

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## N. Korea conducts 'biggest' nuke test

BY KIM GAMEL

*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea announced its fifth and “biggest-ever” nuclear test Friday, claiming it can now make warheads small enough to put onto a missile. The defiant move raises the stakes facing the U.S. and its allies as they try to rein in the North after a rash of provocations.

President Barack Obama declared the United States “does not, and never will” accept North Korea as a nuclear state.

The blast, just eight months after the previous detonation set off the latest crisis on the divided peninsula, came as North

Koreans celebrated the 68th anniversary of the founding of their communist state. It also follows the nearly simultaneous launch of three midrange ballistic missiles that splashed down off the coast of Japan on Monday as world leaders held the G-20 summit in nearby China.

North Korea said it “successfully” detonated a nuclear warhead to show it has the ability to mount them on “strategic ballistic rockets.” It promised to “continue to strengthen our capacity to bolster nuclear force,” according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

“By standardizing and normalizing the nuclear warhead,

we will be able to produce as many smaller, lighter and more diversified nuclear warheads as we need,” the North said. “This has definitely put on a higher level (the North’s) technology of mounting nuclear warheads on ballistic rockets.”

Economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure have so far failed to halt the North’s provocations. Instead, the regime has stepped up the pace of missile tests in recent months as it pushes forward with its stated goal of developing a nuclear weapon capable of reaching the U.S. mainland.

Obama was briefed about the report on board Air Force One

as he returned to Washington from a trip to Asia, according to The Associated Press.

In a statement following his return to Washington, Obama said he had consulted by phone with South Korean President Park Geun-hye and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Obama said the three leaders agreed to work with the U.N. Security Council and the international community to “take additional significant steps, including new sanctions, to demonstrate to North Korea that there are consequences to its unlawful and dangerous actions.”

Stars and Stripes staffers Yoo Kyong Chang and Chiyomi Sumida contributed to this report.

## US airstrikes in 6 countries reminders of permanent wars

*The Washington Post*

While Americans savored the last moments of summer this Labor Day weekend, the U.S. military was busy overseas as warplanes conducted strikes in six countries in a flurry of attacks. The almost simultaneous bombing runs across Asia, Africa and the Middle East spotlighted the diffuse terrorist threats that have persisted into the final days of President Barack Obama’s presidency — conflicts that the next president is now certain to inherit.

In Iraq and Syria, between Friday and Monday, the U.S. conducted about 45 strikes against Islamic State group targets. On the other side of the Mediterranean, in the Libyan city of Sirte, the U.S. also hit fighters with the group. On Sunday in Yemen, a U.S. drone strike killed six suspected members of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

The following day, just across the Gulf of Aden in Soma-

lia, the Pentagon targeted al-Shabab, another group aligned with al-Qaida. And the military conducted several counterterrorism strikes over the holiday weekend in Afghanistan, where the Taliban and the Islamic State group are on the offensive.

Militants in each of those countries have been attacked before, but the convergence of so many strikes on so many fronts in such a short period served as a reminder of the endurance and geographic spread of al-Qaida and its mutations.

“This administration really wanted to end these wars,” said Paul Scharre, a former Army Ranger and Pentagon official now at the Center for a New American Security. “Now, we’ve got U.S. combat operations on multiple fronts and we’re dropping bombs in six countries. That’s just the unfortunate reality of the terrorism threat today.”

In meeting those threats,

Obama has sought to limit the large-scale deployments of the past, instead relying on air power, including drones; isolated special operations raids; and support for foreign forces.

But militant groups have defied eight years of these sustained counterterrorism efforts.

Nowhere are the unexpected turns of Obama’s foreign-policy record more visible than in Iraq, where thousands of U.S. troops returned after the 2011 withdrawal to support local forces’ battle against the Islamic State group. A smaller U.S. Special Operations force is based in northern Iraq, responsible for hunting down militant leaders.

U.S. warplanes conducted about 20 strikes in Iraq over the holiday weekend, largely centered in northern Nineveh province and Mosul, the strategic city that local forces hope to recapture from the Islamic State group this year. But there

were also strikes in Iraq’s western Anbar province, which has largely been retaken from the Islamic State group. That suggests some militant cells linger in areas cleared by the Iraqi army.

The resumption of U.S. combat activities in Iraq in 2014 represented not only the extent of Iraq’s unsolved problems after the American departure but also the power of the war in neighboring Syria to destabilize areas once considered secure.

In Syria last weekend, more than 25 strikes hit targets across the country’s north and east, highlighting the Pentagon focus on the Islamic State group’s de facto capital of Raqqa. While U.S. officials hope that friendly local forces can encircle the city, the path ahead is complicated by the fractured, internationalized nature of the conflict in Syria.

# Muslim Marine recruit hazed before death

*The Washington Post*

Minutes before Raheel Siddiqui, a Muslim recruit, jumped to his death during the early phases of Marine boot camp at Parris Island, S.C., he was hazed and struck by his drill instructor, Marine Corps officials said Thursday.

In addition to acknowledging Siddiqui's abuse, the Marines also said Thursday that the inquiry into his March 18 suicide was just one of several investigations that have slowly widened in recent months embroiling 20 individuals on one of the Marine Corps' most storied training bases.

According to Marine Corps officials, the entirety of the investigations have focused on just one of Parris Island's four recruit battalions: Third Battalion. The Marines have since identified 20 individuals involved with the recruit training process who could be punished for their roles in promoting a toxic training environment, one that consistently turned a blind eye to hazing and implicitly condoned poor leadership.

Siddiqui arrived on Parris Island on March 7 and had only been with his training company, known as Kilo Company, for a day when he reported on March 13 that he wanted to commit suicide, Marine officials said.

The first week or so of Marine boot camp is known as forming and involves recruits going through medical evaluations and uniform issues prior to beginning training. Recruits are then "picked up" by their drill instructors in an infamous ceremony that introduces recruits to their company and the intensity of recruit training. Marine boot camp companies often have nicknames, and Kilo Company is known as "Killer Kilo," a name its recruits and drill instructors often boast about.

Siddiqui was set to speak to the mental health unit on base and a recruit liaison service the day following his claims but recanted them. The next day, Siddiqui was evaluated by the mental health unit and returned to training. According to officials, however, Siddiqui claimed sometime before returning to training that he had been abused by his drill instructors — a claim that was ignored by higher-ups in Kilo Company.

On March 18, Siddiqui was given "improper incentive training" officials said. "Incentive training" is a term for on-the-spot physical training that often takes place at a designated spot in front of the barracks and is used as punishment for an individual or groups of recruits. During the training, recruits are told to do pushups and other calisthenics in place.

Siddiqui told his drill instructor that his throat hurt, officials said, and after failing to respond to the drill instructor, he fell to the floor, apparently in pain. When Siddiqui continued to not respond, the drill instructor "forcefully" slapped him between one and three times. Siddiqui then ran down the length of the barracks, where he vaulted a railing and fell to his death.

The drill instructor who hazed and slapped Siddiqui already had been under investigation in November for the ill treatment of another Muslim recruit and for reportedly consuming alcohol around the trainees. The Wall Street Journal reported that the instructor had placed the Muslim recruit into a dryer. According to officials, "poor investigative" techniques led the command to discount the allegations, and the drill instructor was allowed to continue his duties. The drill instructor is no longer training recruits.

Other officers already removed from their jobs include Lt. Col. Joshua Kissoon, who oversaw the 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, and his superior, Col. Paul D. Cucinotta. Kissoon was relieved of his command March 31 while Cucinotta was removed in June. Cucinotta's top enlisted adviser, Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Deabreu, also was removed.

## DOD: SEALs tried to rescue 2 captives in Afghanistan

By COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Navy SEALs killed more than a handful of Taliban-linked militants during a secret raid in Afghanistan last month, but they were unable to rescue the captives they sought to save, according to Pentagon officials.

The elite special operators killed seven insurgents during a fierce firefight as they assaulted a compound where U.S. officials believed Haqqani network militants were holding two English professors who had been kidnapped in Kabul near American University of Afghanistan, according to defense officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The SEALs did not find American Kevin King and Australian Timothy Weeks during the nighttime raid. It

is not clear whether they were moved or never were there, one official said.

No Americans were injured during the operation.

Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook confirmed Thursday that President Barack Obama had approved a mission at Defense Secretary Ash Carter's recommendation to recover hostages, but he did not provide details about the mission, citing operational security concerns for the troops and the safety of the hostages.

"Military hostage rescue operations are inherently sensitive and dangerous, and careful deliberation went into this mission," Cook said.

He and the officials declined to say when or where the operation took place.

King and Weeks were forced from their sport utility vehicle

and kidnapped by gunmen just outside the university's fortified campus in Afghanistan's capital on Aug. 7. Their whereabouts have remained a mystery, but American officials believe they were captured by the Haqqani network.

The hard-line Taliban faction operates along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and is considered a terrorist organization by the United States. The Haqqani network has taken western hostages in the past, including Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl.

The group held Bergdahl in Pakistan for five years before releasing him to U.S. special operators in May 2014 in a controversial exchange for five senior Taliban leaders who had been held at the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

An official said Friday that

there was some concern the professors' captors would attempt to move them into Pakistan. Cook suggested Thursday that the military would continue its search.

"The United States military remains fully prepared to take extraordinary steps to protect American citizens anywhere in the world," he said.

The raid was the second attempt to rescue the professors, according to The Washington Post. One night before the unsuccessful assault, the SEALs boarded aircraft and flew toward the location where they believed the captives were being held. The mission was called off while they were in the air because its details did not reach White House officials in time to be approved by Obama, the newspaper reported, citing anonymous sources.



## Court has concerns over graphic Gitmo video

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court expressed concerns Thursday about the prospect of ordering the Obama administration to release graphic videos of a former Guantanamo Bay inmate being force-fed during a hunger strike.

Judges hearing arguments in the long-running legal dispute considered whether any First Amendment interest in releasing the footage is outweighed by possible harm to national security.

The Associated Press and 15 other news organizations said the public has a constitutional right to see the videos.

The government said the tapes are classified and warns they could be used as propaganda by extremist groups to incite anti-American sentiment.

U.S. District Court Judge Gladys Kessler last year rejected the government's concerns as vague and speculative. She ordered the videos released with redactions to protect the identities of U.S. personnel, but the release has been on hold pending appeal.

The three-judge appeals panel gave no obvious indication of how they would rule. But at times, they pressed lawyers on both sides over how much deference courts should give to the government's interest in protecting national security.

The videos show former Guantanamo Bay prisoner Abu Wa'el Dhiab being forcibly removed from his cell, strapped to a restraining chair and force-fed his meals through a tube.

The Syrian native was held at Guantanamo for 12 years before being released in 2015 and resettled in Uruguay with five other detainees. During his last four years in detention, he joined other detainees in a hunger strike to protest their confinement. He tried to stop government officials from force-feeding him, a process he describes as torture.

# Naval Academy building to honor 'Amazing Grace' Hopper

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The U.S. Naval Academy will name its future cyberoperations building after Grace Hopper, a pioneering computer scientist and U.S. Navy rear admiral, the academy's superintendent announced Thursday.

Vice Adm. Ted Carter made the announcement at the academy's "Athena Conference: Heroines of the past, present and future," which is marking the 40th anniversary of women's admission to the academy.

The cyberoperations facility, which will be called Hopper Hall, will be the first building named after a woman at the three main service academies.

Often referred to as "Amazing Grace" and the mother of computing, Hopper joined the U.S. Navy Reserve during World War II. She later worked on a team to develop the UNIVAC computer and convert mathematic code into lan-

guage. That led to developing the first compiler in 1952, which led to the creation of COBOL. Carter said Hopper also wanted to be known for training men and women in the Navy.

"So today, her vision, her legacy, will follow through in this field of dreams of cyber for the admiral of the cyber seas — Adm. Grace Hopper," Carter said.

Carter noted Hopper Hall likely will be the last major academic building constructed on school grounds, which is tight for space along the Severn River.

Groundbreaking is set for Oct. 21 on the 206,000-square-foot building. The academy hopes to have the \$106 million facility operational by 2019. It will be built between the Nimitz Library and Rickover Hall.

The academy requires all students to take two cybersecurity classes in a field of increasing importance to national security and civilian computer networks.

## Comey: Extremist threat to be ongoing

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Despite the Islamic State group's loss of territory, the Islamic extremists will continue to pose serious national security problems for the United States and Europe in coming years, the directors of the FBI and CIA said Thursday.

"The threat that I think will dominate the next five years for the FBI will be the impact of the crushing of the caliphate, which will happen," FBI Director James Comey told a national security conference in Washington. "Through the fingers of that crush are going to come hundreds of hardened killers who are not going to die on the battlefield. They are going to flow out."

He predicted that many will head into western Europe and will try to duplicate recent attacks in Paris and Brussels to maintain the Islamic State group's credibility in the militant world. Others will try to bring the fight to the United States, making it imperative for

the U.S. to help its European allies share intelligence better among themselves and with the United States, Comey said.

Comey also said, however, that as the extremist group loses territory, it also will lose its ability to produce slick propaganda "used to motivate screwed-up people to engage in acts of violence."

CIA Director John Brennan also said that many fighters who don't die on the battlefield will try to return to their native countries, where they could launch Islamic State-inspired attacks. He said al-Qaida in Iraq had been reduced to several hundred fighters, yet was able to re-emerge.

"You have a lot of these foreign fighters who have come into the theater that will either stay and fight and die trying or they will try to return to their home countries," Brennan said. "Now, some of them may be rehabilitated and some of them may see that they were on the wrong path, but I think a number of them are going to remain a challenge for the

United States and other governments for a number of years to come."

The Islamic State group has been losing territory on the battlefield. Late last month, Iraqi forces retook a town 45 miles south of Mosul, the second-largest city in Iraq. A string of towns south and southeast of Mosul have also been recaptured as part of an operation aimed at eventually unseating the extremists from Mosul itself.

Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said at the conference that the battle to retake Mosul will be arduous.

"Urban warfighting is not easy," Stewart said. "This is a large city that has had at least two years to prepare to defend its position."

"If an adversary is willing to stand and fight in an urban environment, and you are least limited in the amount of casualties you can impose, it is going to be a long and difficult battle as it unfolds."

## 2 charged with hacking senior US officials

Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Two North Carolina men were arrested Thursday and were charged in connection with a computer hacker network that is suspected to have targeted CIA Director John Brennan and other senior government officials.

Federal prosecutors in Alexandria said Andrew Otto Boggs, 22, known online as “INCURSIO,” of North Wilkesboro, N.C., and Justin Gray Liverman, 24, also known as “D3F4ULT,” of Morehead City, N.C., were charged and will make initial appearances next week.

Prosecutors say Boggs and Liverman were members of a hacking group called “Crackas With Attitude.” Beginning in October, the hackers gained access to personal online accounts of senior U.S. government officials. The officials are not identified in a 37-page affidavit.

Earlier this year, British authorities arrested a 16-year-old boy who they said used the name “Cracka” to target Brennan and others. Indeed, the affidavit states that three British teens, ranging in age from 15 to 17, are members of the conspiracy.

The affidavit cites email exchanges in which Boggs tells another individual, “I want to carry on (Cracka’s) legacy if or when he is arrested. I know he’ll receive a harsh sentence be-

cause our government doesn’t like being embarrassed.”

According to the affidavit, Boggs and Liverman lived in their respective parents’ homes. They used the hacked accounts to send harassing messages to their victims.

While Brennan is not named in the affidavit, he appears to be “Victim 1.” The affidavit states that Victim 1’s emails were released by WikiLeaks on Oct. 21, 2015, which corresponds with a WikiLeaks disclosure pertaining to Brennan.

The leaked emails included a memo addressed to President Barack Obama in 2009 advising him to tone down rhetoric against Iran.

In one exchange, Boggs tells “Cracka” that he wants to hack Victim 1’s agency because “I’ve been looking for evidence of aliens,” according to the affidavit.

When the hackers would gain control of an account, they would use access to promote the Free Palestine Movement, according to the affidavit. In another case, they pretended to be Edward Snowden when they contacted their victim.

News accounts indicate that the Crackas hackers targeted Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and had his phones forwarded to the Free Palestine Movement. The affidavit includes online conversations among the hackers discussing such a plan, but the victim is not identified.

## Trump: Russian influence in election is ‘probably unlikely’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump told a Russia-funded television network that “it’s probably unlikely” that Russia is trying to influence the U.S. election.

Trump, who has faced backlash from both parties in recent days for praising Russian President Vladimir Putin, was interviewed by Larry King, a veteran American journalist whose show airs Thursday evenings on RT America, the U.S. partner of a network originally called Russia Today.

When King asked about reports that U.S. intelligence agencies are investigating whether Russia is trying to disrupt the election, Trump said that he’s skeptical.

“I think it’s probably unlikely. I think maybe the Democrats are putting that out,” Trump said. He added, “I hope that if they are doing something, I hope that somebody’s going to be able to find out, so they can end it, because that would not be appropriate at all.”

Private cybersecurity analysts have blamed Russian intelligence agencies for elec-

tronic break-ins into Democratic Party computers, including a breach of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the House Democrats’ campaign arm.

Trump’s interview with King was promoted by RT America as an exclusive.

A Trump spokeswoman, Hope Hicks, suggested that Trump was not aware that King’s program was linked to the Russian-backed network.

“Mr. Trump recorded a short interview with Larry King for his podcast as a favor to Mr. King,” Hicks said. “What Larry King does with the interview content is up to him. We have nothing to do with it.”

During a televised forum Wednesday on national security, Trump complimented Putin for having “great control over his country.” Putin has offered kind words for Trump in the past as well.

The Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bob Corker, offered Trump a warning when asked about the relationship on Thursday.

“One has to be a little careful to let flattery affect one’s judgment,” Corker told CNN.

## Nigeria faces ‘famine unlike any we have ever seen’

Associated Press

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria — The whimpers from skeletally thin babies too weak to cry are a harbinger of worse things to come: A quarter of the children lucky enough to make it to this emergency feeding center are dying. They are the latest victims of Boko Haram’s Islamic insurgency.

No one knows how many more children are dying of

starvation in refugee camps and areas too dangerous to access because of the extremists’ presence, according to Doctors Without Borders, which runs the emergency feeding center. The aid group first sounded the alarm of a humanitarian crisis of “catastrophic” proportion in northeast Nigeria as Boko Haram lost its grip on some areas and its victims began to emerge.

“These are kids that basical-

ly have been hungry all their lives, and some are so far gone that they die here in the first 24 hours,” said Jean Stowell, an American midwife in charge of the center in Maiduguri, the biggest city in this largely Muslim region. The 110-bed center has quadrupled in size in recent weeks, but each time it expands, it rapidly fills.

Nearly a quarter of a million children are severely malnourished because Boko Haram

has disrupted trade and farming, U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Toby Lanzer warned at a meeting in Brussels on Thursday. About 2 million people in the region have not been reached, “and we can’t assess their situation. We can estimate that it’s awful.”

With Nigeria in a recession and without speedy outside help, “we will see, I think, a famine unlike any we have ever seen anywhere,” he said.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Police: Fight sparked by urination dare

**CT** WILTON — Police said a fight between students from two Connecticut high schools that sent one to the hospital was sparked by a scavenger hunt in which students were dared to urinate on their rival's football field.

Lt. Stephen Brennan told The Hour about 10 Ridgefield High students arrived at Wilton High's field and were met by a similar number of Wilton students.

He said at first the groups engaged in some friendly games until a Ridgefield student tried to complete the dare and things deteriorated.

## Noise charges against singer are dropped

**VA** ALEXANDRIA — The Commonwealth's Attorney in Virginia dropped a noise violation charge against an opera singer after reviewing her arrest.

News outlets reported that officers arrested Krista Clouse, 29, on Friday after she failed to comply with orders to stop using her speaker system without a permit.

According to a statement from the city of Alexandria, the Commonwealth's Attorney reviewed the case and determined Clouse's arrest was mishandled. Police failed to first address the noise with a civil notice of violation.

Clouse was released from jail Saturday. City Manager Mark Jinks apologized to her.

## Neighbors cry foul over 'WTF' sign

**CT** WOODBURY — A Connecticut homeowner who planted three large wooden letters on his lawn that spell "WTF" is rankling neighbors and town officials who said the message is offensive.

WFSB-TV reported that the phrase "Woodbury wastes taxpayer funds" is written along Main Street in historic Woodbury.

This is not the first time the homeowner, Thomas Arras, has fought with the town and the Woodbury Historical Commission over his handcrafted protest messages.

## Masked man found sleeping in car

**KY** HARRODSBURG — Police said a man who broke into several vehicles at a Harrodsburg business was found sleeping inside one of the cars with a mask still over his face.

Multiple news agencies reported police said Matthew Stewart, 35, of Louisville, faces theft, criminal mischief and criminal trespassing charges.

Police were called to CC Auto Parts & Service on Monday after employees found a lock box containing keys had been pried open and several vehicles broken into.

Responding officers discovered Stewart asleep in the driver's seat of a vehicle. Police said he was wearing black gloves and a mask.

## Town's mundane webcam grips YouTube

**WY** JACKSON — If you're driving a red truck through downtown Jackson, Wyo., you could be internet famous.

Live webcam video of a busy intersection near the Jackson Town Square has gripped the online masses. On Tuesday, more than 2,000 people were watching the stream on YouTube that usually has only about 20 watchers.

Red trucks are particularly popular among the many on-

line commenters, although posters also like to point out pedestrians and other mundane happenings in a sort of online I Spy.

The bustling scene can be mesmerizing, but why is it so popular? It's just one of those internet things.

## Bay to get oyster beds made from toilets

**NY** NEW YORK — New York City is placing 50,000 oysters in Jamaica Bay — on beds made with the porcelain from 5,000 recycled toilets.

Mayor Bill de Blasio and the Environmental Protection Department said Tuesday that the project is the largest installation of breeding oysters in New York City.

The northeastern director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Amanda Bassow, said the project will buffer New York from storms while cleaning the water and creating wildlife habitat.

The project's being done in partnership with the Harbor School's Billion Oyster Project.

## Man who freed slaves to get historic marker

**VA** HEATHSVILLE — State officials in Virginia are unveiling a historical marker that honors a man who freed more than 500 slaves.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources said the marker honoring Robert Carter III will be unveiled Saturday in Heathsville in front of the Northumberland County Courthouse. The marker notes that on Sept. 5, 1791, Carter filed a "deed of manumission," at the courthouse. The document eventually freed more than 500 slaves Carter owned. Carter wrote that to keep the men and women enslaved "is contrary to the true principles of Religion

& Justice."

Carter's deed liberated slaves gradually in small groups. Children were freed when they reached adulthood.

## Gov. rappels down high-rise for charity

**CO** DENVER — Colorado's governor is rappelling down a high-rise apartment building for charity.

Gov. John Hickenlooper descended down the 32-floor building in downtown Denver Thursday afternoon to raise awareness for the Cancer League of Colorado.

The Democratic governor hadn't rappelled down a building before. Hickenlooper started on the roof and descended 380 feet to the sidewalk below.

It wasn't Hickenlooper's first risky stunt for a cause. Hickenlooper parachuted from an airplane in 2005 to raise awareness for a state ballot measure related to taxes. He was mayor of Denver at the time.

Hickenlooper had raised \$1,000 by midday Thursday for the event.

## Rare wildflower seen in half-acre bloom

**CA** ANTIOCH — Botanists said a wildflower once thought to be extinct is blooming in Northern California.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported botanists discovered a half-acre cluster of endangered Mount Diablo buckwheat at the Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve near Antioch.

The pink wildflower was thought to be extinct until 2005 when it was rediscovered in a remote area of Mount Diablo State Park. Botanists located the Antioch patch in May but only announced the find on Wednesday.

From wire reports

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# Broncos edge Panthers in NFL opener

Associated Press

DENVER — The start of a new season rekindled some old — and troubling — issues for the NFL.

Nobody could attest to that better than Cam Newton.

The Carolina Panthers quarterback was victimized by helmet-to-helmet hits at least three times in a 21-20 loss to the Denver Broncos on Thursday night. Net result of those hits: Zero penalty yards.

The Super Bowl rematch was every bit as good as promised — it came down to a last-second field-goal attempt — but it was a brutal affair that put Newton, Broncos receiver Jordan Norwood and linebacker Brandon Marshall in evaluation for concussions. None were held out.

“It’s not fun getting hit in the head,” said Newton, who threw for 194 yards, one interception and a touchdown. “But we didn’t lose the game off that.”

At 6-foot-5 and 245 pounds, Newton absorbs more punishment than the typical QB, in part because he runs the ball a fair amount. He took three sacks, eight more hits while trying to throw and also took some thumps after his 11 rushing attempts.

Two of the most vicious hits had a direct impact on the game. The first came early in the third quarter, when DeMarcus Ware pulled Newton down and Von Miller hit him, facemask-to-facemask. No flag was thrown, but Newton was doubled over in pain after that drive. He went 7-for-15 the rest of the game after starting 11-for-18 and leading the Panthers to a 17-7 halftime lead.

With under 40 seconds left, Broncos safety Darian Stewart went helmet-to-helmet with Newton. A flag was thrown but it was nullified because officials also called Newton for intentional grounding.

“Still don’t understand how that’s possible to get intentional grounding when you get personal fouled,” tight end Greg Olsen said. “We’ve just got to treat Cam like a quarterback. I know he’s the biggest guy on the field, but he’s still a quarterback.”

Had that roughing call stood, Carolina would’ve had the ball in field-goal range with a few more plays to move closer. Instead, Graham Gano had a 50-yarder to win that he pushed wide left.

Newton took the high road about the hits. Coach Ron Rivera said he’d wait to see the

replays.

Certainly, they’ll be watching them in the NFL offices, as well. For a league concerned about head hits and concussions, this was a violent start to the season.

Other things we learned as the Broncos rallied to beat the Panthers:

**Siemian can play:** The Broncos were the first defending champion to come into the following season with a starting quarterback who hadn’t thrown an NFL pass. Now, Trevor Siemian has thrown 26, and he has his first win to show for it. Siemian was far from perfect — he threw a pair of interceptions and his 69.1 passer rating won’t remind anyone of Peyton Manning in his prime. Then again, Manning wasn’t in his prime when the Broncos won the Super Bowl last season. “We played in a lot of big games last year against a lot of great teams, so I tried to simulate that feeling as much as I could,” Siemian said. “But no doubt, it’s different when you get out there.”

**Return of the fullback:** Turns out the fullback position didn’t go into complete extinction in the NFL. It’s actually alive in Broncos coach Gary Kubiak’s

offense. Rookie Andy Janovich took a shallow handoff, went around the right end and sprinted 28 yards for a score in the second quarter.

**Rookie risk:** Punter Britton Colquitt was arguably the second-most valuable player for Denver in the Super Bowl, limiting the Panthers to 2 yards on three returns and twice pinning them inside their 20. But he wouldn’t take a pay cut, so GM John Elway released him in favor of rookie Riley Dixon. The seventh-rounder from Syracuse had a 42-yard punt in the closing minutes, allowing Carolina to start its final drive on the Panthers’ 40-yard line.

**Return of Benjamin:** The Panthers had one of their top threats back after receiver Kelvin Benjamin missed all last season with a torn ACL. He got involved early with a 14-yard TD catch from Newton. He finished with six catches for 91 yards.

**Carolina blue:** The Panthers are 17-1 against the rest of the world since the start of last season and 0-2 against the Broncos. “Start thinking about the next one,” said Rivera, whose team plays San Francisco on Sept. 18. “There are still 15 games left to play.”

## Army removes video of football victory celebration

Associated Press

WEST POINT, N.Y. — The U.S. Military Academy removed a video clip of the football team’s postgame locker-room celebration after its upset win over Temple and is investigating whether a team prayer violated the religious freedom of the players.

West Point spokesman Francis J. DeMaro Jr. said Thursday that a third party made allegations the video violated the First Amendment rights of some of the cadets. DeMaro said the video, which was posted on social media, was removed pending the inquiry, which was first reported by Army Times.

Mikey Weinstein, president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, said head coach Jeff Monken crossed the line after the game last Friday night in Philadelphia when he asked a staff assistant to conduct a prayer that ended with Jesus.

“In this case, Coach Monken chose the wrong time, the wrong place and the wrong manner,” Weinstein said Thursday. “He can’t tell anybody, put your hand on someone and let’s pray. You can’t do it, particularly when you’re the head coach (of a public school).”

Weinstein said the video received 232,000 views and 2,000

Facebook shares. He said he started getting “inundated” with phone calls, texts and emails, including 44 from West Point graduates, 40 members of the academy faculty and staff, and six football players, prompting a call to West Point Superintendent Lt. Gen. Robert Caslen.

Weinstein, who said the video was replaced by an edited version, said he was expecting Monken to offer an apology later Thursday.

“We assume that there’s going to be an apology from the coach to the team,” Weinstein said. “We are assuming there’s an admission there was

a misstep.”

Weinstein said Army athletic director Boo Corrigan was putting procedures in place with all coaches at the academy that will prevent a similar situation from happening. Because of his relationship with Caslen, Weinstein said he does not plan to file a third-party inspector general’s complaint on the issue.

The MRFF, which claims 47,300 clients, questioned a practice by the Air Force Academy football team late last year after players began kneeling in prayer prior to games. The academy found it was within regulations.



# Serena ousted in US Open semifinals

Associated Press

NEW YORK — For the second year in a row, Serena Williams' bid to make history ended with a shocking loss in the U.S. Open semifinals.

A seventh title at Flushing Meadows, which would have been an Open-era record, will have to wait. So will a 23rd Grand Slam championship, another record. And her 3½-year reign at No. 1 in the WTA rankings is over, too, one week shy of what would have been yet another mark.

Undone by a half-dozen double-faults, including on match point, and plenty of other mistakes she blamed in part on dealing with an injured left knee, Williams was upset 6-2, 7-6 (5) by big-serving Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic on Thursday night.

"Karolina played great today. I think if she had played any less, then maybe I would have had a chance," Williams said. "So I think I wasn't at 100 percent, but I also think she played well. She deserved to win today."

The 10th-seeded Pliskova, who will play No. 2 Angelique Kerber of Germany for the title on Saturday, began her on-court interview by blurting out that she couldn't believe she'd eliminated Williams to earn

a spot in her first major final. Then Pliskova changed course, saying: "I mean, actually, I do believe it. I always knew I have a chance to beat anyone if I'm playing my game."

At the 2015 U.S. Open, Williams' bid for a calendar-year Grand Slam ended when she lost in the semifinals to unseeded Roberta Vinci of Italy in one of the biggest surprises in tennis history. This one goes pretty high on the list, too.

This was the 33rd major semifinal of Williams' career, and the first for Pliskova, who beat the 34-year-old American's older sister Venus in the fourth round after staving off a match point. Pliskova is only the fourth woman to beat both Williams siblings during the same Slam.

"Obviously, the match with Venus helped me ... not only with the game, but also with the crowd," Pliskova said. "Was my first match on center court."

And to think: The 24-year-old Pliskova had never been past the third round in 17 previous appearances at majors.

But now she's on an 11-match winning streak.

"One more step to go," she said.

Kerber reached her third Grand Slam final of the season — and of her career — by beating two-time U.S. Open

runner-up Caroline Wozniacki 6-4, 6-3. Kerber beat Williams in the Australian Open final in January, then lost to her in the Wimbledon final in July.

Regardless of Saturday's outcome, Kerber will move up one spot to No. 1 on Monday, ending Williams' stay of 186 consecutive weeks, exactly the same number Steffi Graf compiled for the record.

Kerber, who becomes the only German woman other than Graf to get to No. 1, had a chance to overtake Williams last month by winning a hard-court tournament in Ohio, but lost the final there to Pliskova.

"For sure, she has a lot of confidence. Now, especially, after the win against Serena," Kerber said about Pliskova. "I know how I was playing in Cincinnati. I know what to change."

Williams, who refused to answer questions about the rankings, and Graf also share the mark for most Grand Slam titles since 1968, when professionals were first admitted to majors. And Williams remains even with Chris Evert with six U.S. Open trophies.

Pliskova, meanwhile, is now one victory from her first, and on Thursday night, she certainly looked the part of an up-and-comer with the strokes and demeanor to go far.

The temperature was in the low 80s, and the air was muggy, and Williams kept using the pleats of her black-and-pink skirt to wipe her sweaty palms between points. She made 31 unforced errors in all.

Afterward, Williams dismissed the notion she was fatigued from a grueling three-set quarterfinal against Simona Halep that concluded less than 22 hours before the semifinal started (Pliskova, whose quarterfinal was earlier Wednesday, watched, then slept in until 1 p.m. on Thursday).

Instead, Williams and her coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, pointed to the left leg that she repeatedly clutched.

He said she spent far less time than usual warming up for the match, after getting treatment much of the day.

"When you're hampered, you're thinking of other things. Like, I was making errors that I never make, and definitely I didn't make in this tournament in particular. So many simple, simple shots that I easily could have made," Williams said. "I just blame that on just mentally thinking about my leg and just not thinking about the shot."

Mouratoglou was more succinct.

"She didn't show up. She couldn't play," he said. "She was so slow. She couldn't move."

## 'Battle at Bristol' football game could shatter records

Associated Press

BRISTOL, Tenn. — The speedway that calls itself the "last great Colosseum" now will be temporarily transformed into the world's largest football stadium.

Tennessee and Virginia Tech meet Saturday night at the Bristol Motor Speedway, located approximately halfway between the two campuses. The showdown dubbed the "Battle at Bristol" is expected to draw over 150,000 fans, which would shatter the current NCAA single-game record of 115,109 at

Michigan Stadium when the Wolverines beat Notre Dame in 2013.

"It's something that will live with these individuals for the rest of their lives," Tennessee coach Butch Jones said.

A Tennessee-Virginia Tech matchup at Bristol had been discussed for about 20 years and finally was announced in 2013. Jerry Caldwell, the speedway's general manager, said the facility's unique characteristics made it ideal for this transformation.

"We jokingly say we're a football stadium on steroids,"

Caldwell said. "When you walk into the place, that's what you see. That's what it feels like. You walk in and you're completely surrounded by stands just like you would be at a football stadium."

Caldwell declined to disclose the costs of temporarily converting the speedway into a football stadium. Tennessee and Virginia Tech are both guaranteed \$4 million because each school sold over 40,000 tickets. According to the game contract, each school also may receive an additional \$300,000 because the grandstand seats

sold out.

This will be the speedway's first football game since the Washington Redskins and Philadelphia Eagles played a 1961 exhibition game here that drew 10,000 fans to a facility that seated 20,000. Saturday night's event will have an entirely different atmosphere and feel.

"I'm curious to see how the field will be and how far the stands and everything will be from the field," Virginia Tech receiver Isaiah Ford said.

The speedway is hosting the football game less than three weeks after a Sprint Cup race.

# Yanks win again on Austin's home run

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Tyler Austin wasn't sure if Yankees manager Joe Girardi would let him face a right-hander in the ninth inning.

Switch-hitting veteran Mark Teixeira was still on the bench, and the right-handed hitting Austin isn't far removed from a long slump.

Girardi stuck with the rookie, and he came through, helping the Baby Bombers continue their unlikely push into postseason contention.

Austin hit a solo homer in the ninth to give New York its season-high fifth straight victory, 5-4 over the Tampa Bay Rays on Thursday night.

Brian McCann hit two homers for the Yankees, who moved a season-high nine games over .500 (74-65).

After blowing three leads during the first six innings, New York moved within two games of Baltimore for the second AL wild card and four games of AL East-leading Boston. Resurgent New York plays 20 of its remaining 23 games against division opponents, putting it in position to compete despite selling off key pieces at the Aug. 1 deadline.

"I think everybody in this clubhouse be-

lieves that we can make a push at this thing and get in the postseason," Austin said. "It's an exciting time right now."

Austin homered off Erasmo Ramirez (7-11) on a 3-2 pitch for his third homer since being called up Aug. 13. Teammates met him at home plate by dousing him with water in a raucous celebration.

"That was a huge team win for us," Austin said, "and a special moment."

A long one coming, too. Injuries and poor performance slowed Austin's climb through the minors, and in 2015, he was demoted from Triple-A to Double-A during the season. He opened back at Double-A Trenton again this season, a disappointing assignment, but then forced his way to the majors with his bat.

"I didn't give up, kept battling and you know, here we are," he said.

After homering in his big league debut, Austin entered a 4-for-33 slump that ended Sunday. He since has a five-game hitting streak.

Girardi decided to let the 25-year-old Austin bat because Ramirez has better numbers against left-handed hitters.

"And he's in the game," Girardi said of Austin. "A lot of times it's a lot easier if you're in the game."

The pesky Rays kept coming back, get-

ting two homers each from Kevin Kiermaier and Steven Souza by the sixth. This was the first game this season in which three players had multiple homers, per the Elias Sports Bureau.

**Mac attack:** McCann's homer in the second landed in the luxury suites just below the third deck in right field. His second put the Yankees up 4-3 in the fourth, giving him 19 for the season.

The left-handed slugger is one shy of his ninth straight 20-homer season and 10th overall but entered on a 3-for-20 slide.

"You want to pull your weight around here," McCann said. "For a large part of the season, I haven't been doing that. So tonight was nice to get to some baseballs and backspin them."

**Welcome aboard:** Tampa Bay hit four homers after being joined by new hitting coach Chad Mottola earlier in the day. Mottola was promoted from minor league hitting coordinator after Tampa Bay fired Derek Shelton on Tuesday.

Kiermaier homered twice in the first three innings, setting a career high with his 11th homer in the third. He's hit safely in a career-best 12 straight games, the longest streak by a Ray this season.

Souza had his third multihomer game of the season, and second at Yankee Stadium.

## Nova remains unbeaten since joining Pirates

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Ivan Nova is doing his part to improve baseball's pace of play.

The right-hander threw a six-hitter to stay unbeaten with Pittsburgh and Jung Ho Kang hit a two-run double to key a three-run first inning as the Pirates defeated Cincinnati 4-1 on Thursday night, extending the Reds' losing streak to five games.

Nova (12-6) pitched his second complete game in seven starts since being acquired from the New York Yankees in a trade on Aug. 1. He struck out four, walked none, got 15 of his outs on ground balls and retired the first 12 batters while throwing 94 pitches.

The game lasted 2 hours, 28 minutes during a season in which Commissioner Rob Manfred has fretted about the average time of major league games.

"I think my wife and everybody likes it when I get home early, so I try to make it as quick as possible," Nova said with a grin.

Nova improved to 5-0 with a 2.53 ERA in seven starts with the Pirates. He has issued just two walks in 46<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings.

"It's just more of what we've been seeing from him," said Clint Hurdle, who became the sixth manager in Pirates history with 500 wins. "It was a really nice mix of pitches and pitching. No walks again. It's the manual there of how you want to get it done in a quick and efficient way."

**Mariners 6, Rangers 3:** Kyle Seager hit a two-run homer and Dae-Ho Lee added a solo shot to lift host Seattle to a victory over Texas, the Rangers' fourth loss in five games.

Derek Holland (7-7) allowed four runs and 10 hits in 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings, walking three and striking out five. Despite the loss,

Texas still leads the AL West by 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> games.

**Phillies 4, Nationals 1:** Ryan Howard hit a three-run homer and, Alec Asher pitched six innings of two-hit ball coming off a suspension for visiting Philadelphia.

**Brewers 12, Cardinals 5:** Domingo Santana and Orlando Arcia hit back-to-back homers as Milwaukee continued its recent road dominance.

Hernan Perez had four hits and three RBIs for the Brewers, who won their season-high fifth straight on the road and have won seven of their last eight games.

**Padres 14, Rockies 1:** Ryan Schimpf hit a three-run homer and tied a career-high with four RBIs and Clayton Richard pitched seven scoreless innings for host San Diego.

Schimpf, a rookie second baseman, hit his 18th home run of the season, all coming since

July 1.

**Indians 10, Astros 7:** Cleveland scored two runs on a controversial bases-loaded wild pitch by David Paulino in the third inning that led to the ejection of visiting Houston manager A.J. Hinch.

Cleveland led 2-1 when Lonnie Chisenhall attempted to check his swing on a pitch in the dirt. The ball bounced away from catcher Jason Castro and rolled toward the on-deck circle near the Indians dugout.

Play was allowed to continue, although replays showed Chisenhall fouled off the pitch. All three runners — Francisco Lindor, Mike Napoli and Jose Ramirez — crossed the plate.

Hinch protested the ruling and was ejected by plate umpire Jim Joyce. After a video review, Lindor and Napoli were allowed to score for a 4-1 lead, and Ramirez was placed at second.