

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Commander of USS Antietam relieved 3 months into top job

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars And Stripes

WASHINGTON — The commander of the USS Antietam was relieved of his command Tuesday, less than three months after assuming the job, the Navy said.

Capt. Tadd Gorman was relieved by Rear Adm. Karl Thomas, the commander of Task Force 70, due to “a loss of confidence in his personal judgment and ability to lead,” according to a Navy statement. Gorman assumed command of the USS Antietam on May 30 on U.S. Naval Base Guam.

The USS Antietam, a guided-missile cruiser, is operating in the Philippine Sea. The ship is deployed to the 7th Fleet area of operation as part of Task Force 70.

Findings from a command-led investigation into Gorman led to his relief, Military.com reported.

The deputy commander of the Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center, Capt. Jim Storm, assumed command of the USS Antietam.

Gorman was administratively reassigned to Task Force 70 and is now aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, according to Military.com.

Submarine's XO relieved over 'personal conduct'

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The executive officer of the attack submarine USS Jimmy Carter was relieved Monday due to loss of confidence in his personal judgment, the Navy said Tuesday.

Lt. Cmdr. Jonathan Cebik has been administratively reassigned to Submarine Development Squadron 5, the Navy said in a statement.

“The Navy is investigating questions that have arisen with respect to Lt. Cmdr. Cebik’s personal conduct,” Cmdr. Cindy Fields, a Navy spokesperson, said in an email response to questions by Stars and Stripes.

Fields did not provide specific details on the type or extent of personal conduct.

“The U.S. Navy holds its leaders, including executive officers, to very high standards and they are held accountable when those standards are not met,” the Navy statement said. Executive officers “must demonstrate character and competence in their conduct at all times.”

Lt. Cmdr. Robert Osborne will assume

duties as executive officer aboard the boat, according to the Navy.

Cebik, a Connecticut native, graduated from the University of Connecticut in 2005, according to a Facebook post by U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., in 2016. Courtney, then the ranking member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces, administered Cebik’s oath when he was promoted to lieutenant commander after working as a Navy Legislative Fellow in the congressman’s office.

Cebik has served aboard both fast attack and ballistic missile submarines, Courtney said.

The USS Jimmy Carter, homeported at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, Wash., is a Sea-wolf-class, fast-attack submarine. Cebik was assigned to the submarine as executive officer in April 2018.

The nuclear-powered sub is named for the 39th U.S. president and is among the small group of Navy vessels named for a living person. It was christened in 2004.

2 GIs killed in Afghanistan; names, location not yet released

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two American servicemembers were killed in action in Afghanistan on Wednesday, NATO announced in a statement that provided no additional information.

The deaths bring the number of American troops killed by hostile enemy action in 2019 to 14, the highest number of U.S. combat deaths in Afghanistan since former President Barack Obama formally ended combat operations there at the end of 2014. Thirteen American troops were killed by enemy forces in 2018 and 39 were killed in action in 2014, according to Pentagon data.

The names of the servicemembers killed Wednesday were being withheld until 24

hours after their families were notified, which is Pentagon policy, according to the statement. No additional details about the deaths were provided.

U.S. military spokesmen at the Pentagon said Wednesday that they also could not immediately provide the location where the deaths occurred or how the servicemembers were killed.

The incident comes about three weeks after two American soldiers were shot dead by an Afghan soldier in an apparent insider attack at a base in southern Afghanistan’s Kandahar province.

It also comes as peace talks ramp up between U.S. and Taliban officials, who have both recently signaled they are closer to reaching an agreement that would lead to at least a partial withdrawal of American

forces from the country. State Department envoy Zalmay Khalilzad departed Washington on Tuesday for a new round of negotiations with Taliban officials in Doha, Qatar later this week.

The U.S. war in Afghanistan is now in its 18th year. Some 14,000 American troops are deployed there and charged with two separate but related missions – to train and advise Afghan troops and to conduct counterterrorism operations.

Some 8,500 are training and advising Afghan security forces to stabilize the country and battle the Taliban insurgency, under the U.S.-led NATO mission known as Resolute Support. The rest of the forces serve under the American Freedom’s Sentinel mission, which targets primarily the remnants of al-Qaida and Islamic State fighters.

Arms dealer gets 30 years in prison for attempted sale

BY J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

An arms dealer who tried to buy anti-aircraft missiles and sell them to clients in the Middle East was sentenced Tuesday to 30 years in prison, the Justice Department said.

Rami Najm Asad-Ghanem, 53, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Jordan, was found guilty by a federal jury last year of conspiring to use and transfer missile systems designed to destroy aircraft, the statement said. Authorities said the arms dealer, also known as Rami Ghanem, tried to sell missiles to customers including Iraq, Libya, the United Arab Emirates and Hezbollah, a Lebanese political party with an armed wing designated by the U.S. as a foreign terrorist group.

"Mr. Ghanem was literally a merchant of death who was ready, willing and able to sell weapons, including surface-to-air missiles, to any paying customer, with zero concern for the death and destruction these weapons might cause," U.S. At-

torney Nick Hanna for the Central District of California said in a statement.

Ghanem, who authorities said has a long history of trafficking machine guns, sniper rifles and anti-tank weapons, also pleaded guilty last year to six other federal crimes, the statement said.

Investigators started investigating Ghanem during a sting operation in 2014 after a tip from a U.S. company, the Justice Department said. He was arrested in 2015 in Athens after agreeing to purchase weapons from an undercover agent.

Prosecutors said Ghanem arranged to hire mercenaries to transfer and operate Russian-made missiles as part of a \$250 million arms deal with a Libyan militant group in 2015.

Ghanem's attorneys said they plan to appeal and argued in court that there is no evidence that he or any of his alleged co-conspirators actually possessed or distributed any missiles, according to NBC News.

Space Command set to relaunch, official says

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

U.S. Space Command, the Pentagon's 11th combatant command and the first new one in 10 years, will stand up at a ceremony on Aug. 29, according to the U.S. military's highest-ranking officer.

"We will immediately assign 87 units under a single combatant commander" after the ceremony, Gen. Joe Dunford, the outgoing chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Tuesday at the sixth National Space Council meeting in northern Virginia.

Gen. John W. Raymond, commander of Air Force Space Command at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., is expected to take command of the Space Command, Vice President Mike Pence said at the meeting.

The new command's capabilities will include missile warning, satellite operations, space control and space support, Dunford said.

"The direction is clear, we understand it and we're moving out," Dunford said.

No location for the new headquarters has been announced.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order last year establishing U.S. Space Command.

The last combatant com-

mand created was U.S. Africa Command in 2009.

The Pentagon is actually bringing back U.S. Space Command. It was active from 1985 to 2002, based in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Combatant commands provide command and control of military forces. Pence has said U.S. Space Command will serve alongside other functional commands like Strategic Command and Special Operations Command.

Its mission will be to integrate space capabilities across all branches of the military, developing space doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures, Pence said last year at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, when the administration announced plans for a new Space Command and separate Space Force.

The Space Force would be a sixth branch of the armed forces and would require congressional approval.

The White House is still working with Congress to stand up the Space Force, which would become the lead military service for space operations, Pence said Tuesday at the National Space Council meeting.

Separately, Pence said the U.S. intends to return to the moon by 2024.

Judge allows prospective trans GIs' suit to advance

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A federal judge in Maryland ruled Tuesday that men and women barred from joining the military because of their transgender status can proceed with a lawsuit seeking to overturn a Pentagon policy blocking their service.

U.S. District Judge George Russell ruled transgender men and women who would other-

wise be eligible for military service can proceed with their court challenge to the Pentagon's partial ban. However, Russell also ruled five of six servicemembers who originally brought the case could not proceed with the lawsuit because they were permitted to remain in the military under the plan implemented by former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

The U.S. government had sought to have the lawsuit — one of several cases nationwide

challenging the Pentagon order that bans nearly all transgender men and women from enlisting — dismissed from the court altogether.

The Pentagon's transgender policy was implemented in April after the Supreme Court ruled the Defense Department could move forward with the ban nearly two years after President Donald Trump tweeted his intentions to bar all transgender people from the military.

The partial ban blocks the vast majority of Americans with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, the medical condition associated with individuals who do not identify with their birth sex, from serving. It does allow people to enlist with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria who have doctor certification that they have remained stable in their biological sex for 36 months. People who have medically transitioned their sex are disqualified from service.

Houthis claim they downed US drone

BY JOSHUA KARSTEN
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen said they shot down a U.S. Reaper drone, marking what would be the third American unmanned aircraft destroyed in the region since June.

An MQ-9 drone was shot down Tuesday with a missile over the northern city of Dhamar, a statement from Houthi spokesman Yahia Sarie said, according to The Associated Press.

U.S. Central Command said they were investigating the reports of the attack on a U.S.

unmanned aircraft system “operating in authorized airspace over Yemen,” Central Command spokesman Lt. Col. Early Brown said.

“We have been clear that Iran’s provocative actions and support to militants and proxies, like the Iranian-backed Houthis, poses a serious threat to stability in the region and our partners,” Brown said.

CNN reported Wednesday that an unnamed U.S. official had confirmed the drone attack.

Reaper drones are used by the Air Force to attack targets, gather intelligence and conduct search operations,

among other roles. They can be equipped with laser-guided bombs and air-to-ground Hellfire missiles.

The attack would mark at least the third drone downing in the region. The U.S. confirmed that Houthi rebels also shot down a Reaper drone in June.

Iranian forces shot down a Global Hawk surveillance drone over the Strait of Hormuz in June, nearly prompting a U.S. military strike before President Donald Trump called off the attack. Iran claimed that drone was over its territory while the U.S. said it was in international airspace.

Envoy: US is ready for more N. Korea talks

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States is prepared to resume nuclear negotiations as soon as it gets word from North Korea, a senior envoy said Wednesday, while the communist state issued new criticism over U.S.-South Korean military exercises that ended the day before.

Stephen Biegun was the latest U.S. administration official to express hopes for getting the stalled diplomatic process back on track nearly two months after President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un agreed to do so.

The North test-fired several short-range missiles and rockets in recent weeks as it protested the allied drills that began earlier this month and ended Tuesday. But Trump has said Kim sent him a “very beautiful” letter to say he wanted to restart talks after the joint exercises, which the North considers rehearsals for an invasion.

The remarks prompted media speculation that Biegun may meet with North Korean negotiators during his three-day visit to the South, which ends Thursday.

“We are prepared to engage as soon as we hear from our counterparts in North Korea,” Biegun said after meeting with South Korean officials in Seoul. He said Trump had assigned his team to restart working-level talks as agreed with Kim during their June 30 meeting on the Korean border.

“I am fully committed to this important mission,” Biegun said after meeting with his South Korean counterpart, Lee Do-hoon. “We will get this done.”

Lee said their discussions focused on how to quickly resume the talks, which stalled after Trump and Kim failed to reach agreement during their second summit in late February in Vietnam.

VA sued over Mar-a-Lago emails

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A lawsuit filed Wednesday against the Department of Veterans Affairs alleges the agency failed to preserve private emails that could reveal the extent of the influence three members of President Donald Trump’s private club in Palm Beach, Fla., exerted over decisions affecting veterans.

Democracy Forward, an activist organization that often challenges Trump’s actions, filed the complaint in U.S. district court along with American Oversight, an activist and litigation organization founded in 2017 with the goal of uncovering misconduct and conflicts of interest in Trump’s administration.

The suit alleges former VA

Secretary David Shulkin used a private, nonofficial email account to communicate with Marvel Entertainment Chairman Ike Perlmutter, lawyer Marc Sherman and Bruce Moskowitz, a Palm Beach physician — a trio dubbed the “Mar-a-Lago Crowd.” None of the men served in the U.S. military or government, yet they instructed VA officials to steer policies affecting millions of Americans, according to an investigation last year by ProPublica, a nonprofit news agency.

Democracy Forward and American Oversight began seeking Shulkin’s emails in the spring. Current VA Secretary Robert Wilkie has failed to initiate action through the attorney general that would ensure the emails are recovered, the complaint states.

The groups claim the VA’s

lack of effort to preserve or recover the emails is in violation of the Federal Records Act and Administrative Procedures Act.

Wilkie, the National Archives and Records Administration and David Ferriero, archivist of the United States, are listed in the lawsuit as defendants in addition to the VA.

The House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs launched its own investigation into the Mar-a-Lago Crowd in February. The committee is looking into the use of private email accounts by top VA officials when corresponding with the trio, The Wall Street Journal reported.

The Government Accountability Office agreed in November to initiate its own investigation into the amount of influence exercised by Perlmutter, Sherman and Moskowitz.

Former VA pathologist is charged in 3 patient deaths

Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — A pathologist fired from an Arkansas veterans hospital after officials said he had been impaired while on duty was charged Tuesday with involuntary manslaughter in the deaths

of three patients who authorities say he misdiagnosed and whose records he later altered to conceal his mistakes.

A grand jury indictment unsealed Tuesday charged Dr. Robert Morris Levy in the patients’ deaths and on multiple

charges of fraud and making false statements for his alleged attempts to conceal his substance abuse and incorrect diagnoses.

Levy, who was being held at the Washington County jail, pleaded not guilty at a hearing Tuesday.

US moves to end child migrant custody limits

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is moving to end a long-standing federal court agreement that limits how long immigrant children can be kept in detention, a decision that will almost certainly lead to a new court fight over the government's ability to hold migrant families until their cases are decided.

Ending the so-called Flores agreement is a top priority for the Trump administration. It requires the government to keep children in the least restrictive setting and to release them as quickly as possible, generally after 20 days in detention.

Homeland Security officials say they are adopting regulations that reflect the agreement and there is no longer a need for court involvement, which was meant to be temporary.

The move is the latest effort by the administration to restrict immigration, President Donald Trump's signature issue, and is aimed at restricting the movement of asylum-seekers in the country and deterring more immigrants from crossing the border.

It is bound to generate fresh outrage, following reports of dire conditions in detention facilities, and it is questionable whether courts will let the administration move forward with the policy.

Peter Schey, a lawyer for the immigrant children in the Flores case and president of the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law, said if the regulations don't match the settlement, "they would be in immediate material breach, if not contempt of court."

"I think all these things are now part of the 2020 campaign," Schey said.

The officials said they are creating a set of higher standards to govern family detention facilities, which will be regularly audited and the audits made public. But the rules would allow the government to hold families in detention until their immigration cases are completed, which could be much longer than 20 days.

The officials spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss regulations that had not been made public.

The regulations were expected to be formally published Friday and go into effect in 60 days absent legal challenges.

They follow moves last week to broaden the definition of a "public charge" to include immigrants on public assistance, potentially denying green cards to more immigrants. There was also a recent effort to effectively end asylum altogether at the southern border.

Trump: China policies painful but needed

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump acknowledged his aggressive China trade policies may mean economic pain for Americans but insisted they're needed for more important long-term benefits. He contended he does not fear a recession but is nonetheless considering new tax cuts to promote growth.

Asked if his trade war with China could tip the country into recession, he brushed off the idea as "irrelevant" and said it was imperative to "take China on."

"It's about time, whether it's good for our country or bad for our country short-term,"

Trump said Tuesday.

Paraphrasing a reporter's question, Trump said, "Your statement about, 'Oh, will we fall into a recession for two months?' OK? The fact is somebody had to take China on."

The Republican president indicated that he had no choice but to impose the tariffs that have been a drag on U.S. manufacturers, financial markets and, by some measures, American consumers.

Trump was clear that he didn't think the nation is at risk of a recession and that a boom was possible if the Federal Reserve would slash its benchmark interest rate.

"We're very far from a recession,"

Trump said. "In fact, if the Fed would do its job, I think we'd have a tremendous spurt of growth, a tremendous spurt."

Yet he also said he is considering a temporary payroll tax cut and indexing to inflation the federal taxes on profits made on investments, moves designed to stimulate faster growth. He downplayed any idea that these thoughts indicate a weakening economy and said, "I'm looking at that all the time anyway."

Asked about his remarks, White House spokesman Judd Deere said: "The president does not believe we are headed for a recession. The economy is strong because of his policies."

Facebook launches new tool to limit tracking

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Soon, you could get fewer familiar ads following you around the internet — or at least on Facebook.

Facebook is launching a long-promised tool that lets you limit what the social network can gather about you on outside websites and apps.

The company said Tuesday that it is adding a section where you can see the activity that Facebook tracks outside its service via its "like" buttons and other means. You can choose to turn off the tracking; otherwise, tracking will continue the same way it has been.

Formerly known as "clear history," the tool will now go by the slightly clunkier moniker "off-Facebook activity." The feature launched in South Korea, Ireland and Spain on Tuesday, consistent with Facebook's tendency to launch features in smaller markets first.

The company did not give a timeline for when it might expand it to the U.S. and other countries, only that it will be in "coming months."

What you do off Facebook is among the many pieces of information that Facebook uses to target ads to people. Blocking the tracking could mean fewer ads that seem

familiar — for example, for a pair of shoes you decided not to buy or a nonprofit you donated money to. But it won't change the actual number of ads you'll see on Facebook. Nor will it change how your actions on Facebook are used to show you ads.

Even if you turn off tracking, Facebook will still gather data on your off-Facebook activities. It will simply disconnect those activities from your Facebook profile. Facebook says businesses won't know you clicked on their ad — but they'll know that someone did. So Facebook can still tell advertisers how well their ads are performing.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Teen, park workers rescued from zip line

NH LACONIA — New Hampshire firefighters said they rescued a 16-year-old girl who dangled from a zip line 40 feet above a pond, along with two people who tried to help her.

The Laconia Sun reported the girl spent about 30 minutes dangling at the Monkey Trunks Zipline Park in Weirs Beach.

Fire Chief Kirk Beattie said the girl was unable to make the transition to the landing platform at the end of the line and then began to slide back down.

Beattie said two park employees attached trolleys to the line and rode the wire to the girl. They had hoped to move her down the line to the closest landing platform but were unable to do so.

Man falls onto tracks after train door opens

NJ NEWARK — New Jersey Transit is investigating why a train door opened on the wrong side of an outbound train, causing a passenger to fall out of the train.

The incident occurred Monday while the train was stopped at Secaucus during the evening commute.

NJ Transit said the man who fell suffered scrapes and declined medical attention from emergency responders. His name was not released.

Suit: Unwed teacher fired for pregnancy

MO KANSAS CITY — A former teacher at a Catholic school in Kansas City alleges in a lawsuit that she was fired because she was pregnant and unmarried.

The Kansas City Star report-

ed that a jury trial was scheduled to begin in Michelle Bolen's lawsuit against the principal of St. Therese Catholic elementary school and the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph.

Bolen had worked for the school for nearly 15 years when she lost her job in July 2015. Diocese spokesman Jack Smith said her contract wasn't renewed for reasons that have nothing to do with her pregnancy.

Sheriff: Man found in teen's closet after call

SC GRANITEVILLE — Deputies in South Carolina said they found a man in a teen girl's closet while responding to a call about the smell of marijuana coming from her room.

News outlets reported Matthew Smith, 20, was charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, possession of narcotics, and criminal sexual conduct with a minor.

An Aiken County sheriff's report said the teen's stepfather called deputies to report the marijuana smell. It said deputies searched the 15-year-old's closet and found Smith, a marijuana-filled apple and a travel-size bottle filled with a clear substance.

Clinic warns workers to speak only English

FL HAINES CITY — Seven Puerto Rican health care workers said supervisors at a Florida government-run clinic warned them to stop speaking Spanish among themselves or they would get fired.

The women work at the Florida Health Department clinic in Haines City. A statement from the community group La Mesa Boricua de Florida said the group filed a human resources

complaint and wrote a letter to the Florida Department of Health.

The workers said the job required they be bilingual because of the Hispanic patients. Nurse Mairyli Miranda said she and her coworkers speak in English with non-Spanish-speaking patients and staff but choose their native language to talk to one another.

Restaurant changes famous Georges mural

TX WACO — A Texas restaurant called George's that features a mural honoring famous men with the same name was changed to avoid a trademark dispute.

The Waco Tribune-Herald reported owner Sammy Citrano discovered that an alphabet letter he'd put on the mural is a Waco city trademark.

Citrano polled the public on how best to change the mural and still salute all things George. The updated mural shows Interstate 35 access road bridges over Lake Brazos.

Help sought ID'ing 2 who crushed flowers

MS OXFORD — The mayor of a Mississippi town is putting out an all-plants bulletin.

It's an effort to find four unknown men who flopped down in a flower bed that the city of Oxford maintains on the town square.

Mayor Robyn Tannehill on Sunday posted surveillance video on Twitter of the four men leaping into, sitting in and rolling around the planting.

Tannehill is appealing for people to "help me find these jerks so I can inform them of the planning, work and sweat that goes into making our square beautiful."

Officials seize pot mixed with peppers

CA SAN DIEGO — Officials said they seized \$2.3 million worth of marijuana mixed in with a shipment of jalapeno peppers at a Southern California port.

A Customs and Border Protection K-9 unit alerted officers to a shipment of peppers at the Otay Mesa cargo facility in San Diego.

A CBP news release said officers discovered more than 7,500 pounds of marijuana in the peppers' pallets.

Acting CBP Commissioner Mark Morgan congratulated the officers on Twitter and noted it was the second large seizure of marijuana there within days.

More than 100 animals seized at roadside zoo

VA WINCHESTER — More than 100 animals, including water buffalo, tigers and lions, were seized from a roadside zoo in Virginia with a history of complaints.

The Virginia Attorney General's Office said it joined with state and local authorities to carry out the seizures to investigate animal cruelty allegations at Wilson's Wild Animal Park in Winchester.

A search warrant shows nearly 120 animals were seized, including parrots, six camels, 36 goats and two Capuchin monkeys.

Michael Kelly, spokesman for Attorney General Mark Herring, said animal control and animal rescue organizations are caring for the animals.

Federal inspectors have cited the zoo multiple times for violations.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Buckeyes' Dobbbs out to prove he's top RB

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Despite running for 1,053 yards and 10 touchdowns, J.K. Dobbbs said last season was a frustrating personal failure.

"I didn't make defenses fear me as I should," the Ohio State tailback said while vowing to bounce back in 2019.

After he set a freshman school rushing record in 2017 with 1,403 yards, his numbers dropped off last season. Platooning with Mike Weber, Dobbbs averaged 4.6 yards per carry, compared with 7.2 per carry the previous year as the passing game behind record-breaking quarterback Dwayne Haskins Jr. took center stage.

After logging six 100-yard rushing games as a freshman, he did it only three times last season as the Buckeyes' running game failed to find consistency.

"I don't know if he struggled as much as we could just do a better job of calling [plays] up and putting him in good places and getting the blocking a little better," offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson said. "To me, running is a group effort, and our group was good, just not as good as it needs to be."

The pieces are falling into place for a productive year for Dobbbs, 20, and his wide smile is the first indication.

"I just feel like I'm the best running back in the nation, and

I want to prove that," the junior said. "I didn't last year, and I have a chip on my shoulder because I know I can do better."

He worked out hard in the offseason to reduce his body fat by 4% — it's now down to 8% — without taking pounds off his 5-foot-10, 217-pound frame. With Weber gone to the NFL, Dobbbs will be the featured tailback, and he's bound to get a ton of carries early as new quarterback Justin Fields figures things out.

With the dual-threat Fields at quarterback, the offense likely will look more like it did in 2017 when J.T. Barrett, always a threat to carry the ball, helped open up defenses for Dobbbs.

Dobbbs also has the extra

motivation of knowing that a huge season and some Heisman Trophy talk will boost his NFL Draft stock if he decides to leave after this season.

New Buckeyes coach Ryan Day is counting on Dobbbs. Fields didn't dazzle in the spring game, so it remains to be seen how long it will take him to find his stride. The offensive line returns just one full-time starter and may take some time to jell.

Dobbbs said he is prepared to carry the load. Another 1,000-yard season would put him good company: Two-time Heisman winner Archie Griffin is the only other Buckeye to top 1,000 yards in three consecutive seasons.

Michigan, Nebraska poised to break through in Big Ten

Associated Press

The power structure in the Big Ten could be in for a shakeup.

Jim Harbaugh enters his fifth year at Michigan overdue for a breakthrough, and two-time defending conference champion Ohio State is transitioning from Urban Meyer to Ryan Day and replacing a first-round NFL Draft pick at quarterback.

Momentum Nebraska built the second half of last season is expected to carry over into Scott Frost's second year. Wisconsin ceded control of the West with five losses in 2018, and the division is considered wide open with six teams capable of making it to Indianapolis for the Big Ten title game.

Last year, Michigan was in position to win its first conference title since 2004 and make the College Football Playoff for the first time before embarrassing losses to Ohio State and Florida sent Harbaugh into the offseason looking for answers.

The offense returns quarterback Shea Patterson, four starting offensive linemen and an experienced group of receivers. Most important, new

coordinator Josh Gattis promises to jazz up the offense with a fast-paced system featuring run-pass options. The defense lost two first-round draft picks, but there's plenty of returning talent.

Harbaugh doesn't disagree with those who pick the Wolverines to win the East and the league.

Nebraska, coming off a 4-8 season, brings back one of the nation's most dynamic young quarterbacks in Adrian Martinez. Scoring has never been a problem for a Frost team, whether at Central Florida or Nebraska. The biggest question is whether the defense can improve on its No. 94 national ranking.

The Huskers benefit from a schedule that has them playing at home against Ohio State, defending West champion Northwestern, Wisconsin and Iowa.

CFP drought

The Big Ten champion has not made the College Football Playoff since 2015, and the conference hasn't had a team included since one-loss Ohio State got the nod over two-loss champion Penn State in 2016.

Ohio State was passed over in 2018 because of a 29-point loss at Purdue and in 2017 because of a 31-point loss at Iowa. There's been chatter about realigning the Big Ten divisions to create greater competitive balance. East teams have won all five league titles since the East-West split, though it was two teams from the West that caused Ohio State to miss the playoff the last two years.

Top players

Jonathan Taylor, RB, Wisconsin: The returning Doak Walker Award winner led nation with 2,194 yards.

Rondale Moore, WR-KR, Purdue: Set school single-game and season records for all-purpose yards and was the first Big Ten true freshman to make first-team All-America.

Jonathan Martinez, QB, Nebraska: Coming off the most prolific freshman season in program history.

Chase Young, DE, Ohio State: Looking to become the second Buckeye, and first since Mike Vrabel in 1994-95, to record double-digit sacks in multiple seasons.

Yetur Gross-Matos, DE,

Penn State: Coming off a breakthrough season in which he had 20 tackles for loss.

Joe Bachie, LB, Michigan State: Has made at least 100 tackles two straight seasons.

Mark your calendars

Northwestern at Stanford, Aug. 31; Nebraska at Colorado, Sept. 7; Syracuse at Maryland, Sept. 7; TCU at Purdue, Sept. 14; Michigan at Wisconsin, Sept. 21; Ohio State at Nebraska, Sept. 28; Iowa at Michigan, Oct. 5; Penn State at Iowa, Oct. 12; Michigan at Penn State, Oct. 19; Notre Dame at Michigan, Oct. 26; Iowa at Wisconsin, Nov. 9; Wisconsin at Nebraska, Nov. 16; Michigan State at Michigan, Nov. 16; Penn State at Ohio State, Nov. 23; Iowa at Nebraska, Nov. 29; Ohio State at Michigan, Nov. 30; Wisconsin at Minnesota, Nov. 30.

Picks

East: Michigan, Ohio State, Penn State, Michigan State, Indiana, Maryland, Rutgers.

West: Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Northwestern, Purdue, Minnesota, Illinois.

Champion: Michigan.

Cowboys LB Smith gets \$64M extension

Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — When the Dallas Cowboys announced a contract extension for Jaylon Smith, it was first a celebration of the linebacker's journey from a career-threatening knee injury in college to one of the NFL's richest contracts at his position.

Of course, it didn't take long for the focus to turn to holdout running back Ezekiel Elliott, or the question of deals for quarterback Dak Prescott and receiver Amari Cooper with each entering the final year of his rookie contract.

"There is less pie left," owner Jerry Jones said Tuesday. "Make no bones about it. There is less pie."

Smith and the Cowboys agreed on a \$64 million, five-year extension with \$33.5 million guaranteed for the 2016

second-round pick. The average annual value of \$12.8 million on the extension is among the top five for inside linebackers.

The 24-year-old essentially lost a year on his rookie contract because he spent his rookie season on the non-football injury list after the devastating left knee injury in his final game at Notre Dame, where he was an All-American in 2015.

Both sides said the deal came together in a matter of days amid continuing talk of the missing Elliott, the two-time rushing champion who wants a new contract while having two years left on the current one. Elliott's holdout has lasted almost a month.

"For me it's about being a Dallas Cowboy for life," Smith said. "Really, technically, with the tender year, the Cowboys have my rights for two more years. For us to get an exten-

sion like this, is just a testament to how much we love one another and we believe in one another, as well."

Smith started all 16 games for the Cowboys last season, when he was second on the team in tackles (150) and tackles for loss (five). He played in all 16 games, with six starts, when he made his NFL debut in 2017.

Before nerve damage associated with tearing a ligament in his knee during Notre Dame's 44-28 loss to Ohio State in the Orange Bowl on New Year's Day 2016, Smith was considered a top prospect. While plenty of teams wondered if he could play again, the Cowboys took him with the 34th overall pick.

"He has never complained," Jones said while fighting his emotions. "He has never wavered. Never missed a workout. And he's never quit. Not

one time. His story is one that I would have done anything to be sure that it could be sure that it could be a Dallas Cowboys story."

Smith struggled in his first season, in part because the Cowboys had to rely on him more than planned because of injuries to Sean Lee. The progress was dramatic last year as the defense helped keep Dallas in contention while the offense struggled.

The Cowboys won the NFC East, beat Seattle in a wild-card game and lost to the Los Angeles Rams in the divisional round.

"I couldn't lift my foot for a year and two months," Smith said of the time after the injury. "They were able to show their true belief in me. It's just the beginning. I received my new contract after only 22 starts. So I've got a bunch of starts left."

WR Brown practices with Raiders in new helmet

Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — Star receiver Antonio Brown practiced in a certified helmet with the Oakland Raiders on Tuesday, two days after being given an ultimatum by general manager Mike Mayock to be "all in or all out."

"He's all in, ready to go," coach Jon Gruden said. "That's my understanding. Really happy to have him out here. He's a great player."

Brown didn't attend practice Sunday as he worked to find a helmet he was comfortable using and that met safety standards set by the NFL and NFLPA. He lost a grievance last week in which he sought to be allowed to use the Schutt Air Advantage helmet he has worn throughout his career. But the helmet was too old to be certified as safe.

He had hoped to find a newer version of his preferred helmet that could be approved but the one he submitted failed a safe-

ty test conducted by the league and union.

He filed a second grievance Monday seeking a one-year grace period, according to a person familiar with the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity because it wasn't made public. But he is back practicing with the team while that gets resolved.

Brown was not wearing a helmet during the open portion of practice and spent some of the time during stretches in the nearby weight room. But he walked off the field after practice holding a new helmet and Gruden said he's running well after also missing time with frost-bitten feet.

"He's really good," Gruden said. "He's shown great retention of what we're doing. He didn't miss the offseason program. ... Just good to have him back. He's in great shape. He's running hard and running good routes."

Brown didn't take part in a full practice during the Raid-

ers' entire training camp stay in Napa, which wrapped up Monday, missing time because of frost bite on his feet suffered in a cryotherapy accident in France and then over the helmet issue.

That led to Mayock saying Sunday that the Raiders had supported Brown but had "exhausted all avenues of relief."

Gruden said the drama surrounding Brown hasn't impacted the team's preparation for the season.

"It's not been a distraction to me at all," Gruden said. "I hate to break it to anybody but we've known what the status is regarding his feet. He just showed up with frostbite. I never had a guy show up with frostbite. Fortunately we got that thing under control. This grievance thing is no laughing matter. It's something that's really important to him. There's nothing wrong in supporting your players on things they believe in. We also understand the league's position but I'm

confident that he's going to be a heck of a player for us and be ready to roll."

Brown had 686 catches and 9,145 yards receiving the past six seasons in Pittsburgh, the best marks ever for a receiver in a six-year span. But he still wore out his welcome with the Steelers after leaving the team before a crucial Week 17 game last season and Oakland was able to acquire him in March for the small price of third- and fifth-round draft picks.

The drama that surrounded Brown in Pittsburgh didn't stop upon his arrival in Oakland even though he was given a hefty raise with a three-year contract worth \$50.125 million.

Brown arrived at camp with the frost-bitten feet, sending him to the non-football injury list. He was activated on July 28 and participated in parts of two practices before leaving for more than a week to get treatment on his feet and to deal with the helmet grievance.

Nola sharp as Phillies hold off Red Sox

Associated Press

BOSTON — Phillies shortstop Jean Segura was throwing out Red Sox baserunners from both sides of the infield.

Segura made a quick flip to throw out Xander Bogaerts for the first out in the ninth when he attempted to go from second to third on a grounder to short. Then, while covering the second base position in a shift, Segura gloved a hard liner and threw to first to double off pinch-runner Chris Owings and end the game.

"Segura was on top of his game in that inning," Philadelphia manager Gabe Kapler said after beating Boston 3-2

on Tuesday night. "Real quick reactions, and certainly good positioning by [infield coach Bobby Dickerson]."

Segura added a two-run double in the first inning and Aaron Nola (12-3) pitched seven innings of four-hit ball to help Philadelphia snap a two-game losing streak. Nola allowed two runs and one walk while striking out seven to win for the sixth time in his last seven decisions.

Kapler said he plans to pitch the right-hander every fifth day, even with days off, through the end of the season.

"We're in a playoff race and he's far and away our best and most dependable pitcher," said

the manager, whose team remained two games behind the Cubs and tied with the Mets in the NL wild-card race after both Chicago and New York also won Tuesday night. "It's time to take that liberty."

In the opener of a two-game interleague series, three of the first four Philadelphia batters reached base, including back-to-back doubles by Bryce Harper and Segura. Boston made it 3-2 on Jackie Bradley Jr.'s homer in the third but managed just four more hits the rest of the game.

Jose Alvarez and Mike Morin shared the eighth before Hector Neris came on for the ninth and gave up a leadoff double to

Bogaerts.

Bogaerts was out trying to advance to third on a grounder to the shortstop, and then Owings was doubled off first on a hard liner to Segura, who was shifted between first and second, to end the game.

"That's a no-no and he knows it," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said about Bogaerts. "That ball was right in front of him and that's a big mistake."

Neris earned his 22nd save.

Red Sox starter Brian Johnson (1-2) allowed three runs, six hits and two walks, striking out four in 32/3 innings as Boston ended a five-game winning streak.

MLB roundup

Mets top Indians in opening game of crucial homestand

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Commit a mistake against the New York Mets these days and they are poised to make you pay.

Michael Conforto hit a tie-breaking homer moments after an embarrassing error by Cleveland Indians left fielder Oscar Mercado, and the resurgent Mets rolled from there to a 9-2 victory Tuesday night.

"We just have guys stepping up left and right," Conforto said. "Just guys getting big hits in big situations. That's what it's all about."

J.D. Davis also launched a two-run shot and Steven Matz (8-7) permitted one earned run in 61/3 innings as the Mets opened a critical homestand against a trio of pennant contenders with a resounding performance. New York (65-60), which remained two games out of a wild-card spot, has won 19 of 24 to match a season high at five games over .500.

"I think we all knew that even (though) it's August, playoffs started today," Davis said. "We have to have that playoff mentality, that playoff atmo-

sphere that every game counts — especially the hole that we dug ourselves into."

Pete Alonso hit a two-run double to cap a four-run seventh that broke it open, and Mets manager Mickey Callaway bested former boss Terry Francona in Cleveland's first trip to Citi Field.

Before getting the New York job, Callaway enjoyed an extremely successful five-year stint as Indians pitching coach under Francona. The two still keep in touch regularly, and they had a warm visit in a coaches' room at the ballpark in the early afternoon.

Orioles 4, Royals 1: Hanser Alberto hit a tiebreaking three-run homer in the eighth inning, and host Baltimore ended an eight-game losing streak.

Angels 5-2, Rangers 1-3: Delino DeShields raced home from second with the winning run in the 11th inning, giving host Texas a doubleheader split with Los Angeles after an error by first baseman Albert Pujols.

In the opener, Andrew Heaney (3-3) had a career-high 14 strikeouts without a walk over eight innings and Mike Trout

matched the MLB lead with his career-best 42nd homer in the Angels' win. Luis Rengifo also went deep for Los Angeles.

Reds 3, Padres 2: Freddy Galvis hit a tie-breaking two-run homer in the sixth inning, and Aristides Aquino added an RBI single as host Cincinnati beat San Diego.

Braves 5, Marlins 1: Freddie Freeman homered twice and drove in four runs, Dallas Keuchel (4-5) kept working out of trouble and host Atlanta defeated Miami.

Dodgers 16, Blue Jays 3: Clayton Kershaw (13-2) passed Sandy Koufax for most wins by a Los Angeles left-hander and Will Smith hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the third inning during a rout of visiting Toronto.

Kershaw earned his 166th career victory, breaking a tie with Koufax for fifth on the club's wins list.

Athletics 6, Yankees 2: Matt Olson and Mark Canha hit back-to-back homers in the first inning to lead host Oakland over New York for its fifth win in six games.

Pirates 4, Nationals 1: Star-

ling Marte hit a tiebreaking three-run homer in eighth inning, and host Pittsburgh beat Washington.

Cubs 5, Giants 3: Anthony Rizzo homered twice and Cole Hamels (7-4) pitched six innings for his first win in two months, helping host Chicago top San Francisco.

Mariners 7, Rays 4: Tom Murphy hit a tiebreaking homer, his sixth in four games, in the sixth inning to lift visiting Seattle over Tampa Bay.

Twins 14, White Sox 4: Nelson Cruz homered and drove in three runs on four hits in his second game back from a wrist injury as host Minnesota beat Chicago.

Astros 6, Tigers 3: George Springer, Jose Altuve and Martin Maldonado homered to lead host Houston over Detroit.

Cardinals 9, Brewers 4: Dexter Fowler hit a bases-loaded double and drove in four runs, leading host St. Louis past Milwaukee.

Diamondbacks 8, Giants 7: Pinch-hitter Jake Lamb had a tiebreaking two-run single in the sixth inning and host Arizona held on to beat Colorado.