

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Florence stalls, dumps feet of rain

Associated Press

NEW BERN, N.C. — Emergency workers went door to door urging people to flee Florence's rising waters Saturday, and rescuers used inflatable boats to pluck others from homes already submerged as the storm poured on the rain, setting the stage for what could be some of the most disastrous flooding in North Carolina history.

More than 2 feet of rain already had fallen in places, and the drenching went on and on as Florence, a hurricane-turned-tropical storm, practically parked itself over the two states. Forecasters said another 1½ feet could fall by the end of the weekend.

Rivers and creeks rose toward historic levels, threatening flash flooding that could devastate communities.

"I cannot overstate it. Floodwaters are rising, and if you aren't watching for them, you

are risking your life," said Gov. Roy Cooper.

Florence blew ashore early Friday in North Carolina with 90 mph winds, buckling buildings, deluging entire communities and knocking out power to more than 900,000 homes and businesses as it crawled inland and weakened into a still-lethal tropical storm.

The death toll from the storm climbed to at least five — four in North Carolina, including a mother and a baby killed when a tree fell onto a house in Wilmington, and one in South Carolina.

Officials in North Carolina's Harnett County, about 90 miles inland, urged residents of about 1,100 homes to evacuate because the Lower Little River was rising toward record levels.

In New Bern, along the coast, aerial photos show homes completely surrounded by water, with rescuers using inflatable

boats to go house to house to remove people. More than 360 people have been carried to safety since Thursday night amid rising waters from a river swelled by both rain and salty storm surge.

A pet dog licked Johan Mackie's face after he helped rescue Kevin Knox's family from their flooded home. The Army sergeant was part of a team using a phone app to locate people in distress.

At 11 a.m., Florence was centered about 40 miles west of Myrtle Beach, S.C., moving west at 2 mph, not even as fast as a person can walk. Its winds were down to 45 mph.

With the eye of Florence stalled near the coast, the half of the storm still out over the Atlantic continued to collect warm ocean water and dump it on land.

Stream gauges across the region showed levels steadily ris-

ing, with forecasts calling for rivers to crest Sunday and Monday at or near record levels. The Little River, Cape Fear, Lumber, Neuse, Waccamaw and Pee Dee all were projected to rise over their banks, flooding cities and towns.

National Hurricane Center Director Ken Graham said radar and rain gauges indicated some areas got as much as 2½ feet of rain, which he called "absolutely staggering."

"And we're not done yet," Graham said, adding that some hard-hit areas could get an additional 15 to 20 inches because the storm was moving so slowly.

Meanwhile, dozens of U.S. Navy ships and more than 100 aircraft were returning to Hampton Roads, Va., after leaving last week as the storm approached. The Navy said the USS Kearsarge and the USS Arlington will remain at sea to provide disaster assistance, if requested.

Afghan War milestone — people born after 9/11 can enlist

The Washington Post

A day after hijacked planes destroyed the World Trade Center towers, tore into the Pentagon and cratered a Pennsylvania field, thousands of babies were born in the U.S.

They emerged from the womb on Sept. 12, 2001, as hospital televisions were tuned to smoldering rubble, and they grew alongside the subsequent war against al-Qaida and the Taliban.

Wednesday marked a new era for the war in Afghanistan and the young people who make up the bulk of enlistees. It was the first day someone born after the terrorist attacks could enlist, at age 17, and begin a path to serve in the seemingly endless war

launched in response to those attacks.

That is a mind-bending prospect; troops were once partially motivated to enlist because of the attacks. Now, 17 years later, the unfinished war grows further from the events that created it.

The dividing line between troops who enlisted before and after 9/11 initially was stark, veterans have said.

Brandon Friedman was commissioned in the peacetime Army of 2000, and took over an infantry platoon five days after the attacks.

He later led them in Afghanistan in 2002. Those men all had enlisted before the attacks, he said, and had joined for a num-

ber of reasons — to test their mettle, to earn college benefits or maybe to escape dim prospects at home.

But the replacements he received by 2003, who all had enlisted in the wake of 9/11, said they joined for different reasons.

"It was a galvanizing time," he said Tuesday. "We sort of romanticize it now, but there was a lot of unity and sense of purpose in the country and in the military."

About 5.5 million troops have served since 9/11, and nearly 7,000 have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan combined.

Kayla Williams, a former Army linguist, was in Arabic class during the attacks. Like

Friedman, she later met recruits newly inspired to fight. In recent years, however, enlistees are less likely to say 9/11 played a role in their decision to join the military, said Williams, now director of the military, veterans and society program at the Center for a New American Security, a Washington think tank.

Pentagon data show an 8 percent surge in the propensity for young men to enlist right after the attacks, a trend that continued through 2005.

Now, recruits report motivations that mirror those of their pre-9/11 forebears; they join to pursue adventure or to secure benefits, or are drawn to aspects of honor, she said.

Trump: Maria death toll rose 'like magic'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As Tropical Storm Florence inundated the Carolinas on Friday, President Donald Trump circled back to his claim that the official death toll from a devastating storm a year earlier in Puerto Rico was inflated and said the number of dead seemed to rise from double digits to 3,000 “like magic.”

Public health experts have estimated that nearly 3,000 perished because of the effects of Hurricane Maria. But Trump, whose efforts to help the island territory recover have been persistently criticized, has repeatedly questioned that number over the last couple of days.

“FIFTY TIMES LAST ORIGINAL NUMBER — NO

WAY!” he tweeted late Friday.

Trump falsely accused Democrats on Thursday of inflating the Puerto Rican toll to make him “look as bad as possible.” He said just six to 18 people had been reported dead when he visited two weeks after the October 2017 storm and suggested that many had been added later “if a person died for any reason, like old age.”

When Trump visited Puerto Rico, the death toll at the time was indeed 16 people. The number later was raised to 64, but the government then commissioned an independent study to determine how many died because of post-storm conditions. That study — conducted by the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Wash-

ington University — estimated 2,975 deaths.

The deaths fell in two categories: direct and indirect. Direct deaths include such fatalities as drownings in a storm surge or being crushed in a wind-toppled building. Indirect deaths are harder to count because they can include such things as heart attacks, electrocutions from downed power lines and failure to receive dialysis because the power is out — and those kinds of fatalities can happen after a storm has ended but while an area is struggling to restore electricity, clean water and other health and safety services.

Dr. Carlos Santos-Burgoa — the lead researcher on the study and a well-known expert in global health, particularly

Latin America — told The Associated Press that the initial figure of 64 deaths reflected only people whose death certificates cited the storm. He said the latest figure was more accurate and stressed that every death in the six months following the storm was not attributed to the hurricane.

“We are scientists. We are public health people. We are committed to the health of the population. We try to reach the truth, and we try to understand what is damaging the people in order to prevent disease,” he said.

But Trump suggested Friday that it was questionable that the Puerto Rican government commissioned the study from an outside group.

Pompeo slams Kerry over Iran talks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has unloaded on his Obama-era predecessor John Kerry for “actively undermining” U.S. policy on Iran by meeting several times recently with the Iranian foreign minister, who was his main interlocutor in the Iran nuclear deal negotiations.

In unusually blunt and caustic language, Pompeo said Friday that Kerry’s meetings with Mohammad Javad Zarif were “unseemly and unprecedented” and “beyond inappropriate.” President Donald Trump had late Thursday accused Kerry of holding “illegal meetings with the very hostile Iranian Regime, which can only serve to undercut our great work to the detriment of the American people.”

Pompeo said he would leave “legal determinations to others” but slammed Kerry as a former secretary of state for engaging with “the world’s largest state-sponsor of terror” and telling Iran to “wait out this administration.” He noted that just last week, Iranian-backed militias

had fired rockets at U.S. diplomatic compounds in Iraq.

“You can’t find precedent for this in U.S. history, and Secretary Kerry ought not to engage in that kind of behavior,” an agitated Pompeo told reporters at the State Department. “It’s inconsistent with what foreign policy of the United States is as directed by this president, and it is beyond inappropriate for him to be engaged.”

Kerry, who is promoting his new book “Every Day is Extra,” tweeted a response to Trump that referred to the president’s former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, who agreed on Friday to cooperate with the special counsel’s investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and possible coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign.

“Mr. President, you should be more worried about Paul Manafort meeting with Robert Mueller than me meeting with Iran’s FM. But if you want to learn something about the nuclear agreement that made the world safer, buy my new book,” Kerry said.

He has been harshly critical of the president and his decision in May to withdraw from the Iran deal but denies “coaching” Tehran.

In a statement, his spokesman, Matt Summers, said: “There’s nothing unusual, let alone unseemly or inappropriate, about former diplomats meeting with foreign counterparts. Secretary (Henry) Kissinger has done it for decades with Russia and China. What is unseemly and unprecedented is for the podium of the State Department to be hijacked for political theatrics.”

Pompeo also took to task former Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz and ex-Iran deal negotiator Wendy Sherman for joining Kerry at a meeting with Zarif and other Iranian officials earlier this year at a security conference in Munich — though Sherman said Friday she wasn’t with Kerry and Moniz when she met Zarif there. Along with Kerry, Moniz and Sherman played key roles in negotiating the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and several world powers.

Retired Navy Adm. McRaven leaves board

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon said the retired Navy admiral who oversaw the raid that killed Osama bin Laden resigned from a Defense Department advisory board after his criticism of President Donald Trump’s decision to revoke a former CIA director’s security clearance.

Lt. Col. Michelle Baldanza, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said William McRaven, former head of U.S. Special Operations Command, left the Defense Innovation Board on Aug. 20.

That was four days after he wrote in The Washington Post that Trump’s actions revoking former CIA Director John Brennan’s security clearance “embarrassed us in the eyes of our children, humiliated us on the world stage and, worst of all, divided us as a nation.”

Trump revoked Brennan’s clearance last month, saying he felt he had to do something about the “rigged” Russian election interference probe.

Survey shows progress on opioid crisis

Associated Press

Figures from a U.S. government survey released Friday show some progress in the fight against the ongoing opioid addiction crisis with fewer people in 2017 using heroin for the first time compared with the previous year.

The number of new users of heroin decreased from 170,000 in 2016 to 81,000 in 2017, a one-year drop that would need to be sustained for years to reduce the number of fatal overdoses, experts said.

Fewer Americans are misusing or addicted to prescription opioid painkillers. And more people are getting treatment for heroin and opioid addiction, the survey found.

The Trump administration said the positive trends show government efforts are working.

Messages are reaching people about the dangers of heroin and the deadly contaminants it often contains on the street, Dr.

Elinore McCance-Katz, an administration health official, said in a video presentation released with the figures.

Among the other findings:

- Marijuana use climbed in all age groups except young teens, with 2.5 percent of those 26 and older, or 5.3 million adults, reporting they used marijuana daily or almost daily last year.

- Methamphetamine and cocaine use climbed in young adults, ages 18 to 25. The uptick could indicate that users are shifting from opioids to other drugs, said Leo Beletsky, a public health policy expert at Northeastern University in Boston.

- Young adults have increasing rates of serious mental illness, major depression and suicidal thoughts.

- The number of new heroin users in 2017 — 81,000 — was lower than the numbers in most years from 2009 to 2016. But it was similar to the numbers of new heroin users in 2002 through 2008.

Experts said there's still work to be done

before success can be declared.

"Taken together, this does not look like the portrait of a nation with improving mental health and addiction issues," said Brendan Saloner, an addiction researcher at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "It's hard to look at this and not think we need to be doing a better job than we're doing now."

Earlier this month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released preliminary figures that appear to show a leveling off in overdose deaths in late 2017 and the first two months of this year.

Health officials have said it's too soon to say whether the nation's drug crisis has peaked. But in an interview with The Associated Press this week, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said several measures of the crisis are improving.

"We are making progress," he said. "We are seeing a flattening of our deaths from overdose."

Officials hunt for cause of Massachusetts gas blast

Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Mass. — Investigators worked Friday to pinpoint the cause of a series of fiery natural gas explosions that killed a teen driver in his car just hours after he got his license, injured at least 25 others and left dozens of homes in smoldering ruins.

Authorities said an estimated 8,000 people were displaced at the height of Thursday's post-explosion chaos in three towns north of Boston rocked by the disaster. Most were still waiting, shaken and exhausted, to be allowed to return to their homes.

Gov. Charlie Baker said Friday that hundreds of gas technicians were being deployed throughout the night and into Saturday to make sure each home is safe to enter.

Even after residents return and their electricity is restored, gas service won't be turned on until technicians can inspect every connection in each home — a process that could take weeks.

The National Transportation Safety Board sent a team to help investigate the blasts in a state where some of the aging gas pipeline system dates to the 1860s.

The rapid-fire series of gas explosions that one official described as "Armageddon" ignited fires in 60 to 80 homes in the working-class towns of Lawrence, Andover and North Andover, forcing entire neighborhoods to evacuate as crews scrambled to fight the flames and to shut off the gas and electricity.

Gas and electricity remained shut down Friday in most of the area, and entire neighborhoods were eerily deserted.

Authorities said Leonel Rondon, 18, of Lawrence, died after a chimney toppled by an exploding house crashed into his car. He was rushed to a Boston hospital and was pronounced dead Thursday evening.

The state Registry of Motor Vehicles said Rondon had been issued his driver's license only hours earlier Thursday.

Police face ire over portrayal of man shot by Dallas officer

Associated Press

DALLAS — Attorneys for the family of a black man who was killed in his own apartment by a white police officer accused Dallas police of trying to "assassinate his character" and expressed fury that authorities sought a search warrant that resulted in the discovery of marijuana in the victim's apartment.

At a news conference Friday, the lawyers said the search warrant, which allowed investigators to look for drugs, never should have been issued.

They also called for the firing of police officer Amber Guyger, who gunned down Botham Jean, 26, in his own apartment on Sept. 6. She has been booked on a preliminary charge of manslaughter and is free on bond.

Guyger told investigators she mistook Jean's apartment for her own, which is right below his, and that upon entering the dark home, she believed she had encountered an intruder and shot him when he didn't obey her verbal commands.

Lee Merritt, one of the Jean

family's attorneys, said Friday that investigators wasted no time in digging for dirt they could use to smear Jean's name.

"On the night that he was killed, the Dallas Police Department investigators were interested specifically in finding information that could help assassinate his character," Merritt said.

Dallas police did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the criticism.

Jean's mother, Allison Jean, expressed disgust that on Thursday the results of the search of his home surfaced. They showed that, among the things, police found a small amount of marijuana — 10.4 grams — and a marijuana grinder.

She called on police to release toxicology results from a blood sample taken from Guyger on the night of the shooting. She said that she did not understand why Guyger was allowed to "roam the streets for three days" after killing her son. Guyger shot Jean on a Thursday night and was arrested the following Sunday.

Powerful typhoon lashes Philippines

Associated Press

TUGUEGARAO, Philippines—Typhoon Mangkhut lashed the northern Philippines on Saturday, with its powerful winds and rain setting off landslides and destroying homes, leaving at least three people dead and six missing, as the storm barreled toward southern China.

The most powerful typhoon to hit the disaster-prone Philippines this year slammed ashore before dawn in Cagayan province on the northeastern tip of Luzon island, a breadbasket that is also a region of flood-prone rice plains and mountain provinces with a history of deadly landslides.

China and the Philippines agreed to postpone a visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi that was to start Sunday due to the onslaught, which caused nearly 150 flights, a third of them international, to be

anceled and halted sea travel.

At least three people died and six others were missing in the mountain city of Baguio after ferocious winds and rain destroyed several houses and set off landslides, which also blocked roads to the popular vacation destination, said the city's Mayor Mauricio Domogan.

Authorities were verifying the drownings of three people, including two children who reportedly died as the typhoon approached. They were also checking to see what happened to about 70 men who reportedly returned to their coastal village in Cagayan to check on their homes as the typhoon drew closer Friday, sparking concerns over possible storm surges.

Mangkhut's sustained winds weakened to 105 mph with gusts of up to 161 mph, after it sliced northwestward across Luzon,

then blew out to the South China Sea, aiming at southern China and Hong Kong, where residents braced for the worst.

With the weather easing, officials warned there was lingering danger.

"It's still a life-and-death situation," Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said by phone, citing past drownings in swollen rivers in mountain provinces after storms have passed.

Storm warnings remained hoisted in 10 northern provinces, including Cagayan, which could still be lashed by devastating winds, forecasters said. Thousands of people in the typhoon's path had been evacuated.

In Hong Kong, Security Minister John Lee Ka-chiu urged residents to prepare for the worst as the storm barreled toward the southern Chinese city.

Little light shed on closure of solar observatory

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — An observatory in the mountains of southern New Mexico that is dedicated to unlocking the mysteries of the sun has found itself at the center of a mystery that is creating a buzz here on earth.

The Sunspot Solar Observatory has been closed for more than a week. Authorities remained tight-lipped Friday, saying only that an undisclosed security concern was behind the decision to abruptly vacate and lock up the remote facility on Sept. 6.

The FBI referred all questions to the group that manages the site, the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy. Officials there say they're working with authorities.

The association said in an update Friday

that it has "decided that the observatory will remain closed until further notice due to an ongoing security concern. The rest of the National Solar Observatory facilities remain open and are operating normally."

The vagueness continued to fuel speculation on social media.

Located atop Sacramento Peak, the observatory was established in 1947. It overlooks the Tularosa Basin — an expanse of desert that includes the city of Alamogordo, Holloman Air Force Base, White Sands Missile Range, White Sands National Monument and the site of the world's first atomic bomb test.

The telescope at Sunspot was originally built by the U.S. Air Force.

After several years of operation, it was transferred to the National Solar Observa-

tory, which is part of the National Science Foundation.

New Mexico State University in 2016 launched an initiative funded by the foundation to upgrade and update the facility through the newly formed Sunspot Solar Observatory Consortium.

Sunspot's one-of-a-kind telescope produces some of the sharpest images of the sun available in the world, officials said.

Data from observations done at Sunspot are sent to New Mexico State University servers and can be used by researchers around the world.

Solar physicist R.T. James McAteer, who is based at New Mexico State University, said in an email Friday that it will be up to the astronomy research association to decide when Sunspot reopens.

SpaceX changes its plan for flight around the moon

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX said it has signed the first private moon traveler, with some changes to its original game plan.

The big reveal on who it is — and when the flight to the moon will be — will be announced Monday at the company's headquarters in Hawthorne, Calif.

It's not the same mission SpaceX founder Elon Musk outlined last year. The original plan called for two paying passengers to fly around the moon this year, using a Falcon

Heavy rocket and a Dragon crew capsule.

At the time, Musk said the pair approached SpaceX about sending them on a weeklong flight and paid a "significant" deposit for the trip.

The new strategy is to still fly around the moon but using an even bigger SpaceX rocket still in development that has its own dedicated passenger ship. And now, it appears there will be only one person aboard.

Given that this new BFR rocket, as it's dubbed, has yet to be built, the flight presumably is at least a few years off.

SpaceX put out the teaser via Twitter late Thursday, and Musk also tweeted out the news. Company representatives declined to offer additional details Friday.

Musk's ultimate goal is to colonize Mars. This lunar mission — a flyby, not a landing — represents "an important step toward enabling access for everyday people who dream of traveling to space," SpaceX said in a tweet.

On its website, SpaceX is touting the "first passenger on lunar BFR mission," implying there will be more.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man fakes condition; hires women for baths

AZ GILBERT — Police say they arrested an Arizona man who pretended to have Down syndrome and hired caregivers to bathe him and change his diapers.

According to Gilbert police, Paul Anthony Menchaca, 31, posed as a woman on jobsites for caregivers saying she needed assistance with her adult son. Citing court documents, ABC15 reported Thursday that three women were hired to care for Menchaca at different points over the summer, with the first saying she bathed and assisted him 30 times.

Police say all three reported Menchaca becoming aroused during baths. He was arrested Sept. 6 on fraud and sexual abuse charges.

Tomato farmer pleads guilty to growing pot

WY CASPER — An organic tomato farmer in Wyoming pleaded guilty to federal charges of growing marijuana and money laundering.

Stewart Doty of Big Piney faces about two years in prison when he is sentenced in November. He also must forfeit \$63,000 in cash seized during a search of his property in August 2017.

Doty, 61, pleaded guilty Thursday to growing and distributing between 88 and 132 pounds of marijuana and depositing \$35,000 in marijuana proceeds in a Colorado bank account.

KTWO-AM reported Doty told U.S. District Judge Scott Skavdahl that his farming business had been declining and his debts were mounting so he converted about a third of his

tomato greenhouse to growing marijuana.

Police: Husband backs car into wife, kills her

CT GLASTONBURY — Police in Connecticut said the death of an 82-year-old woman struck and killed by a vehicle driven by her husband was an accident.

Glastonbury police identified Margaret Gamer as the woman who was fatally struck by a car Thursday in the driveway of her home. She was taken to the hospital where she died.

Sgt. Corey Davis told the Hartford Courant that her husband hit her while backing out of a garage in an “unfortunate accident.” He stayed at the scene and cooperated with police.

Gamer died Thursday afternoon from the injuries she suffered in the morning accident.

College freshman says service dog banned

MS JACKSON — The University of Mississippi said it’s reviewing a report that a student’s service dog was banned from a classroom.

The Clarion Ledger reported the school last week banned a service dog for allegedly disruptive behavior.

The newspaper reported a freshman who asked not to be identified said she was told by university personnel last week that her brown Labrador, Violet, was no longer welcome because she was “whining excessively” and wandering around the classroom. The student denies that. She would not say why she needs the dog.

University student disability services director Stacey Raycraft said she couldn’t talk about the situation because of student confidentiality requirements.

Sticky syrup spill prompts road closures

ND MANDAN — The Highway Patrol was trying to track down whoever spilled maple syrup on Mandan-area roads.

The brown sticky substance prompted road closures for about three hours Thursday until investigators determined it wasn’t hazardous.

The Bismarck HazMat team determined the substance to be mostly maple syrup, possibly used for cattle feed.

State Health Department officials also responded to the scene, and state Transportation Department workers cleaned up the mess.

Firefighter set fire he helped extinguish

NJ HAMILTON TOWNSHIP — A volunteer firefighter stands accused of setting a shed fire that he later helped extinguish.

Hamilton Township police say Matthew Hesser, 35, faces arson and felony criminal mischief charges stemming from the Aug. 16 fire in the southern New Jersey town. It wasn’t known Friday if the Vineland man had retained an attorney.

Authorities said Hesser is a volunteer with the Mizpah Volunteer Fire Company. They said he made the 911 call reporting the fire and later responded to the scene and helped put out the fire.

But Mizpah Fire Chief Jay Davenport told NJ.com that Hesser was not a member of the department. He said Hesser had applied to join, but his fingerprints and background check were still pending and his application was never approved.

Faked death certificate sent for wanted man

MA FRAMINGHAM — Massachusetts court officials said someone sent them a fake death certificate in an attempt to get active arrest warrants recalled.

The MetroWest Daily News reported the certificate was sent to Framingham District Court from a man claiming to be a lawyer from a firm that apparently doesn’t exist. It included a certificate indicating Richard William Porter, 58, died of a heart attack that contained numerous errors, including spelling mistakes and listing a nonexistent hospital as Porter’s place of death.

The certificate was sent with a letter from Dick Wakefield from the law firm Wakefield & Wakfield demanding the court recall four outstanding warrants for Porter’s arrest.

Bar records indicate there’s no lawyer named Dick Wakefield in Massachusetts.

Empty gas tank foils would-be robber

PA PITTSBURGH — Authorities said a man’s bid to rob a Pittsburgh pharmacy was foiled because his getaway car had no gas.

Police said Anthony Scolieri, 39, fled the pharmacy Wednesday with a small amount of cash and got into the vehicle. But when he couldn’t drive away, he tried to run away on foot but was soon confronted by police.

Authorities said Scolieri showed a cashier a pistol when he demanded cash. But they said the weapon was a fake, and authorities recovered the stolen cash.

Scolieri faces three counts of robbery and one count of possession of an instrument of crime.

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Needy Seahawks sign LB Kendricks to deal

Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — The Seattle Seahawks are hoping Mychal Kendricks can provide a short-term boost on the field that overshadows the issues of signing a player with a pending jail sentencing in his future.

The Seahawks announced the signing of Kendricks on Friday to a one-year deal despite his recent guilty plea on insider trading charges. It's an odd situation for all parties involved, but fills a need for Seattle even if it's just for a short time. Kendricks could make his Seattle debut on Monday night when it plays at Chicago, and the finalization of his deal came after visiting the team on Thursday.

Kendricks was not made available to speak with the media on Friday. Seattle coach Pete Carroll is scheduled to address the media on Saturday before the team leaves for Chicago.

Kendricks pleaded guilty last week to insider trading charges in Philadelphia. His sentencing is expected in January.

He signed a one-year contract with the Cleveland Browns in June after winning a Super Bowl title last season with the Philadelphia Eagles, and he was released by the Browns on Aug. 29 after the charges were filed. While Seattle is signing Kendricks to

add depth at linebacker, it's unclear how long he might be able to play because the NFL has yet to impose any discipline.

NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said Thursday night the situation is under review and Kendricks is currently allowed to sign and participate in activities, including games.

That makes for a strange situation considering Kendricks' guilty plea.

Kendricks' signing is largely because of injury concerns at linebacker. Seattle is without K.J. Wright after minor knee surgery late in the preseason and he only began running this week. Additionally, All-Pro linebacker Bobby Wagner is dealing with a groin injury suffered in the opener that kept him out of practice both Thursday and Friday, and his availability for Monday night is unclear.

Veteran Duane Brown said Kendricks' situation wasn't addressed in any team conversations prior to the announcement of the signing.

"I'm not very clued in to the particulars of everything that is going on," Brown said. "But I know he's a heck of a player. I've competed against him a couple of times when he was in Philly. I know he can be a good addition to our team. Everything else will have to handle itself and let that process play out. We're embracing him. He's here now. He's

part of the team."

Federal prosecutors said Kendricks used tips from an acquaintance to make about \$1.2 million in illegal profits on four major trading deals.

Prosecutors say his co-defendant, Dami-lare Sonoiki, was paid \$10,000 in kickbacks in the scheme from 2014-2015, as well as receiving perks such as tickets to Eagles games and tagging along to a music video shoot or nightclub appearances.

Sonoiki had been working as a junior analyst at Goldman Sachs but left the financial field and has most recently been writing for TV shows. An IMDB profile lists him as a former writer on the popular TV series "Black-ish" as well as other movies and TV shows.

In a statement released by his lawyer the day he was charged, Kendricks said he was sorry and takes full responsibility for his actions.

"While I didn't fully understand all of the details of the illegal trades, I knew it was wrong, and I wholeheartedly regret my actions," he said in the statement.

Kendricks also claimed he didn't take any of the profits for himself, but didn't elaborate on where the money went.

"I am committed to repaying all of the funds gained illegally and accept the consequences of my actions."

Teammates expect QB Roethlisberger will play

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger returned under center on Friday after missing the previous two practices with a bruised right elbow.

He is officially listed on the injury report as questionable to play, but Roethlisberger's teammates expect him to be on the field for the Steelers' home opener Sunday against Kansas City.

"It's always good to have Big Ben out there," center Maurkice Pouncey said. "He's fought through so many things throughout the years. He's a tough guy."

Roethlisberger did not speak to reporters following Friday's practice, but is expected to play in his 202nd game, second most in franchise history. The 15-year veteran has missed just six

games because of injury since the start of the 2013 season. He played a full 16-game schedule just once in his first nine NFL seasons.

Roethlisberger was a full participant on Friday after missing Wednesday and Thursday because of his right elbow injury, sustained on the Steelers' next-to-last offensive play of overtime last Sunday in Cleveland when Genard Avery sacked him and forced a fumble.

"We're never really worried about him," Pouncey said. "He takes some big hits in the games. If he wants to sit out a couple days, it's totally fine."

On Wednesday, Roethlisberger declined to say whether he had an MRI exam on the elbow. Second-year quarterback Josh Dobbs, who beat out veteran Landry Jones to serve as Roethlisberger's primary backup, took first-team snaps

on Wednesday and Thursday.

"Ben is a guy who's professional enough to be ready if called upon," left guard Ramon Foster said. "If he's playing, our job is to protect him overtime."

Roethlisberger threw for 335 yards and a touchdown during an ugly, season-opening 21-21 tie at Cleveland. But he was also responsible for five of the offense's six turnovers, including three interceptions and two fumbles, as Pittsburgh blew a 14-point fourth-quarter lead.

Roethlisberger's teammates still want the two-time Super Bowl winner under center, of course.

"He's the leader," right guard David DeCastro said. "I'm sure he's a guy that wouldn't need to take any reps, but it's always good having him back. It gives you confidence when he's out there."

DeCastro is listed on the in-

jury report for Sunday's game against Kansas City as doubtful after missing practice for a third straight day with a broken hand. The two-time All-Pro left for several snaps after he injured his hand in the fourth quarter against Cleveland, but returned and finished the game.

"Dave's really tough," Pouncey said. "We didn't think he would come back in the game, but for him to come back shows how much he cares and how dedicated he is. He doesn't say a lot, but he goes out there and plays hard."

DeCastro said he could still play and wear a brace to protect his hand, but swelling had to subside. He said Friday the swelling has gone down, but he's not rushing things. B.J. Finney would make his eighth start and third against the Chiefs if DeCastro can't play.

Truex craves big finish with FRR

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Martin Truex Jr. could have been down this week while he prepared for the start of the NASCAR playoffs. After all, his race team is going out of business soon, and nobody has confirmed where he'll drive next year.

Instead, the defending Cup series champion was excited as he returned to Las Vegas. Furniture Row Racing's days are definitively numbered, but he wants the entire crew to seize the opportunity to go out with a once-in-a-lifetime bang.

"I feel like we're in a great place," Truex said. "We definitely want to repeat, no question about it."

The 10 playoff races to end the NASCAR season are also a long farewell for Furniture Row, the plucky underdogs who somehow won it all last year. Owner Barney Visser is closing up shop — but not before Truex gets a shot at repeating his 2017 achievement, starting Sunday at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

Truex knows that the only thing more improbable than last year's championship run by a one-car team from Colorado would be a second title under even more difficult circumstances.

"I think you could take it one of two ways," Truex said. "You could hang your head down and say, 'This sucks. Why are we in this position?' and get mad at the world, or you can look at each other and say, 'Let's go do this.' I think all of us, we look at that and say, 'Hell yeah. Let's go do this. Let's send Barney out on top and let's give him the best going-away gift that we ever could.'"

Truex is gunning for the first repeat Cup championship run since Jimmie Johnson got his fifth straight in 2010. Truex and crew chief Cole Pearn have a genuine chance to pull it off: Their car has been in a three-man derby with Kyle Busch and Kevin Harvick atop the standings for most of the season, with Truex winning four races and posting 15 top-5 finishes.

But it's all bittersweet as one of the most incredible success stories in recent motorsports history comes to an end this winter with the end of Furniture Row. The Rocky Mountain team created as a self-described hobby by Visser stunningly became NASCAR's best last season, with Truex winning eight races and snatching the title from the giants of the sport.

But earlier this month, Visser announced his decision to shut down Furniture Row due to a combination of financial constraints and a desire to spend more time enjoying life.

"It takes so much to keep these race teams going," Truex said. "Especially a small team like ours, with the way we were having to do things, it was a high stress level, I would say."

Although the team is taking small steps toward its end, such as discontinuing shop tours in Denver this week, Truex said he isn't worried about any key employees taking other jobs during the playoff stretch. He also expects Visser to spend whatever is necessary to make sure they can compete until the end.

Joe Gibbs Racing is the most popular pick in the paddock to be the next team for Truex and Pearn. Almost everyone expects Truex to get the No. 19 Toyota currently piloted by Daniel Suarez.

JGR had an alliance with Furniture Row for the past three seasons, making Pearn and Truex quite familiar with their potential destination. If it happens, Truex will be teammates with Busch, the only JGR driver who has been able to keep up with him for two years.

Truex isn't saying anything concrete about his future, but also claims he doesn't think about it much.

"Only maybe on Tuesday or Wednesday," he said. "Monday, you're winding down from that race the day before and figuring out what could we have done better, and then Thursday your focus turns to the next one. That stuff is weekday stuff."

Briefly

WADA panel says Russia OK to return

Associated Press

A key review committee changed directions suddenly this week, and is recommending Russia's anti-doping agency be reinstated after a nearly three-year suspension resulting from the country's scheme to circumvent rules and win Olympic medals.

The World Anti-Doping Agency released a statement Friday saying its compliance review committee was satisfied with Russian promises to fulfill two key criteria for RUSADA's reinstatement: That authorities provide access to data that could help corroborate positive tests uncovered during the investigation into the doping scandal, and that Russian sports entities publically accept that there was a widespread, government-directed effort to manipulate drug tests in order to win medals.

The compliance committee's recommendation came a day after the BBC published a WADA document that was to be distributed at next week's executive-committee meeting, saying neither of the criteria had been satisfied and that it would not recommend reinstatement.

That document is marked as an agenda item for next Friday's meeting of the WADA executive committee, at which RUSADA's future will be discussed.

In changing its stance Friday, the compliance committee urged the executive committee to set a clear timeline for Russia to deliver the data and urine samples that investigators say are key to piecing together cases against drug cheats.

The committee was less specific about Russia's acceptance of responsibility, only saying it was satisfied that a recent letter sent from the sports ministry "sufficiently acknowledged the issues identified in Russia."

Red Wings' Zetterberg announces retirement

DETROIT — Henrik Zetterberg knew something wasn't right with his back last January when he stopped practicing. Despite the aches and pains, he did not miss a game all season for the Detroit Red Wings.

When Zetterberg laced up his skates for the final game of the regular season, he thought that might be the finale of his career. He held out hope over the summer his career could resume and was still clinging to that when he met with a doctor last week.

"Got the final result and nothing really had changed," Zetterberg told reporters Friday in Traverse City, Mich. "So, that's kind of when it kicked in."

The 37-year-old Zetterberg, who won the Conn Smythe Trophy as the top player in the postseason when the Red Wings hoisted the Stanley Cup in 2008, is calling it a career. The skillful Swede is a member of a select group of players that has won a Stanley Cup, world championship and Olympic gold.

Ex-Jets LB Donahue suspended 14 weeks

NEW YORK — Former New York Jets linebacker Dylan Donahue was suspended 14 weeks by the NFL on Friday for violating its substance abuse policy.

The 26-year-old Donahue pleaded guilty last month to charges in two separate incidents in which he was arrested for driving while intoxicated.

Police said he caused a wrong-way crash in February that injured four people in New Jersey. He also received a three-month suspended sentence and was fined \$1,000 for a DUI crash in his hometown of Billings, Montana, in May 2017.

Braves win 6th straight

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Ronald Acuna Jr. struck out twice and reached base once in his first six at-bats against Nationals ace Max Scherzer.

“I think it helps having some previous at-bats against him,” Acuna said through a translator. “I just went in with the same approach. I wanted to have fun out there on the field and have good at-bats.”

Acuna went 4-for-5, had two RBIs and scored the tiebreaking run in the fourth inning to help the NL East-leading Atlanta Braves win their season-best sixth straight game with a 10-5 victory over the Washington Nationals on Friday night.

The Braves stayed 7½ games ahead of second-place Philadelphia. Any combination of nine Atlanta victories or Phillies’ losses will give the Braves their first division title since 2013.

Scherzer (17-7) endured his shortest outing of the year, four innings, while allowing six runs — a season high — and seven hits in 102 pitches.

Scherzer, a three-time Cy Young Award winner, was no match for Acuna, one of baseball’s hottest hitters since the All-Star break.

The 20-year-old left fielder doubled off the wall in his first at-bat. He drove in two runs with a bloop single in the second. He tripled and scored the tiebreaking run on a sacrifice fly in the fourth. His single in the eighth gave Acuna a single-game high in hits.

Juan Soto, Washington’s 19-year-old left fielder, was impressive, too, homering in his fourth straight game and running a long way to catch a liner in the third. Soto scored the game’s first run in the second after beating a tag on Acuna’s throw to third. His 20th homer was a solo shot in the fourth.

“I would say I’m definitely having fun sharing the field with him,” Acuna said, “but I’m always going out there to have a good time on the field every time.”

Jay lifts D-backs over Astros

Associated Press

HOUSTON — In a stretch where the Arizona Diamondbacks feel like things haven’t been going their way, a lucky break on Friday night helped them to a much-needed win.

Pinch-hitter Jon Jay’s tiebreaking triple in the eighth inning sent them past the Houston Astros 4-2, tightening a pair of playoff races.

The AL West-leading Astros had their edge cut by Oakland to 2½ games. Arizona moved within three games of St. Louis and Los Angeles for the second NL wild-card spot.

It was 2-all when Nick Ahmed doubled off Hector Rondon (2-4) with one out in the Arizona eighth. Jay hit a two-out, tiebreaking drive into the right field corner and later scored when a flyball by A.J. Pollock dropped in shallow center field for a single.

The triple by Jay came on a ball he said hit twice off his bat and that he thought was probably going to be foul.

“It kind of hooked back and that’s when I realized what had happened and I just ran,” Jay said. “It fell through and ... that was a big break for us

right there. We needed it.”

Manager Torey Lovullo was impressed with the way his team persevered.

“I know that we’ve been dealing with some frustrating circumstances,” he said. “For us to come out against the world champs and play the way we did, I was really proud of these guys.”

Arizona starter Robbie Ray yielded two hits and two runs with six strikeouts in 5⅓ innings. Brad Ziegler (2-6) pitched 1⅓ scoreless innings and Yoshihisa Hirano allowed one hit in a scoreless ninth for his second save.

David Peralta had three hits and drove in two runs and Paul Goldschmidt doubled twice for Arizona.

Astros starter Dallas Keuchel allowed five hits and two runs in six innings.

Ray retired 13 of the last 14 batters he faced with Houston’s only baserunner in that span coming when he walked Carlos Correa with one out in the fourth.

“It was frustrating,” manager A.J. Hinch said. “We did get a couple of opportunities but just couldn’t break through with the big hit.”

Roundup

Yanks rout Blue Jays in Judge’s return

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Aaron Judge returned to the Yankees for the first time since his right wrist was broken seven weeks ago, taking over in right field for the final two innings of New York’s 11-0 romp over the Toronto Blue Jays on Friday night.

Judge had not played since July 26, when he was hit by a pitch from Kansas City’s Jakob Junis. The Yankees say for now Judge will be limited to defense and pinch running, but they hope he will become a regular at some point in the regular season’s final two weeks.

New York improved to 13-4 against Toronto this season. Starting their final homestand, the Yankees remained 1½ games ahead of the A’s for home field in the wild-card game.

Giants 2, Rockies 0: Chris Stratton pitched a two-hitter for his first career shutout, Austin Slater backed him with a two-run single, and San Francisco snapped an 11-game losing streak by beating visiting

Colorado.

Mets 8, Red Sox 0: Noah Syndergaard pitched seven innings of three-hit ball and New York hit four homers to snap host Boston’s four-game winning streak.

Tigers 5, Indians 4: Andrew Miller gave up two RBI doubles in the seventh inning as Cleveland’s march to the AL Central title was slowed by visiting Detroit.

Athletics 2, Rays 1 (10): Khris Davis led off the 10th inning with his major league-leading 42nd homer, and Oakland beat host Tampa Bay.

Cubs 3, Reds 2: Ian Happ hit a three-run homer in the seventh inning, Jorge De La Rosa worked a shaky ninth for his first career save and Chicago beat visiting Cincinnati.

Dodgers 3, Cardinals 0: Rookie Walker Buehler allowed two hits in eight innings, Yasiel Puig homered twice and Los Angeles drew even with host St. Louis in the NL wild-card race.

Mariners 5, Angels 0: At Anaheim, Calif., Ryon Healy

and Dee Gordon each hit a two-run single and six Seattle relief pitchers combined on a six-hitter.

White Sox 8, Orioles 6: James Shields picked up his first road victory since opening day and Chicago beat host Baltimore on a soggy night.

Royals 8, Twins 4: Salvador Perez capped Kansas City’s five-run ninth inning with a game-ending grand slam, lifting the Royals past visiting Minnesota.

Brewers 7 Pirates 4: Christian Yelich, Travis Shaw and Mike Moustakas homered to lead host Milwaukee past Pittsburgh.

Phillies 14, Marlins 2: Aaron Altherr homered twice and drove in five runs in host Philadelphia’s win over Miami.

Rangers 4, Padres 0: Jurickson Profar had a two-run home run among his three hits and Yohander Mendez followed “opener” Connor Sadzeck by scattering three hits in five relief innings to lead visiting Texas past San Diego.