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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump plans could boost Mideast unrest

Associated Press

President-elect Donald Trump's positions on Middle East issues, if carried out, could bring yet more volatility to the world's most combustible region.

ANALYSIS Besides vowing to rip up the international nuclear deal with Iran, Trump says he will ramp up the war on Islamic State militants; he could make the Palestinians more desperate by siding with Israel's hard-line right wing. He also seems set to end the Obama administration's cold shoulder toward authoritarians like Egypt's Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi.

Trump most often has been vague and sometimes outright contradictory about plans in the Mideast. And his stances could change. His call for a ban on Muslims entering the U.S. worried many in the region, but he has since watered down that stance, and many opinion-

makers in the Gulf at least call it simply campaign rhetoric.

Overall, Trump has shown a focus on fighting Islamic militants and favoring strongmen who do so. He's shown less concern with human rights or the complicated minutiae of the Middle East's many factions and interests.

That is a simpler, black-and-white stance in the eyes of some, but it also can bring a backlash.

Trump pledged repeatedly to intensify the war against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, saying crushing the group is his main priority.

What is less clear is how — and what impact it would have on the conflicts in both countries and the complex alliances that the Obama administration has tried to balance. Trump has given little policy or vision on the wars beyond the vows to defeat the Islamic State group.

In Syria, rebels may be the

biggest losers.

In contrast to the Obama administration's support for the opposition — equivocal as it may have been — Trump said the rebels may be “worse” than President Bashar Assad and that defeating the Islamic State group is more important than removing the Syrian leader. That suggests he could drop any backing. Moreover, he says he wants more and better cooperation against the Islamic State group with Russia, Assad's main ally.

Trump says he will step up airstrikes, vowing to “bomb the hell” out of the militants.

He has criticized the slow pace of the fight, and at one point called for up to 30,000 U.S. troops to be deployed in Iraq — six times the current level. He later seemed to back down, saying “few troops” would be needed.

More intensified bombing, however, risks a backlash if it

brings more civilian casualties. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has come under fire from political rivals over the presence of a few thousand U.S. troops in Iraq.

The Islamic State group may already be broken in Iraq and cornered in Syria before Trump takes office in January. Over the past year, the Obama administration's campaign of airstrikes, along with training on the ground, has helped Iraqi and Kurdish forces take back most territory the Islamic State group captured in 2014. They are currently assaulting the group's last main Iraqi stronghold, Mosul.

In Syria, if Trump allies with Russia against the militant group, it also could bring a major shift away from U.S. support of the rebels. Turning away from the opposition could anger Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which have vowed to oust Assad and to back the rebels.

More than 100 troops seeking transgender care

USA Today

WASHINGTON — More than 100 transgender troops have informed the services that they want to transition to the opposite gender and to be formally recognized in their new genders, or are seeking counseling or medical treatment, according to documents and the military.

The troops are coming forward after the Pentagon's new policy allowing the open service of transgender troops went into effect Oct. 1.

About 55 enlisted sailors and officers have informed their commanders they want to transition to the other gender, according to Lt. Cdr. Nate Christensen, a Navy spokes-

man. There are 48 airmen who are seeking transgender medical care or counseling, said Maj. William Lewis, an Air Force spokesman. In October, Army chief of staff Gen. Mark Milley told the Associated Press that 10 soldiers had formally sought to be recognized in their new genders.

Sailors were informed Monday about the transgender sailors and were urged to abide by the new policy, according to an email from the Navy's chief of personnel.

“Today, we know of approximately 55 sailors who have waited for this policy to be finalized, and desire a gender transition,” Vice Adm. Robert Burke wrote in an email to commanders ob-

tained by USA Today. “With few exceptions, these sailors have had faith that the Navy would come through, and they observed all regulations and standards applicable to their birth gender.”

The exceptions he referred to are sailors who sought treatment before the policy was finalized, said a Navy official who spoke on condition of anonymity because officials were not authorized to speak publicly about details of those seeking treatment. Burke's message accompanied the Navy's new policy for transgender sailors.

“We would ask that your leaders assist our sailors in conforming to Navy regulations and uphold Navy standards

of conduct as we navigate this change,” Burke wrote.

The Pentagon's repeal of the ban on transgender troops was announced June 30. Some members of the military brass objected, fearing the change was happening too quickly. Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, did not appear with Defense Secretary Ash Carter when the repeal was announced.

Transgender troops are estimated to make up a small fraction of the active-duty force of 1.3 million. A Rand Corp. study found there are as many as 6,630 transgender troops, of whom dozens or a few hundred would seek hormone treatment or surgery.

Trump win could spur bigger troop pay hikes

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — After years of being squeezed, troops and their families are hoping for higher pay raises, and the surprise victory of Donald Trump might make that more likely — even before the president-elect takes office in January.

Congress has been debating whether to risk President Barack Obama's veto by adding \$18 billion to the annual defense budget and giving troops the highest pay raise in years. Trump's election now might embolden Republican lawmakers to press harder this year for that money, or at least a chunk of it, now that it is certain their party has claimed the White House, according to budget experts.

Military pay raises have been held to less than 2 percent since 2011, below that of private-sector wage growth, while troops and families have been stressed by deployments. The pay issue has become a top concern, and the nonprofit National Military Family Association wrote an open letter to Trump after Tuesday's election asking that it be made a priority.

Overworked and feeling "nickel-and-dimed," the military wants the president and Congress to provide the 2.1 percent raises that it is supposed to receive under law, said Joyce Wessel-Raezer, executive director of the association.

"If a new administration would say, 'We are going to find a way in our budget to give you the full increase that is in law,' that

would be a huge message," she said.

Congress has been debating for months the possibility of the higher raise as part of the \$602 billion defense budget, but the raise depends on an additional \$18 billion hike. The Armed Services committees in the House and Senate — both controlled by the Republican majority — are split on whether to push ahead with the hike against Obama's veto threat and an insistence by Democrats that each dollar be matched with more domestic spending.

But the earlier defense budget calculus by Republicans might have changed Tuesday when Trump pulled off a sweeping victory that shocked many pundits and poll watchers. Election polling had indicated Trump likely would lose to Democrat Hillary Clinton and that Democrats could make gains in Congress, meaning an even dimmer political outlook for Republicans next year.

"They thought they might lose the Senate and they might as well get the best (budget) deal they could. ... Now I think there is a feeling they could push much harder. I expect them to be more aggressive than they would have been otherwise," said Mark Cancian, senior adviser for the international security program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a bipartisan think tank in Washington.

Obama now might be less likely to follow through with his veto threat, and Democrats in Congress might be more willing to make a deal knowing Republicans will have more control and leverage next year

when Trump proposes his first defense budget, said Sarah Binder, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a nonpartisan think tank in Washington.

"I think the thing is, this level of spending pales in comparison to the level of challenges coming next year," Binder said.

Earlier this year, the Senate Armed Services Committee and its Chairman Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., opted to avoid a political fight with the Democrats. It crafted a defense bill that called for the 1.6 percent troop pay raise requested by Obama.

But the House Armed Services Committee and its Chairman, Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, spearheaded a 2.1 percent raise and the \$18 billion hike despite the veto threat.

Now, the two committees are set to return to Washington on Monday and to continue negotiating a final deal, which could include some or all of the House's hike. Congress has been in recess since September.

The Republican lawmakers could be emboldened by the election to push Congress and the president for more, said Justin Johnson, a senior defense budget policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington.

"I think now you have a situation where the Republicans on the committees can almost dare President Obama to veto it," Johnson said. "It certainly gives them more flexibility."

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Obama requests \$11.6B in war-related spending

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama on Thursday asked Congress for \$11.6 billion in additional war-related funding, including money to fight Islamic State militants, to sustain higher overseas troop levels and to modernize the Afghan military's helicopter fleet.

The request was sent to lawmakers for consideration during the lame-duck session that starts next week. It's evenly divided between the Pentagon and the State Department and foreign aid accounts related to battling the Islamic State group.

"In addition to enhancing our effort to defeat ISIL, this plan would fund the president's decision to adjust our troop levels to better support the Afghan government's strategy to secure its nation, and would help enhance Afghanistan's aviation capability," said Defense Secretary Ash Carter, using an alternate acronym for the Islamic State group. "Swift passage of this plan will help the Department of Defense and our partners in the U.S. government and around the world protect this nation."

The request's fate in the coming weeks is uncertain. It's not clear what Republicans controlling Congress want to do about

a raft of unfinished spending bills now that Donald Trump has won the White House.

While top Republicans like Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., want to clear away the unfinished budget work — and to avoid cluttering the Trump agenda with this year's leftovers — many conservatives hope to win better outcomes next year with Trump in the White House.

At the very least, however, Congress must pass a temporary spending bill to avert a government shutdown next month, which would give lawmakers and the new administration time to hash out a final

accord on more than \$1 trillion in unfinished bills to fund agency operating budgets.

Before the election, Democrats promised they would try to play a strong hand against GOP moves to beef up the defense budget without comparable treatment for domestic programs. The White House and congressional Democrats insist that additional defense dollars be matched with increases for nondefense programs, and pairing the upcoming Pentagon request with nondefense items that would still fit under the umbrella of security costs could free up money for domestic programs elsewhere.

Military: Plan for troops in Europe is on track

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon is moving ahead with plans to deploy more troops, attack helicopters and artillery to Europe early next year as part of a multibillion-dollar effort to reinforce NATO's defenses along Russia's periphery, the military said on Thursday.

A Fort Carson, Colo.-based armored brigade is set to rotate to Europe in January as part of an effort to ensure a year-round presence of tanks and additional troops on the Continent. The deployment, part of the \$3.4 billion European Reassurance Initiative, calls for series of other moves aimed at improving the military's ability to respond to a crisis in Europe.

Yet questions have begun to swirl with the election of Donald Trump as president about whether the United States will remain committed to the plan. The Pentagon played down those concerns Thursday.

The military is "executing the plans as they were constructed with our NATO allies in close consultations with NATO, so we're proceeding forward, and we'll leave it to the next administration to speak to their policy choices," Pentagon spokesman

Peter Cook told reporters.

Cook declined to speculate about whether the Trump administration would remain committed to reinforcing the military's presence in Europe, which, before Russia's 2014 intervention in Ukraine, had been on steady decline.

During his campaign, Trump sent mixed signals about how the U.S. military should be organized overseas and about America's commitment to the NATO alliance.

He made waves earlier this year when he suggested that the U.S. might not be willing follow through on defending allies if they came under attack, saying that U.S. solidarity was contingent on partners' spending more on their own defense. The comments rattled NATO members, particularly those once dominated by the Soviet Union.

At other times, Trump has said that the U.S. remains committed to NATO but that the alliance needs to adapt to new threats.

The future design of U.S. forces in Europe, as well as the longevity of efforts to circulate more rotational forces around Europe, could depend on how the U.S. relationship with Russia develops under Trump.

Drone strike kills 10 US allies in Somalia

The Washington Post

NAIROBI — An American drone strike thought to have struck Islamist militants in Somalia actually killed 10 members of a regional force allied with the United States, according to results of a Pentagon investigation that have not yet been made public.

The September incident sheds light on the escalating involvement of U.S. forces in Somalia's protracted war against al-Shabab, a group of al-Qaida-linked militants. It also points to the unforeseen consequences of increased U.S. drone strikes in a country still run by clan militias.

"They've helped us out against a common enemy," a U.S. military official said Thursday, referring to the regional forces who were killed in the strike. "If we had known who they were, we would have done everything we could to prevent it." He spoke on the condition of anonymity because the investigation's findings are not yet public.

As the United States has waded further into Somalia, it has struggled to form a coalition of allies from a range of rival groups. Two of those groups — from the states of Puntland

and Galmudug — have targeted and arrested al-Shabab terrorists, and received American accolades for doing so.

But the groups also have been fighting one another for decades, mostly over territory in the city of Galkayo.

On Sept. 28, Puntland security forces were sent to investigate a "suspicious group," thought to be al-Shabab based on American surveillance imagery, according to the U.S. official.

American forces accompanied the patrol as advisers until they neared the unknown group. It was early in the morning, and visibility was limited when Puntland forces "started taking fire," said the U.S. official. They asked for air support, and the U.S. military launched the drone strike.

Shortly after the attack, officials in Galmudug began accusing the United States of killing its own allies.

The U.S. Africa Command issued a statement shortly after the attack that described the target of the strike as "a group of armed al-Shabaab fighters."

But a new Pentagon report, parts of which were described to *The Washington Post*, contradicts that initial conclusion.

Marines advising in Mosul battle mark Corps' birthday

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

QAYARA AIRFIELD WEST, Iraq — The Marine Corps celebrates its birthday every November by passing on hard-won experience in the ceremonial sharing of cake from the oldest Marine to the youngest. It's part of a tradition that recalls past victories and a history of military successes.

For the Marines deployed to Qayara Airfield West outside Mosul, who celebrated the 241st anniversary of the service's founding on Thursday, the tradition also echoed their duties as advisers helping the Iraqi army to expel the Islamic State group from their country.

The setting — a tent around a large table covered with a camouflage poncho — was relatively austere compared with birthday

balls held elsewhere in the world.

Lavish, stateside celebrations are more fun, said Maj. Ryan Hunt, leader of the Twentynine Palms, Calif.-based "Blade Runner" team, made up of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment Marines, which he said deployed "from a desert to a desert." At home, they often attend birthday balls hosted in Las Vegas.

Members of the Marine Corps Reserve's 4th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company out of West Palm Beach, Fla., who are advising the Iraqis in fire support, also were present, together with a Navy Corpsman, three Marine veterans and guests from other services.

Hunt spoke of galas during which Marines can enjoy a real beer instead of the nonalcoholic kind on hand at the Iraqi airfield.

But, he said, a stripped-down affair in a harsh, deployed environment is more memorable because it's closer to what Marines "were made to do."

For the oldest Marine present, Master Sgt. Matthew Holly, 43, of the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command, the celebration was his third on a combat deployment.

"The message is always the same," he said. "We're paying homage to our past."

After taking a bite of the first slice of birthday carrot cake, Holly passed it to Lance Cpl. D'Armani Parks, 21, the youngest Marine present. It's a symbol of handing down history and traditions to the future generation of Marine leaders.

"It's good to know who came before you and to celebrate their triumphs," said Parks, who was marking his first deployed birthday celebration.

Anti-Trump protests continue

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — From New York to Illinois to California, in red states and blue, protesters decrying Donald Trump's election spent another night overtaking highways, smashing store windows, igniting fires and in at least one city, facing pepper spray and rubber projectiles from police trying to clear the streets.

The demonstrations stretched into another straight night Thursday and came to a head in Portland, Ore., where thousands of marchers chanted, "We reject the president-elect!" while some lit firecrackers, sparked small blazes and used rocks and baseball bats to break the glass of businesses and vehicles parked at dealerships.

Officers began pushing back against the crowd that threw glass bottles and a trash can, making 26 arrests and using flash-bang devices and pepper spray to force people to disperse.

In Los Angeles, protests were mostly peaceful, but 185 people were arrested, mostly for blocking streets, Officer Norma Eisenman said. An officer was injured near police headquar-

ters, leading to one arrest, but Eisenman had no details about the circumstances or the injury. The officer was released after treatment.

The persisting protests led Trump, himself, to fire back, tweeting: "Just had a very open and successful presidential election. Now professional protesters, incited by the media, are protesting. Very unfair!"

His supporters also took to social media to accuse protesters of sour grapes and refusing to respect the democratic process, though there were no significant counterprotests.

In Portland, police termed the protest a riot after some 4,000 people surged into the downtown area. After giving several orders to leave, officers fired rubber baton rounds. It was not clear if anyone was hurt.

In Denver, protesters made their way onto Interstate 25, stopping traffic for about a half-hour. They also briefly shut down highways in Minneapolis and Los Angeles.

In downtown San Francisco, high school students called out, "Not my president!" as they marched, holding signs urging a Trump eviction. They waved

rainbow banners and Mexican flags, as bystanders in the heavily Democratic city gave them high-fives.

"As a white, queer person, we need unity with people of color, we need to stand up," said Claire Bye, 15, a sophomore at Academy High School. "I'm fighting for my rights as an LGBTQ person. I'm fighting for the rights of brown people, black people, Muslim people."

Nearby in Oakland, a group got into some shoving matches with police, and 11 people were arrested. Protesters lit street fires, smashed windows and sprayed graffiti on at least seven businesses.

In New York City and Chicago, large groups gathered outside Trump Tower. In New York, they chanted angry slogans and waved banners bearing anti-Trump messages. Police still stood guard Friday on Fifth Avenue.

"You got everything straight up and down the line," demonstrator David Thomas said. "You got climate change, you got the Iran deal. You got gay rights, you got mass deportations. Just everything, straight up and down the line, the guy is wrong on every issue."

President-elect, GOP Congress face tough times ahead

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The budding new alliance between Donald Trump and congressional Republicans hides a tougher reality: Even with unified GOP control of Washington, the president-elect's priorities may have trouble getting through Congress.

And in some cases, Republicans, themselves, might be the barrier.

Building a border wall and restricting immigration from terror-stricken nations? Don't count on Senate Democrats to go along, and they effectively will wield veto power in many cases.

Repealing President Barack Obama's health care law? That looks likely to happen in some way, shape or form, but a number of states that accepted that law's expansion of the Medicaid health program for the poor are represented by Republicans. It will take painstaking and potentially lengthy negotiations to come up with a solution.

And then there are Trump's protectionist views on trade, skepticism about international treaty organizations and promises to protect Social Security and Medicare. All that flies in the face of Republican Party orthodoxy — and the list goes on.

Still, all that seemed like a problem for another day as Trump paid a triumphant visit to Capitol Hill on Thursday after a cordial White House meeting with President Barack Obama.

He sat down with House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., whom he derided as "very weak and ineffective" just last month after Ryan distanced himself over audio of Trump talking about groping women. Ryan was all smiles as he escorted Trump, wife Melania and Vice President-elect Mike Pence onto the Capitol Balcony to give them a view of the inauguration platform being constructed for Trump to take the oath of office Jan. 20.

Multiple fires in SE investigated as arson

Associated Press

ATLANTA — At least 20 wildfires in North Carolina are being investigated as suspected arson, officials said, as firefighters from across the country focused on a pocket of fires in the bone-dry southern Appalachian mountains.

A division of the U.S. Forest Service said fires have been burning on more than 25 square miles in the Nantahala National Forest in the western part of North Carolina. Across the South, relentless drought has turned pine trees into matchsticks and has forced people from their homes in dozens of communities.

More than 5,000 firefighters and support staff from around the nation are trying to sup-

press these fires, said Shardul Raval, director of fire and aviation management for the southern region of the U.S. Forest Service.

The effort includes about 40 aircraft, including three large air tankers flying out of Chattanooga, Tenn. Tens of thousands of acres of forest have burned, and about a dozen of the largest fires were uncontained, the forest service said.

High winds, high temperatures and weeks without rain have combined to spark blaze after blaze in the unusually dry landscape. Numerous teams reported wind-driven fires racing up slopes and down ravines as they struggled to protect hundreds of threatened structures.

"It just smells like a camp-

fire" along the Appalachian Trail in northern Georgia, said Carlie Gentry, who works at the Mountain Crossings store at Walasi-yi, a popular stop for hikers.

The national drought report shows 41.6 million people in parts of 15 southern states living in drought conditions. The worst is in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee, but extreme drought also is spreading into the western Carolinas. Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina all have fierce fires.

Kentucky authorities made two arson arrests and cited another man for causing a brush fire by defying a burn ban.

Tennessee authorities also reported arrests for arson and burning violations.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Baby's big hair and troll costume noticed

LA ELTON — A southwestern Louisiana woman said her 3-month-old daughter has such a full head of hair that strangers stop to admire it, and she made the baby a Halloween troll costume.

But Alisha John said she and her husband, Dakota, don't have long to play with baby Areea Sue Oiba John's hair. That's because she's a Coushatta Indian, and the tribe shaves babies' heads as part of a blessing ceremony when they're 4 months old.

She told the American Press in Lake Charles that her older children also were born with a lot of hair. But nothing like Areea's, whose blessing ceremony will be held on Nov. 25.

Claim of water polo sex attack investigated

CA ALAMEDA — A high school water polo player in the Bay Area has been accused of sexually assaulting an opposing player during a game.

The Alameda Police Department said they have opened a criminal investigation after multiple Encinal High School players accused a Berkeley High School team member of behaving inappropriately in the water.

Berkeley Unified School District spokesman Charles Burress declined to comment on the investigation.

Hunter impaled by antler of elk he killed

OR PORTLAND — Authorities say an Oregon hunter was hospitalized after being impaled by the antler of an elk he had just killed.

KATU-TV reported that Crook County Sheriff's Office deputies said Gary Heeter, 69,

of Bend, went hunting Saturday and was dragging the elk's carcass behind his four-wheeler.

Deputies said the vehicle flipped, sending Heeter backward onto the elk's antler.

Hospital officials said that Heeter was in fair condition.

Officers investigate fatal subway shove

NY NEW YORK — New York City police are looking at surveillance video in the investigation of a fatal subway shove at the bustling station beneath Times Square.

A train crushed a passenger to death about 1 p.m. Monday after another woman pushed her onto the tracks. Witnesses flagged down two police officers on the platform.

Melanie Liverpool, of Queens, was apprehended within minutes. She later was arrested on a murder charge. Authorities described her as emotionally disturbed.

Prosecutors claim Liverpool confessed to pushing the woman, but during her arraignment Tuesday, Liverpool said she was innocent.

Naked man stunned after wreck, dies

NC HENDERSONVILLE — Henderson County sheriff's deputies said a naked man they found in the road after a wreck died after they used a stun gun because he charged at them.

Maj. Frank Stout said in a statement that deputies were called about a wreck about 1 a.m. Tuesday. Stout said the driver was naked in the road, was acting extremely irrationally and was noncompliant.

Stout said that as deputies tried to take the man into custody, he charged and a Taser was used.

The man went into cardiac ar-

rest. He was taken to a hospital, where he died. The man's name has not been released.

Deputy shoots suspect wielding wooden stake

AZ CASA GRANDE — Authorities are investigating after a Pinal County deputy shot a suspect who was wielding a wooden stake.

The Casa Grande Dispatch reported that deputies responded Sunday to reports of a suspicious man at a mobile home community in Casa Grande. When deputies arrived, they found the 31-year-old suspect carrying the stake, which he refused to drop despite verbal commands from deputies.

Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeu said the suspect was approaching the deputy while swinging the stake in a threatening manner. As the suspect got close, the deputy fired three rounds, striking the suspect.

The suspect reportedly then dropped his stake and complied with orders. The suspect was transported to the Maricopa Medical Center, where he was listed in stable condition.

Over 20 Chihuahuas removed from home

NH CROYDON — Police said a Croydon woman surrendered more than 20 Chihuahuas and a cat on Saturday.

New Hampshire Animal Rescue League President Monica Zulauf said some of the dogs are currently in the organization's care in Bedford. She said two had to be put down, and others are unable to walk.

Police Chief Richard Lee said no charges had been filed as of Monday, but they could be forthcoming.

Lee told The Valley News that there had been previous

complaints about the woman and her husband, but police weren't able to apply for a warrant to enter their residence.

It's unclear what conditions the animals had been living in.

Man sleeping in trash bin dumped into truck

PA PHILADELPHIA — Police said a homeless man sleeping in a gas station trash container was taken to a hospital after the container was emptied into a garbage truck.

A police spokeswoman said the 36-year-old man was in the trash container at the Speedway Gas Station in the Port Richmond section of the city.

Workers found him after the contents were dumped into the garbage truck shortly before 7 a.m. Monday.

Police said the man was taken to Temple Medical Center for evaluation and was reported in stable condition.

Woman gets wish and loses election bid

MI FRANKENMUTH — Bridget Smith wanted voters not to elect her to Frankenmuth's school board — and they didn't.

Smith filed earlier this year to run for one of three 4-year terms on the school board, but afterward was hired to serve as Frankenmuth's city manager.

When she was being hired by the Bavarian-themed community about 75 miles northwest of Detroit, Smith indicated that she would drop her school board bid. But the deadline to withdraw had passed and her name remained on Tuesday's ballot.

She encouraged voters not to cast ballots for her and Smith placed last among the four candidates.

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First-place Ravens top winless Browns

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Just two weeks ago, the Baltimore Ravens had lost four straight and were working on their second offensive coordinator of the season.

Now they're alone in first place in the AFC North and coming off their most lopsided victory in two years.

After the Ravens (5-4) used an impressive second half to roll past the winless Cleveland Browns 28-7 on Thursday night, Joe Flacco took stock of the situation and smiled.

"It feels good. It's Thursday night and we've got the weekend off," the quarterback said. "It's a lot of fun being part of winning football. It's one of the toughest things to do in the world, to win a game in the NFL."

Oh, don't the Browns know it. Cleveland has lost the first 10 games of a season for the first time since it joined the league in 1950, and inched closer to joining the 2008 Detroit Lions as the only 0-16 team in NFL history.

They're down, but the Browns haven't quit.

"There are better days ahead for this group," said tight end

Seth DeValve, who scored Cleveland's lone touchdown. "We are not flinching and we are not giving up. These guys are working hard every day to get a win."

DeValve's first NFL touchdown gave the Browns a 7-3 lead in the second quarter, but Flacco threw two touchdown passes in the third and another with 6:21 left to provide the Ravens with their second successive win.

It was the first time this season the Ravens were involved in a game decided by more than eight points.

It was also the Baltimore's most lopsided win since a 20-10 victory over Cleveland on Dec. 28, 2014.

Some things we learned about the Ravens and Browns:

Suggs is back: Despite tearing his left biceps last month, Ravens linebacker Terrell Suggs continues to excel.

After Cleveland inserted backup quarterback Josh McCown midway through the third quarter, Suggs beat his man and hit McCown's arm as he threw, setting up an interception by teammate Jerraud Powers at the Browns 40.

In the fourth quarter, Suggs stripped McCown to

force a fumble recovered by Baltimore.

"I've been around for 14 years, but I still feel young," Suggs said. "I have played with a torn biceps before. I have come back from a torn Achilles before. So I guess it's just in my DNA. My mom and dad did something special when they made me."

Confident in Kessler: Though rookie Cody Kessler was replaced in the third quarter by McCown, Browns coach Hue Jackson said Kessler would start in Cleveland's next game against Pittsburgh in 10 days.

"Absolutely, I'm still going to play (Kessler)," Jackson said. "He's a young player and I'm going to put him back out there."

Jackson said he removed Kessler "because I wanted a spark."

So even though they're winless, the Browns don't have a quarterback controversy on their hands.

Finding the end zone: On a night when Ravens receiver Steve Smith caught his 78th career touchdown pass, teammate Breshad Perriman was overjoyed with his first.

The second-year receiver, who missed all of his rookie

season after sustaining a knee injury on his first day of training camp, hauled in Flacco's 27-yard pass with 6:21 to play.

Referees reviewed the catch, but in the end determined Perriman maintained control of the ball as he rolled over in the end zone.

"It was a complete blessing," Perriman said. "(I've been) working for it for a long time, and it finally came today. (It's) just how long it took to get here and all the work you had to put in. All the stuff I've been through."

Second thoughts: The Browns' inability to contain the opposition after halftime — a season-long issue — resurfaced again.

The Ravens outscored them 22-0 after the break. That gives Cleveland's foes a 157-51 edge in the second half and overtime this season.

Jackson can't explain it, and his players are getting tired of addressing the problem.

"This is several games now where we had the lead in the first half and we weren't able to finish them off in the second half," offensive tackle Joe Thomas said. "That's something we will look at here over the next 10 days."

Red-hot Cowboys visit struggling Steelers

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Ben Roethlisberger has seen this show before. Rookie quarterback. Physical running back. Solid defense. A historic hot streak that seems like a portent.

Back in 2004, it was Roethlisberger who was the hot rookie, pairing with Jerome Bettis and the NFL's top-ranked defense to rip off 13 straight wins after replacing injured Tommy Maddox while leading the Steelers to the AFC title game. Now it's Dak Prescott, the 23-year-old with the preternatural calm who has rapidly evolved from fourth-round flyer to perhaps indispensable part of the team that reached midseason atop the NFC.

There is one big difference. While Roethlisberger was asked to serve primarily as a game manager and let the defense do the work — he only passed for more than 200

yards three times as a rookie — Prescott has been asked to do more. In some ways, a lot more. He's on pace to go over 4,000 yards passing and has made Tony Romo, who happens to be the franchise's all-time passing leader, a \$20 million backup.

"He's not just managing games, he's taking games over and doing some pretty awesome stuff," Roethlisberger said of Prescott. "It's fun to watch."

If not exactly fun to play against. The Cowboys (7-1) have ripped off seven straight wins, the third-longest run by a rookie quarterback in league history, even if there's a way to go to reach what Roethlisberger did in 2004. The combination of Prescott, rookie running back Ezekiel Elliott and wide receiver Dez Bryant has quickly become just as dynamic as Pittsburgh's trio of Roethlisberger, Le'Veon Bell and Antonio Brown.

While Dallas is surging, the Steelers (4-4) are slumping. Their three-game losing streak includes a lifeless performance in Baltimore last weekend that dropped them out of first in the AFC North. There's time to get it together. They did it last year, going 6-2 over the second half to earn a playoff berth. The first step this time will be more difficult than most.

"You want to be playing your best football at this time of year," Roethlisberger said. "If we want to be playing our best, we've got to be playing the best. And one of the best is coming in this week."

No place like home: Despite their slide, the Steelers are a favored by a field goal, a testament to the way they handle their business at Heinz Field. Roethlisberger has won seven straight home starts, and Pittsburgh is averaging 35 points in those games.

Duke knocks off No. 15 North Carolina

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Duke waited until it was time to play No. 15 North Carolina to finally cut out all the mistakes that kept haunting the Blue Devils in close losses.

They ran the ball with a physical edge and tightened defensively, then ended their Senior Night by sprinting across the field as time expired to reclaim a lost rivalry trophy.

Daniel Jones ran for two scores and threw for another to help the Blue Devils upset the Tar Heels 28-27 on Thursday night to secure their first Atlantic Coast Conference win.

Duke (4-6, 1-5 ACC) was flirting with its first winless league record since 2007 after a tight loss at No. 5 Louisville and a pair of three-point losses to Georgia Tech and No. 18 Virginia Tech.

"I laid all of that out there: here's the path we've been on, here's how you correct it," Duke coach David Cutcliffe said. "They're smart. They listen, they believe. And that's huge that they keep buying into

each other, the loyalty. So that joy, that's huge."

Jones, a redshirt freshman, ran for 94 yards as part of a ground game that kept moving the chains against the Tar Heels (7-3, 5-2, No. 17 CFP). Shaun Wilson ran for a game-high 107 yards and a score of his own, Duke finished with 227 yards rushing and converted 10 of 17 third-down chances.

"Our offensive line was doing a tremendous job all game," Jones said, "firing off the ball and being physical and creating that physicality that we want as a team."

That formula was on display at the end, as Duke took more than 6½ minutes off the clock with a long drive from its own 1 before punting back to UNC. The Blue Devils then came up with a final stop, with Alonzo Saxton II picking off Mitch Trubisky near midfield with 1:02 left on a night that ended with Duke players sprinting across the field to re-claim the Victory Bell presented to the winner of the long-running

rivalry.

More surprisingly, Duke's defense gradually locked down the Tar Heels' high-scoring offense, which finished with just 31 yards in the final 15 minutes.

"Every time we would make a play, we would shoot ourselves in the foot on the next one or something would happen," Tar Heels coach Larry Fedora said. "There was no consistency whatsoever."

The takeaway: UNC: The Tar Heels likely saw any chance of repeating as the league's Coastal Division champion die with this loss considering they had to keep winning and hope for the Hokies to lose once. But there was a familiar problem with being physical enough to stop the run, on top of the surprising offensive struggles after halftime.

"We missed a big opportunity," Trubisky said.

Duke: After a couple of close losses, Duke showed it had enough fortitude to bounce back and play a clean game even as it flirted with the program's first

winless ACC record since 2007. Notable in Thursday's performance: no turnovers for the second straight week.

Poll implications: North Carolina will almost certainly slide in the AP Top 25 after this one. The question is whether the Tar Heels — who have been in and out of the poll this season — might fall all the way out again after losing to a winless ACC team with a curiously shaky performance.

Streak snapped: The Tar Heels came into this game with nine straight wins on an opponent's home field, tied with No. 3 Clemson for third longest in the nation behind No. 1 Alabama (11) and No. 9 Oklahoma (10).

Blown lead: North Carolina got off to a sprint of a start, jumping to a 14-0 first-quarter lead behind a sharp Trubisky. The junior completed 12 of his first 15 passes for 200 yards and three touchdowns, but threw for just 97 yards on 12-for-18 passing with two interceptions from there. UNC managed only two second-half field goals.

No. 13 Utah racks up 11 sacks in rout of Arizona State

Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Utah was concerned about Arizona State's attacking defense. Turns out the Utes can bring a little pressure, too.

Joe Williams had another big game in his post-retirement tour and No. 13 Utah had 11 sacks among its 22 tackles for loss, leading the Utes to a 49-26 win over Arizona State Thursday night.

"We just kept plugging away and the flood gates just opened up near the end of the game," Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said.

Utah (8-2, 5-2 Pac-12, No. 15 CFP) overcame a slow start with a series of spectacular plays against the FBS' worst passing defense to end an eight-game losing streak in Tempe.

Williams ran for 181 yards and a pair of scores, giving him

844 yards and five touchdowns in four games since returning from a four-week retirement.

Troy Williams threw for 296 yards and three of his four touchdown passes to Raelon Singleton, who had 116 yards on four catches to help the Utes stay within reach of No. 16 Colorado in the Pac-12 South.

Utah's defense found a new level of pressure.

The Utes harassed Arizona State quarterback Manny Wilkins all night, most of it coming from Hunter Dimick. The senior defensive end entered the game with seven sacks and nearly doubled his total against Wilkins, pulling him down five times to break the school record.

Utah had six sacks in the fourth quarter and now has the two highest single-game sack totals in FBS this season after

getting 10 against San Jose State on Sept. 17.

"We probably missed him as much as we got him," Dimick said. "That dude was a freak athlete, but toward the end we fortunately were able to get him bottled up."

Wilkins was adept at avoiding some tackles with some how-did-he-do-that moves in his return from injury, but also made some key mistakes.

He threw an interception in the end zone in the first quarter and Chase Hansen put the game out of reach by returning an interception 43 yards for a touchdown in the fourth quarter.

Wilkins finished with 309 yards and a touchdown on 19-for-31 passing.

"Those are completely mental errors on my part, errors I can't make," Wilkins said.

Arizona State (5-5, 2-5) had

plenty of mistakes in its defensive secondary again.

The Sun Devils held Utah to 27 total yards in the first quarter, but once the Utes got one big play, they kept 'em coming.

Singleton got the first one, shedding a tackling along the sideline on a 64-yard touchdown. It was the 13th touchdown of 50 yards or more allowed by Arizona State this season.

Utah's next touchdown wasn't over 50 yards, but it was spectacular: Siaoisi Wilson laying out for a 27-yard catch just inside the pylon, held up by official review.

The Sun Devils went back to their defensive lapsing at the end of the second quarter, inexplicably leaving Singleton open — no one was within 15 yards of him — in the end zone for a 17-yard score.

Wade victorious in return to South Beach

Associated Press

MIAMI — For 13 years, Dwyane Wade made plenty of what the Miami Heat call “winning plays.”

He made another one Thursday.

And the Heat didn't enjoy this one.

Wade turned a debated foul call into two big free throws with 13.7 seconds remaining, helping the Chicago Bulls hang on for a 98-95 win and ensuring that his return to the arena he called home for 13 seasons would be a winning one.

It was Wade's first time facing the Heat as an opponent, and afterward he seemed more than a little relieved that this was over.

“I can only imagine what he was going through today,” Bulls coach Fred Hoiberg said. “A lot of emotions coming back here.”

Chicago was up 94-92 when Wade got the call that went against Miami's Justise Winslow, a foul along the sideline on an inbound pass where it appeared that the 12-time All-Star may have embellished a bit for effect.

If he did, it worked.

“If it was last year, he got pushed out of bounds,” a smiling Heat coach Erik Spoel-

stra said. “This year? He's selling it.”

Jimmy Butler scored 20 points and Rajon Rondo finished with 16 points and 12 rebounds for the Bulls. Robin Lopez had 16 for Chicago, and Wade scored 13 on 5-for-17 shooting.

“I thought I'd shoot better, since I've been knowing these rims for a while,” Wade said.

But he made the two big free throws when it counted most, and acknowledged afterward that he might have gotten a break.

“I got the vet call,” Wade said.

Said Winslow: “I didn't agree with the call. I think that was because of the stage, because of him being back here. I don't think if he was at another venue, another regular game, they would have made that call.”

Warriors 125, Nuggets 101: Stephen Curry scored 33 points and visiting Golden State beat Denver on a night Kevin Durant's string of 72 straight regular-season games with at least 20 points ended.

Durant finished with 18 points. He remained tied with Michael Jordan for the fourth-longest streak of 20 or more points in league history.

Curry tweaked his ankle in a win over Dallas on Wednesday, but it didn't appear to hamper him. He finished 7-for-13 from three-point range, including one that he turned into a four-point play.

Pelicans 112, Bucks 106: Anthony Davis hit a pair of free throws with 12 seconds left and scored 32 points, and New Orleans got its first victory after losing its first eight by beating host Milwaukee.

The Philadelphia 76ers (0-7) are the remaining winless team in the NBA.

Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo had 17 points, 10 rebounds and one assist in 35 minutes.

Lakers 101, Kings 91: Lou Williams scored 13 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter to help visiting Los Angeles rally past Sacramento.

The Lakers have four wins in a five-game stretch for the first time since November 2013.

DeMarcus Cousins had 28 points and nine rebounds, and Rudy Gay had 15 points and eight rebounds for the Kings, who had their modest two-game winning streak snapped. Sacramento had won the last seven meetings with the Lakers.

Staal lifts rusty Minnesota over Pittsburgh

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Minnesota Wild, after a long layoff, were admittedly a little rusty early on the road against the defending Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins.

But Eric Staal provided the spark offensively to allow the defensive-minded Wild to settle down.

Staal had a three-point night, including the game-winning goal in the third period, as the Wild defeated the Penguins 4-2 on Thursday night.

“I've scored a few against (Pittsburgh) and I've felt the pain against them in the playoffs a few years, too,” Staal said. “It was nice to get the win tonight.”

Staal has spent 11 of his 12 NHL seasons in the Eastern Conference, and last season he played for the Rangers, a team the Penguins eliminated in the playoffs en route to the franchise's fourth Stanley Cup.

Still, Staal has experienced

success against Pittsburgh and the trend continued Thursday. Staal scored his fifth of the season and added two assists, giving him 51 points in 50 career games against the Penguins.

Charlie Coyle scored his fourth of the season on the power play, while Nino Niederreiter added his third and Jared Spurgeon his second into an empty net for the Wild, who won for the fourth time in six games.

Devan Dubnyk, who made 39 saves, allowed fewer than three goals for the eighth straight game, which includes a streak of three straight shutouts. The Wild defeated the Penguins for the first time in five games, including four straight in Pittsburgh.

“This was a great challenge going against the Stanley Cup champions who hadn't lost in regulation at home,” Wild coach Bruce Boudreau said. “I think they were up for it.”

Sidney Crosby and Patric

Hornqvist both scored power-play goals for Pittsburgh, which lost in regulation for the first time in eight games. It was also Pittsburgh's first regulation home loss this season.

Crosby has nine goals and 11 points in eight games since returning from a concussion that sidelined him for the first six games of the season.

Marc-Andre Fleury made his first start in a week on Thursday and stopped 40 shots. He backed up Matt Murray the previous two games.

Sharks 4, Panthers 2: Tommy Wingels scored the go-ahead goal at 8:53 of the third period to lift visiting San Jose over Florida.

Predators 3, Blues 1: Calle Jarnkrok scored twice to lead host Nashville over St. Louis.

Red Wings 3, Canucks 1: Jimmy Howard stopped 36 shots and host Detroit defeated Vancouver.

Lightning 4, Islanders 1: Steven Stamkos had a goal and

two assists, Andrei Vasilevskiy made 31 saves and host Tampa Bay beat New York.

Canadiens 4, Kings 1: Carey Price made 24 saves and host Montreal beat Los Angeles to stay perfect in nine home games this season.

Ducks 4, Hurricanes 2: Jakob Silfverberg scored two second-period goals and added two assists as visiting Anaheim beat Carolina.

Bruins 5, Blue Jackets 2: David Backes, David Krejci and Austin Czarnik all had two points apiece for Boston against visiting Columbus.

Stars 4, Flames 2: Jamie Benn snapped a nine-game scoring drought with two goals, including the game-winner on a third-period power play, and visiting Dallas beat Calgary to snap a five-game losing streak.

Jets 3, Coyotes 2: Nikolaj Ehlers, Blake Wheeler and Andrew Copp scored to help visiting Winnipeg beat Arizona.