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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump scolds NATO on defense funding

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

BRUSSELS — President Donald Trump scolded allies on Thursday for their failure to invest enough money in their defense, saying members must not only increase expenditures but also make up for years of military neglect.

In the future, NATO must also focus more on counterterrorism and managing the flow of migrants into Europe, Trump said.

Trump said all allies must meet NATO's own benchmark by dedicating at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product to their militaries. Currently, only five of 28 allies reach that mark. He went even further in suggesting that allies need to make up for past years of underinvestment, a notion that members are likely to reject.

It had been expected that the president, who in the past has said that the U.S. security guarantee could be contingent on allies' paying their fair share, would be unequivocal about

collective security. Instead, he said nothing on the matter.

Trump's brief comments came during the dedication of a 9/11 memorial at NATO's new \$1.2 billion headquarters. They were in line with Trump's past critiques of allies, but they took some observers by surprise.

Over the past several months, NATO has scrambled to address Trump's concerns.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg announced Thursday that alliance leaders agreed to join the U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State and decided to establish a new counterterrorism cell to better share intelligence on foreign fighters.

Allies will also answer a demand by Trump to establish annual plans to ensure members meet defense spending targets, Stoltenberg said, in a move designed to hold members to account if they fail to increase military expenditures.

In the past, the new U.S. president has been highly critical of NATO, which he has called "obsolete." More recent-

ly he has softened his view on the 68-year-old military pact, particularly as the military alliance has sought to highlight the ways in which it supports U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

If all members met spending targets, allies would have an additional \$119 billion for collective defense, Trump said.

Stoltenberg dismissed the notion that NATO's joining the coalition was mere symbolism, calling it a "practical platform" to coordinate efforts.

He said individual alliance members already contribute to the coalition, adding that NATO will expand the deployment of its AWACS surveillance aircraft to improve the coalition's view of the battlefield, help in air-to-air refueling and provide training to Iraqi forces.

Besides establishing a new counterterrorism fusion cell, allies will agree at a future forum to an "action plan" on fighting terrorism and will appoint a new coordinator to oversee such efforts, he said.

Trump's past criticism of NATO's counterterrorism

fight has confused some allied governments, which have deployed tens of thousands of troops to Afghanistan during the lengthy military campaign there. NATO now has 13,000 troops in Afghanistan, and the Trump administration is weighing whether to increase that number.

Though allies are scheduled to discuss future troop levels in Afghanistan at Thursday's conference, a final decision is unlikely.

Some allies also question the overall value of using NATO's 2 percent national spending target as the ultimate measure of military capability.

Still, Trump has forced the matter onto NATO's agenda with threats that the U.S. could "moderate" its support if allies don't do more.

Those threats have sparked concern that the U.S. commitment to defending fellow members from attack may not be ironclad. Trump reiterated his complaint that the U.S. carries a disproportionate share of the security burden.

US ship sails near reef in challenge to China

By WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

A Navy destroyer sailed near a disputed South China Sea island controlled by China, the first such operation since Donald Trump became president, a media report said.

The USS Dewey conducted a freedom-of-navigation operation on Wednesday within 12 nautical miles of Mischief Reef, which is part of the Spratly Island chain, according to a CNN report that cited an unnamed U.S. official.

The ship has been patrolling the South China Sea since at least May 5, according to photos posted on the Navy's official website.

China asserts a territorial claim around Mischief Reef and all of the Spratly Islands, despite competing claims from several neighboring countries.

Although islands generate a 12-nautical-mile territorial water zone, most international maritime law experts consider Mischief Reef a low-tide elevation with artificial construction, which would generate at most a 500-meter safety zone.

Pentagon spokesman Maj. Jamie Davis declined to confirm the operation, saying in a written statement that operational summaries will be released publicly in an annual report "and not sooner."

"We are continuing regular [freedom-of-navigation operations], as we have rou-

tinely done in the past and will continue to do in the future," Davis wrote. "We have a comprehensive Freedom of Navigation Operations program that seeks to challenge excessive maritime claims in order to preserve the rights, freedoms and uses of the sea and airspace guaranteed to all nations under international law."

In fiscal year 2016, the U.S. conducted freedom-of-navigation operations "challenging excessive maritime claims of 22 coastal states, including allies and partners," he said.

The last freedom-of-navigation operation in the South China Sea took place in October, when the destroyer USS Decatur sailed near the disputed Paracel Islands.

Trump's 'loose lips' irk some submariners

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Some veterans of the Navy's "Silent Service" are cringing at news that President Donald Trump disclosed the whereabouts of two submarines that are part of an undersea force that prides itself on stealth.

While Trump did not give up the subs' precise location, his telling the president of the Philippines of the submarines' presence in a private conversation startled many in a community that has long abided by the adage "Loose lips sink ships."

"The only thing that saves our lives is people not knowing where we are," said T. Michael Bircumshaw, a retired Navy master chief and former commander of the United States Submarine Veterans Inc.

He said telling anyone anything about where U.S. submarines are is "pure, unadulterated, criminal stupidity."

Trump's reference to the submarines was made during an April 29 call that touched on the North Korean threat.

Trump revealed the U.S. had two nuclear submarines in the region and did not want to use them, according to a leaked transcript of the conversation with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

"I didn't see any foul there, and those people making it a foul are a bit ridiculous," said retired Vice Adm. Al Konetzni. "We have submarines operating, thank goodness. We have them operating in all of the trouble spots of the world."

Thomas Fedyszyn, a professor of national security affairs at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, R.I., could not recall a U.S. president ever making such a disclosure.

The Navy generally does not describe where submarines are patrolling until after they've returned home or they're calling on a port. It announced a visit by the USS Michigan to Busan, South Korea, days before Trump's call with Duterte.

Deen Brown, who conducted submarine war patrols for the Navy during World War II, said he was not concerned about the disclosure, and the subs may not even be where Trump said they were.

"But even if they are there, they're not going to be there very long," said Brown, 94, of Oakdale, Conn.

Bud Atkins, who served on 10 submarines and retired as a command master chief, was incredulous. He said Trump should "keep his mouth shut, to put it bluntly."

"I couldn't believe it. I could not believe it," said Atkins, also of Oakdale.

No replacement in sight for Ticonderoga-class cruisers

The San Diego Union-Tribune

ABOARD THE USS BUNKER HILL — Less than an hour after a recent dawn rolled west into the Pacific Ocean, Capt. Joe Cahill sat in his starboard chair, a lined face pointed toward a line of warships wheeling north around San Clemente Island.

In the lead, the destroyers Halsey and Higgins cut through the waves in a tight turn toward land, trailed by the looming flat-top Theodore Roosevelt and the destroyer Sampson in its wake.

In the far rear, like a bear protecting her cubs, was the San Diego-based Bunker Hill, the 10,000-ton cruiser that orchestrates the air defenses for Carrier Strike Group 15. It's on guard in case there's ever a need to blast to dots enemy jets, helicopters, drones and missiles arcing toward the flotilla.

The ships' path last week was designed to mimic the world's most dangerous sea channels — the bustling Strait of Malacca and the Singapore Strait, traveled by a third of the globe's commercial ships, plus the Strait of Hormuz, a flash point between U.S. Navy vessels and the Iranian patrol boats and aircraft that pester them.

"Reps and sets. The geography of Southern California helps make these exercises more realistic," said Cahill, 46, who has performed this ballet on water dozens of times in his quarter-century-long career.

Cahill is widely considered to have one of the most penetrating minds on naval surface warfare, with years both at sea and on teams that designed futuristic warships and advanced tactics.

Until he took the helm of the guided-missile cruiser Bunker Hill last July 22, Cahill directed Vice Adm. Tom Rowden's Distributed Lethality Task Force, the cell that created a new doctrine of savagely prosecuting sea battles across vast distances, the warships widely spaced out so they can hit an enemy from multiple angles without warning.

And no Navy surface ship throws a harder punch than the Bunker Hill, a cruiser armed with a high-tech battery of missile tubes and advanced sensors that probe for faraway targets to destroy.

"They provide our civilian and uniformed military leaders with a per-

sistent, maneuverable warfighting capability, where and when needed around the world," Rowden, the Naval Forces commander, wrote in an email to The San Diego Union-Tribune. "The complexity of integrated air and missile warfare is growing more challenging by the day. We need these cruisers, and the follow on to the cruiser, to be as flexible and capable as possible ..."

The Bunker Hill is slated to deploy this autumn alongside the Roosevelt, and then its lifespan wanes. The Navy plans to decommission the Ticonderoga-class cruiser in 2019, mothballing it after 33 years of service.

It will be the first of the Vertical Launch System "Ticos" to exit the fleet. The brass wanted to swap these aging cruisers for a futuristic warship called the CG(X), but admirals balked at the estimated price tag of \$3.5 billion to \$6 billion each.

The last of the Tico litter, the Port Royal, is slated to retire in 2045. Until then, it and eight other cruisers will receive hundreds of millions of dollars in high-tech upgrades, including advanced radar and sonar, launchers and a much more potent missile interceptor.

"The bottom line is that the upgrades will add life to the cruisers and those upgrades are necessary. They will remain the most impressive integrated missile platforms afloat, but they're not the long-term solution," said Bryan McGrath, a retired destroyer commander who now directs the Maryland-based FerryBridge Group of consultants.

Escalating crew costs in an age of austerity — at full staff, the Bunker Hill has about 360 sailors — also doomed the Ticos. Paced by the Zumwalt, the destroyers in the latest class are bigger than the Bunker Hill but boast crews less than half its size, thanks to robots and software.

The Bunker Hill's crew is considered to be one of the best on the high seas. On May 10, it received the Navy's coveted Battle "E" award for superior combat effectiveness. Six weeks earlier, Lt. Ryan P. Kelly, the Bunker Hill's plans-and-tactics officer, was named the Surface Warfare Officer of the Year for 2016 by Naval Surface Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Combat flexibility: Army to use Navy missiles at RIMPAC

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Army is getting into the ship-sinking business.

U.S. Army Pacific will fire a Naval Strike Missile from shore to destroy an old ship during next year's Rim of the Pacific exercise, the head of U.S. Pacific Command said Wednesday.

Japanese ground forces will also fire a shore-based missile during RIMPAC, Adm. Harry Harris said at the Land Forces in the Pacific, or LANPAC, military conference in Honolulu.

The exercises are an important part of making PACOM's "multi-domain battle concept" ready for a potential conflict, Harris said.

The heart of the concept is to keep an enemy guessing and each service — particularly the Army — capable of fighting anywhere.

"Simply put, this concept provides us a way to ensure access to the global commons in the run-up to war and fight in those same commons should war come," Harris said. "Components must increase their agility and provide support to each other across the war-fighting domains.

America's military advantage in the domains of air, sea, land, cyber and space have eroded as adversaries and rivals have obtained advanced military technology, according to military officials who spoke at the conference.

Multi-domain battle is intended to restore some lost advantage by adding options for joint maneuvering and firing, while confounding enemies with numerous and changing scenarios.

Harris introduced the concept during a speech at the 2016 LANPAC conference, sponsored each year by the Association of the U.S. Army's Institute of Land Warfare.

This year's conference focused largely on multi-domain battle and how the U.S. Army Pacific could better use its land-based forces in a theater that's mostly ocean.

Harris said he'd "like to see the Army's land forces sink a ship, shoot down a missile, and shoot down the aircraft that fired that missile — near simultaneously — in a complex environment where our joint and combined forces are operating in each other's domains."

Standing in the way of that vision are differing sensor and weapons systems used by the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force, some of which are not linked. The chasm widens with the addition of systems used by allies and international partners.

The immediate goal is to get "our alphabet soup of sensors and shooters talking to one another," Harris said. "Service-specific systems must be able to talk to one another if any of this is going to achieve the effects that we're looking for," he said. "Ideally, we'll get to a point

where we see the joint force as a network of sensors and shooters allowing the best capability from any single service to provide cross-domain fires."

Brig. Gen. Lawrence Thoms, commander of the 311th Signal Command, which operates and defends the Army's secure network in the Pacific, summarized the difficult task ahead.

The concept requires distilling a lot of combat information into a coherent, common picture for commanders at different levels, Thoms said.

"Then we have to nest this complete Army picture with joint partners — and we have to be able to do that at great speed, over great distances and against computer adversaries who fight us on every level."

Harris said that with adversaries "fielding advanced weapons in numbers approaching the zombie apocalypse," it is critical to implement the multi-domain concept with "a sense of urgency."

Using a series of baseball analogies, Harris said military commanders must not be afraid of "striking out." "Even when we miss, I want to learn from the experience and continue to swing for the fences," he said.

Noting North Korea's recent spate of failed ballistic missile tests, Harris said that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "isn't playing small ball."

"He's not afraid to fail in public," Harris said. "In fact, he's swinging for those fences. And so, too, must we."

New BRAC proposal in budget

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's Pentagon spending plan for 2018 sent to lawmakers on Tuesday includes a new round of base realignments and closures, a proposal that the Defense Department contends could save billions of much-needed dollars but likely will meet stiff opposition on Capitol Hill.

The proposal, which is part of Trump's Pentagon budget of \$639.1 billion, asks Congress to approve a Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, in 2021. Similar requests sought in recent Pentagon budgets proposed by former President Barack Obama's administration failed to gain any traction, as many lawmakers oppose BRAC, citing potential harms to communities surrounding military bases.

But Pentagon budget documents state the Defense Department holds about 20 percent more infrastructure than is necessary to operate effectively. A BRAC round, which is now barred by law, potentially could save \$2 billion annually for the Defense Department, according to Pentagon estimates.

John Roth, who is performing the duties of Pentagon comptroller, said Tuesday that he wanted to "foot stomp" the department's desire for a BRAC in 2021, but in order to accomplish that planning must begin this year.

"All we're asking for at this stage is the authority," Roth told reporters at the Pentagon. "We can't even do the detailed analysis under current law."

It has been more than a decade since Congress last authorized the Pentagon to conduct a BRAC. That BRAC, initiated in 2005, was the largest and costliest ever conducted, resulting in the closure of about two dozen major military installations across the U.S. and the restructuring of dozens more.

Other BRAC rounds occurred in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995.

Bill would make sharing illicit photos a crime for troops

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House has unanimously approved legislation that makes it a crime for U.S. servicemembers to distribute intimate photos or videos of people without first getting their consent.

The measure is a direct response to a nude photo-shar-

ing scandal that has rocked the Marine Corps. Lawmakers voted 418-0 to pass the bill Wednesday.

The scandal came to light after it was discovered that sexually explicit photos of female and male Marines were being shared on a secret Facebook page.

Rep. Martha McSally, of Arizona, the bill's sponsor, said the "Neanderthals" who posted the photos aren't emblematic of the vast majority of U.S. troops. But she said the idea that anyone in uniform thinks it's acceptable to upload and comment on nude photos is a problem that must be fixed.

UK police find attack evidence; May rips leaks

Associated Press

MANCHESTER, England — Home searches across Manchester and beyond have uncovered important items in a fast-moving investigation into the concert bombing that left 22 people dead, Manchester's police chief said Thursday as a diplomatic spat escalated over U.S. leaks about the investigation to the media.

Greater Manchester Police Chief Constable Ian Hopkins told reporters the eight suspects detained so far are "significant" arrests, and "initial searches of premises have revealed items that we believe are very important to the investigation."

He did not elaborate, but those arrests around the northwestern English city include Ismail Abedi, the brother of Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi, 22. The bomber's father, Ramadan Abedi, and another brother, Hashim, have been detained in Libya.

As police raced to uncover the network that may have helped Abedi attack an Ariana Grande concert on Monday night, furious British officials blamed U.S. authorities Thursday for leaking details of the investigation to the media.

One British official told The Associated Press that police in Manchester have

stopped sharing information about their bombing investigation with the U.S. until they get a guarantee that there will be no more leaks to the media. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

President Donald Trump on Thursday denounced the leaks and asked the U.S. Justice Department and other agencies to launch a full investigation, The Washington Post reported. In a statement issued amid meetings in Brussels with leaders of NATO member nations, Trump responded to British outrage over the leaks by calling them "deeply troubling" and vowing to "get to the bottom of this."

British Prime Minister Theresa May said the U.S.-British defense and security partnership is built on trust. But she said "part of that trust is knowing that intelligence can be shared confidently."

British officials are particularly angry that photos detailing evidence about the bomb were published in The New York Times, although it's not clear that the paper obtained the photos from U.S. officials.

British security services also are upset that Abedi's name apparently was leaked by U.S. officials while British police were withholding it — and while raids were un-

derway in Manchester and in Libya, where the bomber's father lives.

Hopkins, the Manchester police chief, said the leaks had "caused much distress for families that are already suffering terribly with their loss."

Trump on Thursday pledged to "get to the bottom" of leaks of sensitive information, calling the leaks "deeply troubling." He said he is asking the Justice Department and other agencies to "launch a complete review of this matter."

The New York Times defended its publication of crime-scene photographs, saying its coverage had been "both comprehensive and responsible."

"The images and information presented were neither graphic nor disrespectful of victims, and consistent with the common line of reporting on weapons used in horrific crimes," the paper said.

May said the national threat level from terrorism remains at critical — the highest level, meaning that another attack may be imminent. Hundreds of soldiers have replaced police protecting high-profile sites including Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament in London.

"The public should remain vigilant," May said.

Soldiers launch attacks in besieged Philippines city

Associated Press

MARAWI, Philippines — Backed by tanks and helicopters, Philippine government forces launched "precision attacks" Thursday to clear militants linked to Islamic State from a city that has been under siege since a failed raid to capture a militant on the U.S. list of most-wanted terrorists.

Militants have torn through the streets of Marawi since Tuesday night, torching buildings, taking a priest and his worshippers hostage and sealing off much of the city. The violence forced thousands to flee and raised fears of growing extremism in the country.

About 20 people have died in the fighting, including 13 militants and five soldiers, said Lt. Col. Jo-ar Herrera, a military spokesman. President Rodrigo Duterte said a local police chief was stopped at a militant checkpoint and was beheaded.

It was not immediately clear

whether civilians were among the dead.

"At night, we can hear the gunfire," said Mohammad Usman, who watched from his home just outside Marawi as thousands of residents streamed out of the city. "I'm just praying that the bullets will not find their way to my house and hit us. I hope that the bombs will not land nearby and harm us."

Duterte imposed 60 days of martial law Tuesday on the island of Mindanao, which encompasses the southern third of the nation and is home to 22 million people. Marawi has a population of about 200,000.

Duterte warned he could expand martial law nationwide, an unnerving development for many in the Philippines who lived through the rule of Ferdinand Marcos. Marcos declared martial law in 1972 and used it to maintain his grip on power for more than a decade.

The man at the center of

the Marawi violence is Isnilon Hapilon, an Arabic-speaking Islamic preacher known for his expertise in commando assaults. He is at the nexus of several militant groups that are trying to merge into a more powerful force.

Hapilon, who is a commander of the Abu Sayyaf militant group, pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2014. He also heads an alliance that includes at least 10 smaller militant groups, including the Maute, which have a heavy presence in Marawi and were instrumental in fighting off government forces in this week's battles.

All these groups are inspired by ISIS, but so far there is no sign of significant, material ties.

"We have not seen any concrete evidence of material support from [ISIS]," military spokesman Brig. Gen. Resito Padilla said Thursday. But he added that the smaller groups "are working to really

get that recognition and funds, of course."

Washington has offered a \$5 million reward for information leading to Hapilon's capture, but he has proved elusive. The Philippines launched an airstrike that wounded him in January, but he got away.

The army raided what it believed to be his hideout on Tuesday night in Marawi, but the operation quickly went wrong. Militants called in reinforcements and were able to overpower government forces. Once again, Hapilon escaped.

"Based on reports, he is still in the city," Herrera told reporters in Marawi on Thursday as gunfire crackled in the background.

Much of Marawi was still a no-go zone Thursday. Automatic gunfire and explosions could be heard clearly and plumes of black smoke rose from the direction of the city center. Air force helicopters swooped overhead.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Homeowner discovers python in his garage

FL PEMBROKE PINES — An 8-foot python slithered into a Florida garage, where it was spotted by the homeowner taking his dog for a walk.

Joseph Liscinsky told the Sun Sentinel that he quickly put his 14-pound dog back inside his Pembroke Pines house after being startled by the snake.

Liscinsky said the python bit his fingers as he wrestled with it before wildlife officials arrived.

Pythons are not venomous but they have a sharp bite. The snakes are an invasive species in Florida, where they are blamed for decimating populations of native mammals.

Pregnant teen barred from school graduation

MD BOONSBORO — A Maryland high school senior has been barred from participating in her school's graduation ceremony because she is pregnant.

Media outlets reported Maddi Runkles, 18, discovered she was pregnant in January. The teen attends Heritage Academy, a small private Christian school in Hagerstown.

Upon Runkles' pregnancy announcement, school officials suspended her for two days and removed Runkles from her Student Council position.

Anti-abortion organization Students for Life says Runkles shouldn't be punished for her pregnancy, but should be praised for choosing to keep the baby.

Heritage Academy Administrator David Hobbs issued a statement calling Runkles' pregnancy "an internal issue about which much prayer and

discussion has taken place."

Police seize pot plants with value of \$2.95M

NJ EAST ORANGE — East Orange Police said they found 1,470 marijuana plants with an estimated street value of \$2.95 million in a four-car garage in New Jersey.

Officials announced during a news conference Monday that they charged Sherline Dare, 37, with distribution, maintaining and possession of a controlled dangerous substance.

Authorities also are searching for her husband, Densley Lawrence, 41.

Another man was also arrested.

Burial remains may be from the 18th century

VA ALEXANDRIA — Archaeologists working in Old Town Alexandria have found burial remains for two individuals that may date to the 18th century.

The archaeologists are working with developers at a construction site where Robinson Terminal South used to be.

The city requires developers to contract with archaeologists as redevelopment occurs on the city's waterfront.

In a press release, the city said the remains were discovered May 18.

Human remains are consistent with use of the site in the 18th and 19th centuries, when burials sometimes occurred outside of cemeteries.

Couple faces multiple animal cruelty charges

NC JACKSONVILLE — A married couple faces multiple animal cruelty charges after county officials

seized 45 animals from their North Carolina home.

The Daily News reported Damien Irvin, 21, and Samantha Wesche, 19, were arrested May 18.

On May 15 Onslow County Animal Services officials acting on an anonymous tip found two dead kittens inside a freezer and a dead dog.

Another dog was euthanized at the scene. Officials also removed 31 dogs, 13 cats and one pig.

Irvin and Wesche had been out of town since May 6. OCAS Director Howard Martin said in a statement that the animals were found without proper food and water supplies.

Each faces two felony counts of killing an animal by starvation and 45 misdemeanor counts of cruelty to animals.

Grizzly bear, yearlings caught after food raid

MT KALISPELL — Montana wildlife officials have captured an adult female grizzly bear and two yearlings after the animals broke into small freezers outside a mobile home.

The sow, a 9-year-old adult that weighed 309 pounds, was fitted with a GPS radio collar.

The three were caught east of Bigfork and moved to a different area on May 17.

The Flathead Beacon reported a landowner contacted Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks after the bears visited the freezers two nights in a row.

A temporary electric fence was erected around the freezers and remote cameras were deployed to determine if more than one bear was present.

After viewing the bears returning to the freezers undeterred by the fence, managers decided to capture and relocate the bears.

Man is charged with shooting in a church

MO KANSAS CITY — A Kansas City man was charged with shooting into a south Kansas City church, injuring a greeter.

Orlando Gentry was charged Tuesday with assault, possession of a firearm, unlawful use of a weapon and carrying a loaded firearm in the shooting.

Kansas City police said Gentry, 29, fired the shots during a confrontation Sunday at the House of Refuge church.

One of the bullets grazed Montell Bruce in the head and then he fell through a window in the sanctuary. Bruce was treated and released.

The Kansas City Star reported that Gentry told investigators he got into a fight at the church but denied having a gun.

Farmer, 85, dies after falling from a tractor

IN SCHNELLVILLE — Southwestern Indiana police said an 85-year-old farmer who was working in a field died after falling from a tractor.

The (Jasper) Herald reported that Jerome Knies, of Celestine, died Tuesday afternoon following the accident about 55 miles northeast of Evansville.

The Dubois County Sheriff's Department said Knies was operating a 26-year-old tractor in a field between Jasper and Schnellville when he fell from the machine and was fatally injured.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Indy hoping to extend centennial buzz

Associated Press

There was a palpable sense of excitement everywhere Doug Boles went a year ago, whether it was the gas station or grocery store or his office on 16th and Georgetown just outside Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Everyone was talking about the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500.

Boles shared in the excitement, too. The president of the speedway seemed to be everywhere at once, shaking hands with some of the estimated 350,000 fans on race day, taking selfies that showed up on all manner of social media and ensuring the centennial edition would be one to remember.

But just below the surface was also an underlying fear: What would happen next year? Would all the build-up to such a milestone event leave many of those fans done for 101?

"We were worried that one of two things could happen," Boles explained. "People who had been coming for a long time would view the 100th as sort of the end point — they had gotten to the 100th and they were going to do something else, listen to it on the radio, watch it on TV, but weren't going to come."

"And the other one," Boles said, "is we knew we'd have a lot of bucket-listers and first-timer people who were coming, and we were hoping that we could get them to come back a second or third time."

It appears many of those first-timers will indeed be back next weekend.

After strong crowds for qualifying weekend, Boles told The Associated Press that ticket sales are strong to watch Scott Dixon lead the field to green on Sunday. The crowd won't reach the complete sellout last year, which allowed the local TV blackout to be lifted for the first time since 1950, but it

could surpass 250,000 fans, continuing an upward trend that followed years of stagnation.

"Our number on race day is going to end up being better than any race day we've had in at least the last 15 years, other than last year," Boles said. "If you look at 2011 through 2015, we were on a slow-growing trajectory, which we were happy with, and then 2016 obviously was a huge boom. We want to maintain as much of that lift as we could and we're really pleased with how much we gained."

The speedway doesn't release official attendance numbers, making it difficult to quantify the amount of lift the centennial race gave to the "Greatest Spectacle in Racing." At least anecdotally, those who have spent much of May around the racetrack have experienced a similar buzz to last year.

There are more people walking through Gasoline Alley, posing for pictures in front of the Pagoda, and campers have been showing up for days.

"We've seen a great amount of interest in the race," said Graham Rahal, who will start in the middle of the fifth row. "There's been a good buzz about it and that's only going to continue to get better. Even the Grand Prix, it was packed, maybe double what we had from last year."

Yes, the momentum from the 100th race carried over to other IndyCar events. The series' 16 races last year averaged 1.28 million viewers, their highest TV ratings recorded by Nielsen since 2011 — numbers that are noteworthy with Indy 500 broadcast rights up for bidding this year.

Helping the cause of the 101st running are the numerous story lines serving as a backdrop:

■ Speeds are back after years of temper-

ance. Dixon qualified with a four-lap average of 232.164 mph, the fastest attempt since Arie Luyendyk set the track record of 236.986 in 1996.

■ Big names are back, too. Helio Castro-neves will again try to join Rick Mears, A.J. Foyt and Al Unser Sr. in the club of four-time winners, while Juan Pablo Montoya tries to become a three-time champ.

■ The rookie winner has returned. Alexander Rossi is hoping to defend his title from the outside of Row 1, the young American driver part of powerful a six-car Andretti Autosport stable.

■ There's a former Formula One champ making headlines. Fernando Alonso qualified fifth, proving the Spaniard's shot at winning the Borg-Warner Trophy is far more than a publicity stunt.

"It's tough to beat the 100th running, but I think Alonso coming over helps," said Will Power, who will start outside Row 3. "On Carb Day and race day, that's when you really see how big the event's going to be. So we'll see then. It's tough to get a feel for it yet."

Boles thinks he has a feel for it now.

He spends a few minutes every night calling ticketholders, not so much to sell them on anything but simply to touch base. Boles wants to know what people are thinking, what the speedway has done well, where it has fallen short and what it could do better.

"The one thing I've heard a lot, especially from people who are 30-plus year attendees of the 500, is they walked into the venue last year and said, 'That's why we fell in love with the speedway,'" Boles said. "'We fell in love with it because of the electricity that it had, the number of people it had.' So at some level, it reaffirmed for them why they love the place so much."

Air Force blocks WR Robinette's graduation

From wire reports

Football standout Jalen Robinette did not graduate with his Air Force class Wednesday.

The academy released a statement, saying his graduation and commission were on hold for reasons unrelated to his professional football pursuits or any criminal wrongdoing.

Robinette was one of nine seniors removed from the graduation lineup for a variety of reasons, the academy said.

"Cadet Robinette was removed from the graduation

lineup after academy leadership became aware of information that called into question cadet Robinette's eligibility/qualification to graduation and commission," the statement read. "Cadet Robinette's graduation and commissioning will be placed on hold while we further evaluate."

Messages left with Robinette were not immediately returned.

"Graduation is the No. 1 objective," Robinette said in his last full interview with The Gazette in early April.

Since then, many circumstances have changed. The Department of Defense reversed a policy that would have allowed Robinette — expected to be picked in the middle rounds of the NFL Draft — to pursue professional football immediately. Instead, he must serve at least two years on active duty before being released to reserves.

He spent time in rookie minicamps with the New England Patriots and Buffalo Bills.

Robinette was expected to remain at the Air Force Acade-

my as a graduate assistant after receiving his commission.

Citing privacy policies, the academy said it could not discuss the circumstances of the nine cadets who did not graduate. Cadets who don't make the grade are often offered summer school and a late graduation.

Robinette easily the program's most prolific receiver in the past 40 years. He left as Air Force's all-time leader in receiving yards (2,697) and second in catches (120) and touchdown catches (18).

Nashville's Rinne finally gets his shot

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Knocking the smile off Pekka Rinne's face right now is nearly impossible.

The longest-tenured player with the Nashville Predators, the 34-year-old goaltender finally will play in his first Stanley Cup Final in his ninth full NHL season.

"As a player, I feel like I've had a fairly long career and never had this opportunity," Rinne said. "So very fortunate and really appreciate this opportunity. I guess as a player you just enjoy being in this position. Enjoy the chance that you get, and you put your body on the line every night and give everything you have."

Teammates call the 6-foot-5 Finn the backbone of the Predators, and he's probably the best goalie in the world at the moment. He handles the puck like an extra defenseman. He foils the dump-and-chase efforts of opponents. And, oh, is he good in front of the net, aggressive with forwards in the crease, seeing seemingly everything and occasionally making saves with a Dominik

Hasek-like contortion.

Not only is Rinne a playoff-best 12-4, his .945 save percentage ranks third all-time for a single postseason behind a pair of Conn Smythe Trophy winners in Jean-Sebastien Giguere for Anaheim in 2003 and Jonathan Quick for Los Angeles in 2012, according to HockeyReference.com. Rinne's 1.70 goals-against average is 10th all-time for one postseason.

"What he does every night, you can't put into words," Nashville defenseman P.K. Subban said.

The 19-year-old franchise has reached its first Stanley Cup Final behind Rinne's standout performances.

After Nashville ousted Anaheim in six games Monday night, Rinne now is even stingier on home ice with a 7-1 record, 1.54 GAA and .947 save percentage. He made 38 saves on a night where Nashville took only 18 shots.

"Anytime you need to close a series out, you know that as a goalie you got to be good and as a team you got to be good," Rinne said.

The native of Kampele, Fin-

land, has been better than good. He also has the skill to skate out to play the puck. With coach Peter Laviolette's team clogging the neutral zone to slow opponents, Rinne is an extra (tall) layer of frustration waiting at the end of the ice for opponents who dump the puck in — even those high on the glass.

Anaheim defenseman Kevin Bieksa said Rinne will throw his body against the glass to knock the puck down so he can pass it out to a teammate, essentially turning the goalie into another defender.

"You don't see many goalies that aggressive," Bieksa said. "And he's gone out, he's played a lot of pucks. And he's good at it. One of their strengths, for sure."

Anaheim coach Randy Carlyle noted Rinne had eight plays on the puck alone in the first period of Game 5, a 3-1 Nashville win that put the Predators up 3-2 in the Western Conference finals.

"You can't give him that type of opportunity," Carlyle said.

Laviolette calls goaltender the most important position on the ice and he said Rinne's con-

fidence is a huge benefit for the team.

"And it gives you opportunities," he said.

Rinne now has 34 playoff victories and is no longer at the top of a list no goalie likes. Washington's Braden Holtby (29) is now the active goalie with the most postseason wins who hasn't reached the Final.

The only surprise was that it took Rinne this long. He's a three-time finalist for the Vezina Trophy, finishing second in 2011 and 2015. He led the league with 43 wins in 2011-12 and was MVP of the 2014 world championships.

Rinne bounced back from a hip injury that required arthroscopic surgery and later an E. coli infection that limited him to 24 games in the 2013-14 season. With him out of the lineup, Nashville just missed the postseason, leading general manager David Poile to replace coach Barry Trotz with Laviolette.

"I think David and the owners have done a really good job providing Peter more tools and maybe higher quality players and more talent," Rinne said.

ONE Championship's Lee chases stardom outside UFC

Associated Press

Angela Lee is a citizen of the world. Born in Canada and raised in Hawaii by her South Korean mother and Singaporean father, the 20-year-old has lived her short adult life in constant movement around the Pacific Rim and to innumerable points beyond.

When asked how she defines herself geographically, Lee can't pick just one identity.

"I feel like I'm comfortable in any of those areas, any of those countries," Lee said. "I think it's a blessing to have so much mixed culture."

Lee also doesn't fit into any particular box as one of the world's most intriguing up-and-coming mixed martial artists.

The daughter of two martial arts instructors is a gifted wrestler, a strong striker and a prototype for the next generation of well-rounded MMA prospects.

And she didn't need the UFC to reach the precipice of international stardom, either.

Lee (7-0) fights for ONE Championship, a Singapore-based promotion that dominates the burgeoning Asian market for professional MMA. She defends her 115-pound title for the second time Friday in a headlining bout against Isabela Nunes at Singapore Indoor Stadium.

Lee's fame is already remarkable around Asia, where her combination of talent and charisma has inspired com-

parison to Ronda Rousey. In just two years as a professional, the former Hawaii state wrestling champion is building buzz while expanding non-Asian MMA fans' UFC-centric perception of the sport.

"I'm maturing as a fighter, but I still have so much to learn," Lee said. "That's the exciting part. I feel like I'm not even close to my peak or my potential yet."

Lee was the first woman to headline a ONE Championship show last year when she won the promotion's atomweight — called strawweight by the UFC — title. Her show this week is the second ONE event headlined by a woman, and she praises both her promotion and Asian fight fans for embracing

the women's game so quickly.

"When I first started my fighting as an amateur, there were still a few critics saying women shouldn't be fighting, this and that," Lee said. "Just in these two years, it's really been amazing to see the mindset change for people, and how they're looking at these women who are stepping into the cage. We definitely get a lot more respect now. We've come a long way, and I'm excited for all the progress that is still to come."

The UFC has never found a solid foothold in the Asian market despite numerous attempts over the years. The promotion is trying again next month with a show at Singapore Indoor Stadium.

Hamilton's wheels lift Reds over Tribe

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Billy Hamilton saw the ball skip away from Michael Brantley in left field, and after that, there was no stopping baseball's fastest player.

Hamilton scored from first base on Zack Cozart's two-run single with two outs in the ninth inning to lift the Cincinnati Reds over the Cleveland Indians 4-3 on Wednesday night.

Hamilton reached after narrowly beating out an apparent game-ending double play — he was ruled safe after a replay review, putting runners at first and third for Cozart.

With Hamilton running on the pitch, Cozart hit a sinking liner to left. Brantley came up just short on a diving catch at-

tempt, and the ball rolled a couple feet away — plenty of time for Hamilton to follow pinch runner Arismendy Alcantara across home for the lead.

"Not many other guys are going to beat that ball out or score that run, but that's Billy Hamilton," Reds manager Bryan Price said.

Cozart gave all the credit to Hamilton.

"When I saw where Billy was, I knew they weren't going to get him at home," he said.

Allen (0-2) blew his first save since Aug. 17 and also credited Hamilton's speed for affecting the game. The right-hander had recorded 22 consecutive saves.

"Up until we saw it, we thought he was out, but a guy like that is going to make any play close," Allen said of the

overtaken call. "They got the call right. He was safe."

Michael Lorenzen (3-0) pitched the eighth, and Raisel Iglesias retired Brantley with two on in the ninth for his eighth save.

The game was delayed by rain in the top of the sixth inning for 2 hours and 1 minute.

Iglesias retired the first two hitters in the ninth. Jason Kipnis walked and took third on Francisco Lindor's single, but Brantley grounded out to second.

Carlos Santana drove in all three Cleveland runs. He hit a two-run homer in the third and broke a 2-all tie with an RBI double in the fifth.

Adam Duvall hit a two-run homer in the fourth for the Reds, who have taken two of

three from their in-state rivals in their annual series.

Reds starter Lisalberto Bonilla allowed three runs in five innings

Cleveland starter Trevor Bauer gave up two runs in 5¹/₃ innings. He was removed after retiring the first batter in the sixth. As reliever Boone Logan entered the game, the umpires called for the tarp.

Andrew Miller replaced Logan following the lengthy delay. Logan was credited with an appearance despite not throwing a pitch.

Indians right fielder Lonnie Chisenhall was scratched from Wednesday's lineup and is being evaluated for a possible head injury. He was tagged out sliding headfirst at home plate Sunday against Houston.

Sale doesn't strike out 10, but Red Sox beat Rangers

Associated Press

BOSTON — Chris Sale was perfectly happy to sit back and watch the Red Sox hitters do the work this time.

Sale cruised into the fifth inning, then was rewarded in the seventh when the Boston batters erupted for seven runs on their way to a 9-4 victory over the Texas Rangers on Wednesday night.

Sale (5-2) struck out six, falling short in his attempt to become the first pitcher in baseball's modern era to strike out at least 10 batters in nine straight games in one season.

But he didn't seem to mind. "It was fun," said the left-hander, who received more runs of support in the seventh inning alone than he has in any other game this season. "You get run after run, hit after hit. When we score like that, it's fun."

Dustin Pedroia waved home the tiebreaking run on a wild pitch, then singled in two more as the Red Sox turned a 3-1 deficit into a five-run lead and earned their third straight victory. Sam Travis had two

singles for the Red Sox in his major league debut.

Mike Napoli homered for Texas, which has lost three of four to follow a 10-game winning streak.

Sale, who also struck out 10 or more batters in eight straight games in 2015 with the White Sox, remains tied for the season record with Pedro Martinez.

After scoring four runs in support of Sale in his first six starts, the Red Sox have scored 27 while he was in the game in his last five. He took a no-hitter into the fifth, but finished with three earned runs, six hits and a walk in 7¹/₃ innings.

Yankees 3, Royals 0: Helped by a great first-inning catch that forced center fielder Jacoby Ellsbury from the game with a concussion and sprained neck, Luis Severino won for the first time in a month for host New York.

Cardinals 6, Dodgers 1: Mike Leake allowed four hits over eight innings as St. Louis beat host Los Angeles.

Jedd Gyorko had three hits and drew a walk in the two-run second inning that gave the Cardinals the lead for good.

Diamondbacks 8, White Sox 6: Jake Lamb homered off a left-hander for only the second time this season while four other teammates drove in at least one run as host Arizona completed a three-game sweep and won for the eighth time in nine games.

Twins 4, Orioles 3: Jose Berrios took a two-hitter into the seventh inning while Kennys Vargas drove in two runs as Minnesota completed its first three-game sweep in Baltimore since 1996.

Blue Jays 8, Brewers 4: Ryan Goins hit his first career grand slam, one of four homers for Toronto as it swept two-game interleague series and won three straight to finish a seven-game trip.

Athletics 4, Marlins 1: Sonny Gray struck out a season-high 11 over seven innings in his best start in two years and Khris Davis homered to lead host Oakland.

Nationals 5, Mariners 1: Anthony Rendon hit a three-run homer for his eighth of the season and Tanner Roark allowed a run over seven innings to lead host Washington.

Pirates 12, Braves 5 (10): Gift Ngoepe doubled to drive in Andrew McCutchen for the go-ahead run before visiting Pittsburgh hit three straight homers during a seven-run 10th inning to beat Atlanta.

Rays 5, Angels 2: Steven Souza Jr. homered twice to rally host Tampa Bay past Los Angeles.

Rockies 7, Phillies 2: Tyler Chatwood allowed just one hit in seven scoreless innings while Carlos Gonzalez homered as Colorado beat host Philadelphia.

Cubs 5, Giants 4: Anthony Rizzo hit two home runs and Kyle Hendricks tossed seven strong innings as host Chicago held on to beat San Francisco.

Tigers 6, Astros 3: Jose Iglesias finished a triple shy of the cycle while Ian Kinsler had two hits and scored twice as visiting Detroit snapped a three-game losing streak.

Padres 6, Mets 5: Hunter Renfroe snapped an eighth-inning tie with a titanic home run and Brad Hand pitched out of a huge jam in the ninth as visiting San Diego rallied for the win.