

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

2 pilots killed in Marine Corps helicopter crash in Arizona

YUMA, Ariz. — Two Marine pilots have died in a helicopter crash during a training mission in southwestern Arizona, Marine Corps officials said Sunday.

The AH-1Z Viper crashed Saturday night while the pilots were conducting a training mission as part of a weapons and tactical instructor course, according to the Marine Corps. The cause of the crash is under investigation.

Capt. Gabriel Adibe, a Marine Corps spokesman, said the helicopter crashed on the vast Marine Corps Air Station Yuma training grounds. The names of the pilots have not been released pending notification of their families.

The station is located about 2 miles from Yuma and the 1,300-square-mile training ground is one of the world's largest military installations. There have been several fatal crashes involving Marine Corps aircraft near Yuma over the years.

Grammy-nominated rapper Hussle shot and killed at 33

LOS ANGELES — Rapper Nipsey Hussle was fatally shot outside the clothing store he founded to help rebuild his troubled South Los Angeles neighborhood, police said, cutting short a career that earned him a Grammy nomination this year for his major-label debut. He was 33.

Hussle was one of three men shot Sunday outside Marathon Clothing, his store in South Los Angeles; the other two were in stable condition. A large crowd gathered outside the store as night fell. Detectives were canvassing the area for witnesses and looking to see if any surveillance video captured the shooting. Investigators had not yet determined a motive or identified any suspects.

Hussle, who had two children and was engaged to actress Lauren London, was an Eritrean-American whose real name was Ermias Asghedom.

He was born on Aug. 15, 1985, in the same Crenshaw neighborhood where he died, and where he had been working to provide youths with alternatives to the hustling he did when he was younger.

Official: Trump team overruled 25 security clearance denials

WASHINGTON — A career official in the White House security office says dozens of people in President Donald Trump's administration were granted security clearances despite "disqualifying issues" in their backgrounds, such as concerns about foreign influence, drug use and criminal conduct.

Tricia Newbold, an 18-year government employee who oversees the issuance of clearances for some senior White House aides, says she compiled a list of at least 25 officials who were initially denied security clearances last year because of their backgrounds. But she says senior Trump aides overturned those decisions, moves that she said weren't made "in the best interest of national security."

Newbold's allegations were detailed in a letter and memo released today by Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, chairman of the House Oversight and Reform committee. That panel has been investigating security clearances issued to senior officials including Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner, former national security adviser Michael Flynn, and former White House aide Rob Porter.

The letter comes about a month after The New York Times reported that Trump ordered officials to grant Kushner a clearance over the objections of national security officials and after Newbold spoke out to NBC News and other news outlets about her concerns.

Biden says he never meant to make women feel uncomfortable

WASHINGTON — Former Vice President Joe Biden on Sunday defended his interactions with women, saying he doesn't believe he's ever acted inappropriately. But a Nevada politician's assertion that Biden's kiss on the back of her head made her feel uncomfortable prompted some Democrats to question whether the 76-year-old is too out of step with his own party to run a successful 2020 presidential campaign.

The episode, recounted by Democrat Lucy Flores, highlighted an aspect of Biden's persona that has been publicly known for years: the affectionate whispers, hugs and shoulder squeezes he has long doled out to women, often on camera and at high-profile public events. In a moment of national reckoning over sexual harassment and the treatment of women by powerful men, some Democrats said Biden's actions have taken on a new light.

"It looks different in 2019," said Maria Cardona, a Democratic strategist. While Biden's behavior is not automatically disqualifying for the presidency, "it all depends on how he continues to respond to this. He has to acknowledge that his behavior made some women uncomfortable."

Biden said it was never his intention to make women feel discomfort and if he did so, "I will listen respectfully."

Israel, Hamas take first steps toward Gaza cease-fire deal

By ISABEL DEBRE
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — A cease-fire deal appeared to take hold between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers on Sunday, with Israel expanding the permitted fishing zone and easing some tight restrictions on movement through its two main crossings with the Palestinian enclave.

Egyptian mediators have worked in recent days to broker a cease-fire agreement, but talks have been repeatedly interrupted by Palestinian rocket attacks and Israeli military reprisals. The violence has heightened tensions just over a week before Israeli national elections.

In a sign that Egyptian efforts have made progress, the Gaza fishermen's committee said Israel would extend the permitted fishing zone along the Mediterranean coast to a maximum of 15 nautical miles, up from the previous limit of nine. Fishing had been off-limits since Gaza militants launched a rocket toward Tel Aviv last week, touching off rounds of short but intense cross-border fighting between the bitter enemies.

Israeli officials confirmed that the reopening of the fishing zone would go into effect today.



AP Photo/Adel Hana

An explosion caused by Israeli airstrikes is seen in Gaza City last week.

The lifting of some restrictions on the passage of people and cargo in and out of Gaza further indicated a strengthening of the cease-fire, which Hamas officials say would see Israel easing its blockade in exchange for guarantees of quiet.

Israeli and Hamas officials confirmed that the Erez and Kerem Shalom border crossings were re-opened, in a very restricted fashion, for the first time since violence flared up last Monday.

The first steps toward the restoration of calm were nonetheless punctuated by exchanges of fire along the border. Just hours after Israel announced the re-opening

of its main Gaza crossings Sunday, a mortar shell was launched from the Gaza Strip toward Israel, the army said.

The projectile did not cross into Israeli territory but did set off air-raid sirens in the country's south.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, and no immediate Israeli response.

Earlier Sunday, Palestinian militants launched rockets into Israel during the night, and the military responded with tank fire.

Four Palestinians, including three teenagers, were killed by Israeli fire on Saturday as tens of thousands of people took part in mass

rallies that marked the first anniversary of demonstrations along the Israel-Gaza perimeter fence.

Dozens of activists approached the fence during Saturday's demonstration, hurling stones and explosives toward Israeli forces.

Israel says it is defending its border but has come under heavy international criticism for the large number of unarmed Palestinian demonstrators who have been shot over the past 12 months.

Nearly 200 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire, while one Israeli soldier was killed last summer by a Palestinian sniper in Gaza.

Agency: County staff added new contract requirements

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January came at a time when county leaders were frustrated by a lack of transparency at the private nonprofit.

Questions about the agency's management and stability resurfaced after Baker was placed on administrative leave by the agency's board in December over her on-call responsibilities at the crisis respite center in Warrenton. She returned to work in January after an internal investigation, but two board members resigned in protest.

The public scrutiny of the agency over Baker's leave turned up other problems, including the disclosure that the state Department of Human Services nearly pulled the developmental disability contract last fall over the lack of oversight of adult foster homes.

As part of the bidding process, county staff added new contract requirements to improve transparency. Providers have to make quarterly reports to county commissioners, and a county representative must be allowed to attend regular meetings of a provider's governing board.

"The interview process will be an opportunity for us to address any concerns that we might currently have, and what they would do to improve upon those concerns," Steele said.

The county anticipated some competition for the contracts after other providers showed interest.

Steele said a provider from Washington state contacted the county, but wanted to extend the start date of the new contract for several

months past July. The provider, she said, also asked if the county would separate some of the services.

"And that wasn't something that we were willing to do," Steele said.

The behavioral health contract covers mental health and substance abuse treatment. The developmen-

tal disability contract covers care for adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and epilepsy.

Steele said a local provider asked about submitting a bid but had missed the mandatory preproposal conference.

A separate contract for

the crisis respite center is also expected to go out for bid this year. Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare operates the respite center on behalf of a coalition that includes the county, Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc., Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria and Providence Seaside Hospital.

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