

National Digest: Vehicle plows into protesters, killing 1 and injuring 3 in Minneapolis

June 14, 2021 at 4:41 p.m. PDT



MINNESOTA

Vehicle plows into protesters, killing 1

One woman was killed and three people were injured after a man plowed his car into a group of protesters in Minneapolis late Sunday. The suspect is in police custody after demonstrators pulled him from his vehicle following the crash, police said Monday.

Officials had not identified the driver or the victim, but Garrett Knajdek told the Star Tribune that his older sister, Deona M. Knajdek, of Minneapolis, was the protester who was killed. Police said the victim died at a hospital.

Deona Knajdek, who had 11- and 13-year-old daughters, was just days shy of her 32nd birthday when she was killed.

The deadly crash happened just after 11:30 p.m. in the city's Uptown neighborhood near the site where 32-year-old Winston Boogie Smith Jr. was fatally shot June 3 by members of a U.S. Marshals task force who were trying to arrest him on a felony weapons charge.

Three other people were treated for injuries, including one person who was also struck by the driver, police said; none of the three injuries were life-threatening, they said.

As of Monday, details about the driver's identity and his potential motive were unknown, although Minneapolis police spokesman John Elder said that "preliminary investigation indicates that the use of drugs or alcohol by the driver may be a contributing factor in this crash."

The intersection in Uptown where Smith was fatally shot has been the scene of demonstrations for more than a week by community members calling for transparency and accountability. Smith was shot by several members of local sheriff's departments who were working with the marshals as part of a fugitive task force.

— **Kim Bellware**

GEORGIA

The Savannah Police Department said Monday that it has fired five officers in connection with the death of a man who authorities say killed himself while left alone in a police interview room.

The department confirmed the firings after they were first announced by an attorney for the family of the man who died, 60-year-old William Harvey, following a private meeting with Savannah Mayor Van Johnson and Police Chief Roy Minter.

Harvey was found dead April 3 at police headquarters, where he was being questioned in connection with an aggravated assault. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation released preliminary findings of its investigation April 16, saying evidence showed Harvey died after hanging himself with his own shoelaces while left alone in the interview room.

In a statement Monday, Savannah police said two officers — Sgt. Michael Kerr and Cpl. Silver Leuschner — were fired for policy violations related to Harvey's interview.

Police did not say what specific actions prompted their firing. But Francys Johnson, an attorney for Harvey's family, said city officials told him the officers had neglected to turn on video surveillance cameras in the room when Harvey was left alone.

Three others officers were fired in connection with a text message shared among Savannah officers that mocked Harvey's death, the police statement said.

— **Associated Press**

CALIFORNIA

Big Sur trail to reopen after 13-year closure

A popular trail in Big Sur flanked by redwood trees that leads down through a gorge to a 60-foot waterfall is set to open to the public this week after a 13-year restoration needed after a wildfire destroyed access to it, officials announced Monday.

After a \$2 million renovation that fixed bridges, retaining walls, railings, steps and signage, the Pfeiffer Falls Trail will open Friday for the public to enjoy, said officials with California State Parks and Save the Redwoods League, a San Francisco conservation group.

To protect sensitive habitat, California State Parks and Save the Redwoods League officials replaced more than 4,150 square feet of asphalt and concrete, and seven stream crossings, officials said. A 70-foot-long pedestrian bridge that spans the Pfeiffer-Redwood Creek ravine offers dramatic views, they said.

The Basin Complex Fire damaged the 0.75-mile trail, which connects with the Valley View Trail to form a 1.5-mile loop that was the most popular hiking trail in Big Sur before the blaze. A subsequent fire, landslides and a lengthy closure of Highway 1 delayed the restoration project and long-awaited reopening, officials said.

— **Associated Press**

Drugs suspected in deaths of paratroopers

Two Army paratroopers were found dead in their barracks at Fort Bragg and illicit drugs may have been a factor, officials announced Monday.

The 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers were found unresponsive Friday and declared dead at the scene, according to a news release. A cause of death has not been released, but Criminal Investigation Command spokesman Chris Grey said in the news release that investigators have “credible information that the soldiers were involved with illicit drugs.”

The soldiers were identified as Spc. Joshua Diamond, 35, of Plymouth, Mass., and Pfc. Matthew Disney, 20, of Aberdeen, Md. They were part of the 2nd Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team and “served as field artillery firefinder radar operators,” Army officials said.

Diamond was an Iraq combat veteran, and his honors included the Army Commendation Medal with Combat Device, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Combat Action Badge, and the Army Parachutist Badge, the officials said.

Disney was awarded the Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Combat Action Badge and the Army Parachutist Badge.

— **Associated Press**
