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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Marines: Plane developed problems in air

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Marine KC-130T tanker-transport aircraft that crashed into the Mississippi Delta on Monday evening, killing 15 Marines and a sailor, developed problems in midair though investigators are still working to determine what happened, a Marine general said Wednesday.

“Indications are something went wrong at cruise attitude,” Brig. Gen. Bradley S. James, the commander of 4th Marine Aircraft Wing of the Marine Reserves, said Wednesday during a brief news conference in Itta Bena, Miss.

The small town — about 80 miles north of Jackson, the state capital — is where the plane smashed into a soybean field, killing all 16 servicemembers aboard and leaving a trail of debris for miles.

Investigators from local, state, federal and military agencies are expected to spend weeks combing the debris field, which spans 2 to 3 miles, to find clues that will lead them

to what happened before the plane crashed en route from Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in North Carolina to Naval Air Field El Centro in California.

The plane was carrying seven members of the Marines’ elite special operations 2nd Raider Battalion, who were eventually traveling to a pre-deployment training exercise in Yuma, Ariz., the Marine Corps said. Those servicemembers included six Marine commandos and a Navy hospital corpsman assigned to that unit based at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The other nine killed in the crash were crewmembers from the Marine Aerial Refueling and Transport Squadron 452, Marine Air Group 49, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing based in Newburgh, N.Y.

The families of those servicemembers killed in the Marines’ deadliest aviation crash in more than a decade have been notified as of Wednesday, James said. But the service declined to identify them publicly.

“Out of respect for the families, we will not release the names or specifics as of

now,” the general said, adding they would be identified “in the next few days.”

Nonetheless, names of some of the Marines killed in the crash began circulating through news reports.

The Detroit Free Press reported Julian Kevianne, 31, of Detroit was among the deceased. Kevianne, identified as a Marine sergeant, was based at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, according to the report.

The newspaper reported Kevianne’s brother, Carlo, confirmed he was among the deceased.

Another Marine killed in the crash was Gunnery Sgt. Brendan Johnson, according to CNN, which reported his father, Kevin, confirmed the death.

At least one additional crash victim had been identified as of Wednesday. Dan Baldassare, a Marine from Colts Neck, N.J., was killed in the crash, according to PIX 11 news. Ryan McGowan, a longtime friend of Baldassare’s said the Marine was among those killed, according to the news station.

Committee shows support for Navy secretary nominee

BY DIANNA CAHN

Stars and Stripes

In a rousing show of support, the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday questioned Navy secretary nominee Richard Spencer during a two-hour preliminary confirmation hearing that looked more like a unanimous endorsement than the rigors of interrogation.

Committee Chairman Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., appeared amused as he offered the former Marine aviator-turned-finance executive the opportunity to give his opening remarks, saying “please proceed so we can interrogate you as quickly as possible,” while senators spoke of their overwhelming support for the nominee.

Spencer, who left the Marine Corps as a captain and spent

most of his career at venture capital firms, has also served on several military related boards and charities including the Department of Defense business board and as vice chairman of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

While the nominee and the senators spoke of the many challenges facing the Navy during this time of global threats and budgetary crises, no one raised questions about any conflicts that might arise from Spencer’s business investments and interests. President Donald Trump’s previous Navy secretary nominee, financier Philip Bilden, withdrew from consideration in February saying he would not be able to meet Navy ethics requirements without divesting material family financial interests.

Senators did question how Spencer would handle some of the most difficult challenges facing a Navy that is stretched thin, struggling to overcome years of maintenance, readiness and modernization shortfalls and a struggle to keep morale up among servicemembers.

Spencer said he was aware that there was going to have to be some “heavy lifting” to streamline spending and make the force more lean and agile. But he said he comes from a career where “accountability starts at the top” and to adapt in the face of competition, a Navy under him will be guided by the principle of, “If you see something, suggest something.”

Several senators, including McCain and Tim Kaine, D-Va., questioned Spencer about the need for accountability — par-

ticularly in spending and acquisitions. McCain asked how, as secretary, Spencer would handle the excessive cost overruns the Navy saw with the construction of the aircraft carrier Gerald Ford — the first of its class — and the F-35 joint strike fighter.

“My career has been steeped in accountability,” Spencer said. “Accountability starts right here.”

Later, he told Kaine that transparency and accountability “will be the tone set from the top.”

Spencer promised Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, that he would give notice if he intended to make changes to gender integration and he told senators that he would fight military sexual assault.

Concerns raised before arrest of GI who said pro-ISIS things

Associated Press

HONOLULU — The Army knew Sgt. 1st Class Ikaika E. Kang had shown support for Islamic State years ago. It even took away his security clearance for a while.

But he stayed in the service, deploying to Afghanistan in 2013.

Then, last weekend, the FBI arrested the 34-year-old on terrorism charges following a yearlong investigation, shortly after Kang declared his loyalty to the terrorist group and exclaimed that he wanted to “kill a bunch of people,” according to authorities.

The case highlights the challenges investigators face with protecting the public from a potentially dangerous actor on one hand and gathering sufficient evidence to enable prosecution on the other.

Kang is on record making pro-ISIS comments and threatening to hurt or kill other servicemembers back in 2011, according to an FBI affidavit filed Monday in federal court.

The Army revoked his security clearance in 2012, but gave it back to him the following

year. Last year, the Army called the FBI when it “appeared that Kang was becoming radicalized,” the affidavit said.

Retired Army judge and prosecutor Col. Gregory A. Gross said he was perplexed that the Army allowed Kang to remain a soldier even after his favorable comments toward ISIS.

But Gross said the Army may have decided Kang was just mouthing off and was not a threat.

Gross served as the initial judge in the court-martial of Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, an Army psychiatrist who killed 13 people and wounded more than 30 in a 2009 shooting at Fort Hood, Texas. He said Tuesday he was concerned by the similarities between Kang and Hasan’s case.

“He was making all these statements, and giving these presentations,” said Gross, who is a civilian defense attorney for servicemembers.

Lt. Col. Curtis J. Kellogg, a spokesman for the 25th Infantry Division, declined to comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

Kang’s court-appointed law-

yer, Birney Bervar, said his client may suffer from service-related mental health issues of which the government was aware but neglected to treat. He declined to elaborate.

Noel Tipon, an attorney in military and civilian courts, said there’s nothing in the Army manual on removing soldiers from the service that would address allegations like speaking favorably about a group like ISIS.

He suspects the FBI wanted Kang to stay in the Army while they investigated whether he had collaborators.

“They probably said, ‘Let’s monitor it and see if we can get a real terrorist cell,’” said Tipon, who served in the Marine Corps.

The FBI said its investigation showed Kang was acting on his own.

Spokesman Arnold Laanui said the probe took nearly a year given the evidence that needed to be collected and the constitutional rights that needed to be protected.

“These tend to be very meticulous and time-consuming matters,” Laanui said.

US, allies might increase strikes on ISIS in Raqqa

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S.-led coalition fighting Islamic State might increase airstrikes and overhead surveillance support for the fight to retake Raqqa, Syria, now that the militants have been largely defeated in Mosul, Iraq, the top U.S. military commander in Iraq said Tuesday.

Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend told Pentagon reporters he doesn’t see a significant expansion of the U.S. and coalition effort in Raqqa. But he said he thinks there will probably be “a greater level of resourcing,” including intelligence and reconnaissance assets as well as more strikes.

“It will become more of a priority now that Mosul is concluded,” Townsend said.

The added support would help the U.S.-backed Syrian forces who have encircled Raqqa, ISIS’ self-proclaimed capital, breaching the fortified defenses and moving closer to the heart of the city. Officials are predicting a long, tough battle, estimating that more than 2,000 militants are holed up with their families and tens of thousands of civilians in the center of the city.

Townsend, however, cautioned that the battle in Iraq is not over. He said he believes Iraqi troops still need time to oust any remaining ISIS fighters from Mosul. Once that is done, he said, they will probably take a break to reset and rest before launching their fight against ISIS in Tal Afar and other remaining insurgent strongholds in western Iraq.

In other comments, Townsend said he doesn’t know if Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State group, is dead or alive. There have been conflicting reports, including a claim by Moscow in late May that there was a “high probability” he was killed in a Russian airstrike in the southern outskirts of Raqqa.

Pentagon OK’s Expeditionary Medal for Odyssey Lightning operation

Stars and Stripes

Servicemembers who participated in the air campaign against Islamic State in Libya are now eligible for the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Defense Department announced this week.

Personnel involved in the campaign, known as Operation Odyssey Lightning, in Algeria, Chad, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Libya, Niger, Spain, Tunisia or the Mediterranean Sea from Aug. 1 to Dec. 19, 2016, are eligible for the award, the Pentagon said Monday in a message to troops.

In the same message, the DOD updated the

eligibility requirements for the Inherent Resolve Campaign Medal.

Servicemembers who spent 30 days — consecutive or nonconsecutive — in Iraq or Syria after combat operations began on June 15, 2014, are eligible for the award. Personnel previously needed to spend 30 consecutive or 60 nonconsecutive days in those countries to qualify.

Those who engaged in combat or were killed, wounded or medically evacuated from Iraq or Syria can be awarded the medal regardless of the time requirement, the announcement said.

news@stripes.com

Trump comes to son's defense

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump declared Wednesday that his eldest son was “open, transparent and innocent,” a day after Donald Trump Jr. revealed his eagerness to hear damaging information about Hillary Clinton from the Russian government in a meeting last year with an attorney from Moscow.

Defending his son's conduct, the president again dismissed the ongoing Russia investigation as the “greatest Witch Hunt in political history.” Trump responded after Trump Jr. disclosed a series of emails on Tuesday that marked the clearest sign to date that Trump's campaign was willing to consider election help from a longtime U.S. adversary.

The email exchange posted to Twitter by Trump Jr. showed him conversing with a music publicist who wanted him to meet with a “Russian government attorney” who supposedly had dirt on Clinton as “part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump.”

The messages reveal that Trump Jr. was told the Rus-

sian government had information that could “incriminate” Clinton and her dealings with Russia.

“I love it,” Trump Jr. said in one email response.

The president's attorney, Jay Sekulow, said in an interview with NBC's “Today” that Trump Jr. did not violate any laws by accepting the meeting. He said the president had not been aware of Trump Jr.'s June 2016 meeting and didn't find out about his son's email exchange until “very recently.”

As the emails reverberated across the political world, Trump Jr. defended his actions in an interview with Fox News, blaming the decision to take the meeting on the “million miles per hour” pace of a presidential campaign and his suspicion that the lawyer might have information about “underreported” scandals involving Clinton.

Trump Jr. said the meeting “really went nowhere” and that he never told his father about it because there was “nothing to tell.” “In retrospect I probably would have done things a little differently,” he said.

Democrats in Congress voiced outrage and insisted the messages showed clear collusion, with California Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, declaring that “all of the campaign's previous denials obviously now have to be viewed in a different context.”

Yet Republicans — who stand the most to lose politically from Trump's Russia ordeal — did not join in the condemnation. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he was confident Senate investigators would “get to the bottom of whatever happened.” Sen. Susan Collins, a Maine Republican on the Intelligence Committee, cautioned that the emails were “only part of the picture.”

Trump Jr., who was deeply involved in his father's presidential campaign, portrayed his decision to release the emails as an effort “to be totally transparent.” In fact, they had already been obtained by The New York Times.

Hours after the son posted the emails, the father rose to his defense.

GOP set to unveil new health bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says he's ready to unwrap his latest bill repealing much of President Barack Obama's health care law. Another top Republican said the measure will likely keep a pair of tax increases on wealthier Americans that the Affordable Care Act imposed to help finance its expanded coverage.

McConnell, R-Ky., said he will introduce his party's altered health care bill Thursday and begin trying to muscle it through the Senate next week. The renewed effort comes two weeks after he abandoned his initial plan due to deep divisions within the GOP.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, his party's No. 2 Senate leader, said Tuesday the new bill will probably preserve Obama's 3.8 percent tax increase on investment income for couples earning over \$250,000 annually. It would also likely retain a payroll tax increase of 0.9 percent on the same earners that helps finance Medicare, he said.

The two levies are among the biggest Obama's 2010 statute imposed, raising an estimated \$231 billion over the coming decade. Perhaps around \$50 billion of that would be used to increase a \$100 billion fund already in the GOP bill for states to help insurers contain consumers' premiums and deductibles, Cornyn said.

Republicans generally oppose tax boosts, and it was unclear whether preserving those increases would threaten support by any conservatives for the health bill. Republicans are hoping that keeping the two Obama levies might help blunt Democratic attacks that the GOP package would help the rich and hurt the poor.

Cornyn said the reworked bill will provide \$45 billion over a decade to help states combat abuse of drugs including opioids and make it easier for states to get federal waivers to decide how to spend money under their Medicaid health programs.

FBI nominee: Russia probe no ‘witch hunt’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Breaking with the president, the lawyer Donald Trump picked to lead the FBI declared Wednesday that he does not believe a special counsel investigation into possible coordination between Russia and the Trump presidential campaign is a “witch hunt.”

Christopher Wray, the former high-ranking Justice Department official whom Trump nominated last month, also told senators at his confirmation hearing that he would never let politics get in the way of the bureau's mission.

The FBI's work will be driven only by “the facts, the law and the impartial pursuit of justice,” he said, asserting his independence. “My loyalty is to the

Constitution and the rule of law. They have been my guideposts throughout my career, and I will continue to adhere to them no matter the test.”

Trump has repeatedly derided as a “hoax” and a “witch hunt” an ongoing investigation by the FBI and Robert Mueller, the former FBI director selected in May as the special counsel to oversee the probe. Wray, selected for the FBI job last month after Trump fired James Comey, made clear that he disagreed with the characterization.

“I do not consider Director Mueller to be on a witch hunt,” he said under questioning from Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina.

He pledged to lead the FBI “without regard to any partisan

political influence” and said he would consider unacceptable any efforts to interfere with Mueller's investigation.

After Trump dismissed Comey on May 9, the ex-FBI director said that the president had asked him to pledge his loyalty during a dinner at the White House months earlier. He also said Trump had encouraged him to end an investigation into the former national security adviser, Michael Flynn. Wray said Trump made no demand for loyalty from him.

Wray, 50, would inherit the nation's top law enforcement agency at a particularly challenging time, given the abrupt dismissal of Comey by a president who has appeared insensitive to the boundary between the White House and the FBI.

EU's Brexit negotiator puts UK on notice

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — The European Union's chief Brexit negotiator said Wednesday that Britain must meet tough conditions in divorce talks — and doesn't have long to do it — before the two sides can start looking at a future relationship.

Showing frustration with what Europeans consider British grandstanding and impatience with a dearth of clear proposals, the EU's Michel Barnier said Britain needs to make "sufficient progress" on all the initial issues — citizens' rights, the bill that Britain must pay to the EU and the Irish border — before

talks can move to a future trade deal.

Barnier said the three areas "are indivisible and intertwined," making clear that progress in two of the three would be insufficient to advance to the next stage.

He insisted that Britain recognize it faces a bill of many tens of billions of euros to meet previous commitments it made as an EU member. Otherwise, he said, there's no point in discussing anything else.

"It's not an exit bill. It's not a punishment. It's not revenge — at no time has it been those things. It's simply a settling of accounts," he said.

Barnier dismissed British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson's comment that the EU can "go whistle" if it will insist on Britain paying any excessive bill.

"I am not hearing any whistling, just the clock ticking," Barnier said, with the March 2019 deadline for Britain to leave the bloc drawing ever closer.

Estimates of the amount Britain that must pay to cover pension liabilities for EU staff and other commitments such as farming subsidies to humanitarian aid have ranged upward to \$114 billion.

He said questioning such issues as financial obligations

cuts to the heart of any future relationship.

"How do you build a relationship which is going to last with a country where you don't have trust?" Barnier asked.

Trust, he said "means settling accounts."

Barnier said he "could not imagine that a very great country like the U.K." would not also "be a responsible country and respect its commitments."

After Barnier briefed the EU Commission on the negotiations, he spoke to reporters, and exuded some impatience with the British government for letting valuable time in the two-year negotiating slot go to waste.

Missile Wars: Where N. Korea stands after launch of ICBM

Associated Press

TOKYO — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is on the cusp of having something his father and grandfather could only dream of — the ability to unleash a nuclear attack on the United States.

For anyone paying attention, the test launch of his country's first intercontinental ballistic missile on the Fourth of July came as little surprise. Kim has been racing to develop better and longer-range missiles and vowed this would be the year of the ICBM in his annual New Year's address. He made good on that vow with the launch of the "Hwasong-14."

But that isn't all he's been doing. Here's a primer:

Closing the gap. North Korea's newest missile is called the Hwasong-14. Experts believe the two-stage, liquid-fuel missile gives Kim the capability of reaching most of Alaska and possibly Hawaii. Some experts add Seattle and San Francisco. North Korea's missiles aren't very accurate, so big, soft targets like cities are what they would be aimed at.

Kim's technicians still have a lot of work to do. It's not clear if this missile could be scaled up to reach targets beyond Alaska, like New York or Washington.

Reliability is also a big issue that requires years of testing to resolve. Liquid fuel makes the missile a sitting duck while it's being readied for launch.

Diversifying the arsenal. Along with a record number of tests — 17 this year alone — Kim has revealed a surprising array of missiles including Harpoon-style anti-ship missiles, beefed up Scuds, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and missiles that use solid fuel, which makes them easier to hide and harder to destroy.

David Wright, with the Union of Concerned Scientists, said heightened activity over the past 18 months suggests Kim decided a couple of years ago to speed up and diversify.

The takeaway: North Korea is well on its way toward a fine-tuned arsenal of missiles that can strike South Korea, Japan and the US.

What's next? More sanctions, almost certainly. U.S. President Donald Trump claimed "severe things" could be in the offing. The U.S. has circulated a new list of sanctions in the U.N. Security Council and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley put the world, especially China, "on notice" if it doesn't toe Washington's line.

Boko Haram bombings leave 19 dead in Nigeria

Associated Press

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria — Four Boko Haram suicide bombers killed 19 people in a series of attacks that targeted a civilian self-defense force and the people who gathered to mourn their deaths, police in northeastern Nigeria said Wednesday.

Borno state police commissioner Damian Chukwu said 23 others were wounded in Tuesday night's attacks in the northeastern city of Maiduguri, the birthplace of Boko Haram's eight-year insurgency.

The police commissioner said 12 of the dead were members of a civilian self-defense force and the other seven people were killed when they gathered to mourn them.

At least one of the suicide bombers was female, said a spokesman for the self-defense force, Danbatta Bello. The bombers specifically targeted his colleagues while they were on duty, he said.

"A teenage female suicide bomber actually crept to the sandbag post of our boys at Molai and before they could realize what was happen-

ing she detonated herself and killed three of our boys," Bello said.

"That happened simultaneously with the one that occurred at the tea vendor's, where seven of our members who took their time off to eat their dinner were killed," he said.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw mourning residents preparing the bodies of the victims for burial.

Nigeria's government late last year declared that Boko Haram had been "crushed" but deadly attacks continue. The Islamic extremist group has killed more than 20,000 people and abducted thousands of others, and the insurgency has spilled over into neighboring countries.

Northeastern Nigeria is part of what the United Nations has called the world's largest humanitarian crisis in more than 70 years, with the World Food Program estimating that more than 4.5 million people in the region need emergency food assistance.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Twins born to couple who had lost 2 sons

NC CHARLOTTE — A South Carolina couple has welcomed twin boys two years after their two sons died.

Gentry and Hadley Eddings told WBTB-TV the boys, named Isaiah Dobbs and Amos Reed, were born Monday. Their middle names are a tribute to their older brothers. Two-year-old Dobbs Eddings died in a 2015 car wreck, and Reed Eddings died two days later after being delivered at 38 weeks by emergency cesarean section.

Hadley Eddings told WCNC-TV in February that she “missed being a mom from day one” and didn’t “want to continue to live this life without being a mom again.”

Matthew Deans, of Wilmington, N.C., was sentenced to one to three years in prison after pleading guilty to involuntary manslaughter in the wreck.

Police look into officer recorded beating woman

GA ATLANTA — Police outside Atlanta are investigating after a bystander’s video shows an officer beating a homeless woman inside a convenience store.

DeKalb County Police reopened their use of force investigation after local media broadcast video shows the officer striking Katie McCrary, 38, at least 10 times. At one point, she grabs his baton as the officer presses her to the floor with his knee in her back, and he repeatedly shouts “let it go or I’m a shoot you.”

The police report says McCrary had pushed the officer, who was questioning her about begging customers for money at the store in Decatur, Ga.

Police said McCrary was taken to a hospital after her

June 4 arrest. She’s charged with obstructing law enforcement and was served a criminal trespass warning.

Woman injured when chimney collapses on her

MA BOSTON — Authorities said a woman who had attached one end of her hammock to a rooftop chimney in a Boston neighborhood of narrow streets was injured when the brick chimney collapsed on her.

A spokesman for Boston Emergency Medical Services said the department responded to the city’s North End about 12:15 a.m. Tuesday.

It took about 45 minutes to extract the woman from the debris and then lower her in a stretcher from the roof of the four-story building to ground level with the help of a fire department ladder truck. She was taken to the hospital with what were described as serious injuries.

Her name was not made public.

Firefighter backs into station, damages truck

CT WATERFORD — Fire officials in a Connecticut town said their only ladder tower truck is out of commission after a firefighter backed into the fire department building.

Cohanzie Fire Chief Todd Branche told The Day the firefighter took the truck out Sunday to refill its fuel tank.

Branche said the firefighter was pulling the truck back into one of the building’s bays when he hit a brick column, damaging the bucket on the back.

A police report identifies Mark Parker, 39, as the driver. He was not injured.

Branche said the truck has been sent to a center for

repairs.

Gator releases diver after being punched

FL FORT MYERS — A Florida man who was attacked by an alligator while diving for golf balls in a lake said the reptile grabbed his arm and wouldn’t let go so he started punching it in the eyes.

Scott Lahodik told Fox 13 that he was diving on Friday and felt the alligator clamp onto his arm.

“He just came and, full blast, grabbed my arm all the way back in his throat and then he started to roll with me,” Lahodik said from his hospital room in the southwest Florida city of Fort Myers.

“He rolled a couple times and then he still didn’t let go so I knew I had to do something, so I started punching him up by the eye and then he let go.”

Lahodik said he’d made a career diving for golf balls since he retired from the military in 1988. He has 400 stitches and staples in his arm and thinks his diving days are over.

Video shows swastikas being drawn in concrete

NY NEW YORK — A man was caught on surveillance video drawing more than two dozen swastikas in freshly poured concrete in front of a New York City building whose owners are Jewish.

The concrete had been poured Friday on the sidewalk outside a building on Newkirk Avenue in Brooklyn’s Kensington section. The building’s street surveillance camera captured a young man spending 35 minutes drawing nearly 30 swastikas in the still-wet cement early Saturday.

State Assemblyman Dov Hikind of Brooklyn said the video

has been turned over to the New York Police Department.

Letter carrier escapes burning mail truck

NH LONDONDERRY — A letter carrier in New Hampshire barely escaped a burning mail truck.

The Eagle-Tribune reported a mail carrier was working in Londonderry on Monday afternoon when she smelled an odd odor and stopped the vehicle.

Battalion Chief Mike McQuillen said fire started in the truck’s engine and then engulfed the vehicle.

The flaming truck rolled down a street and hit a mailbox along with a trash can after flames destroyed the brakes.

A U.S. Postal Service worker at the scene of the fire couldn’t comment on how the burned mail inside the truck would be handled.

Birds seized from man suspected in cockfighting

IA DES MOINES — More than seven dozen birds were seized from the Des Moines home of a man suspected of involvement in cockfighting.

Court records say Mariana Martinez Ramirez, 28, is charged with possession of animal contest devices.

A city animal control officer’s report from a June 22 visit to Martinez Ramirez’s home said the officer saw roosters that had been physically groomed like birds prepared for cockfighting. A police spokesman said it didn’t appear the cockfights were being staged at the home.

From wire reports

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Cano lifts AL All-Stars with HR in 10th

Associated Press

MIAMI — Robinson Cano hugged Francisco Lindor after the final out, exchanged high-fives with his American League teammates and put an arm around the shoulder of designated hitter/photographer Nelson Cruz.

Winning the All-Star Game still seemed to matter, even if it didn't mean World Series home field.

Cano homered off Cubs closer Wade Davis leading off the 10th inning and the AL beat the National League 2-1 Tuesday night for its fifth straight victory in a game dominated by this era's flame-throwers rather than its standout sluggers.

At 34, the Seattle second baseman was among the oldest players in an event built around so many of the sport's new, young stars, and he was added to the roster only Friday as an injury replacement. At that time, he didn't realize baseball players and owners had scrapped the rule giving home-field advantage in the Fall Classic to the league that wins the Midsummer Classic.

"When I found out, I said, I might get an at-bat," Cano recalled.

Cano earned the MVP honor with his one clutch swing. He sent a hanging curve off the back wall of the right-field bullpen, then blew a bubble with his gum when rounding the bases.

He remembered telling his dad: "I'm not picked — like the last one. If I play, it's great," he said.

Cano hip-bumped Cruz on the way back to the dugout, then was joined by jumping, hopping and high-fiving teammates on the bench. For good measure, they doused Cano with sunflower seeds and fanned him with towels.

Craig Kimbrel wiggled out of a jam in the ninth and right fielder Justin Upton made a lunging catch in the 10th to help the AL. And for the first time since 1964, the rivalry is back to all even — 43 wins apiece with two ties, and each side has scored exactly 361 runs.

Cleveland closer Andrew Miller finished off the win. Manager Brad Mills, taking over the AL squad because Indians skipper Terry Francona was recovering from a heart procedure last week, was thrilled.

"The last thing we wanted to do was get pitchers in that shouldn't probably be in the

game, and risk an injury or something," Mills said.

Cano's homer came exactly 50 years after the previous All-Star extra-inning homer, when Tony Perez hit a tiebreaking 15th-inning shot off Catfish Hunter in the NL's 2-1 win at Anaheim, California. Perez, now a Marlins executive, was among eight Latin-born Hall of Famers who threw out ceremonial first pitches.

Miguel Sano put the AL ahead in the fifth with a bloop RBI single down the right-field line against Alex Wood. Yadier Molina tied it in the sixth with a home run off Ervin Santana and two days before his 35th birthday became the oldest catcher with an All-Star long ball.

Molina, wearing a shiny gold helmet and chest protector, had just entered behind the plate in the top half and snapped off an All-Star first — Cruz pulled a phone out of his uniform pants and asked the catcher to shoot photos of him with umpire Joe West, who last month became just the third ump to work 5,000 big league games.

"I would bet if the game had counted, he would not have done that," NL manager Joe

Maddon said.

Molina took the request in stride.

"It was weird, huh? It was funny, too," he said. "I said: Are you serious? He was. So I did it."

Cruz had planned a similar stunt for the 2013 but said he couldn't do it.

"This time, if I had to take a picture with someone it was Joe West. He's the legend," Cruz explained. "He said, 'Come on get out of here, what are you doing?' Then he said, 'Yeah, yeah. Let's do it.'"

West couldn't believe what was happening.

"I've never seen that before — ever," he told The Associated Press. "That's the first time I ever think I've been speechless on a field."

Kimbrel, throwing at up to 100 mph, stranded runners at second and third to end the ninth, striking out Michael Conforto. The Boston closer wound up with the win.

The AL's first six hits were by first-time All-Stars but some things don't change. The AL has won 12 of 15 and 17 of the last 20 All-Star Games played to a decision.

Longballers Judge, Stanton come up short

Associated Press

MIAMI — Aaron Judge's flyball to center field in the fifth inning triggered a crowd crescendo even though it came to rest in a glove shy of the warning track.

Giancarlo Stanton struck out twice and tapped out to the catcher, so his estimated distance averaged about 7 feet per plate appearance.

The Home Run Derby this was not.

The American League beat the National League 2-1 in 10 innings Tuesday night in the All-Star Game, and the marquee sluggers did their part to keep the score down.

Judge, the New York Yankees rookie sensation and Monday night's winner of the Home Run Derby, went 0-for-3 before departing in the fifth. He left three runners on base but was all smiles in the winning clubhouse.

"This was awesome," Judge said. "My first time coming to Miami, and the goal

was to have some fun and compete. That's what happened. We came out with a win. It was just an awesome experience all around. What a day. What a couple of days."

Miami Marlins slugger Stanton, last year's derby champ and this year's fan favorite, was also blanked as the NL designated hitter. He struck out in the first inning on a 98-mph fastball from Chris Sale, struck out in the third on a slider from Dellin Betances and managed a dribbler against Brandon Kintzler.

Even though Stanton went down swinging, and lost in the first round of the derby, he — like Judge — was upbeat at the end.

"What's the point of being an All-Star if you're going to be mad about things?" he said. "Just have fun."

Stanton ranked his fourth All-Star appearance different from the others.

"A lot more buzz," Stanton said. "A lot more people rooting for me, which is cool. So this one was really cool, and special."

Judge struck out in the first on a 3-2 slider from Max Scherzer, grounded out in the third against Carlos Martinez and flied out against Alex Wood.

"You know it's a tough at-bat," Scherzer said. "It was my first time facing him, and I was trying to get a feeling how the at-bat would go. You toy with him and see what is working. Fortunately I threw a good 3-2 slider and got a swing and a miss."

With a grin, Judge conceded the Washington Nationals ace fooled him.

"I can see why he was the NL starter," Judge said. "I was nervous the first pitch, but after that it's go time. On 3-2 I was getting ready for 100 mph, and I got a slider."

Given Stanton's high profile as the All-Star Game's hometown hero, his exit from the game was a bit surreptitious.

His final at-bat came in the fifth inning, and he was out of uniform and dressed for a night on the town by the seventh.

Querrey ousts Murray; Djokovic retires

Associated Press

LONDON — Limping between points and fading down the stretch, defending champion Andy Murray was stunned by 24th-seeded Sam Querrey of the U.S. 3-6, 6-4, 6-7 (4), 6-1, 6-1 in the Wimbledon quarterfinals Wednesday.

The No. 1-seeded Murray came into the tournament dealing with a sore left hip and it clearly impeded him at Centre Court. He grimaced as he stumbled or landed awkwardly while attempting shots.

Querrey took full advantage to reach the first Grand Slam semifinal of his career — and the first for any American man anywhere since Andy Roddick was the runner-up at Wimbledon in 2009.

“I am still in a little bit of shock myself,” Querrey said.

There was another quarterfinal surprise later Wednesday, when three-time Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic stopped playing because of a right arm injury while trailing 2010 runner-up Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic 7-6 (2), 2-0. After dropping the opening set, Djokovic took a medical timeout while a trainer massaged his arm. A day earlier, during his fourth-round match, Djokovic had his right shoulder worked on by a

trainer.

In Friday’s semifinals, Querrey will face 2014 U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic of Croatia, who also won a five-setter Wednesday, getting past 16th-seeded Gilles Muller 3-6, 7-6 (6), 7-5, 5-7, 6-1 with the help of 33 aces. On the other half of the draw, Berdych will face Roger Federer or Milos Raonic next.

Murray is normally a terrific returner, but Querrey hit 27 aces, including on six of the last nine points he served to finish with a flourish. Querrey was impeccable for portions of the match, finishing with 70 winners and only 30 unforced errors.

“He was dictating all of the points,” Murray said.

From 1-all in the fourth, Querrey grabbed eight games in a row to take that set and lead 3-0 in the last.

“I didn’t start my best, but I just kept with it. Kept swinging away and then really found a groove in the fourth and fifth set,” Querrey said. “And everything kind of seemed to be falling my way then.”

It is the second year in a row that the 29-year-old Californian upset the defending champion and top-seeded man at the All England Club. In 2016, he beat Djokovic in the third round en route to the only major quarterfinal of Querrey’s career before

Wednesday.

That snapped Djokovic’s 30-match winning streak at the majors. Murray didn’t have that sort of recent dominance, but he is a three-time major champion and had been to at least the semifinals at the All England Club in seven of the past eight years.

The hip, though, was a problem. Murray had to skip some practice sessions and pull out of a couple of planned exhibition matches in the leadup to Wimbledon. Even though he kept insisting once the tournament began that he was OK, he was not nearly capable of his best on this afternoon.

Murray’s serve speeds slowed, and his backhand, in particular, didn’t have its usual verve, either. One key to his success is his court coverage, which allows him to play defense as well as anyone. That was not the case in the latter stages against Querrey.

“I was pretty close today. It wasn’t like I was, like, a million miles away from winning the match,” Murray said. “Obviously the end was a bit of a struggle.”

Querrey is the lowest-ranked player to ever beat two-time Wimbledon champion Murray in his 12 appearances at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament.

For Murray, this was the fourth five-set match he’s lost in a row. Querrey is headed in the opposite direction: Merely 4-10 in fifth sets for his career until last week, he has won each of his last three matches by going the distance: against 12th-seeded Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in the third round, Kevin Anderson in the fourth, and now Murray.

Querrey always has had an intimidating serve, but he’s never managed to put together his overall game for enough matches to play on the final weekend at a major.

Indeed, until last year’s win over Djokovic, he might have been best known for some of his unusual off-court episodes. In Thailand for a 2009 tournament, he cut two muscles in his right arm when he sat on a glass table that shattered. Two years ago, he appeared on the reality TV show “The Millionaire Matchmaker.” There’s a popular video clip on social media of Querrey — sunglasses and hat on, shirt unbuttoned — dancing with friends wearing horse-head masks.

Now Querrey’s on-court accomplishment Wednesday will make headlines. Win two more matches, and he’ll be the Wimbledon champion.

Rybarikova makes impressive run to semis

Associated Press

LONDON — Ranked 87th and unseeded at Wimbledon, Magdalena Rybarikova is making quite a run at the grass-court major.

The 28-year-old Slovak reached the semifinals at the All England Club on Tuesday, beating CoCo Vandeweghe 6-3, 6-3 and improving her record on grass to 18-1 this season.

“I won Birmingham (in 2009). Now I won two titles, ITF, I made semifinals in Nottingham, and I won against good players,” said Rybarikova, referring to a couple of lower-tier tournaments and the Aegon Open.

“I just recently played ITFs in Surbiton. I was thinking that I was nervous more there

than today. I have no idea how come I was that calm. Obviously I was nervous, but I was not like I would shake. Sometimes I can get really nervous and really tight. But this match I was quite positive.”

Rybarikova is the lowest ranked player to make it to the Wimbledon semifinals since Zheng Jie did it in 2008 when she was ranked No. 133. She had never before even played in the second week of a major tournament and is the first Slovakian woman to reach the semifinals at the All England Club.

“Obviously, I was dreaming about it since I was a little kid, to be semifinal in the Wimbledon. I think all the players are dreaming about this to happen,” Rybarikova said. “Wimbledon is my favorite Grand

Slam, that’s for sure. Also playing on grass, it’s my favorite surface. I really enjoy playing on grass.”

Rybarikova will next face Garbine Murguza in the semifinals on Thursday. Murguza, the 2016 French Open champion, reached the Wimbledon final two years ago.

For Rybarikova, her past experiences at the All England Club are not so impressive. She has lost in the first round eight times and only once reached the third round, in 2015. That equaled her best result at any Grand Slam tournament.

This year, however, she beat third-seeded Karolina Pliskova in the second round. Pliskova will take over as the No. 1-ranked player on Monday.

Kittel claims 11th stage, fifth of Tour

Associated Press

PAU, France — German rider Marcel Kittel claimed the 11th stage of the Tour de France in a sprint finish on Wednesday, taking his tally to five stage wins since the start of the race.

Ahead of two hard days in the Pyrenees mountains, Chris Froome finished in the main pack to retain the race leader's yellow jersey.

A sprint specialist, Kittel has now won 14 Tour de France stages in five appearances at cycling's showcase event, a record for a German rider.

The stage took the peloton on a flat, 126-mile run from Eymet to Pau in southwestern France.

Kittel's power in the bunch sprint could not be matched and the Quick-Step Floors rider easily beat Dylan Groenewegen and Edvald Boasson Hagen by half a bike length to extend his lead in the points classification after stopping his effort well before the line.

Kittel has lost only one sprint since the start and has been in a class of his own since Mark Cavendish and Arnaud Demare

departed the race.

Wednesday's stage was supposed to be what Tour riders call a "transition" day, an easier ride that took them to the gateway to the Pyrenees mountains ahead of two hard days of grueling ascents.

But stress was palpable in the pack toward the end, with several crashes happening at the back of the peloton.

Third overall, Frenchman Romain Bardet hit the deck and slightly hurt his knee, but the AG2R La Mondiale rider was able to continue after changing his bike and did not lose time.

Two-time champion Alberto Contador also fell with some 20 kilometers left while second-placed Fabio Aru lost one of his Astana teammates when Dario Cataldo was forced to retire with a broken wrist following a crash in the feed zone midway through the stage.

Fifth-placed Jakob Fuglsang, another Astana rider who was expected to play a key role alongside Aru in the mountains, was also caught in the crash and hit the deck but he was able to finish the stage. Astana sports director Dmitry

Fofonov said Fuglsang hurt a wrist too.

Three riders — Frederick Backaert, Marco Marcato and Maciej Bodnar jumped away from the pack immediately after the start from the picturesque town of Eymet in the Dordogne, a tourist hotspot with its castles, caves and other sights.

They quickly built a lead of about four minutes over a laid-back peloton but their breakaway was slowed down by crosswinds on large, flat and straightforward roads. The deficit of the peloton was reduced to 30 seconds with 30 kilometers left when Bodnar attacked to go on his own, making the most of some favorable tailwind.

Bodnar went all out, using his time trial skills to resist the peloton's chase as long as possible, looking for the best possible aerodynamics position in the downhill leading to Pau, but he was ultimately swallowed with 250 meters left.

Froome stayed safe in the pack and kept his overall lead intact before the battle between the main contenders resumes

in the mountains.

The British rider has an 18 second-lead over Aru, with Bardet 51 seconds off the pace.

Trailing 55 seconds behind Froome in the general classification, Rigoberto Uran remains in contention and Fuglsang stays within reach of the podium, 1:37 behind the yellow jersey.

Thursday's Stage 12 is extremely difficult, with six categorized climbs — three of them either rated one or "hors categorie" — and a short but steep uphill finish to an altitude of 1,580 meters (5,200 feet).

Froome said he plans to keep his closest rivals on a tight leash in the mountains and expects two-time champion Alberto Contador to try and wreak havoc during Friday's shorter stage to Foix. Contador has already lost 5:15 minutes overall but could derail Sky's masterplan with relentless attacks on his favorite ground.

"He's never shy to attack from far out. We'd be ready for that," said Froome, adding that Sky is "not going to allow anyone to come back on GC."

Coyotes hire Pens assistant Tocchet to replace Tippett

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Arizona Coyotes have hired Rick Tocchet as head coach, turning the team over to a man who helped the Pittsburgh Penguins win the past two Stanley Cup titles.

The 53-year-old Tocchet, who spent the past three seasons as a Pittsburgh assistant, played 18 seasons in the NHL and helped the Penguins win the Stanley Cup in 1992.

Tocchet spent one season as an assistant to Coyotes coach Wayne Gretzky in 2005-06 and played parts of three seasons with the team from 1997 to 2000.

Tocchet's controversial departure from his Coyotes coaching job did not figure into the decision to hire him, gener-

al manager John Chayka said.

"Rick was the best candidate by a wide margin," Chayka said.

Tocchet was on a leave of absence from his Coyotes job in 2007 when he pleaded guilty in New Jersey to conspiracy to promote gambling and promoting gambling. He was sentenced to two years' probation. NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said an investigation showed Tocchet's involvement in gambling was not as serious as first thought and he was suspended for three months.

There was no evidence Tocchet ever bet on hockey games.

"He's a man of character and integrity," Chayka said. "Any issues in the past are in the past. It didn't raise any red flags for us whatsoever."

Tocchet said he doesn't dwell on what happened back then but wants his players to know it's how they come back from adversity.

"To me, I want to see how a person reacts from his mistakes or his actions on the ice or off ice," he said in a conference call. "To me, that's high character guys that can do that — that can come back from certain things."

Tocchet briefly returned to the Coyotes in 2008 before being hired as an assistant at Tampa Bay. He became interim head coach of the Lightning that November and was head coach at Tampa Bay the next two seasons.

But it was his work with the Penguins that elevated him to the clear favorite to replace

Dave Tippett, who parted ways with the Coyotes after eight years as the franchise's head coach.

"He's one of the best communicators I've come across not only in hockey but probably professionally as well," Chayka said. "... I think he can just relate to the players. He's very firm. He can motivate. He can be aggressive in his approach, but he can also be that big brother kind of approach with our young players and I think that's going to be helpful moving forward."

Chayka said Tocchet has a clear idea of the style he wants his team to play.

"He wants to play fast. He wants to play aggressive. He wants to dictate time and space," Chayka said.