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Trump objects to troop reduction limits

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has objected to a series of provisions in the newly passed 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, including limits on the reduction of troops in South Korea and recognizing Crimea as a Russian province.

The defense legislation, which Trump signed into law Monday, sets new restrictions to keep the administration from decreasing troops in South Korea to less than 22,000. It also prohibits U.S. funds from helping legitimize Russia's control of Crimea.

Both provisions, among several others in the NDAA, reflect congressional concerns about the president and drew objections from the White House.

"There is a whole lot of things they do in [the NDAA] to try to limit President Trump from taking certain actions," said Scott Anderson, a governance studies fellow at the liberal-leaning Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank.

The Korea and Crimea provisions are among several within the NDAA that attempt to limit the president's powers, Anderson said. Late Monday, several hours after

Trump signed the NDAA at Fort Drum in upstate New York, the White House issued a list of objections about the law.

Such signing statements are a common practice for presidents to issue during negotiations and subsequent passage of major legislation such as H.R. 5515, also known as the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act, named for the ailing Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee from Arizona. Often, presidents will object to provisions that appear to infringe on their powers.

"They are saying 'these provisions we don't like because we think they intrude on our constitutional authorities,'" Anderson said. "It's really them maintaining and articulating that there are major constitutional concerns."

Among the list of 2019 NDAA concerns, the Trump administration also complained of restrictions to lower benchmarks for deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles, the use of the military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and executive branch authority over a new National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence.

The NDAA also withholds funds for certain U.S. efforts in Iraq and Syria unless the administration issues a long-overdue

report detailing its strategy in both countries, which drew a Trump objection.

The NDAA also requires certification that the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are bringing the Yemen conflict to an end, and if not, stops U.S. in-flight refueling services for the pro-government coalition. It also drew White House concerns.

In several cases, the Trump statement detailed how he would interpret the provisions to preserve his constitutional authorities. The statement said the president retains the power to reduce the levels of deployed ICBMs, reiterated the continued operation of Guantanamo Bay to hold prisoners and moves the new artificial intelligence commission under the purview of the legislative branch.

Trump's statement also suggests reports or certifications will only be issued in cases that are feasible, such as the Iraq and Syria strategy plans and the certification for the end of the Yemen conflict.

Trump also said he still retains the authority to reduce troop levels in Korea in emergency scenarios. A hypothetical case could include the deployment of Korea-based troops to another country in response to a new crisis, Anderson said.

State of Korean War remains slows analysis

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — It will take scientists months to determine how many sets of Korean War remains were in 55 boxes handed over by North Korea, officials with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency said Tuesday at the White House.

DPAA Director Kelly McKeague and John Byrd, director of scientific analysis for the agency, also said the remains were in "moderate to poor" condition.

"There is a scientific process to estimate that," Byrd said about the number of remains included in the boxes. "I wish it were very fast, because I think a lot of people would like to know. The families would love to know that information, but unfortunately it's going to take months."

McKeague said he had "high confidence" at least some of the remains are U.S. servicemembers. About 7,700 American troops who fought in the war remain missing.

The remains were transferred in July as the result of an agreement reached June 12 between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un when they met in Singapore. They are already undergoing a "painstaking, multifaceted" analysis at DPAA's lab in Hawaii, McKeague said. In coming weeks, Timothy McMahon, the Pentagon DNA operations director, and his team in Delaware will use samples from the remains against a DNA database to compare with other remains recovered from North Korea, as well as DNA samples provided by family members.

"The mettle of our scientists and the capabilities of our labs will be challenged, but

in the months and years ahead, they will make identifications from these remains and give families long-sought answers," McKeague said.

Byrd previously confirmed the remains were human. Once the remains were transported to Osan Air Base in South Korea, DPAA spent two days going through the boxes looking for animal bones, but didn't find any, he said. In at least one case previously, remains were found to be commingled with animal remains.

Scientists must also work to discern American remains from the remains of people from other countries.

Though some of the remains are in poor condition, Byrd said he was confident his lab could identify them in the coming months "and maybe the next several years."

Sailor convicted of attempting sexual activity with children

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A USS Ronald Reagan sailor was convicted Wednesday of six charges involving attempted sexual activity with children.

Prosecutors said Petty Officer 1st Class Gilbert Sandoval — a 32-year-old boatswain's mate assigned to the aircraft carrier — tried to meet a person he believed to be a 14-year-old Kinnick High School freshman for sexual acts. He was also accused of planning to have sex with a 7-year-old girl.

A seven-member panel of jurors found Sandoval guilty of attempted sexual assault of a child, attempted sexual abuse of a child, indecent communication to a child, attempted production of child pornography, inducing a child under 12 to engage in sexual activity and indecent language.

The panel of jurors — known in military proceedings as “court members” — will meet Thursday to decide sentencing.

The accusations came after Sandoval responded to two public posts on the anonymous messaging app Whisper that were planted by Navy Criminal Investigative Service agents. The first, which was targeted at Yokosuka sailors, was by an agent

posing as 14-year-old “Alex.”

According to evidence presented at trial Wednesday, Sandoval messaged with “Alex” March 20 through 22, initially thinking she was a senior at Kinnick. After “Alex” revealed she was underage, Sandoval continued to text with her, eventually exchanging sexually explicit messages and sending a picture of his genitalia.

Over the same period, Sandoval sent messages to an agent posing as “Jess,” a mother seeking a man to rape her 7-year-old daughter, according to messages presented at trial. Sandoval set a time in April to meet “Jess” for sexual activity with the child, but noted he did not want to get caught doing something “immoral,” according to the evidence.

Prosecutors said that during his lunch break on March 22, Sandoval drove to meet “Alex” at her on-base Yokosuka home, believing she was alone. Sandoval and the teen had sent messages planning to talk during the meeting, then engage in sexual activity.

But when Sandoval arrived at the home and texted “Alex” that he was outside, NCIS opened the door and arrested him.

Sandoval's attorney — Lt. Jim Howland — argued on Wednesday that his client may have gone to the house to assess her

true age.

Though the agent pretending to be “Alex” told Sandoval she was 14, pictures sent to Sandoval purporting to be the teen were of a woman in her 20s.

Howland further argued that the NCIS agents participated in entrapment to arrest Sandoval, causing him to act in a way he otherwise was not predisposed to do. Howland suggested the sexually explicit messages to the 14-year-old and about the 7-year-old were just fantasy.

“He said some disgusting texts,” Howland told the court members. “But are these texts illegal?”

Sandoval's mother, Eva Garibay, who traveled from Texas for the trial, told Stars and Stripes Wednesday that she felt the government tricked her son into his actions.

“As a parent, you want the best for your kids. When you sign them over to the military, you don't expect them to play these little games,” she said. “I understand [undercover operations] have to be done for the actual child molesters, but you could tell they were pulling it out of him; that was entrapment.”

Sandoval has served in the Navy for 14 years, and has been stationed in Japan since 2015, Garibay said.

IG probe targets the DOD public affairs chief

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis' public affairs chief is being investigated by the department's inspector general after allegations that she misused her authority and used her staff for personal business, U.S. officials said Tuesday.

The Pentagon issued a statement acknowledging there is an “ongoing review” of Dana W. White, but had no other comment.

The officials, who requested anonymity to discuss details of the investigation, said that White is alleged to have routinely used her personal staff to run errands, get her laundry, pick up lunch, and help with other appointments. They said she had a staff member drive her to work on a snowy day, and when the person complained she wrote a check to cover the cost of the trip.

Officials said White also is accused of retaliating against staff, and transferring employees out of their jobs without cause, including after staff complained about certain assignments and tasks. There has been frequent staff turnover in her office, and she's had four different military assistants — usually a colonel — in the last 16 months.

At least two former employees filed complaints with the inspector general within recent months, but others have been interviewed in connection with the cases.

The investigation was first reported by CNN.

White has worked as Mattis' assistant defense secretary for public affairs since April 2017. Prior to that she worked as strategic communications director for the Renault-Nissan Alliance in Paris and was an adviser on the 2008 presidential campaign of Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.

White also oversees the Defense Media Activity, which includes Stars and Stripes and American Forces Radio and Television Service.

Ospreys make emergency landings in Japan

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — No injuries or damage were reported after two Marine Corps tilt-rotor aircraft made separate precautionary landings Tuesday in Japan.

In the first incident, a Marine Corps Air Station Futenma-based MV-22 Osprey experienced a “system error”

and landed at Kagoshima prefecture's Amami Airport at 5:22 p.m., said Kyushu Defense Bureau spokesman Ipppei Ohkubo.

The helicopter-plane hybrid was returning to Futenma from Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Ohkubo said. It departed Amami at about 7:19 p.m. after being given the green light to continue to its destination.

A crew of eight was picked up by another Osprey just before 8

p.m. Ohkubo said there were no runway closures because of the incident.

The second incident involved another Futenma-based MV-22 making an emergency landing at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, according to Japan's Kyodo news agency.

Officials from Kadena Air Base's 18th Wing declined to comment. Marine officials could not be reached Wednesday.

US told to move on ex-GI's citizenship

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Immigration officials have three weeks to decide whether to approve the citizenship application of a South Korean-born U.S. Army specialist who is suing after the military discharged her, a judge ruled Tuesday.

Yea Ji Sea filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security last month after the military moved to discharge her.

The woman came to the country as a child on a visitor visa and held other visas before enlisting in 2013 under a special government program for foreign citizens who want to serve in the U.S. military.

Under the program, recruits agreed in their enlistment contracts to apply to naturalize as soon as their honorable service was

certified. Sea, 29, alleges in her lawsuit that the government improperly failed to process her application. She sat in the front row of a Los Angeles courtroom Tuesday as U.S. District Judge Michael Fitzgerald said he expected the government to rule on Sea's citizenship by Sept. 5 or explain any reason for a delay.

Sea was scheduled to have an interview with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officials Wednesday, Assistant U.S. Attorney Tim Biche said. The government wants to resolve her citizenship application quickly, but first officials have to hear what she says in the interview, Biche said.

In the meantime, Sea is suffering "serious harm" because she cannot legally work in the U.S. and fears she could be arrested by

immigration officers, said Sameer Ahmed, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, who is representing Sea.

"As a soldier, I would think that I would be protected by at least some kind of law that would say, 'I shouldn't have to worry about driving back home,'" Sea said outside the courthouse.

The Associated Press reported last month immigration attorneys knew of more than 40 U.S. Army reservists and recruits who enlisted in the military with a promised path to citizenship and have been discharged or whose status has become questionable, jeopardizing their futures. The Army has since temporarily stopped discharging immigrant recruits, pending a review of the program.

Fight against ISIS in Iraq, Syria is 'far from over'

BY DIANNA CAHN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The ISIS problem in Iraq and Syria is "far from over" and U.S. and coalition forces are not letting up on efforts to neutralize Islamic State fighters from cities where they still have strongholds, military officials said Tuesday.

"There is still a lot of work to be done both militarily and on civilian stabilization efforts in both countries," said Col. Sean Ryan, a spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve, the U.S.-led coalition fight against ISIS. "Make no mistake — the coalition is not talking victory or taking our foot off the gas in working with our partners."

Ryan spoke to defense reporters via videostream, giving a prepared statement before Maj. Gen. Felix Gedney, British deputy commander for strategy and support of OIR — who traveled the region last week — took the podium to answer questions.

Ryan said that partner forces are working to stabilize areas in Iraq and Syria where ISIS has been driven out, including rebuilding detention centers and training new guards. In some areas such as Manbij in northern Syria, electricity is being restored and some children are

going to school for the first time in five years, he said.

In other areas, the fighting continues. In eastern Syria, the coalition-backed Syrian Democratic Forces are preparing for an assault on the ISIS stronghold of Hajin, a Euphrates River Valley town.

There, he said, the SDF has set up checkpoints to vet fleeing civilians and weed out ISIS fighters trying to escape. Some have been captured, he said.

Gedney also said that there are over 1,000 ISIS fighters in the Middle Euphrates River Valley, where this next phase of operations is targeting. Some of those fighters are moving across the border from Iraq "through historic smuggling routes," he said.

He would not confirm a U.N. report that there are still between 25,000 and 35,000 ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria.

In the northern Syrian town of Manbij — a friction point in U.S.-Turkey relations — U.S. and Turkish forces are conducting independent, coordinated patrols along the border. Gedney said those are "very successful" and "have become routine now."

He said training would soon commence for joint patrolling.

Blame begins as death toll rises in Italy bridge collapse

Associated Press

GENOA, Italy — Italian emergency workers pulled two more bodies out of tons of broken concrete and twisted steel Wednesday after a highway bridge collapsed in Genoa, raising the death toll in the disaster to at least 39 people.

The collapse of the Morandi Bridge sent dozens of cars and three trucks plunging as much as 150 feet to the ground Tuesday as many Italian families were on the road ahead of Wednesday's major summer holiday. The collapse took place after a violent storm.

Civil protection chief Angelo Borrelli confirmed Wednesday that 39 people had died and 15 were injured. Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said three children were among the dead.

Working with heavy equipment, rescuers climbed over concrete slabs with sniffer dogs all through the night and into the day, searching for survivors or bodies. Borrelli said 1,000 of them were at the scene.

Investigators, meanwhile, were working to determine what caused a 260-foot-long stretch of highway to break off from the 150-foot-high bridge in the northwestern port city.

Italian politicians, for their part, were trying to find who to

blame for the deadly tragedy.

The 1967 bridge, considered innovative in its time for its use of concrete around its cables, was long due for an upgrade, especially since the structure was more heavily trafficked than its designers had envisioned. One expert in such construction, Antonio Brencich at the University of Genoa, had previously called the bridge "a failure of engineering." Engineering experts, noting that the bridge was 51 years old, said corrosion and weather could have been factors in its collapse.

While the collapse's cause is yet to be determined, political bickering moved into high gear Wednesday. Italy's minister of transportation and infrastructure, Danilo Toninelli, from the populist 5-Star Movement, threatened in a Facebook post that the state, if necessary, would take direct control of the highway contractor responsible for the bridge if it couldn't properly care for the roads and bridges it was responsible for.

State radio reported Wednesday that some 5-Star lawmakers in 2013 had questioned the wisdom of an ambitious, expensive infrastructure overhaul program as possibly wasteful, but that a post about that on the Movement's site was removed after the bridge's collapse.

Report: Pa. priests molested 1,000 children

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — A priest raped a 7-year-old girl while he was visiting her in the hospital after she'd had her tonsils removed. Another priest forced a 9-year-old boy into having oral sex, then rinsed out the boy's mouth with holy water. One boy was forced to say confession to the priest who sexually abused him.

Those children are among the victims of roughly 300 Roman Catholic priests in Pennsylvania who molested more than 1,000 children — and possibly many more — since the 1940s, according to a sweeping state grand jury report released Tuesday that accused senior church officials, including a man who is now the archbishop of Washington, D.C., of systematically covering up complaints.

The “real number” of abused children and abusive priests might be higher since some secret church records were lost and some victims never came forward, the grand jury said.

While the grand jury said dioceses have established internal processes and seem to refer complaints to law enforcement more promptly, it suggested that important changes are lacking.

“Despite some institutional reform, individual leaders of the church have largely escaped public accountability,” the grand jury wrote in the roughly 900-page report. “Priests were raping little boys and girls, and the men of God who were responsible for them not only did nothing; they hid it all.”

Top church officials have mostly been protected and many, including some named in the report, have been promoted, the grand jury said, concluding that “it is too early to close the book on the Catholic Church sex scandal.”

In nearly every case, prosecutors found that the statute of limitations has run out, meaning that criminal charges cannot be filed. More than 100 of the priests are dead. Many others are retired or have been dismissed from the priesthood or put on leave. Authorities charged just two, including a priest who has since pleaded guilty.

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro said the investigation is ongoing.

The investigation of six of Pennsylvania's eight dioceses — Allentown, Erie, Greensburg, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Scranton — is the most extensive investigation of Catholic clergy abuse by any state, according to victim advocates. The dioceses

represent about 1.7 million Catholics.

Until now, there have been just nine investigations by a prosecutor or grand jury of a Catholic diocese or archdiocese in the United States, according to the Massachusetts-based research and advocacy organization BishopAccountability.org.

The Philadelphia archdiocese and the Johnstown-Altoona diocese were not included in the investigation because they have been the subject of three previous scathing grand jury investigations.

The grand jury heard from dozens of witnesses and reviewed more than a half-million pages of internal diocesan documents, including reports by bishops to Vatican officials disclosing the details of abusive priests that they had not made public or reported to law enforcement.

The grand jury concluded that a succession of Catholic bishops and other diocesan leaders tried to shield the church from bad publicity and financial liability. They failed to report accused clergy to police, used confidentiality agreements to silence victims and sent abusive priests to so-called “treatment facilities,” which “laundered” the priests and “permitted hundreds of known offenders to return to ministry,” the report said.

Kansas governor concedes, will endorse GOP nominee

Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. — Kansas Gov. Jeff Colyer says he will endorse Republican nominee for governor Kris Kobach after conceding in the state's GOP primary in a surprise announcement a week after their neck-and-neck finish threatened to send the race to a recount.

Colyer accepted defeat Tuesday evening after a review of some provisional ballots from most Kansas counties failed to find

enough votes for him to overcome a deficit of 110 votes at the time of poll closing in the Aug. 7 primary, out of more than 311,000 votes initially counted. Kobach, who was endorsed by President Donald Trump, has seen his lead widen as the counting of provisional ballots continues across the state.

“I've just had a conversation with the secretary of state and congratulated him on his success and repeated my determination to keep this seat in Republican hands,” Colyer

said. “This election may be the closest in America. But the numbers are not there.”

Kobach, 52, has a national conservative following thanks to his strong stance against illegal immigration and his fervent defense of voter ID laws. He was vice chairman of the Trump administration's election-fraud commission, though the commission eventually found no evidence to support Trump's claims of widespread voter fraud in the 2016 presidential election.

NJ takes in \$40.6 million in first month of sports betting

Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Sports betting is off and running in New Jersey, with three casinos and two racetracks taking in \$40.6 million in wagers in July, the first full month it was legal.

Those figures were part of a report that showed that Hard Rock debuted as Atlantic City's No. 3 casino in terms of gambling revenue out of the nine casinos in town. Ocean Resort came in last in its first full month of operation.

New Jersey won a U.S. Supreme Court

case in May clearing the way for all 50 states to offer sports betting if they choose. Since betting began in New Jersey on June 14, more than \$57 million in bets has been taken in, and additional companies continue to join a rapidly expanding market.

July's numbers were mainly posted by the Borgata and Ocean Resort casinos, and the Monmouth Park and Meadowlands racetracks. Bally's casino began taking sports bets on July 30.

Since then, Harrah's and Resorts have started taking sports bets as well, but

their revenue will not be reported until mid-September.

And Wednesday morning, the Golden Nugget was to begin taking in-person sports bets.

The Meadowlands, about 6 miles from New York City in East Rutherford, N.J., where the NFL's New York Jets and Giants play, took in \$1.35 million in July, having started taking bets on July 14. Monmouth Park, which started taking bets June 14, took in \$856,280 in July, and has won \$3.1 million since mid-June.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police rescue wedding party from flooded road

NJ BOGOTA — Police came to the rescue when heavy downpours flooded a street, trapping a bride, groom and their wedding party in a car.

It happened Saturday in Bogota as storms spread across northern New Jersey.

Video posted by police on Facebook shows the bride in her gown on the roof of the car, which had water midway up its grill. Police used a Humvee to make the rescue.

Bear makes an unlikely stop at a liquor store

CT BRISTOL — A bear took a stroll into an unlikely snack venue — a Connecticut liquor store.

The mid-sized creature lumbered across a parking lot in Bristol on Monday, getting close enough to the entrance of Crazy Bruce's Liquors to trigger a sensor that automatically opened an outer door.

The Hartford Courant reported video from inside shows the bear walking around the foyer while an employee locks an inner door. The bear eventually figured out how to leave, and the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection was notified.

Deputies rescue women stranded on unicorn raft

MN STARK — It was not a fairy tale, but a rescue on a Minnesota lake did involve a rainbow unicorn.

A sheriff's deputy and a reserve deputy from the Chisago County Sheriff's Office spotted a group of five women on a large, inflatable rainbow unicorn floating on Fish Lake on Saturday. KMSP-TV reported

the deputies pulled their squad car over and asked the women for a photo, but noticed the raft was stuck in weeds. One deputy threw a rope to the women while the other recorded a video.

Deputy Scotty Finnegan, who threw the rope, said the women would have had trouble getting out of the mucky lake unassisted.

Victory Day celebrated; debate lingers on name

RI PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island continues to mark the end of World War II as a state holiday, although it remains the only state in the U.S. to do so.

Every few years, state residents debate changing the name of Victory Day or doing away with it entirely.

Rhode Island made the day an official holiday in 1948, commemorating the announcement of Japan's surrender in World War II. The holiday is now observed on the second Monday of August.

The most recent effort to get rid of the holiday was in 2013 when state lawmakers considered a measure to allow businesses to designate state holidays such as Victory Day as floating holidays for employees. The effort failed amid opposition from labor unions and veterans groups.

Firefighters repair roof damaged by hurricane

FL ORLANDO — A firefighter installing free smoke detectors in a Florida neighborhood noticed the roof on a 70-year-old man's home was still heavily damaged from Hurricane Irma.

So Felix Marquez called about a dozen off-duty and retired Orlando firefighters to help. Marquez and another firefighter spent about \$3,500 to buy the

supplies. The Orlando Sentinel reported they replaced the rotted wood on Bob Thomas' roof Sunday with sturdy plywood. Thomas told the newspaper the Federal Emergency Management Agency denied him aid after Irma because of prior roof damage. He's been trying to fix the leaks himself.

Some state residents will get new area code

SC COLUMBIA — Some South Carolina residents will have a new area code in less than two years.

The North American Numbering Plan Administration announced the new area code of 839 to overlay the existing 803 area code which covers the central part of the state. It will take effect in 2020.

A news release by the administration said the South Carolina Public Service Commission approved the area code overlay to ensure the availability of telephone numbering that's most efficient and least confusing while keeping possible disruption to a minimum. All existing customers will retain 803 and will not need to change their telephone numbers.

Endangered condors to be released

AZ VERMILION CLIFFS — Arizona's Game and Fish Department invited the public to witness the release of endangered California Condors at Vermilion Cliffs National Monument next month.

The state agency said the release of several young captive-bred condors is planned for 11 a.m. on Sept. 22.

The Peregrine Fund will oversee the release atop the dramatic red cliffs in northern Arizona near the state's border with southern Utah.

The California Condor popu-

lation dwindled to just 22 in the 1980s, when an effort was launched to save the species from extinction. As of July 25, there were nearly 500 California Condors in the wild.

Dog loose on interstate can't resist teddy bear

MA SPRINGFIELD — A dog could not resist being lured away from a busy Massachusetts highway by a teddy bear.

The Massachusetts State Police got multiple calls of a dog dashing through traffic on Interstate 291 in Springfield on Sunday.

MassLive.com reported Trooper Corey Brown responded and saw a Doberman pinscher running down a lane. Brown grabbed a stuffed pink teddy bear from his cruiser. The dog loved it and grabbed it quickly, following commands to sit.

The dog has been returned unharmed to the owner, who lives near the highway.

Man charged over gun in son's backpack

IL EDWARDSVILLE — An Illinois man was charged with reckless conduct after authorities said his 4-year-old son found a gun in a backpack his father had taken to him at day care.

The Belleville News-Democrat reported that authorities said Joshua Finley, 32, of Maryville, packed a "nap time bag" that also contained sheets and blankets, then took it to a day care in Glen Carbon on July 2. The child opened the bag a few minutes later and found the gun.

The day care told parents the child immediately took the gun to a teacher, and police were called.

From wire reports

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and Military News

Surging A's rally into West contention

Associated Press

By now, most everyone in baseball realizes the Oakland Athletics are rarely out of it. Almost no deficit is too daunting for a rallying cry, which could be led by any number of sluggers in a loaded lineup.

Never before in his managerial career has Bob Melvin been around a club with such a knack for comebacks, for winning the close ones in the late innings despite what might seem insurmountable odds.

Lately, other teams in contention have added to their rosters to try to do the same down the stretch of the season.

During a recent trip in Texas, the A's rallied from behind 10-2 to beat the Rangers 13-10 by scoring 11 runs over the final four innings and getting a three-run homer by Khris Davis in the 10th. They have earned a reputation around baseball — in both leagues, on both coasts and in between — for their ability to swing for the fences and keep pitching when trailing at any stage of a game.

"I think it's a momentum aspect," Davis said. "You've just got to keep playing the game the right way, what we expect of each other. We're just looking to do our jobs and luckily we're having a great time doing it right now."

Oakland is right on the heels of reigning World Series champion Houston in the AL West, the A's were trailing the Astros by 1 game on Wednesday. The small-budget franchise hasn't reached the playoffs since losing the AL wild-card game in 2014, finishing last in the division the past three seasons.

"It's a fantastic team. We certainly have the ability to be a playoff team," second baseman Jed Lowrie said. "At this point it's got to be a narrow focus. Keep the eye on the prize but narrow the focus."

The A's didn't get their 60th win until Sept. 8 last year and already reached that mark by July 25 in 2018.

They are 38-12 since June 16, their best 50-game stretch since 2005.

New Oakland reliever Shawn Kelley was playing in Washington and went to bed before the A's were done most days but still had heard plenty about their penchant for finding a way to win late.

"Winning close games and not winning games late, I think all that mindset, that mentality kind of manifests itself," said Dodgers manager Dave Roberts, on the losing end of a one-run game at Oakland on Aug. 8. "These guys, with their bullpen, you look at these arms that they're running out, they have four or five guys deep that are lockdown guys in the pen so if and when they do get a lead early, it's tough to beat these guys late. And because they can all slug, that they're a two- or three-run home run away from tying or taking the lead. It's a tough group and it's a fun group to watch, it really is. They're a dangerous team."

Melvin has a deep and talented bullpen that allows him flexibility to mix and match at any point in a game — and the A's acquired closer Fernando Rodney from the Minnesota Twins on Thursday to bolster that strong unit.

"I don't know if I've had this many quality arms in a bullpen ever since I've been managing," he said.

The Milwaukee Brewers know how important winning the close ones will be over the season's final two months. They acquired veteran reliever Joakim Soria and left-handed power hitter Mike Moustakas in a pair of big trades over two days ahead of the deadline.

"That's two different types of things saying when you're not out of it and winning close games," manager Craig Counsell said. "I think we had a team last year that we felt like we played in a ton of close games, so you do get kind of hardened to it a little bit as far as it's the game you play every night. What we felt more than anything is how do you bounce back, because

you are going to lose some of those games and how do you kind of respond when you lose games like that?"

"I don't know if there's a knack for it but we have enjoyed playing in games like that."

Oakland's late-inning numbers are phenomenal.

The A's have 31 comeback wins and are the only team in baseball not to lose when leading after seven innings — 50-0 — and have a 65-game winning streak in such contests.

Oakland is 59-0 when leading after eight innings.

The A's are best in the majors scoring runs in the seventh inning or after with 217 and the eighth inning at 87. They also lead the majors with 10 comeback wins trailing after seven innings. At 24-10 in one-run games, that is also the best record in the majors.

Some managers believe it can become contagious.

"Once you've done it, you know you can do it and you can do it again and you start feeling it," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "You believe it. Without question, I think having success in close games just breeds more success, especially the way you play and handle the pressure of playing in those tight ballgames."

The A's have a noticeable swagger having won so many games in dramatic fashion.

"It just gives you that extra confidence when you get behind, you don't worry about it," Detroit manager Ron Gardenhire said.

It's pretty simple in Melvin's mind: Stick with it, play every out.

Though he knows that means making the right moves with the pressure on to pull off some late-game magic.

"If you keep it close ... all it takes is a walk or a hit or a couple of hits in a row and you're back in the game," Melvin said. "That's why you play 27 outs."

Browns to meet with former Cowboys WR Bryant

Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — Dez Bryant's going to meet with the Browns. Depending on how things go, he could stay awhile.

The free agent wide receiver scheduled a visit with Cleveland on Thursday, and the anticipated stopover could lead to the three-time Pro Bowler signing with a team craving

more playmakers.

Bryant, who was released by the Dallas Cowboys in April after eight seasons, has shown previous interest in joining the Browns. Last week, Bryant posted on Twitter that he intended to speak with the team and a Browns spokesman confirmed the sides will talk.

But while Bryant would certainly be a talent upgrade for a

team coming off a 0-16 season, Browns coach Hue Jackson said it's vital to make sure he fits with Cleveland's culture.

"It's not just a given," Jackson said following Tuesday's practice. "I think you have to work through whatever conversations we have and feel good about it."

Cleveland needs receiving help and receiver Jarvis Landry and quarterback Tyrod

Taylor have lobbied for Bryant, who has 531 career receptions for 7,459 yards and 73 touchdowns.

But the 29-year-old Bryant has baggage, and the Browns have to be sure that he won't be a distraction. Bryant frequently clashed with Dallas coaches and he recently went on a Twitter rant criticizing former teammates.

Puig, Hundley scuffle before Giants' rally

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Yasiel Puig had another rumble with the San Francisco Giants on Tuesday night.

Puig took a swing at Giants catcher Nick Hundley during a benches-clearing scrap in the seventh inning, then Alen Hanson hit an RBI single in the ninth to lift San Francisco over the Los Angeles Dodgers 2-1 on Tuesday night.

The fracas started when Puig swatted his bat in frustration after fouling off a pitch from Tony Watson, and Hundley said something to the mercurial slugger while still in his crouch. Puig turned around and walked toward Hundley, the catcher stood up, and they argued face to face for a moment before Puig shoved Hundley twice.

That brought players out of the benches and bullpens. Puig

and Hundley were momentarily separated, but Puig ducked around teammates, coaches and manager Dave Roberts before reaching back to hit Hundley. He smacked Hundley with an open hand across the front of his catcher's mask.

"When I missed the pitch I knew that was the best pitch Watson was going to throw me so I was a little upset," Puig said via a translator. "[Hundley] told me to stop complaining and get back into the box. When I got in his face he also told me to get out of his face so that's when I got upset.

"I didn't like that he was telling me what to do and then he said some words to me in English that I really can't repeat so that is why I was upset."

Said Hundley: "We're competing on the field against a team we're chasing. They've been scuffling a little bit and

we're trying to catch them. Obviously a nice rivalry. We had some words and pushed a couple times. There's really not more to it than that."

Dodgers coach George Lombard was trying to push Hundley away when Puig took his swing. Lombard and Hundley briefly ended up on the grass. Hundley spoke to Lombard later.

"He was in there trying to break it up," Hundley said. "I think he got caught up in my chest protector. We went down and I knew I was on top of him at some point. I just asked him if he was all right. You don't want anyone hurt in those situations."

After the players were separated for good, the umpires ejected both Puig and Hundley.

It was the fourth career ejection for Puig, who had also got into a skirmish with Giants

pitcher Madison Bumgarner in 2014.

"It doesn't happen with other teams," Puig said.

The Giants received six scoreless innings from left-hander Andrew Suarez, and after Hanson singled in his first run in the second, were leading 1-0 with two outs in the eighth when the Dodgers tied it on Justin Turner's third double and Manny Machado's single off Sam Dyson (3-2).

San Francisco won it in the ninth when Hanson singled off Kenta Maeda (7-8), making his first relief appearance of the season. The Dodgers had a play at the plate but the throw from Enrique Hernandez in center was a little wide and dropped by catcher Yasmani Grandal.

Los Angeles' bullpen has lost the team's past five games.

"What a great game," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said.

MLB roundup

Sizzling Acuna homers for Braves in 5th straight game

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Ronald Acuna Jr. had a case of jitters before he stepped in the batter's box for the first time Tuesday night.

He had homered in the lead-off spot twice in a doubleheader the day before, so even Acuna wondered if it could happen again.

"I wasn't sure I'd be able to hit another home run like that," he said through a translator. "At first I laughed a lot, but then I got nervous again."

He didn't stay nervous for long.

Acuna became the youngest player in major league history to homer in five straight games, hitting a leadoff shot on the first pitch and adding a three-run long ball in the seventh inning to help the surging Atlanta Braves beat the Miami Marlins 10-6.

Freddie Freeman hit his 20th homer to tie it in the sixth,

and Dansby Swanson had a tiebreaking RBI single in the seventh.

Angels 7, Padres 3: Justin Upton had three hits, including a home run for the second straight night, and drove in three runs to lead Los Angeles over host San Diego.

Athletics 3, Mariners 2: Jed Lowrie hit his 100th career homer long after his line drive knocked Seattle ace James Paxton out of the game, and host Oakland moved within one game of slumping Houston for the AL West lead.

White Sox 6, Tigers 3: Ryan LaMarre hit his first major league home run, a drive that bounced off the top of the bullpen shelter in left field and into the hands of his uncle, as Chicago beat host Detroit.

Rockies 5, Astros 1: Nolan Arenado and Trevor Story each went deep, German Marquez pitched well in a matchup with

Justin Verlander, and Colorado beat slumping host Houston.

Cardinals 6, Nationals 4: John Gant homered for his first major league hit and pitched one-run ball into the sixth inning, helping host St. Louis to its season-high seventh consecutive victory.

Red Sox 2, Phillies 1: Pinch-hitter Brock Holt hit a tiebreaking solo homer, Rick Porcello threw seven impressive innings and major league-leading Boston won again.

Indians 8, Reds 1: Jose Ramirez hit his 36th home run and Cleveland ace Corey Kluber extended his dominance over host Cincinnati.

Brewers 7, Cubs 0: Ryan Braun hit two of his team's four homers, Jhoulys Chacin struck out 10 in seven innings and visiting Milwaukee cut into Chicago's NL Central lead.

Yankees 4, Rays 1: J.A. Happ allowed one soft single in

seven shutout innings to win his third consecutive start since being traded from Toronto to host New York.

Diamondbacks 6, Rangers 4: Paul Goldschmidt hit his 27th homer to put visiting Arizona ahead to stay, and All-Star lefty Patrick Corbin worked seven innings for his 10th victory.

Twins 5, Pirates 2: Jorge Polanco got two hits, scored twice and drove in two runs and Miguel Sano hit a two-run homer, leading host Minnesota over Pittsburgh.

Blue Jays 6, Royals 5: Kevin Pillar hit a two-run homer with two outs in the eighth inning to lift Toronto over host Kansas.

Orioles 6, Mets 3: Chris Davis, Adam Jones and Tim Beckham each homered to back a strong performance by starter Andrew Cashner, and host Baltimore snapped a five-game skid.

Cost of Ohio St. probe reaches \$500K

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Urban Meyer investigation is costing Ohio State \$500,000, but whether the superstar football coach keeps his job still comes down to whether the university wants to stick with him based on how he's already been tainted by the scandal.

Meyer is on paid leave while Ohio State pays an outside firm to investigate and a six-member university committee considers whether he responded properly to accusations of domestic abuse made against one of his coaches, Zach Smith, who has been fired.

But Meyer has already given his bosses plenty to consider — he says he knew of domestic violence allegations against Zach Smith before he brought Smith to coach wide receivers at Ohio State, and that he reported new accusations properly when they surfaced in 2015.

University officials expect to make a decision within about a

week in what could come down to a public relations balancing act involving the school's reputation, \$38 million in future salary under Meyer's contract and other jobs at stake.

Why fire Meyer?

Meyer knew about a 2009 domestic incident in Gainesville, Fla., when Smith was a graduate assistant coach for Meyer's Florida team. A police report says that during an argument Zach Smith picked up a pregnant Courtney and threw her against a wall. Zach Smith was never charged.

Knowing that, Meyer allowed Smith to stay on staff at Florida and then brought Smith in at Ohio State. Meyer also knew about the 2015 abuse allegations, but Smith — the grandson of former Ohio State coach and Meyer mentor Earle Bruce — kept his job until Courtney Smith filed for a restraining order on July 20.

"At the end of the day, (Meyer is) the highest-paid

state employee in Ohio, and you have a lot more responsibility than coaching," said B. David Ridpath, an associate professor of sports administration at Ohio University in Athens. "And clearly there was enough smoke with Zach Smith that they should have gotten rid of him a long time ago."

Ohio State didn't put Meyer on leave until Courtney Smith talked to a reporter, saying she was abused for years by her ex-husband. Zach Smith has denied her abuse allegations and has never been prosecuted for abuse.

The Meyer investigation plays out at a time when the school itself — and college athletics at large — is under scrutiny around the handling of misconduct allegations.

Why keep Meyer?

Meyer said he followed "proper protocol and procedures" after finding out about the 2015 abuse allegations.

"Please know that the truth

is the ultimate power, and I am confident I took appropriate action," Meyer said in a tweeted statement.

Meyer didn't detail those actions but the crafted statement was clearly a public defense of his job.

Meyer signed a contract extension in the spring with new language that requires him to promptly report any "known violations" of Ohio State's sexual misconduct policy to the school's Title IX officials. The policy includes sexual harassment, intimate violence and stalking "that involves any student, faculty or staff." The clause doesn't specify how Meyer should treat older accusations.

Meyer may have limited responsibility for reporting because of the scope of behavior covered by the misconduct policy and Title IX, according to Micaela Deming, staff attorney with the Ohio Domestic Violence Network.

Maryland AD: 'Mistakes were made' in death of player

Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — The University of Maryland acknowledged Tuesday that the football player who collapsed during practice and subsequently died did not receive proper medical care and the school must accept "legal and moral responsibility for the mistakes."

Maryland also parted ways with strength and conditioning coach Rick Court, who resigned in the wake of the death of offensive lineman Jordan McNair.

Athletic director Damon Evans acknowledged "mistakes were made" by the training staff in the treatment of McNair, who was hospitalized on May 29 after a team workout and died June 13. Head trainer Wes Robinson and Steve Nordwall, an assistant athletic director for training, were placed on administrative leave by Mary-

land last week.

The attorney for the McNair family said a preliminary death certificate indicates the cause of death was heatstroke.

Court posted his letter of resignation on Twitter on Tuesday. He wrote: "I am stepping down to allow the team to heal and move forward." He had previously been placed on administrative leave.

A person familiar with Court's settlement agreement told The Associated Press that he received a one-time payment of \$315,000. He was in the first year of a two-year contract that ran through February 2020. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the agreement was not released by the school.

Head coach DJ Durkin is also on administrative leave and his future is unclear. McNair family attorney Billy Murphy Jr. has said Durkin should be fired immediately.

Evans said Tuesday the university has "hired an external review team to take a look at this, but as additional information comes forward, we will do what's appropriate."

Dr. Rod Walters, a former college athletic trainer, has been hired by Maryland to investigate the circumstances of McNair's death. A report is expected by Sept. 15, but the school has been provided preliminary findings and shared some of those in a news conference.

"We have learned that Jordan did not receive appropriate medical care, and mistakes were made by some of our athletic training personnel," Evans said. "Walters found that the emergency response plan was not appropriately followed" and that McNair's symptoms "were not properly identified or treated."

Evans said the training staff did not take McNair's tempera-

ture or immerse him in cold water, the suggested treatment for an individual overcome by heat.

University President Wallace Loh said his Tuesday morning visit, with Evans, with McNair's parents at their home was to apologize personally for the loss.

"They entrusted their son to us, and he did not return home," Loh said. "The University accepts legal and moral responsibility for the mistakes that were made on that fateful day. ... They misdiagnosed the situation."

Several members of the football program have come under fire for being mentally and physically abusive to the student-athletes. Loh announced the formation of a commission "to conduct a full and expeditious review of the reported allegations."