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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Marines soon to have female infantry officer

The Washington Post

The Marine Corps expects to soon have its first female infantry officer, a historic first following her anticipated graduation Monday from the service's grueling Infantry Officer Course, said three military officials with knowledge of the training.

The lieutenant and her colleagues completed a three-week combat exercise at the service's training center in Twenty-nine Palms, Calif., on Wednesday, the final graded requirement in the 13-week program. The infantry course is seen as some of the toughest training in the military; about 25 percent of students wash out.

The class will mark its graduation Monday with a "warrior breakfast" 35 miles south of Washington in Quantico, Va., where most of the course is conducted, the officials said. All three spoke to *The Washington Post* on condition of anonymity.

Nearly two years ago, then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter lifted the military's last remaining restrictions for women, part of an effort by the Obama administration to make the armed forces fully inclusive. Two officials said Thursday it is unlikely that the lieutenant will agree to do any media interviews, preferring to be a "quiet professional" and just do her job.

The lieutenant will take over a platoon of infantry Marines in a service that is often seen as the most resistant to full gender integration. The Marine Corps was the only service to recommend keeping some units closed to women ahead of the Pentagon requiring all jobs to be open to women.

The Marines opened the Infantry Officer Course to women experimentally in 2012, allowing women to attempt it as a part of broader research across the Defense Department examining how to integrate all-male units. Thirty-two women attempted the course before the research ended in spring 2015; none completed it.

Four additional female Marines have attempted the course since the Pentagon opened all jobs to women in 2015, including the lieutenant expected to graduate Monday.

Puerto Rico faces long recovery from Maria

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Rescuers fanned out to reach stunned victims Thursday after Hurricane Maria ravaged Puerto Rico, knocking out electricity to the entire island and triggering landslides and floods.

The extent of the damage is unknown given that dozens of municipalities remained isolated and without communication after Maria hit the island Wednesday morning as a Category 4 storm with 155 mph winds, the strongest hurricane to hit Puerto Rico in more than 80 years.

Uprooted trees and widespread flooding blocked many highways and streets across the island, creating a maze that forced drivers to go against traffic and past police cars that used loudspeakers to warn people they must respect a 6 p.m.-to-6 a.m. curfew imposed by the governor to ensure everyone's safety. People resorted to rafts and kayaks to get around because flooding made many roads impassable.

"This is going to be a historic event for Puerto Rico," said Abner Gomez, the island's emergency management director.

President Donald Trump approved a federal disaster declaration for Puerto Rico.

Previously a Category 5 with 175 mph winds, Maria hit Puerto Rico as the third-strongest storm to make landfall in the U.S., based on its central pressure. It was even stronger than Hurricane Irma when that storm roared into the Florida Keys earlier this month.

In the capital of San Juan, towering eucalyptus trees fell nearly every other block over a main road dotted with popular bars, restaurants and coffee shops, some of which were damaged. Outside a nearby apartment building, tourism company operator Adrian Pacheco, 40, recounted how he spent eight hours in a stairwell huddled with 100 other residents when the hurricane ripped the storm shutters off his building and decimated three balconies.

"I think people didn't expect the storm to reach the point that it did," he said. "Since Irma never really happened, they thought Maria would be the same."

Hurricane Irma sideswiped Puerto Rico on Sept. 6, leaving more than 1 million people without power but causing no deaths or widespread damage like it did on nearby islands. Maria, however, blew out windows at some hospitals and police stations, turned some streets into roaring rivers and destroyed hundreds of homes across Puerto Rico, including 80 percent of

houses in a small fishing community near the San Juan Bay, which unleashed a storm surge of more than 4 feet.

"Months and months and months and months are going to pass before we can recover from this," Felix Delgado, mayor of the northern coastal city of Catano, told *The Associated Press*.

The slow slog back to normalcy was in evidence Thursday, however, as residents removed storm shutters and lines began forming at the few restaurants with generator power. The sound of chain saws and small bulldozers filled the post-storm silence that had spread across San Juan as firefighters removed trees and lifted toppled light posts.

Some neighbors pitched in to help clear the smaller branches, including Shawn Zimmerman, 27, a student from Lewistown, Pa., who moved to Puerto Rico nearly two years ago.

"The storm didn't bother me," he said. "It's the devastation. I get goosebumps. It's going to take us a long time."

Maria has caused at least 10 deaths, including seven on the island of Dominica and two in the French Caribbean territory of Guadeloupe. Puerto Rico's governor told CNN a man died after being hit by flying debris. No further details were available, and officials could not be immediately reached for comment.

Maria weakened to a Category 2 storm later in the day but re-strengthened to Category 3 status early Thursday with maximum sustained winds of 115 mph. According to the National Hurricane Center in Miami, the storm was centered about 105 miles east-northeast of Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, and moving northwest at 9 mph. The eye of the storm is expected to approach the Turks and Caicos Islands and the southeastern Bahamas late Thursday and early Friday.

Puerto Rico's electric grid was crumbling amid lack of maintenance and a dwindling staff before the hurricanes knocked out power. Many now believe it will take weeks, if not months, to restore power.

Edwin Rosario, 79, a retired government worker, said an economic crisis that has sparked an exodus of nearly half a million Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland will only make the island's recovery harder.

"Only us old people are left," he said as he scraped a street gutter in front of his house free of debris. "A lot of young people have already gone. ... If we don't unite, we're not going to bounce back."

Temple grave may hold pilot's remains

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The Defense Department has confirmed the existence of a grave that Japanese townsfolk say contains the remains of a downed World War II Navy pilot.

Researchers from the Hawaii-based Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency visited the burial site at a temple in Saiki City on Japan's southern island of Kyushu earlier this month.

"There is a grave there, but since we're an investigation team, we don't exhume graves," said agency research analyst Terry Hunter, who was collecting evidence in Tokyo on Sept. 15 about a separate World War II plane crash.

U.S. officials will work with the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare to potentially have the grave opened to see if it contains human remains, he said.

The agency doesn't release the names of missing personnel it's searching for. However, the aviator was the pilot of an F4U Corsair fighter-bomber launched from the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid in 1945, said Hunter, who is a former Air Force intelligence officer.

Parts of his plane, including its engine, a propeller and a wing, were dragged up by a fisherman in 2006, and the wreckage was returned to the Navy last year. It was at that time that locals told U.S. officials that a body, thought to be the pilot, had washed up on a beach after the plane went down and that the man had been buried at the temple, Hunter said.

The investigators also traveled to Niigata prefecture to look for the missing pilot of an Army Air Corps P-38 Lightning reconnaissance plane that went down in the mountains during bad weather on a trip from Tokyo to Hokkaido just after the war ended, he said.

Green Beret to receive MOH

By **COREY DICKSTEIN**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A retired Army Green Beret credited with saving multiple lives during a covert four-day mission into Laos to target North Vietnamese soldiers operating there will receive the Medal of Honor next month, 47 years after his heroic actions, the White House announced Wednesday.

President Donald Trump will present the military's highest honor to retired Army Capt. Gary Michael Rose on Oct. 23 at the White House. It is an upgrade of the Distinguished Service Cross that Rose received in 1971. Rose was awarded the nation's second highest medal for valor just four months after the Special Forces mission in which he survived bullet and rocket wounds and a helicopter crash to provide life-saving aid to more than 100 comrades, according to the award citation.

Soldiers who served with him, lawmakers and Pentagon of-

ficials have lobbied for several years for Rose's award to be upgraded, which required a special waiver passed by Congress and presidential approval. In an Army statement, Rose said the Medal of Honor belongs to the secretive unit he served with during the Vietnam War, the Army's Military Assistance Command Studies and Observations Group.

"That medal, to me, recognizes finally the service of all the men in all those years that served in MACSOG," Rose, 69, said in the statement. "It's a collective medal from my perspective [which represents] all the courage and honor and dedication to duty that those men served."

Rose, then a sergeant, was the only medic among 16 Green Berets and 120 Vietnamese tribal fighters called Montagnards when they were dropped by helicopter on Sept. 11, 1970, into the Laotian jungle on a mission, Operation Tailwind, to raid a North Vietnamese encampment. The elite Studies and Observations

Group was based in southern Vietnam from where it routinely led such missions into Laos, leading the U.S. covert war against North Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The force came under fire almost immediately after it was dropped off.

By the operation's end, every American and Montagnard soldier would be wounded — including three Montagnards killed — and three Marine helicopters would crash, including one with Rose inside, according to accounts provided by the Army.

Throughout the mission, Rose continued to brave enemy fire to treat wounded comrades, often ignoring his own injuries, according to the award citation.

Rose, who grew up in southern California, enlisted in 1967. After returning from Vietnam, he was commissioned as an officer, remaining in the service until he retired in 1987 as a captain, according to Army records. His other awards include two Bronze Star Medals with "V" device for valor and three Purple Hearts.

US Forces Korea warns of fake evacuation messages

By **KIM GAMEL**
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — U.S. Forces Korea said Thursday it has received "multiple reports" of fake messages saying an evacuation order had been issued.

The command stressed the claim was false, saying "USFK did NOT issue this message" and warning recipients not to click on any links or open attachments included in them.

The false alarms were delivered via text message and Facebook, the military said in notices distributed on social media.

The report comes at a sensitive time on the divided peninsula where jitters are high as North Korea has shown rapid progress in its nuclear weapons program.

The false messages referred to what is known as a noncombatant evacuation operation, or NEO, which would affect family members of the 28,500 U.S. servicemembers stationed in South Korea and nonemergency essential Defense Department

civilian employees.

The military conducts biannual NEO exercises to rehearse a possible evacuation, but none has ever been ordered since the 1950-53 Korean War ended.

USFK said it received "multiple reports of a fake text-to-cell and social media message regarding a 'real world noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) order issued'" on Thursday, USFK said in a message posted on its Facebook page.

The fake messages instructed Defense Department family members and nonemergency civilians on the peninsula that an evacuation order had been issued, it added.

"USFK did NOT issue this message," it said, adding that all those who may be affected should confirm any evacuation-related communications with servicemembers or NEO representatives.

The statement also called on anybody affected to report the messages to U.S. Army counterintelligence on these hotlines: 0503-323-3299 or 010-3100-0171.

Watchdog criticizes Afghan troops' training

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — TV shows used as training guides and “cut-and-paste activities” were among the flaws found by a U.S. government watchdog report as it examined why Afghanistan’s forces are unable to secure the country after 15 years of international assistance.

The Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction’s report on Afghanistan’s security forces described a U.S. effort that either had the wrong mix of advisers or implemented strategies from other nations that didn’t fit Afghanistan.

SIGAR particularly criticized community-policing training for 100,000 Afghan police officers, which was performed by U.S. Army advisers, infantry officers and, in at least one case, an Army helicopter pilot. That militarized the force and resulted in an ongoing “identity crisis” within the Afghan National Police, the report said.

“One U.S. officer watched TV shows like ‘Cops’ and ‘NCIS’ to learn what he should teach,” SIGAR director John F. Sopko said while speaking at a gathering in Washington on Thursday.

The report said the U.S. training effort was ill-prepared from the outset, failing “to understand the complexities of

the mission,” and highlighted early U.S. partnerships with independent militias and politically constrained deadlines by Washington as undermining factors.

“Ultimately, the United States designed a force that was not able to provide nationwide security, especially as that force faced a larger threat than anticipated after the drawdown of coalition military forces,” the 283-page SIGAR report said.

Despite the poor results of an effort that has cost the U.S. \$70 billion since 2002, Sopko said he was “cautiously optimistic.”

The U.S. and Afghans have already begun work on some of SIGAR’s 35 recommendations, which the office began developing as a “lessons learned program” in 2014 at the behest of former U.S. military and diplomatic leaders in Afghanistan.

“The [Afghan forces are] fighting hard, and improving in many ways,” Sopko said. “But we have to do a better job of assisting their growth. Smarter and more appropriate security assistance is vital, now in Afghanistan and later in whatever new contingencies arise.”

Other recommendations by SIGAR included extending the reach of the U.S. military’s mission below the corps level, more focus on the Afghan air force and creating a new group state-side to train, advise and assist commands in Afghanistan.

Generals talk troop separation in Syria

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Generals with the U.S.-led coalition fighting Islamic State met face-to-face with their Russian counterparts recently to discuss ways to keep forces they support in Syria separated on a shrinking battlefield, a U.S. military spokesman said Thursday.

The top military officers spent hours discussing locations of ISIS fighters in the Middle Euphrates River Valley, using maps and graphs to describe where each sides’ partner forces were operating and planning to go during the first-of-its-kind meeting in the Middle East, said Army Col. Ryan Dillon, a spokesman for the Operation Inherent Resolve coalition. Dillon declined to specify where or on what day the meeting was held, adding another meeting like it could take place soon.

The meeting was held as Russia-backed Syrian forces assault the ISIS-held city of Deir al-Zour, about 80 miles southeast of Raqqa, and U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces advance south through rural Deir al-Zour Governorate toward the city.

“Because of that proximity that is why we had this face-to-face meeting,” Dillon told

reporters at the Pentagon from his post in Baghdad. “So that we don’t inadvertently fire upon one another, so we can stay focused on ISIS, and so we can continue to maintain support to our forces both from the air and to our forces on the ground.”

Both sides have pledged to keep their weapons pointed at ISIS for now. However, each side has accused the other of attacking them in recent days.

The U.S. military said SDF fighters were struck and injured Sept. 16 by a Russian aircraft with American special operations advisers nearby. The Russian military said Thursday that SDF fighters and those U.S. commandos have at least twice fired rockets and mortars into Syrian positions with Russian special forces nearby. The Russians warned they would return fire if it happened again.

The U.S. and Russia retain several channels of communication to ensure safety of operations in Syria. Officers running both nations’ air campaigns speak daily to keep their aircraft from interacting. Another line connects commanders directing ground operations from headquarters locations, and the coalition’s top commander U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Paul Funk also has the ability to phone his counterpart, Dillon said.

Cadet who helped with rape prevention accused of sex assault

The (Colorado Springs, Colo.) Gazette

An Air Force Academy cadet lauded for his work with rape-prevention programs was the defendant Wednesday in a sexual assault hearing that could lead to his court-martial.

Senior Cadet Steven Fox is accused of assaulting a Colorado Springs man he took as a date to an academy dance in 2015. Charging papers accuse Fox of penetrating the man with a finger without his consent and rubbing himself against the man’s leg for sexual gratification.

A conviction on the charges could bring a 20-year prison term.

Prosecutors offered an investigative re-

port and video interviews with Fox and his accuser at the hearing, where an investigating officer worked to determine if there’s enough evidence to court-martial him.

“There is reasonable belief that cadet Fox committed the offenses he is charged with,” prosecutor Lt. Olivia Hoff told the hearing officer, Maj. Joseph Smiga.

Fox defense attorney Capt. Joseph Groff contended that the cadet acted with consent amid an ongoing romance with his date, a student from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

The case is a landmark of sorts at the academy as the first of its kind involving homosexual acts since the 2011 repeal of the

military’s ban on gays. Until the repeal, any sexual act between men could have resulted in a sodomy charge under military law.

The Pentagon has worked since the repeal to get male victims to report sexual assault, a group that officials say is still reluctant to come forward.

Fox, who entered the academy after the repeal, was known at the school for his efforts to get men to report sexual assaults.

Hoff pointed to statements made by both Fox and his alleged victim after Air Force investigators began examining the incident last year. Neither denied the dorm room sex, but the alleged victim said Fox persisted after he was asked to stop.

Rescuers in Mexico struggle to reach girl

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — A delicate effort to reach a young girl buried in the ruins of her school stretched into a new day on Thursday, a vigil broadcast across the nation as rescue workers struggled in rain and darkness to pick away unstable debris and reach her.

The sight of her wiggling fingers early Wednesday became a symbol for the hope that drove thousands of professionals and volunteers to work frantically at dozens of wrecked buildings across the capital and nearby states looking for survivors of the magnitude-7.1 quake that killed at least 245 people in central Mexico and injured more than 2,000.

Mexico's navy announced early Thursday it had recovered the body of a school worker from the Enrique Rebsamen school

but still had not been able to rescue the trapped child.

Rescuers removed dirt bucketful by bucketful and passed a scanner over the rubble every hour or so to search for heat signatures that could indicate trapped survivors. Shortly before dawn the pile shuddered ominously, prompting those working atop it to evacuate.

"We are just meters away from getting to the children, but we can't access it until it is shored up," said Vladimir Navarro, a university employee who was exhausted after working all night. "With the shaking there has been, it is very unstable and taking any decision is dangerous."

Mexico City Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera said the number of confirmed dead in the capital had risen from 100 to 115. An earlier federal government statement had put the overall toll

at 230, including 100 deaths in Mexico City.

Mancera also said two women and a man had been pulled alive from a collapsed office building in the city's center Wednesday night, almost 36 hours after the quake.

President Enrique Pena Nieto declared three days of mourning while soldiers, police, firefighters and everyday citizens kept digging through rubble, at times with their hands gaining an inch at a time, at times with cranes and backhoes to lift heavy slabs of concrete.

"There are still people groaning. There are three more floors to remove rubble from. And you still hear people in there," said Evodio Dario Marcelino, a volunteer who was working with dozens of others at a collapsed apartment building.

A man was pulled alive from

a partly collapsed apartment building in northern Mexico City more than 24 hours after the Tuesday quake and taken away in a stretcher, apparently conscious

In all, 52 people had been rescued alive since the quake, the city's Social Development Department said, adding in a tweet, "We won't stop." It was a race against time, Pena Nieto warned in a tweet of his own, saying that "every minute counts to save lives."

People have rallied to help their neighbors in a huge volunteer effort that includes people from all walks of life in Mexico City, where social classes seldom mix. Doctors, dentists and lawyers stood alongside construction workers and street sweepers, handing buckets of debris or chunks of concrete down the line.

Trump mulls drop in refugee admissions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is considering a further reduction in the number of refugees allowed into the United States as the administration works to reshape American immigration policy, officials say.

Trump has already slashed refugee admissions once since taking office. Now he faces a decision on how many to admit in the next budget year.

As is often the case with the Trump administration, Cabinet officials are divided as they weigh the costs and potential security risks associated with the program.

The Department of Homeland Security has been pushing for a reduction beyond the 50,000 maximum-entry mark set by Trump earlier this year as part of his travel ban executive orders — a number that is already the lowest in modern American history. In a propos-

al submitted late last week, the department called for a reduction to 40,000 refugees in the next budget year starting Oct. 1, citing concerns about its workload and ability to adequately vet those seeking entry.

The State Department, which oversees the program, has formally recommended that the number be kept at 50,000, according to Trump administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity. Agencies had been given until the close of business Wednesday to submit formal recommendations for consideration.

Trump has until Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year, to determine how many refugees to admit under the Refugee Act of 1980.

The U.S. welcomed 84,995 refugees in fiscal year 2016, and former President Barack Obama had wanted to raise that number to 110,000 in 2017.

Politics guides GOP to latest health care option

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It's divisive and difficult, but the Republican drive to erase the Obama health care overhaul has gotten a huge boost from one of Washington's perennial incentives: political necessity.

In the two months since Senate Republicans lost their initial attempt to scuttle President Barack Obama's statute, there's fresh evidence GOP voters are adamant that the party achieve its long-promised goal of dismantling that law. This includes conservative firebrand Roy Moore forcing a GOP primary runoff against Sen. Luther Strange, R-Ala., who's backed by President Donald Trump, and lots of money, plus credible primary challenges facing Republican Sens. Jeff Flake, of Arizona, and Dean Heller, of Nevada.

"Republicans campaigned on this so often that we have a responsibility to carry out what you said in the campaign. And that's pretty much as much of a reason as the substance of the bill" to

support it, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, told Iowa reporters in a conference call Wednesday.

GOP Sens. Bill Cassidy, of Louisiana, and Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina, have spent weeks concocting and selling the party's new approach. They say their proposal, shifting money and decision-making to the states, nearly has the votes it would need in a showdown expected next week, a deadline that's focused the party on making a final run at the issue.

Graham and Cassidy would end Obama's requirement that most people buy health coverage and larger employers offer it to workers. It would let insurers charge higher premiums to seriously ill customers and cut Medicaid, the health insurance program for the poor, over time. Money from the law's Medicaid expansion and cost-reductions it provides lower-earning people would be folded into block grants dispersed to states — totaling \$1.2 trillion over seven years — with few federal strings attached.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Teacher placed on leave after KKK assignment

SC LEXINGTON — A South Carolina elementary school teacher who asked students to role play as Ku Klux Klan members for a homework assignment has been placed on administrative leave.

The Island Packet reported that Lexington-Richland School District 5 said it's "taking this matter very seriously" after Tremain Cooper posted a picture of his nephew's assignment on Facebook last week.

The assignment asked fifth-grade students at Oak Pointe Elementary to imagine they were a member of the KKK and provide a justification for the KKK's treatment of blacks. It also asked students to imagine they were newly freed slaves and explain if they were satisfied with their lives.

The school district says it's continuing to investigate and will ensure the assignment is not used again in district schools.

Police: Man slaps victim, steals green chile burger

NM SANTA FE — A New Mexico man is facing charges after police say he randomly slapped a customer, then stole the man's green chile cheeseburger before dashing away.

Santa Fe police arrested Anthony Frazier, 25, on Sunday near the Shake Foundation where authorities say the attack occurred.

According to a criminal complaint, the victim said Frazier walked up to him to dance then slapped him across his face. The victim said Frazier then stole his green chile cheeseburger and ran from the scene.

Triceratops unearthed; 80 percent of skull found

CO DENVER — The Denver Museum of Nature & Science has finished excavating the Thornton triceratops.

The Denver Post reported that excavation of the pre-historic creature finished on Monday, and with about 80 percent of the skull and 15 percent of the skeleton being recovered, the triceratops is the most complete Cretaceous-period fossil to be discovered in Colorado.

Museum dinosaur curator Joe Sertich said the fossils will help his team understand what the Thornton area was like 66 million years ago.

The triceratops was discovered on Aug. 29 when construction workers building the Public Safety Building for police and fire discovered a horn.

Fugitive robber dressed as surgeon arrested

PA PITTSBURGH — Sheriff's deputies say a fugitive wanted for violating his probation in a 2008 Pittsburgh-area bank robbery was arrested after claiming to be a trauma surgeon when his speeding car was stopped.

Allegheny County deputies said Mark Huellen, 41, was wearing a stethoscope and had a fake ID badge when he was arrested in Pittsburgh on Monday night, and claimed to be heading to Allegheny General Hospital for surgery.

Federal court records show Huellen was convicted for the 2008 robbery of a PNC Bank in Dormont and sentenced to more than eight years in prison. Authorities say he violated probation by not holding a job, continuing counseling or reporting to his probation officer.

Man charged with theft of cash, ice cream pops

NH NASHUA — Police say a New Hampshire man nearly ran over a store owner in his attempt to make off with a stolen envelope and stolen ice cream push-pops.

Officials said Joel Ducharme, 38, was charged with theft after being arraigned Monday in Nashua. The Nashua Telegraph reported he entered a not-guilty plea.

According to police, Ducharme entered a farmer's shop that uses an "honor system," meaning it is not staffed and customers are responsible for paying the right amount. Police allege Ducharme stole ice cream and an envelope marked \$304.50.

Prosecutors said the envelope was fake and left there as a decoy. When the store owner confronted Ducharme, he got into his truck and drove off at a high speed.

He was later caught and arrested.

Scientists examine found mastodon teeth

MI NORTH BRANCH — Scientists are examining mastodon teeth that turned up in the yards of homes in Michigan.

The Saginaw News reported Melissa Millsap-Gipson's husband was cutting the grass in Lapeer County when he found a tooth. She said that and another tooth found at the North Branch-area property are wrapped and awaiting examination by experts.

A family in the Saginaw County community of Birch Run also found what was identified as a mastodon tooth.

Adam Rountrey, collection manager at the University of Michigan Museum of Paleon-

tology, said that since the mid-1800s there have been about 300 documented mastodon fossils found in Michigan.

Village hosts 5th annual stone-skipping festival

VT NORTH BENNINGTON — A Vermont village is hosting its fifth annual Stone Skipping Festival, gathering people of all sorts to compete among the best stone-skippers.

The festival will be held Saturday at Lake Paran in North Bennington. The Bennington Banner reported the festival was created by Lake Paran President Alisa Del Tufo and her brother-in-law, Paul Fero.

Del Tufo said there will be multiple levels of competition for skippers of all skill levels — including a kids' competition.

Man accused of swinging golf club at workers

LA BAWCOMVILLE — A Louisiana man is charged with aggravated assault after deputies say he wielded a golf club while chasing two people who were reading water meters.

The News-Star reported that both meter readers said Tommy J. Bouwell, 53, of Bawcomville appeared to be intoxicated. They told officers that Bouwell was sitting on the back steps of a home until they tried to remove a water meter cover. They said he went into the house and came back out swinging a golf club.

He was taken to the Ouachita Correctional Center and booked on two counts of aggravated assault. Bond was set at \$2,000.

From wire reports

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Chiefs' Hunt no longer an unknown

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs thought enough of Kareem Hunt that they traded up to grab the record-setting running back from Toledo late in the third round of April's draft.

They evidently didn't think enough of him to select him any earlier.

Then again, neither did any other team.

So when Hunt raced to the end zone for yet another touchdown Sunday, his second against the Eagles and fifth in his first two games, he set the football on the turf, went down in the fetal position and — well, he took a pretend snooze. The message came across clear: "Stop sleeping on me!"

The league is wide awake now.

In a season that's already become known for an exceptional crop of rookie running backs, from Dalvin Cook to Leonard Fournette, it's been the unassuming Hunt that has stolen the show.

He leads the league in rushing, has the most yards receiv-

ing by any running back, and Hunt's 355 yards from scrimmage through his first two games are the most since Marshall Faulk had 360 in 1994.

The five TDs scored against New England and Philadelphia are the most by a rookie in two games since Dutch Sternaman scored six for the 1920 Decatur Staleys, the franchise now known as the Chicago Bears.

"He's a load," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said, "and you know, he's talented and he's a smart kid, which helps in that position. Because that's a tough one. You have a lot of things that you have to learn as a rookie coming in."

"I've had a lot of rookies start for me over the years, but you know, the Brian Westbrook — they could think on their feet and do those things. That's what this kid can do."

Hunt was never supposed to be a star this quickly.

The Chiefs envisioned a backfield where Hunt, whose speed and shiftiness are uncommonly deceptive, and the bruising Spencer Ware would provide a potent 1-2 punch.

But Ware went down with a

season-ending injury in a pre-season game in Seattle, and that made Hunt the undisputed leader of the backfield.

His first start couldn't have been on a bigger stage: The Chiefs faced the defending Super Bowl champion Patriots on Thursday night, after they had raised another championship banner.

Hunt promptly fumbled the first time he touched the ball.

It was stunning deflation considering Hunt only fumbled once during his entire college career. But rather than hang his head, he vowed to make up for his error, and Reid and Chiefs offensive coordinator Matt Nagy made sure they gave him every opportunity to do so.

He wound up running for 148 yards and a touchdown, caught five passes for 98 yards and two more scores, and helped Kansas City to a come-from-behind 42-27 victory in Foxborough.

"You get in training camp and if there's a fumble here or there, you get on him," Nagy said. "But nothing is as real as it is on a Thursday night, in the middle of the biggest game of the night."

"You don't know how he's going to react. In that situation, it's a win-win for all of us to just be able to give him the ball again, for him to feel comfortable and get his confidence back."

His confidence was soaring by the end of the game, and that carried right into last week's home opener, when he ripped off a 53-yard touchdown run late in the third quarter.

Hunt added another TD run late in the fourth quarter that turned out to be the difference.

"A lot has been added to his plate," Chiefs quarterback Alex Smith said. "Obviously when Spencer went down a lot went on right there. But he's handled it."

He's done better than just handle it.

Reid first learned about Hunt sitting in his office on Thursday nights, while he was trying to put finishing touches on his weekly game plans. He would put whatever college game was playing on the TV in the background, and often they involved teams from the Mid-American Conference.

Broncos quarterback Siemian proving his worth

Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Trevor Siemian is finally starting to get some love around the NFL.

Through two weeks, the Denver Broncos' third-year pro is tied for the league lead with six TD passes and the Broncos (2-0) are tops in the NFL with a 57 percent third-down conversion rate.

Siemian spent his rookie year learning from Peyton Manning and Brock Osweiler, an apprenticeship he parlayed into the starting job by beating out the franchise's supposed future QB, Paxton Lynch, in back-to-back summers.

Cowboys owner Jerry Jones is among the believers in the former part-time starter at

Northwestern who thought long and hard about getting his real estate license when his college career ended on crutches.

Jones was aware of the Broncos' brilliant defense but was admittedly surprised to see Siemian carve up his Cowboys with four TD passes in a 42-17 shellacking in Denver last weekend.

"We were a little taken aback by how well they did offensively," Jones said. "Their quarterback played outstanding."

Siemian has now started 16 games, the equivalent of a full season, and he's gone 10-6 while throwing for 3,851 yards with 24 touchdowns and 12 interceptions — the kind of numbers that would be impressive for a first-round pick, let alone

a seventh.

"Definitely room for a lot of improvement, you know, all over the place, I can tell you," Siemian said Wednesday. "But it's just playing you get more comfortable certainly, just feel for the game, things happen a little slower for you. So, it's like anybody else, the more you play the more comfortable you get and usually the better off you are."

Siemian is the only Broncos QB with two dozen TD throws in his first 16 career NFL starts (his boss, John Elway, had 11).

Sean McDermott, whose Bills (1-1) host the Broncos this weekend, was one of Siemian's earliest converts.

"I had the chance to go against Trevor a year ago when

I was with the Panthers, the opening game of the year. I was impressed with him then. I continue to be impressed," McDermott said. "He's smart. He does a lot in between plays in terms of at the line of scrimmage. He knows where to go with the football based on coverage looks. He gets in and out of plays at the line. He's efficient."

Sort of like another Broncos QB hailed as much for his above-the-shoulders acumen as anything he could do physically.

Siemian might be the biggest bargain in the league, too.

While his backup, Osweiler, is making \$16 million, and Lynch is getting \$880,000, Siemian is pulling in \$615,000 this season.

Experience paying off for Vanderbilt

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Derek Mason and his Vanderbilt Commodores are showing that experience matters.

Yes, even in the mighty Southeastern Conference, where so many five-star recruits make an instant impact.

A year ago, Mason's job security was shaky after a 2-4 start to his third season. Since then, the Commodores have gone 7-3, Mason picked up a contract extension and Vanderbilt is off to its best start at 3-0 since 2011 with the latest win a 14-7 upset of then-No. 18 Kansas State.

Mason thinks the turnaround is simple to explain: Experience matters. Now he has 27 juniors and seniors on the Commodores' two-deep depth chart.

"You just have to grow guys up in your culture, in your program and what you try to do is hold them responsible for playing good football, and I think, man, these guys have done just that," Mason said. "It's not me holding them responsible. It's those guys holding each other responsible. They're loyal to one another, and that loyalty runs deep."

James Franklin proved Vanderbilt could win, posting back-to-back 9-4 records in 2012 and 2013 with bowl victories that put the Commodores in the final AP Top 25 rankings. But he bolted for Penn State after three seasons, and Vanderbilt hasn't been ranked since the final poll after the 2013 season.

Mason now is in his fourth season, and he has a lot to work with thanks to 18 returning starters — trailing only Georgia and Kentucky in the SEC with 19 apiece. That's one more than Florida, the two-time SEC East champs.

Of that group, seven have started 10 or more games consecutively, and Vanderbilt's all-time leading rusher Ralph Webb has 40 consecutive starts. Six other Commodores started multiple games last season: wide receivers C.J. Duncan and Caleb Scott, tight end Jared Pinkney, defensive end Dare Odeyingbo, safety Arnold Tarpley III and cornerback Bryce Lewis.

That's why Mason keeps talking about having a veteran team.

"When you start to get an

older football team in this conference, you can play only 11 guys on the field, you can play anybody," Mason said. "You just got to make sure those guys believe it."

Beating Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee last season sure helped. The Commodores lost to Florida, Auburn and South Carolina in 2016 by a combined 17 points.

Senior safety Ryan White made it clear the Commodores trust Mason.

"We know that Coach has been through a lot," White said. "He always says trust the process, and we're trusting that process and we've got each other's backs."

The Commodores face their biggest test Saturday when top-ranked Alabama (3-0) visits for the SEC opener for both teams. Franklin only had to face Alabama once, and Vanderbilt lost 34-0 in Tuscaloosa in his first season in 2011. This will be the first No. 1 team Vanderbilt has hosted since Tennessee in 1998 on the Vols' way to a national title.

Charles Wright, a redshirt junior, leads the SEC with six sacks, while senior linebacker

Emmanuel Smith ranks fourth in the league with 28 tackles. The Commodores are tied for the most sacks (10) and interceptions (five) in the league while leading the nation having allowed only 13 points through three games.

On offense, junior quarterback Kyle Shurmur has Vanderbilt averaging 242.6 yards passing per game, third-best in the league.

Alabama coach Nick Saban said Monday that the Commodores' experience in Mason's system is easy to see with a physical offense and defense on film and in Vanderbilt's results this season.

"There's no question about the buy-in to the program and the job that he's (Mason) done there," Saban said.

One area that Mason still is working to improve is his young offensive line. A redshirt freshman is starting at right tackle with redshirt sophomores at right and left guard. Mason had to jump on the linemen about penalties at halftime of the win over Kansas State.

"The win helps them grow up, so we'll be better," Mason said.

Some true freshmen are thriving for Pac-12 teams

Associated Press

To redshirt or not to redshirt?

That is the question for Pac-12 coaches who must weigh necessity and talent with maturity and readiness in deciding the immediate future of rookie players. It's certainly not an exact science.

"You never know how a kid is going to react the first time he's in a game," USC coach Clay Helton said. "He looks great at practice and then you get to the stadium. You can always tell with the freshmen — you go across in the huddle and you're like, 'Yep, that one's ready, that one's ready,' then the next one's got the deer-in-the-headlights look and you're like, 'Uh-oh, he

may not be ready.'"

Sometimes, lack of depth or injuries make those decisions no-brainers. But there are a lot of other factors that go into the process, as well.

Arizona (2-1) is playing 17 true freshmen this season, most in the league and third-most among FBS teams.

"At the first practice I meet with all of the freshmen and newcomers, and tell them not to assume they are redshirting. They are here to learn, but not to defer," coach Rich Rodriguez said. "I talked to them a couple of weeks into camp and some of them already know they want to play, and some may not. There are still true freshmen that have not played yet that still have a

chance to play. We're playing a bunch of them, I saw we play the third-most true freshmen in the country. By the end of the year we will probably have the most because we still have many that will play."

Maturity is certainly an attribute of Colorado freshman kicker James Stefanou, who at 30 is the second-oldest player at the FBS level. The Australian former soccer player is 10-for-10 on PATs and he's made six of seven field goals for the Buffaloes (3-0).

Seventh-ranked Washington has seven true freshmen who are making contributions: tight end Hunter Bryant, running back Salvon Ahmed and cornerback Elijah Molden.

The Huskies added receiver Ty Jones to the mix last week in a 48-16 victory over Fresno State.

Asked what goes into his decision, Washington coach Chris Petersen replied: "Can they help us win now? That's about it."

"We think playing them is a good thing for those guys. Four or five years is such a long time — who knows what can happen in that time?" he said. "So you've got to live in the moment. Even if they don't play a ton, the preparation from week to week moves them dramatically ahead, in our opinion."

A few of the other true freshmen getting attention around the league this season:

Sale first to strike out 300 since 1999

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Chris Sale was at his very best — right down to his momentous last pitch — in another meaningful victory for the Boston Red Sox.

Sale struck out 13 to become the first AL pitcher in 18 years to reach the 300 mark, and the Red Sox clinched a playoff berth hours after beating the Baltimore Orioles 9-0 on Wednesday night.

Boston (88-64) was assured at least a wild card and its second consecutive trip to the postseason when the Los Angeles Angels lost 6-5 to the Cleveland Indians. Of course, the Red Sox are looking for much more than that. They lead the AL East by three games over the rival New York Yankees with 10 to play as Boston pursues its third division title in five years.

Sale (17-7) reached the milestone on his 111th and final pitch, a called third strike against Ryan Flaherty to end the eighth inning. The last AL pitcher to fan 300 batters in a season was Boston's Pedro Martinez in

1999, when he set a club record with 313.

Farrell sent Sale back out for the eighth inning to give him a shot at getting No. 300.

Thing is, the left-hander had no idea he was at 299 when the inning started.

"No, I didn't," Sale said. "I went out there and struck out the last guy and everyone started losing it. I knew I was close, but I didn't know I needed just one more."

Mookie Betts and Deven Marrero homered for the Red Sox.

After winning two straight 11-inning games over the skidding Orioles, Boston jumped to a 6-0 lead in the fifth and coasted to its 11th win in 14 games.

Betts and Marrero hit two-run homers in the fourth against Wade Miley (8-14), and Hanley Ramirez added a two-run double in the fifth.

Sale allowed four hits and walked none in matching his career high for wins.

"A dominant performance after a year that has been a dominant one," manager John Farrell said.

Sale reached double figures in strikeouts for the 18th time this season.

He is the 14th pitcher in the so-called Live Ball Era (1920-present) to ring up 300 strikeouts in a season.

It was his 10th scoreless outing of the season, tying the team record held by Babe Ruth (1916) and Martinez (2000 and 2002).

"It was fun. I felt good tonight," he said.

Sale faced a Baltimore lineup that was lacking two of its better hitters. Manny Machado was held out with an illness that manager Buck Showalter said the third baseman had been dealing with for nearly two weeks, and shortstop Tim Beckham was unavailable after having a wisdom tooth removed.

Not that it would have made much of a difference against Sale.

"He's one of the best pitchers in the game, and couple in the fact that we're not really operating on all cylinders offensively, you end up with a shutout," Showalter said.

MLB roundup

Hot Indians earn 26th victory in 27 games

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Francisco Lindor snapped a seventh-inning tie with a two-run homer and the remarkable Cleveland Indians held off Los Angeles 6-5 for their 26th victory in 27 games.

It was Lindor's 31st home run of the season, most by a switch-hitting shortstop in major league history.

Albert Pujols hit his 614th home run for the Angels, who remained 1½ games behind Minnesota for the second AL wild card.

Cleveland is 95-57, one game back of the slumping Los Angeles Dodgers for the best record in baseball and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

Cleveland trailed the Dodgers by 20 games on Aug. 25.

Yankees 11, Twins 3: Aaron Judge hit his AL-leading 45th home run and topped 100 RBIs, Didi Gregorius surpassed Derek Jeter for the most home runs by his franchise's short-

stop and host New York beat Minnesota for a three-game sweep.

The game was briefly halted in the fifth inning when a foul ball down the third-base line off the bat of Todd Frazier struck a young girl, who was carried out of the stands, given first aid and taken to a hospital.

Frazier knelt down and covered his head, and many other Yankees and Twins watched in stunned silence as the fan was helped.

Rays 8, Cubs 1: Blake Snell gave up two hits in seven shut-out innings, and Tampa Bay ended visiting Chicago's season-best seven-game winning streak.

Phillies 7, Dodgers 5: Aaron Altherr hit a tiebreaking, two-run single in the eighth after launching a tying, two-run homer an inning earlier, and host Philadelphia beat slumping Los Angeles.

Pirates 6, Brewers 4: Adam Frazier hit a two-run homer off Milwaukee closer Corey Knebel with two outs in the ninth

inning to lift host Pittsburgh to the win.

Diamondbacks 13, Padres 7: David Peralta hit a leadoff homer and a go-ahead double in the seventh for Arizona, which scored 11 runs in the final four innings and overcame Hunter Renfroe's three homers for host San Diego.

Rangers 8, Mariners 6: Rougned Odor's grand slam capped a seven-run fourth inning and visiting Texas beat Seattle to make up ground in the playoff chase.

Royals 15, Blue Jays 5: Mike Moustakas hit his 37th home run of the season, breaking Steve Balboni's franchise record, Salvador Perez and Whit Merrifield also connected and Kansas City routed host Toronto.

Giants 4, Rockies 0: Tyler Chatwood dug himself an early hole and visiting Colorado lost to last-place San Francisco for its third straight defeat.

Cardinals 9, Reds 2: Dexter Fowler homered for the third straight game while Matt Car-

penter and Paul DeJong also homered as St. Louis gained ground in its playoff push with a win over host Cincinnati.

Nationals 7, Braves 3: Atlanta closer Arodys Vizcaino issued three bases-loaded walks in the six-run eighth, and Gio Gonzalez pitched seven strong innings to lead visiting Washington.

Astros 4, White Sox 3: Yuli Gurriel had three hits, including a two-run double, Brad Peacock threw six solid innings and Houston extended its win streak to six by beating visiting Chicago.

Marlins 5, Mets 4 (10): J.T. Realmuto homered in the 10th inning, and host Miami beat New York after rallying for three runs in the ninth against former teammate A.J. Ramos.

Athletics 3, Tigers 2: Daniel Mengden pitched seven scoreless innings, and Marcus Semien homered and drove in three runs, leading visiting Oakland to a three-game sweep of Detroit.