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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Texas' Harvey recovery to be long, costly

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Nearly a week after Harvey crashed into the Texas coastline, the storm chased more people out of their homes Friday after dumping heavy rain on Louisiana, and people in a Texas city with no drinking water waited in a line that stretched for more than a mile to get bottled water.

Meanwhile, the Houston mayor pleaded for more high-water vehicles and more search-and-rescue equipment as the nation's fourth-largest city continued looking for any survivors or corpses that might have somehow escaped notice in flood-ravaged neighborhoods.

Mayor Sylvester Turner also asked the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide more workers to process applications from thousands of people seeking government help. Harvey victims expect FEMA to work "with the greatest degree of urgency," he told CBS "This Morning" for a segment broadcast Friday.

Turner said he will request a preliminary financial aid package of \$75 million for debris removal alone.

The remnants of the storm were dying as they pushed deeper inland but remained still powerful enough to raise the risk of flooding as far north as Kentucky.

More than 1,500 people were staying at shelters in Louisiana, and that number was climbing as more people evacuate from flood-ravaged communities in Texas. The state opened a seventh shelter Friday in Shreveport for up to 2,400 people, said Shauna Sanford, a spokeswoman for Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards.

The city of Beaumont, home to almost 120,000 people near the Texas-Louisiana line, was trying to bring in enough bottled water for people who stayed behind after a water pumping station was overwhelmed by the swollen Neches River.

In Houston, officials turned their attention to immediate needs such as finding temporary housing for those in shelters, but also to the city's long-term recovery, which will take years and billions of dollars.

Authorities raised the death toll from the storm to 39 late Thursday, while rescue workers conducted a block-by-block search of tens of thousands of Houston homes that rescuers began Thursday.

The latest statewide damage surveys

Storm's effects felt in Deep South

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Harvey spread its misery into the Deep South as flooded creeks drove people from their homes in Tennessee and Kentucky and an apparent tornado damaged homes and toppled trees in a rural area of northwest Alabama.

More than 50 people were evacuated from a Nashville neighborhood due to flooding from Harvey, but no deaths or injuries have been reported, according to a statement Friday morning from the Nashville Office of Emergency Management.

The agency said remnants from Harvey dumped nearly 9 inches of rain in some areas over a 24-hour period and crews responded to dozens of calls overnight requesting aid. About 40 people took refuge in a Red Cross shelter set up at a church.

Richard Williams said he and his wife were rescued from their home south of Nashville overnight. He told WTVF-TV that his wife had to be rescued from her hospice bed by raft.

"When I woke up, the water was up to my waist and up to my wife's hospital

bed," Williams said.

By Friday morning, most streams in the Nashville area were returning to normal levels, emergency officials said.

Near Monteagle, northeast of Chattanooga in south-central Tennessee, Interstate 24 was shut down in both directions Friday after high winds knocked down powerlines across the highway. Traffic was backed up for miles.

Marshall said 3 to 4 feet of water accumulated in a low-lying neighborhood. Two dozen homes and several businesses were affected. The mayor said the flooding "inundated our drainage system in that portion of town."

Marshall said it's the most significant flooding in the town of about 1,400 people since the late 1960s. Seven inches of rain had fallen in Guthrie as of Friday at 11 a.m., the National Weather Service reported.

At 4 a.m. Friday, Harvey's core was about 40 miles southwest of Nashville, the National Hurricane Center said. The storm had maximum sustained winds of 30 mph and was moving northeast at 16 mph. Forecasters said the storm likely would dissipate Saturday evening around Ohio.

revealed the staggering extent of the destruction.

An estimated 136,000 structures in Harris County, 10 percent of all structures in the county database, were flooded, according to the flood control district for the county, which includes Houston.

Jeff Lindner, a meteorologist for the agency, called that a conservative estimate. It is 36,000 more homes than were flooded by Tropical Storm Allison in 1989, the area's previous epic flood.

The Texas Department of Public Safety said more than 37,000 homes were heavily damaged and nearly 7,000 were destroyed, figures that did not include the tens of thousands of homes with minor damage. About 325,000 people have already sought federal emergency aid in the wake of Har-

vey. More than \$57 million in individual assistance has already been paid out, FEMA officials said.

Houston Fire Chief Sam Pena said his department had responded to nearly 16,000 calls since the storm hit Saturday, over 7,600 of them for water rescues.

The search for more survivors and bodies began Thursday when more than 200 firefighters, police officers and members of an urban search-and-rescue team fanned out across the Meyerland neighborhood. They yelled "Fire department!" as they pounded with closed fists on doors, peered through windows and checked with neighbors.

"We don't think we're going to find any humans, but we're prepared if we do," said District Chief James Pennington of the Houston Fire Department.

Parts dealer guilty in plot to steal Army equipment

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A military equipment dealer was convicted Thursday of scheming with soldiers at Fort Campbell, Ky., to steal sensitive material for sale to buyers in Russia, China and Mexico.

John Roberts was found guilty of conspiracy to steal and sell government property, two counts of violating the Arms Export Control Act and 10 counts of wire fraud. Prosecutors said he faces up to five years in prison for conspiracy and up to 20 for each count of arms export violations and wire fraud. More than \$1 million in weapons parts, body armor, helmets, gun sights and other equipment was stolen and sold in a black market, prosecutors said. Six soldiers and another civilian pleaded guilty. One testified Roberts got a tour of the base to see items to be stolen. They brought equipment back from Afghanistan and sold it.

Roberts, 27, testified that he did not know the soldiers were bringing him stolen equipment. He said the items he bought and sold were commonly found in surplus stores, gun stores and on eBay.

But prosecutors said Roberts' own text messages with the soldiers and others involved proved he led the conspiracy.

"This case is about the defendant's greed and piles of stolen military equipment," Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Jaworski said in closing arguments.

Roberts' defense attorney did not give closing arguments.

A former business partner, Cory Wilson, testified that he and Roberts would find soldiers selling items through classified ads or on Facebook, and then ask them for more expensive and harder-to-find items. Wilson pleaded guilty to buying and selling stolen military equipment, wire fraud and violating the Arms Export Control Act.

Mattis disputes reports of being at odds with Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Where some see Defense Secretary Jim Mattis distancing himself from President Donald Trump on North Korea and other big issues, Mattis sees "someone's rather rich imagination" at work creating a conflict where he insists none exists.

"I've seen this now for months," Mattis said, referring to reports that he is at odds with the commander in chief.

In an impromptu exchange with reporters at the Pentagon on Thursday, Mattis was asked about interpretations of comments he made Wednesday after Trump tweeted that talking to North Korea "is not the answer." Shortly after the tweet, a reporter asked Mattis whether the U.S. was out of diplomatic solutions. He replied, "No, we're never out of diplomatic solutions."

Some viewed this as contradicting, or even defying, Trump.

"It was widely misinter-

preted," Mattis said. He said he agreed with Trump that the U.S. should not be talking to North Korea now, after it fired a ballistic missile over Japanese territory, which Mattis called "a reckless, provocative act." There remain diplomatic avenues to pursue in the interest of avoiding war, including additional economic sanctions, Mattis said.

"There is no contradiction at all there," he said. "No disagreement with the president."

He was clearly annoyed by persistent reports of rifts, or at least differences in views, with Trump.

"Right now, if I say six, and the president says half a dozen, they're going to say I disagree with him," he said.

In fact, Mattis, himself, has acknowledged differences with Trump, and he noted two of these Thursday. He recalled that when Trump interviewed him for the Pentagon job after the election, they disagreed on the value of NATO and the

utility of torturing terrorist suspects. In both cases, Mattis seemed to persuade Trump to change his view.

"This is not a man who is immune to being persuaded if he thinks you've got an argument," he said.

Early in his tenure at the Pentagon, following assertions by Trump that journalists are "the enemy of the American people," Mattis said he does not view reporters as adversaries and sees value in the skeptical view they offer.

More recently, Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have made remarks seen by some as rebuffing Trump. Mattis, for example, was seen as splitting with the president during remarks to American troops while visiting Jordan last week.

He told the troops to "hold the line" until the rest of the country gets back to treating each other with civility. Some interpreted the remarks as a critique of Trump's leadership.

Groups seek to halt Trump transgender policy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two LGBT-rights organizations asked a federal judge in Washington on Thursday to bar President Donald Trump from changing the government's policy on military service by transgender people.

The groups, backed by several former military leaders, filed a motion asking the judge to grant a preliminary injunction to keep Trump from reversing course on a 2016 policy change that allowed transgender individuals to serve openly.

Trump slammed that change in a memo last Friday and announced he was directing a return to the policy under which

servicemembers could be discharged for being transgender. Trump directed the Pentagon to extend indefinitely a ban on transgender individuals joining the military, and he gave Defense Secretary Jim Mattis six months to come up with a policy on "how to address" those who are currently serving, leaving the door open to permitting their continued service.

Trump also directed Mattis to halt the use of federal funds to pay for sexual reassignment surgeries and medications, except in cases where it is deemed necessary to protect the health of an individual who has already begun the transition.

Lawsuits challenging presi-

dent's directive have been filed in courts in Washington, Seattle and Baltimore. The Washington lawsuit was filed after Trump wrote on Twitter in July that the federal government "will not accept or allow" transgender individuals to serve "in any capacity" in the military, statements that preceded his memo last Friday. The groups behind the lawsuit, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, wrote in their court filing Thursday that the president's "directive broke faith with transgender men and women who counted on their government's promise that they could serve openly."

ISIS convoy rerouted after strikes blocked path

Associated Press

BEIRUT — A convoy of Islamic State militants being evacuated from the Lebanon-Syria border was moved to another Syrian government-held area Thursday after their passage to ISIS-held territory further east was blocked by U.S.-led airstrikes.

More than 300 militants and their families are in the convoy of buses after vacating the border area as part of a Hezbollah-negotiated deal to transport them to an ISIS-held town in eastern Syria near the Iraqi border.

The deal has angered Iraq and the U.S., which launched airstrikes Wednesday to block the convoy's advance.

After being stuck for hours at an exchange point, the buses moved farther north to a government-controlled area while negotiations continued in search of a new way to reach an ISIS-held area further east.

Earlier in the day, ISIS handed over to Hezbollah the body

of a recently captured Iranian Revolutionary Guard member as part of the deal.

The Lebanese Hezbollah group, which negotiated the controversial agreement, said it had received the body of Mohsen Hojaji and would conduct DNA tests before sending his remains onward to Iran. The handover was reported by the Hezbollah-run Al-Manar TV.

The militants revealed the locations of the remains of Lebanese soldiers captured in 2014 in exchange for safe passage through Syrian government-held territory to an ISIS-held area near the Iraqi border.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said Thursday that he met personally with Syrian President Bashar Assad to ask for his help in securing a deal that would help clear the Lebanon-Syria border area and would uncover the fate of the Lebanese soldiers.

"I went to President Assad. ... I went to Damascus," he said, adding that he sought to

convince Assad to let the convoy pass through government territory.

"He (Assad) told me, this is embarrassing for us, but no problem," Nasrallah told supporters gathered in eastern Lebanon for a "victory rally" to celebrate the expulsion of ISIS from the border area.

"The Syrian government has put up with the embarrassment for the sake of Lebanon," he said.

U.S. airstrikes on Wednesday destroyed a small bridge and cratered a road, forcing the convoy to halt. The U.S. has not targeted the evacuees, themselves, but has struck other groups of ISIS militants in eastern Syria.

Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said some ambulances that were part of the ISIS convoy were able to cross into ISIS-held territories in Syria. He added that Hojaji's body was released after the ambulances carrying wounded ISIS

fighters made it to areas held by the extremists. He said the group is exploring secret ways in which the convoy can cross into ISIS-held areas without being targeted by the U.S.-led coalition.

Nasrallah said earlier this week that the deal would include the handover of a Hezbollah fighter held by ISIS as well as the bodies of two Hezbollah members and Hojaji. Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah are fighting alongside Assad's forces.

Coalition spokesman Col. Ryan Dillon said that they continue to monitor the buses.

"The buses have not made it to ISIS-held territory and we will stick with what we said yesterday and that is we can strike ISIS elements without harming civilians whenever and wherever we will," Dillon said, using a term to refer to ISIS. He added that they struck several vehicles in ISIS-held parts of Syria overnight.

Marine honored for running into traffic and saving man

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

After the impact launched him 20 feet through the air, Marine Corps Cpl. Miles Hogan got up, checked himself for broken bones and sprinted back to the man he'd been trying to save.

Moments earlier on that February 2016 night, Hogan had watched through his windshield as the man's sedan rear-ended a slow-turning minivan and then veered into oncoming traffic.

According to a news release by the Marine Corps, Hogan pulled over and ran to the man's aid.

"I opened the door, and the man takes his seat belt off, and I grabbed under his arms to help him stand up," Hogan told a Corps public affairs officer. "As soon as I pull him to me, I

took one step back, and another car had hit us head on."

That's when Hogan and the man found themselves flying through the air.

Hogan ran back to the man — still in danger as he lay in the road — and dragged him to the shoulder. Hogan noticed the man's eyes were dilated, and he was having trouble looking left and right.

"Hogan gave the man a concussion test, and attended the man until paramedics arrived on the scene," according to the release. "Following the incident, Hogan was hospitalized for a bruised kidney and minor lacerations from the broken glass."

For his life-saving actions, Hogan, a musician with the Parris Island Marine Band, was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal at ceremony at the depot Thursday.

Former Parris Island recruit commander is arraigned

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

A high-ranking former Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., training battalion commander was arraigned Wednesday ahead of his court-martial, according to the Marine Corps Times.

No trial date has been set yet for Lt. Col. Joshua Kissoon, who faces a general court-martial, which is extremely rare for a battalion commander, according to the Corps.

Kissoon is accused of failing to sideline drill instructor Gunnery Sgt. Joseph A. Felix — who was under investigation on suspicion of hazing a different recruit — allowing him to continue supervising trainees, including former recruit Raheel Siddiqui, who died March 18, 2016, following a suspected altercation with Felix.

Kissoon was relieved of his

command of the depot's 3rd Recruit Training Battalion the day before Siddiqui died, according to the Corps, although that decision wasn't made public until two weeks later.

Siddiqui died after he jumped nearly 40 feet from the third story of his barracks. The Corps has ruled his death a suicide.

Siddiqui had reportedly been sick and was attempting to request permission to seek medical treatment, but failed to properly convey that request. Felix reportedly made the recruit run a series of punitive sprints across the barracks. Siddiqui collapsed to the floor, unresponsive, according to some witnesses. Felix attempted to wake the recruit and then slapped him, according to a Corps investigation. Siddiqui then jumped up, ran out of the back of the barracks and vaulted over the railing.

Lightning pace of Tal Afar battle tests US troops' agility

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

NEAR TAL AFAR, Iraq — During the grinding battle to retake Mosul from Islamic State, U.S. advisers to the Iraqis often settled in at tactical bases near the front for several weeks, but the fast-moving fight for Tal Afar — one of the last ISIS bastions in Iraq before being liberated Thursday — put their agility to the test.

Less than 20 miles from Tal Afar, on the eighth day of the Iraqi-led offensive, a whirlwind spun a column of dust across a field, but the U.S. artillery firing line was still. A crewmember from a Paladin self-propelled howitzer washed laundry, teased by a peer who dumped water onto his head.

Nothing would remain damp long in the baking heat, though, which was fortunate for Spc. Gary Bartnik. Sometime after he'd started the wash, the platoon was ordered to move out again, about two weeks after rolling in.

Coalition troops were being repositioned to support their partners better after Iraqi Security Forces swiftly routed ISIS militants from Tal Afar, located about 25 miles from the border with Syria, and pursued hundreds to a village to the northwest. Days later, in the middle of its second week, the battle would be declared over.

The Iraqi offensive, planned and launched less than two months after a punishing, nearly 270-day battle in Mosul, impressed some U.S. advisers. It may also have caught ISIS flat-footed, causing them to fold and run, said Col. Charlie Costanza, a coalition deputy commander in Irbil.

But even before the battle had started, preparations for it required soldiers to adapt on the fly. Lt. Col. John Hawbaker, a commander within the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team advising Iraqi forces, said he was planning to turn left when leading

his unit's relocation from a tactical base south of Mosul, where it had supported federal police forces, but at the last minute he was told to turn right to support the Iraqi army's 16th division outside Tal Afar.

"I'm happy to see the flexibility and agility of my paratroopers," the Bensenville, Ill., native said. "They didn't bat an eye."

In a matter of hours, they set up a new outpost at this previously unknown location as if they'd planned it all along, he said. Such last-minute changes have become commonplace. One soldier balked at advanced warning when Hawbaker briefed the paratroopers about another anticipated move over the weekend.

"Sir, that's almost 48 hours away," Hawbaker recalled him joking. "Why are you giving us so much notice?"

For Lt. Col. James Downing, another 82nd Airborne Division commander and adviser here, the fast-paced battle kept him and his team on the move. They put in a string of six 22-hour days early in the battle while supporting the Iraqi army's 15th Division.

The division moved almost daily, some days retaking up to three outlying villages at a time, even in the face of "significant ISIS presence," Downing said. U.S. advisers helped plan each day's maneuvers, traveled from the tactical base to accompany Iraqi leaders near the front, then traveled back to help plan again.

"We've got to go wherever our partners need us," he said.

If the relentless nine-month Mosul battle could be likened to a marathon, Tal Afar may have been a sprint. But, Downing said, it was more akin to a 400-meter dash — one of the longer sprint events.

"We're never really done," said Glendora, Calif., native Lt. Kirsty Cordes, commander of the Paladin platoon. "We're always ready to move to the next best spot."

Russia-US diplomatic tit-for-tat escalates

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Russia on Friday promised a "tough response" to a U.S. order to shut the Russian Consulate in San Francisco and offices in Washington and New York, the latest round in a diplomatic tit-for-tat.

The U.S. issued its order Thursday and gave Russia 48 hours to comply, intensifying tensions between the two countries.

President Donald Trump's administration described its action as retaliation for the Kremlin's "unwarranted and detrimental" demand earlier this month that the U.S. cut its diplomatic staff in Russia.

"The United States is prepared to take further action as necessary and as warranted," said U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert. Still, she said that Washington hoped both countries could now move toward "improved relations" and "increased cooperation."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Friday that Moscow will reply with firmness, but still must decide on the precise response.

"We will have a tough response to the things that come totally out of the blue to hurt us and are driven solely by the desire to spoil our relations with the United States," he said in a televised meeting with students at Russia's top diplomacy school.

American officials argued that Russia should refrain from retaliation, noting that Moscow's ordering of U.S. diplomatic cuts was premised on bringing the two countries' diplomatic presences into "parity."

"The United States hopes that, having moved toward the Russian Federation's desire for parity, we can avoid further retaliatory actions by both sides," Nauert said.

Both countries now maintain three consulates on each other's territory and ostensibly similar numbers of diplomats.

Exact numbers are difficult to verify independently.

Lavrov on Friday also defended Trump, saying that the new package of sanctions against Russia that Congress adopted last month not only hits Russia but also is designed to "tie Trump's hands, not let him use his constitutional powers to the full to make foreign policy."

Several hours after the U.S. announcement, new Russian Ambassador Anatoly Antonov arrived in Washington to start his new posting.

At the airport, Antonov cited a maxim of former Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin as he urged caution and professionalism.

"We don't need hysterical impulses," Russian news agencies quoted Antonov as saying.

The closures on both U.S. coasts marked perhaps the most drastic diplomatic measure by the U.S. against Russia since 1986, near the end of the Cold War, when the nuclear-armed powers expelled dozens of each other's diplomats.

And it comes amid some of the broadest strains in their relationship ever since. The two countries have clashed over the wars in Ukraine and Syria, but most significantly over American allegations that Russia meddled in the 2016 U.S. election to boost Trump's chances of victory. Investigations continue into whether Trump's campaign colluded with Moscow.

By Saturday, the Russians must close their consulate in San Francisco and an official residence there. Though Russia can keep its New York consulate and its Washington embassy, trade missions housed in satellite offices in both of those cities must shut down, a senior Trump administration official said. The official briefed reporters on a conference call on condition of anonymity.

Outside the consulate building high atop a hill overlooking the San Francisco Bay, there were no visible signs of an exodus Thursday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

House destroyed in french fry mishap

OR LEBANON — An Oregon home has been destroyed in a fire that began with a man cooking french fries.

Division Chief Jason Bolen, of the Lebanon Fire District said a 52-year-old man was cooking fries on the stovetop Wednesday morning when the oil overflowed onto the burners and ignited. Bolen said the man tried to extinguish the blaze but soon realized it was out of control.

The man awakened his girlfriend and the pair escaped along with their two dogs.

Firefighters from Albany, Scio and Sweet Home also responded to the scene. Crews extinguished the fire in about an hour. There were no injuries.

Police: Motorcyclist traveled over 120 mph

NH HANCOCK — Police said a motorcyclist traveling at speeds over 120 mph has been arrested after leading officers on a chase through two New Hampshire towns.

WMUR-TV reported Hancock officers said they tried to stop the motorcycle heading south on Route 202 on Tuesday night. The motorcycle continued into Peterborough. Police said at one point, the driver was attempting to hide in a driveway as an officer passed him, then drove directly toward a second officer.

Police said the driver eventually failed to navigate a corner and lost control of the motorcycle, crashing into a bush.

Police arrested Eric Nolet, 24, of Lyndeborough. He was charged with reckless driving and disobeying an officer.

Tiger the tabby is one of Sing Sing's last cats

NY OSSINING — An orange tabby named Tiger is enjoying his role as one of the last cats living at New York's Sing Sing Correctional Facility.

The prison once had hundreds of resident felines freely roaming its buildings and grounds. Today, fewer than a dozen remain.

Tiger broke into the maximum security facility a decade ago.

The Wall Street Journal said Tiger turns his nose up at tuna from the mess hall. But he'll gladly chow down on the tuna that inmates buy for him at the commissary.

Tiger obeys the officers and once scared a groundhog away from lettuce in the prison garden.

Jermaine Archer said Tiger is getting old, fat and slow. But the inmate adds: "We love him."

Police: Woman steals shoes, leaves son, 5

AL MOBILE — Alabama police have arrested a woman who they say left her 5-year-old son behind after stealing a pair of shoes.

Mobile Police Department spokesman Donald Wallace told news outlets Debrina Scott, 24, shoplifted the shoes Saturday from a Mobile shoe store. Wallace said that when Scott was confronted by security at the store, she took off running across the parking lot. Her son followed her and was nearly struck by a vehicle.

News outlets reported that Scott was arrested Tuesday on charges of theft and endangering the welfare of a child.

Men accused of robbing bar during police party

MD BALTIMORE — The police response time was quicker than ever.

Two men were arrested after, according to police, they robbed a bar outside Baltimore while off-duty officers were there for a retirement party.

The Baltimore Sun reported the men allegedly demanded cash from the register at a Woodlawn bar Tuesday evening while a group of officers gathered for a sergeant's retirement. The officers chased and arrested them. Baltimore County police spokesman Cpl. Shawn Vinson said Joseph McInnis III, 21, and Tyree McCoy, 22, face armed robbery, theft and other charges.

Monaghan's Pub owner said it's odd that someone would attempt a robbery because a precinct station is across the street.

Chief tells cops to stop making traffic stops

PA MIDLAND — A small-town Pennsylvania police chief is drawing fire for an internal memo telling his officers to stop making so many traffic stops because of too many resident complaints.

Midland police Chief Keith McCarthy still wants his officers to stop suspected drunken drivers and others suspected of more serious offenses but asked them to "stop traffic stops significantly." He warned officers who don't will be scheduled for fewer hours.

The chief explains in the memo that the mayor requested the measure saying, "I am well aware that these and many others are illegal violations, but we cannot sustain a department where we have dozens of complaints a month."

The chief and mayor haven't

commented, and the borough's solicitor has declined comment. The borough of about 2,600 residents is 30 miles northwest of Pittsburgh.

Residents find alligator in backyard pool

FL LITHIA — Some Florida residents woke up to an uninvited, scaly guest in their backyard swimming pool: a 7- to 8-foot-long alligator.

The Tampa Bay Times reported that Hillsborough County deputies responded to the Lithia home Wednesday morning. The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office posted a picture of the submerged alligator on Twitter, adding that the "apprehension of this trespassing suspect should be interesting."

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission trappers arrived a short time later and captured the large reptile. No injuries were reported.

Thefts of buses shift focus to security

HI HILO — Hawaii officials are scrambling to shore up security after a second public transit bus was stolen within a week.

The Hawaii Tribune-Herald reported Hilo Mayor Harry Kim said Tuesday he met with the County of Hawaii Mass Transit Agency to discuss security for the bus baseyard.

Police said it appears the suspect, the same in both thefts, cut the lock to the gate of the baseyard. Police said the suspect was charged Tuesday with first-degree theft, resisting an order to stop, reckless endangering, reckless driving, driving without a commercial driver's license, driving a stolen vehicle, property damage and two counts of inattention to driving.

From wire reports

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Astros trade for Tigers' Verlander

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Houston Astros acquired Justin Verlander in a trade with the Detroit Tigers on Thursday night, just before the deadline for having players eligible for postseason play.

The right-hander joins the American League West leaders and a rotation that is led by Dallas Keuchel and Lance McCullers.

"He adds a boost to our rotation," Astros owner Jim Crane said. "He's been pitching well. We think he'll give us some leadership. He's been in the playoffs before and adds a dimension we didn't have."

The six-time All Star is a playoff veteran, having appeared in the postseason five times. He is 7-5 with a 3.39 ERA and 112 strikeouts in 16 career starts in the playoffs. The 34-year-old Verlander is 10-8 with a 3.82 ERA in 28 starts this season. The Tigers will receive minor league prospects outfielder Daz Cameron, right-hander Franklin Perez and catcher Jake Rogers as well as a player to be named later or cash considerations in the deal.

It was the second trade of the day for the Tigers, who sent outfielder Justin Upton to the Los Angeles Angels for pitching prospect Grayson Long and cash or a player to be named.

Crane is optimistic that Verlander is the piece that can help the Astros make a deep run in the postseason.

"We hope it positions us to get into the playoffs, get by the first round, get into the second round and get to the World Series and win it. That's what we've been working at and that's what we'll continue to work at and we want to win."

Verlander has compiled a 183-114 record with a 3.49 ERA and 2,373 strikeouts in his 13-year career with the Tigers.

After trading both Verlander and Upton, the Tigers are now clearly moving forward with a rebuild. Detroit is 58-74 and on track to miss the postseason for the third straight year.

The Tigers drafted Verlander in 2004 with the No. 2 overall pick. He won Rookie of the Year honors in 2006, when Detroit came out of nowhere to win the American League pennant. He led the AL with 19 wins in 2009, but his finest season came in 2011, when he went 24-5 with a 2.40 ERA and won the AL Cy Young Award and MVP.

Roundup

Greinke, D-Backs sweep Dodgers

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Zack Greinke earned his major league-best 16th victory with six strong innings and the Arizona Diamondbacks beat Los Angeles 8-1 on Thursday to complete the first series sweep of the Dodgers this season.

Chris Iannetta and A.J. Pollock homered for the Diamondbacks, who matched their season-best seventh straight victory and pulled 3½ games ahead of idle Colorado for the National League's top wild card spot.

The Dodgers, still with by far the best record in the majors (91-40), have lost a season-worst five in a row.

Greinke (16-6) allowed a run and four hits, striking out six and walking two, to improve to 13-1 in 16 home starts this season.

The Dodgers' Kenta Maeda (12-6) had arguably his worst outing of the year. The right-hander went just three innings and gave up seven runs and eight hits. It was his shortest start and the most runs he's allowed this season.

Paul Goldschmidt doubled twice and drove in two runs for the Diamondbacks. Gregor Blanco had three hits, two of them doubles, drove in a run and scored twice.

Arizona scored 21 runs in the three-game sweep and has won nine of 10.

Astros 5, Rangers 1: At St. Petersburg, Fla., Jose Altuve homered, the Houston bullpen pitched 4⅓ scoreless innings and the Astros beat Texas on Thursday in the last game before they return to their flood-ravaged home city.

Josh Reddick added an RBI single for the AL West-leading Astros, who avoided a three-game sweep at the hands of their in-state rivals at Tropicana Field, where the series was relocated because of Hurricane Harvey.

Houston will have a previously unscheduled day off Friday and play a doubleheader Saturday against the Mets at Minute Maid Park. The downtown Houston stadium escaped major flood damage. Astros president Reid Ryan has said he hopes the weekend games "can serve as a welcome distraction" for the city.

Twins 5, White Sox 4: Max Kepler was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded and two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning, and host Minnesota rallied to beat Chicago.

Trailing 4-3 entering their final at-bat at Target Field, the Twins came back to win their fourth straight and maintain their slim lead for the second AL wild-card spot. The Twins completed a three-game sweep with their first hop-off win since current Minnesota manager Paul Molitor was plunked in the 10th at the Metrodome in

1996 to beat Kansas City.

Brewers 6, Nationals 3: Zach Davies won his 16th game to tie Arizona's Zack Greinke for the most victories in the majors, Jonathan Villar homered and Milwaukee beat visiting Washington.

Davies (16-7) scattered six hits, walked two, struck out four and lowered his ERA to 1.77 over the last nine starts, five of them victories for himself and the team.

Cardinals 5, Giants 2: Michael Wacha pitched six strong innings and Randal Grichuk hit a two-run homer as St. Louis defeated host San Francisco.

The Giants were without staff ace Madison Bumgarner, a late scratch with flu symptoms, as they lost for the sixth time in seven games.

Reds 7, Mets 2: Joey Votto hit a home run, then gave a bat and jersey to a 6-year-old cancer patient as Cincinnati beat visiting New York.

Blue Jays 11, Orioles 8: Host Baltimore's seven-game winning streak ended under a barrage of home runs by Kendrys Morales, who went deep three times and had a career-high seven RBIs to provide visiting Toronto with a victory.

Adam Jones and Chris Davis homered for the Orioles, who fell 2½ games back in the race for the final AL wild card.

Yankees 6, Red Sox 2: CC Sabathia shut down visiting Boston for the fourth time this season and New York got homers from Gary Sanchez and Greg Bird on the way to a victory in the opener of a pivotal four-game series.

Bird drove in three runs and Sanchez had two RBIs as the second-place Yankees shaved Boston's lead in the AL East to 4½ games.

Phillies 3, Marlins 2: Ben Lively hastened Giancarlo Stanton's slide into a slump, and host Philadelphia sent Miami back below .500.

Stanton failed to get the ball out of the infield in three plate appearances against Lively and finished 0-for-5 with two strikeouts. The major league home run leader (51) is 1-for-15 this week.

Cubs 6, Braves 2: Kyle Hendricks turned in his fourth straight solid start and host Chicago ran its winning streak to four games with a victory over Atlanta.

Hendricks (6-4) allowed one earned run on five hits while striking out five and walking three in 6⅔ innings as the reigning World Series champs maintained their 3½-game lead over the Milwaukee Brewers in the National League Central.

Federer outlasts Youzhny in five sets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A bad back prevented Roger Federer from getting ready for the U.S. Open the way he prefers to prepare for a Grand Slam tournament. And it's showed so far.

Federer blamed a lack of proper practice after making an uncharacteristic 68 unforced errors and being forced to go five sets again before coming back to edge a cramping Mikhail Youzhny 1-6, 7-6 (3), 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 on Thursday in Arthur Ashe Stadium.

It is the first time the 36-year-old Federer has played five-setters in both the first and second rounds at a major tournament.

"I knew I was going to maybe struggle early on. Maybe I

struggled more than I would have liked to. But I'm still in the draw, which gives me a chance. I still believe I'm going to pick up my game and become just more consistent because I'm not playing all that bad," Federer said. "It's just that I'm going a bit up and down in waves throughout the match."

Given that Federer entered the day with a 16-0 career record against Youzhny and a 16-0 mark in the U.S. Open's second round, one might have thought that their match would be a mismatch.

Think again.

"He's also a real man who plays tennis," Youzhny noted. "He's not a god."

Well, OK, that's true. But remember: Federer did not drop a single set en route to his record

eighth Wimbledon championship in July. And that he is 37-3 with five titles, including two at majors to raise his record total to 19.

Second on that list, with 15, is No. 1-seeded Rafael Nadal, who trailed by a set and a break before figuring things out and beating 121st-ranked Taro Daniel of Japan 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 in Ashe at night. That followed 20th-seeded American CoCo Vandeweghe's 7-6 (6), 6-2 victory over Ons Jabeur of Tunisia under the lights.

What already was a wide-open women's bracket became more so when 2004 U.S. Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova was upset by 116th-ranked Kurumi Nara of Japan 6-3, 3-6, 6-3. The No. 8-seeded Kuznetsova's exit means five of the top eight

women are already gone.

Two other seeded women lost to Americans in the afternoon: Shelby Rogers edged No. 25 Daria Gavrilova 7-6 (6), 4-6, 7-6 (5) in a tournament-record 3 hours, 33 minutes, and Jennifer Brady eliminated No. 23 Barbora Strycova 6-1, 6-1.

A couple of seeded men departed, too: No. 7 Grigor Dimitrov and No. 15 Tomas Berdych, the 2010 Wimbledon runner-up.

The No. 3-seeded Federer won five consecutive U.S. Open championships from 2004-08 and also was the runner-up twice, including two years ago. But he missed last year's tournament while taking off the second half of the season to let his back and surgically repaired left knee fully heal.

Rosas' FG as time expires lifts Giants over Patriots

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Aldrick Rosas hit a 48-yard field goal as time expired and the New York Giants earned a 40-38 win over the New England Patriots in the final exhibition game for both teams Thursday night.

The Giants scored 34 points in the first half, but the Patriots outscored them 24-3 over the final 29 minutes before Rosas' field goal. It helped salvage a night in which Geno Smith and Josh Johnson each had touchdown passes, and the Giants' defense returned an interception for a touchdown.

Bills 27, Lions 17: Buffalo rookie quarterback Nathan Peterman continued making his offseason-long case to secure the backup job in a preseason-ending win over visiting Detroit.

Packers 24, Rams 10: Quarterback Brett Hundley proved he can also dish out a hit for host Green Bay.

The backup to Aaron Rodgers looked like a tailback when he lowered his right shoulder into cornerback Dominique

Hatfield near the goal line and barreled into the end zone for a 13-yard touchdown run. Hundley also threw for a score.

Jaguars 13, Falcons 7: Rookie Dede Westbrook returned from an injury with six catches for 115 yards and a touchdown, all in the first half, helping visiting Jacksonville close the preseason with a win.

Jets 16, Eagles 10: At East Rutherford, N.J., Josh McCown and New York's first-team offense got the start — and a big scare — in the preseason finale as New York held on to beat Philadelphia.

McCown took a shot to his chest from Eagles linebacker Joe Walker with 7:13 left in the opening quarter. The quarterback was down on a knee for a few moments before getting to his feet and jogging off the field toward the sideline before going down to a knee again as trainers attended to him.

Steelers 17, Panthers 14: Rookie Joshua Dobbs threw for one touchdown and ran for the winning score and host Pittsburgh defeated Carolina in the teams' preseason finale.

Redskins 13, Buccaneers

10: Josh Harvey-Clemons returned an interception 41 yards for a touchdown and Dustin Hopkins kicked two field goals to help visiting Washington finish beat Tampa Bay.

Dolphins 30, Vikings 9: Ja'keem Grant caught four passes for 141 yards and a touchdown and the Miami Dolphins wrapped up the preseason with a victory over host Minnesota.

Ravens 14, Saints 13: At New Orleans, Baltimore got a better look at what first-round draft choice Marlon Humphrey can do when he's healthy. They had to like what they saw.

Humphrey, drafted 16th overall out of Alabama last spring, forced a fumble, broke up a pass and made four tackles in the Ravens' victory.

Colts 7, Bengals 6: Few questions were answered heading into the preseason as host Indianapolis and Cincinnati played a difficult to watch game.

With less than 48 hours until rosters will be cut to 53, both Cincinnati and Indianapolis had key spots undecided. Each team walks away with a lot of uncertainty still remaining.

Chiefs 30, Titans 6: First-round pick Patrick Mahomes II threw for 183 yards and a touchdown in what was likely his final game for a while, and host Kansas City beat Tennessee.

Browns 25, Bears 0: Mitchell Trubisky got an opportunity to start and little chance to show what he can do, completing just two passes for Chicago in a preseason-ending loss to visiting Cleveland.

Seahawks 17, Raiders 13: Austin Davis threw a 16-yard touchdown pass to Kenny Lawler with 1:10 remaining in the fourth quarter, and visiting Seattle beat Oakland.

Broncos 30, Cardinals 2: Kyle Slotter bounced back from a sack for a safety and another sack in the shadow of his own goal line to lead host Denver on touchdown drives of 98 and 96 yards that sparked its win over Arizona, and capping a 4-0 preseason.

49ers 23, Chargers 13: Rookie quarterback C.J. Beathard capped an impressive preseason with a surprising 62-yard touchdown run that helped San Francisco beat visiting Los Angeles.

Dobbins leads Ohio State past Indiana

Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — J.K. Dobbins wanted to give his fans back in Texas something to cheer about.

His Ohio State teammates and Buckeyes fans jumped right on board.

The freshman broke a 15-year-old school record by rushing for 181 yards in his college debut, J.T. Barrett threw three touchdown passes and No. 2 Ohio State managed to pull away in the second half for a 49-21 victory over Indiana on Thursday night.

"I'm probably the only good thing going on in my town right now, so I just thought of it as bringing my city up," Dobbins said after spending the past week watching the flooding in the Houston area. "That's why I came out and played hard like that."

This was more than just a

coming-out party.

Dobbins carried 29 times and broke Maurice Claret's previous debut mark of 175 yards set in 2002. Afterward, Ohio State coach Urban Meyer even compared Dobbins to former Ohio State star Ezekiel Elliott.

That's a pretty good start for the guy who missed all but one play last season at La Grange High school and started in place of Mike Weber, the Buckeyes' top runner in 2016, who sat out with a hamstring injury.

"Not surprised at all," Meyer said. "I had kind of tempered my emotions with you guys early on, but we've seen that since spring practice."

Dobbins didn't just put up numbers.

His long runs in the second quarter finally got the slow-starting Buckeyes moving and his ability to sustain those runs in the second half helped Ohio State score the last 28 points to

put away their 23rd consecutive win in the series.

He also ruined Indiana's big plans for what had been billed as the biggest opener in school history — a nationally televised game with ESPN's "College GameDay" crew in town.

The Hoosiers controlled most of the first half and led 21-20 late in the third quarter. But they couldn't finish the upset in Tom Allen's first home game as the Hoosiers head coach.

"The bottom line is that for 2½ quarters, we went toe-to-toe with them," Allen said. "We were leading and weren't able to finish, so that's on me. We can talk about breaking through and I'm not going to quit talking about it because breaking through is not one game."

Barrett overcame a slow start to finish 20-for-35 for 304 yards. He added 61 yards rushing and another score to move within two touchdowns of

matching Drew Brees' Big Ten career record for total touchdowns (106).

But Ohio State didn't reach the end zone until Antonio Williams' 1-yard plunge with 5:17 left in the first half and couldn't retake the lead until Barrett's 2-yard scoring run midway through the third quarter. Parris Campbell's 74-yard TD reception from Barrett made it 27-21 and, thanks to Dobbins, the Buckeyes never trailed again.

"I kind of knew I was going to do what I did," Dobbins said.

Indiana quarterback Richard Lagow was 40 of 65 with 410 yards with three touchdowns and two interceptions. He also broke Ben Chappell's school record for pass attempts of 64 set in 2010 against Michigan, and finished with the school's second-highest completions total in one game.

Rudolph, Oklahoma State have easy time with Tulsa

Associated Press

STILLWATER, Okla. — Mason Rudolph launched his Heisman campaign with a nearly flawless performance.

The senior quarterback passed for 303 yards and three touchdowns and ran for another score to help 10th-ranked Oklahoma State beat Tulsa 59-24 on Thursday night. He was 20-for-24 with no interceptions.

"We knew we had a good game plan going in," Rudolph said. "They brought a lot of pressure, and I think we combated it well."

Rudolph joined Brandon Weeden as the only Cowboys quarterbacks to surpass 9,000 yards in career passing.

Preseason AP All-American James Washington caught six passes for 145 yards, including touchdown receptions of 77 and 40 yards.

Justice Hill ran for 132 yards and a touchdown, J.D. King had 95 yards and a score and LD Brown added 92 and a touch-

down for the Cowboys, who are in the preseason Top 10 for the third time in school history.

"We have a long ways to go, but we had a good start," Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy said.

Oklahoma State led 21-0 at the end of the first quarter and 38-17 at halftime. The Cowboys gained 640 total yards.

"Scoring early, scoring often is something we haven't done in the past," Rudolph said. "We would kind of sputter in the first quarter. I was happy with the way we jumped on them quick, I don't think it could have started any better."

Tulsa's Chad President got the start over Luke Skipper and passed for 178 yards and ran for 69. Corey Taylor II ran for 111 yards and two touchdowns. D'Angelo Brewer, who ran for more than 1,400 yards last season, finished with 33 yards on 22 carries.

Tulsa gained 432 total yards, but much of that damage came in the second half and didn't

lead to points.

"I'm proud of our guys continuing to fight and grind," Tulsa coach Philip Montgomery said. "You know, we're young, but that's not an excuse. We've got to step up and be ready to play. We'll go back and look at this tape and get an opportunity to correct those mistakes."

Takeaways

Tulsa: The Golden Hurricane are down several notches from the squad that went 10-3 last season and beat Central Michigan 55-10 in the Miami Beach Bowl. Neither quarterback is ready to replace Dane Evans, but President showed good pocket presence and created problems with his speed.

Oklahoma State: The Cowboys, wary of home upsets after last year's stunning loss to Central Michigan, were never in danger in this one. Oklahoma State rushed for 332 yards on 37 carries to balance its dynamic passing attack.

Poll implications

The Cowboys did nothing to hurt their standing. They were a solid favorite, and they handled business against an over-matched opponent.

Oops moment

Early in the second quarter, Oklahoma State's Jalen McCleskey fielded a punt inside the Cowboys' 10-yard line. Rob Riederer forced him to fumble, and Adam Higuera recovered in the end zone for Tulsa's first touchdown.

"McCleskey knows better than that," Gundy said. "His ball security was absolutely terrible, and that's something that we'll continue to work on."

Nitpicking

Rudolph made one mistake, and it was costly. Tulsa's Kolton Shindelar hit him and he fumbled at the 50-yard line. Petera Wilson Jr., recovered and ran it back 26 yards. Tulsa got a field goal out of it.