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STARS AND STRIPES®

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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.

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.

SEE GAINS ON PAGE 14



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 Lorraine 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 Lorraine was pardoned.

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

Samuel Walley is pictured with his fiancée, Hannah Smallwood, in their garage in Buford, Ga. Walley lost his right leg and part of his left arm in Afghanistan.

BONNIE JO MOUNT
The Washington Post

SEE BITTER ON PAGE 10



SETH WENIG/AP

A customer's temperature is checked before entering a store at Garden State Plaza in Paramus, N.J., on Monday. Employers likely rehired several million workers in June, but data suggests that the resurgent coronavirus will limit gains.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Germany	\$2.437	\$2.626	\$3.075	\$2.693	Azores	--	--	\$3.066	--
Change in price	+4.2 cents	+4.2 cents	+3.9 cents	+0.3 cents	Change in price	--	--	+3.9 cents	--
Netherlands	--	\$3.519	\$3.727	\$3.510	Belgium	--	\$2.531	\$2.341	--
Change in price	--	+3.3 cents	+2.8 cents	+2.8 cents	Change in price	--	No change	No change	--
U.K.	--	\$2.736	\$2.985	\$2.603	Turkey	--	\$2.876	\$2.494*	--
Change in price	--	+4.2 cents	+3.9 cents	+0.3 cents	Change in price	--	+3.9 cents	+0.3 cents	--

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Japan	--	\$2.869	--	\$2.479	South Korea	\$2.259	--	\$2.899	\$2.509
Change in price	--	+4.0 cents	--	No change	Change in price	+5.0 cents	--	+4.0 cents	No change
Okinawa	\$2.229	--	--	\$2.479	Guam	\$2.239**	\$2.629	\$2.879	--
Change in price	+5.0 cents	--	--	No change	Change in price	+5.0 cents	+4.0 cents	+4.0 cents	--

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of July 4-9

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		
Euro costs (July 3)	\$1.10	Switzerland (Franc).....0.9438
Dollar buys (July 3)	60.8639	Thailand (Baht).....31.09
British pound (July 3)	\$1.22	Turkey (Lira).....6.8652
Japanese yen (July 3)	105.00	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)
South Korean won (July 3)	1,171.00	
Commercial rates		
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3775	
British pound	\$1.2506	
Canada (Dollar)	1.3567	
China (Yuan)	7.0671	
Denmark (Krone)	6.6101	
Egypt (Pound)	16.1238	
Euro	\$1.1273/0.8871	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7593	
Hungary (Forint)	31.72	
Israel (Shekel)	3.4406	
Japan (Yen)	107.54	
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3079	
Norway (Krone)	9.4661	
Philippines (Peso)	49.64	
Poland (Zloty)	3.96	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7507	
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3933	
South Korea (Won)	1,197.88	

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Discount rate	0.25
Federal funds market rate	0.08
3-month bill	0.14
30-year bond	1.43

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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MILITARY

Army wraps up 3-day recruiting campaign

By JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

The coronavirus pandemic took a bite from its recruiting goals this year, but the Army expects to retake that ground with a three-day campaign that ended Thursday, according to the service's deputy chief of recruiting.

The Army has offered an additional \$2,000 bonus on top of career incentives to recruits who joined during Army Hiring Days, a drive that relied heavily on social media, Brig. Gen. Patrick Michaelis, deputy commanding general of Army Recruiting Command, told Stars and Stripes by phone on Wednesday. The goal is 10,000 new soldiers, which meets strength requirements for the year.

This type of recruiting drive is a first for the Army.

"We wanted this to be like dropping a brick into a puddle," he said.

The service was on track to meet its recruiting and retention goals before a three-month lockdown due to the coronavirus forced its 10,000 recruiters to work from home, Michaelis said.

During that same period, U.S. unemployment skyrocketed as businesses closed and people stayed home to curtail the virus' spread.

Army re-enlistments reached record highs, but without face-to-face interactions, recruiting numbers fell, he said.



SARAH SANGSTER/U.S. Army

Recruits visit the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade at Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii, as part of Army National Hiring Days on Tuesday.

The service devised a strategy to put potential recruits in touch with recruiters without violating social distance guidelines. It turned to civilian corporations to learn how they met hiring goals and discovered a campaign run

by McDonald's several years ago. The fast-food giant hired nearly 50,000 people in one day, Michaelis said.

Army Hiring Days, with one day remaining, appeared to be meeting or exceeding its goals,

Michaelis said. Any recruits who sign up after the Army meets its congressionally mandated goals for this fiscal year will be credited toward fiscal year 2021.

The campaign relied on virtual messaging and marketing that

flooded social media with simple themes about the benefits of service, including signing bonuses for specialized career fields, student loan repayment plans, medical benefits and housing, he said. The \$2,000 bonus for recruits who joined during three-day push applies only to active-duty enlistments, not the Army Reserve or National Guard.

The Army campaign turned to successful social media influencers in its own ranks, like Staff Sgt. Jorge Ortiz, a recruiter in San Antonio.

Ortiz has a prolific Instagram account, @ssg_ortiz_jorge, with thousands of followers from across the country, he said via telephone Wednesday.

He shares stories about his life as a member of the San Antonio community to humanize the idea of being a soldier, he said, adding that stories about his wife, son and their dog provide a real-life perspective on the Army.

Michaelis said the Army focused its effort on Facebook and Instagram but encouraged soldiers to use the platform they were most comfortable with.

"The only environment we are not playing in is TikTok, and that is based on where their servers are located," he said.

The Army banned soldiers from using the popular Chinese social media app in December because of potential security issues.

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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 his ex-

ecutive, 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 Reslind, 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 Reslind on the night of the crash.

His aircraft (call sign Profane 12), the tanker 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 Reslind lost sight of the C-130 "because he became singularly focused on Profane 11." Reslind's night vision goggles washed out while flying off near the lighted second F/A-18, 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 squad-



TYLER HARMON/U.S. Marine Corps

A memorial is unveiled at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, on Dec. 6 in honor of Marines who died a year earlier during a midair training accident.

ron'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 [the squadron] had become 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."

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MILITARY

House panel bill includes funding for Stripes

By STEVE BEYNON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A House committee's version of the annual defense spending bill includes \$15.5 million in federal funding for Stars and Stripes under 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

to 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 know 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 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 Confederates.

"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's bipartisan process and reflects priorities raised by all of the committee's members."

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Courtesy of Juergen Masching

German emergency responders wait outside the Grafenwoehr training area on Wednesday.

German firefighter injured during rescue of US paratroopers who landed in trees

By IMMANUEL JOHNSON
AND MARCUS KLOECKNER
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — A German firefighter was seriously injured in an operation to rescue soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade who landed in trees during a parachute training exercise, officials said Thursday.

The 62-year-old firefighter sustained severe but non-life-threatening head injuries when one of the soldiers fell out of the tree he'd crashed into during the exercise Wednesday, said Werner Stopfer, chief of police in the town of Eschenbach, which is near Grafenwoehr. It was unclear what caused the injuries, Stopfer said, adding that the firefighter was in the intensive care unit of a local hospital.

The soldiers had drifted off course during the jump and ended up in trees on Grafenwoehr, a sprawling training area in Bavaria, brigade spokesman Maj. Chris Bradley said.

The six paratroopers and another firefighter were slightly injured in the accident, which occurred at around 9 p.m., Stopfer said.

Rescue helicopters, firefighters and a mountain rescue team were mobilized to search for the soldiers as night began to fall over the vast training area, Stopfer said. Grafenwoehr covers roughly 57,600 acres, or the equivalent of about 43,600 football fields.

"We did not know exactly how many soldiers were hanging in the trees or if they were lying somewhere on the ground," Stop-

fer said.

Army officials did not immediately say what caused the soldiers to drift off course during the jump.

But the accident is not the first of its kind. During a training exercise in October 2011 in Hohenfels, also in Bavaria, 13 paratroopers suffered head, spine and pelvic injuries when strong winds blew them off course during a jump. They too crashed into trees.

The soldiers involved in Wednesday's incident sustained "typical injuries for parachutists," said Stopfer, such as skin abrasions, bruises and bone fractures.

The Army has launched an investigation.

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GOP signals Trump to withdraw threat to veto defense bill

The Washington Post

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 build the Pentagon hostage to this 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. Hours later, Republicans on both sides of the Capitol made it clear the president needs to back down in a fight over honoring secessionists who fought the United States to maintain slavery.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., reaffirmed his support for the Senate's version of the bill that directs the Pentagon to rename such bases within three years. In the House Armed Services Committee — where lawmakers were expected Wednesday night to approve a similar provision accelerating that time frame to one year — the panel adopted a proposal by Rep. Anthony Brown, D-Md., to ban Confederate flags on all Defense Department property — with no Republicans objecting.

The panel is crafting the House version of the annual defense bill that authorizes a pay raise for service members and billions of dollars for new weapons, fighter jets and ships.

The congressional push to remove Confederate symbols from defense installations faces oppo-

sition from some Republicans.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman James Inhofe, R-Okla., said Wednesday that while he regretted the president's veto threat, he agreed with Trump's view about stripping the names from military bases. He vowed to work to rid the defense bill of the provision before it reaches Trump's desk, all but assuring there will be an internal GOP fight.

"It's part of our history, it's part of our heritage," Inhofe said. "They're tearing down statues and doing all these un-American things. The president feels strongly about it and I do too."

But those comments belied a growing sentiment among many Capitol Hill Republicans, including some who have long griped privately that Trump's racist comments repel Americans.

"I would like the president would reconsider vetoing the entire defense bill, which includes pay raises for our troops over a provision in there that could lead to changing the names of these military bases," McConnell, R-Ky., told Dana Perino in a Fox News interview. Changing military base names is "quite different from trying to air brush the statues in the Capitol," he added.

"I would be happy to see I would support changing the names of bases that were named in the honor of Confederate generals," said Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah. "Those individuals fought against the United States of America and we should instead be honoring people who fought for the United States of America."

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 carnival-style Liberty Fest 2020 from 4-9 p.m. at the golf course with all manner of activities, from a bouncy 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 thrilled mask-wearing spectators Thursday, but the usual July Fourth fairground-style event was put aside this year.

"There is no petting zoo, rock wall or barbecue," said Fred Mamiya of the Yokota Force Support Squadron who was in charge of setting up the celebration. "We are trying to stay away from the group type setting."

The fireworks were scheduled early, Mamiya said, to allow those with weekend travel plans to see the show before setting off.

Yokota's new commander, Col. Andrew Campbell, lifted travel restrictions Monday to permit base personnel to travel around the island of Honshu, except for metro Tokyo and Yokohama.

Camp Zama, home of U.S. Army Japan southwest of Tokyo, canceled a parade and neighborhood parties "due to inclement weather" and substituted a dance party Saturday at the recreation center instead, with social distancing required. No fireworks are planned.

At Sasebo Naval Base in southern Japan, an outside Fourth of July party will be partially virtual. It starts at 6 p.m. Saturday with a concert by Train, a San Francisco rock band, aired on a widescreen TV outside the base fitness center. Fireworks follow at 8:45 p.m., according to an event flyer.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni will host a family picnic, reservations required, at the base track and field from 4-8 p.m. Saturday with live entertainment, according to the base Facebook page. No fireworks are planned.

"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 Berkeley 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 Baucum told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday.

At Naval Air Facility Atsugi, events are planned through the weekend, including the Train virtual concert at 7:45 p.m. and a fireworks display at 8:30 p.m., both on Thursday, and a pool party Saturday, according to the base Facebook page.

The USO in Japan is hosting a virtual concert by country musician Clint Black and other performers, available on Facebook, YouTube (at youtube.com/theuso) and Twitch (@theUSO) at 1 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, according to a USO announcement.

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



Theron Godbold/Stars and Stripes

Children watch a fireworks show at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, Thursday.

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 8 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@stars.com

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MILITARY

Shipping container used for patient transport

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The Air Force more than tripled its capacity to transport coronavirus patients after customizing a steel shipping container for medical use aboard its cargo planes.

Twelve patients with the virus were evacuated on a C-17 Globemaster III from an undisclosed downrange location to Germany in what was the first operational use of the Negatively Pressurized Conex, a box configured to prevent spreading the disease to the crew, the service's Air Mobility Command said in a statement.

The patients arrived at Ramstein Air Base on Wednesday after a 22-hour mission and were transported to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center for further care, officials said.

"This was definitely not your typical patient movement mission," said Maj. Benjamin Weaver, a bioenvironmental engineer, in a statement.

Weaver, the 10th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Flight support team lead for the mission, said the container and team "performed exceptionally well to make it happen."

The box can transport up to 28 seated passengers or eight litters. It can fit into a C-5 Super Galaxy or a C-17, while a smaller version can be used on a C-130 Hercules.

In April, the Air Force evacuated its first coronavirus patients, transporting three U.S. government contractors from Afghanistan to Ramstein. The patients were moved inside the Transport Isolation System, an infectious disease chamber developed but never used during the 2014 Ebola crisis.

That system has limited capacity — a C-17 can carry two of the airlocked units, each of which can carry only two to four patients.

The negative-pressure system was rapidly developed because of the pandemic, Air Force officials said.

Fans continuously pull air from within the unit through high-efficiency particulate filters, the Air Force said. The process is similar to hospital isolation rooms that use negative air pressure to prevent airborne diseases from escaping the room and infecting others.

The steel container also includes an attached anteroom — also under negative pressure — where medical workers can change clothes without risking contamination, the Air Force said.

This week's mission brings the total number of patients transported in isolation containment chambers to more than 100 across 18 missions since the pandemic began, the Air Force said.

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JOHN R. WRIGHT/U.S. Air Force

Airmen assigned to the 313th Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron transfer a coronavirus patient following the first operational use of the Negatively Pressurized Conex to transport 12 patients aboard a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft at Ramstein Air Base in Germany on Wednesday.

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, where case numbers and transmission have fallen sharply from a peak several weeks ago. The restrictions will be reevaluated 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.

EUCOM says 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



JACOB JIMENEZ/U.S. Air Force

First Lt. David Schmitz, an F-16 pilot with the 20th Fighter Wing's 77th Fighter Squadron, was killed Tuesday when his plane crashed during training.

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 base 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.

Schmitz earned his commission through officer training school and graduated at the top of his class in pilot training, Sullivan said.

"He loved his family, his country and he loved to fly," Sullivan said. Schmitz's wife Valerie recalled the day before his final flight in a Facebook post. She 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 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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WAR ON TERRORISM



U.S. Army

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 after reading a recently released Army report that gave more details about the attack.

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 Bolyard managed to draw his pistol and spin around before falling to the ground.

The spirit Bolyard showed, revealed in a recently released Army report on the insider attack in Afghanistan that killed him, comforted his still-grieving son.

"Although reading the investigation report is very tough, it is very nice to know that my father didn't go down without a fight," Preston Bolyard, 22, said in a text message Tuesday.

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 Raziq, 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 U.S. compound 400 yards away from the meeting. The soldiers were armed but wore no body armor to show the growing trust they felt toward their Afghan partners, said the report, which Army Times first made public last week.

Attendance at the meeting was

greater than usual because Raziq had invited the Afghan national police, who would play a key role in ensuring security at the elections. The police usually did not attend such events.

In another break from the norm, Raziq said the police and intelligence leaders' personal security details could keep their weapons as they waited in vehicles outside the meeting. Afghans were usually forbidden from carrying weapons to meetings attended by U.S. advisers, the report cited an official as saying.

After the meeting, as the Americans walked to the base cafeteria for lunch, two men on the police security detail opened fire, first with an AK-47, then with a vehicle-mounted PKM machine gun, the report said. Bolyard was struck and died an hour later.

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

After the gunfire ceased, the Americans rushed Bolyard to a nearby forward 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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DOD: Taliban still working with al-Qaida amid US deal

By PHILLIP 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.

Low-level 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 congressional 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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MILITARY

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 Michael 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, and his sincerely 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 on the worship team, the Navy order substantially burdens Maj. Schultz's sincerely held religious beliefs."

Berry's other 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 sailors permission to travel from home to work and to the grocery store or pharmacy for essential items, said Capt. Sarah Self-Kyler, spokeswoman for the Navy's Fleet Forces Command. Since then, Navy chaplains have worked to make worship 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 released an order to reiterate the March guidelines, which haven't changed, she said. However, the update did provide more specifics on what is and isn't allowed because 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 consistently monitor current health conditions, the Navy's unique mission sometimes demands that it impose greater burdens on its force than are imposed on our civilian counterparts in order to ensure operational effectiveness," Self-Kyler said.

In regards to religious services, the June order allows for sailors to attend drive-thru and outdoor events, but specifically bans attendance 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."

2 with positive coronavirus test mistakenly released from quarantine

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Two newly assigned U.S. service members who tested positive for coronavirus after arriving in South Korea were prematurely released from quarantine due to an administrative error, the military 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.

The raised to 42 the number of cases affiliated with U.S. Forces



DOVONOV MASSIPEPEREZ/U.S. Marine Corps

Marine Cpl. Tyler Wyatt wears a mask to protect against the coronavirus during exercise Caged Hydra at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, on May 20.

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 Okinawa, 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 return 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.

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 contact 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 30,000 Marines stationed in Japan are based in Okinawa.

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

By JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

Two more U.S. military bases in Japan eased coronavirus restrictions in time for sailors, airmen, families and civilian workers to stretch their legs over Independence Day weekend.

Misawa Air Base, at the northern tip of Honshu, the largest of Japan's four main islands, on Thursday opened the Tohoku region for travel by base personnel. Travel is now permitted in Akita, Aomori, Fukushima, Iwate, Miyagi and Yamagata prefectures, according to a post on the base Facebook page.

Likewise, personnel from

Sasebo Naval Base are permitted to travel throughout Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, with the exception of the Fukuoka metro area, Sasebo commander Capt. Brad Stallings said in a statement Wednesday.

Individuals from both installations may visit public baths, saunas and tattoo parlors. They can also dine in at off-base restaurants, 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 hotels and cabins.

"As long as we all continue to take personal responsibility seriously, maintain distance, wear our masks properly and maintain strict hygiene habits we won't catch this disease and it won't find its way into the base or our ships," Stallings wrote.

Bars and karaoke establishments, which have been the leading cause of the virus' spread in Japan, are still off limits for personnel at both facilities, as they are for most U.S. personnel.

Korea, including 17 service members 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 according to protocol, according to the statement.

"Established quality control measures identified the error, and medical staff were able to remedy 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 established protocols to prevent similar occurrences in the future," it said.

It added that public health and base officials had completed contact tracing and cleaned the facilities the service members had visited.

WAR ON TERRORISM

US envoy looks to start talks to end war

By KATHY GANNON
Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Washington's peace envoy told Pakistani officials that Afghanistan's Taliban and Kabul's political leaders were close to starting negotiations to decide the face of a post-war Afghanistan, a crucial next step in a U.S. deal signed with the Taliban in February, according to a statement released Thursday by the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad.

Zalmay Khalilzad was in the region to pave the way for intra-Afghan negotiations expected to begin sometime this month. No date had been set, but Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said late Wednesday the first round would be held in Doha, where the Taliban maintain a political office.

Both sides must still release the remainder of prisoners laid out in the deal, which calls for the Afghan government to free 5,000 Taliban and the insurgents to release 1,000 government personnel. So far, the government has freed 3,500 and the Taliban about 700.

"Ambassador Khalilzad noted how close the sides are to starting intra-Afghan negotiations and the importance of resolving remaining issues quickly, underscoring the promise peace holds for regional stability and development," the embassy statement said of his meetings in Pakistan with the army chief and foreign minister.

Earlier this week, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke to Taliban chief negotiator Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. In Monday's video call, Pompeo "made clear the expectation for the Taliban to live up to their commitments, which include not attacking Americans," according to the State Department. Khalil-



RAHMAN GUL/AP

Washington's peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, attends Ashraf Ghani's inauguration in Kabul, Afghanistan, on March 9.

zad was appointed in September 2018 to open direct peace talks with the Taliban, however until mid-2019 both the United States and Taliban were locked in battle as both sides sought to improve their negotiating position with military victories. The killing of a U.S. soldier in a Taliban attack on the capital Kabul in September 2019 prompted President Trump to declare peace talks with the Taliban dead.

They restarted in December and on Feb. 29 this year the deal was signed in Doha. At the time, the agreement was touted as Afghanisthan's best chance at peace in decades of war.

Under the deal, the Taliban have committed to fighting terrorist groups, not supporting terrorist groups and ensuring Afghanistan is not used by anyone to attack the U.S. or its allies.

The Taliban also said they would not attack U.S. and NATO troops but would continue their fight against Afghan National Security Forces. One of the first items on the agenda of intra-Afghan negotiations is apparently a permanent cease-fire.

Taliban political spokesman Suhail Shaheen said, however, that no talks will begin until all 5,000 Taliban listed in the agreement are freed.

that "the Russians have been selling small arms that have put Americans at risk there for 10 years."

He added: "When I meet with my Russian counterparts, I talk with them about this each time: 'Stop this.'"

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.

Zakharova didn't comment Thursday on reports that Moscow offered bounties for killing U.S. troops in Afghanistan, but Russian officials have denounced them as fake.

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 "independent of the briefing, 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 rare for intelligence to be confirmed without a shadow of doubt before it is presented to senior government decision-makers.

"The White House has done a con, saying that because all of the agencies of intelligence have not signed off on this, it wasn't worthy of the president's attention," Pelosi said on MSNBC. "You know the death of our young people in Afghanistan or any place is worthy of the president's attention."

The House intelligence committee will also receive a briefing on the matter Thursday afternoon, according to a person familiar with that meeting who requested anonymity because it was not publicly disclosed.

The Capitol Hill meetings come as Trump has been under increasing pressure to provide answers about the U.S. response to Russia or the lack of one. But the president has continued to downplay the intelligence, calling it "fake news" designed to damage him and the Republican Party.

The intelligence assessments that Russia offered bounties were first reported by The New York Times, then confirmed to The Associated Press by American intelligence officials and others with knowledge of the matter.

Administration officials have insisted they have taken intelligence seriously. National security adviser Robert O'Brien said Wednesday that the CIA and Pentagon pursued the leads and briefed international allies. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the situation was handled

"incredibly well" to ensure the safety of U.S. troops.

"We took this seriously, we handled it appropriately," Pompeo said, without giving additional details. He said the administration receives intelligence about threats to Americans "every single day" and each is addressed.

A group of House Democrats who were briefed at the White House earlier this week said Trump was bowing to Russian President Vladimir Putin and risking U.S. soldiers' lives.

Texas Rep. Mac Thornberry, the top Republican on the Armed Services Committee, said the panel would "leave no stone unturned" in seeking further information.

Other Republicans defended the president, saying they had confidence in the administration's response. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he didn't think Trump should be "subjected to every rumor."

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany on Wednesday pointed to an individual who she said made the decision not to brief Trump, identifying the person as a female CIA officer with more than 30 years of experience. O'Brien, the national security adviser, said the person was a "career CIA officer."

O'Brien said the intelligence wasn't brought to Trump's attention initially because it was unverified and there was no consensus among the intelligence community.

Russia denies giving weapons to the Taliban in Afghanistan

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia's Foreign Ministry said Thursday that Moscow has never delivered weapons to the Taliban movement in Afghanistan, countering U.S. allegations.

Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova rejected the claim by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who said Wednesday that he had repeatedly raised the issue during his talks with the Russians.

"Russia has only supplied weapons to the legitimate government of Afghanistan, which is well known," Zakharova said at a briefing.

On Wednesday, Pompeo said

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WAR ON TERRORISM

Bitter: Lorange 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.

Lorange had been in command of 1st Platoon for only three days in Afghanistan, but averaged a war crime a day, a military jury found. On his last day before he was dismissed, he 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 case that had already been adjudicated in the military courts sent a signal that war crimes 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.

Traumatized by battle, they have also been brutalized by the politicization of their service and made to feel as if the truth of what they lived in Afghanistan — already a violent and harrowing tour before Lorange assumed command — had been so demeaned that it no longer existed.

Since returning home in 2013, five of the platoon's three dozen soldiers have died. At least four others have been hospitalized following suicide attempts or struggles with drugs or alcohol.

The first fatality came a few weeks before Lorange was pardoned when James O. Twist, 27, a Michigan state trooper and father of three, died of suicide. As the White House was 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 where it had been sheared off by the blast.

They thought of the calls and texts from him that they didn't answer because they were too busy with their own lives. Twist, who had a caring wife, a good job and a nice house, seemed like he was doing far better than most. They didn't know that behind closed doors he was at times verbally abusive, ashamed of his inner torment and, like so many of them, unable to articulate his pain.

By November 2019, Twist, a man the soldiers of 1st Platoon loved, was gone and Lorange was free from prison and headed for New York City, a new life and a start on Fox News.

This story is based on a tran-

script of Lorange's 2013 court-martial at Fort Bragg, N.C., and on the record interviews with 15 members of 1st Platoon, as well as family members of the soldiers, including Twist's father and wife. The soldiers also shared texts and emails they exchanged over the past several years. Twist's family provided his journal entries from his time in the Army. Lorange declined to be interviewed.

In New York, Sean Hannity, Lorange's biggest champion and the man most responsible for persuading Trump to pardon him, asked Lorange about the shooting and soldiers under his command.

Lorange had traded in his Army uniform for a blazer and red tie. He leaned into the microphone. "I don't know any of these guys. None of them know me," Lorange said of his former troops. "To be honest with you, I can't even remember most of their names."

■ ■ ■
The 1st Platoon soldiers came to the Army and the war from all over the country: Maryland, California, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Indiana and Texas to name just a few.

Some had tried college but quit because they were bored or failing their classes. "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 fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers, of service and duty. Twist's father served in Vietnam as a clerk in an air-conditioned office before coming back to Michigan and opening a garage. Twist was just 16 when he started badgering his parents to sign his enlistment papers and barely 18 when he left for basic training. His mother had died of cancer only a few months earlier.

Several of the 1st Platoon soldiers enlisted in search of a steady paycheck and the promise of health insurance and a middle-class life. "I needed to get out of northeast Ohio," McGuinness said. "There wasn't anything there."

In 1999, he was set to pay his first union dues and go to work alongside his steelworker grandfather when the plant closed. So he became a paratrooper instead, eventually deploying three times to Afghanistan.

McGuinness didn't look much like a paratrooper with his thick, squat body. But he liked being a soldier, jumping out of planes, firing weapons and drinking with his Army buddies.

Nine months before 1st Platoon landed in rural southern Afghanistan, a team of Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden.

Samuel Walley, the badly wounded soldier Twist pulled from the blast crater, wondered whether they might be spared combat. "Wasn't that the goal,



President Donald Trump welcomes Clint Lorange to the stage before his remarks at the Republican Party of Florida's Statesman Dinner in December in Aventura.

to kill bin Laden?" he recalled thinking.

But the decade-long war continued, driven by new, largely unattainable goals. They were told by commanders they were waging a counterinsurgency war in which their top priority was winning the support of the people and protecting them from the Taliban. But no one seemed entirely sure how to accomplish that.

■ ■ ■
In May 2012, they moved to a new compound near Payenzai, a remote Afghan village west of Kandahar, which consisted of little more than mud-walled houses, hardscrabble farmers and the Taliban.

So began what Twist described, in a blog post written years later, as an "entire month of despair."

Four soldiers were 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 paralyzed.

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. Lorange 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 Afghanistan 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, Lorange 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 Lorange'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 Afghans wonder why the Americans were shooting at them and motivate them to attend a village meeting that Lorange 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," Lorange said, according to the testimony of one of his soldiers. Lorange didn't pull the trigger. Instead, he stood by his men in the guard towers, picked the targets and issued orders. His troops finally balked when he told them to shoot near children. They refused again 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, Lorange 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 Lorange 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 Lorange of changing the rules of engagement. Still, Lorange's actions left soldiers confused on the critical, life-or-death question of when they were authorized to open fire.

The mission that day was a foot patrol into a nearby village to meet the elders.

Less than 30 minutes after they rolled out of the gate, three men on a motorcycle approached a

cluster of Afghan National Army troops at the front of their formation. Lorange and his troops were standing about 150 to 200 yards away in an orchard, tucked behind a series of five-foot-high mud walls on which the Afghans grew grapes.

At the trial, Lorange's soldiers recalled how he had ordered them to fire.

"Why aren't you shooting?" he demanded.

A U.S. soldier fired and missed. The motorcycle carrying the three men, none of whom appeared to be armed, came to a stop. Upon hearing the shots, McGuinness began running toward Lorange, who was closer to the front of the U.S. patrol, to see why they were shooting.

The puzzled Afghans were now standing next to the stopped motorcycle, "trying to figure out what had happened," according to one soldier's testimony. Gray, who was watching from a nearby armored vehicle, recognized the eldest of the three men as someone the Americans regularly met with in the village. He recalled the Afghans waving at them.

"Smoke 'em," Lorange ordered over the radio.

At first Gray and the other soldiers in the armored vehicle weren't sure whom Lorange wanted them to shoot. "There was a back and forth with the three of us in the vehicle," Gray recalled in an interview.

Then Pvt. David Shilo, who was in the turret of the armored vehicle just inches from Gray, fired, striking one of the men, who fell into a drainage ditch. Because the platoon had been told that morning that the motorcycles weren't allowed in their sector, Shilo testified that he thought he was acting on a lawful order. Shilo declined to be interviewed.

The two surviving Afghan men bent to retrieve their dead colleague when Shilo cleared his weapon and shot again, killing a second Afghan. The third man ran away. Two U.S. soldiers testified that it was possible that an Afghan soldier also fired.

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WAR IN TERRORISM

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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. Loranice ordered Shilo to fire a third time and disable the bike. This time he refused.

"I wasn't going to shoot a 12-year-old boy," Shilo testified.

Relatives of the dead were now on the scene screaming and crying. Loranice's immediate superior officer, Capt. Patrick Swanson, who was two miles away and couldn't see what was happening, ordered him over the radio to search the bodies.

Loranice was convicted of lying to Swanson, telling him that villagers had carried off the corpses before his men could examine them. In fact, Loranice's troops searched the bodies of the dead Afghans and found ID cards, scissors, some pens and three cucumbers, but no weapons, according to testimony.

The troops continued their patrol into the village while McGuinness and a small team of soldiers provided cover from a nearby roof. About 30 minutes after the first shooting, McGuinness spotted two Afghan men talking on radios.

"We have to do something to the Americans," one of the men was saying, according to U.S. intercepts. McGuinness and his troops received permission from the company headquarters to fire and killed the two men. The platoon cut short the patrol and returned to the base.

At the outpost the soldiers were shaken. This doesn't feel right," Gray said.

A few minutes later Loranice burst into the platoon's headquarters ebullient. "That was f---ing awesome," he exclaimed, according to court testimony.

Loranice's soldiers turned him in that evening, and at the July 2013 trial, 14 of his men testified under oath against him. Four of those soldiers received immunity in exchange for their testimony. Loranice did not appear on the stand, and not one of his former 1st Platoon soldiers spoke in his defense. The trial lasted three days. It took the jury of Army officers three hours to find him guilty of second-degree murder, making false statements and ordering his men to fire at Afghan civilians. The sentence handed down a 20-year sentence.

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

■ ■ ■
The war crimes and their aftermath followed Loranice'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 Loranice ordered him and another soldier to fire harassing shots into the neighboring village.

Army investigators, Loranice, 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 threats of prosecution hung



BONNIE JO MOUNT/The Washington Post

Mike McGuinness at home in Raeford, N.C. McGuinness legally changed his surname, which had been Herrmann, in an effort to shed the stigma of the crimes.

over them for months. Eventually, the Army concluded that McGuinness' actions were justified. Prosecutors never pursued charges against Zettel.

Instead the Army issued administrative letters of reprimand to Zettel and Matthew Rush, the soldier who fired the rounds at the civilians from the tower. Zettel had watched from the tower but did not shoot.

Ayres and McGuinness — the senior sergeants in the platoon — received disciplinary letters, which can hinder or delay promotions, for their failure to turn in Loranice sooner or stop the killings on the third day.

McGuinness legally changed his surname, which had been Herrmann, in an effort to shed the stigma of the crimes. "I wanted to get away from the entire situation and I thought I'll change units and no one will know," he said. But, because of the investigation and trial, McGuinness' orders to report to an airborne unit in Italy were canceled. "I ended up staying. People didn't forget," he said.

"It was awful."
Shilo, who fired the fatal shots at the men on the motorcycle, was granted immunity and left the Army not long after the trial.

Even those who weren't punished or even on the patrol that day felt tainted. To some of their fellow troops they were the "murder platoon," a bunch of out-of-control soldiers who had wantonly killed Afghans. To others they were turncoats who had flipped on their commander.

■ ■ ■
The unit had seen some of the heaviest fighting of the long Afghanistan War, but received no awards for valor. There was no recognition for Twist, who had pulled Walley from a blast crater and applied a tourniquet to the

remains of his arm and leg. No one acknowledged Joe Fjeldheim, the platoon medic, who had cut a hole in Hanes' neck and inserted a breathing tube after a sniper's bullet left him paralyzed and choking for air.

"Not a single write up. The only thing we received were Purple Hearts for the guys that got messed up," Zettel said. "We were treated like we had an infectious disease."

The soldiers blamed the killings when they were passed over for promotions or stripped of rank for drinking too much or missing formations. In early 2014, Gray was hospitalized for alcohol withdrawal and put on suicide watch. He had been drinking a half-gallon of whiskey each night to fall asleep. "It was my off switch," he said. A few days into his hospital stay, when he was still dosed up on Valium, an officer visited him.

"Why are you like this?" the officer pressed. "They are just dead Afghans. Why do you care so much?"

The question infuriated Gray. Before the war crimes, he had believed he was helping Afghans and defending his country. "It's like you're this hardcore Christian and some entity drops from the ceiling and says it's a sham," he said. "That's how it was for me. I thought of the Army as this altruistic thing. I thought it was perfect and honorable. It pains me to tell you how stupid and naive I was. The Loranice stuff just broke my faith. ... And once you lose your values and your faith, the Army is just another job you hate."

■ ■ ■
When conservatives rushed to turn Loranice into a hero, McGuinness felt as though the last shreds of his integrity were under assault.

Former Lt. Col. Allen West, who had been relieved of command in 2003 for staging a mock execution of an Iraqi prisoner and was later elected to Congress in the tea party wave, blasted Loranice's conviction in a Washington Times op-ed as a product of the Army's "appalling" rules of engagement.

The rules were drafted by generals who worried that high civilian casualty rates were driving Afghans to support the Taliban. But West insisted that the rules put U.S. troops at undue risk and reflected President Barack Obama's "outrageous contempt for the military." West didn't respond to a request for comment.

Fox News' Hannity took up Loranice's case, calling the conviction a "national disgrace."

In 2014, McGuinness was out drinking with an Army friend, and when the friend went home, he stayed at the bar until he had downed enough booze to "sedate a rhino." 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 car. His closest friends from the unit — Zettel, Dallas Haggard and

Fjeldheim, the medic who saved his life — were at his bedside in York, Pa., during his final unconscious hours.

Ruhl's funeral there was heavy drinking, just like at Bragg, but now that many in the platoon were out of the Army and no longer had to worry about drug tests, there was also cocaine to numb the pain.

Wives traded tips about how to persuade their husbands to go to therapy and talked about hiding their guns when they grew too depressed.

Jared Ruhl — who came home from Afghanistan with orders for Hawaii and a promotion to sergeant but soon began skipping morning formation, was demoted twice to private first class and forced from the Army — complained to McGuinness that life at home felt empty. "Are you in therapy?" asked McGuinness, who was seeing a therapist and getting ready to start college at 33.

"I don't know if I can do it," Ruhl said.

"It can't make things worse," Zettel said.

A few months later Zettel, who had finished college and was commissioned as an officer, stopped in to see Ruhl at his home in Fort Wayne, Ind. Zettel was on his way to a leadership course for new Army officers in Missouri.

Ruhl's stepbrother told him that Ruhl had pulled a gun on a woman in a traffic dispute just days earlier. "Take his gun," Zettel advised Ruhl's stepbrother. "Take it apart and hide the pieces so that he can't get it." It was impossible, the stepbrother said. Ruhl took his gun everywhere. Ruhl confided to Zettel that there were days when he couldn't stop thinking about killing himself.

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"How are we going to fix this?" asked Zettel, who helped Ruhl sign up for counseling at a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital.

Before he could start, Ruhl pulled his gun on an acquaintance at a party. His stepbrother tried to wrestle it away and was fired upon, disarmed, severing Ruhl's femoral artery. He died before paramedics arrived.

Zettel came back for the funeral, then returned to Missouri to finish his five-month leadership course. Four years had passed since the war crimes, but the murders and their aftermath still seemed inescapable.

Six days after Trump was inaugurated as president, Hannity asked him in a White House interview about pardoning Lorraine. "He got 30 years," Hannity said incorrectly. "He was doing his job, protecting his team in Afghanistan."

"We're looking at a few of them," said Trump of the case.

In the months after his conviction, Lorraine had begun to receive support from United American Patriots, a nonprofit group that represents soldiers accused of war crimes. UAP helped Lorraine find new lawyers who claimed in an appeals court filing that they had uncovered evidence showing that the younger victim was "biometrically linked" to a roadside bomb blast that occurred before his death. The sole survivor, his son, said, took to Twitter attacks on U.S. forces after the Americans tried to kill him.

"The Afghan men were not civilian casualties ... but were actually combatant bombmakers who intended to harm or kill American soldiers," the lawyers wrote in the appeal.

In 2017, a military appeals court dismissed the biometric data as irrelevant because Lorraine had "no indications that the victims posed any threat at the time of the shootings." The judges found that the surviving victim's decision to join the Taliban after the platoon tried to kill him probably would have helped prosecutors by demonstrating "the direct impact on U.S. forces when the local population believe they are being indiscriminately killed."

But the biometric evidence and support from UAP helped Lorraine's mother and his legal team get on Trump's favorite television shows — "Fox & Friends" and "Hannity" — where they offered a new account of the killings that differed dramatically from the sworn testimony. In their telling, the motorcycle was stopped on the side of the road with its kickstand down, as testimony and photos from the trial demonstrated, but was speeding toward Lorraine and his men when he ordered them to fire.

"He's got to make a split-second decision in a war zone," Hannity said on his television show. "How did it get to the point where he got prosecuted for this?"

Hannity and a Fox News spokeswoman did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Zach Thomas, who had been standing just yards from Lorraine when he gave the order to fire, was driving to community col-

lege in 2017 when he heard Hannity talking about the Lorraine case on the radio.

"My blood just started boiling," he recalled.

Thomas had spent his last day in the Army testifying against his former platoon leader. He was just 18 when he left for Afghanistan, and like many in the unit, his return home had been difficult. He drank to blunt his PTSD and depression. His plan after the Army was to forget about Afghanistan and start a new life in his hometown of Crosby, Texas.

Thomas pulled over on the side of the road and looked up the number for Hannity's radio show in New York City on his cellphone.

"I'm a big fan, but y'all are being led the wrong way," he told a producer for the show. "This isn't some innocent guy."

A handful of other soldiers from the platoon did their best to counter Lorraine's story. Todd Fitzgerald, who was also standing near Lorraine when he ordered the killings, took to Reddit to defend the unit. He and several other soldiers spoke to The New York Times for a story that detailed the inaccuracies in Lorraine's defense. Fitzgerald, McGuinness and Gray were interviewed for a documentary about the case, "Leavenworth," that aired on the Starz Network.

In April 2018, the platoon suffered its fourth death since returning home when Nick Carson, 26, crashed his car late at night.

Carson had been with McGuinness in Afghanistan on the day of the killings, and like his squad leader had been threatened with war crimes charges.

Carson knew what his fixing to happen, but our platoon leader is making us all out to be murderers," he told his parents in a 2012 phone call from Afghanistan. "Just know, I am not a murderer."

Carson's mother and stepfather were at Fort Bragg a few months later when he returned from the war. "He got off that big plane, hugged us and cried and then he said, 'I love y'all but I need to be by myself. I just need to go,'" recalled his stepfather.

Carson stayed in the Army after the combat tour, but he struggled with PTSD, depression and anger. On the night of the car accident that killed him, Carson had been drinking and wasn't wearing a seat belt. His parents said he might have fallen asleep while driving. The platoon blamed the war crimes and the deployment.

In Afghanistan, the platoon had dubbed themselves the "Honey Badgers" after the fearless carnivore.

Right at home, they began to refer to themselves as "the cursed platoon."

On Oct. 23 at 2:44 a.m., Twist's wife, Emalyn, messaged Sgt. 1st Class Jose Morrissey, who had been Twist's team leader with the platoon in Afghanistan.

"James committed suicide tonight," she wrote from the hospital where the doctors were preparing to harvest his organs. "Could you let his other Army friends know. ... This is a ... living nightmare." It was the platoon's fifth death since returning home four years earlier.

Morrissey woke to the message at Fort Bragg and began sobbing. His soon-to-be ex-wife knew immediately that another member of the platoon was gone. His first call was to McGuinness, who was returning home from a late-night shift as a bouncer at a Fayetteville bar. The two began calling the rest of the platoon, which was scattered across the country.

The deaths had imbued them with a grim fatalism. "Who is it this time?" a few answered when they saw the 5 a.m. calls from Morrissey's phone.

"It's James," Morrissey said again and again.

At Fort Jackson, S.C., Zettel was administering a pre-dawn fitness test to recruits when he got the call. He punched a fence and rushed back to his office so the new soldiers wouldn't see him fall apart. Alone at his desk, Zettel thought about the steady stream of calls and texts Twist had sent him over the past five years, and he wondered if the messages were an indirect way of asking for help.

The hardest call was to Walley, the soldier Twist had dragged from the blast crater. "What's wrong?" his fiancée asked him when he got the call. "It's Twist," Walley told her. She tried to hug him, but he pushed her away. "I need to take this in alone," he said.

At the funeral, Walley spoke first for the platoon, rocking back and forth on his prosthetic leg. Walley was wounded a month before the murders, but they had affected him too. At times, he felt abandoned by those who had tried to distance themselves from the unit, his comrades and the war. "I have to wake up every single day and look in the mirror. Every single day I am hopping in a wheelchair," he often thought. "I don't get to forget."

In January 2016, he was drunk and despondent in his apartment outside Atlanta and accidentally fired his pistol through the ceiling and into the apartment above him. After the shooting, Walley cut back on his drinking and returned to college. He was just one semester from graduating.

He stared out at the packed and silent church.

"Twist would probably give me a little bit of crap right now for having not wrote a speech," he began. "But I figured I'd just tell a story. It's a little bit of a harsh story, but I think it needs to be told."

He took a breath and described the explosion and its aftermath. "My right leg was about 20 feet away. It was completely removed. My left leg, the tibia ripped through the [skin]; my foot was facing toward my butt," he said. His right arm was missing.

"Twist ended up coming through this cloudy haze," Walley continued. "He was the most selfless man I ever knew on this planet. He did not care if he died. He did not care if his limbs had to be ripped off. He didn't care. He just cared that his guys were OK."

The 1st Platoon soldiers were still filtering home from Twist's funeral when Pete Hegseth, a "Fox & Friends" co-anchor who had advocated on Lorraine's behalf, tweeted that Lorraine's pardon was "imminent."



BONNIE JO MOUNT/The Washington Post

"We kind of got betrayed," said Wade Zettel outside his home in Blythehood, S.C. "We were pegged as if we were like a rogue unit. Which we clearly weren't. It was kind of disheartening."

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

In Lorraine'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 Lorraine's arrival.

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

"This is a hometown hero's welcome," his cousin said from the back seat.

Lorraine 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 America!" Lorraine yelled. "God bless America!"

At his side was the head of UAP, the group that had worked to free him. Lorraine's case and the publicity helped the group boost annual donations by about 150%, from \$1.8 million in 2015 to more than \$4.5 million in 2018.

Lorraine, 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 craven "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 Lorraine 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.

In April, with the country locked down by the coronavirus, McGuinness arranged for a dozen of the guys from the platoon to get together for beers on

a video call. He and Walley were finishing up their last few college courses before they graduated. A couple of the soldiers and wives were expecting their first children. Two were in the early days of divorces.

An hour into the call almost everyone was drunk or stoned — except for the pregnant wives.

The troops talked about their plans for the future. Morrissey was just back from another tour in Afghanistan, where he mostly sat on base while the Afghans fought each other. "There's no war left there anymore," he said.

"What are you going to do when you retire?" McGuinness asked him.

"Let me finish, before you laugh," Morrissey replied. "I'm going to go to school to be a barber and open one of those high-end barber shops where you can get a drink, a real gentleman's haircut and shave with a straight razor."

Walley tried to talk, but everyone was talking over him. "No one listens to me," he joked. "Everyone just stares at the guy with two limbs." He and his fiancée were planning their wedding for the spring of 2021. They had reserved a mansion, "where we can fit the whole platoon," he said.

"Just tell me the day and I'll be there," McGuinness promised.

Zettel and his wife were expecting their first child Aug. 10. He was planning on leaving the Army for good in October.

The soldiers talked about the guys they had lost to suicide and self-destructive behavior. And they spoke briefly about Lorraine.

The soldiers shared tips about how to find a good therapist and promised to look out for one another so that there would be no more funerals.

"You guys mean everything to me," McGuinness said. "We have to do this more often. We have to look after each other. If you guys are hurting, hit me up. We can do this instead of just letting things fester."

He rose from his desk chair — a little wobbly from all the beer. It was 2:30 a.m., and they had been talking for more than four hours. "I love you a-holes," he said, and signed off the call.

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NATION

Gains: Job market still seeing historic numbers

FROM FRONT PAGE

The spike, centered primarily in the South and West, has led states such as California, Texas, Arizona and Florida to relocate or otherwise clamp down again on bars, restaurants, movie theaters, beaches and swimming pools, throwing some workers out of a job for a second time.

President Donald Trump said the jobs report shows the economy is "roaring back," although he acknowledged there are still areas where "we're putting out the flames" of the virus.

The job losses over the past two weeks will be reflected in the July unemployment report to be released in early August.

While the job market improved for a second consecutive month, the Labor Department report showed that the U.S. remains far short of regaining the colossal losses it suffered this spring. It has recouped roughly one-third of the 22 million jobs lost.

The reclosings are keeping layoffs elevated: The number of Americans who sought unemployment benefits fell only slightly last week to 1.47 million, according to a separate report. Though the weekly figure has declined steadily since peaking in March, it is still extraordinarily high by historic standards.



MARK LENNAN/AP

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

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 JPMorgan 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.

Kronos, which produces time management software, has found that in the past two weeks, growth in the number of shifts worked has slowed in the Southeast.

"The pace of recovery is starting to slow," said Dave Gilbertson, an executive at Kronos. "We are expecting to see more of a plateauing over the next couple of months."

McDonald's has paused its reopening efforts nationwide, and Apple is reclosing scores 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 or go to congress, in groups without fear of infection, restaurants, hotels and stores will lack enough customer demand to justify rehiring all their workers.

Stonewall Jackson statue removed from Richmond's Monument Avenue

By DENISE LAVOIE
AND ALAN SUDERMAN
Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Work crews wielding a crane, harnessed 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 po-

lice sparked a nationwide protest movement.

In most instances, state or local governments moved to take down monuments in response to impassioned demonstrators, but in a few cases — including several other Virginia Confederate statues — protesters toppled the figures themselves. Also this week, Mississippi retired the last state flag in the U.S. that included the Confederate battle emblem.

Confederate statues were erected decades after the Civil War, during the Jim Crow era, when states imposed new segregation laws, and during the "Lost Cause" movement, when historians and others tried to depict the South's rebellion as a fight to defend states' rights, not slavery. In Richmond, the first major monument — the Lee statue — was erected in 1890.

Work crews spent several hours Wednesday carefully attaching a harness to the massive Stonewall Jackson statue and using

power tools to detach it from its base. A crowd of several hundred people who had gathered to watch cheered as a crane lifted the figure of the general atop his horse into the air and set it aside.

"This is long overdue," said Brent Holmes, who is Black. "One down, many more to go."

Eli Swann, who has lived in Richmond for 24 years, said he felt "an overwhelming sense of gratitude" to witness the removal of the statue after he and others spent weeks demonstrating and calling for it and others to be taken down. He said that as a Black man, he found it offensive to have so many statues glorifying Confederate generals for "fighting against us."

"I've been out here since Day 1," Swann said. "We've been seeing the younger people out here, just coming and constantly marching and asking for change. And now, finally, the change is coming about."

Flatbed trucks and other equip-

ment were spotted Wednesday at several other monuments as well. The city has roughly a dozen Confederate statues on municipal land, including one of Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart. Stoney said it will take several days to remove them.

The mayor said he also is moving quickly because he is concerned that people could be hurt trying to take down the statues themselves. In Portsmouth last month, a man was seriously injured when protesters tried to pull down a Confederate statue.

"Failing to remove the statues now poses a severe, immediate and growing threat to public safety," he said, noting that hundreds of demonstrators have held protests in the city for 33 consecutive days.

Stoney said the removal of the statues is "long overdue" and sends a message that the city of Richmond — the onetime capital of the Confederacy — is no longer a place with symbols of oppres-

sion and white supremacy.

"Those statues stood high for over 100 years for a reason, and it was to intimidate and to show Black and brown people in this city who was in charge," Stoney said.

"I think the healing can now begin in the city of Richmond," he said.

Stoney's move came on the day a new state law took effect granting control of the monuments to the city. The law outlines a removal process that would take at most 60 days to unfold.

But during a City Council meeting Wednesday morning, the mayor balked as the council scheduled a special meeting for Thursday to formally vote on a resolution calling for the immediate removal of the statues.

"Today, I have the ability to do this through my emergency powers," Stoney said. "I think we need to act today."

Work crews arrived at the Jackson statue about an hour later.



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STARS AND STRIPES

WORLD

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



Putin

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.

The weeklong plebiscite was tarnished by widespread reports of pressure on voters and other irregularities, with independent election observers criticizing the voting procedure as having a complete lack of transparency and independent control.

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.



MYANMAR FIRE SERVICE DEPARTMENT/AP

Myanmar Fire Service Department rescuers carry a recovered body after a landslide in a jade mining area in Hpakant, Kachin state, northern Myanmar on Thursday.

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 that critics blame on the government's failure to take action against unsafe conditions.

The Ministry of Information said 123 bodies were recovered from the landslide in Hpakant, the center of the world's biggest and most lucrative jade mining industry. The most detailed estimate of Myanmar's jade industry 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 smothered by a wave of mud," said a statement from the Myanmar Fire Service Department, which coordinates rescues 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 struggle through heavy mud to retrieve bodies by wrapping them in the plastic sheets, which were hung on crossed wooden poles shouldered by the recovery teams.

Khin Maung Myint, a lawmaker from Hpakant, earlier said that in addition to the dead, 54 other people were injured and sent to hospitals. An unknown number of people were feared missing.

Social activists have complained that the profitability of jade mining has led businesses and the government 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.

Turkey has 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 ceasefire 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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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

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.

As part of the sting, undercover agents on Sunday and Monday pretended to be minors in a variety of text messages, social media and apps.

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 apartments 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 3½ 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 3½ 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 falling 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-



GREG EANS, THE (OWENSBORO, KY.) MESSENGER-INQUIRER/AP

Pickin' and grinnin'

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

ter said the magnitude 3.6 earthquake struck shortly before 3 p.m.

Residents who compost in their yards will still be allowed to throw away meat and bones in the trash.

Officials said this is an aftershock from the magnitude 7.1 quake that caused widespread damage in November 2018.

Man admits using drone for delivery to prison

NE LINCOLN — A Nebraska man accused of using a drone to try to deliver marijuana and tobacco to Lincoln Correctional Center pleaded no contest Tuesday to the charges.

Robert M. Kinser, 38, of Lincoln, faces up to four years in prison at his August sentencing. He entered the pleas to charges of attempted delivery of marijuana and attempted conveyance of an article to an inmate, the Lincoln Journal Star reported.

An inmate on a work detail in February 2018 found a crashed drone and two white bags on prison grounds adjacent to the prison, Deputy Lancaster County Attorney Jeff Mathers said. One bag contained 17.5 grams of marijuana, the other had tobacco and rolling papers.

The Nebraska State Patrol's computer crimes division was able to pull digital photos, video clips and metadata from the drone's SD card, which led to a demolition site in Beatrice where

THE CENSUS

600

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 being placed around Blaine, Custer and Bellingham 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 largest. 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.

Kinser works.

Family saves bear with head stuck in container

WI BLOOMER — A Wisconsin family helped save a young bear that was struggling to breathe while swimming in a lake with its head caught in a plastic food container.

Tricia and Brian Hurt and their son, Brady, were fishing Saturday on Marsh Miller Lake in western Wisconsin's Chippewa County when they came across what they first thought was a swimming dog. They soon realized, though, that it was a young bear with a clear plastic cheese ball container stuck on its head.

Their first attempt to pull the tub off the bear's head failed, but another try was successful. They captured the rescue on video.

"That was the thing I remember most, is that bear panting heavily, trying to get air. Can you imagine having that down in the water, it sealed it off so it couldn't get fresh air into that jug?" said

Brian Hurt.

The Hurts then went to a nearby resort, where some people had watched the rescue and told them the bear had been that way for at least a few days. Locals had been trying to figure out how get the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to help it.

Brian Hurt estimated the bear was a year old and likely still with its mother.

Man who spiked ex's tea with meth gets 3 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 home. 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 Mullins' actions could have been disastrous 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 Sheriff's Office says deputies responded Tuesday afternoon to reports of a man shooting a handgun in the air near Davenport.

Soon after, the same man allegedly 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 further incident.

No injuries were reported.

From wire reports

WEEKEND

COUNTRY'S RACIAL RECKONING

PAGE 20



WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS



DANIEL CONSTANCE, DREAMSTIME/TNS

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

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 was about to beat white privilege. Blume, a 29-year-old DJ from Greenwich, Conn., has produced beats for some of the biggest rappers in the game, including Vince Staples, Freddie Gibbs and JPEGMAFIA, under the pseudonym Kenny Beatz. 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, by saying he was in a foul mood. He then responded to a viewer question about the Minnesota Freedom Fund, a nonprofit organization that bails out low-income people from jail. Blume urged his viewers to donate. "A lot of us who grew up poor have white privilege," he said. "I'm trying to normalize the idea of talking about this."

Such outpourings, often in response to questions from fans, have earned Blume a large and growing following on Twitch, the most popular service for live streaming in the U.S. Since starting his Twitch channel in March, Blume has amassed more than 100,000 followers. Every time he goes live, thousands of people tune in to hear him talk about his artistic process and to observe how he interacts with musicians and fellow producers.

Long an afterthought to YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, Twitch has emerged recently as an effective way for musicians to interact with fans during the coronavirus pandemic. Established DJs like Diplo and Sofi Tukker now post to the site multiple times per week, while a growing number of up-and-coming musicians have embraced Twitch as a way to build up a fan base.

"I don't think we've ever experienced quite this large a growth in following as we have in the last 78 days," said Sophie Hawley-Weld, one-half of electronic duo Sofi Tukker. She and Tucker Halpern have streamed live on Twitch nearly 100 days in a row.

What YouTube is for music videos, Instagram for photos and TikTok is for memes, Twitch is becoming for live performance and conversations. In May, people spent almost 27 million hours watching live music and other performing arts on Twitch, according to StreamElements, more than five times January's total. And music is now one

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 Blume's manager Mike Power. "I don't think there's ever been a better way to connect with fans and have fans be in a position to support you."

GADGET WATCH

Smart lock technology perfected

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

A door lock has two main features: opening and closing. Locky, a leader in manufacturing the world's most advanced smart lock, let me give the Secure Pro Lock 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 Locky supplied are written in a clear step-by-step, easy-to-understand format. You will also need the free Locky app, which does require a security confirmation passcode during setup.



LOCKY/TNS

The Locky Secure Pro Lock

I set out to see how long it would take my wife and me to get the old lock off and install the Locky. 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 hardware installed. This included removing the old one and using the existing hole cut in my door and frame for the Locky, 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 inside of the old-fashioned way, with the supplied keys.

Next, we set up the secure link Wi-Fi hub with the Locky app (iOS and Android), which does require 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 to talk with Alexa and other control features of the Locky. The hub is small and plugs directly into any wall outlet within 10 feet of the lock for best performance.

The Locky Secure Pro offers several ways to open the lock: keyless with the app, combination, fingerprint, send a single-use key to someone else (like a repair person) 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 four 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 had to have to dry them a few times. But

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 on the reader, and you'll 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 prevent lifted fingerprints from being used.

Next was Alexa (or Google Assistant), which also runs 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 one in particular I liked and adjusted within the app was the auto-lock timer. The default setting has it lock instantly when you close the door. Instead, I had it lock after the door was closed for five minutes. You can have it totally disabled, but you'll have 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: locky.com; \$299.99

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.

(iStock/Stars and Stripes illustration)

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW



"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](https://www.stripes.com/go/outpostmovie)



Caleb Landry Jones

'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

■ "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

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 jarringly 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



Screen Media Films photos

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

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

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Playing for change

Country music reckons with racial stereotypes, radio play and its future



Rissi Palmer says she was pressured to remove a reference to being Black from her debut single, "Country Girl," in 2007, and was subjected to tone-deaf commentary from reviewers and online trolls ignorant of Black artists' history in country music back to its roots.

CHRIS CHARLES/AP

By KRISTIN M. HALL

Associated Press

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 and 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 an unflinching 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



From top: Darius Rucker, Jimmie Allen and Kane Brown all have had No. 1 country hits recently.

AP photos

Above: Rhiannon Giddens received a MacArthur Foundation grant for her work to reclaim Black contributions to country and folk music.

Red Light Management



"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."

Breland

Atlanta-based country rapper, on his song "My Truck"

PAUL R. GIUNTA, INVISION/AP

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

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.

Grammy-winner Colbie Caillat — known for effervescent pop hits including "Bubbly" and "Realize" — joins Justin Kawika 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 three years while Caillat and Young dated for a decade before calling it quits this year. The four songwriters and performers have worked together and complement each other effortlessly, like a country Fleetwood Mac.

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 Vince Gill making a guitar cameo, and "Knew You" has a reggae vibe.

Another highlight is a reworking of a Caillat deep cut — "I've Never Getting Over You," 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 power 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 say hello to what's on the other side," 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 powerfully 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.

Opener "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."

Scott-Heron'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.

"Who'll Pay Reparations on My Soul?" draws power from its harsh questions and all-too-familiar life story, while "Must Be Something" features Jackson as one of three vocalists, their singing the best part of a great arrangement.

Raheem DeVaughn puts some very touching Marvin Gaye-like vocals on "A Toast to the People" and Jackson plays a Grandmother Moog on "Winter in America," another classic he co-wrote with Scott-Heron.

"Carry Me Home" is a true labor of love that respectfully but bravely reimagine a selection of great songs while placing a much-deserved spotlight on a pair of pioneers whose messages continue to ring too true.

— Pablo Gorondi
Associated Press



Nick Lowe

Lay It On Me (Yep Roc Records)

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 weaving.

"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.

— Scott Bauer
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. There they set up their Weirdo Workshop artist collective and have worked with Jimmie Allen and noted author/poet Caroline Randall Williams.

"We knew that if we were to make our mark in this town as musicians as Black musicians that playing the Grand Ole Opry would be the pinnacle for that," Harmony said.

They got a standing ovation at the Opry, but more importantly for Harmony, he wanted the audience to learn about country music's roots.

"I just wanted their unbiased, undivided attention, so that they can make the correlation between the music that they came to see and the music that we make as Black people," Harmony said.

Both the Academy of Country Music and the Country Music Association started diversity task forces more than a year ago when country music was being criticized for a lack of female voices and women were being left out of major categories like entertainer of the year.

Becky Gardenhire, a top executive at talent agency WME in Nashville who leads ACM's diversity task force, said they are looking at ways to recruit and retain diverse voices, both in the boardroom and on the stage, with efforts like mentorships, networking and outreach to build up a pipeline of future leaders and artists.

"We're hungry for diversity. We want the candidates to come and knock on the door, but we have to also show them



Charley Pride, pictured in 1975, was the Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year in 1971 and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2000.

that the door is open for them," said Damon Whiteside, CEO of ACM.

But just as country artists outwardly reflect a predominantly white image, there are few Black country music executives working behind the scenes. Candice Watkins got one of her first big breaks in country music working as the day-of-day manager for Keith Urban between 2009 and 2011.

"That changed my life because obviously he's a superstar," said Watkins, who is now the vice president for marketing for Big Loud Records, whose roster includes Jake Owen and Morgan Wallen.

But in that manager's role, she realized that she was often the only Black person at the boardroom table. 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.

"How is a young A&R person empowered to come back to the table and maybe pitch a Black artist or person of color? Culturally speaking, do they feel free to do that, or do they automatically know this is dangerous ground for them to even bring up?" Watkins said. "There's a dismantling of culture that needs to happen."

Palmer, who is recording a podcast that focuses on the experiences of women of color in country music, said she feels optimistic that the current discussions about race and country music can lead to progress, if real changes are implemented.

"I love country music, always have, always will. It's healing music. It's beautiful music at its core. It's heartfelt. It's spiritual," Palmer said. "And it would be a shame if not everybody got to enjoy it because of the outward package."

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/AP



WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Destructive Creations

MEDIEVAL MAYHEM

Brutal Ancestors Legacy marks the return of strategy games to consoles

By BRIAN BOWERS
Stars and Stripes

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'll guide heroes as they skulk 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 consoles is the control system. Taps on a few keys and a quick bit of mousing are usually pref-

erable 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



Overall grade:

B-

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

Aged to perfection

Eberbach Monastery winery in the hills near the Rhine has thrived since the Middle Ages

By DAVID EDGE
Stars and Stripes

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.

edge.david@stripes.com
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PHOTOS BY DAVID EDGE/Stars and Stripes

The Eberbach Monastery, which includes a vineyard, is just outside of Eltville, Germany. The monastery was founded in 1136.



One of the 12 original wine presses is exhibited in a dining room.



Above: The abbey at the Eberbach Monastery. Left: Old wine barrels left outside attest to the monastery's industry.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Address: D-65346 Eltville am Rhein, Germany

TIMES

Monday through Friday
10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday
and Sunday 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

COSTS

Entrance fee per adult is 9.50 euros; group prices vary. Individual tours with wine tasting range from 16.50 to 24.90 euros.

INFORMATION

Email: klosterkasse@kloster-eberbach.de
Online: kloster-eberbach.de/en/eberbach-monastery

— David Edge

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

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 grand libraries is 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 older Duke Humfrey's 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 space is so atmospheric, it served as Hogwarts' library in the Harry Potter films. (Duke Humfrey's Library is viewable only on a popular guided tour — book in advance.)

The Weston Library, a more modern wing of the Bodleian, welcomes visitors to enjoy a gallery showcasing a changing selection of its most precious items, including a Shakespeare First Folio (16 plays from 1623), an original score of Handel's Messiah (written in 1741), and several original versions of the 1215 Magna Carta

— the first legal document to set limits on a ruler's power and the basis of many modern constitutions.

Many of Europe's oldest universities have equally fascinating libraries, such as the architecturally glorious Wren Library at Cambridge's Trinity College, the grand Baroque King Joao's Library at Coimbra University in central Portugal, and the library at Dublin's Trinity College, which holds the magnificent Book of Kells.



Rick Steves

The Treasures gallery of the British Library in London is packed with intriguing artifacts. The sheer size of the massive collection is impressive enough, with nearly 300 miles of shelving holding more than 12 million books. But the Treasures room is the reason to visit, with its original ancient maps, illuminated Gospels on parchment, the Gutenberg Bible, precious musical manuscripts, Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and handwritten Beatles lyrics. The only known manuscript of the epic saga Beowulf (AD 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, swirling script and his famous backwards handwriting. Depending on what's on display during your visit, you may see letters by Henry



Rick Steves

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

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 filled with 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 gilded, locked case. Only the abbot had the key, and you needed his blessing to open it. Pondering these treasured volumes, I'm reminded of the importance of free access to information.

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.

Best places come alive through great guiding

In this year's absence of festivals or events, the surroundings themselves are bound to take center stage. As Europe's once bustling tourist hotspots cautiously reopen to visitors already living in the European Union, enlisting the help of a passionate local to show you around his or her favorite places is a great way to ensure you don't miss a beat.

While official tourism entities can be helpful in finding a guide, several online platforms can connect enthusiastic amateur tour leaders with visitors who share their passions, promising meaningful interaction for all involved. It's worth checking guide ratings left by previous tour takers, as well as whether tours are offered consistently by just one person or a team. Should the company you decide to book with have its own website, bear in mind that direct bookings are generally more profitable for the provider, as there's no middle-man waiting to take a cut.

Here's a look at a few tours that garner rave reviews, and some of the platforms out there designed to help you to find the guide just right for you:

The online tour and experience company Viator was acquired by TripAdvisor in 2014, meaning that when you research things to do in a given location on the Trip Advisor website, a variety of tours offered through



Karen Bradbury

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

this platform come up.

Pintoxos in San Sebastian, Spain: This city in the Basque Country prides itself on its vibrant festival culture throughout the year and its food and drink culture. This region's answer to the tapa, a little snack to accompany a beverage, is the pintxo, and numerous companies offer tours of the bars and restaurants serving these bite-sized delights.

A popular tour bookable through Viator is the San Sebastian Pintxo Tour with Wine. This evening outing offered by the MIMO Cooking School skips the tourist traps while exploring the winding streets of the atmospheric Old Town, stopping in at places favored by locals to sample pintoxos alongside wine or cider. A three-hour tour with a maximum of 10 participants is about \$145 per person. Online: tinyurl.com/ydhcz8xs

Airbnb started out by providing a means for individuals to rent out a room in their homes or other shareable spaces, and in 2016, it expanded its offerings into the realm of experiences. In June of 2019, the website added an "adventures" category, although these types of tours remain on a Coronavirus-related hold for the time being.

Tarantella tour in Naples, Italy: Learn about a form of folk music known as Tarantella, characterized by an upbeat tempo and sounds of the tambourine and accompanied by dance. Licensed tour leader Salvatore and Neapolitan singer and dancer Enzo have teamed up to offer a three-hour tour of Naples' historical core and its music.

After setting off from alongside the Greek walls in Bellini square, you will walk along via San Gregorio Armeno, famous for its workshops in which the figures populating a creche are carved into life, and visit the majestic Cathedral of Naples, all the while learning about the traditions and legends of this city of contrasts. The soundtrack to this tour is the very music that's so popular throughout the Campania region. Tours cost \$41 per person. Online: tinyurl.com/ydydscpvz

With Locals is a tour company with a website that helps travelers connect with guides in specific areas of interest and expertise for one-on-one experiences, from cycling to partying until dawn.



iStock

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/y7bfmnyg

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.

Villages of the area around Mulhouse, France: After retiring from his career as a chemist, Christian Coulon grew interested in the nature, history and patrimony of his beautiful corner of the world. His tours lead visitors to architectural gems including half-timbered houses and disused factories, or to natural spots from vineyards to orchards to scenic viewpoints. He also offers tours of Mulhouse's charming historical center. Online: tinyurl.com/yvc3upsv

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 and face forward. Its tour leaders offer visitors the chance to try this time-honored means of getting around. A 90-minute private lesson in a handcrafted wooden vessel known as a batellina is 85 euros for one or two individuals. Other tours offered by the company include the Cicchetto Row, in which fans of fine food and wine use their newly acquired skills to propel themselves to two separate bacari wine bars; or the Row the Grand Canal experience, offered after 8 p.m. and Sundays, once the action on the heavily trafficked waterway has died down. Online: rowvenice.org

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



PHOTOS BY BRIAN FERGUSON/Stars and Stripes

Klag's saddle of lamb with herb crust comes with fried potatoes and green beans and was tender and juicy and well worth the price.

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



**AFTER
HOURS
GERMANY**

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

KLAG'S RESTAURANT

Address: Am Fuerstengrab 12A, 67688 Rodenbach
Hours: Wednesday-Sunday lunch 11:30 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
Menu: German only
Information: Phone: 06374 805777; website: klags.de

— Brian Ferguson



The Klag's restaurant Thursday lunch special of chicken cordon bleu comes with fries and a salad for 8.50 euros.



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

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.

ferguson.brian@stripes.com
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Clean those grimy, easily ignored spots in your kitchen

BY BECKY KRIVSTAL
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 cleaning regimen.

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 ex-

posed area with disinfectant 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 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 use it.

Gaps between the stove and counters.

"Drips and splatter love to fall down the sides of the stove, making those gullies a gross receptacle for rotting food bits that generates odors and attracts infestations," Homer says. "To clean it, dampen a microfiber towel with disinfectant all-

purpose cleaner. Hold it out taut by the corners with two hands and run it through the cracks on each side of the stove every 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.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

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 contemplating 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 semiregular 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, food, wine, a portable battery pack to charge my phone and a gallon of water.

It's impossible to count everything you can buy to go camping. There is gear galore, and it's all cool. There were 30 things I could have purchased at Target alone that would have made for a better camping experience, but I was already anxious about spending nearly \$150 on the tent and sleeping bag combo, plus I was going to be carrying it all by bike. So I kept the new gear to the bare minimum and headed home to pack.

Staring at my backpack, I remembered that an REI camping expert had told me a week ago that you should pack warm clothes even if you're camping somewhere that's hot during the day. I bundled layers into a packing cube that could also double as a pillow at night. This would be my only source of sleeping comfort, as I hadn't wanted to spend more money on a sleeping pad — another item that had been strongly recommended.

My other contactless travel essentials included: a bike tire pump, 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 campsite, 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.

Now to put those new skills to use. Except that my starter was hibernating in the fridge.

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



From top: Writer Natalie B. Compton bikes to the campsite during her attempt at a minimal-risk, solo overnight outing; an idyllic view outside her tent despite a rough night of sleep; among Compton's food supplies: Grapefruit, raisins, peanut butter and Vietnamese coffee in a water bottle.

PHOTOS BY
NATALIE B. COMPTON
The Washington Post



WEEKEND: TRAVEL

FROM PAGE 26

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. Forgoing 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 contactful.

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.

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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific

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 Akigawa 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.

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PHOTOS BY THERON GODBOLD/Stars and Stripes

The Rokuya Daibutsu at the Hokoji Shrine in Hinode, Japan, can be seen through the trees and appears to be sitting peacefully on the mountainside.



A path lined with sculptures leads to a large gate in front of the temple.

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

The Rokuya Daibutsu at Hokoji in Hinode, Japan, sits about three feet taller than its more famous counterpart in Kamakura.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific



PHOTOS BY THERON GODBOLD/Stars and Stripes

Visitors from Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo enjoy tea time at the nearby Rose Town Tea Garden.



Savory options at Rose Town Tea Garden include cucumber sandwiches and croissants stuffed with pastrami, pimento and tomato, which are served next to a steaming cup of tea.

ROSE TOWN TEA GARDEN

Location: 1-Chome 112 Futamatao, Ome, Tokyo 198-0171

Directions: Google GPS code is Q6RH+C6 Ome, Tokyo

Hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; closed Sunday and Monday.

Prices: Start at \$11 for a children's set to \$26 for the Princess Heather set
Dress: Casual
Information: Phone: 080-4187-1720; online: rose-townjapan.com

— Theron Godbold

Fancy a spot of tea?

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

BY THERON GODBOLD
Stars and Stripes

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 is nestled in trees with the sounds of the rushing Tama River below.

This quaint restaurant in Ome



AFTER
HOURS
JAPAN

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 prices drop as you work down the menu from the Princess Heather; each set differs by subtracting one or two items, but all sets are served with a pot of hot tea.

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Diners at Rose Town Tea Garden are treated to classical music set against a backdrop of the sounds of nature and a gorgeous view of the Tama River in Ome, Japan.



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.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

ROAD TRIP!

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 fridge 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 IntelTravel, 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 trailers have a hitch connection 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.

Parking

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, Escapees 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.

iStock



WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE



ILLUSTRATION BY NOGA AMIRAV/Stars and Stripes

Paste it, and it may come

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 and toward a brighter future? The answer seems to be yes, if we're using them in the right way.

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 happi-

ness 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.

Morin, who has written critically of vision-boarding, says that "when you put an item on your vision board, your brain reacts as though you've already gotten it — you imagine yourself across the finish line." The result is that vision boards can actually make us less motivated to strive to achieve our goals.

Another drawback to vision boards

is that they can reinforce the idea that manifesting your dreams will solve all your problems. Research has found an association between depression and the belief that attaining a certain level of prestige or acquiring certain belongings will bring happiness, according to 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." So, if there's a big bag of money on your vision board, not only are you less likely to do anything to acquire the cash, you're emotionally poorer for desiring it.

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.

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Rare sighting

Minority bird-watchers, outdoors enthusiasts say racial issues affect how they connect with nature



PHOTOS BY JACQUELINE LARMA/AP

Keith Russell, program manager for urban conservation at Audubon Pennsylvania, conducts a breeding bird census June 5 at Wissahickon Valley Park in Philadelphia.

BY TERRY TANG
Associated Press

Jason Ward fell in love with birds at age 14 when he spotted a peregrine 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. Butting 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 trembling, 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 has 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 backpacked 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 anything 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 conserva-

tion 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 bird-watching 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."

WEEKEND: BOOKS

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 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 downward slope of the book when the quarantine started,” said Whitehead during a recent phone interview. “For the first eight weeks, most of the time was spent looking after the kids, making sure the Wi-Fi was on so they could do their schooling. Then I finished the draft of the book — not sure how it happened. You just have to find the time and not get too distracted to do the final leg of the book.”

Whitehead, 50, has been staying in “Zone One,” published in 2011, is speculative fiction that depicts a pandemic-stricken 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.

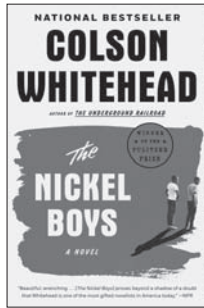
“The Nickel Boys” stays closer to the facts: It’s based on a notorious Florida boarding school from the Jim Crow era that brutalized and sometimes murdered the kids sent there. One protagonist is a promising teenager who lands in the Nickel school after being accused of a crime he didn’t commit.

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 fantastic fiction and loved how you could make possible whatever weird idea you had in your head. Your taking your eccentric ideas and trying to convince the reader that they’re plausible.”

How real life sometimes reminds 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 pan-

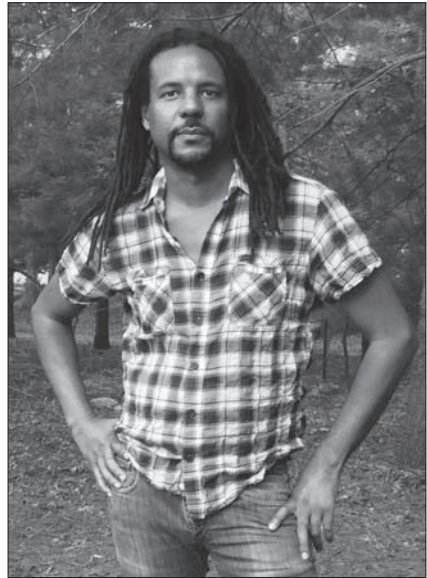


demia) and I felt the same thing after the hurricane (Sandy) a few years ago, when lower Manhattan was blacked out. It was like walking through ‘Zone One.’ And now it’s real and it’s more scary than I thought.”

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 who I was in 2011, and in order to keep that inner voice, I had to impersonate who I had been two years before. When I look back through all my work... I think who I was at the time is always determining how the books turn 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



MADLINE WHITEHEAD, DOUBLEDAY/AP

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.

other day it seemed there was a case of police brutality and we’d have this conversation about what 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 sinner 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 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One way that activists in the Black Lives Matter demonstrations have encouraged their fellow Americans to educate themselves and their children about the Black experience is to purchase books from these Black-focused and -owned bookstores. They remain a crucial presence in the communities they serve, as well as a lifeline for the authors they support. Though many have been closed due to the coronavirus, their books remain available for purchase online.

“At a time like this it’s especially vital for everyone to support these bookstores because relationships are going to be essential for bridging the gaps in communication and understanding between people of different racial backgrounds,” says Mijha Godfrey, co-owner of Jambo Books. “Great relationships can be fomented in bookstores through clubs and spontaneous

conversations with people connecting over a shared love of reading.”

Bloomberg reached out to Black-owned independent bookstore owners across the U.S. to ask their owners if they would provide a recommendation for one (relatively) new book that excites them and for a favorite classic title.

Jeaninne Cook, owner of Harriett’s Bookshop in Philadelphia, recommends

“Such A Fun Age” by Kiley Reid. The story of a 25-year-old Black babysitter for a white family “addresses the intersections of race and class, motherhood, activism, racial profiling, labor, and law,” says Cook.

Her personal favorite is “Beloved” by Toni Morrison. “I read it at 19. I was a young pregnant sophomore in college, and the idea of a mother choosing to kill her child rather than have it experience slavery was jarring and scary and powerful. It was written by a literary genius who reminds us that ‘We are our own best thing.’

Jambo Books is a subscription service that, every month, sends two books that

feature a child of color as the star. For these in the 5- to 9-year-old range, co-owner Godfrey recommends “Rocket Says Look Up!” by Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adoola. “A meteor shower is coming,” she says of the book’s plot, “and Rocket wages a one-girl war against a world with its nose stuck in its phones, so her family and neighbors can witness a meteor shower and experience the thrill of watching

the heavens put on a display.” It allows her, Godfrey says, “to be transported from the minutiae of our daily existence into something transcendental.”

Instead of focusing on just one author, Godfrey recommends the classic collection “Black Voices: An Anthology of African

American Literature.” She describes it as “a broad overview of Black American literature that provides a window into the souls of the people who struggled for freedom, from America’s inception through the Civil Rights Movement.”

Janifer Wilson, the founder and president of Sister’s Uptown Bookstore in Manhattan, suggests “Conversations in

Black: On Power, Politics, and Leadership,” which features contributions from the likes of Stacey Abrams and Harry Belafonte, Eric Holder and Michael “Killer Mike” Render. “Conversations in Black” brings together prominent voices in Black America to address many of the topics we face today,” says Wilson, “including one central question: What should the future of black leadership look like? And just as

important, it offers a compelling road map for the future of Black excellence.”

Her choice for an all-time classic is “The Souls of Black Folk” by W.E.B. DuBois. “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 plights of the Black community.”



WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT

The revolution comes again

By JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Lin-Manuel Miranda likes to picture the millionaire, Mr. Howard, from "Gilligan'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 with most of 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" than ever 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 shutdown will continue 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.

"That was a big reason we pushed up the release," says Miranda of the film originally set to open in theaters in October 2021. "We need a reminder of how magical live theater is."

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 supervised the stage show, dispersed 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" was 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 resonated differently at different times.

Now, the "Rise up!" verses of "My Shot" will sound to many like they're channeling the protest spirit that has swept across the country since the death of George Floyd. "Hamilton" remains a story of revolution—a triumph 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 Hamilton saying there's nothing calm about what's happening. 'The revolution is coming,' Hamilton 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

Miranda, Kail on bringing 'Hamilton' to the screen

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 out there—somewhere, 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 or 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."

"Hamilton" creator Lin-Manuel Miranda, left, and director Thomas Kail.

INVISION/AP

'Hamilton's' leap from stage to Disney Plus shows how brilliant the show really is

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 the outlay. One of the few consistent knocks on Lin-Manuel Miranda's Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-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 \$699 a month to become, at last, a truly populist piece of entertainment.

Filmed theater inevitably loses



Disney Plus/AP

Daveed Diggs, center, portrays Thomas Jefferson in a filmed version of the original Broadway production of "Hamilton."

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- seeching your eye and your approval. 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 foot- age 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 thrall of the stage. The head of conductor-orchestrator 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, the production's Angelica Schuyler, wiping away tears at the tumultuous curtain call.

The added advantage for a viewer is a camera that can step in 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 Hap-

pens." Andy Blankenbuehler's choreography, an amalgam of military, 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 joyful 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 chockablock with volatile personalities is the origin story of our shared American birthright. 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.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

“Trolls World Tour”: Its theatrical release an early victim of the pandemic, Universal offered “Trolls World Tour” as a digital rental in April, which the studio said broke records as its biggest debut for an original digital release. The colorful animated family flick reunites the main characters from 2016’s “Trolls,” as Queen Poppy (voiced by Anna Kendrick) and Branch (Justin Timberlake) once again set off to save the kingdom.

This time the threat comes from the Queen of the Hard Rock Trolls (Rachel Bloom), who aims to take over all the Troll kingdoms, each of which represent a different musical genre.

As Poppy and the gang witness the ravaged Symphonyville and later become imprisoned in Lonesome Flats, Cooper (Ron Funches) embarks on a quest to find trolls that look like him and is found to be royalty in the Funk kingdom.

Eventually the threat becomes an existential one. What happens when one tribe wants total domination: Is it better to have separate tribes in separate kingdoms, or does the Troll universe achieve harmony in coexistence?

It’s a nice, especially timely message for kids and parents, though a clunky one at times via the script. The Queen of the Hard Rock Trolls eventually reckons with the fact that forcing the homogeneity of hard rock on all the kingdoms makes it impossible to be unique.

Also available on DVD: **“Belzebuth”**: After losing a child to a hospital killing spree, a detective (Joaquin Cosío) teams up with an uncommunicated priest (Tobin Bell) to investigate the mysterious deaths of children on the U.S.-Mexico border. In Spanish and English.

“Blood and Money”: A retired veteran (Tom Berenger) makes a startling discovery while hunting in rural Maine.

“Hope Gap”: A woman (Annette Bening) struggles to find her independence after her longtime husband (Bill Nighy) leaves.

“The Lost Husband”: A widow (Leslie Bibb) moves her family to an estranged relative’s Texas farm.

“Murdoch Mysteries, Season 13”: The Canadian detective series set for the turn of the 20th century continues.

“Proximity”: A NASA scientist (Ryan Masson) becomes obsessed with proving that he was abducted by aliens.

“Slay the Dragon”: This documentary examines gerrymandering in the U.S.

“Sorry We Missed You”: A delivery driver (Kris Hitchen) and his family struggle to financially survive in the gig economy.

“Sweetness in the Belly”: After escaping from Ethiopia, an orphan (Dakota Fanning) works to reunite displaced immigrants with their families in England. In English, Amharic and Arabic.

“The Wild Geese Lake”: This neo-noir thriller follows a criminal on the run. Ge Hu, Lun-Mei Kwel and Fan Liao star. In Mandarin.

—Katie Foran-McHale/TNS



Martin Freeman, center, co-created the warts-and-all comedy “Breeders,” which premiered stateside on FX in March. Also pictured: Joanna Bacon (left) and Daisy Haggard.

FX/TNS

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 entree 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 likable and funny,” he says over a Zoom chat from his London home. “I like having that facility; it’s very useful. But like most actors, I’m greedy. I want to do as much as I can do.”

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 Benedict Cumberbatch-starring “Sherlock” (as Watson), the trilogy of “The Hobbit” (as the hobbit, Bilbo Baggins), the FX series “ Fargo” (as Lester Nygaard) and “Captain America: Civil War” and “Black Panther” in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (he says “Panther” director Ryan Coogler has confirmed he’ll be in the sequel).

And this season, he’s got two television shows available in America: The warts-and-all parenting comedy “Breeders,” which hit FX in March, and the true-crime miniseries “A Confession,” available through the BritBox streaming service. He’s not exactly sweet or heroic in either.

“There are lots of comedies about parenting and family, obviously,” he says of “Breeders,” which he co-created. “But there weren’t any that I had seen that showed what happens when you lose your temper

with your kids, when you actually do that. When you do it for real, you don’t get, ‘I’ve told you a thousand times to stop that,’ at least not in my house, or in anybody’s house, when you scratch away and get to the truth.”

He continued, “I was interested in how far we could go down that line and for it to still be funny and for the characters to still be people you root for. They’re not abusive; they’re not horrible people. They love their kids and are ostensibly a pretty happy, functional family. But within that, we’re showing the underside. I haven’t seen this tone in this context on television before.”

The show’s first scene has Freeman’s Paul losing it in front of his kids, and not in PG fashion. Freeman says that moment came to him in a dream.

“It’s pretty much verbatim. I woke up and thought, ‘This is part of a very, very dark comedy.’ The ridiculousness of people trying to talk themselves down from shouting at their kids, to be calm and chilled out, and you can’t fight it. By the time you open the door, you’re screaming obscenities at children.”

He says unapologetically depicting such moments “was part of our conversations from the start. You have to show this, or there’s really no point in doing it otherwise.”

In its bones, “Breeders” is a comedy, but there’s serious drama in its marrow as well. Freeman cites some of those very dark turns as his favorite moments on the show, though to discuss them here would be telling. In the same vein, “A Confession” is not your father’s true-crime miniseries — especially if your father is American.

“That had occurred to me, the difference between the U.S. and the U.K. — it’s a very

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.”

Freeman’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.”

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

CLOSE THE LID

Researchers say infectious diseases like COVID-19 could go airborne when you flush

By KARIN BRULLIARD
AND WILLIAM WAN
The Washington Post

Add 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 fluids at Yangzhou University in Yangzhou, China, said in an email. Bathroom-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 swirl 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 lasted 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

raises the prospect of transmission via toilets,

because many COVID-19 patients experience diarrhea or vomiting. A study of air samples in two hospitals in Wuhan, China, found that although coronavirus aerosols in isolation wards and ventilated patient rooms was very low, “it was higher in the toilet areas used by the patients.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it remains “unclear whether the virus found in feces may be capable of causing COVID-19,” and “there has not been any confirmed report of the virus spreading from feces to a person.” For now, the CDC characterizes the risk as low based on observations from previous outbreaks of other coronaviruses, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

Wang decided to use computer models to simulate toilet plumes while isolating at home, per Chinese government orders, and thinking about how a fluids research-

er “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 even greater energy, result in “massive upward transport of virus.” Particles can reach 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” while 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.

“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.”

WEEKEND: FAMILY

Celebrate the little victories

Completing small tasks helps ease the stress that comes with lockdown

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 our goals smaller than ever.

"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 king 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."

When Princeton, N.J., 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 to hang on to. On good days, one task might quickly become five.

It's about recognizing that our circumstances are harder now, and we need to give ourselves a break," says Kennedy-Moore, author of "Kids! Confidence, Help Your Child Make Friends, Build Resilience, and Develop Real Self-Esteem." "I don't think any of us are functioning at peak productivity."

Want some ideas for how to achieve your own small wins? Put this list on your fridge for when motivation strikes. Tackle one habit or task at a time.

Delegate one task

Parents need to identify what is getting on their nerves from everyone being at home. "What is causing Mom or Dad to feel at a breaking point?" asks Linda Diamond, a productivity and organizing expert in Georgia. "That's where we need to start." If Mom can't look at another dirty floor, it might be time to ask the kids to help mop the kitchen floor each night. "The more parents invite children into the process and let them know they trust their input, the more kids will take initiative and feel confident," she says.

Laugh

"Laughter diffuses stress and tension and connects us. It puts everything in perspective and helps you appreciate absurdity," Kennedy-Moore says. "Try to be ridiculous, do something wrong ... especially if you have little kids around; they love to laugh. With older kids or teenagers, you have to be careful, because you don't want to even come close to laughing at them."

Clear the table

"Whether it's the parents or the



iStock

Being a parent during COVID-19 lockdown can be overwhelming, but small accomplishments can help ease the stress.

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." She suggests a bin, or if you can't order bins online right now, a reusable grocery bag or a tote. Eizen uses a bin to gather her laptop, wireless mouse and keyboard, and then stores it in a cabinet. She also has a bin for her son's online work.

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.

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 will find 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 Boudreau, 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.

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.

Organize the junk drawer

"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."

Write up family recipes

If you're cooking every meal, every day, you're probably learning from 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.

Corral kids' clutter

Help kids find their own small organizing wins. If a child is an athlete and has a lot of medals, "swirl them around in a Mason jar," Eizen says. "Corral little things so they're not all 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 also might 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.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Perhaps not such a loner after all

Prior to writing this column, I had never taken a test like Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which has been used for decades in the military and other organizations to assess personality. I had always assumed I was an introvert, because over the course of 23 years as a Navy spouse, I spent so much time by myself. I mistakenly thought my loner personality was the reason why it was difficult to make friends every time we PCSed.

Turns out, I was wrong. (That is, if you believe the results of the free Myers-Briggs knockoff test I took online today because I was too cheap to spend \$49.95 on the real thing.)

According to the test results, I'm 68% extroverted. Huh. I guess I don't prefer to be alone after all. The free preliminary report ("more detailed results are only a click and a payment away!") indicated that I intuitively seek out people, cooperation, friendships and social support.

Then why on Earth did I spend so much flipping time alone as a military spouse?

About three years into our marriage, my husband Francis, a young intelligence officer, was stationed at sleepers at RAF Moleworth, England. The U.S. military families living on base thrived socially, but we thought living on the economy would maximize our cultural experience. We moved into a house built in 1863 in the village of Ramsey, where our neighbors were polite and reserved, as the English tend to be.

While Francis stood long watches, I spent my days with our infant son, strolling to the alone baker, the butcher, the playground, the duck pond and Sainsbury's. The sun began to set at 4 p.m. at that latitude. Waiting for Francis to get home was agony. I craved adult contact so much, it hurt. When he was late coming home, I'd get so mad, I'd strap our baby into the stroller and walk the village streets in the dark, muttering to myself, "Let's see how HE likes it alone in the dark."

Even after making some friends, our remote location dictated that my days were endured without much contact with other adults. For three years, I became slave to my own solitary routines, mastering meal preparation, planning travel, researching and implementing home therapies for our son after he was diagnosed with autism. By the time we moved to Virginia Beach, Va., I'd become accustomed to being alone. I managed to make new friends, but I maintained a fairly solitary daily routine throughout Francis' many shore duties, deployments and travel assignments.

We moved overseas again in 2008, and again I had to make new friends. Our very social neighborhood on Patsburgs had a large park, a patio and a huge playground. Why was it so hard? Could I make new friends in my 40s? What was wrong with me?

Rather than face the challenge, I decided that I was a loner. That explained everything and gave me the excuse I needed to stop trying. To make matters worse, I started writing while we were stationed in Germany. While the other military spouses got to know each other on our shared patios, I was cooped up in our apartment, tapping away at the keys of my computer.

During subsequent tours in Florida and Rhode Island, I continued to use the loner excuse to avoid the difficult task of making new friends.

Essentially, I spent most of my adult life believing mistakenly that I was an introvert, when the real problem was that I was a military spouse. The reality is that finding new friends after each PCS move is not easy. There is instant camaraderie among military families, but finding friendship chemistry with other spouses can be hit or miss. It takes persistence, sincere effort and a thick skin.

Somewhat, I found friends at every duty station. Karen, Cindy and Di in California. Navarre, Jean, and Mabey in England. Natalie, Suz, Tina, and my bunco girls in Virginia. Erin and the patio crowd in Germany. Muffin and Tara in Florida. The whole gang in Rhode Island.

The knockoff personality test has confirmed the truth: I was never a loner, and I needed all of you all along.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

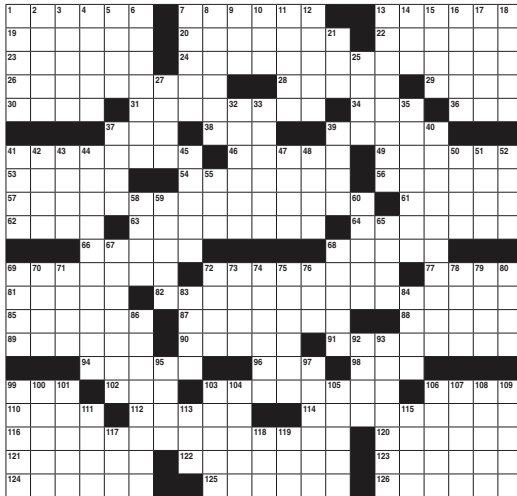
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

ANIMAL CROSSINGS

BY BYRON AND HARRISON WALDEN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Byron Walden is a math and computer science professor at Santa Clara University. Harrison is his 8-year-old son, who, with occasional assistance, has been doing crosswords for more than a year. The jokes in this puzzle's theme are a collaboration between the two. Byron spearheaded the fill — although the top right and lower left corners are completely Harrison's. The two wrote the clues together. — W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Fancy water pitcher
7 Cranks (out)
13 Iranian president Rouhani
19 National park near Bar Harbor
20 Shoulder-supported launcher
22 Go against
23 Put in another light
24 What do you get when you cross 26-Across with a 5-Down?
26 A group of them may be called a memory
28 Bestow
29 Not down so much?
30 Item that can be blown or thrown
31 Coastal-environment simulator at an aquarium
34 Onesie protector
36 Some Instagram-feed posts
37 Pool unit
38 Tokyo-to-Iwo Jima dir.
41 Symbols of watchfulness
46 Krispy ____
49 Musical tone below A
53 Rock climber's tool
54 Neighbors of Saudis
56 "Cheese" products?
- 57 What do you get when you cross 63-Across with a 45-Down?
61 Jungian feminine side
62 Not natural, say
63 Coop group
64 Dazed and confused
66 Went (against)
68 Caper
69 London theater district
72 Flatbread often garnished with rosemary
77 Creatures that can have two sets of jaws and teeth
81 Kind of squash
82 What do you get when you cross 77-Across with a 40-Down?
85 Begin dozing
87 Dandelion look-alike
88 Congregate to rest
89 Fill with love
90 ____ Malfoy, Harry Potter antagonist
91 Logs on to, say
94 Criticizes harshly
96 Tirana's country: Abbr.
99 Abe Lincoln's youngest son
102 ____ de los Muertos
103 Napoleonic symbol
106 "If all ____ fails ..."
110 Confess
112 Got to work
- 114 "____ in the Garden" (Robert Frost poem)
116 What do you get when you cross 114-Across with a 93-Down?
120 ____ 101, world's tallest building before the Burj Khalifa
121 Sporty Chevy
122 Picked (up)
123 Shaping wood using a curved blade
124 Get short with
125 Coldly determined
126 Direct
- DOWN**
- 1 Wasn't indifferent
2 D.C.-to-Boston transport
3 Novenomics, fast-moving snake
4 Get accustomed (to)
5 School group
6 Erode
7 "CSI" broadcaster
8 Spots on ships for anchor cables
9 Weapon used by the Terminator
10 CD-____
11 Aurelius, for Lucius Aurelius Commodus
12 Burrowing lizard
13 Spicy appetizer
14 When National Beer Day is celebrated: Abbr.
15 Tater
- 16 Gandhi of contemporary Indian politics
17 Queried
18 They might take a few swallows
21 Along with
25 Geographical locale whose name means "waterless place"
27 Back of the neck
32 "For shame!"
33 Make bubbly
35 Rice variety
37 Lex Luthor's sister
39 Classroom assignment
40 What's known for its poker face?
41 Take in the newspaper
42 ____ Sixx
43 Suffix with launder
44 Department stores since 1901
45 Ika, at a sushi bar
47 Ireland, poetically
48 Some lapel attachments
50 First letter of the Arabic alphabet
51 Do, ____ fa ...
52 Exam for collegebound H.S. students
55 "Mad Men" channel
58 Pest-control brand founded by Lee Ratner (!) in the 1950s
59 ____ Island
60 Segma mascot



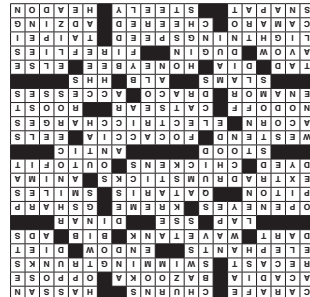
- 65 Home to Natural Bridges National Monument
67 1,000%
68 Ghana's capital
69 Lessen in power
70 Business class, for short
71 Pop
72 "Never ____!"
73 Prefix with -gon
74 M.R.I. alternative
75 Cactus bump
- 76 Org. with a classified budget
78 Many stars have big ones
79 ____majesté
80 Concordes et al.
83 Some HDTVs
84 Father of the Amazons, in Greek myth
86 "Sorry, Charlie"
92 "Moonstruck" Oscar winner
- 93 Smallest of the big cats
95 Home to the Hana Highway
97 Touchingly?
99 Soothing powders
100 Flighty?
101 Strongly held beliefs
103 Weather-forecast figures
104 Inception
105 Hen
- 106 "My Fair Lady" protagonist
107 Fatty acid, e.g.
108 "____ evil"
109 Endorse online
111 Striking sound
113 Big name in vitamins
115 Lessen in power
117 Singing syllable
118 16th letter
119 Palindromic preposition

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

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FACES

Working through the pain

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

By LOUISE DIXON
Associated Press

An accident requiring two screws in his ankle nearly prevented 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 an "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 movie, running and gunning, you gotta remember this dude has got a broken ankle and he's a bit of a stud. Just like his dad," he jokes. Eastwood, who portrays Staff Sgt. Clint Romesha, is the son of action-movie actor Clint Eastwood.

"The Outpost," which also stars Orlando Bloom and Caleb Landry Jones, follows the Battle of Kamdesh in Afghanistan in 2009. The Taliban attacked a remote American Combat Outpost, 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 in a war, but also 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."



SCREEN MEDIA/Associated Press

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

The movie is based on the book "The Outpost: An Untold Story of American Valor," by CNN journalist Jake Tapper.

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 has 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 that there did too, you know, to their own characters," Bloom said. "And it was, it was very sincere, you know ... There was a lot of heart in it."

■ Review of "The Outpost" on Page 19

Jones was encouraged to go for the role of Carter by his older brother, who serves in the Marines.

"He read it and you know a few hours then he said, Caleb, you're doing it. And I said, is it good? And he said, no, you don't understand. You're doing it."

Jones felt the added pressure of his brother and the real-life Carter being on the set, but that ultimately it added to the depth of his performance.

"To be able to look over and see him in the eyes and see him nod or see him shake his head or being able to look at Ty too and see that if I'm doing anything right at all by trying to convey this, I'm very honored," he said.

CNN sees best ratings in its 40-year history

By DAVID BAUDER
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 also had record-setting 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 1.95 million prime-time audience of 18-34 year olds was up 120% over the same period last year, Nielsen said. Fox News, which has led in the ratings for nearly two decades, had an average of 4.07 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%.

"We are 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 reimaged series

The Associated Press

Beavis and Butt-Head are coming back to TV in a reimaged 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, it was announced Wednesday.

The channel said it has ordered two seasons of the new series that will feature themes "relatable to both 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 underserved 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, a statement Wednesday said 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 in 2021.

■ Fox News on Wednesday fired daytime news anchor Ed Henry after an investigation of sexual misconduct in 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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Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals G

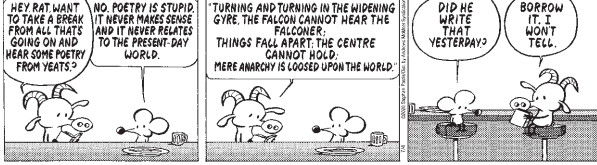
Frazz



Dilbert



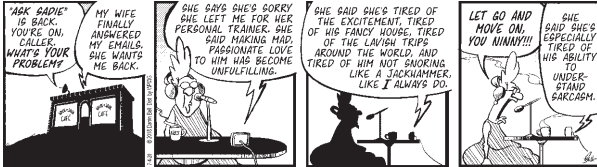
Pearls Before Swine



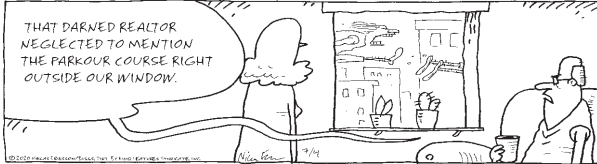
Non Sequitur



Candorville



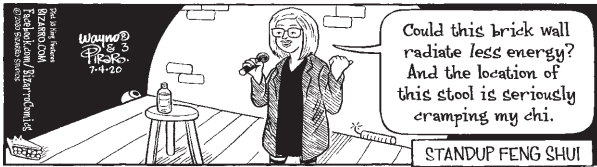
Carpe Diem



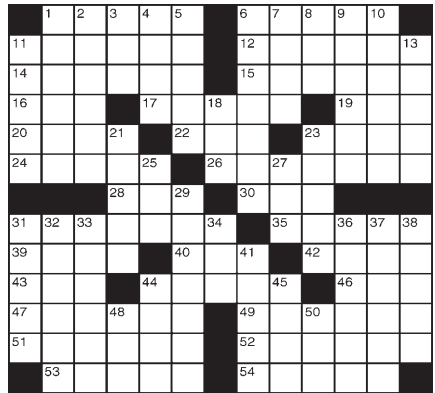
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- Sleep problem
- Squads
- Restitution
- Honor
- Boston stadium
- Moon mission
- Pitcher's pride
- Like old apples
- "Dancing With the Stars" judge Goodman
- Con job
- Three, in Rome
- Dog's treasure
- Male opera star
- Golf course area
- Understood
- 30 Calendar abbr.
- High-speed road
- Portly
- Stagger
- Cow's greeting
- "Mamma Mia" group
- Candied veggie
- Bitten by a bee
- Charged bit
- "A Streetcar Named Desire" cry
- Metro system
- Monotony
- Mistakes in print

- Force measures
- Rotates

DOWN

- Punish by fine
- Scribe
- SSE's opposite
- Wax-coated cheese
- To date
- Bit steeped in a bag
- Glimpse
- From — Z
- Laid-back
- "The Queen of Tejanos Music"
- Make — buck
- Lucre
- "Bow-wow!"
- Fat cat
- Water filter brand
- Tier
- Apr. check casher
- Large gongs
- Secret rendezvous
- Passionate
- Cure
- Thee
- Luke's mentor
- WWII subs
- Country music's Tucker
- Start
- Pivot
- 45 Mentor
- Architect Maya
- "It's c-c-cold!"

Answer to Previous Puzzle



7-4

CRYPTOQUIP

LWKM BZ XSABHTNPKWNG

HPIH JTAT GXTNWIYYS UIMT

HB ET YIQKNPIEYT ZABU

IWXYIKTG: ZYWTJABALG.

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

Today's Cryptquip Clue: L equals K

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OPINION

Never forget: Putin is in the payback business

By DAVID IGNATIUS
Washington Post Writers Group

A basic truth about President Vladimir Putin, which President Donald Trump evidently doesn't understand: Putin is in the payback business. He believes the United States destroyed his former country, the Soviet Union. He likes the United States to feel pain, in Afghanistan and everywhere else.

Trump has his own, much rosier take on Putin. And I can't help wondering whether that explains why, assuming his account is true, the president was never briefed about intelligence reports early this year that Russia was offering bounties to Taliban fighters to kill U.S. and coalition troops in Afghanistan. Perhaps Trump's national security aides were afraid to upset him.

When it comes to the military, Trump has the opposite of a Midas touch. Everything he handles becomes tarnished. That was true of his meddling last year in the discipline case of Navy SEAL Eddie Gallagher; his encouragement of the firing of Capt. Brett Crozier as skipper of the USS Theodore Roosevelt; and his enlistment of Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for a publicity stunt at St. John's Episcopal Church.

There's a lot we still don't know about the Russian bounties in Afghanistan. But sources have provided some basics that allow us to see this incident in context.

First, we must understand that the Russians wish us ill in Afghanistan. Putin's generation resents the bitter about their forced withdrawal that finished in 1989, under American pressure, which presaged the collapse of the Soviet Union. There's a tiny Afghan War Museum in Moscow's

Pervost district: two dark rooms, pictures of the fallen, guns, maps and other trinkets of a war that broke the Soviet Union's spirit.

About 15,000 Soviet soldiers were killed in their nine-year Afghan war. By comparison, the United States has suffered 2,372 military deaths in our Afghan war, waged for more than twice as long.

What makes Afghanistan especially painful for Russia is that the Soviet Union's final defeat resulted from a secret CIA program to supply the Afghan mujahideen with Stinger antiaircraft missiles, that could shoot down Soviet helicopters and were a death sentence for Moscow's recruits.

The Soviet Union might have hoped that the United States would help it escape the Afghan quagmire, but life doesn't work that way. A declassified Feb. 13, 1989, National Security Directive specified that if the Soviets wanted a cutoff in U.S. assistance to the mujahideen, the U.S. "should take no action limiting U.S. options" until the Moscow-backed Afghan government fell.

For the 15 years of the U.S. war in Afghanistan, in which our former allies were now mortal enemies, the Russians played along. They were happy to let Americans kill some Islamists militants that had used U.S.-supplied weapons to kill Russians. But starting in 2018, U.S. commanders noticed a difference: The Russians appeared to be helping the Taliban.

Gen. John "Mick" Nicholson Jr., who commanded U.S. forces in Afghanistan for more than two years, revealed the secret Russian aid for the Taliban in a March 23, 2019, interview with CBS. He said Afghan leaders had showed U.S. commanders Russian-supplied weapons that had been smuggled across the border to Taliban fighters. He said the Russians were also

peddling a false narrative that the U.S. was fostering a buildup of Islamist Shiite fighters in Afghanistan, to justify their actions.

Nicholson's 2018 interview was a rare public protest by a U.S. official. Trump didn't press the Russians to stop, and so they continued. The GRU military intelligence units that were helping smuggle weapons to the Taliban in 2018 may have been the forerunners of GRU operatives who U.S. intelligence analysts suspect are the new bounty hunters.

Through this January and February, as the CIA and military surveillance gathered reports about a cash stockpile in northern Afghanistan and other indicators of a possible Russian operation, U.S. military and intelligence officials became increasingly concerned, several told me. By March, they were pressing for a top-level review by senior Trump administration officials of this still-unconfirmed threat to U.S. soldiers.

Through this agonizing period, Trump kept up a buzz of happy talk about improving relations with Putin, including the possibility of inviting him back into the Group of Seven. Were Trump's commanders too afraid to warn him off this folly?

Trump's silence knows too little about Afghanistan. Our forces there are so humiliated down, I'm told the military hasn't allowed any significant embeds by journalists. Gen. Austin "Scott" Miller, the admirable commanding general, avoids briefing the press or Congress, perhaps for fear of unintentionally offending the White House.

Trump is an obstacle to good policy. Either people don't tell him the truth, or he doesn't want to hear it. Whichever way, he's defaulting on his most basic responsibility as commander in chief.

Biden once sought to ban flag burning. How about now?

By KAREN TUMULTY
The Washington Post

When protesters outside the White House set fire to Old Glory a couple of weeks ago, President Donald Trump took to Twitter and called on Congress to "do something about the lawlifers 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 and stomps on it, but just burn it, they 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 said would get around the high court's objections.

In a July 18, 1989, speech on the Senate floor, Biden said the flag is "a national symbol of unity and we need unity in this country because we are so diverse. Symbols are important ... We have a symbol, unlike the court's inability to recognize it, a symbol that is needed to unite this nation, this diverse nation, a symbol is the flag." Under Biden's legislation, anyone who mutilated, defaced, burned or trampled upon a U.S. flag would be fined as much as \$1,000 or sent to prison for up to a year — or both.

Biden said he would also support a constitutional amendment to make flag burning illegal, but that his measure was a quicker means of achieving the same end. A version of Biden's legislation passed

Congress and was signed into law. On May 14, 1990, the day the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case challenging its constitutionality, Biden declared the government has a "legitimate interest" in protecting the flag. The court struck down the law, citing the First Amendment's protection of free speech.

Biden was undeterred. As late as 2006, near the end of his 36 years in the Senate, he voted in favor of a measure that would have imposed fines of as much as \$100,000 and a year in prison for anyone who would "intentionally threaten or intimidate any 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 constitutional amendment. There may also have been some posturing for the upcoming 2008 presidential race involved. Among the anti-flag burning measure's co-sponsors was then-Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., and then-Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., also voted for it.

Is this still Biden's position? "This is a long-settled position," Biden's question, with the Supreme Court ruling that flag burning is free speech. For Donald Trump to try to politicize the issue is just that: politics," Biden campaign spokesman Andrew Bates told me. He added that Biden does not support a constitutional amendment to ban flag burning.

All that might seem like a long-ago 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 presidential candidates is a well-thumbed page of the Trump playbook, going at least 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 reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. But no one in memory 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 pulling 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. What he does not want to do is get caught at odds with 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 "lawlifers."

In his news conference on Tuesday, Biden threaded the needle on the question of whether it was right to honor the fallen while those commemorating traitorous Confederate leaders belong in museums, those to the imperfect men who founded the republic should stay up.

"There is a difference between reminders and remembrances of history," he said. "What is the difference? Well, when you see George Washington or Abraham Lincoln or Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, and somebody who was in rebellion committing treason ... trying to take down the union and keep slavery. I think there's a distinction."

That is reasonable, and, more importantly, it is right. Symbols, whether they be flags or monuments, are always to be replaced. The same cannot be said of the values of which they are meant to remind us.

Karen Tumulty is a Washington Post columnist.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Biden no guarantee to crack down on Russia for misdeeds
The Wall Street Journal

It 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 task the CIA with killing the Russian agents behind the bounties, send lethal aid to Ukraine to defend itself against Russian aggression, work with allies to oust Russia and Cuba from Venezuela, withdraw from the arms deals Russia is violating, and ratchet up sanctions against the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to Germany.

Of course Biden will do none of that, which ought to put into context the latest Washington uproar over the alleged Russian bounties and President Donald Trump. The stories, leaked by anonymous sources, are another dive into the murky Washington nexus among intelligence, the media and politics.

Trump is cast again as the villain who knows intelligence and does nothing, or should have known but didn't, and in any event he must be in hook to Vladimir Putin. Trump and his advisers say he wasn't briefed on the bounties intelligence, but sources (again anonymous) say it did appear in his daily intelligence briefing that he rarely reads. U.S. intelligence chiefs are embarrassing the leakers, who no doubt want to damage Trump before the election.

Our first reaction is that the Taliban have been killing Americans for years for the religious pleasure of it — why would getting paid make all that much difference? Iranians have been paying them to kill Americans, and so have jihadist elements in Pakistan, including some in the intelligence services.

A second point is why is anyone surprised that Putin's Russia would try to make trouble for America? He's been doing it for at least 12 years, across three administrations, since he invaded neighboring Georgia in 2008. Biden's reaction to that affront was to blame the George W. Bush administration and call for a "reset" with Russia.

Putin is interfering in America's backyard by propping up the Maduro regime in Venezuela. He is trying to drive a wedge in NATO by selling S-400 anti-aircraft missiles to Turkey. He is propping up the Assad regime in Syria. He is blocking an extension of the United Nations arms embargo against Iran.

His agents traveled to the U.K. and tried to kill a Russian defector with a deadly nerve agent but killed an innocent Briton instead. His government recently imprisoned a former U.S. Marine on what are almost certainly trumped up spying charges. And, by the way, he interfered in the 2016 U.S. election under the nose of the Obama administration. Paying to kill Americans is hardly a giant leap of bad faith for Russia's president for life.

In the face of all this, Trump's continuing personal solicitude toward Putin is strange bordering on the bizarre. It's accomplished nothing except damage his own political standing. But then Trump has toughened sanctions against Russia, has sent Javelin antitank missiles to Ukraine, House Democrats offered a bill, has withdrawn from two arms deals Russia is violating, and has tried to stop



PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

Anti-abortion protesters wait outside the Supreme Court for a decision in June Medical Services LLC v. Russo on Monday. The high court ruled 5-4 that a Louisiana law that requires doctors who perform abortions to get admitting privileges at a hospital near their clinic is not valid. The court previously struck down a similar law in Texas.

Nord Stream 2. He's been far tougher on Russia than Obama-Biden ever was.

What we'd like to hear from Biden and Trump this year is what they'll do in response if the intelligence about Russian bounties is verified. Does Trump still want to reward Putin with an invitation to the G-7? If he does it would rival his near-invitation last year to the Taliban to visit Camp David as an insult to Americans who gave their lives in Afghanistan.

As for Biden, he has learned anything since his last go-round with the Russian? He now talks tough about Russia and says Putin has "no soul," but that was true when Biden sought his Russian reset in 2009, and when Barack Obama attacked Mitt Romney as an unreconstructed Cold Warrior in 2012. Is there anything specific that Biden would do that would deter Putin from further attacks on Americans or U.S. interests?

Concern about deals Trump might strike with Putin in a second term is legitimate. If only we could 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." This has long been a foolish, foolhardy obsession for President Donald Trump. Even in the middle of a widening pandemic, he seeks to eliminate health care coverage for some 23 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 initially 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 if part of the law is flawed, the courts must dismantle the whole structure.

Trump claims that he would maintain protections for people with preexisting conditions and other popular elements of Obamacare. But he has no plan to do so. His position is for health care chaos.

Anticipating the Trump administration's court filing, House Democrats offered a different vision. Discrediting Trump's attempts to paint them as unhinged so-

cialists, the Democrats eschewed a revolutionary health care agenda. Instead, they offered the Affordable Care Enhancement Act, a package of changes that would dramatically improve the existing system.

The Democrats would not touch the employer-sponsored health insurance that most non-elderly Americans depend on. Instead, they would bolster the system meant to help those without access to employer-based coverage. The centerpiece is an increase in federal subsidies that would enable low-income Americans to pay little or nothing in health insurance premiums and protect middle-income Americans from the high premiums and cost-sharing that have made it difficult for some to participate in Obamacare, particularly in rural areas. The plan would pump money into state-based "reinsurance" programs that have already proved to restrain premium costs in the states that have tried them.

It would also undo some of the damage Republicans have inflicted, pressing more states to expand Medicaid and rolling back the Trump administration's efforts to allow junk insurance plans. The result would be millions more covered Americans.

The Democrats would fund the bill by lowering prescription drug spending, a policy that requires further debate. But the overall package is solid. Unlike Republicans — who never had a plausible replacement for Obamacare, despite years of baying about its defects — Democrats are showing that they have a detailed plan to fill in the system's gaps, in specific legislative text, that they could take off the shelf should they have the opportunity to govern. Their plan also refutes those in their party who argue that nothing but radical reform can bring progress.

Trump and Republicans, not Democrats, are the health care radicals.

Roberts likely won't protect abortion rights in future cases
The New York Times

The Supreme Court upheld abortion rights on Monday, with Chief Justice John Roberts concurring with the liberals on the court to strike down a Louisiana anti-abortion law.

That sentence might surprise a lot of people, given that the chief justice is a staunch conservative, and that the court now has a solid right-wing majority. President Donald Trump achieved that majority by appointing two justices with the express purpose of pushing a hard-right agenda, as determined by legal groups like the Feder-

alist Society. Obliterating abortion access in America is at the top of that priority list.

What's more, Roberts dissented in a case just four years ago that struck down what was an effectively identical Texas anti-abortion law. So the central question ahead of Monday's decision in June Medical Services LLC v. Russo became: Would the chief justice's disapproval of abortion outweigh his desire for the court to respect its own very recent precedent?

It turns out that it did. In a concurring opinion that provided the fifth vote for a majority, the chief justice wrote that the court's doctrine requires it to "treat like cases alike." Because the Louisiana law — which requires doctors who perform abortions to get admitting privileges at a hospital near their clinic, supposedly in the interests of women's health and safety — was more or less a carbon copy of the Texas law the court previously struck down, and because it burdened women in the same way, it "cannot stand," he wrote.

That's good as far as it goes, which is not very far. It would be a mistake to interpret this decision as a sign that the chief justice has had a change of heart about protecting the bodily autonomy of American women. Even in his concurring opinion, Roberts said that he still believes that the Texas case was "wrongly decided" and that he voted to strike down the Louisiana law solely out of respect for precedent. He appears to have decided that the circumstances of this case were not ideal for crippling reproductive rights — but he left the door open to doing so in the future. Monday's decision, with the plurality opinion written by Justice Stephen Breyer, isn't so much good news for reproductive freedom as it is a temporary reprieve from all the bad.

Abortion access in many parts of the country is abysmal — five states have only one abortion clinic, for instance. If the Louisiana law had been upheld, clinics in that state (which has only three such facilities) and across the country could have closed, forcing many women to travel longer distances at prohibitive expense to receive reproductive health care.

That would violate the constitutional right to have access to an abortion without "undue burden," the standard the Supreme Court has followed since the 1992 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 had, but the conservative federal Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit reversed that decision, ruling that the lower court had gotten the facts wrong — that 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 surely unconstitutional." That's unconstitutional law and imposed identical if not greater burdens on women, and therefore was invalid.

Roberts' decision to concur with the four liberal justices may enrage cultural conservatives who thought that with the confirmation of Justice Brett Kavanaugh, ending the right to an abortion was just a matter of time.

But the chief justice rarely takes the direct route, preferring incremental rulings that slowly chip away at the court's longstanding precedents. So no one should be fooled this time around: The current court is as hostile to reproductive freedom as it ever was. And Roberts left himself plenty of room to vote differently in any of the many cases now speeding toward the court, involving challenges to other state laws that make it difficult if not impossible for most women to obtain an abortion.

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Deals

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League
DETROIT TIGERS — Agreed to terms with 1B Trevor Eguera, RHP Carson King, and OF's Austin Langworthy and D.J. Peterson on minor league contracts.
OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Added INF's Eric Campbell and Robert Puzos, RHP's Wanderson Charles and Miguel Romero, OF's Luis Barrera and Brayson Buelvas to their 60-man player pool.

National League
COLORADO ROCKIES — Released LHP Zac Rosscup. Agreed to terms with C Drew Romo on a minor league contract.
MIAMI MARLINS — Signed RHP Max Meyer to a minor league contract.
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Signed C Patrick Bailey to a minor league contract.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Agreed to terms with RHP Zach Gray and Edward Under, OF's Zach Corneli and Brandon Dietrich, SS's Gio Diaz and Wade Torkelson, 1B Jackson Coutts, INF Brian Klein and C Ray Torres on minor league contracts.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
WASHINGTON WIZARDS — Signed G Jerian Grant.

FOOTBALL
National Football League
GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed RB AJ Dillon to a four-year contract. Signed QB Jordan Love to a four-year contract.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer
ATLANTA UNITED — Waived M Luiz Fernando.

INTER MIAMI — Signed D Leandro Gonzalez Pirez.
MINNESOTA UNITED — Transferred M Romario Ibarra to Liga MX club C.F. Pachuca.

NEW YORK RED BULLS — Returned F Josh Sims to Southampton FC following expiration of his loan contract.

COLLEGE
ETSU — Announced Matt Wise as men's basketball assistant coach.

POUISIANA COLLEGE — Formally applied for admission to NAIA for sponsored sports.

ST. AUGUSTINE'S — Named David Bowser Interim Athletics Director.
TUSCULUM — Promoted Josh Ealy to Assistant Athletic Director for Operations and Development.

Pro soccer

NWSL Challenge Cup

At Herndon, Va.
Saturday, June 27
 North Carolina Courage 2, Portland Thorns 1
 Washington Spirit 2, Chicago Red Stars 1

Tuesday, June 30
 Houston Dash 3, Utah Royals 3
 OL Reign 0, Sky Blue FC

Wednesday, July 1
 Portland Thorns 0, Chicago Red Stars 0
 North Carolina Courage 2, Washington Spirit 0

Saturday, July 4
 Utah Royals vs. Sky Blue
 Houston Dash vs. OL Reign

Sunday, July 5
 North Carolina Courage vs. Chicago Red Stars
 Portland Thorns vs. Washington Spirit

Wednesday, July 8
 Portland Thorns vs. OL Reign
 Sky Blue vs. Houston Dash

Sunday, July 12
 Washington Spirit vs. Houston Dash
 Chicago Red Stars vs. Utah Royals

Monday, July 13
 OL Reign vs. Portland Thorns
 Sky Blue vs. North Carolina Courage

Quarterfinals
Friday, July 17
 Teams TBD
Saturday, July 18
 Teams TBD

Semifinals
Wednesday, July 22
 Quarterfinal winners
Championship
Sunday, July 26
 Semifinal winners

AP spotlight

1982 — Martina Navratilova begins her streak of six straight singles titles at Wimbledon with a 6-1, 3-6, 6-2 victory over Chris Evert Lloyd. It's the third Wimbledon singles title for Navratilova, all against Evert Lloyd.

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 the players 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 leaving for the tournament on Saturday. Upon arrival, 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 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 the tournament played without fans at the ESPN Wide World



RONALD MARTINEZ, GETTY IMAGES/TNS

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

of Sports complex at Disney World. The tournament opens Wednesday.

MLS shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic on March 12, after the league's teams had played two games.

The league said Sunday that 18 players and six staff members had tested positive for the virus

before teams left for Orlando.

League protocol requires players and staff 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 Vancouver Whitecaps on July 9.

MLS scoreboard

MLS is Back Tournament

At Orlando, Fla.
Group Stage
Wednesday, July 8
 Orlando City vs. Inter Miami CF
 Nashville SC vs. Chicago Fire
Thursday, July 9
 New York City FC vs. Philadelphia Union
 Montreal vs. New England
 FC Dallas vs. Vancouver
Friday, July 10
 Toronto FC vs. D.C. United
 Seattle vs. San Jose
Saturday, July 11
 Atlanta vs. New York
 Cincinnati vs. Columbus
Sunday, July 12
 Sporting Kansas City vs. Minnesota United
 Real Salt Lake vs. Colorado
Monday, July 13
 Los Angeles FC vs. Houston
 LA Galaxy vs. Portland
Tuesday, July 14
 Inter Miami CF vs. Chicago
 Philadelphia vs. Nashville SC
 Orlando City vs. New York City FC
Wednesday, July 15
 Seattle FC Dallas
 Montreal vs. Toronto FC
 Vancouver vs. San Jose
Thursday, July 16
 Atlanta vs. Cincinnati
 D.C. United vs. New England
 Columbus vs. New York
Friday, July 17
 Sporting Kansas City vs. Colorado
 Real Salt Lake vs. San Jose
Saturday, July 18
 Portland vs. Houston
 Los Angeles FC vs. LA Galaxy
Sunday, July 19
 New York City FC vs. Chicago
 Philadelphia vs. Inter Miami CF
Monday, July 20
 Orlando City vs. Nashville SC
 FC Dallas vs. San Jose
 Seattle vs. Vancouver
Tuesday, July 21
 Toronto FC vs. New England
 Atlanta vs. Columbus
 Montreal vs. Minnesota United
Wednesday, July 22
 Real Salt Lake vs. Sporting Kansas City
 Cincinnati vs. New York City FC
 Colorado vs. Minnesota United
Thursday, July 23
 LA Galaxy vs. Houston
 Los Angeles FC vs. Portland

Simpson returning after COVID-19 scare

By LARRY LAGE
 Associated Press

DETROIT — Webb Simpson is competing on the PGA Tour again after his family had a coronavirus scare.

One of Simpson's daughters tested positive for COVID-19, leading to him withdrawing from last week's tournament as a precaution.

"The first test was positive, but (she) got tested again by the more accurate tests, along with my other four kids and my wife, and everyone was negative," Simpson said Wednesday, a day before the first round of the Rocket Mortgage Classic. "So we felt confident that she never had it."

Simpson, who leads the tour in FedEx Cup points and scoring average, is attempting to become the PGA Tour's first player with three victories during this pandemic-interrupted year.

Most importantly, the No. 6 player in the world is trying to stay healthy. And Simpson does not believe that doing his job is putting him or his family at risk.

"I mentioned to the commissioner last week that based on our numbers, our stats, I told him the safest place anyone can be in the United States right now is on the PGA Tour," Simpson said. "We

Champ can play after policy change

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 symptoms and get two negative test results at least 24 hours apart.

The decision Wednesday was the latest change to an evolving "Health and Safety Plan" as the tour enters its fourth week back from the COVID-19 shutdown. Champ is among six players and two caddies on the PGA Tour who have tested positive.

Ricky Elliott, the caddie for Brooks Koepka, tested positive before the Travelers Championship last week in Connecticut, and then had a negative test.

The tour said after several asymptomatic positive tests that were followed by a negative test, it consulted with the CDC and is moving to a test-based model, which 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 self-isolate for at least 10 days.

Champ tested positive on June 23 and withdrew from the Travelers Championship. The tour said he had three negative tests over the 72 hours. He still had to be tested at Detroit Golf Club upon arrival. Champ was set to tee off as a single at 2:10 p.m. Thursday on the 10th tee.

— Doug Ferguson, AP

more strict," Simpson said. "That first week at Colonial there were still fist bumps after the round, closer contact I think on the range or player dining. There's way less of that now."

"Now, nobody's touching. Maybe an elbow here or there. I'm definitely seeing how it's affecting everyone, not just those who have had contact with someone."

While the PGA Tour has resumed play, the pandemic is keeping the fans away.

That will take away a chance for defending champion Nate Lashley to hear the roar of the crowd again in the Motor City.

"It's a little different, you know, not having fans here," he said.

Last year, Lashley went from being an anonymous player to someone fans wanted to root for during a wire-to-wire victory, his first on the PGA Tour, after they heard about how his parents and girlfriend were killed in a 2004 plane crash.

Lashley won the inaugural Rocket Mortgage Classic by six shots. He will be paired Thursday with Simpson and Rickie Fowler.

"Rickie and I, we decided that we're just going to follow Nate around and see how he hits because he shot 25 under last year," Simpson joked.

NHL/AUTO RACING



WINSLOW TOWNSON/AP

Phil Kessel has had a disappointing first season with the Arizona Coyotes after suffering a string of injuries. Now that he's 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.

Healthy Kessel expected to give Coyotes a boost

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

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 labored, in large part due to a string of injuries.

The NHL's pandemic-caused pause has given the 32-year-old right wing a chance to heal, putting him in position to have a much bigger impact when the Coyotes return to the ice.

"I feel good right now," Kessel said during a video call this week. "I feel better than I did all year, so I'm excited. My body feels good, I feel rested. I'm going to be ready to go."

The Coyotes pulled off the biggest move of the 2019 offseason, acquiring Kessel from Pittsburgh for center Alex Galchenyuk.

Kessel continued to be productive more than a decade into his NHL career, scoring 27 goals with 55 assists with the Penguins last season. He has scored at least 30 goals six times during his 13-year NHL career and had a career-high 92 points in 2017-18.

Kessel was expected to be the scoring piece the Coyotes had been missing since reaching the 2012 Western Conference finals, their last playoff appearance.

Instead, Kessel showed flashes of his previous brilliance, yet never got on much of a scoring run. He suffered a groin injury early in the season and the pains kept coming.

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

Kessel didn't miss a game, stretching his ironman streak to 844 straight games, sixth-longest in NHL history, yet he didn't seem to have the same explosiveness he had in previous seasons.

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 in 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."

NHL training camps are scheduled to open July 10 and an agreement is in place to restart the season. The start date and sites of the two hub cities have yet to be determined, but the Coyotes will be one of the 12 Western Conference teams continuing their seasons.

Watkins 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 looms in mid-August.

"Everybody is excited about getting back in the saddle. I know we are," track president Michael Printup said. "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," Printup said. "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 times. Attendance figures are not released by the stock car organization, but local officials peg it at over 90,000 annually since 2015. July McKinney Cherry, executive director of the local Partnership for Economic Development, figures the track's economic impact is at least \$275 million annually, based on the most recent study.

Printup figures that number might be down as much as 75% this year. "It's a pretty big number," he said.

Downtown Watkins Glen businesses have been hit hard.

"It's been a challenge, there's no question about it," said Scott Bell, general manager of the Harbor Hotel, which has remained open during the pandemic. "We're seeing occupancy levels that can't even be explained. We don't create the demand, we support the demand, so to have the track open and car clubs coming in, there's a pulse back in the region, which is wonderful to see."

"It drives the economy, no question about it. We need all cylinders churning in order to capture whatever we can the rest of the summer."

Most of the schedule at Watkins Glen has been shuffled. IMSA's annual sports car endurance race, the Sahlen's Six Hours of The Glen, was moved from late June to the first weekend in October 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.

Untouched so far is NASCAR. Its Cup and Xfinity series are slated to race Aug. 15-16, perhaps before thousands of fans.

Printup said WGI's proposal to New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo will be to allow only people from the state and within 150 miles of the track to attend.

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

"It's all about social distancing, temperature takes of every fan," Printup added. "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.



JULIE JACOBSON/AP

Denny Hamlin leads the pack around Turn 1 during a NASCAR Cup Series race on Aug. 5, 2018 in Watkins Glen, N.Y. Three months after its opening day was canceled by the coronavirus pandemic, Watkins Glen International is hosting car clubs again.

TRACK AND FIELD

Difficult few making a mess out of tests

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

By PAT GRAHAM
and EDDIE PELLIS
Associated Press

It's almost as easy as sending a text. Open an app on the cell 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 where-

abouts 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 2018, 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 race walker Tom 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 quarterbacking 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: 6AM). 2. Set a recurring daily alarm 15 minutes before your hour window. 3.



JEFF CHAU/AP

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.

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 phone 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 doing more 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



MARK SCHIEFELBIN/AP

Hammer 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 violations 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 Lyсенko. 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."



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

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.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL



MARK HUMPHREY/AP

Greg Sankey, commissioner of the Southeastern Conference, talks about the decision to cancel the remaining games in the SEC NCAA college basketball tournament in March. A January start is among the ideas being discussed for the 2020-21 college hoops season.

SEC considering shortened season

By JERRY TIPTON
Lexington Herald-Leader

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Going strictly by the calendar, there would be no 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 resumption of sports. He proposed via Twitter on Wednesday that the next college basketball season begin in January. A season contracted by 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 Iowa coach in 2020-21 (or just 2021), did not break new ground.

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

“I think everything’s on the table,” Tranchese 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, Tranchese 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,” Tranchese said. “The question, though, is will things be better in January than they are in November? Who knows?”

Tranchese said he found it dif-

ficult to believe a 2020-21 (or just 2021) college basketball season would be played if schools do not reopen.

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

“And — you know what? — not everybody may do the same thing. Some conferences may elect just to play conference schedules. Others may elect to play, who knows? 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 travel. But it also would mean none of the made-for-television games of November and December. Those games are lucrative in terms of revenue and marketing of programs. Of course, Kentucky regularly plays in the Champions Classic and CBS Sports Classic before conference play. UK also participates in the annual SEC-B12 Challenge, which is played in late January.

“I think safety is the overriding factor, period, end of discussion in my mind,” Tranchese 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, Tranchese paused before responding.

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

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

‘There’s definitely a value — if it’s the right transfer.’

Bryce Drew
Grand Canyon head coach

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 players.”

Twenty Division I programs have changed coaches since March, when the pandemic 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 Iowa, former Vanderbilt and Valparaiso coach Bryce Drew moving to Grand Canyon, and Mississippi coach Andy Kennedy returning to his alma mater at UAB, and former Michigan and Texas assistant Luke Yaklich taking over at Illinois-Chicago. And there’s former Kentucky and Texas A&M coach Billy Gillespie taking over at Tarleton State, which begins the transition Wednesday to Division I.

They’ve bolstered their first recruiting classes with multiple transfers, from Division I graduates to junior-college additions. Some committed as the NCAA considered changing the waiver period to allow all Division I athletes to transfer once without sitting out a season, though that was delayed as the NCAA looks instead at changing legislation by January.

It remains unclear how many transfers will get a waiver to play right away or must sit out a year. That is, of course, whenever a season might take place as the pandemic continues. It’s why ACC Network analyst and former Notre Dame player Jordan Cornette pointed to more than talent and fit with a transfer’s value.

Maturity “comes into play with transfers,” Cornette said. “Those are the ones you will lean heav-



PAUL SANCIYA/AP

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.

ily on because they have proven they can make the jump from high school to college. They can manage their academics. They can play at this level. They can be competitive. They can be voices.

“That’s proven... And now we need them to be more mature than ever because of what’s going on in the world and the uncertainty of the sport right now.”

“That includes when teams can get back to ‘normal’ recruiting.”

On Thursday the NCAA extended a dead period through August for all Division I sports. Coaches are barred from in-person activities such as traveling to meet a recruit or bringing one in for an official visit.

In many cases they don’t have information from personally evaluating a player’s game or observing something as subtle as body language. A transfer, particularly from Division I, could offset some risk with experience.

“There’s definitely a value — if it’s the right transfer, I’ll add,” said Drew, whose first class includes Division I transfers Ashlyn Middaugh (Wichita State), Dima Zdor (Weber State) and Sean Miller-Moore (Oregon State).

“Some players are transferring because there’s a reason they’re transferring and it’s not good. And then there’s others where they’re transferring for a fresh start and a new opportunity.”

Wake Forest and James Madison aim to take advantage with five Division I transfers, while UAB and UIC joined Grand Canyon with three.

For the Demon Deacons, Forbes inherited two guards — high-scoring graduate Ian Du-

Bose from Houston Baptist and Virginia Tech’s Isaiah Wilkins — who committed before the late-April coaching change. He added UNLV graduate Jonah Antonio, guard Daivien 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 Rashawn Fredericks next season. They’re pursuing immediate-eligibility waivers for big man Joel Mensah (San Diego State), wing TJ Taylor (Wyoming), 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 forward Zion Griffin, Chattanooga guard Maurice Commander and guard Teyvion 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 Iowa 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 transfers, 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.

NFL

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 games Aug. 13-16 will give them more time to ratchet up their football fitness.

Teams will now play exhibitions Aug. 20-24 and Aug. 27-31 during what were originally the

DID YOU KNOW?

Teams will now play exhibitions Aug. 20-24 and Aug. 27-31 during what were originally the second and third weeks of exhibition play. All teams will play one home and one road preseason game.

SOURCE: Associated Press

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 finales 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.

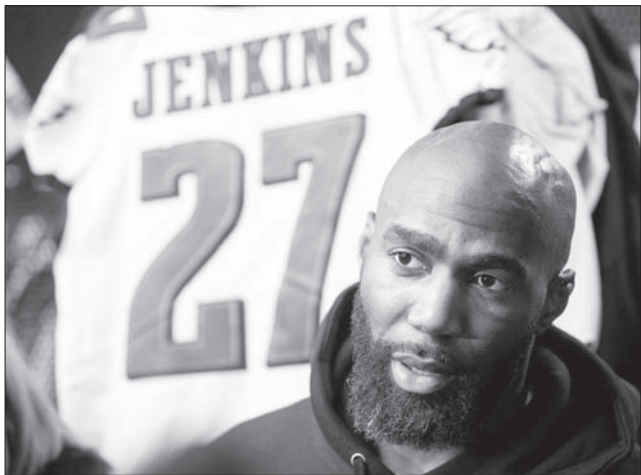
The annual Hall of Fame Game pitting Pittsburgh and Dallas on Aug. 6 was recently scrapped as the induction ceremonies were pushed back to 2021.

AP football writer Rob Maaddi contributed to this report.



JACK DENEMPE/AP

Denver Broncos outside linebacker Von Miller, left, greets Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald after a preseason game on Aug. 29 in Denver. According to a source, the NFL will cut its preseason in half and push back the start of exhibition play so teams have more time to train.



MATT ROUREK/AP

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 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

'It is the responsibility of the employer to provide a safe work environment.'

JC Tretter

Cleveland Browns center and president of the NFL Players Association

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 August 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.

Dr. Thom Mayer, the union's medical officer, advised players on June 20 to stop working out together. Still, Tom Brady and Russell Wilson appear to have ignored those warnings, based on social media posts. And a video posted Tuesday showed new Patriots quarterback Cam Newton working out with wide receiver Mohamed Sanu.

"It is the responsibility of the employer to provide a safe work environment," Tretter told NFL players. "I encourage all workers to hold their employers accountable to high standards. More so than any other sport, the game of football is the perfect storm for virus transmission. There are protections, both short and long term, that must be agreed upon before we can safely return to work. The NFLPA will be diligent as we demand that the NFL provide us the safest workplace."

AP football writer Arnie Stapleton contributed to this report.

NBA/MLB

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 ordinary regular season (39-21) 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 daily 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 shutdown.

"I'm looking 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



Brown

this pandemic and the way things have shaped up, it would be hard pressed for me to find something more obvious than this. It's enabled Ben to reclaim his health. But I think 'inching along' from maybe a month ago, that is not true."

Embiid 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 it. 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.



CARLOS OSORIO/AP

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.

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 corny and comforting, 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 abiding 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 testy 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 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 on Thursday it will use People's Natural Gas Field

in Altoona — a longtime Pirates Double-A affiliate — as an "alternate training facility" once spring training 2020 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 everyone's 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 rule changes along with it. You're putting in the three-batter (minimum), which we've talked about all along. Now, you're putting a runner at second (in extra innings), which no one has managed with. ... No one really knows how it's going to be affected."

Shelton is in the middle of getting a crash course from assistant hitting coach Mike Rebebo — who used the runner at second rule while managing in Double-A last year — on how to handle the rule designed to avoid games from stretching well into the night. Then again, he's getting a crash course in a lot of things. Like the role his players might want to play in bringing attention to social justice issues following the death of George Floyd last month while being taken into custody by police.

While the players have not discussed specifics about any public gestures, Shelton said he will support them "100%."

"I think one of the things that we have to be very aware of is we have to continue to learn, we have to continue to educate, we have to be part of making sure that the situation that we're in the world is getting better moving forward," he said.

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 a champion," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said.

The season has been daunting and won't get any easier. That's why Los Angeles Lakers coach Frank Vogel — whose team was in China when the political issues hit this fall, took the enormous emotional blow that followed Bryant's death, has championed societal change during these troubled times in the country and has had players infected with the coronavirus — wholeheartedly agrees with Spoelstra'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 win the ultimate prize, I do think it deserves a harder-than-ordinary asterisk. If you're going 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 highly 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.

"If you're able to go into a bubble to be isolated from your friends and family, to have no home court



WILFREDO LEE/AP

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 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.

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 Miami 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.

No one 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."

MLB

Short season, no minors may hurt prospects

Rebuilding teams have complicated choices

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

TOP MLB PROSPECTS

Rank/Player	Pos.	Team
1. Wander Franco	SS	Rays
2. Gavin Lux	SS/2B	Dodgers
3. Luis Robert	OF	Chicks
4. Adley Rutschman	C	Orioles
5. MacKenzie Gore	LHP	Padres
6. Jo Adell	OF	Angels
7. Casey Mize	RHP	Tigers
8. Nate Pearson	RHP	Jays
9. Royce Lewis	SS	Twins
10. Bobby Witt Jr.	SS	Royals
11. Jarrod Kelenic	OF	Mariners
12. Jesus Lizardo	LHP	Athletics
13. Cristian Pacheco	OF	Braves
14. Joey Bart	C	Giants
15. Brendan McCay	LHP/DH	Rays

SOURCE: MLB.com

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 Jarrod 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 majors this season 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 Mariners, with a mix of teams good enough to stay in the race for 60 games but also looking ahead to the future.

The Mariners thought top pros-



DAVID SANTIAGO, MIAMI HERALD/AP

Miami Marlins pitcher Sixto Sanchez run drills during spring training in Jupiter, Fla. For a number of rebuilding teams, the 2020 baseball season was supposed to be another step in the progression of their top prospects eventually reaching the big leagues. With a truncated 60-game season in the majors and no minor league season, some clubs are concerned the development of prospects may be stunted.



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Outfielder Jarrod Kelenic hits during the MLB All-Star Futures game in Cleveland. He's considered one of the prime prospects in the Seattle Mariners' rebuilding efforts.

pect 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 multiyear 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's only going to grow 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 come 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? Anyone 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."

AP sports writers Steven Wine in Miami, Dave Sletten in Kansas City, Missouri, Andrew Seligman in Chicago and Pat Graham in Denver contributed to this report.



MATT YORK/AP

Chicago White Sox general manager Rick Hahn, center, is charged with the team's rebuilding efforts. He said teams will have to adjust expectations of when their prospects will be ready for the majors.

MLB

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.

"We were doing workouts by time, you know? You have to reserve 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 of 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 said there had been no positive tests for COVID-19 among players and staff who were examined Wednesday, but he acknowledged that "it's going to be an ongoing process."

Elias has thus far named only 44 players of the 60 available to participate in the preseason workout. He will decide later which prospects will fill out of the preseason roster in advance of a projected season-opener July 23 or July 24.

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 much of what's out there is the easy stories of what people go through with this."

The 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 with symptoms that got so bad he spent part of one day at the hospital.

Hottovy tested negative about two weeks ago and still gets winded easily. He is grateful his wife, Andrea, and young children did not get sick.

Hottovy had a relentless fever, difficulty breathing, dehydra-

tion and an increased heart rate. It was particularly bad at night, making sleep just about impossible.

He got depressed, wondering if he could have done more even though he wore masks and gloves outside the house prior

to becoming ill.

Hottovy spent eight hours at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago on the 12th day and

was prepared to stay overnight. Instead, he got sent home with a breathing apparatus.

"If my story, if my journey through this, helps one person realize how severe this can get — and if that saves one life — then I want my story to be heard," he said. "Again, I'm sorry I'm emotional. It's still fresh."

Hottovy coughed so much during one Zoom meeting with pitchers that manager David Ross took over for him.

Hottovy kept a cooler filled with drinks in the spare room because he didn't want to risk exposing his family by going to the kitchen. He said his wife was constantly cleaning and neighbors brought

supplies to sanitize the home. If he went outside, Andrea and the kids would clear the house and open the doors. Hottovy would then exit as quickly as he could, without touching anything, and he would go straight to his room when he went back inside.

Hottovy thought about opting out of the season. But he has faith in the league's protocols and will be with the team at home and away.

"I do still believe for society and for people, having sports and having baseball ... is important," he said. "But at the same token, one little misstep, one little contact situation by one person, can derail an entire industry."



PHOTOS BY ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Above: A Los Angeles Angels fan rides a bike past the entrance of Angels Stadium on Wednesday in Anaheim, Calif. **Below:** A sign outside the stadium announces the start of the season. The Angels and other Major League Baseball teams will report to their respective facilities for training this week.



AP sports writers David Ginsburg, Jake Selner and Mike Fitzpatrick contributed to this report

SPORTS



Preseason reduction

Source: League to scale back exhibition schedule » Page 52

NBA

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.

SEE CHALLENGE ON PAGE 53

Whichever team eventually hoists the Larry O'Brien Championship Trophy will have overcome one of the most eventful — and challenging — seasons in NBA history.

JEFF CHIU/AP

COVID-19 recovery tough on Cubs coach » MLB, Page 55

