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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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2 Americans killed in insider attack

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Two Americans, including one servicemember, were killed in an attack near a NATO coalition base in the Afghan capital Wednesday, the NATO-led Resolute Support mission said. The Afghan Defense Ministry described it as an insider attack.

The assailant was wearing a military uniform when he attacked a group of foreign soldiers at 11 a.m. near a military base in the Rish Khor area of western Kabul, said Defense Ministry spokesman Gen. Dawlat Waziri.

The assailant was killed, the ministry said.

The dead servicemember and civilian had been conducting duties as part of NATO's train-and-advise mission, Resolute Support said.

One servicemember and two U.S. civilians sustained injuries in the attack and were in stable condition.

A U.S. defense official in Washington, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that the attack occurred at Camp Morehead, possibly at one of the base's entry control points. U.S. forces are not based there; the U.S. team that was attacked was visiting to meet up with and train local forces, the

official said.

The Pentagon said it was still looking into reports that the assailant was a member of the Afghan National Army, a second official said.

If confirmed it would be the first so-called "green-on-blue" incident, in which trained Afghan Army forces in uniform have turned on their U.S. trainers, this year.

The Defense Department withheld identity of those killed pending notification of next of kin.

"Anytime we lose a member of our team, it is deeply painful," Gen. John W. Nicholson, Resolute Support's commander, said in a statement.

"Our sympathies go out to the families, loved ones and the units of those involved in this incident."

There have been several "green-on-blue" attacks in recent years, but such attacks have become much less frequent.

Two Romanian servicemembers were killed in May in the southern city of Kandahar when two attackers dressed as Afghan security officers opened fire on them.

Zubair Babakarkhail in Kabul and Stars and Stripes reporter Tara Copp in Washington contributed to this report.

Apaches join battle to retake Mosul

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. Apache helicopters have joined the battle for Mosul, launching night attacks against Islamic State fighters defending their last major stronghold in Iraq, a U.S. general said Wednesday.

The Apaches can "see a long range at night" and strike targets from a great distance, which is helping Iraqi forces advance on the city, Maj. Gen. Gary Volesky told reporters at the Pentagon.

"That's what they're doing," said Volesky, commander of the 101st Airborne Division and U.S. and coalition land forces in Iraq. "We get into situations where we expect enemy activity to be ... and that's what we focus them on."

There are an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 Islamic State fighters defending Mosul, which has

roughly 1 million residents.

The Islamic State group has controlled Mosul for two years and has established layers of defenses, Volesky said.

"I expect the enemy is going to fight a full-fledged conventional defense in Mosul," he said.

The Apaches are part of the complex set of weapons, including M1-Abrams tanks, high-mobility artillery rocket systems and upgraded Humvees, being used to retake Iraq's second-largest city, Volesky said.

Since the battle for Mosul began Monday, an estimated 18,000 Iraqi army troops are approaching the city from the south while 10,000 Kurdish fighters are approaching from the east.

There are about 5,000 U.S. forces in Iraq, including between 100 and 200 advisers embedded with the advancing Iraqi troops.

But Volesky said the Islamic State group has fought back aggressively.

"Yesterday and the day prior, [forces have seen] a lot more mortars, more rockets. We've been able to counter-fire pretty effectively," he said.

The Islamic State group has also used new and modified tactics in the battle, Volesky said. On Tuesday, the terrorist group used a car bomb explosion to delay Iraqi forces and enable their fighters to retreat. Last week, the U.S. military confirmed the group was rigging commercial drones with explosives and used a Styrofoam plane to kill two Kurdish fighters.

Volesky said the Islamic State group will likely to put up a stiff defense of Mosul but eventually lose their grip and morph into an insurgency.

He said the transition from conventional combat to coun-

ter-insurgency is deemed so predictable that the U.S. training regimen for Iraqi security forces is already being adjusted to prepare them for insurgent threats.

Volesky said some Islamic State fighters already are giving up their positions in the outskirts of Mosul and pulling back into the city. He said he expects this trend to continue.

At some point, he predicted, the Iraqi forces will prevail.

"I expect they (Islamic State fighters) are going to go into insurgency mode," Volesky said. "That's my assessment. That's what we're preparing the Iraqis for."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.
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Lawmakers back Trump's defense plan

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Hours ahead of the final presidential debate, a dozen House Republicans released an open letter of support Wednesday for Donald Trump's defense plans and claimed that President Barack Obama's administration has thrust reckless budget cuts on the military.

The lawmakers, who sit on committees for armed services, foreign affairs and homeland security, pointed to cuts to commissaries and years of low troop pay raises. They blame Obama for spending cuts — though Congress approved a decade's worth of defense spending caps — and said Trump's plan to dramatically increase the number of troops and ships is "serious and sober" thinking.

The GOP nominee's plan calls for 74 more Navy ships and 50,000 more soldiers, as well as other major increases. The plan could require at least \$650 billion over the coming years and is based on Congress repealing five more years of spending cuts called sequestration, which remains a long shot with a bitterly divided House and Senate.

"Such growth phased within budget reality represents the kind of targeted investment our services need today and is grounded in the kind of serious and sober strategic thinking our country needs in these perilous times by a peace through strength policy," according to the letter, which included support from 23 retired lawmakers and military leaders.

The open letter was signed by Rep. Jeff

Miller, chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee; Rep. Michael McCaul, chairman of the Homeland Security Committee; and members of the Armed Services Committee including Duncan Hunter, of California, and former SEAL Team 6 commander Ryan Zinke, of Montana.

Eight retired general officers and four admirals also signed the letter. Missing were the names of the two Republicans who chair the House and Senate armed services committees and are most responsible for crafting defense policy: Rep. Mac Thornberry, of Texas, and Sen. John McCain, of Arizona.

In addition to a larger Army and Navy, Trump also proposes increasing the number of Marine Corps battalions from 23 to 36, building 87 new Air Force fighter aircraft and developing a state-of-the-art missile defense system.

"I'm going to make our military so big, so powerful, so strong, that nobody — absolutely nobody — is going to mess with us," Trump said during a defense policy speech in September.

The nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget did not calculate the cost of such a military buildup, which would likely be hundreds of billions of dollars, but estimated it would ring up an additional \$150 billion in deficit spending over the next decades if Congress repealed \$450 billion in planned defense cuts.

Trump said he will request that Congress lift the caps, and he also claimed his plan would save \$300 billion through tax reform, shrinking the federal workforce and U.S. energy exploration.

"I will ask Congress to fully offset the

costs of increased military spending. In the process, we will make government leaner and more responsive to the public," Trump said in September.

The military has seen declining budgets since historic high U.S. defense spending at the height of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, due partly to caps passed by Congress in 2011 to reduce the deficit. Republicans and Democrats have decried the caps but have been unable to muster the votes to repeal them. Congress is locked in another budget impasse, and the federal government is running on a stopgap budget measure that expires in December.

Meanwhile, several years of pressure to reduce the defense budget led Obama to set troop pay raises below private-sector wage growth and Congress to trim military personnel benefits with reforms to the commissary system, retirement and health care.

Signers of the letter Wednesday said the austerity comes as the U.S. faces threats from Russia, China and the Islamic State group, and they blame the spending caps on Obama.

"Over the last eight years, the U.S. military has been faced with reckless cuts by the Obama administration and the dangers incurred by defense sequestration," the letter said. "Cutting commissary benefits by 30 percent and restricting cost of living raises to 1.6 percent send a telling message to our warriors, many of whom spent 50 percent of their careers in combat zones."

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Judges to decide if court-martial testimony affected penalty

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Two former colleagues of a sexually abusive South Carolina-based Coast Guardsman blamed the stress of his court-martial for their complicated pregnancies. Now, judges must decide whether it was unfair to have those assertions considered in his sentencing.

One of the women miscarried. The other woman delivered her child prematurely. Their painful testimony anchors a case that began aboard the Gallatin, a since-decommissioned cutter based at the Charleston Naval Complex. It will end at the na-

tion's highest military appeals court.

The Oct. 26 hearing at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces could reach beyond former Petty Officer 2nd Class Omar M. Gomez, now serving an eight-year prison term. The case could speak to the role of roiled emotions as the military combats sexual assault.

A court-martial panel meeting at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in North Charleston in 2013 convicted Gomez, following a six-day trial, of aggravated sexual assault, indecent exposure and other offenses.

After Gomez's conviction, military prosecutors summoned several witnesses who had testified against him to return as part of a presentation justifying a prison sentence.

"I was supposed to have twins and one didn't make it," said the first woman, identified only as MS. "And with more stress from this case, I was worried for this baby that was living inside me, hoping that this stress didn't make his heart rate go up."

MS had previously testified that Gomez, then one of her supervisors aboard the Gallatin, had slapped her buttocks and shown her his penis and

testicles.

During the sentencing hearing, the second woman, identified as SW, attributed her subsequent premature delivery to stress-caused pre-eclampsia, a condition marked by high blood pressure.

Gomez's trial defense attorneys did not object at the time.

In his appeal, Gomez's team questioned the women's claims and their effect on the panel deciding his fate. The eight-year prison term was more than the five years sought by Gomez's defense attorneys but less than the 20 to 30 years recommended by Coast Guard prosecutors.

Climate change poses threat to radar site

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — The U.S. Air Force is spending nearly \$1 billion to build a radar installation that will help keep astronauts and satellites safe by tracking pieces of space junk as small as a baseball. That is, if global warming doesn't get in the way.

The Space Fence is being constructed on a tiny atoll in the Marshall Islands that scientists say could be regularly swamped by rising seas within a couple of decades as a result of climate change. The salt water could play havoc with the equipment, the scientists say.

The Associated Press found that neither the military nor its contractor, Lockheed Martin, gave serious consideration to that threat when designing the installation and choosing a site, despite warnings from the island nation's environmental agency.

The future "does not look good for a lot of these islands," said Curt Storlazzi, an oceanographer with the U.S. Geological Survey who is leading a study at Kwajalein Atoll, where the Space Fence complex is being built.

Dana Whalley, a civilian who is managing the Space Fence program, said the radar installation has a projected lifespan of 25 years and he doesn't expect sea levels to rise enough over that period to cause a problem. But if necessary, he said, the base could take steps to improve its seawalls.

Still, because of budget pressures, military equipment is often used well beyond its projected lifespan. In fact, a key part of the radar tracking system that the Space Fence replaces was built during the dawn of the space age and was badly outdated by the time it was shut down 50 years later in 2013.

Midway between Hawaii and Australia, the Marshall Islands are specks of land that typically poke just a few feet above the Pacific Ocean, making them some of the world's most vulnerable places to rising seas.

The U.S. military has a long-standing connection to the islands. Bikini Atoll was used as a nuclear test site after World War II. Kwajalein Atoll, a battle site during the war, is now an Army base, a ballistic missile test site and an important part of the

military's space surveillance network.

The growing problem of space debris was highlighted in 2009, when an old Russian satellite smashed into a commercial U.S. satellite, creating hundreds of pieces of orbiting junk. The 2013 movie "Gravity" dramatized the threat to astronauts, who need to be safe from debris whether they're traveling on the International Space Station or in a rocket.

Lockheed Martin won the \$915 million Space Fence contract in 2014 and broke ground last year. When the radar system becomes operational in late 2018, it should increase the number of objects that can be tracked tenfold to about 200,000 and provide more precise information on their orbits.

The Space Fence installation will include digital transmitters and receivers as well as power and cooling facilities. About 15 people will operate and maintain it around the clock.

The military chose the Marshall Islands because the Space Fence works best near the equator. But it means the installation is being built just 10 feet above sea level, or the height of a bas-

ketball hoop.

Storlazzi said his study explored the point at which storms will cause the sea to wash clear across an island, completely submerging it, at least once a year. He said that's when an island will no longer be able to sustain most plant or animal life.

He examined one island within Kwajalein Atoll and found that it will probably reach its tipping point within a few decades. He said the island on which the Space Fence is being built faces a similar threat.

The flooding there will probably damage power cables, sewer lines and other electronics and hardware, he said. The seawater will erode land, he said, and eat away at everything from concrete to cars.

"When you get to the point where water is going over the top of the island annually, it will affect a lot of daily life, whether it's related to the Space Fence or other operations, like moving food around," he said.

The study, funded primarily by the Defense Department, has not yet been peer-reviewed or published. But it paints a much more dire future for the atoll than earlier studies.

New DOD telescope focused on space junk

The Washington Post

There are a lot of rocks flying around through space. Lots of debris, too. Old satellites, spent rocket boosters, even for a short while a spatula that got loose during a space shuttle mission in 2006. All of it swirling around in orbit, creating a bit of a traffic jam.

For years, the Pentagon has been worried about the collisions that might be caused by an estimated 500,000 pieces of debris, taking out enormously valuable satellites and, in turn, creating even more debris. On Tuesday, the Defense Department took another significant step toward monitoring all of the cosmic junk swirling around in space by delivering a gigantic new telescope capable of see-

ing small objects from very far away.

Developed by the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency, the Space Surveillance Telescope was formally transferred to the Air Force during a ceremony at White Sands Missile Base in New Mexico on Tuesday.

The telescope is designed to monitor objects as small as softballs, in Geosynchronous orbit, or GEO — some of the most important real estate in space. At about 22,000 miles away, its orbit mirrors that of the Earth, so satellites parked there remain in a fixed point over the globe. That allows satellite television or communications providers to serve particular areas — say, North America or Asia — uninterrupted.

But not only is the orbit far away — it's incredibly vast.

"A volume of tens of thousands of oceans," Lindsay Millar, DARPA's program manager, said in a podcast posted on the agency's website. But the telescope's ability to see "something very far away over a very wide area is really what it's best at."

DARPA says the advanced technology in the massive, 90-ton telescope would allow officials to go from "seeing only a few large objects at a time through the equivalent of a drinking straw to a windshield view with 10,000 objects at a time." It is also being used by NASA to monitor asteroids and other near-Earth objects that could collide with the planet, officials said.

Over the next two years, the telescope is going to be moved and reconstructed in Australia, a vantage point that would allow it to survey an underserved area of space.

The telescope is "a big improvement over the legacy ground-based optical telescopes that are used by the U.S. Air Force, because it can search large areas of sky and also track very faint (small) objects in and around GEO," Brian Weeden, a technical adviser at the Secure World Foundation, wrote in an email.

"That's a critical capability for the U.S. military, as they have a lot of very important satellites in GEO, and are increasingly worried about threats to those satellites."

Ex-FBI agent, State official deny talk of bargain

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A now-retired FBI agent and a State Department official involved in a discussion over the classification of information in one of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's emails said Tuesday they had discussed mutual agency requests but had not linked the two as a bargain, as another FBI employee had reported.

The two men's accounts of a 2015 conversation were not identical and will likely not calm the furor over allegations of the State Department trying to arrange a "quid pro quo" to reduce the classification of an email from Clinton's private server in exchange for more FBI positions at the U.S. Embassy in Iraq.

The issue was thrust into the presidential campaign when the FBI published documents containing the allegation, which was seized upon by Republican lawmakers and GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump.

In a statement released by the State Department, Under Secretary for Manage-

ment Patrick Kennedy said he had called the agent, who was not named in the FBI documents but was identified by The Washington Post as Brian McCauley, "to better understand a proposal the FBI had made to upgrade one of former Secretary Clinton's emails prior to its public release."

"The FBI official I spoke to raised the topic of FBI Iraq slots as an entirely separate matter," Kennedy said. "The two matters were not linked. There was no quid pro quo, nor was there any bargaining."

"At no point in our conversation was I under the impression we were bargaining. In the end, State upgraded the email at the FBI's request and in addition, no increase in FBI Iraq slots resulted from this conversation."

In an interview with The Washington Post, McCauley, the former FBI international operations official, recalled a 2015 phone call in which he said the two men each raised something that they wanted.

McCauley acknowledged to the Post that he had agreed to do a favor for Kennedy, but

he said that after consulting with another FBI official about the email in question, he told Kennedy that he was unable to help him. He said there was no "collusion" between the two men and nothing improper occurred.

A separate interview with a different FBI official from the bureau's records management division, whose name is redacted in the documents, relayed to the FBI a conversation between Kennedy and a colleague in the international operations division — presumably McCauley — that was characterized as a "quid pro quo" agreement to change the email's classification status in exchange for allowing the FBI to place more agents in countries where they are currently forbidden.

The email in question described reports in November 2012 that Libyan police were arresting suspects in the attack on U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya. It had been forwarded to Clinton's private email address by Jake Sullivan, a top aide and the department's director of policy planning, who was using his government email account.

Man accused in failed base bomb plot sentenced

Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. — A Kansas man was sentenced Tuesday to 15 months in prison for helping a would-be jihadi's unsuccessful plan to plant what they thought was a bomb at an Army base.

Alexander Blair, 29, also was sentenced to two years of supervised probation. He was accused of loaning \$100 to John T. Booker Jr., 21, to store what they thought was an explosive device; prosecutors said Booker intended to detonate it outside Fort Riley in northeast Kansas in support of the Islamic State group. The device was a fake bomb built by FBI informants.

Blair pleaded guilty to a conspiracy charge in May, and U.S. District Judge Daniel Crabtree said from the bench that he regretted that federal anti-terrorism laws required him to treat Blair as if Blair had multiple previous criminal convictions despite his previously "spotless" record. The judge also said he concluded — as Blair's attorney had argued — that an unusual genetic personal-

ity condition made Blair "susceptible" to manipulation by Booker.

Prosecutors had pushed for the maximum five-year prison sentence, but Crabtree said it would be too harsh for Blair's relatively small role in the conspiracy. Yet the judge also rejected the defense's request for five years' probation, saying it would not be enough punishment when Blair "understood the connection" between his loan and Booker's attempt to bomb the Army base.

Crabtree said he will recommend that Blair be confined at the federal prison system's medical center in Springfield, Mo., both because of his genetic condition, Williams syndrome, and to make it easier for family to visit. As Blair left the courtroom, he said, "I think it's fair."

Booker, who is also from Topeka, pleaded guilty in February to two felonies under an agreement calling for him to serve 30 years in prison, but he hasn't been sentenced.

Philippine police van rams into protesters

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — A Philippine police van rammed into protesters, leaving several bloodied, as an anti-U.S. rally turned violent Wednesday at the American Embassy in Manila.

At least three student activists had to be taken to a hospital after they were run over by the van driven by a police officer, protest leader Renato Reyes said.

Associated Press TV footage showed the van repeatedly ramming the protesters as it drove wildly back and forth after activists surrounded and started hitting the vehicle with wooden batons they seized from police.

In front of horrified crowds, including videojournalists and photographers, the van suddenly charged backward then sprinted forward twice over a space of about 60 feet, barreling through the scattered protesters and hurtling some to the side like bowling pins. A few got run over but managed to stand.

"There was absolutely no jus-

tification for it," Reyes said of the violent police dispersal of about 1,000 protesters. "Even as the president vowed an independent foreign policy, Philippine police forces still act as running dogs of the U.S."

Police lobbed tear gas and arrested at least 23 protesters who broke through a line of riot police and hurled red paint at the officers and a U.S. government seal at the start of the rally at the seaside embassy compound.

The protesters were demanding an end to the presence of visiting U.S. troops in the Philippines and to support a call by President Rodrigo Duterte for a foreign policy not dependent on the U.S., the country's longtime treaty ally.

The activists came from the largest left-wing umbrella group called Bayan (Nation), which has organized regular anti-U.S. protests in front of the embassy for decades, most of which are peaceful.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman driving clients in van charged with DWI

NY WARRENSBURG — An upstate New York woman who was driving a van for a company that provides services for people with developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injuries is facing several charges after crashing the van into two vehicles while driving drunk with two clients as passengers.

The Post-Star, of Glens Falls, reported that Brianna Norton, 24, of Queensbury, is charged with DWI, endangering the welfare of a mentally incompetent person, failure to keep right and having an open container in a motor vehicle.

The accident happened Friday in Warrensburg when Norton swerved into oncoming traffic, slammed head-on into a Subaru and ricocheted into a parked Ford pickup.

Warren County sheriff's deputies said no injuries were reported.

Man buys storage unit, finds dead, frozen cats

NY NEW YORK — Police said a man bought a storage unit at an auction in New York City and found dozens of dead cats frozen in two freezers.

Officers responded to American Self Storage in the Queens neighborhood of Long Island City on Monday evening.

Police said one freezer had frozen cats stacked on top of each other. In the other, police said, they were individually wrapped in paper and plastic bags. One cat had been skinned. About 40 cats in all were discovered.

The nonprofit American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has taken the dead cats into its custody for necropsies. The tests can't be

performed until the carcasses thaw out.

Police are searching for an unidentified woman who originally rented the unit.

Police, bystanders pull man from burning car

FL PALM BAY — Florida police officers linked arms with bystanders to pull a driver from a burning car.

The Orlando Sentinel reported the man's car collided with another vehicle and plowed down a steep embankment Sunday morning. The car caught fire, and Palm Bay police officers rushed to free the driver.

Video of the rescue showed bystanders linking arms to help officers pull the driver through thick brush up to the road.

Police said the driver became combative during the rescue and had to be handcuffed before he was taken to a hospital with minor injuries. No other injuries were reported in the collision or the rescue.

Police credited with saving suspect's life

IN INDIANAPOLIS — An Indianapolis police sergeant is being credited for helping to save the life of a would-be burglar who badly cut his leg on a barbed-wire fence.

The Indianapolis Star reported that Sgt. David Kinsey applied a tourniquet to the 30-year-old man's leg about 2:30 a.m. Sunday before the man was taken to a hospital.

Police had responded to an alarm at L.E. Myers Co., and when they arrived the man ran away, jumped a fence and fled into the woods. He snagged his right leg on the fence. A police dog helped officers track the man, whose shorts were soaked with blood.

Kinsey told the newspaper it shows people that "we don't

just take bad guys to jail."

Horse rescued from mud gets new home

PA CHEYNEY — A Pennsylvania horse that was lifted to safety by a crane after getting stuck in the mud earlier this month has a new home on a Virginia farm.

Rescuers used a crane to pull Cyrus, a Clydesdale, from the mud at Thornbury Farm Stables near Philadelphia about two weeks ago. A farm employee believes another horse likely scared Cyrus, and he ran into the mud.

Stable manager Penny Parker told The Philadelphia Inquirer that Cyrus, 18, was upset after the rescue operation and didn't calm down until another horse, Ghost, was brought in to keep him company. Parker said it would be traumatic to separate the pair now, so Ghost will be joining Cyrus in Virginia.

7 good Samaritans help cops lift car off driver

NJ MAYS LANDING — Police said seven good Samaritans in New Jersey helped officers lift a car off a driver who was critically hurt when the vehicle landed on top of her during a rollover crash.

The Press, of Atlantic City, reported that police said the woman was traveling around a curve Sunday in Hamilton Township when she lost control of the vehicle. The car left the road and crashed into a tree. The driver was thrown from the car as it flipped, and police said it landed upside down on top of her.

Police said passers-by were able to help lift the car and pull her out. She was airlifted to a hospital in Atlantic City.

The driver's identity wasn't released.

Missing, dead livestock cases are investigated

ND CANNON BALL — The North Dakota Stockmen's Association is offering a reward of up to \$14,000 for information that helps crack cases of missing and dead livestock in Sioux County.

The rancher group said that in one instance, three dead bison were found. The other case involves a dead saddle horse, four dead cows and more than 30 missing cattle. Both cases happened near Cannon Ball. The Stockmen's Association is working with law enforcement on the investigation and advising ranchers in the area to monitor their herds and report any suspicious activity.

Skydiving shoe lost, retrieved during jump

TX SALADO — A skydiving instructor in central Texas who lost a shoe during a stunt retrieved the flying footwear after it bounced off his chest and before either reached the ground.

Shelby Palmer told KXXV-TV that he was glad to catch the left shoe that was part of a pair he borrowed from another skydiver. Nobody was hurt in the September jump.

Palmer works for Skydive Temple in Salado. He and Christopher Elder decided to do a stunt in which one person holds on to another for a time, then lets go. Elder let go sooner than planned, knocking off the instructor's shoe.

Palmer worked his turn and descent rate to reach the shoe, which he grabbed and put on before reaching the ground.

Both skydivers landed safely.

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Power outage hurting Cubs' chances

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Anthony Rizzo's bat shattered into shards, and the ball trickled onto an empty patch of infield grass. The Chicago Cubs' cleanup hitter scampered to first base in the ninth inning, getting just his second hit this postseason in Game 3 of the NL Championship Series.

In an October of increasing offensive ineptitude, the powerful Cubs are looking for any kind of break to get them going.

"That's the kind of hit that we needed," fellow slugger Kris Bryant said. "That's the hit that can spark a team."

Except it didn't. This combustible offense remains quiet and cold — and after a superlative regular season, the Cubs have been shut out in back-to-back playoff games.

With its pitching staff again dominating one of baseball's best lineups, Los Angeles took a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series with a 6-0 victory Tuesday night over Jake Arrieta and the Cubs.

If the Cubs don't find their offense before they leave LA, the most infamous championship drought in sports will stretch into next year.

Chicago had never been blanked in two straight playoff games before the Dodgers did it. Chicago's 18 consecutive scoreless innings comprise the longest drought in the team's postseason history, two more than the 1906 squad.

This 103-win club spent exactly one day out of first place this season, but the Cubs are trailing in the NLCS because their hitters have been silenced ever since that five-run eighth inning in a Game 1 victory.

"I don't gamble, but I probably wouldn't

have gambled on that one," Chicago catcher Miguel Montero said.

Including a 1-0 loss in Game 2, Chicago is a collective 6-for-60 with one extra-base hit over the last two games. The Cubs hadn't been shut out since Aug. 28, but Clayton Kershaw and Rich Hill did it with plenty of help from closer Kenley Jansen.

This is highly unusual for the Cubs, who were third in the big leagues with 808 runs during the regular season. They had the majors' second-best on-base percentage before the postseason, but baserunners have been scarce for most of their seven playoff games, and their team batting average is languishing below .200.

"We're not hitting the ball hard," manager Joe Maddon said. "They've pitched well. Obviously, I have no solid explanation. We've just got to keep working at it. ... There is really no excuse. We just have to pick it up quickly."

Chicago hadn't been shut out in consecutive games since May 2014, but the Cubs never really threatened against Los Angeles — and their best hitters realize they bear the responsibility.

MVP candidate Rizzo (2-for-26), Addison Russell (1-for-24), Jason Heyward (2-for-19), Dexter Fowler (5-for-28) and Ben Zobrist (4-for-26) are all struggling mightily in the postseason. The middle of Chicago's lineup is particularly lacking, and Maddon's adjustments haven't helped.

The Cubs were baffled by Hill, the 36-year-old journeyman who was playing independent ball just more than 14 months ago. Hill threw six innings of two-hit ball, and Arrieta couldn't keep up in his return to the stadium where he threw a no-hitter

in August 2015.

The 2015 Cy Young Award winner had a middling NLCS start for the second straight season, giving up four runs and six hits to the Dodgers over five-plus innings. Last October, he gave up four runs and four hits over five innings to the Mets in Game 2 of New York's sweep.

Maddon dropped Heyward from the lineup for Game 3, but replacement Jorge Soler went hitless and made two misplays in right field, although neither cost the Cubs any runs. Heyward struck out on three pitches as a pinch hitter to end the seventh, taking a terrible swing on a down-and-in slider from Joe Blanton.

Fowler's two-out double in the eighth off reliever Grant Dayton was the Cubs' first extra-base hit since Game 1, but Jansen promptly struck out Bryant. After Rizzo's shattered-bat single, Jansen calmly finished off the win.

The playoffs always provide small sample sizes of teams' woes, but California pitching has flummoxed the Cubs through seven games in October. They didn't hit much even in the Division Series against San Francisco, batting a collective .200 with a meager .247 on-base percentage while relying on pitchers at the plate for an alarmingly big chunk of their runs in that four-game series victory.

Game 4 on Wednesday suddenly looms as pivotal for the Cubs, who had five two-game skids in the second half of the season, but haven't lost three straight since early July.

"You're playing against great teams at this time of year," Montero said. "You just try to live in the moment. And maybe you have to have a better plan."

Hill shuts down Chicago, gives LA 2-1 lead

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Rich Hill never strayed from his mindset of pitching in the moment, even when he was far from the major leagues playing independent ball with the Long Island Ducks.

Convinced there would be another opportunity to get back to the big leagues, he focused on executing pitches without worrying about his current circumstances.

Fourteen months later, Hill allowed two hits over six innings to beat Cy Young Award winner Jake Arrieta and the Chicago Cubs 6-0 Tuesday, giving the

Los Angeles Dodgers a 2-1 NL Championship Series lead.

"It's the biggest game of my career," Hill said. "It's just putting in the work, putting in the time, having a routine, persevere, all those things that you can say to sum up some kind of endurance or resiliency. For me, that's all I've ever known is just work."

Rookie Corey Seager had three hits, including a go-ahead single in the third, and Yasmani Grandal hit a two-run homer in the fourth.

Hill, who made two starts in the independent Atlantic League in August 2015 before

signing a minor league deal with Boston, struck out six and walked two. Joe Blanton, Grant Dayton and Kenley Jansen finished. Playing their 200th postseason game, the Dodgers posted consecutive shutouts for the first time.

Hill was strong from the start against one of his former teams, retiring the side to open the game and later eight in a row. He's given up one run in 23 innings over four home starts for the Dodgers, lowering his ERA to 0.39.

"When he's got that attitude out there, you can tell," Dodgers first baseman Adrian Gonzalez

said. "That's when you know he's rolling, that his pitches are working, and he's doing what he wants to do out there."

Grandal was 0-for-5 with three strikeouts against Arrieta in his career before he launched a 3-2 pitch into the right-field pavilion in the fourth for a 3-0 lead. Grandal drove in Reddick, who singled and stole second and third.

"He's been so good for the last couple years just because he doesn't give in," Grandal said of Arrieta. "He still made a really good pitch down in the zone. I was just lucky to put a swing on it and hit it out."

Blue Jays stave off ALCS elimination

Associated Press

TORONTO — Just in time, Josh Donaldson and the Toronto Blue Jays broke out the bats to save their season.

Now they have a chance to really make things interesting in this AL Championship Series.

Donaldson backed up his fiery pep talk to teammates before the game, hitting a home run and turning in a timely diving stop Tuesday to help the Blue Jays avert a sweep with a 5-1 win over the Cleveland Indians.

The Indians still lead the matchup 3-1, but with a couple of big hits and a strong outing by Aaron Sanchez, Toronto handed them their first loss of this postseason.

"I'm not going to give too much away of what I had to say, but just more so getting everybody's attention and focus and understanding," Donaldson said. "I mean, everybody knew coming into today how important today was. But at the same time I just wanted to kind of reiterate that and let the boys know that I was coming to play today."

Cleveland had to try again Wednesday to earn its first World Series trip since 1997, but the big concern for the Indians coming into the series — an injury-riddled rotation — still lingers. In Game 5, Cleveland will start Ryan Merritt, who has pitched just 11 innings

in the majors, against Marco Estrada.

It was an emotional day all around at Rogers Centre, where the home crowd had fallen silent watching the season slipping away because of a slumbering offense that totaled only three runs in the first three games of the series.

"I thought we battled pretty good today, with the bats," Toronto manager John Gibbons said. "Naturally, when you score, which we haven't been doing, it always looks good."

Donaldson's solo shot to left-center field off Corey Kluber in the third put the Blue Jays ahead for the first time all series. Two innings after that, the star third baseman made an outstanding play to preserve a one-run edge.

Sanchez, the American League ERA champion, allowed a run and two hits in six innings, and the bullpen finished with three perfect innings.

Kluber was starting on three days' rest for the first time in his career.

"I felt fine. I don't think it physically affected me. I made a mistake to Donaldson," Kluber said. "We're one win away from the World Series and that's what we're focused on."

Kluber hadn't allowed a run in either of his first two starts this postseason. Donaldson, the reigning AL MVP and sport-

ing a still freshly shaved face, opened the scoring with his first home run of these playoffs.

The wild-card Blue Jays made it 2-0 in the fourth when Ezequiel Carrera's blooper fell between three Cleveland fielders in left-center for an RBI single.

Roberto Perez hit an RBI double in the fifth off Sanchez. Carlos Santana's two-out grounder to the left side might have had a chance to score him, but Donaldson made the play to his left, then popped up and danced off the field with a bit of a fist pump.

"I was locked in," Donaldson said. "It helps when you have a guy like Sanchez in the zone, where you can really focus in on a certain area of the strike zone. And I was able to get a really good read off the bat, and I was fortunate enough to be able to make the play."

The Indians didn't have another baserunner after that. Brett Cecil, Jason Grilli and Roberto Osuna pitched an inning each in relief for Toronto.

Taking no chances, Gibbons brought in Osuna, his closer, in a non-save situation to finish off Cleveland.

The Indians were trying to become the third team to sweep a Division Series and Championship Series in the same postseason. The 2007 Colorado Rockies and 2014 Kansas City Royals both did it.

Cleveland had won nine in a row, including three straight over Boston in the ALDS.

The Indians had a chance to take the lead in the third when Tyler Naquin hit a leadoff double and went to third on a sacrifice. Sanchez retired Santana on a soft grounder with the infield in, and then Jason Kipnis also grounded out.

Kluber was pulled after 89 pitches. He allowed two runs and four hits in five innings.

The Blue Jays added two more runs in the seventh after a throwing error by reliever Bryan Shaw. Edwin Encarnacion came up with the bases loaded and the crowd chanting "Eddie" — and his hard grounder skipped off the mound and into center field for a two-run single to make it 4-1.

Trainer's room: Trevor Bauer's finger injury put more pressure on Kluber to come back for Game 4 and a possible Game 7 on short rest. Bauer cut his right pinkie on a drone and had to be pulled in the first inning Monday after he started bleeding.

"I had to witness everything he had to go through to try and go out there and pitch last night," pitching coach Mickey Callaway said before Tuesday's game. "Not too many people would have done that. He's been wonderful. He's obviously grown over the years because he wanted to."

Virginia Tech, Miami set for key ACC battle

Associated Press

Virginia Tech doesn't have long to lick its wounds after a surprising loss at Syracuse, but the Hokies could hardly ask for a better motivator to get back to work. They face longtime rival Miami on Thursday night.

The former Big East rivals have played 33 times, with Miami winning 20, including three of the past four. The Hokies (4-2, 2-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) were 21-9 in Thursday night games under former

coach Frank Beamer but were 0-3 against the Hurricanes (4-2, 1-2). Miami has lost two straight, to Florida State and North Carolina.

In the now wide open Coastal Division race, the game likely qualifies as a must-win.

"It's very critical," Hokies defensive end Ken Ekanem said. "Any ACC opponent is like a championship game, so I think we can't just hype up in our minds. We have to just take it one game at a time, like I said

before. We've just got to focus on going 1-0. Any ACC opponent, especially Miami — a big rival of ours — is a big game."

Virginia Tech is a half-game behind North Carolina in the Coastal standings but holds the head-to-head advantage against the Tar Heels after a 34-3 victory two weeks ago in Chapel Hill. Pittsburgh also is 2-1 in the division and will host the Hokies next Thursday night.

The Hurricanes spent much of the early part of the season

in the Top 25 before their recent slide, and with every team in the division having at least one loss, they are far from eliminated in the division championship race.

"We've got to just recuperate and just focus in and hone in on the game plan," quarterback Brad Kayaa, who is in his third season as the Hurricanes' starter, said this week. "It is a short week, so it's time to get going."

"Can't dwell on the last two losses. Just got to get going and get this thing on the road."

Hossa scores 500th in Blackhawks' win

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Marian Hossa was almost headed for an awkward celebration of his 500th career goal. Then the Chicago Blackhawks put together one final push, making sure it was a sweet night for their accomplished winger.

Artem Anisimov snapped a third-period tie with his first goal of the season and then had an empty-netter with 45 seconds left, helping the Blackhawks beat the Philadelphia Flyers 7-4 on Tuesday.

Artemi Panarin added two goals and an assist for the Blackhawks, who blew a 4-0 lead before closing strong for their second straight win after dropping their first two. NHL MVP Patrick Kane scored his first goal of the season and collected three assists, and Dennis Rasmussen also scored during Chicago's three-goal first.

"Kind of reminded me of our last game, when we were in a really good spot and we let the other team get back in the game," Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville said. "But tonight I thought we did some better things across the board. We didn't give up a ton and we generated some high quality stuff as well."

Matt Read had two goals for Philadelphia, which dropped two of three on its season-opening road trip. Claude Giroux had

three assists, and Steve Mason made nine saves in relief of a shaky Michal Neuvirth.

Devils 2, Ducks 1: Taylor Hall made his new fans in New Jersey very happy with two power-play goals in a 4:11 span in the second period and host New Jersey posted its first win.

Cory Schneider had 23 saves and forced the Ducks' Chris Wagner to lose control of the puck on a second-period penalty shot as New Jersey snapped a five-game losing streak against Anaheim.

Lightning 4, Panthers 3 (SO): Brayden Point scored the game-winning goal in the sixth round of a shootout for host Tampa Bay.

Point's goal came three rounds after it seemed the Lightning had won the shootout 1-0.

After Jonathan Drouin scored for Tampa Bay in the third round, Vincent Trocheck appeared to fan on his initial shot before sending the puck into the net. It was called no goal on the ice, but the ruling was overturned after a video review.

Lightning star Steven Stamkos forced overtime when he lifted a shot from along the goal line over James Reimer with 5.5 seconds left in the third period.

Sharks 3, Islanders 2: Joe Pavelski scored with 2:11 left to lift visiting San Jose over New York.

Melker Karlsson and Tomas Hertl also scored to help the Sharks win for the third time in four games. Joe Thornton and Brent Burns had two assists each, giving both five on the season.

Capitals 3, Avalanche 0: T.J. Oshie scored twice and Alex Ovechkin picked up his first goal of the season, helping host Washington beat Colorado.

Ovechkin and Oshie each scored on the power play to end Washington's man-advantage scoring drought, and the Avalanche lost for the first time under new coach Jared Bednar.

Stars 2, Predators 1: Jason Spezza scored midway through the third period to give visiting Dallas a win over Nashville.

Adam Cracknell added his second goal of the season for Dallas, and Kari Lehtonen made 27 saves.

Senators 7, Coyotes 4: Tom Pyatt, Mark Stone and Chris Kelly had a goal and an assist each as host Ottawa won in front of a sparse crowd of 11,061 at Canadian Tire Centre.

Arizona lost the services of starting goalie Mike Smith seven minutes into the third period when he suffered an injury to his left leg during a scramble in front of the net.

Wild 6, Kings 3: Erik Haula and Jason Pominville scored for host Minnesota and assisted on the other's first-period goal,

fueling the Wild's victory over Los Angeles that triggered an early exit for Kings goalie Jeff Zatkoff.

After Charlie Coyle, Mikko Koivu and Teemu Pulkkinen tacked on scores for the Wild, Kings coach Darryl Sutter pulled Zatkoff for Peter Budaj during the second intermission.

Canadiens 4, Penguins 0: David Desharnais scored twice and Al Montoya made 36 saves as Montreal won its home opener.

The Penguins, coming off an overtime loss at home Monday night, played their first road game of the season.

Oilers 3, Hurricanes 2: Tyler Pitlick scored the game-winner as host Edmonton topped winless Carolina. Anton Slepyshev and Jordan Eberle scored for the Oilers, who improved to 3-1-0.

Flames 4, Sabres 3: Sean Monahan scored 2:26 into overtime, giving host Calgary its first win of the season.

Monahan made a move and beat Robin Lehner over his shoulder for his first of the season after being set up alone in front by Johnny Gaudreau.

Canucks 2, Blues 1 (OT): Henrik Sedin scored 1:40 into overtime after Bo Horvat tied it late in the third period, lifting host Vancouver over St. Louis.

Horvat scored with 2:55 left in regulation, setting up Vancouver to move to 3-0-0.

Rodgers wants consistency in passing game

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Getting the passing game going in Green Bay means paying more attention to the details for the Packers.

The results have been spotty this season. The solution sounds simple from quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

"You know, we've just got to throw it and catch it better. I've got to be as accurate as I know I can be, and we've got to make sure we're as detailed as we can be in the routes so we're on the

same page more consistently," Rodgers said Tuesday.

Maybe the game Thursday night against the NFC North-rival Chicago Bears will be the one that gets the Packers' passing attack clicking consistently again.

Rodgers is completing 60.2 percent of his passes, which ranks an uncharacteristically low 23rd in the league. It's also 4.7 points below Rodgers' career average.

In the loss to the Cowboys on Sunday, Rodgers threw an out-of-character interception on

second-and-8 from the Dallas 46 to Barry Church after saying that he never saw the Cowboys safety. Rodgers overthrew open receiver Randall Cobb in the end zone early in the fourth quarter.

Rodgers also fumbled on first-and-goal from the 1. Unwinding after the tough game, the quarterback poured himself a scotch and watched the film.

"The scotch was great. You know, I saw things that we've been seeing throughout the year. We're close. We've been making some plays at times, but

not good enough consistently," Rodgers said Tuesday.

And what specifically would Rodgers like to be doing better after reviewing film?

"I just think it's accuracy. I've missed a couple that I'm used to hitting. And you hit those and you take away the throwaways, being able to hit some things on some of those plays instead of extending and throwing the ball away and we're right where we need to be," Rodgers said.

Drops have also been an issue at times for receivers.