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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Brass urges US to step up militant fight

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. must do more to blunt the spread of the Islamic State group in Libya, a “failed state” and a magnet for a growing number of militants exploiting chaos, U.S. Africa Command’s Gen. David Rodriguez said Tuesday.

In Iraq and Syria, where the Islamic State group has declared a caliphate across territory it holds in both countries, additional U.S. force commitments could be required to ensure successful offensives to retake key militant strongholds, Gen. Lloyd Austin, commander of U.S. Central Command, told lawmakers at the same Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

“Yes, we as part of the international community have to do more,” Rodriguez said of the situation in Libya. The U.S.,

concerned about the Islamic State group’s growth in Libya, is considering whether to open up a new front there in the campaign against the group.

Austin, Rodriguez and Gen. Joseph Votel, head of Special Operations Command, described an enemy that, under pressure on one front in Iraq and Syria, is looking to expand into another.

On Tuesday, The New York Times reported the Pentagon presented the White House with a detailed set of strike options aimed at delivering a crippling blow to Islamic State militants in Libya. But the plan has been shelved, for now, the newspaper said, while the Obama administration pursues a diplomatic initiative to form a unity government inside Libya.

In Iraq and Syria, where the U.S. and coalition partners have been conducting an air

campaign in support of local forces fighting the group, the Islamic State group has steadily been losing territory, becoming increasingly “less capable and increasingly demoralized and paranoid,” Austin said.

Still, the U.S. military may need to pump more resources into the fight on the battlefields of Iraq and Syria, where a campaign by indigenous forces to retake major Islamic State strongholds could need more backing from U.S. enablers, Austin said.

He told lawmakers that he has submitted recommendations detailing what military requirements are needed in the campaign, but hinted that more troops could be required on top of the roughly 4,000 now deployed to Iraq and Syria.

“We could develop better human intelligence. We could perhaps provide more advise-

and-assist teams at various levels. We could increase our assistance with providing help with some logistical issues,” said Austin, adding that there also is room for expanding the footprint of special operations forces. Austin also has requested to restart a failed program to train moderate Syrian rebel troops. Last year, that training program came under fire and was abruptly terminated after failing to generate more than a few dozen trained fighters.

“I’ve asked for permission to restart the effort using a different approach,” Austin said. “The training would be shorter, but I think they would be able to greatly enable the forces.”

Votel said the Islamic State group poses the most significant near-term threat in the region to the U.S., while Iran is a longer-term challenge.

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US, S. Korea take aim at North’s nuke plants in drill

The Washington Post

TOKYO — The United States and South Korea started huge military exercises Monday, kicking off drills that will include rehearsing surgical strikes on North Korea’s main nuclear and missile facilities and sending in special forces to carry out “decapitation raids” on the North Korean leadership.

The exercises always elicit an angry response from Pyongyang, but Monday’s statement was particularly ferocious, accusing the United States and South Korea of planning what they are calling a “beheading operation” aimed at removing Kim Jong Un’s regime. The North Korean army and people “will take military counterac-

tion for preemptive attack so that they may deal merciless deadly blows at the enemies,” the North’s powerful National Defense Commission said in a statement.

The drills come amid a particularly tense time, with the international community — and the United States and South Korea, especially — trying to punish Pyongyang for its recent nuclear test and missile launch. The U.N. sanctions passed last week are the toughest yet, and South Korean president Park Geun-hye unveiled further, unilateral sanctions against the North on Tuesday.

About 17,000 American forces and 300,000 South Korean personnel — a third more from both militaries than last spring’s

exercises — will take part in 11 days of computer-simulated training and eight weeks of field exercises, which will involve ground, air, naval and Special Operations services.

The exercises will revolve around a wartime plan adopted by South Korea and the United States last year, called OPLAN 5015. The plan has not been made public but, according to numerous reports in the South Korean media, includes a contingency for surgical strikes against North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile facilities, as well as having special forces practice “decapitation” raids to take out the North Korean leadership.

The JoongAng Ilbo newspaper reported that Kim Jong Un

would be among them.

The joint forces will also run through their new “4D” operational plan, which details the allies’ pre-emptive military operations to detect, disrupt, destroy and defend against North Korea’s nuclear and missile arsenal, the Yonhap News Agency reported. “The focus of the exercises will be on hitting North Korea’s key facilities precisely,” a military official told the wire service.

Christopher Bush, a spokesman for U.S. Forces Korea, declined to comment on the reports. “Alliance operational plans are classified, and we aren’t authorized to discuss them for operations security reasons,” he said.

Hundreds pay respects to rookie Va. police officer

Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — A Virginia policewoman who was fatally shot her first day on the job was laid to rest next to her father in a Massachusetts cemetery Monday after a stirring tribute from hundreds of officers from around the country who came to pay their final respects.

The flag-draped casket of Ashley Guindon, 28, made its way from a funeral home to Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Springfield along a route lined by hundreds of saluting officers standing next to their motorcycles.

The Rev. Mark Stelzer, himself the son of a former Springfield police chief, noted during his homily the risks officers face every day.

“Those of us who grew up in a law enforcement family know firsthand the constant fear that any day of a loved one’s duty as a police officer could be his or her last day of duty,” he said. “Any day could spell the end of watch.”

Guindon was killed Feb. 27 while responding to a domestic dispute at a home in Woodbridge, Va. An Army staff sergeant assigned to the Pentagon was arrested on murder and other charges in the case.

Former Marine sought in shooting called mentally ill

The Washington Post

A former Marine suspected in the point-blank shooting of an Idaho pastor has a history of mental illness, police said Monday.

The announcement came as authorities continued their manhunt for the former Marine, identified as Kyle Andrew Odom, 30.

“Initial reports indicate that, yes, there was some history of mental illness there,” Coeur d’Alene police Chief Lee White said at a press conference. “The

degree of it and the scope of it, I really can’t speak about.”

Odom allegedly ambushed Tim Remington in the parking lot of the Altar Church in Coeur d’Alene on Sunday afternoon, shooting the pastor in the back and skull before fleeing, according to authorities. In what some members of his church have described as a “miracle,” Remington could be released from the hospital later this week and is expected to make a full recovery.

“We do not have any information on a possible motive for

the attack,” White said, adding that police believe Odom acted alone.

With the motive still a mystery, the announcement that Odom suffered from mental illness could help explain the shooting, which drew national attention partly because it came a day after Remington prayed with Republican presidential contender Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas.

The revelation also is likely to add to the debate about the role of mental illness in gun violence, particularly among veterans.

Laser targets in skies a growing concern

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The targeting of an U.S. F-15E Strike Eagle with a laser beam last week that temporarily disoriented its two crewmembers as they descended toward RAF Lakenheath in England was not an isolated incident, military officials say.

Lakenheath-based flight crews generally experience about one laser incident per month during night-flying train-

ing, typically October to March, said Capt. Emily Grabowski, a spokeswoman for the 48th Fighter Wing. But the problem isn’t limited to the U.K.

“We can confirm that lasing incidents do occur at flying wings throughout” U.S. Air Forces in Europe, Capt. Lauren Ott, a command spokeswoman, said Monday.

Air Force officials in Europe couldn’t immediately say how many U.S. military aircraft have been targeted with lasers or whether any incidents caused

injury or damage.

Aviation experts say the shining of handheld, high-powered laser pointers at aircraft is a growing problem worldwide.

“It’s happening more and more frequently,” said Gideon Ewers, a pilot and aviation consultant based in Britain.

High-tech lasers pointed at aircraft can disorient and temporarily blind pilots when their light refracts off the plane’s windshield, Ewers said. They can even cause permanent injury by burning the retina.

Philippines-bound Marines to be briefed on Zika virus

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Marines deploying next month for Balikatan exercises in the Philippines will be briefed about the Zika virus present on the islands but won’t need to take special measures to protect themselves.

“As part of our standard force protection process, Marines are being made aware of diseases

which they may encounter while deployed in the Philippines; the Zika virus, among other diseases present in the Philippines, is included in that force protection planning,” Marine Corps Forces Pacific spokesman Chuck Little said in an email Tuesday.

An American woman who visited the Philippines in January tested positive for Zika, a mosquito-borne illness that can cause birth defects.

Standard force protection measures will apply with no special precautions against Zika, Little said. Officials have yet to release details of this year’s exercise. More than 6,000 U.S. servicemembers participated in last year’s war games involving U.S. and Philippine forces.

Prevention is the way to avoid infection, and that can involve wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants and using mosquito

repellent frequently in affected areas, said Vice Adm. C. Forrest Faison III, Navy surgeon general and chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

Over the past month, the military has been informing personnel stationed overseas about the risks posed by Zika, along with ways they can protect themselves.

There is no vaccine or treatment for the virus, Faison said.

Sharapova admits to failing doping test

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Maria Sharapova's tennis career and Olympic hopes are in jeopardy, and she claims it's all because she failed to click on a link in an email that would have told her to stop taking meldonium.

The five-time major champion says she failed a doping test at the Australian Open in January for the little-known drug, which became a banned substance under the WADA code this year. The former world No. 1 took full responsibility for her mistake when she made the announcement at a news conference Monday in Los Angeles.

Sharapova could face a lengthy ban from the International Tennis Federation, possibly ending her season and preventing her from competing for Russia at the Rio Olympics.

"I know that with this, I face consequences," Sharapova said. "I don't want to end my career this way, and I really hope I will be given another chance to play this game."

The 28-year-old Sharapova received notice last week that she tested positive for meldonium, a blood flow-promoting drug she has been taking for 10 years for numerous health issues. Meldonium was banned because it aids oxygen uptake and endurance, and several athletes across international sports have been caught using it.

Sharapova and all players were notified of the changes in the WADA banned substances list in December. Sharapova claimed she simply missed the change, neglecting to click on the link.

"I take great responsibility and professionalism in my job, and I made a huge mistake," Sharapova said. "I let my fans down. I let the sport down that I've been

playing since the age of 4, that I love so deeply."

Meldonium, also known as mildronate, is a Latvian-manufactured drug popular for fighting heart disease in former Soviet Union countries. Meldonium treats ischemia, or lack of blood flow, but can be taken in large doses as a performance-enhancer.

Sharapova said she began taking meldonium for "several health issues I had back in 2006," including a magnesium deficiency, regular influenza, "irregular" heart test results and early indications of diabetes, of which she has a family history.

Sharapova's penalties could range from a multiyear ban to a minimal sanction with no suspension if officials believe she made an honest mistake. WADA President Craig Reedie told the Associated Press that any athlete found guilty of using meldonium would normally face a one-year suspension.

The ITF's anti-doping program announced in a statement that Sharapova will be provisionally suspended starting this weekend while her case is examined. WADA spokesman Ben Nichols said the organization won't comment until the ITF makes a decision.

Sharapova and her attorney, John J. Haggerty, declined to say where Sharapova was put on the drug or where she gets it now, citing the ongoing process with the ITF. Meldonium is not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

"I understand the drug is sold particularly in Eastern Europe," Reedie told the AP in a telephone interview. "You can almost get it over the counter. For stronger versions, you might need a prescription. There has been a whole rash of these cases since the 1st of January when it appeared on the banned list. This might not

be happening if athletes would be taking more care of the things that are on the list."

Reedie said meldonium can be "very strong medicine."

Although she has lived in the U.S. since childhood, Sharapova won a silver medal and served as Russia's flag-bearer at the London Olympics four years ago.

"I think it's all nonsense," Shamil Tarpishev, the president of the Russian Tennis Federation, told the state Tass agency. "Athletes take what they're given by physiotherapists and doctors. I think that Sharapova will play at the Olympics anyway. But we have to see how events develop."

Two Ukrainian biathletes and Russian cyclist Eduard Vorganov have tested positive for meldonium since it was banned. Earlier Monday, Russia's Ekaterina Bobrova, a European champion ice dancer, told media she tested positive for meldonium.

Sharapova said she took the test shortly before she lost to Serena Williams in the Australian Open quarterfinals Jan. 26. Sharapova hasn't played since then while recovering from a forearm injury, and had already dropped out of the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, which begins this week.

"She is very organized and she takes her career very seriously," Haggerty told the AP. "When she first started to take this back in 2006, she made sure it was approved, that it wasn't on the banned list, and checked in future years. Because she had taken it for so many years, and it was OK year after year, it just got off the radar."

"When she got the letter, she was shocked, completely stunned. She takes great pride in her integrity and how she approaches the game, and she immediately wanted to come forward and take responsibility."

Sharapova is one of the greatest players of her generation, with 35 career singles titles and over \$36 million in career earnings. She is currently No. 7 in the WTA rankings after playing just three tournaments and the Fed Cup final in the last eight months since Wimbledon due to injuries.

Sharapova is thought to be the world's highest-paid female athlete due to endorsement deals and her extensive business ventures, including a high-profile candy line, Sugarpova. Forbes estimated her earnings at \$29.5 million for 2015.

"I am very saddened to hear this news about Maria," WTA CEO Steve Simon said in a statement. "Maria is a leader and I have always known her to be a woman of great integrity. Nevertheless, as Maria acknowledged, it is every player's responsibility to know what they put in their body and to know if it is permissible."

Sharapova became a 17-year-old Wimbledon champion in 2004. She ascended to No. 1 in 2005, won the U.S. Open in 2006 and added the Australian Open in 2008 before completing the career Grand Slam with French Open titles in 2012 and 2014.

But Sharapova has struggled with injuries throughout her career, repeatedly forcing her to take extended breaks from competition. She had surgery to repair a torn rotator cuff, forcing her to change her serving motion, and has struggled with hamstring injuries.

Sharapova was born in Russia before moving to Florida. She lives primarily in Los Angeles now.

The star had a moment of levity when she acknowledged the incorrect assumptions about the reason she had called a news conference.

"If I was going to announce my retirement, it wouldn't be in a downtown Los Angeles hotel with this fairly ugly carpet," she said.

Curry sets record with 301st three-pointer

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Curry scored 41 points and became the first player in NBA history to make 300 three-pointers in a season, and the Golden State Warriors set another record in a season full of them by holding off the Orlando Magic 119-113 Monday night for their 45th straight home victory.

Curry didn't match his 51-point performance against the Magic on Feb. 25 in which he hit 10 of 15 three-pointers, but shot 7-for-13 from long range and also pulled down 13 rebounds. He has 301 threes with 20 games to go.

Golden State surpassed the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls' 44 straight regular-season home victories and improved to 27-0 at Oracle Arena this season with its franchise-best sixth straight win against Orlando.

Klay Thompson added 27 points for the Warriors (56-6), who overcame a season-high 24 turnovers to bounce back from an ugly 112-95 road loss to the Lakers on Sunday that snapped a seven-game winning streak.

Aaron Gordon had 20 points and 16 rebounds in his Bay Area homecoming on a night Orlando played without leading scorer and center Nikola Vucevic because of a strained right groin.

Grizzlies 106, Cavaliers 103: Tony Allen scored a

season-high 26 points and Memphis, despite playing without four injured starters, stunned host Cleveland.

Vince Carter made four free throws in the final 13.4 seconds to steal the upset by a Memphis team that had more coaches than players sitting on the bench.

Lance Stephenson added 17 points and JaMychal Green 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Grizzlies, who forced the Cavs into a season-high 25 turnovers and never backed down against the Eastern Conference's top team. Allen was back after missing eight games with a knee injury for Memphis, which only dressed eight players.

LeBron James scored 28 points and Kyrie Irving had 27 — 14 in the fourth — for the Cavaliers.

Pacers 99, Spurs 91: Monta Ellis scored 26 points and Paul George added 23 to help host Indiana end San Antonio's eight-game winning streak.

The Pacers led by double digits most of the night and hung on after San Antonio trimmed the deficit to three several times in the final 2 minutes.

It's only the second time in 17 meetings since 2008 that the Pacers have beaten the Spurs.

Clippers 109, Mavericks 90: Chris Paul scored 18 of his 27 points when Los Angeles took control in the third quarter, and DeAndre Jordan had 23 points and 20 rebounds amid another round of boos in Dallas.

Paul outscored the Mavericks by himself in the third while going 8-for-9 from the field, punctuating it with a leaning one-handed shot in the lane before the buzzer for a 33-16 advantage in the quarter for the Clippers, who trailed by two at halftime.

Bulls 100, Bucks 90: Pau Gasol had 12 points, 17 rebounds, 13 assists and five blocked shots, and banged-up Chicago beat visiting Milwaukee with All-Star Jimmy Butler sidelined by swelling in his left knee.

The Bulls had six players score in double figures in their second straight win after a four-game slide. Derrick Rose scored 22 points, Mike Dunleavy had 18 and E'Twaun Moore finished with 16 points and seven assists.

Pelicans 115, Kings 112: Anthony Davis had 31 points and 10 rebounds, and host New Orleans came back from a 17-point, second-half deficit to beat Sacramento.

Norris Cole scored 23 and Jrue Holiday 20 for New Orleans, which snapped a four-game losing streak. Dante Cunningham added a clutch three-pointer — just his 40th of the season — to give the Pelicans their first lead of the second half at 111-110 with 36 seconds left.

Hornets 108, Timberwolves 103: Kemba Walker scored 21 of his 34 points in the third quarter and host Charlotte held off Minnesota for its fourth straight win.



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Eagles trade RB Murray to Titans

Associated Press

Coach Chip Kelly's big-money mistakes are following him out the door in Philadelphia.

The Philadelphia Eagles agreed to a pair of trades Monday that will send 2014 NFL rushing champion DeMarco Murray to Tennessee and cornerback Byron Maxwell and linebacker Kiko Alonso to Miami, according to a person familiar with the deals.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the trades won't be announced until Wednesday, the first day of free agency.

Murray's agents at SportsTrust Advisors wrote on Twitter on Monday night: "A trade (and) a new contract has been orchestrated to make (DeMarco Murray) a member of the Tennessee@Titans."

On a day Peyton Manning gave an emotional retirement speech and the Redskins released Robert Griffin III, the

Eagles stole the show.

The Eagles will receive draft picks for the three players. Moreover, they'll gain about \$10 million in space under the salary cap. It's remarkable that Howie Roseman, who is back in charge, found takers for Murray and Maxwell because of their salaries and poor performance.

Murray also agreed to rework the five-year, \$40 million contract with \$21 million guaranteed he signed with Philadelphia last year.

Kelly was fired one game before Philadelphia finished a 7-9 season. His abrupt dismissal came after he went 10-6 in each of his first two seasons and less than a year after he seized control of personnel decisions from then-general manager Roseman.

Kelly, who became San Francisco's new coach, gave Murray and Maxwell contracts totaling \$103 million in free agency last March.

The Eagles hired Doug Pederson to replace Kelly and have already re-signed several young players along with giving

quarterback Sam Bradford a two-year contract to stay in Philadelphia.

The Titans have been looking for a No. 1 running back since releasing Chris Johnson in April 2014 to avoid the final three seasons of a \$53.5 million deal. Johnson was the last running back to run for 100 yards in a game for Tennessee, a drought that stretches back to December 2013.

Quarterback Marcus Mariota ran for 112 yards on December 6 in a win over Jacksonville, but that number was boosted by an 87-yard touchdown run. The Titans ranked 25th in the NFL last season, averaging 92.8 yards rushing per game, and new coach Mike Mularkey has talked about running the ball much more next season.

The Dolphins and new coach Adam Gase are hoping Maxwell and Alonso bolster a defense that ranked 25th last season in yards allowed.

Griffin was one of four players released by the Redskins on Monday to create salary-cap space.

The move, expected for some time, brings an end to the quarterback's sudden-rise-and-stunning-fall saga with a team that traded a bevy of draft picks to acquire him — and now receives nothing in return as he departs. The move gets Griffin's 2016 contract, worth about \$16 million, off the payroll before Wednesday, when the new league year begins and free agents can be signed.

It also closes the book on RG3's tumultuous tenure in Washington. He arrived as a Heisman Trophy winner and the No. 2 overall choice in the 2012 NFL Draft — a pick that came from the Rams at the high price of three first-round selections plus a second-rounder — and immediately became a star and national sensation. He leaves having spent all of last season on the sideline, never allowed to take so much as a single snap during a game.

Caps win in SO, halt Ducks' streak at 11

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — If the Washington Capitals and the Anaheim Ducks meet in the Stanley Cup Final, they're glad there won't be a skills competition to decide the winner.

After 65 tense minutes in a virtually even meeting of regular-season heavyweights, the Capitals used the shootout to come out on top.

T.J. Oshie and Nicklas Backstrom scored in the shootout, and the Capitals stopped the Ducks' franchise-best winning streak at 11 games with 2-1 victory Monday night.

Andre Burakovsky scored the tying goal early in the third period for the NHL-leading Capitals, who also ended Anaheim's eight-game home winning streak with their sixth consecutive victory over the Ducks. The teams traded hard hits and quality scoring chances for 65 minutes.

"It was two good teams battling it out," Washington coach Barry Trotz said. "It was a good test for us, because I didn't know what we would have (in the tank), fifth game in seven nights and getting across the country. We were in shock in the first 30 seconds of the game, but other than that it's sort of been our team. We don't get too rattled. Good on them."

Braden Holtby made 27 saves and stopped two more in the shootout. Oshie atoned for an overtime penalty with the U.S. Olympic shootout star's fourth goal in five attempts this season, and after Corey Perry scored to keep the Ducks alive, Backstrom ended it.

Flyers 4, Lightning 2: Shayne Gostisbehere scored twice, leading host Philadelphia past Tampa Bay to snap the Lightning's franchise-best nine-game winning streak.

Gostisbehere, Brayden Schenn and Wayne Simmonds each scored third period goals for the Flyers, who have 73 points and moved within two of idle Detroit for the final wild-card playoff berth in the Eastern Conference. The Flyers went 5-1 on their homestand and earned 10 of 12 possible points to key their surge in the standings.

There are 17 games left for the Flyers and two of them are against Detroit.

Ondrej Palat and Vladislav Namestnikov scored for Tampa Bay in its first loss since Feb. 16 against San Jose. The Lightning had won six straight on the road.

Bruins 5, Panthers 4 (OT): Lee Stempniak scored his first goal as a Bruin in overtime and visiting Boston beat Florida 5-4 while Panthers forward Jaromir Jagr moved into third on the NHL career points list. Jagr assisted on Aleksander Barkov's goal, passing Gordie Howe with 1,851 points.

Kings 5, Canucks 1: Jeff Carter scored twice in the third period to get his 300th career goal after Drew Doughty and Anze Kopitar scored less than 2 minutes apart in the second period to lift host Los Angeles over Vancouver.

Carter and Vincent Lecavalier scored 39 seconds apart midway through the third, and then Carter added an empty-netter for his 300th. Jonathan Quick made 21 saves to help the Kings climb within a point of Pacific Division-leading Anaheim, which lost 2-1 to Washington in a shootout.

Sharks 2, Flames 1 (OT): Joe Pavelski scored 19 seconds into overtime, Martin Jones made 47 saves and visiting San Jose beat Calgary.

Brent Burns curled toward the net and centered a pass that Pavelski one-timed past Joni Ortio. Burns had the other goal for San Jose, which improved its league-best road record to 24-9-3.

Avalanche 3, Coyotes 1: Semyon Varlamov had 37 saves in his return to the crease, Matt Duchene and Mikhail Grigorenko had a goal and an assist each to help host Colorado beat Arizona.

Shawn Matthias also scored for the Avalanche, who are tied with Minnesota for the second wild-card spot in the Western Conference. Both teams have 72 points, but the Wild have played one fewer game.

Sabres 4, Maple Leafs 3 (SO): Sam Reinhart scored in the shootout to lift visiting Buffalo.

Jack Eichel and Evander Kane scored less than 4 minutes apart in the third period to bring the Sabres back from a 3-1 deficit. It was the 22nd loss in the past 27 games for the league-worst Leafs and fifth straight one-goal defeat.

Lions WR Johnson retires

Associated Press

DETROIT — Calvin Johnson has retired.

The 30-year-old receiver, known as Megatron, announced his decision Tuesday to walk away from the NFL after nine mostly spectacular seasons with the Detroit Lions. He had reportedly told some teammates entering last season that it would be his last and told coach Jim Caldwell after the season that he was retiring.

"Let me assure you that this was not an easy or hasty decision," Johnson said. "As I stated, I, along with those closest to me, have put a lot of time, deliberation and prayer into this decision and I truly am at peace with it."

The 6-foot-5 Johnson had 88 receptions for 1,214 yards and nine touchdowns last season, playing through lingering injuries as he often did. He has 731 career receptions for 11,619 yards and 83 TDs. Johnson broke one of Hall of Famer Jerry Rice's records with 1,964 yards

receiving in 2012, a total Atlanta's Julio Jones approached last season.

Johnson leaves Detroit in a fashion similar to that of Hall of Famer Barry Sanders, who slipped away from the Lions shortly before the 1999 season after he had 1,491 yards rushing as a 30-year-old running back the previous year.

And like Sanders, the quiet and humble Johnson chose to simply release a statement when he retired.

"Let me begin by apologizing for making this announcement via a statement and not in person," Johnson said via a release sent by the Lions. "While I truly respect the significance of this, those who know me best will understand and not be surprised that I choose not to have a press conference for this announcement."

"After much prayer, thought and discussion with loved ones, I have made the difficult decision to retire from the Lions and pro football. I have played my last game of football."

Jury awards Erin Andrews \$55M for secret nude video

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A jury awarded Erin Andrews \$55 million in her lawsuit against a stalker who bought a hotel room next to her and secretly recorded a nude video, finding that the hotel companies and the stalker shared in the blame.

After a full day of deliberations, the panel said Monday that the stalker was responsible for 51 percent of the verdict and the two hotel companies should share the rest, which is nearly \$27 million.

Andrews, a Fox Sports reporter and co-host of the TV show "Dancing with the Stars," wept as jurors announced the verdict. She hugged her attorneys, family and several jurors after the verdict was read. She appeared to sign an

autograph for at least one juror.

The jury heard directly from Andrews, who testified that she was humiliated, shamed and suffers from depression as a result of the video, which has been viewed by millions of people online. She had asked for \$75 million.

An FBI investigation would later reveal that Michael David Barrett shot videos in hotels in Nashville and Columbus, Ohio, and posted them online. The trial focused on the video shot in 2008 at the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt.

On Friday, Davidson County Circuit Court Judge Hamilton Gayden found Barrett at fault and left it up to jurors to decide if the hotel owner, West End Hotel Partners, and former operator, Windsor Capital Group, should share any responsibility. The hotel is a franchise and Marriott was not part of the trial.