

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Tensions rise amid Russia-Ukraine clash

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Ukraine's president declared martial law and NATO leaders gathered for emergency talks Monday, a day after a naval clash with Russian warships sparked one of the most serious military threats in the region in recent years.

Russian coast guard vessels fired upon and seized control Sunday of three Ukrainian vessels attempting to pass through the narrow Kerch Strait to the Sea of Azov, a clash that represents the largest escalation of force since Russia invaded and annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and launched a proxy war in Ukraine's east.

The United States has since sold Ukraine weapons systems and participated in bilateral military exercises while ramping up military operations along the U.S.-led NATO alliance's eastern flank to reassure Russia's neighbors.

The incident Sunday could serve as a prelude to a larger confrontation, security analysts cautioned.

"It seems like Russia is trying to put in place a new Iron Curtain across the Black Sea," said retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, who commanded the U.S. Army in Europe until leaving the service last year. "Everybody should have their eyes wide open."

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko ordered martial law on Monday, set to begin Wednesday for a 30-day period. The move is intended to boost the military's readiness and won't be used to invoke censorship or limit citizen's rights and freedoms, Poroshenko said.

"The attack on the Ukrainian cutters is a Russian-planned element of escalation of the monthslong situation in the Sea of Azov," Poroshenko said. "I'm also sure it is far from the culmination. Intelligence reports dis-

cuss a serious threat of a ground operation against Ukraine."

Ukraine said that a Russian ship rammed a Ukrainian tugboat on Sunday. Afterward, Russian crews fired on the tugboat and two navy vessels, injuring six sailors, before seizing the ships.

Russia's Federal Security Service said the Ukrainian ships made an unauthorized passage through Russian territorial waters, and accused their commanders of failing to give proper transit notification, which Ukraine denied. Russian media said that only three Ukrainian sailors were slightly hurt.

The Russian Foreign Ministry accused Ukraine on Monday of orchestrating a provocation as "a pretext for setting up sanctions against Russia," according to a statement.

For the U.S. and its allies, the incident highlights the growing tensions around the Black Sea, which is vital to the economies

of NATO's southern members but also a place where there is a military mismatch with Russia.

"It not only raises the fears of another large-scale Russian military attack on Ukraine, it also creates concerns of Russia preparing for another attempt to gain more territory and seize the Ukrainian city of Mariupol," said Jorge Benitez, a security analyst with the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington. The city, with a mixed Ukrainian-Russian population, is on the north coast of the Sea of Azov close to the border with Russia.

NATO has looked for ways to bolster forces in the Black Sea region and has considered setting up a flotilla of warships that could counterbalance Russia's sea power. So far, the idea of a multinational flotilla hasn't gained traction amid concerns that such a move could antagonize Russia.

## 'Fat Leonard' scandal sinks Trump nominee

*The Washington Post*

A retired admiral who had been nominated for a senior job in the Trump administration has been torpedoed for his involvement in the "Fat Leonard" corruption scandal, according to Navy officials.

Mark C. Montgomery, a retired two-star admiral, received a letter of censure from the Navy last week after an investigation concluded he had committed graft and taken illicit gifts from Leonard Glenn Francis, a Singapore-based defense contractor who has admitted to bribing scores of officers.

The investigation concluded

that besides accepting gifts, Montgomery also "took action to financially benefit" Francis' company between 2007 and 2009, when the Navy officer served as the commander of a destroyer squadron based in Asia, according to Cmdr. Jereal Dorsey, a Navy spokesman.

The Navy also determined that Montgomery lied about his connections with Francis when he was questioned by investigators this year, Dorsey said.

Known as "Fat Leonard" because of his girth, Francis was the president and chief executive of Glenn Defense Marine Asia, which held more than \$200 million worth of contracts to resupply and refuel Navy

ships at ports throughout Asia. He pleaded guilty to corruption charges in 2015.

Francis has told investigators that he bribed Navy officials with prostitutes, cash, lavish meals and other gifts in exchange for military secrets and other inside information to benefit his business.

A censure is a formal rebuke that will stain Montgomery's official military record but not result in a fine or other punishment. While graft is a crime under military law, the statute of limitations for the offense is ordinarily five years, which would have made it difficult for the Navy to prosecute him.

Montgomery is the sixth

admiral to receive a censure in the Fat Leonard scandal; two other admirals have been charged with crimes by the Justice Department.

The White House had nominated Montgomery in June to become an assistant administrator with the U.S. Agency for International Development. In September, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing to consider his nomination, and he appeared on his way to a speedy confirmation.

On Nov. 15, however, the White House notified the Senate that it had withdrawn Montgomery's nomination. No explanation was given publicly.

## Air Force seeks civilian help to protect satellites

*The (Colorado Springs, Colo.) Gazette*

Known for being staid and secretive, Air Force Space Command is now looking for help from a crowd best known for “man buns” and YouTube channels.

The command is offering \$100,000 in prize money to programming wizards who can use video game technology to replace satellite tracking methods that would be familiar to mission controllers from the Apollo program.

“I’ve been using the term ‘agile,’” said Col. Michael Kleppe, who is overseeing the effort for the Peterson Air Force Base command in Colorado. “It is a new way to look at programs and projects.”

Called the Air Force Visionary Q-Prize Competition, the software challenge is a way for the command to reach into the basements of Silicon Valley and Seattle, where programmers have been building top-end video games for generations.

Kleppe is convinced that technology can revolutionize how the Air Force is able to think about satellites in orbit.

“What a great way to get out to the non-traditional market that we aren’t used to,” he said.

Now, airmen across Colorado use numbers-based programs to track satellite behavior. It’s not that much different from staring at a slowly changing spreadsheet that must be interpreted into a 3D picture of spacecraft above Earth using brain power alone.

“What we need are 21st- and 22nd-century tools to put on our operational floors,” Kleppe said. “We decided the best one to start with is visualization.”

The video game-style interface would also play to an Air Force strength: youth. Kleppe and his colleagues don’t know what the new solution will look like, but they have high expectations. The colonel is hoping for a 3D picture of space that can be moved and manipulated by airmen.

The drive for a new view of space comes as Space Command works to defend satellites from increasing threats.

The service is not looking for a crew cut crowd, saying the competition is planned to “encourage nontraditional industry partners who have limited means to engage with military customers, such as universities, individuals, and small businesses, to find solutions for safe and secure operations in space. No background in space applications is required.”

## Afghan officials: Attacks killed 20 police, 10 troops

*Associated Press*

KABUL, Afghanistan — A Taliban ambush of a police convoy in western Afghanistan killed 20 policemen, while 10 soldiers died in an insurgent attack on an army checkpoint in the north, Afghan officials said Monday as minority Shiites took to the streets in Kabul for the second day to protest the arrest of a local militia commander.

During the demonstrations in the Afghan capital, the protesters opened fire at the police, wounding four policemen. Deputy interior minister Gen. Akhtar Mohammad Ibrahim said 44 policemen were also injured when protesters hurled stones and other hard objects at them.

The Taliban ambush took place in western Farah province on Sunday afternoon. Along with 20 policemen killed, four were wounded, including the deputy provincial police chief, said Dadullah Qaneh, a member of the provincial council.

The convoy was on its way to the district of Lash wa Juwayn to introduce a newly appointed district police chief when it came under attack, said another council member,

Abdul Samad Salehi. The newly appointed chief was also killed, said Qaneh.

In northern Faryab province, the Taliban attacked an army checkpoint in Qaisar district, killing 10 soldiers, said Mohammad Tahir Rahmani, head of the provincial council. Three soldiers were wounded, while the fate of five others was unknown.

The Taliban, who in recent years have taken over nearly half of Afghanistan, claimed responsibility for the Farah attack, the latest in a series of brutal, near-daily Taliban assaults on Afghan military and security forces throughout the country.

The insurgents made no statement on the Faryab assault.

The Taliban view the U.S.-backed government in Kabul as a dysfunctional Western puppet and have refused repeated offers to negotiate with it.

The protesters in Kabul were rallying to denounce the arrest of Abdul Ghani Ali-poor, a Shiite militia leader in western Ghor province. The Afghan intelligence service accuses Alipoor of leading an illegal armed group that is behind extortion and other Mafia-like behavior in the region.

## 6 F-22s from storm-damaged Tyndall arrive at Eglin AFB

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Six F-22 Raptor aircraft from the 325th Fighter Wing out of Tyndall Air Force Base have moved to another western Florida base to continue its training mission after Tyndall was devastated by Hurricane Michael more than a month ago, according to service officials.

During the next four months, the wing’s 43rd Fighter Squadron will have 28 F-22s arrive at Eglin Air Force Base, as well as about 525 personnel — primarily maintenance people and pilots — who will come from Tyndall, according to Eglin spokesman Andrew Bourland.

The six F-22s, which moved last week, will begin flying from Eglin on Tuesday.

Most of Tyndall’s estimated 55 F-22s were able to move to other bases before the storm, though several of them were dam-

aged when they were left in hangars at the base because they were in various states of maintenance. The last three F-22s that remained at Tyndall after the storm flew to Langley Air Force Base in Virginia on Nov. 16, according to Air Combat Command.

Tyndall took a direct hit from Hurricane Michael, a Category 4 storm, on Oct. 10. It caused widespread devastation to the installation, and the recovery effort is ongoing to get operations there up and running again. Some roofs are still being repaired across the base, and buildings are undergoing mold remediation with dehumidifiers. Along the base’s flight line, hangars have large sections of roofing missing, and several buildings had collapsed.

It has not been decided whether the F-22s will return to Tyndall permanently, Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson told reporters in a Nov. 2 conference call, Military.com reported.



# GM to slash 14,700 jobs in N. America

Associated Press

DETROIT — General Motors will lay off 14,700 factory and white-collar workers in North America and put five plants up for possible closure as it restructures to cut costs and focus more on autonomous and electric vehicles.

The reduction includes 8,100 white-collar workers, some of whom will take buyouts and others who will be laid off. Most of the affected factories build cars that won't be sold in the U.S. after next year. They could close or they could get different vehicles to build. They will be

part of contract talks with the United Auto Workers union next year.

Plants without products include assembly plants in Detroit; Lordstown, Ohio; and Oshawa, Ontario. Also affected are transmission factories in Warren, Mich., and Baltimore.

More than 6,000 factory workers could lose jobs in the U.S. and Canada, although some could transfer to truck and SUV plants.

GM, the largest automaker in the U.S., includes the Chevrolet, Buick, Cadillac and GMC brands. It said the moves will save \$6 billion in cash by the

end of next year, including \$4.5 billion in recurring annual cost reductions and a \$1.5 billion reduction in capital spending.

GM doesn't foresee an economic downturn and is making the cuts "to get in front of it while the company is strong and while the economy is strong," CEO Mary Barra told reporters.

Barra said GM is still hiring people with expertise in software and electric and autonomous vehicles, and many of those who will lose their jobs are now working on conventional cars with internal combustion engines.

Barra said the industry is changing rapidly and moving toward electric propulsion, autonomous vehicles and ride-sharing, and GM must adjust with it.

The factories up for possible closure are part of GM's effort "to right-size our capacity for the realities of the marketplace" as consumers shift away from cars to trucks and SUVs.

The company has invested in newer architectures for trucks and SUVs so it can cut capital spending while still raising investment in autonomous and electric vehicles, Barra said.

## Prewinter snowstorm batters the central Midwest

Associated Press

CHICAGO — A wintry storm was battering much of the central Midwest early Monday, bringing blizzardlike conditions that grounded hundreds of flights and closed major highways at the end of the Thanksgiving weekend.

The Chicago Department of Aviation reported early Monday that average departure

delays at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport were 77 minutes, and the flight-tracking website FlightAware reported that more than 350 flights headed to or from the U.S. were canceled.

Heavy snow was expected to continue through the early hours of Monday, with up to a foot of snow expected in Chicago and wind gusts of up to

50 mph likely to cause whiteout conditions, according to the National Weather Service.

Forecasters predicted more than a foot of snow is likely in southeast Nebraska, northeast Kansas, northwest Missouri and southwest Iowa. Downed tree limbs and power lines continued to cause power outages.

In Kansas, Gov. Jeff Colyer issued a state of emergency

declaration Sunday. The action came as a large stretch of Interstate 70, spanning much of the state, was closed between Junction City and WaKeeney.

Separately, a portion of Interstate 29 was shut down in Missouri, near the Iowa border.

Winter storm warnings and winter weather advisories were in effect from central Missouri into eastern Michigan.

## East Coast bridge closure brings traffic to standstill

Associated Press

PENNSVILLE, N.J. — A Delaware bridge shut down in both directions by a gas leak Sunday evening — bringing traffic on a major East Coast artery to a standstill on one of the busiest travel days of the year — has reopened.

The Delaware Department of Transportation tweeted late Sunday that the Delaware Memorial Bridge was "RE-OPENED to traffic" and urged travelers to drive safely.

The leak stemmed from the Delaware chemical production facility Croda Atlas Point, located near the twin suspension bridges on a major route

between Washington and New York City, Holloway Terrace Fire Company spokesman George Greenley said.

The leaked chemical was ethylene oxide, a highly flammable gas that is a finished product stemming from methanol, Greenley said.

"If that flume would have had an ignition source, it could have been catastrophic with the bridge traffic," he said.

The bridge closed about 5 p.m. Sunday. Croda operators requested it be shut down, the Delaware River and Bay Authority tweeted.

Greenley said fire officials were waiting for pressure to dissipate in the pipes at the

facility before reopening the bridge.

He said earlier Sunday that the chemical was dissipating fairly quickly from the pipes, and he estimated the bridge could reopen in the next few hours. The state Division of Natural Resources and Environmental Control was also on scene at the leak.

Traffic on both sides of the bridge was being diverted to other crossings, including the Commodore Barry Bridge to the north, causing what the authority called a "parking lot" situation to disperse to other clogged roadways.

The bridge carries Interstate 295 on eight lanes over the wide

southern reaches of the Delaware River between northern Delaware and southern New Jersey. Southbound traffic from the New Jersey Turnpike also flows across it. More than 80,000 vehicles make the crossing daily, according to the authority.

Lashrecse Aird, a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, was stuck in the bridge traffic on her way home to Virginia from New York. The Thanksgiving commute usually takes her six hours, she said, but she had already been on the road for that amount of time and her GPS told her she had more than three hours to go.

# Mexico to boost security near US border

Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico — Mexico looked set to shore up security near its border with the United States on Monday as police lined up outside a shelter in the city of Tijuana and told Central American migrants they couldn't walk toward the border area.

Mexico's National Migration Institute said that 98 migrants were being deported after they tried to breach the U.S. border, and U.S. agents fired tear gas into Mexico to stop them. Mexico's Interior Department said about 500 migrants were involved in the attempt to rush the border, while U.S. authorities put the number at 1,000.

Mexican officials said the migrants had taken part in "vio-

lent" chaos, which originally began as a peaceful march to appeal for the U.S. to speed processing of asylum claims for Central American migrants marooned in Tijuana.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said on a call with reporters that 69 migrants who tried to cross the border illegally were arrested on the California side.

He said the Border Patrol's use of force policy allows agents to use tear gas and other nonlethal methods, but the incident would be reviewed and the situation was resolved without serious injury.

"As the events unfolded, quick, decisive and effective

action prevented an extremely dangerous situation," he said.

But on Monday, the incident had left many migrants sullen, wondering whether the unrest had spoiled whatever possibilities they might have had for making asylum cases.

Isauro Mejia, 46, of Cortes, Honduras, looked for a cup of coffee early Monday morning after spending the day prior caught up in the clash.

"The way things went yesterday ... I think there is no chance," Mejia said.

In rare criticism of the migrants, Mexico's National Human Rights Commission said it "reiterates that members of the caravans that cross our country should respect Mexican laws and not engage in actions

that affect the communities they pass through."

"It is important to note that the fact the Mexican government protects their rights does not imply a free pass to break the law," the commission said.

The Sunday incident began after a large group marched to the U.S. border to make the migrants' plight more visible to the governments of Mexico and the U.S. Some attempted to get through the fencing and wire separating the two countries, leading U.S. agents to fire the tear gas.

American authorities also shut down the nation's busiest border crossing at San Ysidro for several hours at the end of the Thanksgiving weekend.

## UK's PM May tries to sell Brexit deal to country

Associated Press

LONDON — Prime Minister Theresa May made a blunt appeal to skeptical lawmakers on Monday to back her divorce deal with the European Union: It isn't perfect, but it's all there is, and the alternative is a leap into the unknown.

In essence, she urged Parliament: Let's agree and move on, for the sake of the voters.

Britain and the 27 other EU leaders signed off on a Brexit deal Sunday after more than a year and a half of tough negotiations. It was a day many doubted

would ever come, but May was anything but triumphant as she reported back to Parliament, which must approve the deal for it to take effect.

Scores of legislators — from both the opposition and May's governing Conservative Party — have vowed to oppose it. Rejection would plunge Britain into a political crisis and potential financial turmoil just weeks before it is due to leave the EU on March 29.

"No one knows what would happen if this deal didn't pass," May told the House of Commons.

"Our duty as a Parliament over these coming weeks is to examine this deal in detail, to debate it respectfully, to listen to our constituents and decide what is in our national interest."

Parliament's vote is due before Christmas, likely the week of Dec. 10. Before then, May plans a frantic two-week campaign to convince both the public and lawmakers that the deal delivers on voters' decision in 2016 to leave the EU "while providing a close economic and security relationship with our nearest neighbors."

But May's defense of her hard-

won deal in Parliament was followed by a torrent of criticism, from hard-core Brexit-backers, pro-EU lawmakers and previously loyal backbenchers alike.

Legislators on both sides hate the deal, a compromise that keeps Britain outside the EU with no say but still subject to the rules and the obligations of membership at least until the end of 2020 while a permanent new relationship is worked out.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said the "botched deal" would leave Britain worse off, with "no say over EU rules and no certainty for the future."

## Congo begins first trial to test drugs to treat Ebola

Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal — Congo has begun the first trial to test the effectiveness and safety of four experimental Ebola drugs, the first time scientists have directly compared such treatments, the World Health Organization said Monday.

The U.N. health agency described the multi-drug trial as "a giant step" that would "bring

clarity about what works best."

"While our focus remains on bringing this outbreak to an end, the launch of the randomized control trial in DRC (Congo) is an important step toward finally finding an Ebola treatment that will save lives," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Since the beginning of the Ebola outbreak in the North

Kivu province in August, four therapeutic drugs have been used to treat patients, namely mAb 114, ZMapp, Remdesivir and Regeneron, according to Congo's Health Ministry.

To date, more than 160 people have been treated with the experimental drugs. Patients won't be treated much differently than before, but scientists will now have a clinical trial framework to collect data on

the three antibody treatments and the antiviral.

Congo's Health Ministry said the clinical trial began last week in Beni with Zmapp, mAb 114 and Remdesivir. The test could be extended to other sites and include the fourth medicine, it said. The number of patients who participate "will depend on the evolution of the epidemic and the willingness of patients to participate."



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Deli owner armed with machete chases thief

**NY** HUNTINGTON STATION — A deli owner whipped out a machete and chased away a would-be robber who has now been charged with holding up five New York businesses in the past two months.

Ana Guevara told Newsday she and her husband could have been killed in the confrontation Wednesday at Deli and Pupuseria in Huntington Station on Long Island. Manuel Guevara thinks suspect Carlos Garcia had a fake gun.

Garcia, 35, was charged Thursday in robberies at two cellphone stores, two delis and a laundromat. A suspected getaway driver, Angela Reilly, 53, was also arrested.

Police said that after Guevara chased Garcia away, Garcia tried robbing a nearby deli owned by her sister-in-law. A customer there helped track Garcia down by following the getaway car and writing down the license plate number.

## Dog hailed for saving family from gas leak

**DE** LONG NECK — A German shepherd is being hailed as a hero after alerting a Delaware family to a potentially fatal gas leak.

The News Journal reported that Greta barked to wake up her owner in the middle of the night earlier this month and alerted him to a leak from a propane stove. The gas had filled several rooms in the house.

Owner Ken Walsh called Greta, a rescue dog, a “hero” for alerting him to the gas leak before it hurt him, his wife and their son, 14.

Walsh said Greta was rewarded with a steak and sweet potatoes.

## Town mulls future as all police officers quit

**VT** RANDOLPH — Officials in the Vermont town of Randolph are considering what to do about local law enforcement after all members of the local police department quit over the course of the year.

Vermont Public Radio reported that the members of the department didn’t quit all at once to make a statement; the officers just moved on to other opportunities.

Since the spring, all six full-time members quit, one by one, the last one leaving in September.

Since then, the Orange County Sheriff’s Department has covered the town of about 2,000.

## Dog knocks over gun, injuring duck hunter

**UT** CORINNE — Authorities in northern Utah said a man hunting ducks was wounded in the arm when a shotgun discharged after apparently being bumped or knocked over by his dog.

Box Elder County Sheriff’s Chief Deputy Dale Ward said the man shot Friday at Chesapeake Gun Club near Corinne needed to be treated at a hospital but that his forearm wound isn’t life-threatening.

## Restaurant patron saves choking baby

**NC** HENDERSONVILLE — A baby choking on mashed potatoes at a restaurant during Thanksgiving was saved by a quick-acting patron who performed first aid.

News outlets reported that

Hannah Jarvis and her 7-month-old daughter, Calli, were celebrating Thanksgiving at the Golden Corral restaurant when the baby started choking.

Restaurant patron Debra Rouse performed back blows on the baby, who started breathing again.

Jarvis said her daughter was treated at an emergency room and is doing fine.

## Dead sea lions with gunshot wounds found

**WA** SEATTLE — Since September, six sea lions have died from gunshot wounds in central Puget Sound and Kitsap County.

The Seattle Times reported that another seven are suspected to have died from “acute trauma” caused by humans, including a decomposed sea lion with its head sliced off found washed ashore Nov. 20 in a West Seattle cove.

That’s according to Seal Sitters Marine Mammal Stranding Network, a group that responds to reports of stranded or dead sea lions.

Michael Milstein, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration fisheries spokesman, has confirmed the deaths of five California sea lions in West Seattle, including four that died of gunshot wounds.

## Man throws rock at police HQ glass door

**KS** TOPEKA — Authorities said a man walked up to the Topeka police headquarters and threw a rock through the glass front door.

Police said an officer working the front desk heard the glass break about 10 p.m. Friday and thought the person had shot through the door.

An emergency call drew offi-

cers from several surrounding agencies.

Officers took the suspected rock thrower into custody. He wasn’t identified because he appeared to be having a mental crisis.

## Truck hits house, pins woman against couch

**FL** TAMPA — Deputies in Florida said a pickup truck slammed into the front wall of a house, pinning a 71-year-old woman against a couch in her living room.

Hillsborough County sheriff’s officials said it took about 30 minutes to free the woman Saturday evening.

She was flown to St. Joseph’s Hospital in critical condition.

The driver of the pickup truck fled after the crash. Deputies are still searching for him.

## Bear strolls into highway patrol office

**CA** TRUCKEE — A bear had no trouble opening a door as it strolled into a California Highway Patrol office in a mountain town on Nov. 17.

In an online video shared by the CHP on Saturday, the bear is seen through a window standing on its back legs outside the Donner Pass Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Facility.

The animal has a peek inside and then pulls the door open. It drops to all fours and wanders past a vending machine and into the office in Truckee, north of Lake Tahoe.

The bear can be seen reflected in a window as it looks around.

Eventually, the bear walks out the same way it came in. Moments later, two armed officers follow the animal out the door.

From wire reports

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# Patriots not ready for Atlanta just yet

Associated Press

**EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J.** — When Patriots players looked around the locker room Sunday, they saw a generally healthy squad. That's scary for the rest of the NFL.

Or maybe not.

Unless New England makes some key improvements over the next month — and can anyone doubt the Patriots will, given their track record? — a third straight trip to the Super Bowl will be problematic.

In their 27-13 victory over the game but outmanned Jets, the Patriots (8-3) pretty much were workmanlike. Given the competition this season from the likes of the Chiefs, Steelers, Chargers and Texans, that might not be enough.

Sure, the running game was a major positive as New England rushed for 215 yards, led by rookie Sony Michel's season-best 133 on 21 carries. And the defense was OK.

But these were the Jets, who

don't measure up in any way to any AFC contenders. Things will get more difficult in December, though not terribly so. And in January, unless the Patriots grab home-field advantage in the AFC — they trail only Kansas City by one game and own the tiebreaker — their defense will need to be stout against some high-scoring, big-play offenses.

Considering the holes in that defense that the Jets were incapable of exploiting often enough, New England has some issues it hasn't been plagued by during its remarkable Tom Brady-led run since the early 2000s.

These Patriots don't have the look of a team that can avoid shootouts, especially on the road. When you have Brady and Julian Edelman and Rob Gronkowski — and now Michel — on your side, you'll score your share of points. They will need to do exactly that, probably throughout the playoffs, to get to the big game in Atlanta.

"You'd love to be perfect out there," Brady said. "The other teams are well-coached and they have a lot of good players, too. When you win, you feel really good. Obviously, a couple of weeks ago, we did everything the opposite of what we needed to do (at Tennessee). I think we're doing a better job taking care of the ball; it gives us a much better chance to win games. Scoring more points, converting on third downs, scoring in the red area, all those things are really important that we talked about."

"We made some plays, there are certainly ones we left out there, but we'll take it and keep moving forward."

As they move forward, observers' eyes will be on several areas:

**Gronk's health:** Getting back Gronkowski is huge. He's a difference-maker even when he's not targeted because of the attention defenses must pay to the star tight end, and the lift he provides teammates. He's also

brittle, an effect of his playing such a rugged game and taking so many massive hits.

Other than Edelman and the ultra-dangerous James White out of the backfield, Gronk's support crew isn't intimidating. Josh Gordon remains limited and Chris Hogan is solid, but not a No. 1 wideout. The rest of the cast is, well, the rest of the cast.

More than perhaps ever in his nine pro seasons, Gronk's availability is paramount.

**The road:** New England has played three stinkers away from Foxborough; it's 5-0 at home. Two of those defeats were to now-mediocre-or-worse Detroit and Jacksonville in September. More worrisome are the sour notes the Patriots played in Music City in Week 10.

Never before had former Bill Belichick assistant coaches outmastered the mentor. It happened with both the Lions and Titans this year, of course.

## QB Cousins bounces back against Packers

Associated Press

**MINNEAPOLIS** — Once Kirk Cousins and the Minnesota Vikings took the lead on Green Bay, they played with a fierce refusal to let it go.

They held onto the ball with the same determination.

Cousins bounced back from his worst game of the season with 342 passing yards and three touchdowns without a fumble or an interception, and the Vikings overcame some early gaffes to outlast the depleted Packers for a 24-17 victory Sunday night.

Completing 29 of his 38 attempts, Cousins found Dalvin Cook, Stefon Diggs and Adam Thielen for scores. Diggs and Thielen had eight receptions apiece.

"It just kind of shows his character, shows what kind of player he is, to be able to just not really care what people talk about him, not really care about what happened last week," Thielen said of Cousins, adding: "The throws he was making, his full game was really impressive. That's what you expect out of him."

Sheldon Richardson had two sacks to lead the defense's game-long stifling of Aaron Rodgers, and the Vikings (6-4-1)

pushed the Packers (4-6-1) further back in the NFC wild card race.

The Vikings won a night game for the first time this season after losing to the top three teams in the NFC: to the Rams in Los Angeles, at home to the New Orleans Saints and at Chicago in a two-interception game by Cousins against the first-place Bears. The Vikings entered the weekend with the fourth-most turnovers in the NFL, and Cousins has been charged with 13 of the 16 giveaways. Coach Mike Zimmer was so impressed by the way Cousins played against the Packers that he gave him the game ball in the locker room afterward.

"Last week left a bad taste in our mouths," Cousins said, "and the chance to come back on Sunday night football against a division rival at home was a great opportunity, and I'm glad we made the most of it."

Rodgers threw a TD pass to Davante Adams and Aaron Jones scored on a short run for a 14-7 lead early in the second quarter, but the Packers fell to 0-6 on the road this season and 1-5-1 against the Vikings in their past seven meetings. Their final seven possessions produced only one field goal, with five punts and one turnover on downs.

"We've all got to play better, myself in-

cluded," Rodgers said. "Started off the game nice. We had a couple good drives. We're rolling there. We hit our unfortunate typical lull and didn't get it going again."

With Randall Cobb out (hamstring) for a sixth game this season and rookies Equanimeous St. Brown (elbow) and Trevor Davis (hamstring) forced out in the second half, Rodgers didn't have much to work with down the field. Left guard Lane Taylor (quadriceps) departed in the first half and left tackle David Bakhtiari (knee) was sidelined in the second half, leaving the protection shaky at best. Rodgers finished 17-for-28 for 198 yards, without a turnover.

The Packers failed to move the chains on eight of 10 third downs. Jones was stuffed on fourth-and-inches by Harrison Smith, Danielle Hunter and Eric Kendricks midway through the third quarter, giving the Vikings the ball at the Green Bay 44. That set up a 37-yard field goal by Dan Bailey for Minnesota's first lead of the game.

"We're definitely not in the position, record-wise, we thought we would be in coming into the year or even after this game. We thought we could get the victory. But unfortunately we ran out of gas," Packers linebacker Clay Matthews said.



## NFL roundup

## Seahawks rally past Panthers

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Russell Wilson threw for 339 yards and two touchdowns and Sebastian Janikowski kicked a 31-yard field goal as time expired to lift Seattle to a 30-27 come-from-behind victory over Carolina.

After Graham Gano missed a 52-yard field goal with 1:40 left in the game that would have given the Panthers the lead, Wilson moved around in the pocket until finding Tyler Lockett downfield for a 43-yard completion, setting up the winning kick.

The victory puts Seattle (6-5) firmly in the hunt for a wild-card spot in the NFC, while the Panthers (6-5) are reeling after losing three straight and having their 10-game home winning streak snapped.

Lockett finished with five catches for 107 yards and a touchdown, while David Moore had four receptions for 103 yards and a score.

The Panthers spoiled a record-setting performance from Christian McCaffrey, who had a franchise-record 237 yards from scrimmage. He had 17 carries for 125 yards and 11 catches for 112 yards, becoming the first Carolina player to surpass 100 yards in both receiving and rushing in the same game.

Cam Newton finished 25 of 30 for 256 yards with two touchdown passes and one interception in the end zone. He ran for 63 yards on eight carries.

**Broncos 24, Steelers 17:** Nose tackle Shelby Harris picked off Ben Roethlisberger's 2-yard pass to Antonio Brown in the end zone with 1:03 remaining to seal host Denver's win that snapped the Steelers' six-game winning streak Sunday.

The Broncos (5-6) used four takeaways to counter a 97-yard touchdown toss from Roethlisberger to JuJu Smith-Schuster.

Roethlisberger was 41-for-56 for 462 yards, but he was intercepted twice and the Steel-

ers (7-3-1) lost two fumbles in losing for the first time since September.

**Chargers 45, Cardinals 10:** Philip Rivers tied the NFL record for consecutive completions and set marks for the most to start a game and the highest percentage in a game and host Los Angeles rolled over Arizona.

The 15-year veteran completed his first 25 passes and was 28-for-29 for 259 yards and three touchdowns in three quarters. It was also his 11th straight game with multiple TD passes.

**Colts 27, Dolphins 24:** Andrew Luck threw three touchdown passes, Adam Vinatieri kicked a 32-yard field goal as time expired and host Indianapolis beat Miami for its fifth consecutive victory.

Indianapolis (6-5) scored 13 points in the final 8½ minutes to erase a 10-point deficit. It's the longest win streak for the Colts since 2014.

**Browns 35, Bengals 20:** Baker Mayfield threw a career-high four touchdown passes in another growing-up-fast performance, and Cleveland ended one of the NFL's longest streaks of road futility with a victory over host Cincinnati, which lost quarterback Andy Dalton to a thumb injury.

Cleveland (4-6-1) got its first road win since 2015, emphatically snapping a streak of 25 straight road losses that was one shy of the Lions' NFL record. The Browns also ended a run of seven straight losses to their intrastate rival.

And just as a Browns safety predicted, it wasn't even close.

The Browns surged ahead 28-0 as former head coach Hue Jackson watched helplessly from the opposite sideline.

**Eagles 25, Giants 22:** Jake Elliott kicked a 43-yard field goal with 22 seconds remaining, and host Philadelphia rallied for a victory.

The defending Super Bowl champions trailed 12-0 early and were down 19-14 in the

fourth quarter before Carson Wentz made key throws and undrafted rookie Josh Adams delivered big runs.

**Ravens 34, Raiders 17:** Rookie quarterback Lamar Jackson ran for a touchdown and threw for a score, Terrell Suggs returned a fumble 43 yards for a TD and host Baltimore ran past Oakland.

Cyrus Jones took a punt 70 yards for a touchdown to help the Ravens (6-5) win a second straight game for the first time since September.

**Bills 24, Jaguars 21:** Josh Allen scored the go-ahead touchdown on a 14-yard run in the fourth quarter, and the Bills beat the Jaguars in a game marred by a fight that led to the ejections of Jacksonville running back Leonard Fournette and host Buffalo defensive end Shaq Lawson.

Fournette scored twice to tie it at 14 in the second quarter. He finished with 95 yards on 18 carries before he was thrown out with 2:57 left in the third.

**Buccaneers 27, 49ers 9:** Jameis Winston threw for 312 yards and two touchdowns to help host Tampa Bay snap a four-game losing streak.

Winston, benched last month after turning the ball over 11 times in 14 quarters, completed 29 of 38 passes without an interception.

The fourth-year pro, who's shared the starting job with Ryan Fitzpatrick, tossed scoring passes of 6 yards to Cameron Brate and 28 yards to Adam Humphries on a play he extended by scrambling to his right before throwing back toward the center of the field.

Tampa Bay (4-7), meanwhile, had four sacks and forced a turnover on defense for the first time in eight games, with Ryan Smith and Isaiah Johnson coming up with the team's first interceptions since a loss to Pittsburgh on Sept. 24.

Matt Breida rushed for 106 yards for the 49ers (2-9).

## Top 25 roundup

## Villanova tops FSU

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Collin Gillespie had 17 points, including two key late free throws, and the Wildcats won the AdvoCare Invitational by beating No. 14 Florida State 66-60 on Sunday.

"He loves the competition," Villanova coach Jay Wright said. "I'm just glad he's on our side."

Gillespie made it 64-60 by connecting on a pair of free throws with 11.2 seconds to play in what was a tight second half.

Eric Paschall had 15 points and Phil Booth chipped in 12 for the defending national champions (5-2). Dhamir Cosby-Roundtree had 11 points and eight rebounds.

Villanova went from No. 8 to out of the Top 25 — the first time since December 2013 — in last Monday's poll after losing to Michigan 73-46 in a rematch of last season's championship game and losing 76-68 in overtime to Furman.

Florida State (5-1) got 11 points from both Mfiondu Kabengele and Trent Forrest.

"They did a much better job of playing to their strengths than we did ours," Florida State coach Leonard Hamilton said. "I thought our guys gave good effort. I think that we're a team that has a chance to develop into a pretty good basketball team."

**Oklahoma State 90, No. 19 LSU 77:** Cameron McGriff had 28 points and Lindy Waters added 16.

The Cowboys were 6-6 against ranked teams last season. Skylar Mays scored 20 points for the Tigers (5-2), who were coming off a 79-76 overtime loss to No. 14 Florida State on Friday.

McGriff hit a three and Waters made three free throws during a second-half opening 15-2 run that put Oklahoma State ahead 57-39 with 13 minutes to play.

## NBA roundup

# Sixers' Butler hits another winning three

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jimmy Butler's new teammates saw him drift to one of his favorite spots on the court and already knew what to expect.

Butler made a three-pointer with 2.3 seconds remaining to give the Philadelphia 76ers a 127-125 victory over the Brooklyn Nets on Sunday.

"Man, to tell you the truth it could have been anybody," the Sixers' recent addition said.

"They do have a lot of confidence in me but I got so much more confidence in those guys. They really got us back in the game."

Butler's shot from the right wing, similar to the one that beat Charlotte in overtime on Nov. 17, capped Philadelphia's rally from 20 points down in a game the Nets led nearly all the way.

Butler finished with 34 points and 12 rebounds, and Joel Embiid had 32 points and 12 boards for the 76ers, who have won five of their last six games.

A game-time decision after spraining his ankle against Cleveland on Friday night, Butler looked fine after he spent Saturday at Villanova's home gym.

He hoisted up shots from about 20 different spots, including the same area from where he would go on to make the 76ers a winner.

Embiid has grown accustomed to Butler's flair for the dramatic, but knew his new teammate had to rush it a little after Philadelphia inbounded the ball with just 10.2 seconds remaining.

"He kept taking his time and I am like, 'Are you going to freaking shoot the ball?'" Embiid said. "You know, big-time play. He got to his spot and he made a big-time shot."

The Nets shot 57 percent from the field and hit 46 percent beyond the three-point line to head into the half with a 68-54 lead before the 76ers rallied.

D'Angelo Russell had 38 points, his highest total with the Nets, and added eight assists and

eight rebounds.

**Magic 108, Lakers 104:** Nikola Vucevic had 31 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists and Terrence Ross made a go-ahead lay-up with 34 seconds left to help visiting Orlando beat Los Angeles.

Ross scored 16 points as the Magic defeated the Lakers for the second time in eight days.

LeBron James had 24 points and seven assists for the Lakers, who had won three straight games and six of their past seven.

**Raptors 125, Heat 115:** Kawhi Leonard had 29 points and 10 rebounds, Kyle Lowry added 12 points and 10 assists, and host Toronto won its fifth straight.

Jonas Valanciunas had 17 points and 10 rebounds as the Raptors improved their NBA-leading record to 17-4.

**Knicks 103, Grizzlies 98:** Enes Kanter had a career-high 26 rebounds and scored 21 points, Tim Hardaway Jr. finished with 22 points and visiting New York overcame a

poor shooting first half to beat Memphis.

**Clippers 104, Trail Blazers 100:** Tobias Harris had 34 points and 11 rebounds, and visiting Los Angeles beat Portland.

Danilo Gallinari made the tiebreaking jumper with 47 seconds left and added 17 points for the Clippers.

**Pistons 118, Suns 107:** Andre Drummond had 19 points and 16 rebounds, and host Detroit pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat Phoenix.

Devin Booker scored 37 points for Phoenix.

**Hawks 124, Hornets 123:** John Collins had 23 points and 11 rebounds and blocked Kemba Walker's runner as time expired, helping host Atlanta snap a 10-game losing streak with a victory over Charlotte.

**Jazz 133, Kings 112:** Rudy Gobert had 18 points and 15 rebounds, Ricky Rubio scored 27 points and visiting Utah beat Sacramento to snap a three-game losing streak.

## NHL roundup

# Watson's hat trick leads Predators over Ducks

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Austin Watson had a difficult time remembering the last time he scored a hat trick — at any level.

"American Hockey League, maybe?" Watson said. "A couple of years now."

Watson, known as a grinder who is strong on the penalty kill, recorded his first career NHL hat trick Sunday night as Nashville defeated the Anaheim Ducks 5-2.

Watson, a 26-year-old right wing, became the fourth Predators player to record a hat trick this season, a franchise record.

"It's always nice to score goals and contribute," said Watson, who entered the game with

just one goal. "As hockey players, that's what we like to do."

Watson usually spends his time on the third and fourth lines, but he moved up to the first and second lines against Anaheim due to an undisclosed injury to center Kyle Turris.

He scored the game's first goal in the opening period, added his first career power-play goal in the second period and his empty netter with 1:06 left prompted the sellout crowd of 17,167 at Bridgestone Arena to shower the ice with caps.

"To get an opportunity to play with [Ryan Johansen] and [Filip Forsberg], two really gifted hockey players, and then I was out there with [Colton Sissons] and [Nick Bonino], we had some good success," Wat-

son said. "It was a fun night."

Watson returned from an 18-game suspension for domestic violence two weeks ago.

"I think it was just a matter of getting back on the ice and getting his timing back," Predators coach Peter Laviolette said. "He was in shape when he started, but there's something about the game and the way it moves and getting your game-timing down from moving the puck, reading the plays, reading the situations. So we've been giving him more opportunity with regard to ice time, penalty kill."

**Flames 6, Coyotes 1:** Noah Hanifin and Mark Jankowski each scored twice, former Coyotes goalie Mike Smith just missed his 38th career shutout

and visiting Calgary routed Arizona.

Smith made 28 saves in his first win since Nov. 1. Calgary led 6-0 before Clayton Keller scored for Arizona with 6:16 remaining.

**Lightning 5, Devils 2:** Brayden Point had two goals and an assist to lead host Tampa Bay.

Tyler Johnson, Cedric Paquette and Alex Killorn also scored for the Lightning, who have won three straight games and five of six.

**Kings 5, Oilers 2:** Dustin Brown recorded a hat trick to lead host Los Angeles past Edmonton.

Anze Kopitar scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period and had two assists.