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FBI: Base shooting 'terrorism related'

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The shooting at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, on Thursday that left the gunman dead, a sailor injured and a second person of interest at large is being investigated as “terrorism related,” the FBI said.

“We are working diligently with our state, local and federal partners on this investigation, which is fluid and evolving,” FBI Agent Leah Greeves said during a news conference. “We may have a potential second related person of interest at large in the community. But we would encourage the public to remain calm.”

Greeves provided few additional details during the news conference but confirmed the gunman was dead. The FBI said they would not release information about the suspect at this time due to the ongoing investigation.

However, the suspect was identified as Adam Alshali of Corpus Christi, according to three officials familiar with the investigation who were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The incident locked down the base for

more than five hours, with a report of an active shooter at the base at about 6:15 a.m., the Navy said.

The gunman tried to speed through a base security gate, opening fire and wounding the sailor, a member of base security, U.S. officials told the AP. But she was able to roll over and hit the switch that raised a barrier, preventing the man from getting onto the base, the officials said.

Other security personnel shot and killed the man. The sailor sustained minor injuries and she was treated and released from a local hospital Thursday, said Steve Strickland, a spokesman with Navy Region Southeast

An early morning post on the base's Facebook page about the incident stated the shooter was in the vicinity of the north gate. Local station Kiii 3 News posted a video of the shooting from a witness who appeared to be waiting in a line of cars near the gate. Multiple gunshots can be heard throughout the minute-long video.

The base lifted the lockdown at about 11:38 a.m. and normal traffic resumed at the main gate, according to a post on the base's Facebook page. The north gate remains closed to all traffic and the scene is

still being processed, Greeves said.

Naval Criminal Investigative Service and local law enforcement were also involved in the investigation at the scene. However, the FBI's office in Houston is the lead agency in the investigation.

Naval Air Station Corpus Christi conducts pilot training, according to the base website.

The base had a similar lockdown in December when a man rammed his truck into a barricade, according to The Associated Press. He has pleaded guilty to destruction of U.S. government property and possession of a stolen firearm.

This is the third active-shooter incident at a naval base in five months. On Dec. 4, a junior enlisted sailor, Gabriel Antonio Romero, 22, shot three civilians at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, killing two of them before killing himself.

Just days later on Dec. 6, a Saudi Air Force officer, Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani, shot and killed three sailors and injured eight others at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla. On Monday, the FBI announced Alshamrani was in communication with al-Qaida prior to the attack based on data found on his cellphone.

EU states vow to respect overflight treaty without US

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Ten European Union countries on Friday expressed regret at U.S. plans to withdraw from an international treaty allowing observation flights over more than 30 countries and vowed to uphold the pact, as NATO envoys met to discuss developments.

President Donald Trump said Thursday that Russian violations make it untenable for the United States to stay in the Open Skies Treaty. Washington has signaled that it will pull out in six months, although Trump hinted that he might reconsider the decision.

The treaty came into force in 2002. It was meant to promote trust between the U.S. and Russia by allowing signatories to conduct reconnaissance flights over each other's territories to collect information

about military forces and activities.

In a joint statement, the foreign ministries of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden said the pact “is a crucial element of the confidence-building framework that was created over the past decades in order to improve transparency and security across the Euro-Atlantic area.”

“We will continue to implement the Open Skies Treaty, which has a clear added value for our conventional arms control architecture and cooperative security. We reaffirm that this treaty remains functioning and useful,” the 10 said, even though they share U.S. concerns about Russia's respect of the pact.

They called on Russia to lift flight restrictions, notably over its Kaliningrad region,

which lies between NATO allies Lithuania and Poland. Of the 10 countries, Finland and Sweden are not NATO members.

Already in 2018, NATO leaders expressed concern about “Russia's ongoing selective implementation” of the treaty and other conventional arms control pacts. European nations have conducted most of the flights, which often take place over Russia and Belarus.

Earlier, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas acknowledged that Russia was not respecting the treaty, “but from our point of view, this does not justify a withdrawal.”

He said his counterparts in Britain, France, and Poland have repeatedly made this clear to Washington, and that Germany “will work intensively in this time with our like-minded partners for the U.S. to reconsider its decision.”

Fla. base takes safety pause after crashes

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Two fighter jet crashes just days apart at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., have prompted the base commander to call for a safety pause at the base.

Brig. Gen. Scott Cain, commander of the 96th Test Wing, which is responsible for operations at the base located in the Florida Panhandle, posted a message to the base Facebook page Wednesday that announced the pause, which includes safety instruction for all Eglin personnel.

The order follows accidents

that occurred in the last week involving two different aircraft from two different units.

An F-22 Raptor crashed Friday into a training range located about 12 miles northeast of the main base. An F-35A Lightning II crashed Tuesday while landing. The pilots involved in each crash were able to eject from their aircraft and have since been released from the hospital, Cain said.

Both accidents remain under investigation and no cause for either has been released.

The two crashes were part of routine training operations, according to news releases.

The F-22 was part of the 325th Fighter Wing and the F-35A was part of the 58th Fighter Squadron. Neither resulted in loss of life or damage to civilian property.

Cain's safety message to airmen also directed leaders at the base to spend Thursday speaking with service members about "how we will continue to operate safely as we return to flying operations after Memorial Day and also how we will maintain our resiliency through all of this."

During the safety pause, Cain also asked for the 9,800 military and civilian person-

nel who report to the base to discuss how to remain safe throughout the long Memorial Day weekend.

Because of the precautions required by the coronavirus pandemic, the safety pause was virtual and included a briefing from the safety office to be used base-wide, Cain wrote in an additional post about the safety pause.

"Times of crisis are the true test of an individual's character and they also demonstrate the strength of a team," he said. "Team Eglin has certainly risen to the occasion in the last week."

Marine received medal for saving injured motorist

BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes

When Cpl. Andrew Tate saw an overturned car at the side of the road in a national park in California, his Marine instincts and trauma aid training kicked in and allowed him to save the life of the badly injured driver, he said.

Tate, with the 1st Marine Division, was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal this month in a ceremony at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, Calif., for rescuing the driver — a man in his mid-40s who was on a camping trip.

But if Tate had not taken the Combat Lifesaver Course, things might have turned

out differently, the Marine told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday.

Tate pulled over immediately when he saw the flipped vehicle in Mojave National Preserve, about an hour south of Las Vegas.

Grabbing the trauma kit he always carries with him, he ran to the vehicle, only to find the doors had been crushed inward and wouldn't open.

Instinctively, Tate heaved his body against the vehicle and began shaking one of the doors back and forth until he was able to wrench it open, he said.

With another motorist who had also stopped to help, retired Marine Lt. Col. Tom McCabe, Tate carefully extracted the driver from the vehicle. McCabe counted

several cars that drove past without stopping, Tate said.

As the two Marines pulled the injured man from the vehicle, they talked to him to ensure he did not lose consciousness, Tate said.

Tate stabilized the victim and prepared a landing zone for a medical evacuation helicopter, his award citation said.

Several weeks after the incident, which happened last year, the driver told Tate that he was recovering and doing well, the Marine said.

The Navy and Marine Corps Commendation medal is awarded for acts of heroism or meritorious achievement or service to personnel serving in any capacity with the Navy or Marine Corps.

Pentagon reverses policy on virus hospitalizations

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon's top official for personnel issues said Thursday that he has canceled an order that seemed to bar individuals from military service if they were hospitalized with complications from the coronavirus.

Matthew Donovan, the undersecretary of defense for

personnel and readiness, told reporters that the Pentagon no longer had a specific policy instructing the services on how to handle recruits who have been previously diagnosed with the virus. Donovan's announcement — at least the third adjustment to the policy in recent weeks — came during a Pentagon news briefing in response to questions about a May 6 order, which temporarily

stopped the services from enlisting potential recruits who spent time in the hospital with a coronavirus diagnosis.

"I have rescinded that," he said.

The military will continue to halt recruits now experiencing symptoms or who test positive for the coronavirus from shipping to initial entrance training until they recover, Donovan said. He said he briefed some

Senate Armed Services Committee members on the changes recently.

Donovan said people who have suffered from the coronavirus will be examined by a doctor, just as any other individual attempting to enter the military would. Some of those individuals could require additional screening to ensure they did not suffer long-term effects from the virus.

Jobless aid splits Congress politically

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Reconsideration of jobless aid is fast becoming the focus of congressional debate over the next virus aid package

After the Senate decided to take a “pause” on new pandemic proposals, senators faced mounting pressure to act before leaving town for a week-long Memorial Day break. Republicans are staking out plans to phase out coronavirus-related unemployment benefits to encourage Americans to go back to work. The Senate also

began efforts to fast-track an extension of a popular small business lending program.

“Republicans and the White House are reaching consensus on the need for redesigning the unemployment benefits so they are not a barrier to getting people back to work,” Rep. Kevin Brady of Texas, the top Republican on the House Ways and Means Committee, told reporters on a conference call. President Donald Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell huddled at the White House to discuss the issues.

The flurry of activity comes after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi pushed a new \$3 trillion aid package through the House last week. The Senate, under McConnell, says there is no urgency to act, and senators are expected to reconsider more aid only in June.

Congress has moved beyond the political consensus reached at the outset of the crisis and is now splitting along familiar party lines.

Brady warned that generous benefits, with a \$600 weekly boost during the pandemic ap-

proved under the earlier aid bill, would “handcuff” workers and discourage them from returning to work.

Republicans are hopeful that as states reopen, the economy will improve, lessening the need for more federal funds. But if workers refuse to return to work, they worry companies can’t begin to rebound.

Brady proposes giving workers a one-time \$1,200 bonus to get back to work. He said conversations were happening at the highest levels at the White House.

Face masks overshadow Trump’s Ford factory visit

Associated Press

YPSILANTI TOWNSHIP, Mich. — Pandemic politics shadowed President Donald Trump’s trip to Michigan on Thursday as he highlighted lifesaving medical devices, with the president and officials from the electoral battleground state clashing over federal aid, mail-in ballots and face masks.

Trump visited Ypsilanti, outside Detroit, to tour a Ford Motor Co. factory that had been repurposed to manufacture ventilators, the medical breathing machines governors begged for during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But his visit came amid a long-running feud with the state’s Democratic governor and a day after the president threatened to withhold federal funds over the state’s expanded vote-by-mail effort. And, again, the president did not publicly wear a face covering.

All of the Ford executives giving Trump the tour were wearing masks, the president standing alone without one. At one point, he did take a White House-branded mask from his pocket and tell reporters he had worn it elsewhere on the tour, out of public view.

“I did not want to give the press the pleasure of seeing it,” Trump said.

A statement from Ford said that Bill Ford, the company’s executive chairman, “encouraged President Trump to wear a mask when he arrived” and said the president wore it during “a private viewing of three Ford GTs from over the years” before removing it.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said Trump’s decision “wasn’t surprising but it was disappointing.” Speaking to MSNBC, she added that anyone with a public platform “has a responsibility to make sure that they model precisely what we’re asking everyone else to do.”

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel said mask wearing isn’t just Ford’s policy — it’s also the law in a state that’s among those hardest hit by the virus. Nessel said that if Trump refused to wear a mask Thursday “he’s going to be asked not to return to any enclosed facilities inside our state” and “we’re going to have to take action” against any company that allows it in the future.

Poll: Trump’s approval rating remains steady

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As the coronavirus pandemic stretches on, Americans’ views of the federal and state government response to the crisis are starting to sour — yet President Donald Trump’s personal approval rating has remained steady.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that 41% of Americans approve of the president’s job performance, while 58% disapprove. That’s consistent with opinions of Trump before the pandemic, as well as throughout his more than three years in office.

The survey highlights one of the remarkable features of Trump’s tenure as president: Despite a steady drumbeat of controversies, an impeachment trial and now a historic public health crisis, few Americans have changed their views of him.

“The Trump presidency is a perfect example of the Rorschach test of politics,” said Alice Stewart, a Republican strategist. “People that want to see that the president is doing a good job will see that regardless of where the chips fall. If they want to see that he’s doing

a crappy job, they will see that regardless of what happens.”

Overall, the poll shows that 39% of Americans approve of Trump’s handling of the virus.

Just 31% of Americans approve of the federal government’s response. Forty-eight percent disapprove, including 20% of Trump’s supporters — suggesting that some view the president apart from the sprawling federal apparatus he oversees.

Approval ratings for the federal government have slipped as the pandemic has stretched on, from 40% approval one month ago to 31% now.

State governments continue to get higher marks from the public, though support there is slipping as well.

State governments have ultimate control over when and how restrictions on businesses, schools and public transportation are lifted. In hard hit areas like New York City, strict limitations remain in place. In other parts of the country, including Texas and Georgia, restaurants, malls and other businesses have started to welcome back customers. Just 23% of Americans however, approve of the congressional leaders’ response.

San Francisco allows homeless encampments

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco is joining other U.S. cities in authorizing homeless tent encampments in response to the coronavirus pandemic, a move officials have long resisted but are now reluctantly embracing to safeguard homeless people.

About 80 tents are now neatly spaced out on a wide street near San Francisco City Hall as part of a “safe sleeping village” opened last week. The area between the city’s central library and its Asian Art Museum is fenced off to outsiders, monitored around the clock and provides meals, showers, clean water and trash pickup.

In announcing the encampment, and a second one to open in the famed Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, San Francisco Mayor London Breed acknowledged that she didn’t want to approve tents, but having unregulated tents mushroom on sidewalks was neither safe nor fair.

“So while in normal times I would say that we should focus on bringing people inside and not sanctioning tent encampments, we frankly do not have many other options right now,” Breed said in a tweet last week.

San Francisco has moved 1,300 homeless people into hotel rooms and RVs as part of a statewide program to shelter vulnerable people but the mayor has been criticized for moving too slowly. She has said she is not inclined to move all the city’s estimated 8,000 homeless into hotels, despite complaints from advocates who say overcrowded tents are a public health disaster.

San Francisco is just the latest city to authorize encampments as shelters across the country move to thin bed counts so homeless people, who are particularly susceptible to the virus due to poor health, have more room to keep apart.

Florida

TAMPA — A Florida man accused of coughing on and spitting at police officers while claiming to be infected with the

coronavirus was indicted on a federal terrorism charge.

A federal grand jury in Tampa returned an indictment Wednesday charging James Jamal Curry, 31, with perpetrating a biological weapon hoax, according to court records. He had previously been charged by a criminal complaint last month. He faces up to 5 years in federal prison if convicted.

Curry’s attorney, Samuel Landes, said in an email that prosecutors are stretching a law meant for terrorists to cover a run-of-the-mill police encounter.

“The United States Attorney’s position, in this case, would make each of the millions of COVID-19 patients ‘in possession’ of a biological weapon,” Landes said.

St. Petersburg police officers responded to a domestic violence call involving Curry on March 27, according to court documents. During his arrest, Curry declared that he was infected with COVID-19 and coughed on an officer’s arm, police said.

Curry bonded out of jail the following day, and police were later called to the same residence where Curry had been arrested a day earlier. During his second arrest, Curry spit on an officer multiple times, hitting the inside of her mouth with blood-filled saliva, prosecutors said. Curry again claimed to have the coronavirus, laughed and announced that he was spreading the virus.

Law enforcement obtained a warrant to test Curry for COVID-19, and the result was negative.

Georgia

ATLANTA — Data on coronavirus infections that was a key driver in Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp’s aggressive push to reopen the state was flawed and may have distorted perceptions of progress against the virus.

Georgia Department of Public Health spokeswoman Nancy Nydam said in an emailed statement Thursday that the department included

antibody tests when calculating the total number of tests conducted “since early April,” using the same methodology as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She said about 57,000 of the 407,000 total tests reported to the state have been antibody tests.

The inclusion of antibody tests in state testing data was first reported by the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer.

Antibody tests look for the presence of a protein that the body makes in reaction to the virus, while other, more common tests, called viral tests, look for the virus itself.

Conflating the two tests can create confusion about the current impact of the virus, said Dr. Richard Rothenberg, an infectious disease expert at Georgia State University. That’s because antibody tests tell you whether a person had the coronavirus in the past, not whether the person was infected at the time of the test.

Kansas

BELLE PLAINE — The University of Kansas faces a shortfall amounting to more than a quarter of its general operating budget after the coronavirus pandemic forced it to close campuses, Chancellor Douglas Girod said Thursday.

The \$120 million shortfall stems from losses in research dollars, event fees and student housing and dining revenue, The Lawrence Journal-World reported.

“I share this sobering assessment to contextualize the hard decisions we need to make. With a budget shortfall of this magnitude, KU needs to adopt new business models, reorganize and restructure, streamline and cut programs, and implement long-term cost reductions to address historic financial challenges,” Girod said in a written message.

Michigan

DETROIT — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer prevailed Thursday in a high-stakes challenge from Republican lawmakers who sued over her authority to de-

clare emergencies and order sweeping restrictions during the coronavirus outbreak.

A 1945 law cited by Whitmer, a Democrat, is not limited to regional emergencies and can have no end date, said Judge Cynthia Stephens of the Court of Claims.

“It would take a particularly strained reading of the plain text of the (law) to conclude that a grant of authority to deal with a public crisis that affects all the people of this state would somehow be constrained to a certain locality,” Stephens said.

The lawsuit by the House and Senate grew out of frustration with Whitmer’s one-size strategy to stop the spread of the coronavirus by keeping people at home statewide and shutting down businesses, even if regions far from the Detroit area were not harmed as much by the virus or COVID-19.

New York

NEW YORK — Summer school in New York will be conducted remotely, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Thursday, citing the risks of returning children to the classroom.

The governor said it’s too early to make a decision about the fall semester. School buildings in New York have been closed since March.

“Schools obviously pose risks. They’re places of gathering. They’re on buses. They’re in classrooms,” Cuomo said at his daily briefing. “How do you reduce density in a classroom? How do you reduce density in a cafeteria, on a school bus, et cetera? How do you get children to wear masks?”

New York City is also meeting the coronavirus crisis with a massive emergency food assistance program and will be delivering 1 million meals daily by next week, with another 500,000 meals available daily for pickup at school sites, Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

“We will let no New Yorker go hungry, period,” de Blasio said. “It’s not acceptable, no matter what we’re up against, that anyone would be hungry in this city.”

Flood raises pollution fears from plant

Associated Press

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. — It took seven years to settle on a plan for cleansing two rivers and floodplains polluted with dioxins from a Dow Chemical Co. plant in central Michigan. The work itself has lasted nearly twice as long, with plenty still to do.

Now, scientists and activists fear some of the progress may have washed away with floodwaters that overwhelmed two dams this week, chasing 11,000 people from homes in and near

Midland, the company's headquarters city.

The Tittabawassee River flows past the Dow plant and eventually meets the Saginaw River, which continues into Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay. That 50-mile stretch is tainted with dioxins — highly toxic compounds that researchers say can damage reproductive and immune systems and cause cancer. The area is on the federal Superfund list of hazardous sites.

Regulators and company of-

officials said Thursday it was too early to tell whether the swollen river had damaged spots that had been repaired or swept pollutants farther downstream. Dow said it would inspect each cleanup location as floodwaters recede and sample for new contamination.

The projects "held up remarkably well" during a 2017 flood "and we are confident that we will see a similar outcome this time," spokesman Kyle Bandlow said.

The U.S. Environmen-

tal Protection Agency said it would team with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy to evaluate any chemical releases from the plant, although Dow had reported none. Damage from the flood three years ago was "minimal" and required only minor repairs, EPA's regional office in Chicago said.

But a similar outcome is unlikely after this week's considerably bigger flood, said Allen Burton, a professor of environment and sustainability at the University of Michigan.

Prosecutor pledges justice for Arbery slaying

Associated Press

DECATUR, Ga. — The Atlanta-area district attorney now prosecuting the fatal shooting of Ahmaud Arbery spoke for the first time about the case Friday, pledging to "make sure that we find justice" for a "broken" family and community.

Georgia Bureau of Investigation director Vic Reynolds appeared alongside Cobb County D.A. Joyette Holmes, saying that "at this point we feel confident the individuals who needed to be charged have been charged."

Their news conference at GBI headquarters in Decatur followed the arrest Thursday of 50-year-old William "Roddie" Bryan Jr. on charges of felony murder and

criminal attempt to commit false imprisonment. Bryan is the man whose cellphone video of Arbery's shooting led to the arrest of Gregory and Travis McMichael on murder and aggravated assault charges more than two months after the slaying.

Asked how Bryan could be charged with murder if he didn't pull the trigger, Reynolds referred to Bryan's arrest warrant, which said he tried "to confine and detain" Arbery without legal authority by "utilizing his vehicle on multiple occasions" before Arbery was shot.

"We are going to make sure that we find justice in this case. We know that we have a broken family and a broken community down in Brunswick," Holmes said.

Bryan's attorney, Kevin Gough, has said his client played no role in Arbery's death, asserting that "Roddie Bryan is not now, and has never been, more than a witness to the shooting."

But the GBI director said Friday that "if we believed he was a witness, we wouldn't have arrested him."

Under Georgia law, a person can be charged with felony murder for committing any felony that causes the death of someone else. It does not require intent to kill and carries an automatic life sentence. Arbery was slain Feb. 23 when the white father and son armed themselves and pursued the 25-year-old black man running in their neighborhood.

Pakistan plane crash kills 107 and destroys houses

Associated Press

KARACHI, Pakistan — A passenger plane crashed in a crowded neighborhood on the edge of the international airport near Pakistan's southern port city of Karachi on Friday, killing all 107 passengers and crew, the city's mayor said.

Mayor Wasim Akhtar said at least five or six houses were destroyed in the crash of the domestic flight operated by Pakistan International Airlines. It wasn't immediately known if anyone was killed or wounded in the neighborhood itself.

Police wearing protective masks struggled to clear away crowds to allow a firetruck and an ambulance to move through the narrow streets toward the crash site, the air filled with dust and smoke. Police and soldiers cordoned off the area.

A transmission of the pilot's final exchange with air traffic control, posted on the website LiveATC.net, indicated he had failed to land and was circling around to make another attempt.

"We are proceeding direct, sir — we have lost engine," a

pilot said.

"Confirm your attempt on belly," the air traffic controller said, offering a runway.

"Sir — mayday, mayday, mayday, mayday Pakistan 8303," the pilot said before the transmission ended.

The aircraft arriving from the eastern city of Lahore was carrying 99 passengers and eight crew members, said Abdul Sattar Kokhar, spokesman Pakistan's civil aviation authority.

Witnesses said the Airbus A320 appeared to attempt to

land two or three times before crashing in a residential area near Jinnah International Airport. The residential area on the edge of the airport, known as Model Colony, is poor and heavily congested.

Airworthiness documents showed the plane last received a government check on Nov. 1, 2019. PIA's chief engineer signed a separate certificate April 28 saying all maintenance had been conducted. It said "the aircraft is fully airworthy and meets all the safety" standards.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officials: 2 firefighters get fired for cheating

GA FORSYTH — Two firefighters in Georgia were fired after they were caught cheating in a fire instructor training class, authorities said.

The Monroe County Emergency Services announced the terminations in a Facebook post on Wednesday, two days after instructors from the Georgia Public Safety Training Center told the department the firefighters had cheated in the class.

“Whether on an emergency scene or training in the classroom, the trust of the public is imperative and of the utmost importance to us,” Monroe County Emergency Services Spokesman Capt. Shane Cook said.

Officials said the names of the terminated firefighters will not be released.

High school’s WebEx meeting gets hijacked

SC COLUMBIA — A high school principal’s online meeting to plan a virtual graduation ceremony was hijacked by someone who played porn videos for students and parents, news outlets reported.

“As you might imagine I’m both mortified and angry,” Dreher High School Principal Kevin Hasinger wrote in an email to families after his WebEx meeting was disrupted. He said he’d contact Cisco Systems to identify the person who locked him out and played the video.

Superintendent Craig Witherspoon told The State that the school is investigating. Hasinger said any student found to be involved will be expelled. The school’s resource officer also is preparing a police report,

Columbia Police Spokeswoman Jennifer Timmons said.

Police crack down on illegal dirt bike use

MA BOSTON — Boston police have arrested 18 people and seized 30 off-road vehicles they said were negatively affecting the quality of life in the city by tearing around urban streets in a “reckless and irresponsible manner.”

The series of arrests announced Wednesday occurred on various days earlier this month.

The vehicles seized included dirt bikes, mopeds and motor scooters, many of which were not properly registered.

During one arrest, officers observed two people on dirt bikes without helmets, going through red lights, weaving in and out of traffic, and traveling on the wrong side of the road at high speed.

Man suspected of vandalizing art exhibit

SD SIOUX FALLS — A man suspected of vandalizing an exhibit of outdoor art sculptures in Sioux Falls has been arrested in Alaska, officials said.

The 35-year-old man is being held on a felony charge of intentional damage to property between \$100,000 and \$500,000.

Jackson was arrested Tuesday in Fairbanks, Alaska, after an arrest warrant was issued, Minnehaha County State’s Attorney Crystal Johnson said Wednesday. He is currently waiting extradition back to South Dakota.

Officers responded to a report of vandalism downtown May 5 after two sculptures and several windows at U.S. Bank and the Carroll Institute were damaged, The Argus Leader

reported.

Jackson was in Sioux Falls to buy a dog and had lived in Sioux Falls for a short time prior to moving to Alaska, according to the warrant.

He was recognized at the Sioux Falls Regional Airport by someone who sent in a tip to CrimeStoppers, officials said.

The SculptureWalk in downtown Sioux Falls is a collection of outdoor sculptures that are displayed year-round.

Visitor hurt when bison knocks her to ground

WY YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — Yellowstone National Park officials say a visitor was injured when she was knocked to the ground after getting too close to a bison near the popular Old Faithful Geyser.

The visitor, whose name and age have not been released, was injured Wednesday afternoon but refused to be taken to a hospital. Park officials did not provide any details about her injuries.

The incident is the first time a bison has injured a visitor this year.

Visitors are required to stay at least 25 yards away from large animals, including bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose and coyotes, and at least 100 yards away from bears and wolves.

Man held for allegedly stealing small plane

CA FULLERTON — A stolen plane crashed into a fence at the Fullerton Municipal Airport on Wednesday afternoon and the unlicensed pilot was arrested, police said.

Only minor damage occurred when the Cessna 172S overshot the runway while landing and hit a fence, Sgt. Eric Bridges told the Orange

County Register.

The plane was stolen earlier from the Chino Airport a few miles away in San Bernardino County, police said.

“We called the owner and asked if he was missing a plane, and he said ‘no’ at first,” Bridges said. “He thought it was still sitting at the airport where he left it.”

A 32-year-old West Covina man was arrested on suspicion of grand theft and the theft of an aircraft. His name wasn’t immediately released.

It wasn’t immediately clear how he managed to take the plane, police said.

Man arrested for thefts of garage doors

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A Utah man who was hired to install garage doors acquired supplies by stealing doors from homes under construction, authorities said.

Police arrested Justin Thomas Strasburg, 35, on Tuesday, The Deseret News reported.

Strasburg was arrested May 7 while in possession of about \$1,500 in stolen garage door components. He was a suspect in thefts across Salt Lake and Utah counties, a police affidavit said.

After Strasburg’s release from the Salt Lake County Jail, a Utah County sheriff’s detective posed as a garage door buyer and set up an appointment with Strasburg in Eagle Mountain on Tuesday, authorities said.

Strasburg fled from the officer and was apprehended after a vehicle and foot chase.

“In speaking with Justin, he admitted to being the suspect in eight separate incidents where garage doors, garage door openers, motors and other items for garage doors were taken,” the affidavit said.

From wire reports

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NFL looks at adding 'booth umpire' and tech adviser for refs

Associated Press

The NFL is considering adding a "booth umpire" and a senior technology adviser to the referee to assist the officiating crew.

The league also is looking at other rules changes, including an alternative to the on-side kick.

NFL clubs received a list of potential rules changes on Thursday. Owners will vote on the proposals at the upcoming league meeting to be held by video conference on May 28.

The league's competition committee told teams last month it supports studying ways to determine how officiating personnel who have access to a video feed could help on-field officials. A booth umpire would serve as an eighth game official.

If owners don't approve adding a booth umpire and/or a senior technology adviser, the league could test a version of both rules in the preseason for possible future implementation.

The proposal that would give teams another option instead of an onside kick permits a team to maintain possession of the ball after a score by substituting one offensive play. The kicking team would attempt a fourth-and-15 from its 25-yard line. This could be done a maximum of two times per game.

Onside kicks have become infrequent — and hardly ever successful — since the NFL changed rules on alignments for kickoffs.

Other rules changes to be discussed:

- Making permanent the expansion of automatic replay reviews to include scoring plays and turnovers negated by a foul, and any successful or unsuccessful extra-point attempt.

- Providing the option to the defense for the game clock to start on the referee's signal if the defense declines an offensive penalty late in either half. This would eliminate instances when an offense could benefit time-wise from committing a penalty.

- Expanding the defenseless player protection to a kickoff or punt returner who is in possession of the ball but who has not had time to avoid or ward off the impending contact of an opponent.

- Preventing teams from manipulating the game clock by committing multiple dead-ball fouls while the clock is running.

The Eagles had proposed restoring preseason and regular-season overtime to 15 minutes and to implement rules to minimize the impact of the overtime coin toss. But they have withdrawn the idea.

Owners are expected to drop the use of video reviews on pass interference after a one-year trial that caused as many headaches as it solved issues.

Dolphins' rookie Tagovailoa is league's lone lefty QB

Associated Press

When Tua Tagovailoa signed his rookie contract with the Miami Dolphins, the left-handed quarterback from Alabama didn't have to worry about smudging his signature.

He signed the documents with his right hand.

Yes, the NFL's latest lefty QB is a natural right-hander, one whose father, Galu, turned him into a (sometimes) southpaw in his youth.

"My dad was the only lefty in our family and he wanted me to be a lefty as well, so he switched the way I threw," explained Tagovailoa, who still eats, writes and golfs right-handed but shoots baskets and throws footballs with his left.

"I don't think I would be here if I was a righty," said Tagovailoa. "Because I know I'm only good with my left hand throwing the ball."

That makes Tagovailoa an oddity in the NFL, where a left-hander hasn't started at quarterback since 2015, when Dallas' Kellen Moore threw for 435 yards in a Week 17 loss to Washington.

Since then, 116 quarterbacks have thrown a pass in the NFL, and all of them were right-handed.

The last lefty to throw a TD pass wasn't even a quarterback but a wide receiver: the Cowboys' Dez Bryant threw a 25-yard strike to Jason Witten in 2016 against Detroit.

Fewer than three dozen southpaws have played quarterback in the NFL's 100-year history, something that irks Steve Young, the most decorated left-handed QB and the first to reach the Hall of Fame, 11 years before Ken Stabler's posthumous induction in 2016.

"There's something wrong from a statistical standpoint," Young said, noting that with 10% of the general population being left-handed, every year there should be a half-dozen lefties among the league's 64 or so quarterbacks.

"And we've never been 10%," Young said. "I can never remember six of us at one time. It was Boomer Esiason, myself, Mark Brunell, Jim Zorn early on. I can think of four or five, never six at one time, ever. Later on, Michael Vick."

Now, lefties are lucky there's even one of them.

"I will never say a kid is left-handed so he can't play in the National Football League," Steelers GM Kevin Colbert said. "That would be a naive statement. That would never concern us whatsoever."

Added 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan: "A good thrower is a good thrower. I would say it's probably a coincidence, probably less pool to choose from."

The bias certainly doesn't begin in the pros.

"I don't follow all college teams, but I never see a lefty quarterback," Young said. "So, the NFL might say, 'Hey don't look at me. There's no lefties coming out of college.' Then, the colleges say, 'Look, there's no lefties coming out of high school.'"

Even the experts are stumped over what's caused this paucity of southpaws.

"I really don't know the answer," shrugged Ravens GM Eric DeCosta.

"Quite honestly, I don't know," added Falcons GM Thomas Dimitroff.

"I usually have an answer or can dance around a lot of things," Vikings GM Rick Spielman acknowledged. "That one, I have no answer to."

"I don't have an answer," either, added Broncos GM John Elway, who did offer a guess: he wonders if all the good left-handed quarterbacks are becoming pitchers instead.

"Those lefties that can throw heat are pretty coveted," said Elway, himself a minor league farmhand (as a right-handed outfielder) in the Yankees system the summer before beginning his Hall of Fame NFL career.

"If I could be a left-handed pitcher and throw in the 90s and play major league baseball, that's a pretty good gig," Jaguars coach Doug Marrone said. "I don't have anyone 300 pounds running at me trying to take me down."

Being such a scarcity, lefty QBs actually have an advantage because opponents aren't accustomed to facing offenses that have had to flip the playbook on its vertical axis, Young suggested.

"Our teams in San Francisco were always 'left-handed' because I was left-handed," Young said. "And I think there's a slight advantage because no one else shows up with a left-handed quarterback and such comfort coming out left, rolling left, left-to-right formations. And so for a defense, it was just different."

Recently, teams haven't needed to change the makeup of their offensive line to accommodate a lefty, either. With so many elite edge rushers, right tackles have become just as valued as left tackles, the traditional blindside protectors.

Just one more reason Young insists it's foolhardy to consider lefties a liability — at any level.

Heartbroken Briscoe wins Xfinity race

Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — Chase Briscoe was grateful to bring a moment or two of happiness to wife Marissa in the worst week of their lives.

It was Tuesday, during a 12-week exam, that they learned that their expected child — they only learned Monday that it was a girl — had no fetal heartbeat.

Two days later, Briscoe won the Xfinity Series' return to action when he held off Kyle Busch at Darlington Raceway.

"This has been the hardest week I've ever had to deal with and God is so good," Briscoe said. "Even when I took the lead with 50 to go, I was crying inside the race car."

Briscoe joined his wife's appointment on a video call from the infield at Darlington, awaiting the rain-delayed race's original start time. He and Marissa shared their news on Instagram on Wednesday, hoping it might help others cope with

similar tragedies.

His story will reach so many more after the victory Thursday.

"This is more than a race win," he said. "This is the biggest day of my life after the toughest day in my life, and to be able to beat the best there is is so satisfying."

Briscoe said he never seriously considered pulling out of the competition, that racing might be "therapeutic" in the series' first event since March 7 in Phoenix due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Briscoe used two strong restarts and a quick pit stop to finish on top. He got the lead out of the pits during the final caution, then pulled away from Busch and Justin Allgaier on the subsequent restart with seven laps to go for his fourth career win and second this season.

"Honestly, winning the Daytona 500 couldn't even top the feeling of just, like I was saying earlier, the ups and downs,"

Briscoe said. "This is what my family needed and what my wife needed."

Busch seemed to have the race in hand as he took the second stage in a dominant showing. But he was called for speeding in the pits and ordered to the back of the 39-car field.

But Busch was there to challenge Briscoe at the end, the cars touching off the final turn before Briscoe crossed the finish line in front by 0.08 seconds.

Allgaier was third, Austin Cindric fourth and Noah Gragson, the pole sitter who won the first stage, was fifth.

For Busch, it was another error that cost him a win at Darlington. In the NASCAR Cup Series race Wednesday night, he clipped Chase Elliott late to cause a spin — Elliott waited and extended his middle finger at Busch — and finished second to Joe Gibbs teammate Denny Hamlin.

Busch was satisfied with his

run. "I had a good showing, put on a little bit of an exciting show there at the end," he said.

Busch said wife Samantha reached out to Marissa to offer solace. The Busch family had similar heartache in the past.

Briscoe appreciated the words of consolation from the Busches and all the friends in NASCAR he's heard from the past two days.

Busch and Timmy Hill were in all three Darlington races. The two plan to run all four races at Charlotte, too.

After the delay Tuesday because of rain, more storms delayed the planned noon start for another 4½ hours.

NASCAR's Cup Series had a successful return at Darlington with two races.

Kevin Harvick earned his 50th Cup win when he took Sunday's race, the first for the series in 10 weeks while Hamlin won a rain-shortened race Wednesday night, the first time the series ran on that day since 1984.

Vanderbilt makes Lee first woman AD in SEC

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Vanderbilt has removed the interim title, making Candice Storey Lee the first woman to become an athletic director in the Southeastern Conference.

With Vanderbilt's announcement Wednesday, Lee now is among only five women and the second black woman in charge of a Power Five program. Daniel Diermeier, who takes over as Vanderbilt's chancellor on July 1, said Lee is the "living embodiment" of the university's values and aspirations.

"Candice is perfectly positioned to lead our athletics program to new heights of success on and off the field of play," Diermeier said. "She has the drive, creativity, and perseverance to help elevate our student-athletes, and the entire Vanderbilt Athletics program."

The 41-year-old Lee, a former Commodores basketball captain, was named interim athletic director Feb. 4 when Malcolm Turner resigned after one year on the job for the former NBA G League president. That made Lee the first woman to run athletics at Vanderbilt, and she said she was incredibly honored and could not be in this position without the support of Vanderbilt's leadership, coaches, staff and fans.

"There are challenges ahead and much uncertainty about what college athletics can and should look like during a pandemic, but I firmly believe that anything is possible if we all work together," Lee said.

Tennessee's Joan Cronan was the only other woman to have been at least an interim AD at an SEC school, the conference said. She was the interim for the Volunteers for approximately three months in

2011. Cronan and Bev Lewis at Arkansas both were in charge of women's departments when both schools had separate athletics departments.

Lee joins Carla Williams at Virginia as the only black women athletic directors at a Power Five school, with Sandy Barbour at Penn State, Jennifer Cohen at Washington and Heather Lyke at Pittsburgh the other women ADs.

As a four-year letter winner for Vanderbilt's women's basketball team, Lee graduated with a degree in human and organizational development in 2000. She also received her master's degree in counseling from Vanderbilt in 2002, and in 2012, Lee earned her doctorate from Vanderbilt in higher education administration.

She became Vanderbilt's senior woman administrator in the athletics department in 2004 and deputy athletic direc-

tor in 2016. In that role, Lee ran the day-to-day operations and also oversaw both football and women's basketball for the Commodores.

Lee is a former member of the NCAA women's basketball rules committee, former chair of the NCAA Division I women's lacrosse committee and a former chair of the SEC Senior Woman Administrators. Lee also is on the board of the directors for the YWCA of Middle Tennessee and on the SEC Executive Committee.

Susan R. Wente, Vanderbilt's interim chancellor and provost, said Lee hit the ground running after being appointed interim athletic director earlier this year.

"We will look back and see this decision as a major turning point for Vanderbilt athletics, and our entire university," Wente said.