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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Mattis: Jury out on women in combat

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — There are not enough women serving in traditionally all-male combat jobs to determine whether the 3-year-old policy to open all military positions to everyone has been successful, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told a roomful of future officers Tuesday.

Prompted by a cadet's question during an appearance at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Mattis said "the jury is out" on whether women belong in close combat jobs, such as the infantry or armor units. Mattis' less than full-throated endorsement of women serving in those roles drew condemnation from some advocates for women serving in combat roles.

"His remarks undermine the fearless women who have selflessly volunteered to serve their country in the most dangerous jobs in the military," the Service Women's Action Network, a group that advocates for female servicemembers, said Wednesday in a statement.

Mattis' immediate predecessor, former Defense Secretary Ash Carter, opened all military jobs to women in 2015 in a controversial decision that was opposed by senior Marine Corps leaders. Top officials with

the Pentagon's other three military services and U.S. Special Operations Command concurred with the decision made by Carter, former President Barack Obama's final defense secretary, to allow women to serve in front-line combat roles following studies completed by the individual services.

Mattis told the VMI cadets that he and senior uniformed officials, including Gen. Mark Milley, the Army's chief of staff, and Gen. Robert Neller, the commandant of the Marine Corps, continue to study the issue and hope to have conclusive data soon.

"This is a policy that I inherited, and so far the cadre is so small, we have no data on it," said Mattis, who retired as a four-star Marine general in 2013, before women could serve in such roles. "We're hoping to get data soon. There are a few stalwart young ladies who are charging into this, but they are too few."

Officials with SWAN challenged the lack of data that Mattis cited, accusing him of obstructing the ongoing process of integrating women into once all-male units.

"When the most senior military leader makes it clear that this was not a policy that he supported but one that he 'inherited' he is tacitly endorsing efforts to undermine the success of the women currently serv-

ing in the infantry and in combat arms," the group said in a statement. "He is sabotaging the efforts of his men and women who are working to integrate women, and his remarks likely put women at greater risk from those in their units who would do them harm because he has signaled that he doubts women belong in their units."

Previously, Mattis had indicated in testimony to Congress that he would support female troops serving in the formerly closed positions as long as they could meet the same physical and mental standards that men in those roles must.

"I have no plan to oppose women in any aspect of our military," Mattis told the Senate Armed Services Committee in January 2017 during his confirmation hearing to serve as President Donald Trump's defense secretary. "The standards are the standards, and when people meet the standards, then that is the end of the discussion on that."

Army, Marine Corps and Special Operations Command leaders said in 2015 that they expected few women would be interested in serving in close combat roles. Only a small number of women have attempted to join those fields since the ban was lifted. But the numbers are increasing.

Report: Marine F-35B is set for Afghan combat mission

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Marine Corps F-35B Lightning fighter jet could fly its first combat mission over Afghanistan in the coming days, CNN reported Wednesday.

The stealth aircraft were traveling from the Gulf of Aden to the Persian Gulf aboard the USS Essex amphibious assault ship on Wednesday morning, CNN reported, citing an unnamed official.

The fifth-generation fighter jets had been conducting reconnaissance missions in Somalia and were ready to provide close air support to U.S. forces in the country but were never needed for that purpose, CNN said.

The U.S. military in Afghanistan told

Stars and Stripes on Wednesday that it was aware of the report but would not comment on future operations.

The F-35Bs are attached to the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, which left San Diego with the Essex Amphibious Ready Group on July 10. The group's flagship, a big-deck amphibious assault ship, can carry up to six F-35Bs, a variant designed to land vertically and take off from shorter distances than other jets.

Lockheed Martin, the jet's primary contractor, touts the F-35 line — the costliest aircraft program in U.S. history — as combining stealth capabilities, supersonic speed, extreme agility and state-of-the-art sensors.

Critics in Congress have questioned the F-35B's combat readiness, citing a string of software, engine and weapons systems

problems, but U.S. military officials have promised the glitches are being resolved.

News of the jets' possible use in Afghanistan came as the United Nations expressed concern over a surge in civilian casualties caused by airstrikes in the country.

The U.N. Mission in Afghanistan said 21 civilians, including children, were killed in two separate airstrikes over the weekend. It was unclear whether the strikes were carried out by Afghan or U.S. forces.

In the first six months of the year, the UNAMA documented 353 civilian casualties, including 149 deaths, from airstrikes, a 52 percent increase from the same period in 2017. The spike corresponds with an uptick in U.S. air power under the Trump administration's strategy to force the Taliban to the negotiating table.

EOD airmen to feel full weight of 'Gruester'

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Air Force explosive ordnance technicians might soon become painfully familiar with the "Gruester," the nickname for a grueling component of the career-specific fitness test being introduced for them.

This month, 21 EOD airmen from seven bases put the service's new EOD Tier 2 physical fitness prototype test through a trial run.

The results from the 36-hour assessment will be used to establish a baseline for fitness and strength, Air Force officials said.

The field test at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., was part of an effort to evaluate how well airmen in certain career fields

can perform the physical tasks required of their jobs. The tailored fitness testing is geared toward airmen whose jobs are more physically demanding, such as EOD, tactical air control party operators and air liaison officers.

Unlike the current Tier 1 fitness test, "this will be the new standard for anyone who wants to be an EOD operator regardless of age and gender," Capt. Cory McCart, EOD flight commander for the 96th Civil Engineer Group at Eglin, said in a statement.

The Gruester was one of 10 exercises assessed during baseline testing Sept. 10-12. The drill involved a combination of pushups, planks, a rollover with a 50-pound sandbag and an over-the-shoulder carry with

the sandbag for a 15-meter run for 20 rounds. A 15-meter run without the 50-pound sandbag was also performed between rounds.

"The Gruester was brutal," Tech. Sgt. Cole Carroll-Grandegenett, of the 52nd Civil Engineer Squadron at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, said in a statement.

The EOD airmen in the pilot test were the ones who coined the nickname for the grueling routine.

The new test is more than an excuse to make airmen sweat.

Carroll-Grandegenett said the Air Force's Exercise Science Unit found a correlation between an ability to perform the Gruester well, and endurance and energy conservation in the field as EOD operators,

according to the Air Force.

Eglin was chosen for the pilot test because of its high heat and humidity, training infrastructure and other factors.

Once the new test and standards are implemented, airmen will be given a year to adapt before the standards are officially enforced, officials said.

The other exercises in the Eglin test included a 1.5-mile run; a 1,000-meter row; a 20-pound medicine ball toss, overhead and sideways; a grip strength test; a trap-bar deadlift with maximum weight for five repetitions; pullups; cross-knee crunches to a metronome at 56 beats per minute until failure; a farmer's carry with two 50-pound sandbags (one in each hand) for 100 meters; and a 3-inch square-bar static hold.

Congress nears final OK of defense spending bill

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A massive defense spending measure that would direct more than \$670 billion toward a wave of Defense Department increases, including the largest boost to servicemembers' pay in nearly a decade and new gains in the number of troops, equipment and weapons for the 2019 fiscal year, could see passage on the House floor this week.

The effort is part of a so-called "minibus" appropriations measure, H.R. 6157, a larger package of more than \$850 billion to fund labor, health and human services and education priorities. It will also fund priorities directed in the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act.

The defense budget moves on two tracks. The annual NDAA directs policy and spending plans for the military while the defense appropriations bill is what actually moves money to the Pentagon.

President Donald Trump signed the 2019 NDAA, H.R. 5515, into law Aug. 13, which ushered through a series of new policy reforms, such as revamping the military's "up or out" promotion system and policies to reign in sexual misconduct and domestic abuse among the ranks. The \$716 billion NDAA also authorizes a 2.6 percent pay raise for servicemembers, as well as new purchases of aircraft, ships, submarines and

weapons.

The NDAA directs funding for the Defense Department as well as atomic energy defense activities under the Energy Department. Because it funds additional agencies, the NDAA directs larger spending priorities than its appropriations counterpart legislation, H.R. 6157, said Andrew Sherbo, a University of Denver finance professor who has tracked government and defense budget issues.

Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said Tuesday that he was confident the legislation would pass on the House floor this week and be signed into law by Trump in time for the start of the 2019 fiscal year on Monday.

"I don't think there will be a veto ... He's been very consistent about rebuilding the military from beginning to end and this is the biggest single step we can take to rebuilding the military," Thornberry told reporters in a briefing. And "there have been regular conversations between House and Senate leadership and the president for weeks, if not months, about what happens the last week in September."

But several times this year, Trump has threatened a veto of spending measures if Congress doesn't approve significant funding for a southern border wall, a move that could trigger a government shutdown.

"If it happens, it happens," Trump has

said about a shutdown. "If it's about border security, I'm willing to do anything. We have to protect our borders."

A veto could set into motion a dramatic turn of events. At the end of this week, the House is slated to go into recess until the November midterm elections, Thornberry said.

"I understand the president is frustrated about other appropriations that are not part of this, but I believe he will sign [H.R. 6157], and I believe it will be a major achievement — as weird as that sounds — to actually get our work done on time in a way that benefits the military so much," Thornberry said.

If the defense spending measure is passed by Monday, it would mark the first time in about 10 years that the Defense Department won't operate under a temporary funding measure, otherwise known as a continuing resolution, for the start of its fiscal year.

During Thornberry's briefing Tuesday, he also lauded moves toward the creation of a "Space Force," supported recent comments on potentially ramped-up U.S. presence in Syria, and lamented the Army's recent miss on recruiting goals. And even in the face of rising U.S. debt and deficits, the House Armed Services Committee is ready to hold a Wednesday hearing to examine the correlation between a strong military and a prosperous economy.

"Economic growth, to have that, requires military strength," Thornberry said.

New accusation brought against Kavanaugh

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate Judiciary Committee is reviewing allegations by a third woman accusing Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh of sexual misconduct, a panel spokesman said Wednesday, in yet another potential blow to his prospects for Senate confirmation.

As in the allegations by his two previous accusers, the latest incident is alleged to have occurred decades ago. In a three-page sworn declaration, Julie Swetnick, of Washington, says she witnessed Kavanaugh “consistently engage in excessive drinking and inappropriate contact of a sexual nature with women in the early 1980s.”

Her attorney, Michael Avenatti, posted the declaration on Twitter and provided it to the committee.

Kavanaugh denied her allegation as he has the others.

President Donald Trump tweeted that Avenatti was a “third-rate lawyer” pushing “false accusations.”

The new development came a day before Kavanaugh and his first accuser, Christine Blasey Ford, are to testify to the Judiciary Committee in what looms as a critical moment in the 51-year-old conservative jurist’s quest to join the high court. As of now, Republicans controlling that panel have announced no plans to focus Thursday’s session on the claims of the two other women.

Kavanaugh released a statement denying the new charges.

“This is ridiculous and from the Twilight Zone. I don’t know who this is and this never happened,” Kavanaugh said.

The committee also released a two-page

prepared statement from Kavanaugh for Thursday’s hearing in which he “categorically and unequivocally” denies Ford’s allegation.

She has said he forced her into a room at a high school party, held her on a bed and tried removing her clothes as he muffled her mouth with his hands. Ford says she eventually escaped.

Kavanaugh’s written testimony for the committee went a bit farther than the description of his youthful behavior he gave in a Fox News Channel interview Monday, when he said “people” may have drunk too much at high school parties.

“I drank beer with my friends, usually on weekends. Sometimes I had too many. In retrospect, I said and did things in high school that make me cringe now,” Kavanaugh said.

Trump: China attempting election meddling

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — President Donald Trump on Wednesday accused China of attempting to interfere with the upcoming United States congressional elections and claimed its efforts are motivated by opposition to his tough trade policy.

Trump, speaking in front of world leaders while chairing the United Nations Security Council for the first time, did not present evidence for his claim, which came amid an ongoing special counsel investigation into Russia’s attempts to interfere in the 2016 U.S. election and concerns that the November elections could also be vulnerable.

“Regrettably, we found that China has been attempting to interfere in our upcoming 2018 election,” Trump said “They do not want me or us to win because I am the first president ever to challenge China on trade.”

U.S. officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment. With the elections less than two months away, U.S. intelligence officials have said they are not now seeing the intensity of Russian intervention registered in 2016 but are particularly concerned about activity by Russia, China, Iran and North Korea.

Trump also used his moment chairing

the Security Council meeting about nuclear proliferation to issue a strong warning to nuclear aspirant Iran, which he deemed the “world’s leading sponsor of terror” fueling “conflict around the region and far beyond.”

The president has withdrawn the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran, accusing the country of destabilizing actions throughout the region and support for terrorist groups like Hezbollah. Tough sanctions are due to kick in against Tehran in November, and Trump warned that there would be “severe consequences” for any nation that defied them.

Marine will receive Medal of Honor next month

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A retired Marine sergeant major who twice scaled a concrete wall unprotected and in full view of enemy fighters so he could move wounded troops to safety in the midst of the Battle of Hue during the Vietnam War will receive the Medal of Honor next month, the White House announced Tuesday.

John L. Canley, who was a gunnery sergeant when he led Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines into Vietnam’s Hue City on Jan. 31, 1968, and fought for six more days, will be awarded the nation’s highest military honor by President Donald Trump on Oct. 17 at the White House. The Medal of Honor will upgrade the Navy Cross that

Canley received in 1970.

Stars and Stripes reported in July that Canley, 80, of Oxnard, Calif., would receive the Medal of Honor.

Following a prolonged effort by friends and lawmakers to see Canley’s medal upgraded, he will become the seventh individual to receive the Medal of Honor from Trump. Former Army Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II will receive the award Monday for his actions as a Special Forces medic in Afghanistan in 2008, an upgrade of his Silver Star. All of the Medals of Honor that Trump has presented during his presidency have been award upgrades.

Canley and his company fought off several attacks as their convoy moved toward Hue at the end of January following the surprise Tet Offensive that left the lightly

defended city in the north of then-South Vietnam inundated with North Vietnamese troops and Vietcong fighters, according to a description of his actions.

After his company’s commander was seriously wounded, Canley took control of the unit. During the course of the week-long siege, Canley successfully neutralized enemy combatants and repeatedly brought injured Marines to safety, despite sustaining several shrapnel injuries.

Canley commanded the company for three days, exposing himself repeatedly to enemy fire as he helped drag injured Marines to safety. On Feb. 6, at Hue’s hospital compound, the site of some of the battle’s fiercest fighting, he twice scaled 10-foot-high walls, exposing himself to enemy fire, to help wounded Marines escape to safety.

Cosby backer decries trial as racist, sexist

Associated Press

NORRISTOWN, Pa. — A publicist for the once-beloved Bill Cosby complained that his conviction and three- to 10-year prison term for sexual assault stem from a racist and sexist justice system as the defense vowed to appeal the first celebrity trial of the #MeToo era.

Cosby, 81, spent his first night alone in a Pennsylvania prison after being accustomed to a life filled with handlers and household help. Corrections officials announced Wednesday that Cosby will serve his sentence at SCI Phoenix, a new state prison about 20 miles from the gated estate where a jury concluded he drugged and molested a woman in 2004.

Cosby spokesman Andrew Wyatt said Tuesday after the comedian's sentencing that Cosby was "one of the greatest civil rights leaders in the United States for over the past 50 years" while decrying the trial as the "most sexist and racist" in the country's history.

The judge, prosecutor and jury saw it differently.

"No one is above the law. And no one should be treated disproportionately because of who they are, where they live, or even their wealth, celebrity or philanthropy," Montgomery County Judge Steven O'Neill said in sentencing Cosby.

"We prosecute where the evidence takes us and that was done in this case," District Attorney Kevin Steele said. "When Judge (Eduardo) Robreno released the deposition and said that this is perhaps criminal, we're obligated to look at that and we did and we worked through the case and we got to where we are today."

Cosby was found guilty in April of drugging and sexually assaulting a woman at his estate after being barraged with similar accusations from more than 60 women over the past five decades.

Spokesman Wyatt said all three of the psychologists who testified against Cosby were "white women who make money off of accusing black men of being sexual predators."

SC preps for storm aftereffects

Associated Press

GEORGETOWN, S.C. — A week ago, firefighters in Conway, S.C., went to a neighborhood and told surprised residents their houses would flood from Hurricane Florence even though they had never had water in them before.

On Monday and Tuesday, those same firefighters checked on those same neighborhoods with maps that detailed each of the nearly 1,000 homes that could expect to be inundated.

"It's kind of playing out exactly like we forecast," Conway Fire Chief Le Hendrick said.

Twelve days after the once-fierce hurricane arrived on the coast, and more than a week after it blew north and dissipated, rivers swollen by its relentless rains are still flooding homes and businesses in their paths as they make their way to the sea.

The slow-moving disaster has allowed forecasters to pinpoint exactly who will flood.

There have been few rescues or surprises in South Carolina — just black, reeking water slowly seeping in and even more slowly receding.

"You find yourself sitting around a lot and thinking, 'What if' or, 'I wonder what things are like right now,'" said Vivian Chestnut, who left her home in Conway a week ago and might not get back until well into October. "And wondering what you are going to find when you finally get back."

The Waccamaw River, which flows through the city of 23,000, was expected to crest on Wednesday at 21.7 feet. It surpassed the previous record high of 17.9 feet set in 2016 by Hurricane Matthew on Friday.

The waterway was not expected to drop below 18 feet or so until sometime next week.

The river floods at 11 feet.

All that water is making its way to Georgetown, where five different rivers reach the sea.

Officials there said the worst of the flooding would start Wednesday and last until Thursday, likely leaving only one highway into the city.

If that weren't bad enough, more weather was forming off the coast in a hurricane season that still has two months to go. National Hurricane Center forecasters watching a low pressure area about 200 miles south of Cape Hatteras, N.C., said it could become a tropical depression as it approaches the coast before moving quickly to the north.

While it will likely dump some additional rain on the Florence-battered city of Wilmington, it wasn't expected to be significant enough to worsen the flooding.

Report: Suicide rate rose among young vets

By NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The number of suicides among younger veterans increased "substantially" from 2015 to 2016, according to a new report released Wednesday by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The new VA National Suicide Data Report, which shows that suicide among veterans continues to be higher than in the rest of the population, reveals younger veterans are particularly at risk. For every 100,000 veterans age 18 to 34, 45 committed suicide in 2016 — up from 40.4 for every 100,000 in 2015.

"It confirms what we've been seeing anecdotally," said Paul Rieckhoff, founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "It's a wave we've been seeing for years and trying to sound the alarm on."

The suicide rate also increased among female veterans from 2015 to 2016, the data show. The suicide rate for female veterans is 1.8 times greater than

for other women.

Overall, there were more than 6,000 veteran suicides each year from 2008 to 2016. Veterans accounted for 14 percent of all suicides in the United States in 2016, yet veterans make up only 8 percent of the population, the VA found.

In 2016, guns were used in nearly 70 percent of veteran suicides. For the rest of the population, firearms were used in 48 percent of suicides that year.

"The issues we have to be courageous enough to talk through include access to guns," Rieckhoff said. "A real conversation around that is overdue."

In previous years, the VA determined the average number of veteran suicides each day, the last of which was calculated at 20 per day in 2014 — an oft-cited statistic. The VA stopped that practice with this newest report because the statistic is "commonly misinterpreted."

The release of the report coincides with a hearing scheduled by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for Thurs-

day, when lawmakers are slated to discuss veteran suicide and the country's suicide-prevention efforts.

In the report, the VA described veteran suicide as an "urgent crisis" that the agency can't address alone.

"Because many veterans do not use VA services and benefits, we must build networks of support, communication and care across the communities where veterans live and thrive," the report states.

The data help the VA and other advocates tailor suicide-prevention initiatives to reach the most affected groups of veterans, the report states.

Rieckhoff sees the new report as a call to action.

"We've never really had the president stand up and say, 'This is a national health priority. This is a national security priority,'" Rieckhoff said. "We think that's what's going to be necessary to mobilize the country. The issue is, can we get people to pay attention and get involved?"

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

10-day sentence to be served over 10 years

FL MIAMI — A Florida man convicted in a fatal car crash that killed his teenage sister and two men in another vehicle has been sentenced to 10 days in jail — one day on the anniversary of the crash for 10 years.

The Miami Herald reported Tuesday that a judge imposed the unusual sentence on Erick Betancourt, 24. He faced up to 27 years behind bars after pleading guilty to three counts of vehicular homicide.

Betancourt was behind the wheel when his vehicle veered into the wrong lane and crashed into another car in January 2014.

Betancourt must also complete community service and several other conditions.

Study ranks Hawaii least teacher-friendly

HI HONOLULU — A new study ranks Hawaii as the least teacher-friendly state in the nation.

The study published by Wallet-Hub on Monday said Hawaii teachers also get the lowest annual salary based on cost of living, about \$24,000.

The study says the average salary for all teachers is about \$30,000.

Hawaii Teachers Association President Corey Rosenlee said because Hawaii teachers are the worst paid in the nation, about a third of Hawaii students don't have a fully qualified teacher.

WWII code breaker buried with UK honors

NE OMAHA, — A 92-year-old woman was buried in Nebraska with British military honors for a secret that she held for decades: her

World War II service as a code-breaker of German intelligence communications.

The Omaha World-Herald reported that the Union Jack was draped over Jean Briggs Watters' casket during her burial Monday. Watters died Sept. 15.

The tribute honored Watters for her role decoding for a top-secret military program led by British mathematician Alan Turing, who was the subject of the 2014 Oscar-winning film "The Imitation Game."

Watters was 18 when she enlisted in the Women's Royal Naval Service. She and her husband retired to the U.S. in 1969.

Flying manhole cover injures city worker

MD BALTIMORE — Authorities said a flying manhole cover injured a Baltimore fire department worker on the scene of an underground fire that caused several manhole explosions.

Fire department spokeswoman Blair Skinner told news outlets that the employee was hospitalized Monday after being hit. Two firetrucks were also damaged.

Details about the fire and manhole explosions haven't been released, but news outlets reported video shows plumes of thick black smoke emitting from a manhole.

Ben & Jerry's plans candidate flavors

VT MONTPELIER — The founders of Ben & Jerry's ice cream are putting their ice cream expertise to work to support seven congressional candidates in the midterm elections who they call progressive.

Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, both of Vermont, are working with political action committee MoveOn to create ice cream flavors that reflect the

values of each of the candidates. They are seeking the public's help in naming the flavors. After picking winners, Cohen said he will make about 40 pints of each flavor by hand in his kitchen to be raffled off to support the candidates.

The candidates are Jess King in Pennsylvania, Lauren Underwood in Illinois, Aftab Pureval in Ohio, J.D. Scholten in Iowa, Ammar Campa Najjar in California, Stephany Rose Spaulding in Colorado and James Thompson in Kansas.

People can sign up starting Monday to enter the raffle to win the limited edition pints.

Driver of military-style vehicle accused of DUI

RI COVENTRY — Police said a man driving a military-style vehicle that struck another vehicle hauling a horse trailer on a Rhode Island highway was under the influence.

Police said Matthew Wright, 35, was driving the five-ton truck when he struck a pickup towing a horse trailer.

A juvenile in the pickup truck was hospitalized for minor injuries, and a veterinarian was called to give a horse stitches to close a cut on its head.

Firefighters rescue kids stuck in a tree

NJ MIDDLETOWN — Firefighters came to the rescue of two adventurous children who got stuck in a tree in central New Jersey.

Middletown officials said Braden Tolas and his stepsister, Davela Dente, climbed up the 30-foot tree Sunday. The 11-year-olds got stuck on their way down due to slippery and breaking branches.

Braden told the Asbury Park Press that he used his cellphone to call his mom, who called her husband. He went over with a

ladder but eventually called 911 when he realized the kids were up higher than he could reach.

Man in custody 15 years after escape

LA CLINTON — A man who escaped a Louisiana prison 15 years ago and fled to Mexico is back in custody.

East Feliciana Sheriff Jeff Travis told The Advocate that Lonnie Payne, 44, "truly and honestly wanted to be home." Authorities said he escaped from a Clinton prison in 2003 while serving a 12-year sentence for burglary.

Payne was arrested last month when he crossed a checkpoint in Mexico and gave security officials a fake name. Travis said a few days passed before Payne gave the U.S. Consulate his real name, prompting his return to the United States.

Volunteers to help clean up in Detroit

MI DETROIT — About 10,000 volunteers are expected to help clear alleyways, mow weeds and remove debris from 300 city blocks in Detroit over six days as part of an annual beautification effort.

Life Remodeled said two community gardens will be built and 500 flowering trees, fruit trees and perennials will be planted beginning Monday in the west side neighborhood surrounding Central Academy and High School. New bus shelters, softball bleachers, grills and picnic tables also will be installed.

Volunteers will include students from city and suburban schools.

Since 2014, Life Remodeled has mobilized volunteers to help board up more than 1,600 vacant houses and remove blight from city blocks.

From wire reports

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Americans try to end Ryder Cup drought

Associated Press

Another trip across the Atlantic turned into another failure for the Americans in the Ryder Cup. At least on paper.

What emerged that Sunday night after their 16½-11½ loss to Europe four years ago in Scotland was enough frustration, mainly from Phil Mickelson, to overhaul a broken system. It brought Mickelson and Tiger Woods closer together in the search for a winning formula. It led to players having more input in picking their captain and forming their team. The hope was that it would create more continuity.

And for one Ryder Cup, it seemed to work.

Every player contributed at least one point for the first time since 1975 in a 17-11 victory at Hazeltine in Minnesota in 2016, the widest margin for the Americans in 35 years.

Now comes the real test.

The 42nd Ryder Cup matches are Friday through Sunday at Le Golf National outside Paris, and U.S. captain Jim Furyk is well aware that Europe has not lost at home since 1993, the year Jordan Spieth, Justin Thomas and Bryson DeChambeau were born.

"We started changing the culture in 2014, and I think 2016 was a huge step," Furyk said. "But in order to take the next step ... we wanted to have a winning record in 10 Ryder Cups over 20 years. The math is pretty simple. You have to win on the road. Eventually, we're going to have to do that. We have our first opportunity this year."

That opportunity involves Woods.

Furyk selected him as a vice captain in late February, when Woods was just returning following a fourth back surgery

and had yet to break 70 in the six rounds and two PGA Tour events he had played. Since then, Woods contended on the back nine at two majors, had six top 10s and finished 11th in the Ryder Cup standings, making him an easy choice as a captain's pick for his first Ryder Cup since 2012.

He hadn't won a tournament in five years until winning the Tour Championship last weekend. His only winning Ryder Cup team as a player was in 1999. But he hasn't lost his presence.

"He brings so much greatness to the game of golf, and he is the one person that probably sticks his nose a little outside the golfing environment and reaches a lot of people," European captain Thomas Bjorn said. "It will be exciting in France to see him there."

Woods and Mickelson, a captain's pick for the first time in

his record 12th appearance in the Ryder Cup, represent the old guard on a U.S. team that is built around fresh faces who already have achieved plenty on golf's biggest stages.

Nine of the 12 players on the American team are major champions, and they have combined to win 10 of the last 16 majors since the last Ryder Cup in Europe.

It's a strong team, no doubt.

"I've been part of Ryder Cups since 1997, and I've not gone into a Ryder Cup where the United States don't have a great team," Bjorn said. "So it doesn't come as a surprise to me or to the team that's going to play for the European side, but the American team is going to be great."

Then again, the Americans have taken strong teams to Europe over the last two decades and didn't return home with the gold trophy.

US golfer Reed perfectly happy to be Public Enemy No. 1

Associated Press

SAINT-QUENTIN-EN-YVELINES, France — Patrick Reed relishes the role of Captain America.

He's just as comfortable being Public Enemy No. 1 at the Ryder Cup.

"I'm supposed to be the villain, just like when Ian Poulter comes to the States, he's the villain," Reed smirked. "You expect to hear the fans kind of go back and forth with you. If it's not happening, it probably means you're not playing very well."

Reed was a convenient target of the European faithful at Gleneagles back in 2014, telling them to hush after he made a big putt.

Nothing figures to change when the U.S. tries to retain the cup at Le Golf National just outside of Paris.

As far as Reed is concerned, bring it on.

"There's really nothing to get underneath my skin, that's for sure," Reed said.

He clearly relishes the charged atmosphere of a Ryder Cup, having lost only one of nine matches over his first two appearances. At Hazeltine two years ago, he teamed with Jordan Spieth to go 3-0-1 in foursomes and four-balls before beating Rory McIlroy in singles on the final day, leading the Americans to their first victory since 2008.

Now, the 28-year-old Reed is eager to end another drought.

The U.S. team has gone a quarter-century since its last victory in Europe.

"The young guys don't want to have to go through what the old guys did every 25 years," he said. "Put our foot down and go out and play some good golf, kind of like we did in 2016, and try to win the cup and take the cup back home."

Since last playing in the Ryder Cup, Reed has added a snazzy new line to his résumé.

Masters champion.

That first major title has only added to Reed's confidence.

"It's a good problem to have to have people either saying Captain America or Masters champion," Reed said. "But this week," he quickly added, "I'm definitely Captain America."

He was coy about another pairing with Spieth, though it would certainly be a gutsy move for captain Jim Furyk to break up a duo that meshed so well at the last two Ryder Cups.

"It's just going to really all depend on what we think are the best people we can put out and best teams we can put out since some guys are going to sit at some point, and who we feel can go out and get us the most points possible," Reed said.

Of course, the singles pairing that everyone wants to see is a head-to-head showdown with Poulter, who is 12-4-2 at the Ryder Cup and has never lost a singles match.

"It would always be great playing Poults," Reed said, not backing down at all. "I'll take any of them. All of the guys are playing some great golf. I've al-

ways been the type that I want to go up against their best guy, and so on Sunday, I want to go up against whoever is playing the best that week."

Reed is trying to pass on that same bravado to Ryder Cup rookies such as Justin Thomas, Bryson DeChambeau and Tony Finau.

"It's the one week that you can show your emotion," Reed said. "We all have a bunch of emotion. It's just some guys wear it on their sleeve and some guys bottle it up. This is the one week you can show the passion you have for the game of golf and the passion you have for your country and the passion you have for your teammates to go out and play the best you can."

"If you make a putt and you're excited, show it. If you go out and you miss a putt, and you're not thrilled, show it, but do it in the right way. That's the biggest thing. This is the one week that we're allowed to let loose and show our emotions."

Unbeaten Dolphins enjoying trick plays

Associated Press

DAVIE, Fla. — Ryan Tannehill says when he calls a trick play, even his offensive linemen get excited.

And why not? Razzle dazzle is a big reason the surprising Miami Dolphins are undefeated.

“I’m all for anytime everybody gets excited about a play call,” play-caller and coach Adam Gase said with a chuckle Monday. “The worst is when the quarterback says he doesn’t believe it’s going to work. That’s when you get a little nervous.

“If I feel like guys really like something, we’ll get to it.”

They’re likely cueing up something exotic for the New England Patriots, where the Dolphins play Sunday with a chance to end their streak of nine consecutive losses in Foxborough.

The Dolphins used a receiver-to-receiver pass and two wideout sweeps to score three touchdowns Sunday and rally

past Oakland 28-20. With the win, Miami improved to 3-0 for only the third time since the Dan Marino era and took a two-game lead over the other three teams in the AFC East, including perennial power New England.

How much is left in Gase’s bag of play-calling tricks?

“A lot,” he said.

Sunday’s surprises allowed the Dolphins to spring their speed — NASCAR on grass, as receiver Jakeem Grant called it. He and receiver Albert Wilson each scored on a jet sweep, and Wilson threw his first NFL pass for a 52-yard touchdown to Grant.

Fun, right?

“When you win,” Gase said, “it’s fun.”

The Dolphins had practiced the three plays for weeks and chose the right time to call them. The scores helped erase a 17-7 second-half deficit.

“The play comes into the huddle, and everyone kind of gets excited,” Tannehill said.

“Anytime there’s a big-shot call or a trick play, you can feel the offensive line kind of get excited.”

The defensive line, too.

“It’s a lot of fun watching guys run down the sideline untouched,” defensive end Cameron Wake said.

Wilson did just that, sprinting into the clear on his 74-yard jet sweep catch and run. The Raiders’ reaction?

“They got behind me so quick, I didn’t really see their faces,” Wilson said.

Zing.

He did see Grant, exchanging a high five with his teammate as they ran stride for stride into the end zone.

The 5-foot-9 Wilson and 5-foot-7 Grant are part of the fastest receiving corps in team history. Kenny Stills can fly too, as he has showed while averaging 20.4 yards on nine catches this season, three for touchdowns. Running back Kenyan Drake is also swift, giving Miami yet another quick-strike

option.

“Coach always tells us just go out there and run — a lot of defenders are going to be terrified by speed, so just take off and run,” Grant said.

It’s not really that simple. The trick plays require perfect timing, and talent.

The receiver-to-receiver pass involved a fake pitch by Tannehill, a handoff to Frank Gore and a lateral to Wilson. The former high school quarterback then rolled to his right as he threw a pass right on the money, as had been the case daily in practice.

“I know how hard that is to be running full speed laterally and make that throw,” Tannehill said. “During the week, he was consistent on making a perfect throw. It wasn’t ever a question. He never stretched Jakeem out or made him adjust really. After I saw him run it the first time I thought, ‘He’s got this. He doesn’t need any tips.’”

Vikings tell erratic Griffen to stay away from practice

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — Last week, the Minnesota Vikings were concerned enough about Everson Griffen’s state of mind that they barred the three-time Pro Bowl defensive end from practice until he had a mental health evaluation.

After a scary series of incidents on Saturday, Griffen remained away from the team on Tuesday and out of action indefinitely. Coach Mike Zimmer said Griffen would not travel with the team to play the Los Angeles Rams on Thursday.

“The only thing we really are concerned about for Everson isn’t anything to do with football. It’s about him getting better,” Zimmer said.

“In the five years that I’ve been here I’ve always loved Everson and the effort that he puts out, the work that he does, the chance to count on him in

game time and even in practice. He’s always been a really, really good model for us, and obviously he’s going through some tough times now.”

Griffen was already going to miss the game last Sunday against the Buffalo Bills because of a nagging issue with his knee, but even without the injury he was in no condition to play.

According to police in Minnetrista, the Minneapolis suburb where he lives, Griffen was making comments about people trying to kill him. He was eventually transported by ambulance to an area hospital for his well-being, despite jumping out of the vehicle at one point during a brief stop for crossing deer. He was never arrested or suspected of committing any crimes.

According to the police report on Saturday:

■ Vikings director of secu-

rity Kim Klawiter requested a welfare check for Griffen’s wife, Tiffany, and their three children after a recent pattern of erratic and disruptive behavior at team headquarters had caused concern. Griffen had arrived for practice that morning and was told he couldn’t participate.

■ Officer Michael Kokesh met with Griffen’s wife, who told him that Griffen got up in the middle of the night on Sept. 16 and left the house, which he has done before in attempt to deal with “demons in his head.” Griffen was gone for several days during the week, at one point sending his wife a text message that referenced suicide. He’s not on medication, she said, but should be.

■ Kokesh spoke with Vikings executive director of player development Les Pico, who said Griffen had been exhibiting paranoid behavior and irratio-

nal and rapid speech but did not believe he was at risk for harming himself or others. Pico met Griffen at a downtown Minneapolis hotel, where he had also created a disturbance in the lobby and threatened violence.

■ Griffen showed up shirtless outside the house of teammate Trae Waynes, who lives on the same street. A little later, Griffen left his vehicle at a gas station and rode home with a man who said he didn’t know Griffen and was shaking when he met officers waiting outside Griffen’s house.

■ After Griffen agreed to the hospital visit, officers summoned by paramedics after the stop for the deer found him walking on the side of a county road. Griffen told them he was afraid “someone was going to shoot him.” The officers convinced him to return to the ambulance and lie down on a stretcher inside.

Astros win 100th game, clinch AL West

Associated Press

TORONTO — Houston is heating up as October approaches.

The Astros clinched another AL West title and reached 100 wins for the second straight season, beating the Toronto Blue Jays 4-1 Tuesday night behind Alex Bregman's two-run homer.

Houston improved to 100-57 and was assured of first place hours later when second-place Oakland (95-63) lost at Seattle. The Astros will open the Division Series at home against Cleveland on Oct. 5.

Astros manager A.J. Hinch, said he would not stay up to watch the outcome of the Athletics game.

"I'm going to go to bed," he said. "Do you hear my voice? I'll wake up in the middle of the night and figure it out."

The Astros need three wins

in their final five games to break the franchise record for victories in a season, set in 1998.

"I'm proud of this team, and they're not done yet," Hinch said. "To be at 100 and climbing is remarkable for this team, and we should be very proud."

Houston is 18-4 in September and 54-22 on the road, both best in the major leagues.

"We really haven't played our best baseball until lately," Bregman said. "That's a good sign heading into the postseason. I think we're in a good spot right now."

Roberto Osuna needed just six pitches in the ninth for his 20th save in 21 chances. Earlier Tuesday, assault charges against Osuna were dropped because the complainant, who lives in Mexico, made clear she would not travel to Toronto to testify. Osuna agreed to stay

away from the alleged victim for one year and continue counseling.

Traded from Toronto to Houston in July, Osuna was booed by Blue Jays fans for the second straight game, starting with when he entered and then in between pitches. Speaking through a translator, Osuna said he was untroubled by the negative reaction.

"When I came into the game I was focused on what I had to do, so it didn't affect me," he said.

Josh James (2-0) allowed one run and four hits in five innings in his third big league start.

"It was probably the least efficient outing of his young career," Hinch said. "He had to battle through some delivery issues."

Bregman went 2-for-5 and extended his club-record streak of reaching base safely on the

road to 53 games, the longest since 59 in a row by the New York Yankees' Derek Jeter in 2006 and 2007.

Bregman hit his 31st homer, a two-run drive in the first off Sam Gaviglio. Billy McKinney's sixth homer cut the gap in half in the third, but Houston widened its lead in the sixth when Tyler White chased Gaviglio with an RBI single and pinch-hitter Evan Gattis had a sacrifice fly off Danny Barnes.

Gaviglio (3-9) allowed four runs — three earned — and six hits in five-plus innings, his fifth straight winless outing. With Toronto's starting rotation dealing with injuries all season, Gaviglio has made a career-high 23 starts for the Blue Jays, winning twice.

"It's been a good experience, a lot of learning," he said. "I wish I could have been a little more consistent."

MLB roundup

Dahl's homer helps Rockies into lead for wild card

Associated Press

DENVER — David Dahl went 3-for-5 on the night. Now, he's thinking 5-for-5 the rest of the way — wins to close out the regular season.

That would guarantee the Colorado Rockies a playoff spot.

Dahl homered for a second straight game, a three-run shot in the third, and the Rockies vaulted into the final NL wild-card spot by beating the Philadelphia Phillies 10-3 on Tuesday.

The Rockies' fifth straight victory moved them a half-game in front of St. Louis for the second wild-card after the Cardinals lost 12-4 to Milwaukee. Colorado also pulled within a half-game of the NL West-leading Los Angeles Dodgers, who lost 4-3 to Arizona. With five games remaining, the Rockies have a chance to win their first division title.

Mariners 10, Athletics 8 (11): Pinch-hitter Chris Herrmann's two-run homer in the 11th inning gave host Seattle a win over Oakland.

Brewers 12, Cardinals 4: Christian Yelich homered and drove in six runs, and surging Milwaukee hurt host St. Louis' playoff chances.

Pirates 6, Cubs 0: Slugger Kris Bryant exited with a bruised left wrist, Mike Montgomery got hit hard over four-plus innings and host Chicago stumbled again in its playoff run by losing to Pittsburgh.

Nationals 9, Marlins 4: Max Scherzer became the 17th pitcher since 1900 to strike out 300 batters in a season, reaching that milestone by fanning 10 in seven innings during host Washington's otherwise meaningless win over Miami.

Yankees 9, Rays 2: Struggling Gary Sanchez drove in four runs for the first time since early April, Luis Severi-

no won his 19th game and New York beat host Tampa Bay to keep up its push for home-field advantage in the AL wild-card game.

Indians 5, White Sox 4: Trevor Bauer took a step toward returning to Cleveland's rotation for the postseason by tossing four effective innings, but host Chicago overcame a two-run, ninth-inning deficit and beat Cleveland.

Braves 7, Mets 3: Ronald Acuna Jr. hit a go-ahead single in the seventh inning, Ozzie Albies homered in the eighth and NL East champion Atlanta rallied past host New York for its sixth straight victory.

Tigers 4, Twins 2: Harold Castro's first career hit started an eighth-inning rally that led Detroit past host Minnesota.

Joe Mauer set the Twins' record for reaching base. He singled in the first inning, reaching base for the 3,073rd time in his

career and surpassing Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew.

Royals 4, Reds 3: Hunter Dozier led off the ninth inning with a tie-breaking home run, lifting Kansas City over host Cincinnati.

Diamondbacks 4, Dodgers 3: Eduardo Escobar homered off Kenta Maeda leading off the ninth inning, and host Arizona tightened the NL West race.

Los Angeles (88-70) had won 10 of its previous 12 games to surge into the NL West lead.

Angels 4, Rangers 1: Shohei Ohtani, Justin Upton and Kaleb Cowart drove in runs and host Los Angeles rallied with four runs in the sixth inning.

Giants 5, Padres 4 (12): Pitcher Madison Bumgarner had the first game-ending hit of his career, a pinch-hit single in the 12th inning that drove in Gorkys Hernandez, and lifted host San Francisco over San Diego.