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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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600 more US troops to join Mosul fight

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.— The United States will send an additional 600 troops to Iraq to assist in the upcoming fight to retake Mosul from the Islamic State group, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced Wednesday.

The U.S. forces will “enable Iraqi security forces and also peshmerga in the operations to isolate and collapse [the Islamic State group’s] control over Mosul. But also to protect and expand Iraqi security forces’ gains elsewhere in Iraq,” Carter said. The additional forces will be based throughout Iraq, including at Qayyarah West air base, an airfield south of Mosul being used as an operations hub for the upcoming battle. Some of the additional U.S. forces will be sent to al-Asad air base

and Al-Taqaddum, an Iraqi air base that was used to train the Iraqi army to recapture Ramadi from the Islamic State group last December.

The troops deployed to Iraq will come from the logistics, intelligence and train, advise and assist specialties, a senior defense official said on the condition of anonymity.

The added forces will bring the authorized number of U.S. troops in Iraq to 5,262, the official said.

Carter said the troops, in part, will focus on eliminating the Islamic State group’s ability to conduct “external plotting” and stop plans and attacks on Iraqi targets and ones outside the country’s borders.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi confirmed the troop increase in a statement and called it the “final” troop increase for Iraq.

Carter, who has made several troop-increase recommendations to the White House during his tenure, said the 615 requested “is what we now foresee as the requirement for the envelopment of Mosul.”

The request would “increase the final number of American trainers and advisers under the umbrella of the international coalition in Iraq to provide backing for security forces and the Iraqi [heroes] in the fight for the impending liberation of Mosul,” according to al-Abadi’s statement on his government webpage.

Defeating the Islamic State group in Mosul would be a major victory for Iraq.

The government lost the northern city to the Islamic State in mid-2014 when a weakened Iraqi army fled the terrorist group’s advances.

The city is Iraq’s second-

largest and has been used by the Islamic State group as a de facto headquarters there.

Carter said how long the additional forces, and other U.S. troops “in harm’s way,” stay in Iraq depends on the resistance that they encounter in retaking of Mosul.

“Different cities have fallen in different ways,” Carter said. “We do not know what [the Islamic State group’s] plans will be for the defense of Mosul nor whether they will be able to carry out whatever plans they have. ... We are prepared for whatever happens there.”

Once Mosul is defeated, Carter said some of the U.S. forces could remain.

“We are prepared to continue to help the Iraqi security forces consolidate their control,” he said.

Congress eyes deal to avert troop pay freeze

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — With three days to go, Republicans and Democrats said Wednesday that they have a plan to pass a temporary federal budget to keep the government open — and avert possible troop pay freezes and civilian defense furloughs.

Republican leaders said the compromise could placate Democrats by adding emergency funding into separate legislation that they demanded for the water crisis in Flint, Mich. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said Wednesday morning he felt “very comfortable” with the GOP plan.

Political brinkmanship threatened to grind government to a

halt and cause financial headaches for active-duty troops if their paychecks are delayed. It has become common on Capitol Hill where a year ago lawmakers were fighting over efforts to halt funding for Planned Parenthood, a nonprofit reproductive health care provider that also provides abortions, causing the Defense Department to warn its personnel of pay freezes and potential furloughs for thousands of civilian workers.

“We are hopeful we will soon reach an agreement with our Democratic colleagues to move forward with a clean [continuing resolution] Zika package,” said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., referring to the stopgap budget bill that could keep the government

funded through Dec. 9. Democrats defeated two attempts to bring the spending bill to a vote on the Senate floor Tuesday, demanding Republicans reopen negotiations so they could add \$220 million to improve the public water systems in Flint, where contaminated drinking water exposed thousands of children to high levels of lead.

The budget bill already includes money for veteran and military construction projects, emergency funding to fight the Zika virus, aid for flood damaged areas in Louisiana and funding to combat the nationwide opioid epidemic. But Senate Democrats, two of whom represent Michigan, said Flint has waited a year for aid.

To break the impasse, House

Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said the House was set Wednesday afternoon to consider an amendment to a water infrastructure bill to add money for Flint.

“That will help unlock the [temporary budget bill], which has been stalling in the Senate, which now I think will be unstuck,” Ryan said. “We should be able to move this through, I believe, before Friday.”

It will require the support of Democrats, who appeared to be veering away from a public showdown as the end of the week looms. Congress has resorted to a temporary budget through December because it failed to pass an annual budget on time due to deep political divisions.

US, Afghans probe claim airstrike hit civilians

By CHAD GARLAND
AND ZUBAIR BABAKARKHAIL
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. and Afghan officials are investigating reports that a U.S. airstrike targeting Islamic State militants in eastern Afghanistan killed more than a dozen civilians early Wednesday.

Malik Osman, a tribal leader in the Achin and Shinwar districts of Nangarhar province, said the strike hit a civilian home in Achin district around 3 a.m. People had gathered at the home to congratulate a man named Haji Raees and his wife, who had returned two days earlier from the Hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Osman said 13 people were killed, including Haji Raees, his sons, cousins and a tribal leader named Haji Akhtar Mohammad. Another 16 were wounded.

Hazrat Hussain Mashriqiwal, a provincial police spokesman, confirmed the airstrike, but said it killed 18 Islamic State fighters, including a mid-level commander and a judge.

"We sent a commission to investigate whether civilians were killed in the attack," he said.

U.S.-backed Afghan forces have been battling the militants in Achin, where they have established a stronghold, for months. An operation this past summer killed an estimated 300 Islamic State fighters.

Brig. Gen. Charles Cleveland, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan spokesman, said the U.S. did conduct a counterterrorism airstrike in the Achin district of Nangarhar province.

"U.S. Forces-Afghanistan takes all allegations of civilian casualties very seriously," Cleveland said in a statement. "We are aware of some claims of Afghan casualties, and are currently reviewing all materials related to this strike."

Naval reservist investigated over actions during anthem

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser

Pacific Fleet officials investigated a naval reservist on active duty from San Diego who failed to stand and salute during the playing of the national anthem on Sept. 19 at Pearl Harbor.

It's unclear what the investigation found or what penalties, if any, that Petty Officer 2nd Class Janaye Ervin, an intelligence specialist, may face for her actions while fulfilling her required two weeks of training, said Pacific Fleet spokesman Senior Chief Petty Officer Joel Cesar.

The Pacific Fleet concluded its investigation of Ervin, but Cesar did not know the results.

"I don't believe anything was done on our part," Cesar said. "It was more trying to understand where she's coming from."

Cesar did not believe that Ervin was in formation when she chose not to acknowledge the playing of the national

anthem.

Her actions follow a growing movement by athletes led by San Francisco 49ers backup quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who in August began refusing to stand during the playing of the national anthem, citing racial divides that include the police shootings of sometimes unarmed blacks.

In a Facebook post, Ervin wrote, "On September 19, 2016, while in uniform, I made the conscious decision to not stand for the Star Spangled Banner because I feel like a hypocrite, singing about 'land of the free' when, I know that only applies to some Americans. I will gladly stand again, when ALL AMERICANS are afforded the same freedom. The Navy has decided to punish me for defending the Constitution and has taken away my equipment I need to do my Naval job. It was my pleasure serving my country, I love it dearly, that is why I must do this for you. I will keep

you all posted on what happens next!"

The post and others were taken down from Ervin's Facebook page later Monday, leaving little information other than a profile picture of the lead characters from the cartoon action-comedy television show "Archer," which features a black female secret agent.

Ervin returned to San Diego on Friday, Cesar said.

Military.com reported that Ervin's actions came two weeks after an unidentified sailor attached to Naval Air Technical Training Center in Pensacola, Fla., filmed herself refusing to stand while the national anthem was played.

Navy regulations require uniformed personnel to stand and salute during the playing of the national anthem, Cesar said. Military members in civilian attire are required to stand and hold their hand over their heart, he said.

Pacific personnel see duplicate charges

By ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

U.S. personnel throughout the Pacific recently received duplicate charges on debit and credit card purchases over a six-month period at several base facilities because of a computer error, Navy officials said Wednesday.

The glitch potentially affects anyone stationed in Japan, South Korea, Guam, Singapore and the Naval Postgraduate School in California, who charged goods and services between Jan. 22 and June 23 at the Navy's youth programs or Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities. Customers were mistakenly charged at venues including the Navy's child care

and youth centers, auto and hobby shops, marinas, movie theaters, tour ticket offices and outdoor recreation centers, the officials said.

Navy Installations Command's treasury department has identified the erroneous charges and contacted Bank of America to refund customers' money.

"The reversals are underway and we expect them to be done in the next couple of days," Navy Region Japan spokesman Cmdr. Ron Flanders said Wednesday. "We understand this is a very serious issue that has impacted the lives of Navy families ... and we ask that people remain patient."

The problem was spotted over the weekend when customers

noticed duplicate charges during a computer system software update, Navy officials said.

Further questions on the amount of incorrect transactions were referred to Navy Installations Command officials, who were not immediately available for comment.

Comments left on Yokosuka-related social media websites indicated that some servicemembers could be waiting on large sums of incorrectly charged payments — particularly those who make monthly day care payments. A worker also asked how refunds would be received by customers who have changed banks or received new debit cards since the duplicate transactions were recorded.

VA tries to recoup money paid to veterans in prison

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs is billing veterans who were incarcerated at any time since 2008 for benefits they received — but shouldn't have — while in prison, a VA official said Tuesday.

Beth Murphy, an official with the Veterans Benefits Administration, faced a congressional subcommittee Tuesday, three months after the VA inspector general's office found VA employees failed to reduce benefits payments to veterans who were incarcerated in federal, state or local institutions, as federal law requires. The failure on the part of the VA to alter benefits led to \$104 million in overpayments from May 2008 to June 2015.

After the IG initiated the review, the VA started to collect.

Murphy said VA staff followed up last year on 11,500 instances where benefits needed to be reduced. So far this year, staff has worked on nearly 15,000 cases. When it's discovered a veteran owes a debt, the case is sent to the VA's Debt Management Center. Murphy did not say how much money has been collected so far.

"VBA has issued guidance to all regional offices to make sure these claims are appropriately prioritized," Murphy said.

There are about 13,000 cases still pending, she said, and VA staff is working to complete the

oldest first.

Rep. Ralph Abraham, R-La., said he was concerned the VA had been blaming the veterans, and then sticking them with unexpected bills for payment.

Murphy had said part of the reason benefits go unchanged is because veterans don't notify the VA when they've been incarcerated.

"I would venture to say these veterans have more urgent matters on their minds than remembering to contact the VA from prison," Abraham said. "Even if a veteran did notify the VA, there is no evidence VA would have promptly processed the adjustment."

"Veterans who have received these overpayments have committed crimes, but they are not at fault for the overpayments."

David McLenachen with the Veterans Benefits Administration conceded the VA was "not doing a good enough job on this" but said the agency had a legal obligation to recoup the overpayments.

If veterans can't afford the bill in a lump sum, they will have to sacrifice future benefits to pay back the debt or establish a payment plan, Murphy testified.

In about half of the cases, the VA waives at least part of the debt, Murphy said. That can happen when a veteran's spouse or children needed the benefit to survive while the veteran was in prison.

Senate votes to override veto

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate voted Wednesday to override a presidential veto and clear the way for 9/11 victims to sue Saudi Arabia, despite warnings from the Defense Department.

The House was also poised to vote on an override and the outcome will determine whether the legislation becomes law.

The new law, called the Jus-

tice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act, makes it possible for victims' families to sue Saudi Arabia in U.S. court over claims it supported terrorists who waged a series of attacks — including a suicide attack with a passenger jet on the Pentagon — that killed nearly 3,000 people on Sept. 11, 2001.

Fifteen of the 19 hijackers were Saudi nationals.

US threatens to stop cooperating with Russia in Syrian war

The Washington Post

The United States is preparing to suspend all bilateral cooperation with Russia over Syria unless Moscow takes immediate steps to end the ongoing assault on the city of Aleppo and moves to restore a collapsed cease-fire, the State Department said Wednesday.

The action would mean the effective end of nearly a year of intensive, bilateral diplomacy, led by Secretary of State John Kerry, to wean Russia away from its support for President Bashar Assad and persuade it to join forces with the United States in its counterterrorism efforts in Syria against al-Qaida and the Islamic State.

The announcement came amid reports of a ferocious ongoing assault by Syrian and Russian jets and Syrian ground troops on surrounded, rebel-occupied eastern Aleppo, where the United Nations has said more than 250,000 civilians are trapped.

In a telephone conversation early Wednesday with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Kerry "expressed grave concern over the deteriorating situation in Syria, particularly for continued Russian and Syrian regime attacks on hospitals, the water supply network, and other civilian infrastructure in Aleppo," State Department spokesman John Kirby said in a statement.

Envoy: US will hasten THAAD to South Korea

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States plans to deploy an advanced missile defense system in South Korea "as soon as possible" to meet the growing threat from the North, the top U.S. diplomat for the region said.

The two allies agreed earlier this year to station a Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, system on the divided peninsula, but the plans have stiff opposition from local protesters and regional powerhouse China.

Daniel Russel, assistant secretary of state for East Asia, told a congressional hearing Tuesday that the timetable is a defense matter for the Pentagon.

"But given the accelerating

pace of North Korea's missile tests, we intend to deploy on an accelerated basis. I would say as soon as possible," he added when asked if THAAD could be deployed by next year.

North Korea has raised fears that it is making swift progress in its weapons programs despite toughened U.N. Security Council sanctions imposed after it conducted a fourth nuclear test in January.

That has been followed by several missile launches with increasing success and a fifth nuclear test on Sept. 9.

The U.S. and South Korean militaries have worked hard to build support for the THAAD, but residents in the Seongju region, where it is to be deployed, have protested over health and economic concerns.

Ex-Miss Universe in campaign spotlight

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alicia Machado says that when she gained weight after being crowned Miss Universe for 1996, Donald Trump labeled her with a sexist nickname — “Miss Piggy” — that caused her shame and humiliation.

Two decades later, Machado’s dealings with Trump, her one-time beauty pageant boss, are reverberating through the 2016 campaign as the Republican businessman and reality TV

star seeks the White House.

Democratic rival Hillary Clinton told Machado’s story toward the end of Monday’s first presidential debate, scolding Trump for referring to the Venezuelan-born actress as “Miss Housekeeping,” as Clinton said, “because she was Latina.”

“Donald, she has a name,” Clinton said, prompting Trump to ask, “Where did you find this?”

Clinton said, “Her name is Alicia Machado and she has become a U.S. citizen, and you

can bet she’s going to vote this November.”

Asked about the exchange during an interview Tuesday with “Fox & Friends,” Trump said Machado was “the worst we ever had,” adding: “She gained a massive amount of weight. It was a real problem. We had a real problem.”

On CNN Tuesday night, Machado said she thinks Trump believes women are “a second class of people.”

“I love this country,” Machado said. “I don’t want to have

some misogynist president.”

Now a U.S. citizen, Machado told reporters Tuesday in a conference call arranged by the Clinton campaign that her experience with Trump could “open eyes” in the presidential election.

She said she was “really surprised” to hear Clinton refer to her story during the debate — she said she was overcome with emotion and started crying — but wanted to help Clinton in the election.

Poll: Clinton’s health remains a concern

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The “stamina,” the “look”: A new poll suggests voters are buying in to Donald Trump’s insinuations about Hillary Clinton’s health. They’re ignoring the medical reports.

Voters — especially men — have more confidence that Trump is healthy enough for the presidency than Clinton, according to the Associated Press-GfK poll.

It’s a disconnect considering

Clinton has released more medical information than Trump, and that outside doctors who’ve looked at the available data say both candidates seem fine. But it shows the political points Trump scored after the Democratic nominee’s much-publicized mild case of pneumonia.

Another gender divide: Nearly half of women but just 4 in 10 men think Clinton’s health is getting too much attention, found the poll, which was taken before the candidates’ debate on Monday.

“Everybody gets sick,” said Sherri Smart, 56, of New York. She said she hasn’t decided who to vote for but wishes the candidates would discuss issues instead of sniping about who’s most vigorous. “What’s important is, what are you going to do for me?” Smart said.

The AP-GfK poll found 51 percent of voters are very or extremely confident that Trump is healthy enough to be president. In contrast, just over a third of voters — 36 percent — had the same confidence in Clinton’s

health.

The AP-GfK Poll of 1,694 adults, including 1,476 registered voters, was conducted online Sept. 15-19, using a sample drawn from GfK’s probability-based KnowledgePanel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points, and for registered voters is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points.

Probe determines MH17 downed by Russian missile

Associated Press

NIEUWEGEIN, Netherlands — Dutch-led criminal investigators said Wednesday they have solid evidence that a Malaysian jet was shot down by a Buk missile moved into eastern Ukraine from Russia.

Wilbert Paulissen, head of the Central Crime Investigation department of the Dutch National Police, said communications intercepts showed that pro-Moscow rebels had called for deployment of the mobile surface-to-air weapon and reported its arrival in rebel-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine.

From that and other evidence collected by the Joint Investigation Team, “it may be con-

cluded MH17 was shot down by a 9M38 missile launched by a Buk, brought in from the territory of the Russian Federation, and that after launch was subsequently returned to the Russian Federation,” Paulissen told a news conference.

The conclusions were billed as results of a two-year Dutch-led criminal probe of the disaster that claimed 298 lives.

A separate investigation by Dutch safety officials last year concluded that the Amsterdam-to-Kuala Lumpur flight was downed by a Buk missile fired from territory held by pro-Russian rebels.

Dutch police spokesman Thomas Aling said the joint investigation findings differ in that they are designed to

be solid enough to be used as evidence in a criminal trial. Where and when a trial might take place is still to be determined, Aling said.

Russia has consistently denied allegations that pro-Moscow rebels in eastern Ukraine were responsible. On Monday, the Russian military said it has new radio-location data that show the missile that downed the Boeing 777 did not originate from rebel-controlled territory, and said it would turn the data over to investigators.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov reiterated that assertion Wednesday ahead of the Dutch report.

“If there was a rocket it could only have been launched from a different area,” he told report-

ers, referring to Russian radar data. “You can’t argue with it; it can’t be discussed.”

In the Joint Investigation Team, Dutch police and judicial officials have been working with counterparts from Australia, Belgium, Malaysia and Ukraine, seeking to gather the best possible evidence for use in prosecution of the perpetrators.

They have faced extraordinary challenges. The crime scene in Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk oblast where the plane crashed on July 17, 2014, killing all aboard, was located in an active war zone, and during the days following the crash pro-Kremlin militants limited access to the site.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

City might ban replica guns to protect kids

MD SALISBURY — Salisbury officials are considering banning toys and BB guns that look like real firearms in order to decrease the likelihood of police shootings.

City Councilman Muir Boda told The Daily Times of Salisbury that he proposed the legislation after he was approached by residents concerned about the possibility of officers mistaking fake guns for the real things. That confusion was at the heart of the 2014 shooting of Tamir Rice, 12, in Cleveland.

A bill introduced earlier this year in the Maryland General Assembly would have outlawed imitation firearms statewide unless they had visible markings on them, but the bill never made it out of the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

Wanted: New home for coyote not euthanized

RI MIDDLETOWN — Authorities are still trying to find a home for a Rhode Island coyote that was spared euthanization after a public outcry, but it likely won't be at the Roger Williams Park Zoo.

Newport City Councilman John Florez told The Newport Daily News that the Providence zoo lacks a suitable enclosure for the coyote, known as Cliff, and building one would cost about \$100,000.

The coyote was set to be killed after it was spotted roaming around Newport and Middletown in broad daylight and appeared at a bus stop crowded with children. Scientists said Cliff had become too comfortable around people.

Police rescinded the kill order after a public outcry. Cliff remains in the wild.

Man arrested after 3 high-speed chases

UT TOOELE — Police captured a Utah man after he led them on several high-speed chases to avoid arrest.

Utah Highway Patrol Sgt. Andrew Prescott told The Deseret News that officers became involved in several chases with a Murray man, 25, Saturday night after spotting him driving recklessly on Interstate 80.

Prescott said the driver led officers on chases that reached speeds of 90 and 100 mph, but he forced police to call off the pursuit by twice driving into oncoming traffic. Police said he ended a third chase by speeding off the freeway.

Prescott said troopers had road spikes and a helicopter ready when the driver was next spotted on I-80. The sergeant said the driver made it to a motel parking lot, where he was arrested on multiple charges.

Graves being exhumed in effort to ID victims

PA WILKES-BARRE — Working with state police, an anthropologist is leading a team exhuming the bodies of four unidentified homicide victims in northeastern Pennsylvania, including a woman who'd been doused in sulfuric acid and a newborn boy.

The hope is that scientists will be able to give the victims a name — and lead police to their killers. The exhumations started Monday.

Pennsylvania State Police cold-case investigators are working with forensic anthropologist Erin Kimmerle, of the University of South Florida, who previously led an effort to exhume more than 50 old graves at a shuttered reform school in Florida.

Police: Man dies after shooting at officers

ID GARDEN CITY — Authorities in southwest Idaho said a 52-year-old Idaho man died Monday morning from multiple gunshot wounds after pointing a gun at four police officers who opened fire.

The Ada County coroner identified the man as Anthony Ray Bauer.

Authorities said police in Eagle pursued a Dodge Durango into Garden City about 2 a.m. where officers from that city and Boise began following the vehicle.

Police said Bauer drove to the Garden City police station where he was confronted by four officers, two from Boise and two from Garden City, and brandished a gun.

Authorities said all four police officers fired and that Bauer then crashed into the police station and died at the scene. No officers were injured.

Parks' former home to be repurposed

MI DETROIT — A former Detroit home of civil rights icon Rosa Parks is set to be torn down and refashioned for a new purpose.

The Detroit Free Press reported that what was left of the home in the southwest part of the city was to be torn down Monday. The property will be turned into an urban garden that is planned to supply the neighborhood with vegetables.

The home's facade has been removed and will be refashioned into a replica-style artwork that will be shown in museums across Europe.

American artist Ryan Mendoza is leading the project. He has lived in Europe for about 20 years and is known for his controversial artwork in Detroit.

This summer, Mendoza re-

styled two abandoned homes to display the names of presidential candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton through fake bullet holes at night.

Woman robs Arby's, flees in a taxi cab

FL GAINESVILLE — A Florida woman faces armed robbery charges after police say she robbed an Arby's restaurant in Gainesville and then hailed a cab to get away.

A Gainesville police report says Keshunte L. Taylor, 20, pointed a gun at a clerk Sunday morning and demanded money.

Authorities said Taylor took more than \$200 from three registers at the fast-food restaurant.

The Gainesville Sun reported that Taylor hopped in a cab, which police stopped a couple of blocks away. Police said they recovered a gun and \$219.

Doggone: Pooch takes trip to Boston

FL JACKSONVILLE — A Pyrenees mix named Apollo is back home in Florida after a journey that took him to the Boston area.

Cynthia Abercrombie told the Florida Times-Union there were occasions over the previous six weeks that she thought she'd never see Apollo again.

No one knows how Apollo, who escaped from his enclosure Aug. 11, got to Boston. Swansea animal control Officer Lisa White found Apollo on Aug. 8.

A microchip helped officials locate Abercrombie, and White started looking for ways to get him home. Mary Ellen House, of East Coast Paws, arranged for a relay of drivers to return Apollo to Florida.

From wire reports

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Colts' Gore keeps moving up league's career rushing list

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — When Frank Gore hears the list, he shakes his head.

Two weeks ago, he passed Thurman Thomas.

Last week, it was Franco Harris.

This week in London, the Indianapolis Colts' running back needs 88 yards to move past Marcus Allen, Edgerrin James, Marshall Faulk and Jim Brown on the league's career rushing list.

If Gore stays healthy and productive through the rest of this season, he just might catch Tony Dorsett and Eric Dickerson, too.

Gore never dreamed he would be mentioned in the same breath as so many all-time greats or be able to potentially pass seven Hall of Fame running backs in one season.

James is the only one of the eight who hasn't been inducted, though he is the Colts' career rushing leader and former University of Miami player, just like Gore.

"Man, that's a blessing, especially coming out of college as a third-round (draft) pick," Gore said Tuesday.

"A lot of people said I wouldn't be here long enough to do something like that. Eighty-eight yards? I hope it happens this

weekend."

At age 33, Gore doesn't spend much time reflecting on milestones, and though he knows he's No. 13 all time, he couldn't tell you his rushing total was 12,225 yards or that his 83 consecutive starts are the most of any back in the league.

See Gore would rather watch film, prep for the Colts' longest trip of the season and make sure Indy (1-2) takes advantage of its chance to get to .500 with a win over the winless Jacksonville Jaguars so he gets another shot to get the most elusive prize of all — a Super Bowl ring.

Teammates have learned to expect nothing less from Gore, who refuses to let age, opponents or anything else get in his way.

At times, Gore has made the hard work look easy.

After running for 608 yards as a rookie in 2005 with San Francisco, the 49ers' strong offensive line cleared the way for Gore to top the 1,000-yard mark eight times over the next nine years. He missed by 147 yards in 2010, when he was limited to 11 games.

When coach Jim Harbaugh departed after the 2014 seasons and the 49ers appeared to be in rebuild mode, Gore decided to leave the only NFL home he had known.

Initially, he agreed to sign

with Philadelphia then changed his mind and joined former college teammate Andre Johnson in Indy, a team many pegged as a title contender.

But 2015 didn't go according to plan.

Injuries forced the Colts to shuffle their offensive line and the predictable struggles led to a series of injuries that knocked Andrew Luck out of nine games.

The running lanes were smaller and closed quicker than expected, too, and as a result, Gore finished a frustrating season with a career low of 3.7 yards per carry, 967 yards and out of the playoffs.

So Gore has embarked on a personal mission to become the team's first 1,000-yard runner since 2007 and end a league-high 53 consecutive-game streak without a 100-yard runner, a streak that almost ended last week against San Diego.

Gore ran 13 times for 70 yards in the first half, but finished with 21 carries for 82 yards.

If Gore ends the drought Sunday, he will also leapfrog four big names on the career rushing list including Jim Brown (12,312) at No. 9, and put Gore within striking distance of two more household names, Dorsett (12,739) and Dickerson (13,259), still the NFL's single-season rushing leader.

Texans' Watt put on IR

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Houston Texans placed star defensive end J.J. Watt on injured reserve on Wednesday.

The move came one day after a person familiar with Watt's condition told The Associated Press he had re-injured his back and that the Texans expect him to be sidelined until at least December — and possibly the entire season. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the team hasn't discussed his injury.

Watt, who has won Defensive Player of the Year for the past two seasons, missed training camp and Houston's four pre-season games after surgery in July to repair a herniated disk in his back. He started each of the team's three regular-season games and got hurt again Thursday against the Patriots.

The Texans signed veteran defensive end Antonio Smith to take his spot on the roster.

The team was still exploring the injury and it's unclear if it will require surgery.

The 27-year-old is a three-time Defensive Player of the Year and a four-time Pro Bowler. He has 45 passes defended in his six-year career. He has also forced 15 fumbles and recovered 13.

Who will start at QB for Patriots is still a mystery

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Jimmy Garoppolo and Jacoby Brissett were both in uniform as the Patriots went back to the practice field on Tuesday.

Which one of them will be at quarterback when New England hosts Buffalo on Sunday remains a mystery at this point.

Garoppolo missed last week's game against Houston with a throwing shoulder injury that occurred during the second quarter of the New England's win over the Miami Dolphins on Sept. 18.

In his absence last week, Brissett, a third-round pick in this year's draft, successfully led New England (3-0) past the Houston Texans in his first career start, but sustained an apparent right thumb injury sometime during the second half.

It's all added more intrigue as the Patriots prepare for their final game before the return of Tom Brady from his four-game "Deflategate" suspension.

Neither Garoppolo nor Brissett were available for interviews Tuesday, but Brissett did briefly acknowledge the high in-

terest surrounding his health as reporters gazed at him while he walked through the locker room prior to practice.

Coach Bill Belichick deflected questions on the status of his quarterbacks earlier this week, deferring to the NFL-mandated injury report which will be available for the first time this week on Wednesday.

Receiver Danny Amendola said he was just as clueless about the plan at quarterback as everyone else.

"I don't know — ask coach," Amendola said. "That will be up to him."

D. Johnson aims to lead US to Ryder Cup

Associated Press

CHASKA, Minn.— Dustin Johnson made an exception to his rule of never watching golf on television, only because it was the Ryder Cup.

“That was the only thing I missed,” Johnson said.

The best player this week at Hazeltine, he was nowhere to be found two years ago at Gleneagles.

Amid a published report that Johnson twice tested positive for drugs, he took a six-month break from golf to seek help for what he described as “personal challenges.” That caused him to miss the PGA Championship, the entire FedEx Cup playoffs and the Ryder Cup.

That now seems like a long time ago.

Johnson is No. 2 in the world, with a chance to reach the top by the end of the year. He is the U.S. Open champion, and perhaps the most feared player in golf because of his combination of power off the tee and precision with his wedges.

He has gone from a low point in his career to being a dominant player that his power and

talent suggested he should be.

“I’ve had a lot of [stuff] happen to me,” Johnson said in an interview last summer. “But I come out better on the other side.”

Now he takes his place as the leader of an American team desperate to win the Ryder Cup.

Phil Mickelson has the most experience, playing in his 11th consecutive Ryder Cup and qualifying for every one of those teams. Davis Love III is the U.S. captain for the second time, popular with the players. Tiger Woods surely will bring a presence to the team room and on the golf course as an assistant captain.

Johnson, however, is the thoroughbred.

That puts him in the best position to set the tone for these matches for his U.S. team. Because it’s not about speeches in the team room. It’s not about pumping fists or any other public displays of excitement. It’s about points.

“The best way to be a leader is to win your match,” Johnny Miller said over the weekend.

That’s one area where the

Americans have been lacking during their most recent losing streak to Europe. The top qualifiers for the U.S. team in the past three Ryder Cups have combined to win a total of one match.

Bubba Watson went 0-3 at Gleneagles. Woods was 0-3-1 at Medinah in 2012, not contributing a point until he halved with Francesco Molinari in singles. Mickelson was the top qualifier in 2010. He went 1-3 at Celtic Manor, not winning a match until he beat Peter Hanson in singles.

Johnson is a lock to win PGA Tour player of the year. Johnson’s three victories were a major (U.S. Open), World Golf Championship (Bridgestone Invitational) and FedEx Cup playoff event (BMW Championship). He had 14 finishes in the top 10, a rate of 67 percent. He won the PGA Tour money title at just over \$9.3 million. He won the Vardon Trophy for lowest adjusted scoring average.

He didn’t have many bad weeks.

How will he respond as the top player for the American

team? Johnson is not one to let anything clutter his thinking, assuming there are many thoughts going through his head at all. He sees the shot and hits it. He makes the game simple.

“What he brings to the table is his game,” Mickelson said. “He just needs to keep playing the way he’s playing. Shoot low numbers and he’s going to get us a lot of points.”

It didn’t work out that way at Gleneagles when Johnson made his Ryder Cup debut with Mickelson at his side. They lost two matches, both ending on the 16th green. Johnson went 3-0 at Medinah, playing twice with Matt Kuchar. He also formed a strong pairing with Jordan Spieth at the Presidents Cup last year in South Korea, a combination of the best driver and the best putter.

“He thinks simply, which helps in his golf game,” Spieth said. “He just has a lot of confidence in what he’s doing. Bad stuff doesn’t seem to bother him. You couldn’t even get under his skin. D.J. will laugh it off.”

Motivation sometimes comes off of the course

Associated Press

CHASKA, Minn. — The U.S. has done almost everything to try and win a Ryder Cup again, including having Tiger Woods on the team as an assistant captain.

So maybe bringing in Michael Phelps for an inspirational speech wasn’t too far of a stretch. Like Woods, he does know a little something about winning.

“We had a very exciting talk from Michael Phelps,” U.S. captain Davis Love III said. “Michael talked to us a lot about the Olympic experience and Team USA and how much fun it was for him to have the four American golfers down there because he’s such a big golf fan.”

Phelps might not be the last inspirational speaker the 12 players on the U.S. team hear this week. Ever since former President George W. Bush helped rally the 1999 team to a comeback victory, they’ve become extremely fashionable.

Love might even take a few tips from the speakers of past and present when he sends the team out Friday to try and break yet

another losing streak in the Ryder Cup.

“I don’t think I’m going to tell you what I’m going to tell them,” he said, “but if I was a football coach or a motivational coach, I’d tell my team that they are very, very good and to go play their best.”

Here’s a look back at a few motivational speakers in the Ryder Cup:

Remember the Alamo. The U.S. was getting beaten badly at Brookline Country Club, down 10-6 to the Europeans heading into the Sunday singles. Captain Ben Crenshaw gathered his charges the night before and brought in Bush, then governor of Texas, to try and inspire them to an improbable comeback.

Bush didn’t really give a speech. He simply read the famous letter from the commander of the Alamo in 1836 that ended with “victory or death.” It wasn’t quite that extreme, but the U.S. players went out and won the first six singles matches en route to a comeback win that had players running around and screaming in glee at the 17th hole when the Cup was clinched.

Ailing Seve. Seve Ballesteros was one of

the best Ryder Cup players ever, a pivotal figure in turning the tide against the U.S. team. In 2010, he was recovering from surgery to remove a brain tumor, but captain Colin Montgomerie still wanted him to be part of the team.

Before play began at Celtic Manor in Wales, Ballesteros spoke by phone to the European team, which promptly went out and reclaimed the cup from the U.S.

Ballesteros would die a few months later in his native Spain at the age of 54.

Major Dan. The same year Ballesteros spoke to the Europeans, U.S. captain Corey Pavin had a National Guard F-16 pilot try and pump up his team. Major Dan Rooney, who is also a PGA professional, taped a message to the U.S. team that won in 2008 and gave an inspirational talk to the 2010 U.S. team.

Sir Alex. Europe used a speech by Sir Alex Ferguson, the longtime Manchester United leader, to win the cup in Scotland the last time out. Ferguson urged Europe’s golfers to adopt the Old Trafford mentality his team used to win its matches.

Jays blast O's in wild-card showdown

Associated Press

TORONTO — Josh Donaldson hit a two-run homer, Aaron Sanchez struck out 10 and the Toronto Blue Jays beat the Baltimore Orioles 5-1 on Tuesday night in the opener of their AL wild-card showdown.

Ezequiel Carrera also homered as the Blue Jays won for the sixth time in eight games. They lead the wild-card standings by two games over the Orioles with five to play.

Baltimore leads Detroit by one game for the league's final playoff spot.

Orioles slugger Chris Davis was ejected for arguing with plate umpire Will Little after striking out against Joe Biagini in the seventh, the third time in three at-bats Davis was caught looking. Baltimore manager Buck Showalter also was tossed after he came out to argue.

Sanchez (14-2) struck out the first four hitters he faced and five of the first six.

Kevin Gausman (8-12) allowed five runs, four earned, and seven hits in six innings.

Yankees 6, Red Sox 4: Gary Sanchez, Didi Gregorius and Tyler Austin homered off David Price (17-9), and host New York ended Boston's 11-game winning streak and delayed its AL

East title celebration.

Having clinched at least a wild-card berth last weekend, Boston is five games ahead of second-place Toronto with five games left, needing just one victory or a Blue Jays loss to ensure the division championship.

Mets 12, Marlins 1: Noah Syndergaard (14-9) struck out eight and allowed one run in six innings, and visiting New York totaled 19 hits to beat grieving Miami.

Jay Bruce and Yoenis Cespedes each hit his 31st homer for the Mets, who maintained a half-game lead on the Giants for the first NL wild card, with St. Louis 1½ games behind New York.

The game was the Marlins' second since the death of ace Jose Fernandez in a boating accident.

Giants 12, Rockies 3: Buster Posey homered for his 1,000th hit, Hunter Pence also went deep one batter later and host San Francisco beat Colorado.

Brandon Crawford tripled twice for San Francisco, which remained a half-game behind the Mets for the top NL wild card and one game up on the Cardinals for the second spot.

Astros 8, Mariners 4: George Springer had three hits, includ-

ing a two-run double during a six-run sixth inning, and host Houston beat Seattle.

The victory leaves Seattle two games behind Baltimore for the second AL wild card and cuts Houston's deficit in the race to 2½ games.

Tigers 12, Indians 0: Miguel Cabrera homered and drove in five runs in the first two innings, and Justin Verlander (16-8) struck out 12 to lift host Detroit over a Cleveland lineup full of backups.

Cubs 6, Pirates 4: Chris Coghlan hit a three-run triple and John Lackey (11-8) worked in and out of trouble over five innings, helping visiting Chicago beat reeling Pittsburgh.

Nationals 4, Diamondbacks 2: Max Scherzer (19-7) struck out 10 and allowed two runs in six innings and Anthony Rendon hit a go-ahead three-run homer as host Washington beat Arizona to inch closer to home-field advantage in the NL Division Series.

Cardinals 12, Reds 5: Playing with a heavy heart, Aledmys Diaz hit his first career grand slam and host St. Louis finished with five home runs.

St. Louis is a game behind the Giants for the second NL wild card.

Rangers 6, Brewers 4: Jonathan Lucroy hit a go-ahead two-run double against his former team in the sixth inning to help host Texas beat Milwaukee.

The Rangers have a half-game lead over Boston for the best record in the American League.

Padres 7, Dodgers 1: Rookie Hunter Renfroe hit his first career grand slam and also had a three-run shot to drive in all the runs in host San Diego's victory over the NL West champs.

Royals 4, Twins 3: Billy Burns' sacrifice fly scored Raul Mondesi in the 11th inning as host Kansas City beat Minnesota, staving off postseason elimination.

White Sox 13, Rays 6: Melky Cabrera and Leury Garcia homered to back Chris Sale (17-9), and host Chicago routed sloppy Tampa Bay.

Braves 7, Phillies 6: Freddie Freeman hit his career-high 33rd homer and stretched his career-best hitting streak to 29 games, helping host Atlanta begin its final homestand at Turner Field with a victory.

Angels 8, Athletics 1: Rookie Jefry Marte hit his first career grand slam in a seven-run fourth inning and visiting Los Angeles beat Oakland.

No. 8 Wisconsin in midst of tough stretch in Big Ten

Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — It's rare these days for a team to beat Michigan State so soundly that the game is essentially over midway through the fourth quarter.

Alabama did it in last year's national semifinals, and now Wisconsin has a blowout win over the Spartans on its resume — the latest sign that the Badgers should be treated as contenders in what could be a loaded Big Ten.

Wisconsin forced four turnovers and held Michigan State to 75 yards rushing in Saturday's 30-6 win over the Spar-

tans. The Badgers moved up three spots to No. 8 in the AP poll Sunday, and Michigan State fell nine spots to No. 17.

Wisconsin (4-0, 1-0) has not allowed more than 17 points in a game this season, and the Badgers have allowed only three offensive touchdowns.

"Well, I've been lucky. I've been around some really good defenses," coach Paul Chryst said after Saturday's win. "Today, it was big and I thought again it was a good plan by our defensive coaches because our kids understood it and they were able to execute it and they were opportunistic."

With Ohio State, Michigan

and Michigan State in the East Division, it's hard for teams on the other side of the league to earn too much of the spotlight, but Wisconsin has an opportunity to change that. The Badgers already have beaten LSU and Michigan State, and their next two games are at No. 4 Michigan and against No. 2 Ohio State.

If they win either of those two, they'd have another significant victory that could serve them well with the playoff committee if they were to win the league championship.

Michigan State rushed for 260 yards the previous weekend at Notre Dame, but Wisconsin's

front contained running back LJ Scott and pressured quarterback Tyler O'Connor. Michigan State's low rushing total was partially because of sacks and a mishap on a punt, but the Spartans couldn't establish any consistency moving the ball.

A season after leading the nation by allowing 13.7 points per game, the Badgers are allowing an average of 11.8. On Saturday, the Wisconsin defense gave up only two field goals.

The Badgers are now 12th in the nation in total defense, and if anyone doubted the legitimacy of this team's impressive start, well, Michigan State can certainly vouch for it.