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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US military plane crashes in Ghazni

BY J.P. LAWRENCE
AND PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Air Force communications aircraft crashed in a Taliban-controlled area of central Afghanistan on Monday, after which video of the purported wreckage circulated on social media.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein said the aircraft was a Bombardier E-11A, during a meeting with reporters in Washington on Monday. Goldfein did not confirm further details.

“It appears we have lost an aircraft,” Goldfein said. “We don’t know the status of the crew.”

U.S. Forces-Afghanistan spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett said on Twitter that while the incident was under investigation, “there are no indications the crash was caused by enemy fire.”

The plane crashed around 1:30 p.m. Monday in Ghazni province, and initial reports suggest two or three people died, said Arif Noori, spokesman for the provincial governor.

Noori wasn’t initially able to confirm whether it was a U.S. aircraft that crashed in Deh Yak district, about 80 miles southwest of Kabul.

“We tried to send Afghan security forces to the scene,” Noori said, but they were pulled back due to security concerns.

The Taliban control large sections of Ghazni, which was the site of a surprise offensive in 2018.

Teams from the Red Cross

and Red Crescent went to the crash site but weren’t able to send updates due to poor phone reception in the remote area, Noori said.

The Taliban said in a Pashto-language statement that the U.S. plane crashed and that their fighters “had downed it tactically.” They also said that “lots” of U.S. service members died, The Associated Press reported. The Taliban are known to exaggerate their claims.

Tariq Ghazniwal, a journalist in the area affiliated with the Taliban, said that he saw the burning aircraft, AP reported. On Twitter, Ghazniwal told AP that he saw two bodies and that the front of the aircraft was burned badly.

Early reports stated the crash was an Ariana Airlines plane, but the company told AP that none of its planes had crashed in Afghanistan.

The Aviation Safety Network, which tracks aviation accidents, identified the E-11A by its Air Force tail number, 11-9358.

The Air Force’s fleet of four E-11A aircraft, outfitted with the Battlefield Airborne Communications Node payload, provides a unique capability in a country where mountains and poor communications infrastructure create a challenge for military operations, the service has said.

All of the service’s BACN aircraft are assigned to the 430th Expeditionary Electronic Combat Squadron and solely fly out of Kandahar Airfield, where they’ve been deployed for about a decade.

Chad Garland, Corey Dickstein and Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report.

One hurt in attack on Baghdad’s Green Zone

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

A nighttime mortar attack on the heavily fortified Baghdad Green Zone hit the U.S. Embassy, injuring one person there, staff members said Monday.

One of several projectiles fired at the diplomatic facility struck and damaged a dining facility inside the embassy compound, a coalition security official confirmed to Stars and Stripes shortly after the Sunday attack. Gen. Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, told reporters traveling with him that the mortar attack had started a fire that was put out and had caused a minor injury to a U.S. national — not a military service member — who had since returned to duty, The Associated Press reported.

The attack, which was initially reported as a rocket strike, quickly drew condemnation from Iraq’s acting Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi, who said such acts threaten to drag the country into a new conflict.

Such “outlaw acts” weaken Iraqi sovereignty and the sanctity of diplomatic missions on its soil, Abdul-Mahdi’s statement said. He resigned as prime minister in November in the face of anti-government demonstrations, but continues to serve in a caretaker role until a replacement can be named.

Five rounds fell onto the international zone, which houses government buildings and foreign embassies, the Iraqi government’s security media cell said in an online statement. Three of them fell inside the U.S. Embassy compound, which is the world’s largest embassy, several media outlets reported.

A State Department official who responded to a Stars and

Stripes inquiry on the attack declined to comment on the security situation in Baghdad, beyond stating that it remains tense and Iran-backed groups continue to pose a threat.

“So, we remain vigilant,” the official said via email, in which they also called on Iraq to fulfill its obligations to protect diplomatic facilities. Iraqi militia members and their backers had stormed the embassy compound on New Year’s Eve, forcing the U.S. to quickly deploy about 100 Marines from Kuwait to reinforce the facility.

It’s the second rocket attack to target the U.S. Embassy in six days and is the latest in a series of sporadic rocket strikes that began targeting areas housing U.S. forces in the country last summer as Washington warned of increasing threats from Iran and its proxies in response to the Trump administration’s maximum pressure campaign. President Donald Trump has imposed harsh sanctions in an attempt to force Tehran to renegotiate an Obama-era nuclear agreement that the U.S. president and his supporters have criticized as a bad deal.

Recent months have seen more than a dozen rocket attacks on the Green Zone and Iraqi bases hosting U.S. and coalition forces elsewhere in the country, which U.S. officials have called on Abdul-Mahdi’s government to prevent. The U.S. has blamed the attacks on Shiite militia groups, which have Iranian backing but are formally part of Iraq’s security forces.

Security forces have been ordered to work to arrest those responsible for the rocket strikes on the Green Zone and to prevent future attacks, Abdul-Mahdi’s statement said Sunday.

Navy deploys 2 Tritons to Guam for debut

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The Navy's largest unmanned aerial vehicle has deployed for the first time to the Pacific, where it will conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

Two MQ-4C Tritons — maritime versions of the Air Force RQ-4 Global Hawk — have arrived at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, the Navy said in a statement Sunday after the second aircraft touched down.

The Tritons, and two others scheduled to be on Guam by 2021, will be flown by the Navy's first dedicated drone squadron, Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19, which will focus on honing the skills needed to operate the high-tech planes, the statement said.

The Tritons will complement P-8A Poseidon surveillance planes and bring increased persistence, capability and capacity through their multi-sensor mission payloads, the Navy statement said.

The drones provide real-time intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance over vast ocean and coastal regions, Northrop Grumman states on its website.

"The aircraft can fly over 24 hours at a time, at altitudes higher than 10 miles, with an operational range of 8,200 nautical miles," the website states.

The Triton looks like the RQ-4B Global Hawks that the Air Force already flies out of Guam; however, the resemblance is only skin deep.

The front edges of a Triton's wings are toughened to withstand bird strikes, and its electronics are designed to withstand power surges from lightning. Tritons also have stiffer wings that allow them to dive below 10,000 feet to get a closer look at targets floating on the water, according to the Navy.

The Tritons on Guam will fall under Task Force 72, the lead command for patrol, reconnaissance and surveillance forces in

7th Fleet, the Navy said.

"The introduction of MQ-4C Triton to the Seventh Fleet area of operations expands the reach of the U.S. Navy's maritime patrol and reconnaissance force in the Western Pacific," said Capt. Matt Rutherford, the task force commander. "Coupling the capabilities of the MQ-4C with the proven performance of P-8, P-3 and EP-3 will enable improved maritime domain awareness in support of regional and national security objectives."

The inaugural deployment of Triton to Guam also brings enhanced capabilities to forward fleet commanders, Rear Adm. Peter Garvin, commander of 7th Fleet's patrol and reconnaissance group, said in the statement.

The Navy's first dedicated drone squadron is "superbly trained" and ready to provide the persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance the Navy needs, he said.

Marines wanted for service's new recruiting advertisement campaign

Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has put out a casting call for active duty and reserve Marines to participate in the service's latest recruiting campaign focused on the boot camp "transformation."

Casting sessions will be held in February at two Marine Corps bases on the East and West Coasts, the Corps said in an administrative message published Friday.

"In order to ensure authenticity and accuracy, MCRC has always utilized real Marines in its advertising," said the message signed by Maj. Gen. James W. Bierman, head of Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

One casting call will be held at the Conservation Law Enforcement Complex on Camp Lejeune, N.C., Feb. 3-4. A West Coast call will be held Feb. 6-7 at the Pacific Views Center on Camp Pendleton, Calif.

"Marines selected to be featured in Marine Cops advertisements are exemplary ambassadors of the Marine Corps to the public," the message said. "No previous acting experience is necessary."

Marines deemed most qualified after the initial screening will be notified and scheduled for personal interviews at a later date.

The campaign, part of the Corps' "Battles Won" marketing strategy, looks at the "transformation story of making Marines via recruit training," the message said. Filming will run from Feb. 27 to March 1 at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., and in Atlanta, Ga.

Marines who want to participate must be available to serve on temporary duty orders for the entire filming window, plus one day of travel on either side.

IG: Flaws found in reporting of readiness of sealift ships

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The Military Sealift Command inaccurately reported the readiness of reserve transport ships, which are crucial for moving large volumes of combat gear in a crisis, a report by the Defense Department Inspector General has found.

The flawed reporting of surge sealift ship readiness means that commanders could base crisis decision-making and planning on bad information, the IG said in a report released on Friday.

"As a result of the MSC's inaccurate ship readiness reporting, the [U.S. Transportation Command] assessment of surge sealift capability was unreliable and could lead geographic combatant commanders to make incorrect assumptions about the initial availability of equipment and resupply of critical items," the report said.

Surge sealift provides 90% of cargo space needed to meet combatant commanders' op-

erational plan requirements, the report said. In the event of a large conflict, the fleet would likely be called upon to move weaponry and supplies.

About 60 government-owned transport ships are part of the military's sealift reserves. In September, dozens of those ships were ordered to sea to determine if reserve transport vessels were able to respond on short notice. U.S. Transportation Command, which launched the "Turbo Activation" drill, said in a report afterward that only about 40% of the ships had left port without issues.

The inaccuracies in reporting the seaworthiness of reserve ships may have arisen from MSC not having sufficient procedures in place to ensure accurate inspection reports, the IG said.

Part of the problem was that, while MSC officials relied on captains to assess their ships, the findings were never verified or reconciled with other records.

S. Korean man with coronavirus near US base

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The U.S. military urged people to seek medical care when necessary and avoid nonessential travel to China after confirmation of a case of coronavirus in a South Korean man from the vicinity of two U.S. bases.

A man from Pyeongtaek, a city close to Camp Humphreys and Osan Air Base, is one of four South Koreans with the potentially deadly, flu-like disease, according to a U.S. Forces Korea announcement Monday.

President Moon Jae-in, meanwhile, ordered that all people entering South Korea

from the Chinese city of Wuhan be checked amid growing fears about the spread of the virus.

U.S. Forces Korea, the main command for some 28,500 American service members, issued a carefully worded public service announcement on social media in a bid to prevent panic.

South Korea has confirmed that four people who recently returned from China had been infected with the virus, which originated in Wuhan, an industrial city with a population of 11 million.

The most recent was a 55-year-old South Korean man who tested positive after he visited a clinic with cold symp-

toms on Jan. 21, a day after returning home from Wuhan, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. KCDC officials declined to provide more details, saying the case was still under investigation.

“There has been a recent global outbreak of a new virus spreading from Wuhan (China) with four confirmed cases in Korea and one of the four patients, who resides in Pyeongtaek, being admitted to Seoul National University hospital for observation and treatment,” the USFK notice said.

“There are no known cases where the virus is being transmitted from person to person in

Korea,” it added. “Be advised that this is cold and flu season and the coronavirus shares similar symptoms.”

Symptoms include fever, cold spells, coughs and difficulty breathing.

The military advised people to “avoid nonessential travel to Wuhan and China if possible,” and to avoid travel or contact with others while sick.

China has implemented sweeping efforts to contain the viral disease as the death toll in the country rose to 80. Several infections also have been confirmed in other countries and in the U.S., including in Washington, Illinois, California and Arizona.

US dropped a record number of bombs in Afghanistan last year

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The United States dropped more bombs and other munitions in Afghanistan last year than any other year since documentation began in 2006, Air Force data shows.

American aircraft released 7,423 munitions in the country in 2019, according to figures published Monday by U.S. Air Forces Central Command. Coalition aircraft flew nearly 8,800 sorties during the period, over a quarter of which carried out strikes.

The tally surpasses the previous record set last year when 7,362 munitions were released and comes amid ongoing discussion between American and Taliban officials aimed at ending America's longest war.

Talks between the two sides continued for most of 2019 as American bombs were dropped.

“The U.S. has been very explicitly using stepped-up attacks on the Taliban as a form of leverage-seeking,” Laurel Miller, former U.S. acting Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, said in a phone interview, adding that the Taliban also see violence as their main form of leverage.

The AFCENT figures include bomb and missile strikes, 105 mm shells fired by AC-130 gunships and strafing fire from 20 mm cannons and up.

Airstrikes, predominantly conducted by U.S. forces, caused 579 of the 1,149 civilian war fatalities attributed to pro-government forces in Afghanistan during the first nine months of 2019, according to the most recent United Nations data. Insurgent groups were responsible for 1,207 ci-

‘The U.S has been very explicitly using stepped-up attacks on the Taliban as a form of leverage-seeking.’

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vilian deaths in that time, the U.N. data showed. Another 207 civilian deaths were unattributed to either side.

Last week, Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission blamed a U.S. drone strike conducted earlier this month in western Herat province for killing 15 civilians, including three children.

“The commission has repeatedly called on domestic and foreign forces to be more careful in conducting military operations so that civilians are not harmed,” the commission said.

A spokesman for U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan confirmed the U.S. military carried out the strike in support of government forces. Afghan authorities said an investigation was ongoing.

While U.S.-trained Afghan forces are capable of conducting ground operations, they still need air support to fight insurgents and terrorist groups, like the local Islamic State affiliate, said Rohullah Ahmadzai, Afghan Defense Ministry spokesman.

Marine gets 6 years for fatal shooting

Portland (Maine) Press Herald

The U.S. Marine who shot and killed a Marine corporal nine months ago will spend almost six years in a military prison.

Jeff Houston, a spokesman for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, said on Sunday night in an email that Cpl. Spencer Daily, 21, of Youngstown, Ohio, was court-martialed on Jan. 6 in South Carolina and was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter in the death of Tyler Patrick Wallingford, 21, of Standish, Maine.

NCIS said the shooting took place while the two were playing a video game in Daily's barracks room on April 12 at Marine Corps Air Station in Beaufort, S.C..

“Daily claimed that while drinking alcohol and playing a video game with the victim, he pointed his gun and accidentally shot the victim,” NCIS said in a statement.

NCIS said that Daily was found guilty of willful discharge of a firearm under circumstances to endanger human life and involuntary manslaughter.

Auschwitz survivors return 75 years later

Associated Press

OSWIECIM, Poland — Survivors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp recalled their suffering as they marked the 75th anniversary of its liberation, returning to the place where they lost entire families and warning about the ominous growth of anti-Semitism and hatred in the world.

“We have with us the last living survivors, the last among those who saw the Holocaust with their own eyes,” Polish President Andrzej Duda told the dignitaries at the commemoration, which included the German president as well as Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders.

“The magnitude of the crime perpetrated in this place is terrifying but we must not look away from it and we must never forget it,” Duda said.

About 200 camp survivors attended, many of them elderly Jews and non-Jews who traveled from Israel, the United States, Australia, Peru, Russia, Slovenia and elsewhere. Many lost parents and grandparents in Auschwitz or other Nazi death camps, but were joined by children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren.

They gathered under an enormous, heated tent straddling the train tracks that had transported people to Birkenau, the part of the vast complex where most of the murdered Jews were killed in gas chambers and then cremated. Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet army on Jan. 27, 1945.

Most of the 1.1 million people murdered by the Nazi German forces at the camp were Jews, but other Poles, Russians and Roma were imprisoned there. Polish survivors walked with Duda through the camp’s gate early Monday wearing striped scarves that recalled the prison garb they wore more than 75 years ago.

Kobe Bryant killed in helo crash

Associated Press

CALABASAS, Calif. — The helicopter carrying Kobe Bryant and eight others that crashed into a rugged hillside outside Los Angeles was flying in foggy conditions considered dangerous enough that local police agencies grounded their choppers.

The helicopter plunged into a steep hillside at about 9:45 a.m. on Sunday with an impact that scattered debris over an area the size of a football field and killed all aboard. The accident unleashed an outpouring of grief from admirers around the world, who mourned the sudden loss of the all-time basketball great who spent his entire 20-year career with the Los Angeles Lakers.

Thousands of fans, many wearing Bryant jerseys and chanting his name, gathered outside the Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles, home of the Lakers and the site of Sunday’s Grammy Awards where Bryant was honored.

Bryant, 41, who perished with his 13-year-old daughter, Gianna, was one of the game’s most popular players and the face of the 16-time NBA champion Lakers.

The cause of the crash was unknown, but conditions at the time were such that the Los An-

geles Police Department and the county sheriff’s department grounded their helicopters.

The Los Angeles County medical examiner, Dr. Jonathan Lucas, said the rugged terrain complicated efforts to recover the remains. He estimated it would take at least a couple of days to complete that task before identifications can be made.

Bryant’s helicopter left Santa Ana in Orange County, south of Los Angeles, shortly after 9 a.m. and circled for a time just east of Interstate 5 near Glendale. Air traffic controllers noted poor visibility around Burbank, just to the north, and Van Nuys, to the northwest.

After holding up the helicopter for other aircraft, they cleared the Sikorsky S-76 to proceed north along Interstate 5 through Burbank before turning west to follow U.S. Route 101, the Ventura Highway.

Shortly after 9:40 a.m., the helicopter turned again, toward the southeast, and climbed to more than 2,000 feet. It then descended and crashed into the hillside at about 1,400 feet, according to data from Flightradar24.

When it struck the ground, the helicopter was flying at about 184 mph and descending at a rate of more than 4,000 feet

per minute, the data showed.

The chopper went down in Calabasas, about 30 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. Bryant’s Mamba Sports Academy in nearby Thousand Oaks was holding a basketball tournament on Sunday.

Federal transportation safety investigators were on their way to the scene. Among other things, they will look at the pilot’s history, the chopper’s maintenance records and the records of its owner and operator, said NTSB board member Jennifer Homendy at a news conference.

Kurt Deetz, a pilot who used to fly Bryant in the chopper, said the crash was more likely caused by bad weather than engine or mechanical issues.

“The likelihood of a catastrophic twin engine failure on that aircraft — it just doesn’t happen,” he told the Los Angeles Times.

Justin Green, an aviation attorney in New York who flew helicopters in the Marine Corps, said that pilots can become disoriented in low visibility, losing track of which direction is up. Green said a pilot flying an S-76 would be instrument-rated, meaning that person could fly the helicopter without relying on visual cues from outside.

Dems demand Bolton testify at Senate trial

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Pressure is increasing on senators to call John Bolton to testify at President Donald Trump’s impeachment trial after the revelation that a draft of a book by the former national security adviser undercuts a key defense argument — that Trump never tied withholding military aid to Ukraine to his demand the country help investigate political rival Joe Biden.

Bolton writes in the forthcoming book that Trump told him he wanted to withhold hundreds of millions of dollars in security aid from Ukraine until it helped him with investiga-

tions into Biden. Trump’s legal team has repeatedly insisted otherwise, and Trump tweeted on Monday that he never told Bolton such a thing.

Republican senators faced a pivotal moment as they arrived on Capitol Hill to resume Trump’s trial. Democrats are demanding sworn testimony from Bolton and others, and pressure is mounting on at least four Republicans to force the issue.

“John Bolton’s relevance to our decision has become increasingly clear,” GOP Sen. Mitt Romney, of Utah, told reporters. Sen. Susan Collins, of Maine, said she has always

wanted “the opportunity for witnesses” and the report about Bolton’s book “strengthens the case.” But several GOP senators who met privately with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said nothing had changed. McConnell declined to comment.

“I don’t know how you can explain that you wanted a search for the truth in this trial and say you don’t want to hear from a witness who had a direct conversation about the central allegation in the articles of impeachment,” Rep. Adam Schiff, the California Democrat who is leading the House prosecution team, said on CNN.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police unable to help woman stalked by drone

ME GORHAM — A Maine woman who was harassed by a drone for two days said police told her they could do nothing about it.

Mary Dunham said a drone tracked her in her car on Tuesday as she drove to a gas station, where she called police, and then to her home in Gorham. It followed her 8 miles to her brother's house in Standish the following day.

It was an “unnerving” experience, she said. “The officer arrived and said, ‘Yeah, I see it. I don’t know what to tell you, though. We can’t do too much,’” she said.

Some states have laws that make it a crime to use drones for surveillance that violates a person’s reasonable expectation of privacy, but Maine is not one of them, the Portland Press Herald reported.

Easter bunny arrested after hit-and-run

FL ORLANDO — A Florida man who became a video sensation after fighting a man on the street while dressed as the Easter Bunny was arrested and tried to use the costume to elude capture, authorities said.

Earlier this month, Antoine McDonald was driving a motorcycle when he ran a stop sign and crashed into a carport before fleeing the scene, according to the Florida Highway Patrol.

Deputies went to McDonald’s address and spotted a gray car driving away and found McDonald laying in the backseat of the car. When a deputy went to arrest him, he denied it.

“I wasn’t in any crash. I’m the Orlando Easter bunny, Google it,” he said, according to an arrest report.

Man gets probation in soda rebate scheme

TX HOUSTON — A Houston man was sentenced to five years’ probation for participating in a rebate scheme that defrauded soda giant Dr. Pepper Snapple Group Inc. of more than \$1 million.

Joseph A. Isaac was sentenced in federal court on Wednesday. He had pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud in September.

Prosecutors said Isaac’s company was in charge of a rebate campaign by Dr. Pepper that paid money to customers who returned bottle caps and paid vendors who agreed to switch to Dr. Pepper Snapple Group products in restaurants and convenience store soda dispensers. Authorities said Isaac, 54, failed to pay the rebates from 2010 to 2015 and instead pocketed the money.

Woman accused of beating 93-year-old

LA BATON ROUGE — Charges have been upgraded against a Louisiana woman accused of beating a 93-year-old grandmother in an alleged assault caught on video.

Lottie Morgan, 57, faces a charge of aggravated second-degree battery and an abuse charge.

In a short video shared online and with police, Morgan is allegedly seen beating a person with a belt inside a home earlier this month. Family member Lenny Morgan told WAFB-TV that he recorded the video. He said that Lottie Morgan has been the 93-year-old’s caregiver.

Lottie Morgan was arrested Jan. 12 and charged with cruelty to persons with infirmities, news outlets reported. She posted a \$1,500 bond, and Lenny Morgan said she then returned

to the same home as the woman she’s accused of beating.

Three left on court after basketball brawl

DE LEWES — A high school basketball game in Delaware devolved into a three-on-three contest after a bench-clearing brawl, and only three of those players were left on the court at the buzzer.

Thursday’s game ended with only one player on the court for Cape Henlopen High School and two for Sussex Tech. Sussex Tech won the game 63-62.

Media outlets reported that Cape Henlopen, the home team, was leading 39-27 with about four minutes left in the third quarter when a fight broke out. Players from both benches rushed onto the court, resulting in most of them being ejected.

Sussex Tech released a statement saying that it is working with Cape Henlopen to review the incident, and that administrators are investigating and will take appropriate action.

Drywall screws spill causes traffic closure

AK ANCHORAGE — Thousands of drywall screws that fell onto a busy Alaska road punctured tires and caused police to close off traffic until the mess was cleaned up.

The 1/4-inch drywall screws were strewn onto Eagle River Loop Road on Thursday afternoon, the Anchorage Daily News reported. Police did not immediately determine the cause of the spill.

The road is one of the main entryways into Eagle River, a community within the municipality of Anchorage. The screws punctured some tires immediately, forcing drivers to the side of the road. Other drivers found screws after arriving

at their homes.

Sheriff’s office names 1st female deputy chief

AL BIRMINGHAM — The Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office announced on Friday that Felicia Rucker-Summerlin was named deputy chief, the first woman in that position in the agency’s 200-year history, news outlets reported.

“It really hasn’t hit me yet,” Rucker-Summerlin said. “I was shocked. When you think 200 years, and here I am.”

In an interview with AL.com, Rucker-Summerlin said that she took advantage of every leadership training opportunity and worked a variety of assignments. She took steps to make sure no one could tell her she wasn’t qualified for any position.

“I didn’t want (it) just because I was female or just because I was black,” Rucker-Summerlin said. “I wanted it because I’m qualified.”

Patio chair falls 12 stories, hits woman

NY NEW YORK — A woman was hospitalized on Saturday when a chair fell off a 12th-story balcony in New York City and hit her on the head, police said.

The incident happened at about 2:30 p.m. in the Union Square neighborhood of Manhattan. The wooden patio chair was apparently swept off the balcony during a steady rainstorm. It hit a 23-year-old woman and a parked car.

The woman, who was not identified, was taken to Bellevue Hospital for treatment of a laceration to her head.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Bryant's drive continued after the NBA

Associated Press

It was April 14, 2016. It was the first full day of Kobe Bryant's new chapter as a retired NBA player. All he had done the night before was score a mind-boggling 60 points in his farewell game, not getting out of Staples Center until around midnight.

His staff at Kobe Inc. were certain they would beat their boss to the office that morning.

They were wrong. He beat everyone there by two hours. "We have a lot of work to do," Bryant told them.

Even in retirement, Bryant found no substitute for hard work. Kobe Bean Bryant was many things: one of the greatest players in basketball history, a five-time NBA champion, a two-time Olympic gold medalist, a fluent speaker of multiple languages, a resident of the world, an Oscar winner, the self-described Black Mamba that started as a nickname and became his brand, someone so good he had two numbers retired by the Los Angeles Lakers.

He never stopped. Basketball was his obsession for 20 years in the NBA. Storytelling was the obsession for the rest of his life.

Tears, as would be expected once the news broke of Bryant's death in a helicopter crash in Southern California on Sunday, flowed freely in the NBA world.

LeBron James was inconsolable when he got the news, a day after passing Bryant for No. 3 on the league's career scoring list. Doc Rivers struggled when he tried to put his feelings into words. Even the normally beyond-stoic Kawhi Leonard's eyes welled up when he was talking about Bryant.

The pain was obvious elsewhere: Oregon women's basketball star Sabrina Ionescu didn't hide her anguish when she said she was dedicating the rest of her season to

Bryant's memory, soccer's Neymar held up a "24" with his fingers after scoring a goal for Paris Saint-Germain, and marqueees at the Super Bowl in Miami were lit up in the Lakers' colors of purple and gold as a tribute.

The elite ones, the ones like James and Leonard and Ionescu and Neymar, are all like Bryant was. Driven. Obsessed with their craft. Those are the sort of people Bryant enjoyed most. He didn't have much patience for anything else.

Teammates were never immune from his criticism; not even Shaquille O'Neal, a fellow all-time NBA great, could avoid clashes with Bryant. O'Neal was half-a-foot taller and probably an easy 100 pounds heavier than Bryant. Didn't matter. Bryant wanted to fight one day in practice, so they fought.

His toughness was legendary; Bryant blew out his Achilles on a play in 2013 where he'd been fouled and made the two free throws knowing that his season would be over a few seconds later. It was against Golden State; the Lakers trailed at the time, and Bryant — who hyperextended a knee in that same game and played through it because the game was so important in the playoff race — swished both shots. "We were down two. Had to tie the game first," Bryant said years later, when asked why he stayed in the game.

His commitment was legendary; there was a game in 2011 in Miami that the Lakers lost by six, and Bryant was so displeased with how he played that he went back onto the court for 90 minutes of uninterrupted shooting that went on until after midnight. His teammates were on Miami Beach for dinner. Bryant was working instead. "It's my job," Bryant said.

His swagger was legendary; during the FIBA Americas tournament in 2007, Bryant was less-than-impressed with how Bra-

zil thought it had a chance to beat Team USA. So, he tasked himself with guarding Leandro Barbosa, who until that point had been the leading scorer in the tournament. With Bryant blanketing him — making it difficult for him to even dribble at times — Barbosa made one shot all night. The Americans won by 37. "Looking at a great white shark is one thing," Bryant told teammates, "but jumping into the pool with one is another thing."

He played in Los Angeles, but he was a star everywhere. Everywhere. At the Basketball World Cup in China this past summer, Bryant was on the court for a game during the medal round. He said a few words in Mandarin and the fans in Beijing screamed in more delight than they had for the guy who had taken the floor just before Bryant, a fellow by name of Yao Ming.

He was as driven in his storytelling life as he was in his playing days. Kobe Inc. wasn't just a cool name. It was his world. He wanted to inspire kids through books that combined the worlds of sports and fantasy. He was toying with the idea of taking his stories to Broadway. He won an Oscar for "Dear Basketball," a short animated film in 2018 that had been converted from a poem that he penned when he decided it was time to retire from playing the game. He had a podcast for kids and families, not with him blathering on about whatever he wanted to talk about but with characters talking about how to be a good teammate. He had a franchise of shows called Detail, where he broke down the nuances of basketball and had other huge names from other sports do the same thing.

He wasn't kidding around when talking to his staff on April 14, 2016. Kobe Bryant still had a lot of work to do.

He was just getting started. And now he's gone.

Player's legacy extends beyond his records

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Kobe Bryant inspired a generation of basketball players worldwide with sublime skills and an unquenchable competitive fire.

He earned Los Angeles' eternal adoration during his two decades as the fierce soul of the beloved Lakers, and he was respected by basketball fans from every place with a hoop and a dream, including his native Philadelphia and in Italy, his other childhood home.

Less than four years into his retirement, Bryant was seizing new challenges and working to inspire his daughters' generation through sports and storytelling when his next chapter ended shockingly early.

Bryant, the 18-time All-Star who won five NBA championships and became one of the greatest basketball players of his generation during a 20-year career all with the Lakers, died in a helicopter crash Sunday. He was 41.

The crash occurred in the foggy hills above Calabasas, Calif., about 30 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. Bryant was killed, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press, and a different person familiar with the case confirmed Bryant's 13-year-old daughter Gianna also died.

Authorities said nine people were on the helicopter, and all were presumed dead. No names were released.

Bryant lived south of Los Angeles in coastal Orange County, and he often used helicopters to save time and avoid Southern California's notorious traffic. He traveled to practices and games by helicopter before his playing career ended in 2016. He continued to use them after retirement as he attended to his new ventures, which included a burgeoning entertainment company that recently produced an Academy Award-winning animated short film.

Kobe's death leaves NBA, fans in shock

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Kobe Bryant authored some of his most memorable moments at Madison Square Garden and made himself a centerpiece of the Lakers-Celtics rivalry.

Bryant was remembered for that and so much more Sunday after the five-time NBA champion, his teenage daughter and seven others were killed in a helicopter crash.

Tributes poured in from around the basketball, entertainment and political worlds. Players and teams who competed with and against Bryant struggled their way through the games that were scheduled, unable to summon his intense competitive spirit.

"We laughed and joked about the Mamba mentality. We're all going to need it right now," Clippers coach Doc Rivers said through tears before his team played in Orlando.

Madison Square Garden was lit up in the Lakers' gold and purple colors for the game between the New York Knicks and Brooklyn Nets. Nets star Kyrie

Irving didn't play, leaving the arena after hearing of Bryant's death.

The 18-time All-Star made his first All-Star appearance at MSG in 1998, a passing of the torch game in which Michael Jordan played for the final time as a member of the Chicago Bulls. Bryant later set the scoring record at the current arena when he scored 61 points in 2009, a mark that was later bettered by Carmelo Anthony.

Bryant played twice against Rivers and the Celtics for the championship, with Boston winning in 2008 and the Lakers taking the 2010 title, when Bryant captured his second consecutive NBA Finals MVP award.

"We always liked to reminisce. We would always laugh at our versions of our losses," Rivers said. "You know, when we beat them in 2008, he had his version. And when they beat us in 2010, I had my version, and then we would laugh at how different we looked at the games."

Pau Gasol, a former teammate of Bryant's during those series, tweeted, "Beyond devastated... my big brother... I can't,

I just can't believe it."

The Lakers and Celtics already had the NBA's most famous rivalry, but it had been dormant since the heydays of Magic Johnson and Larry Bird before Bryant helped lead its resumption. Johnson, just days after giving an emotional speech during a memorial service for former NBA Commissioner David Stern, was devastated again after Bryant, 41, and 13-year-old daughter Gianna were among those killed in Southern California.

"As I try to write this post, my mind is racing," Johnson wrote on Twitter. "I'm in disbelief and have been crying all morning over this devastating news that Kobe and his young daughter, Gigi have passed away in a helicopter crash. Cookie and I are heartbroken."

Bryant also helped the U.S. win Olympic titles in 2008 and 2012, after the Americans had been shut out of gold medals in major international basketball competitions since 2000.

"He was in constant pursuit of doing something special and there will never be a greater

warrior in our sport," said Mike Krzyzewski, who coached Bryant on those teams after trying to recruit him to Duke.

Tiger Woods was told of Kobe Bryant's passing by his caddie Joey LaCava coming off the 18th green at Torrey Pines on Sunday at the Farmer's Insurance Open.

"Joey just told me coming off 18th green," Woods told CBS. "I didn't understand why the people in the gallery were saying, 'Do it for Mamba.' But now I understand. It's a shocker to everyone. Unbelievably sad and one of the more tragic days."

And not only for fellow athletes. Bryant had been busy in the arts after retirement as a player and quickly been successful.

"Kobe was a legend on the court and just getting started in what would have been just as meaningful a second act," former President Barack Obama tweeted. "To lose Gianna is even more heartbreaking to us as parents. Michelle and I send love and prayers to Vanessa and the entire Bryant family on an unthinkable day."

Steady Nadal beats animated Kyrgios

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Rafael Nadal left the muttering and the preening, the underarm serving and the 'tweening, to his younger, flashier opponent, Nick Kyrgios.

Surely, Nadal was content to collect the win in the latest installment of their rivalry.

The No. 1-ranked Nadal kept his thoughts to himself and limited his shot-making to the more traditional variety in an entertaining 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (6), 7-6 (4) victory over home-crowd favorite Kyrgios on Monday to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals and get closer to a record-tying 20th Grand Slam title.

These two guys don't like each other. But Nadal had nothing but nice things to say after improving his head-to-head record to 5-3 against Kyrgios.

"When he wants to play, when he is focused on what he's doing, I think he's a very important player for our sport," Nadal said, "because he has a big talent and is one of these players that can be very, very inter-

esting for the crowd."

While Kyrgios was up to some of his usual trick shots and antics, what he never did was waver in his effort, something folks often accuse him of.

"Today," Nadal said, "I think he played very serious, tried all the time his best."

It certainly meant a lot to Kyrgios, who said: "I'm shattered to have lost tonight. These are the matches that I want to win the most."

Here's how the elevated stakes and tension affected both men: At 5-all in the pivotal third-set tiebreaker, Kyrgios double-faulted. That offered up a gift-wrapped set point. But Nadal failed to take advantage because he double-faulted right back.

Still, two points later, the 23rd-seeded Kyrgios put a forehand into the net, and the set was Nadal's. Not long after, Kyrgios double-faulted again to get broken at love.

That put Nadal ahead 2-1 in the fourth, seemingly in charge.

"Against Nick," Nadal would say afterward, "you are never (in) control."

Sure enough, Nadal faltered while serving

for the win at 5-4, double-faulting to create a pair of break points, the second of which Kyrgios converted with a jumping forehand and celebrated by throwing his head back and screaming. Spectators rose and roared and waved their Australian flags in support of the 24-year-old from Canberra.

"A scary game," Nadal called it, acknowledging he was hampered by nerves.

But he regrouped and pulled out the win in the closing tiebreaker, which ended with Kyrgios putting a forehand into the net.

Sure, the cool, breezy conditions played to Nadal's advantage and dulled Kyrgios' power-based style. But there also was this: Nadal finished with more than twice as many winners as unforced errors, 64-27.

On Wednesday, the 33-year-old Nadal's 41st career Grand Slam quarterfinal will be against No. 5 Dominic Thiem in a rematch of the past two French Open finals, both won by Nadal.

The other men's quarterfinal on the top half of the bracket is No. 7 Alexander Zverev vs. No. 15 Stan Wawrinka.

NBA roundup

Zion's double-double paces Pelicans

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Zion Williamson's authoritative, two-handed dunk as he was fouled by Boston guard Kemba Walker gave an appreciative crowd its first taste of how effectively the New Orleans Pelicans can close out games with the NBA's top draft choice on the court.

Williamson had 21 points and 11 rebounds in 27 minutes, and the Pelicans beat the Celtics 123-108 on Sunday for their first victory in three games since the rookie star joined the lineup.

The game also marked the first time the Pelicans permitted Williamson to play late in the fourth quarter. He scored eight points in the final three minutes as New Orleans pulled away.

"I felt helpless the last two games not being able to help my team in the fourth quarter," Williamson said. "Being able to close it out tonight felt good."

As did his first win, he said, adding: "The first of many, hopefully."

Jrue Holiday had 25 points, JJ Redick scored 17 and Brandon Ingram added 16 for New

Orleans, which snapped a two-game slide. Lonzo Ball's career-high 15 assists included a long lob to Williamson for an alley-oop layup and an alley-oop pass that Williamson dunked on a sideline inbounds play.

Trail Blazers 139, Pacers 129: Damian Lillard had 50 points and 13 assists, becoming the first Portland player with 40-plus points in three straight games, and the host Trail Blazers beat Indiana.

CJ McCollum returned after a three-game absence because of an ankle injury and added 28 points for Portland. Hassan Whiteside had 21 points and 14 rebounds.

Domantas Sabonis — whose father, Arvydas, played for the Blazers, had 27 points, 14 assists and 11 rebounds for Indiana for his second career triple-double. His first came last Sunday at Denver.

The Pacers were without starter Malcolm Brogdon, who missed his second straight game in concussion protocol after taking an elbow against Phoenix on Wednesday.

"We've been having a lot of injuries all year so I just wanted to come out, be aggressive and

help the team any way I can," Sabonis said.

Indiana (30-17) has not won in Portland since the 2007-08 season, a streak of 11 games.

Knicks 110, Nets 107: Julius Randle had 22 points and 15 rebounds to lead host New York past Brooklyn, which played without Kyrie Irving.

Marcus Morris added 21 points to help the Knicks earn a split of the New York season series. Spencer Dinwiddie, back in the starting lineup with Irving out, scored 23 points for the Nets.

Hawks 152, Wizards 133: Trae Young had 45 points and 14 assists in an emotional game for the first-time All-Star and Kobe Bryant fan, helping host Atlanta beat Washington.

De'Andre Hunter finished with 25 points, and Kevin Huerter added 18 for the Hawks,

Bradley Beal scored 40 points for the Wizards.

Raptors 110, Spurs 106: Pascal Siakam scored 35 points to lead Toronto to a win at San Antonio.

Kyle Lowry added 16 points to help the Raptors win their seventh straight game.

DeMar DeRozan and Derrick White led the Spurs with 14 points each.

Clippers 112, Magic 97: Kawhi Leonard scored 15 of his 31 points in a big third quarter and Los Angeles won at Orlando.

Leonard scored seven straight points for the Clippers in the quarter to help his team stretch a four-point lead to 10 as it pulled away.

Nuggets 117, Rockets 110: Nikola Jokic had 24 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his ninth triple-double of the season and Jerami Grant scored a season-high 25 points in host Denver's victory over Houston.

Russell Westbrook scored 22 of his 32 points in the second half for the Rockets. James Harden sat out with a bruised left thigh.

Grizzlies 114, Suns 109: Ja Morant scored 14 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter to help host Memphis hold off Phoenix. Jaren Jackson Jr. and Dillon Brooks finished with 20 points each for the Grizzlies.

Top 25 roundup

No. 4 Aztecs run unbeaten string to school-record 21

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — While remaining the country's only unbeaten team was important to the San Diego State Aztecs, they had another milestone on their minds Sunday.

"It was important because we wanted to hit 21-0 and make (school) history," junior Trey Pulliam said.

Mission accomplished.

Malachi Flynn scored 21 points, Pulliam added a career-high 18 points and the fourth-ranked Aztecs (21-0, 10-0 Mountain West) staved off UNLV's second-half rally to win 71-67 and break the school records for best start and longest winning streak in the program's 99 seasons.

Jordan Schakel contributed 11 points for the San Diego State, which had won 20 straight games twice before — during the 2010-11 and 2013-14 seasons. The latter team made the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament and finished 31-5.

No. 11 Michigan State 70, Minnesota 52: Cassius Winston had 18 points and eight assists to help the visiting Spartans cruise past the Gophers.

Xavier Tillman added 17 points and 10 rebounds for Michigan State (15-5, 7-2), which bounced back from a loss at Indiana three days ago to stay in a first-place tie in the Big Ten with Illinois.

No. 12 Oregon 96, UCLA 75: Chris

Duarte scored 20 of his 24 points in the first half and the host Ducks took full advantage of 23 Bruins turnovers.

No. 17 Maryland 77, Indiana 76: Jalen Smith capped a last-minute comeback by making the go-ahead layup with 14 seconds left to give the visiting Terrapins the win over the Hoosiers.

No. 25 Houston 68, South Florida 49: DeJon Jarreau had 12 points and six assists, Fabian White Jr. added 11 points and the host Cougars beat the Bulls.

Caleb Mills had 11 points and Chris Harris Jr. finished with nine points and eight rebounds. Houston (16-4, 6-1 American) shot 42% in winning its fourth straight.