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Russian spy ship detected near Hawaii

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

A Russian spy ship has been detected off Hawaii amid preparations for U.S. Navy-led Rim of the Pacific exercises, according to the Pacific Fleet.

The Balzam-class “auxiliary general intelligence ship recently arrived in international waters off Hawaii where exercise Rim of the Pacific is taking place,” Pacific Fleet spokesman Lt. Clint Ramsden told USNI News this week.

“The ship’s presence has not affected the conduct of the exercise, and we’ve taken all precautions necessary to protect our critical information,” he said.

The participation of 26 nations, with nearly 50 ships, more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel, makes RIMPAC a tempting target for the Russians to monitor.

James Brown, an international affairs expert at Temple University’s Japan campus, said the spy ship likely is based in Vladivostok, home port for the bulk of Russian military forces in the Far East.

Experts contacted by USNI News speculated the vessel could be the Pribaltika, which is able to intercept and record communications and electronic emissions such as radar.

“The Russians have been investing more in their Pacific fleet, and this is likely one of their advanced vessels,” Brown said.

The ship’s presence off Hawaii sends a message about Russia’s capabilities in response to U.S. operations near its airspace and waters, he said.

“I suppose they want to show that they are watching, anyway,” Brown said.

Removal of US air support had role in Syria rebels’ battle loss

The Washington Post

American warplanes were diverted from an offensive launched against the Islamic State group last week by U.S.-backed rebels in Syria in order to bomb a more enticing target in Iraq, withdrawing air support at a critical moment and contributing to the failure of the rebel operation, according to U.S. officials familiar with the incident.

Aircraft assigned to provide cover for the offensive, launched June 28 to capture the eastern Syrian town of Bukamal, were ordered in the middle of the operation to leave the area and to head instead to the outskirts of Fallujah, in neighboring Iraq, the officials said.

A large convoy of Islamic State group fighters had been seen trying to escape across the desert after the city was recaptured by the Iraqi army, and U.S. commanders decided that the convoy represented a “strategic target,” according to U.S. military spokesman Col. Chris Garver.

The convoy was destroyed by the U.S. and British planes along with gunships and aircraft from the Iraqi air force, which began striking the long line of Islamic State vehicles before the U.S. Air Force arrived. Hundreds of Islamic State group fighters were killed and scores of their vehicles were destroyed in one of the more spectacular assaults against the militants in the nearly two years of war against them.

By that time, however, the fighters of the Pentagon-trained New Syrian Army were in retreat, beaten back by the militants to their desert base more than 200 miles away at Tanf, on the Syria-Iraq border. The fail-

ure of the operation was a significant blow to the Pentagon’s Syria strategy of building a Syrian Arab force capable of taking on the Islamic State group.

The diversion of air forces also calls into question whether the U.S. military and its coalition allies have committed enough resources to the war against the Islamic State group, which is now being waged on multiple fronts across a large swath of territory in Syria and Iraq.

Defending the decision to withdraw air support from the Syria battle, Garver said, “You have a finite number of resources and you try to get the biggest bang for buck that you can out of the resources you have. ... Prioritization was given to one target over another.”

The U.S. military’s daily record of airstrikes conducted in Iraq and Syria shows that eight strikes were conducted in Bukamal on the day the offensive was launched — but only one on the day it crumbled. For the bombing of the Fallujah convoy, the U.S. Air Force “put everything up in the air,” Garver said, including B-52 bombers and AC-130 Spectre gunships.

“The priority here appeared to be going after the target, going after the big, shiny object,” said David Maxwell, a former Special Forces officer and the associate director of Georgetown University’s Security Studies Program, after being informed of the strikes. “It’s the manifestation of a mindset of the last 15 years, of these drone strikes and special-operations-force raids, where we want to achieve immediate effects on the battlefield without thinking about what might fall to the wayside.”

The decision to attack the convoy left the New Syrian Army without air cover and struggling to maintain early gains in an operation that was already teetering on the brink of failure.

There were other reasons for the operation’s collapse, according to New Syrian Army fighters involved in the operation. They include failed hopes that residents of the town of Bukamal would rise up to support the offensive. The New Syrian Army succeeded on the first day to seize a foothold at a rudimentary airstrip outside the town. A rebel radio station, Bu Kamal Liberation Radio, broadcast appeals to the local population to stage an insurrection.

But the calls were not heeded, said Abdulsalam Muzil, a member of the Authenticity and Development Front, the rebel group that formed the New Syrian Army. “We put out messages on our radio station but it was difficult for people to join us because the Islamic State has an iron fist,” he said. “Also, now people are not listening to the radio so much because they consider it old-fashioned.”

The Islamic State soon counterattacked, pushing the rebel forces out of the town and back into the desert, where they were forced to drive 150 miles back to their border garrison base.

The New Syrian Army initially said it lost two men in the fight, one who was killed in the ensuing gunbattle and another who was captured and beheaded. The Islamic State displayed their brutalized bodies in a video, as well as quantities of captured weapons, including U.S. .50-caliber heavy machine guns. Three others later died in an ambush as the group retreated back across the desert.

Marine's defense plans to cite Clinton case

The Washington Post

A Marine Corps officer who has been locked in a legal battle with his service after self-reporting that he improperly disseminated classified information will use Hillary Clinton's email case to fight his involuntary separation from the service, his lawyer said.

Maj. Jason Brezler's case has been tied up in federal court since he sued the service in December 2014. He became a cause celebre among some members of Congress, Marine generals and military veterans after he sent a classified message using an unclassified Yahoo email account to warn fellow Marines in southern Afghanistan about a potentially corrupt Afghan police chief. A servant of that police official killed three Marines and severely wounded a fourth 17 days later, on Aug. 10, 2012, opening fire with a Kalashnikov rifle in an insider attack.

An attorney for Brezler, Michael J. Bowe, said that he intends to cite the treatment of Clinton "as one of the many, and most egregious examples" of how severely Brezler was punished.

FBI Director James Comey announced Tuesday that he would not recommend the U.S. government pursue federal charges against Clinton, but he rebuked her "extremely careless" use of a private, unclassified email server while serving as secretary of state. The FBI found that 110 of her emails contained classified information.

Bowe said it is impossible to reconcile President Barack Obama's statement that Clinton's intentional act of setting up a secret, unsecured email server did not detract "from her excellent ability to carry out her duties" while Brezler received a "completely opposite finding ... involving infinitely less sensitive and limited information."

FBI head defends Clinton decision

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Summoned before Congress and aggressively questioned by Republicans, FBI Director James Comey on Thursday strongly defended the government's decision to not prosecute Hillary Clinton over her private email setup.

Comey said there was no evidence that she knew that anything she was doing was against the law or had lied to federal investigators.

Comey's appearance before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee marked his first public statements since an FBI announcement that removed the threat of criminal charges against the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee but also revived public scrutiny of her handling

of classified information.

A number of Republicans suggested there was a double standard for charging everyday people accused of crimes as opposed to high-level people like Clinton. Lawmakers asked Comey if he had been hearing that, too.

"I've heard it a lot," he said. "It's not true, but I've heard it a lot."

Comey gave his most detailed explanation to date about why the Justice Department concluded without charges a yearlong investigation that had dogged Clinton's presidential campaign and raised questions for voters about her trustworthiness.

Republicans said they were infuriated with the FBI's decision and confused by the way it was presented.

On Thursday, Comey said the legal decision came down to a simple lack of a criminal intent.

Comey said that prosecutions for classified material have historically been reserved for cases of intentional or willful wrongdoing, obstruction of justice or disloyalty to the U.S. He drew distinctions between the Clinton probe and last year's prosecution of former CIA Director David Petraeus, who pleaded guilty to sharing classified information with his biographer.

Petraeus, he said, retained a "vast quantity" of classified information and then lied to the FBI about it. Comey initially said the documents had been found in Petraeus' attic, later correcting himself to say they'd been found in a desk.

Lawmaker questions if policy will affect military readiness

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The requirements of hormone therapy might make some transgender troops unable to deploy on military missions and affect the military's ability to fight wars, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee said Thursday.

Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, said the historic policy change last week allowing those servicemembers to serve openly is threatening to redefine what it means to be ready to fight and blamed President Barack Obama for pressuring the military to adopt it without adequate planning.

Thornberry, who holds the gavel of the most influential military committee in the House, had come out against the Pentagon policy shift when it was announced June 30 by Defense Secretary Ash Carter. But he elaborated on his concerns over transgender medical readiness and the ability to deploy during an appearance at the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank in Washington.

"At least some number of transgender people require hormone therapy, which requires regular lab tests and also requires refrigeration," Thornberry said. "If you have those requirements, whatever your situation, you have been

non-deployable."

Estimates over the number of transgender troops serving vary from 4,000 to 15,500. After a year of consulting and planning, Carter said the ban on their serving openly was lifted immediately, similar to moves in recent years to allow gay servicemembers and to integrate women fully into all combat roles.

In October, the military health care system will begin providing transgender troops all care deemed medically necessary for gender transition, including hormone treatment and gender reassignment surgery. The Pentagon estimated the care will cost about \$4 million to \$14 million annually.

Thornberry said the move to allow the ongoing medical care raises questions over whether the military is redefining troop readiness, which is the ability to go to war when called upon.

His response came after a chaplain's group raised concerns about transgender troops during the Heritage event.

The Pentagon said it will not begin actively recruiting transgender troops for another year. During that time, many details of the new policy including medical treatment must still be worked out.

Jones denies PED use; match canceled

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Jon Jones has denied using any performance-enhancing substances after a positive drug test knocked him out of the main event at Saturday's UFC 200.

The UFC interim light heavyweight champion broke into tears at a hastily arranged news conference Thursday, a day after his rematch with Daniel Cormier was canceled.

"I would never take anything that would enhance my game," Jones said. "Being labeled as someone who would ever cheat, it hurts me more than anything I've ever been through in my career."

Jones' manager, Malki Kawa, said the fighter was informed of a possible PED violation by USADA, which administers the UFC's anti-drug policy. They've asked USADA to test Jones' backup sample, and Kawa hopes to get the results later Thursday, although he has little hope the result will change.

Jones and Kawa declined to name the substance for which Jones was flagged, although Kawa said it "could be" related to a nutritional supplement.

Jones said he "can't even pronounce it. I've never even heard of it."

The long-reigning champion briefly left the stage at his news conference after being overcome with emotion.

Jones said he has been taking the same supplements for most of his career, and he has no idea why his June 16

test would yield a violation after he passed seven other doping tests this year. Although Jones had endured numerous public embarrassments due to his apparent use of recreational drugs, he has been a vocal opponent of performance-enhancing substances in mixed martial arts.

"You can say whatever you want about Jon over the years," Kawa said. "For the last year, he's done nothing but try his best to live his life right, to eat right, to do the right things, and obviously not to be in this type of predicament. He's been very outspoken about this stuff. ... He didn't cheat at all."

Jones, who turns 29 later this month, could face a multi-year suspension for a doping violation. He has fought just four times since September 2013.

"If I do have to sit out for two years, I'll definitely be back," Jones said. "I'm already thinking about the good that can happen. I try to stay optimistic. At the end of the day, I'm a fighter, and even though I may seem broken up here, I'm not broken. I'm just really upset."

Jones is widely considered the world's top pound-for-pound mixed martial artist, but he has endured numerous troubles of his own making in recent years.

He has failed drug tests around two of his last three fights, testing positive for cocaine use shortly before beating Cormier in their first meeting in January 2015. He was allowed to fight because the detected cocaine metabolite was not banned for out-of-competition use by the Nevada Athletic Commission.

A few months later, Jones was suspended by the UFC and had his 205-pound title stripped due to his involvement in a hit-and-run accident in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where the upstate New York native lives and trains.

Jones is still on probation stemming from that incident, but he doesn't believe a positive doping test would impact it.

Cormier won the light heavyweight title during Jones' UFC suspension, which was lifted in October 2015. After Cormier pulled out of their first scheduled rematch with a foot injury, Jones returned to competition in April with a victory over Ovince Saint Preux.

Jones cried openly when asked what he would say to Cormier, his longtime rival and frequent verbal sparring partner. The UFC is attempting to book a late replacement bout for Cormier, but the light heavyweight champion is likely to miss out on millions in salary and pay-per-view revenue from the promotion's biggest show of the summer.

"I know this fight meant a lot to him," Jones said. "The fight meant a lot to me. ... I know some good will come from this, but right now it's hard to see it."

Brock Lesnar's heavyweight bout with Mark Hunt is UFC 200's new main event at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. Lesnar's much-anticipated return from a 4½-year MMA absence was previously the penultimate bout on the star-studded pay-per-view card assembled by the UFC for its biggest event of the summer.

Kerber squashes bid for all-Williams title match

Associated Press

LONDON — Venus Williams' deepest Grand Slam run in a half-dozen years ended one victory short of what would have been yet another Wimbledon title match against her sister Serena.

Unable to replicate the sort of turn-back-time performance that carried her to the semifinals at the All England Club, Venus was broken in her first four service games Thursday and lost to No. 4-seeded Angelique Kerber 6-4, 6-4.

The 36-year-old Venus was the oldest Slam semifinalist since Martina Navratilova was 37 at Wimbledon in 1994. Venus is a five-time champion at the grass-court tournament, but she hadn't made it this far since at Wimbledon since 2009, or at any major since the 2010 U.S. Open.

So now, instead of an all-Williams final on Saturday, it will be Kerber against No. 1 Serena in a rematch of the Australian Open final won by the German in January.

That was Kerber's first Grand Slam title, and prevented Serena from collecting her record-equaling 22nd. Now Serena is once again so close to that number.

In control from start to finish in Thursday's first semifinal, Serena needed all of 48 minutes to overwhelm Elena Vesnina 6-2, 6-0 in what felt like a training session.

Except Serena probably gets more of a workout when she practices.

"You have to admit she was just better. She was stronger, faster," Vesnina said. "I couldn't do anything today."

Serena's serve was in fine form, reach-

ing 123 mph and producing 11 aces against the 50th-ranked Vesnina, who was making her major semifinal debut.

Serena won 28 of 31 points that she served, including the last 17, and compiled a 28-9 edge in total winners.

Since winning her sixth Wimbledon trophy a year ago to raise her career count to 21 majors, Serena has come quite close to tying Steffi Graf with 22, the most in the Open era, which began in 1968 (Margaret Court holds the all-time mark of 24). But Serena was surprisingly beaten by Roberta Vinci in the U.S. Open semifinals last September, then by Kerber in Melbourne, and by Garbine Muguruza in the French Open final last month.

"I mean, I think for anyone else in this whole planet, it would be a wonderful accomplishment," Serena said about reaching her third Grand Slam final of the year. "For me, it's about, obviously, holding the trophy and winning, which would make it a better accomplishment for me. For me, it's not enough. But I think that's what makes me different. That's what makes me Serena."

And now she has given herself yet another chance to catch Graf.

Except rather than a fifth Williams vs. Williams final at Wimbledon, and ninth at a major, it will be Serena vs. Kerber.

Serena has won five of their previous seven matches.

The left-handed Kerber dropped to her knees at the baseline and tossed aside her racket after a running cross-court forehand winner capped the 19-stroke exchange that ended her semifinal against Venus.

Wade chooses Bulls

Associated Press

MIAMI — Dwyane Wade never really planned for this to happen. He wore shirts that called Miami "My City" and referred to AmericanAirlines Arena as "My House." He knew where the three boys that he's raising would go to high school. He had plans for what he wanted to do in South Florida whenever his basketball days were complete.

He called himself a #HeatLifer.

It was his plan. It's no longer his reality.

In a decision that essentially started what will become a massive shakeup of the franchise, Wade decided Wednesday night that he will leave the Miami Heat after 13 seasons. He agreed to terms on a two-year contract with the Chicago Bulls and will earn about \$47 million, instantly making him the highest-paid player on his new team — a distinction he never had in Miami.

Miami had become home. Chicago was his first home, and is now his next home.

"This was not an easy decision, but I feel I have made the right choice for myself and my family," Wade wrote in a letter to Miami, released to The Associated Press.

Wade was to guest-host "Live with Kelly" alongside Kelly Ripa on Thursday in New York, a deal that was struck long before this decision.

His name already hangs from the rafters at what is now his former home arena, commemorating his Olympic success while with the Heat. Eventually, his No. 3 will be hoisted as well. And regardless of how long he's with the Bulls or any other club, on the night he goes into the

Basketball Hall of Fame, the tribute videos will be dominated by what he did in a Heat uniform.

Wade is Miami's career leader in games, minutes, field goals, field goal attempts, free throws, free throw attempts, assists, steals and points. He's even second in blocked shots, perhaps the most impressive stat of all considering Wade is listed at 6-foot-4 — which is generous, probably by about an inch.

He played for all three Heat title teams. He was the Finals MVP in 2006. He was a 12-time All-Star. He was beloved like only a handful were in Miami, reaching a stratosphere perhaps only seen by the likes of Dan Marino, Alonzo Mourning and Jason Taylor. And Wade won more rings than all of them, combined.

"Thank you @DwyaneWade for a great 13 yrs!" Heat managing general partner Micky Arison wrote on Twitter. "You've had a tremendous impact on our community and our organization. We wish you all the best."

It was simply time for a change. Maybe even more simply, it was time for Wade to go home.

"Watching the Bulls growing up inspired me at an early age to pursue my dream of becoming a basketball player," Wade wrote in the letter. "My most treasured memories were watching my dad play basketball on the courts of Fermi Elementary School and developing my game at the Blue Island Recreation Center. I have never forgotten where I came from and I am thankful to have an opportunity to play for the team that first fueled my love of the game."



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Kang has 2 RBI in win amid probe

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Jung Ho Kang is playing while under investigation for sexual assault, and the Pirates infielder helped Pittsburgh climb in the standings with a 7-5 win over the Cardinals.

Kang drove in two key runs with a seventh-inning double a day after Chicago police announced their investigation, and Pittsburgh beat the St. Louis Cardinals 7-5 on Wednesday night for its sixth straight comeback win.

Kang's double off Jonathan Broxton (1-1) put the Pirates up 6-5 after they trailed 5-1.

Kang, through an interpreter, declined to comment on the assault allegations after the game in his first public remarks. He did talk about the latest comeback victory, which gave Pittsburgh seven consecutive wins overall and leapfrogged them past St. Louis for second place in the NL Central.

"Not only myself but also all the teammates and the team as a whole unit, we always think positive and keep our heads in the fight," Kang said. "And that's what we did today and the last couple of days."

In a statement Tuesday, police said a 23-year-old woman reported being assaulted by Kang inside a hotel. Police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said the Chicago woman met Kang through a dating app. Kang invited the woman to his hotel room on June 17, after the Pirates played the Cubs.

The woman said she blacked out, then drifted in and out of consciousness as he sexually assaulted her. The woman's name has not been released.

Kang has not been charged, and Major League Baseball said in a statement it would "respond fully as additional facts

emerge."

The Pirates have won three straight games at Busch Stadium after dropping their previous seven in St. Louis.

Pirates relievers combined for five scoreless innings. A.J. Schugel (2-2) got the win and Mark Melancon picked up his 26th save.

Pirates left-hander Jeff Locke lasted just four innings and had his three-start winning streak snapped.

Giants 5, Rockies 1: Johnny Cueto intends to pitch in next week's All-Star Game after not getting to play in his first appearance there two years ago.

Cueto pitched a five-hitter to become the NL's first 13-game winner, and host San Francisco beat Colorado to move atop the major league standings.

With the Dodgers' Clayton Kershaw on the disabled list and Jake Arrieta of the Cubs stumbling in recent weeks, the door is wide open for Cueto to become the second Giants pitcher in five years to start the All-Star Game, following Matt Cain in 2012.

"It would be big," Cueto said through an interpreter. "It would mean a lot because it would be the first time that I would ever pitch in an All-Star Game. And I want to pitch."

Cueto (13-1) allowed one run on five hits with eight strikeouts and one walk while going the distance for the fourth time this season. He also became the first Giants pitcher since John Burkett in 1993 to win 13 games before the All-Star break.

Reds 5, Cubs 3: Tucker Barnhart hit a go-ahead, three-run homer off Trevor Cahill in the seventh inning to help Cincinnati beat host Chicago in the Cubs' 12th loss in 17 games.

Orioles 6, Dodgers 4 (14): Jonathan Schoop doubled in the go-ahead runs

with two outs in the 14th inning, lifting Baltimore over host Los Angeles in a game that included a stadium-record 36 strikeouts.

Tigers 12, Indians 2: Nick Castellanos had three hits, including a three-run homer, and tied his career high with five RBIs to lead Detroit and stop host Cleveland's home winning streak at 13.

Red Sox 11, Rangers 6: David Ortiz reached 20 homers for the 15th consecutive season and drove in three runs, and Steven Wright pitched efficiently into the seventh inning for host Boston.

Astros 9, Mariners 8: Carlos Gomez had three RBIs and finished a home run shy of the cycle and Luis Valbuena hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the eighth inning to help host Houston sweep Seattle.

Nationals 7, Brewers 4: Bryce Harper hit the first of host Washington's three home runs as the Nationals returned to form.

After watching Washington score a combined two runs in the first two games of the series, manager Dusty Baker said before the finale, "We're operating at a low energy level right now."

Harper remedied that with a three-run shot in the first inning, the Nationals' first long ball in three games.

Mets 4, Marlins 2: Wilmer Flores homered twice and Jacob deGrom pitched seven strong innings for host New York.

Giancarlo Stanton went deep twice for the second consecutive day to reach 200 homers.

Blue Jays 4, Royals 2: Michael Saunders hit a solo home run in the fourth inning and singled home the winning run in the eighth as host Toronto completed a three-game sweep.

Edwin Encarnacion hit a two-out double

off Kelvin Herrera (1-2) in the eighth and scored when Saunders lined a single to center.

White Sox 5, Yankees 0: Miguel Gonzalez pitched five-hit ball over seven innings for host Chicago.

Gonzalez (2-4) matched his longest outing of the season and shut down New York after it pounded out a season-high 20 hits in Tuesday's 9-0 romp.

Angels 7, Rays 2: All-Star Mike Trout homered and Jered Weaver pitched six innings of one-run ball for visiting Los Angeles.

With his 100th hit, Trout became the first player to collect 100 hits and 15 home runs before the All-Star break four times before his age-25 season. Miguel Cabrera and Jimmy Foxx are the only other players to have accomplished the feat three times.

Padres 13, Diamondbacks 6: Ryan Schimpf homered twice and Yangervis Solarte drove in five runs, including three on a homer, as San Diego beat host Arizona.

Shelby Miller (2-9) allowed six runs in five innings.

Phillies 4, Braves 3: Freddy Galvis hit a two-run homer with two outs in the eighth inning to lift host Philadelphia.

Maikel Franco hit a homer for the fourth straight game. Galvis lined a 2-2 pitch off Arodys Vizcaino (1-4) into the seats in right after Franco had started the inning with a walk.

Twins 4, Athletics 0: Ervin Santana struck out eight and walked none in a two-hitter for host Minnesota.

Santana (3-7) pitched his eighth career shutout and 15th complete game, helping the Twins take two of three from the A's.

Portugal blanks Wales

Associated Press

LYON, France — Cristiano Ronaldo may have guided Portugal into the final of the European Championship, but he needed a little help from an often forgotten forward.

Nani made another vital contribution to Portugal's bid to win Euro 2016, scoring his team's second goal in the 2-0 victory over Wales on Wednesday.

The tournament has rejuvenated the 29-year-old forward, who once stood out with Ronaldo at Manchester United — before his star began to fade and Ronaldo went on to even greater glory at Real Madrid.

In France, the two former club teammates are in perfect sync, with each scoring three goals to guide an imperfect Portugal side into Sunday's final at the Stade de France against either Germany or the tournament hosts.

"It's an amazing moment. It's a historic moment for our country and we have to celebrate," Nani said.

Just three minutes after Ronaldo opened the scoring against Wales with a powerful header, Nani provided another devastating blow to Welsh hopes in Lyon. Timing his slide near the penalty spot just right, he turned an off-target shot by Ronaldo past goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey and into the Wales net.

"It was a surprise goal," Nani said. "It was instinct."

His reward included a round of applause from the Portuguese fans when he was

replaced by Ricardo Quaresma with three minutes to play.

Euro 2016 is proving to be a high point in the career of Nani, who followed in Ronaldo's footsteps by starting out at Sporting Lisbon and later moving to Old Trafford. The two helped United win the 2008 Champions League before Ronaldo left for Madrid a year later.

Though he struggled to secure a first-team place, Nani won four Premier League titles with United before returning to Sporting Lisbon on loan for a season in 2014. He was then signed by Fenerbahce in the Turkish league, a step down in the career ladder.

However, his earlier goals at Euro 2016 — the equalizer in a 1-1 draw with Iceland and a goal in the 3-3 draw with Hungary that saw Portugal squeak into the knockout stages — have not gone unnoticed.

Spanish league club Valencia announced on Tuesday that it had signed Nani to a three-year deal.

For the moment, though, his focus is on the national team, which is back in a European Championship final for the second time.

Unlike Ronaldo, Nani wasn't there for Portugal's previous final on home soil in 2004, when it surprisingly lost 1-0 to Greece in Lisbon.

But now he will get the chance to help Portugal exorcise those demons from 12 years ago.

"We still have the final to go. I don't have an explanation for the feeling at this moment," Nani said. "But it's not over."

Olympic track's youth movement is nothing new

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — The headlines say youth is being served on the U.S. Olympic track and field team.

The numbers say that's nothing new.

With the second half of Olympic track trials set to start Thursday, 35 of the 50 athletes (75 percent) who have already guaranteed themselves trips to Rio de Janeiro will be going to their first Olympics. That sort of turnover is pretty much the norm. Data supplied by USA Track and Field shows an average of 53 percent turnover from year to year on the most recent world championship and Olympic teams, which essentially award the same number of spots through the same qualifying process. When the gap is two years, the turnover rate is 60 percent.

This year's group of newcomers includes 18-year-old high jumper Vashti Cunningham, the world indoor champion, who will be the youngest U.S. track and field athlete to qualify for the Olympics since Carol Lewis in 1980. The team also includes high jumper Chaunte Lowe and sprinter Allyson Felix, both of whom are in their 30s and going for the fourth time.

"You look at the system we have and the depth of talent we have, and one thing that's fairly consistent is that we'll have an amazing team and amazing athletes," USATF CEO Max Siegel said. "It's just a matter of who the stars are going to be.

It's also the challenge of how we select them."

The U.S. won 29 medals at the London Olympics four years ago. That number dwindled to 18 at last year's world championships, raising alarm among some in track circles.

Over the years, the USATF has settled on a system in which the top three finishers in each event make it, assuming they have met an Olympic qualifying standard. There are no exceptions for injuries or past performances the way there are in many countries, including Jamaica, where Usain Bolt will almost certainly be on the team despite pulling out of Jamaica's qualifier with a hamstring injury.

It may be the fairest system, but, as decathlete Ashton Eaton said, "if the goal is to send the best team, I'm not sure the trials method is the best method."

For instance, a tangle of feet in the stretch of the women's 800-meter final knocked out Brenda Martinez and Alycia Montano, either of whom would've contended for medals. Making it instead were three first-timers: Kate Grace, Ajee Wilson and Chrishuna Williams.

"Surreal," said Grace, who was ranked seventh nationally coming into trials but had a gold medal around her neck Monday night. "I've never podiumed at a national event, and now I'm going to the Olympics. I knew I could run at this level even though I'd never done it before."