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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Navy searching for exams lost in mail

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

The advancement exams for sailors aboard the USS Antietam appear to be lost in the mail.

The command of the cruiser, which is homeported at Yokosuka, Japan, is searching for the exams that were on their way to a Florida processing center.

Capt. George Kessler first informed the crew of the status of the missing exams on Wednesday via a post to the Antietam's official Facebook page.

"We verified receipt of our exams at Camp Walker Post Office in Korea," the ship's commander wrote. "The next location in the postal chain is Osan Air Mobility Command."

In an updated statement provided Thursday by Task Force 70, Kessler said the exams had been tracked to a flight departing Nov. 13 from Osan AMC Terminal to Yokota Air Base in Tokyo before being delivered to FMC Yokohama.

"The office was closed in Yokohama last night and we are working to get their information as soon as the office reopens," Kessler wrote.

Kessler said there are two courses of action moving forward.

In the first, the exams make their way through the postal system and are eventually delivered to their destination, Naval Education and Training Professional Development Center in Pensacola, Fla., where

they will be graded.

If they are not found, sailors will take the "Spring Advancement Exam as a late exam," Kessler wrote.

"Our desire is to ensure you have every opportunity to advance on this exam cycle and in the future," he said in the statement.

According to the statement, the Florida training center is tracking the exams using registered mail numbers.

The Navy advancement exam consists of 175 questions, with 150 of them related to the exam-taker's rating and another 25 about professional military knowledge.

This isn't the first time the exams have been lost in the mail.

In 2006, 251 Naples-based third-class petty officers were informed that they'd have to retake their exams after their first answer sheets were lost in the mail.

"I can only tell you personally that I'm sorry, and we as a system failed you and we need to assume accountability for that," Command Master Chief Gustavo Beltra told a gathering of affected sailors in the wake of that loss.

Beltra said that identity theft was a concern because the lost exams contained personal information, such as Social Security numbers. He advised sailors to monitor credit reports and report suspicious activity.

Serving those who serve is a far-reaching military task

The Washington Post

Thousands of U.S. troops are spending Thanksgiving deployed to the American border with Mexico, joining fellow servicemembers overseas in Afghanistan and Iraq who are marking the holiday away from loved ones — a familiar fact of life for those who serve.

The Pentagon shipped out more than 300,000 pounds of traditional Thanksgiving food, including 9,738 whole turkeys, to those stationed and deployed around the globe. A total of 799 pounds of turkey went to troops serving on the border in southern Texas.

Like many of the Pentagon's initiatives, the Thanksgiving rollout was an affair of a giant scale: 51,234 pounds of roasted turkey, 16,284 pounds of sweet potatoes, 81,360 pies, 19,284 cakes and 7,836 gallons of egg-

nog. Forces around the world received the goods through the vast military supply chain that keeps those serving in combat equipped with everything from medicine to food.

"Many of America's military men and women are away from home this Thanksgiving, making sacrifices to secure our freedom and to protect our southern border," Army Brig. Gen. Mark Simerly, the commander of troop support for the Defense Logistics Agency, said in a statement. He said the military was providing them "the very best Thanksgiving meal our country has to offer."

A spokeswoman for U.S. Army North, which oversees the Army part of the deployment, said that Thursday would be a "light duty day" for troops deployed along the border, meaning they would be asked to do little, if any, work.

No troops had been sent home to their regular duty stations or moved among the border mission sites, she said Wednesday.

Many bases host traditional Thanksgiving meals in their dining halls. Those deployed farther afield often find more creative ways to celebrate, whether that means frying a turkey on a combat outpost in Afghanistan or eating Thanksgiving dinner on a submarine.

A select few usually get treated to meals with senior leaders, who often visit the troops on Thanksgiving and Christmas as a show of thanks for their sacrifice. George W. Bush famously flew into Iraq under the cover of night to mark Thanksgiving with the troops in 2003, months after the invasion.

The tradition of making sure forces deployed over the Thanksgiving holiday receive their turkey dates back de-

cades. The Pentagon supplied turkey and cranberry sauce to troops serving overseas during World War II. The tradition followed in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Some of the troops deployed to the border in Texas will mark Thanksgiving in place with the turkey sent over by the Pentagon.

Others deployed to California and Arizona will go to military bases near where they are operating to celebrate the holiday, according to a spokeswoman for the Defense Logistics Agency.

"We're a 365-day-a-year military. Rain or shine, light or dark, cold weather or hot weather - we have an all-weather force that's on duty 24/7," Mattis said during a recent trip to Texas.

Melting ice has US military looking north

The Washington Post

UNALASKA, Alaska

Army helicopters began flying in and out of the scraggly wilderness near this fishing town in August, surprising even the mayor.

The tan, twin-rotor Chinook aircraft thumped over treeless cliffs and the historic port of Dutch Harbor, parking at a mountainside airstrip too small to land jet airliners.

Soldiers came and went, sometimes staying at the main hotel in town, across the street from a bar called the Norwegian Rat Saloon. Unalaska's mayor, Frank Kelty, said he called the military to find out what was going on but learned little.

"We have these Army helicopters here, and we don't know what they're doing or where they're going," he said after driving by the airport on the remote Aleutian island and seeing a Chinook resting near the runway.

The mysterious operation was part of the U.S. military's gradual growth in the Arctic as it grapples with the effects of melting polar ice and Russia's and China's increasing assertiveness in the region. The slowly evolving plan has included stationing more fighter jets in Alaska, expanding partnerships with Nordic militaries, increasing cold weather training and designing a new class of icebreaker ship for the Coast Guard that could be armed.

The vision could take greater shape by the end of the year. Both the Navy and Coast Guard are working on new Arctic strategies in light of the quickly changing circumstances senior U.S. military officials see.

In October, the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier and its associated ships sailed above the Arctic Circle, the first such unit to do so since the Cold War. The strike group, carrying thousands of sailors, practiced cold weather operations in the Norwegian Sea, an area where Russian submarines operate.

"Certainly America has got to up its game in the Arctic. There's no doubt about that," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said during a visit to Alaska in June. "The reality is that we're going to have to deal with the developing Arctic, and it is developing."

Recent upgrades include new sensors on several Aleutian islands for a radar network known as the North Warning System. It was first installed during the Cold War to watch for incoming aircraft and ballistic missiles, but the Pentagon concluded more recently that existing radar did not offer "adequate detection and identification of aircraft operating outside the continental United States," according to an Air Force assessment.

That prompted the operation involving the helicopters in Unalaska.

A military spokeswoman, Leah Garton, said the mission allowed the aircrews to practice navigating over water and landing in mountainous areas, where the sensors were installed. The new equipment will "assist in flight safety for all civilian and military aircraft in the local area," she said.

The new Navy and Coast Guard Arctic strategies would follow the national defense strategy released by Mattis in January that made countering Russia and China a priority. Both nations have shown interest in Arctic resources as the ice melts, including fossil fuels, diamonds and metals like nickel and platinum.

Russia has more than 40 icebreakers — the U.S. military has two working ones — and stationed more troops in the region. China, meanwhile, is building its third polar icebreaker and staked a claim this year as a "near-Arctic" state, further injecting itself into policy debates.

"We're obviously watching both the Russians and the Chinese quite closely," said Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, who over-

sees Coast Guard operations in the Arctic and Pacific. "Russia, on their side of the Arctic in sort of the Northern Sea Route, is investing heavily in commercial infrastructure and in military infrastructure."

Coast Guard Capt. Gregory Tlapa, who commands the lone U.S. military icebreaker traveling to the Arctic each year, said waterways like the Bering Strait are not yet busy with ships, especially compared with other maritime corridors. Waters are warming, he said, but "somewhat warmer still means mostly frozen."

But the lack of U.S. military vessels and infrastructure in the Arctic could be problematic, said Tlapa, speaking on the red-hulled USCGC Healy while it refueled in Dutch Harbor in August. Congress recently approved initial funding for six new polar icebreakers, but they are probably years away from deploying.

"It's that school of international realism: If you're not here, someone else will be," Tlapa said. "The nation doesn't have a deep-bench strength in terms of capabilities to operate up here and project power and protect our national interests."

The potential militarization has raised hope for investment in places like Unalaska and Nome, a port town on Alaska's western coast.

Though nothing is planned, Kelty argued that an influx of U.S. troops could bring infrastructure projects that could benefit residents, such as the installation of undersea fiber-optic cables from mainland Alaska that could bring more affordable internet and cell-phone service.

Despite its distance from the Arctic, Unalaska is the last deepwater port where large ships heading to the Arctic can refuel in the western United States, and the first when returning. However, it is not considered ideal by mariners and pilots because of its limitations, which include no highway con-

necting it to mainland Alaska, limited communications and wild weather in which thick fog and high winds are common and can maroon visitors for days.

Elsewhere in the Arctic, the Pentagon has begun to expand its presence through training exercises with partner nations. In Europe, the Marine Corps is deepening relationships with Norway, Finland and Sweden, training units of rank-and-file troops in the shadow of Russia. In June, Norway's government asked the United States to increase the number of Marines there from about 330 to 700, with plans to base them on a rotational basis in the Norwegian Arctic.

Col. John Carroll, the deputy commander of Marine Corps Forces Europe, said commanders want to make sure service-members are familiar with the biting cold and can move through the countryside on skis or snowshoes.

The Air Force is planning to base two squadrons of advanced F-35A fighters in Alaska by 2022, supplementing a fleet of jets that already includes two squadrons of F-22 Raptors, considered the Pentagon's best in air-to-air combat. The decision will allow the Air Force to take advantage of the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex, a sprawling installation that includes 65,000 square miles of space for pilots to train.

"Air power, in particular, plays such a crucial role in this region," Ferguson said. "The ice is melting, absolutely, but the reality is that it's incredibly difficult to operate from a surface perspective, either on ocean or on land."

In April, Navy Secretary Richard Spencer told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the recent decrease in polar ice has prompted the Navy to begin preparing a new Arctic strategy just four years after the last one was released.

SEAL faces charges in Iraq case

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — Evidence was presented in a San Diego military courtroom Tuesday to determine whether a Navy SEAL platoon commander will be tried on charges that he failed to act when made aware of atrocities allegedly committed by another SEAL during a 2017 deployment in Iraq.

Lt. Jacob Xavier Portier faces seven charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman and dereliction of duty.

Military prosecutors allege Portier knew about the actions of Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher, who is accused of killing a wounded teenage Islamic State combatant in Mosul. In the hours after the killing, Portier conducted a reenlistment ceremony for Gallagher next to the teenager's corpse.

Portier then, according to the prosecution, ordered his platoon to take a group photo next to the dead prisoner.

Prosecutors said that although Portier was not present

during the killing, he was made aware of it by other SEALs.

The defense argued that Portier reported Gallagher as soon as the lieutenant found out about the incidents.

Marine Capt. Conor McMahon argued the government's position in front of Navy Cmdr. Phil Hamon, who presided over the Article 32 hearing at Naval Base San Diego.

"This case is about a Navy lieutenant who didn't possess the moral courage to do the right thing," McMahon said in his closing comments. "Lt. Portier didn't take out a hunting knife and stab a prisoner in the neck. He didn't get behind a sniper rifle and shoot at a little girl trying to escape from ISIS, and he didn't shoot an old man taking water jugs to the river. But he knew about it — and he did nothing."

Hamon will make a report to military authorities, who will determine whether Portier will stand trial.

Prosecutors allege that other, unnamed members of the platoon came to Portier throughout the deployment with

concerns about Gallagher's conduct in the field, including shooting at least two noncombatant civilians.

After the platoon returned to San Diego, some of its members continued to lobby Portier to hold Gallagher accountable for his actions, prosecutors said.

"It got so bad that by February or March 2018, [the two SEALs] were so frustrated that they went to Lt. Portier and told him if an investigation wasn't launched, they were going directly to NCIS, the Commodore or Fox News," McMahon said.

Prosecutors also allege Portier made false statements when questioned about Gallagher's actions by his commanders.

Attorney Jeremiah Sullivan, who represents Portier, said there are conflicting accounts from members of the platoon, and that instead of reporting the incidents to him, the SEALs actually kept information from Portier. Once he found out, he did report Gallagher to his chain of command. Sullivan is asking for a speedy trial for Portier, saying the prosecutions case is weak.

Mattis: US must balance rights, ties with Saudis

The Washington Post

The United States must balance its concerns about Saudi Arabia's human rights record with the need to maintain a "strategic relationship" with the Saudis, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Wednesday.

In his first extended comments on last month's killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents in Istanbul, Mattis told reporters at the Pentagon that "there has to be accountability for anyone involved in the murder. Yes, I'm calling it murder."

"We're not going to apologize for our human rights stance," he said. "Nor are we going to apologize for working with Saudi Arabia when it's necessary for the good of innocent people who are in trouble."

"Presidents don't often get the freedom to work with unblemished partners," Mattis said.

It was in American interests to work with the Saudis to "stop the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen," he said. He also credited the Saudis with assisting in stepped-up U.S. efforts to bring the Taliban and the Afghan government together for reconciliation talks.

Mattis said that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, its coalition partner in Yemen, had largely ceased "offensive operations" over the past 72 hours around Hodeida, the key, rebel-held Yemeni port city where Saudi airstrikes have hit civilian targets, including schools, and impeded the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Reports from the ground in and around Hodeida indicated that the airstrikes have stopped, although some ground skirmishes continued. The apparent cease-fire between the U.S.-backed coalition and Iran-backed Houthi rebels comes as both sides have agreed to attend U.N.-backed peace talks Mattis said would be held in Sweden in "very, very early December."

Mattis said that he did not think that Mohammed's involvement "has been fully established either by the CIA or the Saudi government."

Trump plans a possible visit to war zone

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump frequently credits himself with accomplishing more for the military and veterans than any other president in recent memory. But he has yet to embark on what has long been a traditional presidential pilgrimage important to the military: a visit to troops deployed in a war zone.

As he departed Tuesday for Florida to spend the Thanksgiving holiday at his private club in Palm Beach, Trump said he'd soon correct the oversight.

"I'm going to a war zone," he said in response to a reporter's question about his support for the troops. He did not say when he would be making the trip or where he would be going. An official said a White House team recently returned from begin-

ning to plan for a visit.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Wednesday that visiting a war zone is a decision for the president, while adding that there have been times in the past when he has advised against visits to "certain locations" to avoid security risks to the president and the troops.

"There's places that I've been very straightforward I don't want him to go at certain times," Mattis said. He declined to elaborate.

On Thursday, Trump delivered a Thanksgiving message to troops around the world, telling them by telephone, "Your courage truly inspires us."

The omission of a trip downrange is one of a long list of norm-breaking moves that underscore the president's increasingly fraught relationship with the military, which

has celebrated Trump's investments in defense spending but cringed at what some see as efforts to politicize their service.

Just this week, Trump leveled criticism against the storied commander of the 2011 mission that killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, retired Adm. William McRaven. "Wouldn't it have been nice if we got Osama bin Laden a lot sooner than that, wouldn't it have been nice," Trump said.

The latest controversy followed a pattern of concerns raised by former senior military officers about Trump's grasp of the military's role, and it comes as White House aides and defense officials have raised alarm about what they view as the president's disinterest in briefings about troop deployments overseas.

Pelosi moves closer to win

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rep. Nancy Pelosi appears to be having some success shrinking the ranks of Democratic lawmakers opposing her bid to serve a second stint as speaker of the House.

Rep. Brian Higgins, of western New York, announced Wednesday he will now support Pelosi after earlier signing on to a letter opposing her bid.

One day earlier, Marcia Fudge, of Ohio, announced she would back Pelosi after earlier flirting with the idea of running for the position herself.

Pelosi, 78, still has a daunting challenge ahead to secure 218 votes, but she is growing closer to that threshold with an aggressive behind-the-scenes campaign focused on addressing some of her skeptics' top concerns.

In Higgins' case, he said he had several productive discussions with Pelosi and other party leaders. He said they will work with him to expand Medicare as an option for those between the ages of 50 and 65. He also said that one of the people he hoped would run for speaker, Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif., told him she would be focusing on her bid to lead the Congressional Black Caucus.

Earlier in the year, Higgins had described Pelosi to The Buffalo News as "aloof, frenetic and misguided."

Higgins said Wednesday he had taken a "principled stand" in opposing Pelosi.

"A principled stand, however, often requires a pragmatic outlook in order to meet with success," he said.

The change, of course, comes shortly after Fudge announced her support for Pelosi just a few days after telling reporters she was seriously considering a run and that she needed to talk with her family about it during the Thanksgiving break.

Fudge said she was assured by Pelosi that black women, in particular, "will have a seat at the decision-making table." She was also named as incoming chair of a panel that will delve into voting rights access, a top priority of the new Democratic majority.

President spars with chief justice over judiciary views

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and Chief Justice John Roberts clashed in an extraordinary public dispute over the independence of America's judiciary, with Roberts bluntly rebuking the president for denouncing a judge who rejected his migrant asylum policy as an "Obama judge."

There's no such thing, Roberts declared Wednesday in a strongly worded statement contradicting Trump and defending judicial independence. Never silent for long, Trump defended his own comment, tweeting defiantly, "Sorry Justice Roberts."

The pre-Thanksgiving dust-up was the first time that Roberts, the Republican-appointed leader of the federal judiciary, has offered even a hint of criticism of Trump, who has several times blasted federal judges who have ruled against him.

Before now, it has been high-

ly unusual for a president to single out judges for personal criticism. And a chief justice's challenge to a president's comments is downright unprecedented in modern times.

It seemed a fight that Trump would relish but one that Roberts has taken pains to avoid. But Roberts and several of his colleagues have gone out of their way to rebut perceptions of the court as a political institution divided between five conservative Republicans and four liberal Democrats.

As the justice widely seen as closest to the court's middle, Roberts could determine the outcome of high-profile cases that split the court.

The new drama began with remarks Trump made Tuesday in which he went after a judge who ruled against his migrant asylum order. The president claimed, not for the first time, that the federal appeals court based in San Francisco was biased against him.

On Wednesday, after a query by The Associated Press, Roberts spoke up for the independence of the federal judiciary and rejected the notion that judges are loyal to the presidents who appoint them.

"We do not have Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges. What we have is an extraordinary group of dedicated judges doing their level best to do equal right to those appearing before them," Roberts said.

On the day before Thanksgiving, he concluded, "The independent judiciary is something we should all be thankful for."

Trump hit back, questioning the independence of judges appointed by his predecessor.

"Sorry Chief Justice John Roberts, but you do indeed have 'Obama judges,' and they have a much different point of view than the people who are charged with the safety of our country," he tweeted.

Police in India struggle to recover body of American killed on remote island

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — Indian authorities were struggling Thursday to figure out how to recover the body of an American killed after wading ashore on an isolated island cut off from the modern world.

John Allen Chau, 26, was killed last week by North Sentinel islanders who apparently shot him with arrows and then buried his body on the beach, police say.

But even officials don't travel to North Sentinel, where people live as their ancestors did thousands of years ago, and where outsiders are seen with suspicion and attacked.

"It's a difficult proposition," said Dependera Pathak, direc-

tor-general of police on India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where North Sentinel is located. "We have to see what is possible, taking utmost care of the sensitivity of the group and the legal requirements."

Police are consulting anthropologists, tribal welfare experts and scholars to figure out a way to recover the body, he said.

While visits to the island are heavily restricted, Chau paid fishermen last week to take him near North Sentinel, using a kayak to paddle to shore and bringing gifts including a football and fish.

It was "a foolish adventure," said P.C. Joshi, an anthropology professor at Delhi University who has studied the islands.

"He invited that aggression."

On his first day, Chau interacted with some tribesmen — who survive by hunting, fishing and collecting wild plants — until they became angry and shot an arrow at him.

The self-styled adventurer and Christian missionary then swam back to the fishermen's boat waiting at a safe distance.

He returned to North Sentinel the next day, Nov. 16. What happened then isn't known, but on the morning of the following day, the fishermen watched from the boat as tribesmen dragged Chau's body along the beach and buried his remains.

Pathak said seven people have been arrested for helping Chau.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Video shows bears stealing chocolate

NC ASHEVILLE — A North Carolina teen caught a hungry bear and its three cubs on video breaking into her car to devour dozens of chocolate bars.

Lilly Thurmond, 16, provided WLOS-TV with cellphone video of the bears moving in and out of the Toyota Prius and eating about 50 bars meant for a school prom fundraiser.

She and her mother told the station they believe the bears opened an unlocked door on the car in the driveway of their wooded lot in Asheville.

They said the furry bandits left the inside of the car dirty and punctured some backseat cushions, but insurance has agreed to pay for the damage.

Police: Teen stabbed classmate with pencil

MA BOSTON — A 15-year-old student at a Boston high school was charged with using a pencil to stab another student in the leg during a fight.

An officer assigned to Brighton High School responded to the fight in a hallway just before 11 a.m. Tuesday.

The injured student, also 15, was taken to the hospital with injuries not believed to be life-threatening.

Boston Public Schools is conducting its own investigation and says both students will be subject to disciplinary measures.

Victor in sheriff's race wins by a single vote

IL DECATUR — A winner was declared by a single vote in a central Illinois county

sheriff's election.

The Macon County clerk's office Tuesday certified final results giving Democrat candidate Tony Brown 19,655 votes to Republican Jim Root's 19,654 votes.

Preliminary results on Election Night had given Root a 99-vote lead, but mail-in and provision ballots counted Tuesday favored Brown 191-91.

Brown and Root are both lieutenants in the sheriff's department.

They were seeking to replace Howard Buffett, the son of billionaire investor Warren Buffett who became interim sheriff last year when the previous sheriff retired.

Bison statue stolen from nature area

KS TOPEKA — Authorities said a statue of a bison calf was stolen from a popular nature area north of Topeka.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported that Doug Iliff reported the statue was broken off at the base and taken from the parking lot at Iliff Commons, a privately owned area that is open to the public. It has several miles of trails for walking, running, cross-country skiing and mountain biking. A replica of Topeka's original log cabin is situated on the trail.

Iliff estimates the statue is worth about \$800.

Missing portrait of female mayor returns

NM SANTA FE — The portrait of Santa Fe's only female mayor, which mysteriously disappeared two decades ago, is back at City Hall.

The Santa Fe New Mexican reported former Mayor Deb-

bie Jaramillo's image returned to a wall of former mayors this week after years of a bizarre chain of events that had left no trace of Jaramillo's tenure.

Jaramillo had said she suspected her portrait had been stolen.

Man accused of faking own death arrested

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A man accused of faking his own death to collect a \$2 million life insurance policy was arrested in Moldova and returned to Minnesota to face federal charges.

Authorities indicted Igor Vorotinov, 54, in 2015 on one count of mail fraud. He was arrested last week.

Prosecutors allege in court documents that in 2011, Vorotinov's ex-wife, Irina, identified a corpse in Moldova as her ex-husband's. She then returned to the U.S. with a death certificate and cremated remains and received the life insurance payment. Money was then transferred to her son and to accounts in Switzerland and Moldova.

She pleaded guilty to her role and is serving a three-year sentence. A preliminary hearing for Igor Vorotinov is scheduled next week.

ACLU to fight barring indecent vanity plates

RI PROVIDENCE — The American Civil Liberties plans to challenge a Rhode Island policy that bars vanity license plate applications deemed indecent.

ACLU Rhode Island Executive Director Steven Brown told the Providence Journal the Division of Motor Vehicles is violating the First Amendment by rejecting license plates based on "what they see as in good taste."

A probe by the paper found that the agency has rejected 50 license plate applications since 2012. Rejected license plates include BONG and PPLSUC.

State law gives the agency the authority to refuse a plate that "might carry connotations offensive to good taste and decency."

2 charged in caribou harassment, killing

AK ANCHORAGE — Alaska State Troopers said two teenage boys from Kotzebue illegally killed a caribou after chasing the animal on a snowmobile and ramming it several times.

The boys, aged 16 and 17, are facing charges including harassment and taking a bull caribou during a closed season.

Wildlife troopers started getting complaints Nov. 11 about a caribou being chased by a snowmobile on the ice near town. Callers told troopers the snowmobilers killed the animal after it fell.

Woman accused of abandoning dogs

ND BISMARCK — A Glenburn woman is accused of abandoning three dogs in a Bismarck apartment.

Authorities allege Leoda Fowler, 21, left the dogs in locked cages with no food or water for at least three days. They were found sitting in their own waste.

The Minot Daily News reported Fowler faces misdemeanor counts of animal neglect and animal abandonment that together carry a maximum punishment of six years in prison.

From wire reports

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Health issues complicate Meyer's future

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Urban Meyer doesn't seem to be having much fun these days.

The Ohio State coach is not demonstrably mirthful, of course, at least not when it comes to his job.

"It's not like me to be the Joe Positive guy," he acknowledged the other day. "I'm usually the opposite."

But the 54-year-old Meyer's sideline demeanor has taken on a decidedly beleaguered stoop this season. The usual shouting and gesticulating, the ripping off of his headset, those are often followed by a hand moving up to the left side of his head because of severe headaches.

Just last week, TV cameras captured his pained reactions as his team slogged through a mistake-filled overtime victory over Maryland, adding to the speculation that health problems could lead to his early retirement — something he has repeatedly denied.

On the eve of the biggest game of the year, No. 10 Ohio State's showdown with No. 4 Michigan this weekend, it is easy enough to wonder if Meyer is still suffering through one of the more difficult stretches of his storied career.

This season, his seventh in Columbus, was tumultuous bordering on absurd even before the first game kicked off on Sept. 1.

Meyer weathered a scandal involving a now-fired assistant coach that led to his suspension for the first three games and a series of public apologies and explanations. He has had a flareup of the arachnoid cyst in his head that causes debilitating headaches, one of which dropped him to a knee during a game on Oct. 6.

He lost star defensive end Nick Bosa to an

early season-ending injury, and the Buckeyes' defense never fully recovered. The problems led to a shocking blowout by unranked Purdue on Oct. 20 that pushed Ohio State to the fringe of the playoff picture. Other injuries have been a plague all year.

Just last week, Meyer had to stop preparations for the Maryland game and address another off-the-field issue, this one involving a report that a former player left the program because of bad treatment. Everyone at the university issued denials, but Meyer had to talk to the team and the media about it while trying to keep it from becoming a distraction.

"All that stuff is foolishness," insisted Ryan Day, the co-offensive coordinator who ran the show during Meyer's suspension. "This team right here knows what a great person coach Meyer is, and the rest of that stuff we're not even focused on. There have been a lot of things that have been said this year, and it hasn't bothered this team."

It is safe to say that nothing has personally hurt Meyer more in his career than people saying his lax treatment of now-fired assistant coach Zach Smith made him culpable in the domestic abuse allegedly suffered by Smith's ex-wife. Meyer said he knew about the accusations against Zach Smith — grandson of former Ohio State coach Earle Bruce — but wasn't sure they were true and kept Smith on his staff because no criminal charges were filed. The university cited that lapse when it suspended Meyer.

A chronic worrier and control freak, Meyer had lost control of certain things in his world and, by all accounts, that knocked him off-kilter. His wife, Shelley, a psychiatric nurse, pulled the curtain back recently when she responded to a Twitter user who was inquiring about Urban's "most difficult

personality trait."

"[I] think he would be ok if I said his 'control/perfection' issues are the most difficult to deal with — as we know LOGICALLY, a person can't control everything, and being perfect is REALLY hard when [you] can't control ALL," she wrote.

Meyer won two of his three national championships at Florida but retired twice because of stress-related poor health, leading to chatter recently that he might be close again to doing something else. He already has experience as an ESPN broadcaster. He's a grandfather now, and he and Shelley are empty-nesters. He will make \$7.6 million this year, with a contract that runs through 2022.

There have been reports that the 39-year-old Day — who moved from the press box to the sideline with Meyer this season — is being groomed as the coach-in-waiting, although Ohio State has denied it.

Meyer, who acknowledged depression and anxiety issues late in his six-year tenure at Florida, said he is not close to giving it all up. He told reporters recently he plans to be Ohio State's coach for "as long as I can," without saying exactly what that means. As long as his health will allow it? Until he starts losing?

Until he's no longer having fun?

Winning, of course, makes everything better. Meyer has done a lot of it and is paid handsomely. He is 80-9 at Ohio State. He has beaten Michigan every year he's been here and few would be all that surprised if the Buckeyes manage to do it again Saturday at Ohio Stadium.

Meyer also insists he's fine and is enjoying himself — as long as the Buckeyes win.

"Believe it or not," he said, "I'm a halfway fun guy sometimes."

Rivalry week should clarify College Football Playoff picture

Associated Press

Rivalry week should help sort out the College Football Playoff picture while finalizing the conference championship game matchups.

No. 3 Notre Dame (No. 3 CFP) can pretty much wrap up one of the four playoff spots Saturday by winning at Southern California. No. 4 Michigan (No. 4 CFP) seeks to remain in playoff position Saturday when it visits No. 10 Ohio State (No. 10 CFP), with the winner facing No. 20 Northwestern (No. 19

CFP) next week in the Big Ten championship game.

No. 7 Washington State (No. 8) also still harbors playoff hopes as it prepares to host No. 16 Washington (No. 16 CFP) on Friday, with the winner facing No. 18 Utah (No. 17 CFP) in the Pac-12 championship game.

The Oklahoma-West Virginia and Texas-Kansas games on Friday will determine the representatives in the Big 12 championship game. If No. 11 Texas (No. 14 CFP) beats Kansas, the Longhorns will face the Okla-

homa-West Virginia winner for the Big 12 title. If Kansas upsets Texas, No. 6 Oklahoma (No. 6 CFP) and No. 12 West Virginia (No. 13) would meet for a second straight week in the Big 12 championship game.

Here are some other things to know heading into the final weekend of college football's regular season:

Best game

Michigan at Ohio State: Michigan has lost to Ohio State each of the last six seasons but

heads into this year's game as a four-point favorite.

Ohio State (10-1, 7-1 Big Ten) has looked more vulnerable than its record suggests, as the Buckeyes got trounced 49-20 by Purdue last month and eked out a 52-51 overtime victory over Maryland last week. Michigan (10-1, 8-0) has won 10 straight since a season-opening 24-17 loss at Notre Dame.

Michigan leads all Football Bowl Subdivision teams in total defense, while Ohio State ranks second in total offense.

No. 1 Duke falls to Gonzaga in Hawaii tourney

Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii — Gonzaga found itself in the same position as Duke's first five opponents: appearing helpless as the Blue Devils and their rim-rattling freshmen ran past and flew over them.

The Zags never panicked, never looked up in awe at the bouncy Blue Devils. They have too much experience to get rattled, even against college basketball's most talked-about team.

Playing with poise and grit down the stretch, No. 3 Gonzaga turned back top-ranked Duke's late-game charge to win the Maui Invitational title game 89-97 on Wednesday.

"Experience plays a big role in this," said Gonzaga guard Zach Norvell Jr., who had 18 points. "We came down the stretch and got some stops. We knew we were winning it on the defensive end."

Gonzaga (6-0) put on an offensive show in the first half and batted down on defense after Duke made a second-half charge, blocking four shots in the final 46 seconds to win its second Maui title.

Rui Hachimura scored 20 points and the Zags beat a No. 1 team for the first time while ending the Blue Devils' unbeaten streak on the Valley Isle (17-1).

Dubbed a Final Four contender when Killie Tillie returns, Gonzaga already looks like one — even with one of their best players on the bench in a walking boot.

Five-time Maui champion Duke (5-1) fell behind by 16 in the second half before firing up the Blue Devil express with a series of head-above-the-rim dunks and drives.

Taking advantage of Gonzaga big man Brandon Clarke's fourth foul, Duke pulled within a basket as Blue Devils fans sent an earthquake of noise off the rafters of tiny Lahaina Civic Center.

Hachimura put Gonzaga up 89-87 with a strong move at the basket with 75 seconds left, but the Zags kept giving Duke chances by missing four free throws. Clarke clanked two with 30 seconds left and Hachimura came up empty on two more with 10 seconds left.

Gonzaga's defense made up for it.

Hachimura and Clarke each had two blocked shots in the final minute, capped by Clarke's swat of R.J. Barrett's driving attempt at the buzzer.

Barrett had 23 points and Zion Williamson scored 22 for the Blue Devils.

Top 25 roundup

No. 2 Kansas beats Marquette

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Dedric Lawson had 26 points and 12 rebounds to lead No. 2 Kansas to a 77-68 defeat of Marquette in an NIT Season Tip-Off semifinal in New York.

The Golden Eagles (3-1) led by as many as 12 in the first half before taking a 47-38 lead into the break. Then came a 22-0 run by THE Jayhawks.

Marquette went 0-for-10 from the field to start second half as Kansas (4-0) retook the lead in commanding fashion.

Sam Hauser led the Golden Eagles with 20 points while Markus Howard had 18 points.

The Jayhawks got 16 points from Lagerald Vick while Devon Dotson chipped in with 10 points, four assists and three steals.

No. 4 Virginia 74, Middle Tennessee 52: De'Andre Hunter had 15 points, nine assists and eight rebounds to help the Hokies beat the Blue Raiders in the Battle 4 Atlantis at Paradise Island, Bahamas.

Kyle Guy also scored 15 points and Braxton Key added 13 for the Virginia (4-0), which never trailed but didn't put the game away until midway through the second half. The Hokies led 9-0 and 30-9, only to see Middle Tennessee claw to within 38-30 early in the second half.

Guy answered with a three-pointer to start a 9-0 run that stretched the lead back out. The Blue Raiders got no closer than 11 again. Antonio Green scored 11 points to lead Middle Tennessee (3-2), which shot 39 percent.

No. 5 Tennessee 92, Louisville 81: Grant Williams scored 24 points to lead five Vols in double figures in an NIT Season Tip-Off semifinal in New York.

Admiral Schofield added 20 points for Tennessee (4-0), which shot 54 percent from the field. The win was the 664th of coach Rick Barnes' career. It moved him past John Wooden on the all-time Division I wins list.

Trailing 77-70 with 6:51 left, Cardinals coach Chris Mack got called for a technical foul when he didn't like an over-the-back call on Dwayne Sutton. Louisville could never recover, trailing by as many as 15.

Jordan Nwora had 23 points and 10 assists to lead the Cardinals (3-1).

No. 8 Auburn 73, Arizona 57: Bryce Brown scored 19 points, Malik Dunbar added 15 and the Tigers pulled away from the Wildcats to win the Maui Invitational third-place game.

Auburn (5-1) gave top-ranked Duke its first real test of the season in the semifinals before losing by six. The Tigers built a 10-point lead against Arizona, allowed the

Wildcats to pull within one and took control with an 11-0 second-half run to go up 14.

Brandon Randolph had 18 points and Justin Coleman 16 for Arizona.

No. 10 Kentucky 87, Winthrop 74: PJ Washington had 19 points and 11 rebounds, Tyler Herro added 15 points and the Wildcats shot 56 percent to run away from the Eagles.

Coming off Sunday's tense victory over hot-shooting VMI, the Wildcats (4-1) had a far easier time against the Eagles as they used their size to control the boards 37-20 and scoring in the paint (42-24).

Josh Ferguson, Charles Falden and Austin Awad each had 11 points, while Kyle Zunic and Adam Pickett added 10 apiece for Winthrop (2-3), which lost its second in a row.

No. 15 Mississippi State 61, Saint Mary's 57: Quindary Weatherspoon and Tyson Carter each scored 12 points to lead the Bulldogs in the consolation game of the MGM Main Event's heavyweight division in Las Vegas.

The Gaels took a 50-48 lead with 6:15 left, but Mississippi State went on a 6-0 run, culminated by Aric Holman's powerful dunk.

The Bulldogs (4-1) got nine points and 11 rebounds from Holman, while Lamar Peters added 10 points.

Jordan Ford scored 23 points for Saint Mary's (3-2), and Malik Fitts added 10 points and nine rebounds.

Creighton 87, No. 16 Clemson 82: Sophomore Ty-Shon Alexander made seven three-pointers and scored a career-high 36 points to lead the Blue Jays to the upset in the championship game of the Cayman Islands Classic in George Town.

Alexander, who was named the most outstanding player of the tournament, was 9-for-16 shooting, missing just five from distance, and made all 11 of his free throws.

No. 20 Iowa 105, Alabama State 78: Luka Gazra scored 22 points, freshman Joe Wieskamp had a career-high 20 and the Hawkeyes rolled in their home debut as a ranked team.

No. 22 Buffalo 110, Dartmouth 71: Nick Perkins had 18 points and 10 rebounds in the host Bulls' win.

Five players scored in double figures for Buffalo (4-0), which tied its record for points in a game since moving to Division I in 1994-95.

No. 25 Wisconsin 62, Stanford 46: Ethan Happ had 16 points and 12 rebounds before fouling out late, and the Badgers beat the Cardinal in the first round at the Battle 4 Atlantis at Paradise Island, Bahamas.

Sophomore Nate Reuvers had a tournament-record nine blocked shots for Wisconsin (4-0).

NBA roundup

LeBron victorious in return to Cleveland

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Once the video tribute ended, a simple sentiment filled the giant scoreboard. Against a black backdrop, giant white letters delivered the heartfelt message.

Cleveland wanted to say something.

"THANK YOU, LeBRON," it said.

Eight years after he was treated like a villain, LeBron James was welcomed back properly.

Back on the court where he performed for 11 seasons, and under the title banner he helped raise, James returned to Cleveland and rallied the Los Angeles Lakers to a 109-105 win on Wednesday night over the Cavaliers, who played their best game of the season against their former teammate but couldn't stop him when it mattered most.

James finished with 32 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists. He also scored or as-

sisted on 11 straight points as the Lakers overcame a 99-91 deficit in the fourth quarter.

But basketball took a backseat to James' homecoming, which was so different than his return in 2010, when betrayed Cleveland fans unleashed their fury on him.

There were no profane chants this time. No derogatory signs. No venom.

The Cavs, who came in a league-worst 2-13, gave James and the Lakers all they could handle. And even after giving up an eight-point lead, they had a chance to tie late, but Kyle Korver missed a wide-open three-pointer with 17 seconds left and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope made four free throws to seal it for Los Angeles.

Thunder 123, Warriors 95: Russell Westbrook recorded his first triple-double of the season and visiting Oklahoma City defeated two-time defending NBA champion Golden State.

Rockets 126, Pistons 124:

James Harden scored a season-high 43 points, Clint Capela added 27 and host Houston won its fifth straight.

76ers 121, Pelicans 120: Joel Embiid had 31 points and 19 rebounds and host Philadelphia beat New Orleans after Anthony Davis missed the third of three free throws with 2.5 seconds left.

Knicks 117, Celtics 109: Trey Burke scored 29 points, Tim Hardaway Jr. had 21 and New York beat host Boston to snap a six-game losing streak.

Hornets 127, Pacers 109: Jeremy Lamb scored 21 points, NBA scoring leader Kemba Walker had 16 points and a season-high 11 assists and host Charlotte beat Indiana.

Bucks 143, Trail Blazers 100: Giannis Antetokounmpo matched his season high with 33 points and finished an assist short of a triple-double in three quarters to help host Milwaukee rout Portland.

Grizzlies 104, Spurs 103:

Mike Conley had 30 points, Marc Gasol hit two free throws with 0.7 seconds left and Memphis beat host San Antonio.

Bulls 124, Suns 116: Jabari Parker had 20 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists, and host Chicago beat Phoenix to stop a four-game slide.

Raptors 124, Hawks 108: Kyle Lowry scored 21 points in his first triple-double of the season and Toronto beat host Atlanta.

Mavericks 119, Nets 113: Harrison Barnes scored a season-high 28 points, Devin Harris broke a fourth-quarter tie with eight straight points and host Dallas beat Brooklyn.

Kings 119, Jazz 110: Willie Cauley-Stein scored 23 points and Bogdan Bogdanovic had 18 to help Sacramento beat host Utah.

Nuggets 103, Timberwolves 101: Paul Millsap had 25 points, Jamal Murray added 18 and Denver held off host Minnesota.

NHL roundup

4-goal first period helps Sabres extend win streak to 7

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Tired of coming from behind during their NHL-best winning streak, the Buffalo Sabres went out and did something about it.

Jeff Skinner and the Sabres got off to a fast start Wednesday night as Buffalo scored four first-period goals on its way to a 5-2 victory over the Philadelphia Flyers.

It was a dynamic outburst from the league's hottest team, which has won seven in a row.

"That was written on our white board — making sure we're ready to start," said right wing Tage Thompson, who scored Buffalo's second goal. "We want to be on the winning side starting from the drop of the puck."

Evan Rodrigues and Sam Reinhart each had a goal and an assist for Buffalo (14-6-2), which came from behind in its previous three victories. Skinner and Johan Larsson also scored, and Carter Hutton made 23 saves.

Penguins 5, Stars 1: Sidney Crosby scored a spectacular goal and set up two others during a rout of visiting Dallas in his return to the lineup after missing three games with an upper-body injury.

Lightning 7, Panthers 3: Steven Stamkos had a goal and three assists and host Tampa Bay beat Florida to reclaim the top spot in the Eastern Conference.

Rangers 5, Islanders 0: Alexandar Georgiev stopped 29 shots for his first career shut-

out, Filip Chytil scored for the fifth straight game, and the Rangers beat the crosstown-rival Islanders.

Capitals 4, Blackhawks 2: Tom Wilson, Andre Burakovsky and Michal Kempny scored to give Washington an early lead, and the host Capitals held off Chicago.

Hurricanes 5, Maple Leafs 2: Trevor van Riemsdyk and Justin Williams scored 22 seconds apart in the first period, sending host Carolina past Toronto.

Red Wings 3, Bruins 2 (OT): Andreas Athanasiou tied it midway through the third period and scored 49 seconds into overtime to lift host Detroit past Boston.

Devils 5, Canadiens 2: Pavel Zacha scored twice, Tay-

lor Hall had a goal and an assist, and host New Jersey beat Montreal.

Predators 4, Blues 1: Pekka Rinne made 28 saves to set an NHL record for wins by a goalie from Finland, and host Nashville spoiled Craig Berube's first game as St. Louis' coach.

Wild 6, Senators 4: Eric Staal scored his second goal of the game with 5:58 left and host Minnesota overcame a sloppy third period to beat Ottawa.

Golden Knights 3, Coyotes 2 (OT): Max Pacioretty stuffed in a rebound at 3:36 of overtime to lift Vegas past host Arizona.

Pacioretty also scored in the second period, Tomas Nosek had a goal and Marc-Andre Fleury made 19 saves. Derek Stepan scored twice for Arizona.