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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Senator: Sex assault pervasive in military

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sexual assault in the U.S. armed forces remains pervasive despite attempts to eradicate sex crimes from the ranks, according to a new report by a Senate Democrat who has been critical of the Pentagon's efforts.

In the report to be released Thursday, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., said "despite years of congressional reforms, our men and women in uniform still do not have confidence in the military justice system."

Fewer sexual assault cases are going to trial, she said, and those that do are generating fewer convictions.

Gillibrand, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, examined internal legal documents from 238 sexual assault cases that were adjudicated in 2015 at four of the largest military installations in the U.S.: the Army's Fort Hood in Texas, Naval Station Norfolk

in Virginia, the Marine Corps' Camp Pendleton in California and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

In what she described as a shocking outcome, Gillibrand said there were no examples in the records from those bases of disciplinary action being taken against anyone who retaliated against a person who reported a sexual assault.

She said that conflicted with Pentagon surveys that found more than half of all victims across the vast Defense Department enterprise experienced negative reactions or reprisal for their complaints.

Gillibrand is the top Democrat on the panel's personnel subcommittee.

Her report is being issued less than a week before the Senate is scheduled to take up the defense policy bill for the 2018 budget year. Gillibrand is seeking to force a vote on an amendment that would make a major change in how the military ser-

vices deal with allegations of sexual misconduct.

Gillibrand's proposal would strip senior military officers of their authority to decide whether sex crimes and other serious offenses go to trial. That responsibility instead would be given to independent military trial counsels. Supporters of Gillibrand's measure, including Republican Sens. Chuck Grassley, of Iowa, and Rand Paul, of Kentucky, say drastic change is needed to get a grip on a persistent problem.

Gillibrand said the data she's compiled "make a profound argument for the professionalization and modernization of the military justice system." For example, she said, her review of the 2015 cases found that higher-ranking servicemembers accused of sexual misconduct are more likely to be believed than their victims and therefore are less likely to be convicted.

Senior Pentagon officials have opposed her plan, as has Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., the

chairman of the Armed Services Committee. They've argued that commanders are essential to maintaining good order and discipline in the ranks. Removing them would mean fewer sex offenders will be caught and convicted, they said.

Other lawmakers and senior U.S. military leaders say gains have been made toward curbing sex crimes and punishing offenders. The Pentagon's annual report on sexual assault and harassment in the military that was issued in May found that reports of sexual assaults in the military increased slightly last year — 6,172 reports were filed in 2016, compared with 6,083 the previous year.

But defense officials said an anonymous survey done as part of the report also showed progress in fighting sexual assault, as fewer than 15,000 servicemembers described themselves as victims of unwanted sexual contact. That is 4,000 fewer than in a 2014 survey.

Fuel shortages, traffic jams hit as Fla. braces for Irma

Associated Press

MIAMI — The Florida Highway Patrol escorted gasoline trucks to dry fuel pumps, and officials ordered thousands of metropolitan Miami's 6 million residents to leave Thursday as Hurricane Irma barreled toward a rendezvous with the state this weekend.

The National Hurricane Center issued a hurricane watch for the Florida Keys and parts of South Florida, the first of what is likely many watches and warnings throughout Florida over the next few days.

At least 31,000 people fled the Florida Keys, which could begin seeing wind and rain from Irma as early as Friday night, Gov. Rick Scott said. He noted the size of the Category 5 storm, and told residents not to become complacent.

"It is wider than our entire state and could cause major and life-threatening impacts

from coast to coast. Regardless of which coast you live on, be prepared to evacuate," Scott said.

The Republican governor acknowledged traffic jams and gas shortages were "frustrating," and said federal authorities and other states were helping to move more gas into the state. He urged gas stations to stay open as long as possible to accommodate evacuees.

In the Keys, officials evacuated a hospital and expected to empty others along the chain of islands by the end of the day. Boats were tied down or taken out of the water. American Airlines, which has a hub in Miami, said its last commercial flight out of that city would be Friday.

Irma is the most powerful hurricane recorded in the Atlantic. The U.S. National Hurricane Center said it could rake the entire length of Florida's east coast and push

into Georgia and the Carolinas, where governors had declared states of emergency.

Florida's governor waived tolls on all highways and told people if they were thinking about leaving to "get out now." He warned that Irma is "bigger, faster and stronger" than Hurricane Andrew, the last Category 5 storm to hit the state.

Andrew struck just south of Miami in 1992 with winds topping 165 mph, killing 65 people and inflicting \$26 billion in damage. It was at the time the most expensive natural disaster in U.S. history.

Mayors in Miami-Dade and Broward counties issued mandatory evacuation orders for barrier islands and low-lying mainland areas. Because of the uncertainty in the forecast, state and local authorities in Miami and Fort Lauderdale held off for the time being on ordering any widespread evacuations there.

Damaged USS McCain to depart Singapore

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS John S. McCain will head back to its homeport in Japan for a damage assessment later this month, Naval Sea Systems Command announced Wednesday.

The ship limped into Changi Naval Base, Singapore, with a hole in its port side after an Aug. 21 collision with a merchant ship east of the city-state that killed 10 sailors.

The Navy plans to take the McCain to Yokosuka Naval Base using a heavy lift ship. The move will allow crewmembers to be with their families while a damage assessment determines “repair plans to include cost, schedule and location for the ship’s repairs,” NAVSEA said in a statement.

It’s unclear if the Navy has the facilities and dry dock space to fix the guided-missile destroyer in Yokosuka.

The McCain’s sister ship, the USS Fitzgerald, damaged in a June 17 collision with another merchant vessel off Japan that killed seven sailors, is heading stateside because its repairs would tie up dry dock space at Yokosuka, the Navy said.

The U.S. military community in Singapore is supporting the McCain’s crew, which is still there with the ship, said 7th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Clay Doss.

“They’re not sitting idle,” he said of the crew. “They’re standing watches ... they are doing as normal of an in-port routine as they possibly can.”

A memorial ceremony for the lost McCain sailors may be held at Yokosuka in coming weeks, Doss added.

hlavac.tyler@stripes.com

Navy’s blueberries to give way to green; 2-year rollout is near

BY TYLER HLAVAC
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Some sailors will be able to trade in their blueberries uniforms for the new, green cammies starting next month, the Navy said in a message to the fleet last week.

A two-year rollout is expected to put the green, pixelated, camouflage work uniforms — called the Navy Working Uniform Type III — in every sailor’s wardrobe by October 2019, the message said. They’re replacing blue outfits — nicknamed blueberries — that have been the Navy’s only authorized work uniform since July 2010.

The first sailors to get the new

uniforms will be at the Navy’s Recruit Training Command in Great Lakes, Ill., at Officer Candidate School in Newport, R.I., and in the Southwest Region, the Navy said.

The old gear is being phased out partly because of sailors’ complaints, former Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus said last summer. Sailors have panned the blue outfits as uncomfortable, heavy and a fire hazard.

“They want uniforms that are comfortable, lightweight, breathable ... and they want fewer of them,” Mabus said at the time.

Sailors have been welcoming the upcoming wardrobe change. Petty Officer 2nd Class Jessie Bohannon, an informa-

tion systems technician at Yokosuka, said the blue uniforms made sailors stick out like a sore thumb. “[The green cammies] look more professional,” he said. “A lot of people did not like the blue camouflage.”

Black leather safety boots will remain standard for the green uniform, but commanding officers could authorize Navy-certified desert tan or coyote brown boots when safety boots aren’t required, the Navy said in last week’s message. Sailors are allowed to wear a coyote brown command ball cap in lieu of a blue cap.

Enlisted sailors will get extra clothing allowance money to pay for the new uniform, the Navy said.

USFK deploys THAAD launchers amid protests

BY KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Protesters scuffled with police Thursday as the U.S. deployed four additional launchers to complete an advanced missile defense system in South Korea.

President Moon Jae-in, meanwhile, pressed his case on the diplomatic front, holding separate meetings in Russia with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

China also offered support for calls for tightening U.N. Security Council sanctions against North Korea, although it stressed the goal should be dialogue leading to a peaceful resolution.

“We believe that sanctions and pressure are only half of the key to resolving the nuclear issue. The other half is dialogue and negotiation,” Foreign Minister Wang Yi was quoted as saying. “Only when the two

are put together can it unlock the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula.”

Beijing also reiterated its opposition to the Terminal High Altitude Defense system, with a Foreign Ministry spokesman saying a complaint over the issue was lodged with Washington and Seoul.

China fears the system’s powerful radar could be used against it despite U.S. insistence that it’s only aimed at countering the growing threat from the North.

Seoul and Washington agreed in July 2016 to station THAAD in the melon farming region of Seongju, about 190 miles southeast of Seoul.

Military officials have stressed the urgency of getting THAAD operational as Pyongyang has stepped up its nuclear weapons program. The North has conducted three nuclear tests since last year, the most recent on Sunday.

The communist state also test-fired two intercontinental ballistic missiles in July and is

reportedly poised to possibly launch another one in connection with Saturday’s 69th anniversary of its foundation day.

The THAAD plan has faced several hurdles, including fierce objections from residents in Seongju, about 190 miles southeast of Seoul. U.S. Forces Korea moved two launchers and the radar into place in late April.

Thousands of South Korean police were deployed near the THAAD site, which is in a remote southeastern area of the country, to clear the way for the U.S. convoy carrying the four additional launchers and other equipment on Thursday.

Scuffles broke out when hundreds of protesters tried to block the path to the former golf course that now houses THAAD. Local health and fire officials said dozens of people suffered mostly minor injuries.

The Defense Ministry said that, despite the protests, the THAAD deployment was completed.

Senate GOP nearly doubles disaster aid

BY ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

Senate Republicans have almost doubled the size of the disaster relief package for Harvey to more than \$15 billion, a first installment to help communities in Texas rebuild from the storm — and stock reserves for looming damage from Hurricane Irma.

The must-do legislation, paired with a short-term increase in the government's borrowing authority and a temporary government funding bill, was on track to pass the Senate as early as Thursday. The federal government's disaster aid reserves are dwindling as Irma takes aim at Florida.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., unveiled the measure late Wednesday, adding \$7.4 billion in community development block grants to President Donald Trump's \$7.9 billion request, which overwhelmingly passed the House on Wednesday. McConnell also added a temporary extension of the federal flood insurance program.

"It will provide certainty and stability for first responders, state officials, and the many others involved in preparing for and recovering from these storms, with critically needed emergency resources that will not be interrupted by the prospect of a shutdown or default," McConnell said Thursday. "The

recovery effort for a record-setting storm like Harvey has strained resources to the limit already."

The additional community block grant money is to jumpstart rebuilding efforts. The money can cover costs the Federal Emergency Management Agency can't.

"This funding will serve as an initial first step toward helping Texans begin the process of rebuilding," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas.

The \$15 billion-plus aid package is also crafted in such a way to free up another \$7 billion in FEMA disaster relief funds.

The Senate vote comes a day after Trump shocked GOP leaders by siding with top Demo-

crats Sen. Chuck Schumer, of New York, and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, of California, who demanded a debt ceiling increase only through December.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., who opposed the short-term debt limit idea, said on Thursday that the deal that Trump cut with Democrats made sense, with one devastating storm and another looming.

Ryan said that the president didn't want to have "some partisan fight in the middle of the response."

Asked in the interview with The New York Times about Trump siding with the Democrats, Ryan said, "Yeah, I sort of noticed that."

Does Trump move create wall for GOP candidates?

Associated Press

NEW YORK — On immigration, there were few easy answers for the Republican Party's most vulnerable members. And President Donald Trump just made things harder.

Endangered Republicans from California to Colorado and Nevada to New Jersey have struggled in recent days to defend Trump's decision to end the program that offered deportation protections for young people living here illegally who came to this country as children. The Trump administration gave Congress six months to agree on an alternative, yet it's far from certain that a divided Congress can do so.

And on the ground in key states and swing districts across America, a concerned Hispanic community is getting even angrier at Trump's Republican Party as next year's midterm elections loom.

"Those candidates who need Latino voters are on their own, and they're struggling," said Alfonso Aguilar, executive director of the Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles. "If he continues with this behavior and this rhetoric, things could get worse."

In isolated instances, Republicans facing difficult re-elections joined Democrats in condemning the president's move to end protections for young immigrants. The majority, however, praised Trump for ending what they viewed as an unconstitutional program even as they vowed to find a compassionate solution.

The varied responses highlight the GOP's struggle to balance competing interests. On one side: Trump's small but energized white nationalist base. On the other: a growing Hispanic community, which is poised to play an increasingly powerful role in national politics over the coming years.

Trump's latest move does not come in a vacuum. The president last month pardoned former Maricopa County, Ariz., Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was convicted of ignoring a judge's order to stop profiling Latinos suspected of being in the country illegally. Trump also continues fighting for a massive wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Republican's rhetoric is not going over well in Arizona and Nevada, two states with significant Hispanic populations and competitive Senate contests next fall.

'No collusion' with Russia, Trump's son tells senators

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's eldest son told lawmakers Thursday he was open to receiving information about Hillary Clinton's "fitness, character or qualifications" in a meeting with a Russian lawyer last year.

However, Donald Trump Jr. insisted that neither he nor anyone else he knows colluded with any foreign government during the presidential campaign.

His description of a June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower, delivered in an opening statement at the outset of a closed-door Senate Judiciary Committee interview, provided his most detailed account of an encounter that has attracted the attention of congressional investigators and special counsel Robert Mueller.

Multiple congressional committees and Mueller's team of prosecutors are investigating whether the Trump campaign coordinated with Russia to influence the outcome of the election. A grand jury used by Mueller as part of his investigation has already heard testimony about the meeting, which besides Trump Jr., included the president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and his

then-campaign chairman, Paul Manafort.

In Thursday's prepared remarks, which were obtained by The Associated Press, Trump Jr. sought to explain emails he released two months ago that showed him agreeing to the meeting, which had been described as part of a Russian government effort to help his father's campaign.

In his new statement, he said he was skeptical of the outreach by music publicist Rob Goldstone, who said he had information that could be damaging to Clinton. But Trump Jr. said he thought he "should listen to what Rob and his colleagues had to say."

At one point during the email exchange, Trump Jr. had told Goldstone, "If it's what you say I love it especially in the summer." Trump Jr. sought to explain that remark Thursday by saying it was "simply a colloquial way of saying that I appreciated Rob's gesture."

Trump Jr. agreed to the Senate interview after the committee chairman, Republican Chuck Grassley, of Iowa, subpoenaed him and Manafort.

Hunter survives mauling by grizzly bear in Montana

Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. — A grizzly bear feasting on an elk carcass charged a bow hunter in Montana and attacked him, slashing a 16-inch cut in the man's head that required 90 stitches to close.

"The bear just flat-out charged us," said Tom Sommer as he recovered in a Montana hospital on Tuesday afternoon. He said it closed the 30-foot distance in 3 or 4 seconds.

"It bit my thigh, ran his claws through my wrist and proceeded to attack my head," Sommer said. "I could hear bones crunching, just like you read about."

Sommer said he and a hunting partner were looking for an elk they had been calling Monday morning when his partner spotted the grizzly in the southern end of the Gravelly Range, just north of the Idaho border.

His hunting partner unleashed a blast of bear spray, which slowed the bear's charge. Sommer said he grabbed his canister so quickly that he couldn't release the safety

and he couldn't afford to look down as the bear closed in. He ran around a tree twice and dropped his bear spray in the process.

Sommer then grabbed his pistol and turned to confront the bear.

He still had his pistol in his hand and was going to shoot the bear in the neck when it swatted his arm down, Sommer said.

"Just like that it stopped. He stopped biting me, he got up and started to run away," said Sommer, who splits his time among Idaho, Missouri and Florida.

His hunting partner had been able to deploy the rest of his bear spray, ending the attack, which Sommer estimated lasted about 25 seconds.

"Through it all I was very conscious, very level-headed and low key about it," Sommer said. "Besides some scars, it doesn't appear that I will have any problems."

"I've been a hunter my whole life," said Sommer, 57. "I have no grievance against the bear. He was just doing what bears do. But I would have shot him just the same."

Syrian army: Israel air raid on military position kills 2

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Israeli warplanes struck a military position near the Mediterranean coast in western Syria early Thursday, killing two soldiers and causing material damage, the Syrian army said.

The airstrike targeted a facility near the town of Masyaf that some said was tied to Syria's chemical weapons program, in a stronghold of President Bashar Assad that is also heavily protected by the Russians.

In a statement, the Syrian army said the Israeli warplanes fired several missiles while in Lebanese air space, and warned of the "dangerous repercussions of such hostile acts on the security and stabil-

ity of the region."

There was no immediate comment from Israel, which has rarely confirmed or commented on such strikes.

While largely staying out of the Syrian civil war, Israel has carried out a number of airstrikes against suspected arms shipments believed to be bound for Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, which is fighting alongside Assad's forces. Israel also has struck several Syrian military facilities since the conflict began, mostly near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Assad, not wanting to draw Israel into his country's war, has never responded.

West's wildfire season worse than expected

Associated Press

A wet winter and spring in the Western U.S. brought predictions that the 2017 wildfire season would be mild. It ended up one of the worst in U.S. history in land burned.

The smoke, the flames, the aching lungs, the evacuations. They're summertime facts of life in the U.S. West, where every wildfire season competes with previous destruction.

The foliage that sprouted from rain and snow has gone bone-dry, feeding flames in places that have not seen downpours in months and strangling cities with smoke.

The biggest fires came later than usual in some states, after Labor Day, when the fire season traditionally starts to peter out.

Here is a look at the fires:

■ **Oregon.** It's been weeks since Maryjane Carlson has been able to relax.

The artist lives in Brookings, a small city along the southern Oregon coast that's threatened by one of the nation's largest wildfires. Carlson and her neighbors never know when the blaze is going to move closer to the wooded town.

In addition to the fear of the flames, smoke never leaves. An asthmatic, Carlson had to buy an air purifier and sometimes covers her face with a mask.

Thousands of residents have evacuated as firefighters battle blazes statewide, including one devastating hiking trails and waterfalls in the scenic Columbia River Gorge.

■ **Montana.** Darinda Yoder wishes she had not waited so long to evacuate her home near Montana's border with Canada.

If she had left earlier, she would not have the terrifying memory of flames rushing down a mountain toward the state's oldest Amish community last weekend.

"The fire came down so fast they almost didn't get us out," Yoder told the Missoulian newspaper.

It has burned 10 homes and 30 other buildings and threatened a community on the western shore of Lake Kocanusa on Wednesday.

■ **Washington.** Local recreationists and tourists mourned damage to hiking trails and campsites from a fire near Mount Rainier National Park.

It more than doubled in size to 68 square miles and closed all backcountry trails on the east side of the iconic park.

The fire closed 70 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail, which runs from Canada to Mexico, near Mount Rainier.

■ **Idaho.** Catholic nuns living at the Monastery of St. Gertrude can normally see across an entire prairie to the Bitterroot Mountains.

But they were hard-pressed Wednesday to see the road leading to the monastery in the city of Cottonwood amid heavy smoke.

Idaho's largest wildfire is being allowed to burn in a rugged wilderness area. Authorities say they plan to protect bridges, a ranch, and other high-value sites that could be threatened by the 110-square-mile blaze.

■ **Utah.** Nearly 200 homes in a neighborhood nestled in the foothills near a northern Utah canyon were evacuated Wednesday as crews battled a blaze that burned three houses.

Calmer winds allowed firefighters to stop the 1-square-mile fire from spreading toward more homes in the city of Ogden, said Rachelle Handley, of the U.S. Forest Service.

■ **California.** Twenty large blazes burned across the state, including one outside Yosemite National Park that moved through ancient sequoia trees and another that burned five homes in Los Angeles.

Outside Yosemite, crews gained ground against a blaze that burned halfway through a grove of 2,700-year-old giant sequoias. Officials said it had not killed any trees, which can withstand low-intensity fires.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Washington Monument to get \$10M upgrade

DC WASHINGTON — The Washington Monument is modernizing its elevator and getting a permanent area for safety checks and visitor screenings.

The Washington Post reported the National Park Service said Tuesday it awarded a contract for the more than \$10 million project to a Maryland construction company following a monthlong process. Officials said the monument is expected to reopen in spring 2019 after reliability issues with the elevator caused it to close in August 2016.

Around \$3 million will be spent to repair and update the elevator, while the roughly \$7 million remaining in the contract will pay for the new security building.

Both jobs will be handled by Rockville general contractor Grunley Construction.

Dog helps sniff out invasive ants on islands

CA LOS ANGELES — Scientists assessing efforts to eradicate invasive ants on the Channel Islands off California have enlisted a four-legged expert to sniff out the destructive insects.

A yellow Labrador named Tobias has lived for months with a handler on Santa Cruz Island. The specially trained dog keeps its snout to the ground, searching for nests of Argentine ants that threatened the ecosystem after being introduced decades ago.

Christina Boser, an ecologist with the Nature Conservancy, said Tuesday that no new nests have been found.

She said in the absence of new nests, researchers have kept a few old nests around to

give Tobias something to sniff out so the dog can get his reward: a favorite ball.

Passy Pete predicts 6 more weeks of summer

ME BELFAST — A group of Mainers say Passy Pete the Lobster has predicted six more weeks of summer at an annual ceremony.

The crustacean has been fished out of the Passagasawakeag River the past three years in a tradition modeled after Punxsutawney Phil's in Pennsylvania.

David Crabiel and his business partner, David Brassbridge, thought up the eccentric ceremony as a way to have some fun. Each year, a group of barons flank Passy Pete as he picks a scroll to determine whether Maine will see an extended summer or be greeted by winter. This year's ceremony took place Monday.

Agricultural festival to recycle human urine

MA ORANGE — A Massachusetts agricultural festival already known for its sustainable practices is taking it one step further this year by collecting and recycling human urine.

Organizers of the North Quabbin Garlic & Arts Festival told The Telegram & Gazette the urine will eventually fertilize hay in the field in Orange on which the event is held.

Founder Deborah Habib said the festival scheduled for Sept. 23-24 attracts more than 10,000 people yet produces only three bags of trash.

Habib hopes to collect about 1,200 gallons of urine.

The Rich Earth Institute will collect the liquid waste in portable toilets designed for the purpose. Founder Kim Nace

said the practice reduces the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus that enters waterways and saves on the cost of transporting urine to treatment plants.

Cousins born on same day at same hospital

KS WICHITA — Two cousins are more like twins after they were born hours apart at the same Wichita hospital.

The Wichita Eagle reported that Adrian Joshua Matthews was the first to arrive, at 5:20 a.m. on Sept. 1 at Wesley Medical Center. Rick Matthews said he and his wife, Vanessa Pui-con, barely made it to the hospital before Adrian was born. His due date was still two weeks away.

Just a few doors down, Rick Matthews' sister, Elizabeth Matthews, was in labor with her first child. She had checked in with her fiancé, Anthony Stronach, the night before. Their baby, Robin June Stronach, was born at 9:05 a.m.

Lost Fort Drum soldier found in Adirondacks

NY PAULSMITHS — Authorities said a soldier from Fort Drum is recovering after he was rescued in rugged terrain in the Adirondacks two days after setting out on a hike.

The Adirondack Daily Enterprise reported that state forest rangers said Richard Guinan, 40, contacted his wife from the summit of St. Regis Mountain to say his cellphone battery was going to die soon but that she shouldn't worry about him. She reported him missing Saturday night and a search was conducted through Sunday without finding Guinan.

Forest rangers, local search-and-rescue teams and dozens

of soldiers and others from Fort Drum gathered early Monday morning to resume the search when Guinan was spotted on the mountainside by rangers in a state police helicopter.

Dog warns homeowners of fire, dies in the blaze

MN OAK GROVE — Minnesota authorities said a dog died in a house fire after alerting the occupants that the home was being consumed by flames.

The fire happened just before 6:28 a.m. Monday in Oak Grove, about 30 miles north of Minneapolis. Oak Grove Fire Chief Curt Hallermann said both people inside the home awoke and left the house after the dog alerted them to the fire.

Hallermann said the dog refused to exit the home and died in the fire.

Kitten rescued after traffic shut down

MA BOSTON — A kitten found walking on a busy highway tunnel is safe after Massachusetts State Police shut down traffic to aid in the animal's rescue.

Police said Sunday on Facebook that the kitten decided to "play a little hide and seek" in the Ted Williams Tunnel in Boston.

The Animal Rescue League of Boston quickly rescued the animal after Sgt. Bob Dateo shut traffic down.

A trooper posted a photo of the wayward kitten on social media. A video taken by police shows the cat walking along the side of the road as cars drive by.

The kitten will be put up for adoption when it's medically cleared.

From wire reports

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Young QBs ready for the spotlight

Associated Press

When Tom Brady, Drew Brees, Aaron Rodgers and other older, elite quarterbacks move on from the NFL, the position will remain in good hands.

The Young Guns are already taking over.

Derek Carr, Marcus Mariota, Jameis Winston, Dak Prescott and Carson Wentz headline a crop of talented signal callers who quickly developed into rising stars. And, they're only getting better.

"There's always room to improve," said Carr, who led the Raiders to 12 wins last year and their first playoff berth since 2002.

Carr finished tied for third in the MVP voting after completing a career-best 63.8 percent of his passes with 28 touchdowns and only six interceptions. He also led seven fourth-quarter comebacks before breaking his leg in Week 16, basically ruining Oakland's Super Bowl chances.

Oakland gave Carr the richest contract in the league, \$125 million over five years, only to see Detroit's Matthew Stafford get even more money a couple months later.

"The best thing about Derek, and I mean this sincerely, is that he wants to be great," Raiders offensive coordinator Todd Downing said. "He understands that to be great, it's always a learning process. It's always a growing process."

While Carr took three years to bust out, Mariota, Winston, Prescott and Wentz have progressed even faster.

Mariota threw for 3,426 yards with 26 TDs and nine interceptions, helping the Tennessee Titans improve from 3-13 to 9-7 in his second season. The fact his success has come in a vertical offense that doesn't fit his skill set as much as the intermediate passing game is even more impressive.

"I feel a lot more comfortable," Mariota said about entering his second year in coach Mike Mullarkey's offense. "You kind of know what to expect. You're in a situation where you're familiar with everything."

Winston, drafted No. 1 overall in 2015, with Mariota going second, has outstanding ability to manage the pocket and extend plays. His arm strength allows him to wait until the last second before zipping the ball to his receiver. He also plays with a ton of enthusiasm, which invigorates his teammates.

Winston has started every game in two seasons with Tampa Bay, leading the Bucs from six wins as a rookie to nine last year. He's thrown for 4,000-plus yards each season, but also has 33 interceptions.

Prescott had one of the best rookie seasons for a quarterback in league history after replacing an injured Tony Romo. Prescott tied Ben Roethlisberger's rookie record of 13 wins, led the Cowboys to a division title and set rookie marks in passer rating (104.9) and fewest interceptions (four, to go with 23 touchdowns).

"I'm only one year in so, there's a lot that I can get better at," Prescott said. "There's more reps that I'll encounter. There's a lot more defensive looks that will come my way."

Prescott won far more games as a rookie, but the best young quarterback in the NFC East could wind up being Wentz.

The Philadelphia Eagles traded up to select Wentz No. 2 overall in 2016. He started 16 games, going 7-9. Wentz threw for 3,782 yards, but only threw for 16 touchdowns and tossed 14 picks. He also set a rookie record with 379 completions.

"With his competitive fire, his intangible skill set, his physical skill set, we couldn't be more excited about the things that he brings to the table," personnel boss Howie Roseman said.

Browns' Garrett out with ankle injury

Associated Press

Myles Garrett's big plans to sack Ben Roethlisberger in the season opener are on hold.

At this point, Garrett's NFL debut for the Browns won't happen for weeks.

Cleveland's rookie defensive end, who through preseason has lived up to enormous expectations as the No. 1 overall pick in this year's NFL draft, will miss Sunday's opener against Pittsburgh and possibly a few more games after severely spraining his right ankle during practice. A teammate fell on the back of his leg during a drill Wednesday.

Coach Hue Jackson opened his news briefing by saying Garrett "was limited today with an ankle," but he did not provide any specifics about the injury other than to say the 21-year-old did not finish practice.

"He went as long as he could," said Jackson.

An MRI revealed the 6-foot-4, 275-pound Garrett has a high ankle sprain, an injury that typically takes several weeks to heal. His status will be updated in a "couple" of weeks, the team said. That means he will sit out against the Steelers and likely the following week at Indianapolis, and perhaps other games.

Jackson, who typically downplays injuries when he knows a player will return, was evasive when asked about his level of concern on Garrett.

"We'll see. I don't want to make medical decisions," he said. "I am not very good at them so we will see where we are as we move through the week."

Jackson refused to elaborate on Garrett's condition, how he hurt his ankle or at what point it occurred during the workout. He declined to answer further questions about Garrett as he left the podium, led by a team spokesman.

Garrett's loss is another blow for the beleaguered Browns, who went 1-15 last season and have had their share of costly injuries in recent years. Quarterbacks Robert Griffin III

and Josh McCown were hurt early last season. Wide receiver Corey Coleman, a first-round pick, missed six games with a broken hand, and Cleveland lost both starting guards with torn foot ligaments.

Garrett suffered what he feared was a serious left foot sprain during the spring; it turned out to be nothing major and he didn't miss the start of training camp. He has dazzled with his speed, strength and commitment.

During his junior season at Texas A&M, Garrett was severely limited with a left ankle injury.

Despite a drop in production and sacks, the Browns were satisfied Garrett was healthy and worth the first choice and investment when they selected him first overall despite the need for a quarterback.

Before he was released last week, two-time Pro Bowl cornerback Joe Haden felt the Browns, who have had a checkered history with bad first-round picks, had nailed this choice.

"He is looking like the first overall pick," Haden said on a conference call. "I was super excited when we got him. I feel like that is the pick that is a stamp. We didn't miss on that one. I could tell that from the very beginning. He just has stuff that you can't teach: his motor, his professionalism and his attitude. He definitely is a pro already. He is mature beyond his age. He just loves the game and loves getting after it."

"My bold prediction, I really feel like Myles can make the Pro Bowl his rookie year."

Garrett hoped to begin his season by getting his hands on Roethlisberger, who is 20-2 in his career against the Browns. Following the draft, Garrett made it clear he intended to make Roethlisberger his first sack, saying he was "coming for him first."

"I stand by it," Garrett said with no hesitation Wednesday before the injury. "You shouldn't be scared to take anybody down."

Del Potro stops Federer in quarters

Associated Press

NEW YORK — So much for the first U.S. Open matchup between Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

Federer failed to live up to his end of the bargain.

Hours after Nadal did his part with an easy-as-can-be victory to get to the semifinals at Flushing Meadows, Federer was unable to join him for what would have been the most-anticipated showdown of the entire two weeks, wasting chances to take control and missing shots he normally makes in a 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (8), 6-4 loss to 2009 champion Juan Martin del Potro on Wednesday night.

“He came up with the goods when he needed to,” Federer said, “and I helped him a little bit sometimes, too, maybe.”

Federer described himself as too “edgy” and said “that little magic was missing.”

He also insisted that, unlike just about everyone else, he did not spend any time at all pondering a possible matchup with

Nadal at the only Grand Slam tournament where they’ve never met. Their wonderful rivalry has included 37 matches, and at least two finals at each of the other majors.

“I had struggled too much throughout the tournament,” Federer said, “to think too far ahead.”

Given that he is 36, and Nadal is 31, perhaps it is time for the tennis world to concede that Roger vs. Rafa at the U.S. Open just will never happen.

This is the sixth occasion when they were a round away from playing in New York, but one or the other lost — including eight years ago, when del Potro beat Nadal in the semifinals, then Federer in the final to end the Swiss star’s run of five consecutive titles at the tournament.

This time, Federer entered the quarterfinals 18-0 in Grand Slam play this season, including titles at the Australian Open and Wimbledon to raise his record count to 19 major

championships.

But he tweaked his back at a tournament last month, curtailing his preparation for the U.S. Open, and he was not quite at his best for stretches. He needed five sets to win each of his first two matches — and Wednesday, he succumbed to the del Potro’s familiar formula of massive forehands and booming serves.

Before the U.S. Open began, Nadal was honest as can be when asked whether he hoped to face Federer. The answer, the No. 1-seeded Nadal said earnestly, was no — because he’d rather go up against someone easier to beat.

Well, as it turns out, he’ll face the 24th-seeded del Potro on Friday. It is the first major semifinal for del Potro since 2013; he missed two years’ worth of Grand Slam tournaments until Wimbledon in 2016 because of three operations on his left wrist.

The other semifinal features two men who have never been this far at any major: No. 12

Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain vs. No. 28 Kevin Anderson of South Africa.

The women’s semifinals are both all-American matchups, the first time that’s happened at the U.S. Open in 36 years: No. 9 Venus Williams vs. unseeded Sloane Stephens, and No. 15 Madison Keys vs. No. 20 CoCo Vandeweghe.

Nadal, who won two of his 15 Grand Slam trophies in New York, overwhelmed 19-year-old Russian Andrey Rublev 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 in the quarterfinals, then had to wait hours to see what Federer would do under the lights against del Potro.

“It was one of those matches where, if I ran into a good guy, I was going to lose, I felt. I don’t want to say I was in a negative mindset, but I knew going in that I’m not in a safe place,” Federer said. “Rightfully so, I’m out of this tournament, because I wasn’t good enough — in my mind, in my body, and in my game. ... If you’re missing all three, it’s going to be tough.”

Seattle’s Bennett: Vegas incident ‘traumatic’

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Seattle Seahawks defensive end Michael Bennett accused Las Vegas police on Wednesday of racially motivated excessive force, saying he was threatened at gunpoint and handcuffed following a report of gunshots at an after-hours club at a casino-hotel.

Police said they’re investigating, but that Bennett failed to stop for officers searching a crowded casino for what they believed to be an active shooter just hours after the Aug. 26 boxing match between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Conor McGregor.

“I believe this case will become completely clear as all the available video is reviewed for evidentiary purposes,” Clark County Undersheriff Kevin McMahill told reporters. “We’ll see very, very clearly exactly what happened on this incident.”

Bennett said on a Twitter message titled “Dear World,” that police “singled me out and pointed their guns at me for doing nothing more than simply being a black man in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

McMahill aired a lengthy video clip taken from a police sergeant’s body camera during a search of the Cromwell casino after a report of gunfire at the Drai’s nightclub. But he said at least one officer who encountered Bennett didn’t have his body camera on at the time.

Bennett isn’t seen until the very end of the clip — being handcuffed as he lies prone in a traffic lane on Las Vegas Boulevard.

McMahill said that with an internal affairs investigation just beginning, he saw “no evidence that race played any role in this incident.”

Police and casino officials later attributed the report of gunfire to the sharp sound of velvet rope stands being knocked to a tile floor.

Bennett, during a brief appearance Wednesday at the Seahawks’ practice facility in Renton, Wash., described the incident as “traumatic” but declined to go into specifics about it.

“It’s a traumatic experience for me, my family and it sucks that the country that we live in now sometimes you get profiled for

the color of your skin,” Bennett said. “Do I think every police officer is bad? No, I don’t believe that. Do I believe there are some people out there that judge people by the color of their skin? I do believe that.”

“I’m just trying to focus on the game, focus on the task at hand and let everything take care of itself,” Bennett said. “But like I said this is a tragic situation for me, I hate to be up here at this moment. There is a lot of people who experienced what I experienced at that point, at that moment and they’re not here to tell their story.”

Bennett, a 6-foot-4 defensive end who has been a leader of the national anthem protests started by former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, said he was among several hundred people running away.

In his Twitter message, Bennett said he was handcuffed face-down on the ground after an officer held a gun to his head saying he would blow his head off if he moved.

“All I could think of was ‘I’m going to die for no other reason than I am black and my skin color is somehow a threat,’” he wrote. He said he thought of his wife and children.

Indians collect 14th straight victory

Associated Press

CHICAGO — In a season where the Cleveland Indians hope to get one more win than last year, the team has a chance to take its best stretch of baseball farther than a year ago.

Carlos Carrasco was the latest Indians starter to shine with a complete game dismantling of the Chicago White Sox on Wednesday night, and the 5-1 victory was Cleveland's 14th straight win.

The streak is MLB's longest this season and the Indians have a chance to set a franchise record with 15 straight on Thursday in Chicago, which would top last season's run of 14 by the eventual American League champions who lost the World Series in Game 7 to the Chicago Cubs.

The win also was the team's 10th straight on the road and would have been a shutout if not for Adam Engel's line drive home run with two outs in the ninth inning.

"I was trying to go deep into the game

so I can save the bullpen," Carrasco said, after the bullpen pitched 8¹/₃ scoreless innings on Tuesday. "And there's a lot of energy right now when we play good."

Carrasco (14-6) allowed three hits, facing 28 batters with 97 pitches in his eighth career complete game. The right-hander said all five of his pitches were working, as he threw 76 strikes.

"He was able to throw all of his pitches for strikes early in the count and then put guys away with sliders," catcher Roberto Perez said. "He got pretty much ahead of everybody. He was awesome."

Carlos Santana hit a two-run home run to cap a three-hit night as Cleveland added three runs in the eighth inning to break open a 1-0 game.

After not allowing a hit through four innings, the White Sox had leadoff singles in the fifth and sixth innings off Carrasco, but Avisail Garcia and Kevan Smith were both doubled off on the next at-bat.

Carrasco struck out nine and did not allow a walk. Through his last six starts, Carrasco is 4-1 with a 1.69 ERA.

"I think there's games, maybe not a ton over the course of a year, where you have everything, where it just falls into place," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "You have a lot of other games where you have some of it, and you've got to kind of figure out and maneuver your way through a lineup. Tonight, everything was working for him."

Rookie right-hander Reynaldo Lopez (0-3) stranded eight runners in six innings, and allowed a run on Tyler Naquin's sacrifice fly in the fourth inning.

The Indians have scored first in each of their wins during the streak.

"They're very, very good, obviously very balanced," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "They're an excellent major league baseball team, again proving why they're one of the best teams in baseball."

Roundup

Twins get key win to retake wild-card spot

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The Minnesota Twins didn't want to call it a must-win. Still, they know how important it was.

Eduardo Escobar had three hits and three RBIs, Brian Dozier and Ehire Adrianza both homered and the Twins beat the Tampa Bay Rays 10-6 on Wednesday.

"It's too early for must-wins," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said. "But given the circumstances of coming off a tough series against the Royals and losing the first two (here), it stymies that negative momentum and hopefully it gets us back on track."

Minnesota ended a three-game skid and took a half-game lead over the Angels for the second AL wild-card spot. Los Angeles lost 3-1 to Oakland.

"We leave here with a positive mind," Escobar said through a translator. "The offense struggled in the first two games here and we didn't hit well. Knowing that we won and the offense

woke up again gives us momentum to go to Kansas City."

A three-game sweep would have destroyed the wild-card edge the Twins brought to Tampa Bay. The Rays, who are near the back of the wild-card pack, would have been only one game behind Minnesota.

"Sweeping is hard in the big leagues," Rays right fielder Steven Souza Jr. said. "We just had so many opportunities to win this ball game and everybody was fighting. We know we gained a game, [but we] could've gained three and that would have been an enormous swing."

Cubs 1, Pirates 0: Alex Avila knocked an RBI triple in the ninth inning, capping a duel between Jose Quintana and Gerrit Cole and lifting Chicago over host Pittsburgh.

Red Sox 6, Blue Jays 1: Doug Fister gave up one run over seven innings, Jackie Bradley Jr. hit a two-run homer and drove in three runs and host Boston beat Toronto.

Nationals 8, Marlins 1: Gio Gonzalez and four relievers combined on a six-hitter, and

Washington beat host Miami for the eighth consecutive time.

Rangers 12, 4; Braves 8, 5: Freddie Freeman hit a two-run double during his team's five-run second inning against Cole Hamels and host Atlanta held off a rally to beat Texas and split a doubleheader.

Nomar Mazara had a two-run homer in the nightcap for Texas, which won the first game behind four hits from Elvis Andrus.

Diamondbacks 3, Dodgers 1: Pinch-hitter Adam Rosales doubled in the go-ahead run in the seventh inning and visiting Arizona overcame a rare deficit to beat Los Angeles for its franchise-record 13th straight win.

Royals 13, Tigers 2: Salvador Perez homered twice as Kansas City broke open a close game to rout host Detroit.

Athletics 3, Angels 1: Sean Manaea pitched six-plus innings of shutout ball and Khris Davis homered as host Oakland snapped a season-high eight-game losing streak.

Mets 6, Phillies 3 (6): Robert Gsellman pitched well in a

winning return from the minors and Travis d'Arnaud homered to help host New York beat Philadelphia in a game shortened to six innings because of rain.

Reds 7, Brewers 1: Rookie Luis Castillo struck out 10 in his final start of the season, Zack Cozart and Jose Peraza homered and last-place Cincinnati completed a three-game sweep of visiting Milwaukee.

Giants 11, Rockies 3: Joe Panik completed a torrid series with five more hits and Johnny Cueto threw five effective innings, helping the Giants beat Colorado to snap a 10-game skid against the Rockies at Coors Field.

Astros 5, Mariners 3: Newly acquired Cameron Maybin hit a two-run homer in the ninth inning to lift his team over host Seattle, as Houston completed a three-game sweep to extend its winning streak to seven.

Cardinals 3, Padres 1: Stephen Piscotty hit a two-run homer, rookie Jack Flaherty threw five innings of one-run ball and streaking St. Louis beat host San Diego.