

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Thursday, September 6, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Trump fumes over anonymous op-ed

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Pushing back against explosive reports his own administration is conspiring against him, President Donald Trump lashed out against the anonymous senior official who wrote an opinion piece in *The New York Times* claiming to be part of a “resistance” working “from within” to thwart the commander in chief’s most dangerous impulses.

Washington was consumed by a wild guessing game as to the identity of the author, and swift denials of involvement in the op-ed came Thursday from top administration officials, including the office of Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Trump was furious, tweeting Thursday morning that “The Deep State and the Left, and their vehicle, the Fake News Media, are going Crazy — & they don’t know what to do.”

On Wednesday night, Trump

tweeted a demand that if “the GUTLESS anonymous person does indeed exist, the Times must, for National Security purposes, turn him/her over to government at once!” White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders called on the “coward” who wrote the piece to “do the right thing and resign.”

White House officials did not immediately respond to a request to elaborate on Trump’s call for the writer to be turned over to the government or the unsupported national security ground of his demand.

To some, the ultimatum appeared to play into the very concerns about the president’s impulses raised by the essay’s author. Trump has demanded that aides identify the leaker, according to two people familiar with the matter, though it was not yet clear how they might go about doing so. The two were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

In a “House of Cards”-style plot twist, Trump allies and political insiders scrambled to unmask the writer.

The author, claiming to be part of the “resistance” to Trump “working diligently from within” his administration, said, “Many Trump appointees have vowed to do what we can to preserve our democratic institutions while thwarting Mr. Trump’s more misguided impulses until he is out of office.”

“It may be cold comfort in this chaotic era, but Americans should know that there are adults in the room,” the author continued. “We fully recognize what is happening. And we are trying to do what’s right even when Donald Trump won’t.”

Trump raged about the piece in the White House, calling around to confidants to vent about the disloyalty of the author and fuming that the so-called “Deep State” within the federal government had conspired against him, according

to a person familiar with the president’s views but not authorized to discuss them publicly.

Trump, appearing at an unrelated event Wednesday at the White House, lashed out at the *Times* for publishing the op-ed.

“They don’t like Donald Trump and I don’t like them,” he said of the newspaper. The op-ed pages of the newspaper are managed separately from its news department.

The anonymous author wrote in the *Times* that where Trump has had successes, they have come “despite — not because of — the president’s leadership style, which is impetuous, adversarial, petty and ineffective.”

The column was published a day after the release of details from an explosive new book by longtime journalist Bob Woodward that laid bare concerns among the highest echelon of Trump aides about the president’s judgment.

## GIs in Afghanistan taste pizza MRE for the 1st time

By Chad Garland

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — It took more than 30 minutes to arrive, but the pizza was coming from Massachusetts, via Ramstein Air Base in Germany and Bagram Air Field, to the Afghan capital.

Plus, unlike Domino’s, it’s got a three-year shelf life.

In anticipation of the long-awaited rollout of the Meal, Ready to Eat pepperoni pizza, Stars and Stripes flew several of the military ration’s main pizza entrees into Afghanistan for taste tests with the troops.

“It’s not delivery, it’s MRE,”

Air Force Capt. Robert Erskine said before digging into a slice.

The feedback was generally positive — some said it was a contender for a new favorite menu item. It’s designed to be eaten cold or hot, but those who tried it cold said it would be better heated. Some said it was a bit too bready or needed the added flavor of cheese spread, which will come with the full MRE.

Erskine, from Yakima, Wash., said he wouldn’t order it if it was on the room service menu. Partial to thin crust, Erskine said he liked it better once he sliced off the bottom two-thirds of bread.

Since the 1980s, soldiers have been asking for a pizza MRE, according to the Army. In 2012, the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center in Natick, Mass., began the tricky task of developing a slice-in-a-pouch that would be shelf-stable for 36 months.

“It’s a very difficult food to create to be able to store for a long time at room temperature,” said Anastacia Marx de Salcedo, the author of “Combat-Ready Kitchen: How the U.S. Military Shapes the Way You Eat.”

Marx de Salcedo keeps up with military food innovation

and traces the ways the technology and foods eventually reach the public. McDonald’s McRib, for example, traces its lineage to military food developments.

It’s too soon to say whether the MRE pizza will one day reach the public, but the techniques that make it possible may.

Part of the difficulty for the pizza developers was creating a barrier between the various pizza components — cheese, sauce, crust and toppings. Basil and tomato films were used to create “very, very thin layers between each ingredient,” Marx de Salcedo said.

# Navy: 2,500 rifles seized in Persian Gulf

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The U.S. Navy says a recent arms seizure from small ships near war-torn Yemen netted over 2,500 Kalashnikov assault rifles.

The Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet gave the updated total in a statement Wednesday.

day. It boarded the skiff and the dhow, a traditional ship in the Persian Gulf, during a routine check in the Gulf of Aden on Aug. 28.

The Navy added, "The origin and intended destination of the skiff have not yet been determined."

In early 2016, U.S.-allied warships in the region stopped three dhows carrying thousands of Kalashnikov assault rifles as well as sniper rifles, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, anti-tank missiles and other weapons believed bound for Yemen from Iran.

## USMC helo makes emergency landing on Okinawan island

By MATTHEW M. BURKE  
AND AYA ICHIHASHI

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — No injuries were reported after a U.S. military helicopter made an emergency landing Wednesday on an island off Okinawa's coast, Marine Corps and Japanese officials said.

The Marines told Japanese officials that a UH-1Y Venom from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing made a "precautionary landing" about 3:45 p.m. on Kume Island after a warning light came on, said Okinawa Defense Bureau spokesman Masashi Katsuren and Kumejima town hall official Yuhka Nakasone.

The aircraft landed in a grass field next to a runway at Kumejima Airport, Nakasone said.

There were no reports of damage or injuries, including to the Venom's five crewmembers, Katsuren and Nakasone said.

"The aircraft systems performed as designed and notified the pilot of the issue," III Marine Expeditionary Force spokesman Capt. Eric Flanagan said in an emailed statement. "The aircrew performed as trained and chose the safest option, landing the aircraft in accordance with standard procedures."

"We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused while our forces trained to support the U.S.-Japan security alliance."

The Venom's crew performed a safety check before taking off again about 5:15 p.m., Nakasone said.

The aircraft flew first to Kadena Air Base, arriving about 5:43 p.m., and then to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, where it arrived at approximately 6:40 p.m., Katsuren said.

The aircraft was conducting routine training at the time of the incident, Flanagan said.

## After McCain's death, Sen. Inhofe takes lead of armed services panel

By CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Sen. Jim Inhofe, a longtime Republican senator from Oklahoma, will take over as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Inhofe, 83, has been acting chairman of the committee, which has oversight of military issues, since Sen. John McCain was forced to leave Capitol Hill in December 2017 due to illness. The Arizona Republican died Aug. 25 at age 81 after a 13-month battle with brain cancer.

"Senator Inhofe filled in for Senator McCain during a difficult year," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said Wednesday from the floor of the upper chamber. "He rose to the occasion and helped lead the committee in passing crucial legislation that honored the example of his predecessor and the volunteers who defend our nation."

Though McCain was not physically present during Inhofe's tenure as acting chairman, the two senators did coordinate at times. From his Arizona home, McCain issued statements and co-sponsored legislation in his final months as a 31-year senator.

Inhofe, for example, helped shepherd through the \$715 billion National Defense Authorization Act, which sets policy and spending for the Defense Department.

On Wednesday, the Senate Armed Services Committee officially chose Inhofe to become the permanent chairman for the panel. Inhofe said he was looking forward to working with his colleagues on the committee to ensure the military is ready and able to defend the country against growing threats around the world.

"I am deeply honored that my colleagues have selected me to lead the Armed Services Committee," said Inhofe, who has served on the panel since 1995. "America is facing new and unprecedented threats that are different from anything we've

seen before. As chairman, it will be my priority to address these threats while maintaining a staunch commitment to servicemembers and their families, as well as continue the bipartisan tradition of rigorous accountability and oversight of the Defense Department."

McCain's seat in the Senate also was filled this week, and could remain part of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

On Tuesday, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey appointed longtime McCain friend and former Sen. Jon Kyl to take over the Senate seat at least for the coming months. Kyl, who served as a congressional lawmaker from Arizona from 1987 to 2013, said he would not run for election to the seat. He was sworn into the Senate on Wednesday.

McCain was elected in 2016 to a six-year term, which must be filled by appointment at least until a special election is held for the seat in 2020.

McCain's quick temper and frustration with military leaders, exhibited in his probe into the deaths of 17 sailors in two Navy ship crashes last year and in his grilling of Pentagon nominees or leaders, was a frequent staple of his committee hearings.

James Mountain Inhofe, on the other hand, is more soft-spoken and is not known to question witnesses relentlessly during hearings to the degree that was commonplace for McCain. He has a more conservative record than McCain. In 2012, Inhofe co-sponsored legislation to prohibit same-sex marriages on military bases. In 2015, Inhofe said he was disappointed by a Supreme Court decision requiring all states to recognize same-sex marriage.

Inhofe worked as a businessman for about 30 years before becoming mayor of Tulsa in 1978 and then a congressional lawmaker in 1987. Inhofe, who served in the Army for two years from 1956 to 1958, joined the Senate in 1994.

Inhofe also is known to speak highly of President Donald Trump, while McCain and Trump were well-known adversaries.

## Insurgents kill 19 in Afghanistan attack

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Insurgents killed 19 security personnel in separate assaults in Afghanistan, officials said Thursday, a day after twin bombings in Kabul killed 21 people, including two local TV reporters.

Another 89 people were wounded in Wednesday's bombings, in a Shiite neighborhood of the capital. The attack bore the hallmarks of Islamic State, which has carried out a wave of bombings against minority Shiites in recent years. The Taliban denied responsibility.

Later Wednesday, suspected Taliban insurgents overran a security outpost in the northern Badghis province and then ambushed reinforcements, killing 10 soldiers, according to Jamshid Shahabi, a spokesman for the governor.

In what is being described as an insider attack, a local police official in the northern Takhar province turned his weapon on his colleagues early Thursday, killing all eight. Abdul Khali Aseir, the provincial police spokesman, says the gunman escaped.

Two journalists from Afghanistan's TOLO TV were among those killed in the Kabul bombings. Samim Famarz and Ramiz Ahmadi were "fearless" reporters who represented what is best in the country, the station said in a posting on Twitter.

The U.N. envoy to Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto, condemned the "callous attack" in Kabul.

# Embattled Trump thanks N. Korea's Kim for praise

By KIM GAMEL  
*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he and Kim Jong Un will "get it done together" after the North Korean leader reaffirmed his commitment to a nuclear-free peninsula.

The tweet came hours after Kim was quoted as saying he still has faith in Trump despite recent setbacks that have caused nuclear talks to deadlock nearly three months after the two leaders met in Singapore.

However, Kim demanded reciprocal goodwill measures and called for a declaration to formally end the Korean War, offering assurances that it would not be linked to the withdrawal of U.S. troops, an envoy said.

"Chairman Kim stressed that he has never spoken negatively about President Trump to his staff or anyone," Moon's national security adviser, Chung Eui-yong, told reporters Thursday, a day after meeting with Kim in Pyongyang.

The praise was welcomed by Trump, who is facing political controversies at home.

"Kim Jong Un of North Korea proclaims 'unwavering faith in President

Trump.' Thank you to Chairman Kim. We will get it done together!" Trump wrote.

South Korea, meanwhile, announced that President Moon Jae-in will meet with Kim on Sept. 18-20 in Pyongyang, North Korea, for their third summit this year.

The developments raised hopes for a revival of talks that began earlier this year, reversing months of tensions that spiked as the North test-fired several missiles and conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test.

The Trump administration likely would seek more specific measures such as a declaration of nuclear-related facilities, said Scott Snyder, the director of the U.S.-Korea policy program at the Council on Foreign Relations.

"There is evidence of progress," he said in a telephone interview. "The question is whether there's enough in Chung Eui-yong's statement to entice the U.S. back into direct talks."

Kim expressed hope for ending decades of hostilities "and realizing denuclearization by improving the North Korean-U.S. relationship within Trump's first term," Chung said, adding that Kim had asked him to deliver his message to Washington.

## Delays in Forever GI Bill could affect veterans' checks

By NIKKI WENTLING  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Student veterans starting the 2018-19 school year could receive incorrect housing payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs because the agency missed a deadline to fully implement changes to how the checks are calculated, lawmakers and veteran advocates said Wednesday.

Last year, Congress approved the Forever GI Bill, a major expansion of veterans' education benefits, and gave the VA until Aug. 1 to establish its 34 new provisions. One of the changes is to calculate veterans' housing allowances based on the ZIP codes of the campuses where

they attend classes.

The VA failed to meet the Aug. 1 deadline because of problems with the technology required to complete the new calculations. VA officials told lawmakers that they would update the technology by mid-August. As of Wednesday, the new system still wasn't in place.

"It's come to my attention that the [VA] has screwed up accountability and responsibility for a Forever GI Bill benefit," Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., said Wednesday at a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing. "The changes that should've been made in information technology weren't made. The checks and balances we have built into the system weren't followed."

Student Veterans of America, which has nearly 1,500 chapters at colleges nationwide, is hearing from members concerned about their payments, said Barrett Bogue, the group's vice president of public relations.

"I haven't heard from a critical mass of student veterans who've been negatively affected yet, but I have heard from schools and representatives that this is a problem and it needs to be addressed as soon as possible," he said.

As of Wednesday, the VA was testing the technology needed to implement the change to housing allowances, VA press secretary Curt Cashour said. He did not provide an estimated time for when the issue would be fixed, and said only

that "VA will announce a deployment date upon completion of testing."

"The VA went from saying 'We'll have it implemented in mid-August' to not providing even a date," Bogue said. "That's cause for concern."

The VA said it was in the process of preparing to notify students and schools regarding the impact to payments. Cashour did not provide an estimate of how many veterans would be affected by the problem.

Since the Forever GI Bill was signed, the VA has implemented 28 of its 34 measures, Cashour said.

"It just so happens one they didn't is the one that affects the living allowance," Bogue said. "It's affecting livelihood."

# Earthquake leads to landslides in Japan

Associated Press

SAPPORO, Japan — A powerful earthquake Thursday on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido triggered dozens of landslides that crushed houses under torrents of dirt, rocks and timber, prompting frantic efforts to unearth any survivors.

At least nine people were killed, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said. Officials said at least 366 were injured, five of them seriously, and about 30 people were unaccounted for after the magnitude 6.7 earthquake jolted residents from their beds at 3:08 a.m.

Nearly 3 million households were left without power by the quake — the latest in an exhausting run of natural disasters for Japan.

It paralyzed normal business on the island, as blackouts cut off water to homes, immobilized trains and airports, causing hundreds of flight cancellations, and shut down phone systems.

In the town of Atsuma, where entire hillsides collapsed, rescuers used small backhoes and shovels to search for survivors under the tons of earth that tumbled down steep mountainsides, burying houses and farm buildings below. The area's deep green hills were marred by reddish-brown gashes where the

soil tore loose under the violent tremors.

Twenty-eight people remained unaccounted for in the town, Atsuma Mayor Shoichiro Miyasaka told public broadcaster NHK. The landslides ripped through some homes and buried others. Some residents described awakening to find their next-door neighbors gone.

The island's only nuclear power plant, which was offline for routine safety checks, temporarily switched to a backup generator to keep its spent fuel cool. Nuclear regulators said there was no sign of abnormal radiation — a concern after a massive quake and tsunami in March 2011 that hit northeast Japan destroyed both external and backup power to the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant, causing meltdowns.

Japan's Meteorological Agency said the quake's epicenter was 24 miles deep. But it still wreaked havoc across much of the relatively sparsely inhabited island. Abe said that up to 25,000 troops and other personnel would be dispatched to Hokkaido to help with rescue operations.

In the prefectural capital of Sapporo, a city of 1.9 million, the quake ruptured roads and knocked houses askew. A mudslide left several cars half-buried.

# Fight over documents dominates hearing for Supreme Court pick

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation tumbled into highly charged arguing Thursday over whether key documents were being withheld, and one Democrat risked Senate discipline by releasing confidential material. A newly disclosed email revealed that President Donald Trump's pick once suggested *Roe v. Wade* was not settled law.

The finger-pointing over the unusual vetting process for Trump's nominee made for a rough start for the final day of questioning of Kavanaugh, who so far has avoided major missteps that could block his confirmation. Republican John Cornyn, of Texas, said senators could be expelled from office for violating confidentially rules, while Democrats led by Cory Booker, of New Jersey, responded, "Bring it on."

Meanwhile, it was shown, in an email obtained by The Associated Press, that Kavanaugh had taken a different tone on a 2003 abortion case than he had during Wednesday's hearing, when he stressed how difficult it is to overturn precedents like *Roe*. In the email, Kavanaugh was reviewing a potential op-ed article in support of two judicial nominees while he was working at the George W. Bush White House, according to the document. It had been held by the committee

as confidential.

"I am not sure that all legal scholars refer to *Roe* as the settled law of the land at the Supreme Court level since Court can always overrule its precedent, and three current Justices on the Court would do so," Kavanaugh wrote, referring to justices at the time, in an email to a Republican Senate aide. The document is partially redacted.

Asked about it by the committee's top Democrat, Dianne Feinstein of California, Kavanaugh reiterated his previous testimony that "*Roe v. Wade* is an important precedent of the Supreme Court."

The 15-year-old email underscored a dispute that has dominated part of the hearing over Kavanaugh's unusually long paper trail stemming from his years in the Bush White House. The panel's process resulted in hundreds of thousands of pages of Kavanaugh's documents being withheld as confidential or kept from release under presidential privilege by the Trump White House.

Booker called the process "a bit of a sham." He was chastised by GOP colleagues for having discussed a confidential document about Kavanaugh's legal views on race.

So far, Kavanaugh appears on track toward confirmation in the Republican-held Senate.

# Lawmakers, experts: NATO's value still substantial

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — NATO has proven its substantial value and remains a critical investment for U.S. national security, senators and experts said Wednesday during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing.

The comments were a rebuke to President Donald Trump's stance that NATO and its partner nations have fallen short of their commitments.

In a NATO summit meeting in July, Trump issued a series of insults about the alliance and its members, and later told Fox News that the nation of Montenegro, which has about 630,000 residents, could trigger World War III.

"In a world where various forces are eroding democracy and the rules-based international order, it is a core interest of the United States to bolster and strengthen alliances like NATO, a guarantor and the cor-

nerstone of peace for Americans in the trans-Atlantic region for 70 years," Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., said during the hearing. "Unfortunately, President Donald Trump clearly takes a different view. He has questioned the value of the alliance to the United States and said that NATO was 'helping Europe more than it was helping us.'"

The hearing was the third for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in a series examining growing threats from Rus-

sia, with the focus Wednesday on NATO's value.

Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., chairman of the committee, said he hoped the hearing would make clear NATO's critical value to the United States and the committee's support for NATO.

NATO has long remained a deterrent against escalating conflicts, especially ones involving Russia, said Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, a nonprofit Washington think tank.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## More squirrels leads to more roadkill

**ME** AUGUSTA — Officials said there are more squirrels scampering around southern Maine — and more of them are getting run over by cars as a result.

Maine Audubon biologist Sarah Haggerty said she's surprised by the number of squirrels she's seen around the state. The Portland Press Herald reported a bumper crop of acorns and pine cones are the reasons for the boom in small rodent populations.

The Maine Department of Transportation said crews have noticed more roadkill this year that needs to be cleaned up.

## Apartment combines kitchen, bathroom

**MO** ST. LOUIS — A St. Louis man is the new tenant of a tiny apartment with a unique layout — the kitchen and bathroom are in the same place.

Yep. The toilet, bathtub, oven and sink are all in one room. The 200-square-foot apartment is in St. Louis' tony Central West End.

The ad and photo for the \$525-per-month apartment appeared on several websites. Harold Karabell, of S.F. Shannon Real Estate, Management said the new tenant loves it.

Toilet/kitchen combo aside, Karabell said the apartment has a lot to like, including refinished hardwood floors and new windows.

## Necklace donation to benefit Goodwill

**NC** GREENSBORO — Diamonds are a Goodwill's best friend.

Citing a Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina an-

nouncement, news outlets reported a Greensboro resident recently donated an 18-karat, white gold necklace featuring 176 diamonds. Appraised at \$6,480, the necklace has attracted 10 bids on Goodwill's online auction.

The necklace's price has risen from \$1,650.99 on Aug. 31 to \$5,002.01 as of Wednesday morning. The bids jumped Tuesday as news outlets began to report on the find.

Goodwill plans to funnel the proceeds to its mission of providing free and low-cost job training and placement services.

## Woman who said she was robbed arrested

**DE** HARRINGTON — A woman who reported being robbed has been arrested in Delaware on burglary charges.

The Delaware State News reported Pamela M. Watkins, 47, called police Aug. 31, saying she was being robbed at a business.

According to a Harrington police statement, police responded to a report of a burglary at a home as officers interviewed Watkins.

Based on the description of the burglary suspect, police took Watkins to the home, where she was identified as the suspect.

Police said Watkins had asked to use the phone at the home and then tried to force her way inside before fleeing. She was allegedly intoxicated.

## Public library turns away donations

**TN** ELIZABETHTON — A public library in Tennessee has received so many books recently that it has begun turning away donations.

Renita Barksdale, director of the Elizabethton/Carter County Public Library, told the Johnson City Press the library has had to

rent two storage spaces to hold recent donations. Barksdale said even the storage spaces are "filled to the brim."

The library said it will hold a book sale this month and may start accepting donations again.

## Officials: Moonshine operation shut down

**MS** KILN — Officials said they've shut down a large moonshine operation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

WLOX-TV reported that agents with the Alcoholic Beverage Control division of the state Department of Revenue are questioning someone but haven't made any arrests related to the Kiln still.

Possession of untaxed whiskey is a misdemeanor in Mississippi, while distilling is a felony.

Agent Kurt Alexander said agents found 20 barrels of fermenting mash, four 55-gallon drums of moonshine and 75 1-gallon jugs of moonshine.

Alexander said moonshine sells for about \$20 per gallon on the Gulf Coast, while it can fetch as much as \$50 a gallon elsewhere.

## Couple marries 36 years after wedding

**HI** KAILUA-KONA — A Big Island couple who believed they were married 36 years ago officially tied the knot after learning of a documentation mix-up.

West Hawaii Today reported Randy and Leigh Mitchell were legally married at the Kealahou courthouse last week, though their first wedding was in February 1982.

The couple learned two years ago that their marriage license was never filed at the time of their wedding in Huntington Beach, Calif.

Leigh Mitchell discovered the

mistake when she tried to renew her driver's license, which required her marriage license to show her name change.

## Tree falls, causes car to flip and land in lake

**NH** ALEXANDRIA — Police in New Hampshire said a tree that fell on a road caused a driver's car to flip and land upside down in a lake.

WMUR-TV reported Richard Abbene, of Hebron, wasn't seriously injured Tuesday.

He said he was traveling about 20 mph around a sharp curve in Alexandria just before he found himself upside down in Newfound Lake.

He said he didn't know that a tree had fallen on his car until first responders told him.

Abbene's wife, Kathleen, said it's lucky that her husband hates air conditioning, because he had rolled his window down. That allowed him to climb out of his car.

## Stolen M&M character statues returned

**NJ** HOLMDEL — Two statues of M&M candy characters that were stolen from a children's concert in New Jersey last month have been returned unharmed.

State police had issued a tongue-in-cheek all-points bulletin for the 3-foot-tall statues after they were taken Aug. 20 from the PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel.

Officials noted they were "fairly certain" the statues didn't melt like chocolate.

In a Facebook post Monday, state police said that the Mr. Red and Mr. Yellow M&M characters were "reunited with their twin siblings" at the arts center on Saturday. Details were not disclosed.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

On a mission to provide credible reporting and daily news to America's military, wherever they serve.

Mobile apps available: [www.stripes.com/apps](http://www.stripes.com/apps).

## NFL preview

# Distractions dominate to start season

Associated Press

NEW YORK— Rules changes and U.S. anthem demonstrations seem to have people inside and outside the NFL obsessed as the opening kickoff of the season approaches.

Yes, the Super Bowl champion Eagles and Atlanta Falcons will open things on Thursday in Philadelphia. What many people wonder: Will there be any social injustice protests during “The Star-Spangled Banner?” And will players, coaches and officials have a handle on the adjustment to use of the helmet in making a hit.

Not to mention the new kickoff rules and, at last, a catch rule that seems to make sense.

Those are enough issues to grab attention away from Philly’s quarterback situation, as well as the progress of the five first-round quarterback draft choices expected to make their debuts sooner or later.

Or from the return from injuries of Aaron Rodgers, J.J. Watt, Richard Sherman, DeShaun Watson, David Johnson and Odell Beckham Jr., to name a few.

Or Jon Gruden’s return to an NFL sideline in Oakland.

Plus, Adam Vinatieri’s pursuit of the career points and field goals marks.

What’s ahead on Dec. 30?

## Rules changes

The preseason has been dominated, even overridden, by discussion of, and doubts about, the “helmet rule.” Basically, any player on offense or defense lowering his head and making contact with any part of the helmet is subject to a 15-yard penalty, a fine, and even an ejection. It’s a player safety adjustment for which “the goal long term is to make the game safer and take out some of these hits that should not be part of the game,” says New York Giants owner John Mara, a member of the competition committee that recommends rules changes to the owners.

The concerns on many levels

focus on players adjusting to the tackling requirements and officials mastering such calls at full speed.

Gene Steratore, who recently retired as an NFL referee, expects the critical tempest to die down quickly.

“Players will adjust because they are that good,” says Steratore, now a TV analyst after 15 seasons in the league. “Officials will, too, because they are that good. There will be a learning curve for all of them, but I think in a fast period of time, a trigger moment will come that will show right before that contact if it is worthy of a flag.”

The fix to the phrasing of the catch rule should eliminate the kind of calls — on Jesse James, Dez Bryant et al. — many found bogus.

“Control. If it looks like a catch and smells like a catch, it’s a catch,” says Troy Vincent, the NFL chief of football operations. “(The rule) had become convoluted: What you should do, what you shouldn’t do. It should be clear as day. So our job was to simplify and we put it in practical terms.”

The other major rule alteration is on kickoffs, where coverage team players no longer can take a running start, and there are regulations on where kick team players can be overall and how they can block.

## National anthem

Anticipation of whether players will demonstrate during the national anthem again this season is high, fueled in part by reactions from President Donald Trump. Players argue that their message about the need for change in communities nationwide has been misconstrued by the president and his followers, including many team owners.

With the unilateral policy banning players from any on-field protests during the anthem on hold as owners and players discuss the issue, no one can be sure what’s ahead.

Everyone can be sure the topic won’t disappear.

“Part of the problem is that when you continue the rhetoric that this is controversial or this is somehow a negative thing, people treat it as such,” Eagles safety Malcolm Jenkins says. “But we’ve seen in other leagues when they’ve decided to amplify the voices of their players to also emphasize the importance of the issues that we’re raising, and change the narrative away from the anthem, that not only is it more acceptable, the fan base gets educated on what we’re talking about, and we can actually make some movement.”

## Rookie QBs

Before we reach 2019, it’s a near-certainty that Baker Mayfield, Sam Darnold, Josh Allen, Josh Rosen and Lamar Jackson will get onto the field. Some likely will be starters, maybe even stamp themselves as stars.

Only in Baltimore, where Joe Flacco is the incumbent, is the rookie (Jackson) a long shot to become the No. 1 quarterback this season. The others — Cleveland’s Mayfield, Buffalo’s Allen, the Jets’ Darnold and Arizona’s Rosen — are with teams considered outsiders in the playoff chase and it makes sense as early as prudent to see if they are the franchise quarterbacks they were drafted to be.

## Coaches

New coaches in charge of the Arizona Cardinals, Tennessee Titans, Detroit Lions, Giants, Chicago Bears and Los Angeles Raiders include four newbies to being in charge: Detroit’s Matt Patricia, Chicago’s Matt Nagy, Tennessee’s Mike Vrabel and Arizona’s Steve Wilks. All of them made their marks as proficient coordinators and bring freshness and toughness to their franchises.

Vrabel, of course, has three Super Bowl rings as a player

with New England, which surely earns him some respect in the locker room. If he’s considered a product of the Bill Belichick coaching tree, though, Vrabel could struggle; few of the Patriots coach’s protégés have had much success as a head man in the NFL.

So the same goes for Patricia, although he has far more experience in coaching.

New York’s Pat Shurmur had a short stint in charge in Cleveland and probably didn’t get a fair shake. The Giants desperately needed a culture change after the 2017 debacle.

Oakland also comes off a bad season following a playoff appearance, and the Raiders made the biggest splash by bringing back (and out of the broadcast booth) Jon Gruden. There’s lots of excitement in the Black Hole and throughout Oakland about Gruden, who clearly has stamped his personality on the roster by trading his best player, holdout pass rusher Khalil Mack.

“I love the Raider fans, I love Oakland, and that’s the primary reason why I’m standing here,” he says.

## Pursuing history

Vinatieri is a marvel. The NFL’s oldest player at 45, he begins his 23rd NFL season in range to pass Hall of Famer Morten Andersen as the leading scorer. He was dependable for a decade in New England and then a dozen years in Indianapolis.

He needs seven field goals to pass Andersen (565) for the most field goals. Andersen scored 2,544 points in a league-record 382 games and Vinatieri needs 58 points to break the record.

“It’s one of those things that I haven’t really thought too much about,” he says. “I’m still just trying to help my team win games and keep on putting chapters in this book, and if that happens, fantastic.”

# Djokovic earns berth in US Open semis

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Novak Djokovic put aside all of it, from his opponent's unheard-of, middle-of-a-set chance to change out of sweat-soaked clothes and shoes, to consecutive time violations because he let the serve clock expire, to the 16 break points he wasted.

All that mattered, really, was that Djokovic managed to do what Roger Federer could not two nights earlier: beat 55th-ranked John Millman at the U.S. Open.

Djokovic moved a step closer to a third championship at Flushing Meadows and 14th Grand Slam title overall by eliminating Millman 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 to get to the tournament's semifinals for an 11th appearance in a row. He sat out last year because of an injured right elbow.

The No. 6-seeded Djokovic, who won Wimbledon in July, had been drawn to face Federer in the quarterfinals. But Millman scuttled that showdown by stunning the 20-time Grand Slam champ in four sets in the fourth round on a hot and humid evening that Federer

said sapped his energy and made it hard to breathe.

"I was, alongside many other people, anticipating the match against Federer," Djokovic said.

This night was cooler, as the temperature dipped into the 70s, but the humidity was above 80 percent, so with Millman drenched, he sought permission for a wardrobe change at 2-all in the second set. It was odd enough to see a player be allowed to do that during, instead of after, a set, but even odder for it to happen after an even number of games, rather than at an odd-game changeover.

"I was struggling. He was struggling. We were all sweating. Changing a lot of T-shirts, shorts," said Djokovic, who will face 2014 U.S. Open runner-up Kei Nishikori on Friday. "Just trying to find a way to hang in there."

When Millman apologized for leaving the court at that juncture, Djokovic replied, "I'm fine to have a little rest," then sat down on his sideline bench without a shirt on and cooled off.

"I didn't even know the rule,"

said Millman, whose request to leave briefly was permitted based on something called the "Equipment Out of Adjustment" provision in the International Tennis Federation guidelines, because his sweat was making the court slippery.

Widely considered the best returner in the game, Djokovic kept accumulating chances — and then failing to cash them in. He was able to come through on only four of his 20 break points.

There were other issues for him, too, including in the third set when, ahead by a break, he was called by the chair umpire for allowing the 25-second serve clock, making its Grand Slam debut at this tournament, to run out on back-to-back points. After the first, he double-faulted, and he wound up getting broken there.

But he broke back in the match's next-to-last game, then served out the victory at love.

"I think the guy's beat a brick wall once," Millman said, "because he makes you work hard for every point and it's relentless."

Earlier Wednesday, Nishiko-

ri defeated the man he lost to in the final four years ago, Marin Cilic, 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5), 4-6, 6-4. Add that to No. 20 Naomi Osaka's 6-1, 6-1 win over unseeded Lesia Tsurenko of Ukraine, and Osaka and Nishikori give Japan semifinalists in both men's and women's singles at the same Grand Slam tournament for the first time in tennis history.

"It's great to see," said Nishikori, who is into his third major semifinal — all in New York — but is still in search of his initial Slam trophy.

For Osaka, who is 20, this is her first trip past the fourth round at a major. She purported to be "freaking out inside," even if it certainly never showed.

She was set to face No. 14 Madison Keys of the U.S. on Thursday night. Serena Williams plays No. 19 Anastasija Sevastova of Latvia in the other semifinal.

Still in search of her first Grand Slam title, Keys reached her third semifinal in the past five majors by using her big-strike game built on serves and forehands to overpower No. 30 Carla Suarez Navarro of Spain 6-4, 6-3.

## Gamecocks ready for test against No. 3 Bulldogs

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — South Carolina quarterback Jake Bentley is excited about his team's new, fast-paced offense. He believes the 24th-ranked Gamecocks will be able to move the ball effectively this week against No. 3 Georgia.

Bentley passed for a career-high four touchdowns in a 49-16 season-opening win over Coastal Carolina of the Sun Belt Conference. The snaps came quickly, as did the points — the Gamecocks scored their most points in a game in five years.

The QB knows that Coastal Carolina is not Georgia.

"You take a lot of good away from Coastal and use that this week," Bentley said Tuesday.

"I think the way we were able to move the ball and execute effectively is a positive. Georgia's got a lot of great players so we've got to execute even better and continue to build on what we did last week."

The Gamecocks are back in the Top 25 for the first time since 2014, cracking the rankings on Tuesday. It's a milestone coach Will Muschamp will spend almost no time thinking about or discussing with players.

"If I do discuss it, it will be a solid, 15 seconds of a waste of our time," Muschamp said.

More important to Muschamp is beating Georgia, something he and the Gamecocks have not been able to do recently on a regular basis.

Muschamp is a woeful 1-5

as a head coach against the Bulldogs, the last two of those losses coming as South Carolina coach. The Gamecocks weren't blown out in either defeat — 28-14 in 2016 and 24-14 last year — but their defensive line struggled to contain Georgia's run game and the offense couldn't get going against the Bulldogs' defense.

South Carolina linebacker Bryson Allen-Williams said the Gamecocks have upgraded their personnel and worked to improve their techniques. He knows, too, that toppling Georgia could get those skeptical about the Gamecocks to take another look.

"They competed for the national championship last year," he said. "They've got talented

players, just like we have talented players. The biggest thing is just us taking all games the same and not doing what some guys like to do in getting up for certain games."

Bentley completed 22 of 29 passes for 250 and threw touchdowns to four receivers. One of those, returning playmaker Deebo Samuel, had a stunning, one-handed grab stretching out in the end zone.

Samuel, a senior back from a broken leg that caused him to miss this game a year ago, sees a more polished approach from Bentley and the offense as the tempo has increased.

"Everybody has talked about what we need to do to win this game," he said. "And that's what we're going to do."

# Story powers Rockies to victory over Giants

Associated Press

DENVER — Carlos Gonzalez waited patiently as Trevor Story finished his postgame interviews, a beer in hand to congratulate his Colorado teammate on his huge night.

More games like that from Story, and Gonzalez will be pouring champagne all over him at the end of September.

Story homered in his first three at-bats, including one projected at more than 500 feet, and the Rockies beat the San Francisco Giants 5-3 on Wednesday in a game delayed 68 minutes by rain at the start.

"That was awesome," Colorado manager Bud Black said. "Trevor took the game over."

The All-Star shortstop had a chance to tie the major league record of four homers in a game but struck out in his final at-bat in the eighth inning.

"Everybody's expecting a home run," Gonzalez said. "I was like, 'Just hit something.' When you're having that kind of night, I guarantee he wasn't trying to hit the ball over the fence, and it was just clicking."

Story powered Colorado to its fifth straight win, and the Rockies increased their NL West lead to 1½ games over Arizona and Los Angeles. The Diamondbacks were off and the Dodgers lost to the New York Mets.

Colorado has been to the postseason four times but has never won a division title in its 26-year history.

"I'm more excited about the win at this point," Story said. "Every win from here on out is huge."

It was the first three-homer game of Story's career and his fifth multihomer game this season. The outburst came at the expense of Giants starter Andrew Suarez (6-10).

Story's first home run, a 459-foot shot to left field, according to Statcast, gave the Rockies a 2-1 lead in the first inning.

He topped that with another solo homer in the fourth that

traveled an estimated 505 feet onto the concourse beyond the left-field stands. It was the longest homer in franchise history and the longest since Statcast began tracking distances in 2015. It just edged out the 504-foot drive Giancarlo Stanton hit in Denver when he played for Miami.

"As soon as it came off the bat I was like, 'Oh my god, it's going to hit the scoreboard. It's going to go straight to my Lamborghini in the parking lot,'" Gonzalez said.

Story's last home run — his 31st of the season — soared a projected 416 feet and gave Colorado a 4-3 lead. He popped out of the dugout for a curtain call as the crowd of 24,790 cheered.

"When you have a night like tonight it's hard to explain," Story said. "You kind of get these feelings, these intuitions, and you try to act on them, not out-think yourself."

Suarez wasn't unhappy with his outing despite the big night from Story.

"It's crazy how baseball works," he said. "I threw well and one guy beat me."

Harrison Musgrave (2-3) got the win and Adam Ottavino pitched the ninth for his sixth save.

Aramis Garcia went deep for San Francisco, which has lost five in a row.

**Raw power:** Story's first home run had a little twist to it. After he connected, he lost his balance and fell to the ground as the ball landed on the concourse in left field.

"That first one was a little different," he said. "I've never fallen down like that. Maybe on a swing and a miss."

**Road woes:** San Francisco has struggled away from home lately and at Coors Field all season. The Giants have lost six straight in Denver and nine of their last 11 on the road overall.

"It's been a rough time in Colorado," manager Bruce Bochy said. "It has been a tough place the last couple of years."

## Roundup

# Angels rookie Ohtani tees off on Rangers

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Shohei Ohtani homered twice during a huge night at the plate after getting bad news about his pitching arm, and the Los Angeles Angels beat the Texas Rangers 9-3 on Wednesday.

Perhaps headed for Tommy John surgery, the two-way rookie sensation went 4-for-4 with three RBIs, four runs and a stolen base to power the Angels. About two hours before the game, the team announced Ohtani has new damage in his right elbow and ligament-replacement surgery has been recommended.

The club said the Japanese star had an MRI earlier in the day that revealed the problem in his ulnar collateral ligament.

Ohtani's homers were towering drives into the right-field seats. With his second two-homer game, Ohtani tied Kenji Johjima's 2006 major league record of 18 homers by a Japanese rookie.

Andrelton Simmons also homered for the Angels and drove in three runs.

**Red Sox 9, Braves 8:** Brandon Phillips hit a two-out, two-run homer in the ninth inning, highlighting his long-awaited season debut and capping visiting Boston's biggest comeback of the season.

The Red Sox overcame a late six-run deficit to sweep the three-game series between division leaders.

**Athletics 8, Yankees 2:** Stephen Piscotty hit a two-run single, Matt Chapman and Matt Olson each doubled in a run, and host Oakland jumped on New York early.

The A's moved within 3½ games of the Yankees for the top AL wild card and remained 3½ back of the AL West-leading Astros.

**Astros 9, Twins 1:** Alex Bregman homered and had five RBIs, and Evan Gattis hit his 25th home run to help Houston

rout visiting Minnesota.

**Indians 3, Royals 1:** Corey Kluber became the first 18-game winner in the majors this season, striking out 10 in host Cleveland's victory over Kansas City.

The Indians reduced their magic number for clinching the AL Central to nine.

**Mets 7, Dodgers 3:** Zack Wheeler stayed in the game after getting hit in the chest by a line drive, pitching seven sharp innings to lead visiting New York over Los Angeles.

**Cubs 6, Brewers 4:** Daniel Murphy and Kyle Schwarber homered to back a solid start from Jose Quintana, and Chicago held off host Milwaukee to avert a three-game sweep.

**Cardinals 7, Nationals 6:** Matt Adams homered twice against his former team, Marcell Ozuna tied his career high with four hits and visiting St. Louis held off Washington.

**Mariners 5, Orioles 2:** Nelson Cruz and Denard Span hit back-to-back home runs, and host Seattle overcame sloppy infield defense to beat Baltimore.

**Tigers 10, White Sox 2:** Ronny Rodriguez hit a two-run homer and Jeimer Candelario, Mikie Mahtook and JaCoby Jones each added a solo shot, powering visiting Detroit to a rout of Chicago.

**Blue Jays 10, Rays 3:** Aledmys Diaz hit a three-run homer in a seven-run first inning, Aaron Sanchez won for the first time in three months and host Toronto beat Tampa Bay to prevent a three-game sweep.

**Marlins 2, Phillies 1:** Sandy Alcantara pitched shutout ball into the eighth inning in his second career start, Austin Dean drove in a pair of runs and Miami beat visiting Philadelphia.

**Pirates 3, Reds 2:** Jameson Taillon pitched five effective innings and helped send Homer Bailey to yet another loss in host Pittsburgh's win over Cincinnati.