

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Navy officer pleads guilty to taking bribes

The Washington Post

It's been four years since federal authorities made their first arrests in the worst corruption scandal in Navy history, but the criminal investigation shows no sign of ending anytime soon.

On Friday, Jesus Cantu, 59, a retired Navy captain and Stanford graduate, pleaded guilty in federal court in San Diego to conspiracy to commit bribery. In his plea agreement, he admitted to accepting expensive hotel rooms, fancy dinners and the services of prostitutes from Leonard Glenn Francis, a charismatic Asian defense contractor who did hundreds of millions of dollars of business with the Navy.

Cantu, of Silverdale, Wash., had not surfaced previously as part of the epic corruption

case. He is the 19th defendant to be convicted so far. Federal prosecutors have charged 10 others whose cases are pending. Another defendant is facing charges in Singapore.

According to his plea agreement, Cantu began conspiring to commit bribery with Francis — known as “Fat Leonard” in Navy circles — in 2007 when the officer was the assistant chief of staff for logistics for the Navy's 7th Fleet, based in Asia.

Cantu admitted accepting bribes and prostitutes from Francis until 2013, when he was serving as deputy commander of the Military Sealift Command's Far East division in Singapore.

According to the plea agreement, Cantu's final escapade with Francis occurred on Sept. 13, 2013, when they went to

dinner in Singapore and partied with prostitutes at Francis's expense. Three days later, Francis was lured by federal authorities to San Diego and arrested in a sting operation after a yearslong investigation into his company.

Cantu was questioned at the time by a Naval Criminal Investigative Service agent about his contacts with Francis, but gave “materially false” responses, the plea agreement states. He retired from the Navy the following year.

The number of people entwined in the scandal has escalated steadily since 2015, when Francis pleaded guilty to bribery and conspiracy to defraud the United States, and agreed to cooperate with federal authorities.

In court papers, Francis admitted to bribing scores of

Navy officials with millions of dollars so they would leak him classified and confidential information about Navy operations. He then exploited the inside information to rig contracts and gouge federal government as his firm, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, resupplied Navy vessels in Asian ports.

In addition to the 28 defendants in federal court, the Navy has opened separate investigations under military law into more than 250 active-duty and retired personnel who had contact with Francis dating to the 1990s.

Most of those investigations have occurred behind closed doors; the Navy has made its findings public in only a handful of cases.

Helicopter crew had life vests, air bottles during crash

Associated Press

HONOLULU — All five crewmembers aboard a Black Hawk helicopter that crashed over the Pacific had life vests and an air bottle for underwater breathing, but Army officials and rescuers searching the turbulent waters off Hawaii for days had not seen signs of life as of late Friday.

Crews of Black Hawk helicopters undergo underwater crash and survival training before they come to Hawaii, said Master Sgt. Peter Mayes, a spokesman for the 25th Infantry Division. Soldiers simulate being on board a helicopter that's crashed into the water and learn how to free themselves.

Mayes said there was no life raft on board the helicopter be-

cause operating procedure only calls for rafts when noncrew member soldiers or people without life vests are on board.

Army officials have spent days sifting through chunks of helicopter debris since the aircraft crashed during nighttime training Tuesday.

The U.S. Coast Guard said Friday it is searching up to 50 miles off the remote point where the UH-60 helicopter crashed west of Oahu.

Firefighters found and collected what appeared to be pieces of helicopter fuselage and a helmet earlier in the week. The Coast Guard said responders continue to find debris, but didn't have specifics on what kind.

The Navy brought remotely

operated underwater vehicles and sonar to help. On Friday, they searched waters about 1 mile off the coast, said Lt. Col. Curtis Kellogg, a spokesman for the Army's 25th Infantry Division.

Shifting waters and swift currents spread debris from 2 miles off shore on Tuesday night to an expanded search area of at least 50 miles on Thursday.

The ocean floor drops quickly off Oahu and varies throughout the search area. It is over 1,000 feet deep at the center of a safety zone established by the Coast Guard for the search.

The safety zone extends from a 5-mile radius around the last known location of the helicopter. The Coast Guard set it up

because it's likely to have a higher concentration of debris and be where most of the search aircraft and vessels are operating. It's not allowing civilians to enter the area.

A Coast Guard HC-130 plane helping with the search was using radar that's designed to search the surface of the ocean, said spokeswoman Chief Petty Officer Sara Muir. An MH-65 helicopter was using infrared technology, she said.

The two Black Hawk crews were conducting training between Kaena Point and Dillingham Airfield when communications were lost.

The two helicopters are part of the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade based in Hawaii.

US says Iraqis ready for battle

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Senior U.S. military leaders said Friday that Iraqi forces are largely set for their next major campaign against Islamic State extremists after closing out the wrenching nine-month battle to retake the city of Mosul.

Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said he sees the Iraqi assault on the ISIS-held area of Tal Afar “unfolding relatively soon.” The upcoming fight follows weeks of Iraq regrouping troops and repairing equipment and weapons after recapturing Mosul in July.

“I can’t say that we replaced every single damaged or broken vehicle or rifle or machine gun,” said Townsend, whose forces are aiding the Iraqi military. But, he insisted: “They’ll be ready enough.”

Tal Afar and the surrounding area is among the last pockets of ISIS-held territory in Iraq after victory was declared in Mosul, the country’s second-largest city. Tal Afar is west of Mosul and about 93 miles east of the Syrian border. It sits along a major road that was a key ISIS supply route.

Mosul took a heavy toll on Iraqi forces. As many as 1,400 troops were killed and more than 7,000 wounded, and the Iraqi military has proceeded methodically since its big-

gest success to date. Just three years ago, its soldiers were chased by ISIS from much of the battlefield.

“The last days of Mosul looked like Iwo Jima to me,” Townsend told a small group of reporters.

“In the end, it took bulldozers plowing ISIS fighters under the rubble,” he recalled, using multiple different acronyms for the extremist group. “Iraqi infantry men advanced beside the bulldozers, shooting and throwing grenades at Daesh fighters popping up out of the rubble.”

Iraqi Humvees emerged shot up, their glass spider-webbed with bullet marks and shrapnel, their weapons worn out or even destroyed.

In the weeks since, much of the Iraqis’ equipment has been repaired or replaced, said Gen. Joseph Votel, America’s top Middle East commander, who spent the last few days in Iraq.

“I think they are ready,” Votel told reporters Friday, echoing Townsend. The key priority, he said, is ensuring the Iraqis maintain momentum and have a good battle plan, and that the U.S.-led coalition is prepared to support them.

Votel met with Iraqi military and political leaders in Baghdad and with Kurdish peshmerga leaders in Irbil, in northern Iraq. He was ensuring U.S. military advisory teams are with the right local units to

provide the best support, intelligence-gathering, surveillance and advice.

Iraqi military leaders said Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has approved their combat plans. The fight will involve a broad spectrum of forces, including the Iraqi Army, counterterrorism troops, police and a group of mainly Shiite, Iranian-backed militias.

The fight will start “in the next few days,” Iraqi Brig. Gen. Yahia Rasool told reporters. Speaking through an interpreter, he said officials believe there are between 1,400 and 1,600 ISIS militants in the Tal Afar area. Many are foreign fighters, he said.

Rasool said the various Iraqi forces already have largely encircled Tal Afar.

“I don’t think it will be tougher than the battle of Mosul, taking into consideration the experience we got in Mosul,” he said

Townsend said the fight for Tal Afar will be a “microcosm” of Mosul, with parts easier and others equally difficult.

“It’s smaller and there are fewer bad guys,” Townsend said. “But for the Iraqi security force member or policeman or infantryman or special forces soldier who’s attacking, it won’t be easier. He’s going to be facing a determined ISIS fighter dug into Tal Afar, determined to fight to the death.”

Navy expects housing crunch in San Diego

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The Navy is facing a looming housing crunch in the San Diego region, where high home prices and rents are already a problem.

Rear Adm. Yancy Lindsey told the San Diego Military Advisory Council last week that the Navy will add 20 more warships and 15,000 sailors and their families to the region by 2025 as the military focuses on the Pacific Rim.

The San Diego Union-Tribune reported the Navy’s Southwest region commander urged local leaders to find creative solutions as military staffing rises.

San Diego and nearby Coronado are currently home ports for 52 Navy ships.

New barracks named after black graduate

WEST POINT, N.Y. — The U.S. Military Academy has opened a new barracks named after a graduate who was shunned by fellow cadets at West Point because he was black.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Friday for the Davis Barracks, named after Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. It was attended by academy and Army officials and a nephew of Davis’ from Waterbury, Conn.

Davis was West Point’s only black cadet when he arrived in 1932. He lived alone and no cadets spoke to him unless it was necessary. He graduated in 1936.

Davis became an Army Air Forces pilot and led a fighter group of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. He joined the Air Force when it became a separate service in 1947 and was its first black general. Davis died in 2002.

From The Associated Press

Sailor, girlfriend accused of child abuse

Associated Press

MURRIETA, Calif. — A Navy sailor and his girlfriend were charged Thursday with child abuse and torture after his malnourished 5-year-old son was found gravely injured in their Southern California home.

The boy was hospitalized in grave condition after police were called to the couple’s Murrieta home on Tuesday, the San Diego Union-Tribune reported.

Police did not say how the injuries were inflicted but that officers found “extremely unsanitary” living conditions at the home after receiving a 911 call reporting a child in need of medical aid. Officers found 11 dogs and four cats and feces and urine throughout the residence, Murrieta police Lt. Tony Conrad said.

Benjamin Whitten, 33, and Jeryn Johnson, 25, were arrested on Tuesday. The River-

side County District Attorney’s office charged the pair with one count of torture and one count of child abuse that allegedly caused a child to become comatose.

The couple’s arraignment was delayed until Aug. 24. Each is being held on \$1 million bail.

A Navy spokesman confirmed Whitten, the boy’s father, works as a machinist’s mate at Naval Base Point Loma.

Counterprotest draws thousands to Boston

Associated Press

BOSTON — Thousands of demonstrators chanting anti-Nazi slogans converged Saturday on downtown Boston, dwarfing a small group of conservatives who cut short their “free speech rally” amid a boisterous repudiation of white nationalism a week after racially tinged bloodshed in Virginia.

An estimated 15,000 counterprotesters marched through the city to historic Boston Common, where many gathered near a bandstand abandoned early by conservatives who had planned to deliver a series of speeches. Police vans later escorted the conservatives out of the area, and angry counterprotesters scuffled with armed officers trying to maintain order.

Police Commissioner William Evans said Friday that 500 officers — some in uniform, others undercover — were deployed to keep the two groups apart Saturday. Boston’s Democratic Mayor Marty Walsh and Massachusetts’ Republican Gov. Charlie Baker both warned that extremist unrest wouldn’t be tolerated in this city, famed as the cradle of American liberty.

Organizers of the midday event have publicly distanced themselves from the neo-Nazis, white supremacists and others who fomented violence in Charlottesville, Va., on Aug. 12. A woman was killed at that “Unite the Right” rally and scores of others were injured when a car plowed into counterdemonstrators.

Opponents feared that white nationalists might show up in Boston anyway, raising the specter of ugly confrontations in the first potentially large and racially charged gathering in a major U.S. city since Charlottesville. But only a few dozen conservatives turned out for the rally on historic Boston Common — in stark contrast to the estimated 15,000 counterprotesters — and the conservatives abruptly left early.

Events were planned around the country, in cities including Atlanta, Dallas and New Orleans.

Walsh greeted counterprotesters Saturday morning outside Reggie Lewis Center in the city’s Roxbury neighborhood. Counterprotesters from Black Lives Matter and other groups

denouncing racism and anti-Semitism marched from there to the Common, and another group plans to rally on the steps of the statehouse overlooking the sprawling park.

Some counterprotesters were dressed entirely in black and wore bandanas over their faces. They chanted anti-Nazi and anti-fascism slogan, and waved signs that said: “Love your neighbor,” “Resist fascism” and “Hate never made U.S. great.” Others carried a large banner that read: “SMASH WHITE SUPREMACY.”

TV cameras showed a group of boisterous counterprotesters on the Common chasing a man with a Trump campaign banner and cap, shouting and swearing at him. But other counterprotesters intervened and helped the man safely over a fence into the area where the conservative rally was to be staged. Black-clad counterprotesters also grabbed an American flag out of an elderly woman’s hands, and she fell to the ground.

The permit issued for the rally came with severe restrictions, including a ban on backpacks, sticks and anything that

could be used as a weapon. The permit was for 100 people, though an organizer had said he expected up to 1,000 people.

The Boston Free Speech Coalition, which organized the event, said it has nothing to do with white nationalism or racism, and its group is not affiliated with the Charlottesville rally organizers in any way.

“We are strictly about free speech. ... We will not be offering our platform to racism or bigotry,” the group said on its Facebook page. “We denounce the politics of supremacy and violence.”

But the mayor pointed out that some of those invited to speak “spew hate.” Kyle Chapman, who described himself on Facebook as a “proud American nationalist,” said he would attend.

Black Lives Matter said Friday that members from around the U.S. planned to march Saturday in Boston.

Walsh said the city would do whatever is necessary to head off violence initiated by either side. “If anyone gets out of control — at all — it will be shut down,” he said.

Civil War re-enactment in Virginia is canceled

The Washington Post

A Civil War re-enactment in Virginia was canceled Friday after participants shared worries over their safety following the recent violence in Charlottesville, Va.

The two-day event in Manassas, scheduled to start Aug. 25, was meant to share how both Union and Confederate soldiers lived during the Civil War.

In previous years, the event that started in 2011 featured tent cities set up in the downtown area, an evening ball and lectures about how the war started and why.

Patty Prince, a Manassas city spokeswoman, said some of the re-enactors called event

organizers with worries that the racially charged atmosphere around the country over whether to tear down Civil War monuments would lead to violence.

“It’s just not a good time to have it,” Prince said about the event, which the city began hosting to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War. “It’s a very sad time in our country.”

Manassas is where the First Battle of Bull Run was fought in 1861, a key victory for the Confederate army that forced the Union army to realize the conflict would not be as easy as it initially believed. The Second Battle of Bull Run was fought a year later.

President to skip Kennedy Center Honors art awards

Associated Press

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. — In a break with tradition, President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump have decided not to participate in events honoring recipients of this year’s Kennedy Center Honors arts awards to “allow the honorees to celebrate without any political distraction,” the White House announced Saturday.

The Kennedy Center said it respected Trump’s decision and that the show will go on.

Past presidents and first ladies have hosted a White House reception in the hours before the Kennedy Center gala.

The decision came a day after the entire membership of the President’s Committee on

the Arts and the Humanities resigned to protest Trump’s comments about last weekend’s demonstrations by white supremacists in Charlottesville, Va. The president blamed “many sides” for the violence that left an anti-racism activist dead.

Trump has had a long and contentious relationship with the arts world, and some of the Kennedy Center honorees already had said they would not attend the White House reception hosted by him in December.

One of the honorees, television writer and producer Norman Lear, also had questioned whether Trump would want to attend the gala, “given his indifference, or worse, regarding the arts and humanities.”

Suspect in Fla. officers' shooting arrested

Associated Press

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — A suspect in the fatal shooting of a police officer in Florida and the grave wounding of a sergeant was arrested several hours after the attack in a bar, authorities said Saturday.

Everett Miller faces a charge of first-degree murder for the killing of Officer Matthew Baxter and could face other charges for the wounding of Sgt. Sam Howard, Kissimmee police Chief Jeff O'Dell said at a news conference Saturday. Kissimmee is located south of the theme park hub of Orlando.

During a patrol late Friday

of a neighborhood with a history of drug activity, Baxter was "checking out" three people, including Miller, when the officer got into a scuffle with Miller. Howard, his sergeant, responded as backup, the police chief said.

Sheriff's deputies with a neighboring law enforcement agency later tracked down Miller at a bar and approached him. Miller started reaching toward his waistband when the deputies tackled and subdued him, O'Dell said.

They found a handgun and revolver on him.

The police chief said Miller

would be taken to jail wearing the fallen officer's handcuffs.

Authorities originally said they believed there were four suspects, but the chief said Saturday that no other arrests are anticipated.

Miller, 45, was a Marine veteran and was recently involuntarily committed for a mental evaluation by the Osceola County Sheriff's Office. The early stages of the investigation show that Miller had made threats to law enforcement on Facebook, O'Dell said.

As of Saturday morning, Howard was in "grave, critical condition" at the hospital,

O'Dell said.

"It's grave. Not much hope that he will survive this," the police chief said.

Baxter, 27, had been with the Kissimmee Police Department for three years. He was married to another Kissimmee police officer, and they have four children.

Howard, 36, has served with the Kissimmee Police Department for 10 years. He and his wife have one child, O'Dell said.

Also, two state troopers were shot and a suspect killed outside a store near Pittsburgh on Friday.

Police look for links between Spain and Finland attacks

Associated Press

HELSINKI — The knife attack in western Finland that left two dead and seven others wounded is "a likely terror act," Finland's intelligence agency said Saturday, while police said Europol was investigating if it had any ties to deadly vehicle attacks in Spain.

The suspect, an 18-year-old Moroccan asylum-seeker, was shot and wounded in the thigh by police during his rampage Friday in Turku. He was hospitalized under guard Saturday and is being investigated for murder with possible terrorist intent, police said.

Investigators say he came to Finland in early 2016.

The suspect has yet to be questioned, while four others, also Moroccans living in Turku who know him, were detained on suspicion of involvement. An international arrest warrant had been issued for a sixth person, police said.

The two dead were Finnish women, while the seven wounded included four Finns, and one Italian, one Briton and one Swedish man. Two of the wounded were still in intensive care. The youngest victim was 15, the oldest 67, police said.

Prime Minister Juha Sipila

told a news conference that if confirmed as an act of terrorism, "it's the first time Finland has encountered such a terror act."

He told reporters he had spoken with several European leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, about the attack.

The NBI said investigators were working with colleagues from the Finnish Security Intelligence Service, police in Turku and the European Union's police agency, Europol. Robin Lardot, head of the NBI, said Europol was helping to check whether there are connections to the vehicle attacks in Barcelona but refused to elaborate.

In June, the Finnish Security Intelligence Service raised its threat assessment to the second level of a four-step scale, citing the Nordic country's "stronger profile within the radical Islamist propaganda."

Flowers and candles were placed on a square in Turku, and Finnish flags flew at half-staff across the country.

"We need to stick together now, hate is not to be answered by hate," Sipila, the prime minister, said in a tweet. A minute of silence was planned for Sunday at 10 a.m.

Spain, France hunt for leader of terrorism cell

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain — Authorities in Spain and France pressed the search Saturday for the supposed ringleader of an Islamic extremist cell that carried out vehicle attacks in Barcelona and a seaside resort, as the investigation focused on links among the Moroccan members and the house where they plotted the carnage.

Early Saturday, police searched two buses in north-west Catalonia in the hunt for any remaining members of the cell. Nothing was found in the searches in Girona and Garrigas, police tweeted.

Across the Pyrenees, French police carried out extra border checks on people coming from Spain — a routine beefing-up of patrols anytime a neighboring country flags a potential risk, a French security official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. No arrests were made.

Police also announced a series of controlled explosions Saturday in the town of Alcanar, south of Barcelona, where the attacks were planned in a rental house destroyed Wednesday by an apparently accidental blast. Authorities had initially written off the incident as a

household gas accident but took another look on Friday and returned on Saturday.

Police believe the Wednesday night blast, which killed at least one person and injured one of the people currently in custody, actually prevented a far deadlier attack using explosives, forcing extremists to use more "rudimentary" vehicles instead.

In the carnage claimed by Islamic State, a white van swerved onto Barcelona's historic Las Ramblas pedestrian promenade Thursday afternoon, killing 13 people and injuring more than 100 as it plowed down unsuspecting tourists and locals. A few hours later, five extremists began mowing down people along the boardwalk in the seaside resort of Cambrils.

One woman died, and five others were injured before police shot and killed all five attackers. They were armed with an axe, knives and fake explosive belts.

Authorities said the two attacks were related and the work of a large terrorist cell that had been plotting for a long time from the house in Alcanar, 125 miles from Barcelona.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman allegedly bites fisherman's line

FL ST. AUGUSTINE — It wasn't exactly the catch a Florida man was hoping for while fishing in the Atlantic Ocean. Instead, deputies say a drunken woman cursed at him before swimming up to his fishing line, biting it and swimming away with the rigging.

St. Johns County Sheriff's officials told local news outlets the fisherman told deputies the incident happened Tuesday evening as he was fishing with a rented pole near St. Augustine.

Deputies asked Alexandria Turner, 22, to come to the pier office, but she became belligerent.

She was arrested on suspicion of intoxication and resisting arrest.

Silent song finds iTunes popularity

NY NEW YORK — An unusual tune has found its way onto the top 50 on the iTunes charts, alongside Ed Sheeran and Keith Urban hits. The song is completely silent. "A a a a a Very Good Song" costs 99 cents for just under 10 minutes of dead air.

While the musical quality of the track is debatable, its popularity is due to its simple role: When people plug smartphones into a car, usually the first song alphabetically plays by default. "A a a a a Very Good Song" offers users several minutes of respite.

The "song" is the brainchild of Samir Mezrahi, who released it last week.

Man uses pepper spray on re-enactors

NC NEWTON — Police said a man pepper-sprayed Confederate re-enactors in North Carolina during

a reunion parade. News outlets quoted police as saying Karl Smith, 56, of Morganton, has been charged with two counts of misdemeanor assault.

Authorities said he assaulted the re-enactors Thursday during the 2017 Soldiers Reunion parade in Newton when they stopped to fire their weapons.

Police seized a small canister of pepper spray and a .38-caliber revolver for which Smith had a concealed-weapon permit.

City council outlaws bikini-clad workers

WA EVERETT — The City Council in Everett, Wash., voted to require employees at coffee stands to wear a minimum of tank tops and shorts, in response to businesses where women often wear bikinis.

The Daily Herald reported the proposal was unanimously approved Wednesday.

It specifically requires employees at "quick service" restaurants, which also include fast food and food trucks, to adhere to the dress code.

Driver forced to jump rising drawbridge

NJ LOWER TOWNSHIP — Authorities said operator error is to blame for forcing a driver to accelerate in order to jump across an opening drawbridge in New Jersey.

Police said Terence Naphys had paid the toll to cross the Middle Thorofare Bridge on Aug. 1. As he was crossing the steel grate, it began to rise.

Police said Naphys accelerated and managed to reach the concrete road on the other side, causing minor damage to his vehicle.

The bridge tender told police a commercial vessel was approaching, and he activated the

bridge's lights and gates in anticipation that all vehicles would be clear. However, he wasn't sure because of sun glare.

Dig at colonial military site wrapping up

NY FORT EDWARD — A six-week archaeological dig on a colonial-era British military site on the upper Hudson River is wrapping up.

A team of volunteers and students has been excavating areas on Rogers Island at Fort Edward, 45 miles north of Albany.

Thousands of British and Colonial American troops were encamped at Fort Edward during the French and Indian War from 1755-1759.

The excavations, led by archaeologist David Starbuck, have uncovered 18th-century artifacts such as musket balls and pottery, as well as evidence of soldier dwellings. The dig ends Friday.

Students protest dress code; parents arrested

MS TUNICA — A protest over the dress code at a Mississippi high school has resulted in the arrest of some parents for trespassing.

Students at Rosa Fort High School in Tunica walked out Wednesday after school officials told them they couldn't wear colored shoes to school because of possible gang affiliation.

According to the district's 2017-2018 student handbook, students can only wear solid black, brown or white shoes. Students and parents said they didn't know of the change.

WREG-TV reports at least two parents face charges for allegedly taking their children off campus without permission.

Ashley McKay says she was

there during the protest and when she got home she was arrested on charges of trespassing, harassment, disturbing a public school and contributing to child delinquency.

Principal resigns after threatening student

PA CHURCHILL — A former principal who was placed on leave after state officials published recordings of him threatening to punch a 14-year-old student will likely receive a benefits package for his resignation.

Former Woodland Hills High School Principal Kevin Murray's resignation was announced Wednesday night. The (Pittsburgh) Tribune-Review reported Murray will have seven days to sign a severance agreement, after which it will be made public.

Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala Jr. earlier this year declined to file criminal charges against Murray. Zappala called the threats against the student "inappropriate," in a letter to the district's superintendent.

Police, DEA agents seize 30K fentanyl pills

AZ TEMPE — Federal drug agents and Tempe police detectives seized 30,000 fentanyl pills during an operation against a drug trafficking organization related to a Mexican cartel.

They said the pills were discovered after a traffic stop during a Drug Enforcement Administration operation last weekend.

A search of a vehicle led to the discovery of the fentanyl-laced pills. According to authorities, the pills were designed to look like oxycodone.

From wire reports

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Freeman set for final year with Ducks

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — After the trials of last season, Oregon running back Royce Freeman appears to have emerged with two things: a college degree and a brighter outlook.

The senior, who opted to stay with the Ducks rather than enter the NFL Draft this spring, heads into the season with 936 career rushing yards to go to reach LaMichael James' Oregon record of 5,082.

"I'm comfortable in my own skin. I'm a senior, I've been here before, I've seen it all, been to a national championship," he said. "I feel more than comfortable being around these guys and playing beside them — and that was a huge reason for me coming back."

Freeman completed a degree this summer in general social science with an emphasis on crime, law and society, something that was important in addition to "finishing on a better note than I did last year."

Freeman was the Ducks' leading rusher last year with 945 yards in 11 games. He was widely considered a Heisman candidate going into the season, but he was held back by injury.

Oregon was struggling overall, too. The Ducks finished 4-8 overall and at the bottom of the Pac-12 North standings at 2-7 — snapping a run of nine straight winning seasons in conference play. Three days after the season ended with a loss to Oregon State in the Civil War game, the Ducks fired coach Mark Helfrich.

Oregon went on to hire charismatic coach Willie Taggart, who spent the previous four years turning around the program at South Florida. The Bulls flipped from a 2-10 record in his first year to a 10-2 mark last season and a spot in the Birmingham Bowl.

"Coach Taggart and his staff bring energy every day," Freeman said. "And they demand the same from us."

Taggart has been impressed with Freeman.

"He's excited. He's ready to go. I've seen a big difference in him and his attitude and the way he's doing things and the way he's working. Really excited about it, and glad that he decided to come back," Taggart said.

In his first two seasons, Freeman has epitomized the speed in Oregon's hyper-drive offense.

The native Californian burst on the scene as a freshman, rushing for 1,365 yards — a Pac-12 true freshman record — and 18 touchdowns. He also caught a touchdown pass. As a result, he was named the league's freshman of the year on offense.

He followed that up with 1,836 yards — an Oregon single-season record — and 17 touchdowns as a sophomore.

Freeman currently has 44 rushing touchdowns for his career, trailing James' 53. But he insists he's not paying attention

to the numbers, or closing in on James' lofty records.

"I don't really think of anything statistical," he said. "I mean, I feel like if I go out there and perform the best that I can and the best I am capable of, then everything else will come."

At 6 feet and a muscular 238 pounds, Freeman recently attracted attention with a video showing him squatting 600 pounds during a team lifting session.

He's also a preseason candidate for numerous awards, including the Doak Walker award for the nation's top running back. James won the honor as a sophomore at Oregon in 2010.

When asked how many carries he plans to give Freeman each game, Taggart laughed.

"As many as he wants," Taggart said with a smile. "I told him to tell me when he doesn't want any more carries. I'll just keep giving them to him."

Buckeyes' Booker starts fresh after medical redshirt

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — After he injured his knee in Ohio State's season opener last year, linebacker Dante Booker was a man in limbo.

Week after week, coach Urban Meyer would tell reporters that Booker may be close to returning to the field. Week after week, Booker would sit out, watching his replacement, Jerome Baker, become a star in a defense laden with stars. In the end, the season was a wash, and Booker took a medical redshirt.

"I felt like I was robbed a little bit," he acknowledged.

Booker is healthy now, and has earned a starting outside linebacker spot, joining Baker — who came out of nowhere to finish second on the team in tackles (83) and tackles for a loss (9.5) — who will man the other side.

To Booker, who played in nearly every game in his first two years before earning the starting nod in last year's pre-season camp, 2017 seems like a fresh start. He still considers himself a brand-new starter.

"I feel like I'm more passionate because I don't have as many swings left," he said. "It's kind of reignited this fire a little bit inside of me."

New linebackers coach Bill Davis said Booker doesn't need any extra motivation.

"With Dante I don't think there's any such word as extra," said Davis, an NFL assistant for 24 NFL seasons. "He is so driven. He wants it too bad. As long as I've known him, he's that driven. He is full-throttle and wants it as bad as anyone I've been around."

Coach Urban Meyer sees it, too.

"He's doing great," Meyer said. "He's one of my favorite

players. He's just a good guy who works his tail off. It's not been easy for him."

Booker's resurgence is timely because there was a huge hole to fill in the Buckeyes' linebacker corps. Raekwon McMillan, the leading tackler and leader of last year's defense, left a year early for the NFL. That's 221 tackles in the past two seasons that now have to be accounted for.

Last year's strongside backer and fifth-year senior Chris Worley has moved over to the middle to replace McMillan, leaving Baker and Booker on the outsides.

Baker was a present surprise last year, introducing himself to the nation when he grabbed an interception and ran it back 68 yards for a touchdown to give the Buckeyes a 14-0 lead at Oklahoma in their third game of the season. He also had a critical interception against

Michigan late in the third quarter with Ohio State down by 10. He admits, though, that he lined up wrong about half the time and compensated for it with his speed.

"His football IQ is high to begin with, and I think it's growing," Davis said of Baker, who along with Worley has been named to the preseason watch list for the Butkus Award. "When you take a fast player who is twitched up like he is, and he sees things clearly and knows he knows, now you actually increase his speed. So Jerome is getting faster and faster."

Davis, who was hired when Luke Fickell took the head coaching job at Cincinnati, has brought an NFL mindset to the linebackers room, instructing the players on how to be "a next-level pro," Worley said.

Seahawks win, lose Fant to ACL injury

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Russell Wilson looked just fine throwing for 206 yards and two touchdowns in the first half, and the Seattle Seahawks suffered a significant injury loss to left tackle George Fant in their 20-13 victory over the Minnesota Vikings on Friday night.

Wilson picked apart a Vikings secondary that played without starting cornerback Trey Waynes and safety Andrew Sedenjo, completing 13 of 18 passes. He hit Kasen Williams on a 1-yard touchdown pass and found Mike Davis on a 22-yard catch-and-run TD late in the first half.

But the Seahawks have lost Fant likely for the season with a torn ACL in his right knee, throwing the offensive line into flux with two weeks remaining in the preseason.

Fant was injured midway through the second quarter when he was rolled into by teammate Justin Britt and immediately fell to the turf in pain. The team training staff

attended to Fant on the field and placed an air splint around his lower right leg before he was taken away.

The injury may have significantly changed Seattle's plans. Fant took over at left tackle midway through last season and spent the offseason reshaping his body to be stronger going into this season. Earlier this week offensive line coach Tom Cable said Seattle was set on the left side of the offensive line with Fant at tackle and Luke Joeckel at guard.

Fant's injury overshadowed what was an otherwise solid performance by the Seahawks. Williams continued to make a bid for a roster spot with an acrobatic 27-yard catch, followed by his 1-yard TD on Seattle's opening drive. He nearly had a second TD but couldn't haul in a deep pass from Wilson near the goal line in the second quarter.

Minnesota's Sam Bradford was 7-for-11 for 95 yards, leading three drives for the Vikings before calling it a night. Taylor Heinicke threw a 21-yard touch-

down pass to Bucky Hodges in the fourth quarter.

Bennett sits: Seahawks defensive end Michael Bennett sat during the national anthem for the second straight game of the preseason.

Bennett was alone sitting on the Seahawks bench during the "The Star-Spangled Banner." But teammates showed support for Bennett with center Justin Britt standing alongside with his hand on Bennett's shoulder. Defensive back Jeremy Lane also stood next to Bennett.

Kicker revenge: Walsh took great joy in having success against his former team that released him last season. Walsh made a pair of 52-yard field goals in the second half and made gestures toward the Minnesota sideline after each kick. Walsh pointed at the sideline after his first make and walked toward the bench and appeared to say something after the second.

Walsh nearly had three made kicks of beyond 50 yards but a 53-yard attempt in the first half hit the crossbar.

Start cookin': Vikings' rookie Dalvin Cook ran well in the first half against most of Seattle's starting defense. With the Vikings bringing back Latavius Murray slowly from ankle surgery in March, Cook had seven carries for 40 yards in the first half, including a 15-yarder. Cook also had one reception for 10 yards.

Kickin' it: Both of Minnesota's kickers converted their opportunities in the first half. Marshall Koehn hit from 29 yards in the first quarter and Kai Forbath was good from 51 yards just before halftime. That was the only opportunities for either kicker as the Vikings had only two drives inside the Seattle 40.

Celebrate good times: Davis' touchdown was his first since signing with the Seahawks in the offseason and he had a unique celebration. Davis ran into the end zone then laid down using the ball as a pillow as his teammates joined him to celebrate. It was the most extensive of any of the touchdown celebrations.

Rookie Watt making case for playing time with Steelers

Associated Press

LATROBE, Pa. — Pittsburgh Steelers first-round pick T.J. Watt will take all the preseason snaps he can get at right outside linebacker.

And perhaps most of them in the regular season too, a fact the man he's in the process of replacing isn't fighting.

James Harrison is the Steelers' career sacks leader, including a team-high five last season at the not-so tender age of 38.

The now-39-year-old Harrison doesn't care who has the starting spot he's held for the better part of a decade as long as it results in another Lombardi Trophy for the Steelers.

"I'm not worried about it," Harrison said Wednesday. "Whatever they want me to do. I'm 39 years old and still playing football."

Harrison, the 2008 NFL Defensive Player of the Year, dressed for one padded practice during training camp.

Other than that, he's been working out on his own, sporting a gray sweatsuit in the sun while teammates practice on an adjacent field.

Watt, the 30th overall pick in 2017, is the younger brother of Houston Texans defensive end J.J. Watt — a three-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year.

The younger Watt flourished as the starting right outside linebacker during the Steelers first preseason game against the New York Giants, earning two sacks in the first four snaps.

He wouldn't have a problem being in the same role when the regular season begins on Sept. 10 in Cleveland.

"I've always said from the be-

ginning, I'm never going to turn down reps," Watt said. "If that comes with more reps, then I'm all for it. I'm just out here trying to show that I'm consistent as possible, I can make plays and I can be trusted."

Watt made his impact early against the Giants. He beat his man on third down and took down the Giants' Josh Johnson for his first sack. On the next defensive snap, Watt didn't fall for a run fake and sacked Johnson for the second time in as many plays.

"I was just playing football and trying to make a play," Watt said. "The second one was a read option, so I tried to see if he would keep it or dump it off. At that point, it's just instincts taking over."

Coach Mike Tomlin called Watt a "one-rep learner," or a quick study, despite playing the

position for just two seasons at Wisconsin.

Watt, who has two older brothers in the NFL, has also been commended for his high-level of conditioning, allowing the rookie to absorb significant snaps on defense and special teams deep into the fourth quarter against the Giants.

"I was ready for it," Watt said. "I knew going into the game that we were pretty light at outside linebacker, and that I was also expected to play some special teams, which I'm perfectly OK with."

Tomlin has sought to preserve the veteran Harrison in the past.

Harrison, who has a franchise-best 79½ sacks, didn't have a sack through the first seven games of the 2016 season while rotating with former first-round pick Jarvis Jones.

Moreland, Reed key to Red Sox's victory

Associated Press

BOSTON — Nineteen batters.

Six pitchers.

One hour, 5 minutes.

Eight runs.

Two lead changes.

And when the seventh inning was over on Friday night, the Boston Red Sox were back in front and on their way to a 9-6 victory over New York and a five-game lead over the rival Yankees in the AL East.

"We sent a number of guys to the mound; they put a number of balls in play — hit batters,

walks in there," Red Sox manager John Farrell said. "But then Addison Reed came on in the seventh to shut it down."

Reed and fellow Red Sox reliever Joe Kelly retired presumptive AL rookie of the year Aaron Judge with the bases loaded in back-to-back innings, and pinch-hitter Mitch Moreland delivered a two-run single to rally Boston to its 13th victory in 15 games.

The Yankees snapped a four-game winning streak, blowing a 6-3 lead after rallying from a 3-0 deficit.

"Our guys fought really hard to get in front of the lead. Really good at-bats from a lot of different people," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said.

Reed (1-1) got five outs, striking out three. He was the seventh Boston pitcher, after starter Drew Pomeranz left mid-batter with back spasms in the fourth. Craig Kimbrel pitched the ninth for his 29th save.

The Red Sox opened a 3-0 lead on homers from Christian Vazquez and Rafael Devers, who hit his fourth in five games

and his seventh in his 19-game major league career. But Todd Frazier hit a two-run homer in the sixth, then New York scored four in the seventh to take a 6-3 lead.

Boston loaded the bases in the bottom of the seventh against Tommy Kahnle (2-4), scored one run on Mookie Betts' sacrifice fly and another on Andrew Benintendi's single. Hanley Ramirez walked to load the bases again before Moreland lined an 0-2 pitch to center to make it 7-6.

Machado hits 3 homers to lead Orioles over Angels

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The Baltimore Orioles and Los Angeles Angels spent the night launching baseballs over the outfield wall, combining for 10 home runs in a game decided by the grandest hit of all.

Manny Machado capped a three-homer night with a grand slam in the bottom of the ninth inning, providing the Orioles with a 9-7 victory Friday night.

"It's like a game where everybody's dunking," Baltimore manager Buck Showalter said. "No [jump] shots tonight."

Machado hit his seventh career slam off Keynan Middleton (4-1), who entered with two on and one out in the ninth. After Tim Beckham singled to load the bases, Machado hit a drive far over the center-field wall to give the Orioles their first lead.

Machado also hit a two-run homer in the third and a solo shot in the fifth to finish with seven RBIs.

Albert Pujols set the tone for the game in the first inning with a milestone homer off Jeremy Hellickson. There would be plenty more long balls on a steamy night at Camden Yards.

"Obviously a good hitters' park," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "We hit the ball good tonight; they did too. They got the last big hit."

Machado's third slam of the year came on a fastball that

caught way too much of the plate.

"I was looking for a pitch and I got it," he said. "I made a good swing on it. Off the bat, I knew it was going to go far."

Said Middleton: "I was trying to go fastball away, and I left the fastball over the middle."

Pujols' two-run drive was the 609th of his career, tied with Sammy Sosa for eighth on the all-time list. Pujols and Sosa share the distinction of hitting more home runs than any other foreign-born player.

After Pujols and Kole Calhoun connected in succession in the first inning, C.J. Cron and Kaleb Cowart homered in the second for a 5-0 lead. The Orioles used homers by Mark Trumbo, Machado and Caleb Joseph and cut the gap to a run before a two-run drive by Mike Trout made it 7-4 in the fifth.

All five L.A. home runs came off Hellickson, the first time the right-hander yielded more than three in a game.

Dodgers 8, Tigers 5: Chris Taylor was 4-for-5 with two doubles, and visiting Los Angeles welcomed back Adrian Gonzalez from the disabled list with a victory over Detroit.

Cubs 7, Blue Jays 4: Jake Arrieta pitched into the seventh inning and allowed a run, and Javier Baez homered and drove in three runs to help host Chicago beat Toronto.

Cardinals 11, Pirates 10: Matt Carpenter hit a three-

run homer in the second inning to make it 5-1 and visiting St. Louis went on to outscore Pittsburgh.

Astros 3, Athletics 1: Dallas Keuchel threw seven shutout innings, Alex Bregman and Jose Altuve homered and host Houston beat Oakland.

Keuchel (11-2) allowed three hits, walked one and struck out three.

Rockies 8, Brewers 4: At Denver, Charlie Blackmon hit his sixth leadoff home run of the season, German Marquez won for the first time in three weeks and Colorado beat Milwaukee.

Twins 10, Diamondbacks 3: Miguel Sano hit two of the Twins' season high-tying six home runs, including an inside-the-park dash by Byron Buxton, and host Minnesota powered past Arizona.

Nationals 7, Padres 1: Matt Grace pitched 4¹/₃ scoreless innings in place of injured Max Scherzer, and Howie Kendrick hit a leadoff homer and drove in two runs to help visiting Washington beat San Diego.

Scherzer was scratched from his scheduled start and placed on the 10-day disabled list with a sore neck.

Mariners 7, Rays 1: Nelson Cruz hit his 30th homer and doubled twice, and Erasmo Ramirez won his first game for Seattle since April 1, 2014, leading his team past host Tampa Bay.

Indians 10, Royals 1: Corey Kluber put together another Cy Young-worthy performance before leaving with a sprained right ankle, and Jay Bruce homered twice to help visiting Cleveland rout Kansas City.

Kluber (12-3)

White Sox 4, Rangers 3: Nicky Delmonico lined an inside-the-park home run in the eighth inning, his second go-ahead homer of the game, and visiting Chicago beat Texas to end a five-game losing streak.

Delmonico's fifth homer eluded a leaping Nomar Mazara, bouncing off the wall as the right fielder crumpled on the warning track clutching his left knee.

Reds 5, Braves 3: Cincinnati hit three home runs in the sixth, including a two-run shot by Adam Duvall, and Sal Romano threw seven strong innings in a victory over R.A. Dickey and host Atlanta.

Giants 10, Phillies 2: Matt Moore took a one-hitter into the eighth inning and picked up his first win in nearly two months, leading San Francisco past Philadelphia.

Marlins 3, Mets 1: J.T. Realmuto hit a two-run homer and visiting Miami won for the sixth time in seven games, downing New York to move within two games of .500 for the first time since May 3.