

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Dozens killed in wave of Afghan attacks

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban unleashed a wave of attacks across Afghanistan on Tuesday, targeting police compounds and government facilities with suicide bombers in the country's south, east and west and killing at least 74 people, officials said.

Among those killed in one of the attacks was a provincial police chief. Scores were also wounded, both policemen and civilians.

Afghanistan's deputy interior minister, Murad Ali Murad, called the onslaught the "biggest terrorist attack this year."

Murad told a press conference in Kabul that attacks in Ghazni and Paktia provinces killed 71 people.

In southern Paktia province, 41 people — 21 policemen and 20 civilians — were killed

when the Taliban targeted a police compound in the provincial capital of Gardez with two suicide car bombs. Among the wounded were 48 policemen and 110 civilians.

The provincial police chief, Toryalai Abdyani, was killed in the Paktia attack, Murad said.

The Interior Ministry said in a statement earlier Tuesday that after the two cars blew up in Gardez, five attackers with suicide belts tried to storm the compound but were killed by Afghan security forces.

Health Ministry spokesman Waheed Majroo said the Gardez city hospital reported receiving at least 130 wounded in the attack.

Hamza Aqmhah, a student at the Paktia University, told The Associated Press that he heard a very powerful blast that shattered glass and broke all the

windows at the building he was in. The university is about 1.25 miles from the training academy, said Aqmhah, who was slightly injured by the glass.

A lawmaker from Paktia, Mujeeb Rahman Chamkani, said that along with the provincial police chief, several of his staff were killed. Most of the casualties were civilians who had come to the center, which also serves as a government passport department, Chamkani said.

In southern Ghazni province, the insurgents stormed a security compound in Andar district, using a suicide car bomb and killing 25 police and five civilians, Murad said. At least 15 people were wounded, including 10 policemen, he added.

Arif Noori, spokesman for the provincial governor in Ghazni, said the Taliban attack there lasted nine hours. By the time

the attackers were repelled, 13 Taliban fighters had been killed, Noori added.

And in western Farah province, police Chief Abdul Maruf Fulad said the Taliban attacked a government compound in Shibkho district, killing three policemen.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for all three attacks.

Despite the staggering numbers, Murad said Afghan forces are confident in their "readiness to fight terrorists and eliminate them from Afghanistan." He said the Taliban have suffered heavy defeats over the past six months at the hands of Afghan forces and were seeking revenge.

Later on Tuesday, an Afghan official said drone strikes killed 35 Taliban fighters in the country's east, near the border with Pakistan.

## Syrian commander says Raqqa recaptured from ISIS

Associated Press

BEIRUT — U.S.-backed Syrian forces liberated the city of Raqqa on Tuesday from Islamic State militants, a senior commander said, in a major defeat for the collapsing extremist group that had proclaimed it to be the capital of its "caliphate."

Although clashes in Raqqa have ended, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces are in control, combing the city in northern Syria for land mines and searching for any ISIS sleeper cells, Brig. Gen. Talal Sillo told The Associated Press.

Sillo said a formal declaration that Raqqa has fallen would be made once troops finish their clearing operations in the city on the banks of the Euphrates River.

Col. Ryan Dillon, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition,

said it has not yet received official reports that the city was cleared, describing mines and booby traps throughout Raqqa that have killed returning civilians and senior SDF commanders in recent days. One of those killed Monday was the head of the internal security force affiliated with the SDF.

Another challenge for the troops is searching the tunnels that were dug by the militants around the city, Dillon said.

"This will take some time, to say that the city is completely clear," he told the AP. "We still suspect that there are still (ISIS) fighters that are within the city in small pockets."

The loss of Raqqa will deprive the militants of a major hub for recruitment and planning, Dillon said, because the city attracted hundreds of foreign

fighters and was a place where attacks in the Middle East and Europe were planned. He added that the militants remain active in Syria, farther south around the eastern province of Deir el-Zour.

"This has been the wellspring of [ISIS] as we know it," he said. But he stressed that the military defeat of the militants "doesn't mean the end of [ISIS] and their ideology."

Dozens of militants who refused to surrender made their last stand earlier Tuesday in Raqqa's sports stadium, which the group had turned into a notorious prison in the more than three years it held the city.

ISIS militants had been cornered in and around the stadium, and it was not immediately clear after Sillo's statement whether any were still inside it.

"The stadium is a huge structure with underground rooms and tunnels. There are also buildings around it" still under the control of ISIS, said SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali.

A senior Kurdish commander later said the stadium had been checked and cleared of land mines.

SDF forces raised their own flag in the stadium, he added.

The SDF forces earlier captured Raqqa's main hospital, the other last remaining ISIS holdout that had served both as a medical facility and an ISIS command center. The SDF fighters have not gone through it to clear it, Dillon said.

With the capture of the hospital, the last black ISIS flag was taken down, according to the Kurdish-run Hawar news agency.

# N. Korea: Nuke war could be imminent

Bloomberg

North Korea warned that a nuclear war “may break out any moment” as the U.S. and South Korea began one of the largest joint naval drills off both the east and west coasts of the peninsula.

Kim In Ryong, North Korea’s deputy ambassador to the United Nations, said Monday that his nation had become a “full-fledged nuclear power which possesses the delivery means of various ranges” and warned that “the entire U.S. mainland is within our firing range.” He also called North Korea “a responsible nuclear state.”

“As long as one does not take part in the U.S. military actions against the DPRK, we have no intention to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any other country,” Kim said, referring to his country’s for-

mal name.

The comments are similar to other warnings North Korea has made over the past few months as tensions have increased with President Donald Trump’s administration. Kim Jong Un’s regime has repeatedly said it needs the capability to strike the U.S. with a nuclear weapon to deter an American attack.

“They just bluff to the extreme because they think that if enough people worry about what they’re saying, that would deter U.S.-South Korean action,” Bruce Bennett, senior defense analyst at Rand Corp., said in a Bloomberg TV interview. “The problem is North Korea is used to using very extreme words to deter by bluff and by bluster, and now they’re shocked that the Americans are using a similar approach.”

Trump has said military

force is an option to stop Kim and has ruled out talks with Pyongyang. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Sunday the president wants him to push forward on diplomacy with North Korea “until the first bomb drops.”

A war of words has escalated between the two leaders in recent weeks, with Trump labeling Kim “Rocket Man” and telling the U.N. that the U.S. would “totally destroy” North Korea if it attacks. Kim responded by calling Trump a “dotard” and warning of the “highest level of hard-line countermeasure in history.”

South Korean military officials are preparing for another possible missile launch from North Korea this week to counter the U.S.-South Korea drills, which include an American aircraft carrier and a nuclear submarine. Also, China’s Com-

munist Party will start its most important political meeting in five years on Wednesday.

A North Korean official said an intercontinental ballistic missile test could coincide with Trump’s visit to Asia next month, CNN reported, without identifying the person.

The official added that two more steps are needed for Pyongyang to achieve its goal of having reliable ICBMs: an above-ground nuclear detonation and the “testing of a long-range ICBM capable of reaching Guam — and even further.”

Russian Ambassador to North Korea Alexander Matsegora on Monday urged the U.S. to reduce military drills near North Korea, reiterating a proposal for both sides to step back and calm tensions.

## US military presence in Somalia surges in 2017

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The number of U.S. servicemembers operating in Somalia has quadrupled since the beginning of the year to 400 troops, making it the biggest contingent deployed to the war-torn country in nearly 25 years.

The Pentagon confirmed the total Monday, two days after a massive truck bomb in the Somali capital of Mogadishu killed more than 300 people.

Col. Rob Manning, briefing reporters in Washington, said “we’re not going to speculate” about whether the Somalia mission will expand further. About half of the 400 U.S. troops in Somalia are positioned in Mogadishu, and the rest are operators in the field on an advisory mission.

In early 2017, the U.S. had about 100 troops in Somalia, said Robyn Mack, a

spokeswoman for U.S. Africa Command.

AFRICOM said all of its personnel were accounted for after Saturday’s attack.

The U.S. announced in April that it had sent about 40 soldiers from the 101st Airborne into Somalia, marking the first time since 1993 that regular troops were given a mission there. Their task has focused on training Somalia’s fledgling military to ensure a steady stream of supplies reaches forces fighting the Islamic militant group al-Shabab.

A cadre of U.S. special operations forces also operates alongside Somali troops as advisers. In May, a Navy SEAL involved in those efforts was killed. His death was the first combat casualty in Somalia since the notorious Black Hawk Down debacle in 1993, in which 18 servicemembers were killed.

## US: Tensions between Kurds, Iraq still distract

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Tensions between Iraq’s Kurdish forces and the nation’s government-controlled military, which resulted in brief clashes over disputed territory in northern Iraq on Monday, distract from the mission to defeat Islamic State, a U.S. military spokesman said Tuesday.

Army Col. Ryan Dillon, a Baghdad-based spokesman for the anti-ISIS coalition, downplayed the deadly engagement south of Kirkuk early Monday morning as a “miscommunication” between the two forces, both of which have been trained by U.S. and coalition troops during the last three years. Dillon added the two sides were able to transition control of areas in and around Kirkuk peacefully Monday and Tuesday.

The Kurdish Regional Government had controlled Kirkuk,

an oil-rich city of some 1 million Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and Christians in northern Iraq, since driving ISIS from the city in 2015.

Baghdad has long sought to regain control of the city, and tensions grew following a recent nonbinding Kurdish independence referendum resulting in the Iraqi government demanding the Kurds leave the city by Oct. 15.

Dillon said he was aware of only the one outbreak of fighting early Monday morning, despite reports of other violent skirmishes in the area.

“That one incident was the only altercation, armed conflict, exchange of fire that we know about,” he told reporters Tuesday at the Pentagon.

Dillon warned the tensions between the two sides are disrupting the plan to defeat the last of ISIS in territories along the Euphrates River near Iraq’s border with Syria.



# Claim about past presidents, fallen troops disputed

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For U.S. presidents, meeting the families of military personnel killed in war is about as wrenching as the presidency gets. President Donald Trump's suggestion Monday that his predecessors fell short in that duty brought a visceral reaction from those who witnessed those grieving encounters.

"He's a deranged animal," Alyssa Mastromonaco, a former deputy chief of staff to President Barack Obama, tweeted about Trump. With an expletive, she called Trump's statement in the Rose Garden a lie.

Trump said in a news conference he had written letters to the families of four soldiers killed in an Oct. 4 ambush in Niger and planned to call them, crediting himself with taking extra steps in honoring the dead properly. "Most of them didn't make calls," he said of his predecessors. He said it's possible that Obama "did sometimes," but "other presidents did not call."

The record is plain that presidents reached out to families of the dead and to the wounded, often with their presence as well as by letter and phone. The path to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and other military hospitals, as well as to the Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, where the remains of fallen soldiers are often brought, is a familiar one to Obama, George W. Bush and others.

Bush, even at the height of two wars, "wrote all the families of the fallen," said Freddy Ford, spokesman for the ex-president. Ford said Bush also called or met "hundreds, if not thousands" of family members of the war dead.

Obama's official photographer, Pete Souza, tweeted that he photographed Obama "meeting with hundreds of wounded soldiers, and family members of those killed in action."

Others recalled his frequent visits with Gold Star families, and travels to Walter Reed, Dover and other venues with families of the dead and with the wounded.

Retired Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed those contacts, tweeting: "POTUS 43 & 44 and first ladies cared deeply, worked tirelessly for the serving, the fallen, and their families. Not politics. Sacred Trust."

Trump addressed the matter when asked why he had not spoken about the four soldiers killed in Niger. They died when militants thought to be affiliated with Islamic State ambushed them while they were patrolling in unarmored trucks with Nigerian troops.

"I actually wrote letters individually to the soldiers we're talking about, and they're going to be going out either today or tomorrow," he said, meaning he wrote to the families of the fallen soldiers. He did not explain why letters had not been sent yet, more than a week after the attack.

"If you look at President Obama and other presidents, most of them didn't make calls," Trump said.

Pressed on that statement later, he said of Obama: "I was told that he didn't often, and a lot of presidents don't. They write letters." He went on: "President Obama, I think, probably did sometimes, and maybe sometimes he didn't. I don't know. That's what I was told. ... Some presidents didn't do anything."

## Trump warns McCain after senator's tough talk

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Tuesday issued a warning shot after Republican Sen. John McCain questioned "half-baked, spurious nationalism" in America's foreign policy.

Trump said in a radio interview with WMAL in Washington that "people have to be careful because at some point I fight back." The president added "I'm being very, very nice but at some point I fight back and it won't be pretty."

McCain, a former Navy pilot who spent 5½ years in a Vietnam prisoner of war camp and is battling brain cancer, offered a simple response to Trump: "I have faced tougher adversaries."

In Philadelphia on Monday night, the six-term Republican senator from Arizona received an award for a lifetime of service and sacrifice to the country. In addition to recalling his more than two decades of military service and his imprisonment during the war, McCain took

a moment to go a step further than the night's other speakers, who lamented what many described as a fractured political climate.

"To abandon the ideals we have advanced around the globe, to refuse the obligations of international leadership for the sake of some half-baked, spurious nationalism cooked up by people who would rather find scapegoats than solve problems," he said, "is as unpatriotic as an attachment to any other tired dogma of the past that Americans consigned to the ash heap of history."

Former Vice President Joe Biden presented McCain with the Liberty Medal. Though members of opposing parties, the two men worked together during their time in the Senate. Former President Barack Obama congratulated the senator on the award in a tweet Monday night.

McCain and Trump have long been at odds. During the campaign, Trump suggested McCain was not a war hero because he was captured in Vietnam.

## Drug czar nominee pulls name from consideration

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rep. Tom Marino, President Donald Trump's nominee to be the nation's drug czar, is withdrawing from consideration following reports that he played a key role in weakening the federal government's authority to stop companies from distributing opioids.

Marino "has informed me that he is withdrawing his name from consideration as drug czar," Trump tweeted Tuesday. "Tom is a fine man and a great Congressman!"

Trump's announcement comes a day after the president raised the possibility of nixing the nomination following reports by The Washington Post and CBS News. The re-

ports detailed the Pennsylvania lawmaker's involvement in crafting a 2016 law, signed by President Barack Obama, that weakened the Drug Enforcement Administration's authority to curb opioid distribution.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, the bill's lead Senate sponsor, defended the measure Monday, calling allegations that he or Marino "conspired" with drug companies "utterly ridiculous." Hatch, a 40-year veteran of the Senate, said he was "no patsy" of the drug industry.

The language affecting DEA enforcement authority was suggested by the DEA and the Justice Department, Hatch said, adding that the agencies could have tried to stop the bill at any time — or recommended that Obama veto the measure.



## Fla. candidate says she was abducted by aliens at age 7

Associated Press

MIAMI — A Florida candidate for Congress said Monday she stands by her claims she was abducted to an alien spaceship at age 7 but that the incident shouldn't detract from what she's done since then.

Bettina Rodriguez Aguilera has claimed in past Spanish TV network appearances, most recently in 2011, that she was taken aboard a ship with three blonde creatures that resembled Rio de Janeiro's Christ the Redeemer statue.

"I don't exactly know what happened," she told The Associated Press on Monday. "I believe it is real. But I was 7 years old. It was an experience I had a thousand years ago."

Since those television appearances, Rodriguez Aguilera has served as a councilwoman in the city of Doral, where she was appointed vice mayor. She also teaches leadership at Miami Dade College and runs a consulting firm, Bettinara Enterprises. She is one of five Republicans running to replace Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla., when she retires at the end of next year. Ros-Lehtinen's retirement opens up a competitive seat that Democrats have high hopes of capturing.

Rodriguez Aguilera declined to go into details on what was said in her 2009 appearance on America TeVe, where she claimed the extraterrestrials told her "the center of the world's energy is in Africa." She then talks about 30,000 nonhuman skulls discovered in a cave on the Mediterranean island of Malta. Another video uploaded in 2011 also showed Rodriguez Aguilera in a TV show talking about that.

The videos were cited in a Miami Herald story Monday and are available on YouTube. In them, Rodriguez Aguilera mentions seeing paranormal activity later, while growing up in Miami when she was 12 and into her teens. She cites a UFO sighting when she was 17 and refers to an article in the same newspaper that she says corroborated what she saw.

## Calif. faces more fires as blazes in wine country fade

Associated Press

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — As fire crews gain on wildfires burning for more than a week in Northern California's wine country, new fires broke out in other parts of the state, including northeast of Los Angeles.

Firefighters are battling a blaze that sprang up overnight in the southern Bay Area Santa Cruz mountains, prompting evacuation orders and threatening 100 homes. The fire has torched about 125 acres.

At least one structure was destroyed, Rob Sherman, assistant chief of the California Department of Forestry and Fire

Protection, told KNTV news.

Farther south, crews with air support are racing to protect a historic observatory and communications towers from a growing brush fire on Mount Wilson northeast of Los Angeles. The blaze was initially estimated at around 5 acres. Officials say the observatory has been evacuated and the fire is not burning near foothill residences.

A week after fleeing wildfires in Northern California, tens of thousands of people are returning to their neighborhoods. Some will face the prospect of destroyed homes. All will face the possibility of lasting emo-

tional damage.

The cluster of wildfires has been burning in Northern California's wine country for more than a week. The fires, the deadliest cluster in California history, have killed at least 41 people and destroyed nearly 6,000 homes.

The thousands of calls coming from concerned residents in neighboring Sonoma County "have shifted from questions about evacuation to questions about coping," Sonoma County Supervisor Shirlee Zane said. "Many people who call are sad and worried. The shock has worn off and the sadness, depression and loss is setting in."

## Las Vegans help after tragedy with garden, free services

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The day after a gunman opened fire on a country music festival from a high-rise Las Vegas hotel, a local landscaper was at City Hall with an idea for remembering the 58 people he killed.

Jay Pleggenkuhle, of Stonerose Landscapes, said he thought the people of Las Vegas needed a project to help them work through their grief.

His business partner, Daniel Perez, pushed him to tell city officials about the idea for a temporary "pop-up" garden where people could mourn. Officials identified a quarter-acre city lot in the downtown arts district originally slated for a dog park and suggested the garden be made permanent.

With city approval, the land and a plan drawn on a paper napkin, the landscaping team asked their contractor friend Mark Hammelmann for help.

More than 1,000 volunteers joined in.

Over the next three days, the

dirt lot was leveled, concrete bricks were placed and a heart-shaped garden was filled with purple pansies, red and white roses and bright pink petunias. A temporary "Remembrance Wall" was hammered together from wooden pallets. Trees and shrubs were planted. Neighbor John Pacheco, a local artist now dubbed the "garden mayor," served coffee to volunteers.

Around the city, local businesses have offered cremations for those who died and spaghetti dinners and 30-minute massages for first responders who rushed to the shooting scene, all at no cost. A dentist's office said it would provide free treatment for dental injuries sustained in the attack. A plastic surgery practice announced free wound care and scar therapy for disfiguring injuries.

St. Rose Dominican Hospitals, which treated 71 victims across three campuses, has said it will not require payment from any patient victims of the attack. Many mental health clin-

ics provided trauma counseling without charge.

The Uber ride-sharing service is still providing free rides to anyone who travels to and from hospitals or blood banks, local driver Sheryl Hyatt said. She visited the garden Sunday to look for the photograph of Sonny Melton, a registered nurse from Big Sandy, Tenn., who died in the shooting. Melton was 29.

"There he is," she said, pointing at his smiling image attached to the wall.

Hyatt said she had driven him and his wife, Heather, from the airport when they arrived for the music festival and remembered him because of his big personality.

"He was a real hoot," she said, "the kind of guy you don't forget."

Organizers of the garden said it is those happy memories they hope will emerge among visitors, along with a sense of community and connection.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## 2 use fake dough to buy fried dough

**NH** LACONIA — Police said a man and woman used fake money to buy fried dough at a pumpkin festival.

Laconia police charged Christopher Greene, 24, and Holly Solans, 23, with forgery and resisting arrest. The two refused bail and were being held at Belknap County Jail.

Police said Greene and Solans had passed a fake \$100 bill at a fried dough stand Saturday evening in Laconia. Police said Greene took off on foot after police approached them.

## Life-size pope cutout stolen, then returned

**NJ** WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP — Authorities said a life-size cutout of Pope Francis that was stolen from a New Jersey church during a bingo fundraiser has been returned intact.

New Jersey police said the theft occurred Thursday night at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Gloucester County. A post made on the department's Facebook page the following night said the cutout had been returned.

One witness reported seeing the cutout in a car occupied by three women.

## Sheriff is forced to cancel giveaway event

**FL** FORT LAUDERDALE — A food voucher giveaway event for Hurricane Irma victims was canceled after police say scuffles broke out and people fainted from the heat while standing in long lines.

The South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported that the Broward County Sheriff's Office canceled Sunday's voucher

giveaway after "safety concerns and overwhelming response" on Saturday at events in North Lauderdale. The Food for Florida program gives food vouchers to families affected by power outages from Hurricane Irma. The vouchers can be used at supermarkets.

## No charges in case of cheerleading splits

**CO** DENVER — A Denver prosecutor said no charges will be filed following an investigation into videos showing a high school coach pushing cheerleaders down in splits.

District Attorney Beth McCann said in a statement released Saturday there was insufficient evidence to warrant charges after a police investigation.

The former coach, Ozell Williams, was dismissed after the videos became public. An East High School principal retired, and an athletic director resigned. The recordings were broadcast on KUSA-TV in August, showing eight cheerleaders repeatedly being pushed into splits. In one video, a girl appears to cry out in pain and repeatedly asks the coach to "please stop."

## Cops: Woman stabbed husband in hospital

**MD** BALTIMORE — Baltimore police have arrested a woman they allege fatally stabbed her husband in a hospital.

Police arrested Anita Jones, 30, on Saturday and charged her with first-degree murder stemming from the stabbing death of Christopher Yancey, 33.

Police said officers were called to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore on Friday for a reported suicide. When they

arrived, hospital staff told them Jones and Yancey had been arguing in a room while their son was getting a procedure.

Jones then came out and told staff that Yancey had cut himself. Staff members found Yancey suffering from multiple lacerations, and he was pronounced dead. Jones left the hospital before officers arrived.

## Former school board member sorry for slur

**SC** FLORENCE — A former school board member in South Carolina has apologized for sending an email in which he called black board members "darkies."

One black Florence School District One member said that is not enough, and he wants a state and federal investigation into possible discrimination.

Glenn Odom sent the email to a district employee in August asking for a ride and also asking her not to "send it to the darkies." He resigned Oct. 2. The Morning News reported he apologized during a prayer gathering Friday.

Board member Alexis Pipkins Sr. said black board members weren't told about the email for a month and that's why he wants the district's emails reviewed.

## 2 expose themselves in parking garage

**AL** HUNTSVILLE — Police in Alabama are looking for two men who they say exposed themselves to women in two separate incidents at a parking garage.

Huntsville police spokesman Sgt. Jonathan Ware told news outlets that police have received two reports of exposure over the past six weeks and believe there may be more victims. Police released a picture of one man at the Clinton Avenue parking garage, with the

hope of identifying the suspect. Police believe the incidents involved different men.

Ware said both incidents took place in broad daylight.

## Pathologist hauling organs guilty of DWI

**IN** MARTINSVILLE — An Indiana pathologist who was hauling human organ samples in his pickup truck when he was arrested on drunken driving charges has pleaded guilty.

Elmo A. Griggs, 75, was sentenced last week to a year of probation in Morgan County after pleading guilty to one count of operating a vehicle while intoxicated. A second count was dismissed.

The Indianapolis Star reported Griggs has worked as a pathologist for more than a decade. He was arrested Sept. 12 after he was spotted driving erratically along Indiana 67, about 10 miles southwest of Indianapolis. A vodka bottle and totes containing slides and organ samples from Griggs' private pathology cases were found in his truck.

## Man burglarizes 4 houses of worship

**NY** NEW YORK — Authorities said a homeless man who told police he was "mad at God" is going to prison for burglarizing four New York City houses of worship.

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown said Monday that Joseph Woznik, 24, was sentenced to 1½ to 4½ years after pleading guilty to burglary as a hate crime and other charges.

The break-ins occurred in March and April at a Hindu temple and three churches. Woznik pried open donation boxes, ransacked church offices, broke windows and pawned a church's digital camera.

From wire reports

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# Talented NBA rookies ready for debut

Associated Press

MIAMI— If there was one takeaway from Lonzo Ball's first training camp and preseason, it was this: He doesn't sound like his dad.

There's no humility in Ball's game. The confidence of the Los Angeles Lakers' rookie point guard is high when he's on the floor and with a ball in his hand. But when he speaks, when microphones are thrust near his face and the lights of cameras shine in his eyes and reporters pepper him with questions, there's no bluster or bravado emanating.

Yes, even the most ballyhooed player in this highly regarded NBA rookie class knows that a learning process awaits over the next few months.

"The grind of the season, 82 games, I've never played that before," Ball said. "It is my first year, so I don't know what really to expect. But I'm going in there with an open mind, ready to learn, ready to get better and I'm looking forward to the challenge."

His father, LaVar Ball, has generated plenty of headlines with his sometimes over-the-top remarks, plus has faced tons of criticism for things like slapping a \$495 price tag on the infamous Big Baller Brand shoe that was released months before his son made his NBA debut. But Lonzo Ball speaks with humility, a calmness that helped convince the Lakers that he indeed was the right pick to be the rebuilding team's point guard of the present and future.

"I'd like to just play," Lonzo Ball said.

No. 1 pick Markelle Fultz will be part of Philadelphia's young core that the 76ers hope get them back in the Eastern Conference playoff mix, No. 3 pick Jayson Tatum should be a big part of a Boston team that believes it can compete for a title, and No. 9 pick Dennis Smith Jr. — an absolute freak of an athlete, even by NBA standards — is already being mentioned as a star of the future in Dallas and a legitimate rookie of the year candidate this season.

They won't be asked to be great right away. But this rookie class might have as much potential as any in years. Here's some of what to know from the rookie perspective going into the season:

**All-star chances:** Don't expect to see many freshmen on the floor in Los Angeles for the All-Star Game in February.

Here are the last three rookies to make an All-Star team — Blake Griffin in 2011 (which was his second year in the NBA), Yao Ming in 2002 (after he was a pro in China before coming to the NBA) and Tim Duncan in 1998.

The odds are stacked even higher against the guards. The last rookie guard to make the game was Michael Jordan in 1985, and the last rookie point guard was Isiah Thomas in 1982.

**Scoring comes later:** Since 2000, only seven rookies have averaged 20 points per game. They were Blake Griffin (22.5), Carmelo Anthony (21.0), LeBron James (20.9), Kevin Durant (20.3), Joel Embiid (20.2 last

year, after he missed his first two seasons), Elton Brand (20.1) and Tyreke Evans (20.1).

The learning curve can be steep, when considering that stars of now like Isaiah Thomas, Kevin Love, Marc Gasol and Al Horford all averaged less than 12 points as rookies. James Harden averaged 9.9, Mike Conley 9.4, Kawhi Leonard and Paul George were just under 8 points per game, Giannis Antetokounmpo was at 6.8, Kyle Lowry and Gordon Hayward didn't even average 6 points and CJ McCollum barely averaged 5.

**Then again ...:** Milwaukee's Malcolm Brogdon showed last year that scoring isn't exactly a prerequisite for rookie awards.

He averaged 10.2 points per game last season, the lowest for any NBA rookie of the year in the 68-year history of the award. Brogdon started only 28 games, by far the lowest for a ROY winner since the NBA started charting that statistic.

**Welcome, Milos:** Having 30somethings as NBA rookies isn't unheard of, although the vast majority of those examples came in the league's infancy during the 1940s.

Milos Teodosic is about to join that club. The 30-year-old Serbian is a rookie for the Los Angeles Clippers this season, and yes, he's eligible for rookie of the year honors. He's starred in pro leagues in Russia and Greece, and Clippers coach Doc Rivers — not a bad passer in his day — says Teodosic is one of the best distributors of the basketball that he's ever seen.

## Thunder relying on league's new Big Three

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Russell Westbrook, Carmelo Anthony and Paul George have accomplished nearly everything in their basketball careers.

Westbrook is a two-time scoring champion, two-time All-Star MVP and the reigning league MVP. Anthony is a 10-time All-Star and three-time Olympic gold medalist. George is a four-time All-Star, former most improved player award winner and an Olympic gold medalist.

None of the new Oklahoma City Thunder teammates have an NBA title.

They say that is what drives this version of the NBA's latest Big Three.

"It's a different energy, a different focus, a different motivation that myself have, Paul has and Russ has, being that we haven't won a championship yet in our careers," Anthony said. "We see that, and that's our ultimate goal."

It's every NBA player's goal, but few have what it takes to win a title or are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to get to the top.

Westbrook, who recently signed a reported five-year, \$205 million extension with OKC, averaged a triple-double last season and broke Oscar Robertson's single-season record for triple-doubles in a season with 42. But he didn't have much help offensively, and the Thunder lost to the Houston Rockets in the first round of the

playoffs.

Oklahoma City added George in an offseason trade with Indiana, then once the possibility of Anthony leaving New York became real, George helped Anthony add Oklahoma City to his list of possible destinations since he had a no-trade clause in his contract.

"You know, it's awesome to have guys that want to play alongside you and team up with you and share a mission with you, so we got right to it," George said. "The same for Russ. Those two are pretty close. We all were kind of in the loop on what was going on and we made it possible."

For this union to work there will need to be sacrifices, especially by Anthony. He has

been a lead scorer his entire career, and last season he averaged 22.4 points. He is the No. 25 scorer in NBA history with more than 24,000 points. He is heading into territory that it took other All-Stars some time to adjust to, most recently Kevin Love and Chris Bosh.

"I didn't want to come here to try to outshine Paul or Russ and vice versa," Anthony said. "We're trying to win basketball games, and by any means necessary, we're going to do that. I'm going to bring my skillset to this team, to this organization, and that's what I'm here for."

George said all three players approach the game the right way, so he has no doubts that eventually they will make it work.



# Titans end 11-game skid versus Colts

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Wesley Woodyard squatted and folded his arms as his Tennessee teammates bowed in front of the veteran linebacker near midfield in celebration, deserving every bit of the attention.

Woodyard had just forced Colts quarterback Jacoby Brissett out of bounds shy of the first down marker on fourth-and-inches, sealing the Titans' 36-22 win Monday night over Indianapolis.

It ended the Titans' 11-game skid to their AFC South rivals — the one tied for the longest active drought against one team in the NFL. Cleveland now has lone possession of that mark against Denver.

"We feel like every game's a must-win, but this was definitely a must-win, especially with the 11-game streak on the line," said Woodyard, who also had a team-high eight tackles and recovered a fumble. "We came in and answered the call."

The Titans (3-3) next head to winless Cleveland for a chance to move above .500 before their

bye.

Still waiting for Andrew Luck, the Colts (2-4) have yet to beat a team with a win this season. Indianapolis has been outscored 85-22 in fourth quarters, and coach Chuck Pagano had to answer for another head-scratching finish this week. His Colts led 19-15 going into the fourth only to be outscored 21-3.

"We have to figure it out," Pagano said.

Here are some things to know about the Colts and Titans:

**Marcus Mariota:** Mariota played with a strained left hamstring that kept him out of last week's loss in Miami, and the Titans quarterback was careful about it. The Colts sacked him once and hit him six times, but Mariota shuffled around the pocket to throw for a season-high 306 yards. His 53-yard touchdown with 5:29 left to a wide-open Taywan Taylor put the Titans ahead to stay.

"He's a tough guy," Titans running back Derrick Henry said. "To come out there at not even 100 percent, to come out here and play and lead us to a

win against a good division opponent. All credit goes to him. That shows what type of leader he is, what type of guy he is and how great he is.

**Smash Mouth:** The Titans ran for 168 yards with Henry turning in his best game yet in the NFL. He ran 19 times for 131 yards and provided the final margin by running 72 yards for a TD inside the final minute.

"My goal was to get a first down," Henry said. "We knew they were out of timeouts, so if we get the first down, that ends the game. But when I got past the safety, I saw grass, and I'm like, 'I've got to go for it.'"

**Containing Hilton:** The Titans finally figured out how to slow down T.Y. Hilton, limiting the Colts' star receiver to a single catch for 19 yards. The three-time Pro Bowl selection had 12 catches for 230 yards and two touchdowns in the Colts' two victories over the Titans last season.

"He's a game-wrecker, he can change the game," Titans coach Mike Mularkey said. "Whatever we can do to take him out of

the game, we're going to do. If it was taking two of our guys to cover him, we were going to do that."

**Succop's record streak:** Titans kicker Ryan Succop set an NFL record by making his 47th straight field-goal attempt from inside 50 yards. He then made four more field goals from that distance to extend his streak to 51. Succop had been tied coming into the game for the NFL record with Atlanta's Matt Bryant, who made 46 straight kicks from inside 50 yards from 2013-15. Succop made two 48-yarders and also connected from 32, 40 and 23 yards out.

"I'm so humbled, and I feel so blessed," Succop said.

**AFC South:** The Colts find themselves looking up at the rest of the division, and the Titans now are tied with Jacksonville and Houston at 3-3 with a 2-1 mark in the division that matches their win total for all of last season. "That was the whole objective, to get a division win," Mularkey said. "No other ultimatum. That was it. Get the win."

## Clemson goes back to drawing board after shocking loss

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Clemson coach Dabo Swinney has already started breaking down every aspect of his program since the seventh-ranked Tigers' surprise loss to Syracuse this past Friday night.

"It's been a long weekend," Swinney said Monday.

Clemson (6-1, 4-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) is off this week before hosting Georgia Tech on Oct. 28. During the break, Swinney hopes to uncover why the defending national champions, who were more than a three-touchdown favorite, instead were outplayed across the board in a 27-24 loss.

"The bottom line is we really did a poor job. We really did a poor job as coaches," Swinney

said. "Flat out got our butts kicked."

That was a big reason why Swinney stepped into the Syracuse locker room during the Orange celebration to congratulate the winners. Swinney said the Syracuse and visiting team's locker rooms are right next to each other and he wanted the Orange to know firsthand from him how well they played.

"I was happy for those guys," he said.

Now, Swinney's got to rediscover that happy feeling for the Tigers, who were held to their second-lowest total of the season with 304 yards of offense. A big reason was quarterback Kelly Bryant leaving the field early for a second consecutive game. This time, Bryant was

diagnosed with a concussion after getting tackled in the second quarter. That followed his sprained ankle in the third quarter of a win over Wake Forest on Oct. 7.

Swinney said Bryant has "responded well" since Friday night's injury and he expected him back at practice later in the week.

"We'll be really cautious with him this week," Swinney said.

This week will be one of self study and correcting mistakes for the Tigers. The to-do list is long, but includes giving up too many penalties that kept Syracuse drives going and correcting defensive techniques if Clemson has hopes of winning the ACC Atlantic, the league title and returning to the College Football Playoff.

Syracuse "saw they had a definite chance to win the game and we just didn't capitalize on the opportunities we had to make a comeback," Clemson defensive end Clelin Ferrell said.

Also in need of repair is Clemson's field goal kicking, which has been in disarray since a freak practice injury to national championship starter Greg Huegel cost him the rest of the season because of knee ligament damage. Backup Alex Spence missed two of three field goals at Syracuse and four of six since taking over the job last month.

Swinney said the place-kicking job is wide open. Spence is expected to compete with Christian Groomes for the starting job.

# Yankees battle way back into ALCS

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Back in the Bronx, the big guys delivered.

Greeted by an array of “All Rise” signs in a ballpark that fits their style, Aaron Judge hit a three-run homer and made a pair of sparkling catches, leading CC Sabathia and the New York Yankees over the Houston Astros 8-1 Monday night and cutting their deficit to 2-1 in the AL Championship Series.

Todd Frazier hit a go-ahead, three-run homer into the short porch in right field in the second inning against Charlie Morton.

The 6-foot-7 Judge entered in a 4-for-31 (.129) postseason slump that included one home run, four RBIs and 19 strikeouts. The slugger capped a five-run fourth with a laser of a drive to left field off Will Harris and robbed Yuli Gurriel and Cameron Maybin of extra-base hits.

“You see a guy put his head basically through the wall and then dive,” Frazier said. “The ground is going to shake when

he hits the ground.”

Sabathia, almost as big at 6-foot-6, allowed three hits over six scoreless innings for his first postseason win in five years. The Yankees stopped a seven-game ALCS losing streak dating to Sabathia’s victory over Texas in 2010 — when Judge had just started his freshman year at Fresno State.

After a pair of 2-1 losses in Houston, the Yankees led 8-0 after four innings.

“Just the energy, the fans,” Sabathia said. “We can kind of feed off their energy.”

New York improved to 4-0 at home this postseason. The Yankees were an AL-best 51-30 at home this season.

“We’re somewhat built for this ballpark,” manager Joe Girardi said.

Houston scored on a bases-loaded walk in the ninth before postseason star Jose Altuve grounded into a game-ending double play with the bases loaded.

Sonny Gray starts Game 4 for New York in the best-of-seven series on 11 days’ rest

Wednesday against Lance McCullers Jr.

Frazier got the Yankees rolling, taking an awkward hack at a low, outside fastball and slicing an opposite-field drive over the right-field scoreboard.

“You don’t think it’s going, just because how unorthodox the swing was,” Frazier said.

Judge used his height and long left arm to make a leaping catch with his left shoulder slamming into the right-field wall against Gurriel starting the fourth.

Being a rookie, he politely waited outside the dugout for all the veterans to descend the steps after the third out — as he always does — then capped a five-run bottom half with a line drive that just cleared the left-field wall.

Then in the fifth, he sprinted into short right for a diving backhand catch on Maybin.

On the first chilly night of autumn with a game-time temperature of 57, Sabathia relied on the sharp, slow slider that has helped revive the former flamethrower’s career.

Pitching with caution to Houston’s dangerous lineup, he walked four, struck out five and pitched shutout ball for the first time in 21 career postseason starts. During the regular season, he was 9-0 in 10 starts following Yankees’ losses.

Adam Warren followed with two hitless innings, Dellin Betances walked his only two batters and Tommy Kahnle finished. Houston had four hits, leaving it with just 15 over the first three games, and is batting .169 in the matchup.

Morton was chased after 3<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings and allowed seven runs and six hits: three infield singles, a bloop single to center, a double that Maybin allowed to fall in left and Frazier’s homer.

“If you were to show me a video of the swing, show the pitch speed and the location, I would have never thought that,” Morton said. “That was unbelievable.”

A New Jersey native who grew up a Yankees fan, Frazier entered 7-for-18 against Morton with two home runs.

## Kucherov’s two goals help Bolts overtake Red Wings

Associated Press

DETROIT — Nikita Kucherov is in the middle of one of those stretches when the puck seems to do whatever he wants.

The dynamic forward scored twice Monday night to lift the Tampa Bay Lightning to a 3-2 victory over the Detroit Red Wings. Kucherov barely touched the puck on the decisive goal, but he did enough to deflect it past Jimmy Howard with 18:13 remaining in the third period, and Tampa Bay held on for its fourth straight victory.

Kucherov had exactly one goal in each of Tampa Bay’s first five games this season. After adding two more Monday, he is second in the league in goals, two behind Washington’s Alex Ovechkin.

“Special player,” Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. “He didn’t show up to Tampa in September. He showed up in July. He was on the ice four or five times a week just working on his game, and we’re reaping the benefits of that.”

Tyler Johnson also scored for the Lightning, who are now atop the NHL standings with 10 points. Justin Abdelkader and Mike Green scored in the second period to help Detroit erase a 2-0 deficit, but Kucherov broke the tie early in the third, reaching out with one hand on his stick and barely getting a piece of a loose puck in front of the net. It slid slowly under Howard and in.

Johnson opened the scoring with a short-handed goal in the first period, collecting the puck near his own blue line and outskating Trevor Daley

the other way before beating Howard. Kucherov scored on a power play 101 seconds later with a wrist shot from the right circle.

“They play really tight and there’s not much space on the ice,” Kucherov said. “You have to kind of grind this out and play the right way. ... Sometimes just wait for mistakes.”

Abdelkader’s goal came after some extensive deliberation by the officials. He was hooked from behind by Victor Hedman on a breakaway, but he was able to get a shot off. Andrei Vasilevskiy made the save, and Abdelkader went sliding into him. Detroit’s Darren Helm, who was trailing the play, put the rebound into the net.

After a review, officials took the goal away, ruling Abdelkader had interfered with the goalie and Hedman was guilty

of a hooking penalty. After additional discussion, Abdelkader was given a penalty shot, which he converted into a goal.

He was the first Detroit player to score on a penalty shot since Valtteri Filppula on Dec. 15, 2007.

Green’s tying goal was set up by Tomas Tatar, who started a rush with some impressive stickhandling in his own zone, and then eventually passed to Green, who followed his own shot and scored on the rebound.

“I thought we were the better team 5 on 5, I thought we had more scoring chances,” Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill said. “In the end, the difference was specialty teams. They scored two on specialty teams and we scored zero.”