

The Washington Post



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SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 2012

WASHINGTONPOST.COM • B1

Pentagon to deploy floating base

'Mothership' for commandos could be headed to Persian Gulf

BY CRAIG WHITLOCK

The Pentagon is rushing to send a large floating base for commando teams to the Middle East as tensions rise with Iran, al-Qaeda in Yemen and Somali pirates, among other threats.

In response to requests from U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, the Navy is converting an aging warship it had planned to decommission into a makeshift staging base for the commandos. Unofficially dubbed a "mothership," the floating base could accommodate smaller high-speed boats and helicopters commonly used by Navy SEALs. Procurement documents show, Special Operations forces are a key part of the Obama administration's strategy to make the military leaner and more agile as the Pentagon confronts at least \$487 billion in spending cuts over the next decade.

Lt. Cmdr. Mike Kafka, a spokesman for the Navy's Fleet Forces Command, declined to elaborate on the floating base's purpose or to say where, exactly, it will be deployed in the Middle East. Other Navy officials acknowledged that they were moving with unusual haste to complete the conversion and send the mothership to the region by early summer.

Navy documents indicate that it could be headed to the Persian Gulf, where Iran has threatened to block the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial shipping route for much of the world's oil supply. A market survey proposal from the Military Sealift Command, dated Dec. 22

MOTHERSHIP CONTINUED ON A11



Afghan youths play soccer in Herat. Their country could see NATO troops leave by the end of 2013, a year ahead of schedule, under a proposal put forth by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Afghan President Hamid Karzai at a news conference Friday in Paris.

France to accelerate Afghan withdrawal

Sarkozy to pull out troops a year early, will urge NATO to do same

BY EDWARD CODY AND KAREN DEYOUNG

PARIS — France announced Friday that it will pull its combat forces out of Afghanistan one year ahead of the scheduled NATO withdrawal and said it would urge the rest of the alliance to do the same.

President Nicolas Sarkozy made the unexpected proposal in concert with Afghan President Hamid Karzai at a news confer-

ence here. "We have decided... to ask NATO to consider a total handing of NATO combat missions to the Afghan army over the course of 2013," Sarkozy said.

The move dramatized growing uncertainty, in Afghanistan as well as in NATO countries, over the future of the U.S.-led military campaign against the Taliban. It could also complicate the Obama administration's deliberations over the pace of withdrawing U.S. troops.

The 33,000 "surge" troops President Obama sent to Afghanistan in 2010 are due to be home by the end of summer. The military believes that the remaining 68,000 should stay until the end of the 2014 summer fighting season to

maintain and expand what they say are gains against the Taliban. Reopening NATO discussions on an end date would probably strengthen the hand of administration officials who envision a faster, phased drawdown that would save money as well as U.S. lives.

NATO first set the 2014 target 14 months ago and has scheduled a summit in Chicago in May to begin to flesh out withdrawal plans. That discussion is likely to be accelerated, with Sarkozy saying his government would propose the early drawdown at a meeting of alliance defense ministers next week in Brussels.

Sarkozy said he intended to explain his reasoning to Obama

by telephone Saturday.

Obama administration officials reacted with skepticism to the broader proposal for advancing the overall NATO withdrawal date. Decisions within the Afghanistan coalition, a senior administration official said, "are taken by 50 countries, not one."

The coalition includes the 28 NATO members and an additional 22 countries.

"Anyone can propose anything for consideration," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid inflaming the issue.

The official said that while the administration "doesn't necessar-

AFGHANISTAN CONTINUED ON A9

As GDP grows, divide remains

2.8% EXPANSION IN FOURTH QUARTER

But gains aren't getting to consumers' wallets

BY PETER WHORISKEY

The economy is growing at a decent clip. Corporate profits are at record highs. And the nation's automakers, whose near-collapse in 2007 heralded the downturn, are humming along.

But for many Americans, even those with jobs, the "recovery" so far seems hardly worth celebrating.

The Commerce Department issued a quarterly report Friday that said the economy expanded at a comfortable rate of 2.8 percent during the last quarter of last year. The figure suggests that, after the slowdown for much of 2011, the recovery has begun to accelerate again.

But the report and other recent economic data suggest a stark divide between the fortunes of businesses and people. Companies are thriving again, but households have come under financial stress, creating dissatisfaction that, in a presidential election year, could have far-reaching effects.

At the broadest level, in terms of size, the economy has recovered from the downturn. With this year's growth, the nation's GDP, or the value of all goods and services it generates, exceeds pre-recession levels. The nation has recorded 22 straight months of job increases, including the addition of 200,000 jobs in December.

But total employment num-

GDP CONTINUED ON A11

Life term, no parole in killing at yoga store

BY PAUL DUGGAN

A Montgomery County judge, his voice rising in anger at times, sentenced Brittany Norwood to life in prison without the chance of parole Friday for the savage killing of co-worker Jayne Murray in a Bethesda yoga store last year.

In the climax to a sensational murder case that rocked Bethesda's top downtown retail district, Circuit Court Judge Robert Greenberg locked eyes on the diminutive, 29-year-old defendant seated before him.

"Coldblooded... brutal... calculated... deliberate... devious... malicious," was how the judge described Norwood and the murder she committed in the Lullu-limon Athletica store. The sentence brought a burst of applause from a room packed with more than 200 people, including relatives of Norwood and Murray.

"Please!" the judge scolded, sil-

NORWOOD CONTINUED ON A4

Hazardous attraction

Popular magnet toys used to mimic piercings pose risk if swallowed

BY LENA H. SUN

Meredith DelPrete, 10, was at school one day and did something that she said is popular among kids her age: She pretended to have a pierced tongue. The Fairfax County fifth-grader took two magnetic balls from her pocket and placed one on top of her tongue and the other on the underside. The magnets, the size of a BB, are extremely powerful. They made it look like she had a stud. She opened her mouth to show a friend.

"That's when the silver orbs rolled off. "I could feel them in the back of my throat. I tried to get them out, but I couldn't. So I just swallowed them," she said in an interview this week.

That accidental swallowing led to five days at Inova Fairfax Hospital, at least 10 X-rays, three CT scans and an endoscopy. Finally, on Jan. 20, a surgeon used a metal instrument to manipulate the magnets into her appendix, avoiding major surgery. He then removed her appendix, and the magnets,



ASPIRD/RECKON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Meredith DelPrete, 10, of Fairfax County holds the type of ball-bearing magnets, called Buckyballs, that she swallowed at school. A surgeon removed two magnets — and her appendix.

doctors said.

Doctors and consumer-product safety officials say the growing popularity of small, ball-bearing magnets pose a unique health hazard. Not only are they in toys, but they can also be found in jewelry and are marketed as desktop toys for adults. The magnets that Mer-

edith received as a gift are a popular brand known as Buckyballs, which are 5mm in diameter. The labels warn to keep them away from children and not to put them in the nose or mouth; they say that if swallowed, magnets can cause seri-

MAGNETS CONTINUED ON A4

Paul's denials over racist newsletters are disputed

BY JERRY MARKON AND ALICE CRITES

Ron Paul, well known as a physician, congressman and libertarian, has also been a businessman who pursued a marketing strategy that included publishing provocative, racially charged newsletters to make money and spread his ideas, said three people with direct knowledge of Paul's business.

The Republican presidential candidate has denied writing inflammatory passages in the pamphlets from the 1990s and said recently that he did not read them at the time or for years afterward. Numerous colleagues said he does not hold racist views.

But people close to Paul's operations said he was deeply involved in the company that produced the newsletters, Ron Paul & Associates, and closely monitored its operations, signing off on articles and speaking to staff members virtually every day.

"It was his newsletter, and it was under his name, so he always got to see the final product... He would proof it," said Renae Hath-

way, a former secretary in Paul's company and a supporter of the Texas congressman.

The newsletters point to a rarely seen and somewhat opaque side of Paul, who has surprised the political community by becoming an important factor in the Republican race.

The candidate, who has presented himself as a kindly doctor and political truth teller, declined in a recent debate to release his tax returns, joking that he would be "embarrassed" about his income compared with that of his richer GOP rivals.

Yet a review of his enterprises reveals a sharp-eyed businessman who for nearly two decades

NEWSLETTERS CONTINUED ON A7

■ **Newt Gingrich:** His campaign struggles to find its footing after a new poll showed Mitt Romney had regained his lead in Florida.

■ **Marco Rubio:** Star senator has become center of gravity in Florida.

■ **President Obama:** He proposes a plan to reward colleges and universities that cut tuition costs.

IN SUNDAY'S POST

In full bloom The Spring Arts Preview covers all of the major events coming to the area, including theater and music. **Sunday Arts**

The customs of customs Helpful tips on what globe-trotting Americans need to know when returning from abroad. **Travel**



Committed to a real-life role After "The Wire," actress Sonja Sohn couldn't just leave Baltimore's troubled streets behind. **Magazine**

Democracy at work A guide for the young on who's running for president, how the primaries work and the race's main issues. **KidsPost**

INSIDE

METRO
Existing rule will apply to Occupy protesters
The Park Service said that the prohibition on camping on federal parkland would be enforced in Washington on Monday. **B1**

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FINANCIAL
For a day, unconfined by 140 characters
Some Twitter users say they will boycott the social network after it announced it may begin blocking tweets in some countries. **A10**

PostPoints
DAILY CODE (DETAILS, B2) **6 9 2 1**
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Norwood apologizes to relatives of victim

NORWOOD FROM A1

encing the crowd. Norwood, speaking publicly for the first time, addressed Murray's family before learning her punishment. "Before I go to prison," she said, "I needed you to hear how deeply sorry I am."

In an after-hours confrontation apparently sparked by Norwood's attempt to steal a pair of yoga pants, authorities said, she bludgeoned, choked and stabbed Murray, using at least five weapons to inflict more than 350 separate wounds. Then she gave herself a few minor wounds, bound her own hands and ankles in a restroom, and initially fooled detectives with an elaborate tale about a pair of masked intruders.

Until the cover-up unraveled days later, police thought she was a victim of two killers on the loose, and fear reigned on the upscale streets of Bethesda Row. "You're one hell of a liar, ma'am," Greenberg said in a tone of contempt.

Norwood and her attorneys had sought a sentence of life with a chance of parole. "I don't even ask this for myself," Norwood said as she dabbed tears. "I truly ask this for my family, especially my mom and dad." The judge was unmoved.

"I have no doubt, Ms. Norwood, that you are a deeply troubled woman," Greenberg told her. However, "my sympathy for your plight, ma'am, does not begin — does not begin — to approach what I feel for the Murray family."

With or without parole, he said, "you will live. You will see another sunrise, another sunset. It may be through a prison window. There'll be Christmas. There'll be telephone calls. There'll be visits. The only visits Jayna Murray will have are those to her grave."

In arguing that the prolonged brutality of the killing and the seemingly remorseless cover-up attempt made life without parole a fitting punishment for Norwood, State's Attorney John McCarthy summed eight of Murray's relatives and friends to



State's Attorney John McCarthy speaks outside court. With him are Jayna Murray's brother Hugh, left, and parents, David and Phyllis.

Phyllis Murray said her daughter's death was "a pain that ripped through our bodies. The grief is like a lightning strike. It is so powerful. It is so intense." She said, "This individual must be removed from society forever."

As Norwood sat silent and almost motionless, her eyes cast downward, one of Murray's two older brothers, an Army captain in dress uniform, strode to the lectern. "Your honor, I'm Hugh Murray, and I am a victim of murder — my sister Jayna's murder."

"Nothing will ever return to normal," he said. "Nothing will ever be the same."

Hugh Murray's wife, Kate, told Greenberg: "When we do sleep, we as often as not have nightmares about Jayna's murder."

Then Murray's other brother, Dirk Murray, invoked the three Furies of Greek mythology, Dante's nine circles of hell, and the Old Testament story of Cain and Abel, telling the judge, "I've explored all to see what kind of hell awaits Ms. Norwood."

His wife, April, came next, then Jayna Murray's boyfriend, Fraser

speaks. Murray, 30, a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University, was bright, loving, compassionate, intelligent, adventurous and devoted to her family, they said.

Of the many stages of grief, I have not moved away from rage," he father, David Murray, said. Greenberg. He recalled leading soldiers in combat as an Army officer and seeing changes in their psyches as they grew used to fighting. "Once bloodied, the unwepted is easier and probably more likely," he said of killing. And that would be true of Norwood, he said, if she was someday freed.

Bozell. "No longer can I look forward to our children, praying they have Jayna's smile and her indomitable spirit," Bozell said.

At Norwood's trial late last year, there was no dispute over whether she had killed Murray. Defense attorneys sought a verdict of second-degree murder, arguing that the crime was committed in the heat of passion. McCarthy contended that the killing was intentional and deliberate, and the jury agreed, convicting Norwood of first-degree murder. She was a star soccer player in high school and college and had no criminal record before the killing.

On Friday, Norwood showed emotion only after the Murray family spoke. She cried as a brother, Sandre Norwood, spoke. "This is not brought out at the trial," he said.

"Please, your honor: At least give her some hope," he said, asking for parole eligibility.

Greenberg, who has worked in the Montgomery justice system for decades, said he could recall only two cases "that approach the brutality of this case." The savagery of the killing, he said, is "nothing short of astounding to me."

Staff writer Dana Hedgpeth contributed to this report.

Tiny but powerful magnets pose big risk when swallowed

MAGNETS FROM A1

ous injury or death. Another 10-year-old was hospitalized at Inova Fairfax at the same time as Meredith: a boy who had swallowed three ball-bearing magnets. He passed them without incident, doctors said. On Wednesday, a third child, a 9-year-old boy, was taken to the hospital and transferred to Georgetown University Hospital, a doctor said. The boy's condition could not be immediately determined.

Neither Meredith nor the other 10-year-old suffered serious injury, doctors said.

When two or more magnets are swallowed, they can attract each other internally, resulting in serious injuries, such as small holes in the stomach and intestines, intestinal blockage, blood poisoning and even death, according to safety and health officials.

In November, the Consumer Product Safety Commission issued its first product-wide warning about ball-bearing magnets in adult products in a news release with manufacturers. The commission had received 22 reports of incidents involving the magnets from 2009 through October, it said.

The actual number is likely higher, doctors said. Inova Fairfax alone had three cases in less than a week.

Though parents of younger children are generally warned about the hazards of small toys, there is less awareness among adults — and even medical professionals — about the risk of magnets, especially when older children use them to emulate tongue or lip piercings, according to parents, doctors and safety officials.

"The potential for serious injury and death if multiple magnets are swallowed demands that parents and medical professionals be aware of this hidden hazard," said commission Chairman Inez Tenenbaum. "This is not a child-proof product and should be kept away from children."

Three doctors who treated Meredith said they did not know children were using magnets to mimic piercings.

"I had not heard about it until that evening," said Sharon Day, an emergency-room doctor on duty when Meredith and the other 10-year-old were hospitalized. Day, who lives in Montgomery County, quizzed her two high-school-age children, "I said to my kids, 'Are you guys doing this?' ... They weren't, but they had heard about it."

Voluntary recalls. Marsha Kay, who chairs the pediatric gastroenterology department at the Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital, said magnet ingestion among children has been reported increasingly in recent years.

"It's a very popular and perceived to be safe," she said of the magnets. Reports first began appearing in the United States in 2005. That year, Meredith and the other 10-year-old boy died after swallowing nine cylindrical magnets from an older sibling's toy building set, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The magnets had joined across two loops of intestine, causing a twisting of the bowel that led to a fatal bloodstream infection.

Since 2008, the Consumer Product Safety Commission has received more than 200 reports of children swallowing all kinds of magnets; at least 18 children required emergency surgery to remove them.

And at least two major toy manufacturers have issued voluntary recalls of toys with magnets since 2006. In 2010, the maker of Buckyballs and the commission issued a voluntary recall of Buckyballs magnet sets to update the labeling.

The recent reports may be linked to the holiday season. Kay said she received a call this week from a doctor elsewhere in the country about an accidental ingestion by a school-age child.

Stephen Kim, the Annapolis pediatric surgeon who removed the magnets from Meredith, said he and two other doctors in the practice have recently received more inquiries from pediatricians and gastroenterologists. As a result, they are aiming to come up with a treatment protocol.

"We're trying to discuss a unified response to anyone who consults us," he said. "This is a big, big problem," said Ben Enav, the pediatric gastroenterologist who treated Meredith last year. He had a third case, another school-age child who swallowed the same type of magnets and needed surgery because of a perforated intestine.

"I can see how an innocent bystander can think this seems all very benign and nothing to worry about, but if these things get separated and are floating through your intestine," they can cause serious injury, he said.

Even urgent-care and emergency-room clinicians have assumed — incorrectly — that they can send a child who has swallowed magnets home. "They are not aware of how serious a problem this is," Enav said.

Craig Zucker, chief executive for Maxfield & Oberon, the manufacturer of Buckyballs, said the company puts warning labels in five places, inside and outside the boxes. The company works with the commission to spread the message that the magnets should be kept from children.

"We don't sell to stores that sell exclusively children's products or toy stores," he said. "We are doing everything we can to make sure it's not getting to children." Brookstone, one of many retailers that carry the magnets, says they are a popular item. A boxed set of 125 Buckyball magnets sells for \$24.99. A company spokeswoman said new product training includes warnings that they are for adults only.



Doctors monitored the magnets inside Meredith DePrete's body and pursued surgery after they became embedded in her large intestine.

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