

STARS AND STRIPES



Thursday, September 13, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

US forces launch strike in Somalia in wake of assault

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

U.S. forces in Somalia came under attack earlier this week, prompting a defensive airstrike against a militant group aligned with al-Qaida, U.S. Africa Command said Thursday.

AFRICOM said that U.S. troops were on a mission Tuesday with Somali partner forces about 40 miles west of Mogadishu when they came under attack. No U.S. military personnel were injured in the clash, but one member of the partner force was killed and two others were injured.

"The U.S. airstrike was conducted against an enemy fighting position in self-defense after U.S. and partner forces came under attack," AFRICOM said in a statement.

Two militants were killed and one was wounded in the strike, the statement said.

The al-Shabab militant group has waged its insurgency in Somalia since 2006. The militants, who have sworn allegiance to al-Qaida, also have carried out attacks in Kenya, Djibouti and Uganda. The African Union has deployed as many as 22,000 troops and policemen since 2007 to try and to help stabilize the nation.

The U.S. military also has provided backing to the AU force with airstrikes and with a limited number of special operations troops who have been rotating through Somalia for several years. They have been working alongside allied forces as front-line advisers.

Somalia, home to one of the world's weakest central governments, is attempting to build up its armed forces at a time when the African Union is preparing to draw down its forces in the country. The African Union force, deployed in Somalia for more than a decade, has played a central role in the battle against al-Shabab. During the past two years, AFRICOM has increased the pace of airstrikes in the country in an effort to apply pressure on the militants.

US troops in Poland could be first to fight if Russia attacks

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

ORZYSZ, Poland — Pfc. Patrick Aumick isn't optimistic about his personal survival if Russian troops came storming across the Suwalki Gap, a vulnerable corridor along NATO's eastern flank regarded by military planners as today's version of the Cold War's Fulda Gap.

Aumick, 20, a forward observer with 1st Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, said his unit's task in a crisis would be to slow down a larger Russian invasion force that would have the Americans outmanned and outgunned.

"I'd like to think we could hold them up," he said.

If Moscow ever to test the alliance on its own turf — something Russian authorities repeatedly have rejected as Western paranoia — the Suwalki Gap along the Polish and Lithuanian borders could be the place. But some military analysts fear that U.S. and allied soldiers like Aumick are badly exposed as they operate near the 45-mile Suwalki corridor as part of NATO Battle Group Poland.

Significant Russian forces are based in Kaliningrad, a military enclave that borders Poland and Lithuania and is just 50 miles from where U.S. forces operate.

If the Russians mobilized to seize control of Suwalki and to cut the Baltics off from the rest of NATO, the U.S.-led battle group of 1,100 troops would be first responders.

After six months of training geared toward protecting the strategically vital corridor, U.S. soldiers with the Vilseck, Germany-based 1st Squadron described their jobs as human tripwires, deployed to hold the line in case of conflict.

"It wouldn't just be us," added Sgt. Wollrick Thurton, 25. "We'd be getting help from other allies and we would be getting reinforced."

But the questions of whether NATO has sufficient firepower in the region and whether reinforcements could arrive fast enough are fiercely debated in military circles.

Slowing a Russian offensive enough to buy time for reinforcements is one scenario, but

one that would likely come at a high cost for the soldiers on the ground. Other military analysts argue U.S. and allied forces in Poland and the Baltics would be overrun quickly in any scenario.

A July report co-authored by former U.S. Army Europe leader Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges calls for more troops and firepower in the region in hopes of deterring Russia from attempting to control the Suwalki corridor that separates Kaliningrad from Russian ally Belarus.

"If Russian forces ever established control over the Suwalki region, or even threatened the free movement of NATO personnel and equipment through it, they would effectively cut the Baltic States off from the rest of the Alliance," the report stated. "Such an outcome could make reinforcing the Baltic States by land exceptionally difficult. Deterring any potential action — or even the threat of action — against Suwalki is therefore essential for NATO's credibility and Western cohesion."

Hodges' report for the Center for European Policy Analysis calls for upgrades like developing a division-sized operational headquarters in Poland as well as adding a mobile U.S. Army air defense battalion in the region.

There are signs that the U.S. is moving in that direction. Last week, the Army announced it was setting up new air defense and rocket units in Germany. Like the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, those units could be candidates for rotations in Poland and the Baltics.

Since April 2017, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment has led NATO's multinational battle-group in Poland, which includes about 800 U.S. soldiers and a smaller contingent of troops from allied states. Next week, 2nd Cavalry turns the mission over to the 2nd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment from the Tennessee National Guard.

During the 2nd Cavalry Regiment's stint, cavalrymen have become a more lethal fighting force, commanders said.

"We are a more ready force, hands down," said Lt. Col. Tim Wright, commander of 1st Squadron and NATO Battle Group Poland.

Wasp strike group aids islands after typhoon

BY JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

Sailors and Marines from the Wasp Expeditionary Strike Group were first on the scene after Typhoon Mangkhut struck the Northern Marianas on Monday.

The amphibious assault ship USS Wasp and the dock landing ship USS Ashland — both based out of Sasebo, Japan — positioned themselves behind the then-Category 2 storm, and had aircraft in the air by sunrise Tuesday, said Task Force 76 commander Rear Adm. Brad Cooper.

The strike group has been assisting the

Federal Emergency Management Agency, which took over after President Donald Trump declared a state of emergency.

"Within hours, we had Marines and sailors on ground, assessing damage and preparing for recovery," Cooper told Stars and Stripes via telephone from the Wasp on Thursday morning.

The most significant damage was suffered by Rota, the Northern Marianas' southernmost island, Cooper said. Mangkhut lashed it with winds exceeding 100 mph.

"It damaged the hospital and downed trees," he said. "Luckily, there were no

fatalities."

The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and Navy Seabees have been busy using "raw, American muscle" to clear roads and to pick up debris, Cooper said.

"I am super proud of the effort of our young sailors and Marines to help fellow citizens and make a positive difference in the lives of others," he said.

Residents had no power or water when the Wasp and the Ashland arrived. As of Thursday morning, half the island had power and water service had been completely restored, Cooper said.

Marine recruits who were sickened sue food company

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

Three of six young Marine recruits who became critically ill last fall after eating undercooked hamburgers at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego have filed lawsuits against the food service company Sodexo Inc.

Michael Baker Jr., 21; Tristan Abbott, 19; and Vincent Grano, 19, were discharged from the Marines earlier this year after complications from an illness believed to have been caused by contaminated food left them incapable of serving, court documents say.

The trio were among 244 recruits training at the depot in October 2017 when they ate food — believed to be undercooked Sodexo hamburgers — contaminated with E. coli, according to the documents. Fifteen men — including Baker, Abbott and Grano — developed hemolytic uremic syndrome from the bacteria.

The condition affects the circulatory system and "results in the destruction of blood platelets (cells involved in clotting), a low red blood cell count (anemia) and kidney failure due to damage to the very small blood vessels of the kidneys," according to the National Kidney Foundation.

HUS patients have an 85 percent recovery rate, according to the foundation; however, complications that can arise from the syndrome can have long-term effects.

A Defense Department investigation into the incident found "a statistically significant association between ill recruits and the consumption of undercooked ground beef," according to court documents. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also investigated the matter and came to the same conclusion.

Abbott, Baker and Grano now are ask-

ing that a jury order Sodexo to compensate them for violating the company's "duty" to serve safe food and to warn consumers of possible dangers in its food, according to court documents. They say Sodexo's negligence caused the health issues and that the company is strictly liable to the plaintiffs for their illnesses.

Sodexo has not yet filed a response and its director of public relations, Enrico Dingess, said he was "not able to provide a detailed response at this time" because of the ongoing litigation.

Baker, of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, had been at the recruit depot for only 13 days when he was taken by ambulance to Naval Medical Center San Diego and was diagnosed with HUS on Oct. 29, 2017, according to the court documents.

Baker ate in the depot's mess hall each day over his short stay, and began feeling ill about Oct. 25, the documents say. He kept up with his boot camp activities for several days despite increasing fatigue, stomach cramps and diarrhea.

By Oct. 29, his stools had become "grossly bloody," according to the court documents. That's when he reported his "desperately ill condition" to his senior drill instructor and was ordered to the depot's medical clinic, which quickly sent him to the naval medical center.

Baker was hospitalized there for the next month and was admitted to intensive care three times with severe pneumonia and kidney failure developed as a complication of HUS. He was placed on a ventilator for "at least four days" and underwent repeated dialysis treatments, the court documents say.

His kidneys were damaged permanently in the ordeal, and he was discharged from the Marines in March.

Abbott, of Haskell, Ark., arrived in San Diego on Sept. 25. After eating hamburgers from the cafeteria on Oct. 21, he developed bloody diarrhea, vomiting and stomach cramps, according to the court documents.

Abbot kept working until Oct. 29, when one of his drill instructors took him and another ill recruit to the camp's naval hospital, the court documents say. After two days of hospitalization, medics took him to Scripps Memorial Hospital Encinitas, where he was diagnosed with HUS and was started on dialysis.

On Nov. 3, Abbott was moved to yet another hospital — Naval Medical Center San Diego — to keep up with his worsening symptoms, the court documents said. He remained in intensive care for nearly four weeks and developed involuntary twitching in his head, arms and legs because of a neurological issue caused by HUS.

Abbott was medically discharged April 27.

Grano, who began recruit training Aug. 7, 2017, came down with symptoms similar to Abbott and Baker's on Oct. 23 — "the day before he was to begin the final training challenge of boot camp, called 'The Crucible,'" according to the court documents.

Three days later, the resident of Lake in the Hills, Ill., reported his symptoms to his senior drill instructor and took an ambulance to the emergency room and was released later that day, the documents say. But days later, he lost consciousness and woke up in a bed at Naval Medical Center San Diego.

Grano also was diagnosed with HUS, which caused kidney failure and central nervous system problems including sudden-onset seizures that later grew into epilepsy, according to court documents.

Hurricane Florence moves in on Carolinas

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, N.C. — The outer bands of wind and rain from a weakened but still lethal Hurricane Florence began lashing North Carolina on Thursday as the monster storm moved in for a prolonged and potentially catastrophic drenching along the Southeast coast.

Florence's winds had dropped from a peak of 140 mph to 105 mph by midmorning, reducing the hurricane from a terrifying Category 4 to a 2. But forecasters warned that the widening storm — and its likelihood of lingering around the coast day after day — will bring seawater surging onto land and torrential downpours.

"It truly is really about the whole size of this storm," National Hurricane Center Director Ken Graham said. "The larger and the slower the storm is, the greater the threat and the impact — and we have that."

As of 11 a.m. EDT, Florence was centered about 145 miles southeast of Wilmington, its forward movement slowed to 10 mph. Hurricane-force winds extended 80 miles from its center, and tropical storm-force winds up to 195 miles.

Forecasters said Florence's eye could come ashore early Friday around the North Carolina-South Carolina line. Then it is likely to hover along the coast Saturday, pushing up to 13 feet of storm surge and unloading water on both states.

By midday, Spanish moss blew sideways in the trees as the winds increased in Wilmington. On North Carolina's Outer Banks, water flowed through streets and between beachfront homes, and some of the few people still left in Nags Head took photos of angry waves topped with white froth.

The forecast calls for as much as 40 inches of rain over seven days along the coast, with the deluge continuing even as

the center of the storm pushes its way over the Appalachian Mountains.

The result could be what the Houston area saw during Hurricane Harvey just over a year ago: catastrophic inland flooding that could swamp homes, businesses, farms and industrial sites.

The police chief of a barrier island in Florence's bulls-eye said he was asking for next-of-kin contact information from the few residents who refused to leave.

"I'm not going to put our personnel in harm's way, especially for people that we've already told to evacuate," Wrightsville Beach Police Chief Dan House said.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper urged residents to remain alert despite changing forecasts.

"Don't relax, don't get complacent. Stay on guard. This is a powerful storm that can kill. Today the threat becomes a reality," he said.

Trump claims Democrats inflated Puerto Rico deaths

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Thursday rejected the official conclusion that nearly 3,000 people died in Puerto Rico from last year's Hurricane Maria, arguing without evidence that the number was wrong and calling it a plot by Democrats to make him "look as bad as possible."

As Hurricane Florence approached the Carolinas, the president picked a fresh fight over his administration's response to the Category 4 storm that smashed into the U.S. territory last September. Trump visited the island in early October to assess the situation amid widespread criticism over recovery efforts.

"When I left the Island, AFTER the storm had hit, they had anywhere from 6 to 18 deaths. As time went by it did not go

up by much. Then, a long time later, they started to report really large numbers, like 3000," Trump tweeted.

He added: "This was done by the Democrats in order to make me look as bad as possible when I was successfully raising Billions of Dollars to help rebuild Puerto Rico."

Puerto Rico's governor last month raised Maria's official death toll from 64 to 2,975 after an independent study found that the number of people who succumbed in the sweltering aftermath had been severely undercounted. Previous reports from the Puerto Rican government estimated the number was closer to 1,400.

Trump's comments drew swift criticism from elected officials and residents of the island, where blackouts remain common, 60,000 homes still have makeshift roofs

and 13 percent of municipalities lack stable phone or internet service.

Gov. Ricardo Rossello said in a Facebook post in Spanish, "The victims of Puerto Rico, and the people of Puerto Rico in general, do not deserve to be questioned about their pain."

Rossello said he left the analysis of the deaths in the hands of experts and accepted their estimate as the official death toll. "I trust that this process was carried out properly," he said. He also said he was waiting for Trump to respond to a petition to help Puerto Rico complete work on emergency housing restoration programs and debris removal.

San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz, a Democrat who has sparred with Trump, tweeted that "Trump is so vain he thinks this is about him. NO IT IS NOT."

Olivia now tropical depression; Maui downpours expected

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Heavy rain and winds from a tropical storm downed trees, knocked out power and prompted evacuations of several homes on Hawaii's Maui island but spared the state widespread damage before it headed to sea and away from the state.

Tropical Storm Olivia was downgraded Thursday to a tropical depression after it crossed the state Wednesday, making landfall on Maui and Lanai islands.

Weather forecasters warned heavy downpours would continue Thursday, producing additional rainfall of 3 to 5 inches and isolated amounts of 6 to 8 inches on higher terrain.

That could cause life-threatening flash floods because the ground already is saturated with water, the Central Pacific Hurricane Center said in a statement.

But Maui Mayor Alan Arakawa said he was hopeful the effects of the storm would be limited.

"It's been an ordeal but we're coming through this fairly well," Arakawa said at a news conference. "I'm not seeing any really large areas of damage, no homes destroyed or flooded to any kind of extreme measures as we did in previous storms."

The Central Pacific Hurricane Center said Olivia was more than 100 miles southwest of Honolulu late Wednesday. It was moving west with maximum sustained winds of 40 mph, just barely strong enough to qualify as a tropical storm.

Senate approves \$147B spending bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As a potentially catastrophic hurricane heads for the Carolinas, Congress is moving to avert a legislative disaster that could lead to a partial government shutdown just weeks before the November midterm elections.

The House was set to vote Thursday on a \$147 billion package to fund the Energy Department, veterans' programs and the legislative branch. The Senate on Wednesday night approved the measure 92-5.

The bill is the first of three spending packages Congress hopes to approve this month to avoid a government shutdown when the new budget year begins Oct. 1. It represents a compromise between House and Senate negotiators.

If all three compromise spending packages are approved by both chambers and signed by President Donald Trump, they would account for nearly 90 percent of an-

nual spending, including the military and most civilian agencies.

Lawmakers would still need a short-term patch for a portion of the government, including the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees Trump's long-promised wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Approval of the initial spending bill was so important to Republican leaders that they moved up a vote planned for Thursday, citing the threat of Hurricane Florence bearing down on the Southeastern U.S. coast. The storm is expected to make landfall Friday or Saturday in the Carolinas and create havoc along the East Coast.

The bill represents a marked departure from recent years, when Congress has routinely ignored agency-specific spending measures in favor of giant "omnibus" packages that fund the entire government all at once. Trump has said he won't sign another bloated bill, and lawmakers have been working to approve a series of small-

er spending measures.

"The American people expect us to get our work done. If we continue to work together in a bipartisan manner, we can successfully fund nearly 90 percent of the federal government on time through regular order — something Congress has not been able to do in many years," said Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby, R-Ala.

"This package is not perfect, but that is the nature of compromise," added Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy, the top Democrat on the Appropriations panel.

Leahy said he was concerned that the bill does not do enough to cover costs associated with a program that allows veterans to receive government-paid health care at private facilities.

"We do our veterans no favors when we make promises to them that we cannot keep," he said.

Apple unveils largest, priciest iPhone lineup

The Washington Post

Apple on Wednesday unveiled some big iPhone news — literally.

The trillion-dollar company introduced three large-screened iPhones at its annual fall product event, hosted at its headquarters in Cupertino, Calif. The record-setting price of the largest phone — starting at \$1,099 — is key to Apple's strategy as smartphone sales growth stalls.

The newest smartphones are called the iPhone Xs, iPhone Xs Max and the iPhone XR. All have the same basic design as last year's iPhone X, with fronts that are nearly all-screen — with the exception of a notch cut out from the top to house a front-fac-

ing camera — and lack a home button. The phones announced Wednesday are, collectively, the largest and most expensive iPhone lineup Apple has ever announced.

Apple has had a financially successful year, becoming the first publicly traded U.S. company to hit a \$1 trillion valuation.

Apple chief executive Tim Cook said Wednesday that the company is about to sell its 2 billionth iOS device.

But the tech giant has had to adjust its strategy to keep revenue and profit growing. Fewer people are rushing out to snap up new premium smartphones each year, opting instead to hold on to their phones for longer. That has slowed growth for many smartphones, including the iPhone, and

Apple has moved to offset slowing sales growth with higher-priced phones.

Apple's main competitor in smartphones, Samsung, has also tried that strategy by setting the price for its Galaxy Note line in the \$900 range. But it hasn't worked as well for Samsung as it has for Apple, which sold the iPhone X last year for \$999.

The iPhone Xs will be the same price (\$999) and size as its predecessor, sporting a 5.8-inch screen.

Apple is also releasing the \$749 iPhone XR for those who balk at a four-digit price tag. The phone looks similar to the iPhone X, but it has a 6.1-inch display and uses a different type of screen that is less expensive for Apple to produce.

Philippines begins evacuations ahead of supertyphoon

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine authorities began evacuating thousands of people Thursday from the path of the most powerful typhoon this year, closing schools, readying bulldozers for landslides and placing rescuers and troops on full alert in the country's north.

More than 4 million people live in areas at most risk from the storm, which the Joint Typhoon Warning Center in Hawaii categorized as a supertyphoon with power-

ful winds and gusts.

Typhoon Mangkhut could hit northeastern Cagayan province on Saturday. It was tracked on Thursday about 450 miles away in the Pacific with sustained winds of 127 miles per hour and gusts of up to 158 mph, Philippine forecasters said.

With a massive rain cloud band 560 miles wide, combined with seasonal monsoon rains, the typhoon could bring heavy to intense rains that could set off landslides and flash floods, the forecasters said. Storm warnings have been raised in 25 provinces

across the main northern island of Luzon, restricting sea and air travel.

Office of Civil Defense chief Ricardo Jalad told an emergency meeting led by President Rodrigo Duterte that about 4.2 million people in Cagayan, nearby Isabela province and outlying provincial regions are vulnerable to the most destructive effects near the typhoon's 77-mile-wide eye. Nearly 48,000 houses in those high-risk areas are made of light materials and vulnerable to Mangkhut's ferocious winds.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Emu escape artist heads to new home

ME LISBON — A Maine emu escape artist named Ralphie, also known as "The Bird," is heading to a new home in Georgia.

Janet Tuttle at Rockin' T Equine Sanctuary and Rescue in Lisbon said they have raised \$3,000 through a T-shirt fundraiser to send Ralphie to Noah's Ark Animal Sanctuary in Georgia.

Ralphie gained national fame with a high-profile escape from the Lisbon sanctuary in June. The 19-year-old, 5-foot-4-inch bird was captured the following day.

Johnsonville sculpture made by 'LOVE' artist

WI JOHNSONVILLE — What is believed to be one of the last pieces by the late Robert Indiana, the artist made famous by his iconic "LOVE" works, is in place outside the Johnsonville sausage company in Sheboygan County.

The 20-foot-tall stacked red letters spell "BRAT" and are a take on Indiana's enduring pop art "LOVE" series with its "LO" stacked on top of the "VE." Indiana died earlier this year at 89.

The Journal Sentinel reported that despite questions raised about artwork attributed to Indiana near the end of his life, Johnsonville's owners are confident in the sculpture's authenticity.

Kangaroo gets jump on owners and flees

MS HARRISVILLE — A kangaroo is on the run — or maybe the jump — in central Mississippi.

The Simpson County Sheriff's Office said deputies are looking for a 10-month-old kangaroo

since he bolted from his new owners only minutes after arriving in Mississippi. The Shute family said they bought the kangaroo, named Ricky, from an online auction.

Ricky has been sighted several times. No one has been able to catch the kangaroo because he's just too fast.

Report of urinating on flags sparks outrage

MA SOMERVILLE — A Massachusetts man who said he saw someone urinate on several small U.S. flags at a veterans' cemetery has sparked online outrage and a police investigation.

George Gatteny said he was passing the Somerville Veterans Memorial Cemetery on Monday when he saw a man pulling up the flags, throwing them behind a statue and urinating on them.

Gatteny told WFXT-TV he was "appalled" and tried confronting the man, who smirked and walked away.

Gatteny posted pictures of the flags and the man on Facebook along with an explanation. His post has 15,000 comments and 35,000 shares.

Boy survives meat skewer piercing skull

MO HARRISONVILLE — A 10-year-old Missouri boy is recovering after he was attacked by insects and tumbled from a tree, landing on a meat skewer that penetrated his skull from his face to the back of his head.

Miraculously, that's where Xavier Cunningham's bad luck ended. The skewer had completely missed Xavier's eye, brain, spinal cord and major blood vessels, The Kansas City Star reported.

Xavier's harrowing experience began Saturday afternoon when yellow jackets attacked

him in a tree house. He fell to the ground and his mother, Gabrielle Miller, ran down the stairs when she heard screaming. His skull was pierced from front-to-back with half a foot of skewer sticking out of his face.

There was no active bleeding, allowing the hospital time to get personnel in place for a removal surgery Sunday morning that was complicated by the fact that the skewer was square, with sharp edges, and had to come out perfectly straight.

Doctors think Xavier could recover completely.

Officials hope fatberg helps to educate

MI CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Officials in suburban Detroit hope the discovery of a large fatberg in a sewer line will help educate the public about what shouldn't go down the drain.

The Macomb County Public Works Office said workers cleared an 11-foot-diameter pipe in Clinton Township that was partially clogged by the collection of oils, grease, fat and solid items such as baby wipes. It was about 100 feet long and as much as 6 feet tall.

Public Works Commissioner Candice Miller said in a statement Tuesday that the "gross" fatberg "provides an opportunity ... to talk with people about the importance of restricting what goes down our sewers."

Town mourns its first female mayor, a dog

KY RABBITHASH — The town of Rabbit Hash is known for a string of highly esteemed mayors, one of whom died this week. She was 12, and a dog.

The Enquirer reported Rabbit Hash's first female mayor, Lucy Lou, died Sept. 10.

The colorful political figure

was a fixture in the media, with appearances on everything from Japanese television to "CBS Sunday Morning."

The collie was elected as the Ohio River town's third canine mayor. She served 2008-16.

Alligator bites man who went into lake

FL CLEARWATER — Police in Florida said an alligator bit a man who went into a lake to retrieve a flying disc.

News outlets reported the approximately 11-foot alligator bit Richard Peel, 35, on Monday. Clearwater police said the man was taken to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Peel had been playing disc golf at Cliff Stephens Park when he went to grab the disc from the lake. The alligator attacked him, but witnesses fought it off and pulled him out.

Cops: Worker threw grease at women

PA PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia police have charged a fast-food worker who they say threw hot grease on a customer during an argument.

Authorities said the incident happened around 3 a.m. Saturday at a Checkers in southwest Philadelphia.

Police said three women at the drive-thru window received the wrong order. The women told police an argument ensued after the female employee refused to change the order. Police said the employee threw containers of grease at the women.

The driver was taken to the hospital with first-degree burns while the other two women were treated at the scene.

Police have charged the employee with multiple offenses including aggravated assault.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Jags forced to relive Pats play

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Myles Jack squeezed into his locker stall, his leather chair pushed to one side, his sweaty clothes scattered across the floor.

He had Jacksonville's season opener against the New York Giants running through his mind, so the mere mention of New England caught him off guard.

"Oh, we're going way back?" Jack asked last week.

Just eight months. Just to the team's final game of the 2017 season. Just to the closest the small-market franchise has even been to the Super Bowl.

Just to one play, really. The Play, actually.

With the Patriots (1-0) and Jaguars (1-0) meeting again Sunday in Jacksonville, it's sure to be a topic of conversation outside — maybe even inside — the locker rooms.

The Jags allowed a third-and-18 conversion in the fourth quarter of the AFC championship game at New England in late January, a lapse that was instrumental in the Patriots overcoming a 10-point deficit and one that still haunts Jacksonville's players and coaches more than 250 days later.

"I was just starting to forget about that play," Jack said. "I can't believe I have to relive that."

The Jaguars did just about everything right through three-plus quarters against the defending Super Bowl champions. The defense pressured Tom Brady, sacking him three times. The offense controlled the clock, keeping the three-time league MVP on the sideline. Together, they built a lead and stretched it to 20-10 with a field goal early in the final frame. Jack even forced a fumble on the next possession that could have been a touchdown.

He was ruled down by contact, and the Jags followed with a three-and-out series.

Everything started to unravel a few minutes later.

With 10:49 remaining and the Pats facing third-and-18 at their own 25-yard line, the Jaguars liked their chances — and for good reason. Jacksonville's vaunted defense ranked fifth in the league in preventing third-down conversions of 16 yards or longer.

The unit featured six Pro Bowl selections, two speedy linebackers, the league's top-rated secondary and arguably the best pass rush in franchise history. The Jags had few, if any, holes on that side of the ball.

In third-down situations of 16 yards or longer, they had stopped opponents short of first downs 17 times in 18 tries during the regular season.

None of those came against Brady.

The New England quarterback handled a low snap in a shotgun formation, took a five-step drop to buy extra time, shuffled left to avoid Marcell Dareus' rush and then threw a low pass to Danny Amendola in the middle of the field that

he hauled in for a 21-yard gain.

"I remember how big the play was," Patriots running back James White recalled. "I don't remember the exact play call or what-not, but it was a big play. I mean, Danny always comes up with plays like that, finds the right spot in zone. We had good protection; the offensive line did a great job. Tom did a good job finding him. We needed that play in order to get to where we wanted to be, so it was huge play."

New England scored four plays later, seizing the momentum from the unlikely conversion and leaving the Jags reeling.

Players, coaches and fans point to other reasons for the Patriots' comeback: Brady being Brady; officials ruling Jack down; Pro Bowl defensive linemen Calais Campbell and Yannick Ngakoue getting injured; two busted coverages near the goal line that resulted in touchdowns; and the offense's inability to run the ball late.

But the one that sticks out for everyone is the third-and-long play.

"It still haunts you a little bit, but just like every game, you learn good things and bad things," Jaguars defensive coordinator Todd Wash said. "Would you change things? Would you not change things? I do not think one play determines the outcome of a ball game. I think if you do, you are crazy. Obviously, we would have liked to get off the grass there."

Wash called for a zone scheme, "Two Palms" to be precise. It was a calculated move based on the belief that most of Brady's explosive passing plays come against man coverage.

After the game, All-Pro cornerback Jalen Ramsey questioned why the Jags played so much zone in the second half, noting how Amendola found holes for the key reception as well as two touchdowns.

On the third-down catch, Amendola ran a seam route that started between the left-side numbers and the hash marks. He curled behind Jack, who had taken a few steps right to cover White out of the backfield, and in front of safety Tashaun Gipson.

Gipson, who missed practice during the week because of a foot injury, took the lame for the reception.

"That is just one of them things where you got relaxed," said Gipson, adding that he thought the team's pass rush would get to Brady. "I am not going to lie to you. I told myself I would never answer this question again. But that play right there, I would be lying if I said that didn't keep me up all offseason. Got lax."

Now the Jaguars are left to deal with The Play forever and relive it this week.

"Now you're making me sad," Jack said.

Buckeyes face first real test

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio State so far proved it can dispense merciless beatings to opponents it is supposed to beat. The Buckeyes will learn more about their potential when they travel to Arlington, Texas, this week to face another AP Top 25 team in TCU.

This will be the first real measuring stick of the season for the No. 4 Buckeyes, a road game in front of what essentially will be a home crowd for TCU, whose Fort Worth campus is a half-hour drive from AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys.

A few sure things have emerged so far for Ohio State: New starting quarterback Dwayne Haskins Jr. can stand up against a rush and deliver pinpoint passes in stride to any one of a cadre of talented receivers. Either one of the pair of tailbacks, Mike Weber or J.K. Dobbins, is capable of breaking loose for big plays.

And the No. 4 Buckeyes (2-0) can operate just fine without suspended coach Urban Meyer on the sideline.

"We're pretty deep, a lot of playmakers," said acting coach Ryan Day, who will run the show on game day one more time before Meyer is allowed to return for the Sept. 22 matchup against Tulane. "When you get the ball to those guys in space and stretch the ball vertically and horizontally, you can really be explosive. Our ability to protect (quarterbacks) is really good right now, too. So the rhythm has been good."

The No. 15 Horned Frogs (2-0), who routed SMU last Saturday, will present a more complicated challenge.

"They have all the answers," Day said of the experienced TCU defense. "Any time a defense has been together that long, they've seen so many things come their way, so they have adjustments, they make quick adjustments, they know how you're trying to attack them."

Stewart, Storm surge to title past Mystics

Associated Press

FAIRFAX, Va. — Sue Bird and Breanna Stewart fretted following the regular-season opener after the Seattle Storm lost at home to the Phoenix Mercury.

"We thought, 'Oh, crap, what kind of year is this going to be?'" Bird reminisced.

The answer came nearly four months later with a championship.

Stewart led the Storm to their third WNBA title Wednesday night, scoring 30 points in a 98-82 victory over the Washington Mystics in Game 3 of the best-of-five series.

Natasha Howard added career-high 29 points and 14 rebounds for the Storm. Seattle won 26 games during the regular season — 11 more than the 2017 campaign — entered the playoffs as the No. 1 seed, and swept the finals.

Stewart was the league MVP and was selected the Finals MVP after averaging 25.6 points in the three games. She scored 17 points in the first half as the Storm raced to a 47-30 lead.

"Stewie was just amazing," Storm coach Dan Hughes said. "She truly was the MVP of this league. She truly was the MVP of these Finals. God blessed me with an opportunity to coach her and I will be forever grateful."

Bird, also a member of a Seattle's championship teams in 2004 and 2010, was certainly appreciative of the title — and the growth of the Storm's younger players. Seattle landed Jewell Loyd and Stewart, both All-Stars in 2018 with Bird, with the No. 1 overall picks in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

"Each [championship] is special in its own way, but this one is probably going to have a different meaning for me," said the 37-year-old point guard who had 10 points and 10 assists. "There is probably no comparison to be honest. I didn't know if I'd be playing at this point. Our

team went through a rebuild and yes, I decided to stay. Once we got Stewie and Jewell, we knew we'd get to the other side, but how do you know you're going to get to the other side this fast?"

The coach sensed something brewing early in his first year with the franchise. Following the Phoenix loss, Seattle won five in a row.

"I think this was our year," Hughes said. "All year you could just see the escalation."

Elena Delle Donne scored 23 points for the Mystics. Kristi Toliver had 22 points.

"Obviously, this finals didn't go the way we wanted it. The great thing is we can still improve. We don't feel like we peaked and this is it for us," Delle Donne said.

Washington reached the Finals for the first time in franchise history.

"There's been a huge transformation with the culture of this team," said Delle Donne, who was acquired by Washington before the 2017 season. "Last year we were brand new. I didn't know (Toliver's) favorite beer. That's a pretty important thing to know about Panda. Now I can go to the bar and order her everything she needs."

Toliver, seated next to the first-team All-WNBA player, chimed in. "I'm going to need a lot tonight."

Alysha Clark had 15 points for Seattle.

Washington battled Seattle and history. Since the league went to a best-of-five format in 2005, four teams trailed 0-2. Each lost Game 3. The Mystics joined that unwanted club. Poor perimeter shooting contributed. Washington finished 8-for-23 on three-pointers in Game 3 and 11-for-60 (18.3) in the series.

Despite the misfires, Washington rallied from down 18 points to trailing 72-67 with 6:49 remaining. Starting with a Stewart three-point play, Seattle countered with eight consecutive points and pulled away.

Capitals still recovering as training camps open

Associated Press

When Alex Ovechkin embraced Josh Norman in a meeting of two of Washington's biggest sports stars, the Redskins cornerback had a question for the Capitals' Stanley Cup-winning captain.

"You still celebrating?" Norman asked.

"We're done," Ovechkin said. "We're done for right now."

The Capitals seemed to celebrate as hard as any champion in NHL history. When they get on the ice for the first practices of training camp Friday, they will be just one of 31 teams chasing a title all over again.

"We have to forget already about that and focus," center Evgeny Kuznetsov said. "We have to move forward. When you taste that win, you want to do it over again. To do that, it's not easy."

A year after being written off as title contenders, the Capitals are now a focal point of the NHL as camps open. Elsewhere in the Eastern Conference, the rival Penguins will look to rebound from a second-round postseason exit, the Lightning are stacked even after general manager Steve Yzerman stepped down and the Maple Leafs look like Cup favorites after adding John Tavares.

The Western Conference-champion Golden Knights won't have Nate Schmidt for any game in the preseason or the first 20 of the regular season after a performance-enhancing drug suspension, while the Blues loaded up on centers in a bid to move past recent playoff disappointments — like the Capitals did a year ago.

Some things to watch from training camps around the league:

Tryout time

At least 20 players will attend camps on professional tryout agreements, with defenseman Brandon Davidson in Chicago and winger Scottie Upshall in Edmonton among those most likely to earn a contract. The Oilers — who have the selling

point of playing with Connor McDavid — also invited defenseman Jason Garrison and former Capitals forward Alex Chiasson to camp. Edmonton is the land of opportunity this month after missing the playoffs by 17 points last season. The young Bruins are bringing in veterans Daniel Winnik, Lee Stempniak and Mark Fayne on tryouts. Each one will have to impress to make it.

Who's not there

A handful of restricted free agents remain unsigned, including Maple Leafs forward William Nylander, Golden Knights defenseman Shea Theodore and Oilers defenseman Darnell Nurse. Nylander wasn't listed on Toronto's 73-player training camp roster released Wednesday. RFAs lack leverage and time, with the season coming up next month. Still, such situations are usually resolved before the opener.

New coaches

Washington's Todd Reirden is one of six new coaches, but he has been on Barry Trotz's staff the past four seasons and had a hand in winning the Cup. Rod Brind'Amour has plenty of familiarity with the Hurricanes after seven seasons as an assistant but an entirely different challenge as he looks to end a league-worst nine-year playoff drought. New faces in new places include Trotz taking his Cup ring to the Islanders, former Carolina coach Bill Peters in Calgary, Jim Montgomery in Dallas and David Quinn with the Rangers.

Rookie watch

Buffalo No. 1 pick Rasmus Dahlin is the player to watch in the preseason to see if the smooth-skating Swedish defenseman can make the NHL look as effortless as previous endeavors. Dahlin will make the Sabres' roster and could contribute immediately on a blue line that needs it.

MLB roundup

Dodgers avoid Reds' sweep

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Dodgers manager Dave Roberts didn't breathe a sigh of relief. He could have.

Yasmani Grandal and Justin Turner drove in three runs each, and Los Angeles beat Cincinnati 8-1 Wednesday to avoid a season sweep by the last-place Reds.

Joc Pederson homered for the Dodgers, and Grandal had three hits.

"When we played them in L.A., they were on a hot streak," said Grandal, Cincinnati's 2010 top amateur draft pick. "It didn't really matter how we played. We were trying to figure out what to do with our guys. We had a lot of guys hurt. It seems like they played us hard all year."

Los Angeles remained 1½ games behind NL West-leading Colorado and pulled within two games of St. Louis for the second NL wild card after the Cardinals lost to Pittsburgh 4-3. The Dodgers had been 0-6 against the Reds and were on the verge of being swept by Cincinnati in a season for the first time.

"We can beat them," Roberts

said.

Twins 3, Yankees 1: Jake Odorizzi's no-hit bid was broken up when Greg Bird hit a run-scoring double with one out in the eighth inning, and host Minnesota beat the Yankees to take two of three from New York.

Brewers 5, Cubs 1: Curtis Granderson homered, tripled and scored three runs, Lorenzo Cain added three hits and visiting Milwaukee beat Chicago to move within a game of the NL Central lead.

Nationals 5, Phillies 1: Stephen Strasburg threw seven impressive innings, Bryce Harper, Ryan Zimmerman and Juan Soto homered and Washington beat host Philadelphia to complete a three-game sweep.

Rays 3, Indians 1: Blake Snell took a no-hit bid into the seventh inning and got his major league-leading 19th win, leading Tampa Bay past visiting Cleveland.

Athletics 10, Orioles 0: Matt Olson homered during a 10-run third inning in which the first 11 batters reached base, and Oakland beat host Baltimore for its sixth straight victory.

Astros 5, Tigers 4: George Springer made a diving catch

in the eighth inning to help preserve Houston's lead, and the Astros swept a series at Comerica Park for the first time.

Braves 2, Giants 1: Pinch-hitter Tyler Flowers drove in the go-ahead run in the ninth inning, and visiting Atlanta moved closer to clinching the NL East.

Pirates 4, Cardinals 3: Jameson Taillon won his fourth straight start, Jacob Stallings drove in three runs and Pittsburgh snapped host St. Louis' three-game winning streak.

Padres 5, Mariners 4: Austin Hedges and Hunter Renfroe hit long home runs, and visiting San Diego held on to beat fast-sinking Seattle for a two-game sweep.

Angels 8, Rangers 1: Rookie Francisco Arcia homered twice and drove in four runs, rookie Jose Fernandez hit his second career homer and host Los Angeles beat Texas.

Mets 13, Marlins 0: Zack Wheeler and Jay Bruce helped New York jump on visiting Miami on a long, soggy day.

White Sox 4, Royals 2 (12): Tim Anderson hit a two-run homer in the 12th inning to lift Chicago past host Kansas City.

BoSox earn 100th win

Associated Press

BOSTON — The scoreboards at Fenway Park were all flashing "100 WINS" to celebrate the Red Sox reaching the milestone for the first time since Ted Williams returned from World War II.

David Price was already thinking about No. 101.

"That's what we've done all year," Price said on Wednesday night after pitching seven innings of three-hit ball to beat the Toronto Blue Jays 1-0. "That's why we have 100 wins right now."

Price (15-6) struck out seven to win his sixth straight decision. The Red Sox left-hander is unbeaten in 11 starts and is 5-0 with a 1.56 ERA in five starts since the All-Star break.

Boston's magic number for clinching the AL East dropped to seven over the Yankees.

"Don't get me wrong; 100 is 100," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "But we've got bigger goals, obviously."

A night after becoming the first major league team this year to clinch a playoff spot, Boston won for the 10th time in 14 games and moved a season-high 54 games above .500 for the first time since the 1946 team of Williams, Johnny Pesky, Bobby Doerr and Dom DiMaggio went 104-50.

Rockies rally to win on LeMahieu's home run

Associated Press

DENVER — DJ LeMahieu found himself in the spotlight even if he doesn't much care for being in the spotlight.

Walk-off homers will do that. Especially the first one of his career, in the middle of a heated division race.

LeMahieu hit a two-run homer off Yoshihisa Hirano in the ninth inning, and the NL West-leading Colorado Rockies rallied to beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 5-4 on Wednesday night.

"It was cool. Just a great moment," the soft-spoken LeMahieu said. "That was awesome."

LeMahieu launched a fastball over the fence in right as the Rockies kept their 1½-game advantage over Los Angeles intact after the Dodgers beat Cincinnati ear-

lier in the day. The Diamondbacks fell 3½ games behind in the division race. This is the latest in the season the Rockies have been alone in first place since 1995.

A night after getting his first career save, Hirano (4-3) allowed a single by Gerardo Parra off the glove of first baseman Paul Goldschmidt to begin the ninth. Charlie Blackmon bunted Parra over to second and LeMahieu followed with the walk-off homer. He was doused with water after crossing home plate as fans chanted "DJ, DJ, DJ!"

"I was just looking to drive the ball. It was a lot of fun," LeMahieu said.

Hirano's pitch to LeMahieu was the latest miscue by a struggling Arizona bullpen where some roles have been juggled.

"He just made a mistake," Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo said. "He

threw a fastball that could be taken the other way."

Overlooked in LeMahieu's ninth-inning theatrics was the performance of Colorado's bullpen, which turned in five perfect innings, including two each by Chris Rusin and Scott Oberg. Wade Davis (3-6) picked up the win by pitching a flawless ninth, including two strikeouts.

That marks the first time the Rockies' bullpen has tossed five perfect innings in franchise history, according to the team.

Since 2015, the Diamondbacks are now 17-6 against Colorado during games played in September or later — including their win in the NL wild-card contest last October.

"These are tough, tough to lose under these circumstances," Lovullo said. "It hurts."