

STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Report: Sub maintenance lag costs \$1.5B

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Navy burned through more than \$1.5 billion in the past decade supporting attack submarines sitting idle awaiting maintenance at overwhelmed and understaffed shipyards, a federal audit found.

Since 2008, attack submarines have incurred 10,363 days — more than 28 years — of cumulative idle time and maintenance delays due to lags in getting into and out of shipyards, the Government Accountability Office said in a public report released Monday.

The Navy has been unable to begin or complete on time the majority of maintenance periods for its 51 attack submarines since 2008, which has resulted in significant maintenance delays and support cost outlays, the GAO said.

Despite some steps taken by the Navy the past few years to mitigate shortages in mainte-

nance facilities and workers, “attack submarine maintenance delays are getting longer and idle time is increasing,” the GAO said.

The report recommended the Navy conduct an analysis of workload allocation across public and private shipyards so the latter could be better leveraged. Three other GAO recommendations were deemed too sensitive for public release, it said.

The ranking member of the House Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee called the GAO study “a sobering assessment of the challenges facing our undersea forces.”

“While demand for our undersea fleet and its unique capabilities continues to rise as reflected in the 2016 Force Structure Assessment, delays in maintaining our existing fleet are exacerbating the growing shortfall in our submarine force structure,” Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., said in a statement

Monday. “This report makes clear that the Navy must do more to fully utilize the capacity of our private shipyards to reduce the backlog in submarine repair work — something I have repeatedly urged the Navy to act on.”

The attack-sub fleet includes 33 Los Angeles class, 3 Seawolf class and 15 Virginia class submarines. They are homeported at bases in New London, Conn.; Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Norfolk, Va.; San Diego; and Bangor, Wash. Four are homeported on Guam.

The most time-consuming maintenance work, such as overhauls, restorations and nuclear refueling, is done at one of the country’s four public naval shipyards. They are Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility, and Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance

Facility.

Two private shipyards — General Dynamics Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding — construct nuclear-powered ships and sometimes provide depot-level maintenance for attack subs, the GAO said.

A Navy safety program requires submarines to adhere to strict maintenance schedules and pass assessments before being allowed to submerge.

“Attack submarines also face delays in beginning maintenance when the public shipyards have no available capacity, in some cases forcing submarines to idle pier-side because they are no longer certified to conduct normal operations,” the GAO said.

Since 2008, 14 attack subs accounted for a combined 61 months idle as they awaited entry into shipyards for maintenance, the GAO said.

General wants to start redeploying border troops

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Army general in charge of the Trump administration’s controversial border mission is interested in beginning to redeploy some of the U.S. troops who were dispatched several weeks ago to assist Customs and Border Protection, U.S. military officials said Monday.

The shift would come as the military seeks to adjust to realities on the ground, where soldiers have spent days stringing miles of barbed concertina wire and some have said that they spent days waiting for assignments.

They were sent to the border in the days leading up to

the Nov. 6 midterm election as President Donald Trump said he wanted to stop an “invasion” of migrants who were traveling north in a caravan from Central America.

Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan said in an interview with Politico on Monday that he would likely focus first on redeploying some soldiers focused on logistics. They comprise the majority of the border force, and have focused both on installing concertina and other barriers to slow down any rush of migrants and building temporary camps in which U.S. soldiers can live nearby.

U.S. military officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the

subject, confirmed the comment is accurate.

“Now that things are set down here, we don’t need as many troops to actually build base camps and things like that, because the base camps are built,” said Buchanan, who has headquarters in San Antonio.

Critics of the operation, including some retired generals, have decried the effort as a cynical attempt by the president to rally his conservative base to vote. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and other defense officials have defended it as legal, with Mattis saying that in the military, “we don’t do stunts.”

It’s unclear how quickly the troops will begin returning home and whether any could be

reassigned from Texas or Arizona to California following a recent decision by members of the caravan to turn west and head to Tijuana, Mexico, just south of San Diego. The migrants began arriving in Tijuana last week.

Presently, there are about 5,800 servicemembers deployed to the border for the mission, including about 2,800 in Texas, 1,500 in California and 1,500 in Arizona. Buchanan said that the number of servicemembers involved in the mission should fall quickly as soldiers finish their work, Politico reported.

U.S. military officials have said repeatedly that they expect the entire mission to conclude by Dec. 15, with the caveat that circumstances could change.

Dozens dead in blast at Kabul gathering

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A bomb blast killed dozens of people in Kabul on Tuesday at a gathering where hundreds of religious scholars came to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad.

At least 43 are dead and 83 more were wounded, Afghan Health Ministry spokesman Waheed Majroh said Tuesday night.

The attack occurred around 6:20 p.m. at the Uranus Wedding Hall, a complex that

hosted both the gathering and a wedding, said Moula Mohammed Paiman, head of a union of wedding halls in Kabul.

A suicide bomber walked into the gathering and blew himself up during a reading of the Koran from beginning to end, Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish said.

The blast occurred about 2 miles away from the Kabul airport, where hundreds of U.S. troops are based on a NATO compound.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the attack

and declared Wednesday a national day of mourning.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

The gathering Tuesday should have requested police protection but didn't do so, police spokesman Basir Mujahid said. Wedding halls such as Uranus normally provide their own security.

The U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan extended his sympathy to the families of the victims Tuesday.

"Sickened and deeply sad-

dened by tonight's terror attack as the Ulema Council marked the Prophet's Birthday," Ambassador John Bass said on Twitter. "I extend our condolences to the families and followers of those killed and wounded."

The suicide bombing came as the Afghan government continues to struggle to provide security in the face of attacks from the Taliban and other militant groups throughout the country. The Taliban controls or contests more territory than it has since the U.S. invasion in 2001.

Trump reportedly weighing first trip to combat zone

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has begun telling advisers that he might visit troops in a combat zone for the first time in his presidency, as he has come under increasing scrutiny for his treatment of military affairs and failure to visit servicemembers deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq.

Trump has so far declined to visit those combat regions, saying he does not want to associate himself with wars he views as failures, according to current and former advisers, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private conversations. Current advisers said Trump is not expected to visit a war zone during the Thanksgiving break, which he will spend at his Mar-a-Lago golf resort in Florida.

The president has often cast himself as a champion of the Pentagon, invoking the strength and size of the military at campaign rallies and on Twitter. At the same time, he has frequently criticized U.S. military missions and decisions while personally attacking some former military leaders, contributing to a complicated relationship with the armed forces he commands.

Although he signed off on Defense Secretary Jim Mattis' requests to bolster the American military presence in Afghanistan and Syria and retain the presence in Iraq, Trump isn't a fan of U.S. military operations there.

Questioned last week about why he has not visited American troops deployed in overseas conflicts, Trump indicated during a Fox News interview that a trip was in the works.

"I think you will see that happen," Trump said in the interview with Chris Wallace that aired Sunday. "There are things that are being planned. We don't want to talk about it because of security reasons and everything else."

For most of Trump's tenure, a trip to Iraq or Afghanistan would have carried real security challenges and political complications, U.S. officials said.

Still, if the president wanted to visit American troops deployed to one of the countries, U.S. military officials would find a way to organize the trip as they have done in the past, according to officials familiar with the matter.

New review finds little progress on Taliban deal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. and Afghan governments have made "little clear progress" recently in compelling the Taliban to negotiate a peace deal, according to a new U.S. assessment Monday that said military and political signs point toward continued stalemate.

"Progress toward peace remains elusive," Glenn A. Fine, the acting Pentagon inspector general, wrote in an introduction to a comprehensive review of military, political and humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan during the July-September period. Those were the final three months of the 17th year of a war that began in October 2001.

The report offered little support for the Trump administration's assertions that its revised war strategy, announced in August 2017, is bringing the Afghan government and the Taliban insurgency closer to peace and reconciliation. When he visited Kabul in July, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the strategy "is indeed working."

In the three months following Pompeo's visit, the Taliban demonstrated their resilience even as the U.S. military con-

tinued its focus on training and advising the Afghan army and police while helping develop an Afghan air force.

Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Saturday that efforts to draw the Taliban into peace talks are being made "below the surface." But he indicated that progress is insufficient.

Noting that U.S. officials as recently as a year ago called the war a stalemate, Dunford said, "it hasn't changed much" since.

Pulling the Taliban into peace negotiations has been the central feature of the Trump administration's Afghanistan strategy, with little result so far. The effort has intensified since Zalmay Khalilzad, a former U.S. ambassador to Kabul, was appointed a special U.S. envoy to Afghanistan in September. The Associated Press reported on Sunday that Khalilzad held three days of talks with the Taliban in the Gulf state of Qatar.

Without referring explicitly to the talks in Qatar, Khalilzad told a news conference Sunday in Kabul, "I am talking to all interested parties, all Afghan groups ... and I think there is an opportunity for reconciliation and peace."

Maverick Cafe now open on McCain

By CHRISTIAN LOPEZ
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Meals are once again being served aboard the USS John S. McCain, 15 months after the guided missile destroyer was severely damaged in a collision that killed 10 sailors.

Monday marked the first full day of food service since Aug. 21, 2017, when the ship ran into a merchant vessel east of Singapore, according to a Navy statement issued Tuesday.

The McCain has been undergoing repairs at Yokosuka since returning to its homeport in December.

The crew was served a ceremonial meal of steak, chicken and cake to commemorate Monday's special day.

"Regaining the ability to serve the crew food aboard the ship is yet another step towards returning to normal operations and is a huge boost to the morale of the crew," McCain supply officer Lt. j.g. Kathryn Hussy said in the statement.

On Aug. 29, the crew shared a birthday cake in the mess to commemorate what would have been the late Sen. John McCain's 82nd birthday. A photo posted to the ship's official Facebook page showed a white cake with "Happy Birthday Maverick!" written in blue icing.

A message accompanying the image said the mess had been christened the "Maverick Cafe" in his honor. In July, the former naval officer was added as a namesake for the ship, which also honors his Navy admiral father and grandfather.

The McCain accident was the second deadly collision involving a Yokosuka-based destroyer last year. Two months earlier, the USS Fitzgerald collided with a cargo ship off Japan's Izu Peninsula, killing seven sailors.

Navy chief says US must meet Russia's challenge in Europe

By SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A strong U.S. naval force is vital in keeping Europe secure as Russia grows more active in waters throughout the theater, the Navy's top officer said Tuesday.

A resurgent Russia is "challenging a lot of the system of rules and norms that have existed here in Europe and around the world for so long," Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson said after an all hands meeting with sailors at the Navy's base in Naples. "So it is very important that as this dynamic emerges that we learn and respond to that as a nation."

The Navy's 6th Fleet is key to strengthening security in this part of the world, Richardson added.

"We are entering a maritime era," Richardson said. "The responsibilities for naval forces — the United States Navy and

navies of our allies and partners — has never been greater."

He praised the naval forces in Europe, saying they are doing "cutting-edge work" with dynamic force employment, the revived tactic of deploying in less predictable patterns.

Russia has been increasing its naval presence in the Mediterranean in the past two years in response to the war in Syria, where Moscow has deployed air and ground forces in support of President Bashar Assad. In September, Russia's Mediterranean squadron conducted its largest exercise since the end of the Cold War off the Syrian coast.

Both Richardson and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith held a question-and-answer session with sailors, several of whom asked about personnel matters, such as promotions.

Richardson talked about how the Navy is overhauling performance evaluations to give sailors

a clearer idea of how to do their jobs better.

"You are the primary audience of your evaluations," he said. "It's not a promotion board or a screening board."

More emphasis will be put on character, Richardson said, rather than just competence, especially for those in leadership positions. The Navy also is having success in recruiting and retaining high-quality sailors despite fierce competition for talent in the private sector, Richardson said. The Navy exceeded by 18 its recruiting goal of 39,000 sailors during fiscal year 2018, the Defense Department said last week.

One sailor asked how America can strengthen bonds with allies as adversaries vie for their allegiance. Richardson replied there are competing forces with radically different ideas about how the world should look. The way to beat them is to be vocal about what America stands for, he said.

Trump criticized for McRaven comments

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has ignited a firestorm of criticism and charges that he is politicizing the military by faulting a war hero for not capturing al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden sooner.

Trump took shots at retired Adm. William McRaven in a weekend Fox News interview in which he also asserted that the former Navy SEAL and former commander of U.S. Special Operations Command was a "backer" of Trump's 2016 rival Hillary Clinton and a supporter of President Barack Obama.

"Disgusting," the George W. Bush administration's White House counterterrorism adviser, Fran Townsend, wrote Monday on Twitter.

Leon Panetta, who was CIA director during the bin Laden raid and later served as secretary of

defense, said Trump owed an apology to McRaven and to all of those in the military and intelligence agencies who played a role in tracking down bin Laden and carrying out the risky raid into Pakistan. He called Trump's remark "patently ridiculous."

"It demonstrates a profound lack of understanding of how our military and intelligence agencies operate and undermines the president's own standing as commander-in-chief," Panetta said in a statement.

The controversy follows a pattern of concerns raised by former senior military officers about Trump's grasp of the military's role. Some assert that his decision to send thousands of active-duty troops to the U.S.-Mexico border shortly before the Nov. 6 midterm elections was a political stunt.

Trump also drew criticism for his decision not to visit Arlington National Cemetery on Veterans

Day last week, following his trip to Europe.

McRaven told CNN he is a fan both of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, having served under them. "I admire all presidents, regardless of their political party, who uphold the dignity of the office and who use that office to bring the nation together in challenging times," he said pointedly.

McRaven previously had drawn widespread attention for lambasting Trump for repeatedly calling the news media the "enemy of the people." McRaven had said the president's words were "the greatest threat to democracy" in his lifetime. When that was raised in the Fox News interview, Trump lashed out at McRaven, who organized and executed the bin Laden raid in Pakistan in May 2011 as head of the secretive Joint Special Operation Command.

Trump: US won't punish crown prince

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Tuesday the U.S. will not punish Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at this time or cut arms sales to Saudi Arabia for the killing of U.S.-based columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

Trump called the killing of Khashoggi inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul a “horrible crime” that the U.S. does not condone, but said Saudi Arabia is a “great ally” and canceling billions in arms sales would only benefit China and Russia, which would be glad to step in and make the sales.

Trump’s decision, announced in a statement released just before he left for the long Thanksgiving weekend in Florida, will disappoint and anger critics who have called for a much firmer rebuke to the kingdom and especially bin Salman.

U.S. intelligence officials have concluded that bin Salman, the kingdom’s de facto leader, ordered the Oct. 2 killing, according to a U.S. official familiar

with the assessment. Others familiar with the case caution that while it’s likely that the crown prince had a role in the death there continue to be questions about the degree to which he was involved.

The U.S. earlier sanctioned 17 Saudi officials suspected of being responsible for or complicit in the killing, but members of Congress have called for harsher actions.

Trump said Tuesday in his statement that the king of Saudi Arabia and the crown prince “vigorously deny” any knowledge of the planning or execution of the murder of Khashoggi.

“Our intelligence agencies continue to assess all information, but it could very well be that the crown prince had knowledge of this tragic event — maybe he did and maybe he didn’t!” Trump said.

“That being said, we may never know all of the facts surrounding the murder of Mr. Jamal Khashoggi. In any case, our relationship is with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They have

been a great ally in our very important fight against Iran.”

He said the United States intends to remain a steadfast partner of Saudi Arabia to ensure the interests of the United States. “America First!” he wrote.

Trump said he knows some members of Congress will disagree with his decision. He said he would listen to their ideas but only if they are focused on U.S. national security.

Late last week, a bipartisan group of senators introduced legislation that calls for suspending weapons sales to Saudi Arabia; sanctions on people who block humanitarian access in Yemen or support the Houthis rebels; and mandatory sanctions on those responsible for Khashoggi’s death.

France’s top diplomat said Monday that his country was mulling sanctions against Saudi Arabia. And Germany on Monday announced that it has banned 18 Saudi nationals from entering Europe’s border-free Schengen zone because of their suspected connections to the killing.

Illness hits victims of Calif. fire

The Washington Post

YUBA CITY, Calif. — The main exhibit hall at the Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds here has become the home of last resort for 68 people who fled the fires that swept through a broad swath of forest and hill towns nearby.

And some days, an ambulance shows up. A team of paramedics, wearing protective masks and disposable yellow plastic aprons, wheeled a sick man out of the exhibit hall Monday on a stretcher, another victim of the bitter repercussions of mass displacement that the Camp Fire has created.

The outbreak of vomiting and diarrhea has carried on for days.

“On average, about one a day goes to the hospital,” said Bob Christensen, 77, smoking a cigarette outside the exhibit hall and watching a cleanup crew with mops and buckets begin wiping down the metal door handles with a powerful chemical disinfectant.

Ethia Carter, who arrived with the Red Cross from southern Florida, is on her second day running the facility after her predecessor got sick.

“We have four in isolation,” she said, indicating an infirmary set up behind blue curtains on one side of the yawning hall, stacked with bottles of fresh water and other supplies.

The most devastating fire in California history began in the Sierra foothills in the morning hours of Nov. 8, prompting a hectic evacuation that has left at least 52,000 people in hotels, relatives’ homes, parking lots and makeshift shelters such as this one in Yuba City.

More than 10 days later, those temporary accommodations are being overwhelmed by overcrowding and disease. As heavy rain moves into the area for the first time since the fire began, those living in tents face the threat of flooding, too.

More than 120 people have been taken to hospitals in recent days with stomach ailments that resemble the symptoms of the norovirus, a highly contagious infection.

Gunman kills 3 at Chicago hospital

Associated Press

CHICAGO — A gunman repeatedly shot an emergency room doctor outside a Chicago hospital, including after she fell to the ground, before he ran into the building and fatally shot a responding police officer and a pharmacy worker as she walked out of an elevator, according to witnesses and investigators.

The attacker, Juan Lopez, also died during the shooting Monday at Mercy Hospital on the city’s South Side, but it was unclear if he took his own life or was killed by police, Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson said late Monday outside another hospital, just minutes after leaving the slain officer’s family.

“This officer, all of those officers are heroes. They saved a lot of lives because we just don’t know how much damage he was prepared to do,” Johnson said.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, fighting back tears, said the victims were “all going about their day, all doing what they loved.” He added: “This just tears at the soul of our city. It is the face and a consequence of evil.”

The hospital identified the slain staff members as Tamara O’Neal, 38, an emergency room physician who never worked on Sunday because of her religious faith, and Dayna Less, 25, a first-year pharmacy resident who had recently graduated from Purdue University.

The slain officer was identified as Samuel Jimenez, 28, who joined the department in 2017 and had recently completed his probationary period, Johnson said. Police said he was married and the father of three children.

Police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi described the shooting as a “domestic-related active shooter incident,” but he provided no details about the re-

lationship between the gunman and the slain doctor. Lopez, 32, and O’Neal had been arguing in the hospital parking lot just before the shooting. When one of O’Neal’s friends tried to intervene, “the offender lifted up his shirt and displayed a handgun,” Johnson said.

The friend ran into the hospital to call for help, and the gunfire began seconds later. After O’Neal fell to the ground, Lopez “stood over her and shot her three more times,” a witness named James Gray told reporters.

When officers arrived, the suspect fired at their squad car, then ran inside the hospital. The police gave chase. Inside the medical center, Lopez exchanged fire with officers and “shot a poor woman who just came off the elevator” before he was killed, Johnson said, referring to Less, the pharmaceutical assistant.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man retracts pledge to return gold coins

OH COLUMBUS — A treasure hunter has taken back a pledge to turn over 500 missing coins minted from gold found in a shipwreck off the South Carolina coast.

The Columbus Dispatch reported that Tommy Thompson had agreed to deliver the coins to a court-appointed receiver by Sunday to settle a lawsuit brought by an investor. The paper said the deal fell apart Friday when Thompson said he has no idea how to obtain the coins.

Thompson found the S.S. Central America in 1988 after persuading more than 100 investors to fund the voyage for nearly \$13 million.

Thompson never repaid the investors, and fled to Florida.

Man stabbed, then run over with vehicle

WI MILWAUKEE — A 20-year-old man is in serious condition in Milwaukee after authorities say he was stabbed multiple times and then run over with a vehicle.

Police said the victim and another man got into a fight Sunday night, and when the victim fell in the street after being repeatedly stabbed, the other man intentionally ran him over.

The victim was taken to a hospital. Police are searching for the other man.

Officer frees bear cub stuck in garbage bin

CA TRUCKEE — A bear cub has been reunited with its mother thanks to a police officer in Northern California who colleagues are calling a “bear whisperer.”

Truckee police Sgt. Mon Pere responded to a report of the momma bear trying to free her cub from a garbage container. Police video shows Pere calling out to the momma bear that he was going to help her baby.

The officer climbed on another container and told the cub he was a friend as he lifted the lid. The cub scampered out and ran to its mother, who was watching nearby.

Police said the sergeant has had two bear rescues in recent weeks.

Pet owners warned after coyote takes dog

SD SIOUX FALLS — Sioux Falls Animal Control is advising residents to keep an eye on their pets after a coyote took a small dog over the weekend.

Police said the coyote took the dog about 6:15 a.m. Saturday on North Galaxy Lane in northwestern Sioux Falls. Animal control has been monitoring the situation and implemented measures to scare and trap the coyote.

Authorities said Sioux Falls residents should keep small pets on a 6-foot leash and monitor them while they are outside.

Anyone who sees a coyote should use hazing techniques to scare them off, such as yelling and waving their arms, making loud noises or throwing rocks or sticks.

Police: Man tried to steal pizzeria tip jar

DE DOVER — Delaware State Police said they arrested a man who tried to steal a tip jar from a pizzeria when employees weren't looking.

Police said Sunday they'd arrested Titus Rodriguez, 46, on

charges of attempted robbery.

Police said Rodriguez visited Pizzeria Porta Bella in Dover and grabbed the tip jar while employees were busy.

As he tried to leave the restaurant, he was confronted by employees.

After a struggle, employees restrained him until troopers arrived, police said.

'Demon' sermon irks yoga community

MO OZARK — Springfield's yoga community is speaking out after a pastor at an Assemblies of God megachurch warned Christians to avoid the popular activity because he claims it has “demonic roots.”

The Springfield News-Leader reported that Pastor John Lindell told worshippers last month at the James River Church in Ozark that yoga positions were “created with demonic intent” and called Hinduism demonic.

Stephanie Wubbena, who owns Live Pure Yoga in Springfield, posted a video criticizing Lindell's sermon on YouTube on Nov. 1, saying that it's hurting small businesses.

She cited a local yoga studio that lost more than 10 members one day after the sermon.

Suspect climbs onto roof, then surrenders

MT BUTTE — Police said a man was arrested after leading officers on a high-speed chase, crashing into a building and climbing onto the roof of a Domino's Pizza in Butte.

The Montana Standard reported that Fred Lewis Cutsinger, 31, was taken into custody Saturday after climbing down from the building.

Police said Cutsinger was wanted on state and federal

warrants when an officer tried to pull him over Saturday and Cutsinger sped away.

'Santa' brings holiday cheer to shoppers

VT DERBY — A mystery man is providing cheer to Walmart shoppers in Vermont.

The man paid off the entire lot of layaway items at the store in Derby, near the Canadian border.

Brownington resident Sandra Cortez told WCAX-TV she thought it was a rumor. She learned it was real when she went to the store and find her items paid off.

Julie Gates, of Eden Mills, said she asked the man, “Who can afford to pay for everyone's layaway?”

She said the man responded, “Santa Claus can.”

Walmart officials declined to say how much the man spent.

Illegal drone photo of Yellowstone is probed

WY YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — Yellowstone National Park officials said they're investigating after a photo was posted online showing one of the park's geothermal features from a drone, which is illegal.

The Jackson Hole News & Guide reported the photo of Grand Prismatic Spring was posted on Instagram and then deleted after criticism from other users. Drones are banned in Yellowstone and many other parks.

The National Park Service says drones can harass wildlife and the noise is a nuisance to visitors. Violation of the ban is a misdemeanor with a penalty of up to six months in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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Rams hold off Chiefs in record game

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Even before the fourth lead change of the fourth quarter, well before the 1,001st yard of combined offense was tallied, the Kansas City Chiefs and the Los Angeles Rams already knew this was a classic.

Two powerhouse NFL teams at the peak of their brilliance dueled deep into the night at an ecstatic Coliseum, racking up eye-popping numbers that stretched the box score and credulity.

There were 14 touchdowns, including three by defensive players. There were 56 first downs. There were 105 points, with 50 from each team — the first time that's ever happened in an NFL game.

In the final moments, the Rams did just enough to leave with a win they'll savor for years.

And if these teams meet again at the Super Bowl in 2½ months, the Chiefs will remember the sting from coming up just short.

Jared Goff threw a 40-yard

touchdown pass to Gerald Everett for the go-ahead score with 1:49 to play, and the Rams outlasted the Chiefs for a 54-51 victory Monday night in a showdown that somehow surpassed the hype.

"It was a crazy game, crazy game," said Goff, who passed for 413 yards and four touchdowns and even ran for another score. "It seemed like whoever had the ball at the end was going to win the game. There was times where we felt like we were going to put the knife in and finish them, and there were times where it was the other way around, where we had to claw back into it."

Patrick Mahomes passed for a career-high 478 yards with six touchdown passes in his latest jaw-dropping effort for the Chiefs (9-2), but he also threw two interceptions in the final 1:18 as the Rams (10-1) claimed the highest-scoring Monday night game ever played.

The highest-scoring game in the league this season was an offensive fantasia of ingenious scheming from mastermind coaches Andy Reid and Sean

McVay — along with 21 combined penalties to keep things interesting. The second half was an extended thriller featuring 59 combined points.

Both teams scratched out fourth-quarter leads, only to see them evaporate. Mahomes hit Tyreek Hill with a 73-yard TD pass just when the Rams appeared to be pulling away early in the fourth, and Goff replied with two late TD passes to Everett, a backup tight end with 31 career catches before this game.

"It was a whirlwind," McVay said. "I feel like I might need a couple of beverages to relax tonight, but it was great. This is what you love so much about the game."

And this game was ultimately decided by defense: Marcus Peters and Lamarcus Joyner came up with late interceptions as the Rams stopped Mahomes' final efforts.

"It's always fun to play against real good teams," Mahomes said. "You get to go out there and have fun ... (but) it's the same as when we played New England. You can't make

mistakes against great teams. You need to limit your mistakes, but be aggressive."

The Coliseum's first Monday night game since 1985 was staged on short notice after the NFL moved the matchup from Mexico City to Los Angeles six days ago due to poor field conditions at Azteca Stadium. The Rams used the opportunity to give free tickets to thousands of first responders and families recovering from the dual tragedies of nearby wildfires and a mass shooting in Thousand Oaks.

Those fans got an incredible treat for their reward — and if the video game-like spectacle they saw turns out to be a Super Bowl preview, Atlanta will get an All-Madden-level show as well.

"It was just cool," said Todd Gurley, whose 13-game touchdown streak somehow ended in this offensive showcase. "It was a last-minute game and everybody (came) out in support. Had the families here, had the responders, so it was just a great overall crowd and it was good for the city."

Redskins sign Sanchez as McCoy takes over at QB

Associated Press

ASHBURN, Va. — Colt McCoy knew exactly what his teammates needed to hear.

In the aftermath of a gut-wrenching two-point loss and the sickening season-ending injury to Alex Smith, McCoy stood up in the Washington Redskins locker room and addressed the group.

McCoy "told us we were in good hands," running back Chris Thompson said. "We had no doubt about that from the jump. We lost the game, but I will say Colt talking to us afterwards really had the dudes hyped up and we're ready to get to Dallas."

Washington signed Mark Sanchez on Monday to serve as the new backup, but this is McCoy's team now after Smith

broke his right tibia and fibula in gruesome fashion. McCoy will start Thursday when the Redskins visit the Dallas Cowboys in a Thanksgiving showdown that will go a long way to determining who wins the NFC East, and the 32-year-old has the full confidence of the coaching staff and players to take over for the rest of the season.

"I just feel very comfortable with Colt and always have," coach Jay Gruden said. "It's been a luxury to have him as a backup quarterback and now it's a great opportunity for him to take the reins. I know he's excited about it. He's a guy that knows the system, he's a competitor, accurate with the football, understands where to go with the football — we assume

— but we'll see on Thursday."

Until Sunday, McCoy hadn't thrown a pass in a regular-season game since 2015. The Cowboys game will be his first start since 2014, the same season he beat Dallas on the road on a Monday night.

That was ages ago in NFL time, but there's a reason McCoy has been on the roster since Gruden came to Washington. His knowledge of the offense was evident even to Houston Texans players when McCoy seamlessly took over for Smith.

"He's been here for years," Texans cornerback Johnathan Joseph said. "He understands the offense well. There's been a point in time where they were talking about him being the starter. So it's good to have two

guys that can come in. As soon as he came in the game, it was like they never dropped off from where they were."

Whether backing up Robert Griffin III, Kirk Cousins or Smith, McCoy has developed a reputation among teammates for being ready to play in a heartbeat. Center Chase Roullier said McCoy treats each day leading the scout team in practice as his Super Bowl, and no one has ever said the former University of Texas star was unprepared.

"Even last year when he didn't, I think, get a single snap all season, he prepared like he was the starter then," linebacker Ryan Kerrigan said. "To have that mentality and to be that consistent with that mentality really speaks volumes to him as a professional."

Top 25 roundup

Sun Devils surprise No. 15 Bulldogs

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — As a freshman, Arizona State's Kimani Lawrence made three three-pointers.

Monday night, the sophomore drained three from long range — part of a 22-point performance — including the game winner with 33 seconds left, to lead the Sun Devils to a 72-67 victory over No. 15 Mississippi State in the heavyweight bracket of the MGM Main Event.

"I've completely reconstructed my shot, from the base, to the release, to getting it all in one motion, I've worked really hard for it," said Lawrence, who is 9-for-19 from three-point range through the first four games of the season. "Credit to Remy (Martin) to trusting me. He hit me, I hit the shot. Stepped up, made a big-time play for the team, for the program."

Luguentz Dort added 17 points and nine rebounds, while Martin scored 16 for the Sun Devils, who will meet Utah State in the championship game

on Wednesday.

The Bulldogs, who will face Saint Mary's in the consolation game, were led by Aric Holman with 22 points and 10 rebounds.

Arizona State, which climbed as high as No. 3 after opening last season 12-0, improved to 4-0, while handing the Bulldogs their first loss of the season (3-1).

This year, the Sun Devils have scrapped the fast-paced, up-tempo style that saw them average 95.6 points after their first six games, to a blue-collar approach that includes a physicality that baffled Mississippi State. This season, thus far, the Sun Devils are averaging 86 points per game, and out-rebounding teams, 51-34.

Duke 90, San Diego State 64: R.J. Barrett scored 20 points, Cam Reddish added 16 and top-ranked Duke remained undefeated at the Maui Invitational.

The Blue Devils (4-0) shot 52 percent, made 10 of 25 from

three-point range and improved to 16-0 in Maui while earning a spot in Tuesday's semifinals against No. 8 Auburn.

No. 3 Gonzaga 84, Illinois 78: At Lahaina, Hawaii, Rui Hachimura scored 23 points, Zach Norvell Jr. added 15 and the Bulldogs (4-0) held off the Illini in the opening round of the Maui Invitational.

No. 6 Nevada 90, California Baptist 55: Trey Porter had 14 points and nine rebounds, Jordan Brown scored 16 and the host Wolf Pack beat the Lancers.

No. 7 North Carolina 101, Saint Francis (Pa.) 76: Cameron Johnson scored 20 points, freshman Nassir Little added 19 and the host Tar Heels beat the Red Flash in the on-campus round of the Las Vegas Invitational.

No. 8 Auburn 88, Xavier 79 (OT): At Lahaina, Hawaii, Bryce Brown scored 26 points, Jared Harper added 25 and the Tigers outlasted the Musketeers to open the Maui Invitational.

No. 12 Kansas State 82, Missouri 67: At St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Dean Wade scored 21 points, and the Wildcats defeated the Tigers in the championship game of the Paradise Jam tournament.

No. 14 Florida State 93, Canisius 61: Mfiondu Kabengele scored a career-high 18 points and Terance Mann added 12 as the host Seminoles warmed up after a seven-day layoff to beat the Golden Griffins.

No. 16 Clemson 72, Akron 69: At George Town, Cayman Islands, Shelton Mitchell scored 22 points with four steals, Elijah Thomas had 15 points and 12 rebounds and the Tigers beat the Zips in the first game of the Cayman Islands Classic.

No. 17 UCLA 80, Presbyterian 65: Jaylen Hands scored 19 points and Jalen Hill had a career-high 20 rebounds to lead the host Bruins to a win over the Blue Hose.

Sports briefs

Beltre announces retirement after 21 seasons

Associated Press

Adrian Beltre of the Texas Rangers retired Tuesday after 21 seasons in a career in which he hit 477 home runs and became the first player from the Dominican Republic to have 3,000 hits.

The 39-year-old third baseman announced his decision in a statement released by the Rangers, saying it is time for the "next chapter of my life."

"After careful consideration and many sleepless nights, I have made the decision to retire from what I've been doing my whole life, which is playing baseball, the game I love," Beltre said. "I have thought about it a lot and although I appreciate all the opportunities and everything that baseball has given me, it's time to call it a career."

Beltre was a .286 hitter with 1,707 RBIs in 2,933 career games. His 3,166 hits rank 16th on baseball's career list, with his hom-

ers total 30th and RBIs 24th. He played 2,759 games at third base — only Hall of Famer Brooks Robinson had more.

The four-time All-Star and five-time Gold Glove winner made his big league debut at 19 with the Dodgers in 1998.

In his statement, Beltre thanked former Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda for "believing in this young kid from the Dominican Republic when others thought I was too young to be called up" to the majors.

Beltre played with Los Angeles until 2004, then was with the Seattle Mariners from 2005 to 2009 and the Boston Red Sox in 2010. He joined the Rangers as a free agent in 2011 and appeared in his only World Series in his first season with Texas.

Yankees get ace Paxton

NEW YORK — James Paxton spent the first two months of the 2016 season in the

minor leagues after an awful spring training caused his demotion.

When he returned to the majors, he quickly emerged as the Mariners' ace, and now the Yankees hope he can bolster the thin rotation that contributed to New York's loss to Boston in the AL Division Series. New York acquired the 30-year-old left-hander from the rebuilding Seattle Mariners on Monday for top prospect Justus Sheffield and two other minor leaguers.

Oilers fire McLellan

EDMONTON, Alberta — The Edmonton Oilers fired coach Todd McLellan on Tuesday and replaced him with Ken Hitchcock with hopes of reviving a team languishing in sixth place in the Pacific Division.

McLellan was in his fourth season with the team, which was just 9-10-1 entering their game Tuesday at San Jose.

NBA roundup

Walker's 43 helps Hornets top Celtics

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The NBA's new scoring leader was determined his latest big night wouldn't go to waste.

Kemba Walker scored 43 points, giving him 103 in his last two games, and the Charlotte Hornets battled back to beat the Boston Celtics 117-112 on Monday night.

Walker followed up his NBA season-best, 60-point effort in an overtime loss to the 76ers on Saturday night with another spectacular performance. He scored 21 points in the fourth quarter and made 14 of 25 shots overall, including seven more three-pointers.

He finished 7-for-10 from the floor with four three-pointers in the fourth quarter as Charlotte erased a 10-point deficit to pull even at 8-8 on the season.

"I just wanted to win, man," Walker said. "I wanted to win a close game. We've been in every game for the most part. There's

a couple we haven't been in but you know things just haven't been going our way in those situations and tonight it did and it felt good."

Walker passed Golden State's guard Stephen Curry to take over the NBA scoring lead at 29.6 points per game.

Walker also passed the injured Curry for the league lead in three-pointers made with 65.

"It means a lot but it's still the early season," Walker said. "I would've never, ever in my life thought I would be that high up in the rankings as far as scoring in the NBA. But I'm going to try to keep it up, do what I can to win games."

Walker outdueled Boston's Kyrie Irving, who finished with 27 points and 11 assists.

76ers 119, Suns 114: Joel Embiid scored 19 of his 33 points after halftime and added 17 rebounds to help host Philadelphia.

Ben Simmons added 19

points, 11 rebounds and nine assists for Philadelphia, which won its third straight while improving to 9-0 at home.

Pelicans 140, Spurs 126: Anthony Davis had 29 points and nine rebounds, Julius Randle added 21 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists in 25 minutes, and host New Orleans won its third straight.

Bucks 104, Nuggets 98: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 29 points and Eric Bledsoe added 22, including two late three-pointers, as host Milwaukee overcame a 17-point first-half deficit to down Denver.

Antetokounmpo added 12 rebounds for Milwaukee, which came from 22 down in the first half to beat the Chicago Bulls on Friday night.

Kings 117, Thunder 113: Buddy Hield made three consecutive three-pointers late in the fourth quarter and scored 25 points, Marvin Bagley III had his first career double-double and host Sacramento beat

Oklahoma City to spoil Russell Westbrook's return from injury and then the birth of his twin daughters.

Pistons 113, Cavaliers 102: Andre Drummond had 23 points and 16 rebounds, and host Detroit cruised over Cleveland.

Grizzlies 98, Mavericks 88: Mike Conley scored 28 points, Marc Gasol had 17 points and 15 rebounds and host Memphis broke open a close game in the fourth quarter.

Pacers 121, Jazz 94: Bojan Bogdanovic scored 21 points, Domantas Sabonis nearly had a triple-double and host Indiana beat Utah.

Clippers 127, Hawks 119: Montrezl Harrell had 25 points and 11 rebounds, Lou Williams added 16 points and a season-high 11 assists, and Los Angeles rallied past struggling host Atlanta to win its fifth straight game.

NHL roundup

Sabres rally past Pens, extend win streak to 6 games

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Buffalo Sabres might be for real. The Pittsburgh Penguins might be in real trouble.

The proof came over the final 30 minutes of Buffalo's rousing 5-4 overtime victory on Monday night. The Sabres reeled off the final four goals, the last on a shot from the right circle by Jack Eichel that squirted past Casey DeSmith 45 seconds into the extra period to give Buffalo its sixth straight win.

"It's just unbelievable the resiliency the past two weeks," Sabres head coach Phil Housley said.

Buffalo beat the Penguins for just the second time in the last 11 meetings by hanging in there after Pittsburgh took

a 4-1 lead. Momentum shifted early in the second period when the Sabres killed a 5-on-3 power play to keep the deficit at three. Zach Bogosian kick-started the comeback with a one-timer 10:39 into the second and the young Sabres took off from there.

Tage Thompson, Casey Nelson and Casey Mittlestadt also scored for Buffalo, which has won six straight for the first time since the 2009-10 season. Carter Hutton withstood an early flurry from Pittsburgh and finished with 36 saves.

"We just stayed the course and we didn't bend," Housley said. "And obviously Carter Hutton made some huge saves at the right time."

Tanner Pearson had a goal

and an assist for the Penguins, his first points with Pittsburgh since being acquired in a trade with Los Angeles last week. Phil Kessel picked up his 10th for the Penguins and Jake Guentzel and Derick Brassard also scored.

Kings 2, Blues 0: Rookie goalie Calvin Peterson earned his first NHL shutout and rookie forward Matt Luff scored his first goal as visiting Los Angeles blanked St. Louis.

Maple Leafs 4, Blue Jack-ets 2: Zach Hyman scored two goals late in third period and host Toronto extended its winning streak to four games.

Rangers 2, Stars 1: Filip Chytil scored the tiebreaking goal 4:32 into the third period to rally host New York past Dallas.

Panthers 7, Senators 5: Mike Hoffman scored and extended his point streak to 16 games in his return to Ottawa after being traded to Florida.

Capitals 5, Canadiens 4 (OT): Lars Eller scored with less than 90 seconds left in overtime as visiting Washington rallied past Montreal.

Predators 3, Lightning 2: Ryan Johansen had a goal and an assist and Pekka Rinne stopped 29 shots as host Nashville won its second straight.

Flames 7, Golden Knights 2: Matthew Tkachuk and Johnny Gaudreau tied career-highs with four points each for host Calgary.

Jets 6, Canucks 3: Patrik Laine recorded a hat trick and led visiting Winnipeg past Vancouver.