

Vet in love with terrorist charged

By **CHAD GARLAND**

Stars and Stripes

Holiday travel can be stressful, especially for a New Jersey woman arrested this week on charges she provided material support to a member of an al-Qaida affiliate in Syria whom she said she loved, but found too controlling.

FBI agents arrested 53-year-old Army veteran Maria Bell on Wednesday at her home in Hopatcong, N.J., federal prosecutors said. Bell had tickets to travel to Turkey via Egypt the same day, a criminal complaint said.

It's the second time the FBI has interrupted Bell's plans to travel to Turkey around Thanksgiving.

In 2018, she had plans to fly from New York City to Istanbul on Black Friday, but she was denied boarding after federal agents interviewed her at the airport.

On that trip, she had planned to meet up with a man who identified himself as a member of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, a designated terrorist group run by the founder of al-Nusra Front and made up of al-Qaida

veterans, the complaint said, citing encrypted online messages between the two.

Bell sent the man \$3,150 in 18 installments up to the day before Thanksgiving in 2018, using middlemen to conceal the intended recipient, the complaint said.

But just before Thanksgiving, the two appeared to have a falling out after the militant, believed to be a man named Abdullah Flayes, refused to let her meet his family, a government transcript of their online communications showed.

Authorities say Bell also provided advice to the man on operational security, communications and weapons, and ammunition purchases in thousands of messages on apps and social media since February 2017.

Bell often cited her military experience, prosecutors said. She served in the National Guard and on active duty in the Army from November 1984 to January 1986, but received an other-than-honorable discharge in lieu of a court-martial, a criminal complaint stated.

Flayes is not named in the document, but

is identified in online news videos cited in the court record, one of which in late 2016 showed him wearing a camouflage uniform and body armor, carrying a rifle and fighting Syrian regime forces in Aleppo.

In that video, he says he is a member of Ahrar al-Sham. At the time it had a military partnership with HTS, a group reportedly run by Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, a man believed to have had close ties to the former leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Jolani was arrested and held by U.S. forces at Camp Bucca in Iraq in 2008, and after his release worked alongside Islamic State founder Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

At one point, Flayes warned that if U.S. warplanes struck militant-controlled targets in support of the Syrian regime, "we will return to revenge within New York."

"If there were ever an attack in New York, all Muslims and helpers like me will be arrested," Bell responded later, prosecutors said.

If convicted, Bell faces up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Miller travels to Somalia during holiday tour

By **CAITLIN M. KENNEY**

Stars and Stripes

CAMP LEMONNIER, DJIBOUTI — Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller traveled to Somalia on Friday to meet with American forces stationed there as President Donald Trump considers removing U.S. troops from the country, according to a defense official.

Miller arrived in Djibouti on Thursday as part of his Thanksgiving holiday tour to meet with troops. During that stop, he took a flight to Somalia to extend his holiday message of appreciation and support to the U.S. service members working in Mogadishu, according to Lt. Col. Anton Semelroth, a Pentagon spokesman.

Information about which base or the specific troops Miller met with was not disclosed. Reporters did not travel with Miller to Somalia in what a defense official said

was possibly the first visit to the country by a defense secretary.

Miller's visit comes as Trump's administration considers reducing U.S. troops in the country, according to news reports. Experts are worried that a withdrawal of troops would leave the Somali forces vulnerable to be overrun by terrorist fighters, The Associated Press reported Thursday.

About 700 American troops in Somalia are conducting counterterrorism operations and train, advise, assist support to Somali forces. Al-Shabab, a terrorist group linked to al-Qaida, is active in the country and capable of conducting attacks such as rigging vehicles as bombs. There is also a smaller force of ISIS-Somalia, but it does not have the capability of al-Shabab. The United States has conducted air strikes in the country to kill al-Shabab members.

A Defense Department inspector general

report released Wednesday states U.S. Africa Command has seen "a definitive shift" in recent months of the group's focus to attack U.S. interests in the region. AFRICOM also believes al-Shabab is the most "dangerous, capable, and imminent threat" on the continent, according to the report. The group also has the intent to attack America, but does not have the ability now to do so, the report states. In the last year, al-Shabab has been behind three attacks that have killed or injured U.S. personnel: September 2019 at Baledogle Airfield in Somalia; Manda Bay in Kenya in January, and an attack in September in southern Somalia, according to the report.

Somalian security forces are closing in on a deadline next year to take over full control of the country's security, however the inspector general report states they still rely on international support.

Trump to honor Electoral College result

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he will leave the White House if the Electoral College formalizes President-elect Joe Biden's victory — even as he insisted such a decision would be a “mistake” — as he spent his Thanksgiving renewing baseless claims that “massive fraud” and crooked officials in battleground states caused his election defeat.

“Certainly I will. But you know that,” Trump said Thursday when asked whether he would vacate the building, allowing a peaceful transition of power in January. But Trump — taking questions for the first time since Election Day — insisted that “a lot of things” would happen between now and then that might alter the results.

“This has a long way to go,” Trump said, even though he lost.

The fact that a sitting American president even had to address whether or not he would leave office after losing reelection underscores the extent to which Trump has smashed one convention after another over the last three weeks. While there is no evidence of the kind of widespread fraud Trump has been alleging, he and his legal team have nonetheless been working to cast doubt on the integrity of the election and trying to overturn voters' will in an unprecedented breach of democratic norms.

Trump claimed, despite the results, that this may not be his last Thanksgiving at the White House. And he insisted there had been “massive fraud,” even though state officials and international observers have said no evidence of that exists and Trump's campaign has repeatedly failed in court.

Trump's administration has already giv-

en the green light for a formal transition to get underway. But Trump took issue with Biden moving forward.

“I think it's not right that he's trying to pick a Cabinet,” Trump said, even though officials from both teams are already working together to get Biden's team up to speed.

And as he refused to concede, Trump announced that he will be traveling to Georgia to rally supporters ahead of two Senate runoff elections that will determine which party controls the Senate.

As for the Electoral College, Trump made clear that he will likely never formally concede, even if he said he would leave the White House.

“It's gonna be a very hard thing to concede. Because we know there was massive fraud,” he said, noting that, “time isn't on our side.”

North Korea's Kim vents against virus, economy

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered at least two people executed, banned fishing at sea and locked down the capital, Pyongyang, as part of frantic efforts to guard against the coronavirus and its economic damage, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers Friday.

Kim's government also ordered diplomats overseas to refrain from any acts that could provoke the United States because it is worried about President-elect Joe Bi-

den's expected new approach toward North Korea, lawmakers told reporters after attending a private briefing by the National Intelligence Service.

One of the lawmakers, Ha Tae-keung, quoted the NIS as saying Kim is displaying “excessive anger” and taking “irrational measures” over the pandemic and its economic impact. Ha said the NIS told lawmakers that North Korea executed a high-profile money changer in Pyongyang last month after holding the person responsible

for a falling exchange rate. He quoted the NIS as saying that North Korea also executed a key official in August for violating government regulations restricting goods brought from abroad. The two people weren't identified by name. North Korea also made an unsuccessful hacking attempt on at least one South Korean pharmaceutical company that was trying to develop a coronavirus vaccine, the NIS said.

The NIS said it couldn't immediately confirm the lawmakers' accounts.

Iranian nuclear scientist slain in ambush attack

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — An Iranian scientist named by Israel as the leader of the Islamic Republic's disbanded military nuclear program was killed Friday in an ambush on the outskirts of Tehran, authorities said.

Iran's foreign minister alleged the killing of Mohsen Fakhrazadeh bore “serious indications” of an Israeli role, but did not elaborate. Israel, long suspected of killing several Iranian nuclear scientists a decade ago, declined to immediately comment. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu once told the public to “remember that name” when talking about Fakhrazadeh.

The killing risks further raising tensions

across the Mideast, nearly a year after Iran and the U.S. stood on the brink of war when an American drone strike killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad.

Trump himself retweeted a posting from Israeli journalist Yossi Melman, an expert on the Israeli Mossad intelligence service, about the killing. Melman's tweet called the killing a “major psychological and professional blow for Iran.”

Details about the slaying remained slim in the hours after the attack, which happened in Absard, a village just east of the capital that is a retreat for the Iranian elite. Iranian state television said an old truck with explosives hidden under a load of wood blew up near a sedan carrying Fak-

hrizadeh.

As Fakhrazadeh's sedan stopped, at least five gunmen emerged and raked the car with rapid fire, the semiofficial Tasnim news agency said.

Fakhrazadeh died at a hospital after doctors and paramedics couldn't revive him. Others wounded included Fakhrazadeh's bodyguards. Photos and video shared online showed a Nissan sedan with bullet holes in the windshield and blood pooled on the road.

While no one claimed responsibility for the attack, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif pointed the finger at Israel, calling the killing an act of “state terror.”

Black Friday gives hope to coping stores

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After months of slumping sales and businesses toppling into bankruptcy, Black Friday is offering a small beacon of hope.

In normal times, Black Friday is the busiest shopping day of the year, drawing millions of shoppers eager to get started on their holiday spending.

But these are not normal times: The economy is tanking and crowds are expected to be dramatically diminished as coronavirus cases spike and shoppers do more of their purchases online.

Many retailers closed their doors on Thanksgiving Day but are beefing up their safety protocols to reassure wary customers that they can still come back the next day. For those who can't be reassured, stores are moving their doorbuster deals online and ramping up curbside pickup options as a last grasp at sales before the year ends and they head into the dark days of winter with the pandemic still raging.

"Black Friday is still critical," said Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData

Retail. "No retailer wants it to be tarnished. It's still vital to get their consumers spending and get consumers into the holiday mood."

Macy's Herald Square in New York featured such deals as 50% off handbags and 60% off women's and men's coats, but there was just a trickle of shoppers at around 7 a.m., an hour after the store opened. There was no one in line at the service area where customers pick up their online orders. Workers could be seen sanitizing door knobs and windows. The scene looked similarly empty at the nearby Manhattan Mall.

At the Garden State Plaza mall in Paramus, N.J., parking spots were easy to find shortly after the mall opened at 7 a.m. Inside, there was a line at video game store GameStop and several police officers to control the crowd.

Things were quiet at a Walmart in Saddle Brook, N.J. The nation's largest retailer has been offering its best deals online this month to deter any crowds from showing up on Black Friday.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention has labeled shopping in crowded stores during the holidays a "higher risk" activity and says people should limit any in-person shopping, including at supermarkets. Instead, the health agency recommends shopping online, visiting outdoor markets or using curbside pickup, where workers deliver orders in the parking lot.

The day after Thanksgiving has been losing its luster as the unofficial start to the holiday shopping season for the past several years, with more stores were offering holiday discounts throughout the month. Still, Black Friday has remained the busiest day of the year, according to ShopperTrak, and is expected to hold that title again this year.

The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, has taken an optimistic view, predicting that shoppers will be looking for reasons to celebrate. The trade group expects sales for the November and December period to increase between 3.6% and 5.2% over 2019 compared with a 4% increase the year before. Holiday sales have averaged gains of 3.5% over the past five years.

Families adjust to pandemic-altered Thanksgiving

Associated Press

Vivian Zayas can't keep herself from scrolling through photos of last Thanksgiving, when her mother stood at the stove to make a big pot of rice and beans and then took a seat at the edge of the table.

That was before anyone had heard of COVID-19 and before it claimed the retired seamstress. Ana Martinez died at 78 on April 1 while recovering at a nursing home from a knee replacement.

The family is having their traditional meal of turkey, yams, green beans and rice and beans — but Zayas is removing a seat from the table at her home in Deer Park, N.Y., and putting her mother's walker in its place.

"It's a painful Thanksgiving. You don't even know, should you celebrate?" asked Zayas. "It's a lonely time."

The family is left with "an empty chair at the table forever," another daughter, Alexa Rivera, said.

Americans are marking the Thanksgiving holiday amid an unrelenting pandemic that has claimed the lives of more than a quarter of a million people in the United States. Turkey and pies will still come out of ovens, football will still be on TV, families

will still give thanks and have lively conversations about politics. But this holiday has been utterly altered after months filled with sorrows and hardships: Many feasts are weighed down by the loss of loved ones; others have been canceled or scaled back with the virus surging.

Zoom and FaceTime calls have become a fixture at dinner tables to connect with family members who don't want to travel. Far fewer volunteers are helping at soup kitchens or community centers. A Utah health department has been delivering boxes of food to residents who are infected with the virus and can't go to the store. A New York nursing home is offering drive-up visits for families of residents struggling with celebrating the holiday alone.

On any normal Thanksgiving Day, Kara McKlemurry and her husband would drive from their Clearwater, Fla., home to one of two places: his family's home in another part of the state or her family's house in Alabama. This year, McKlemurry informed her family there would be no visits. She and her husband didn't want to risk infecting anyone or getting the virus themselves.

Not everyone followed McKlemurry's example. Millions of Americans bought tick-

ets to fly somewhere for the holiday, crowding airports despite pleas from officials to avoid travel and gatherings.

In the nation's capital, the convention center is empty unlike in previous years, when volunteers have worked together to serve a meal to about 5,000 people. In the era of social distancing, the sponsored event had to be reimaged.

Ahead of the holiday, organizers delivered to 20 nonprofits 5,000 gift bags, each with winter clothing accessories, hand sanitizer and a mask, and 5,000 boxes that included a turkey sandwich with condiments, a side potato salad, a cookie and utensils.

In Ogden, Utah, Evelyn Maysonet stepped out of her home Tuesday morning to find boxes overflowing with canned goods, desserts and a turkey. She has been isolating with her husband and son since all three tested positive for COVID-19.

None of them has been able to leave to buy groceries, so they were thrilled to receive the health department's delivery — and the chance to cherish the things that matter most.

"As long as you have a life and you're still alive, just make the best of it with you and your family," Maysonet said.

Nevada county fears overtaxing its morgue

Associated Press

RENO, Nev. — “This is an awful question, but how many bodies does a freezer cooler hold?”

A Reno newspaper reporter posed it to the local coroner who fears the recent explosion of coronavirus cases could soon overtake not only northern Nevada’s ability to treat the sick, but also store the dead.

COVID-19 is spreading so fast in Nevada that someone contracts it every minute on average and someone else dies from it about every two hours.

The vast majority of cases and deaths have been in Clark County — the state’s most populous county that includes Las Vegas. But Washoe County, including Reno-Sparks, has recorded 59 COVID-19 deaths the last 30 days — half of those over this past week.

If current trends continue, Washoe County Medical Examiner Laura Knight said the death rate could potentially double over the next two to three weeks.

She’s paying close attention because she’s responsible for the safe keeping of victims at the county morgue.

“I could see a scenario where we double and double and then within about a six-week period, we could potentially be filling our capacity,” she told reporters Wednesday.

Knight is working to expedite cremations at funeral homes and mortuaries, many already at 90% capacity, and transfer some bodies to the county’s 200-capacity facility.

It’s currently only 10% full. But fearful of death surges that typically follow infections by two to three weeks, she’s making contingency plans to rent storage units like they did shortly after the pandemic’s outbreak last spring when images of trucks filled with bodies in New York first drew national attention.

Missouri

ST. LOUIS — More Missouri counties are adding mask orders as virus cases and hospitalizations surge.

Among them is Jefferson County, which approved a mask order on Wednesday, the third county in the region to add coronavirus restrictions in recent days. The move followed a persistent — but so far unsuccessful — campaign by area health officials imploring Missouri Gov. Mike Parson to mandate masks statewide, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reports.

COVID-19 hospitalizations have been breaking records nearly every day. And on

Thursday, the state reported 4,471 new confirmed cases, bringing the total to 287,263.

Since the pandemic started, 3,808 people have died, according to the latest data from the state’s health department.

The issue has been a source of tension for months in the county, with residents protesting when a similar order was proposed in the summer.

“The thing we need to remember most importantly out of this is that it isn’t about restricting individuals, it’s about saving lives,” Jefferson County Health Department Director Kelley Vollmar said in a statement.

Mississippi

JACKSON — Mississippi hospitals are administering a new antibody therapy to coronavirus patients in hopes that it will improve outcomes and limit hospitalizations as new cases of the coronavirus are on the rise.

Monoclonal antibodies were approved on Nov. 21 through emergency use authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The therapy can be used by high-risk patients who have tested positive for the virus and have not yet been hospitalized.

The one dose is administered intravenously and can be used in individuals ages 12 or older, according to the Mississippi State Department of Health.

George Regional Hospital in Lucedale administered the treatment for the first time to two COVID-19 positive patients last Friday, WLOX-TV reports. Days later, both patients are doing well with few symptoms, George Regional Hospital Chief of Staff Dr. Jay Pinkerton said.

Wisconsin

MADISON — Wisconsin reported a decline in coronavirus cases on Thursday, but health officials worried that holiday gatherings could undo recent progress in slowing infections.

The Department of Health Services reported 5,095 new cases of the virus — the sixth day that new cases have declined. But health officials also reported 62 more deaths, bringing the state’s death toll to 3,240.

Over the past two weeks, the rolling average number of daily new cases has decreased by 5.2%. But the state has still reported the nation’s sixth-highest number of new cases in that time, with Johns Hopkins researchers tallying about 1,567 new cases per 100,000 people. Roughly one in every

139 people has tested positive in the past week.

Health officials are readying for another surge in infections and deaths stemming from Thanksgiving gatherings. They pushed people to stay at home to celebrate the holiday in an effort to slow the spread.

The Department of Health Services noted the loss that many feel after losing family and friends to the virus.

It wrote on Twitter, “3,240 families won’t have their loved ones at their #Thanksgiving tables ever again.”

Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — An additional 6,434 Hoosiers have been diagnosed with COVID-19, bringing to 318,894 the number of Indiana residents known to have had the coronavirus, state health officials said Thursday.

A total of 5,295 Hoosiers are confirmed to have died from COVID-19, an increase of 63 from the previous day for a second straight day, the Indiana Department of Health reported. Another 266 probable deaths have been reported based on clinical diagnoses in patients for whom no positive test is on record.

The newly reported deaths made November Indiana’s deadliest COVID-19 month yet with 1,118 confirmed deaths.

The number of people in Indiana hospitalized with COVID-19 was 3,384, the department said.

Gov. Eric Holcomb has said he plans to meet with local elected officials, businesses and hospital administrators around the state next week to get “updated perspectives and input” about COVID-19 responses at the local and county levels, and to see how “the state could be doing more” to help out.

Kansas

LAWRENCE — The number of Kansas counties that require face coverings has risen sharply as fewer opt out of Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly’s latest mask mandate.

Sixty-two Kansas counties now have orders in place, with many coming as Kelly’s new statewide mask order went into effect Wednesday, according to a list compiled by the Kansas Association of Counties. The remaining 43 of the counties have opted out, but most are encouraging or recommending people wear masks, The Kansas City Star reports.

It’s a stark contrast to the response Kelly received to her first mask order in July, when the majority of counties opted out.

Rockefeller Christmas tree owl returns to the wilderness

NY SAUGERTIES — Rocky the stowaway owl is back in the wild. The tiny Saw-whet owl was named Rockefeller after it was found by a worker setting up the holiday tree at Manhattan's Rockefeller Center. The owl was apparently trapped in the 75-foot-tall Norway spruce when it was cut down 170 miles north, in upstate New York.

The female owl was uninjured but hadn't eaten for at least three days when she was discovered and sent to Ravensbeard Wildlife Center in the Hudson Valley town of Saugerties. There, a rehabilitator nursed her back to health for a week with plenty of mice before Rocky was cleared to continue her migratory journey south.

In a video posted on Ravensbeard's Facebook page, Rocky sits quietly on rehabilitator Ellen Kalish's fingers before winging her way over to a grove of pines.

"She is a tough little bird and we're happy to see her back in her natural habitat," the center wrote on Facebook.

Rescuers use night-vision goggles to find missing hiker

CA CALABASAS — Southern California rescuers spotted a missing hiker using their night-vision goggles and flew her to safety, authorities said.

The Malibu Search and Rescue Team, part of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and Los Angeles County firefighters found the 45-year-old woman in the Red Rock Canyon Park area of Topanga, the team said in a

They found the "proverbial needle in the haystack" by using their night vision goggles to locate the hiker, authorities said. She was not injured.

Man suspected of trying to take photos in restroom

OR PORTLAND — A Portland man convicted of harassing and committing sexual acts on women aboard Portland light rail trains and buses now has been accused to trying to take a photograph of a woman in a bathroom stall.

Jared Walter was arrested after attempting to take the photograph in a restroom stall at the Lloyd Center Mall, KOIN-TV reported.

He was indicted by a Multnomah Grand Jury for multiple charges including invasion of personal privacy, attempted invasion of personal privacy disorderly conduct.

3 restaurant servers receive \$2,100 tip from generous couple

RI BARRINGTON — Three servers at a Rhode Island restaurant received a tip for over \$2,000 from two generous patrons last week.

The two customers insisted that the servers at Bluewater Bar and Grill wait until they left to close the tab and left a tip for \$2,100 to be split between the three.

The server, Melissa Jordan, said that the couple, who asked to remain anonymous, brought the servers to tears with the gift.

On the back of the receipt, the couple wrote, "Hope this will help you all. You all have a nicer Xmas."

Man faces charges for spitting at hikers who were maskless

MA ASHBURNHAM — A 71-year-old Massachusetts man facing charges for claiming he had COVID-19 when he spit at two women on a hiking trail because he was apparently angry they were not wearing face masks has been ordered by a judge to quarantine and be tested for the virus.

Hale Powell, of Westford, was released after pleading not guilty at his arraignment to assault and battery and issuing a false threat of a biological agent.

Two young women who had been hiking the Midstate Trail in Ashburnham paused to sit down on a bench at the Hudson Overlook, a spot where the Boston skyline is visible, police said.

A man confronted them about their lack of masks, police said. The man walked away, but returned, lowered his own mask and spit toward the women several times.

Trio plead guilty for roles in home title scheme

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — Federal prosecutors said three Oklahoma City residents have pleaded guilty for their roles in a scheme in which they used fake documents and fictitious lawyers to take ownership of more than a dozen houses without the knowledge of the homeowners.

Laura Johnson, 45, Thomas Johnson Sr., 52 and Cheryl Ashley, 70, are accused of using fraudulent documents from 2014 until 2019 to obtain titles to homes and other properties, according to U.S. Attorney Timothy J. Downing.

The three defendants filed fraudulent warranty deeds to transfer properties into the names of fictitious companies and individuals. The scheme also included fraudu-

lent confidential stamp tax affidavits and fake mortgages, according to prosecutors.

Salt Lake City official wants curbside, online alcohol sales

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Utah's state liquor regulator wants to implement curbside pickup and online sales of alcohol, but the state agency needs funding from the Legislature.

Some state legislators are apprehensive about the idea, KSTU-TV reported.

"Can we ensure that the safeguards are in place?" said Republican Rep. Timothy Hawkes, who handles liquor legislation for the House majority. "But yeah, we've got to make sure our systems align with what consumers expect and demand."

Utah remains one of the most restrictive states about alcohol in the country.

Sperm whale that was stranded on beach is euthanized

AL MONTROSE — Veterinarians euthanized a sperm whale that had been stranded in Mobile Bay and was no longer able to swim, a conservation group announced.

The Dauphin Island Sea Lab Marine Mammal Research Program said the whale was sedated and euthanized.

"Euthanasia was the best option for this animal who was suffering and unable to swim and survive any longer in the wild. The process went very smoothly. We were able to find a window of calm weather to sedate the animal and administer the medication necessary," the agency said.

The 35-foot whale had been in the bay for about a week and repeatedly stranded itself.

Man pleads guilty to more than a dozen robberies, drug charges

MA BOSTON — A Massachusetts man has pleaded guilty in connection to more than a dozen robberies in the Greater Boston area, according to prosecutors.

Luis Cintron, 41, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Boston to 14 counts of robbery and conspiracy to commit robbery. In addition, Cintron pleaded guilty to charges for the possession of cocaine and the intent to distribute cocaine, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney's office.

According to the statement, Cintron was involved in 15 armed store robberies involving two suspects. There was no information on the second robber.

Associated Press

Washington atop NFC East

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Alex Smith has Washington at least temporarily in first place in the NFC East after winning on Thanksgiving for the first time, two years after a planned holiday showing was wrecked by the quarterback's career-threatening leg injury.

Smith and his teammates aren't going to concern themselves with how bad their division might be.

Antonio Gibson ran for three touchdowns, Smith threw a scoring pass and Washington pulled away in the fourth quarter of a 41-16 Thanksgiving win over the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday.

Smith was days away from a second career Thanksgiving start in a visit to Dallas two years ago when he was injured. Now he has a second straight victory in his improbable comeback.

"It's hard to put into words," said Smith, who was a modest 19-for-26 for 149 yards and got bailed out on his only interception when receiver Terry McLaurin ran down Dallas linebacker Jaylon Smith to prevent a tying touchdown before the Cowboys had to settle for a field goal.

"I never would have dreamt in a million years something like this would be happening. Just thankful for it and making the most of it every day."

Gibson's second score was a 23-yard run on the first play after an ill-advised fake punt by Dallas as Washington beat its division rival on Thanksgiving for just the second time in 10 tries. Washington has been the most frequent visitor for the Cowboys in their annual holiday home game.

Washington (4-7) slides ahead of Philadelphia (3-6-1) in the NFC East and will stay in first place if the Eagles lose to Seattle on Monday night. It was

the third win in five games since a five-game losing streak dropped Washington to 1-5.

The New York Giants can pull even with Washington by beating Cincinnati on Sunday, and they currently hold the tie-breaker because they went 2-0 against Washington this season.

"Our record's not the best," Gibson said. "We're still in it. That gives us hope. That's what we're pushing for is we can still make the playoffs right now. We're going to keep going."

Dallas (3-8) couldn't build on a big win at Minnesota, losing for the fifth time in six games since star quarterback Dak Prescott's season-ending ankle injury.

The Cowboys were playing a day after strength coach Markus Paul died at a hospital following a medical emergency at the team's facility. Paul was honored with a moment of silence before the game.

The Cowboys trailed 20-16 when they faced a fourth-and-10 from their 24-yard line early in the fourth quarter. Darian Thompson took the snap in front of punter Hunter Niswander and pitched to Cedrick Wilson on a reverse that was stuffed for a 1-yard loss.

On the next play, Gibson easily beat the Dallas defense to the left pylon. After another Dallas punt, Gibson capped a clock-killing drive with a 37-yard score for a 34-16 lead.

Washington made it a blow-out when Montez Sweat tipped and intercepted a pass right in the face of Andy Dalton and was free to run 15 yards for a TD.

Gibson, who already was the rookie leader in touchdowns rushing and now has 11, finished with 115 yards on 20 carries.

And two-time rushing champion Ezekiel Elliott of Dallas had just 32 yards while losing his fifth fumble of the season, by far the most of his five-year career.

McLaurin had the defensive play of the game, tackling Smith at the Washington 4 after Smith's interception in the open field near the 50. The Cowboys went 6 yards in the wrong direction and had to settle for a short field goal and a 20-16 deficit late in the third quarter.

"I was just trying to make a play," said McLaurin, who led Washington with seven catches for 92 yards. "But when our defense got that stop, that's when I kind of felt like, 'Wow, that was a big play.' You never give up on any plays because you never know what's going to happen."

Dallas' last lead was 10-7 in the second quarter after Dalton's 54-yard touchdown pass to Amari Cooper, who had 112 yards on six catches.

PASS AND CATCH

Smith's touchdown pass was a 5-yarder to tight end Logan Thomas, the former college quarterback who chucked the ball into the second deck of seats not long after his 28-yard pass to McLaurin on a trick play set up Gibson's first TD.

"I told him he's got a pretty good QB rating right now," Smith said. "Gadget plays are a part of football, and what better day to run it on than Thanksgiving? Obviously we do multiple things with Logan. He's a talented guy."

INJURIES

A Dallas offensive line that has been in flux all season lost both starting tackles to injuries on the opening drive, which ended in a field goal. And that's with the original starting tackles already out for the season with injuries.

Zack Martin, a four-time All-Pro at right guard making a second straight start at right tackle, injured his left calf in the first half. Four plays earlier, left tackle Cameron Erving exited with a knee injury.

Texans top tame Lions

Associated Press

DETROIT — Deshaun Watson dropped back in a protected pocket at midfield and perfectly lofted one of his four touchdown passes, connecting with Will Fuller in stride just before he reached the end zone.

Houston's star quarterback made it look easy, and the Detroit Lions did their part to not put up much of a fight.

Watson had a pair of go-ahead touchdown passes in the first half and threw for two more scores in the fourth quarter to help Houston pull away and beat Detroit 41-25 Thursday.

And still, he wasn't satisfied.

"It was definitely good, but I missed two touchdowns," Watson said.

The dynamic quarterback finished 17-for-25 for 318 yards with four touchdowns and no interceptions. He has thrown 15 touchdown passes without getting picked off once in the past six games.

"You've got to give some credit to the guys up front," interim coach Romeo Crennel said. "If they give him time, he's able to make plays. Guys can get open and he can hit them."

Texans star defensive end J.J. Watt had an early pick-6 and Fuller had six receptions for 171 yards and two touchdowns, including a 40-yard touchdown catch in which it looked like he and Watson were all alone on a practice field.

The Texans (4-7) have won two straight for the first time this season and three of their past four games with Crennel.

"That's good, but we haven't won enough," Crennel said.

Detroit (4-7) might end the season with interim leaders after losing consecutive games for the third time this season, dropping coach Matt Patricia's record to 13-29-1 and general manager Bob Quinn's mark to 12 games under .500 over five seasons.

Marshall breaking mental health stigma

Associated Press

Brandon Marshall caught 970 passes for 12,351 yards and 83 touchdowns, owns an NFL record with 21 receptions in one game and played in six Pro Bowls during a remarkable 13-year career in the NFL.

His proudest accomplishment came when he sought help for mental illness.

"I have to go back to when I first realized that football wasn't my purpose but that was my platform and that was on the campus of McLean Hospital in 2011," Marshall said on the AP Pro Football Podcast. "I was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, and I just had phenomenal experiences learning who I was and just breaking down some of my belief systems. It helped me actually just become better in so many other areas of my life and inspired me to build things that could help people be better.

"So that's the thing I'm most proud of is the start of that mental health journey on the nonprofit side. You know, it's cool scoring touchdowns. It's cool making it to the NFL. That was an amazing journey. But when you are in a position to potentially save a life, that's a

phenomenal experience."

Marshall's transition to life after football following the 2018 season has gone smoothly. He launched a podcast called "I Am Athlete" during the coronavirus pandemic with former NFL players Chad Johnson, Fred Taylor and Channing Crowder. He started "House of Athlete," a Florida-based lifestyle wellness brand. He's one of four hosts of Showtime's "Inside the NFL" and recently was named co-host of "First Things First," a weekday morning show on FS1.

But none of it would be possible if Marshall hadn't realized he needed help to deal with isolation and depression.

"I didn't have those skills (to cope) so I had to go to McLean Hospital and join dialectical behavior therapy groups, cognitive behavioral therapy, mentalization, self assessment," Marshall said. "I started with the clinical evaluation and neurological evaluation to see what I was dealing with, to see if I was capable of change. And for me the journey has been really interesting, really impactful, transformative.

"I just know that everybody deals with something. It affects

all of us, because if it isn't us, it's our neighbor. It's just important for us to be able to identify what people may be dealing with. For me, borderline personality disorder presented itself different than the people I was in the same group with. So I'm just thankful that I'm still here today to be able to tell my story and encourage others."

Marshall wants to break the stigma that men should simply "man up" and "suck it up" when it comes to mental health.

"Real men face things," he said. "You can't just face your strengths. You've got to face your challenges and your weaknesses. And it's OK to not be OK. And the best way to come out on the other side is talk to people, ask questions, ask for help."

Marshall said he continues to seek professional care.

"I talk to people when I need to and I also try to stay ahead of it," he said. "And I think that's an important part of our routine. We have a routine where we're taking care of ourselves physically, but at the same time mentally, and being able to deal with stress, especially now there are people dealing with

anxiety and depression for the first time ever because of racial tension, because of COVID-19."

Marshall began his career with Denver in 2006 and played for Miami, Chicago, the New York Jets and Giants and Seattle. He had episodes of volatile behavior early in his career that affected his relationships with coaches, teammates and others before getting his life under control.

"It was just a lot of highs and a lot of lows. But I'm just glad that I was able to turn things around halfway through my career and be a guy that people can lean on and depend on," Marshall said. "My life was a living hell. It was a struggle. But I think the biggest thing for me was what people didn't see. It was the anxiety that I didn't even know I was dealing with. It was being uncomfortable in my own skin, going to the gas station 100 degrees outside in Miami, having a hoodie on and bending down and moving in a way that people won't recognize me and see me because I didn't want to sign autographs because I was just uncomfortable. So there's a lot to it. It was one hell of a journey but now I'm on the other side."

Sources: Ravens QB Jackson test positive for virus

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson has tested positive for COVID-19, according to multiple media outlets.

Last year's NFL MVP is the biggest star to become infected by the virus.

The Baltimore Sun and ESPN, both citing unidentified sources, reported that Jackson was among four more Ravens players to test positive Thursday.

Outside linebacker Pernell McPhee was placed on the reserve/COVID-19 list Wednesday,

joining running backs Mark Ingram and J.K. Dobbins and defensive tackle Brandon Williams. Because of the outbreak, the Ravens have been conducting team work remotely.

The Ravens also said Wednesday they had disciplined a staff member, reportedly a strength coach, for not obeying league protocols.

Baltimore (6-4) was supposed to play the unbeaten Pittsburgh Steelers (10-0) on Thursday night, but the game was postponed until Sunday. The latest round of positive tests could

jeopardize the game being played this weekend.

Backup quarterback Robert Griffin III would be the most likely candidate to start for Baltimore in place of Jackson. The No. 2 overall pick in the 2012 draft, Griffin has made only one start in the past four seasons.

Bridgewater expected to play against Vikings

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — While Panthers coach Matt Rhule says he expects quarterback Teddy Bridgewater to return to the starting lineup on Sunday

against the Minnesota Vikings, he's "pessimistic" about Christian McCaffrey's chances of playing.

McCaffrey was listed as questionable on the team's injury report on Friday after practicing on a limited basis, which immediately raised some eyebrows about his chances of playing this week. But Rhule seemed to shoot down any hopes of a McCaffrey return a few minutes during his video conference call, telling reporters, "I'm pessimistic that he will play."

The Panthers (4-7) have a bye next week.

Top-ranked Gonzaga rolls past Kansas

Associated Press

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Coach Mark Few and Gonzaga keep reaching new heights.

While the top-ranked Bulldogs opened their season with a 102-90 victory over No. 6 Kansas, Few won his 600th game.

“I got an ice shower in the locker, which I didn’t expect,” said Few, who has been at Gonzaga since 1999. “(Kansas coach) Bill (Self) and I set this up for a big college basketball game on Thanksgiving Day before the Cowboys game. That’s why we love college basketball. There’s a lot more games like this coming across the season.”

Drew Timme scored 25 points, Jalen Suggs had 24 and Corey Kispert added 23 as No. 1 Gonzaga pulled away for a statement win.

“We’re not that experienced of a team coming back,” Few said. “We needed Drew and Corey against a high, high level team. We needed their experience and toughness.”

The Bulldogs built a double-digit lead in the first half at the Rocket Mortgage Fort Myers Tip-Off, then saw the Jayhawks

tie it twice in the second half before putting them away. Gonzaga went on a 22-7 run to go up 96-78.

Self said he believes the Bulldogs are as talented as the Kentucky team in 2014-15, which went 38-0 before losing to Wisconsin in the Final Four.

“I thought we played a great team,” he said. “They have four guards who I think will be the best guards we’ll play all year.”

Suggs, who got in foul trouble in the first half, scored 17 of his 24 in the second half.

“I played patient, picked my spots, picked my moments,” Suggs said.

Few said Suggs was special. “And he’s so good to coach,” he added.

Marcus Garrett led Kansas with 22 points and Ochai Agbaji added 17 points. Agbaji picked up his fourth foul midway through the second half, which hurt the Jayhawks. When he left, Kansas trailed 70-67.

“We needed Ochai out there,” Self said. “We’re not deep enough to make up for him.”

The Jayhawks rallied from a

14-point deficit in the first half to tie the game at 57.

Thanks to 62 points in the paint, the Bulldogs shot 65% from the field.

COVID-19 news

Three non-athletes that are part of Gonzaga’s traveling party were isolating in their hotel rooms after one tested positive for the coronavirus.

A total of 112 tests were given and no players from any of the four participating teams tested positive, tournament officials said. Auburn and St. Joseph’s also are participating in the tournament.

“To get the game in was really important for our guys,” Few said. “The Kansas program and ours were consistently doing the right things. We did the protocols and tested hundreds of times. I absolutely marvel at what these guys have done. They’ve never complained.”

Big picture

The way these teams played each other, it wouldn’t be a surprise to see Gonzaga and Kansas meet again late in the NCAA

Tournament, maybe the Final Four.

The Bulldogs are deep and look like they can play defense as well as any of Few’s teams. They can score from the inside and the outside.

Kansas never gives up. Not many teams in the country could get in a 14-point hole to the nation’s No. 1 team and come back to tie it. However, the Jayhawks couldn’t recover from Gonzaga’s second offensive attack.

“I thought we had a bad 25-28 minute start,” Self said. “We gave up a lot of layups, we turned the ball over. Yet we could’ve had a two- or four-point lead.”

Fierce freshmen

While Suggs took over the game at times for Gonzaga, Bryce Thompson and Jalen Thompson had solid openers for Kansas, combining for 23 points.

“(Jalen) was in attack mode,” Garrett said. “He guarded well and was a competitor. Bryce had the same aggressive mindset.”

Robinson-Earl leads Wildcats past Sun Devils

Associated Press

UNCASVILLE, Conn. — Coming into this season, Villanova coach Jay Wright wondered who might replace Saddiq Bey as the Wildcats’ go-to player.

After two games, Wright thinks Jeremiah Robinson-Earl may have answered that question for him.

Robinson-Earl followed up an 18-point performance in the season opener with a career-high 28 points on Thursday night to lead No. 3 Villanova over No. 18 Arizona State 83-74 in the championship game of the Empire Classic.

“He wanted to be in that role

last year and he just wasn’t there yet,” Wright said. “He did all the dirty work last year and he still does the dirty work. But, I think he has developed.”

The 6-foot-9 sophomore forward hit 11 of his 17 shots and pulled down eight rebounds.

Justin Moore added 16 points and 12 boards for the Wildcats (2-0), and Caleb Daniels chipped in with 14 points — 10 in the second half. Daniels spent the final eight minutes of the first half on the bench after picking up his third foul, but wasn’t whistled again.

The Wildcats dictated the pace of the game and dominated on the glass, outrebounding Ari-

zona State 43-27.

No. 8 Illinois 97, Chicago State 38: Ayo Dosunmu scored 22 points, freshman Andres Curbelo added 18 and the host Illini routed the Cougars.

Illinois (2-0) scored the first nine points and led 47-17 at half-time. The Illini hosted Ohio in the third round of the multi-team event Friday and will face No. 2 Baylor on Wednesday.

Adam Miller added 15 points and Kofi Cockburn finished with 14 points and 11 rebounds. Illinois shot 60% from the field.

Xavier Johnson led Chicago State (0-2) with 10 points. Cougars coach Lance Irvin has opted out of the season due to CO-

VID-19 concerns. Assistant Rodell Davis is coaching the team in Irvin’s absence.

No. 15 West Virginia 78, VCU 66: At Sioux Falls, S.D., Derek Culver had 23 points and 15 rebounds to help the Mountaineers beat the Rams in the Bad Boys Mowers Crossover Classic semifinals.

West Virginia (2-0) faced Western Kentucky in the final Friday.

Culver rebounded from a seven-point game Wednesday night in the Mountaineers’ opening victory over South Dakota State, finishing two shy of his career high. He was 8-for-14 from the field.