

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Wasp is on 1st patrol after assessment

BY JAMES BOLINGER

Stars and Stripes

The USS Wasp and its strike group steamed away from Okinawa on Monday, heading out for its first regional patrol since arriving in Japan earlier this year.

The amphibious assault ship spent the past couple of weeks undergoing a “ready-for-sea assessment,” during which F-35B Lightning IIs landed aboard the vessel for the first time. Some have dubbed the Wasp a miniature aircraft carrier because of upgrades that allow it to host the next-generation stealth fighter.

More than 2,300 members of the Okinawa-based 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit are embarked with the strike group,

The amphibious assault ship spent the past couple of weeks undergoing a ‘ready-for-sea assessment,’ during which Lightning IIs landed aboard the vessel for the first time.

which includes the 844-foot flat-top Wasp, the guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey, the dock-landing ship USS Ashland and the amphibious transport dock ship USS Green Bay.

The short-takeoff, vertical-landing-capable F-35Bs come from Fighter Attack Squadron 121 out of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

The fighter “is a great addition to the team,” Col. Tye Wallace, commander of the Marines embarked with the strike group, said in a statement. “It’s a flexible aircraft, which will greatly

enhance our capabilities ... to execute missions across the spectrum.”

During the patrol, sailors and Marines — who are trained to conduct amphibious assaults, seize airfields, reinforce embassies, evacuate civilians and respond to disasters — will learn to work together, the statement said.

The Wasp serves under Amphibious Force 7th Fleet, the Navy’s only forward-deployed amphibious force, headquartered at White Beach Naval Facility, Okinawa. It arrived at

Sasebo on Jan. 14 to replace the USS Bonhomme Richard after a 28,400-mile journey from Norfolk, Va. It was delayed after being diverted to the Caribbean to assist in disaster-relief efforts after two major hurricanes devastated the islands.

The Bonhomme Richard, which has been homeported at Sasebo since April 2012, will remain there for an undetermined period before heading to its new home in San Diego, where it will undergo maintenance and upgrades.

Navy considers scrapping a hospital ship

BY SCOTT WYLAND

Stars and Stripes

A hospital ship could become a casualty as the Navy seeks to free more money to spend on warships, submarines and aircraft.

The Navy proposes mothballing one of its two floating hospitals — the USNS Mercy or the USNS Comfort — to make budgetary room to expand its fighting capabilities.

These 1,000-bed ships have provided medical care during wars and disasters since they were converted from oilers in the late 1980s.

Most recently, the Comfort went to Puerto Rico in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The Navy’s proposed 2019 budget of \$151.4 billion would be a \$12.6 billion increase over the previous year and calls for adding 46 ships to the current 280 over the next five years. For 2019, the Navy looks to add two submarines, three destroyers and 24 F-18A Super Hornets.

But Navy leaders say the increased pro-

duction still falls short of the pace needed to meet a long-term goal of a 355-ship fleet in 30 years.

Some lawmakers have questioned the

‘I’m a big fan of hospital ships because I love the fact that we can help injured and ill (service) members.’

Gen. Darren McDew
U.S. Transportation Command

Marines, and also the civilians across this world,” said Rep. Trent Kelly, R-Miss., at a March 8 congressional hearing.

“There will come a time when we need that and we need to always be ready.”

Air Force Gen. Darren McDew, head of the U.S. Transportation Command, told lawmakers that tough decisions are required even with a budget increase.

Still, the loss of a hospital ship would be felt during a crisis, when hundreds of patients would have to be airlifted to a distant hospital, McDew said.

“I’m a big fan of hospital ships because I love the fact that we can help injured and ill (service)members,” McDew said.

Losing a hospital ship would dramatically increase needs for large aircraft to transport patients, McDew added.

The Mercy has mostly operated in the Pacific, and the Comfort in the Atlantic and the Persian Gulf. The Comfort assisted in the aftermath of Katrina, the Haitian earthquake and the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Both have operating rooms, intensive care units, burn wards and radiology facilities, as well as general medical and dental services. They each carry up to 1,200 personnel and have landing decks for airlifting patients from shore.

Navy closer to buying 2 carriers at one time

(Newport News, Va.) Daily Press

The Navy on Monday moved closer to buying two aircraft carriers at once, formally requesting shipbuilder Huntington Ingalls Industries to “further define” possible cost savings of a double purchase.

“The opportunity for a two-ship contract is dependent on significant savings that the shipbuilding industry and government must demonstrate,” said James F. Guerts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition.

HII is the sole builder of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers at its Newport News Shipbuilding division. Responding to the Navy’s request, HII President Mike Petters released a statement in support of a two-carrier purchase, something he has advocated for some time.

“We believe the most effective way to reduce cost of aircraft carriers is to take a multi-ship purchase approach and build them every three to four years,” he said. “Buying two ships at once stabilizes the Newport News Shipbuilding workforce and their national supplier base, allows us to buy materials in quantity and phase work more efficiently. This action by the U.S. Navy allows us to work with them to better define and achieve the significant

cost savings that will result from this approach.”

A two-carrier purchase would cover the future USS Enterprise, also known as CVN-80, now undergoing advance work at the Newport News shipyard, plus CVN-81, which does not yet have a name. The two ships constitute the third and fourth carriers of the Gerald R. Ford class.

“The Navy plans to award the CVN-80 construction contract in early fiscal year 2019 as a two-ship buy pending congressional approval and achieving significant savings,” Guerts said.

The bulk purchase of aircraft carriers has significant support in Congress. In December, 131 House of Representatives members signed a letter to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis supporting the idea, led by Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va. Earlier that month, nine senators backed a two-carrier purchase, including Virginia Democrats Mark Warner and Tim Kaine.

The Trump administration supports a significant expansion of the Navy fleet, from about 275 ships today to 355. That would include expanding the number of aircraft carriers from 11 to 12, prescribed by the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, which serves as a blueprint for defense spending.

Landstuhl commander suspended amid probe

BY WILL MORRIS

Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The Army suspended the commander of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center on Tuesday, pending the outcome of an investigation.

Col. Timothy Hudson, who took command of the Army’s largest hospital in Europe in June, will be placed on other duties while the investigation is conducted, officials said.

Officials declined to comment on the nature of the investigation other than to say that the issues did not involve patient safety or patient care.

The staff of the hospital was notified Tuesday morning of the decision.

Col. Claude Burnett, Landstuhl deputy commander of Army health clinics, was appointed as the acting commander.

Brig. Gen. Dennis P. LeMaster, Regional Health Command Europe commander, said the suspension will not affect the hospital’s mission.

“LRMC remains fully mission capable and will continue to provide safe and quality health care for our beneficiaries and

mission command oversight of its six geographically separated clinics,” LeMaster said.

Although it remains unknown whether the allegations are personal or professional in nature, some doctors have been critical of hospital management in recent months.

In February, civilian doctors at Landstuhl said they were moving ahead with an effort to unionize, citing low morale and compensation, as well as staff shortages, said Peter Winch, a representative with the American Federation of Government Employees in Washington.

Doctors who highlight problems risk not getting their contracts renewed, union organizers said.

“You feel like the leadership will retaliate and not extend your contract,” said one doctor, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Doctors who spoke with Stars and Stripes in February said that performance awards were being withheld or delayed for unknown reasons. The medical command disputed the comments, stating that compensation was comparable with the private sector and that bonuses were being paid.

Navy says fuel tanks fix in Hawaii could cost billions

Associated Press

HONOLULU — The Navy has estimated that the least expensive method of double-wall-ing its fuel tanks that in 2014 spilled 27,000 gallons of fuel could cost between \$500 million and \$2 billion.

The costs are part of an agreement entered into by the Navy, Defense Logistics Agency, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and state Department of Health to upgrade the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility,

the Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported Monday.

The facility, with 20 giant underground tanks that cumulatively hold 250 million gallons of fuel, is deemed by the military to be an essential facility for operations. In December, the Navy submitted a tank upgrade study that examines three single-wall options and includes improved repair and restoration as the most basic option, as well as two double-wall designs and one tank-within-a-tank design.

The most expensive tank-within-a-tank option, with carbon steel and full interior and exterior coating, is estimated at between \$2 billion and \$5 billion. The cheapest single-wall option is projected by the Navy to cost between \$180 million and \$450 million, the Star-Advertiser reported.

At a Red Hill public information meeting last week, Waianae resident Kapua Keliikoa-Kamai favored secondary containment — double-wall-ing the tanks — in five years.

The Sierra Club of Hawaii has a similar stance.

The consent agreement requires that whatever upgrade is selected needs to be completed by September 2037.

The Navy last month also completed a Red Hill study that looks at 12 potential relocation sites for what it said would be an “extraordinary project” to duplicate in 40 tanks the same 250 million gallon capacity that exists now.

Dunford in Afghanistan to evaluate campaign

Associated Press

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — The top U.S. military officer visited Afghanistan on Monday to evaluate the military campaign and ensure new American advisory teams and an upgraded Afghan Air Force are on target as the next fighting season with the Taliban looms.

Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he wants to understand the goals for the coming months so the U.S.-led coalition can develop ways to measure progress in the fight.

Dunford told reporters traveling with him that he seeks “a discussion about measures of effectiveness.” A key question, Dunford said, is how the U.S. will know that it’s where it needs to be in implementing what is, in

actuality, the Afghans’ plan.

The idea of benchmarks for progress in the Afghan War has been simmering for several months as the Pentagon looks to end America’s longest war. Measuring success will be a key part of White House discussions this summer when President Donald Trump looks for a one-year assessment of his new regional strategy. Last August, a reluctant Trump had to be persuaded to inject new U.S. troops into the conflict, which is now in its 17th year.

“The intent really is to get my own assessment of what we can expect over the next couple months,” said Dunford, who commanded U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan from February 2013 to August 2014. He said a major focus will be ensur-

ing Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, has the resources he needs.

Dunford’s visit comes on the heels of a two-day stop in Afghanistan last week by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis amid talk of a renewed push to get Taliban fighters to the peace table with the Afghan government. The increased U.S. military campaign is seen as part of that effort. It includes hundreds of additional Army trainers and advisers who will work with Afghan troops closer to the fight, with the goal of turning the corner on what has been a stubborn stalemate with the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

About five weeks ago, the Army’s new training brigade deployed to Afghanistan with about 1,000 soldiers. It included close

to 600 trainers and advisers and hundreds of security forces and other support personnel. The so-called Security Force Assistance Brigade is part of the broad new strategy that has pushed the Afghan conflict back to the top of the Pentagon’s warfighting priority list.

In addition to troops, the U.S. has also sent more intelligence and surveillance aircraft, A-10 attack planes and combat search-and-rescue aircraft to the fight. Many of those resources have been shifted from Iraq and Syria, where the battle against Islamic State militants is waning. The U.S. also is providing more fighter aircraft and other support to the Afghan Air Force while increasing the number of American forces on the ground to more than 14,000.

Turkey threatens to expand offensive against Kurds

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Turkey’s president vowed Monday to keep up the pressure against a U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish militia after his troops captured the Syrian town of Afrin, threatening to expand the military offensive into other Kurdish-held areas across northern Syria and even into neighboring Iraq.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan appeared set on forcing Washington to reconsider its partnership with the Syrian Kurdish fighters, the main U.S. ally in the fight against Islamic State.

Turkey first launched its military operation in Syria in 2016, and Erdogan has repeatedly said it will not allow a “terror corridor” along its border — a reference to territories controlled by the Kurdish forces, which Turkey views as terrorists because of their links to Kurdish insurgents fighting inside Turkey.

Emboldened by Sunday’s capture of Afrin, Erdogan went even further on Monday, asserting that Turkish troops and allied Syrian forces would press eastward, targeting territory that includes Kobani, a town that has become a symbol of the fight against ISIS, as well as Qamishli, where the Syrian government controls an airport and a security zone.

Also in the crosshairs is Manbij, a town jointly patrolled by U.S. and Kurdish forces and where U.S. bases are housed, triggering concerns over potential friction with U.S. troops. Erdogan even threatened to target Iraq’s Sinjar mountains, used by Kurdish fighters to move between Iraq and Syria, and

which Turkey claims is a stronghold for the outlawed Kurdish rebels fighting an insurgency in its southeast.

“We’ll continue this process until we completely abolish this corridor,” Erdogan said. “One night, we could suddenly enter Sinjar.”

Nicholas Heras, a Middle East Security fellow at the Washington-based Center for a New American Security, said the capture of Afrin was a “milestone” for Turkey in Syria but was not the end of its campaign against the Kurdish militia, known as the Syrian Kurdish People’s Defense Units, or YPG.

“The final destination is a Turkish war on the Kurds throughout northern and eastern Syria that destroys the YPG and forces the Americans to work by, with and through Turkey” in the fight against ISIS and in Syria, he said.

U.S. support of Syria’s Kurdish militia, which Turkey views as a threat to its national security, has soured relations between the two NATO allies. Ankara has accused the U.S. of not fulfilling a promise to move Syrian Kurdish fighters out of Manbij. Seeking to ease tensions, U.S. and Turkish officials held talks about Manbij earlier this month following a visit by outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. But with Tillerson’s firing, the next round of talks has been postponed.

Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, the Ankara director of the German Marshall Fund of the United States think tank, said the capture of Afrin had fulfilled Turkey’s aim of preventing the Kurdish militia from linking up its territories

in eastern and western Syria, and Erdogan’s threat to expand the military operation was a bargaining chip aimed at Washington.

“Politically, though, it would be very difficult to accomplish,” he said.

Formidable guerrilla fighters, the YPG withdrew from Afrin on Sunday after a Turkish thrust into the town center. They have vowed to continue the fight, using hit-and-run attacks against Turkish troops in Afrin.

Such an insurgency could prove to be “a big thorn” for the U.S. military operation in Syria, Heras said. “A YPG insurgency in Afrin would prompt Turkey to escalate against the Kurds throughout northern Syria, jeopardizing the U.S.-led mission to stabilize the areas captured” from ISIS militants, he said.

Already, thousands of Kurdish fighters have been redeployed away from front lines with ISIS to take part in the Afrin battle, threatening to distract from the fight against the extremists.

Turkey’s state-run news agency said 11 people — seven civilians and four Turkish-backed Syrian fighters — were killed Monday in an explosion as a building in the town center was being cleared of booby traps. Anadolu News agency said the bomb was reportedly left by the Syrian Kurdish fighters.

A senior Kurdish official, Aldar Khalil, called the Turkish offensive an “occupation” that endangers “the whole of northern Syria.”

Another package bomb in Texas

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — A package bomb believed to be linked to the recent bombings in Austin exploded early Tuesday inside a FedEx distribution center near San Antonio, leaving one worker with minor injuries, and a second unexploded bomb was found at the same facility, authorities said.

Hours later, police sent a hazardous materials team to a FedEx facility in Austin to check on a suspicious package there, but there was no immediate word about whether that package contained explosives.

FBI agent Michelle Lee said the explosion happened about 1 a.m. at a FedEx facility in Schertz, which is just northeast of San Antonio and about 60 miles southwest of Austin. A worker was treated for minor injuries and released, police said.

"It would be silly for us not to admit that we suspect it's related" to the four Austin

bombings that have killed two people and injured four others since March 2, Lee said. She did not have details about the size, weight or description of the package.

The package was on a conveyor belt when it detonated. One worker reported ringing in her ears after the blast. She was treated at a hospital and released.

Before it exploded, the package had been sent from Austin and was addressed to a home in Austin, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton told Austin television station KXAN.

Schertz police Chief Michael Hansen said the intended target of the bomb was not the shipping facility or anyone in Schertz.

The FedEx blast came less than two days after another bombing wounded two men Sunday night in a quiet Austin neighborhood. It was triggered by a nearly invisible tripwire, suggesting a "higher level of sophistication" than agents saw

in three package bombs left on doorsteps, according to Fred Milanowski, agent-in-charge of the Houston division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Authorities have not identified the two men who were hurt Sunday, saying only that they are in their 20s and white. But William Grote told The Associated Press on Monday that his grandson was one of them and that he had what appeared to be nails embedded in his knees.

Police described the men's injuries as significant, and both remained hospitalized Monday in stable condition.

Grote said his grandson was in a lot of pain. On the night of the bombing, one of the victims was riding a bike in the street and the other was on a sidewalk when they crossed a tripwire that he said knocked "them both off their feet."

"It was so dark, they couldn't tell and they tripped," he said. "They didn't see it. It was a wire. And it blew up."

Self-driving Uber hits, kills Ariz. pedestrian

Associated Press

A self-driving Uber SUV struck and killed a pedestrian in suburban Phoenix in the first death involving a fully autonomous test vehicle — a crash that could have far-reaching consequences for the new technology.

The fatality Sunday night in Tempe was the event many in the auto and technology industries were dreading but knew was inevitable.

Uber immediately suspended all road-testing of such autos in the Phoenix area, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Toronto. The testing has been going on for months as automakers and technology companies like the ride-hailing service compete to be the first with cars that operate on their own.

The Volvo was in self-driving mode with a human backup driver at the wheel when it hit Elaine Herzberg, 49, as she was walking a bicycle outside the lines of a crosswalk, police said. She died at a hospital.

Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi expressed condolences on his Twitter account and said the company is working with local law enforcement on the investigation.

The National Transportation Safety Board, which makes recommendations for preventing crashes, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which can enact regulations, sent investigators.

Tempe police Sgt. Ronald Elcock said local authorities haven't drawn any conclusions about who is at fault but urged people to use crosswalks.

He told reporters at a news conference Monday the Uber vehicle was traveling about 40 mph when it hit Herzberg immediately as she stepped onto the street.

Neither she nor the backup driver showed signs of impairment, he said.

Md. student dies after wounding 2 others

Associated Press

GREAT MILLS, Md. — A teenager with a handgun shot a girl and boy inside his Maryland high school Tuesday before he was fatally wounded during a confrontation with a school resource officer, a sheriff said.

The officer and the teenager both fired a single shot at that point, and it wasn't immediately clear whether he took his own life or was killed by the officer's bullet, St. Mary's County Sheriff Tim Cameron said. The other students were hospitalized in critical condition, and the officer was unharmed.

"When the shooting took place, our school resource officer, who was stationed inside the school, was alerted to the event and the shots being fired. He pursued the shooter and engaged the shooter, during which that engagement he fired a round at the shooter," Cameron said.

"Simultaneously, the shooter

fired a round as well. So, in the hours to come, in the days to come, through a detailed investigation, we will be able to determine if our SRO's round struck the shooter."

This latest shooting comes as lawmakers nationwide face pressure to take action against gun violence following the Valentine's Day killings of 17 people at a Florida high school by a teenager with an assault weapon. Maryland's Senate joined the House on Monday night to ban bump stocks, which enable a semi-automatic rifle to mimic a fully automatic weapon.

Outside the school, a line of about 20 school buses formed on the street in front of the building. Ambulances, firetrucks and other emergency vehicles crowded the parking lot and the street.

St. Mary's County Public Schools said the situation was "contained" after the shooting at Great Mills High School,

which has about 1,600 students and is near the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, about 65 miles southeast of Washington.

Agents with the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives joined deputies at the scene. The county sheriff said parents were told to stay away and urged to go instead to Leonardtown High School to reunite with Great Mills students.

Many students across the country are calling for effective gun controls. The violence hasn't abated since the massacre in Parkland, Fla., and Great Mills High has not been immune.

Just last month, the school's principal, Jake Heibel, told parents in a letter posted on the local news site The Bay Net that two students were interviewed after they were overheard mentioning a school shooting, and they were found to pose no threat.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

IHOP worker punched in face by customer

RI PROVIDENCE — Police are investigating after a worker at a Rhode Island IHOP restaurant was punched in the face by a customer who had been asked to leave.

The Providence Journal reported that the 23-year-old male employee was taken to the hospital after the attack about 1 a.m. Sunday.

Police said three men brought alcohol into the restaurant and were asked to remove it from their table. That started an argument, which led to threats and the men being asked to leave.

More than 100 held in cockfighting raid

AR DE QUEEN — Authorities said more than 100 people were taken into custody when dozens of law enforcement officers raided a suspected cockfighting operation in southwest Arkansas.

The bust happened in Sevier County north of De Queen, about 125 miles southwest of Little Rock. Sevier County Sheriff Robert Gentry said authorities were tipped off that a cockfight would be held at that location. Authorities said more than 200 birds were seized in the raid.

Wayward horses bring traffic to standstill

GA TUCKER — Several horses traveled down a highway in Georgia and motorists had to hold their horses.

News outlets reported that 10 horses took to the streets and ended up blocking traffic on Highway 78 near North DeKalb Mall on Saturday.

Motorists came to a standstill as police blocked off traffic

to ensure the safety of the motorists and the horses.

Little Creek Horse Farm confirmed it was their horses on the highway.

Couple have rare identical triplets

WV HUNTINGTON — A West Virginia doctor said a couple's three newborn daughters are "exceedingly rare" because they are identical triplets.

The girls were born Feb. 23 at Cabell Huntington Hospital to Alex and Brianna Walls, of Kenova. The triplets are named Kenadie Faith, Teagen Grace and Raelynn Hope. They have an older brother and sister — Addison, 8, and Barrett, 4.

Basement barbecue sickens partygoers

NY MASTIC — Police on Long Island said dozens of partygoers attending a basement barbecue suffered carbon monoxide poisoning.

WNBC-TV reported Suffolk County Police responded to calls about unconscious people at a Mastic home around 9 p.m. Sunday. Police said they discovered individuals at the family party had been using a charcoal barbecue in the basement of the home.

Fourteen people were treated for carbon monoxide poisoning at area hospitals. Eleven others were treated at the scene.

Jesus statue stolen 90 years ago returned

NJ HOBOKEN — A baby Jesus statue stolen nearly 90 years ago from a New Jersey church was returned.

The Rev. Alex Santora said a suspicious package was delivered last week to Our Lady of

Grace Church in Hoboken with no return address. The Jersey Journal reported the pastor called police.

The package was determined to be safe and was opened, revealing the baby Jesus and a note detailing how the sender's grandfather received it in the 1930s.

The anonymous sender said they felt the statue should be returned to the rightful owner.

2 charged with taking vases from cemetery

DE WILMINGTON — Two people are accused of stealing memorial vases from a Delaware cemetery.

The News Journal reported a New Castle County grand jury indicted Alicia A. Hart, 27, and Harrison E. Hudson, 28, on charges of theft, selling stolen property, conspiracy and criminal trespass. They're also charged with endangering the welfare of a child who was present during the thefts.

According to the indictment, Hart and Hudson are accused of stealing metals and other property valued at more than \$1,500 from Gracelawn Cemetery.

Faulty fuel pump leaves ferry stranded

MA TISBURY — Officials say a faulty fuel pump is to blame for a ferry losing power off the coast of Martha's Vineyard, stranding 72 passengers for five hours.

The Cape Cod Times reported the ferry's fuel oil transfer pump was not generating enough pressure to transfer oil properly. The issue caused the ferry to lose power about 15 minutes into a trip from Vineyard Haven to Woods Hole on Saturday evening.

Steamship Authority general manager Robert Davis said the ferry was cleared to return to service Monday morning.

The ferry had just gone back in service March 7 after an \$18.5 million refurbishment. Davis said the pump had not been reset during the work, and both an alarm and a pressure gauge failed to alert the crew of an issue.

Man arrested after baby found at subway

NY NEW YORK — Police said a 26-year-old man was arrested and is facing charges including abandonment of a child after a 6-month-old girl in a stroller was found unattended on a city subway platform.

Authorities said the man had been with the child and the child's mother in upper Manhattan. They separated, with the man taking the child with him.

The baby was found unharmed on the platform at 86th Street and Lexington Avenue early Sunday morning.

Class ring returned to family 90 years later

MI SUNFIELD — A class ring was returned to a Michigan family almost 90 years after it was awarded.

The Lansing State Journal reported that Gretchen Mapes received an ornate class ring from Sunfield High School in 1929. She died in 1954.

Mapes' son, Mike O'Toole, was recently given the ring.

The piece of jewelry was found half-buried in the gravel outside where the high school once stood. Vee Grimwood saw the ring glint in the sunlight as she waited for her daughter's dance class to finish in 1984.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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NFL quarterback shuffle is in full swing

Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Already a dozen NFL teams have new quarterbacks, half of them starters. And next month's draft features a deep class of QB prospects, a half-dozen of which could hear their names called in the first round.

Why such a remarkable run on prime-time passers?

"They're hard to find," Denver Broncos general manager John Elway said after introducing Case Keenum as his fifth quarterback since Peyton Manning's retirement just two years ago. "It's a tough spot to play. There are a lot of expectations. It's a hard position. There are a lot of pressures on it. You've got to play with consistency and there are a lot of people that rely on that position."

So, proven passers and projects alike see teams jockeying to throw multiple millions their way.

The harbinger of the "Great Quarterback Shuffle" of 2018 came during Super Bowl week when word got out that the Kansas City Chiefs were sending Alex Smith to the Washington Redskins, freeing Kirk Cousins to become a free agent in his prime, one who would rewrite

the conventional contract.

Cousins made the media rounds at the Super Bowl, where he secretly scouted out the city he would soon call his own.

Minnesota surged past Denver, Phoenix and New York as Cousins' desired destination after the Vikings decided to let all three of their veteran quarterbacks hit the open market.

While Cousins was working out a three-year, groundbreaking (fully guaranteed) and record-setting (\$28 million average) deal in Minnesota, the Broncos, Cardinals and Jets were picking through the Vikings' quarterback bin:

■ Coming off a \$2 million deal in Minnesota, Keenum commanded a two-year, \$36 million deal in Denver after leading the Vikings to an 11-3 mark and the NFC championship game.

■ Sam Bradford, whose injury opened the way for Keenum's breakout season, signed a one-year, \$20 million with the Cardinals, who lost Carson Palmer to retirement.

■ Teddy Bridgewater, once the Vikings' established starter before a devastating knee injury two years ago, signed a one-year, \$5 million contract with

the Jets, who also re-signed Josh McCown for one year at \$10 million.

Trevor Siemian, who blew up the Broncos' quarterback plans two straight summers by beating out 2016 first-round flop Paxton Lynch, heads to the Vikings as Cousins' backup after going 13-11 in Denver.

Leading the Bills to their first playoff appearance in 18 years wasn't enough for Tyrod Taylor to secure his long-term future in Buffalo. The Bills traded Taylor to Cleveland, which traded DeShone Kizer to the Green Bay Packers, where he'll back up Aaron Rodgers.

AJ McCarron finally gets his chance to prove himself after spending four seasons in Andy Dalton's shadow in Cincinnati. He signed a two-year deal with the Bills and said it makes no difference if his new team adds more competition by selecting one of the highly regarded quarterback prospects in the draft next month.

"I try not to ever waste any mental thought on it because it's something I can't control," McCarron said. "... You can either let it affect you in how you go about your work and let that define you. Or you can change

everybody's thought process. My mindset is to change anybody that's had any doubt."

Keenum said his mindset won't change should Elway draft a quarterback such as Oklahoma's Baker Mayfield, Wyoming's Josh Allen, USC's Sam Darnold, UCLA's Josh Rosen, Louisville's Lamar Jackson or Oklahoma State's Mason Rudolph.

"I've been around long enough to know that anything is a possibility in this league. I was a starting quarterback when a team drafted somebody No. 1 overall and traded a bunch of draft picks. I know how that goes," Keenum said, recalling when the Rams selected Jared Goff in 2016.

Teams are also doling out big bucks for backups just two months after watching Nick Foles' MVP performance in leading the Eagles past Tom Brady's Patriots in Super Bowl 52 while injured starter Carson Wentz watched from the sideline.

In several weeks, the NFL will be flush with a new crop of quarterbacks, some of whom may one day make today's jaw-dropping contracts look a little less eye-popping.

Ex-NFL official helping vets make the calls

Associated Press

Hector Tarango was lost, finding little purpose in life.

After a medical discharge from the Army following a series of ailments, including a ruptured Achilles tendon, he had developed post-traumatic stress disorder. His personal life was a mess.

"My deployment money was gone, my son was gone and my wife remarried. It was ugly after my three deployments," he says. "I gave up."

Then three people and one vocation turned around Tarango's existence.

His son, Joseph, re-entered his life. His friend Henry Rodriguez, whom Tarango calls "my brother," alerted him to Battlefields to Ballfields, an organization that gets veterans involved in officiating.

And Mike Pereira, the former NFL head of officiating and current Fox football analyst who founded Battlefields to Ballfields a year ago, took Tarango under his wing.

Now, Tarango, 37, not only is a football official, he's branched out into basketball.

"I played sports and football, but I didn't know the rules," Tarango says. "A lot of people watch football and think they know the rules, but they don't."

"Henry told me Mike Pereira ran it and I had no idea who Mike was. I wasn't interested in it (originally), but I did some research and said, 'Yeah, I'll do it.' I had never blown a whistle before."

Like more than 100 other former military members, Tarango regularly blows whistles now, working youth and high school games in California. Pereira launched his organization last year hoping to reach the century mark at some point in its buildup. He's gone well past that number, and many of the vets have stories similar to Tarango's.

Battlefields to Ballfields funds the veterans through scholarships as they get involved in officiating. Pereira works with officiating groups across the country to get

the veterans onto the fields and courts.

"One of the hurdles when you start to officiate is the cost of starting: dues and registration fees and uniforms," he says. "It's expensive, especially based on what you make per game."

It's also rewarding, not only for the former military members but for the officiating realm.

Battlefields to Ballfields is looking for mentors among veterans who already have experience in officiating, and Pereira believes many of his recent signees have the ability to teach.

"These guys and women make a good little extra income and they're getting out and working with kids," Pereira says. "We all talk about how we want to serve again in some way, and they feel like a part of the community."

"It's the most fulfilling thing I have ever done."

Women's NCAA Tournament roundup

MAC teams make Sweet 16

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Buffalo and Central Michigan are crashing the women's Sweet 16.

The two 11 seeds from the Mid-American Conference pulled off stunning road upsets of Florida State and Ohio State on Monday night to advance to the regional semifinals for the first time in school history.

It's the first time a school from the MAC has advanced this far since Bowling Green reached the regional semifinals in 2007.

Buffalo coach Felisha Legette-Jack said she spoke on the phone with Central Michigan coach Sue Guevara after their game was over. Buffalo was the first team from the conference to earn an at-large berth in 22 years.

"Our goal was to let people know that the MAC was alive and well," Legette-Jack said.

They sure are.

"We are excited to see success come from two teams in the MAC because it's always been a one-bid league," the Bulls' Stephanie Reid said. "For as long as I have been here, for I know as long as Coach (Legette-Jack) has been here, for a long time, it's been a one-bid league. They finally opened up to us and accepted us into the tournament at-large and now we are showing why."

Both Buffalo and Central Michigan won by double digits.

"This team will not fold," Guevara said. "This team is very tough, this team is very focused. We know what we had to do and we went out and did it."

While making the Sweet 16 is new for both those schools, UConn is headed to its 25th consecutive regional semifinals. All four No. 1 seeds advanced to the Sweet 16 for the ninth consecutive season.

Huskies coach Geno Auriemma wasn't surprised to see a few newcomers in the regionals.

"If you look around the country, mid-major programs are better than people think and they're one of the best," he said.

"Women's basketball mid-majors don't get any respect. On the men's side they do, but not on the women's side. So for this year to have what's happening with the mid-majors (winning), I think that's the best thing that's ever happened."

Albany Regional

No. 1 Uconn 71, No. 9 Quinnipiac 46: Napheesa Collier scored 23 points and host UConn beat in-state neighbor Quinnipiac to advance to a 25th straight Sweet 16.

Azura Stevens added 14 points and Kia Nurse chipped in with 13 for the Huskies (34-0), who found themselves in a much slower-paced game than their 140-52 first-round rout of Saint Francis (Pa.).

No. 5 Duke 66, No. 4 Georgia 40: Leaonna Odom scored 16 points and Duke's defense was dominant, holding host Georgia to two second-quarter points.

Lexie Brown and Erin Mathias each had 14 points for Duke (24-8), which will play UConn in the Albany Regional on Saturday.

No. 11 Buffalo 86, No. 3 Florida State 65: Cierra Dillard scored 22 points and Buffalo shocked host Florida State to advance to the Sweet 16 for the first time in school history.

The Bulls, who were one of the last four to earn an at-large berth in the 64-team field, shot 47.4 percent from the field and went 24-for-26 from the foul line. They also held the Seminoles to 3-for-25 on three-pointers and 33.8 percent from the field.

Kansas City Regional

No. 1 Mississippi State 71, No. 9 Oklahoma State 56: Victoria Vivians scored 23 points, Teaira McCowan added 21 points and 18 rebounds and host Mississippi State earned a hard-fought win over Oklahoma State.

Top-seeded Mississippi State (34-1) also got 17 points from Morgan William, who hit several crucial baskets throughout

the game. McCowan scored 17 of her 21 points in the second half and shot 8-for-12 from the field.

No. 2 Texas 85, No. 7 Arizona State 65: Lashann Higgs scored 19 points and Brooke McCarty scored 15 as host Texas booked its fourth consecutive trip to the Sweet 16.

No. 3 UCLA 86, No. 11 Creighton 64: Jordin Canada scored 21 points and Japreece Dean added 16 points to lead host UCLA.

Spokane Regional

No. 11 Central Michigan 95, No. 3 Ohio State 78: Presley Hudson scored 28 points and Central Michigan stunned host Ohio State to earn the school's first ever trip to the Sweet 16.

Central Michigan (30-4) out-rebounded and out-hustled Ohio State, played taut defense, hit a season-high 14 three-pointers and kept the Buckeyes at bay late in the game.

The Chippewas got plenty of help in the upset from the unusually error-prone Buckeyes, who got behind in the first half and then were run over by momentum and couldn't climb back in. Central Michigan led by as much as 23 points in the second half as Ohio State struggled to put together a run that would shift the tide.

Lexington Regional

No. 4 Stanford 90, No. 12 Florida Gulf Coast 70: Alanna Smith scored 28 points with four three-pointers, Brittany McPhee added 17 points and nine rebounds and host Stanford is headed back to the Lexington Regional for a third straight March after beating scrappy Florida Gulf Coast.

Freshman Kiana Williams shined on the big stage for the second time in three days with 12 points and six assists for the Cardinal (24-10), on to the Sweet 16 for the 11th straight season.

NIT roundup

Ford lifts Gaels by Huskies

Associated Press

MORAGA, Calif. — Jordan Ford made a wide open three-pointer with 45.3 seconds to go and Saint Mary's won its program-record 30th game of the season with an 85-81 victory over Washington on Monday night to reach the NIT quarterfinals.

Washington freshman Jaylen Nowell answered with a deep three to pull to 82-79 at 33.5 but Saint Mary's worked the clock down to 12.8 before Ford sealed it with two free throws.

Ford scored 22 of his 26 points in the second half. Evan Fitzner added a season-high 20 points off the bench for Saint Mary's (30-5) and Emmett Naar had 12 assists.

Noah Dickerson had 22 points and nine rebounds for Washington (21-13), which lost to Saint Mary's for the first time. Matisse Thybulle moved into second in Pac-12 history for single-season steals, tying Gary Payton with 101.

Western Kentucky 79, USC 75: Justin Johnson scored 23 points and the visiting Hilltoppers won consecutive NIT games for the first time since 1948 with a victory over the Trojans.

Utah 95, LSU 71: Sedrick Barefield led five starters in double figures with 17 points and the host Utes hit 14 three-pointers en route to a rout of the Tigers.

Oklahoma State 71, Stanford 65: Jeffrey Carroll scored 26 points, tying a career-high with five three-pointers, and Kendall Smith added 19 points to help the host Cowboys beat the Cardinal.

Oklahoma State (21-14) out-scored Stanford 29-18 in the fourth quarter to secure a school-record-tying 15th home victory this season.

NBA roundup

Miami outlasts Denver in double-OT

Associated Press

MIAMI — They broke the stat system. That's how good Miami and Denver were — even modern technology couldn't keep up with the Heat and Nuggets.

For 48 minutes, they went back and forth.

And one overtime didn't decide it, either.

Finally, after three hours, the Heat said enough. James Johnson scored a career-high 31 points, Kelly Olynyk added 30 off the bench and Miami set a franchise single-game scoring record by beating the Nuggets 149-141 in double overtime on Monday night.

"There didn't deserve to be a loser," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "Guys probably really enjoyed playing in a game like this."

His guys did, anyway. Olynyk became the second reserve in Heat history to score 30. Wayne Ellington had a career-high 29 points, and the Heat made 20 three-pointers — second-most in franchise history.

All that comes with a serious disclaimer. There was no official box score after the game, because the system crashed in the first overtime and crews were scrambling to determine official numbers long after the final buzzer. What mattered most was the score — one that moved Miami (38-33) into seventh in the Eastern Conference and left the Nuggets two games back of the last Western Conference spot.

Cavaliers 124, Bucks 117: LeBron James scored 40 points as part of his third triple-double in four games and host Cleveland beat Milwaukee as coach Tyronn Lue began his leave of absence to address health issues.

Lue said Monday in a statement he been dealing with chest pains and loss of sleep, and that tests have offered no conclusion about what the issue is. Associate head coach Larry Drew will run the team in Lue's absence.

Spurs 89, Warriors 75: LaMarcus Aldridge had 33 points

and 12 rebounds, and host San Antonio blew a 16-point lead to injury-ravaged Golden State before pulling away for a victory.

The Spurs beat Golden State for the first time in four tries this season and won their fourth straight overall to move into fifth place in the Western Conference, one-half game ahead of idle Utah and New Orleans.

76ers 108, Hornets 104: Joel Embiid had 25 points and 19 rebounds and Ben Simmons had a triple-double to lead host Philadelphia over Charlotte.

Simmons had 11 points, 12 rebounds and 15 assists to help the Sixers keep alive their shot at finishing fourth in the Eastern Conference and earning home-court advantage in the first round of the playoffs.

Pacers 110, Lakers 100: Victor Oladipo sparked a decisive run and finished with 20 points, Myles Turner had 21 points and host Indiana recovered from a poor start against Los Angeles.

The victory snapped Indi-

ana's two-game losing streak.

Pistons 106, Kings 90: Blake Griffin had 26 points, nine rebounds and seven assists and Detroit pulled away in the third quarter to beat host Sacramento.

Ish Smith had 18 points, Reggie Bullock added 17 and Anthony Tolliver scored 12 points behind three three-pointers — one of three Pistons with a trio of threes.

Knicks 110, Bulls 92: Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 22 points and Michael Beasley added 17 as host New York beat Chicago.

Enes Kanter had 10 points and 13 rebounds, while Troy Williams added 11 for the Knicks.

Nets 118, Grizzlies 115: Allen Crabbe and Caris LeVert each scored 22 points and host Brooklyn beat Memphis.

Rondae Hollis-Jefferson had 16 points and 12 rebounds, and DeMarre Carroll scored 18 points for the Nets, who have two straight wins for the first time since Jan. 19-21.

NHL roundup

Predators blank Sabres, win for 14th time in last 15

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Predators stalwart Pekka Rinne briefly stopped to marvel when informed of the elite NHL goaltending company he joined in becoming a three-time 40-game winner — and after a shutout, no less.

Only six players — Martin Brodeur and Terry Sawchuk, among them — had previously done that.

"When you say that, it sounds pretty cool," Rinne said, after stopping 35 shots in a 4-0 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Monday night. "Those guys are legends of this game. They've done so much not only for the

game of hockey but for the position of being a goalie. That's great. That's a credit to my teammates, big time, and also my coaching staff."

Blue Jackets 5, Bruins 4 (OT): Cam Atkinson scored 2:55 into overtime to lift visiting Columbus to its eighth straight win, spoiling a splendid NHL debut for Boston forward Ryan Donato.

Sonny Milano, Boone Jenner, Thomas Vanek and Artemi Panarin also scored for the Blue Jackets. Nick Foligno had two assists, and Vanek and Jenner each added one. Joonas Korpihalo stopped 34 shots.

Kings 4, Wild 3 (OT): Jeff

Carter scored his second goal of the game with 33.8 seconds left in overtime and visiting Los Angeles recovered after giving up a two-goal lead.

Tanner Pearson and Dustin Brown also scored for Los Angeles, which has alternated wins and losses over its past nine games. The Kings pulled into a tie with Anaheim for third place in the Pacific Division with 86 points, and hold the tiebreaker over the Ducks.

Panthers 2, Canadiens 0: Roberto Luongo stopped 28 shots for his third shutout of the season and 76th of his career to lead visiting Florida.

Aaron Ekblad and Alek-

sander Barkov scored to help the Panthers inch closer to a playoff position, pulling three points behind idle new Jersey for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference. Florida has two games in hand on the Devils.

Coyotes 5, Flames 2: Oliver Ekman-Larsson scored twice late in the third period to lead host Arizona.

Max Domi also had two goals for Arizona, including an empty-netter with 21 seconds left, and had an assist on Ekman-Larsson's tiebreaking goal. Richard Panik scored early in the second period for the Coyotes, and Antti Raanta stopped 42 shots.