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Iragis Retake Center of City In Grip of ISIS

A Victory in Ramadi Could Prove Pivotal

By FALIH HASSAN and SEWELL CHAN

BAGHDAD - Breaking a seven-month occupation by the Islamic State, Iraqi troops on Monday retook most of Ramadi, the most populous city in western Iraq, overrunning a government compound held by the terrorist group at the city center and dealing a setback to its deadly grip on large parts of the country.

Iraqi soldiers continued to face stiff resistance by Islamic State fighters in several pockets, and their hold on Ramadi — achieved after a week of fierce fighting with help from American jets that pounded enemy positions — re-mained tenuous. In Washington, Pentagon officials warned that it would be premature to declare outright victory.

But if the government man-ages to hold Ramadi, it could prove pivotal to the efforts to beat back the Islamic State in Iraq and, ultimately, to reverse the group's gains in Syria as well. The Obama administration is hoping that a victory in Ramadi could also help vindicate its strat-egy of relying largely on air power to aid Iraqi and other partners fighting on the ground.

The Ramadi campaign is the latest in a string of defeats for the Islamic State, also known as ISIS and its Arabic acronym, Daesh. The group has lost as much as 40 percent of the Iraqi territory it conquered last year.

Iraq's prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, who announced the city's "liberation" on Twitter on Continued on Page A5



A military vehicle carrying members of the Iraqi security forces flew the national flag as it drove through Ramadi on Monday.

'Repo Men' of the High Seas

A Last Resort for Owners of Stolen or Seized Ships

By IAN URBINA

MIRAGOÂNE, Haiti — In Greece, Max Hardberger posed as an interested buyer; in Haiti, as a port official; in Trinidad, as a shipper. He has plied guards with booze and distracted them with prostitutes, spooked port police officers with witch doctors, and duped night watchmen into leaving their posts. His goal: to get on board a vessel he is trying to retrieve and race toward the 12-

mile line where the high seas be-gin and local jurisdiction ends. Mr. Hardberger is among a handful of maritime "repo men"

THE OUTLAW OCEAN

Recovery Operations

who handle the toughest of grab-and-dash jobs in foreign harbors, usually on behalf of banks, insurers or shipowners. A last-resort solution to a common predica-

ment, he is called when a vessel has been stolen, its operators have defaulted on their mortgage or a ship has been fraudulently detained by local officials.

"When we show up, things go
missing," Mr. Hardberger said.

Tens of thousands of boats or

ships are stolen around the world each year, and many become part of a global "phantom fleet" in-volved in a broad range of crimes. Phantom vessels are fre-quently used in Southeast Asia for human trafficking, piracy and illegal fishing; in the Caribbean for smuggling guns and drugs; and in the Middle East and North Africa to transport fighters or circumvent arms or oil embargoes, according to Rear Adm. Christopher Parry, a maritime security expert formerly with Britain's Royal Navy. Usually the vessels are not re-

covered because they are diffi-cult to find on the vast oceans, the search is too expensive and the ships often end up in ports with uncooperative or corrupt of-

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Colleges Rush To Embolden Entrepreneurs

By NATASHA SINGER

HOUSTON - The original charter of Rice University, draft-ed in 1891, established a school here dedicated to the advance-ment of literature, science and art. These days, Rice seems equally dedicated to the advancement of the next Mark Zucker-

The university offers academic courses in entrepreneurship strategy and financing, extracurricular start-up workshops and a summer program for students seeking to start companies. In August, Rice announced a multimillion-dollar "entrepreneurship initiative" to develop more courses and programs in the sub-ject. And administrators say they hope to erect an entrepreneurial center to house classes and serv-

ices supporting student projects.
"We want Rice to be one of the schools at the top of the list of schools that prospective students

Continued on Page B2

JURORS DECLINE **CHARGES IN DEATH** OF CLEVELAND BOY

SHOT BY POLICE OFFICER

Prosecutor Cites 'Perfect Storm of Human Error' in Case

By TIMOTHY WILLIAMS and MITCH SMITH

CLEVELAND — A grand jury declined on Monday to charge a Cleveland patrolman who fatally shot a 12-year-old boy holding a pellet gun, capping more than a year of investigation into a case that added to national outrage over white officers killing African-Americans.

In announcing the decision, Timothy J. McGinty, the Cuya-hoga County prosecutor, said he had recommended that the grand jurors not bring charges in the killing of the boy, Tamir Rice, who was playing with the gun outside a recreation center in November

Mr. McGinty said the fatal encounter had been a tragedy and a "perfect storm of human error, mistakes and miscommunications." But he said that enhance ment of video from the scene had made it "indisputable" that Tamir, who was black, was drawing the pellet gun from his waistband when he was shot, either to hand it over to the officers or to show them that it was not a real firearm. He said that there was no reason for the officers to know that, and that the officer who fired, Timothy Loehmann, had a reason to fear for his life.

The case began when a caller

to 911 said a male was pointing a gun at people in a Cleveland park. The caller added that the gun was "probably fake," and that the person waving it was "probably a juvenile." But those caveats were not relayed to Officer Loehmann or his partner Frank Garmback, who was driv ing the patrol car. Officer Loeh-mann, who is white, opened fire within seconds of arriving at the park. Officer Garmback was also

spared any charges.

The shooting in Cleveland came just two days before a grand jury in Missouri declined

to indict a white police officer in Continued on Page A10

Meadowlark Lemon (36) in a Harlem Globetrotters game at Madison Square Garden in 1973.

MEADOWLARK LEMON, 1932-2015

Master of Hook Shots and Hardcourt Comedy

Meadowlark Lemon, whose halfcourt hook shots, no-look behind-the-back passes and vivid clowning were marquee features -good traveling basketball show known as the Harlem Globetrotters for nearly a quarter-century, died on Sunday in Scottsdale, Ariz. He was 83.

His death was confirmed by his specify the cause.

A gifted athlete with an entertainer's hunger for the spotlight, Lemon, who dreamed of playing for the Globetrotters as a boy in North Carolina, joined the team in 1954, not long after leaving the Army. Within a few years, he had assumed the central role of showman, taking over from the

long-reigning clown prince Reece Tatum, whom everyone called Goose.

Tatum, who had left the team around the time Lemon joined it. was a superb ballplayer whose on-court gags — or reams, as the players called them — had established the team's reputation for laugh-inducing wizardry at a championship level.

Continued on Page A16

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea - More than 70 years after the end of World War II, South Korea and Japan reached a landmark agreement on Monday to resolve their dispute over Korean women who were forced to serve as sex slaves for Japan's Imperial Army.

The agreement, in which Japan made an apology and promised an \$8.3 million payment that would provide care for the wom-en, was intended to remove one of the most intractable logjams in relations between South Korea and Japan, both crucial allies to the United States. The so-called comfort women have been the most painful legacy of Japan' lonial rule of Korea, which lasted from 1910 until Japan's defeat in

The Japanese and South Kore-



A statue symbolizing Korean sex slaves in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

the agreement in Seoul, said each side considered it a "final and irreversible resolution" of the is-

The apology and the payment which, unlike a previous fund, will come directly from the Japanese government, represent a compromise for Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, who has often been reluctant to offer con-trition for his country's militarist

The deal won praise from the governing party of President Park Geun-hye of South Korea and from Secretary of State John Kerry, but it was immediately criticized as insufficient by oppo-sition politicians in South Korea, where anti-Japanese sentiments still run deep, and by some of the

"We are not craving for money," said Lee Yong-soo, 88, one of the women. "What we demand is that Japan make official reparations for the crime it had committed."

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INTERNATIONAL A4-8

Iran Hands Over Its Uranium

Iran handed over almost its entire stockpile of low-enriched uranium to Russia, fulfilling a major step in the nuclear deal struck over the summer and apparently leaving Iran with too little fuel to make a nuclear weapon. PAGE A4

A Menacing Shift in Burundi A deadly conflict in the African nation

has taken on a divisive ethnic tone that worries rights monitors and Western officials, making negotiations now underway particularly crucial. PAGE A4

NATIONAL A9-12

G.O.P. Voice on Women's Issues

Frustrated by the tone of Republican presidential candidates, a group of 70 members of Congress spreads the message that the party cares about women's issues. On Washington. PAGE A12

Governor Off the Grid

Near the end of a 50-year political career, Jerry Brown gravitates toward a cabin in the California hills owned by his family for generations.



NEW YORK A13-15

Theater's Ownership Disputed

The Slave Theater in Brooklyn, above, a bastion of civil rights struggles, was sold and scheduled for demolition. But who owns it? The Appraisal. PAGE A13

OBITUARIES A16-17 Motorhead Frontman Is Dead Ian Fraser Kilmister, the jagged-voiced

heavy metal singer and bassist known

as Lemmy, was 70.

SPORTSTUESDAY B7-12 Yankees Get Star, and Scrutiny

The team traded for Reds closer Aroldis Chapman, who is being investigated in a domestic violence case.

BUSINESS DAY B1-6

A Big-Picture Business Group

In Minnesota, an elite team quietly shapes the economic agenda, tackling issues like discrimination and inequality that executives usually avoid. PAGE BI

SCIENCE TIMES D1-6

Shared Schizophrenia Care

Programs are springing up across the United States that give people with schizophrenia more control over treatment decisions.

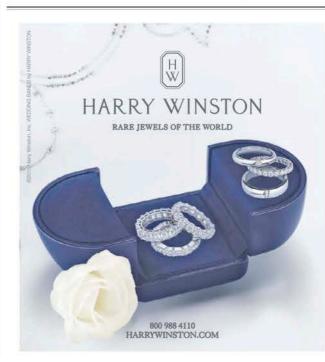
Lara Croft Has Company

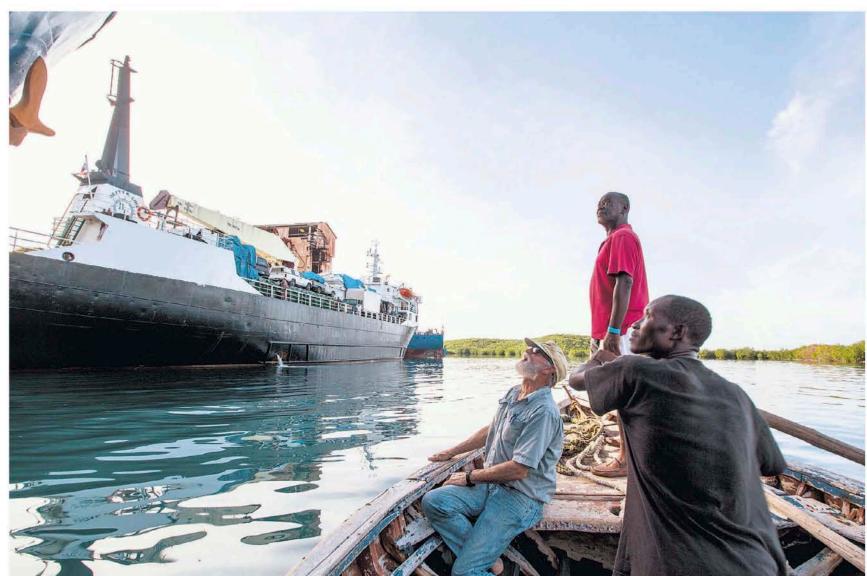
Male-dominated video games are making room for multidimensional, powerful and intelligent female heroes who are neither victims nor objects.

EDITORIAL, OP-ED A18-19

Walter F. Mondale







Max Hardberger, a maritime "repo man," center; his longtime fixer, Oge Cadet, in red; and a hired rower got a closer look at ships in Miragoâne, Haiti, by pretending to be potential buyers.

Maritime 'Repo Men': A Last Resort for Stolen or Seized Ships

From Page Al

But sometimes, when the boat or ship is more valuable, firms like Mr. Hard-berger's Vessel Extractions in New Orleans are hired to find it. His company occasionally handles jobs involving megayachts, but more often the targets are small-to-medium cargo ships that carry goods between developing counwith poor or unstable govern-

To the local port authorities and law enforcement officials in foreign countries, Mr. Hardberger and his ilk are vigilantes who erode the rule of law in places that are struggling to establish it. "They deserve to be arrested," Louhandy Brizard, 27, a Haitian Coast Guard officer, said about repo men during a sea

patrol looking for stolen boats.
Charles N. Dragonette, who monitored maritime crime for the United States Office of Naval Intelligence until 2012, said that he believed that Mr. Hardberger follows whatever rules exist. But, he added, "I do worry about how these guys undercut local authorities and the property of them but steeling." ties, embarrassing them by stealing ships from under their noses, and wors-ening the overall corruption problem by paying bribes to local helpers to pull off these heists."

Most recoveries of stolen boats and maritime repossessions are ho-hum affairs, typically involving paperwork and banks working with local law enforcement. But when negotiations fail, waterborne jailbreaks sometimes occur.

Charles Meacham, a maritime repo man based in Jacksonville, Fla., recounted how his teams spirited hun-dreds of boats out of a marina in Mexico in 2009 after they were stolen from Florida by a drug cartel, a move that won him a bounty on his head. Court papers describe a job that Mr. Hardberger han-dled in 2009, where he retrieved a from the Dominican Republic, boarding it by pretending to be a shipper, then sailing the ship to the Turks and Caicos Islands, where he handed it over to the mortgage holder.

Citing past assignments in Cuba, Egypt, Ghana, Honduras, Trinidad, Venezuela and elsewhere, Mr. Meacham and a half dozen others in the industry said that they each get on average one or two "extraction" requests per year. John Dalby, chief executive of Marine Risk Management, said his firm was currently working for a consortium of banks to repossess a fleet of more than a dozen freighters from nearly as many ports around the world. "They have to be taken all at once or else several will run," he said.

A review of contracts and court

records from some of these extraction jobs and interviews with repo men, insurance investigators and coast guard officers show that lawlessness offshore

The Outlaw Ocean

Articles in this series are examining lawlessness on the high seas and how weak regulations and lax enforcement allow misconduct to go unpunished.

ONLINE: Previous articles in the series, and related coverage: nytimes.com/oceans





sometimes extends from corruption onshore. These documents and comments shed light on the array of ploys used to steal, seize, extort and recover ships. They also reveal how maritime repo men — and the scheming debtors, dodgy port mechanics, testy guards, disgruntled crews and dishonest port officials that they are hired to outwit take advantage of the lack of policing and jurisdictional ambiguity of the open

The public perception of modern piracy usually involves Somalis in fast boats capturing tankers on the high seas.
"More often overlooked but just as prevalent is white-collar piracy, ral Parry said. Buccaneers in business suits hijack ships in port through opportunistic ruses rather than at sea with surprise shows of force.

Consumers are affected by the theft and corruption because it adds millions

of dollars to transport costs and insurance rates, raising sticker prices more than 10 percent, maritime researchers

Most corrupt detentions in port consist of "squeeze and release" bilking schemes intended to get bribes, said

Douglas Lindsay, the lead partner with Maritime Resolve, a recovery firm based in England. "But squeeze long enough and you strangle," Mr. Lindsay said. Shipping businesses can go bankrupt as cargo spoils, delivery deadlines pass and owed wages accumulate.

"The fact is that in some ports in the world possession isn't, as the saving goes, nine-tenths of the law," Mr. Dragonette added. "It is the law."

Ship Raiders and Port Pirates

Port scams are as old as shipping itself and seasoned repo men can identify them by name. "Unexpected complications": a shipyard makes repairs without permission, then sends the owner an astronomical bill, often for more than the value of the ship, hoping to force its forfeiture. "Barratry": buying off crews, sometimes paying more than a year's wages to leave a ship's keys and walk away. "A docking play": a shipowner defaults on his mortgage, but is in cahoots with a marina, which charges the repossessor hyperinflated docking

"I swam out to it one night and

took the boat back," said Steve Salem, a

Above, Mr. Hardberger inspected a map while on a patrol with the Haitian Coast Guard. Left, Douglas Lindsay, the lead partner with Maritime Resolve, a recovery firm based in England, said ships are often detained by port officials seeking a bribe.

repo man in Sarasota, Fla., recalling one such case in the Abacos, a chain of is-

Mr. Lindsay described a "classic shakedown" case he handled in 2011 in Guinea in West Africa where a ship was being fraudulently detained with a \$50 million fine for less than \$10,000 in damage to a dock. "They fly you in, you find the right official, and negotiate him back to Planet Earth," Mr. Lindsay said.

Stolen boats — about 5,000 were taken in the United States in 2014 — are often relocated to "unfriendly jurisdictions," where local governments are sometimes less sympathetic to American owners and more susceptible to bribes, the repo men said.

Mr. Meacham, the Florida-based repo man, said he was once sent to Havana to retrieve a stolen American-owned megayacht being used by a hotel there. Chartering the vessel into international waters, he then told the Cuban captain: Come with us to the United States or take a lifeboat back to shore. The captain chose the former.

John Lightbown, the general man-ager of a Florida shipping company, said that in some places criminals can seize a \$2 million ship for \$2,000. "No evidence, no invoices, no affidavits, no appeals process," said Mr. Lightbown, who has hired Mr. Hardberger several times. "They just need the filing fee that goes to a local justice of the peace and something extra under the table."

To talk his way on board, Mr. Hardberger said, he has a collection of fake

uniforms and official-sounding business

cards; among them are "Port Inspec-

tor," "Marine Surveyor" and "Internal Auditor." He also carries a glass vial of magnetic powder to sprinkle on the hull to reveal lettering that has been welded

Mr. Dalby, from Marine Risk Man-agement, said that rather than taking ships from unfriendly ports, he pre-ferred surreptitiously placing GPS trackers on them while in transit, then calling in the police.

"Occasionally the legal system solves the problem," added Mr. Hardberger, who canceled plans for an extraction job this month after a court in Haiti ordered the release of a freighter called the Amber Express, which had been improp-erly detained in the Port of St.-Marc,

All of the repo men said they abide by certain self-imposed rules. No violence or weapons — better, they said, to hire street youths for lookouts, bar owners for diversions, and prostitutes to talk their way on board to spy. Officials from the Haitian Coast Guard, Interpol, and the bar association in California, where Mr. Hardberger is licensed, said they had no records of complaints, disciplinary actions or arrest warrants for him.

Asked whether he ever pays off pub-lic officials, Mr. Meacham replied in much the same way as his colleagues had. "Bribery is illegal," he said. "Negotiating a fine is not.'

Toil and Trouble

Often, maritime law works in crooks' favor, said Michael Bono, a lawyer and managing director of Vessel Extrac-tions. Ship sales are more anonymous and final than sales of other types of property, he said. If someone buys a stolen painting at an auction, explained Edward Keane, a maritime lawyer in New York, the rightful owner can later make a claim and in many cases repos-But under international time law, he said, a vessel sold at a judicial auction has had its "face washed" or "bottom scrubbed" clean of liens and other previous debts, including mort-

About 50 miles west of Haiti's capital, in Miragoâne, known as a pirate's para-dise, Mr. Hardberger explained that giving a stolen boat a fast makeover requires little more than "about \$300, four welders, and a fax machine."

Joined by his longtime local fixer, Oge Cadet, Mr. Hardberger, 67, crossed the harbor in a row boat while they prospected a strip of beach where they hope to build a dock to chop up old ships for scrap. Mr. Cadet recounted an extraction job here in 2004. An American businessman had bribed local judicial officials to seize a 10-story-tall car carrier called the Maya Express and sell the ship to him in a rigged auction, according to court records.

To scare guards away, Mr. Hardberger paid a local witch doctor \$100 to publicly put a curse on the one place in town with cellphone reception. Though the glare from a blowtorch used by Mr. Hardberger's team to cut through the ship's anchor chains almost got them caught, they successfully sailed the ship to the Bahamas, where a judge upheld the repossession.

Referring to Haiti's ports and legal system, Justice John Lyons of the Bahamas wrote that "cronyism and corruption are the order of the day."