WASHINGTON — U.S. unemployment fell to 11.1% in June as the economy added a solid 4.8 million jobs, the government reported Thursday. But the job-market recovery might already be faltering because of a new round of closings and layoffs triggered by a resurgence of the coronavirus.

The jobless rate was down from 13.3% in May, but it is still at a Depression-era level. The data was gathered during the second week of June, before a number of states began to reverse or suspend the reopenings of their economies to try to beat back the virus.

“This is a bit of a dated snapshot at this point,” said Jesse Edgerton, an economist at J.P. Morgan Chase.

The news came as the number of confirmed infections per day in the U.S. soared to an all-time high of 50,700, more than doubling in the past month, according to the count kept by Johns Hopkins University.

**VIRUS OUTBREAK**

US job market improves, but its gains could be short-lived

**By Christopher Rugaber**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. unemployment fell to 11.1% in June as the economy added a solid 4.8 million jobs, the government reported Thursday. But the job-market recovery might already be faltering because of a new round of closings and layoffs triggered by a resurgence of the coronavirus.

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SEE GAINS ON PAGE 14

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**Bitter defeat**

For the men of 1st Platoon, President Donald Trump’s pardon of an officer they helped convict of murder is a crushing betrayal

**By Greg Jaffe**
The Washington Post

Only a few hours had passed since President Donald Trump pardoned 1st Lt. Clint Lorance and the men of 1st Platoon were still trying to make sense of how it was even possible. How could a man they blamed for ruining their lives, an officer the Army convicted of second-degree murder and other charges, be forgiven so easily? How could their president allow him to just walk free?

“I feel like I’m in a nightmare,” Lucas Gray, a former specialist from the unit, texted his old squad leader, who was out of the Army and living in Fayetteville, N.C. “I haven’t been handling it well either,” replied Mike McGuinness on Nov. 15, the day Lorance was pardoned.

“There’s literally no point in anything we did or said,” Gray continued. “Now he gets to be the hero . . .”

SEE BITTER ON PAGE 10
### PACIFIC GAS PRICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Super E10</th>
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### EUROPE GAS PRICES

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### WEATHER OUTLOOK

The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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### EXCHANGE RATES

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**Military rates**

- Euro (July 3) = 1.00
- Dollar (July 3) = 0.88
- British pound (July 3) = 0.88
- Japanese yen (July 3) = 107.54
- South Korean won (July 3) = 1,197.88

**Commercial rates**

- Bahrain (Dinar) = 0.1375
- Brazil = 1.0490
- Canada (Dollar) = 1.3567
- China (Yuan) = 6.6371
- Denmark (Krone) = 0.8671
- Egypt (Pound) = 6.1611
- Euro = 1.1091
- Hong Kong (Dollar) = 7.7503
- Hungary (Forint) = 311.72
- Israel (Shekel) = 4.4461
- Japan (Yen) = 107.54
- Kuwait (Dinar) = 0.4661
- Netherlands = 1.6228
- Philippines (Peso) = 49.64
- Poland (Zloty) = 3.96
- Saudi Arabia (Riyal) = 1.7507
- Singapore (Dollar) = 1.3933
- South Korea (Won) = 1,197.88

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**INTEREST RATES**

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**STARS AND STRIPES**

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**RELLOCATION GUIDE**

Every Friday in the European and Pacific editions of Stars and Stripes AND online daily at [www.stripes.com/relo](http://www.stripes.com/relo)
Report says Marine review finds issues with midair collision probe

By Seth Robson
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A Marine Corps review has found multiple inaccuracies in the investigation of a midair collision off Japan’s coast that killed six Marines more than two years ago, according to a report by Military.com.

Five crew members of a KC-130J tanker and the pilot of an F/A-18 Hornet died during the nighttime training mission on Dec. 6, 2018. The Hornet’s weapons officer was the sole survivor.

Both aircraft were based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

An accident investigation report, released in September, determined that toxic leadership and the F/A-18 pilot’s inexperience conducting nighttime, in-air refueling contributed to the collision. The investigation also found that the fighter pilot’s use of the sleep aid Ambien contributed to the crash and that Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242 suffered from “inadequate oversight of training and operations” and an “unprofessional command climate.”

Four Marine officers — the squadron commander and its executive, operations and aviation safety officers — were fired as a result.

However, a review of the investigation’s findings directed by Gen. Gary Thomas, the assistant commandant, has found “many inaccuracies” that led to “differing — and false — narratives,” according to the Wednesday report by Military.com.

Marine Corps officials in Japan didn’t immediately respond Thursday to questions about the review.

Lt. Gen. Robert Hedelund, the service’s longest-serving aviator, assigned to carry out the review, wrote that the first investigation was not impartial in its focus, thorough in its scope or accurate in its findings, according to Military.com.

The review board dismissed the initial report’s finding that trace amounts of Ambien found in Capt. Jahmar Resilard, the F/A-18 pilot who crashed into the tanker, played a role in the accident.

“There is no basis to conclude that … Ambien use was casual or contributory to the 2018 mishap,” the new 153-page investigation states, according to Military.com.

The new findings highlight challenges faced by Resilard on the night of the crash.

His aircraft (call sign Profane 12) and another F/A-18 (call sign Profane 11) were flying with their lights off during the refueling operation but, after tanking, the other fighter turned on its external lights, according to the review, Military.com reported.

“These circumstances set the conditions for Profane 12 to focus on the overtly lit Profane 11 aircraft instead of the dimly lit tanker,” the report states, according to the website.

The experts on the review board determined that Resilard lost sight of the C-130 “because he became singularly focused on Profane 11.” Resilard’s night vision goggles washed out while flying off near the lighted second tanker, making it harder to see the tanker, Military.com reported.

“It must be noted, this specific set of circumstances would have been incredibly difficult for any pilot, let alone a junior, or less proficient pilot to overcome,” the review board wrote, according to the website.

The review board noted warning signs regarding the squadron’s readiness levels that senior leaders overlooked, Military.com reported.

Maj. Gen. Thomas Weidley, former head of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, has since faced administrative action. So has Col. Mark Palmer, former commanding officer of Marine Aircraft Group 12. An aviation safety officer who was incorrectly blamed after the first investigation has been cleared, the website reported.

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing’s operational tempo “overshadowed or caused a blind zone” when it came to the all-weather attack squadron’s readiness, the review board wrote, Military.com reported.

“Accepting low readiness from its specialized career fields, common practice for many years, and in this case, 1st MAW made no effort to mitigate the squadron’s risk in participating in” the nighttime refueling exercise.

Marine Aircraft Group 12 also failed to recognize the risks, the new investigation states, according to the website, “to a greater degree and with greater ramifications.”
House panel includes funding for Stripes

WASHINGTON — A House committee’s version of the annual defense spending bill includes $15.5 million in federal funding for Stars and Stripes after the Defense Department proposed cutting the military newspaper from its 2021 budget.

The House Armed Services Committee unanimously approved $740.5 billion in spending in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets yearly policy and funding priorities for the Pentagon, and that Stars and Stripes is funded at the same amount as fiscal year 2020. The final committee vote on the NDAA was 56-0.

“Stars and Stripes fulfills a niche in journalism that isn’t going to be matched by other journalists when it comes to military families and the minutiae of benefits, it is a very necessary piece of journalism,” said Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., who introduced the Stars and Stripes amendment.

The bill also requires Defense Secretary Mark Esper to submit a report to the House Armed Services Committee about maintaining Stars and Stripes as a benefit for service members.

The bill mandates Esper analyze reducing the newspaper’s operations and examine whether it should still receive annual funding provided by Congress.

The proposed Defense Department budget for fiscal year 2021 cuts Stars and Stripes of its federal subsidies, which equals about half of the news organization’s yearly funds to pay to print and distribute newspapers to American troops deployed around the globe, including remote and often-dangerous locations such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The rest of the organization’s money comes from sales, subscriptions and advertising.

Stars and Stripes first appeared during the Civil War, and it has been continuously published since World War II. It produces daily newspapers for U.S. military troops across the world and a website, stripes.com, which is updated with news 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Though it is part of the Pentagon’s Defense Media Agency, Stripes retains its editorial independence and is congressionally mandated to be governed by First Amendment principles.

The proposed cuts to Stars and Stripes were a product of the recent defense-wide review to cut spending and reallocate funds to efforts the Pentagon considers important for defense against threats from other military powers, mainly China and Russia.

“So, we trimmed the support for Stars and Stripes because we need to invest that money, as we did with many, many other programs, into higher-priority issues,” Esper said during a Feb. 13 news conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

But Gallego said cutting Stars and Stripes funding from the Defense Department budget was not about money.

“It’s such a small number in comparison to the whole budget, it’s less than a rounding error,” he said before the committee approved the bill. “This has nothing to do with budgets. This has to do with the DOD not liking investigative journalism. If not for [Stripes], Congress might not be informed about some of these important issues.

I think they believe this is the one time to get rid of Stars and Stripes.”

On June 11, the Senate Armed Services Committee approved their version of the NDAA, which includes no funding for Stars and Stripes. However, the 2021 defense bill is not expected to be finalized until the fall. It must be passed by both chambers of Congress by Sept. 30, the end of the fiscal year, to provide the Pentagon an on-time budget.

Last year, the bill was not signed into law until December as lawmakers argued over the inclusion of funding for President Donald Trump’s proposed wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. This year, Trump has threatened to veto the spending bill over the inclusion of renaming U.S. military bases honoring Confederate leaders.

“The chairman’s mark is not the bill I would have written, but on the whole, it is one I agree with and can support,” Rep. Mac Thornberry of Texas, the committee’s ranking Republican, said in a statement ahead of the NDAA vote. “It is the product of the House Armed Services Committee, bipartisan process and reflects priorities used by all of the committee’s members.”

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GOP signals Trump to withdraw threat to veto defense bill

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is increasingly isolated over his staunch defense of Confederate symbols on military bases, as uneasy congressional Republicans signal to the White House that now is not the time to hold the Pentagon hostage to their one issue.

Trump threatened late Tuesday to veto a $740 billion defense policy bill if it included bipartisan language mandating the removal of the names of Confederate leaders from military installations. Although some Republicans on the Senate Armed Services Committee made clear that now is not the time to address the issue.

Trump’s promised wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. This year, Trump has threatened to veto the spending bill over the inclusion of renaming U.S. military bases honoring Confederate leaders.

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PACIFIC

Pandemic leads US bases to alter July Fourth events

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — U.S. military bases across the Pacific will salute 244 years of American independence with celebrations both mild and full-throated but all in the shadow of the lingering coronavirus pandemic.

At Camp Humphreys, the Army’s sprawling headquarters in South Korea, the schedule of events reads like any other Fourth of July celebration.

A DJ starts things off at 12:15 p.m. Saturday, followed by a talent show, the Eighth Army Band performance, traditional Korean dance, a Best Dad Joke Battle and more, concluding at 7 p.m. in time for fireworks at 8:45 p.m.

“Social distancing is encouraged,” is the timely advice atop the event listing on the Humphreys Morale Welfare and Recreation website.

The coronavirus surged in South Korea in late March and, so far, has tallied nearly 13,000 cases, including at least 40 people affiliated with the U.S. military. The Army began to relax its restrictions in late May as the rate of new cases per day in the country declined.

The Eighth Army, headquartered at Humphreys, on its own urged troops and their families to continue social distancing, wearing masks and washing their hands often over the holiday.

At Camp Casey, 40 miles north of Seoul, the garrison plans a noon to 9:30 p.m. Saturday barbecue, with games, food, live music and displays at the Casey Gateway Club parking lot. Indoor events will include a head count to maintain social distancing, a flyer for the event states.

Camp Walker, in Daegu, plans a Fourth fairground-style event, the Eighth Army Band performance, traditional Korean performance, a carnival-style Liberty Fest 2020, a bounce house to a mechanical bull. Fireworks are slated to go off at 8:45 p.m.

At bases in Japan, celebrations are muted as the U.S. military inches out of nearly three months of coronavirus restrictions. At Yokota Air Base, home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo, a 20-minute fireworks show will kick off events late Saturday evening on Camp Foster at 8:15 p.m. With Soa house at 7:30 p.m. family movie at Berry Field, according to the base Facebook page.

“The City of Yokosuka requested we not have [fireworks] because they are concerned about large public gatherings,” base spokesman Randall Bacon told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday.

At Naval Air Facility Atsugi, the 20-minute restrictions were followed by a 30-minute firework show Saturday, according to the community services Facebook page.

“At Camp Zama, home south of Tokyo of the 7th Fleet where the most demanding restrictions were imposed following a coronavirus outbreak there, Independence Day will be marked with softball and volleyball tournaments, a kids’ carnival and an outdoor movie.”

No live fireworks are planned, but a virtual display will precede the 7:30 p.m. family movie at Berry Field, according to the base Facebook page.

“Face coverings and social distancing are required,” the announcement said.

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On Okinawa, the Marines downsized their Fourth of July observance in deference to the prefectural government’s desire to avoid large gatherings, according to Marine Corps Community Services. Instead of the fairground-style events and parade previously planned, the Marines are setting up gourmet food-truck pods 3-9 p.m. Saturday on Camps Lester and Foster and at Plaza Housing, with fireworks at 8:15 p.m. on Camp Foster, according to the community services Facebook page.

Kadena Air Base plans a drive-in movie starting at sunset Friday, with fireworks to follow around 9:15 p.m. All movie spots are taken, according to the support squadron.

Finally, U.S. Naval Base Guam plans a fireworks display at 9 p.m. Friday from Clipper Landing Park and an Independence Day Motorcade Parade through the main base and Apra View housing Saturday.

Stars and Stripes reporters Theron Godbold, Matthew Burke and Christian Lopez contributed to this report.

ditzler.joseph@stripes.com

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“Social distancing is encouraged,” is the timely advice atop the event listing on the Humphreys Morale Welfare and Recreation website.

The coronavirus surged in South Korea in late March and, so far, has tallied nearly 13,000 cases, including at least 40 people affiliated with the U.S. military. The Army began to relax its restrictions in late May as the rate of new cases per day in the country declined.

The Eighth Army, headquartered at Humphreys, on its own urged troops and their families to continue social distancing, wearing masks and washing their hands often over the holiday.

At Camp Casey, 40 miles north of Seoul, the garrison plans a noon to 9:30 p.m. Saturday barbecue, with games, food, live music and displays at the Casey Gateway Club parking lot. Indoor events will include a head count to maintain social distancing, a flyer for the event states.

Camp Walker, in Daegu, plans a Fourth fairground-style event, the Eighth Army Band performance, traditional Korean performance, a carnival-style Liberty Fest 2020, a bounce house to a mechanical bull. Fireworks are slated to go off at 8:45 p.m.

At bases in Japan, celebrations are muted as the U.S. military inches out of nearly three months of coronavirus restrictions. At Yokota Air Base, home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo, a 20-minute fireworks show will kick off events late Saturday evening on Camp Foster at 8:15 p.m. With Soa house at 7:30 p.m. family movie at Berry Field, according to the base Facebook page.

“The City of Yokosuka requested we not have [fireworks] because they are concerned about large public gatherings,” base spokesman Randall Bacon told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday.

At Naval Air Facility Atsugi, the 20-minute restrictions were followed by a 30-minute firework show Saturday, according to the community services Facebook page.

“At Camp Zama, home south of Tokyo of the 7th Fleet and where the most demanding restrictions were imposed following a coronavirus outbreak there, Independence Day will be marked with softball and volleyball tournaments, a kids’ carnival and an outdoor movie.”

No live fireworks are planned, but a virtual display will precede the 7:30 p.m. family movie at Berry Field, according to the base Facebook page.

“Face coverings and social distancing are required,” the announcement said.

At Yokosuka Naval Base, home south of Tokyo of the 7th Fleet and where the most demanding restrictions were imposed following a coronavirus outbreak there, Independence Day will be marked with softball and volleyball tournaments, a kids’ carnival and an outdoor movie.

No live fireworks are planned, but a virtual display will precede the 7:30 p.m. family movie at Berry Field, according to the base Facebook page.

On Okinawa, the Marines downsized their Fourth of July observance in deference to the prefectural government’s desire to avoid large gatherings, according to Marine Corps Community Services. Instead of the fairground-style events and parade previously planned, the Marines are setting up gourmet food-truck pods 3-9 p.m. Saturday on Camps Lester and Foster and at Plaza Housing, with fireworks at 8:15 p.m. on Camp Foster, according to the community services Facebook page.

Kadena Air Base plans a drive-in movie starting at sunset Friday, with fireworks to follow around 9:15 p.m. All movie spots are taken, according to the support squadron.

Finally, U.S. Naval Base Guam plans a fireworks display at 9 p.m. Friday from Clipper Landing Park and an Independence Day Motorcade Parade through the main base and Apra View housing Saturday.

Stars and Stripes reporters Theron Godbold, Matthew Burke and Christian Lopez contributed to this report.

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Troops, long-term residents exempt from EU travel ban

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. military personnel bound for assignments in Europe won’t be affected by a new European Union travel ban on Americans, officials said.

Status of Forces and bilateral agreements with countries mean “we don’t anticipate any direct impacts on U.S. personnel,” U.S. European Command said in a statement after the EU travel restriction went into effect Wednesday.

The restrictions also “should not apply” to long-term EU residents and their family members, or “to people with an essential function or need,” including health care workers, seasonal agricultural workers, researchers and diplomats, the European Council said. Military personnel are on the list of essential workers, said the EC, one of the main decision-making bodies of the EU.

The ban on American visitors was imposed to prevent a resurgence of the coronavirus in Europe, which case numbers and transmission have fallen sharply from a peak several weeks ago. The restrictions will be evaluated and updated every two weeks, the EC said.

If new cases of the coronavirus are “close to or below the EU average” over a period of 14 days, the U.S. will be added to the list of countries whose citizens can travel to the EU.

But the likelihood of that happening soon is slim. New cases of the virus have spiked in the U.S. after several states lifted lockdown restrictions. Dr. Anthony Fauci, a member of the White House coronavirus task force and head of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told a congressional hearing Tuesday that, if steps are not taken to slow the spread of the virus, the U.S. could see 100,000 new cases a day — double the current number.

The announcement of the travel ban on Americans comes as the Defense Department tries to unwind a substantial backlog of troops and DOD civilians waiting to move to new assignments around the world. The backlog was created by a Pentagon order halting military moves and other nonessential travel in the spring, when Europe was bearing the brunt of the pandemic and cases in the U.S. were still relatively low.

“Italy, which in the spring had the highest death toll in the world from coronavirus, along with Germany and Poland are hubs for U.S. troops in Europe. As of Thursday, the U.S. had the highest number of confirmed cases of coronavirus in the world — 2,686,587 out of 10.7 million worldwide and 128,062 deaths out of a global total of 516,552, according to a tally compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

EU COM said the military is taking precautions “to ensure we maintain the trust and confidence of our host nations.”

As an example, recently arrived troops with the 101st Airborne’s 101st Combat Aviation Brigade are isolated in small groups for two weeks in Grafenwoehr, before moving to forward locations in other parts of Europe.

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Family and colleagues remember pilot killed in Shaw base crash

Stars and Stripes

A former enlisted loadmaster who had pursued a lifelong dream of flying for the Air Force was killed while piloting the F-16CM fighter jet that crashed late Tuesday in South Carolina, Shaw Air Force Base officials said.

First Lt. David Schmitz, a pilot with the 20th Fighter Wing’s 77th Fighter Squadron, was flying the single-seat jet on a training mission when it crashed on the base at about 11:30 p.m., said on its Facebook page:

“During this extremely difficult time, the outpouring of love and support from our communities to his family and our base has been much appreciated,” the post said. “Thank you.”

Schmitz got his pilot license at 17, said Col. Lawrence Sullivan, commander of the 20th Fighter Wing, in a video on the page.

A former loadmaster on the C-17, Schmitz “never gave up on his lifelong goal of flying for the United States Air Force as a pilot,” Sullivan said.

Sullivan said.

“Schmitz’s wife Valerie recalled the day before his final flight in a Facebook post. He let him sleep in because he would be flying at night, and she said he called her and their dog Toby into the bedroom.

“He smiled and said, ‘I just want to be with my family!’” Valerie Schmitz wrote. “‘My heart melted and I jumped on the bed, snuggled up close to Dave and lay my head on his warm chest, steadily rising with each breath. I could hear his heartbeat. Toby jumped on the bed next to me and we all snuggled for a moment and watched funny animal videos before Dave had to get ready for the day.’

The couple kissed goodbye and the dog licked him on the cheek. After midnight, the doorbell rang and she was informed about the accident.

“In an instant my life had changed forever and my heart shattered into a million pieces. A few hours later I kissed my sweet husband one last time on his cold lips,” she wrote.

“Hold your loved ones close. You never know when it might just be the last time you’ll see them. Your life can change forever in an instant. I love you so much, Dave, I always will.”

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DOD: Taliban still working with al-Qaida amid US deal

BY PHILIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban remain closely tied with al-Qaida despite assuring the United States they would disavow the terrorist group in exchange for a withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, the Defense Department said this week.

Level-low insurgents routinely receive support from al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent — the group’s regional affiliate — and work with the terrorists to undermine the U.S.-backed government in Kabul, the DOD said in a semiannual report to Congress published Wednesday.

“Despite recent progress in the peace process, AQIS maintains close ties to the Taliban in Afghanistan, likely for protection and training,” the report said, using an abbreviation for the terrorist group.

The Pentagon’s assessment, which covers the period from December to May, follows similar findings the United Nations published last month. It also underscores the challenges the Trump administration faces as it attempts to end the longest war in U.S. history, now in its 19th year.

Under a U.S.-Taliban deal signed in February, all U.S. forces could be out of Afghanistan by next summer if the jihadis fulfill certain commitments, including renouncing al-Qaida and preventing terrorist groups from using Afghan soil to train, recruit, raise funds or plot attacks on the U.S. and its allies.

Officials believe the threat posed by AQIS to U.S. forces is “limited,” the report said, and U.S. counterterrorism measures have reduced its ability to conduct independent operations in the country without the Taliban.

But U.S. lawmakers are concerned that al-Qaida’s presence could expand and threaten national security if American troops withdraw without proof that the group’s links to the insurgents have been severed. Some members of Congress who have seen classified sections of the U.S.-Taliban deal have said it lacks ways to measure the militants’ compliance with their promises.

Those concerns led the House Armed Services Committee to approve an amendment Wednesday to next year’s defense spending bill that would require congression al oversight of further troop drawdowns in Afghanistan.

Throughout his term, President Donald Trump has pushed to end America’s “forever wars,” which he’d promised during his campaign. But the proposed amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act seeks to put a new check on his power to do so.

It would require his administration to certify that troop reductions to certain levels would be done in consultation with allies, would not raise risks for remaining American personnel and would be in the best interest of the U.S.

An initial reduction of American troops from about 13,000 to 8,600 was already completed last month, weeks before a deadline set in the U.S.-Taliban deal. U.S. military officials insist future reductions will be conditional and that mounting violence may cause delays.

While the text of the agreement doesn’t specifically block the Taliban from attacking Afghan forces, U.S. officials say the insurgents made verbal assurances they’d curb violence by 80%.

Though they have not attacked U.S. forces since late February, Wednesday’s report said, they have sustained levels of violence five times higher than those seen during the week before the agreement was signed.

“U.S. Government Departments and Agencies continue to closely monitor violence levels in Afghanistan and assess whether the Taliban is sufficiently complying with its commitments under the U.S.-Taliban Agreement,” the report said.

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Report details 2018 Afghan insider attack that killed soldier

BY J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — He was shot in the back as he ran for cover, but Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy A. Bolyard, who was killed in an insider attack in Afghanistan on Sept. 3, 2018, “didn’t go down without a fight,” his son Preston Bolyard said.

Nearly two years later, no militi ant group has claimed responsibility for the shooting, but the investigation report published last month in a recently released Army report that gave more details about the attack.

Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy A. Bolyard, who was killed in an insider attack in Afghanistan on Sept. 3, 2018, “didn’t go down without a fight,” his son Preston Bolyard said.

Preston Bolyard, 22, said in a text message Tuesday:

“Although reading the investigation report is very tough, it is very nice to know that my father didn’t go down without a fight.”

Bolyard was killed on Sept. 3, 2018, in Logar province. The details of his last moments are buried in the investigation report, which was completed weeks after the insider attack but only recently made public.

Bolyard was the top enlisted soldier in the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade, which specializes in training foreign militaries and was on its first, high-profile deployment. He was killed after he and other SFAB advisers attended a meeting with Brig. Gen. Abdul Raiziq, commander of an Afghan army brigade at Camp Maiwand, to plan security for provincial elections.

His death came amid a spate of insider attacks in the fall of 2018, including one in October that killed two senior Afghan officials, wounded a U.S. general and narrowly missed the top American commander of the war effort.

The investigation report revealed new details of the September attack, including that Bolyard and the other advisers had left their protective gear at a small vehicle-mounted PKM machine gun, the report said. Bolyard was shot and died an hour later.

Another soldier, Staff Sgt. Steven McQueen, was shot in the head. He later credited the new helmet he was wearing with saving his life.

After the gunfire ceased, the Americans helped Bolyard to a nearby surgical team, but they were unable to save him.

The two gunmen and two accomplices fled the base but were captured after about seven hours.

Nearly two years later, no militant group has claimed responsibility for the shooting.

With details of the attackers’ apprehension struck from the report and a section that focused on their possible motivation redacted, “We may never know the true motives behind the shooting,” Preston Bolyard said.

But he was comforted to learn that other soldiers tried to save his father, a six-time Bronze Star recipient and veteran of seven deployments, he said.

His father’s funeral in West Virginia weeks after the attack was packed with friends and those he had helped, his son recalled.

“I still look up to his leadership every day,” he said.

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5 troops request pass on ban on attending church

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

At least five service members have hired a lawyer to fight a Navy order that bars them from attending indoor worship services to prevent the spread of the coronavirus because they believe it violates their constitutional right of religious freedom.

First Liberty Institute, a Texas-based legal office focused on defending religious freedoms, sent letters beginning Monday to five commanders, asking them to grant the service members an accommodation and to encourage the Navy to rescind the “unlawful order.”

“The commander in chief has already declared churches are essential in America,” said Michelle Berry, general counsel for First Liberty and the lawyer for the five service members. “It really strikes me that the Navy is either blatantly disregarding the president, the commander in chief, or they haven’t been paying attention and are completely tone deaf to what’s going on.”

Air Force Maj. Daniel Schultz, who is assigned to the Naval Post Graduate School in California and therefore falls under the order’s restrictions, is part of his off-base church’s leadership and worship team, according to Berry’s four-page letter to Air Force Lt. Col. Matthew Garvin, commander of the school’s Air Force element.

“Maj. Schultz is a devout Christian, who since he held religious beliefs compel him to participate in religious services at his church, in person,” Berry wrote. “Because [the order] bans him from attending church and participating with the worship team, the Navy order substan- tially burdens Maj. Schultz’s sincerely held religious beliefs.”

Berry’s four clients have declined to have their names or the specifics of their requests released publicly.

The Navy first issued orders to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in March, only granting members permission to travel from home to work and to the grocery store or pharmacy for essential tasks. Maj. Self-Kyler, spokeswoman for the Navy’s Fleet Forces Command. Since then, Navy chaplains have worked to find religious opportunities available to sailors in ways that don’t require large gatherings of people, she said.

“The [Defense Department] places a high value on the rights of members of the military services to observe the tenets of their respective religions or to observe no religion at all,” Self-Kyler said.

On June 24, the Navy re-issued an order to reiterate the church guidelines, which haven’t changed, she said. However, the update did provide more specifics on what is and isn’t allowed to be exposed in many service members live in civilian communities that have begun reopening.

The order warns “the easing of community restrictions is not aligned with the Navy imperative to maintain [the coronavirus] infection as low as achievable across the force.”

“While all region and installation commanders maintain a strong working relationship with local and state leadership and con- sistently monitor public health conditions, the Navy’s unique mission sometimes demands that it impose greater burdens on its forces than are imposed on our civilian counterparts in order to ensure operational effective- ness,” Self-Kyler said.

In regards to religious services, the June order allows for sailors to attend drive-thru and outdoor events, but specifically bans at- tendance at indoor religious services held off base, as well as other places, including bars, casinos, conferences, sporting events, concerts, public beaches, amusement parks and other events “designed to promote large gatherings.”

By JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

Two more U.S. military bases in Japan eased coronavirus restric- tions in time for sailors, airmen, families and civilian workers to stretch their legs over Indepen- dence Day weekend.

Misawa Air Base, at the north- ern tip of Honshu, the largest of Japan’s four main islands, on Wednesday opened the Tohoku re- gion for travel by base personnel. Travel is now permitted in Akita, Aomori, Fukushima, Iwate, Mi- yagi and Yamagata prefectures, according to a post on the base Facebook page.

Likewise, personnel from Sasebo Naval Base are permit- ted to travel throughout Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan’s four main islands, with the excep- tion of the Fukuoka metro area, Sasebo commander Capt. Brad Stallings said in a statement Wednesday.

Individuals from both instal- lations may visit public baths, saunas and tattoo parlors. They can also dine in at off-base res- taurants, as long as they practice social distancing and wear masks covering their nose and mouth when not eating.

Misawa imposed a 90-minute dining limit and a “hard cut-off” 9 p.m. restaurant curfew.

Sasebo’s people may visit amusement parks and take part in sports; Misawa personnel can go to movie theaters and massage parlors. They may also stay at ho- tels and cabins.

“As long as we all continue to take personal responsibility se- riously, maintain distance, wear our masks properly and maintain strict hygiene habits we won’t catch this disease and it won’t find its way onto the base or our ships,” Stallings wrote.

Bars and karaoke establish- ments, which have been the leading cause of the virus’ spread in Japan, are still off limits for per- sonnel at both facilities, as they are for most U.S. personnel.

The infected individual lives at Camp McTureous, a housing area in Uruma city less than two miles from Camp Courtney, the statement said.

“It is believed the individual contracted the virus from recent travel to the United States,” the Marine statement said. “They have only had minimal con- tact with [U.S. Forces Japan] personnel and have not had any contact at all with anyone off base.”

This is the fourth case associated with the U.S. military on the island since the global pandemic began. Most of the approximately 40,000 Marines stationed in Japan are based in Okinawa.

USMC confirms 1st Okinawa case

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Marine Corps has reported its first case of coronavirus on Okina- wa, a family member of a Marine who tested positive Wednesday after returning from the United States, Marine Forces Japan announced Thursday.

The case is the first on the island prefecture since April 30.

The family has been quarantined since their re- turn June 19, and Navy health professionals and Marine Corps authorities are tracing their contacts “to determine whether anyone else may have been exposed,” the Marines’ statement said.

Sasebo and Misawa latest bases to ease anti-virus limits before holiday

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Two newly assigned U.S. service members who tested positive for coronavirus while being in South Korea were prematurely released from quarantine due to an administrative error, the mili- tary said Thursday.

The announcement came a day after officials at Osan Air Base issued a “COVID-19 alert” that urged people to stay inside and ordered them not to travel to other bases, while officials cleaned affected facilities and contacted people who may have been exposed.

The base issued an all-clear Thursday evening and confirmed the two service members had tested positive.

That raised to 42 the number of cases affiliated with U.S. Forces Korea, including 17 service mem- bers arriving from overseas for new assignments in South Korea.

The service members landed at Osan Air Base, south of Seoul, on a government-chartered flight from the United States on June 17. USFK said Thursday.

They initially tested negative and were placed in a mandatory two-week quarantine according to procedures in place due to the pandemic, according to USFK.

The troops tested positive on a second test that is required to exit quarantine, but the results were originally recorded as negative “due to an administrative error,” so the two were released accord- ing to protocol, according to the statement.

“Established quality control measures identified the error, and medical staff were able to remediate the situation within nine hours of their release,” it said. “Osan of- ficials contacted and transported the service members to Osan’s isolation facility designated for confirmed COVID-19 cases.”

“USFK is reviewing estab- lished protocols to prevent similar occurrences in the future,” it said.

It added that public health and base officials had completed con- tact tracing and cleaned the fac- ilities the service members had visited.

The five service members who tested positive mistakenly released from quarantine

2 with positive coronavirus test mistakenly released from quarantine

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The five service members who tested positive mistakenly released from quarantine
Intel chiefs brief Congress about Russian bounties

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. intelligence chiefs conducted classified briefings Thursday for congressional leaders who have demanded more answers about intelligence assessments that Russia offered bounties for killing U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

President Donald Trump has called news reports about the assessments a “hoax,” but hasn’t directly addressed their substance or whether the U.S. has or will respond to Russia.

Top intelligence officials, including CIA Director Gina Haspel and Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, conducted the closed-door briefing for a group of lawmakers dubbed the “gang of eight” — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the top Republicans and Democrats on the two intelligence committees.

The group regularly receives classified briefings at the highest levels, and leaders rarely speak about them. None of the lawmakers leaving the meeting would comment on it.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer would only say that “the briefings are important, I don’t think the president is close to tough enough on Vladimir Putin.”

Pelosi said ahead of the meeting that she hopes Republicans in the briefing are “open to the truth,” and she called for additional sanctions on Russia.

The White House has insisted that Trump wasn’t briefed on the assessments because they hadn’t been verified, even though it’s now confirmed without a shadow of doubt before it is presented to senior government decision-makers.

Russia denies giving weapons to the Taliban in Afghanistan

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia’s Foreign Ministry rejected the claim by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who said the Russian government had supplied small arms to Taliban fighters.

Russia, which has long been critical of the U.S.-led operation in Afghanistan, welcomed February’s peace deal between the U.S. and the Taliban aimed at ending the protracted war.


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Bitter: Lorance received 19-year term for ordering his troops to fire on men

FROM FRONT PAGE

“And we’re left to deal with it,” McGuinness concluded.

Lorance had been in command of the Platoon for only three days in Afghanistan when the war crime a day, a military jury found. On his last day before he was dismissed, Lorance had ordered his troops to open fire on three Afghan men standing by a motorcycle on the side of the road who he said posed a threat. His actions led to a 19-year prison sentence.

He had served six years when Trump set him free.

The president’s opponents described the pardon as another instance of Trump subverting the rule of law to reward allies and reap political benefits. Military officials worried that the decision to overturn a conviction already had been adjudicated in the military courts sent a signal that war criminals were not worthy of severe punishment.

For the men of 1st platoon, part of the 82nd Airborne Division, the costs of the war and the fall-out from the case have been profound and sometimes deadly.

As enshrined by history, they have also been brutalized by the politicization of their service and marked by tales of what they lived in Afghanistan — already a violent and harrowing tour before Lorance assumed command — had so demeaned that it no longer existed.

Since returning home in 2013, from the battle zone, the 48 soldiers have died. At least four others have been hospitalized following suicide attempts or struggling with PTSD.

The last fatality came a few weeks before Lorance was pardoned. Donnie Ayres was a hardworking Michigan state trooper and father of three, died of suicide. As the new year dawned, preparing the official order for Trump’s signature, the men of 1st Platoon gathered in Grand Rapids, Mich., for the funeral, where they remembered Twist as a good soldier who had bravely rushed through smoke and fire to pull a friend from a bomb crater and place a tourniquet on his right leg.

President Donald Trump welcomes Clint Lorance to the stage before his remarks at the Republican Party of Florida's Statemen Dinner in December in downtown.

“I needed to get out of class life. “I needed to get out of college,” Twist said. “I didn’t know how to handle it,” Gray said of college. “I was really immature.”

Others joined right out of high school propelled by romantic notions, inherited from veteran grandfathers, of service and duty. Twist’s father served in Vietnam as a clerk in an air-conditioned office away from the battle. He moved to Michigan and opening a garage. Twist was just 16 when he started badgering his parents to sign him up. His grandfather, of service and duty.

“Some had tried college but quit because they were bored or failed because they didn’t know how to handle it,” Gray said of college. “I was really immature.”

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Another soldier was severely wounded in quick succession. On June 6, Walley lost his leg and arm to a Taliban bomb. Eight days later, yet another enemy mine wounded Mark Kerner and 1st Lt. Dominic Latino, the platoon leader. Then, on June 23, a sniper’s bullet tore through Matthew Hanes’ neck, leaving him paralysed from the neck down.

The platoon was briefly sent back to a larger base a few miles away to shower, meet with mental-health counselors and pick up their new platoon leader. Lorance had served a tour as an enlisted prison guard in Iraq before attending college and becoming an infantry officer. He had spent the first five months of his Afghanian tour as a staff officer on a fortified base.

This was his first time in combat.

“We’re not going to lose any more men to injuries in this platoon,” he told then-Sgt. 1st Class Keith Ayres, his platoon sergeant, shortly after taking over on June 29, according to Ayres’ testimony.

His strategy, he said, was a “shock and awe” campaign designed to cow the enemy and intimidate villagers into coughing up valuable intelligence. When an Afghan farmer and his young son approached the outpost’s front gate and asked permission to move a section of razor wire a few feet so that the farmer could get into his field, Lorance threatened to have Twist and the other soldiers on guard duty kill him and his boy.

“He pointed at the child … at the little, tiny kid,” Twist testified. He estimated the child was 3 or 4 years old.

On Lorance’s second day, he ordered two of his sharpshooters to fire within 10 to 12 inches of unarmed villagers. His goal was to make the Americans worry that the Americans were shooting at them and motivate them to attend a village meeting that Lorance had scheduled for later in the week, his soldiers testified.

His real motive, though, seems to have been cruelty. “It’s funny watching those f—-ers dance,” Lorance said, according to the testimony of one of his soldiers. Lorance didn’t pull the trigger. Instead, he stood by his men in the guard tower and picked the targets and issued orders. His troops finally balked when he told them to shoot near children. They returned fire a few hours later when he ordered them to file a false report saying that they had taken fire from the village.

On the day of the killings for which he would be convicted, Lorance posted a sign in the platoon headquarters stating that no motorcycles would be permitted in his unit’s sector. The platoon’s soldiers were falsely told before the day’s patrol that motorcycles should be considered “hostile and engaged on sight.” Several soldiers testified that Lorance told them that senior U.S. officials had ordered the change. At least two sergeants recalled the guidance had come from the Afghans and did not apply to U.S. forces. Due to the conflicting testimony, the jury of Army officers acquitted Lorance of changing the rules of engagement.

Continues on Page 11
A few minutes later, a boy approached the dead men and the motorcycle, which was standing on the side of the road with its kickstand still down. Lorance ordered him and another soldier to fire harassment shots into the neighboring village.

Army investigators, who were primarily puny and weak, threatened Zettel with aggravated assault charges for the shootings in the tower. And they showed McGuinness a charge sheet accusing him of murder for killing the Afghans who were talking on the radios about targeting Americans.

The threat of prosecution hung over them for months. Eventually, the Army concluded that McGuinness’ actions were justified. Prosecutors never pursued charges against Zettel.

Lorance did not appear on the stand, and not one of his former superiors in the platoon — received disciplinary letters, which can hinder or delay promotions, for their failure to turn in the bodies. Lorance’s immediate superior, Maj. Mike McGuinness, was turned to the base.

In response to a Lorance clemency request, an Army general reviewed the conviction and reduced the sentence by one year.

The war crimes that year followed Lorance’s soldiers home to Fort Bragg.

Dave Zettel wasn’t on the patrol when the killings were committed but was in the guard tower when Lorance ordered him and another soldier to fire harassment shots into the neighboring village.

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Lorance did not appear on the stand, and not one of his former superiors in the platoon — received disciplinary letters, which can hinder or delay promotions, for their failure to turn in the bodies. Lorance’s immediate superior, Maj. Mike McGuinness, was turned to the base.

In response to a Lorance clemency request, an Army general reviewed the conviction and reduced the sentence by one year.

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In 2014, McGuinness was out drinking with an Army friend, and when the friend went home, he stayed at the bar until he had downsed enough booze to “sedate his will.” A military police officer found him later that night, sitting in his truck on All American Parkway, the main drag through Fort Bragg, with a gun in his mouth.

It was the end of his 16-year Army career.

Soon the platoon began to suffer losses at home. First Kerner, who was wounded in a bomb blast with the unit’s first platoon leader, died in March 2015 of cancer at 23. Doctors discovered the malignancy when they were treating his combat wounds. Five months later Hanes, who was paralyzed by the bullet he took to his neck, died of a blood clot at 24.

“Saying I love you doesn’t even scratch the surface of how much you truly mean to me,” he wrote in a note to the platoon three months before he fell into a coma. His closest friends from the unit — Zettel, Dallas Haggard and
“We kind of got betrayed,” said Dave Zettle outside his home in Blythewood, S.C. “We were pegged as if we were like a rogue unit. Which we clearly weren’t. It was kind of dishheartening.”

The actual release would come two weeks later on Nov. 15.

In Lorance’s hometown of Merit, Texas, Lee Greenwood’s “God Bless the U.S.A.” blared from a sound system in the parking lot of the local high school. A cheering crowd of about 300 people had spent the previous two hours in the cold and dark awaiting Lorance’s arrival.

“This is absolutely amazing,” Morrissey said as his car, escorted by the county constable, rolled to a stop in the high school parking lot.

“It’s a hometown hero’s welcome,” his cousin said from the back seat.

Lorance climbed atop a flatbed trailer. Someone from the crowd gave him an American flag. The vice commander of the local VFW handed him a microphone.

“God bless Texas!” Lorance yelled. “God bless America.”

And with that, the appeals court fell silent. The group that had worked to free Lorance, his case and the public defender who helped secure annual donations by about 150%, from $1.8 million in 2015 to more than $4.5 million in 2018.

Lorance, who was wearing his crisp, blue Army uniform — his pants tucked into his boots, paratrooper style — knew exactly what his backers wanted to hear. “We finally have a president who understands that when we send our troops to fight impossible wars, we must stand behind them,” he told the crowd.

He blasted the creeps “deep state” military officers he blamed for his conviction. “That’s not really the military. That’s the politicians who run the thing,” he said. “The men and women in the mud and dirt. That’s the real U.S. military.”

The next morning Lorance boarded a plane for New York City, where he appeared on “Fox & Friends” and Hannity’s radio show. In December, he joined Trump onstage at a GOP fundraiser.

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Stonewall Jackson statue removed from Richmond’s Monument Avenue

BY DENISE LAVOIE AND ALAN SUDERMAN
Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Work crews wielding a crane, harnesses and power tools wrested an imposing statue of Gen. Stonewall Jackson from its pedestal along the famed Monument Avenue in Richmond, Va., on Wednesday, just hours after the mayor ordered the removal of all Confederate statues from city land.

Mayor Levar Stoney’s decree came weeks after Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam ordered the removal of the most prominent and imposing statue along the avenue: that of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, which sits on state land. The removal of the Lee statue has been stalled pending the resolution of several lawsuits.

The Jackson statue is the latest of several dozen Confederate symbols to be removed from public land in the United States in the five weeks since the death of George Floyd at the hands of police sparked a nationwide protest movement.

And the total number of people who are drawing jobless benefits remains at a sizable 19 million.

The number of laid-off workers seeking jobless benefits rose last week in Texas, Arizona and Tennessee. Though the figure fell in California, it remained near 280,000. That’s more people than were seeking unemployment benefits in the entire country before the outbreak took hold in March.

The U.S. job growth in June was driven mainly by companies recalling workers who had been laid off as part of the widespread business shutdowns across the country in the spring.

In an ominous trend contained in the Labor Department report, more Americans said they had lost jobs permanently. The figure rose 600,000 last month to nearly 2.9 million.

Workers who are permanently laid off typically face a much harder time finding new jobs, and most go to a new company or switch occupations.

“Even as we move into the second half of the year, a large number of people will still be looking for work,” said Eric Winograd, senior U.S. economist at asset manager AllianceBernstein.

Credit and debit card data tracked by JP Morgan Chase show that consumers reduced their spending last week after having increased it steadily in late April and May. The reversal has occurred both in states that have reported surges in COVID-19 and in less affected states, Edgerton said.

McDonald’s has paused its reopening in several states nationwide, and Apple is reclosing stores of its stores in the U.S. Economists have long warned that the economic benefits of allowing businesses to reopen would prove short-lived if the virus wasn’t brought under control.

Until most Americans feel confident enough to dine out, travel, shop and socialize, groups without fear of infection, restaurateurs, hotels and stores will lack enough customer demand to justify rehiring all their workers.

A woman wears a protective mask while shopping for clothing in a Gap store in New York on Tuesday.

Celebrating 75 years of serving US military in the Pacific - 1945-2020

Celebrating 75 years of serving US military in the Pacific - 1945-2020
Russian officials: 78% of voters want Putin around longer

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Almost 78% of voters in Russia have approved amendments to the country’s constitution that will allow President Vladimir Putin to stay in power until 2036, Russian election officials said Thursday after all the votes were counted. Kremlin critics said the vote was rigged.

In the weeklong balloting, which concluded on Wednesday, 77.9% voted for the changes, and 21.3% voted against, with 100% of the precincts counted by Thursday morning. Russia’s Central Election Commission said the turnout exceeded 64%, according to officials.

The reported numbers reflect the highest level of voter support for Putin in 10 years. In the 2018 presidential election, 76.7% of voters supported his candidacy, while only 63.6% did in the 2012 election.

But Kremlin critics said the numbers alone show they are false, with an unrealistic approval rating for the Russian leader amid wide frustration in the country over declining living standards.

“A record in falsifying votes has been set in Russia,” opposition politician Alexei Navalny said in a Facebook post Thursday. “The announced result has nothing whatsoever to do with the people’s opinion.”

Putin’s approval rating was at 59% in May, according to the Levada Center, Russia’s top independent pollster. That was the lowest in two decades.

For the first time in Russia, polls were kept open for an entire week to bolster turnout and avoid election-day crowds amid the coronavirus pandemic — a provision that Kremlin critics denounced as an extra tool to manipulate the outcome, as ballot boxes remained unattended for days at night.

Observers also pointed to the relentless pressure that state and private employers put on their staff to vote, monitoring that was hindered by bureaucratic hurdles, virus-related restrictions and the dubious legal standing of the early voting.

Landslide at Myanmar jade mine kills over 100 people

Associated Press

HPAKANT, Myanmar — At least 123 people were killed Thursday in a landslide at a jade mine in northern Myanmar, the worst in a series of deadly accidents at such sites in recent years. Critics blame the government’s failure to curb reckless and irresponsible mining practices.

Lawmakers, government officials and workers at such sites in recent years, were killed in a landslide in Hpakant, Kachin state, northern Myanmar on Wednesday. The Jade miners were smoothed over by a wave of mud, said a statement from the Myanmar Fire Service Department, which said it generated about $31 billion in 2014. Hpakant is a rough and remote area of Kachin state, 600 miles north of Myanmar’s biggest city, Yangon.

“The jade miners were smoothed over by a wave of mud,” said a statement from the Myanmar Fire Service Department, which coordinates rescue and other emergency services. The army also took part in the recovery operation along with other government units and local volunteers.

The London-based environmental watchdog Global Witness said the accident “is a damning indictment of the government’s failure to curb reckless and irresponsible mining practices in Kachin state’s jade mines.”

At the site of the tragedy, a crowd gathered in the rain around corpses shrouded in blue and red plastic sheets placed in a row on the ground.

Emergency workers had to dig through heavy mud to retrieve bodies by wrapping them in the plastic sheets, which were hung on crossed wooden poles shrouded by the recovery teams.

Social activists have complained that the profitability of jade mining has led businesses to neglect enforcement of already very weak regulations in the jade mining industry.

Turkey demands French apology over Mediterranean naval incident

Associated Press

BERLIN — Turkey’s foreign minister on Thursday demanded an apology from France over its depiction of a standoff between ships from the two countries in the Mediterranean Sea that prompted Paris to suspend its involvement in a NATO naval operation.

France said its frigate Courbet was “lit up” three times by Turkish naval targeting radar on June 10 when it tried to approach a Tanzanian-flagged civilian ship suspected of involvement in arms trafficking. The ship was being escorted by three Turkish warships. The Courbet backed off after the confrontation.

At the time, the French frigate was part of the Sea Guardian mission, which is helping to provide maritime security in the Mediterranean. France said it was acting based on NATO information and that under the alliance’s rules of engagement, such conduct is considered a hostile act.

Paris denied harassing the Courbet. Both countries are NATO allies.

“France has not told the truth to the EU or to NATO,” Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said during a visit to Berlin. “The claims that our vessels locked onto (French vessels) are not true,” Cavusoglu added. “We have proven this with reports and documents and gave them to NATO. NATO saw the truth.”

NATO has confirmed only that investigators have submitted their report into the incident, but said it was “classified” and declined to say what conclusions, if any, had been drawn.

“Instead of engaging in anti-Turkish activities and such leanings, France needs to make a sincere confession,” Cavusoglu said. “Our expectation from France at the moment is for it to apologize in a clear fashion, without ifs or buts, for not providing the correct information.”

The French government sent a letter Tuesday to NATO saying it is halting its participation in Sea Guardian “temporarily.”

France has accused Turkey of repeated violations of the U.N. arms embargo on Libya and branded the Turkish government as an obstacle to securing a cease-fire in the African nation, which Turkey has firmly denied.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, speaking alongside Cavusoglu, said “it is extremely important that relations between France and Turkey are constructive” because the countries need to work together on many issues. He said he hopes that “a constructive, open and very transparent dialogue” will be possible in the coming days and weeks to address their differences.

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14 charged with trying to have sex with minors

MO ST. LOUIS — Fourteen people from the St. Louis area are facing federal charges accusing them of attempting to have sex with minors following an FBI investigation. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported Wednesday that all of the suspects were arrested this week at homes where they allegedly thought they were going to engage in sex with minors they met online. A news release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Illinois announced the charges.

Most food scraps now unfit for trash, landfill

VT MONTPELIER — Most food scraps are now banned from the trash and landfill in Vermont.

Vermonters now must collect their food scraps and either compost them in their yards, take them to food waste drop-off sites such as transfer stations or have them hauled away by a service. Trash haulers are required to offer food scrap collection services to nonresidential customers and apartment complexes with four units or more, unless another hauler is willing to do the collection, the state said. It’s part of Vermont’s Universal Recycling Law to cut down on trash in landfills.

Woman gets 3 1/2 years after faking own death

WV CHARLESTON — A West Virginia woman who faked her own death to get out of a fraud charge has been sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison, officials said Tuesday.

Julie M. Wheeler, 43, was sentenced for defrauding a federal health care program and now faces local charges for reporting a false emergency, according to a news release from U.S. Attorney Mike Stuart.

Authorities said Wheeler pleaded guilty to the fraud charge in February but before she could be sentenced, she and her family staged her fall from the Grandview State Park overlook. The report of her fall led to an extensive effort to find her body.

Eventually, state police found Wheeler at her home in Beckley, hiding in a closet.

Quake was aftershock of 2018 temblor

AK ANCHORAGE — A minor earthquake was felt throughout Alaska’s Cook Inlet region Tuesday, and officials said it was an aftershock of a more powerful earthquake that struck the Anchorage area 19 months ago.

The Alaska Earthquake Cen-

ter said the magnitude 3.6 earth-
quake struck shortly before 3 p.m. It was centered 4 miles southeast of Anchorage and was recorded at a depth of about 26 miles. The center said the earthquake was felt in the Anchorage area and in the northern suburbs in the Mata-

nuska-Susitna Borough.

Officials said this is an after-

shock from the magnitude 7.1 quake that caused widespread damage in November 2018.

Pickin’ and grinnin’

Alex Martin plays the song “Can’t You See” by The Marshall Tucker Band on his Takamine acoustic guitar while enjoying the outdoors at Smothers Park in Owensboro, Ky., on Wednesday. “It’s my wife’s favorite song,” he said.

The approximate number of traps the Washington State Department of Agriculture is placing to catch invasive Asian giant hornets in Whatcom County. The state traps, which add to those already placed by citizens, are in the state’s northwest, the only places in the U.S. that the giant hornet has ever been found, The Capital Press reported. Asian giant hornets are the world’s larg-
est. They are brutal to pollinators, known to decapitate honey bees and the subject of wide fascination. The non-native wasp eats fruit, which is a potential problem for agriculture, agriculture department spokeswoman Karla Salp said.

Man who spiked ex's tea sentenced to 3½ years

VA ROANOKE — A Virginia man has been sentenced to three years in prison for spiking his ex-girlfriend’s pitcher of tea with methamphetamine.

The Roanoke Times reported that Elvis Jarrett Mullins, 41, of Troutville, was sentenced last week. Authorities said he broke into his ex’s Roanoke house. The woman returned home, consumed the tea and “felt drugged,” prosecutors said. Hospital tests later showed a positive result for amphetamines. The woman was otherwise not injured.

Mullins has already served about 15 months. He pleaded no contest in November to breaking and entering and to adulterating food or drink. Mullins also has taken part in a drug rehabilitation program and apologized.

Judge David Carson said Mul-

lins’ actions could have been di-

sastrous if the couple’s young son also drank the tea.

Police car pursuit ends in ocean cliff plunge

CA SANTA CRUZ — A car-

jacking suspect fleeing Santa Cruz County authorities ended up in the drink and then the clink.

The Santa Cruz County Sher-

iff’s Office says deputies respond-

ed Tuesday afternoon to reports of a man shooting a handgun in the air near Davenport.

Soon after, the same man alleg-

edly carjacked someone and fled at speeds over 100 mph toward the city of Santa Cruz, where deputies called off the pursuit for safety reasons.

A short time later Santa Cruz police found the vehicle had gone off West Cliff Drive and plunged into the ocean.

The Sheriff’s Office said the suspect climbed out of the car and up the cliff, where he was taken into custody without fur-

ther incident.

No injuries were reported.
WEEKEND

COUNTRY'S RACIAL RECKONING

PAGE 20
Hub of connectivity

Twitch platform gives music industry a place to plug in

BY LUCAS SHAW
Bloomberg News

On the morning of May 27, Kenneth Charles Blume III wanted to talk about white privilege. Blume, a 29-year-old DJ from Greenwich, Conn, has produced beats for some of the biggest rappers in hip-hop, including Vince Staples, Freddie Gibbs and JPEGMAFIA, under the pseudonym Kenny Beats. Having benefited directly from Black culture, he felt an urge to speak out after the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota days earlier.

To vent, he turned to Twitch, a video site owned by Amazon. He began his performance, which would go on for more than two hours, by saying five times January’s total. And music is now one of electronic duo Sofi Tukker. She and Tucker last 78 days,” said Sophie Hawley-Weld, one-half of the idea of talking about this.”

What YouTube is for music videos, Instagram is there’s ever been a better way to connect with fans and have fans be in a position to support artists in all their perfect glory. They are going to the door.

Musicians are making the most of Twitch, the most popular service for livestreaming in the U.S.

of the top 15 genres on the site. “Music is growing like crazy right now,” said Mike Olson, Twitch’s head of music. “We’re seeing a lot of artists who, for all the reasons you’re aware of, are in need of a place to connect with fans and a way to make up for revenue they’d normally get on the road.”

Olson joined Twitch in 2018 from Pandora, the online radio service. The following year, he helped to create a music team dedicated to increasing the number of artists who regularly use the site. Since then, Olson has tried to convince artists that they don’t need to drastically change their routine in order to attract an audience on Twitch — they can just film themselves getting ready for a show, or practicing at home or playing video games.

At first, musicians were slow to come around. Many associated Twitch with the insular world of hardcore video-game fans, which remains a major constituent on the site. In April, nine of the 10 most popular genres on Twitch were specific video games, led by Valorant. “Before all this hit, 90% of artists didn’t even know what Twitch was,” said Karen Allen, a manager who wrote an advice book for musicians on how to use Twitch. “Of the 10% who did, it was 50/50 on whether they knew there was a music category.”

But in recent months, as thousands of artists found themselves stuck at home, many started to try out Twitch. While some social networks are just starting to offer live chats and subscriptions, those options have been built into Twitch from the beginning. “Facebook and YouTube and Instagram are where you put your polished self,” said Allen. “No one is going to Twitch to see signed artists in all their perfect glory. They are going there because they like music and a fun creator who is good, or fun to hang out with.”

According to Allen, to make a living off of Twitch, artists need to surpass 100 concurrent viewers and stream multiple days a week. Many acts make more than $100,000 a year from Twitch alone, typically from a mix of ad revenue and donations. That’s good money for a musician who can’t sell out a club, but it’s still pocket change to a major act.

“Twitch is one of the best things to ever happen for artists, particularly for independent artists,” said Bloom’s manager Mike Power. “I don’t think there’s ever been a better way to connect with fans and have fans in a position to support you.”

ON THE COVER: Black artists have been part of country music from the beginning, but the industry has been slow to address its racial barriers.

GADGET WATCH
Smart lock technology perfected

By Gregg Ellman
Tribune News Service

A door lock has two main features: opening and closing. Locally, a leader in manufacturing the world’s most advanced smart lock, let me give the Secure Pro Latch edition a try.

There’s a lot to say about the lock; it has great features, it’s visually appealing, and it performs perfectly. The instructions Locally supplied are written in a clear step-by-step, easy-to-understand format. You will also need the free Locally app, which does require a security confirmation passcode during setup.

The Lockly Secure Pro Latch

I set out to see how long it would take my wife and me to get the old lock off and install the Locly. I have little experience in installing locks; just what I've learned over the years from installing a few other smart locks for testing. If you’re handy, this installation should be no problem using a few basic tools.

It took us about an hour to get the deadbolt Secure Pro lock mounted. This included removing the old one and using the existing hole cut in my door and frame for the Locly, since they matched.

To make sure they match, you must go through a series of measurements with the supplied information to ensure holes don’t have to be adjusted or added. The lock adjusts to different existing hole sizes.

If you follow the instructions, the installation is straightforward; just take your time. This includes adding the included four AA batteries for power and installing the door sensors. With the hardware installed, the lock is ready to open the door from the outside the old-fashioned way, with the supplied keys.

Next, we set up the secure link Wi-Fi hub with the Locly app (iOS and Android), which requires a few security steps. The app is critical for setting up the keyless features. A user-friendly dashboard within the app works great for locking and unlocking the door.

The Wi-Fi hub is used for live monitoring with optional notifications sent to your smartphone, setting up voice assistants as I did with Alexa and other control features of the Locly. This is a small system that plugs directly into any wall outlet within 10 feet of the lock for best performance.

The Lockly Secure Pro offers several ways to open the lock: keys with the app, combination, fingerprint, send a single-use key to someone else (like a repairman or friend), or grant regular access to a family member or close friend. The keypad is front facing and activated with a tap. It’s got five buttons, four with three numbers in each and an OK button for creating and using access codes.

A nice feature of the keypad is that the buttons with numbers in them move around (using patented PIN Genie Technology) every time you use the lock. So each time you go to the lock, the numbers are in a different, unique place, so the access code pattern can’t be stolen from a recorded pattern routine.

Up to eight sets of access codes can be stored and deleted when needed.

The fingerprint reader was next to be connected. Being a hot summer day, my fingers were sweaty and I did have to dry them a few times. After a few tries, I had my thumb and index fingerprint set up, as did my wife. Up to 99 fingerprints can be stored.

You have to scan your fingerprint several times at slightly different angles and it’s going to get a beep when the reading has been registered. Now, with both hands full, you can walk up to the door and as long as you can free one finger for a few seconds to be scanned, the door will unlock. It’s that easy and secure. The advanced 3D fingerprint scanner is designed to store a total of 19 fingerprints from being used.

Next was Alexa (or Google Assistant), which also runs you through a few security steps in the Alexa app. Remember, this is the front door you’re opening, not just turning on a light, so you want this security. After a few minutes, Alexa was unlocking the door.

The lock is loaded with many innovative and handy features — too many to name here. But overall, I liked and adjusted within the app was the auto-lock timer. The default setting has it lock instantly when you walk through the door. Instead, I had it lock after the door was closed for five minutes. You can have it total disability but you’ll be able to remember to lock it when you leave.

Access can be granted to guests and workers when you’re not home, even without online access. When you do have Internet access, the lock can be controlled from anywhere.

Online: locly.com; $299.99
WAR MOVIE, or cautionary tale?

‘The Outpost,’ about a 2009 Taliban assault in Afghanistan, works well as both

BY ANN HORNADAY
The Washington Post

On Oct. 3, 2009, a group of soldiers stationed at an isolated base in the Hindu Kush endured what would become one of the bloodiest confrontations in the U.S. war in Afghanistan: the Battle of Kamdesh, a punishing 12-hour assault from hundreds of Taliban forces that wound up costing several American lives and becoming a particularly grievous example of poor military judgment, and its most dire consequences for the people forced to carry it out.

“The Outpost,” adapted from CNN anchor Jake Tapper’s book (subtitled “An Untold Story of American Valor”), revisits that day with harrowing verisimilitude, both as a riveting war picture and cautionary tale. Skillfully directed by Rod Lurie, this engrossing and deeply wrenching thriller dances the same fine line as most latter-day movies that want to honor service and sacrifice, without lapsing into empty triumphalism. For the most part, “The Outpost” balances those competing impulses, with a canny combination of unadorned bluntness and technical finesse.

In classic style, Lurie introduces the audience to the men of Bravo Troop 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division, through a group of newcomers to the titular outpost, which sits at the bottom of three imposing mountains amid hostile territory. When one of the soldiers chooses his bunk, he sees the words “It doesn’t get better” carved into a piece of timber next to it; when the viewer considers how vulnerable the men’s situation is — utterly exposed and utterly hemmed in, like sitting ducks at the bottom of a giant punch bowl — the words can’t help but sound prophetic.

What ensues is a welter of names, off-color banter and the daily routine of outpost life, wherein the saying about war — interminable boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror — becomes alarmingly literal. Wending his camera through cramped quarters and the dusty environs inside the wire, Lurie eavesdrops on the men’s sometimes intimate, sometimes uneasy camaraderie, as teasing gives way to argument, which can quickly morph into outright hostility. The strutting, fretting, swearing and macho bravado, one senses, masks the underlying anxiety that they are far too easy prey for the mostly unseen enemy watching from virtually a grenade’s throw away.

This is a movie in which casual conversation all too often presages a spate of sudden, brutal violence: When the soldiers laugh off their Afghan translator’s warnings of an imminent “big one,” there’s no doubt that carnage will surely ensue. It does, in quick, lethal outbursts. But the big one, when it comes, is something else altogether.

Filming in long, unbroken takes, Lurie makes “The Outpost” an impressively immersive experience, giving viewers a chance to see, up close, the pitiless chaos of combat that often looks like an indiscernible morass of smoke, dirt, blood and decimated bodies. There are only three identifiable stars in the movie: Orlando Bloom, Scott Eastwood and Caleb Landry Jones, who plays a pale, skinny staff sergeant named Ty Carter. Four real-life survivors of the Battle of Kamdesh are on hand to provide authenticity to a film in which the dialogue can sound distractingly studied, even at its most offhand. (The script was written by Paul Tamasy and Eric Johnson.) “Embrace the suck” is a favorite catchphrase, for obvious reasons. Another is “It’s all good,” repeated by one soldier even when he knows it’s all anything but.

The climactic battle, which unfolds over the final 45 minutes or so of “The Outpost,” is stirring and heartbreaking, as men lose comrades, fight to save others and become heroes they never would have chosen to be had circumstances been less shamefully mismanaged. (After an investigation, four officers were disciplined for not taking adequate measures to secure the base.) The most haunting issues the film raises — how on Earth anyone would put soldiers so brazenly in harm’s way; the reasoning behind keeping them so woefully under-resourced; the absurdity of asking the U.S. military to act as both aggressor and diplomat; what, ultimately, the mission was — remain long after the smoke and dust have cleared.

To paraphrase another saying: Never have so few served for so long on behalf of so many. The question, still, is to what end.

“The Outpost” stars Scott Eastwood, above right, and Orlando Bloom, top.

“The Outpost” is rated R for war violence and grisly images, pervasive crude language and sexual references. Running time: 123 minutes.

“He’s a bit of a stud, just like his dad”: A broken ankle complicated Scott Eastwood’s involvement in the film. Story on Page 39

“The Outpost” is the rare war movie with a veteran at the helm. Read about director Rod Lurie, and the thoughts of several of the real-life soldiers depicted in the film, at stripes.com/go/outpostmovie

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When country singer Rissi Palmer was working on her debut album, she wanted a song like Gretchen Wilson's “Redneck Woman,” a song that would introduce her and tell her story to fans.

On her 2007 debut single, “Country Girl,” she celebrated her country roots while explaining that she didn’t have to look or talk a certain way to call herself a country girl.

“I said that I am not white in the first verse, and the label was like, ‘No, no, no,’” said Palmer, who then rewrote the lyrics to make it feel more universal. “It was very intentional when I wrote that song to talk about all the women, or all the people, that might not necessarily fit in the box, but are still of the same mindset.”

The country music industry has long been hesitant to address its long and complicated history with race, but the death of George Floyd in police custody and the protests it sparked in the U.S. and around the world became a sound too loud for the genre to ignore.

Over the past weeks, country artists, labels and country music organizations posted about Black Lives Matter on social media, participated in the industry-wide Blackout Tuesday or denounced racism outright. On June 25, Grammy-winning country group The Dixie Chicks announced it would drop “dixie” from its name. The group said in a statement that it wanted to meet “this moment.”

But Black artists say the industry still needs to address the systematic racial barriers that have been entrenched in country music for decades. Stereotypes that country music is just for white audiences, written by white songwriters and sung by mostly white males are reinforced daily on country radio, playlists, label rosters and tour lineups. In recent years, however, the conversations about country music have shifted to a broader acknowledgement that nonwhite artists have always been in the genre, even if they aren’t always recognized.

Artist/scholar Rhiannon Giddens received a MacArthur Foundation grant for her work to reclaim Black contributions to country and folk music. And artists like Darius Rucker, Kane Brown and Jimmie Allen have all had No. 1 country hits in recent years, while Mickey Guyton just released a powerful song called “Black Like Me.” But that ingrained culture of exclusivity remains a struggle to change.

“You can look at the reviews of my first album. I was called colored, like, ‘I didn’t know colored people like country music,’” said Palmer, who had three singles reach the Hot Country Songs Chart. “I used to get messages all the time on MySpace, saying, ‘I am so sick of you. Why are you trying to be white?’ Or ‘Why are you trying to take over country music?’

Change hasn’t been easy. After Grammy-winning country group Lady Antebellum announced they were changing their name to Lady A, they later had to apologize to a Black singer who had been using that stage name for years.

Atlanta-based country rapper Breland also wanted to address, with a wink and a smile, country music’s racial blinders with his TikTok-fueled song “My Truck.” The music video starts with a white guy in a black cowboy hat singing as smoke billows across a dusty landscape, then Breland abruptly shoves him out of the frame to announce, “Don’t touch my truck.”

“I just felt like it was time for people to change their perspective on what country music is and what country music can be, because there is an audience of country music listeners under 30 who believe Black Lives Matter,” said Breland, whose song reached No. 26 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart and has been remixed with Sam Hunt.

Like Lil Nas X’s genre-bending “Old Town Road,” Breland playfully fuses trap rhythms with country tropes about horses, do-si-dos and beer on his self-titled EP and sings with country artists Chase Rice and Lauren Alaina. Breland said country music labels can’t just continue to focus on one type of audience.

“There’s a group of country listeners who love country music because of the way it sounds, but don’t love some of the politics that they know are going on behind the scenes,” he said.

Historically country music was created by and played in both white and Black communities in the South, but the music became marketed along racial lines in the Jim Crow era, said Amanda Marie Martinez, a historian and writer who is studying country music and race. White country music was stigmatized early on as “hillbilly music,” so the industry started pushing it toward the rising white middle class as a way to make the genre more respected and hugely profitable.

“In the process, they’ve also prioritized the white, middle income, relatively conservative listener as their demographic, kind of the opposite of youth culture,” Martinez said.

But there were periods of diversity, such as the post-Civil Rights era, when

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21
Gone West
Canyons (Triple Tigers Records)

The full-length debut from Gone West sets the tone on the album cover — the four members languidly walking up a road in Malibu, Calif. It’s warm and they are sun-kissed. The Grammy-winner Colbie Caillat — known for effervescent pop hits including “Bubbly” and “Realize” — joins Justin Furik, Young, Jason Reeves and Nelly Joy for a Nashville sound mixed with southern California. Together, they make music reminiscent of Little Big Town and Lady A. Four of the songs first appeared on the band’s debut 2019 EP “Tides”: “Gone West,” “Home Is Where the Heartbreak Is,” “This Time” and the outstanding “Confetti,” a rare fun celebration of a breakup.

“Gone West” acts as the band’s letter of intent, with each member having a verse about finding each other in different parts of the country. It’s wonderfully crafted, catchy and smart — like the band. This is a group whose tender, blended harmonies aren’t faked. Reeves and Joy have been married for eight years while Caillat and Young dated for a decade before they moved to Franklin, Tenn., a Nashville suburb that is home to historical sites of a major Civil War battle and plantations where slaves were once held.

The 13-track “Canyons” shows more of the band’s range while staying firmly in the country genre. “Slow Down” is a lazy river of a song with Young making a guitar cameo, and “Knew You” has a reggae vibe. Another highlight is a reworking of a Caillat deep cut — “Don Never Go Over Your 40” which she co-wrote with Young for her 2014 album, “Gypsy Heart.” Here, Gone West have slowed it down, added strings, rewritten lyrics and made it into a piano-fueled duet with male vocal. It has gone from pop to an achingly beautiful ballad.

The album ends on a dreamy high with “Tides” — borrowing the title of their EP for a full-circle moment — with Young adding a verse in Hawaiian. “Every time we say goodbye / We have slowed it down, added strings, rewritten lyrics and made a lazy river of a song with Vince Gill making a guitar cameo,” the group sings.

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

The Archives
Carry Me Home: A Reggae Tribute to Gil Scott-Heron & Brian Jackson (Montserrat House)

The Archives, a reggae band from Washington, D.C., pay an inspired tribute to the late, groundbreaking soul and jazz poet and musician Gil Scott-Heron — and his collaborator Brian Jackson — on songs from the 1970s that are still powerful and relevant today.

Founded and led by keyboardist Darryl “Trane” Burke, who produced the album with Eric Hilton of Thievery Corporation, The Archives play at a high level. With some notable guests, including Jackson himself, they’ve made a very fine album.

The band’s home base is a connection — Scott-Heron and Jackson lived in the city and the area for years — and the reggae versions aren’t a random stylistic choice either, as Scott-Heron’s father was a Jamaican soccer player.

“Home Is Where the Hatred Is” is like a first-person update of John Prine’s heartbreaking “Sam Stone.” Instead of the addict’s child lamenting the father’s torment, the junkie himself tells the tale — “Home is where I live inside my white powder dreams.”

Socked together, the band’s best-known composition, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised,” is stripped of most of its lengthy lyrics, a sensible choice, as, for example, neither Spiro Agnew nor John Mitchell mean today what they did during the Nixon era.

“Trane” has been together for more than 40 years and produced songs like “Lay It On Me,” the one love song. Lowe sounds the most melancholy on “Lay It On Me,” the one love song. Lowe’s often the only Black person at the boardroom table. But in that manager’s role, she realized that she was “why do they have a standing ovation at the Opry, but more importantly for Harmony, he wanted the audience to learn about country music’s roots.

“ar in typical Nick Lowe fashion, the upbeat love song that’s the title track of his latest EP, “Lay It On Me,” is immediately followed by a note of caution: “Don’t Be Nice to Me.”

And just to pile on the misery, he follows that up with a cover of a 1962 Brenda Lee hit “Here Comes That Feeling,” a song not about finding love, but losing it.

It’s that sardonic duality that’s long endeared Lowe to music fans over his more than 40-year career. After all, this is the guy perhaps best known for “Cruel to Be Kind.” And true to form, thanks to the surf-rock backing of Los Straitjackets, Lowe combines his tales of love lost with an upbeat, ’50s-era groove that will help you forget the sad tales he’s weavin’.

“Here comes that lonely feeling again (you can’t fight the feeling),” the 71-year-old Lowe sings in a tone that almost sounds like he’s enjoying it. If anything, Lowe sounds the most melancholy on “Lay It On Me,” the one love song.

The only other tune on this oh-too-short release is an instrumental remake of the 1969 Shocking Blue song “Venus.” “Lay It On Me” marks the third EP in two years to feature Los Straitjackets, the Nashville-based, Mexican wrestling-mask-wearing band now in their fifth year backing up Lowe.

Chuck Harmony, left, and Claude Kelly, who perform as Louis York, have played at the Grand Ole Opry, a steppingstone on their mission to educate audiences.

JEREMY RYAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

FROM PAGE 20
Black artists like Charley Pride, Linda Martell, O.B. McClinton and Stoney Edwards were having success, alongside Johnny Rodriguez and Freddy Fender, who were singing in English and Spanish.

Black artists today are also reclaiming spaces that have been overwhelmingly white domains. Claude Kelly and Chuck Harmony, who work as a duo called Louis York, were already hit-making songwriters and producers behind pop songs like “Party in the USA” by Miley Cyrus and “Grenade” by Bruno Mars when they moved to Franklin, Tenn., a Nashville suburb that is home to historical sites of a major Civil War battle and plantations where slaves were once held.

They set up their Weirdo Workshop artist collective and quickly realized that she was “the only Black person at the boardroom table. How is a young A&R person empowered to come back to the table and maybe pitch a Black artist or person of color?”

Candice Watkins said her label supports her and values her opinion, but she knows that might not be the same for other minorities and their companies.

“Someday,” Watkins said, “we’ll have a standing ovation at the Opry, but more importantly for Harmony, he wanted the audience to learn about country music’s roots.

“Don Never Go Over Your 40” which she co-wrote with Young for her 2014 album, “Gypsy Heart.” Here, Gone West have slowed it down, added strings, rewritten lyrics and made it into a piano-fueled duet with male vocal. It has gone from pop to an achingly beautiful ballad.

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when considering where to start with Ancestors Legacy, I thought about the results of my DNA test. If I wanted to dive into my ancestors’ legacy, I figured I should start with the Anglo-Saxons. After all, they provided 48% of my genes. Instead, the medieval strategy game’s campaign forced me into the role of a Scandinavian — only 2% of my genes. But it wasn’t long before I finished pillaging the English countryside as a Viking and got down to pillaging the English countryside as an Englishman. All was as it should be.

Ancestors Legacy was developed by Destructive Creations, originally for computers and later ported to the Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and most recently to the Nintendo Switch. I was dying to test the game’s touch-screen controls on the Switch, but my wife’s ongoing obsession with Animal Crossing: New Horizons made that impossible. I opted for the Xbox One instead.

It’s a pretty standard real-time strategy game that features resource gathering, building construction, unit creation and combat. The game features four medieval European cultures: Anglo-Saxon, Viking, Germanic and Slavic. Each has two story-based campaigns, which add up to a hefty single-player package. Each culture also has its own specialized warriors. Vikings have Berserkers and mounted scouts. Anglo-Saxons have slingers and longbows. Germans have crossbows and armored cavalry. And Slavs have cavalry and mounted archers.

The campaign missions are usually very engaging and provide a surprising variety of challenges. You will guide heroes as they stalk amid the brush or lead daring cavalry charges. You fight through cities and defend against sieges. The detailed battlefields and well-developed scenarios cause you to think and fight hard to secure your goal.

The missions in each campaign also provide a glimpse of medieval history. Some of those glimpses are clouded by the fog of war — or actually the fog of simplified storytelling and a pinch of anachronism. Look to these missions for fun, not a history lesson. Fans of strategy games will be familiar with the rock-paper-scissors combat style. For example, archers beat spearmen, spearmen beat cavalry, and cavalry beat archers. Woe to you if you send three companies of archers to capture a village and are met by a squadron of charging cavalry. As a result, you’ll need to build your army with an eye toward mixing its capabilities and positioning your individual units where they can be most effective in your line of battle.

Once you’ve played through the campaigns, you’re well prepared to engage in a skirmish, either against the game’s artificial intelligence or against a human opponent.

In the skirmish mode, you can select your culture, battlefield, technology level and number of players. If you’re playing against the game’s AI, you can even set the difficulty and pacing. However, be aware that even an easy AI opponent is difficult to beat unless you’ve honed your tactics in the single-player campaigns. In the beginning, it seemed that AI opponents were always optimized to recruit and upgrade units far faster than I ever could — unless I stacked the deck by setting my opponents on easy and gave myself a more advanced ally. The game’s default pacing seems to be set to accommodate PC gamers rather than the more limited controls offered by consoles.

The major concern with any strategy game that moves from computer to console is the control system. Taps on a few keys and a quick bit of mousing are usually preferable to using combinations of controller buttons and a ponderous joystick to train and marshal your forces. However, the game’s control system is pretty robust and relatively agile by console standards. Ancestors Legacy benefits from the fact that it’s more like Company of Heroes than Warcraft or Age of Empires. You aren’t building and maintaining a sprawling settlement. You’re equipping, training and leading an army. As a result, everything is streamlined so the focus is on fighting. That dramatically cuts down the mechanics and menus required to play the game.

My biggest complaint about Ancestors is still related to the control system. Many functions aren’t mentioned — or at least aren’t described very well — in the game’s tutorials and info boxes. There are a number of shortcuts embedded in the control system that I discovered only by accident or by trial and error. Once I learned these, my performance and enjoyment improved dramatically.

Graphics are a mixed bag. The battlefields are loaded with detail and are very appealing. The units also look pretty good from a bird’s-eye view. You also have the option of tapping the joystick and zooming in to watch the battle up close. In this view, however, it becomes apparent that the character renderings are relatively rudimentary — at least for the Xbox One — and that they quickly get so covered with blood that all detail is obscured.

The game has a mature rating — presumably because of the blood-covered warriors, unless I missed something else.

I haven’t played a strategy game on a console since Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3 — way back in 2008. While Ancestors Legacy didn’t exactly make me yearn for a new crop of games in the genre, I found it a fun and satisfying diversion from the shooters, battles royale and open-world sandboxes that dominate the game scene.

Bottom line: B-
Platforms: PC, Xbox One, PlayStation 4, Switch
Online: nintendo.com/games/detail/ancestors-legacy-switch
The Eberbach Monastery gives visitors a glimpse at nine centuries of winemaking and the life of the monks that made it. The monastery is about 25 minutes from the Army’s Hainerberg area, in the hills outside of Eltville. Originally founded in 1136 by 12 Cistercian monks, the monastery and winery have been beautifully preserved.

When I first arrived, my eyes were immediately drawn to the Romanesque basilica that dominated the surroundings. The large tracery windows flooded the basilica with light. The expansive, three-aisled church has been restored several times over the centuries; recent renovations unearthed remains of a Gothic floor and ancient tombs.

Walking through the monastery and under its repeating, wood-beamed archways felt like stepping back in time. While exploring, I took an English audio tour and heard more about the monks who once lived here, learning, among other things, that they weren’t allowed to speak to each other outside of the chapter house.

The monks prayed and did the work of the church, while the lay brothers that lived there did most of the manual labor jobs, including working the vineyards.

Today, the lay brothers’ dining room houses the 12 original wine presses that were used at the monastery.

Among the mix of Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque and modern buildings that surrounded the abbey, I was pleasantly surprised to find a hotel and restaurant.

Part of the hotel was constructed in the 16th century as a barn and mill for the monastery. The restaurant Klosterschanke, near the garden, serves a wide range of regional specialties as well as rustic dishes from the state of Hesse. The vineyard’s wine is available there or on tasting courses at the wine shop.

If you are a history lover like me or simply want something to do for the day, the Eberbach Monastery is a great place to visit.

The Eberbach Monastery, which includes a vineyard, is just outside of Eltville, Germany. The monastery was founded in 1136.
Don't forget to book some library visits

As we’ve had to postpone our travels because of the pandemic, I believe a weekly dose of travel dreaming can be good medicine. Here’s a reminder of the fun that awaits us in Europe at the other end of this crisis.

For travelers with an interest in the evolution of Western culture, a stop at one of Europe’s grandest libraries offers an unforgettable experience. Many of them offer the chance to connect with books and documents that changed the course of history — while basking in impressive, ornate interiors that reflect the tremendous importance of books in earlier centuries.

One of the oldest libraries in Europe is the Bodleian Library at England’s Oxford University. Opened in 1602, it incorporates the former Corpus Christi Library from the 15th century. In those days, books were considered so precious that many were actually chained to a desk.

Today this historic library is a world of creaky old shelves of books dating to the Middle Ages, stacked neatly under a beautifully painted wooden ceiling. The entire room is the reason to visit, with its original ancient maps, illuminated Gospels on parchment, the Gutenberg Bible, precious musical manuscripts, Lewis Carroll’s Adventures in Wonderland and handwritten Beethoven symphonies. The only known manuscript of the epic saga Beowulf (c. 1000) is here, as is Geoffrey Chaucer’s bawdy Canterbury Tales (c. 1410). Display cases feature trailblazing documents by early scientists such as Galileo and Isaac Newton. Pages from Leonardo da Vinci’s notebook show his powerful curiosity, and his famous bow towards handwriting. Depending on what’s on display during your visit, you may see letters by Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth I, Darwin, Freud or Gandhi.

In the centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire, and into the Middle Ages, it was primarily monks who preserved and painstakingly copied ancient manuscripts, and who kept literacy alive in Europe. Today, many of Europe’s finest old libraries are still housed in monasteries.

The library at Strahov Monastery in Prague is packed with the books from the 10th through 17th centuries, shelved under elaborately frescoed ceilings that celebrate philosophy, theology and the quest for knowledge. As the Age of Enlightenment took hold, the Church struggled to maintain its social and political power. Books containing challenging ideas — by thinkers like Nicolaus Copernicus, Jan Hus and Jean-Jacques Rousseau — were placed in a giant, locked case. Only on the abbot’s say so, and then you needed his blessing to open it. Pondering these treasured volumes, I’m reminded of the importance of free access to information.

A Global Greeter Network member can offer a free tour of the colorful and historical center of Mulhouse, France.

The majority of these offerings unfold in urban settings.

**Beer and culinary tour in Bruges, Belgium:** Alain, a self-proclaimed brewery guru with years of experience working in local bars and restaurants, shares his expertise with tourists in Bruges. Prices work on a sliding scale, with an individual paying 89 euros for a private two-hour tour, to 28 euros per head for a group of eight. Online: tinyurl.com/y8bnfnyg

The Global Greeter Network is unique in the fact that all of its hometown-loving guides offer their personalized tours for free. Guides serve more than 200 destinations, in both megacities and smaller towns. The maximum group size is six people.

**Prague’s Strahov Monastery library was a center of learning during the Middle Ages.**

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

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**Best places come alive through great guiding**

In this year’s absence of festival events, tours and the like, both local and otherwise, there are many places that are bound to see center stage. As Europe’s once bustling tourist centers repeatedly reopen to visitors already living in the European Union, enlisting the help of a passionate local to show you their city or her favorite places is a great way to ensure you don’t miss a beat. While traditional travel tours can be helpful in finding a guide, several online platforms can connect enthusiastic and knowledgeable tour leaders with visitors who share their passions, promising meaningful interaction for all involved. For instance, looking guide ratings left by previous tour takers, as well as whether tours are offered consistently by the same guide, can be useful.”

Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Travel blog: strips.com/blogs/europe-traveler

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**A Googre Greeter Network member can offer a free tour of the colorful and historical center of Mulhouse, France.**

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**Villages of the area around Mulhouse, France:** After retiring from his career as a chemist, Christian Coulon grew interested in the nature, history and economy of his beautiful corner of the world. His tours lead visitors to medieval villages, half-timbered houses and disused factories, or to natural spots from vineyards to orchards to rate Baccari points. He also offers tours of Mulhouse’s charming historical center. Online: tinynr.com/y8bnfnyg

Some tours and guides are waiting to be discovered on the internet, simply by searching for guided tours, the city name and your desired activity there.

Row Venice: This nonprofit organization is made up of water sport enthusiasts and athletes dedicated to the preservation of traditional water culture and the Venetian style of rowing: upright, from vineyards to orchards to rate Baccari points. Their tours are guaranteed to get you moving. Row Venice: tinyurl.com/ycv3upsv

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Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.
Clean those grimy, easily ignored spots in your kitchen

**By Becky Krystal**
*The Washington Post*

In the decade I’ve lived in my house, my kitchen has never been worked so hard as now. Three meals a day for three people, seven days a week, plus snacks (human and canine), in addition to recipe testing for whatever I publish here. I do my best to keep things neat-ish, especially when it comes to the more obvious spots — the oven, microwave and counters. But there are certain places that are easy to overlook. Here are a few to add to your routine.

**The mat underneath your dish rack.**
Are you like me, and there’s almost always something in your dish rack? Every so often, get everything out so you can actually give the mat where the water drains some attention, too. You may be able to pop it in the dishwasher. Otherwise, give it a good scrub in the sink.

**The grease filters above your cooktop.**
Read the manual to see how to remove them, as well as for any specific cleaning tips. GE, for example, recommends soaking and swishing them in a mix of hot water and dish soap, using a brush as needed. The Kitchen offers a tutorial as well, which includes baking soda. Some filters are dishwasher-safe, though discoloration may occur.

**Underneath the produce drawers in your refrigerator.**
Since they’re at the bottom, “This is where all drips and spills in your fridge go to die,” says Melissa Homer, chief cleaning officer of cleaning service MaidPro. She suggests pulling the drawers all the way out, spraying the exposed area with disinfecting all-purpose cleaner and scrubbing with the coarser side of a kitchen sponge until any caked-on food is gone. Do one more round of spraying and take a pass with a microfiber towel. Now would also be the time to clean the inside and outside of the drawers.

**The grease filters above your oven.**
Homer says the process typically involves soaking and swishing them in a mix of hot water and dish soap, using a brush as needed. The Kitchen offers a tutorial as well, which includes baking soda. Some filters are dishwasher-safe, though discoloration may occur.

**The grease filters above your toaster oven.**
The crumb tray of your toaster oven. It can be hard to remember to do this until you start to smell something burning, so try to be more proactive. Homer recommends emptying the tray over a trash can every other time you clean the stove top. Then check the floor with a flashlight to look for any other debris. If it needs work, use the same towel strategy, but secure with rubber bands to a flattened wire hanger to get hard-to-reach spots.

**The dishwasher filter or strainer.**
This trap catches whatever food is washed off the dishes. “If you forget to clean it, it can smell and get clogged and spit food bits back on your dishes,” Homer warns. Each model is different, so read the manual.

Homer says the process typically involves locating it under the spinner (pull out the lower dish rack first) and twisting and lifting it out. Wash with soap and water in the sink.

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**KLAG’S RESTAURANT**

**Address:** Am Fuerstengrab 12A, 67688 Rodenbach

**Hours:** Wednesday-Sunday lunch 11:00 a.m.-2 p.m., dinner 6 p.m.-11 p.m., Monday lunch 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Tuesday closed

**Prices:** For entrees, between 10 and 27 euros; 8.50 euros for the weekday lunch special

**Information:** Phone: 06374 805777; website: klag.de

— Brian Ferguson

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**Warm beer, fantastic food**

Klag’s Restaurant in Rodenbach is worth the splurge

**By Brian Ferguson**
*Stars and Stripes*

I wasn’t looking for lamb, but I found it at Klag’s Restaurant in Rodenbach.

Usually, I go for the rump steak when I eat out, but I saw the lamb and thought, “I’ve never had restaurant lamb.”

Nestled in a neighborhood by a park, Klag’s is in a big building with a small sign. If you didn’t know it was there, you wouldn’t notice it. As my family is out of town, I went alone on a Wednesday. It was not crowded. The German-style restaurant has a two-sided menu with a diverse selection of foods. A few of the main courses are salmon filet, ham omelet, pork cutlet, steak and saddle of lamb. Soups, salads, appetizers and desserts round out the selections.

At 27 euros, the saddle of lamb with herb crust, served with fried potatoes and green beans, was the most expensive item on the menu. And it was worth every penny. The lamb was tender and juicy, the potatoes were crispy and the green beans were fresh.

Bread with a sour cream sauce was served as a starter at no additional cost. The seating at Klag’s is all outdoors. I sat on the shaded deck in front, but there are also white tents set up on the side of the building. I never went inside, but it seemed fancy. Patrons also have the option to call in an order and pick it up.

The restaurant has implemented hygiene measures, such as setting tables an acceptable social distance apart. As the menu was in German, I required a little help to order. The server, who was pleasant, timely and wore a mask, recommended the lamb.

There is street parking for the restaurant, but on a busy night it will fill quickly. There is also a parking lot about 100 meters down the road. I went back the next day and ordered the chicken cordon bleu lunch special. It came with a salad and fries and was exactly what I expected — filling, especially for 8.50 euros.

I enjoyed my dinner visit and stayed for about an hour. I would have stayed longer, but for the one problem I had with Klag’s. The beer wasn’t cold enough.

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**Seating is outside in the beer garden at Klag’s in Rodenbach.**

PHOTOS BY BRIAN FERGUSON/Stars and Stripes

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Contactless camping

COVID-19 inspires travel writer to create trip with minimal risk

BY NATALIE B. COMPTON  
The Washington Post

"Contactless" is just about the last word I would use to describe my travel style. Before the pandemic, some of my favorite travel memories were made possible thanks to contact. But that kind of travel can’t take place right now. The pandemic is continuing to wreak havoc around the world, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to tell us that “travel increases your chances of getting and spreading COVID-19.”

And yet, my impulse to travel has been a constant throughout my hundred days of working at home in isolation. On a Wednesday night, after transitioning from staring at my computer for work to staring at my computer for fun, I started thinking about how I could pull off a trip with the lowest possible risk.

What if I cut out the parts of travel that made it problematic during the pandemic? The parts like going through airports, sitting on planes, interacting with hotel guests, congregating at bus terminals or contaminating a gas station?

Convinced I could make contactless travel a thing, I booked a campsite, went to Target and bought the cheapest tent and sleeping bag I could find. Then I hatched a plan to bike 42.8 miles to a national park carrying all of my gear and supplies. When the pandemic started, I was sure I’d keep up with my five-day-a-week workout routine at home. Reader, that did not happen. Workouts turned into semi-regular 15-minute ab exercises coupled with some biking and jogging on occasion. When I looked on the internet for a campsite available in the next two days, I had to keep in mind that my endurance would be a factor. That filtered out most of the options, and I settled on Oak Ridge Campground in Prince William Forest Park in Virginia. Yes, it was 40 miles away. No, I had never biked that far before. But I figured the energy of being out of my apartment would help propel me.

According to the CDC, the concern with taking a trip by car is the risk of spreading or contracting the novel coronavirus while you’re at a rest stop or gas station. So I vowed not to visit any of these establishments on my ride.

In addition to the sleeping bag and tent, other necessities that I purchased at Target included: DEET-heavy bug spray, sunscreen, general toiletries, a notebook, reading material (Anthony Bourdain’s “A Cook’s Tour”), my driver’s license, a credit card, $20 cash, a foldout knife, aspirin, a lighter and some trash bags to haul out garbage.

The morning of my contactless travel experiment, I posted my plan on Instagram so I’d be fueled by peer pressure to complete the mission. Within a few minutes, my mother called me (at about 5 a.m. her time), and I knew she’d seen I was up to no good. She was reasonably worried that her youngest, single daughter was planning on biking 40 miles into the woods to camp alone. I didn’t blame her.

If you’re going to attempt contactless travel, make sure you tell your mom ahead of your social media posts so you can tell her how you’ve already sent your campsite information to your best friends, you packed a knife and will be reachable by cell throughout the journey. When she asks why you’re doing it, do not answer “why did people want to go to the moon” because she will not find that funny or helpful.

The night I booked my campground, I pulled some flour out of my pantry and started making bread dough. Like many other Americans, I had started my foray into bread baking during the pandemic. Instead, I used a recipe for burger buns that I figured I could mold into a loaf shape and use however I wanted. It turned out fine.

Meal planning for the rest of the trip came down to considering what food could stay edible unrefrigerated overnight, what wouldn’t take up too much room and what was durable enough to survive being smashed in my backpack. I went with grapefruit, raisins, pistachios, peanut butter, a water bottle full of Vietnamese coffee, salami and an avocado (which yes, smashed in transit).

If you were doing to do a contactless trip that lasted more than a night or two, you may want to get into the world of Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) foods. They’re backpack-friendly, dehydrated and compact. I’ve eaten some decent ones when traveling in remote destinations, and while they’re not my first pick for standard wining and dining, they’ll do.

I’m not sure why, but when I pictured biking from a metropolitan area to a national park I imagined scenic pathways and leafy trails.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27
Instead, Google Maps took me down highway sidewalks and suburban sprawl (to no fault of the technology’s own, it just gave me the most direct bike route).

The majority of my Into The Wild experience was spent gripping my bike handlebars for dear life as cars roared by me, the hot summer sun burning my skin through the weak Whole Foods sunscreen I kept reapplying to no help.

Google Maps directed me along a hiking path, not a paved road, for the final stretch of the journey through the national park to my campsite. I eventually made it to my little plot exhausted. Not long after setting up my tent, eating dinner and drinking wine while convincing my mom I was safe, I crawled into my sleeping bag and fell asleep immediately.

I set off on my contactless trip with the best intentions. I’d stop nowhere. I’d touch nothing. I’d hurt no one.

My first day of travel, I followed my own guidelines perfectly. I biked in my cloth face mask, went to the restroom in nature, resisted the siren song of convenience stores and fast food restaurants. There was even a quaint ice cream shop in a historic old town along a river. I still biked onward.

On the way home, after my one solitary night of camping, was a different story.

I woke up wrecked. Forgetting the sleeping pad had been a gargantuan mistake. When I’d gotten into my sleeping bag at night, the ground felt firm yet not terribly so. Throughout the night, the ground seemed to become increasingly unyielding.

At daybreak, my face was swollen. My lips had cracked. My body felt like I had been stamped in a metal press. My muscles were blazingly sore from the bike ride and carrying the weight of my gear.

After breakfast in a stupor, I was too tired to hike out into the woods to pee. Instead, I went to the camp restroom, feeling guilty for touching the door handles and sink faucet. (I kicked the toilet handle into motion.) I had made contact on my contactless adventure.

An hour and a half from my apartment, I also spied a farmers market stand advertising fresh peaches and I cracked. I rolled into the parking lot, ditched my bike, waited in a line six feet from the patrons around me and bought some produce, a root beer and a Thai iced tea Popsicle to eat standing alone by my bike.

The guilt rushed through me stronger than the muscle soreness. I biked the rest of the way home without stopping, feeling like I’d failed my mission.

The trip was neither contactless, nor contact-ful.

If you’re going to travel during the coronavirus, it doesn’t have to be a wild-goose chase that ends in guilt and pain. Remember that the pandemic is still very much a problem, read the CDC travel guidelines thoroughly before you commit to a plan and keep your loved ones and neighbors in mind along the way.
A place of peace

Find serenity at the base of a 60-foot Buddha at the Hokoji Shrine

BY THERON GODBOLD
Stars and Stripes

We could all use a little serenity right now as the coronavirus pandemic drags on, and if you live and work at Yokota Air Base, the Buddha of Rokuya, or Rokuya Daibutsu, isn’t far from the home of U.S. Forces Japan.

The 60-foot-tall bronze Buddha, about three feet taller than the more famous, much older Buddha in Kamakura, is a 20-minute drive from Yokota’s main gate. A leisurely bike ride gets you there in about 45 minutes.

Located on the grounds of Hokoji, a Buddhist temple in Hinode, the Buddha was unveiled in 2018, partly with hopes of bringing more tourists to the area.

Built on a mountainside, the approach to this giant Buddha is through a bare landscape, with acres of newly planted trees still attached to supporting stakes. Several paths, steep in places, lead from the admission office to the top.

Arriving visitors will turn from the street along the Hirai River onto the street heading uphill along the temple complex. On the right is a parking lot. From here, visitors may backtrack to the entrance of a paved, forested path along which statues point the way to a large gate before the temple.

Built in 1478, Hokoji was erected to convert a Tendai sect temple to the Soto sect of Zen Buddhism, according to the temple’s website.

Continuing along the path leads to Akiyama cemetery, a vast, traditional Japanese burial ground on the bowl-like hillside above. Cresting the steep hill, you’ll see the Buddha across the ravine, looking over the valley.

To reach the Buddha, pay a fee at the admission booth — 300 yen, or about $2.87 for adults, and 100 yen for a child. The helpful staff speaks minimal English.

Winding your way uphill through a small forest of Japanese cedars brings you to Rokuya Daibutsu. Here you will find benches and a modern, motion-sensor fountain for the ritual hand-cleansing upon arrival.

Inside the base of the Buddha, visitors may purchase incense to leave at the 1/10th scale gold-plated version of the bronze monolith sitting above you. Also, prayer ornaments and fortune papers are available for suggested donations of 300 yen.

Vending machines can be found at the rest area near the admission building. Ample free parking and public restrooms are also available.

godbold.theron@stripes.com
Twitter: @godboldTheron

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS
Hokoji is a 20-minute drive from the front gate of Yokota Air Base, Japan; the Google GPS code is P7W7+Q4 Hinode, Tokyo

TIMES
The grounds are open daily, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

COSTS
Admission to the Buddha is 300 yen for adults and 100 yen for children.

FOOD
There are vending machines for snacks and drinks on the grounds.

INFORMATION
Online: entakuzan-houkouji.or.jp

— THERON GODBOLD
Fancy a spot of tea?

Rose Town Tea Garden in Tokyo serves lunch with a Victorian flair

With coronavirus restrictions at U.S. military bases around Tokyo easing enough to allow some local travel, what better way to relax than with a light lunch and a pot of tea? Like a scene from a period movie, Rose Town Tea Garden’s Victorian-style building is nestled in trees with the sounds of the rushing Tama River below. This quaint restaurant in Ome with a very European feel isn’t a bad drive for those at Camp Zama or Yokota Air Base.

Open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, the tea garden has seating for 28, according to its website. Reservations are not required but highly recommended, especially on weekends. Tables are widely spaced, providing room to socially distance. Discerning palates will find something to savor among the 20-plus flavors of tea from herbal to black and green. The set menu features only homemade entrees.

I ordered the Princess Heather set and it was a grand affair that came with a well plated and zesty garden salad that set the tone for the meal. The second course was a potato and smoked salmon soup that was warm and had a delicately fishy flavor. The final course was a tower of finger sandwiches and desserts: scones, cucumber sandwiches, pimento and tomato stuffed croissants, pastrami, cinnamon coffee cake, lemon custard tarts with fresh fruit toppings and a mango custard, all served with a pot of steaming black tea. It was delicious, almost decadent and a fair value at only $26.

Five menu sets are available, including a children’s set that comes with sandwiches, dessert, scones and juice or milk and costs a little over $11.

The Princess Heather set at Rose Town Tea Garden in Ome, Japan, starts with a zesty salad and finishes with a tower of finger foods and desserts alongside a steaming pot of tea.
What you need to know about RV travel

**By Danielle Braff**

Special to The Washington Post

Recreational vehicles look like the perfect vehicle for the pandemic — you can go on vacation and still socially distance. Which may explain why RV dealers across the country are seeing a significant increase in sales, some as much as 170 percent from a similar period last year, according to the RV Industry Association, based in Reston, Va.

Rentals are even hotter: RVshare, a peer-to-peer rental website, reports a 1,600 percent surge in rentals since April, the height of the pandemic — and it has already tripled bookings from the entire year of 2019.

Because social distancing “will likely be around in some form for the foreseeable future,” said Monika Geraci, senior manager with the association, it’s comforting that recreational vehicles “allow the freedom to go where you want, when you want — but also the ability to control your environment and how you interact with other people.”

But if you buy one, be warned: You can’t just hop inside and enjoy the ride. “RVing is a whole new experience,” said Megan Buemi, RVshare spokeswoman.

**Equipment**

The first step is stocking up on essentials, said Kelly Beasley, co-founder of Camp Addict, an RV education website. Surprisingly, Beasley said, new and used RVs don’t come equipped with many necessary tools (rentals should supply everything, but check before you drive off the grounds).

Nearly 90 percent of last year’s RV sales were towable, rather than motorized. Beasley suggested that all new RV owners purchase a sewer hose; chocks (chocking involves securing the wheels when you’re at your destination so the rig doesn’t roll or move unexpectedly); a water hose (to connect your RV to a water supply at the campsite); a power cord (to connect your RV to a power supply at the campsite); refrigerator bars (to keep the contents of your refrigerator from spilling out); and more (she has a full list at campaddict.com/must-have-rv-accessories).

While motor homes have a parking brake, trailers don’t — and Beasley recommends putting chocks on a motor home anyway in case the parking brake fails. If you plan on connecting a trailer to your vehicle, you’ll need a hitch, though you won’t need one on a motor home unless you’re going to tow a vehicle behind it.

**Maintenance**

Maintaining your RV may feel like a second job at first, but it should become less daunting once you figure out what you’re doing. “Maintenance on your RV is much like the maintenance on your personal vehicle, only supersized,” said Cindy Baker, a travel adviser with InteLiteTravel, part of Ensemble Travel Group, a consortium of more than 700 independent travel advisers.

Before you venture out on any long trip, you’ll need to inspect your tires to make sure they have the correct amount of air to carry the weight of your load, Baker said. It’s easier than it sounds, since you can purchase a tire pressure monitoring system. Place the sensors on your tires to monitor their pressure and temperature as you drive. They warn you of changes that can lead to a dangerous blowout, said Julie Chickery, a Virginia-based RV enthusiast with a blog called Chickery’s Travels.

She suggested joining an auto roadside service, as many offer plans that cover your RV and your car simultaneously.

**Driving**

Once you’ve got everything you need, you need to practice driving, especially going backward.

There’s a learning curve when backing up a trailer, Beasley said. Because the back of the trailer is a point, the back of the trailer will go in the opposite direction of the back of the vehicle when you back up. Nearly every campsite will require you to back in, so before you get on the road, find an empty parking lot to practice.

“Also, if you have a lot of RV behind your rear wheels, you have to watch out for tail swing,” Beasley said, when your back end swings out when you turn. “Plenty of newbies have damaged property and their own RV because they didn’t understand the mechanics of how their back end juts out when they make a turn,” she said.

Before you head onto the road, you need to memorize the height and weight of your RV, which is essential knowledge for going under bridges. Some roads are completely inaccessible for RVs, so it helps to use a GPS navigator specifically for RVs. You can configure it for the length, height and weight of your vehicle, said Jer Goss, Atlanta-based chief executive of Goss RV, a luxury motor coach rental company.

**Pricing**

Many RV adventurers choose to join membership-based clubs to save money on campground nightly fees as well as other camping services, Baker said.

For example, Escapes RV Club offers between a 15 and 50 percent discount at more than 800 commercial parks throughout the United States, Mexico and Canada for $39.95 annually. Membership also includes seven of the club’s own parks throughout the United States, where RVers can stay for the short term or even on deeded lots.

Alternatively, for $44 annually, Passport America offers discounts that are about 50 percent off, and they have more than 1,800 participating campgrounds within their network.

There are also memberships that offer free boondocking (off-grid,sans utilities) to their members at locations across the United States.

When you’re researching campgrounds and memberships, be aware of the various options, Chickery said. There are very simple campgrounds that will provide a safe place to park for the night — and there are destination RV resorts with activities and swimming pools.

Once you’ve defined your needs, you can search for the best fit at your desired location by using apps such as AllStays and RV Life.

**Speed**

An RV is a large, heavy piece of machinery that can be dangerous if driven too quickly, Chickery said.

Towable tires aren’t made to go faster than 65 miles per hour, she said. However, even with a motor home, you could make a case for driving more slowly for safety purposes.

“The faster you go, the longer the distance it takes to stop,” she said. “When you add the weight of these motor homes and large towables to the equation, driving at slower speeds and allowing additional distances between vehicles will improve safety.”

Plus, because RVs weigh between five and seven tons, driving is going to feel different from driving a 3,000-pound car. You’ll accelerate slowly and brake even more slowly, said Diane Vukovic, owner of the blog Mom Goes Camping.

“You have to plan turns well in advance: It takes a while to come to a full stop in an RV, so you’ll need to leave lots of room to brake,” she said.

Wind can also make driving an RV tough, so if it’s windy, you should go more slowly.

Recreational vehicles are surging in popularity as travelers weigh vacation options amid the pandemic.
If approached properly, vision boards can help us envision a future beyond COVID-19.

By Elizabeth Heath
Special to The Washington Post

I used to think vision boards — those pieces of poster board plastered with aspirational words and images — were silly, until I made one. Now, our family vision board hangs in the hallway, where we walk past it several times a day. I don’t stop to look at it very often, but it’s always in the corner of my eye, literally and figuratively.

We made the vision board in early January. Fast forward six months, and some of our “visions” for 2020 — a trip to South Africa, for example — have gone up in smoke because of the worldwide pandemic. But even after months of lockdown, a lot of good items remain on the board: reasonable, obtainable goals motivating ideas and ideals for what we want our lives to look like. In a year when so many lives are in a holding pattern, I wondered, could vision boards help propel us past the pandemic.

Vision boards, sometimes referred to as dream boards, rose in popularity in the 2000s, thanks to the enormous success of Rhonda Byrne’s self-help book “The Secret.” Byrne introduced the Law of Attraction to the masses — the belief that health, wealth and happiness can come from positive thinking and envisioning yourself already there. Vision boards are a tool in the journey of manifesting those goals — add photos, clippings and inspirational words representing the things you want or want to achieve, and the universe will deliver. If you paste it, it will come.

The problem with vision boards, many mental health professionals point out, is that too often, when people assign their dreams to a vision board, they stop doing the hard work to get what they want. I’ve asked the universe for a sports car this year, so somehow, one will come to me. By waiting for the universe to deliver the things they want and feel they deserve, people remove their own agency from the equation. “As a therapist, I’ve seen a lot of people think that because they put things on their vision boards, those things were going to happen,” says Amy Morin, a psychotherapist and author of “13 Things Mentally Strong People Don’t Do.” “They have no desire to put in any effort.”

Another drawback to vision boards, says Marilyn Fitzpatrick, a counseling psychologist and professor emerita at McGill University in Montreal. “We don’t know for certain why we see these negative results in the research,” Fitzpatrick says. “But one idea is that when we compare ourselves to others, we stop focusing on who we are and what we can do, and focus on external, material goals.”

Visions will bring happiness, according to Fitzpatrick. “A vision board should reflect not how we think about our future but what we want to achieve, and what we can do, and focus on the present or future, not on the past.” The pitfalls of material desire notwithstanding, Fitzpatrick and others agree that a vision board, when approached with the right attitude, can be part of a larger tool kit of emotional well-being — especially now, when many of us could use some positivity.

“How we think about our future and how we envision our lives has a profound influence on our current state of mind,” Fitzpatrick says, and can help us think past the pandemic.

Visually oriented people, in particular, might benefit from a vision board. “A vision board should reflect not just where we want to be in 10 years or two years, but where we want to be right now,” she says. And while you may want to be on a tropical beach, your goals for the present should be grounded in reality. In the context of COVID-19, that might mean using images that reflect what you want your interactions with others to look like, whether it’s playing with the kids or helping an elderly neighbor with a grocery delivery.

Morin says that adding images of events you know are going to happen to the board can bring a sense of satisfaction as well. “I’m a big fan of pleasant activity scheduling,” she says. So, if you know that when lockdown restrictions ease, you’re going to have lunch with friends, add it to your vision board. This “provides a mood boost by giving you something concrete to look forward to,” she adds.

Whether the vision board you create is grounded in the present or future, it’s essential, experts say, that it be filled with images associated with action. For example, Morin says that instead of a photo that represents you in a perfect new job, you could add an image of your résumé to represent the job search.

As for that trip to South Africa? I think I’ll save a spot for it on our 2021 vision board.
By TERRY TANG
Associated Press

Jason Ward fell in love with birds at age 14 when he spotted a perching falcon outside the homeless shelter where he was staying with his family.

The now 33-year-old Atlanta bird lover parlayed that passion into a YouTube series last year. One of the guests on his first episode of “Birds of North America” was Christian Cooper, a Black bird watcher who was targeted in New York City’s Central Park by a white woman after he told her to leash her dog.

A video capturing the encounter showed the woman, Amy Cooper (no relation), retaliate by calling the police and clearly referencing his race to raise the threat level.

Ward, who is Black, said the video, even now, is “jarring” to watch. Buttting heads with dog owners is common among birders, but he’d never seen it take such a turn.

“Especially knowing Christian and how confident he is, hearing his nervousness and trepidation, it shed light on how dangerous that situation could have been,” Ward said.

It didn’t culminate in any arrests, and Amy Cooper later issued an apology. But it brought attention to how the great outdoors can be far from great for Black people.

Worries about discrimination, racial profiling and even subtle aggression keep some away. Furthermore, those fears can perpetuate the stereotype that hiking, camping and bird watching are “white” activities.

Christian Cooper’s encounter, which happened on May 25, the same day as George Floyd’s death at the hands of a white Minneapolis police officer, has been cited in nationwide protests against systemic racism and white privilege.

For Black people, the incident was not surprising, said Carolyn Finney, author of “Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors.”

“Systemic racism doesn’t stop at the park gates,” Finney said. “I’ve back-packed all over the world ... There are places in this country I would never go on my own. It is my loss. I just don’t trust the public.”

Birding can take participants to parks, woods and suburban streets. Depending on the setting, Ward said he adjusts his demeanor so he doesn’t seem threatening.

Worries about discrimination, racial profiling and even subtle aggression keep some away. Furthermore, those fears can perpetuate the stereotype that hiking, camping and bird watching are “white” activities.

He makes sure his face isn’t covered even if it’s cold. He always has his binoculars in plain sight rather than pulling them out of his bag.

“Just simple stuff like that I have to pay attention to that other people might say, ‘What? Come on dude! They’re just binoculars,’” Ward said. “If someone easily recognizes them as binoculars, it’s still a case in which I have to prove that I’m actually looking for birds occasionally.”

Mike Parr, president of the American Bird Conservancy, is white but his three sons are half-Black. His youngest, who is 12, has gotten into birding. Cooper’s experience is now in the back of his mind.

“We personally haven’t come across anyone like that, but as a parent, I am concerned about things that could happen to him,” Parr said. “Birding isn’t all that well understood by people.”

Keith Russell, 63, an urban conservation program manager for the National Audubon Society’s Philadelphia-based chapter, said as a Black person, he has his guard up if he’s searching for birds with binoculars near homes. But he’s never felt unsafe among fellow birders and hopes Cooper’s close call doesn’t scare off others.

“I think it’s very very important to be clear for anyone who might not understand this and take a superficial view of this ... It’s not dangerous to be a birder if you’re a person of color,” Russell said. But, he added. “There have been historical problems with access.”

He thinks that for some Black families, past discrimination and segregation at parks and other recreation sites may have set them on a path away from nature. That lack of connection to the outdoors then continues with the next generation.

“It can take a while to make that internal culture go away,” Russell said. “I think it’s definitely starting to.”

The misconception that most Black people aren’t outdoorsy may get bolstered by history books. Finney, the author, said that too often the history of U.S. conservation centers on white figures like naturalist John Muir. Meanwhile, less attention is paid to the hundreds of Black soldiers who protected national parks after the Civil War.

The same goes for Hispanic communities. Many are unaware that Hispanics have connections with public lands going back generations, said Liz Archuleta, a county board supervisor in Flagstaff, Ariz., and co-founder of Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting and the Outdoors.

“My mother tells stories about how, at least twice a month on a Saturday, the entire Hispanic pioneer community of Flagstaff used to get together and go through the forest and have picnics,” Archuleta said. “It’s foreign to me when people say we have to get Hispanics to enjoy the outdoors more.”

The shift in support toward Black Lives Matter after Floyd’s death has every corporation and nonprofit re-evaluating how they can elevate Black and brown voices.

In the birthing world, there’s already been an effort in recent years to do that. The National Audubon Society, which was established in 1905 to preserve birds and their habitats, has 1.8 million members. Approximately 198,000 identify as people of color; only 45,000 identify as Black or African American.

“Obviously, that’s not reflective of where the U.S. population is,” said Rebecca Sanders, senior vice president of the organization’s state programs.

The group is trying to recruit more minorities. Staff training now includes ways to intervene if someone is mistreated because of race or another trait. In the past year, they have set up chapters at dozens of colleges, including historically Black ones. They also filled almost half of nearly 100 internships and fellowships with people of diverse backgrounds.

“As our staff and our membership base become more representative, it changes who you are,” Sanders said. “Those perspectives make us ask different questions and change some of our decisions.”

Environmental organizations are making universal statements that the outdoors belong to everyone — but, Finney said, they have to address that it’s simply not the same for Black communities.

“The National Park Service and others want to engage diverse communities and often are bringing kids in,” Finney said. “How is some Black teenager going to feel about their ability to feel safe and welcome?”

Since Christian Cooper’s video, several Black professionals have reached out to Ward via social media to inquire about birding: “We’re definitely getting feedback from a lot of people who are saying ‘You know what? I definitely want to get a pair of binoculars now,’” Ward said. “I thought this was boring and for people who didn’t look like me.”

Minority bird-watchers, outdoors enthusiasts say racial issues affect how they connect with nature
An eventful year for Pulitzer Prize winner Whitehead

By Hillel Italie

Associated Press

Even sheltering in place, Colson Whitehead has had an eventful year. Whitehead became the first fiction writer to win the Pulitzers for back-to-back novels, “Underground Railroad” and “The Nickel Boys,” which won the Pulitzer in May and comes out in paperback this week. He also managed to finish a crime novel, with the working title “Harlem Shuffle,” that he had begun more than a year ago.

“I was on the wrong side of the book when the quarantine started,” said Whitehead during a recent phone interview, “and for the first eight weeks, most of the time was spent looking after the kids, making sure the Wi-Fi was on so they couldn’t get schoolwork.” Then I finished the draft of the book — not sure how it happened. You just kind of find the time and not get too distracted to do the final leg of the book.”

Whitehead, 50, has been staying in Long Island with his wife and two children. He has been a published author since his acclaimed debut novel, “The Intuitionist,” came out in 1999, and he has established himself for his vivid prose and imagination. “Zone One,” published in 2011, is speculative fiction that depicts a postapocalyptic New York City, a narrative which became painfully timely during the coronavirus outbreak. “Underground Railroad” combined historical detail from the 19th century and a unique twist: Whitehead imagined the network for bringing runaway slaves North to their freedom as a literal railroad. “The Nickel Boys” stays closer to the facts: It’s based on a notorious Florida boarding school from the Jim Crow era that brutalized and sometimes murdered the kids sent there. One protagonist is a promising teenager who lands in the Nickel school after being accused of a crime he didn’t commit.

During his interview, Whitehead also discussed the Black Lives Matter protests, early influences and how each book reflects the person he was while writing it.

Here are highlights:

Childhood reading: “I wanted to write from a very early age, just from reading Marvel Comics and Stephen King, and Arthur C. Clarke and Ray Bradbury. I consumed fantasy and fiction and loved to figure out everything weird you had in your head. Your taking your eccentric ideas and trying to convince the reader that they’re plausible.

How real life sometimes re-minds him of ‘Zone One’: “I have tried not to think about that book because things turn out pretty terribly. I was terrified those first couple of weeks of the pandemic and I felt the same thing after the hurricane (Sandy) a few years ago, when lower Manhattan was blacked out and I was walking through ‘Zone One.’ And now it’s real and it’s more scary than I thought.

How life has changed since describing himself as incapable of joy in the 2014 nonfiction book on poker “The Noble Hustle”: “I was this depressed guy going through this midlife crisis and having this wonderful writing assignment (to write about the World Series of Poker) fall into my lap. It’s really only since 2011, and in order to keep that inner voice, I had to impersonate the person I had become in the two years before. When I look back through all my work… I think who I was at the time is always determining how the book turns out.

‘For ‘The Nickel Boys,’ I was someone trying to figure out where the country was going. It was during the first months of the Trump administration and in Elwood and Turner (the book’s two main characters), I had Elwood being the optimist and Turner being the pessimist. On the Black Lives Matter protests: ‘I grew up in New York and in the early ’80s and every other day it seemed there was a case of police brutality and we’d have this conversation about how that has to change and nothing happened. My whole life has been me seeing these documented cases that result in zero change. ‘But I’ve been surprised how far reaching and involved the protests have been. You’re seeing people in white, tony towns in the South and the Midwest and you’re seeing protesters in New York and on Fifth Avenue and in Union Square and at the Barclay Center. I’ve been delighted and surprised how people have seized the moment. It feels like we’re moving somewhere in the country. I’m usually pessimistic about where things are going, but the protests have made me feel a little different.”

The summer reads that Black bookstore owners are recommending

By Brin-Jonathan Butler

Bloomberg

Twenty years ago, there were 325 Black-owned bookstores across the United States. By 2012, that total had fallen to 54. Though the number has roughly doubled in recent years, Black-owned bookstores, like all Black-owned businesses, occupy a precarious space in their neighborhoods and sometimes face daily threats. One way that activists in the Black Lives Matter movement have been able to support the Black-owned bookstores across the United States is through the reading lists they recommend.

One way that activists in the Black Lives Matter movement have been able to support the Black-owned bookstores across the United States is through the reading lists they recommend.

“One of the most influential works in African-American literature, written by one of the most prolific Black writers in history, The Souls of Black Folk contextualizes what it means to be Black in America. DuBois’ concepts of life behind the ‘invisible veil of race’ and the result of ‘double-consciousness’ — the sense of always ‘looking at oneself through the eyes of others’ — are still pertinent today — and, we believe, essential to understanding the plight of the Black community.”

Colson Whitehead became the first fiction writer to win Pulitzer Prizes for back-to-back novels, with “Underground Railroad” in 2017 and “The Nickel Boys” in May.
The revolution comes again

BY JAKE COLYE
Associated Press

in-Manuel Miranda likes to picture the millionaire, Mr. Howell, from “Gillum’s Island,” saying the brag. You know the one. “Well, I saw it with the original cast.”

On Friday, Miranda will steal that boast from anyone who ever saw “Hamilton” in its blistering first year and a half on Broadway. A live capture taken from two of the last performances present at the original cast in June 2016 will premiere on Disney Plus, opening a new chapter in Miranda’s ever-evolving-pop-culture phenomenon. In just a weekend, over Independence Day, more people will see “Hamilton” on screen forever before.

“There’s a part of me that just likes taking the brag away from people,” says Miranda, speaking from his home in Manhattan’s Washington Heights. “I wanted the world to have that brag.”

“Hamilton,” as it’s been nicknamed, will land in homes just days after Broadway announced that its shutter is continuing through at least the end of the year due to the pandemic. Disney, which acquired the film for $75 million, will sacrifice whatever the box-office returns might have come for a major boost to its streaming service and a rush of virtual togetherness. With the stage all to itself, “Hamilton” arrives as a godsend to theatergoers. One of the first things that hits you watching “Hamilton” is the sensation of being in the midst of applause, with a full house all around. Director Thomas Kail, who also shepherd the Broadway show, dispensed nine cameras and some 100 microphones around the Richard Rodgers Theatre to document two performances: a Sunday matinee and a Tuesday night show. Tracking and close-up shots were done in between.

For Kail, who spoke by Zoom alongside Miranda, it means giving everyone the same seat — and a chance to dig even deeper into “Hamilton.”

“There’s a level of inspection of the show that can be quite different than the endorphin rush of watching it knowing that might be your one chance,” says Kail. “In some ways, this will allow it to settle because now it’s yours.”

Since “Hamilton” first performed at the Public Theater in January 2015 and moved to Broadway that August, the words mostly haven’t changed (though two expletives have been scrubbed to make the film PG-13).

But as a rhyming, hip-hop omnibus of national history and identity, slavery and immigration, its power has resorted differently at different times.

Now, the “Rise up!” verses of “My Shot” will sound to many like we’re re-channeling the protest spirit that has swept across the country since the death of George Floyd. “Hamilton” remains a story of revolution — a triumphant and tragic one told passionately by performers of color. Everyone who perishes in “Hamilton,” Miranda points out, dies from gun violence.

“Everything present at the founding is still present,” says Miranda. “When I am sitting still and listening right now, it’s to the young people who are leading these protests who are saying: This is what we stand for and this is what we won’t stand for.” I’m struck by a section that was always treated as comic relief when the show first came out where there’s Samuel Seabury and he’s telling everyone to remain calm. And there’s Miranda saying there’s nothing calm about what’s happening. “The revolution is coming,” Miranda says.

“Hamilton” has already been woven into contemporary history. Miranda’s first performance of a song from it came at Barack Obama’s White House. Ever since, the history-making musical has been indelibly linked to the Obama era. Michelle Obama called it “the best piece of art in any form that I have ever seen in my life.”

But after the election of Donald Trump, “Hamilton” took on a more magnified aura of resistance. Just days after polls closed, Mike Pence, then the vice-president elect, attended a show. The cast, doubting Trump and Pence’s support for minorities, read a letter from the stage asking him to “uphold our American values and to work on behalf of all of us.”

Trump’s angry response in a series of tweets, Miranda considers “a very early glimpse of the Trump playbook.” Soon, the line “Immigrants, they get the job done” became a more pronounced rallying cry.

“I wrote it as kind of a throwaway line and in the Trump administration it gets this roar of approval,” says Miranda. “You almost feel the audience trying to say, ‘This anti-immigrant sentiment embodied by the current administration is not who we in the audience are.’ Things hit differently than they did in the Obama administration. And they’ll hit differently next year.”

Kail can’t sit in the back of a theater to see how this version of “Hamilton” plays. There were no test screenings except for one a few weeks ago for the cast, including original members Daveed Diggs, Leslie Odom Jr., Jonathan Groff and Renee Elise Goldsberry. But through Disney’s subscription streaming service, it will be on the theater-orifice, everywhere — to meet another moment in American history.

“Maybe it can be of use and of service in a way that was totally different than when we played our last performance two months ago and opened four months ago,” says Kail. “Access was always the challenge for us. Access is always the challenge for theater. Here was a chance for us to make the door wider and lower the barrier.”

Miranda, Kail on bringing ‘Hamilton’ to the screen

**By Peter Marks**
The Washington Post

Let’s have another round tonight. And heck, why not tomorrow night, too? Pour as much “Hamilton” as your heart desires, now that Disney Plus is streaming a masterly film of the smash Broadway musical, recorded on the stage of the Richard Rodgers Theatre, with its peerless original cast.

I’m not in the habit of hawking subscriptions to digital platforms. But the movie version directed by Thomas Kail is from an economic as well as an aesthetic standpoint well worth all of the few consistent knocks on Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Tony- and Pulitzer-winning musical, an account of the rise and demise of Alexander Hamilton in warm tones of rap, rock, jazz and traditional show tunes, has been outrageous ticket prices. The show allows itself for $6.99 a month to become, at last, a truly populist piece of entertainment.

Filmed theater inevitably loses something in the translation: that electric sense of human energy, the ineffable appeal that actors make, as they reach out to you, and seemingly only you, be-seeming your eye and your approbation. But Kail, who won a Tony for his direction of the Broadway production, finds other means of expressing the intensity of the “Hamilton” experience, through close-ups and overhead shots and a camera moving through ensemble numbers like a rush-hour rider through a turnstile. (Kail supplemented the live footage with onstage cameras when there was no audience present.)

The visual boundaries of the film are the dimensions of the Rodgers; this is a movie in the passionate thrill of the stage. The head of conductor-orches-trator Alex Lacamoire pops out of the orchestra pit; Howell Binkley’s lighting sprays beams onto David Korins’ warehouse set and the tasteful opulence of Paul Tazewell’s costumes. You can hear the reaction of the audience, so that you’re spared the hollow ring of performance into a theatrical void. You’re aware, too, that actors are going all-out, as on any given night at an ecstatic hit. You may even notice remarkable Renee Elise Goldsberry’s production’s Angelica Schuyler, wiping away tears at the tumultuous curtain call.

The added advantage for a viewer is a camera that can stop and study Miranda’s face as Hamilton submits to the anguished judgment of his betrayed wife, Eliza (Phillipa Soo), or isolates the seductive showmanship of Leslie Odom Jr. as Aaron Burr, romancing the lens all through the sultry chords of “The Room Where It Happens.” Andy Blankenbuehler’s choreography, an amalgam of martial arts, capoeira and break-dance gestures, aids immeasurably in conveying the fluidity of the musical’s episodes. It culminates in a stunning stop-action staging of the Hamilton-Burr duel.

The film is at times deeply moving and, for a show that is virtually all song and no dialogue, extraordinarily character-rich. “Hamilton” is a uniquely joy-ful achievement. But escapism, it’s not. It’s a show that points out, in this frightening time of pandemic and portentous moment for democracy, how messy and fractious and cloack-and-drape politics are. With volatile personalities is the origin story of our shared American birthing. Even if you watch it with the shades pulled down and lights turned off, you won’t be able to shut history out.

“Hamilton” is rated PG-13 for language and some suggestive material. Running time: 181 minutes.
More than just Mr. Nice Guy

Martin Freeman shows different facets of acting in 2 new TV projects

BY MICHAEL ORDONA
Los Angeles Times

The Everyman Card has been nice to have in his back pocket; it afforded him entry to a solid career. But British actor Martin Freeman has others to play, as two very different television projects show.

“I didn’t go to drama school just to be nice,” Freeman explains. “It’s the mundanity of it that’s more affecting.”

The Everyman Card had its first, most public instance of acting in a family-oriented television program. Freeman has been a T and dotting an I of procedure.

The 48-year-old Freeman made his name as the nice young man in the original British “The Office” (think the John Krasinski role), the accidental cosmic tourist in “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy,” and the sensitive porn stand-in in “Love Actually.” Since then, his hits have included the accidental cosmic tourist in “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy,” and the sensitive porn stand-in in “Love Actually.”

Freeman’s Fulcher is all business; he doesn’t do that version — slap him around, the actor gets to look good. It’s not true; not in English telling of the story. There aren’t any big car chases or explosions; no one gets shot. The best American TV is the best in the world, but you guys like a car chase,” he says, smiling.

The series’ first act, if you will, is a nail-biting hunt after Freeman’s Detective Superintendent Steve Fulcher learns of a young woman’s kidnapping. From there, it becomes an examination of the aftermath. The balance of the drama turns on a failure to observe the equivalent of a suspect’s Miranda rights, with severe consequences.

“Steve is a very good copper who believes in ‘suspects’ rights and reining in police,” says Freeman, who got to know the real Fulcher in his research. “But he says, ‘If someone can tell me what I should have done instead of the action I took, please tell me.’ He didn’t kick the … out of someone in the back of the squad car or put words into a suspect’s mouth. It was literally not crossing a T and dotting an I of procedure.”

Fulcher’s Fulcher is all business; he almost never loses his cool. The actor shows remarkable restraint, particularly when he must deliver terrible news to family members or when he gets devastating information from a suspect.

“The director and the writer both said, don’t do that version — slap him around, the actor gets to look good. It’s not true; not in this story, anyway. It’s more mundane than that. It’s the mundanity of it that’s more affecting,” he said. “That said, there are some breakdowns — when I tell [costar] Imelda Staunton her daughter’s died, you didn’t have to do anything but just be there in that scene. She’s making this animal noise. You have to be a stone to not be affected. It makes your job easier. You have to do less.”
Researchers say infectious diseases like COVID-19 could go airborne when you flush

**CLOSE THE LID**

**By Karin Brulliard and William Wan**

**The Washington Post**

A dd this to our list of worries in these anxious times: coronavirus-containing clouds that waft into the air when a toilet is flushed.

Scientists who simulated toilet water and air flow say in a new research paper that aerosol droplets forced upward by a flush appear to spread wide enough and linger long enough to be inhaled. The novel coronavirus has been found in the feces of COVID-19 patients, but it remains unknown whether such clouds could contain enough virus to infect a person. The authors say the possibility of that mode of transmission calls for action in the midst of a pandemic — first and foremost, by closing the lid.

“Flushing will lift the virus up from the toilet bowl,” co-author Ji-Xiang Wang, who researches at Yangzhou University in Yangzhou, China, said in an email. Bathrooms users “need to close the lid first and then trigger the flushing process,” Wang said, and wash their hands thoroughly if closure isn’t possible.

Toilets and modern sanitation systems have been a huge boon to public health and life expectancy since the 19th century. Even so, people have long been leery of germs in bathrooms, and that wariness has only increased during the pandemic. But experts say most of us are focusing on the wrong aspect.

For all our paranoia about the surface of toilet seats — the tissue paper we oh-so-carefully lay down, the thin covers often offered in public stalls — germ transmission from skin contact is a relatively small health risk compared with what happens after you flush. That’s when bits of fecal matter swish around so violently that they can be propelled into the air, become aerosolized and then settle on the surroundings.

Experts call it the “toilet plume.” The potential for airborne transmission of infectious disease via sewage has been the subject of research for more than a century, and the toilet plume’s role has been scrutinized since the 1950s. Scientists who have seeded toilet bowls with bacteria and viruses have found contamination of seats, flush handles, bathroom floors and nearby surfaces. This is one reason we are told to wash our hands after visiting the john.

Even though public bathrooms are known to contribute to the spread of viruses that transmit via ingestion, such as the noroviruses that haunt cruise ships, their role in the transmission of respiratory viruses has not been established, said Charles P. Gerba, a microbiologist at the University of Arizona.

The risk is not zero, but how great a risk it is, we don’t know,” Gerba, who has studied the intersection of toilets and infectious disease for 45 years, said of the potential for flushing to spread the coronavirus. “The big unknown is how much virus is infectious in the toilet when you flush it ... and how much virus does it take to cause an infection.”

A study published in March in the journal Gastroenterology found significant amounts of the coronavirus in the stool of patients and determined that viral RNA last ed in feces even after the virus cleared from the patients’ respiratory tracts. Another study in the journal Lancet found the coronavirus in feces up to a month after the illness had passed. Scientists around the world are now studying sewage to track the spread of the virus.

Researchers say the virus’ presence in excrement and the gastrointestinal tract "could contribute to the global fight against the virus."

The resulting study was published June 16 in the journal Physics of Fluids. It found that flushing of both single-inlet toilets, which push water into the bowl from one port, and annular-inlet toilets, which pour water into the bowl from the rim’s surrounding edge with greater energy, result in “massive upward transport of particles” at heights of more than three feet and float in the air for more than a minute, it found. The paper recommends not just lid-closing and hand-washing but urges manufacturers to produce toilets that close and self-clean automatically. It also suggests that toilet users wipe down the seat. Gerba, however, said seats shouldn’t be a major concern. Research has found that public and household toilet seats are typically the cleanest surface in restrooms, he said, probably because so many people already wipe them off before using them. Also, he said of SARS-CoV-2, “the virus that causes COVID-19: “I don’t think it’s butt-borne, so I don’t think you have to worry.”

Gerba has been studying coronavirus transmission for two decades, and in 2003 he was sent by the World Health Organization to Hong Kong to investigate the role of toilet flushing in a SARS outbreak at an apartment complex called Amoy Gardens.

Investigators suspected cases were driven in part by the apartment’s sanitary system, because the outbreak seemed to begin after an index patient suffering from diarrhea used a toilet in the apartment complex. Gerba said improper ventilation in the building, not flushing, seemed to be the culprit.

But Gerba does not rule out the possibility that the novel coronavirus might be spread by flushing. He said he once did an experiment, never published, in which he placed six cages holding mice at different heights in a small bathroom and then flushed a mouse pneumonia known only to transmit by inhalation. More than a quarter of the mice were infected, though none of those that had been placed at six feet above toilet level, he said.

In the absence of clear evidence, Gerba said, his advice remains the same: “Flush and run” when using a public toilet without a lid. Wash hands well post-flush and use hand sanitizer after leaving the restroom. Choose well-ventilated bathrooms if possible, and “don’t hang around the restroom” in any case.

But most important, Gerba said, is closing the lid before flushing. He’s been doing it for decades, even at home: “If I have my toothbrush too close to the toilet,” Gerba said. “I don’t want to brush my teeth with what’s in the toilet.”
Celebrate the little victories

By Lindsey M. Roberts
Special to The Washington Post

Control what you can control, experts say. That advice is applicable now more than ever. When the news cycle, changing regulations and perils of self-quarantining with children underfoot threaten to overwhelm us, it’s time to turn to the small “wins.” There are things that we can accomplish, even if we have to shrink out our challenges ever smaller.

“During quarantine, when we’re in absolute chaos, it’s not futile to cling to small moments of control,” says Justin Earley, a Virginia lawyer and author of “The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction.” “It can help to say, ‘I’m going to be the kind of person in quarantine who gets up at the same time every day.’ The possibility of any big wins are far, far removed from our grasp; it’s a good time to do little things.”

M. Priscilla Eizen, a psychologist Eileen Kennedy-Moore counsels new mothers, for example, she encourages them to “accomplish one thing each day.” That one thing might be as simple as getting a shower. On bad days, completing that task might provide one accomplishment through the day. On good days, one task might quickly become five.

“About recognizing that our circumstances are harder now, and we need to give ourselves a break,” says Kennedy-Moore, author of “Kid Confidence: Help Your Child Overcome Fears and Feel Confident,”” she says. “I don’t think any of us are functioning at 100 percent now, with changing regulations and perils of self-quarantining with children underfoot.”

Parents need to identify what is getting them by, EARLEY SAYS.

Write up family recipes

If you’re cooking every meal, every day, you’ve probably learned what your family does and doesn’t like. Write the favorites on recipe cards in a tin or save them in an app — or even make a family cookbook with Shutterfly.

Coral kids’ clutter

Help kids find their own small organizing wins. If a child is an athlete, organize their art supplies and identify dried-up markers, broken crayons, empty bottles of glue and even dried-out ballpoints that can be tossed. Organize the junk drawer

Write the jury

“If someone does want to tackle some small organizing projects, try the junk drawer,” Eizen says. “It doesn’t have to be super overwhelming, and it’s such a good feeling when it’s done.”

Have one communal meal

“If you make the table the center of gravity, then you make community the center of gravity,” Earley says, explaining that the difference between roommates or housemates and family is whether you eat together. Sit down for one meal together, light a candle or get out the cloth napkins, and turn a common space into a community space.

Organize the junk drawer

“Organize the junk drawer, and corral little things so they’re not cluttering around.” You can also hang clear shoe organizers on the backs of doors so kids can put away all the little toys on their floor without losing sight of where they are. Eizen also recommends Lego tape for getting Lego creations off the floors and onto vertical surfaces.

Sort books with kids

Ask kids to help you go through their bookshelves. Which books have they outgrown? Which ones do they want to store, and what are they ready to pass on to others? You might also figure out what kind of books they might be ready for and hunt for used ones on sites such as ThriftBooks.com until the libraries open.

Sort pens and markers

Have kids go through their art supplies and identify dried-up markers, broken crayons, empty bottles of glue and even dried-out ballpoints that can be tossed.

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Turn off phones

“For me, this is a great example of a super-small habit that has a macro, life-shifting effect on my life,” Earley says. “Anybody who finds that if you actually turn off your phone, you’re suddenly flooded with these anxieties. You have to confront the fact that becoming unreachable might actually become a worthwhile pursuit.” Earley turns off his phone when he comes home from work and leaves it off until his kids go to bed.

Sort the artwork

Both Eizen and Lindsay Boudreaux, interior designer at Shotgun Double in Alexandria, Va., recommend sorting your children’s art projects with them, then sending the favorites to the service Artkive, which turns flat and three-dimensional artwork into a book or a mosaic-framed print that you can enjoy.

Clear the table

“Whether it’s the parents or the kids, we’re all kind of working and doing our schoolwork on the dining room table, out in the communal space,” says Sara Eizen, an interior designer in Seattle. “At the end of the day, pack it up.”

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NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

BY BYRON AND HARRISON WALDEN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

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1 Fancy water pitcher
2 Cranks (out)
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4 National park near Bar Harbor
5 Shoulder-supported lifter
6 Go against
7 Put in another light
8 What do you get when you cross 26-Across with a 5-Down?
9 A group of them may be called a nursery
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17 Krispy ______
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20 Logs on to, say
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23 Fill with love
24 Prefix with -gon
25 Cactus bump
26 Spots on ships for attachments
27 Take in the newspaper
28 A curved blade
29 “Do, ____ fa . . .”
30 When you cross 26-Across with a 45-Down?
31 M.R.I. alternative
32 “Never ____!”
33 “For shame!”
34 They might take a few swallows
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36 ____ Six
37 Suffix with launder
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40 What’s known for its poker face?
41 Take in the newspaper
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46 “My Fair Lady” protagonist
47 What’s a moving snake?
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56 What’s a moving snake?
57 What do you get when you cross 63-Across with a 45-Down?
58 Injunian feminine side
59 Not natural, say
60 Coop group
61 Dared and confused
62 Went (against)
63 Caper
64 London theater district
65 Flatbread often used for sandwiches
66 Onesie protector
67 Symbols of water
68 Pool unit
69 Go against
70 Put in another light
71 What do you get when you cross 26-Across with a 5-Down?
72 What do you get when you cross 77-Across with a 45-Down?
73 What’s a moving snake?
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81 What’s a moving snake?
82 What do you get when you cross 77-Across with a 45-Down?
83 What’s a moving snake?
84 What’s a moving snake?
85 Begin dozing
86 Take in the newspaper
87 A group of them may be called a nursery
88 Take in the newspaper
89 About to rest
90 “My Fair Lady” protagonist
91 Logs on to, say
92 “My Fair Lady” protagonist
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200 “My Fair Lady” protagonist

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

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Working through the pain

Eastwood soldiered on with a broken ankle during filming of ‘The Outpost’

BY LOUISE DIXON
Associated Press

A n accident requiring two screws in his ankle nearly prevented actor Scott Eastwood from portraying a real life soldier in Afghanistan in “The Outpost,” a role that required a level of athleticism.

Eastwood was tight-lipped about how he was injured, but he said it led to a “interesting” shoot. Director Rod Lurie had a “tough as hell time trying to figure out how we were gonna design shots where for the first few weeks I couldn’t walk,” he said.

Lurie rescheduled the entire shoot, starting with static scenes and shifting the action to the end. “When you see Scott Eastwood in this film, running and gunning, you gotta remember this dude has got a broken ankle and he’s a bit of a softy like his dad,” he jokes. Eastwood, who portrays Staff Sgt. Clint Rome- sha, is the son of action-movie actor Clint Eastwood.

“The Outpost,” which also stars Orlando Bloom and Cale Lacy Jones, follows the Battle of Kamdesh in Afghanistan in 2009. The Taliban attacked a remote American Combat Out- post, deep in the mountains, that was nearly impossible to defend. Despite winning the battle and holding the base, eight American soldiers died.

It’s a story of “regular soldiers,” Lurie says. “These guys are on the ground; they have to pay the penalty not just for being up a war, but for maybe the tactical and strategic mistakes of the command above them.”

“It’s not a pro-military film. It’s certainly not a pro-war film, but it might be a pro-soldier film,” Lurie adds. “I was a soldier myself, and so I’ve got this deep connection to these guys and to what is the internal fortitude of these guys is something that we really wanted to get across.”


Making “The Outpost” was made even more personal for Lurie when his son Hunter died suddenly during pre-production.

Lurie said he wanted to shoot the soldiers who lost their lives in the battle “honorably and without the glamorization.”

“It’s done without musical flourish. It’s done without a single bullet that actually felled those guys. And I did that, not in honor, but in respect of the families of the men,” he said.

Jones portrays Spc. Ty Carter, a survivor who won the Medal of Honor. Jones said he was inspired by Lurie’s direction.

The result is “a very visceral and kinetic storytelling of this. It leaves you with the people. You’re with them in uncomfortable times, in times of extreme emotion, dealing with the psychological effects,” Jones said.

“I felt what it must have been like to be there and to lose people and to be a part of that,” Eastwood said. “And I just found myself very emotional.”

Bloom, who plays Capt. Ben Keating, said he felt a “duty of responsibility” to his character. He talked with Keating’s father and worked some of those shared memories into his portrayal.

“I felt very connected to him and I think all of the boys out there did too, you know, to their own characters,” Bloom said.

“And it was, it was very sincere, you know… There was a lot in it.”

Scott Eastwood portrays Staff Sgt. Clint Romesha in a scene from “The Outpost.”

CNN sees best ratings in its 40-year history

BY DAVID BAUER
Associated Press

An extraordinary stretch of news with the coronavirus pandemic and racial reckoning triggered by George Floyd’s death has led CNN to its biggest audience for any three-month period in the network’s 40-year history.

Fox News Channel and MSNBC and quarters ending in June, according to the Nielsen company. But CNN’s audience increased at a higher pace than its rivals, and it is also seeing strong numbers for its digital operation.

The news is welcome at a network that has been relentlessly attacked for four years by President Donald Trump and his allies, who often mocked CNN as “failing.”

“All of our research shows we are the most trusted name in news,” Jeff Zucker, chairman of WarnerMedia News and Sports and CNN chief executive, said Wednesday.

“Others may not believe that, others may scoff at that, the president of the United States makes fun of it, but it’s true.”

CNN’s weekday prime-time audience of 1.95 million was up 18% over the same period last year, Nielsen said. Fox News, which has led in the ratings for nearly two decades, had an average audience of 1.54 million viewers, a 43% increase, while MSNBC’s count of 2.47 million was up 13% from 2019.

They are routinely the three most-watched networks on all of cable TV. For the total day, CNN’s viewership was up 119% over 2019, Fox jumped by 48% and MSNBC by 34%.

“CNN is a news organization that is built for this kind of time,” Zucker said. “The others in this space are political talk channels, and so even when they’re talking about these stories, they’re talking about the politics of the stories. We’re talking about the news of the stories.”

Beavis and Butt-Head making TV comeback in reimagined series

The Associated Press

Beavis and Butt-Head are coming back to TV in a reimagined version of the animated series about a pair of Gen X slackers.

“It seemed like the time was right to get stupid again,” Mike Judge, the creator and voice of both characters, said in a statement.

“Beavis and Butt-Head,” which debuted in 1993 on MTV, is moving in its new iteration to ViacomCBS corporate sibling Comedy Central, where it will premiere Wednesday.

The channel said it has ordered two seasons of the new series that will feature themes “relatable to the new and old fans,” including Gen Z kids and their Gen X parents.

Judge will write and produce the series and again will voice the characters in a deal that includes other spinoffs and specials.

The original series, which drew praise for its social satire and criticism for its raunchy humor and violence, aired until 1997 and was briefly revived in 2011. The characters jumped to the big screen in 1996 with “Beavis and Butt-Head Do America.”

Prince Harry addresses institutional racism

Prince Harry stressed the need to tackle institutional racism during a speech he recorded for Wednesday’s ceremony for the Diana Awards, a charity for young people set up to honor his late mother.

In a video message shown in the virtual ceremony, the Duke of Sussex said that “institutional racism has no place in our societies, yet it is still endemic.”

“My wife said recently that our generation and the ones before us haven’t done enough to right the wrongs of the past,” he said. “I, too, am sorry — sorry that we haven’t got the world to the place that you deserve it to be.”

Harry paid tribute to young people being recognized at the ceremony for their work on race and injustice, saying he saw the “greatest hope” in them amid the division and anger in the world.

21 Savage starts free online financial program for youth

Rapper 21 Savage will be launching a free online financial literacy education program for youth sheltered at home during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Grammy winner announced his new Bank Account At Home nationwide initiative on Wednesday, including a partnership with Atlanta mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms to provide free WiFi and tablets for undeserved students in the city.

Other news

Jay-Z’s annual festival in Philadelphia, Made in America, won’t take place Labor Day weekend due to the coronavirus pandemic. In a statement Wednesday, the rap mogul’s Roc Nation company said it plans to produce the popular festival in 2021. Roc Nation said tickets for the 2020 event will be valid for the 2021.

Fox News on Wednesday fired daytime news anchor Ed Henry after an investigation into sexual misconduct at the workplace. Fox offered no details of the complaint that resulted in Henry’s firing, only to say that it happened “years ago.”

A British judge on Thursday rejected an attempt by tabloid newspaper The Sun to quash a libel suit from actor Johnny Depp over an article claiming he abused ex-wife Amber Heard.
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  - July 4th at 9 p.m. CET

**PACIFIC**
- AFN|prime Pacific
  - July 4th at 9 p.m. JST/KST
  - July 5th at 4 a.m. JST/KST
- AFN|prime Atlantic
  - July 5th at 12 a.m. JST/KST
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  - Ad is for a car or vehicle that is not available for viewing.
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**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Across</th>
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<td>1. Punish by fine</td>
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**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

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HAREMS SANDALS
ORDAINE RHEA
SINCE ENO BEADY
RAGS ANITA
SYSTEM RUMBLE
ADELE SIAV
APORT ENE KIT
NARC STEFFI
SUNHATS RANDI
EL CLOT HOG ORION
LOT I WO NOSED
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**CRYPTOQUIP**

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H B E T Y I Q N P I E Y T Z A B U
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I W A X Y I K T G: Z Y W TA J B A L G.

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: SOME FLOWERING, CLIMBING SHRUBS HAVE BEEN GROWING OUT OF CONTROL ALL OVER. IT’S MASS WISTERIA!  

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: L equals K
Biden once sought to ban flag burning. How about now?

By Karen Tumulty
The Washington Post

Two senators outside the White House set fire to Old Glory a couple of weeks ago, hoping to trigger a bellicose reaction on social media.

President Donald Trump took the bait, tweeting and calling on Congress to “do something about the lowlifes that burn the American flag.”

At his rally in Tulsa, Okla., a few days earlier, he had suggested a specific penalty: “If somebody wants to burn the American flag, stand up and go to jail. Go to jail for one year.”

The president might be surprised to learn that there is a well-known Democrat who for years led a fight in Congress to do just that. He was a senator from Delaware and chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

His name is Joe Biden.

After the Supreme Court in 1989 struck down a Texas law against flag desecration and upheld it as a repugnant but constitutionally protected act of free speech, Biden led a push for legislation that he thought would get around the high court’s objections.

In a July 18, 1989, speech on the Senate floor, Biden said America’s symbol “is a banner of freedom, a symbol of our country’s liberty, a symbol of the belief and promise of freedom for all people in every land. . . . It is a symbol of the values that we cherish, our values as a people — democracy, liberty — and those values against which we have fought and for which we have died.”

Biden’s proposal would have imposed fines of as much as $100,000 and a year in prison for anyone who would “intentionally threaten to burn an American flag or person or group of persons by burning, or causing to be burned, a flag of the United States.”

That legislation was, again, offered as an alternative to a clumsy constitutional amendment. There may also have been some posturing for the upcoming 2008 presidential race involved. Among anti-flag burning senators, Biden’s measure’s co-sponsors were then-Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., and then-Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill.

Is this still Biden’s position? “This is a long-settled constitutional question, with the Supreme Court ruling that flag burning is protected speech,” said Obama. “I don’t support a constitutional amendment to ban flag burning.”

Biden appears to see it as a long-long argument over hypotheticals were it not for the degree to which symbols — flags, statues, monuments, the names of military bases — have moved to the forefront of the 2020 presidential campaign.

The weaponization of patriotism against Democratic presidents is a well-thumbed page of the Republican playbook, going as far back as George H.W. Bush’s attacks on his 1988 rival, Michael Dukakis, for vetoing a 1977 state bill that would have required teachers to lead schoolchildren in singing the national anthem.

No one in history has used it as aggressively as Trump, who throws around charges of “treason” with abandon.

On Wednesday, Trump retweeted a video put together by Senate Republicans that began with an image of a U.S. flag on fire and continued with more of protesters being pulled down statues. “Since Democrats won’t speak out against the destruction happening in liberal cities across America . . . We will,” the Republicans wrote.

For Biden this is all tricky territory.

While his history on the flag burning issue is odd at the Supreme Court’s view of the First Amendment, it will make it harder for Trump to pin the former vice president as being in step with what the president terms liberal “lowlifes.”

In his news conference on Tuesday, Biden conceded the needle on the question of taking down monuments, suggesting that while those commemorating traitorous Confederate leaders belong more to the imperfect men who founded the republic should stay up.

“Personally, I’ve been for a lot of years between reminders and remembrances of history,” he said.

“The idea of comparing whether or not George Washington owned slaves or Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, and somebody who was in rebellion committing treason . . . trying to take down the union and keep slaves does not make the point,” he said.

That is reasonable, and, more importantly, it is right. Symbols, whether they be totems of honor or unholy emblems, can be re-written and re-placed. The same cannot be said of the values of which they are meant to remind us.

Karen Tumulty is a Washington Post columnist.
Biden no guarantee to crack down on Russia for misdeeds  

The Wall Street Journal

It is going to be something to watch, on Jan. 21, 2021, when President Joe Biden takes revenge on Russia for paying the Taliban to kill Americans in Afghanistan. He'll tackle China with killing the Russian agents behind the bounties, send lethal aid to Ukraine to defend itself against Russian aggression, work with allied countries to ostracize Russia and Cuba from Venezuela, withdraw from the arms deals Russia is violating, and has tried to stop sending, has withdrawn from two arms deals and, by the way, he interfered in the 2016 election with Russia. He is trying to make trouble for America?

For the Biden administration, since he invaded neighboring Georgia in 2008. Biden 12 years, across three administrations, in the middle of a放置 for Obamacare, despite years of placements for Obamacare, including in some of the intelligence services.

A second point is why is anyone surprised that Putin's Russia would try to make trouble for America? Putin has been doing it for at least 12 years, across three administrations,_invading neighboring Georgia in 2008. Biden's defense reason that to that about is to be blame the George W. Bush administration and call for a “reset” with Russia.

Russians are interfering in America’s backyard by propping up the Maduro regime in Venezuela. He is trying to drive a wedge by propping up the Maduro regime in Venezuela. Trump is trying to make trouble for America. He is trying to drive a wedge by propping up the Maduro regime in Venezuela. He is going to be something to behold, on Jan. 21, 2021, when President Joe Biden takes revenge on Russia for paying the Taliban to kill Americans in Afghanistan. He'll tackle China with killing the Russian agents behind the bounties, send lethal aid to Ukraine to defend itself against Russian aggression, work with allied countries to ostracize Russia and Cuba from Venezuela, withdraw from the arms deals Russia is violating, and has tried to stop sending, has withdrawn from two arms deals and, by the way, he interfered in the 2016 election with Russia. He is trying to make trouble for America?

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A second point is why is anyone surprised that Putin's Russia would try to make trouble for America? Putin has been doing it for at least 12 years, across three administrations, in the middle of a放置 for Obamacare, despite years of placements for Obamacare, including in some of the intelligence services.

Concern about deals Putin might strike with Putin in a second term is legitimate. If we can only trust that Biden would be any better, and he might be worse.

Administration seeks end of ‘Obamacare’ but lacks own plan  
The Washington Post

The Trump Justice Department asked the Supreme Court last week to kill “Obamacare,” the program for Medicare, Medicaid, and other health care programs — a thinly veiled, foolhardy obsession for President Donald Trump. Even in the middle of a widening pandemic, he seeks to eliminate health care coverage for some 25 million Americans. In so doing, the president betrays his responsibility to defend in court a statute that Congress passed, resorting to bizarre legal arguments that liberal and conservative legal experts have denounced. The reasoning is so far-fetched that the Justice Department internally shuddered to embrace it. Even Attorney General William Barr tried last month to soften the Justice Department's stance. Government lawyers had argued that only parts of the Affordable Care Act had to go. Now they insist that the entire law is Plan B. The courts must dismantle the whole structure. The Supreme Court upheld abortion providers in Texas case Planned Parenthood v. Casey. A Federal District Court in Louisiana struck down the state's law because it posed such an undue burden, just as the Texas law did. But the conservative federal Circuit of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit reversed that decision, ruling that the lower court had gotten the facts wrong. But it was not clear that the new law would actually burden women's ability to get an abortion.

Monday's decision reversed the Fifth Circuit ruling, holding that the district court had gotten it right the first time. The Louisiana law, Breyer wrote, was “almost word-for-word identical” to Texas' unconstitutionality, slightly different, but no greater burden on women, and therefore was invalid.

To decide to concur with the four liberal justices may enrage cultural conservatives who thought that with the confirmation of Justice Brett Kavanaugh, all hope for an abortion was a just matter of time.

But the chief justice rarely takes the direct route, preferring incremental rulings that play well at the Supreme Court's longstanding precedents. So no one should be fooled this time around. The current court is in a power-sharing moment, such as it ever was. And Roberts left himself plenty of room to vote differently in any of the many cases now pending toward the court, involving challenges to other state laws that make it difficult if not impossible for most women to obtain an abortion.
Six FC Dallas players test positive

**By Anne M. Peterson**

Associated Press

Six players with FC Dallas have tested positive for COVID-19 and the entire team has been quarantined ahead of the MLS Is Back tournament.

The club confirmed in a statement Wednesday that five players and a member of the coaching staff tested positive upon arrival in Florida for the month-long tournament starting next week.

The team said all players and staff tested negative for coronavirus before arriving in Orlando last week. About 250 players and staff were in quarantine at a hotel in Orlando while a four-day pre-season training camp and scrimmage against the Houston Dynamo were moved online.

Two players tested positive. Four more positive tests were uncovered in subsequent testing.

“In consultation with MLS medical officials, FC Dallas took proactive steps to isolate the newly newly affected players as well as all FC Dallas players and staff in Orlando out of an abundance of caution. All members of the club delegation are following MLS health and safety protocols and will remain quarantined in their hotel rooms pending the results of further COVID-19 testing,” the team said in a statement.

The names of the players were not released.

The league said that no other team has been in contact with the FC Dallas delegation since its arrival. All of the league’s 26 teams are sequestered in hotels in advance of further COVID-19 testing, the team said in a statement.

At least six FC Dallas players have tested positive for COVID-19, casting doubt on the MLS Is Back Tournament’s July 8 start.

**Pro soccer**

**NWSL Challenge Cup**

At Herriman Utah

Saturday, July 18

North Carolina Courage 2, Portland Thorns 1

Washington Spirit 2, Chicago Red Stars 1

Portland Thorns 1, North Carolina Courage 0

Sunday, July 19

Kansas City Eclipses B 2, Washington Spirit 0

Saturday, July 25

North Carolina Courage 2, Portland Thorns 1

Chicago Red Stars 2, Washington Spirit 0

Sunday, July 26

Orlando Pride 1, Chicago Red Stars 0

Columbus 0, NC Courage 0

**MLS scorecard**

**MLS is Back Tournament**

At Orlando, Fla.

**Group Stage**

Wednesday, July 8

Orlando City vs. Inter Miami CF

Thursday, July 9

New York City FC vs. Toronto FC

Detroit 0, Montreal 1

Friday, July 10

3:0

Toronto FC vs. D.C. United

D.C. United 0, Orlando City 0

Saturday, July 11

AT&T Field in Chattanooga, Tennessee

Cincinnati vs. Columbus

Sporting Kansas City vs. Minnesota United

Real Salt Lake vs. Colorado

Tuesday, July 14

Inter Miami CF vs. Chicago Fire

Philadelphia Union vs. New York City FC

Portland Timbers vs. D.C. United

Thursday, July 16

Atlanta United vs. Cincinnati

D.C. United vs. Montreal

San Jose Earthquakes vs. Columbus

Saturday, July 18

Sporting Kansas City vs. Colorado

Real Salt Lake vs. Portland Timbers

Portland Timbers vs. D.C. United

Thursday, July 23

La Galaxy vs. Inter Miami CF

Philadelphia Union vs. New York City FC

Montreal vs. Columbus

**Wednesday, July 15**

**Wednesday, July 16**

**Wednesday, July 17**

LOUISIANA COLLEGE — Formerly ad-

mitted for admission to NAIA for spo-

nsored sports.

**ST. AUGUSTINE’S** — Named David

Bronson as its new basketball

athletic director.

**TUSCULUM** — Promoted Josh Ealy to

Assistant Athletic Director for Opera-

tions and Development.

**Six FC Dallas players test positive**

Cameron Champ was added to the field in the Rocket Mortgage Classic in Detroit under a modified PGA Tour policy that allows players who test positive for the coronavirus to be eligible if they had no symp-

toms and get two negative test re-

sults at least 24 hours apart.

The decision Wednesday was the latest change to an evolving “Health and Safety Plan” as the tour en-

tered its fourth week back from the

COVID-19 shutdown. Champ is among six players and two caddies on the PGA Tour who have tested

The tour said after several as-

ymptomatic positive tests that were

followed by a negative test, it con-

sulted with the CDC and is moving
to a protocol that allows players or caddies to return if they have two negative tests at least 24 hours apart. Previously, the tour relied on time-based protocols that required those who test positive to
sel-isolate for at least 10 days.

Champ tested positive on June 23 and withdrew from the Travel-

ers Championship. The tour said he

had three negative tests over the

72 hours. He still had to be tested

day before the Vancou-

vernari as the PGA Tour entered

a fourth week of its restart.

The tour policy requires players

to be tested every two days upon arrival in Florida. Teams began traveling last week in advance of the tournament.

FC Dallas is scheduled to open the tournament with a group stage match against the Vancou-

ver Whitecaps on July 8.

**Cameron Champ can play after policy change**

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The tour policy requires players
Healthy Kessel expected to give Coyotes a boost

By John Marshall

Associated Press

GLendale, Ariz. — The start of Phil Kessel’s desert tenure did not go according to plan, for him or the Arizona Coyotes.

Expected to give the Coyotes a scoring jolt, Kessel instead lacerated, in large part due to a string of injuries.

The NHL’s pandemic-caused pause has given the 32-year-old time to set a career low in shots.

“I feel good right now,” Kessel said during a video call this week. “I’ve never had a year like that, so I’m going to be ready when the season is a good time to get it started again.”

When the NHL shut down due to the coronavirus on March 12, Kessel had 14 goals and 24 assists.

More telling, he had five even-strength goals and was on pace to set a career low in shots.

“Obviously, I had a tough year,” said Kessel, who returned to Arizona from Florida three weeks ago. “I think it’s probably my most injuries I’ve had is this year, but that’s no excuse. It’s one of those years. Obviously, I’m going to look to never have that again. I’ve never had a year like that, so I’m looking to bounce back. This is a good time to get it started again.”

Now healthy and refreshed, Kessel could give the Coyotes a big boost when the NHL season resumes.

He won consecutive Stanley Cup titles with the Penguins and has 33 goals with 44 assists in 87 career playoff games.

Kessel was runner-up to Sidney Crosby for the 2016 Conn Smythe Trophy after finishing with 10 goals and 12 assists when the Penguins won the first of two titles.

“I think it matters,” Kessel said of playoff experience. “I think guys that have been there in those spots, they know what to expect and what to do. I think to be honest, it’s a different level of hockey. It’s a faster, more crisp game. It’s a fun time of year.”

When the NHL season resumed in mid-August,

“Everybody is excited about getting back in the saddle. I know we are,” team president Michael Printupsaid. “We had some people on furlough and we were able to bring back almost every single person, so that’s good. It’s good to get the activity going, get the track hot.”

Car clubs returned to The Glen two weeks ago and Printup expects the car club schedule will quickly be booked through Nov. 1.

And that would be a very good thing.

“It’s been pretty quiet,” Printupsaid. “When you think about car clubs, we turn those track rentals three times a week. You’re changing 150 to 400 drivers a week that are driving the economy and this community. It’s sorely missed.”

WGI is a major economic driver in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. NASCAR weekend has sold out five straight weekends and now has been switched to Labor Day weekend.

The Sports Car Club of America’s Majors Super Tour, originally slated for June, and the Finger Lakes Wine Festival in July have been postponed until 2021.

“Though quite a far as NASCAR, its Cup and Xfinity series are slated to race Aug. 15-16, perhaps before thousands of fans,” Printupsaid WGI’s proposal to New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo will be to allow only people from the state who can drive the economy and this community.

“We think we have a pretty good plan on being able to allow limited number of fans,” Printupadded. “We know that to ask to bring fans from outside the state was probably going to be a big stretch.

“It’s all about social distancing, temperature checks of every fan,” Printupadded. “We can social distance them in the grandstands. We have plenty of those.”

And surely plenty of space to spread out. WGI covers more than 1,800 acres, one of the largest of the 12 tracks NASCAR owns.

Phil Kessel has had a disappointing first season with the Arizona Coyotes after suffering a string of injuries.

Now that he has had time to heal up during the NHL’s pause, the high-scoring forward could help the Coyotes make a deep run once the season resumes.

By the numbers

844

Number of consecutive games Arizona right wing Phil Kessel has played during his 13-year career, sixth-longest in history.

6

Number of seasons during his career Kessel has scored at least 30 goals. He scored 27 last season with the Penguins.

14

Number of goals Kessel had scored this season when the season was shut down on March 12.

SOURCE: Associated Press

Waters Glen open again as NASCAR race draws nearer

By John Kekis

Associated Press

The roar is back at New York’s Thunder Road.

Three months after its opening day was canceled by the coronavirus pandemic, Watkins Glen International is hosting car clubs again as NASCAR weekend culminates in mid-August.

“Everybody is excited about getting back in the saddle. I know we are,” team president Michael Printupsaid. “We had some people on furlough and we were able to bring back almost every single person, so that’s good. It’s good to get the activity going, get the track hot.”

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Most athletes are true to word in confirming dates with drug testers

By Pat Graham and Eddie Pells
Associated Press

It’s almost as easy as sending a text. Open an app on your phone, type in a few words, click a box or two. To really make the system work, though, athletes have to be where they say they’ll be at the time they say they’ll be there.

Lately, some high-profile names in track and field have been making a mess of what’s supposed to be a simple process of letting drug testers know where they will be for one hour each day.

World champions Christian Coleman and Salwa Eid Naser could miss the Olympics for what are known in the antidoping world as whereabouts failures — the failure to be where they said they’d be when testers came calling, unannounced, to collect a urine or blood sample. It’s part of a system of no-notice, out-of-competition testing that is considered the best deterrent to illicit drug use in sports.

Other recent cases — one involving a British hammer thrower who said he was fishing when he really went to see his mom, another involving a Russian high jumper whose whereabouts forms were forged by team officials — have only heightened the feeling that a routine piece of bookkeeping can be anything but that. They’ve also placed the taint of doping on athletes who haven’t tested positive, but are accused of breaking the rules, nonetheless.

The cluster of recent cases runs contrary to the reality that most athletes have very little problem keeping their whereabouts information current, then being where they say they’ll be. Since early 2001, when the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency’s whereabouts system began, there have been 21 whereabouts sanctions out of 175,000 completed tests. That’s 0.00012%.

USADA said it finds athletes 88% of the time on the first try. Global numbers tell the same story. In 2015, for instance, there were a total of 34 whereabouts violations among a worldwide pool of between 20,000 and 30,000 athletes (the number changes from season to season), virtually all of whom are tested multiple times during a single year.

“Just respect the hour slot, be where you need to be,” British runner Tobi Bosworth told The Associated Press in an email, referencing a time he interrupted his beach vacation to wait in a hotel for testers. “If athletes are missing more than three tests, then simply for respect and integrity of sport, they shouldn’t be anywhere near the top level of sport.”

Coleman is face-to-face with that possibility.

The 100-meter world champion has been battling the whereabouts system for more than a year now. His latest incident, made public this month, came Dec. 9, when he said he was out Christmas shopping when testers arrived at his residence. It marked his third infraction in a 12-month period, which drew a provisional suspension that threatens his eligibility for next year’s rescheduled Tokyo Games.

Coleman’s latest case brought a flurry of Monday morning questioning from the track world, much of it on social media.

American distance runner Kara Goucher, long an outspoken advocate for clean sport, posted on Twitter her “Top 3 tips on how to not miss a doping test.”

1. “YOU pick your guaranteed window. Pick an hour you KNOW you’ll be home.” [Ex: 6 a.m.]
2. Set a recurring daily alarm 15 minutes before your hour window. 3. Hire someone to call you every day before your window. “You’re welcome.” Goucher wrote.

Many athletes meticulously plan their itinerary weeks in advance. Since her kids get up early, U.S. distance runner Stephanie Bruce makes sure she’s available at 6 a.m. If she has an early morning workout, she changes the time.

Athletes can also be tested outside their primary window, which is why they give detailed accounts for the day (5 a.m. to 11 p.m.). If, for example, Bruce goes on a long training run, she will record that so everyone knows she will be difficult to reach during that block.

Bruce said she was tested 10 times in 2019.

“And I haven’t won a medal. I haven’t made an Olympic team,” she said. “It shows they’re doing their job.”

The whereabouts system came under a uniform global protocol in 2009. Since then, it has become more streamlined with each passing year. These days, virtually all athletes have access to an online portal or an app on their cell phones, that allows them to input and update their whereabouts data. The phone apps allow athletes to opt in for daily reminders about the information they’ve provided.

“The expectation is that if an athlete has a first strike, he or she will be more doing than what’s necessary to make sure they don’t have a second one,” said Stuart Kemp, the World Anti-Doping Agency’s expert on whereabouts.

“And if they get a second one, that should be a real wake-up call.”

After his latest missed test, Coleman lashed out on social media, arguing the situation could have been avoided had testers simply called him, as they had done in the past. But calling an athlete

Salwa Eid Naser, of Bahrain, celebrates after winning gold in the women’s 400-meter final at the World Athletics Championships in Doha, Qatar, in 2019. She had three whereabouts failures prior to the event, but was not suspended until recently.

United States sprinter Christian Coleman, the world champion in the 100 meters, could miss the Tokyo Games for what are known in the anti-doping world as whereabouts failures.

Hamer thrower Mark Dry of Scotland is serving a four-year doping suspension in a case that came out of a whereabouts violation.

is not required. And, Kemp says, the calls are not designed to give athletes a last chance.

“It’s more about validating that they’re really not where they said they were going to be,” he said.

Coleman isn’t the only athlete whose Olympic hopes are in limbo.

Naser won the 400 meters at world championships last year, running the fastest time since 1985, but more recently was suspended for a series of whereabouts failures, three of which occurred before the championships.

It led some to wonder why, with three strikes already on her record, she was allowed to race at worlds. The Athletics Integrity Unit, which is prosecuting the case on behalf of World Athletics, has offered little insight, other than to say the investigation was ongoing when worlds began and that after a fourth whereabouts failure in January, she was provisionally suspended.

In many respects, whereabouts issues aren’t unlike other aspects of the anti-doping world. The application of the rules are often only as good as the anti-doping agencies that enforce them.

On the one hand, the curious instance of Scottish hammer thrower Mark Dry has drawn attention because of the UK Anti-Doping Agency’s dogged pursuit of a case that seemed an example of nothing more than a slight mistake.

The UKAD sought a tampering charge, which brought with it a four-year doping ban. Most whereabouts failures result in two-year bans or less.

On the other hand, the Russian track federation, already suspended for a cheating scheme that ensured the country’s entire Olympic program, acknowledged this year that it had forged whereabouts documents for top high jumper Danil Lysenko. The revelation led to the resignation of the federation’s president and penalties for other leaders, along with a $5 million fine.

In a different twist on the whereabouts issue in Russia, a WADA report in 2016 said foreign testers, who ran the country’s anti-doping program while Russia’s agency was under suspension, were unable to reach athletes training in “closed” cities where outsiders aren’t allowed. It contributed to 23 missed tests, 111 whereabouts failures and 736 tests that were declined or canceled.

The latest headlines haven’t involved any allegations of state-sponsored corruption. Still, with the cases piling up, the obvious question — one Coleman seems to be asking as his Olympic hopes have become imperiled — is whether there could be a better way.

Answer: At this point, no. “It’s a necessary part of ensuring a level playing field,” USADA CEO Travis Tygart said. “If there were any other way, we certainly would be pushing for it. But there’s not.”
By Jerry Tipton  
Lexington Herald-Leader  
LEXINGTON, Ky. — Going strictly by the calendar, there would be a 2020-21 college basketball season. Instead, there would be a 2021 college basketball season.

Former Kentucky coach Rick Pitino put that idea into the bulging suggestion box for the re-arranged sports. He proposed via Twitter on Wednesday that the next college basketball season begin in January. A season contract with the coronavirus pandemic would have teams playing only league games.

A delayed start would “buy some more time for a vaccine and to get things under control,” he tweeted. “Although I can’t wait to be back on the sidelines, the health of my players and staff is what’s really important.”

Pitino, who will be in his first season as Iona coach in 2020-21 (or just 2021), did not break new ground.

Former Big East Commissioner Mike Tranghese, now a consultant to the Southeastern Conference, said he had discussed a January start — and many other ideas with Dan Leibovitz, the SEC’s associate commissioner for men’s basketball.

“I think everything’s on the table,” Tranghese said. “I think everything has to be on the table. You know, the problem is nobody knows where we’re headed.”

First things first, the next football season “consumed” officials in various conferences, Tranghese said.

As for basketball, the metaphorical ground continually shifting makes it impossible for the SEC to be confident in any plan.

“Danny Leibovitz and I have talked about a lot of things regarding basketball,” Tranghese said. “The question, though, is will things be better in January than they are in November? Who knows?”

Tranghese said he found it difficult to believe a 2020-21 (or just 2021) college basketball season could be played if schools do not reopen.

“The easy answer is a vaccine, obviously,” Tranghese said. “What Rick says, I think everything is on the table.

“And — you know what? — not everybody is on the same track. Some conferences may elect just to play conference schedules. Others may try to play conference schedules and some open-up games. There’s nobody in charge who can say this is what we’re doing.”

ESPN college basketball analyst Dick Vitale said he went on social media earlier in the week and proposed something similar to Pitino’s suggestion.

“You’ve got to have March Madness,” he said. “We can’t go two years in a row without it.”

A January start in a season confined to only conference games would mean a reduction in revenue for college basketball programs, which rely heavily on television deals.

“I think safety is the overriding factor, period, end of discussion in my mind,” Tranghese said. “SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey agrees with the idea of safety being the top priority, the consultant said. “I know Greg has said that to me on a number of occasions: whatever we do, student-athletes have to be protected.”

With rates of infection rising in several states, a college basketball season in the 2020-21 school year seems less than certain.

When asked what odds he’d put on some type of college basketball season being played during the 2020-21 school year, Tranghese paused before responding.

“I don’t know,” he said. “I’m nervous about it.”

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

**EXPERIENCED TRANSFERS ESPECIALLY VALUABLE TO COACHES IN NEW JOBS**

By Aaron Beard  
Associated Press

Mark Byington has spent more than three months as the men’s basketball coach at James Madison without being able to take a recruiting trip or meet personally with the eight players joining his program during the coronavirus pandemic.

But he takes some comfort in that five of the newcomers have Division I experience. He’s hoping the older players provide some stability amid these uncertain times for college athletics.

“Highlighting the enhanced value of transfers for the coaches who changed jobs after last season and are trying to build new programs. “We wanted to get older,” Byington said, who left Georgia Southern for the Colonial Athletic Association program. “And the best evaluations we could get during a pandemic was watching guys who played against other Division I programs.”

Twenty Division I programs have changed coaches since March. Eight are among the programs that shut down college and professional sports as well as in-person recruiting. Wake Forest is the only school from a Power Five conference to do so after firing Danny Manning and hiring Steve Forbes from East Tennessee State.

Other notable changes include Hall of Famer Rick Pitino going to Iona, former Vanderbilt and Valparaiso coach Bryce Drew taking over at Illinois-Chicago. And upgrading from Division II programs.

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Other notable changes include Hall of Famer Rick Pitino going to Iona, former Vanderbilt and Valparaiso coach Bryce Drew taking over at Illinois-Chicago. And upgrading from Division II programs.

When asked what odds he’d put on a 2020-21 (or just 2021) college basketball season beginning in January, Tranghese talked about a lot of things regarding basketball, but said, "I don’t know," he said. "I’m nervous about it.”

Friday, July 3, 2020

Former Michigan assistant Luke Yaklich is the new head coach at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Yaklich has three Division I transfers and two junior-college transfers joining the program he took over.

Former Michigan assistant Luke Yaklich is the new head coach at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Yaklich has three Division I transfers and two junior-college transfers joining the program he took over. Yaklich also — who committed before the late-April coaching change. He added UNLV graduate Jonanthan Antonio, guard Davion Williamson after coaching him two years at ETSU and Tennessee graduate Jalen Johnson — who committed to the Buccaneers before following Forbes to Wake Forest.

The Dukes will have UAB graduate guard Rashad Frensham for next season. They’re pursuing immediate-eligibility waivers for big man Joel Mensah (San Diego State), wing TJ Taylor (Wyo- ming), guard Vado Morse (Mount St. Mary’s) and guard Jalen Hodge (Louisiana-Monroe). Each has at least two years of Division I experience.

At UIC, Yaklich knew the Flames needed experienced guards. So they added rising Division I juniors in Iowa State transfer Zion Griffen, Chattanooga guard Maurice Commander and guard Trevon Kirk, who played two years at Ohio and redshirted last year at Colorado State. They added two junior-college guards, too.

Others like Pitino at Iona and new Western Illinois coach Rob Jeter went heavy on juco players with four each, while Jeter’s class includes two Division I transfers and one from Division III.

“Whether it be the junior college or four-year programs, there’s obviously more concrete information and background on what they can do: more video, more stats, more opportunities to talk with people,” said Yaklich, a former assistant to John Beilein and Shaka Smart.
Source: League to cut preseason schedule in half

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press

The NFL will cut its preseason in half and push back the start of exhibition play so teams have more time to train following a virtual offseason made necessary by the coronavirus pandemic, a person with knowledge of the decision told The Associated Press.

The person spoke Wednesday on condition of anonymity because the league hasn’t announced that the preseason will be cut from four games to two.

Players are still discussing with their union whether to ask for cancellation of all preseason games, according to two people familiar with their thinking. Both people spoke on condition of anonymity because a decision hasn’t been made.

The pandemic forced teams to conduct their entire offseason programs via videoconference. So, teams will be gathering together for the first time when training camps open July 28.

Minus the usual minicamps, on-field practices and in-person weight training from April to June, players’ conditioning won’t be what it normally is. So, eliminating the first week of preseason training camps is going to be high when it comes to cutting the preseason in half.

Teams will now play exhibitions Aug. 20-24 and Aug. 27-31 during what were originally the second and third weeks of exhibition play, with all 32 teams playing one home and one road game.

Most of those games will remain the same as originally scheduled, although some matchups in that second slate will have to be changed so every team gets a game at home.

The exhibition finals on Sept. 3 were also scrapped, giving teams more time to get ready for the regular season, which opens Sept. 10 with Houston at Kansas City.

There are no changes to the regular-season schedule.

The league continues to draw up protocols, not only for COVID-19 mitigation but for ramping up practices during the first few weeks of training camp.

The annual Hall of Fame Game pitting Pittsburgh and Dallas on Aug. 6 was recently scrapped as the induction ceremonies were pushed back to 2021.

New Orleans Saints strong safety Malcolm Jenkins said last week that “football is nonessential.” With training camp less than a month away, some players are speaking out about concerns over playing during a pandemic while others are ignoring medical advice and holding workouts with teammates.

As some players raise COVID-19 concerns, others ignore advice

By Rob Maaddi
Associated Press

Some NFL players are raising concerns about playing football amid the coronavirus pandemic while others are ignoring advice of medical experts by working out with teammates.

JC Tretter, a center on the Cleveland Browns and president of the NFL Players Association, wrote an open letter to players on Tuesday, saying they have to fight for “necessary COVID-19 protections.”

New Orleans Saints safety Malcolm Jenkins said last week that “football is a nonessential business and so we don’t need to do it.”

Pittsburgh Steelers defensive lineman Cameron Heyward has asthma so he wants to “take every precaution” if he plays. “We are not invincible, and as recent reports have shown, we certainly aren’t immune to this virus,” Tretter wrote in his letter.

“Underlying conditions like high BMI, asthma and sleep apnea are all associated with a higher risk of developing severe symptoms and complications when infected with COVID-19. Those conditions are widespread across the league. NFL players are humans — some with immunocompromised family members or live-in elderly parents. Trust me: we want to play football. But as a union, our most important job is to keep our players safe and alive. The NFLPA will fight for our most at-risk players and their families.”

The league informed owners last week that training camp is expected to open as scheduled later this month. An AP source said Wednesday the league will shorten the preseason in half by starting two weeks later.

Dr. Allen Sills, the league’s chief medical officer, said he has regular communication with medical officers of other professional sports leagues and they are learning from one another.

“We’re approaching this as a medical and public health problem,” Sills said Wednesday. “This isn’t about one league having an advantage over another. We’re working together as a group of medical professionals saying how can we do the best job in taking care of our patients in creating the safest possible environments?”

The NFL and the Pro Football Hall of Fame already canceled the opening preseason game between Dallas and Pittsburgh set for Aug. 6. The hall’s induction ceremonies set for Aug. 8, and for mid-September for a special centennial class, were moved to Aug. 21, 2021, when the Cowboys and Steelers will play in the game.

“I want to play football. I think all my peers want to play football. It’s how we make a living,” Jenkins said in a video posted on Twitter. “But there’s so much that we don’t know right now. When we look at what’s happening in the country, cases are going up, projected deaths are going up. I know that the bar for the NFL is going to be high when it comes to creating a safe working environment and making it as safe as possible for guys to come back as we keep in mind it’s not just about the athletes and their health and the coaches and staff, but our families, too.”

Sills said information gathered from other sports leagues domestically and internationally will help shape the way the NFL approaches its season.

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“It is the responsibility of the employer to provide a safe work environment.”

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“It is the responsibility of the employer to provide a safe work environment.”

Cleveland Browns center and president of the NFL Players Association
76ers' Brown: Embiid, Simmons healthy

By Dan Gelston
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia 76ers coach Brett Brown says All-Star guard Ben Simmons is “good to go” for the NBA restart after sitting out the final games before the shutdown with a back injury.

Brown, whose contract runs through 2021-22, also expected fellow All-Star Joel Embiid to start the season in the best shape of his professional career.

The Sixers need their franchise stars at full strength if one of the early favorites to win the East Conference can shake off both an 0-7 record at restart (39-26; 6th in the East) and a nearly five-month layoff to return as contenders for their first NBA championship since 1983.

The 23-year-old Simmons had missed his eighth straight game and was receiving treatment for his nerve issues in his lower back when the season stopped. Embiid was recovering from surgery on his left hand and had just returned after missing five games with a sprained left shoulder at the time of the season's shutdown.

“Thank you for Joel to come in as good a shape as he has been in since I have coached him,” Brown said Wednesday.

Simmons, who averaged 16.7 points, 7.8 rebounds and 8.2 assists in 54 games, was hurt in a Feb. 22 game at Milwaukee. He vomited because of the pain and there was no guarantee he would have been ready for the playoffs had the season not been suspended because of the pandemic.

Simmons, the league leader in steals, worked out and played pickup games with LeBron James — and videos of the two showed both stars playing without masks. Simmons’ trainer, Chris Johnson, posted video two weeks ago of a shirtless Simmons shooting and dunking.

“He’s good to go. He’s put in a tremendous amount of work for me to be able to confidently say that,” Brown said. “I think when you search for silver linings with this pandemic and the way things have shaped up, it would be hard-prepared for me to find something more obvious than this. It’s enabled Ben to reclaim his health. But I think ‘pinching along’ from maybe a month ago, that is not true.”

Embidi has been riddled with injuries since he was drafted with the No. 3 pick of the 2014 draft. Embiid, averaging 23.4 points and 12.3 rebounds, has never played more than 64 games in a season. He was hindered by illness and knee injuries during last season’s playoff run, and the Sixers worked this season to balance his minutes with the proper amount of rest.

The Sixers signed the 25-year-old Embiid, a native of Cameroon, to a $148 million, five-year extension that kicked in at the start of the 2018-19 season.

There is nobody on our team that has put in more time than Joel Embiid,” Brown said. “I’m proud of him, I respect him. He needed to do this. We understand the impact he can have on our team.”

Brown also said no player on the Sixers has tested positive for COVID-19 and no player has decided to opt out of the restart.

Challenge: Restart will test championship mettle

FROM BACK PAGE

Teams won’t be back together, all at once, in person, until getting to Central Florida.

“I think this might be certainly the most worthy of all world championships in the NBA because of all the things that every team is going to have to navigate and overcome to be able to be crowned champions,” Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said.

The season has been daunting and won't get any easier. That's why star Los Angeles Lakers forward Frank Vogel — whose team was in China when the political issues hit this fall, took the emotional blow that followed Bryant's death, has championed social change during these troubled times in the country and has had players infected with the coronavirus — wholeheartedly agrees with Antetokounmpo's stance.

“Our team has been through a lot this year,” Vogel said. “And we’ve endured, and we’ve come out strong each time we’ve faced adversity. I don’t know about other teams but if we were able to come through all of this and achieve the ultimate prize, I do think it deserves a harder-than-average asterisk. If this is the stage for us to put an asterisk on it, I don’t think it weakens it at all.”

There are elements of the restart that are not easy for anyone involved, such as the isolation from the outside world, the daily testing, and the restrictive rules that the NBA put in place after consultation with health officials.

Denver coach Michael Malone said that will prove someone's championship mettle.

“It’s a unique situation to have the ability to go into a bubble to be isolated from your friends and family, to have no home court advantage, to have a league interruption of four months, and you’re able to spend 90 days and come out of there a champion, I think this will be the toughest championship ever won,” Malone said.

“There’s no asterisk. You win an NBA championship anytime, it’s a hell of an accomplishment. But in these circumstances, these unprecedented times, with everything going on … I think it will be a remarkable accomplishment.”

Some may argue otherwise, but the 1999 championship by San Antonio after a 50-game regular season and the 2012 championship by the Miami Heat after a 66-game season — both shortened because of labor strife in the league — come with no formal asterisk attached. This NBA season will see the 22 remaining teams all play between 71 and 75 games before the playoffs, and the league’s plan is for a full four-round, best-of-seven-throughout postseason.

San Antonio’s 1999 championship after a 50-game regular season and the 2012 championship by the Miami Heat after a 66-game season — both shortened because of labor strife in 5-4 league — come with no formal asterisk attached. This NBA season will see the 22 remaining teams all play between 71 and 75 games before the playoffs, and the league’s plan is for a full four-round, best-of-seven-throughout postseason.

One no is being gifted a title this season.

“I saw (Houston guard) Austin Rivers said today, you know that the idea of an asterisk next to this championship, I think he said it exactly right,” Boston coach Brad Stevens said Wednesday. “This is going to be a super unique situation and whoever wins it is going to really earn it.”

Pirates skipper tired of routine

By Will Graves
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Derek Shelton ended nearly each press availability during spring training by jokingly telling reporters they picked the wrong day to ask the Pittsburgh Pirates first-year manager about his opening day starter.

His answer was always some variation of “sorry, that’s tomorrow” before jogging off to his next meeting. The bit was equal parts easygoing and confronting, a way for the former minor league catcher turned major league assistant to set an easygoing tone for a club with both a modest payroll and modest expectations.

Three months later, the routine feels like a relic of a reality that no longer exists. The questions Shelton must grapple before managing his first regular-season game are far more complex. Like, how is he going to make sure his team is abide by the 108-page health protocol Major League Baseball put together in response to the COVID-19 pandemic? How will he support players who might feel the need to speak out on social justice issues? How will he help create a positive vibe in a clubhouse filled with players smarting from a protracted and tetchy negotiation with owners on when and how to return?

Figuring out a fifth starter and who to pencil in at designated hitter on a given night seems quaint by comparison.

“Zoom calls aren’t cutting it anymore,” Shelton said.

He’s eager to get back to some semblance of normal, even if normal is in short supply in 2020. Instead of six weeks in Bradenton, Fla., to get ready, Shelton will have half that time to turn the trick with players split at facilities 100 miles apart. The team announced Saturday it will use People’s Natural Gas Field in Altoona — a longtime Pirates Double-A affiliate — as an “all-starquarters” of sorts to accommodate an out of spring training 2.0 starts next week.

In a way, though, all the changes might work to Shelton’s advantage. No manager has worked under the unique conditions the league faces over the next three months. In a way, it’s even fair to say Shelton will go into the first year on the job no matter how many World Series rings they might have stashed away.

“Managers who have managed in playoff situations probably have a little bit more advantage with how to use their bullpens and things like that,” Shelton said. “But I think it’s an unknown for all of us because there are going to be rules changes along with it. You’re putting in the three-batter (minimum) rule, which we’ve never had about all along. Now, you’re putting a runner at second (in extra innings), which no one has managed about all at once, in person, until getting to Central Florida.

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Pittsburgh Pirates bench coach Don Kelly, left, and manager Derek Shelton watch from the dugout during a spring training game against the Toronto Blue Jays on March 12 in Bradenton, Fla.
Short season, no minors may hurt prospects

Rebuilding teams have complicated choices

By Tim Booth
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Seattle Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto had at one point expected former first-round pick Logan Gilbert to be pitching at T-Mobile Park by the time June rolled around. He also believed Jarred Kelenic, one of the top prospects in all of baseball, would likely soon follow him to the big leagues, set to join a group of prospects expected to be at the core of the Mariners' rebuilding project.

"Eventually, our players are still going to hit the ground running and achieve whatever ceiling they were able to achieve," Dipoto said. "It may just take a little bit longer."

From Seattle to Kansas City, Baltimore to Miami, rebuilding teams that were hoping to see their young prospects play in the major leagues are reevaluating their plans.

The challenge: figure out how to get a substantive season in for some of the top talent in the minor leagues that these clubs are banking on to eventually become contributors if they ever want to climb out of division basements. And do it amid the coronavirus pandemic, which is knocking out all minor league play this year.

Is it worth starting the clock on the career of a top prospect for a truncated 60-game season? What about the taxi squad each team will keep? Is there enough of an opportunity for meaningful at-bats or innings to pitch? Could there be an expanded fall league option in Arizona, presuming health and safety concerns allow for that?

All key questions. None with straightforward answers.

"It is affecting all 30 clubs," White Sox GM Rick Hahn said. "And it is something that as we head into the fall, winter, the 2021 season we're going to have to adjust our expectations in terms of guys' pacing, in terms of guys' likelihood and timing at making an impact at the next level."

The list of teams facing a significant rebuild is short. Seattle is there. So, too, are the Royals, Orioles and Tigers in the American League. In the National League, it's more muddled outside of the Marlins, with a mix of teams good enough to stay in the race for 60 games but also looking ahead to the future.

The Marlins thought top prospect Sixto Sanchez might pitch in the majors this year. Now, is it worth it? Same for their top draft pick, Max Meyer out of Minnesota.

Will the Royals bring up Bobby Witt Jr.? What about Adley Rutschman in Baltimore or Kelenic in Seattle?

"You want to be 100% sure a player is ready to help you at the major league level before you add them. ... There's no minor leagues to send them down to if they struggle at the major league level," Royals GM Dayton Moore said. "So it's a unique situation, a unique challenge that we're looking forward to, but we also have to think big picture as well."

The teams caught in the middle are those who expected 2020 to be a springboard. They may have had key players who had a taste of the big leagues in 2019 and were hoping this season would be the transition into becoming contenders in 2021.

A prime example is Hahn and the White Sox.

"I'm of the mindset, and have been of the mindset, is what we're building here is a multiyear project. It's a multyear endeavor," Hahn said. "This was going to be sort of that first year of transitioning from the rebuild into that competitive stage, so it's extremely important from our perspective to get these guys out there and competing."

"We obviously have a young club, a team that is going to get and benefit from playing experience during the regular season and hopefully the postseason, so getting a taste of that this season was of the utmost importance," he said.

For the White Sox and others on the fringe of contention, it could mean taking a different approach to a 60-man group that includes the taxi squad. As in, would it be better to have players with big league experience available immediately if need be, or prepare prospects for the future?

In Seattle's case, Dipoto said he's now viewing the development of their prospects in a 17-month window. Whether it's on the taxi squad or in some sort of fall league, what can they get accomplished this year? And how does that alter the time frame for where they should be in their development in 2021.

For a club that expected to start turning the corner next year, the developmental loss this season could be significant.

"We are viewing this as almost the beginning of an onboarding for the next 17 months and messaging it to the players like that," Dipoto said. "We have your best interests in mind. We are going to preserve your health and well-being above all other things, and along the way we're going to compete our butts off and try to win as many of these 60 games as we can win.

"And who knows what can happen in a season like that, when it's 60 games? Anybody can get hot and make a run. And I guess to that extent we have as good a shot as anybody, but we're also highly focused on the big picture and it will stay that way."
Players begin reporting to teams for tests

Starting Friday and Saturday, many teams will be holding split workouts

By Dave Skretta
Associated Press

Yoan Moncada has spent the past couple of months working out in what he called a “controlled and limited environment” in Florida, where the White Sox slugger could continue to get at bats while protecting himself from the coronavirus.

That’s a good description of the environment that greeted him upon his return to Chicago.

Players began reporting to their teams and home ballparks Wednesday in the most significant step yet as Major League Baseball presses ahead with its plan for a 60-game sprint of a season. Most players underwent a battery of health checks, not only for COVID-19 but also for any other lingering ailments from spring training, ahead of planned workouts beginning Friday and Saturday.

There were no workouts by time, you know! You have to re-serve a time. I wasn’t interacting with a lot of people there,” Moncada said of his sessions in Florida. “The last couple of weeks I started lifting a little bit. I was hitting with limitations that we had during this situation. But I feel good. I’m ready to go.

Much like other clubs, the White Sox intend to split their 60-man roster into two groups, one working out in the morning and the other in the afternoon. All players will have their temperatures checked multiple times each day, observe increased social distancing and get accustomed to stringent safeguards that MLB has put into place for the season.

“That’s going to be different to see and feel as a team,” Moncada said. “We’ll have to wait and see Friday how it goes.”

The Yankees won’t hold their first full-team workout until Saturday, even though manager Aaron Boone said players began intake testing Wednesday. That’s when he plans to address the team for the first time — also in waves.

“We’ll have to get creative with how we communicate,” said Boone, who plans to make the same speech three or four times.

Faced with the prospect of playing 60 games in 66 days, time-consuming safety protocols, the responsibility to remain diligent health-wise off the field and the general anxiety of working amid a pandemic, Boone believes focus and toughness can be as important to a team this season as base-running or bullpen management.

“How do you deal with that mentally and emotionally?” Boone asked. “How you’re able to separate that out when you take the field each and every night? There’s an advantage to be had there.”

After gauging workloads for pitchers during the shutdown, Boone expects his starters will be ready to face live hitters on the first day of summer camp. He plans to stay flexible on usage and may consider using a six-man rotation or openers, but nothing has been determined yet as all teams adjust to a new norm.

“An injury can wipe out a season in a hurry,” Boone said, adding that he’s likely to be cautious with players early after New York placed a major league-record 30 players on the injured list a total of 39 times last season.

Orioles general manager Mike Elias has thus far named only 44 players of the 60 available to participate in the pre-season workout. He will decide later which prospects will fill out the pre-season roster in advance of a projected season-opener July 23 or July 24.

And despite rising numbers of COVID-19 across the country, and a few players opting out, most players and executives have been bullish on the season taking place. They believe in protocols hammered out during lengthy negotiations between MLB and its players’ association.

“We’ve got to make sure we understand best practices in social distancing, make sure we know we are keeping ourselves not only apart from one another but also behaving in a way that’s consistent to what’s going to keep us all healthy,” Mets general manager Brodie Van Wagenen said. “Provided we can all work together to comply with these protocols and respect — as I said earlier — respect each other and respect the rules, I’m optimistic that we can make this happen.”

Cubs coach says COVID-19 quarantined him for a month

By Andrew Seligman
Associated Press

CHICAGO — An emotional Chicago Cubs pitching coach Tommy Hottovy is recovering from a severe case of COVID-19 that quarantined him for 30 days.

The 38-year-old Hottovy broke down as he detailed a harrowing ordeal during a conference call on Wednesday. The Cubs resume workouts Friday for the first time since Major League Baseball shut down camps on March 12.

“It’s still kind of raw in the fact that we just got through it and to relive it,” said Hottovy, in his second season as the Cubs’ pitching coach. “Obviously, it affected us pretty significantly for a month. I felt it was important for me to talk through what I went through because too many people out there is the easy stories of what people go through with this.”

Hottovy, a former major leaguer, learned he had the virus on the third day he felt ill, following a nasal test. He isolated in a spare bedroom at his home after realizing he had been exposed to a contact situation by one person, can derail an entire industry.”
One of a kind?

Eventual 2020 champ will have overcome challenge unlike any other

By Tim Reynolds
Associated Press

The 2020 NBA champion, if one is crowned, will have emerged as the ultimate winner from a season that lasted more than a full year from start to finish. A season that saw political unrest between the NBA and China, the deaths of David Stern and Kobe Bryant, racial issues across the nation and, if that wasn’t enough, a pandemic.

It is a season like no other. So, an asterisk-bearing champion? Not a chance.

I think this might be certainly the most worthy of all world championships ... because of all the things that every team is going to have to navigate and overcome.

Eric Spoelstra
Miami Heat head coach

To the teams in the NBA, this championship might be the toughest one ever claimed. It’ll come after more than three months of living in a quasi-bubble at the Disney complex near Orlando, Fla., after an entire post-season is played without fans, with most if not all that time spent away from friends and family. And only one of the 22 teams headed to Disney will be able to say it was absolutely worth the trouble.

“I’ve heard a lot of people say that there’s going to be, like, a star next to this championship,” Milwaukee forward and reigning NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo said. “I feel like at the end of the day this is going to be like the toughest championship you could ever win because the circumstances are really, really tough right now. So, whoever wants it more is going to be able to go out there and take it.”

He’s not alone in feeling that way.

Most of the 22 teams that will be headed to the Disney campus next week — the first arrivals are scheduled for July 7 — spent Wednesday beginning Phase 3 of the NBA’s restart process. Workouts are still individual, but now mandatory. No team can practice or play 5-on-5 until arriving at Disney.

Whichever team eventually hoists the Larry O’Brien Championship Trophy will have overcome one of the most eventful — and challenging — seasons in NBA history.

COVID-19 recovery tough on Cubs coach

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