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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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S. Korean warships conduct live-fire drills

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korean warships took to the sea as the navy began a live-fire drill Tuesday, the latest show of force after the North conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test.

Washington and Seoul also agreed to remove the alliance-imposed limit on the size of warheads for South Korea's missiles to allow the South to boost its own defensive power, according to the president's office.

The moves came as the United States and South Korea vowed to step up pressure on

the North, which was reportedly preparing to test-fire another intercontinental ballistic missile, possibly in connection with the 69th anniversary of its foundation on Saturday.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said the communist state's actions show it's "begging for war" as she called on the Security Council to adopt the strongest sanctions and other diplomatic measures.

The naval drills began Tuesday with a 2,500-ton frigate and guided-missile vessels conducting a live-fire exercise in the sea off the peninsula's east coast. They were to continue Wednesday through Saturday

in the southern seas, a statement said.

On Monday, South Korea conducted a mock attack on the North's nuclear-testing site with fighter jets and a land-based missile system.

North Korea said it tested a hydrogen bomb on Sunday that could be fitted onto an ICBM. The explosion was so powerful it could be felt in neighboring China.

That followed weeks of saber rattling from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, including a threat to fire missiles into the waters near the U.S. territory of Guam. The regime also test-fired two ICBMs in July and sent a missile soaring over the

Japanese island of Hokkaido last month.

President Moon Jae-in discussed the growing threat from the North in a phone call late Monday with President Donald Trump. The call came after Trump criticized what he called South Korea's "talk of appeasement with North Korea" as part of his response to Sunday's nuclear test.

Moon took office on May 10 promising to pursue engagement with Pyongyang, but he has been forced to take a harder line as the North stepped up the pace of its missile- and nuclear-testing programs.

Plans to make Italy's base hospitals clinics worry some

BY SCOTT WYLAND

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Kimberlee Ferris gave birth prematurely three years ago in a civilian hospital where her husband wasn't allowed in the room and medical staff refused her anesthesia during nine hours of labor.

Ferris, then 22, couldn't convince the Italian nurses she was in labor and needed painkillers. Her baby began crowning when Ferris was in the bathroom and she was rushed to the delivery room, where her daughter was born 30 minutes later.

"They told me I was just constipated and that's what was causing my pain," said Ferris, a Navy spouse who now lives in Silver Spring, Md. "They finally believed me when it was almost too late. My daughter was almost born on the bathroom floor."

Italian hospitals for years have taken care of surgeries, complicated births and serious illnesses for servicemembers

and their families that base hospitals weren't equipped to handle.

However, a Defense Department plan to scale down the three U.S. military hospitals in Italy has many Americans worried that longstanding problems centered on communication, pain management and differences in treatment will grow more common.

Base hospitals in Naples, Aviano and Sigonella will be converted to outpatient clinics in 2019, which would end treatment requiring overnight stays.

Adm. Raquel Bono, Defense Health Agency director, said she visited civilian hospitals in Naples and Sigonella after she heard criticism and thinks the complaints are often valid.

"We want to make sure that their experience of care is something that doesn't add to the trauma of the event that they are going through," Bono said.

Bono said her agency is work-

ing to form a network of Italian doctors and nurses who can help American patients better understand the care they will receive.

The agency is also creating liaison teams who will translate and advocate for American patients, Bono said. The agency has already begun hiring in Naples and Sigonella.

Italian hospitals now provide English-speaking liaisons, but Ferris said her liaison left as soon as she was hospitalized and was unavailable by phone. An attentive liaison might help, Ferris said, but it wouldn't offset the culture shock of giving birth in a foreign hospital.

"Everything is different than on the base," Ferris said.

The Euro Health Consumer Index, which annually compares health systems based on patient rights, accessibility, outcomes and other factors, ranked health care in Italy's more prosperous North and in Rome highly, compared with its peers on the Continent.

Italy's south, home to Naples and Sigonella, scored considerably lower in patient satisfaction. Patients frequently travel to better regarded northern regions for health care, a 2015 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report on Italy stated.

"Whilst it cannot be said that any one region delivers consistently 'poor' health care, it is clear that some regions struggle to provide the same quality as others," the OECD report stated.

Navy hospitals in Naples and Sigonella, and the Air Force hospital in Aviano are underused as 24-hour facilities, with each averaging one or two patients checking in per night, health officials said.

The low volume doesn't justify the costs of maintaining full medical centers, and it diminishes the skills of doctors who must stay sharp in case they are sent to a war zone, said Lt. Col. Gabriella Hermes, a Defense Health Agency spokeswoman.

Hurricane Harvey victims face dire housing crunch

Associated Press

HOUSTON — One couple displaced by Harvey managed to get a hotel room, but got kicked out after one night for lacking state identification that was lost to the flooding. A man whose cellphone was wrecked by floodwater is staying at a convention center, waiting for government offices to reopen Tuesday.

While the number of evacuees seeking refuge in Houston's emergency shelters has dwindled, many thousands of people are still in dire need of housing. Some returned to complexes inundated with sewage and mud. Others are staying with family and friends.

More than 50,000 went to government-paid hotels, some far away from homes and schools.

"You can't just pick the hotel," said D'Ona Spears, who has no way of getting her children to school when it resumes next week. "You have to go further out, further out, further out."

Spears and Brandon Polson had gotten a government-funded hotel room near downtown, but without ID they had to leave. After going to the Toyota Center, the basketball arena that's also housing evacuees, they were taken to a motel in Humble, about 20 miles away. Spears said she wished the family could return to the convention center.

At the George R. Brown Convention Center, about 1,500 people remain and several said they were homeless, disabled or from public housing. About 2,800 were at the NRG Center, another convention center that opened after George R. Brown reached double its original capacity.

Harvey struck Texas on Aug. 25 as a Category 4 hurricane but brought the worst flooding to Houston and other areas as a tropical storm. The rain totaled nearly 52 inches in some spots, and the storm is blamed for at

least 60 deaths.

FEMA said about 560,000 families are registered for its housing assistance program. It said 53,630 residents displaced by Harvey are currently in government-funded hotel rooms.

The temporary housing has been provided for 18,732 households, said FEMA spokesman Bob Howard. Once people are granted the assistance, there is a minimum allotment of 14 days, but that can be extended if necessary.

FEMA officials also are weighing other options, such as mobile homes, should the need arise.

Some people choosing to go back to their homes after Harvey were trying to make do the best they could.

But at the Clayton Homes, some apartments were filled with water and floors were caked in mud and sewage.

Clayton Homes residents were among the first to arrive at the convention center last weekend, many riding in the back of city dump trucks. The complex is bound on one side by Buffalo Bayou, the muddy waterway that jumped its banks and sent water rushing into homes.

Rosie Carmouche spent two days at George R. Brown with her two children. But she didn't want to stay too long, fearing for her possessions.

"They made you feel as comfortable as they possibly can; I will give them that," Carmouche said. "But when your mind is — you know what kind of community you live in? It's hard."

Laquinna Russell used bleach to scrub out the bottom floor of their two-story home, but is worried about mold and invisible bacteria so her family is sleeping on their second floor.

"We didn't have anywhere to go but back here," she said.

Trump moves to rescind program for immigrants

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Tuesday began dismantling the government program protecting hundreds of thousands of young immigrants who were brought into the country illegally as children. Attorney General Jeff Sessions declared the Obama administration's program "an unconstitutional exercise of authority" that must be revoked.

New applications will be halted for President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which has provided nearly 800,000 young immigrants a reprieve from deportation and the ability to work legally in the U.S. in the form of two-year, renewable work permits.

"I'm here today to announce that the program known as DACA that was effectuated under the Obama administration is being rescinded," Sessions announced.

The administration is giving Congress six months to come up with a legislative fix — "should it choose to," Sessions said — before the government stops renewing permits for people already covered by the program.

According to Department of Homeland Security officials, people with permits whose renewals are set to expire between now and March 5, 2018, will be able to reapply — so long as their applications are submitted by Oct. 5, 2017, one month from Tuesday. No permits will be revoked before their existing expiration dates, and applications already in the pipeline will be processed, they said.

Trump, in a statement, said

the change would be "a gradual process, not a sudden phase out."

"Thus, in effect, I am not going to just cut DACA off, but rather provide a window of opportunity for Congress to finally act," he said.

He said he did not favor punishing children for the actions of their parents. At the same time, though, he said, "we must also recognize that we are a nation of opportunity because we are a nation of law" and "young Americans have dreams, too."

His action drew swift criticism from many immigration advocates and Democratic lawmakers.

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi called Trump's decision "a deeply shameful act of political cowardice and a despicable assault on innocent young people in communities across America."

Some Republicans objected, too.

Sen. John McCain, of Arizona, said Trump was taking "the wrong approach," and he added, "The federal government has a responsibility to defend and secure our borders, but we must do so in a way that upholds all that is decent and exceptional about our nation."

Trump's announcement came the same day as a deadline set by a group of Republican state officials who said they would challenge DACA in court unless the Trump administration rescinded the program. Administration officials argued the program might not hold up in court — and said that allowing the lawsuit to proceed would throw the program into far more chaos than the move they chose.

Former professor takes over USARAF

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — A former engineering professor who arrived in Vicenza three weeks ago found himself Friday as the acting commander of U.S. Army Africa.

Brig. Gen. Eugene LeBoeuf, a civil engineering professor at Vanderbilt University until he was called to active duty last year, was to be the deputy commander.

But on Friday his responsibilities broadened when USARAF commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Harrington was suspended while the Army Inspector General investigates reports that Harrington sent flirtatious texts to an enlisted soldier's wife.

USARAF officials declined to address questions about any difficulties the com-

mand was facing following the abrupt change in leadership.

"Under Brig. Gen. LeBoeuf's leadership, USARAF will continue its mission and implement the vision of achieving USAF-RICOM and U.S. Army long-term strategic goals," USARAF spokesman Lt. Col. Armando Hernandez said in an email.

Where Harrington will be posted during his suspension was unclear. In similar circumstances, senior officers have been sent to the Pentagon to serve as special assistants.

LeBoeuf's most recent previous active-duty posting was at the new Army University at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., as the deputy commander and vice provost for academic affairs.

LeBoeuf was also previously a professor and associate chair of the civil and environmental engineering department at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

LeBoeuf holds four U.S. patents and has authored scores of technical publications.

LeBoeuf's military career began in 1985 as a second lieutenant and an Army Technological Enrichment Program Fellow at Northwestern University.

He was on active duty for seven years, serving in South Korea, the U.S. and in the Gulf War.

He spent the first eight years of his Army Reserve career at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

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Gen. Funk takes over anti-ISIS coalition

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

IRBIL, Iraq — Lt. Gen. Paul E. Funk II, commander of III Armored Corps, assumed command Tuesday of the U.S.-led coalition backing Iraqi and Syrian forces in their fight against Islamic State at a time when the terrorist group continues to lose ground in both countries.

In a transfer-of-authority ceremony attended by hundreds of coalition troops and U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines at an undisclosed location in southwest Asia, Funk relieved Lt. Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander of XVIII Airborne Corps, who had led Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve since August 2016.

Funk, commander of the Fort Hood, Texas-based III Armored Corps, is on his second deployment in support of Operation Inherent Resolve — his sixth combat deployment since Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

He takes command as Iraqi forces are soon expected to begin an offensive to retake the ISIS-held town of Hawija, south of Kirkuk, and half of

Shirqat. The group also still controls towns in western Anbar province near the Syrian border and swaths of territory in Syria.

Under Townsend, the coalition helped Iraqi Security Forces reduce ISIS-held territory to a 10th of what it once was.

The Iraqis liberated Mosul, the country's second-largest city and a key stronghold for the militants, as well as Tal Afar to the west and the remainder of northern Nineveh province.

He's also overseen coalition training and support of Syrian opposition groups fighting to oust ISIS from the capital of its self-proclaimed global caliphate in Raqqa, where the old city was liberated this week.

"What all of this has shown is that our 'by, with and through' strategy works when you have capable partners willing to fight," Townsend said.

Townsend's XVIII Corps had relieved III Corps when it was last in Iraq from September 2015 to August 2016, then under the command of Lt. Gen. Sean B. MacFarland.

Gen. Joseph L. Votel, commanding general of U.S. Central Command, who presided

over Tuesday's ceremony, said III Corps' efforts at that time led to the recapture of both Fallujah and Qayara Airfield West, a key logistics hub supporting coalition and Iraqi forces in northern Iraq.

Since its inception in June 2014, the coalition of 72 nations and organizations has helped its Iraqi and Syrian partners reclaim more than 30,000 square miles of territory from ISIS and liberate more than 5.5 million people, the coalition said.

Besides intelligence, combat advice and more than 26,000 strikes, the alliance has provided equipment and training for nearly 115,000 Iraqi Security Forces members and more than 11,000 Syrian fighters.

As a result, "real change is happening," Funk said. "ISIS is on the run."

Condemning the jihadis' campaign of violence, Funk reaffirmed the coalition's commitment to ending it.

"ISIS' brutality forces us to look deep into the heart of darkness," he said. "We must defeat them, and our collective effort will."

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Yokosuka sailor accused of punching local man

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO, Japan — A sailor assigned to Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan was arrested Sunday on suspicion of causing bodily injury after an incident at a local beach, Japanese police said.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Kade Robert Cossey, 20, was taken into custody at 8:27 p.m. after allegedly punching a 33-year-old Japanese man in the face during an argument at Zushi Beach, a police official said.

Cossey was visiting the beach with friends when he started arguing with a customer at a beachside hut, the official said. When the owner of the establishment intervened, the sailor punched the man, breaking his nose.

The case was due to go to a local prosecutor on Tuesday.

Sean Kelly, a public affairs officer at Yokosuka, confirmed Cossey's arrest in an email to Stars and Stripes and said the Navy is cooperating with Japanese authorities and will provide further details as they become available.

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Irma strengthens on path to US

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Hurricane Irma strengthened into a dangerous Category 5 storm Tuesday as it roared toward the northeast Caribbean on a path toward the U.S.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Irma had sustained winds of 175mph and was centered about 270 miles east of Antigua. It was moving west at 14 mph.

Irma's center was expected to move near or over the northern Leeward Islands late Tuesday and early Wednesday, the hurricane center said. The eye was later expected to pass about 50 miles from Puerto Rico late Wednesday.

Authorities warned that the storm could dump up to 10 inches of rain, cause landslides and flash floods and generate waves of up to 23 feet. Govern-

ment officials began evacuations in certain islands and urged people to finalize all hurricane preparations.

"The decisions that we make in the next couple of hours can make the difference between life and death," said Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello. "This is an extremely dangerous storm."

Residents on the U.S. East Coast were urged to monitor the storm's progress in case it should turn northward toward Florida, Georgia or the Carolinas.

"This hurricane has the potential to be a major event for the East Coast. It also has the potential to significantly strain FEMA and other governmental resources occurring so quickly on the heels of (Hurricane) Harvey," Evan Myers, chief operating officer of AccuWeather, said in a statement.

In the Caribbean, hurricane warnings were issued for 12 island groups, including the British Virgin Islands, where the governor urged people to evacuate the tiny island of Anegada if they could ahead of the storm.

Both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands expected 4 to 8 inches of rain and winds of 40-50 mph with gusts of up to 60 mph.

Meanwhile in Florida, residents took advantage of the Labor Day holiday Monday to empty many store shelves of drinking water and other supplies in advance of the storm, which could affect the state by the weekend. Also Monday, Florida Gov. Rick Scott declared a state of emergency for the state's 67 counties to give local governments "ample time, resources and flexibility" to prepare.

Wildfires threaten US parks

Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. — Wind-driven flames, hot temperatures and dry conditions are hampering firefighters across the West even after Labor Day, the unofficial end to a summer of devastating wildfires.

The dozens of fires burning across the West and Canada have blanketed the air with choking smoke from Oregon, where ash fell on the town of Cascade Locks, to Colorado, where health officials issued an air quality advisory alert.

A 14-square-mile fire in Montana's Glacier National Park emptied the park's busiest tourist spot as wind gusts drove the blaze toward the doorstep of a century-old lodge. The Lake McDonald Lodge, a 103-year-old Swiss chalet-style hotel, sits on a lake as the Going-to-the-Sun-Road begins its vertigo-inducing climb up the Continental Divide and is an endearing park symbol for many visitors.

On Monday, fire crews got bad news: The wind had shifted and gusts were driving the fire down the mountainside toward the lake's shores.

Outside California's Yosemite National Park, a wind-fueled fire made its way deeper into a grove of 2,700-year-old giant sequoia trees. Officials said the fire had gone through about half the grove, and had not killed any trees.

There are about 100 giant sequoias in the grove, including the roughly 24-story-high Bull Buck sequoia, one of the world's largest. Fire crews also wrapped 19th-century cabins in shiny, fire-resistant material to protect them.

The fire threatening the grove was one of several in the area — one of which closed some trails in Yosemite. A road leading to the park's southern entrance was also closed.

Elsewhere in Northern California, a fire destroyed 72 homes and forced the evacuation of about 2,000 people from their houses.

US-backed forces take Raqqa's Old City

The Washington Post

BEIRUT — U.S.-backed forces in Syria have captured the Old City of Raqqa, the latest milestone in their ongoing assault against the self-proclaimed capital of Islamic State's rapidly shrinking territories, according to a U.S. military statement on Monday.

Kurdish and Arab fighters with the Syrian Democratic Forces secured the neighborhood over the weekend after vanquishing a last pocket of resistance in the city's historic Grand Mosque, the statement said.

The capture followed a grinding two-month battle for the neighborhood that has proved the toughest challenge yet of a 3-month-old offensive for Raqqa, launched in June and still far from over.

Unlike the Old City in Mosul, the one in Raqqa does not lie at the heart of the city and its seizure does not signify an imminent end to the fighting, said U.S. military spokesman Col. Ryan Dillon.

The SDF now controls roughly 60 percent of Raqqa, said Dillon, who would not put a timeline on how long it would take to claim the rest but predicted that weeks of fighting lie ahead.

He said it does however represent a "significant step" in the overall battle for the city, which has turned into a block-by-block advance against a largely unseen enemy.

"This is still not over. It's still going to be very difficult, but we're making progress," he said.

The Kurdish and Arab forces have been advancing simultaneously on multiple fronts, backed by U.S.-led airstrikes and accompanied by U.S. special operations forces, in an effort to stretch the resources of the defending militants.

They are being met by barrages of improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers, many of them emerging behind SDF lines from an extensive network of tunnels dug by the militants to defend the city.

The United Nations says

there are around 20,000 civilians trapped in the city, and as was the case in the battle for Mosul, they are bearing the brunt of the relentless airstrikes. Amnesty International said last month that hundreds of civilians had died in airstrikes since the offensive began, and said it had documented 176 deaths in June and July.

The toughest battle is expected to be for a cluster of government buildings in the city center, known as the security block, where ISIS has prepared its heaviest defenses.

The advance in Raqqa coincides with significant gains by Syrian government forces farther south on the outskirts of the city of Deir al-Zour, now the only major city in either Iraq or Syria that still is mostly under ISIS control.

Syrian army units backed by loyalist militias advanced to within 6 miles of a garrison of Syrian soldiers that has been besieged on the edge of the city for the past three years.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Safe dye turns river in city bright green

SC GREENVILLE — Authorities say a safe dye used to track sewer leaks turned a river bright green in a South Carolina city.

The Reedy River changed colors Saturday in Greenville.

Greenville Police spokesman Johnathan Bragg said environmental officials stopped the water from going further downstream and tested it, finding the color was caused by a nontoxic dye that helps find leaks in sewage pipes. Police are trying to determine how the dye got into the river.

Woman accused after stolen police car chase

TX LUFKIN — An East Texas woman was in custody after allegedly stealing a police car while handcuffed and then leading officers on a chase that reached nearly 100 mph before she crashed.

Police said Toscha Sponsler, 33, of Lufkin had been detained in connection with shoplifting and was in the back of a police car when she managed to get out of one of the cuffs, squeeze through a partition, crawl into the front seat and take off.

A chase involving numerous law enforcement agencies went on for about 20 miles Saturday before a state trooper spun her out. Sponsler then hit a tree.

She's jailed on multiple charges.

Dog owners told to pick up poop or pay a fine

NH RYE — A town that's home to a popular beach in New Hampshire is putting dog owners on notice: Pick up or pay up.

Officials in Rye have put up notices warning of a fine of up

to \$1,000 if they fail to dispose of pet waste.

The Portsmouth Herald reported that those warnings came a week after high levels of fecal bacteria closed the New Castle town beach. David Neils, of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, said it's "impossible to tell" the source of the contamination. But town officials say pet waste can be washed into storm drains and emptied into the water off beaches.

Library says fines can't be paid with tokens

MA DANVERS — A Massachusetts library is reminding residents that Chuck E. Cheese tokens are not an acceptable form of payment for overdue book fines.

Peabody Institute Library in Danvers posted on Facebook last week the library has had a surge of people attempting to pay fines and printing fees with tokens from Chuck E. Cheese and Bonkers — a Peabody amusement center — this summer. The library said the tokens are not legal tender and cannot be accepted. Bookkeeper Sue Kontos told The Salem News she had counted three Chuck E. Cheese tokens one day before realizing they weren't real money.

Chuck E. Cheese, a restaurant and entertainment center for kids featuring arcade and video games, has been phasing out the use of coins.

Jail deputies let inmate throw feces at others

CA DUBLIN — A California county sheriff's office arrested four of its own deputies who are accused of allowing a maximum-security prisoner to throw feces and urine at other inmates.

The East Bay Times reported

the Alameda County Sheriff's Office arrested its deputies last week on charges of mistreating inmates at Santa Rita Jail.

One deputy resigned and three others were placed on administrative leave after Sheriff Gregory Ahern launched an investigation into the incident in January. The three on leave are Sarah Krause, 26; Justin Linn, 23; and Erik McDermott, 27. Stephen Sarcos resigned.

Lightning strikes car, deploying its airbags

FL TITUSVILLE — Lightning struck a car being driven on Interstate 95 in Florida, deploying its airbag and injuring the driver.

Brevard County fire officials said a lightning strike also injured a motorcyclist driving nearby on the same highway.

Both victims were taken to a hospital with minor injuries.

Brevard County Fire Rescue didn't provide information about the drivers.

2 charged after teen takes drugs from home

MI MONROE — Authorities conducting a drug raid in southeastern Michigan found cocaine and the drug ecstasy hidden inside a potato chip canister that was smuggled from a Monroe home by a 14-year-old girl.

The Monroe News reported Sunday that the girl told police she feared her parents would be in trouble for dealing drugs and hid the canister in her clothing to get past officers during the raid last week.

Officers outside the home seized the can and drugs after seeing the girl pass it off to another relative.

Officers said they also found crack cocaine in a salsa jar.

A 39-year-old man and his 37-year-old wife were arrested

and charged with possession with intent to deliver drugs and maintaining a drug house.

The girl was not charged.

Test at sentencing shows woman was drunk

IA WEST DES MOINES — A former West Des Moines preschool employee convicted for showing up to work drunk is back behind bars after officials say she showed up drunk to her sentencing.

The Des Moines Register reported that Angela Hircock, 43, was initially charged with child endangerment and public intoxication after police were called to the preschool in March. At the time, a breath test showed her blood alcohol content at 0.37 percent.

On Thursday, she was given a deferred sentence on a misdemeanor. But officials say as part of her probation proceedings after sentencing, a breath test showed her blood-alcohol level at 0.178. The legal limit to drive is 0.08.

Her sentencing was then set aside and she was arrested.

USS Constitution reopens for public tours

MA BOSTON — The USS Constitution has reopened for public tours following a 2½-year restoration project.

The world's oldest commissioned warship resumed its Tuesday-through-Sunday tour schedule last week. The wooden ship, docked at the Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston, was launched in 1797 and earned its nickname "Old Ironsides" during the War of 1812.

It was returned to the water in July.

The ship's crewmembers are active-duty sailors.

From wire reports

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West might be NFL's top division

Associated Press

Top to bottom, the AFC West looks loaded this season. It's also up for grabs.

All four teams have sky-high expectations of handling a difficult schedule that includes the Eagles, Cowboys, Giants, Patriots and Dolphins when they're not beating up on one another.

The Oakland Raiders are no longer mired in mediocrity, thanks to 2016 Defensive Player of the Year Khalil Mack and quarterback Derek Carr, who has newfound security in both a shiny, \$125 million contract and in unretired running back Marshawn Lynch with him in the backfield.

The Kansas City Chiefs have one of the league's nastiest, youngest defenses, but also the specter of instability with first-round pick Patrick Mahomes waiting to succeed QB Alex Smith.

Philip Rivers is commuting from San Diego to L.A. as the Chargers, under new coach Anthony Lynn, try to reverse their fortunes following eight close losses last year that led to the exit of Mike McCoy. He landed in Denver for his second stint as offensive coordinator.

McCoy drew up the blueprints for a Broncos offense once again led by Trevor Siemian, who has a better supporting cast as he seeks to lead the

rebound from a 9-7 season that ended Denver's five-year reign as division champ.

Some things to watch in the AFC West this season:

Harrassing QBs: The AFC West features a fantastic four-some of pass rushing duos.

Even with DeMarcus Ware retiring, Denver has Von Miller and Shane Ray. Oakland has Mack and Bruce Irvin. Mack edged Miller for Defensive Player of the Year last year, which some of Miller's teammates say drove Miller to train like never before, showing up at camp with thighs the size of watermelons.

The Chargers feature Joey Bosa and Melvin Ingram, the Chiefs have Dee Ford and Justin Houston.

Charles in charge: The Chiefs cut running back Jamaal Charles, their all-time leading rusher, this spring to save \$6 million in salary cap space. The Broncos signed him to a one-year deal worth up to \$4 million.

The Broncos, who bolstered their backfield and O-line in trying to bridge the gap between their substandard offense and spectacular defense, are counting on Charles being the player who once seemed headed to the Hall of Fame — not the one who's been slowed by bad knees the last two seasons.

Charles, who insists on call-

ing his cut from the Chiefs a "firing," is itching to show his former team it shouldn't have let him go.

The Chiefs wanted Spencer Ware to take the bulk of their carries, but he blew out his right knee in the preseason, leaving third-round pick Kareem Hunt atop the depth chart.

Long drive: The Chargers have made the move north to Los Angeles, where the franchise played its first game in 1960. Back then, traffic wasn't the issue in Southern California that it is now.

Rivers didn't want to uproot his wife and eight children, so he's making the commute from his home in Rancho Santa Fe to the team's new headquarters in Costa Mesa, which is about 75 miles and can take 90 minutes or more.

Vegas, baby: The Raiders' relocation to Las Vegas won't happen for two more years, so Oakland has a chance to return to its previous glory before fans would have to trek nine hours to attend their games.

The move doesn't appear a big issue yet as Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum is sold out for the season, and the Raiders look primed to give their fans a lot more to cheer about before they leave town.

Pats still favorite for AFC

Associated Press

Let's get it out of the way immediately: If there's a team good enough to stop the Patriots from winning the AFC again, we don't see it.

Of course there aren't any locks in pro sports, especially in the NFL, where teams rise and fall annually. Well, except for New England, which appears even more stacked than last season, when it won everything.

At 40, Tom Brady might still be in his peak years. That's a scary proposition for the rest of the league.

"I think it's a lot easier now for me than it's ever been," Brady says of getting prepared for the season, which the Patriots kick off Thursday night by hosting the Kansas City Chiefs. "I feel like my routine is better than it's ever been. When you're younger you don't know what to do. After 17 years, going into my 18th year, I know what to do. I know how to prepare. I'm never sore. I could practice every day. I could practice twice a day if they'd let us do that, but that's not the way it goes anymore.

"It's just fun being out here competing. That's what us football players are here for. It's football season. That's what football players do — we go out and compete."

In New England, those players go out and win, to the tune of 14-2 in 2016. The AFC East could be decided by Halloween given the weaknesses of the opposition for Brady and company — even though Brady lost his favorite receiver, Julian Edelman, to a torn-up knee.

At least the conference should feature some tight races in the other divisions, particularly the AFC West and South.

QB experience key for North's order

Associated Press

A tweet answered the biggest question in the AFC North — in fewer than 100 characters, no less.

"Informed the team I am looking forward to my 14th season," Ben Roethlisberger told the Twitterverse in April. "Steeler Nation will get my absolute best."

With that, the division's pecking order was established. It's the Steelers and everyone else in a division that slumped significantly last season and is counting on its unmatched run of quarterback continuity to get it back among the NFL's best.

No other division has been as proficient in sending teams to the playoffs lately — 18 in the past nine seasons. It's had multiple playoff teams in seven of the past nine seasons.

A big part of that starts with the most important position, and the AFC North excels at finding and keeping the good ones — well, with one exception, of course.

Roethlisberger has nine playoff appearances, six division titles and two Super Bowl rings in his 13 seasons. Joe Flacco — entering his 10th season — helped Baltimore win playoff games in each of his first five seasons and added a Super Bowl MVP season. Andy Dalton got the Bengals into the playoffs in five of his six seasons, although they have yet to win one in the postseason.

And then there's Cleveland, where each new season brings a new quarterback and another lesson in why it's so important to have a proven quarterback. Rookie DeShone Kizer becomes QB No. 27 since the Browns returned as an expansion team in 1999.

Del Potro knocks off Thiem at US Open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Juan Martin del Potro's stay at the U.S. Open really should be over. Nearly was.

The 2009 champion at Flushing Meadows had a fever and thought about quitting while dropping the opening two sets with little resistance against No. 6-seeded Dominic Thiem in the fourth round Monday. Then he trailed by a big margin in the fourth set, even facing two match points.

Still, buoyed by a boisterous Grandstand crowd chanting "Ole!" and his nickname, "delPo," he never gave in or gave up. Eventually, del Potro worked his way all the way back on the strength of powerful serves and thunderous forehands to edge Thiem 1-6, 2-6, 6-1, 7-6 (1), 6-4 and set up a quarterfinal showdown against Roger Federer.

"I took all that energy to change in a good way and think about [fighting] and not [retiring]," the 24th-seeded Argentine said. "Unbelievable atmosphere."

Del Potro long has been popular, but became even more so

since returning from three operations on his left wrist that kept him out of Grand Slam action for two years and sent his ranking out of the top 100.

"He was gone for so long that it's just really nice to see him back playing these kind of matches," Federer said. "That's what he came back for, to get crowd support the way he got it."

Thiem also aided del Potro by playing his worst tennis when he was closest to victory in the fourth set, which he led 5-2. Thiem served for the match at 5-3, but got broken. Leading 6-5, he managed to get within a point of winning at 15-40 on del Potro's serve, but a pair of aces at 127 mph and 121 mph erased those two chances. The ensuing tiebreaker was dominated by del Potro, who closed it with a booming cross-court forehand winner on the run.

When it was over, del Potro raised both arms overhead and threw his head back, enjoying the fans' adulation, then crossed himself. He joked that he thought he should get a trophy just for winning this one.

It was by far the day's most enthralling match, with spec-

tators' roars heard all the way across the grounds at Arthur Ashe Stadium, where Federer was beating No. 33 Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-4, 6-2, 7-5.

The only bit of intrigue came after the second set, when Federer went off the court for a medical timeout. He said afterward it was so he could get a massage after feeling a muscle tightening at the top of the back of his left leg.

Federer improved to 12-0 against Kohlschreiber; his record against del Potro is 16-5. But del Potro won their meeting in the 2009 final in New York in five sets for his only Grand Slam title, ending Federer's streak of five straight U.S. Open championships — and he hasn't won the trophy since.

"I felt like that I left that match with a lot of regrets," Federer said.

The other matchup on that half of the men's bracket will be No. 1 Rafael Nadal against 19-year-old Andrey Rublev, the youngest quarterfinalist at the U.S. Open since Andy Roddick was 19 in 2001.

Nadal got to the round of eight in New York for the first time since his 2013 title, over-

whelming 64th-ranked Alexander Dolgoplov 6-2, 6-4, 6-1.

"Every victory, every set that you win, is more confidence," Nadal said. "That what's I am doing."

Now Nadal gets to play a fifth consecutive unseeded foe in Rublev, who took out No. 9 David Goffin 7-5, 7-6 (5), 6-3.

There are four Americans in the women's quarterfinals in New York for the first time in 15 years after No. 15 Madison Keys grabbed the last four games to top No. 4 seed Elina Svitolina of Ukraine 7-6 (2), 1-6, 6-4 in Monday's last match.

No. 20 CoCo Vandeweghe beat Lucie Safarova 6-4, 7-6 (2) earlier Monday, while Venus Williams and Sloane Stephens advanced Sunday.

Vandeweghe's quarterfinal opponent is No. 1 seed Karolina Pliskova, the 2016 runner-up, who beat 91st-ranked American Jennifer Brady 6-1, 6-0.

Keys now faces Estonia's Kaia Kanepi, who beat Daria Kasatkina 6-4, 6-4 to become the first qualifier in 36 years to reach the U.S. Open women's quarterfinals.

No. 25 Tennessee outlasts Georgia Tech in double-OT

Associated Press

ATLANTA — This was a game Tennessee had no business winning.

What a boost for embattled coach Butch Jones in the season opener.

Despite getting dominated statistically and surrendering five rushing touchdowns to new Georgia Tech quarterback Ta-Quon Marshall, the Volunteers rallied from a pair of two-touchdown deficits in the second half to somehow pull out a 42-41 victory in the second overtime Monday night.

Tennessee came up with a crucial turnover late in the fourth quarter, blocked a field-goal attempt on the final play of regulation and stopped

Marshall on an attempted 2-point conversion when the Yellow Jackets decided to go for the win rather than settle for a tying PAT that would have forced a third overtime.

"We talked all week about the will to win," Jones said. "We knew this would be a game where we had to show some resolve, some grit."

Did they ever.

Georgia Tech ran 96 plays, rushed for 535 yards and finished with 655 yards overall, compared to 59 plays and 369 yards for the Vols. The Yellow Jackets had 33 first downs and an overwhelming advantage in time of possession during regulation, holding the ball for 41 minutes, 27 seconds.

"It was a game we should've won," Georgia Tech coach Paul Johnson said, "and we didn't."

In a decision announced just minutes before kickoff, Marshall got the nod at quarterback over Matthew Jordan, the top backup to Justin Thomas the last two seasons. Johnson certainly made the right call there.

In his first college start, Marshall rushed for 249 yards — the most ever by a Georgia Tech QB — and also set a school record for rushing touchdowns with three in regulation and two more in overtime, the latter a 13-yard scamper in which he broke a tackle and reached the end zone standing.

"I'm looking forward to doing

great things this season," Marshall said.

He already did.

But Tennessee finally figured out a way to stop him on the 2-point try.

Running to his right, Marshall wasn't able to get outside as the blocking broke down, so he attempted to cut inside. Going down short of goal line, he flung a desperation heave toward KirVonte Benson that appeared to possibly be a lateral. But the closest official immediately ruled an incomplete pass when the ball touched the turf, even though Benson tried to power into the end zone.

Game over.

"That should have been a walk-in," Johnson moaned.

Martinez homers 4 times for Arizona

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — J.D. Martinez keeps doing damage and the Arizona Diamondbacks keep winning.

Martinez tied a major league record by slugging four of Arizona's six home runs, and the Diamondbacks routed the NL West-leading Los Angeles Dodgers 13-0 on Monday night for their 11th straight victory.

"We were part of history," Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo said. "You can't believe it after it keeps happening — second, third and finally the fourth time. It was amazing. J.D. works as hard as anybody at his swing, perfecting his craft, and he deserves that moment."

Martinez was the headliner on a big night for a couple of Diamondbacks.

Robbie Ray struck out a career-high 14 while helping sec-

ond-place Arizona to its longest winning streak since it also won 11 in a row June 18-30, 2003.

"He has our number," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "He was exceptional."

Martinez is the 18th player in major league history to hit four homers in a game, and the 16th in the modern era. The team's six homers tied for the most in Dodger Stadium history by a visitor.

"I felt like it was one of those days," Martinez said. "I was seeing the ball well and when I was swinging, I was hitting it."

Arizona grabbed a 2-0 lead on Martinez's two-run shot off Rich Hill (9-7) in the fourth. Martinez added solo shots in the seventh and eighth innings before capping his power show with a two-run shot off Wilmer Font in the ninth.

Walking to the plate for the last time, Martinez recalled hitting three homers in a game

in 2015 and thinking too much about a fourth in his final at-bat. He didn't get it.

This time, he told himself if a fourth homer was meant to be, it would happen.

"There's no point trying to force it," he said.

Martinez has 34 homers this season, including 18 since being traded to the D-backs from Detroit on July 18. He has six multihomer games in his career, with five coming this season.

The 30-year-old right fielder is still adjusting to NL pitching, too.

"It's pretty impressive to see a guy go out there and take four really good at-bats and hit four really long balls," Ray said. "I thought there was no way they were going to throw him something he could hit. But sure enough, he got a ball right where he wanted it and he put it in the seats."

The Dodgers are still base-

ball's best team at 92-45, but they remain mired in a season-worst slump, having dropped four in a row and nine in 10 games. It equaled the Dodgers' largest shutout loss since June 25, 2004, against the Angels.

"We're going to win a game again, I know that, and the tide will turn," Roberts said. "We're still in first place, I do know that."

Ray (12-5) scattered three hits over 7 2/3 innings. The left-hander improved to 7-1 on the road. His strikeouts were the most by a D-backs pitcher since Randy Johnson had 15 against the Dodgers on Aug. 31, 2004.

Ray became the first pitcher in major league history to have four games with 10 or more strikeouts against the Dodgers in a single season.

"Any time you can keep that lineup in check like that is pretty special," he said.

MLB roundup

Bauer helps Cleveland notch 12th straight victory

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Trevor Bauer was sharp again to win his eighth decision in a row, and the Cleveland Indians beat the Chicago White Sox 5-3 on Monday for their 12th straight victory.

A day after tying the major league record with five extra-base hits, including two homers, Jose Ramirez homered again for the Indians, his 23rd of the season. Carlos Santana added his 22nd home run.

Bauer (15-8) gave up two runs on three hits with nine strikeouts and one walk over 6 1/3 innings as the Indians allowed more than two runs for just the third time in the 12-game run. It's the longest winning streak for AL Central-leading Cleveland since a team-record 14 consecutive wins last season. James Shields (2-6) kept the White Sox in the game before taking a line drive by Francis-

co Mejia off the knee in the top of the seventh. Shields limped off the field and is considered day-to-day.

The veteran right-hander allowed four runs and six hits in 6 1/3 innings, extending his streak to 11 starts without a win.

Pirates 12, Cubs 0: Chicago ace Jake Arrieta (14-9) exited in the third inning with a hamstring cramp, and host Pittsburgh routed the NL Central leaders.

Blue Jays 10, Red Sox 4: Steve Pearce had three hits as visiting Toronto sent Boston starter Rick Porcello (9-16) to his major league-leading 16th loss.

Rays 11, Twins 4: Corey Dickerson hit his 26th home run and also doubled twice, powering host Tampa Bay past Minnesota.

Nationals 7, Marlins 2: Anthony Rendon drove in four

runs, Daniel Murphy drove in three more and visiting Washington overcame a camera-denting home run by Giancarlo Stanton to beat Miami.

Rangers 8, Braves 2: Elvis Andrus, Nomar Mazara and Rougned Odor homered, Andrew Cashner (9-9) pitched six strong innings and visiting Texas beat Atlanta.

Angels 11, Athletics 9 (11): Visiting Los Angeles employed an American League-record 12 pitchers on Labor Day, and Kole Calhoun hit a two-run triple in the 11th inning to beat Oakland.

Astros 6, Mariners 2: Dallas Keuchel (12-3) pitched effectively into the eighth inning as visiting Houston won its fifth in a row.

Yankees 7, Orioles 4: Starlin Castro homered and drove in three runs, Didi Gregorius also went deep and visiting New York fueled its playoff push with a win over Baltimore.

Rockies 4, Giants 3: Carlos Gonzalez drew a two-out, bases-loaded walk in the ninth inning, and host Colorado halted a four-game skid.

Reds 5, Brewers 4: Billy Hamilton hit a solo home run with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning, lifting host Cincinnati over Milwaukee.

Cardinals 2, Padres 0: Carlos Martinez (11-10) threw a three-hitter and struck out 10, Yadier Molina hit a two-run single and visiting St. Louis beat San Diego for its fourth victory in five games.

Mets 11, Phillies 7: Jose Reyes and Asdrubal Cabrera each homered and host New York built a big lead, beating Philadelphia to end a four-game losing streak.

Royals 7, Tigers 6: Eric Hosmer, Salvador Perez and Alcides Escobar homered for visiting Kansas City, which denied Detroit with its defense.