

STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, November 6, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Combat gear in use at US-Mexico border

The Washington Post

From head to toe, he is ready for war.

The M4 semiautomatic rifle in his hands is tipped with a suppressor favored by special operations units to muffle gunshots during clandestine missions.

Just above that is a PEQ-15 sight, which projects an infrared beam visible with night-vision goggles so the shooter can fire at night or point out targets for comrades and helicopters above. A tactical flashlight and holographic sight round out the rifle. Magazines are at his hip for quick reloading during a firefight.

A mask obscures his face, and he wears a noise-canceling tactical headset that would look natural for scouting an Afghan valley for Taliban insurgents.

Photos taken Monday of U.S. Customs and Border Protection

agents training weeks before a potential arrival of a caravan of Central Americans reveal a southern border already militarized — even before the arrival of thousands of active-duty soldiers.

There are no indications that the mostly Honduran migrants, many of them women and children, pose a threat that would necessitate long- and short-range tactical engagements. Nonetheless, CBP agents have drilled with armored vehicles, riot gear, helicopters and more, photos from the border have shown.

The preparations come amid questions about how much force active-duty soldiers and agents along the border can and should use. President Donald Trump had suggested that troops should treat rock-throwers as combatants and that rifle fire would

be an appropriate response, but he later backtracked on his comments.

Agents wielding military gear could belong to CBP's Border Patrol Special Operations Group — the agency's premier tactical response team.

CBP did not respond to a request for comment about which unit was shown training on the Texas-Mexico border.

Law enforcement agencies since 1990 have requested billions in military-grade equipment thanks to the 1033 program, a Pentagon initiative that diverts surplus military equipment to civilian authorities.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq created a high-water mark in available equipment, and subsequent drawdowns from each nation have meant law enforcement operations have browsed

everything from excess bayonets and uniforms to sniper rifles and vehicles designed to absorb roadside bombings.

Critics have maintained that the weapons produce an overly aggressive posture suitable for combat but not interactions with civilians. The Obama administration restricted the program late in his second term after images of officers atop armored vehicles pointing rifles at protesters in Ferguson, Mo., drew severe criticism.

Trump rolled back those restrictions in August 2017.

Photos from Getty Images showed CBP agents wearing Operational Camouflage Pattern uniforms originally designed for Army use. Green Berets and some Navy SEALs have worn the pattern, which now extends to local police departments.

Ranger School rated 5-star 'weight-loss service' on Google

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

The Army's Camp Rogers, home of the first week of Ranger School at Fort Benning, Ga., is listed as a weight-loss service on Google Maps, and so far the reviews give it five stars.

"I successfully lost 40 (pounds) during my stay," wrote a Google user named Garrison Turner in the latest of five five-star reviews. "The knowledgeable staff and motivated participants make this a premiere (sic) facility to drop any unwanted pounds."

Students arrive at Camp Rogers and undergo a weeklong assessment filled with grueling physical challenges and skills tests but little sleep and few meals. Those who graduate the 62-day course, one of the Army's toughest, have been known

to lose dozens of pounds.

About two-thirds of the school's students failed in 2016 and 2017, according to school data, and the top three reasons for failure are all events in the first week — a fitness test, land navigation and a 12-mile foot march.

"Does the hustle and bustle of modern life have you worn down? Ready for a change of pace, experience the great outdoors as they were meant to be enjoyed?" reads another review. "This is the place for you!! Take a dip in Victory Pond or take a 12-mile stroll across [south Georgia's] rolling hills."

Anyone can add a place to Google Maps, but they must include a name, location and category, such as "weight-loss service," "military base" or "government office." It's not clear who made or edited the

Camp Rogers entry, but it includes the correct staff duty number for the 4th Ranger Training Battalion, the unit responsible for conducting the first of the course's three phases.

The initial Fort Benning phase, divided between Camp Rogers and Camp Darby, is followed by the mountain phase in northern Georgia and Florida or the swamp phase in the Sunshine State's panhandle.

The first day of the 21-day Benning phase kicks off with a fitness test requiring students to complete 49 pushups, 59 situps, six chin-ups and a 5-mile run in 40 minutes. It has been the top reason for course failures — more than 900 students, or about one-quarter of the total failures each year in 2016 and 2017 — according to the Army's Ranger Training Brigade.

The second day begins long before dawn and includes land navigation, which accounted for about one-tenth of the failures in recent years. The 12-mile forced march under a load of about 50 pounds caps off the four-day assessment, and last year it weeded out nearly 300 students.

Fewer than half the students of a Ranger School class typically proceeds to the second part of the Benning phase, according to an Army website for prospective students.

"I lost [eight] pounds in three days at Camp Rogers, but they're such a great weight-loss service that they kicked me out because I hadn't lost enough weight in that time," wrote Rob Whitmore, who also gave a five-star review on Google. "The staff are the most polite and caring people I've ever met!"

2 Reagan sailors face drug charges

BY CHRISTIAN LOPEZ

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Two USS Ronald Reagan sailors are facing charges that include the possession and distribution of a controlled substance, according to a Navy official and criminal charge sheets filed Aug. 30.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Andrew Miller, a machinist's mate, is accused of using, possessing and distributing LSD from January to February, according to his charge sheet.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Sean Gevero, an electrician's mate, is accused of distributing LSD and possessing anabolic steroids in February, his charge sheet stated.

In addition to the pair, who are now facing courts-martial, at least three other sailors attached to the aircraft carrier could be charged with using an illegal drug, according to a statement emailed to Stars and Stripes on Monday by Navy Lt. Joseph Keiley, a 7th Fleet spokesman.

"Naval Criminal Investigative Service investigations are complete regarding U.S. sailors involved in drug distribution," he said. "Two cases are pending special courts-martial, two cases are pending Article 32 preliminary hearings and one case went to an Article 32 hearing."

Trial dates have not been set.

The cases pending Article 32 hearings involve a seaman apprentice and a petty offi-

cer second class charged with wrongful use and possession of a controlled substance.

The other unidentified sailor attended an Article 32 hearing in September for wrongful use and possession of a controlled substance and is awaiting further legal proceedings.

The Navy began investigating the possibility of a drug ring aboard the Ronald Reagan on Feb. 6 when it received a tip about a sailor using LSD, according to a Wall Street Journal article published Feb. 9.

Japanese authorities were also involved in the investigation when suspicions that the drugs were being sold to Japanese citizens surfaced. They dropped the case in June.

South Korean cadets tour US ship in Japan

BY JAMES BOLINGER

Stars and Stripes

SASABO NAVAL BASE, Japan — Future South Korean military officers checked out the USS Wasp and its homeport of Sasebo, Japan, on Tuesday during a tour organized by the Japan Self-Defense Forces.

The visit by 160 midshipmen and cadets from the Republic of Korea army, navy and air force comes just weeks after Japan pulled out of an international fleet review hosted by South Korea over a flag dispute.

The group learned about the Wasp's capabilities as they explored its flight deck and hangars. The 844-foot amphibious assault ship — which can carry Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II short takeoff/vertical landing stealth fighters — returned from deployment last week after providing humanitarian assistance to the Northern Mariana Islands as they recovered from damage wrought by last month's Typhoon Mangkhut.

The South Korean cadets, who arrived on a pair of ROK Navy destroyers and a landing ship, will tour other vessels and facilities and meet the

mayor of Sasebo this week, said Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force spokesman Cmdr. Masa Yokoyama.

The visit promotes "mutual understanding and deepening of defense interaction," he said.

Last month, Japan announced it would not send a warship to an international fleet review hosted by South Korea because it could not accept Seoul's request that it remove the Japanese navy's "rising sun" flag, an Associated Press report said.

Many South Koreans see the flag as a symbol of Japan's World War II aggression and protested its use during the Oct. 10-14 event near Jeju island.

Rear Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of Task Force 76, said in an email that it's an honor to host the cadets.

"We ... look forward to serving alongside the bright young men and women serving in the militaries of both nations for many years to come," he said.

The visit marks the 22nd by South Korean cadets to Japan in a little over a decade. Cadets toured Yokosuka Naval Base last December, Yokoyama said.

Japan to develop underwater drone to defend remote islands

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japan plans to develop a large underwater drone to monitor its remote islands as Tokyo continues to build up assets set to guard against Chinese incursion.

The unmanned submersible will be unveiled in a Ministry of Defense policy document that lays out the island nation's five-year plan from April 2019, Japan's Kyodo News reported Monday, citing a "government source." Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Cabinet is slated to approve the policy in mid-December.

Officials have been mum on when the drone's development will begin but an Iwakuni facility — where experiments to "detect sound waves" will take place in a large water tank — could be operational by fiscal year 2021, Kyodo reported. The submersible will be more than 32 feet long and "adaptable to various missions including surveillance."

A Defense Ministry spokeswoman confirmed a funding request for research and development for the project in the fiscal year 2019 budget, which starts in April.

"The surrounding environment around Japan is pretty harsh, and for our national security, it is most important to raise

our surveillance ability, including the sea," ministry spokeswoman Akiko Asai told Stars and Stripes.

Japan has not decided "when, how and where" to utilize the underwater drone, Asai said. That decision will depend on the outcome of the project.

The underwater drones could be shared with multiple branches of the nation's Self-Defense Forces.

Japan's Mid-Term Defense Program — the document that includes the drone plan — and the National Defense Program Guidelines are scheduled to be approved by the Cabinet on Dec. 18, Kyodo reported. The guidelines are expected to call for a broader strategy utilizing "unmanned equipment."

The Self-Defense Forces are suffering from a "chronic shortage" of personnel, which may explain the move, Kyodo said.

News of the underwater drone came a week after the Defense Ministry said it was also developing supersonic glide bombs that can be launched from nearby islands to deter attacks in the region. Those projectiles are said to be less likely to be intercepted by anti-aircraft artillery and could be put into service by March 2026.

Air Force expands basic training course

BY JAMES BOLINGER

Stars and Stripes

Feedback from the field has inspired the Air Force to revamp basic training to focus on readiness, lethality, fitness and warrior ethos.

The changes, which took effect Sept. 4 but were announced Monday, expand Basic Military Training from 7½ weeks to 8½ weeks, according to a statement out of Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas.

Basic Expeditionary Airman Skill Training, or BEAST, Week — when trainees put all their combat knowledge into practice — moves from week five to become Basic Military Training's culminating event.

"Readiness is the central theme across the BMT curriculum as we deliver trained and committed airmen capable of delivering 21st century air

power," 326th Training Squadron commander Col. Jose Surita, who oversaw the revamped curriculum's development, said in the statement. "We need highly trained and ready airmen."

The changes to Basic Military Training's final week — once called Airmen's Week — are the latest in a series of improvements since the beginning of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The first major change in 2008 increased the length of Air Force basic training from six to 8½ weeks.

The Air Force created Airmen's Week in 2015 to raise awareness of sexual misconduct in the wake of a 2013 sexual assault scandal at Lackland Air Force Base involving trainees and their instructors. It focused on character development and was held after trainees graduated Basic Military Training,

which was scaled back to 7½ weeks.

The new Basic Military Training curriculum integrates skills once taught in Airmen's Week throughout the full 8½ weeks of training, the statement said.

Airmen must also attend a beefed-up Self-Aid/Buddy Care class called the Tactical Combat Casualty Course and will see their number of fitness sessions increase from 31 to 44 throughout training, the statement said. The sessions are a mix of cardio, strength and interval training.

"These changes sound good to me," said Staff Sgt. Karl Ahner, deputy dispersing officer with the 374th Comptroller Squadron at Yokota Air Base, Japan. "Obviously, you want fit airmen. Also, I did my BMT in the winter and [physical training] was sometimes canceled because of the weather. If we'd had 44 (days) instead of 31, missing

some wouldn't have been as bad."

Course designers also added a heritage program that introduces trainees to Air Force heroes and weaves heritage and warrior ethos, the statement said.

"We will be introducing warrior identity, as well as Air Force history and heroes, every week throughout training," Master Sgt. Richard Bonsra, a military training instructor, said in the statement. "Those topics will then be reinforced during all training events, such as naming physical training sessions after a fallen Airman to cement the experience."

Future changes to how heritage and warrior ethos are ingrained into Basic Military Training will include naming obstacles on the "Creating Leaders, Airmen, Warriors," or CLAW, course after Air Force heroes, he added.

NATO to keep training Afghan forces

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

NATO's reinforced mission will continue training Afghan forces, the alliance's top official said Tuesday, even as government troops sustain higher numbers of casualties in a war now in its 18th year.

"This is a difficult situation," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said during a visit in Kabul. "We see violence and instability and we don't underestimate the challenges."

Stoltenberg, along with NATO Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti, met with coalition leaders and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul at a time when security conditions in Afghanistan appear to be deteriorating.

After 17 years of war, there are few signs of progress as casualties among Afghan troops rise and attempts at peace talks with the Taliban insurgents have foundered.

While Ghani reiterated the importance of setting con-

ditions for peace talks, the Taliban's hand appears to be strengthening.

In recent months, the Afghan government has lost control or influence of more districts, and the country's security forces are suffering their highest casualties ever, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction reported last week.

Stoltenberg said one reason Afghan casualty rates are higher is that NATO has pulled back from combat operations to focus on training and advising.

The Afghans are trying to do the job more than 100,000 NATO troops once did, Stoltenberg said. "Of course that has an impact for Afghan security forces."

A decision in July by NATO to expand its mission from 13,000 to 16,000 troops is aimed at better preparing Afghan forces with a larger training mission, he said.

"We have decided to increase our presence and we

have done that with more trainers, more advisers," Stoltenberg said. "Our presence here is conditions-based; it is not a timetable."

The visit by top NATO leaders also comes amid an uptick in insider attacks against coalition troops.

While most U.S. and NATO troops are not formally involved in a direct combat mission in Afghanistan, U.S. troops still face risks from attacks by Taliban infiltrators or disgruntled local forces.

On Saturday, Maj. Brent Taylor was killed in an insider attack at a training center in Kabul, marking the fourth such coalition death this year.

While Stoltenberg acknowledged the difficulty of the mission, NATO's top official said he remains hopeful of an eventual peace for a country that has been involved in multiple wars for decades.

"The potential for peace is greater now than it has been in many years," Stoltenberg said.

Turkey says joint Syria patrols not acceptable

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Tuesday that joint patrols by U.S. forces and a Kurdish-led militia in northern Syria are "unacceptable."

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and the U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State conducted two joint patrols last week after Turkish artillery shelled Kurdish positions in northeastern Syria.

Turkey considers the Kurdish militia that forms the backbone of the SDF an extension of the Kurdish insurgency within Turkey. U.S. support for the Kurdish-led forces, who retaken large areas from ISIS, has raised tensions between the two NATO allies.

Italian prosecutor to probe actions of US ship in Med

Associated Press

A prosecutor in Sicily opened a preliminary investigation Tuesday into allegations a U.S. ship, the USNS Trenton, delayed rescuing migrants from a sinking dinghy from which some 76 people drowned in June.

The June 12 rescue off Libya came at a tense time on the Mediterranean, with Italy's new populist government refusing to let aid groups dock in a bid to dissuade them from rescuing migrants.

The Trenton, an expeditionary fast transport, did rescue 41 people. But a half-dozen survivors told Italy's La Repubblica newspaper that the ship delayed intervening until after their dinghy started sinking, more than an hour after the migrants first spotted the U.S. flags on the ship.

Ragusa Prosecutor Fabio D'Anna confirmed Tuesday he had opened an investigation into their claims.

The U.S. Navy's 6th Fleet didn't immediately comment.

Also Tuesday, Spanish res-

cue workers combed the seas and shores of southern Spain searching for 17 missing migrants a day after finding the bodies of 17 other migrants who died trying to cross the Mediterranean in boats departing from North Africa.

The Spanish Civil Guard said it had found four bodies of migrants and 22 survivors Monday, all men from northern Africa, after their wooden dinghy hit a reef close to the coast west of the Strait of Gibraltar. The Civil Guard said 13 of the survivors were thought to be unaccompanied minors.

It said 17 other people traveling were missing, but could have reached Spanish shores. The Civil Guard on Tuesday resumed the search for them on sea and land.

Earlier Monday, Spanish maritime rescuers found 80 people, including five women, and recovered the bodies of 13 dead migrants in the Alboran Sea, part of the western Mediterranean migrant route into Europe.

Voting seems secure, but problems persist

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Tuesday's midterm elections marked the first nationwide voting since Russia targeted state election systems in the 2016 presidential race, with federal, state and local officials seeking to reassure the public their voting systems are secure.

There have been no signs so far that Russia or any other foreign actor has tried to launch cyberattacks against voting systems in any state, according to federal authorities.

The Department of Homeland Security has been working over the last year to improve communication and intelligence-sharing with state and local election officials who were largely left in the dark about Russian activities in 2016. Federal agencies including Homeland Security and the FBI have opened a command center to help state or local election offices with any major cybersecurity problems that arise.

"Things are running pretty smoothly around the country," said Matt Masterson, senior cybersecurity adviser with the Department of Homeland Security.

The same can't be said for all security preparations, or for early voting and the voter registration process in some states.

DHS officials have boasted that the 2018 midterms will be the most secure election in U.S. history, pointing to federal intrusion-detection sensors that will protect "90 percent of election infrastructure," as DHS Undersecretary Christopher Krebs tweeted in mid-October. Those sensors, which sniff for malicious traffic, are installed on election systems in 45 states.

But similar sensors used at the federal level have performed badly. According to a Sept. 14 letter from the Office of Management and Budget, those sensors had a 99 percent failure rate from April 2017 onward, when they detected only 379 out of almost 40,000 "incidents" across federal civilian networks.

Voters casting ballots early have encountered faulty machines in Texas and North Carolina, inaccurate mailers in Missouri and Montana, and voter registration problems in Tennessee and Georgia. In other states, including Kansas, Election Day polling places have been closed or consolidated.

The challenges come amid a surge of interest, with registrations and turnout running well ahead of what is typically seen during a midterm election.

The Citadel tweaks haircut rules to attract female cadets

The (Columbia, S.C.) State

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The Citadel is making a change in an effort to attract more female cadets.

The military college in Charleston, S.C., has changed its rules about grooming, according to a news release from The Citadel.

Part of the adjusted grooming rules will mean "fourth-class female cadets" are no longer required to cut their hair "at matriculation," The Citadel reported. The changes to the

college's Blue Book, its list of regulations, will be in place for the 2019-20 academic year.

The Citadel said the new standards "will improve the recruiting of women."

This is a progressive step for the 176-year-old military college, which admitted its first class of women in 1996.

Initially, female cadets were required to have "a distinctive haircut," which was a "pixie-style haircut," until the 2008-09 school year, when the military college said women

were permitted "to have long hair worn in a bun" if they were upperclassmen.

But, according to The Citadel, female cadets who were attempting to grow their hair out had "an unruly mop that requires a lot of attention and a lot of bobby pins," by their sophomore year.

"Good for the women who were willing to come here and cut their hair, but the haircuts just look bad," Citadel Commandant Geno Paluso said in a news release.

The new standard allows women at The Citadel to follow the standards of the U.S. Army set by the Department of Defense, the school said.

The changes to the Blue Book are not limited to female cadets.

The Charleston college reported "fourth-class male cadets will get one initial haircut at matriculation." That is a return to an old rule, which was changed in 1997 when men were required to have "a yearlong freshman-standard haircut."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Statue restored for WWI anniversary

UT OGDEN — An iconic statue of a “doughboy” in Ogden Cemetery has been restored in time for the centennial of the end of World War I.

The Standard-Examiner reported the statue has been cleaned and repaired and will be rededicated at a ceremony Saturday.

“Doughboy” was the nickname given to members of the U.S. Army or Marine Corps during World War I, which ended when German signed an armistice agreement with the Allies on Nov. 11, 1918.

The Weber County Heritage Foundation started raising funds to restore the statue two years ago. The statue formerly stood at an old American Legion Post but was relocated to the cemetery shortly after World War II.

Gas explosion levels empty mansion

PA GLADWYNE — An apparent gas explosion leveled an empty mansion in an affluent suburb of Philadelphia on Sunday, reducing the 9,000-square-foot home to rubble and frightening neighbors and others who felt the thunderous boom.

The explosion at the Gladwyne mansion happened just after 8 p.m. and was felt as far away as southern New Jersey.

The house was undergoing extensive renovations, authorities said, and no one was inside at the time of the explosion. It was reduced to a few walls and rubble as debris ended up strewn among nearby trees.

The cause of the explosion remained under investigation Monday.

Bring cans to reduce parking ticket costs

KY LEXINGTON — Officials in one Kentucky city have offered to reduce parking fines in exchange for canned food items.

A statement from the Lexington Parking Authority said its Food for Fines program begins Nov. 19 and runs through Dec. 14. Those who bring in 10 cans of food will receive \$15 off parking citations, including those that are past due.

The statement said those with multiple citations will receive \$15 credit for every set of 10 cans.

Man accidentally shoots self in robbery

GA MACON — A Georgia sheriff's office said a man robbing a Macon McDonald's accidentally shot himself in the thigh, foiling his escape.

News outlets reported the Bibb County Sheriff's Office said an armed man wearing a wig entered the restaurant Saturday night and ordered a manager to take him to a safe. Deputies said the manager complied before fleeing with another employee. They then heard a gunshot and saw the thief flee.

Deputies said Donte Sherrod Grayer, 26, was found wearing only his boxers and lying near a wig, money and other clothing. Deputies said he was identified as the suspect and taken to a hospital in stable condition.

Pizzeria chain closes several restaurants

MA BOSTON — A popular pizzeria chain in New England abruptly closed several locations.

Patrons and workers at Papa

Gino's locations tweeted Sunday about the surprise closures, which included a number of locations in the Boston area and neighboring New Hampshire.

The company hasn't provided a full list of the closures and a company spokeswoman didn't immediately comment.

The company also owns D'Angelo Grilled Sandwiches. Patrons reported some of those restaurants also had signs saying they were permanently closed.

Officer probed after woman pulled by hair

MS CLARKSDALE — A Mississippi Delta police officer is under investigation for allegedly pulling a woman down by her ponytail.

WHBQ-TV reported a security camera at a Clarksdale shopping center captured the incident.

Clarksdale Police Chief Sandra Johnson Williams said she met Friday with Mayor Chuck Espy to discuss possible disciplinary action in the incident.

The nature of the act is unclear because the video shows the woman smiling and laughing when the officer pulled her back up.

Goodwill worker finds python in donation

TX FORT WORTH — A Goodwill worker collecting clothes and other items at a Texas sorting center was surprised to find an albino python clinging to the side of a bin.

The python was huddled in a pile of clothes when the worker discovered it at the center in Fort Worth.

Manager James Murphy said it's not clear if the snake slithered away from its owner and was accidentally dropped off or

if its donation was intentional.

Goodwill staffers will care for the python until the owner claims it or a permanent home is found.

State health officials confirm plague in cat

WY GILLETTE — Wyoming health officials said a cat in the northeastern part of the state is infected with plague.

The Gillette News Record reported Sunday that the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory confirmed the illness in the Campbell County cat, and no human cases have been identified in the area.

Dr. Alexia Harrist, with the Wyoming Department of Health, said plague is a serious bacterial infection that can kill pets and people if it's not treated with antibiotics.

The disease can be transmitted to humans from sick animals and by fleas coming from infected animals.

Endangered snake found out of habitat

OH CADIZ — A nearly 5-foot-long rattlesnake was found in eastern Ohio well north of its normal habitat.

The Times Reporter reported wildlife officials recently learned that a timber rattlesnake had been run over on U.S. Route 250. The 57-inch-long snake was found dead near Tappan Lake in Harrison County.

The state Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife said timber rattlesnakes normally live about 100 miles to the south. They're listed by the state as an endangered species.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

On a mission to provide credible reporting and daily news to America's military, wherever they serve.

Mobile apps available: www.stripes.com/apps.

Vikings' Hunter leads league in sacks

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — The physical attributes Danielle Hunter has used to amass his league-leading total of 11½ sacks this season are so ideal that some of his Minnesota Vikings teammates have taken to calling him “Create-A-Player,” the feature on Madden NFL that allows gamers to concoct the seemingly perfect computerized prospect.

Hunter's 6-foot-5, 252-pound, muscle-bound frame and 4.57-second 40-yard dash time that led all defensive linemen at the combine in his draft year would already be a handful for opposing offenses, but the strides he's made over four seasons on the mental side of the game have helped turn him into one of the league's best defensive ends with just one week elapsed past his 24th birthday.

Matthew Stafford was the latest quarterback with a too-close look at Hunter's dominance, when his 3½ sacks and fumble return for a touchdown fueled a 24-9 victory for the Vikings on Sunday over the Detroit Lions.

“He's improved on just being reactive,” Vikings coach Mike

Zimmer said. “A lot of young defensive linemen, especially because we harp on stopping the run, they're nervous about, ‘Hey, I'm going to take a chance here, because I think this is a play-action pass’ or something like that. The thing I notice about Danielle, he just lets it rip now, and that's what makes him good.”

The Jamaica-born Hunter, who settled in the Houston area with his family at age 8, was drafted by the Vikings in the third round out of LSU in 2015 after he ended an unheralded college career by skipping his final season of eligibility.

His length, speed and strength made him an obvious pro prospect, but there were league-wide concerns about his technique inconsistencies and tendency to let overthinking slow down his production. He had only 4½ sacks over three years with the Tigers.

The Vikings, though, relied on analytics to peg Hunter as a potential star with the right coaching and scheme. They saw a note-taking and self-motivated player who they wouldn't have to worry about doing his part.

Still six months shy of his 21st birthday when he was drafted, Hunter had plenty of time to grow. In 2016, he led all defensive ends in the NFL with 12½ sacks and finished third overall.

Last season, he overtook Brian Robison as the full-time starter opposite Everson Griffen. He signed a five-year contract extension this summer worth as much as \$72 million with \$40 million in guaranteed money and \$15 million up front.

With 37 sacks in 55 games, Hunter has fast climbed the all-time Vikings lists. With just three more sacks over Minnesota's last seven games, he'll have the second-most in a player's first four seasons with the team behind Jared Allen.

Hunter is tied with Los Angeles Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald for the league lead with 13 tackles for loss and tied for eighth in the NFL with 15 quarterback hits. He had at least one sack in each of the five games Griffen missed earlier.

“It's not me alone. I've got good teammates, a good defensive line again,” Hunter said after the Vikings sacked Stafford a franchise-record 10

times. “We go out there, and we work together as a team.”

The Vikings (5-3-1) eagerly entered their bye week with their well-decorated defense back on track following a couple of uncharacteristically soft performances over the first half of the schedule.

“We had things that we had to fix. We just learned from what we had done, and then we went out there and just went to execute them,” Hunter said. “Just doing our jobs. Not trying to do selfish things out there.”

That's the foundation of Zimmer's system, a disciplined approach to honoring the run, staying in the right pass-rush lanes and trusting nearby teammates to handle their responsibilities. This four-down-linemen scheme, though predicated on an ability to pressure the quarterback from all points, is not designed to produce high individual sack totals. Every once in a while, though, an in-the-zone performance such as the one Hunter had on Sunday comes around.

“Sometimes you go out there,” Hunter said, “you just know you're about to beat this guy.”

Mariota overcomes fumbles, leads Titans past Dallas

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Kevin Byard secured the interception that sparked the sluggish Tennessee Titans and turned toward midfield.

The flashback for the Dallas Cowboys was just as disheartening as the original.

Byard mimicked Terrell Owens' mocking celebration on the star logo at the 50-yard line from 18 years ago, Marcus Mariota accounted for three touchdowns and the Titans spoiled Amari Cooper's Dallas debut with a 28-14 victory on Monday night.

The end-zone pick of Dak Prescott came after Mariota fumbled on the first two Ten-

nessee possessions. Just as T.O. did at old Texas Stadium 18 years ago, Byard ran to midfield, under the huge videoboard at spacious AT&T Stadium, and spread his arms.

Owens did it twice in a blowout San Francisco win over a bad Dallas team that time. This win by the Titans (4-4) ended their three-game losing streak while handing the Cowboys (3-5) their first loss in four home games and making their road to the playoffs a difficult one.

“It was huge,” Mariota said of Byard, while adding that he didn't see the celebration. “The defense has done an unbelievable job throughout the year in building us up. They found ways to give us plays, to get

turnovers.”

The Cowboys looked like the team headed for a blowout win, but led just 7-0 after Mariota's early miscues because of Brett Maher's missed 38-yard field goal on the opening possession and Prescott's ill-advised throw into double coverage.

“That was the difference. Simple as that,” said Prescott, who lost a fumble at his 40-yard line to set up Tennessee's tiebreaking score in the third quarter. “Defense gives a turnover there. We're up seven points and I go down there and try to force the ball and give it right back to them.”

Cooper scored the first Dallas touchdown after DeMarcus Lawrence stripped the ball

from Mariota. The two-time Pro Bowl receiver finished with five catches for 58 yards after coming over from Oakland in a trade for a first-round pick during the open week.

Given another chance when what would have been a third straight fumble to start the game was overturned by a review that showed Luke Stocker didn't have the ball long enough on a catch, Mariota led an 80-yard drive capped by Derrick Henry's 1-yard plunge for a 7-7 tie.

Mariota converted two third-and-9s with passes and a shorter third down with a run on his first TD drive, setting the stage for the Titans to convert 11 of 14 third downs.

Key college transfers may contribute

Associated Press

Acquiring a high-profile transfer isn't necessarily a prerequisite for every Final Four contender, but a look at the rosters of AP Top 25 teams sure makes it seem that way.

Four of the top five teams in the preseason poll are counting on contributions from at least one transfer. Reigning national champion Villanova also should get a boost from a transfer.

Perhaps the most notable example is No. 1 Kansas, which added Dedric Lawson and K.J. Lawson from Memphis and also brought in former California guard Charlie Moore. All three players sat out last season due to NCAA transfer rules.

Big 12 coaches have selected Dedric Lawson as the conference's preseason newcomer of the year.

"The thing that separates him from most is his ability to see the game differently than the way most people see it," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "He doesn't see one pass ahead, he sees two. He is the best pass-

er we've had since I've been the coach at Kansas."

No. 2 Kentucky has Stanford graduate transfer Reid Travis. No. 3 Gonzaga has added Geno Crandall from North Dakota and Brandon Clarke from San Jose State. No. 5 Virginia expects a boost from former Alabama guard Braxton Key. Villanova, ranked ninth, should get some instant offense from Albany graduate transfer Joe Cremo.

Here's a closer look at some transfers who figure to make a major impact on the 2018-19 college basketball season.

F Brandon Clarke and G Geno Crandall, Gonzaga

Height/Class: Clarke: 6-foot-8/Jr. Crandall: 6-3/Sr.

Former schools: Clarke: San Jose State. Crandall: North Dakota.

Crandall is a graduate transfer who earned second-team all-Big Sky honors for North Dakota each of the last two seasons. Clarke joins Gonzaga's team this year after sitting out the 2017-18 season. Crandall averaged 15.5 points as a sophomore and 16.6 points as a junior. He

also led the Big Sky in steals (2.1) and ranked seventh in assists (3.6) last season. Clarke averaged 17.3 points, 8.7 rebounds, 2.6 blocks and 2.3 assists to earn first-team all-Mountain West honors for San Jose State in 2016-17. Clarke had 18 points and 11 rebounds in just 16 minutes as Gonzaga defeated Central Washington in a preseason exhibition. Crandall had 8 points, four rebounds, four assists and three steals in that game.

G Joe Cremo, Villanova

Height/Class: 6-4/Sr.

Former school: Albany

Villanova loses four NBA Draft picks from last season's national championship team but adds some firepower by luring this graduate transfer from Albany. Cremo scored 1,469 points in three seasons at Albany and was a first-team all-America East selection last year. He averaged 17.8 points and shot 45.8 percent from 3-point range (76 of 166) in his junior season to help Albany go 22-10. He averaged 15.8 points as a sophomore.

G Mustapha Heron, St. John's

Height/Class: 6-5/Jr.

Former school: Auburn

Heron received an NCAA waiver enabling him to play for St. John's immediately rather than sitting out a year. He missed a preseason exhibition Thursday due to a concussion. Heron helped Auburn win a share of the Southeastern Conference regular-season title last year as he averaged 16.4 points and 5.3 rebounds while earning second-team Associated Press all-SEC honors. He ranked sixth in the SEC in scoring. Heron had 15.2 points and 6.1 rebounds per game as a freshman.

G Braxton Key, Virginia

Height/Class: 6-8/Jr.

Former school: Alabama

Key received a waiver from the NCAA that allows the Alabama transfer to play for Virginia immediately rather than sitting out a season. Key led Alabama with 12 points per game and also averaged 5.7 rebounds and 2.5 assists as a freshman in 2016-17 before his production dipped last year. Key had 7 points, 5.3 rebounds and 1.1 steals per game in 2017-18 after a knee injury caused him to miss the first 10 games of the season.

Blackhawks fire Quenneville after losing 5 straight

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Joel Quenneville knew the deal. After three Stanley Cup titles and nine playoff appearances with the Chicago Blackhawks, the long-time coach figured this was a big season for him.

"I only think we're in the winning business and we better win," Quenneville said on the first day of training camp.

Two months later, it was over.

The Blackhawks fired Quenneville on Tuesday, ending a wildly successful run that returned the franchise to the top of the NHL after years of heartache.

"This is certainly a very difficult decision," general manager Stan Bowman said in a statement. "But I believe it is in the best interests of the Black-

hawks organization. We need to maximize each and every opportunity with our playoff goals in mind and create continued growth and development throughout our roster at the same time.

"After much deliberation the last several days, with great respect to what Joel has meant to the Blackhawks, we knew we had to make a change."

Assistants Kevin Dineen and Ulf Samuelsson also were let go. Jeremy Colliton was hired as the 38th head coach in franchise history, and Barry Smith, 66, moved from Chicago's front office to the bench as an assistant coach.

Colliton moves from Chicago's American Hockey League affiliate in Rockford, Ill., and is now the NHL's youngest head coach at 33. Blackhawks forward Chris Kunitz, defense-

man Duncan Keith and goaltenders Corey Crawford and Cam Ward are older than Colliton, and defenseman Brent Seabrook also is 33.

"All of those associated with Jeremy strongly believe he possesses many of the tools that will make him a successful head coach in this league," Bowman said. "He has been very impressive as a communicator, a leader, and coach. He knows the Blackhawks system, understands our players and our culture and we believe he gives us the best opportunity to have success and grow as a team."

The 60-year-old Quenneville had another year left on a three-year contract extension he signed in 2016 that pays him \$6 million per year, second highest in the NHL behind Mike Babcock in Toronto.

He was the longest-tenured head coach in the NHL and the second coach fired in the past three days after the Los Angeles Kings dismissed John Stevens on Sunday.

Whenever Quenneville wants to get back to work, he likely will have plenty of suitors.

The former NHL defenseman has 890 wins in 22 years as a head coach with St. Louis, Colorado and Chicago. Scotty Bowman, Stan's father and a senior adviser with the Blackhawks, is the only man with more regular-season victories.

Quenneville took over Chicago four games into the 2008-09 season, replacing Denis Savard after the Hall of Famer was let go by former general manager Dale Tallon. What followed was an unprecedented run for one of the NHL's Original Six franchises.

NBA roundup

Harden powers Rockets past Pacers

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — James Harden produced his typical scoring flurry Monday night. His teammates delivered the knockout blow with a staunch second-half defensive effort.

On a night the league's reigning MVP made a tiebreaking three-pointer with 36.1 seconds left and closed it out by making four straight free throws, Harden was thrilled to see the Houston Rockets rediscover their winning combination in a 98-94 victory at Indiana.

"We're doing a really good job of getting stops and making it hard for teams to score," he said. "I'm not worried about our offense. We're a really good offensive team. We're going to make shots. We need a pretty good defensive effort (each night)."

Warriors 117, Grizzlies 101: Klay Thompson scored 27 points, Kevin Durant added 22 points, six rebounds and six

assists, and host Golden State used a big third quarter to beat Memphis for its eighth straight victory.

At 10-1, the Warriors are off to the second-best start in franchise history behind the team of three years ago that began 24-0.

Nuggets 115, Celtics 107: Jamal Murray scored a career-high 48 points, including 19 in the fourth quarter, and Denver overcame a sluggish start to beat Boston and improve to 9-1, 6-0 at home.

Denver spotted the Celtics an 18-point lead in the first quarter but quickly made up ground behind Murray, who scored 23 in the first half.

Raptors 124, Jazz 111: Kyle Lowry had 17 points and 11 assists to lead visiting Toronto past Utah.

Serge Ibaka, OG Anunoby and Fred VanVleet also scored 17 apiece as the Raptors had six players in double figures while

winning their fourth straight.

Clippers 120, Timberwolves 109: Tobias Harris scored 22 points, Lou Williams added 20 and Los Angeles dropped Minnesota to 0-6 on the road.

The Timberwolves rallied in the fourth quarter when Jimmy Butler and Derrick Rose combined to score 22 of the team's 25 points. They twice got within one, but Los Angeles answered both times, with Williams' bucket and Montrezl Harrell making consecutive baskets for a 98-93 lead.

Thunder 122, Pelicans 116: Host Oklahoma City won its fifth straight game but lost star point guard Russell Westbrook to a sprained left ankle.

After coming down hard on the side of his foot, Westbrook pounded the ground in frustration before limping off the court.

Bulls 116, Knicks 115 (2 OT): Zach LaVine scored a career-high 41 points, including

the game-winning free throw with 0.2 seconds left, as visiting Chicago beat New York in double overtime.

Emmanuel Mudiay's coast-to-coast layup tied the score with 2.7 seconds left. Lavine, who scored all eight of Chicago's points in the second OT, was then fouled by Mudiay and made the first free throw.

Magic 102, Cavaliers 100: Evan Fournier hit a 22-foot jumper at the final horn and host Orlando came back from a five-point deficit in the last 24 seconds, taking advantage of a late collapse by struggling Cleveland.

Heat 120, Pistons 115 (OT): Josh Richardson scored 27 points to lead short-handed Miami past host Detroit in overtime.

Richardson hit four clinching free throws in the final 2.1 seconds, ending Miami's three-game skid. Detroit has dropped five in a row.

NHL roundup

Boyle's hat trick helps Devils cruise past Penguins

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Brian Boyle scored three times for his first career hat trick, and the New Jersey Devils beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 5-1 on Monday.

Boyle got his natural hat trick on "Hockey Fights Cancer" night in Pittsburgh. It included two power-play goals and two redirections in front of the net.

Boyle, 33, was diagnosed with a form of bone marrow cancer at the beginning of training camp last season.

He underwent treatment, returned to the lineup last November and won the NHL's Masterton Trophy, best exemplifying qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship and

dedication to hockey.

Will Butcher had a goal and two assists for New Jersey, and Travis Zajac scored his fourth goal. The Devils stopped a three-game slide with their first road win.

Jamie Oleksiak scored for the Penguins, who have dropped four in a row.

Capitals 4, Oilers 2: Alex Ovechkin scored on the power play, backup goaltender Pheonix Copley made 31 saves and host Washington ended its two-game losing streak by beating Edmonton.

The defending Stanley Cup champions came out flying two days after a mistake-filled overtime loss to Dallas. Jakub Vrana scored on his first turn with the fourth line after

being demoted, and linemate Devante Smith-Pelly scored on the group's second shift a few minutes later as the Capitals jumped all over Cam Talbot and the Oilers.

Bruins 2, Stars 1 (OT): Brad Marchand scored a power-play goal 4:29 into overtime, lifting host Boston over Dallas.

David Pastrnak also scored on the power play for Boston, which had lost two of three. Tuukka Rask made 24 saves.

Radek Faksa had a short-handed goal for the Stars, who are 3-1-1 on a six-game trip. Former Bruins goaltender Anton Khudobin stopped 33 shots.

Canadiens 4, Islanders (SO): Joel Armia scored in the fifth round of the shootout to

send Montreal to the road win over New York.

The Canadiens rallied from two goals down to win for the fifth time in the last six meetings with the Islanders.

Flyers 5, Coyotes 2: Claude Giroux had two goals and an assist, Calvin Pickard stopped 35 shots and visiting Philadelphia ended Arizona's five-game winning streak.

The Flyers jumped on the Coyotes early, going up 2-0 after first-period goals from Giroux and Shayne Gostisbehere.

Sean Couturier also scored and Oskar Lindblom added an empty-net goal for Philadelphia, which completed its four-game trip 3-0-1.