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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Trump names acting chief of intelligence

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said in a tweet Thursday that he will name Joseph Maguire, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, as the acting director of national intelligence, following his aborted effort to install a political loyalist.

Maguire is a retired Navy admiral not steeped in the inner workings of the intelligence community, but his appointment was seen as steadying in the middle of a tumultuous shake-up in the top ranks of the country's spy agencies.

As Trump announced Maguire's appointment, he also said that Sue Gordon, the deputy director of national intelligence, would resign and not serve in the acting role when director

Daniel Coats also departs next week.

Democratic and Republican lawmakers had said they wanted Gordon, a career intelligence official, to fill in for Coats. But Trump was reluctant to keep someone with whom he had never formed a close bond. The president and his aides also regarded her as a career official and consequently suspicious, according to officials with knowledge of the president's views.

In a handwritten letter to Trump reviewed by The Washington Post, Gordon wrote that she had offered her resignation "as an act of respect & patriotism, not preference. You should have your team."

A U.S. official said Gordon was "heartbroken" and agonized over her decision to step

down, but that she recognized she served at the president's pleasure.

"No one ever doubted her commitment to the officers who make up the intelligence community," said the official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Maguire, 67, will assume the role Aug. 15, when Gordon leaves her position.

"Sue Gordon is a great professional with a long and distinguished career. I have gotten to know Sue over the past 2 years and have developed great respect for her," Trump said in a tweet.

Current and former intelligence officials were relieved by Maguire's appointment, although it wasn't clear whether Trump would formally nominate him as the permanent

intelligence director. Maguire was already confirmed by the Senate for his current position and by law is allowed to assume the duties as acting director.

"He's not a career intelligence officer but he does understand the role that the men and women of the intelligence community play and will represent them well," said one former senior intelligence official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to be candid.

Maguire, who was a SEAL Team 6 commander, has extensive experience in counterterrorism operations and national security, said Mike McConnell, a former director of national intelligence who worked with Maguire during the George W. Bush administration.

Afghanistan election in doubt as US, Taliban near deal

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan faces a presidential election next month but few believe the vote will take place as the United States and the Taliban inch closer to a deal that could end the nearly 18-year war but bring uncertainty about almost everything else.

Few candidates — 18 are running for the country's top job — have openly campaigned after the Taliban last week attacked the office of President Ashraf Ghani's running mate on opening day of the campaign, killing at least 20 people. Amrullah Saleh, known for his fierce anti-Taliban stance, was unharmed.

This week, the Taliban declared the election a "sham" and warned fellow Afghans to

stay away from campaign rallies and from the polls, saying such gatherings could be targeted. A day later, a Taliban car bomb aimed at Afghan security forces ripped through a Kabul neighborhood, killing 14 people and wounding 145 — most of them civilians, including women and children.

The developments came even as the Taliban and a U.S. envoy tasked with finding a peaceful resolution to the war in Afghanistan reported progress on negotiations in Qatar on an agreement for the withdrawal of some 20,000 U.S. and NATO troops, along with Taliban guarantees that Afghanistan would not be a base for other extremist groups.

The Taliban spokesman in Qatar, Suhail Shaheen, told The Associated Press on Fri-

day that he expects an agreement "at the end of this round of talks."

The deal would include a cease-fire and Taliban negotiations with other Afghan representatives, he said. However, it wasn't clear whether that meant the Taliban would agree to talk to Kabul government members in their official capacity or only as ordinary Afghans, as in the past.

President Donald Trump and the Qatari leader, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, spoke by phone on Thursday about the Gulf nation's work to "support regional stability," the White House said, and the U.S. and Taliban lead negotiators have been traveling in recent days to brief several countries involved in the process on the latest developments.

The U.S. envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, said on Friday he had been in Norway, which would facilitate the intra-Afghan discussions that would follow a deal.

But so far, the Taliban have refused to negotiate with the government, dismissing it as a U.S. puppet.

Scott Worden, director of the Afghanistan program at the United States Institute of Peace, wrote last week that the choice in the peace process is between "pursuing a negotiated solution with the Taliban that would lead to a new system that the Taliban agree to participate in, or seeking to renew the current government's legitimacy through elections and having the new government negotiate from what it hopes will be a position of greater strength."

Russian bombers intercepted off coast of Alaska

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — American and Canadian fighter jets intercepted a pair of Russian Tu-95 Bear bombers in international airspace off the coast of Alaska on Thursday, according to the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

Two U.S. F-22 Raptor stealth fighter jets and two Canadian CF-18 Hornet fighters on Thursday morning intercepted the long-range, nuclear-capable Russian bombers north of Alaska over the Beaufort Sea, NORAD said in a statement.

The Russian aircraft were within the Alaskan and Canadian Air Defense Identification Zones, which stretch roughly 200 miles from the U.S. and Canadian coasts. Both nations expect aircraft entering the area to positively identify themselves in the interest of national security.

This marked the second time this month that Russian aircraft were observed in the area. NORAD said two Tu-142 Russian maritime reconnaissance anti-submarine warfare aircraft entered the zone west of Alaska on Aug. 1, but they were not intercepted at that time.

The Russian planes never entered sovereign American or Canadian airspace in either incident, NORAD said.

“NORAD’s top priority is defending Canada and the United States. NORAD operators identified and intercepted the Russian aircraft flying near our nations,” Air Force Gen. Terrence O’Shaughnessy, the NORAD commander, said in a statement about Thursday’s incident.

The command released photographs of the incident showing the fighters flanking the Cold War-era, quad-propeller bombers.

Russian military aircraft flying near the United States is not uncommon. The two August incidents are the first reported by the U.S. military since May, when F-22s intercepted Russian Bear bombers and Su-35 Flanker fighters on May 20 and May 21. A similar intercept was reported in January.

The United States conducts flights near Russian airspace on a regular basis at times. U.S. defense officials, however, have sometimes raised concerns about the Russian response to such flights, accusing pilots of conducting unsafe or unprofessional intercepts.

O’Shaughnessy stated in April in written testimony to Congress that Russian aircraft patrols near American and Canadian airspace “have grown increasingly complex in recent years.”

Ex-Gallagher prosecutor removed amid scrutiny

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The former lead prosecutor in the court-martial of Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher was reassigned Tuesday, the latest service shakeup as the Navy reviews the performance of the Judge Advocate General Corps.

Cmdr. Chris Czaplak was the senior trial counsel during the Gallagher court-martial until he was taken off the case in June after concerns were raised by defense lawyers about Gallagher’s ability to have a fair trial when it became known Czaplak had participated in a Naval Criminal Investigative Service investigation looking into leaks to the media about the case. Gallagher was accused of committing several war crimes during a deployment to Iraq in 2017, including the killing of a wounded Islamic State combatant.

Capt. Jennie Goldsmith, the new commander of the Navy’s Region Legal Service Office Southwest Trial Department in San Diego, reassigned Czaplak to Code 67, which is the JAG’s technology, operations, and plans division located at the Washington Navy Yard in Washington, D.C.

It was done “in an effort to move the [department] forward,” Cmdr. Jereal Dorsey, a Navy spokesman, said in a statement. The new senior trial counsel for the department

will be Cmdr. Phil Hamon.

The Navy’s recent string of high-profile crimes and scandals have led to internal reviews of practices within the service. As part of those examinations, Adm. John Richardson, the chief of naval operations, has called for a comprehensive review into the leadership and performance of the Navy’s JAG corps. Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Bob Burke will lead the review.

Two weeks ago, the Navy’s top SEAL, Rear Adm. Collin Green, commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, wrote in a letter to the elite force that he had ordered an ethics review of the command, telling them that “we have a problem” within the community, after it has been plagued by allegations of crimes and other misconduct.

In May, it was discovered Czaplak had embedded tracking software in an email to defense lawyers for Gallagher as well as Navy SEAL Lt. Jacob Portier, as part of an NCIS investigation into leaks to the media, the San Diego Union-Tribune reported.

Portier had been charged for conduct unbecoming an officer for having a re-enlistment ceremony for Gallagher next to the dead body of the ISIS fighter who Gallagher was accused of stabbing to death when the prisoner was being treated for injuries. Richardson dismissed all charges against Portier on Aug. 1 and Gallagher was found not guilty in the fighter’s death.

Army adds GRE to captains course

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A new Army policy means officers have to take the Graduate Records Examination, or GRE, when they’re taking the four- to six-month Captains Career Course.

But not everyone thinks the move will have the results the Army is looking for.

Many graduate school programs use the computer-based, standardized test to assess applicants, but the Army sees the test as a tool to determine which officers would be best-suited to pursue advanced degree programs and other educational opportunities.

“We’re not only giving the Army visibility of that potential earlier on but we’re also

giving the officers visibility of that potential,” said Lt. Col. Cayton Johnson, Army Talent Management Task Force assessments team chief.

But some education experts caution that the test has limitations and should be used alongside other assessments to gauge soldier talent, particularly leadership ability.

While the GRE measures “academic knowledge and analytical skills,” said Robert Sternberg, professor of human development at Cornell University, “there are a lot of people who are good analytical test-takers, but who are not particularly strong in the additional skills leaders need for success.” Those include creativity, common sense, emotional intelligence, wisdom, integrity, “and most of all, commitment to giving their job their all,” he said.

McConnell: Background checks, 'red flag' gun bills mulled in fall

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Shifting the gun violence debate, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says he now wants to consider background checks and other bills, setting up a potentially pivotal moment when lawmakers return in the fall.

The Republican leader won't be calling senators back to work early, as some are demanding. But he told a Kentucky radio station that President Donald Trump called him Thursday morning and they talked about several ideas. The president, he said, is "anxious to get an outcome, and so am I."

Stakes are high for all sides, but particularly for Trump and his party. Republicans have long opposed expanding background checks — a bill passed by the Democratic-led House is stalled in the Senate — but they face enormous pressure to do something after mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, that left 31

people dead. McConnell, who is facing protests outside his Louisville home, can shift attention back to Democrats by showing a willingness to engage ahead of the 2020 election.

"What we can't do is fail to pass something," McConnell said. "What I want to see here is an outcome."

McConnell said he and Trump discussed various ideas on the call, including background checks and the so-called "red flag" laws that allow authorities to seize firearms from someone deemed a threat to themselves or others.

"Background checks and red flags will probably lead the discussion," McConnell told Louisville's WHAS-AM. He noted "there's a lot of support" publicly for background checks. "Those are two items that for sure will be front and center as we see what we can come together on and pass."

Trump has been interested in federal background checks

before — and tweeted Monday about them — only to drop the issue later, a turnaround similar to his reversal on gun proposals after the 2018 high school shooting at Parkland, Fla.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said Trump assured them in phone calls Thursday he will review the House-passed bill that expands federal background checks for firearm sales.

In a joint statement, they said Trump called them individually after Pelosi sent a letter asking the president to order the Senate back to Washington immediately to consider gun violence measures.

NRA chief Wayne LaPierre said in a rare public statement Thursday that some federal gun control proposals "would make millions of law-abiding Americans less safe and less able to defend themselves and their loved ones."

July arrivals at US border drop well below 100K

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of migrants encountered by U.S. authorities at the southern border has dropped below 100,000 for the first time in five months amid increased collaboration with Mexico and Guatemala to crack down on the flow, according to government data released Thursday.

In July, there were 82,049 people encountered by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, down 21% from June when there were 104,344 people and down 43% from May. The number of families and minors crossing the border also dropped.

The monthly numbers from USCBP have become a yardstick by which President Donald Trump measures the success of his administration's efforts to reduce immigration, his signature issue. The number of migrant families from Central America has risen sharply during his term despite his hardline policies.

Over the past few months, there has been outcry over squalid conditions for migrant children crammed into border facilities not meant to hold them longer than 72 hours. Some were kept for weeks because of delays in handling such cases.

Acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan traveled to another border town — Yuma, Ariz. — on Thursday to detail the border numbers. He said that in mid-June there were more than 1,250 children in custody for 72 hours or longer — but that had dropped to about 160 children.

There had been about 10,000 families in custody; now there are 2,000 and they are held about 34 hours, he said. Single adults are down from 8,000 to about 2,000 in custody. He did not provide the length of detention for single adults, who are often held the longest.

Experts push for domestic terrorism law

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Seven days, three mass shootings, 34 dead.

The FBI has labeled two of those attacks, at a Texas Walmart and California food festival, as domestic terrorism — acts meant to intimidate or coerce a civilian population and affect government policy. But the bureau hasn't gone that far with a shooting at an Ohio entertainment district.

Even if there's a domestic terrorism investigation, no specific domestic terrorism law exists in the federal criminal code. That means the Justice Department must rely on other laws such as hate crimes and weapons offenses in cases of politically motivated shootings.

The legal gap has prompted many survivors, victims' families, law enforcement officials

and legal experts to call on lawmakers to create a domestic terrorism law that could aid investigators and punish perpetrators.

"Calling something for what it is is an important first step in combating this problem," said Brian Levin, director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.

However, supporters of a domestic terrorism law say some lawmakers may be reluctant to push legislation that could target white supremacists.

"When you dismiss it as a mass shooting or a hate crime or some crazed gunman, you're minimizing what impact it has," said Daryl Johnson, a former senior domestic terrorism analyst at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. "It's a double standard. We should be call-

ing all ideologically motivated violence terrorism, whether it comes from the white variety or the Muslim variety."

The gunmen in Ohio and Texas appear to be white, while the Gilroy, Calif., shooter identified himself as Iranian and Italian on social media.

In El Paso, Texas, authorities suspect a 21-year-old gunman posted anti-Hispanic writings online before killing 22 people Saturday at a Walmart store.

In Gilroy, authorities say, the 19-year-old attacker who killed three people, including two children, had compiled a "target list" that included religious groups, federal buildings and both major political parties.

In Dayton, Ohio, however, the FBI has not yet said if it considers an attack that killed nine people to be domestic terrorism.

Countries warn of travel to US after shootings

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — The United States often takes a leading role in calling out the world's most dangerous places, warning its people about the risks of traveling to countries that are at war, under terrorist threats, experiencing civil unrest or displaying significant anti-American sentiment.

The latest mass shootings have triggered a sharp role reversal, with three countries warning their citizens about the risks of traveling to the U.S.

Venezuela, Uruguay and Japan issued warnings to varying degrees following the deaths of 31 people over the weekend in Dayton, Ohio, and El Paso, Texas. Each warning noted U.S. gun violence, and at

least one was laced with a dose of political payback.

Without directly naming President Donald Trump, the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro blamed the surge in violence on speeches emanating from Washington that are "impregnated with racial discrimination and hatred against immigrants." It urges Venezuelans to postpone U.S. trips.

The socialist Maduro is ruling over the worst economic crisis in Venezuelan history amid an escalating political battle with the White House, which backs opposition leader Juan Guaido's bid to oust him.

Travel industry analyst Henry Harteveldt said Venezuela's warning came off more like a "political jab" than a genuine concern for its citizens' safety. It came

hours before Trump signed an executive order that hit Maduro's government with yet another round of punishing financial sanctions designed to end his rule.

Countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands have not issued new warnings in recent days, but they have longstanding advisories for travelers of mass shootings and gun violence.

The State Department is obligated to inform the public about potential threats under a "no double standard" rule that calls for such information to be shared equally with government employees as well as the public.

The U.S. denies that any of its travel warnings are politically motivated, but that does not stop frequent complaints from foreign countries.

Man in anthem attack believed Trump ordered it

Associated Press

MISSOULA, Mont. — A Montana man charged with assaulting a 13-year-old boy who refused to remove his hat during the national anthem believed he was doing what President Donald Trump wanted him to do, his attorney said.

Attorney Lance Jasper told the Missoulian he will seek a mental health evaluation for Curt Brockway, a U.S. Army veteran who became caught up in the heightened animosity and rhetoric gripping the nation, and convinced himself that he was following the president's orders.

"His commander in chief is telling people that if they kneel, they should be fired, or if they burn a flag, they should be pun-

ished," Jasper said.

Jasper added that Brockway "certainly didn't understand it was a crime."

Brockway suffered a traumatic brain injury in a vehicle crash in 2000 that has affected his decision making, and Jasper said he plans to raise that in his client's defense.

Jasper's comments Wednesday came as prosecutors formally charged Brockway with assault on a minor, a felony that carries a maximum five-year prison sentence and a \$50,000 fine upon conviction.

Brockway, 39, told a sheriff's deputy that he asked the boy to remove his hat out of respect for the national anthem before the start of the county rodeo, Mineral County Attorney Ellen Donohue wrote in the docu-

ment describing the attack.

The boy cursed at Brockway in response, and the man grabbed him by the throat, "lifted him into the air and slammed the boy into the ground," Donohue wrote.

Prosecutors said the boy was airlifted to a hospital for a possible concussion and skull fracture. His condition was not immediately known.

"Trump never necessarily says go hurt somebody, but the message is absolutely clear," Jasper said. "I am certain of the fact that (Brockway) was doing what he believed he was told to do, essentially, by the president. ... Everyone should learn to dial it down a little bit, from the president to Mineral County."

Biden says 'poor kids' are as bright as 'white kids'

The Washington Post

Former Vice President Joe Biden, who has a history of gaffes, on Thursday night told a group of mostly minority voters in Iowa that "poor kids" are just as bright as "white kids."

Biden, who has been leading in national and early state polling for the Democratic presidential nomination, was speaking on the subject of education at a town hall in Des Moines, Iowa, hosted by the Asian and Latino Coalition.

"We should challenge students in these schools that have advanced placement programs in these schools," Biden said. "We have this notion that somehow, if you're

poor, you cannot do it. Poor kids are just as bright and just as talented as white kids."

After a brief pause, he added: "Wealthy kids, black kids, Asian kids, no, I really mean it, but think how we think about it."

His remarks prompted a stir on social media on Thursday night, with many focusing on the equivalence he drew, intentionally or not, between poor children and minority children.

President Donald Trump's campaign highlighted a video clip from the event on its "War Room" account on Twitter. In a separate tweet, the campaign's rapid response director, Andrew Clark, wrote: "Yikes ... have fun mitigating that one."

Thursday was not the first time Biden's

comments on race have prompted scrutiny.

In February 2007, on the day he launched his bid for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination, Biden found himself defending comments made a week earlier in an interview with the New York Observer about then-Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill.

In the interview, he called Obama "the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy."

Biden issued a statement that day, saying: "I deeply regret any offense my remark in the New York Observer might have caused anyone. That was not my intent and I expressed that to Sen. Obama."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man arrested after stolen vehicle crashed

ND FARGO — Fargo police have a man in custody for crashing a stolen vehicle into a fence at Hector International Airport.

Authorities said the man, 22, stole several items from an apartment Wednesday, including car keys. He then took off in a stolen vehicle.

KFGO reported officers located the suspect, who had a flat tire. But, the man sped away, drove over a tire deflation device and onto airport property, where he crashed into the fence.

Awning saves boy from serious harm in fall

NJ EDISON — Authorities said a 4-year-old boy escaped serious injury when he fell from a second-floor window at his home because an awning broke his fall before he rolled onto the grass.

Edison police said the boy was in a bedroom playing a game when he fell around 7:20 p.m. Tuesday.

His older brothers were talking in the room when they noticed that the screen and the toddler were gone. When they looked out the window, they saw him on the grass crying and called 911.

The child was treated at a hospital for a swollen leg and ankle, bruised ribs and a lump on his head. His name has not been released.

Dive team finds two Apple watches in water

CT BROOKFIELD — A police department's dive team conducting a training exercise also managed to do some good at the same time.

Brookfield police posted on

Twitter that the dive team was training at Candlewood Lake on Tuesday when they found two Apple watches in 25 feet of water.

The watches still worked and were returned to their owners. Police said they were told the watches had been in the water for two weeks.

Ex-prison guard gets jail for drug smuggling

VT BURLINGTON — A former Vermont correctional officer has been sentenced to three months in jail for a conviction of working with an inmate to smuggle drugs and other contraband into the Newport prison.

Federal prosecutors said former guard Grant Vance, who pleaded guilty to the charges in March, was sentenced Monday in U.S. District Court in Burlington. Also Monday, the judge sentenced the inmate to 15 months in prison.

Officials said Vance was searched when he arrived for work on June 28, 2018, and officials found 61 strips of buprenorphine inside a hollowed-out marker. Prosecutors said he also smuggled cigarettes and marijuana into the prison.

Prosecutors said six informants told prison officials Vance was smuggling contraband into the prison.

Woman fights off burglar with hot grease

AL DECATUR — Police said an Alabama woman used a pot of hot grease to fight off an armed burglar.

Decatur police told reporters on Tuesday that officers responding to the scene last week found Larondrick Macklin suffering burns to his face. Authorities determined Macklin had entered the woman's house with a gun and the woman de-

fended herself.

Macklin was taken to a hospital for treatment and arrested the next day on charges of first-degree domestic violence and burglary.

The cause of the domestic violence charge is unclear, as is the connection, if any, between Macklin and the woman.

Woman dies as SUV not placed in park hits her

DE LAUREL — Delaware State Police said a 77-year-old woman was on her way to drop trash into a bin when her own vehicle rolled over her and killed her.

A police news release said the woman forgot to put her car in park, and it began rolling backward toward her as she attempted to get garbage from the back of her Ford Escape to dump in a nearby bin.

The woman fell to the ground and the sport utility vehicle's back tires rolled over her. Police said she was pronounced dead at the scene.

Dozens of ducklings create traffic jam

ME BIDDEFORD — Dozens of ducklings have made a bid to create the world's cutest traffic jam.

Even "Make Way for Ducklings" author Robert McCloskey couldn't have envisioned a scene like the one in Biddeford on Wednesday morning. Biddeford resident Karen Ramunno captured the scene on video as a mother duck guided 45 ducklings across a five-lane road.

The mother duck shepherded the babies across Alfred Road in two waves, one of 22 and another of 23. WCSH-TV reported the impromptu duckling parade brought traffic to a standstill in both directions, but no one seemed to mind.

Ramunno said no one beeped

at the line of ducklings, which made it across safely.

Residents warned after rabid bat bites person

OR SALEM — Public health officials are warning residents to be careful after a person was bitten by a rabid bat in southeast of Salem in the Breitenbush area.

The Statesman Journal reported health officials said the person was bitten on Saturday, but declined to say exactly where the incident happened, or whether the out-of-state visitor was an adult or child.

The victim captured the bat and brought it to the Marion County Health Department, according to program supervisor Alisa Zastoupil.

The bat was sent to Oregon State University for testing, which confirmed it was infected with rabies.

Woman bites man who forced way into home

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A nearly toothless woman said she bit a man who forced his way into her apartment.

Alice Coleman told WSVN she woke up early Monday morning to a fire alarm going off. Coleman, 61, said that when she opened the door, a man pushed his way inside. She said he kept calling her "mama" and telling her everything would be OK. Coleman said that "with the little teeth I got, I bit him."

Coleman said she ran out of the apartment and he locked himself inside. She called police from a neighbor's house. They arrested Fitzroy Morton on three felony charges.

Coleman said she'll be more careful about opening her door now, adding she will open it with her Taser.

From wire reports

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D'Arnaud making most of time in Tampa

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Travis d'Arnaud is quietly making the most of an opportunity to resurrect his career with the Tampa Bay Rays.

The soft-spoken catcher who also played for the New York Mets and Los Angeles Dodgers this season has rebounded from a miserable opening month to not only play himself into a role with the youthful Rays but become one of the club's most consistent players.

"He's been right in the thick of everything we've done good offensively," manager Kevin Cash said.

"He's been our best player for the last month and a half. Consistent as can be, clutch — all the factors you want to see in a teammate," center fielder Kevin Kiermaier added. "We wouldn't be where we are right now without him. That's nothing but the truth."

The Rays, who were off Thursday, have bounced back from a tough stretch to win

seven of their past 10 games. At 66-50, they currently hold the second AL wild-card spot, a half-game ahead of the Oakland Athletics.

The 30-year-old d'Arnaud, who missed most of 2018 after undergoing Tommy John surgery, is grateful for a fresh start after starting the season with the Mets and also spending less than a week with the Dodgers, who sold him to Tampa Bay for \$100,000 on May 10.

"It's been good," said d'Arnaud, a .249 career hitter who played parts of seven seasons with the Mets before they released him May 3.

When the Dodgers called, the native of Southern California was elated.

"It was cool that it was the hometown team I watched growing up. So to be there for those days was a dream-fulfilling moment for me," d'Arnaud said. "But ultimately, getting picked up by the Rays was the path that was destined, and fortunately for me the coaches and all the players here welcomed

me with open arms. The transition has been nice and smooth."

Since starting the year in a 2-for-24 slump in 11 games for the Mets and Dodgers, d'Arnaud has batted .283 with 13 homers and 44 RBIs in 55 games with Tampa Bay.

He's been one of the hottest hitters in baseball since July 1, batting .337 with four doubles, eight homers and 27 RBIs over his last 24 games.

He hit a walkoff homer to beat the AL East-leading Yankees at Tropicana Field on July 6, swatted three home runs out of the leadoff spot to key another win at New York on July 15, and he's been every bit as solid defensively as the Rays thought he would be.

"The way he came in and established himself with the pitchers was really all we were hoping for. Anything we got with the bat was going to be kind of a bonus," Cash said. "But he's taken it to a different level. He's been one of our most potent bats. He's been one of the best in the American

League this past month. Hopefully that continues."

All d'Arnaud, whose current nine-game hitting streak matches his career best, felt he needed was a chance to play his way back into form after missing most of last season with an injury, it was not easy to get re-acclimated to major league pitching.

"I had a whole year off from baseball," he said. "It's different when you're facing younger guys and you see a lot more mistakes vs. a big league pitcher where they know where the ball is going better and have more advanced game plans. It was just something I had to go through and experience."

Kiermaier said a change of scenery can make a difference, too.

"I think he used getting released as a chip on his shoulder," Kiermaier said. "We wanted him. We needed him. And little did we know what we were going to get. He's having another coming out party, and it's fun to watch."

Guarantano's goals remain high amid Vols' struggles

Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee's back-to-back losing seasons have done nothing to limit quarterback Jarrett Guarantano's ambition.

"I literally went into the offseason and said I want to be the best in the country," Guarantano said Sunday. "I want to do things that I haven't done yet. I just want to be the best. Going into this season, I want to win a lot of games and I want the team to know that I'm the best in the country. That's really about it."

Guarantano's bid to become the best has involved studying guys who currently hold that title. He watched NFL quarterbacks such as Deshaun Watson, Aaron Rodgers and Drew Brees and also analyzed some of the college quarterbacks who have enjoyed much more success than him thus far.

"I looked at Tua," Guarantano said, referring to 2018 Heisman Trophy runner-up Tua Tagovailoa of Alabama. "I looked at (Georgia's Jake) Fromm. I looked at (Clemson's) Trevor (Lawrence) a little bit. I studied a lot of guys."

Guarantano wants to lead Tennessee back to relevance after consecutive last-place finishes in the Southeastern Conference's Eastern Division.

Although Guarantano has thrown for 16 touchdowns with only five interceptions in 385 career passes, Tennessee has gone 6-12 in the games he has started.

After Tennessee went 5-7 last season, coach Jeremy Pruitt responded with a staff overhaul that included luring offensive coordinator Jim Chaney away from Georgia and moving 2000 Heisman Trophy winner Chris Weinke from running backs coach to quarterbacks coach.

Chaney is Guarantano's fourth offensive coordinator in as many seasons. Chaney's credentials help explain Guarantano's confidence.

"Everybody has immense trust and immense respect for him," Guarantano said. "Whenever we signed him, everybody was excited because we knew his track record and knew the types of things he's done in the past. The past two days, everybody's whooping and hollering. Everybody's very excited, just having that guy around He ex-

erts confidence in himself and us. I think our offense is much more confident, and we know our jobs better."

Chaney was Purdue's offensive coordinator during Brees' college career. Former Vols quarterbacks Jonathan Crompton and Tyler Bray both had productive seasons during Chaney's last stint at Tennessee. Nathan Peterman developed into an NFL quarterback prospect while playing for Chaney's offense at Pittsburgh.

Guarantano says some of the work he has done this offseason has involved fixing his footwork to become more elusive. Guarantano was sacked 26 times last season. He was sacked 22 times in 2017 despite starting just six games.

When he's had time to throw, Guarantano has shown star potential at times, most notably while passing for 328 yards in a road upset of Auburn last season. He wouldn't give his 2018 performance a letter grade but said he's learned from the setbacks he's endured.

"I think I'm a lot better football player than last year," Guarantano said.

He's eager for the chance to prove it.

Top pick Murray debuts with Cardinals

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Kyler Murray wanted to take his team on a scoring drive Thursday night, and even checked twice with his coach to see if he could play beyond one possession.

Arizona didn't take any chances with their prized rookie quarterback, but Murray completed nearly all of his passes and showed the mobility that made him the top overall draft pick, going 6-for-7 for 44 yards in 10 plays during the Cardinals' first offensive series

of the game.

Then he put on a headset, took off his pads and watched the Cardinals' 17-13 win over the Los Angeles Chargers in the preseason opener for both teams.

"I was just going out there and being myself, like always. Trusting in my abilities," Murray said. "I wanted to score. I wanted to go back in. I was definitely itching for more."

The 2018 Heisman Trophy winner, starting his first NFL drive at the Cardinals 2 after a

fumble recovery by linebacker Jordan Hicks, picked up three first downs, with his longest completion a 14-yard short pass to running back David Johnson.

Murray didn't have an official carry, but worked out of the shotgun and rolled out several times.

"He made quick decisions, that's what we're looking for. Operated well and took care of the football," Cardinals coach Kliff Kingsbury said, adding that the starters, includ-

ing Murray, are likely to play longer in the next preseason game.

Murray escaped pressure from the Chargers' Chris Peace on one play and completed a pass along the sideline to rookie KeeSean Johnson, but it was ruled incomplete because of a penalty.

"When we got the strip I was like 'Good,'" Murray said. "At the same time I was like 'Of course I get the ball at the 2.' My mindset was to go and score and unfortunately we didn't."

NFL preseason roundup

Battered Rosen directs three Dolphins scoring drives

Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — Josh Rosen kept going down and getting back up.

Bidding for a starting job, Rosen overcame shaky protection to throw for 191 yards and direct three scoring drives of more than 60 yards to help the Miami Dolphins win their exhibition opener Thursday against the Atlanta Falcons, 34-27.

Rosen went 13-for-20 with no touchdowns and one interception and played half the game. He shook off more than half a dozen hits as Falcons reserves manhandled the Dolphins' backups on the offensive line.

"That's football," Rosen said. "We're all working on things. It's a physical game."

Rosen is competing for the quarterback job with veteran Ryan Fitzpatrick, who worked the first two Dolphins series and led them to a field goal. Fitzpatrick completed 2 of 5 passes for 20 yards.

Patriots 31, Lions 3: Jakobi Meyers caught two touchdown passes in an impressive preseason debut, and visiting New England drubbed Detroit.

Lions receiver Jermaine Kearse was carted off injured early in the first quarter, and that was the start of a dismal night for Detroit. The Lions

didn't cross midfield until the latter half of the fourth quarter, when they finally drove for a field goal. The Patriots sacked Detroit quarterbacks nine times.

Ravens 29, Jaguars 0: Lamar Jackson directed two scoring drives in three possessions and the Baltimore defense throttled visiting Jacksonville backup quarterback Gardner Minshew.

Jackson played the first quarter and went 4-for-6 for 59 yards and a touchdown. Minshew was mercifully lifted after going 7-for-14 for 46 yards.

Bills 24, Colts 16: With LeSean McCoy resting, and Frank Gore limited to two series, rookie running back Devin Singletary got host Buffalo off to a running start.

On the Bills' fourth drive, Singletary showed off the shiftiness that led the team to draft him in the third round. He accounted for 16 yards rushing and 21 receiving as part of a 46-yard drive that ended with Matt Barkley hitting Cam Phillips for an 8-yard touchdown pass.

Browns 30, Redskins 10: Baker Mayfield threw a touchdown pass to end his only series as host Cleveland gave a brief preview of its offensive firepower.

Mayfield picked up where he left off following his "dangerous" rookie season, firing a 24-yard TD pass to Rashard Higgins as the Browns went no-huddle and drove 89 yards in just 2:13 to open the game.

Giants 31, Jets 22: At East Rutherford, N.J., Daniel Jones threw a touchdown pass in his only series and opened speculation on how long he will have to wait to replace Eli Manning.

Taking over after Manning had a three-and-out series, the sixth pick overall in the draft hit all five of his passes, the final one a perfect 12-yard throw to Bennie Fowler III in the right corner of the end zone.

Seahawks 22, Broncos 14: Paxton Lynch threw for one score and ran for another against his former team as part of an impressive second-half performance, leading host Seattle over Denver.

Lynch was 11-for-15 for 109 yards and added another 38 yard rushing. He hit 6-foot-5, undrafted free agent Jazz Ferguson on a 6-yard TD in the third quarter, and added a 9-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter by bulling through Denver defenders at the goal line.

Titans 27, Eagles 10: Host Philadelphia rested Carson Wentz, only to lose his backup.

Nate Sudfeld left the sideline on a cart after injuring his left arm on a late hit in the second quarter. Sudfeld fell backward after a personal foul by Isaiah Mack and immediately went to the sideline. He was wearing an air cast on the cart ride to the locker room. There was no immediate word on the extent of his injury.

Panthers 23, Bears 13: With Elliott Fry and Eddy Pi-neiro battling for the Chicago kicking job, the best kicking effort came from visiting Carolina rookie Joey Slye.

Slye made field goals of 42, 55 and 29 yards and the Panthers had a 7-yard touchdown catch and 11-yard TD run from rookie Elijah Holyfield.

Packers 28, Texans 26: De-Shone Kizer was 8-for-13 with 102 yards and a touchdown. Tim Boyle added two second-half touchdown passes for host Green Bay as Aaron Rodgers had the night off.

With Deshaun Watson not playing and A.J. McCarron sidelined with a thumb injury on his right throwing hand, Joe Webb, the only other quarterback on the Texans' roster, played the entire game. The nine-year veteran was 25-for-40 for 286 yards a touchdown and two interceptions.

Clevinger, Cleveland hold off Minnesota

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Trying to ice his arm and knee in the clubhouse after his night was done, Mike Clevinger screamed at the television after each up and down for Cleveland just like a fan watching the tense finish at home.

The scene in Minnesota was befitting of the postseason, intensifying an AL Central race that's just heating up.

Clevinger allowed only three hits with nine strikeouts in seven innings, Jose Ramirez drove in three runs, and the Indians struck first in this four-game series between the

division front-runners with a 7-5 victory on Thursday that cut the Twins' division lead to one game.

"It's way more fun to go through this versus feeling like it's spring training where you're getting ready for something bigger," Clevinger said. "This is what it's going to be like in October. The games are going to be just like this."

Indians closer Brad Hand ended the game by retiring Eddie Rosario on a routine flyout with the bases loaded, recording his 29th save in dramatic fashion after facing the last four batters of a three-run

eight by the Twins.

"This team is fighting all the time, fighting all game, every pitcher and every at-bat," said Rosario, who went 0-for-5 with one RBI.

Minnesota has been in sole possession of first place since April 27, a lead that was 11½ games on June 3 and was still 7½ games on July 13. The Indians are 40-16 since June 4, the best record in baseball in that span.

"This is like a whole new rivalry starting this year. It's a totally different ballgame when they're on the field now," Clevinger said.

The RBI singles in the fourth by Luis Arraez and Marwin Gonzalez were all the Twins managed against Clevinger (7-2), who watched four relievers toil through the eighth as Cleveland's lead was cut to 6-5. Miguel Sano hit an RBI double off Hand, who retired Gonzalez on a flyout with runners at first and second to finish the frame.

Then Hand had to grind through the ninth, after a home run by Tyler Naquin in the top of the inning insured the lead.

"That was a lot to ask," Indians manager Terry Francona said.

Of everyone, really.

MLB roundup

Urshela homers twice as Yankees hammer Blue Jays

Associated Press

TORONTO — Gio Urshela hit two home runs for the second straight game and the New York Yankees outslugged rookie Bo Bichette and the Toronto Blue Jays 12-6 Thursday night to extend their winning streak to a season-best nine games.

Playing in Toronto for the first time, Bichette became the first player in major league history to double in nine consecutive games. He also homered, giving him an unprecedented 13 extra-base hits in his first 11 career games. Bichette is the first rookie to have an extra-base hit in nine straight games since Ted Williams in 1939, according to STATS.

The Yankees have hit a record 19 homers over their last four games, including at least five in each win during a three-game sweep at Baltimore this week. Mike Tauchman also homered Thursday to give New York three connections.

Domingo German (15-2) pitched five innings to win his sixth consecutive decision for New York.

Both of Urshela's homers came off left-hander Thomas Pannone (2-5), who matched a

career worst by giving up seven runs in 2⅓ innings.

Luis Cessa pitched the final three innings for his first save.

Red Sox 3, Angels 0: Chris Sale righted himself and struck out 13 over eight innings of two-hit ball, Sam Travis hit a two-run homer and Boston beat visiting Los Angeles.

Sale (6-11) had allowed 14 runs over nine innings during his previous two starts, both against the rival New York Yankees. He carved up the Angels in his 13th outing with double-digit strikeouts this season.

The Red Sox had lost nine of 10 games, not including Wednesday's contest against the Royals that was suspended in the 10th inning with the score tied at 4. Thursday's game ran without issue and was over in a tidy 2 hours, 16 minutes. Brandon Workman worked a clean ninth with two strikeouts for his seventh save.

Dillon Peters (2-1) gave up three runs and five hits and struck out eight over six innings.

Cubs 12, Reds 5: Anthony Rizzo had a pair of hits as part of a 30th birthday celebration, Nicholas Castellanos added to

his team's surge with a pair of homers and Chicago beat host Cincinnati for its biggest NL Central lead of the season.

The Cubs' sixth win in seven games gave them a 3½-game margin over the idle Brewers. Left-hander Cole Hamels struggled, but Tyler Chatwood (5-1) fanned six in three innings as Chicago pulled away.

Giants 5, Phillies 0: Madison Bumgarner carried a no-hit bid into the sixth inning and won his fourth straight decision, pitching host San Francisco past Philadelphia to snap a four-game losing streak.

Pinch-hitter Cesar Hernandez hit a sharp single up the middle with one out in the sixth to break it up. Before that, the only Phillies baserunner came when Rhys Hoskins drew a one-out walk in the fourth.

Mike Yastrzemski hit a solo homer and drove in three runs to get the offense going after San Francisco scored just four total runs the previous three days in being swept by the Nationals.

The Giants delivered four straight hits against Aaron Nola (10-3) to start the third and back Bumgarner (7-7),

capped by Yastrzemski's two-run double before he got caught in a rundown trying to stretch it to a triple. San Francisco left the bases loaded in the fourth.

Marlins 9, Braves 2: Brian Anderson homered twice, Elieser Hernandez (2-4) pitched six shutout innings and Miami beat visiting Atlanta on a rough night for Dallas Keuchel.

Hernandez retired 11 consecutive batters before Ronald Acuna Jr.'s leadoff single in the sixth.

The Marlins chased Keuchel (3-5) with a five-run fourth capped by Anderson's second home run and 20th of the season for an 8-0 lead. Keuchel allowed eight runs and 10 hits in 3⅔ innings, his shortest outing since joining the Braves on June 10.

Tigers 10, Royals 8: Jordy Mercer hit a walk-off, two-run homer against Richard Lovelady (0-2) in the ninth inning to lift host Detroit over Kansas City.

Padres 9, Rockies 3: Rookie Fernando Tatis Jr. hit his second leadoff home run in two games — and team-record sixth this season — and San Diego beat visiting Colorado.