Curfew permanently lifted for US service members in S. Korea

By Kim Gamel and Matthew Keeler
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Gen. Robert Abrams permanently ended the hugely unpopular 1-to-5 a.m. curfew for U.S. service members in South Korea on Tuesday after a six-month suspension proved successful.

The commander of U.S. Forces Korea made the decision after assessing the number and the types of incidents involving troops since the curfew was lifted temporarily on June 17, according to a news release.

Abrams also consulted with other military leaders and unit commanders, who were asked to recommend whether to reimpose the curfew, to continue the suspension or to end it.

“All recommended its termination,” he said in the statement released Tuesday, stressing the need to maintain order and discipline in line with USFK regulations.

“Leaders are responsible for our service-members’ on-and-off-post conduct, we are ambassadors of USFK, the United States and the U.S.-South Korea alliance to the Korean people,” he added. “We have a solemn responsibility to keep readiness at its highest levels with a ‘fight tonight’ posture, approach and mentality.”

Abrams first announced a three-month curfew suspension on June 17 as a test for some 28,500 American troops stationed on

SEE CURFEW ON PAGE 4

Airmen from the 51st Fighter Wing enjoy drinks at a bar just outside Osan Air Base, South Korea, on Saturday.

MATTHEW KEELER/Stars and Stripes

Senator: US troop drawdown in Afghanistan coming

By Tameem Akhgar
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham said Monday that President Donald Trump will announce an American troop drawdown from Afghanistan this week that will likely begin next year.

Seaking from the Afghan capital of Kabul, Graham, R-S.C., said the president could reduce troop numbers to 8,600, down from the current estimated 12,000.

“The Afghan security forces are getting more capable,” said Graham. “As they achieve capability, the number of U.S. forces necessary can go down.”

Despite his past reluctance to embrace a troop withdrawal, Graham said he supports Trump’s expected drawdown. That’s because Graham said 8,600 U.S. troops would be sufficient to guarantee “Afghanistan never becomes a launching pad for another attack against the United States’ homeland.”

Graham said America’s withdrawal from Afghanistan must be “condition-based” and that the Taliban must keep the promises they’ve made during talks.

“It’s our goal to withdraw our forces, but it is our ultimate goal to do it in a sustainable fashion so we don’t have to come back and we don’t undercut our prestige and our standing all over the world,” he said.

It wasn’t clear from Graham’s comments when or if the U.S. would withdraw all of its forces completely.

The Taliban have said any peace agreement must include getting all American troops out of the country.

Recently resumed peace negotiations between the U.S. and the Taliban were “paused” again after an attack Wednesday outside Bagram Air Field, north of Kabul. The attack killed two Afghans and wounded 70 others. Five international coalition troops from the U.S. and the country of Georgia

SEE GRAHAM ON PAGE 5
Louisiana sues California over alligator ban

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Louisiana is suing the state of California over its decision to ban the import and sale of alligator products, saying the ban will hurt an important Louisiana industry and ultimately could hurt the state’s economy.

In a lawsuit filed Thursday, Louisiana said the economy surrounding alligators has played a key role in bringing back the American alligator population and is an important factor in protecting wetlands and other species besides alligators that depend on the wetlands.

“California has nevertheless attempted to destroy the market for American alligator products notwithstanding the fact that no such alligators live in California,” the lawsuit says.

Louisiana said in its lawsuit that because most of the state’s coastal habitat is privately owned, the state does not have direct control over how it is managed. But the alligator industry provides economic incentives for landowners to take steps to protect marshlands.

The state argues that if California’s ban goes into effect, “landowners will be forced to greatly reduce or cease their erosion control efforts because they will be unable to economically sustain those efforts, resulting in irreparable harm to their property as well as harm to Louisiana’s sovereign environmental interests in wetland preservation.”
Battle of the Bulge vets, war dead honored

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Defense Secretary Mark Esper and European leaders gathered Monday at the Luxembourg American Cemetery to honor those killed in the Battle of the Bulge and to thank veterans on hand to mark the 75th anniversary of the pivotal battle.

Before approaching the vets to shake hands, Esper addressed the crowd and the men.

“For a moment in history, the fate of the free world rested on their shoulders — rested on your shoulders,” Esper said.

The winter battle was the largest and costliest of the war for the United States, fought over six weeks in the forests and towns of Belgium and Luxembourg, where allies were outnumbered in a surprise offensive by German forces.

The American soldiers held the line, buying time for reinforcements. More than 19,000 U.S. troops died in the fighting, and more than 5,000 of the war dead are buried at the cemetery in Luxembourg. Lt. Gen. George S. Patton Jr., who commanded the 3rd Army during the Bulge campaign, is also buried there.

“Your stories are remarkable and we will forever be grateful for the sacrifices you made,” Esper said. The U.S. soldiers took a “gallant stand against tyranny” as they fought Germany’s last major offensive on the Western Front, he said.

The soldiers fought through setbacks and the bitter cold, despite being low on supplies and poorly equipped for freezing conditions. The men knew hardship, having lived through the Great Depression, and brought that grit to the battlefield, Esper said.

“The real story of the Battle of the Bulge are the soldiers who banded together,” Esper said.

Included in the U.S. delegation attending the ceremony in Luxembourg were House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Events in Luxembourg capped four days of international commemorations of the battle.

U.S. F-16s flew over the cemetery grounds in honor of the air power that helped turn the tide in the battle and paved the way for victory.

Henri, the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, said the soldiers’ “exceptional bravery” ensured the “freedom of our countries, democracy and the rule of law.”

“We are indebted and eternally grateful to them,” he said.

Battle of the Bulge veteran Robert Izumi, a Japanese-American, stayed in Germany after the war and served in Patton’s unit.

Turkish leader says he could close Incirlik over sanctions

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Turkey is prepared to kick the U.S. military out of Incirlik Air Base if Washington imposes sanctions on the country, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, raising the stakes after a similar warning was made last week by Turkey’s foreign minister.

“We will close down Incirlik if necessary,” Erdogan said Sunday on Turkey’s A Haber news program.

The U.S. has about 50 nuclear bombs stored at Incirlik, which watchdog groups have raised security concerns about. President Donald Trump said earlier this year he is confident the weapons are safe at the base.

Erdogan also said a U.S. Army site in the small Turkish village of Kurecik, which houses a radar for NATO missile defense efforts in Europe, could also be closed down. “If they are threatening us with these sanctions, of course we will be retaliating,” he said.

Erdogan’s warnings come a week after a U.S. Senate committee backed legislation calling for economic sanctions after Turkey acquired Russia’s S-400 missile defense system and over Ankara’s incursion into northern Syria.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu last week also blasted the action by U.S. lawmakers and warned Ankara would consider cutting off access to Incirlik and Kurecik if economic penalties were imposed.

Tensions between the U.S. and Turkey have been fraught in recent years. Turkey has already been removed from the Pentagon’s F-35 program amid concerns that its operation of Russian air defenses could compromise the fifth-generation aircraft’s stealth technology.

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Erdogan, a strategic base that dates to the early days of the Cold War, has played a role in U.S. operations against Islamic State.

While U.S. lawmakers in Congress have been critical of Erdogan and are calling for sanctions against the country, Trump has given no indication that he intends to move forward with penalties.

Earlier this month, Trump praised Erdogan and said Turkey was doing a good job in its military operation in northern Syria, putting the U.S. president at odds with Pentagon leaders who have been critical of the Turkish incursion.
Pentagon's top Asia policy official resigning

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon says its top Asia policy official is resigning after two years in the job.

The top Pentagon spokesman, Jonathan Hoffman, told reporters Thursday that Randall Schriver, assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs since January 2018, confirmed to him that he is leaving the job.

Hoffman did not offer a specific reason for Schriver’s decision to resign but suggested that the requirement for frequent travel to and from Asia had become a personal burden for Schriver. Hoffman said Schriver brought “unmatched” expertise on Asia policy.

Schriver, a former Navy intelligence officer, had been the Pentagon’s representative in U.S. nuclear diplomacy with North Korea in 2018. His position as head of Asia policy for the Pentagon has taken on added importance as the Trump administration tries to shift its strategic focus from the insurgent wars of Afghanistan and Iraq to and from Asia had become a high priority.

Biegun, who was in Seoul for talks with South Korean officials, called on North Korea to sit down for talks.

"Let me speak directly to our counterparts in North Korea. It is time for us to do our jobs. Let’s get this done. We are here. And you know how to reach us," he said.

Biegun later held separate meetings with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul, Seoul’s point man on North Korea. Moon’s office said that during his visit to the presidential Blue House, Biegun said the Trump administration wouldn’t give up on seeking diplomatic progress with North Korea, but it did not elaborate.

It’s unclear if North Korea will reach out to the U.S. to resolve their widening differences on how to achieve North Korean denuclearization. Senior North Korean officials have recently said denuclearization is already off the negotiating table and have threatened to lift a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests. In past months, North Korea has also conducted a slew of short-range missile and other weapons tests.

Concerns about a major North Korean provocation grew after the country said Saturday that it had successfully performed an unspecified “crucial test” that will strengthen its nuclear deterrent. Experts say the North could launch a satellite-carrying rocket or an intercontinental ballistic missile if the U.S. fails to meet the year-end deadline.

Friday’s test was the second in a week at a rocket facility where North Korea has conducted missile engine tests and launched satellites in what the United Nations called cover for testing its long-range missile technology.

North Korea’s military chief, Pak Jong Chon, asserted Saturday that the North has built up a “tremendous power” and that the findings from the recent tests would be used to develop new weapons to allow the country to “definitely and reliably” counter U.S. nuclear threats.

The test flight of an ICBM would likely derail diplomatic efforts as President Donald Trump has viewed the North Korean weapons test moratorium as a major foreign policy achievement. Biegun called the latest North Korean statements “so hostile and negative and so unnecessary.”
2 airmen receive medals for actions in Afghanistan

BY J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Two pararescuemen credited with saving dozens of lives during intense combat in Afghanistan have received Silver Star Medals, the Air Force said.

Tech. Sgt. Gavin Fisher and Staff Sgt. Daniel Swensen, who were lauded for their actions in separate clashes, received the third-highest military award for bravery in a ceremony Friday at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

“Getting this medal is important because it lets people know the war is still going on, the valorant efforts by men and women are still going forth,” Fisher said in a statement. “People are still out there dying and fighting for each other, and it needs to be recognized.”

Fisher, who also received a Purple Heart, fought in a fierce battle in the strategically important southeastern city of Ghazni in August of 2018. An attack by more than 1,000 Taliban fighters occupied much of the city — home to 100,000 people — prompting American forces to send support and launch airstrikes against the insurgents.

Fisher served as the rear gunner in a convoy that was struck by rocket-propelled grenades and machine-gun fire during a Taliban ambush, an Air Force statement said.

Even after being wounded by grenade shrapnel, Fisher continued firing back at his attackers and gave medical treatment to critically injured soldiers during two ambushes, the Air Force said.

The Air Force credits Fisher with saving the lives of 10 critically injured soldiers, evacuating 20 more and eliminating 118 Taliban fighters.

Swensen received his medal for fighting in western Farah province in September, the statement said.

He was part of an Army Special Forces helicopter assault to reclaim a police headquarters taken by the Taliban. Militants sprang an ambush on a ground assault team Swensen was leading through a compound, separating them from their supporting fire team and pinning them down before a grenade blast wounded Swensen and five others. Despite his wounds, the pararescueman ran through enemy fire to treat an injured soldier before moving him to safety, the Air Force said.

Swensen carried one of the wounded as he and the others moved to an extraction point about half a mile away. As they waited for a medical evacuation helicopter to arrive, the Taliban launched a second attack. Braving enemy fire, Swensen directed his comrades to cover, then continued treating the wounded until they could be evacuated. He then stayed behind to lead the remaining troops back through the enemy-occupied town to rescue four more injured soldiers. In all, he saved nine lives, the statement said.

“It’s weird to receive so much attention for something that I feel anyone else would’ve done on the battlefield that night. I’m honored my peers think I deserve this medal.”

Staff Sgt. Daniel Swensen
Silver Star recipient

Amazon, DOJ spar over redactions in lawsuit

The Justice Department is pushing back on Amazon’s decision to withhold certain information from the public in its lawsuit over President Donald Trump’s alleged meddling in procurement matters.

Amazon Web Services, the cloud computing division of Amazon, is suing to overturn a Defense Department decision to give its competitor Microsoft a massive, taxpayer-funded cloud computing contract. The Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure, known as JEDI, is a project to centralize the military’s cloud computing systems in the hands of a commercial cloud provider. It is worth up to $10 billion over a 10-year period.

In its initial legal complaint, Amazon’s proposal was redacted, while Microsoft’s proposal was made public. “Amazon also withheld key bits of information from the company’s initial legal complaint,” the Justice Department wrote.

The Justice Department noted that it would not be in a position to place “substantive” injunctions on the JEDI project until early February. Even so, Amazon reserved the right to seek an injunction. Amazon has until Jan. 17 to request discovery in the case.

Graham: US still seeks deal with Taliban

FROM FRONT PAGE

were lightly wounded, according to U.S. military spokesman Sonny Leggett. He did not specify how many of the injured were Americans.

Washington’s peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, has been trying to hammer out a peace agreement with the Taliban for more than a year. The U.S. wants any deal to include a promise from the insurgent group that Afghanistan would not be used as a base by terrorist groups.

Graham, however, said the Taliban could not be trusted to be a reliable counterterrorism force.

“It would be insane for America to allow the Taliban to flourish there that al-Qaida and ISIS-K doesn’t come back in a back door to represent a threat to our allies and to the American homeland,” said Graham, using an alternative abbreviation for Islamic State’s branch in Afghanistan. The Afghan affiliate refers to itself as the Khorasan Province.

Khalilzad tweeted earlier this month that ISIS in eastern Afghanistan has been weakened by operations carried out not just by the U.S. and Afghan forces, but by the Taliban as well.

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**Navy building ship named for gay sailor who was forced out**

**By Matthew M. Burke 
Stars and Stripes**

By the time Harvey Milk’s supervisors in the U.S. Navy officially questioned him about his sexuality, he had graduated from officer school and was serving as a line officer on a submarine rescue ship during the Korean War.

Then his superiors caught him in a park that was popular with gay men, his nephew said. The questioning raised questions about Milk’s sexual orientation in an era when the military banned gay, lesbian and bisexual service members.

Milk was forced to resign.

In a move that signaled an about-face on the issue of gay rights, the Navy on Friday began constructing the USNS Harvey Milk, a fleet oiler that will provide fuel to ships and aircraft.

**CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Students at Lester Middle School received some larger than life guests Friday as two sumo wrestlers from the renowned Sadogatake stable in Kyushu stopped by to impart a little Japanese culture.**

Kotoeko — a maegashira ranked seventh in Japan’s top Makuuchi division — and his protege, Kotooodutsu, were on Okinawa for Saturday and Sunday’s Oozumou Okinawa Basho, or Grand Sumo Exhibition. Maegashira is the lowest of the five ranks in sumo’s top division.

They answered students’ questions, gave pointers on proper wrestling technique, refereed several matches between the school’s teachers and chowed down on some Popeyes fried chicken in what overall turned out to be a raucous affair.

Today, we got together with the children and taught them about sumo,” Kotoeko said following the assembly in the school’s gymnasium.

“Sumo always starts and ends with respect and pride associated with hosting the sport,” Kotoeko added.

**Sumo heavyweights introduce Okinawa students to the sport**

**By Matthew M. Burke 
Stars and Stripes**

Lester eighth grader Austin Martinez, a Lester eighth grader, said it was exciting to have professional sumo wrestlers giving them pointers and telling them about their careers. Seeing his fellow seventh grader Brigham Beck.

“I love sumo and I just really wanted to show the kids what a great sport it is,” Kalina said. “And they liked it.”

Austin Martinez, a Lester eighth grader, said it was exciting to have professional sumo wrestlers giving them pointers and telling them about their careers.
DENVER — A federal appeals court in Denver has ruled that officials at a supermax prison in Colorado sufficiently changed their policies and corrected their mistakes after refusing to distribute a magazine that provides legal information to inmates.

The three-judge panel of the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday rejected an argument by the magazine's publisher, Prison Legal News, that a court order was warranted to prevent future censorship.

"The Warden has declared that PLN's future publications substantially similar to the previously rejected publications will not be rejected," said the opinion written by Judge Scott Matheson Jr.

The dispute centers on the U.S. Bureau of Prison's decision to not distribute 11 Prison Legal News magazine issues between 2010 and 2014. The reason, prison officials said, was that those 11 magazines named individual inmates and employees in the Administrative Maximum Facility in Florence, Colo.

The facility is the highest-security prison in the U.S., housing inmates such as Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski, Sept. 11 conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui and, more recently, drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman.

Paul Wright, editor of Prison Legal News, expressed disappointment in the appeals court ruling, noting that this was the second time the Bureau of Prisons had censored the magazine and the "second time they claimed the suit was moot by capitulating at the last minute and delivering the censored publications years after they were published."

KEYPORT, N.J. — A New Jersey man whose number was found in the back pocket of one of the perpetrators of last week’s fatal shootings at a Jewish market was due in court Monday to face a weapons charge unrelated to the attack.

Ahmed A-Hady, of Keyport, was charged with being a felon in possession of a weapon. He had been convicted of a drug charge in 2012. He was scheduled to appear in U.S. District Court in Newark in the afternoon.

A-Hady’s number was found in the pants pocket of David Anderson, one of two attackers killed by police after an hourslong standoff at the JC Kosher Supermarket in Jersey City. Anderson and Francine Graham killed Jersey City Police Detective Joseph Seals before storming the store, killing three people inside. The attack is being investigated as domestic terrorism.

Anderson and Graham are also prime suspects in the slaying of a livery driver found dead in a car trunk in nearby Bayonne the previous weekend, authorities have said.

A-Hady hasn’t been charged with providing any of the weapons used in Tuesday's shootings. The FBI said searches of his residence and a pawnshop in Keyport where he works — about 15 miles south of where the shootings occurred — yielded weapons including three AR-15-style assault rifles, three handguns and one shotgun, as well as more than 400 rounds of ammunition.

Anderson and Graham were armed with multiple weapons including an AR-15-style rifle and a shotgun, and a pipe bomb was also found in the stolen U-Haul van they drove to the market. Two of the weapons used by Anderson and Graham were bought by Graham in Ohio last year, police have said.

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The FBI searched the Buy N Sell pawnshop in Keyport, N.J., over the weekend while investigating last week’s killing of a police officer and fatal attack on a Jewish market in Jersey City.

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**NATION**

House report says Trump betrayed nation

**BY LISA MASCARO**  
**AND JONATHAN LEMIRE**  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House Judiciary Committee released a sweeping report Monday bolstering the case for impeaching President Donald Trump, laying out the rationale for charges that accuse him of betraying the nation for his own political gain.

Trump faces two articles of impeachment by House Democrats: abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. They point to Trump pressuring Ukraine to investigate 2020 political rival Joe Biden while withholding as leverage military aid the country relies on to counter Russia as well as his efforts to block the House investigation.

The House will vote Wednesday on the impeachment articles approved last week by the House Judiciary panel. The vote is all but certain to result in Trump’s impeachment, though he’s expected to be acquitted in a Senate trial.

Detailing its case against the nation’s 45th president, the Judiciary panel released a 650-page report just after midnight. The document, which formally lays out its case against Trump, is expected to be acquitted in a Senate trial, though he’s expected to be acquitted in a Senate trial, though he’s expected to be acquitted in a Senate trial, though he’s expected to be acquitted in a Senate trial.

The report was submitted to the House Rules Committee, which will meet Tuesday to set parameters for Wednesday’s debate.

The panel summarized the evidence for impeachment compiled by the House intelligence committee and said Trump “has demonstrated he will remain a threat to national security and the Constitution if allowed to remain in office.”

Trump, by refusing to cooperate with the House impeachment inquiry, violated the Constitution’s system of checks and balances, the report said.

In dissent, Republicans on the panel denounced the materials submitted by Democrats.

“The palpable record on which the majority relies is an affront to the constitutional process of impeachment and will have grave consequences for future presidents,” said Rep. Doug Collins, of Georgia, the panel’s top Republican. “The quicker the majority report and the majority’s actions are forgotten, the better.”

The White House press secretary tweeted Monday that the release of the impeachment report “in the middle of the night” underscored that impeachment effort was a “partisan sham.”

Trump, only the fourth U.S. president to be charged in impeachment proceedings, has insisted he has done nothing wrong. Attention is turning to the Senate trial, where the Republicans are expected to acquit Trump in January.

“There ought to be a fair trial where the whole truth comes out,” Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer told reporters Sunday in New York. “And I’m going to work to get that done.”

The top Senate Democrat called for new evidence and testimony from former national security adviser John Bolton, acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and two others as part of a detailed proposal outlined in a letter Sunday to Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to spur negotiations with the GOP.

“This trial must be one that is fair, that considers all of the relevant facts,” Schumer wrote.

Trump has expressed interest in a robust trial that would not only clear him of the charges in the Senate but also vindicate him, but his desire for a lengthy proceeding is something Senate Republicans are hoping to avoid.

McConnell and Schumer are expected to meet to discuss how to conduct the trial.

The witness list will be key to the proceedings.

In his letter, Schumer proposes a detailed structure and timeline for a trial to begin Jan. 7, with the swearing-in of Chief Justice John Roberts to oversee the proceedings and stretch for several weeks as Democrats subpoena witnesses and testify, specifically around Trump’s decision to withhold military aid from Ukraine. A day of what Schumer calls “pre-trial housekeeping measures” was expected next week.

Democrats want to hear from Bolton, who labeled the alternative foreign policy being run by Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani and others as a “drug deal” he wanted no part of. He left the White House in September.

They also want testimony from Mulvaney, who has acknowledged the military aid to Ukraine was being held up, as well as two other White House officials: Robert Blair, a top Mulvaney aide, and Michael Dunfy, a budget official who was tasked with handling the Ukraine issue. Those officials defied House Democrats’ subpoenas to appear before the inquiry.

Comey: ‘Real sloppiness’ in Russia probe but no misconduct

**BY ERIC TUCKER**  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former FBI Director James Comey acknowledged Sunday that a Justice Department inspector general report identified “real sloppiness” in the surveillance of a former Trump campaign aide and said he was wrong to have been “overconfident” about how the Russia investigation was handled.

But Comey also insisted he was right to feel some measure of vindication because the report did not find evidence for the most sensational of President Donald Trump’s claims, including that he had been wiretapped and illegally spied on and that the FBI had committed treason in investigating ties between Russia and his 2016 campaign.

The inspector general, Comey said in an interview on “Fox News Sunday,” did not find misconduct by FBI personnel, did not find political bias, did not find illegal conduct. The significant mistakes the inspector general identified are “not something to sneeze at” but also not evidence of intentional misconduct, Comey said.

In a tweet Sunday, Trump called for an apology from Comey, now that he “got caught red handed.”

The report by Inspector General Michael Horowitz concluded that the FBI opened the Russia investigation for a legitimate reason and was not motivated by partisan bias when it did so.

But Horowitz also found major errors and omissions in applications the FBI submitted to a federal court to allow wiretapping. These problems include the omission of key information about the reliability of a source whose information had been relied on for the warrant and the altering of an email by an FBI lawyer.

Comey said in retrospect that he was wrong when he said last year that the applications to the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court were handled in a “thoughtful, responsible way.”

“... He’s right,” Comey added, referring to Horowitz. “There was real sloppiness, 17 things that either should’ve been in the applications or at least discussed and characterized differently. It was not acceptable and so he’s right. I was wrong.”

Current FBI Director Christopher Wray told The Associated Press last week that the report identified problems that are “unacceptable and unrepresentative of who we are as an institution.”

The FBI is taking more than 40 steps to fix those problems, he said.

Comey also criticized Attorney General William Barr for saying in a separate interview last week that the many errors by the FBI left open the possibility that agents may have acted in bad faith.

“The facts just aren’t there, full stop,” Comey said when asked whether Barr has a valid point.

“That doesn’t make it any less consequential, any less important, but that’s an irresponsible statement.”
Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., hits a baseball after a meeting with minor league baseball players and officials at FunCity Turf on Sunday in Burlington, Iowa. Sanders is opposed to Major League Baseball's plan to cut 42 minor league teams.

**Sanders makes pitch for saving minor league baseball teams**

**By Will Weissett**

Associated Press

BURLINGTON, Iowa — Take Bernie out to the ballpark!

Bernie Sanders, the Vermont senator and Democratic presidential candidate, is aggressively opposing a Major League Baseball plan to cut 42 minor league teams across the country after 2020. Among the targeted are the Vermont Lake Monsters, the Single-A affiliate of the Oakland Athletics in his hometown, Burlington.

Defending low-profile ball clubs in far-flung places more fervently than anyone in the crowded Democratic presidential field allows Sanders to potentially win over a largely untapped 2020 constituency: baseball fans.

Sanders briefly took batting practice Sunday on an indoor turf field as representatives from three small-town Iowa teams looked on: the Quad City River Bandits, the Clinton LumberKings and the Burlington Bees, the local club in this town on the Mississippi River. In August, Sanders played softball with reporters on the state's corn field-ringed "Field of Dreams," the set of the Hollywood hit of the same name. And he has tapped a former Harvard second baseman, Faiz Shakir, to run his campaign.

Sanders shed his signature suit jacket to take swings in a sweater over a dress shirt. With a staff member slow-pitching, the senator dribbled a few grounders to his left, then lifted a ball in the air in the same direction. Taking the diamond demonstrated physical stamina for a 78-year-old who recently had a heart attack while also letting Sanders press a larger political point about rich owners putting profits ahead of the national pastime.

MLB is negotiating a new agreement with the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the governing body of the minors. The initial contract proposal primarily would affect lower-level teams in short-season leagues. Sanders met last month with Commissioner Rob Manfred to decry the plan and the senator sent him a letter Saturday, arguing that baseball "has to be considered more than just the bottom line."

After the initial Sanders-Manfred meeting, MLB issued a statement saying it "understands that we have an obligation to local communities to ensure that public money spent on minor league stadiums is done so prudently and for the benefit of all citizens."

But it added: "MLB also must ensure that minor league players have safe playing facilities suitable for the development of professional baseball players, are not subjected to unreasonable travel demands, are provided with compensation and working conditions appropriate for elite athletes, and have a realistic opportunity of making it to the major leagues."

Some minor league players have filed a federal class-action suit charging that many players earn less than $7,500 per year, violating minimum wage laws.

More than 100 members of Congress from both parties have signed a separate letter to Manfred opposing shutting down minor league teams. So far, though, Sanders is alone among the Democratic

**Thousands of Ohio voters’ absentee applications denied**

**By Julie Carr Smyth**

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Thousands of Ohio voters were held up in their efforts to cast absentee ballots for last year’s general election because of missing or mismatched signatures on their ballot applications, an Associated Press review has found.

The signature requirement on such applications is a largely overlooked and spottily tracked step in Ohio’s voting process, which has shifted increasingly to mail-in ballots since an unusual default absentee voting was instituted in 2005.

To supporters, the requirement is a useful form of protection against voter fraud and provides a layer of security necessary for absentee balloting.

To detractors, it’s a recipe for disenfranchisement—a cumbersome addition to an already stringent voter identification system.

Figures provided to the AP through public information requests to Ohio’s 88 county boards of elections show 21 counties rejected more than 6,500 absentee ballots because a signature was either missing or didn’t match what was on file. That requirement is not for the ballot itself, which faces a different battery of requirements, but merely for an application requesting one.

Another five counties reported rejecting about 850 applications because the voter failed to sign the application or leave it blank. A large number of boards didn’t provide signature data.

The few counties that tracked what happened to applications after they were rejected said issues were largely addressed before or on Election Day.

Twelve responding counties recorded encountering no signature issues with the absentee applications. The remaining responding counties said they didn’t track how many applications they rejected.

It’s a statistic conspicuously absent from all the official data collected by the state, making it all but impossible to compare the issue across years or multiple states.

Signatures and other verification requirements are there to safeguard Ohio’s elections, said state Rep. John Becker, a southwestern Ohio Republican. He said if a voter fails to sign the application form, “that’s on them.”

But Jim Miller, executive director of the League of Women Voters of Ohio, said the AP analysis highlights a largely unchecked area of the process her organization already views as inefficient and subject to uneven enforcement.

“So a person can register to vote online, but if you go online to request an absentee ballot, a form is mailed to you that you have to fill out,” Miller said. Her organization supports allowing people to request absentee ballots online.

About 1.4 million of Ohio’s roughly 8 million registered voters cast absentee ballots last year.

Republican Secretary of State Frank LaRoche advocated as a state law last year for Ohio to allow voters to apply for absentee ballots online. A version of legislation he first proposed in 2013 is now known as Ohio’s Larry’s Law.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, three states — Oregon, Washington and Colorado — conduct all-mail elections, eliminating the ballot application process by automatically mailing a ballot to every registered voter before Election Day.

Miller said Ohio has not shown the political will to move in that direction, but her organization is pushing establishment of a permanent absentee list for those voters who meet certain criteria that require help, such as illness, permanent absentee list for those voters who meet certain criteria that require help, such as illness, permanent disability or illiteracy.

Seven states and the District of Columbia have just such a system.
**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Man convicted in $3M romance fraud scheme**

FL — A Virginia City man was convicted Friday in federal court in Missouri for his role in a scheme that defrauded lonely women across the country out of nearly $3 million.

Henry N. Asomani, 34, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Ghana who lived in Dumfries, Va., was found guilty of six counts involving fraud and conspiracy.

Prosecutors said Asomani’s co-conspirators contacted people who had posted ads on online dating sites such as ChristianMingle.com or through their Facebook pages and then used various phony stories to persuade victims to send them money.

Besides victims in Missouri, other victims live in New Jersey, Alaska, Oklahoma, Florida, Texas, Kansas and Iowa.

**Package thief taunts with thank-you note**

MN — A package thief who made off with a woman’s delivery in St. Paul last week decided to leave something behind for the victim — a handwritten thank-you note taunting her for the package.

Homeowner Hilary Smith said she found the note on her porch after she got home from work, hours after she received a text saying that her package had been delivered.

The note said: “So just a quick little thank you for leaving me the opportunity of stealing your package. Very nice of you, Thank You.” It was signed: “The new owner of your package.”

Smith said she appreciates hand-crafted thank-you notes, but not in this case.

**Man found eaten by gator died of overdose**

FL — A man who was found partially eaten by a hand-crafted thank-you note

**Head-spinning stunt**

Chase Josey gets some air over the crowd during his second run of the men's snowboarding halfpipe finals of the Land Rover U.S. Grand Prix at Copper Mountain, Colo., on Saturday.

**The Census**

$70K

The amount anonymously donated to pay off layaway purchases at two Alabama Walmarts. Someone paid off $45,000 in purchases at a store in the east Alabama city of Anniston on Monday, according to Casey Staheli, a spokesman at company headquarters in Arkansas. Someone paid off another $25,000 in layaway purchases two days later at a Walmart in nearby Oxford. WBMA-TV reported that customers at the Walmart in Anniston who arrived to pick up layaway items got a note that said: “God loves you. Jesus paid the price.”

**Stolen pit bull to make long trip back home**

WV — A pit bull that was stolen from its owner in Montana and taken across the country to West Virginia is on its way back home, thanks to a microchip and a group of volunteers who love animals.

Cassandra Rasmussen, of Butte, Mont., said a person she considered a friend stole her purse and took her 9-year-old dog Zeus on Oct. 30.

The suspected thief was arrested in the Charleston area in November and the dog was taken to a shelter. Workers at the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association scanned him for a microchip and identified Rasmussen as the owner.

Volunteers are driving Zeus the nearly 2,000 miles back to Butte, according to a Facebook page.

**Man commits crime to return to prison**

MI — An Alaska man suspected ofbiting off part of the nose of a friend has been charged with felony assault.

Zachary Atchley, 27, of Fairbanks, was arrested Dec. 10, the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner reported.

The injured man told Alaska State Troopers that he went to see Atchley and another man about 3 a.m. Tuesday at Atchley’s camp west of Fairbanks and began drinking hard liquor.

The man said Atchley approached and bit him, then prevented him from leaving for medical help for about an hour, a criminal complaint said. Atchley also punched him in the head and neck, the man said.

Part of the man’s left nostril and the tip of his nose was missing.

**Man who crashed car into barber surrenders**

CA — A San Francisco Bay Area mother suspected of ramming her car into her son’s barber following a haircut surrendered to authorities, police said.

Ruby Delgadillo, 28, brought an attorney with her when she turned herself in Wednesday and refused to give a statement to detectives, the Antioch Police Department said.

Police said Delgadillo rammed into Brian Martin, 63, with her car, smashing him into a glass storefront and breaking his leg, because she was upset with her son’s haircut.

“She was trying to kill me,” said Martin, owner of the Delta Barber Shop in Antioch, 45 miles east of San Francisco.

Martin told reporters Delgadillo had been his customer for over a year and was usually pleasant but she became upset over a small nick on her son’s neck.

**Bear spray explosion forces evacuation**

MT — A Bozeman barber who was evacuated after a can of bear spray exploded in a warming oven.

Graver Johnson, battalion chief with the Bozeman Fire Department, said three fire engines were sent to the home Dec. 10 because it was thought the structure was on fire.

The explosion was contained in the oven, and firefighters used fans to air out the building. The Bozeman Daily Chronicle reported it’s unclear why the bear spray was in the oven, and three men who live at the home declined to comment.

From wire reports
Hallmark reverses course, reinstates same-sex marriage ads

Associated Press

The Hallmark Channel, reversing what it called a “wrong decision,” said Sunday it will reinstate commercials featuring same-sex couples that it had pulled following a complaint from a conservative group.

The earlier decision by Crown Media, Hallmark’s parent company, to pull several ads for the wedding planning site Zola featuring two brides kissing at the altar had triggered a storm of protest. Celebrities like Ellen DeGeneres and William Shatner criticized the move, and the hashtag #BoycottHallmarkChannel was trending on Twitter at one point.

“They have pulled the ads. They have reversed course,” actor Colin Firth said. “It’s a victory for love. It’s a victory for women. It’s a victory for the family.”

The network said it would resume airings of two ads featuring same-sex couples.

“A couple of weeks ago, we made a mistake in our decision making process,” the network said in a statement. “We made the right choice to air these ads. We regret the impact this had on our viewers and apologize.”

The two ads feature old friends Danny DeVito, left, and Danny Glover in the cast of “Jumanji: The Next Level.”

“Jumanji: The Next Level” put “Frozen 2” on ice, while Clint Eastwood’s “Richard Jewell” continued its hot streak to claim top spot at the box office.

“Frozen 2” took in $32 million, while “Richard Jewell” grossed $25 million.

“Jumanji: The Next Level” opened in 4,200 theaters and grossed $58 million. The sequel to 2017’s “Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle” features Dwayne Johnson and Kevin Hart, and was directed by the up-and-coming filmmaker Jake Kasdan.

“Richard Jewell” was directed by Clint Eastwood and stars Clint Eastwood as the hero of the 1996 Olympic Park bombing.

“Frozen 2” has earned $525 million in North America and $1.26 billion worldwide.

“Richard Jewell” has grossed $76 million worldwide.

Other news

- “Mad Men” actress Christina Hendricks filed for divorce Dec. 13 from her husband of 10 years, actor Geoffrey Arend. The marriage dissolution documents cited irreconcilable differences. The couple, who have two children, 4, and 41, have no children. They announced their separation in October.

- British actor Colin Firth has split from his Italian film producer wife Livia Giuggioli after 22 years of marriage. They have three children. She announced the separation in October.

- British-based Cineworld says it will buy Canada’s Cineplex for about $1.7 billion to create North America’s largest chain of movie theaters and better compete with AMC Entertainment, which owns or operates about 1,000 theaters around the world.

- Anna Karina, the French New Wave actress who became an icon of the cinema in the 1960s and was the muse of Jean-Luc Godard, died Dec. 14 of cancer. She was 79.
Kosovan man charged with supporting ISIS

BERLIN — A man from Kosovo has been charged in Germany with supporting a terrorist organization on allegations he funneled money to Islamic State in Syria and spread propaganda for the extremist group, federal prosecutors said Monday.

The suspect, identified only as Hasen B. was charged Dec. 4 in Hamburg, prosecutors said.

B. is accused of facilitating the transfer of funds to an ISIS fighter in Syria 11 times between 2016 and 2017 and contributing some of his own money as well.

Lebanon delays new PM talk after brutal clashes

BEIRUT — Lebanon’s president Monday postponed talks on naming a new prime minister amid attacks on his government’s leadership as demonstrators in Lebanon’s capital clashed Monday with security forces.

The clashes were the most violent protest in more than a year in Lebanon since daily anti-government demonstrations erupted in Lebanon in mid-October.

President Michel Aoun was to meet with the heads of Lebanon’s parliamentary blocs on Monday to discuss the naming of the new prime minister amid divisions on the shape of the next government.

The presidential palace said the consultations would instead take place on Thursday, following a special request from Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

PM Johnson prepares to ‘get Brexit done’ in time

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson says he’s ready to begin work on ensuring a Brexit agreement is passed by Jan. 31.

Johnson will welcome 109 newly elected colleagues, many of them coming from parts of the country that were once strongholds of the opposition Labour Party.

Busied by the Conservatives’ decisive win in last week’s election, Johnson will move fast to deliver on his campaign mantra to “get Brexit done.” That means ensuring a Brexit withdrawal agreement bill is passed in time for the U.K. to leave the European Union on Brexit Day at 11 p.m. on Jan. 31.

Johnson said Monday he was hopeful that the EU would introduce the EU withdrawal bill on Friday. It will be up to the speaker of the House of Commons to determine if Parliament will hold its first major vote on the bill that same day or will wait until January after the Christmas recess.

The Brexit divorce bill is expected to receive strong support in Parliament, where Johnson’s Conservatives hold a strong majority. The party won 365 of the 650 seats in the House of Commons in Thursday’s landslide election.

If the bill passes and Britain leaves the EU on time, the country will enter a transition period when EU rules and regulations would still apply in the country and people and goods would still be able to pass freely between the U.K. and the remaining EU members.

Negotiators for the British government and the EU would start trade talks with an eye toward reaching a comprehensive post-Brexit agreement.

Queen Elizabeth II will formally open Parliament on Thursday with a speech outlining the government’s legislative program.

Japanese companies pay compensation to bigger Korean wartime laborers

Japan’s trade curbs against South Korea have demanded compensation for the Korean wartime laborers.

The two sides also agreed to cooperate closely on threats from North Korea and to achieve next week’s summit.

Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha, both attending the Asia-Europe Meeting in Madrid, Spain, talked briefly and welcomed their trade officials’ meeting in Tokyo, Japanese officials said.

The two sides also agreed to cooperate closely on threats from North Korea and to achieve next week’s summit.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said that Japan’s export control measures are part of the country’s international responsibility and that “they are not something that we decide by negotiating with a trade partner.”

“Our policy has been consistent and there is no change to our position,” Suga said, referring to Japan’s position on the wartime compensation issue. “We urge South Korea to act wisely.”

South Korean national assembly speaker Moon Hee-sang is seeking to set up a compensation fund for the Korean wartime laborers with an option that allows Japanese companies to chip in donations as a compromise.

Japanese companies pay compensation to bigger Korean wartime laborers

Japan, South Korea hold export talks after dispute

Japan has demanded in July that South Korea reverse the measures, saying Tokyo has weaponized export controls in retaliation for South Korea’s court ruling demanding Japanese companies pay compensation to former Korean laborers over their treatment during Japan’s 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

Tokyo has pressed Seoul to stick with the 1965 agreement, resolving their dispute over wartime Korean laborers, criticizing the court decisions as a violation of international law.

Japan’s trade curbs against South Korea have led to subsequent retaliatory measures that spilled into the area of national security, with Seoul threatening to abandon a key military intelligence-sharing pact.

The pact was saved just hours before its expiration in November, following Washington’s repeated pressure and with Tokyo agreeing to resume export controls requested by Seoul.

Monday’s talks come a week ahead of a planned summit between the two countries and China.

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Rebels kill scores in weekend Congo attacks

BY AL-HADJI KUDRA MALIRO
and SALEH MWANAMILONGO
Associated Press

BENI, Congo — Rebels with apparent links to Islamic State killed at least 43 people in eastern Congo over the weekend in a series of attacks carried out in response to a new military offensive in the area, a rights group said Monday.

Rebels from the Allied Democratic Forces in some cases went door-to-door shooting their victims dead, according to a Congolese human rights group known by its French acronym, CEPADHO.

The rebels have been trying to pit the civilian population against the army so that people demand the military action be stopped, said Omar Kavotha, president of the rights organization. Insecurity in the area already prompted demonstrators to protest late last month by setting fire to the town hall.

The deadly weekend violence targeted an area in eastern Congo that is at the heart of the Ebola epidemic.

“Those attacks will certainly paralyze the Ebola response teams,” said Dr. Pierre Celerin Adikley, who coordinates the effort to control the disease in the Beni region. “The movement of the population becomes difficult to control.”

The medical effort to control the second-deadliest Ebola outbreak in history has been severely hampered since the start by the presence of so many armed groups in eastern Congo.

The medical effort to control the second-deadliest Ebola outbreak in history has been severely hampered since the start by the presence of so many armed groups in eastern Congo.

Health teams have at times been unable to safely get to areas to carry out vaccinations of those at highest risk of contracting the deadly virus. Without the ability to react quickly, Ebola has continued to spread.

Community mistrust of the health workers has only further deepened the problem.

Egypt: Militias hold Libyan government ‘hostage’

BY SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

CAIRO — Libya’s U.N.-supported government is held hostage by “armed and terrorist militias” in the capital, Tripoli, Egypt’s leader said Sunday.

President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi said in televised comments that the Government of National Accord “is not able to have a free and real will because they have been taken hostage by armed and terrorist militias there.”

The GNA is backed by Egypt’s regional rivals Turkey and Qatar, and Egypt’s relations with the two countries have been strained since 2013. That’s when el-Sissi, as defense minister, led the military overthrow of elected but divisive Islamist President Muhammad Morsi amid mass protests against his brief rule. Morsi was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Tripoli-based government is supported by a Libyan affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood group, which Cairo designated as a terrorist organization in 2013. Turkey and Qatar are also staunch backers of the Brotherhood.

El-Sissi said the Libyan conflict has posed a threat to Egypt’s national security because militants and weapons spill over the border into Egypt. He said it had been a priority for Egypt to directly interfere in Libya “but did not take this step to maintain the relationship and brotherhood with the Libyan people.”

There was no immediate comment from the Tripoli authorities.

Last week, the Egyptian president said a comprehensive political solution for the Libyan conflict would be achieved in the coming months that would put an end to a “terrorist hotbed that pushes militants and weapons to (Libya’s) neighboring countries including Egypt.”
‘Afghanistan Papers’ should surprise no one

BY SAM LONG
Special to Stars and Stripes

The saddest thing about the “Afghanistan Papers” published by The Washington Post is not that the Pentagon faces another embarrassment, or that how many people in Washington are claiming to be surprised by their content. The documents the author of the Afghanistan Papers gave me are “shocking,” His Democratic counterpart, Richard Blumenthal — whose son served in Afghanistan — was deadly serious about not leaving. The briefing became a dark comedy. For many people in Washington, humor is a universal salve, applied to mask both physical and emotional pain. Some of us openly laughed at the litany of similar anecdotes. I remember calling a friend from my adviser team that afternoon and asking if he felt the same way. He said, “I feel like I was watching a movie.”

The narrative was so absurd that it was hard to believe. Even after the briefing, I couldn’t shake the feeling that we were living through something that would be remembered for years to come. The briefing was a reminder of how much we have yet to learn about the war in Afghanistan. It was a wake-up call for the American public, who have been deceived for many years about the war’s failures. The documents we have seen now are powerful evidence that the war was a failure and that we should be doing everything we can to bring it to an end.
Looking at the news
A weekly sampling of U.S. editorial cartoons

YOU FACE AN INJURY, I'LL LINE UP FOR THE KICKBACK, THEN WE'LL ALL GO FOR THE SACK!

THE PRESIDENT WARNED MR. LAUROV ABOUT RUSSIAN ELECTION MEDDLING...

"...BUT CUDDLING IS OK!!!"

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS, MR. TRUMP, THERE'S NO RATTLESKAG IN YOUR POCKET!

JAMES COMEY'S PARADE

MAINSTREAM MEDIA

VINDICATED

Here comes the judge!

IMPEACH
IMPEACH
IMPEACH
IMPEACH
IMPEACH
IMPEACH
IMPEACH

IMPLODING

WALT HANDELSMAN/Tribune Content Agency

LISA BENSON/Washington Post Writers Group

JIM MORIN/MorinToons Syndicate

WALT HANDELSMAN/Washington Post Writers Group

WALT HANDELSMAN/Tribune Content Agency
Top 25 Fared
1. Louisville (18-0) lost to Texas Tech 80-77; Beat Eastern Kentucky 99-67; Beat Kennesaw State 95-68; Beat Georgia Tech 63-52; Beat Minnesota 93-69.
2. Kansas (18-1) beat Minnesota 95-66; Beat Ohio State 91-69; Beat Purdue 92-61; Beat Texas 93-73; Beat Duke 100-66.
3. Michigan (17-2) beat Illinois 84-74; Beat Notre Dame 94-74; Beat Indiana 85-78; Beat Wisconsin 88-64; Beat Iowa 98-70.
4. Michigan State (17-2) beat Maryland 88-72; Beat Minnesota 72-46; Beat Purdue 68-65; Beat Ohio State 75-54; Beat Penn State 76-72.
5. Duke (17-2) beat Notre Dame 95-78; Beat North Carolina 78-68; Beat Virginia 84-66; Beat Miami (Fla.) 82-70; Beat Boston College 95-48.
7. Kansas State (16-3) beat Missouri 73-63; Beat Arkansas 85-62; Beat South Carolina 74-60; Beat Oklahoma State 75-67; Beat Oklahoma 88-67.
8. Virginia (16-3) beat College of Charleston 80-68; Beat Florida State 79-69; Beat Wisconsin 86-69; Beat Notre Dame 84-72; Beat Michigan 79-66.
10. Georgia (16-3) beat No. 19 South Carolina 75-61; Beat Florida 81-69; Beat South Carolina 72-65; Beat Mississippi State 70-61; Beat Arkansas 88-70.
11. Baylor (16-3) beat Texas Tech 90-81; Beat TCU 93-73; Beat Kansas State 90-77; Beat West Virginia 81-67; Beat Oklahoma 88-71.
12. Auburn (16-3) beat Mississippi State 78-67; Beat Kentucky 87-78; Beat Missouri 95-85; Beat Tennessee 89-78; Beat Florida 73-67.
13. Memphis (16-3) beat No. 19 Tennessee 88-75; Beat Georgia 92-81; Beat Oklahoma State 77-72; Beat Tennessee 94-78; Beat No. 14 Florida 79-69.
15. Arizona State (16-3) beat Oregon 73-68; Beat Oregon State 76-69; Beat UCLA 103-76; Beat Colorado 94-75; Beat Stanford 89-74.
17. Oregon (16-4) beat Washington State 79-67; Beat Oregon 91-86; Beat Stanford 89-71; Beat Colorado 82-70; Beat Washington 87-69.
19. LSU (16-4) beat Georgia 73-65; Beat Arkansas 69-58; Beat Mississippi State 69-56; Beat Kentucky 85-58; Beat Alabama 95-74.
20. Wisconsin (16-4) beat Northwestern 83-54; Beat Illinois 89-79; Beat Michigan 80-70; Beat Minnesota 79-56; Beat Purdue 90-75.
22. Seton Hall (15-5) lost to Rutgers 68-66; Beat St. Francis (Pa.) 94-71; Beat Pennsylvania 79-64; Beat Creighton 80-65; Beat Temple 94-77.
23. Butler (15-5) beat Creighton 80-65; Beat Xavier 81-62; Beat Marquette 65-64; Beat Providence 85-72; Beat Xavier 72-69.
24. Colorado (15-5) lost to Northern Iowa 79-76; Beat Colorado State 56-44; Beat San Diego 77-71; Beat Utah 73-64; Beat Colorado 71-50.
25. San Diego State (10-0) did not play.
**Longtime Giants ace signs $85M, 5-year deal**

By Janie McCauley
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Longtime Giants ace Madison Bumgarner has reached agreement with the Arizona Diamondbacks on a $85 million, five-year contract that ends his run of success in San Francisco, a person with direct knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Sunday.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the Giants still need to pass a physical to complete the deal.

Bumgarner pitched 11 seasons for the Giants, but knew his time likely had ended. He bid farewell along with retiring manager Bruce Bochy on the final day of the season.

The 2014 World Series MVP with the Giants has agreed to a $85 million, five-year contract with the Arizona Diamondbacks that will end his successful 11-season run in San Francisco.

**Indians trade Kluber to Rangers**

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Corey Kluber led by example and excellence in Cleveland. The Texas Rangers are hoping he can do the same for them.

Kluber pitched 11 seasons for the Indians, but knew his time likely had ended. He bid farewell along with retiring manager Bruce Bochy on the final day of the season.

The 2014 World Series MVP with the Indians has agreed to a $85 million, five-year contract with the Arizona Diamondbacks that will end his successful 11-season run in San Francisco.

**NHL roundup**

Cane's 1st hat trick of season lifts Chicago

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Patrick Kane scored three goals for his first hat trick of the season, and the Chicago Blackhawks stopped a three-game losing streak by topping the Minnesota Wild 5-3 on Sunday.

Brandon Saad and David Kampf also scored for Chicago, which was coming off a heartbreaking loss at St. Louis. The last-place Blackhawks had dropped seven straight games when they were struck by a line drive.

Kevin Fiala scored twice for Minnesota in the opener of a three-game trip. Eric Staal also scored, and Ryan Suter had three assists.

The Jets improved to 20-11-2.

Kyle Connor also scored and Connor Hellebuyck made 29 saves to help the Jets improve to 20-11-2.

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**The Blackhaws' Patrick Kane, left, celebrates with teammate Brent Seabrook (7) on the bench after scoring one of his goals against the Minnesota Wild on Sunday in Chicago.**
## Scoreboard

### Eastern Conference

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### Southeast Division

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### Scoreboard

**Tuesday, December 17, 2019**

- **Golden State** vs. **Sacramento**: 5 23 .179 19
- **Sacramento** vs. **L.A. Lakers**: 12 14 .462 11
- **L.A. Clippers** vs. **L.A. Lakers**: 20 8 .714 4
- **L.A. Lakers** vs. **Indiana**: 24 3 .889 —
- **Minnesota** vs. **Utah**: 10 15 .400 7
- **Denver** vs. **New Orleans**: 17 9 .654
- **Dallas** vs. **Doncic, DAL**: 25 236 184 732 29.3
- **Antetokounmpo, MIL**: 26 299 166 807 31.0
- **Harden, HOU**: 26 291 308 1021 39.3

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### Roundup

**Lakers beat Hawks for 7th straight win**

ATLANTA — Not looking the least bit tired after a whirlwind weekend, LeBron James scored 32 points and the Los Angeles Lakers extended their winning streak to seven with a 101-96 victory over the pesky Atlanta Hawks on Sunday night.

The Lakers pulled even with Milwaukee for the NBA’s best record at 24-3.

“Highlights: sometimes they happen, sometimes they don’t,” James said. “I try to play the game with a lot of joy.”

The Hawks kept it close all the way. Rookie Cam Reddish got a look at a tying three-pointer from the corner, but the shot clanked off the rim. Danny Green went to the other end and knocked down a pair of the three to send the Hawks to their fourth straight loss.

After scoring 28 points in a win at Milwaukee on Friday night, James flew to Columbus, Ohio, to watch son Bronny play a high school game Saturday night. Then, James traveled on to Atlanta to face the Hawks.

James also had 13 rebounds and seven assists, the best a no-longer injury-plagued Anthony Davis added 27 points and 13 rebounds.

Travis Young led the Hawks with 30 points.

---

**Nuggets 111, Knicks 105**: Nikola Jokic made a late go-ahead three-pointer and finished with 25 points to help Denver hold off New York.

Will Barton had 16 points, Gary Harris added 15 and Jamal Murray had 14, including a key three-pointer in the late going. The Nuggets beat the Knicks for the 12th straight time in Denver.

Marcus Morris led New York with 22 points. The Knicks were coming off back-to-back road wins under interim coach Mike Miller. They played Denver 11 days ago in New York and lost by 37 points, a setback that preceded the firing of David Fizdale as coach.

---

**Nets 109, 76ers 89**: Terrence Ross and 11 rebounds and Garrett Temple finished with 13 points for the Nets.

With Joel Embiid out with an upper respiratory illness, Ben Simmons scored 20 points and Tobias Harris chipped in 17 for the 76ers. They had won five in a row.

---

**Magic 130, Pelicans 119**: Jonathan Isaac had 21 points and 10 rebounds and visiting Orlando handed New Orleans its franchise-record 12th straight loss.

Magic center Nikola Vucevic returned from a sprained ankle to score 20 points. He played 29 minutes in his first game since Nov. 20. Orlando snapped a three-game losing streak while making a season-high 17 threes, shooting 50% from long range.

Jrue Holiday led the Pelicans with 29 points and eight assists.

**Nets 109, 76ers 89**: Spencer Dinwiddie scored 24 points, Joe Harris had 16 points and Brooklyn beat Philadelphia.

DeAndre Jordan had 13 points and 11 rebounds and Garrett Temple finished with 13 points.

---

**Leaders**

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Scoreboard

Chiefs romp past Broncos in the snow

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Chiefs turned Arrowhead Stadium into their own winter wonderland, junketing through the snow to an easy victory over the Broncos as the AFC West champions march toward another postseason run filled with possibilities.

Patrick Mahomes threw for 340 yards and two touchdowns, and Tyreek Hill had 11 receptions for 167 yards and another touchdown as Kansas City improved to 11-3 and claimed a 1½-game lead over Denver in the AFC West.

It was another magical day for the Chiefs offense, which moved the ball at will and Twenty-two degrees as the snowflakes fell. It was another day for the KC fans to go home happy.

The Chiefs take a 1-0 lead into halftime, but the scoreboard shows a 10-0 lead entering the locker room.

In the first half, the Chiefs outscored the Broncos 10-0.

In the second half, Kansas City took control and scored 21 points.

The Chiefs outscored the Broncos 21-0 in the second half.

In the third quarter, both teams scored touchdowns, but the Chiefs continued to run away from the Broncos.

In the fourth quarter, the Chiefs pulled away even more, scoring two touchdowns.

The Chiefs won 32-10.

Individual Statistics

PASSING

Chiefs — Mahomes 26-41-3-315, Hill 4-11-1.

Broncos — Allen 7-24-0.

RECEIVING

Chiefs — Hill 11-167, Kelce 8-80, Kelce 7-54, Hill 1-34.

Broncos — Hill 4-11-1.

The Chiefs outscored the Broncos 21-0 in the second half and 32-10 overall.

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Broncos — Hill 4-11-1.
Eagles overcome fumbles, Redskins

LANDOVER, Md. — Carson Wentz fumbled the ball away, but recovered in time to keep alive Philadelphia's hopes of winning the NFC East.

Wentz bounced back from a potentially costly mistake by leading a 75-yard, go-ahead scoring drive and throwing his third touchdown pass of the day.

"I didn't lose faith or confidence at all," Wentz said. "I just wanted one more chance. I wanted another chance to go down and the defense gave that to us, and we got it done."

Philadelphia and Dallas both are 7-7 and face off in Philadelphia next week.

Wentz threw TD passes to Miles Sanders, Zach Ertz and Greg Ward and was 30-for-43 for 261 yards, Harmon 2-22, Sprinkle 2-13, S.Sims 5-45, Peterson 3-25, Thompson 2-13. Washington 7-7-0-13—27

D.Ross cannon/PF

Oakland Raiders fans in "The Black Hole" watch their team walk off the field. The Eagles beat the Raiders 20-16 Sunday in the Raiders' final home game before moving to Las Vegas next season.

DRAKE'S 4 TDs lift Cards past Browns

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Kenny Dracie was almost embarrassed by his four-touchdown day for Arizona, saying that two of the scores came when he essentially fell forward on 1-yard runs. The other two were so easy, he strolled into the end zone untouched.

The Cardinals found four Chargers' turnovers and converted them into 20 points. It is the most turnarounds for a Zimmer-led unit.

"We knew that they had more in turnover margin, so it was important that we try to get some today," Zimmer said.

Minnesota has a two-game lead for the final NFC playoff spot and has won four of its last five.

"It's all up for grabs," said Kirk Cousins, who threw for 207 yards with a touchdown and an interception.

"We put ourselves in a position to have a lot to play for these last two games."

Vikings 39, Chargers 10

Minnesota L.A. Chargers

PASSING—Philadelphia

L.A. Chargers

First downs 20 13
Total Net Yards 239 259
Rushes-yards 23-106 20-25
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Rushes-yards 23-106 20-25
Comp-Att-Int 20-37-0 29-46-2
Passing 226 263
Punt Returns 0-0 0-0
Interceptions Ret. 3-0 2-0
Sacked-Yards-Lost 2-7 2-17
Fumbles-Lost 0-0 0-0
Penalties-Lost 0-0 0-0
Time of Possession 29:21 34:39

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Jacksonville 1-21, Leonard Fournette 1-21, Yeldon 1-21, Chubb 1-21, DeAndre 1-21, Denard 1-21, Sanu 1-21, Posey 1-21, B. Germany 1-21, Will 1-21, Thomas 1-21, Jones 1-21

Missed Field Goals—None.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

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Missed Field Goals—None.
Falcons rally to stun Niners in final seconds

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Matt Ryan outshined his former offensive coordinator in an MVP-type fashion Kyle Shanahan knows oh so well.

Yet even this rally might have been more improbable than either could have imagined — two Falcons touchdowns in the final 5 seconds. A pair of replay reversals in the last 8 ticks of the clock, including Austin Hooper’s apparent Falcons touchdown in the final minute, sent the game into overtime.

When you’re down that tight in the red zone, there are going to be tight window throws. It was a great effort,” Ryan said. The call didn’t go our way. At that point, you have to have the mindset of just getting right back to it and finding a way to get the job done the following play.”

When things couldn’t get crazier, they did. On the final kickoff, Atlanta scored another touchdown when Olamide Zaccheaus came up with the ball as the 49ers were tossing it around in desperation.

The 49ers still clinched their first playoff berth since a 2013 run to the NFC championship game with the Rams’ loss at Dallas.

FROM BACK PAGE

we’ll be ready and we’ll be excited.”

The Cowboys won the first meeting and would clinch the division by marching into Philly and walloping the Eagles. The final game at AT&T Stadium is one that the Cowboys can clinch their fourth division title in six seasons with a win at the Eagles.

The defending NFC champion Rams (7-7), who really needed help to get into the playoffs, didn’t help themselves with another poor showing after their most impressive game of the season in a win over Seattle.

“We haven’t been consistent as a football team really through this whole season.”

Both teams came into the game with a chance to clinch an NFC wild-card berth, but the Rams lost to the Eagles while the Cowboys beat the Redskins.

Mike McVay said, “That’s a big part of my responsibility is to figure out solutions and help us be more consistent.”

The Cowboys’ No. 1-ranked offense kept rolling with a season high in points to go with 475 yards, including scoring drives of 90 and 97 yards.

Least: Apart from East, NFC race a scramble amongst formidable teams

“Still all up for grabs,” said Vikings QB Kirk Cousins, who was 19 of 25 for 207 yards with a touchdown and interception in a lopsided win at the Chargers. “You want a good place to be. We’ve put ourselves in a position to have a lot to play for these last two games.”

That, compared to facing the underachieving Cowboys or undermanned Eagles, is not a very enticing prospect.

Green Bay and Minnesota figure to, well, figure out the NFC North on Monday night, Dec. 23 in Minneapolis. ESPN couldn’t have asked for a more juicy closer to its season.

The Packers, who hold a one-game lead on the Vikings, finish with awful Detroit and Minnesota.

“The NFC is more of a scramble among some very formidable teams,” ESPN’s Chris Simms said.

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NFL

Texans’ late push takes out Titans

Houston holds edge for AFC South crown

By Teresa M. Walker

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Houston Texans took charge in the fourth quarter, and now they have control of the AFC South with four games remaining.

The defending division champs are looking for Houston’s fourth AFC South title in six years under coach Bill O’Brien. The Titans haven’t won this division since 2008, and Mike Vrabel is Tennessee’s third coach since.

Carles Hyde ran for 104 yards and scored a TD with 10.54 left off Ka’imi Fairbairn’s 29-yard field goal with 3:26 remaining provided the winning margin as the Texans scored 10 straight points in the fourth quarter to beat the Tennessee Titans 24-21 on Sunday.

“We had to lock in,” Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson said. “That’s what we did. It came down to that fourth quarter of standing up, getting up and getting in and getting points on the board and defense making stops. Yeah, it was just something that we definitely didn’t want to let slip out of our hand.”

Now the Texans (9-5) must travel home with a short week before going to Tampa Bay on Saturday before hosting the Titans (8-6) again in the regular season finale.

“I don’t think we should even think we have second about anything other than Tampa Bay, and that should be the whole goal,” O’Brien said. “I think the Texans’ improved chances of winning the division. The Texans nearly blew a 14-0 halftime lead with Tennessee intercepting Watson twice inside the Titans.

The Titans snapped a four-game win streak with only their second loss in seven games. Now they will need help in the final two games to earn their second playoff berth in three seasons.

“We’ve just got to be better, man,” Titans safety Kevin Byard said. “We’ll see them guys again in two weeks, but disappointed.”

When the Titans tied it at 14 early in the fourth quarter, the Texans scored 10 straight points. Hyde ran for a 1.4-yard TD, then Fairbairn’s field goal finished Houston’s scoring.

“We’ll have to have an answer there,” O’Brien said.

Tennessee outgained Houston 432-374. Ryan Tannehill threw for 279 yards, ran for a 1-yard TD, but also was intercepted at the goal line. Derrick Henry snapped a four-game stretch of 100-yard rushing games, finishing with 86 yards on 21 carries.

Texans 24, Titans 21

Houston 14-6 (1st-2, 3rd-0, 4th-13)

Tennessee 8-6 (1st-3, 2nd-0, 3rd-0, 4th-6)

Zeke Olsen/AFP

Associated Press

Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver James Washington (14) celebrates a touchdown with teammates during the second half of an NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills, Sunday, Dec. 15, 2019, in Pittsburgh. The Bills beat the Steelers 17-10.

Pittsburgh Steelers safety Minkah Fitzpatrick (29) celebrates a touchdown during the first half of an NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills, Sunday, Dec. 15, 2019, in Pittsburgh. The Bills beat the Steelers 17-10.

Associated Press

Packers slip past Bears in rivals’ 200th meeting

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay Packers’ wait to see if a long-time foe would help them clinch a playoff spot was a whole lot easier than the lateral-filled final play they had to survive to beat the Chicago Bears in the rivals’ 200th game.

Leading by eight points with just 1 second remaining, Tramon Williams fell on Javon Kinlaw’s fumble at the 2-yard line to end Green Bay’s 21-13 victory over the Bears on Sunday.

A few hours later, the Packers were playoff bound, when the Dallas Cowboys beat the Los Angeles Rams.

“I think I blacked out there for a second,” Green Bay coach Matt LaFleur said. “There was so many laterals. I couldn’t tell. I was just hoping that someone was going to make the tackle.”

With the win, Green Bay (11-3) swept the Bears for the 15th time in the last 26 seasons and the seventh time in 11 seasons. The Packers defeated Chicago 10-3 in the season opener. Green Bay now leads the series 99-95-6.

The Packers improved to 19-5 under McDermott. Buffalo trailed Pittsburgh for the 15th time in 11 seasons. The Bills also beat the Steelers for the first 10-win season since 1999.

“Will learn from this and move forward to our next opportunity,” said Steelers coach Mike Tomlin, a colleague of McDermott’s at William & Mary. “There is scarcity in this business. You only get so many opportunities to state for a cause as yourself.”

Buffalo won for the fourth time in five games and recorded its first 10-win season since 1999. The Bills also beat the Steelers for the second time in Pittsburgh.

Packers 21, Bears 13

By Dan Scifo

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay Packers’ wait to see if a long-time foe would help them clinch a playoff spot was a whole lot easier than the lateral-filled final play they had to survive to beat the Chicago Bears in the rivals’ 200th game.

Leading by eight points with just 1 second remaining, Tramon Williams fell on Javon Kinlaw’s fumble at the 2-yard line to end Green Bay’s 21-13 victory over the Bears on Sunday.

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Teams 17, Steelers 10

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Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Buffalo Bills didn’t have many playoff experiences during a recent two-decade stretch.

Bills coach Sean McDermott and his quarterback Josh Allen are helping to change the culture in Buffalo.

Allen threw a 14-yard touchdown pass to Tyler Kroft with 7:55 to play and the Bills clinched a playoff spot, beating the Pittsburgh Steelers 17-10 on Sunday night.

“(Mc德ermott) preaches play-off caliber and that’s the standard we hold ourselves to,” Allen said.

“The goal is to get yourself into the playoffs to have a shot at the Super Bowl.”

Buffalo (10-4) has done that. The Bills secured their second playoff berth in three seasons under McDermott. Buffalo trailed 10-7, but scored on two possessions in the fourth quarter.

Allen rallied the Bills for a comeback win for the fifth time this season. Consecutive interceptions by Jordan Poyer and Levi Wallace on Pittsburgh’s last two possessions sealed the victory.

The surging Steelers (8-6) had an opportunity to leapfrog the Bills for the top AFC wild-card spot, but Buffalo snapped Pittsburgh’s three-game win streak. The Steelers remain the No. 6 seed in the AFC, but have no room for error.

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Associated Press

Texas running back Carlos Hyde ran for 104 yards and a touchdown in Houston’s 24-21 win over the Titans on Sunday, Nov. 17, 2019.
The folks at NFL headquarters can relax: The NFC East winner will have at least a .500 record.

That’s barring a tie next week when Dallas visits Philadelphia, of course. And in this season of unpredictability — isn’t December supposed to be dominated by the better teams? — anything from 55-55 to 3-3 in a blizzard could occur at Lincoln Financial Field.

It’s been a year of supreme separation in the NFL. Forget competitive balance, there are a bunch of haves and just as many have-nots in 2019. Which makes it understandable that the league offices would have been under siege had a 7-9 NFC East champion hosted a 12-4 wild card, particularly when teams with winning records don’t get into the postseason parade.

With Dallas’ stunning turnaround romp past the Rams and Philly’s improbable ability to pull out two victories over weak rivals despite being as injury ravaged as any team in football, the 7-9 prospect died. Although 7-8-1 with that equally unlikely tie happening is in the mix.

“Yeah, it’s exciting,” Eagles quarterback Carson Wentz says. “The last couple weeks it’s been backs against the wall and that doesn’t change. We got Dallas coming in and we know what that means to this city each week, regardless of the circumstances. But we also know the circumstances and what’s riding on it as

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Above: Dallas receiver Tavon Austin, top, celebrates his touchdown during the Cowboys’ 44-21 win over the Los Angeles Rams on Sunday. Left: Eagles receiver Greg Ward catches a touchdown pass over Redskins cornerback Josh Norman in Philadelphia’s 37-27 win. The Eagles will host the Cowboys next week in an NFC East showdown.

D-backs ink longtime Giants ace Bumgarner