was accused of marrying a U.S. citizen purely to obtain an upgraded immigration status after he overstayed a tourism visa.

His sister, Sanela Dedic, was accused of paying off an unidentified American woman to be the bride in the fake marriage. The siblings pleaded

guilty to conspiracy to commit marriage fraud.

Dedic allegedly offered to pay the woman \$5,000 and gave her a Ford Taurus.

Woman filming attack killed by assailant

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A woman who witnessed a man beating a woman on a sidewalk in San Francisco was fatally stabbed by the suspect after she started recording him on her cellphone.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported that Veronica Soliz, 61, had walked outside her building when she saw the attack and called police. Soliz's ex-husband, Jack Schwindler, told the newspaper she then followed the assailant and was recording him with her cellphone when the man turned on her and stabbed her in the head Wednesday. She died after being rushed to a hospital.

Police arrested Arthur Finch, 49. He was charged with murder, attempted murder, three counts of assault with a deadly weapon, domestic violence and other charges.

Girl dies after being hit by officer's SUV

MO COLUMBIA — The Missouri State Patrol is investigating the death of a 4-year-old girl who was struck by an SUV driven by a Columbia police officer.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported that the incident happened Friday afternoon at Battle High School when an officer drove on a sidewalk to observe students as they departed. The state patrol said the officer's SUV hit Gabriella Curry as she walked on the sidewalk. Gabriella died at a nearby hospital.

Columbia city spokesman Steve Sapp said the girl was at the high school because both

her parents drive school buses and she was riding with one of them. Sapp said it's not immediately clear when or why the girl left the bus.

Skier dies, 4 rescued after avalanche

CO DENVER — A skier died in an avalanche in the San Juan Mountains in southwest Colorado.

Ouray County Sheriff Dominic Mattivi said the victim was part of a group of five skiers who were skiing on Red Mountain Pass in the backcountry when the avalanche occurred Saturday. The other four skiers were rescued.

Mattivi told The Denver Post that it's the first avalanche that he can remember in that part of the mountain range.

More felony charges for man in chase case

MS COLUMBUS — A man who led police on a chase through parts of Alabama and Mississippi last week has been charged with 11 more felonies in Mississippi.

Local news outlets reported that Lowndes County, Miss., investigators filed the charges against Jacob Ray Conn, 25, of Caledonia, after his capture Dec. 31 near Vernon, Ala.

Investigators have charged Conn with three building and one vehicle arsons, three burglaries and three motor vehicle thefts, mostly associated with incidents at a Columbus scrapyard on Dec. 30 and 31. He's also charged with fleeing law enforcement.

In Monroe County, Miss., Conn faces charges of felony fleeing from law enforcement, assault on a police officer and third-offense driving under the influence.

From wire reports

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QB Foles helps Eagles get past Bears

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Philadelphia Eagles were desperately seeking a lift with little time left to save their season.

Nick Foles came through for the defending Super Bowl champions. And he did it just in time.

Foles threw a 2-yard touchdown pass to Golden Tate on fourth down in the final minute, and the Eagles hung on for a 16-15 wild-card victory over the Chicago Bears after Cody Parkey's missed field goal hit the upright and crossbar.

After squeezing past the NFC North champions, the Eagles (10-7) will visit top-seeded New Orleans (13-3) next Sunday.

"It's going to be a tall task this week," Foles said. "They had a bye week and they are a tremendous team. They had an amazing season. But you know, I love these guys that I get to play with. I know we're ready for this week."

The Eagles won five of their final six regular-season games. They squeezed into the playoffs by beating Washington and

having the Bears (12-5) give them an assist by taking out Minnesota last week.

The Eagles are trying to become the first team to repeat as Super Bowl champions since New England in 2004. And they're also trying to become the first sixth seed to win the title since Green Bay in the 2010 season. The Packers beat the Bears for the conference championship at Soldier Field that year.

"We have nothing to lose," safety Malcolm Jenkins said. "Nobody expects us to do anything. Everybody counted us out. So you know, what do we have to lose but our dignity and pride?"

Foles came through down the stretch against the NFL's stingiest defense to help the Eagles pull out the tight victory. He completed six passes on a 60-yard drive for the go-ahead TD after Chicago's Pat O'Donnell shanked a punt.

Three plays at the 2 went nowhere, with Kyle Fuller breaking up a third-down pass to Alshon Jeffery near the goal

line. But with the season on the line, Foles rolled to his right and Tate reached to grab the go-ahead TD with 56 seconds left.

"He never tries to do too much. He tries to play within himself on every play," tight end Zach Ertz said. "The moment's never too big for him and he just resonates that calm and positive attitude."

Foles is now 7-0 while filling in for Carson Wentz in must-win games the past two seasons, with a Super Bowl MVP performance against New England last year. And he came through against Chicago when things weren't looking so promising.

"You know, (Foles) just does a great job of just staying in the moment, staying calm and, you know, no panic," Eagles coach Doug Pederson said. "There was no panic on the offense or on the sideline."

Wendell Smallwood's 2-point conversion run failed. But the Eagles hung on when Parkey's 43-yard attempt in the closing seconds hit halfway up the left upright and ricocheted off the

crossbar. He was 11 of 12 on fourth-quarter field goals prior to missing the biggest kick of his career. And it was the sixth time this season he nailed an upright on a missed field goal or extra point.

That ended a stunning turnaround season for the Bears in their first year under coach Matt Nagy. They won the NFC North after four straight last-place finishes and reached the playoffs for the first time in eight years.

"I see a lot of young talent and a great coaching staff," guard Kyle Long said. "We didn't have any postseason experience — now we have a little bit of it. Now we have a taste of what the stakes are like and we know what it takes to win and we have the pieces to the puzzle to win."

Bears defensive lineman Akiem Hicks said: "This is what we're going to deal with. If you wanted a different result, maybe make a different play. You've got to swallow this and let it hurt for a little bit. We'll be all right."

Chargers top Ravens as Jackson struggles

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The Los Angeles Chargers' prize for dismantling the toughest defense in the NFL is a road game against a team that has long been a nemesis for Philip Rivers.

Los Angeles advanced to the divisional round of the postseason by beating the Baltimore Ravens 23-17 on Sunday. Next up, a matchup against the New England Patriots (11-5) this Sunday.

Since Rivers became a starter, the Chargers are 0-7 against Tom Brady and the Patriots, including 0-2 in playoff games. The last time they met, New England rolled to a 21-12 win in the AFC Championship game in January 2008.

Fortunately for Rivers, past performances don't necessarily mean that much. Just two weeks after being dominated by Baltimore in a loss that knocked them out of first place in the AFC West, the Chargers (13-4) bounced back with a resounding win to advance to the second round of the playoffs for the first time since 2014.

Rivers went 22-for-32 for 160 yards, his

longest completion a 28-yarder to Mike Williams.

Going up against longtime Patriots quarterback Tom Brady and standout coach Bill Belichick is no easy task, but Rivers is up for the challenge.

"I'm not playing Tom by any means. But is it special to go to New England against a Hall of Fame coach and arguably the best quarterback ever to play and get another shot at 'em? Heck, yeah," Rivers said. "To get an opportunity again to go against them, 11 years after we had the opportunity in the 2007 season, yeah, it's awesome. Looking forward to it."

The Chargers face a veteran quarterback after putting the clamps on a rookie, Lamar Jackson of the Ravens, who fumbled three times, threw an interception and was sacked seven times in his playoff debut.

AFC North champion Baltimore (10-7) got to play a home playoff game for the first time since 2012, but its run ended there.

Looking ahead, this much is clear: John Harbaugh figures he'll be back as coach and he knows Jackson will be the team's

starting quarterback next season instead of past Super Bowl MVP Joe Flacco.

While Flacco is "the best quarterback in the history of the Ravens," as Harbaugh put it, Jackson's 6-1 close to the regular season cemented the first-round draft pick and Heisman Trophy winner as the No. 1 quarterback.

"Lamar's our quarterback going forward. There's no question about that," Harbaugh said.

And as for Harbaugh's future?

"We'll see," he said. "I have every expectation and every plan to be here, as long as the Ravens want me here. And I believe they want me here. That's been made clear by them to me."

Two weeks ago, the Ravens' complicated offensive strategy wore down and puzzled the Chargers. Not this time.

"We played assignment football," Chargers defensive end Melvin Ingram said. "We were told to see what we were supposed to see. They do a lot to confuse us, but we stayed with it and it was a much better result for us."

College basketball roundup

Michigan tops Indiana, remains unbeaten

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Michigan got Indiana's best players in foul trouble in the opening minutes and took full advantage, building a cushion it used to stay undefeated.

Charles Matthew scored 16 of his 18 points in the first half to help the second-ranked Wolverines build a double-digit lead, and they went on to beat the 21st-ranked Hoosiers 74-63 Sunday.

Michigan's Jordan Poole finished with 18 points, Xavier Simpson scored 12 and freshman reserve Brandon Johns had eight points and eight rebounds.

The Wolverines (15-0, 4-0 Big Ten) are a win away from matching their best start in school history.

"We're just worried about getting better," Poole said. "We rarely talk about our record."

Michigan joined No. 8 Michigan State as the two teams without a Big Ten loss four games into the 20-game conference schedule.

The Hoosiers (12-3, 3-1) had won seven straight since losing at Duke and their chances to extend the streak were hurt

because their stars were forced to sit a lot.

Indiana's Juwan Morgan scored 25 points on 9-for-22 shooting and Romero Langford added 17 points while limited by foul trouble.

"When those two guys aren't on the floor, we're a different team offensively and defensively," Indiana coach Archie Miller said.

When Morgan and Langford went to the bench with two fouls early in the first half, the Wolverines went on a 12-3 run in less than 3 minutes before the pair returned to the floor.

"We set the tone and we got their two big guys in foul trouble," Michigan coach John Beilein said. "They're tremendous. They're really tough to stop and they both sat about 20 minutes."

No. 16 Marquette 70, Xavier 52: Markus Howard scored 26 points, Sacar Anim had 20 and Marquette beat Xavier to remain unbeaten at home.

The Golden Eagles (12-3, 1-1) bounced back from an 89-69 loss at St. John's in their Big East opener on New Year's Day. They improved to 11-0 at the new Fiserv Forum.

Naji Marshall had 21 points for Xavier (9-7, 1-2).

No. 19 Houston 90, Memphis 77: Armoni Brooks had 22 points and hit six three-pointers and the host Cougars remained undefeated.

Nate Hinton added 19 points and nine rebounds, Corey Davis Jr and Galen Robinson Jr each had 11 points and DeJon Jarreau scored 10 points. Houston (15-0, 2-0 American) extended its home-winning streak to a nation-best 28 games. The Cougars shot 45 percent, including 50 percent in the second half, and hit 12 of 34 three-pointers.

No. 22 Wisconsin 71, Penn State 52: Ethan Happ had 22 points and eight rebounds and the visiting Badgers routed Penn State to stop a two-game slide.

The struggling Nittany Lions were without coach Patrick Chambers, who was suspended for the game after shoving Penn State freshman guard Myles Dread during a timeout Thursday in a loss at Michigan. Chambers apologized and said he was just trying to get the best out of Dread.

Brad Davison added 14 points for Wisconsin (11-4, 3-1

Big Ten).

No. 25 Iowa 93, No. 24 Nebraska 84: Jordan Bohannon scored a season-high 25 points, Tyler Cook had 16 and the host Hawkeyes beat Nebraska, snapping a three-game losing streak to open Big Ten play.

Ryan Kriener added 14 points in his first career start for Iowa (12-3, 1-3), which shot 29-for-32 from the free throw line in holding off the Huskers (11-4, 1-3).

Isaac Copeland had 24 points to lead Nebraska.

Navy 50, Holy Cross 48: Hasan Abdullah scored 15 points, the last two coming on a floater from about 10 feet that rolled around the rim and dropped through with less than a second remaining that lifted the host Midshipmen over Holy Cross.

Abdullah grabbed the rebound of a Navy miss in the lane and dribbled to his right before rising up to flip in the game-winner with 0.6 seconds on the clock.

Abdullah also had nine rebounds, eight assists and two steals for the Midshipmen (5-8, 2-0 Patriot League).

Schauffele wins, ties Kapalua course record

BY DOUG FERGUSON

Associated Press

KAPALUA, Hawaii — Xander Schauffele never had a better round or a more peculiar ending.

After holing out for two eagles, and closing with four birdies over his last five holes for an 11-under 62, he chose to wait inside the scoring trailer to see if it would be enough to beat Gary Woodland in the Sentry Tournament of Champions on Sunday.

The trailer was just behind the grandstands on the 18th hole. The television had a 10-second delay. He heard sighs. He heard radio traffic. About

the time he figured out that he won, he saw Woodland's birdie putt to force a playoff slide by on the right.

"So it was a bit strange," he said. "But the day was awesome."

Schauffele took another step toward joining the young elite in golf with his second victory this season, and fourth in the last 18 months. He already has two multiple-win seasons in his third year on the PGA Tour. He moved to No. 6 in the world.

"This is the stuff you dream about," Schauffele said. "But to actually pull it off, it feels awesome. I could see myself doing it, but it's hard to believe just sit-

ting here and talking about it."

In all four of his victories, he had to rally on the final day. Kapalua presented the biggest deficit at five shots. He delivered a record-tying round.

He started with a bogey and figured he had nothing to lose. Before long, he was in position to win. He ran off three straight birdies. He chipped in from the front of the green on the par-5 ninth for eagle. He holed a wedge from 107 yards for another eagle on No. 12. He took his first lead with back-to-back birdies on the 14th and 15th holes, both times coming close to chipping in for more eagles.

Tied with Woodland over

the closing holes, Schauffele finished birdie-birdie for a 61 that tied the course record at Kapalua held by four other players.

"It was a crazy day," Schauffele said. "I knew it was going to be a birdie fest at the end. We kept our head down and made a run for it."

Woodland had a chance to force a playoff, but he hit his drive on the par-5 18th so far — 390 yards downhill but into a Kona wind — that he was between clubs. He tried to draw a hard 4-iron and left it out to the right, hit a pitch-and-run to 10 feet and missed the birdie putt.

NBA roundup

T-wolves rout Lakers, fire Thibodeau

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Andrew Wiggins scored 25 of his 28 points in the first half, helping the Minnesota Timberwolves take charge from the opening tipoff and breeze by the LeBron James-less Los Angeles Lakers for a 108-86 victory on Sunday, the last game for coach Tom Thibodeau.

Thibodeau was fired about an hour after the Timberwolves raised their home record to 8-2 against Western Conference foes, according to a person with knowledge of the decision. Though the timing of the dismissal after a decisive win was unusual, Thibodeau's third season with the team started with turmoil surrounding the discontent of All-Star Jimmy Butler.

"We would like to thank Tom for his efforts and wish him all

the best," Timberwolves owner Glen Taylor said in a statement. "These decisions are never easy to make, but we felt them necessary to move our organization forward."

Scott Layden will remain the general manager overseeing the basketball operations and assistant coach Ryan Saunders will be the interim head coach for the remainder of the season.

The Athletic first reported that Thibodeau, who was also the president of basketball operations with full authority over the roster, had been let go. Saunders is the son of the late Flip Saunders, who's the winningest coach in club history.

Thibodeau finished 97-107 with the Wolves, who returned to the NBA playoffs last spring after a 13-year absence. As Butler, Thibodeau's prized acquisition who played for him in

Chicago, forced his way out of Minnesota, however, he found himself in a tenuous spot.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 28 points, 18 rebounds and four blocks, and Jeff Teague scored all of his 15 points in the first half and finished with 11 assists. Minnesota is 15-12 since trading Butler.

Lance Stephenson had 14 points for the Lakers. They fell to 1-5 without James since he strained his groin during the Christmas Day win at Golden State.

Raptors 121, Pacers 105: Norman Powell scored a season-high 23 points, Pascal Siakam had 12 points and 10 rebounds, and host Toronto snapped Indiana's six-game winning streak.

Wizards 116, Thunder 98: Bradley Beal scored 25 points to help Washington beat host Oklahoma City.

Otto Porter had 20 points, six rebounds and five assists, Jeff Green scored 16 points and Tomas Satoransky added 15 for the Wizards.

Nets 117, Bulls 100: D'Angelo Russell scored 28 points, DeMarre Carroll had 20 and Brooklyn beat host Chicago for its third straight victory.

Clippers 106, Magic 96: Tobias Harris scored 28 points and host Los Angeles overcame a slow start to beat Orlando.

Hawks 106, Heat 82: Trae Young scored 19 points, John Collins had 13 points and 13 rebounds, and host Atlanta snapped a three-game skid.

Hornets 119, Suns 113: Kemba Walker scored 18 of his 29 points in the final 4½ minutes — including a halfcourt heave when he was trying to run out the clock — and Charlotte handed host Phoenix its sixth straight loss.

NHL roundup

Hawks snap Penguins' win streak at eight

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Chicago Blackhawks gave Pittsburgh a head start — and still grounded the surging Penguins.

Again.

Dylan Strome broke a tie 1:48 into the third period and the Blackhawks beat Pittsburgh 5-3 on Sunday night to end the Penguins' winning streak at eight games.

"We're not going to quit; we're going to play until the end," Blackhawks coach Jeremy Colliton said. "It certainly wasn't the start we wanted, we kind of gifted a couple, but credit to those guys in there. I was really happy with how hard we competed and it was nice to see the guys get rewarded."

Strome scored seconds after a power-play expired, beating fallen goalie Casey DeSmith off a pass from Patrick Kane. Jonathan Toews added an empty-net goal and had an assist to run his points streak to six games.

Alex DeBrincat scored on a power play for his 19th of the season, and Chris Kunitz

and Duncan Keith both scored their first for the Blackhawks. They won their 10th straight against the Penguins, including five straight in Pittsburgh. The Blackhawks haven't lost to the Penguins since March 30, 2014, in Pittsburgh.

"Considering [Pittsburgh] won eight in a row coming into the game, they've obviously been feeling pretty good about themselves," Kane said. "I think it's a team we can kind of compare ourselves to as far as what happened in the past and different history, so a lot of us get excited to play these guys."

Chicago snapped a two-game skid and has won three of five and six of nine following an eight-game losing streak in November.

Kane had three assists. He's the 20th player in NHL history and the first American-born skater to begin his career with at least 12 straight seasons with 30-plus assists.

Coyotes 5, Rangers 0: Rookie Conor Garland scored twice, Darcy Kuemper made 23 saves for his first shutout of the

season and 12th overall and host Arizona beat New York to end a three-game losing streak.

Capitals 3, Red Wings 2: Michal Kempny scored with 3:52 remaining, and visiting Washington beat Detroit to snap a three-game losing streak.

Oilers 4, Ducks 0: Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl scored again, Cam Talbot made 39 saves for his first shutout this season and visiting Edmonton beat Anaheim for its second victory in nine games.

Golden Knights 3, Devils 2: Max Pacioretty broke a tie with 4:14 left in the second period and Malcolm Subban made 36 saves in his first home start since March 30 to help Vegas beat New Jersey.

Hurricanes 5, Senators 4: Justin Williams broke a tie with a power-play goal at 7:34 of the third period and visiting Carolina won its fourth straight and handed Ottawa its eighth loss in a row.

Jets 5, Stars 1: Kyle Connor ended a 10-game pointless streak with a goal to help host Winnipeg beat Dallas.