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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Crews make slow progress against N. Calif. wildfires

Los Angeles Times

Firefighters continued to gain control of some fires scorching Northern California on Thursday night, thanks in part to continued calm winds in some parts of the region.

Altogether, the fires have burned more than 180,000 acres and have caused at least 31 deaths. Officials expect the death toll to rise as search efforts begin in earnest.

Hotels and shelters are packed with families wondering when they can get back home, or if they have a home to return to. As grim recovery efforts continue, neighbors and family members outside the region are starting to find out who perished in the fire. On Thursday night, Sonoma County released the names of 15 people who had died because of the Tubbs fire — many of them in their 70s.

The Tubbs fire, which has been responsible for 17 deaths in Sonoma County and destroyed at least 2,834 homes and 400,000 square feet of commercial space in the city of Santa Rosa alone, had burned 34,770 acres and was 10 percent contained by Thursday night, not a big change from that morning.

"The numbers aren't, on the face, great, but they're making progress," Sonoma County Sheriff's Deputy Brandon Jones said Thursday morning. Santa Rosa was spared heavy winds overnight, Jones said.

There were no new mandatory evacuations related to the Tubbs fire overnight, but the town of Calistoga as well as large swaths of Santa Rosa

and Sonoma County remained under evacuation orders, as the fire spread north and east Thursday.

Families won't be able to get back to their homes for a while, Jones said. Crews have to remove debris and to fix downed power lines, as well as trees that have been burnt out and may pose a risk of collapsing. In Sonoma County alone, about 16,000 homes are still without power.

The massive Atlas fire, threatening Napa and Solano counties, was 7 percent contained and covered 43,762 acres as of Thursday night, according to Cal Fire. Officials anticipated overnight winds, with a red flag warning for the area still in effect Thursday night.

Residents were allowed back into areas of Napa County affected by the fire, including parts of the Silverado Country Club and Monticello Park, according to Cal Fire. Evacuation orders in neighboring Solano County still remain in effect.

The Redwood fire in Mendocino County has burned 34,000 acres and was 10 percent contained as of Thursday night.

"Steep inaccessible terrain coupled with critical fuel moistures, and northwest winds will provide challenges for crews working on the fire," a Cal Fire incident report read Thursday night.

Yuba County was hit with the 10,171-acre Cascade fire, 45 percent contained as of Thursday night. The fire claimed at least four lives, and the county has released a list of damaged homes.

Votel: Advisers to help end stalemate in Afghanistan War

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — U.S. military troops in Afghanistan have begun working with smaller Afghan units to prepare them for a more aggressive offensive against the Taliban next year in a push to break the stalemate in the 16-year-old war, the top U.S. commander for the Middle East said Thursday.

While acknowledging there is still much more to be done, Army Gen. Joseph Votel sounded a more optimistic tone, saying he is seeing some positive trends in the Afghans' fight.

As more older Afghan commanders leave or are pushed out of their posts, younger leaders are taking over, he said, adding that the forces are conducting more operations and are going on the offensive more often. As a result, he said, officials are seeing the number of casualties start to go down.

"I think we're still very keen to break the stalemate, and that's what this effort is about here," Votel told reporters at his U.S. Central Command headquarters. "I'm not declaring victory here with this — but I think some of the steps we've taken ... are positive steps that are moving us in that direction to break the stalemate."

Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Congress last week that he still considers the war a stalemate. But he and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis assured lawmakers that the plan to increase U.S. forces in Afghanistan and to beef up military

support to the Afghan units will pay off.

Congress members, however, have expressed skepticism and frustration with the Pentagon, and have complained that they haven't gotten enough information on the administration's new strategy for winning the war in Afghanistan and bringing greater stability to the broader region.

President Donald Trump in August approved a Pentagon plan to deploy as many as 3,800 additional U.S. forces to Afghanistan, where there are already more than 11,000 serving.

The additional American forces will be used to increase efforts to advise and assist Afghanistan's forces, including putting advisers with smaller Afghan battalions, which they call Kandaks. Doing so puts American troops closer to the fight, but military leaders say it will allow them to better help the Afghans improve their ability to fight insurgents.

Votel said the advisers will help those Afghan units get ready for next year's fighting season.

The U.S. troops also would be used to beef up U.S. counterterrorism operations against al-Qaida and a growing Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan, as well as the Taliban and other extremist groups.

The added American troops already have started moving into Afghanistan, including a significant number of Army soldiers and some Air Force personnel who went in with an extra six F-16 fighter jets.

Pest infestation closes commissary

By STEPHEN CARLSON

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The main commissary at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, Calif., has been closed indefinitely due to an outbreak of rodents, according to the Defense Commissary Agency.

“The [Defense Commissary Agency] has sent public health, sanitation, engineer and store operation experts to the store and is working with installation personnel to ensure the facility is thoroughly cleaned and to address where and how the pests are entering the store,” Richard Brink, an agency spokesman, said in a statement to

Stars and Stripes.

Commissaries have individual pest-control programs and use private contractors for rodent management and extermination alongside regular health and safety inspections. How the rodent infestation escalated far enough to require closing the commissary is unclear. Commissary officers at the Twentynine Palms commissary declined to comment.

“This issue escalated surprisingly fast since a Sept. 29 health and sanitation report found no substantial complaints. However, just 12 days later the store was closed. Rodent infestations can escalate quickly under certain circumstances, which offi-

cials are looking into in this case to solve the problem,” Brink said.

The closure of the only full-sized commissary at Twentynine Palms could mean great inconvenience for troops and families stationed at the base. Commissaries function as the primary grocery store on military posts.

Twentynine Palms is home to the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Center and the Marine Air Ground Combat Center. It is one of the primary combined-arms training bases for the Marine Corps.

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How drill instructors avoid ‘frog voice’

By WADE LIVINGSTON

*The (Hilton Head Island, S.C.)
Island Packet*

“Nasally.”

“Straight-from-the-throat.”

That’s how Staff Sgt. Jake Bublitz described using his voice during his first cycle as a drill instructor at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island.

It was a case of “what-not-to-do,” Bublitz, now in his third cycle training recruits on the island, recently said.

“It took me a long time to get my voice to rebound when it was over,” he said, his voice hoarse and threatening to vanish, three weeks into the 13-week training cycle.

Drill instructors call it “frog voice” — that raspy effect they develop from yelling commands to recruits, yelling at recruits and, sometimes, just yelling. Yelling for hours and days and weeks on end. Yelling so much that, sometimes, all that comes out is a croak.

Or a whisper-scream.

While frog voice is an oft-joked-about feature of the depot’s aura, drill instructors such as Bublitz don’t take it lightly — all that yelling can have serious health consequences. At the depot’s Drill Instructor School, Marines learn techniques for safeguarding their bodies and vocal chords. And some drill instructors say the hardest part of their day is coming to work with sore throats and no voices — and knowing they’re going to have yell for 18

straight hours.

That’s what Staff Sgt. Thomas Phillips told Task & Purpose: “Honestly, the worst thing ever wasn’t waking up at 3 in the morning,” he said during a May 2016 interview that offered a behind-the-scenes glimpse at what it’s like to be a drill instructor. “(I)t was getting to work, parking my truck, and walking to the squad bay knowing I had to yell again.”

It’s not uncommon for drill instructors to spit up blood, Phillips said.

“Drill instructors literally scream so hard at recruits that they can pass out, give themselves hernias, or do serious and permanent damage to their vocal chords,” according to the Marine Corps Times.

To combat these ailments, drill instructors in training learn methods for projecting their voice and preventing injury.

Bublitz said veteran drill instructors taught him how to speak from his diaphragm and squeeze his lower abdominal muscles to be loud and clear, and to stave off a hernia.

Another technique: situational awareness. If you’re directing a platoon of about 100 recruits, Bublitz said, you have to realize where you’re standing in relation to platoon guide — the recruit leading the platoon — and how many recruits have their backs to you. If you’re yelling at someone’s back and from a distance, it’s harder for them to hear you.

Finally, Bublitz said some of his mentors taught him to yell commands with economy: “I try to limit the communications with

recruits down to three to five words, unless you’re actively teaching something,” he said.

And if you teach trainees right the first time, he said, you can be even more efficient.

“Prime example: going to the chow hall,” he said.

“I told my recruits at the very beginning I’m going to say, ‘Stacks!’” he said, explaining the command for trainees to un-sling their rifles and prop them against each other, then remove their backpacks.

“And they say, ‘Stacks, aye, sir.’

“It’s just a one-word command, and they know it from the very beginning.”

During training cycles, drill instructors might use lozenges, hot water with honey and lemon, hot tea followed by a cold drink or even pickle juice to treat their strained throats, according to the Marine Corps Times.

Bublitz stays away from the lozenges and processed sugar.

He drank deeply and often from a large jug of water as he talked about his voice, which he’s trying to safeguard ahead of his upcoming performances.

Bublitz is a singer-songwriter on the side.

He was a recent finalist in a national music competition for veterans sponsored by financial corporation USAA and media site We Are The Mighty.

He’s got an album coming out soon.

And he’s got a gig coming up this month.

Family held captive in Pakistan heads home

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The parents of an American woman freed with her family after five years of captivity say they are elated, but also angry at their son-in-law for taking their daughter to Afghanistan.

“Taking your pregnant wife to a very dangerous place, to me, and the kind of person I am, is unconscionable,” Caitlan Coleman’s father, Jim, told ABC News.

Caitlan Coleman and Joshua Boyle were abducted by a Taliban-linked extremist network in October 2012 while on a backpacking trip that took them to Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and then to Afghanistan. She was pregnant at the time and had three children in captivity.

Two Pakistani security officials say the family left by plane from Islamabad on Friday. The officials did not say where the family was headed, but Boyle’s family has said the couple’s plan is to return to Canada. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity in keeping with official protocol.

Caitlan Coleman is from Stewartstown, Pa., and Boyle is Canadian. She was “naive,”

but also “adventuresome” with a humanitarian bent, her father told the AP in 2012.

Jim Coleman said in the ABC interview he didn’t understand why Boyle had refused to let his family leave the region on a U.S. military plane, which complicated their exit from the country. The father said that if he had seen an American aircraft after being held captive, he’d be “running for it.”

Still, Coleman’s mother, Lynda, said the opportunity to finally speak to her daughter after she was freed was “incredible.”

“I’ve been waiting to hear that voice for so long. And then to hear her voice and have it sound exactly like the last time I talked to her,” she said.

Pakistan’s foreign Ministry spokesman Nafees Zakaria said the Pakistani raid that led to the family’s rescue was based on a tip from U.S. intelligence and shows that Pakistan will act against a “common enemy” when Washington shares information.

U.S. officials have long accused Pakistan of turning a blind eye to groups like the Haqqani network, which was holding the family. Earlier this year, U.S. President Donald

Trump warned Pakistan to stop harboring militants.

On Thursday, Trump praised Pakistan for its willingness to “do more to provide security in the region” and said the release suggests other “countries are starting to respect the United States of America once again.”

The operation appeared to have unfolded quickly and ended with what some described as a dangerous raid, a shootout and a captor’s final, terrifying threat to “kill the hostage.” Boyle told his parents that he, his wife and their children were intercepted by Pakistani forces while being transported in the trunk of their captors’ car and that some of his captors were killed. He suffered only a shrapnel wound, his family said.

U.S. officials did not confirm those details.

A U.S. military official said that a military hostage team had flown to Pakistan Wednesday, prepared to fly the family out. The team did a preliminary health assessment and had a transport plane ready to go. But sometime after daybreak Thursday, as the family members were walking to the plane, Boyle said he did not want to board.

Boyle’s father said his son did not want to board the plane because it was headed to Bagram Air Base and that the family wanted to return directly to North America. Another U.S. official said Boyle was nervous about being in “custody,” given his family ties.

He was once married to Zaynab Khadr, the older sister of former Guantanamo Bay detainee Omar Khadr and the daughter of a senior al-Qaida financier. Her father, the late Ahmed Said Khadr, and the family stayed with Osama bin Laden briefly when Omar Khadr was a boy.

The Canadian-born Omar Khadr was 15 when he was captured by U.S. troops following a firefight and was taken to the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay. Officials had discounted any link between that background and Boyle’s capture, with one official describing it in 2014 as a “horrible coincidence.”

The U.S. Justice Department said neither Boyle nor Coleman is wanted for any federal crime.

The couple told U.S. officials and their families they wanted to fly commercially to Canada.

Contractor sold \$19K binoculars for \$100

NORFOLK, Va. — A Hampton man walked into a pawn shop two years ago with high-tech military-grade binoculars that had been stolen from a guided missile destroyer.

They were worth about \$19,000, court documents said. He sold them for \$100.

Alexander Vann King, 32, was sentenced Thursday to 15 months in prison.

The former Navy contractor pleaded guilty in April to one count of receiving stolen property.

Vann King took possession of a laser “range finder, identified as an AN/PES-2 Vector 21B from the USS Mitscher, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer, according to court documents.

In an interview with investigators, Vann King confessed to selling them. He said he thought they were just regular binoculars.

Court documents do not indicate who stole them, nor whether investigators know.

Navy planning \$4.3M White Sands project

WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE, N.M. — The U.S. Navy plans to spend \$4.3 million on a project at White Sands Missile Range to support future testing for naval operations.

The funding was recently announced by Sen. Martin Heinrich’s office. The New Mexico Democrat, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, had pushed for more money to revitalize government laboratories and test

ranges as part of a defense spending measure.

With the funds, officials say they will be able to build upon the Navy’s research and development test site at the White Sands complex in southern New Mexico.

Heinrich described White Sands as a national treasure for the U.S. military given its unique terrain, airspace and the expertise of those who work there. In addition to preparing for future testing, he says the project will result in construction jobs.

Man got kickbacks for work he did for Navy

NEWARK, N.J. — A Pennsylvania man who worked for a company that made parts for the U.S. Navy has pleaded guilty to soliciting and receiv-

ing \$150,000 in kickbacks for providing work to a New Jersey firm.

Christopher Sanchirico pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the federal kickback act in Newark on Tuesday.

He lived in King of Prussia and was the assistant purchasing manager for a Philadelphia company that made shock-hardened circuit breakers and switchgears for Navy ships, submarines and aircraft carriers.

Prosecutors say he received between 5 percent and 10 percent of the revenue from work he provided to a Cherry Hill machine shop that gave him kickbacks.

He faces up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. He will be sentenced in January.

From wire reports

Trump halting health care subsidy payments

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a brash move likely to roil insurance markets, President Donald Trump will “immediately” halt payments to insurers under the Obama-era health care law.

Before sunrise Friday morning, Trump went on Twitter to urge Democrats to make a deal: “The Democrats ObamaCare is imploding,” he wrote. “Massive subsidy payments to their pet insurance companies has stopped. Dems should call me to fix!”

The Department of Health and Human Services had made the announcement in a statement late Thursday. “We will discontinue these payments immediately,” said acting HHS Secretary Eric Hargan and

Medicare administrator Seema Verma.

In a separate statement, the White House said the government cannot legally continue to pay the so-called cost-sharing subsidies because they lack a formal authorization by Congress.

However, the administration had been making the payments from month to month, even as Trump threatened to cut them off to force Democrats to negotiate over health care. The subsidies help lower copayments and deductibles for people with modest incomes.

Halting the payments would trigger a spike in premiums for next year, unless Trump reverses course or Congress authorizes the money.

“It is a spiteful act of vast,

pointless sabotage leveled at working families and the middle class in every corner of America,” said House and Senate Democratic leaders Rep. Nancy Pelosi, of California, and Sen. Chuck Schumer, of New York. “Make no mistake about it, Trump will try to blame the Affordable Care Act, but this will fall on his back and he will pay the price for it.”

The president’s action is likely to trigger a lawsuit from state attorneys general, who contend the subsidies to insurers are fully authorized by federal law, and say the president’s position is reckless.

“We are prepared to sue,” said California Attorney General Xavier Becerra. “We’ve taken the Trump Administration to court before and won.”

Word of Trump’s plan came on a day when the president also had signed an executive order directing government agencies to design insurance plans that would offer lower premiums outside the requirements of President Barack Obama’s Affordable Care Act.

Frustrated over setbacks in Congress, Trump is wielding his executive powers to bring the “repeal and replace” debate to a head. He appears to be following through on his vow to punish Democrats and insurers after the failure of GOP health care legislation.

Experts have warned that cutting off the money would lead to a double-digit spike in premiums, on top of increases insurers already planned for next year.

Trump touts the support of conservative religious group

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump assured a high-profile gathering of Christian conservatives on Friday that his administration will defend religious organizations, promising a return to traditional American values while again subtly stoking the fire he helped ignite over NFL players kneeling during the national anthem.

Trump, the first sitting president to address the Values Voter Summit, ticked off the promises he’s fulfilled to evangelical Christians and other conservatives, pledging to turn back the clock in what he described as a nation that has drifted away from its religious roots.

“How times have changed, but you know what, now they are changing back again, just remember that,” Trump told the enthusiastic crowd.

He noted, as Christian conservatives often do, that there are four references to the “creator” in the Declaration of Independence, saying

that “religious liberty is enshrined” in the nation’s founding documents.

“I pledged that in a Trump administration, our nation’s religious heritage would be cherished, protected and defended like you have never seen before,” Trump said. “Above all else in America, we don’t worship government. We worship God.”

Trump praised his repeal of the Johnson Amendment, which limited political activity or endorsements by religious groups that received tax exemptions, as well as his administration’s effort to expand the rights of employers to deny women insurance coverage for birth control. The White House also has issued sweeping guidance on religious freedom that critics have said could erode civil rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

The president also bemoaned the use of the phrase “Happy Holidays” as a secular seasonal greeting and vowed to return “Merry Christmas” to the national discourse.

Trump sets conditions for US staying in Iran deal

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Friday announced that he will abide by an international nuclear deal with Iran for now but will ask Congress to attach new caveats that either could alter the deal or could lead to its rupture.

Trump will withdraw presidential “certification,” or endorsement, of the agreement negotiated by his predecessor, but will not immediately bust the deal by reimposing U.S. sanctions on Iran’s disputed nuclear program.

Trump detailed his dissatisfaction with what he sees as gaps and failures in the agreement within a larger reframing of U.S. policy toward Iran.

He charged that Tehran is “not living up to the spirit of the deal.”

Trump said that if Congress, U.S. allies and his administration cannot come up with a way to strengthen the nuclear deal, “it will be terminated.”

Trump’s compromise gives at least temporary reprieve to an agreement that limits Iran’s nuclear activities and opened

its economy to greater Western investment, but which does not foreclose the possibility that the Islamic Republic eventually could develop a nuclear weapon.

Iran repeatedly has insisted that it does not seek nuclear arms but says it will not give up the ability to enrich uranium for energy and research reactors.

Instead of withdrawing outright, Trump asked Congress to amend a law that gives lawmakers some oversight over the deal.

The Trump administration is asking Congress to add conditions for U.S. cooperation that would address Iranian ballistic missile development as well as alleged support for terrorist or extremist groups in Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said. The administration also wants to address “sunset clauses” in the deal that allow Iran to resume certain nuclear activities beginning eight years after the deal went into effect in 2015.

Tillerson called that a “countdown clock to when Iran can have a nuclear program again.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Motorist falls short in bid to jump over canal

FL LEHIGH ACRES — Authorities said a man tried to jump his car over a canal in a Florida neighborhood, but didn't make it.

WFTX reported that the car had been towed from the Lehigh Acres canal on Tuesday after it failed to clear the 20 feet between both sides.

Witnesses reportedly told the TV station that before attempting the jump, the man drove to the edge of the canal and got out of the car to observe the distance.

Lee County deputies said the man wasn't injured, but the Toyota Corolla was totaled.

Investigators said they weren't sure why the man attempted the jump, noting he could have driven a few blocks to get to the other side.

Monument's flag not on federal land

NY NEW YORK — Gay-rights activists who worked to get a rainbow flag installed at the new Stonewall National Monument in New York City are upset the National Park Service said the flag isn't actually on federal land but on city property.

The distinction may seem like a minor one, but the group that lobbied for the flag to be flown at the site said the Park Service's announcement the city, not the federal government, would be maintaining the flag seems like a betrayal.

The Park Service said no slight was intended.

"They're trying to make the gay community insignificant," said Scott Gorenstein, a spokesman for Wednesday's flag dedication event. "They're trying to make us disappear. We're saying we are here, this is our flag."

The monument is in an area around the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar where patrons resisted police in 1969 and boosted the gay rights movement.

Would-be car thief thwarted by gate

CA LOS ANGELES — A would-be car thief was caught on video breaking into an exotic car rental business but was thwarted after failing to smash through the metal gate around the location.

KABC-TV reported the suspect, who made no attempts to disguise his face, is seen breaking into the office of Beverly Hills Rent-A-Car and swiping the keys to most of the cars on the lot.

He tried to use a less-expensive Honda to ram the metal fence and gate. When that didn't work, he tried with a McLaren.

It is believed he spent more than two hours on the lot before giving up and fleeing.

Driver: Car chase was on his bucket list

IA DES MOINES — The Iowa State Patrol said a man pulled over in Des Moines after a car pursuit and told state troopers that he wanted to be chased because it was on his bucket list.

Des Moines television station KCCI reported that the man refused to halt a little before 7:30 a.m. Thursday when a trooper tried to stop him over a violation on Interstate 80. The 10- to 15-minute chase ended soon after he left the interstate. He was taken into custody.

That's when the 46-year-old Des Moines resident shared his bucket list story with troopers. Court records don't yet show that he's been charged.

According to news reports, the man was charged with a DWI offense, eluding, inter-

ference with official acts, operation without registration, unlawful use of license, speeding and a parole violation.

Rodin sculpture found in borough hall

NJ MADISON — A bust of Napoleon by French sculptor Auguste Rodin long thought to be lost has been found on display in a New Jersey borough hall, where it sat for 85 years.

The bust's origin was confirmed in 2015, but officials waited to reveal the multi-million-dollar artwork was a long-lost piece by Rodin until Wednesday. The Record reported the owners of the bust announced it will be leaving the Madison borough hall on loan to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The authentication was made in person by Jerome Le Blay, an international expert in modern sculpture.

\$70K worth of stolen lei, knives returned

HI WAILUKU — Police have recovered about \$70,000 worth of merchandise stolen from a Maui store, but are still searching for the remaining items estimated to be worth \$30,000.

Police returned 12 of the stolen Niihau shell lei to Maui Hands on Tuesday. The store's owner, Panna Cappelli, said the staff was in tears as the officers reunited them with the lei. Cappelli said most of the items returned were the "priceless, collector, museum pieces."

Surveillance video caught a man smashing the store's glass door on July 17. In less than a minute, the man stole 25 of the rare lei and five expensive knives.

Lt. Derrick Lopez, head of the Property Crimes Unit of the

Criminal Investigation Division, said police have made several arrests.

Getaway car caught on fire, police say

MO LAKE ST. LOUIS — Three women are in custody on suspicion of stealing \$8,000 worth of merchandise from a Victoria's Secret store and escaping in a car, only to have the car pop a tire and catch fire.

Police said the suspects entered the store in Lake St. Louis Thursday and ran to a car with the stolen clothing and merchandise. The car avoided Lake St. Louis police but struck a curb, causing a tire to deflate.

Still, according to police, the car headed east on Interstate 64, where it eventually stopped in Frontenac as it caught fire, possibly due to sparks from the tire rim.

University settles in support cat case

NC RALEIGH — A university in North Carolina has reached a settlement to allow a student to keep a cat she uses as an emotional support animal in her dorm room.

Legal Aid of North Carolina said North Carolina State University also agreed to train staff on the federal Fair Housing Act and pay the student a \$3,000 settlement.

Laura Auman filed a federal discrimination complaint against the university last year after the school wouldn't let her keep the cat in her dorm room. The animal is considered a reasonable accommodation for her disability.

The News & Observer of Raleigh reported that N.C. State will also publicize its policy allowing assistance animals in dorms.

From wire reports

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Cubs rally on Scherzer, top Nationals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Chicago Cubs win whenever they need to, with whatever it takes, even a seven-out save by Wade Davis to preserve a shrinking lead and a “Did that really happen?” four-run inning against Washington ace Max Scherzer in a thriller of a Game 5.

That wild, bat-around fifth inning Thursday night for Chicago included Addison Russell’s go-ahead two-run double, a bases-loaded hit-by-pitch, and a disputed dropped third strike followed by a throwing error, helping the defending World Series champion Cubs come back — and then hold on — to edge the Nationals 9-8 and reach the NL Championship Series for the third year in a row.

Russell drove in a total of four runs, and Davis, Chicago’s seventh pitcher, turned in his longest appearance since 2012. The Cubs trailed 4-1, then led 8-4 and 9-6, in a game that lasted more than 4½ hours and ended after midnight on Friday.

Catcher Willson Contreras picked off Jose Lobaton at first base to quash a Washington threat in the eighth and Davis fanned a swinging Bryce Harper for the final out.

Chicago, which surpassed its total of eight runs in the first four games of the NL Division Series, advanced to face the Los Angeles Dodgers, who will start ace Clayton Kershaw at home in Game 1 of the NLCS on Saturday.

For manager Joe Maddon and the Cubs, this was their fourth consecutive victory in a win-or-be-eliminated postseason game.

That includes three straight to end the 2016 World Series, when Chicago trailed the Cleveland Indians 3-1 before forcing a Game 7 won by the Cubs in 10 innings.

The Nationals, meanwhile, went one-and-done yet again: This is the fourth time in the past six years that the club won the NL East and immediately lost its opening playoff series. And this is the third time in that span that Washington bowed out with a Game 5 NLDS loss at home; that also happened in 2012 against the St. Louis Cardinals and last year against the Dodgers.

This one was played exactly five years to the day after the decider against the Cardinals, which the Nationals lost 9-7 in Washington. Just like that night, the Nats started Gio Gonzalez. Just like that night, Washington raced out to an early lead (6-0 back then). And just like that night, Gonzalez had control problems and started giving back some of the edge.

Homers by Daniel Murphy and Michael A. Taylor — whose grand slam off Davis backed Stephen Strasburg’s 12-strikeout masterpiece in Washington’s 5-0 victory in Game 4 at Wrigley Field on Wednesday — gave the hosts a 4-1 lead in the second against Cubs starter Kyle Hendricks.

But Gonzalez gave back two of those runs, so it was 4-3 as two-time Cy Young Award winner Scherzer entered for the fifth. He started Game 3 of this series, pushed back because of an injured hamstring, and hadn’t come out of the bullpen since 2013 with the Detroit Tigers.

By the time Scherzer’s one inning was over, the Cubs had taken a 7-4 lead. They

scored two earned runs and two unearned runs, on the strength of three hits, one hit by pitch, one intentional walk, a catcher’s interference, and one very odd play.

What could have been a potentially inning-ending strikeout turned into a run, as Javier Baez swung and missed, but the ball went under catcher Matt Wieters’ glove and through his legs. When Wieters collected the ball, he threw it into right field for an error, then appeared to argue that the play should have been ruled over because Baez’s follow-through carried the bat into the catcher’s mask.

Russell made it 8-4 in the sixth on an RBI double when left fielder Jayson Werth tried to make a sliding catch but whiffed. The lead was 9-6 when Washington got one run in the seventh on Harper’s sacrifice fly, and one in the eighth on Taylor’s RBI single.

But the Nationals wasted some opportunities. In the eighth, with two on and no outs, pinch-hitter Adam Lind hit into a double play. Later in that inning, again with two men aboard, Lobaton was nailed by Contreras’ snap throw for the third out — Lobaton was originally ruled safe, a call that was overturned on replay.

In the seventh, Ryan Zimmerman was up as the go-ahead run with two men on, but Davis struck him out. That was part of an 0-for-4, three-K night for the first baseman who had a resurgent season, leading the Nationals with 36 homers and 108 RBIs.

That season is over for him and his team. The Cubs, though, will play on.

Eagles shut down Panthers’ running backs

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Panthers have long been known for their ability to run the football.

Just not this year.

Had it not been for quarterback Cam Newton, who had 71 yards on 11 carries, the Panthers would have been completely one dimensional on offense in a 28-23 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles on Thursday night. Carolina running backs Jonathan Stewart, Christian McCaffrey and Fozzy Whittaker were limited to 1 yard on 13 carries.

Even wide receiver Curtis Samuel, who had one carry for

8 yards on a reverse, outgained Carolina’s running backs.

“We have a lot of things to look at,” said coach Ron Rivera. “We really do.”

It’s unusual for a Panthers team that has rushed for more yards than any team in the NFL since the start of the 2008 season.

But the holes simply aren’t there.

At one point Stewart was gang-tackled for a 3-yard loss in the backfield by seven Eagles defenders. The normally mild-mannered Stewart got up screaming at the Carolina bench in frustration.

There was nowhere to run.

The franchise’s all-time leading rusher had eight carries for minus-4 yards Thursday and is averaging just 2.9 yards per carry this season. He hasn’t scored a touchdown running the ball.

“We have to find ways to get him going,” Newton said. “That’s part of that lethargicness I was mentioning. A team that is heavily favored to run the ball, that’s who we are. That’s Panthers football. We have to find a way to get that running game going and get Stew involved.”

Eagles LBs command respect: Nigel Bradham likes the hype the Eagles’ front seven

gets around the league, but wonders why the linebackers aren’t talked about more. Maybe a 28-23 victory at Carolina that included three interceptions of Newton will remedy that.

“We feel like we’re the most consistent,” said Bradham, who finished with 10 tackles. “We’re just continuing to grind and try to gain some respect in this league. Even in our division, we don’t get much respect. How can they just talk about the front four, and forget the linebackers?”

Outside linebacker Mychal Kendricks led the Eagles with 15 tackles.

Briefly

US men's soccer coach Arena stepping down

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bruce Arena resigned as U.S. men's national team coach on Friday, three days after the Americans failed to qualify for the World Cup for the first time since 1986.

The U.S. Soccer Federation said within 10 days it will announce an interim coach for planned exhibition games next month.

A 66-year-old member of the U.S. National Soccer Hall of Fame, Arena coached the U.S. to its greatest success in the modern era, from 1998-2006, then was fired by USSF President Sunil Gulati.

Arena was brought back last November after a 0-2 start in the final round of qualifying in the North and Central American region under Jurgen Klinsmann. The Americans were unbeaten in their first 14 games under Arena, winning their third CONCACAF Gold Cup under him, but they lost a home qualifier to Costa Rica 2-0 last month, putting a berth in danger.

A 4-0 home win over Panama put the U.S. back in position for an eighth straight World Cup trip and the Americans needed only a draw at Trinidad and Tobago, the world's 99th-ranked team. After months of constant lineup changes, Arena kept the same 11 starters, and the Americans fell behind by two goals in the first half and lost 2-1.

With three wins, four losses and three ties, the Americans finished fifth among six teams in the hexagonal. Panama climbed to third and qualified, and Honduras finished fourth and will meet Australia in a playoff next month for a berth.

"This certainly is a major setback," Arena said in a statement. "Questions rightly should be asked about how we can improve."

Arena was 10-2-6 in his second term, leaving him with an 81-32-35 record and the most wins among U.S. coaches.

"I maintain a fierce belief that we are heading in the right direction," he said. "I believe in the American player and the American coach, and with our combined efforts the future remains bright."

Rams, LB Ogletree agree to extension

LOS ANGELES — Linebacker Alec Ogletree agreed to a four-year contract extension with the Los Angeles Rams through the 2021 season on Thursday night.

The Rams (3-2) reached the deal with Ogletree, their top tackler and a key leader on their defense, early in his fifth season with his only NFL club.

The St. Louis Rams drafted Ogletree in the first round out of Georgia in 2013. He took over a key role as their middle linebacker last season, and he has remained prominent during their switch to a 3-4 defense this season under new coordinator Wade Phillips.

Ogletree leads the Rams with 54 tackles in five games this season, including two sacks. He had 171 tackles by the team's count last season.

Source: WNBA's Stars to be sold, relocated

The San Antonio Stars are in negotiations to be sold and relocated, and a person with knowledge of the situation tells The Associated Press the buyer is based in Las Vegas.

The team announced the discussions on Thursday night. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because neither the team or the WNBA have disclosed information about the buyer.

"Negotiations with a potential buyer of the Stars team are ongoing," WNBA spokesperson Dina Skokos said in a statement. "Once those discussions are concluded, we will provide additional information."

UNC avoids penalties in academic fraud case

Associated Press

North Carolina has avoided major penalties after an NCAA infractions committee panel "could not conclude" there were academic violations in the multi-year case focused on irregular courses.

In a report released Friday morning, the panel said it found only two violations out of five charges the school originally faced: a failure-to-cooperate charge against two people tied to the problem courses in the formerly named African and Afro-American Studies (AFAM) department.

Former AFAM chairman Julius Nyang'oro faces a five-year show-cause penalty through 2022 in what amounts to the sole penalty imposed in the wide-ranging case filled with starts, stops and twice-rewritten charges. Nyang'oro had refused to interview with NCAA investigators after the case was reopened in 2014.

The other person, retired AFAM office administrator Deborah Crowder, initially refused interviews but reconsidered and interviewed with NCAA investigators in May as well as attended the school's hearing with the panel in August. She was not punished, but the NCAA says it is making note of her initial lack of cooperation.

North Carolina also faced an improper-benefits charge tied to athlete access to the problem courses and lack of institutional control, while a former professor and academic counselor for women's basketball was charged with providing improper help on assignments.

"While student-athletes likely benefited from the so-called 'paper courses' offered by North Carolina, the information available in the record did not establish that the courses were solely created, offered and maintained as an orchestrated effort to benefit student-athletes," said Southeastern Conference Commissioner Greg Sankey, the panel's chief

hearing officer.

It's a long-awaited step for both the school and NCAA. Investigators first arrived at UNC more than seven years ago in a football probe that ultimately spawned into this case focused on irregular courses featuring significant athlete enrollments.

The ruling comes roughly eight weeks after UNC appeared before the infractions panel in August in Nashville, Tenn., for a two-day hearing that included Chancellor Carol Folt, athletic director Bubba Cunningham, men's basketball coach Roy Williams, football coach Larry Fedora and women's basketball coach Sylvia Hatchell. The school faced five top-level charges, including lack of institutional control, though no coaches were charged with wrongdoing.

The focus was independent study-style courses in the formerly named AFAM department on the Chapel Hill campus. The courses were misidentified as lecture classes but didn't meet and required a research paper or two for typically high grades.

In a 2014 investigation, former U.S. Justice Department official Kenneth Wainstein estimated more than 3,100 students were affected between 1993 and 2011, with athletes across numerous sports making up roughly half the enrollments.

The NCAA had said UNC used those courses to help keep athletes eligible.

After sanctioning the football program in March 2012 in the original case, the NCAA reopened an investigation in summer 2014, filed charges in May 2015, revised them in April 2016 and again in December.

The NCAA originally treated some of the academic issues as improper benefits by saying athletes received access to the courses and other assistance generally unavailable to non-athletes.

No. 9 Buckeyes look to roll in Nebraska

Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Ohio State-Nebraska matches two of the five programs with the most major college football wins in history, but the teams are in very different places entering Saturday night's game at Memorial Stadium.

The ninth-ranked Buckeyes (5-1, 3-0 Big Ten) beat Nebraska by 59 points last year in Columbus and have dominated four straight opponents since their loss at home to Oklahoma. They're bidding for a third appearance in the College Football Playoff in four years.

The Cornhuskers (3-3, 2-1) are just another team behind Wisconsin in the Big Ten West these days. They've

lost to Northern Illinois, and Wisconsin beat them by three touchdowns. With a university administration and fan base desperate for a return to glory, third-year coach Mike Riley is under increasing pressure.

The stadium will be sold out for the 359th consecutive game since 1962, but with the Huskers 24-point underdogs, tickets were available for as little as \$17 on the secondary market Thursday night.

"It's very tradition rich, the fans are very prideful and it's a great opportunity for us to go into a big-time atmosphere and be able to showcase our skills," Buckeyes center Billy Price said.

Those skills have been show-

cased a lot recently. The Buckeyes have amassed 2,462 yards of offense the last four games, the most ever over a four-game span for the program, and have scored 54 or more points in three straight. Quarterback J.T. Barrett, who hasn't had to play in the fourth quarter in three straight games, has thrown 16 touchdowns against one interception.

"I think J.T. and the receivers are playing very well together," coach Urban Meyer said. "I can't ask for more out of them as far as working and trying to get better. We still have a long ways to go. He's doing a very nice job."

Devine Ozigbo has run for 100 yards in three straight

games for the Huskers, but quarterback Tanner Lee has been inconsistent and prone to throwing interceptions.

"I think we'll be fine, whoever we play," Ohio State defensive end Nick Bosa said. "We're good enough to handle any offensive line. I think it's going to be more the environment, the fact that they're at home and it's probably the biggest game of their season, so they'll probably give it everything they have."

Riley said Ohio State's run of success under Meyer — he's 38-2 in Big Ten games in six seasons — reminds him of his time at Oregon State when Pete Carroll turned Southern California into the Pac-12's standard-bearer.

Roundup

Lightning win: Stamkos scores first goal since surgery

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Steven Stamkos' 11-month wait for a goal is over.

Stamkos scored his first goal since having right knee surgery last November and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 5-4 on Thursday night.

"I knew it was a matter of time, so I wasn't losing any sleep over it," Stamkos said. "I'm just happy to be playing hockey again. Glad to be a part of some wins here."

Stamkos made it 3-1 with a power-play goal at 3:49 of the second period from the low left circle. The Lightning star previously scored Nov. 15 at Detroit, the same game that he had a season-ending lateral meniscus tear in the knee.

Stamkos entered with five assists in three games this season. He tied Vincent Lecavalier for the Lightning team record with 112 power-play goals.

"You see him getting stronger and stronger," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said.

Slater Koekkoek got his first

two NHL goals, and Victor Hedman and Nikita Kucherov also scored for the Lightning, who have won three of four. Alex Killorn had four assists, while Andrei Vasilevskiy made 36 saves.

Pittsburgh got goals from Jake Guentzel, Conor Sheary, Bryan Rust and Matt Hunwick. Antti Niemi, who allowed four goals on 13 shots over 9:16 against Chicago on Oct. 5 in his Penguins debut, stopped 29 shots.

"It's not fun to give up five goals and lose a game, but there was lots of good things," Niemi said.

After Stamkos' score, Sheary and Kucherov traded goals in the second. Rust scored on the power play to cut the deficit to 4-3 with 5:36 to go in the period.

Koekkoek got his first goal, coming in his 43rd game, 6:07 into the first. His second extended the lead to 5-3 late in the second.

Hunwick got Pittsburgh within 5-4 at 10:01 of the third.

Hedman put Tampa Bay up

2-1 on a power-play goal from just inside the blue line with one-tenth of a second left in the first period.

Guentzel tied it at 1 four seconds after a Pittsburgh power play ended midway through the first. The Penguins had three man-advantage goals in a 3-2 win Wednesday night at Washington.

Wild 5, Blackhawks 2: Chris Stewart broke a tie midway through the third period with the first of his two goals and visiting Minnesota beat Chicago for its first victory of the season.

Jason Zucker had a goal and an assist, and Devan Dubnyk made 36 saves to help the Wild (1-1-1) hand Chicago (3-1-1) its first regulation loss.

Panthers 5, Blues 2: Roberto Luongo moved into a tie for fourth on the NHL career victory list with 454, making 37 saves to help host Florida beat St. Louis.

The 38-year-old Luongo is tied with Curtis Joseph on the career list.

Red Wings 4, Coyotes 2: Luke Glendening broke a tie

with a short-handed goal with 3:24 left and visiting Detroit beat winless Arizona.

Dylan Larkin got the assist on Glendening's goal, his second of the night, after Red Wings goalie Jimmy Howard made a flexible save at the other end. Howard finished with 33 saves.

Predators 4, Stars 1: Samuel Girard scored his first NHL goal and had an assist to lead host Nashville past Dallas.

The 19-year-old Girard was playing his second NHL game.

Sharks 3, Sabres 2: Timo Meier scored late in the second period, lifting host San Jose past Buffalo for its first win of the season.

Tomas Hertl and Chris Tierney also scored for the Sharks, and Martin Jones made 23 saves.

Jets 4, Canucks 2: Patrik Laine and Tyler Myers scored 3:13 apart late in the second period to help visiting Winnipeg beat Vancouver.

Josh Morrissey and Nikolaj Ehlers, into an empty net, also scored. Connor Hellebuyck made 31 saves, and Bryan Little had two assists.