NOW IN ITS 10TH YEAR, SYRIAN WAR CONTINUES TO IMPACT WORLD

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SYRIAN WAR

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MIDEAST

Trump gets clean bill of health from personal physician

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

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EX-ARMY PILOT LINKS PFAS, DEATH OF DAUGHTER

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — After Jim Holmes’ daughter was born in 2002, just months after the 9/11 terrorist attacks spawned a new American war in Afghanistan, the Army pilot worried about the impact a fatherless life would leave on her if he were killed on a faraway battlefield.

Holmes said he never imagined that 17 years later, it would be he who would mourn her loss. Kaela Holmes died in March 2019, just days after her 17th birthday, after fighting a 15-month battle with a rare brain cancer that her father now believes is related to drinking water contaminated by firefighting foam used for decades at Patrick Air Force Base in Florida, on or near which his family lived for 16 years.

“Kaela was a beautiful, intelligent, loving daughter who loved her Army family with all her heart. She made a positive impact on everyone she ever encountered, excelled in school and never disappointed me once in her 17 years of life,” Holmes said Wednesday during testimony before the House Appropriations Committee subpanel on military construction, veterans affairs and related agencies. “I lost my only child due to being poisoned by the same military that I faithfully served and fought for.”

Holmes appeared before House lawmakers to advocate for a stronger Pentagon response to its decadeslong use of the firefighting foam used for decades at Patrick Air Force Base in Florida, on or near which his family lived for 16 years.

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Holms
The network’s core is more than capable of handling the surge in demand because it has evolved to be able to easily handle bandwidth-greedy Netflix, YouTube and other streaming services. “The core of the network is massively over-provisioned,” said Paul Vixie, CEO of Farsight Security and an internet pioneer who helped design its domain naming system. But if parents are videoconferencing for work at the same time college and high school students are trying to beam into school, they could experience congestion. Figure a packet-dropping threshold of five or more users. That’s because the so-called last mile is for most Americans provisioned for cable — download capacity is robust but upload limited. Fiber optic connections don’t have the same issues and will do fine. Traffic has spiked 10% to 20% during peak hours since the start of February in greater Seattle, the U.S. region hardest-hit by COVID-19, according to Cloudflare.

**Exchange Rates**

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**EXCHANGE RATES**

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**WEATHER OUTLOOK**

**TODAY IN STRIPES**

**STARS AND STRIPES**

However you read us, wherever you need us.

Mobile • Online • Print
In 10th year, Syrian war still impacts world

By Zeina Karam
Associated Press

BEIRUT — In a world gripped by a pandemic, global unrest and a fast-moving news cycle, it can be difficult to remember that the war in Syria is still happening.

Even before the coronavirus outbreak took over daily lives around the globe, the conflict, which began in early 2011, had largely fallen off the world’s collective radar — reduced to a never-ending fight involving an ever-more complex web of players and refugees that few remember once lived in a country they called home.

But as it enters its 10th year, the war which gave rise to Islamic State and triggered the worst humanitarian catastrophe of the 21st century — has shown it is still creating new tragedies that can have an outsized impact on global politics.

Earlier this month, Turkish and Syrian troops were clashing in Syria’s northwest. That brought NATO-member Turkey and Russia, which back opposing sides of the war, to the brink of direct confrontation, and produced an unprecedented wave of displaced people. Arguing that it faces a potential new influx of refugees from Syria, Turkey announced it would no longer stop its vast migrant and refugee population from illegally entering the country, touching off a new crisis for the European Union.

More than half of Syria’s pre-war population of 23 million people have been driven from their homes, and a staggering 80% of the population live beneath the poverty line, according to the United Nations. Contrary to what some may hope, the Syrian war is nowhere near its end-game.

Chaos in the north

A cease-fire brokered by the Turkish and Russian presidents in Moscow last week may have put the brakes on the Syrian government’s devastating military campaign to retake the northwestern Idlib province. But the halt is not a long-term solution, and the war’s final and most devastating chapter is yet to come.

In the three months before it was paused, the Syrian offensive triggered the largest single wave of displacement of the entire war. That may be dwarfed by the flight of humanity toward Turkey if Syrian President Bashar Assad resumes the assault to retake Idlib, home to some 3 million people. The area is the last remaining rebel-controlled area in Syria, and from Assad’s perspective, the only place standing in the way of complete military victory.

“Even if Idlib is somehow re-taken and an estimated 3 million people are accommodated in Turkey or elsewhere, it is unlikely that Damascus has the capacity or even the tools to rule over formerly opposition-controlled areas for long periods of time without trouble,” said Danny Makki, a London-based Syrian journalist.

‘Perfect storm’

Nearly a decade of fighting has transformed the Mideast country into a failed state providing free-for-all proxy battlefield where world powers can settle their scores.

Russia, Iran, Turkey and the U.S. all have boots on the ground in Syria. The Lebanese Hezbollah and a slew of other Iranian-backed militias are fighting there. Israel bombs inside Syria frequently and at will. The war has pulled in so many international players that one Syrian joke says perhaps the Syrian people are the ones who need to leave the country, so as not to disturb those foreign powers fighting on their soil.

Assad, who has been able to keep his grip on the central government from Damascus throughout the war, continues to chip away at rebel-held territory with Russian help.

But many areas recovered by the government are a wasteland of wrecked buildings. Few refugees have dared to return, and reconstruction efforts are on hold, pending a political resolution.

Meanwhile, the economic situation is deteriorating so fast that ordinary Syrians struggle to keep up with prices that rise even over the course of a day. The currency is collapsing: it now takes 500 Syrian pounds to get a dollar, 20 times the pre-2011 amount. The economic squeeze has been worsened by neighboring Lebanon’s acute financial crisis.

“It is a devastating dynamic, almost a perfect storm,” David Beasley, head of the World Food Program, told The Associated Press in a recent interview.

Full circle?

Even if Assad were to recapture remaining rebel-controlled territory, ruling it is another issue. His government’s policy of “reconciliation” in areas it already seized — effectively forced surrender of all opposition — has proven futile.

In Damascus, there has been a series of mysterious blasts targeting civilians and military personnel using explosive devices in the past three weeks.

In the southern province of Daraa, where the uprising against Assad began in March 2011, a reconciliation between the government and insurgents reached two years ago has crumbled with acts of violence reported almost on a daily basis.

Ambushes, explosions and shootings left scores of fighters dead on both sides, and anti-government protests have re-erupted in some areas.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitoring group, said 217 people have been killed in violence in Daraa over the past months, including 45 civilians, 113 soldiers and pro-government gunmen, and 37 rebels who signed deals with the state in 2018.

“The growing insurgency in Daraa and the poor economic situation in Damascus is evidence that the war will not abruptly end, and in fact, the socio-political and military circumstances are present to indicate that this will rumble on for many years to come,” Makki said.

Turkey-Russia patrols start amid protests on Syrian highway

By Andrew Wilkes
Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish and Russian troops began joint patrols Sunday on a key highway in northwest Syria, Turkey’s Defense Ministry said, while both the Russian government and Syrian opposition activists said the patrols were shortened because of protests.

Patrols on the highway known as the M4, which runs east-west through Idlib province, are part of a cease-fire agreement between Turkey and Russia signed earlier this month. The cease-fire ended an escalation in fighting that saw the Turkish military in rare direct conflict with Syrian government troops.

The vital highway, which runs through northern Syria from the Mediterranean to the Iraqi border, has been partially closed since 2012. Work has been underway over the past days to refurbish it for traffic. Some sections of the M4 remain under rebel control.

For the past three days, residents of rebel-held parts of the highway have protested in rejection of Russian troops patrolling the road.

“The first Turkish-Russian unified land patrol was carried out on the M4 highway in Idlib with the involvement of land and air elements,” Turkey’s Defense Ministry said in a statement.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said Turkey and Russia carried out their first joint patrol mission along the M4 highway Sunday adding that “the patrols’ route was shortened” after militants used women and children to block the way. The Defense Ministry’s statement was carried by state-run news agency Tass.

Ankara has been given additional time to ensure the safety of troops taking part in joint patrols, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Syrian opposition activists said residents blocked the highway with burning tires near the village of Nairab on the southern edge of Idlib in rejection to patrols by “Russian occupation forces.”

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor with activists on the ground in Syria, said the joint patrols were not successful as they moved a short distance west of the government-held town of Saraqeb before being stopped by the protests.
VIRUS OUTBREAK

Moves to and from S. Korea resume as exceptions granted

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Dozens of service members and loved ones arrived in South Korea, while others boarded flights out over the weekend as the Army granted exceptions to an order halting moves to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus.

About 70 troops and family members disembarked from a military charter flight that landed on Osan Air Base on Friday, days after many of them were kicked off the flight at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport amid confusion over the order.

Eighth Army commander Lt. Gen. John W. Lee, who had been barricading their movement to South Korea since they had been stuck in transit, not initiating moves.

“These soldiers and family members were, unfortunately, delayed at the Seattle Tacoma airport earlier this week,” said Maj. Gen. Daniel Christian, deputy commander for sustainment. “It was an extra few days, but we’re glad to have them on the peninsula and welcome them to the Eighth Army.”

The passengers underwent health screening procedures that included questions relating to temperature checks for possible exposure to the virus as required for entry to all military installations in South Korea.

The military, meanwhile, began granting exceptions to the keep-stay-moved order which caught many families in mid-move having already vacated homes, shipped household goods and sold cars.

The first group of service members and family members left on the charter flight, known as the Patriot Express, from Osan Air Base on Saturday.

American troops and family members arrive on Osan Air Base, South Korea, on Friday, days after they were kicked off a military charter flight in Seattle amid confusion over an Army order halting moves amid the coronavirus crisis.

Bill “approved a number of exceptions to policy movements to get soldiers and their families who had already cleared, shipped household goods, or who were otherwise adversely affected by the order, off the peninsula,” according to the Eighth Army.

Exceptions were granted on a case-by-case basis, and the travelers will have to undergo quarantine and other requisite protocols upon arrival in the United States, officials said.

Maj. David Watkins and his wife, Irina, have to be out of their apartment by next week as they planned to transfer to Fort Belvoir, Va.

Watkins, who suffers from multiple health issues and was recently diagnosed with a brain tumor, said he has been told his exception was approved, but he’s waiting to see it in writing.

The order announced last week, which included Italy, halted moves to new assignments known as permanent changes of station, or PCS, through May 6 as well as travel for professional military education unless the course lasts at least six months.

The Defense Department has since expanded international and domestic travel restrictions for all employees as the respiratory virus has spread rapidly, prompting President Donald Trump to declare the pandemic a national emergency.

By Kim Gamel
Stars and Stripes

S. Korean virus numbers drop, but officials still cautious

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea’s daily coronavirus count dropped to double digits for the first time since the outbreak began nearly a month ago, officials said Sunday.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention logged 76 new cases Saturday, raising the total of positive tests to 8,162. The number of deaths from COVID-19 rose to 75, while 834 patients have been discharged.

For the first time since the daily number fell below 100 since Feb. 21, when a woman in the southeastern city of Daegu tested positive and the virus spread rapidly through a religious sect after she attended services.

Most of the infections have been in Daegu and surrounding areas, while the rest have been traced to the Shincheonji Church of Christ, which has apologized for its role in the crisis.

However, authorities have expressed concern over new clusters of infections elsewhere, including a school in Seoul and the government complex in Sejong.

“We want to ask you to continue to maintain social distancing and refrain from visiting any crowded places and any social gatherings,” Kwon Jun-wook, the vice head of the KCDC.

“We are not out of the woods yet here in Korea,” he added. “We must all do our part in our efforts to combat the virus.”

Abrams, the commander of U.S. Forces Korea, said Friday that 392 service members, family members and civilians were in self-quarantine at the peak of the crisis in late February.

“Our goal is to have maximum protection and safety to our service members, families, and civilians while also ensuring that we remain operationally ready,” the Defense Department imposed travel restrictions for its uniformed and nonuniform personnel Friday, banning all forms of official travel for 60 days to countries affected by coronavirus, according to a memo dated Wednesday by Defense Secretary Mark Esper.

The restrictions include China, Italy, Iran and South Korea, among others.

Travel for essential missions only is allowed to countries under a level 2 CDC advisory.

Sasebo first installation to ban escorted guests amid virus concerns

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

The base that is home to warships of the Navy’s amphibious force in the Pacific has banned escorted guests — effective immediately — due to the coronavirus.

Sasebo Naval Base in the Japanese island of Kyushu made the announcement Friday afternoon, according to the installation’s Facebook page. The order applies to all base facilities, including Naval Beach Unit 7’s Yokose Landing Craft Air Cushion facility, fuel and ordnance facilities and off-base housing areas.

Government-issued ID cardholders, contractors and vendors will still be allowed access, the post said. The restrictions will remain until further notice.

“In order to minimize the presence of non-mission related personnel on base and to ensure the welfare and safety of everyone in the community, escorted guests will be prohibited on all Sasebo Naval Base facilities until further notice,” the post said.

A spokesman for U.S. Forces Japan, Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Fitts, said this is the first such restriction he is aware of in Japan. USFJ provides baseline policy and direction but local commanders are given the discretion to implement additional measures, he said in an emailed statement Friday.

Similar restrictions have been implemented in South Korea, which has been designated a Travel Health Notice Level 3 country by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A CDC level 3 advisory means a widespread community transmission of the disease is occurring.

Japan is part of a level 2 CDC travel advisory, which means a sustained community spread of the disease is underway.

“Every installation’s process and protective measures will vary depending on available resources and capability,” Fitts wrote. “As long as all standing policies are adhered to, commanders retain the authority and flexibility to address issues at their installations.”

Firmar added that USFJ continues to monitor the situation with a level of “seriousness and an abundance of caution.”

“USFJ is tracking all new developments on a 24-hour basis in order to make the best decisions possible,” he said. “Our goal is to provide maximum protection and safety to our service members, families, and civilians while also ensuring that we remain operationally ready.”

The Defense Department imposed travel restrictions for its uniformed and nonuniform personnel Friday, banning all travel to countries affected by coronavirus.
So you’re stationed overseas and it’s an election year... This handy flowchart on absentee voting lays it all out.

Do you want to vote in U.S. elections?

YES

Have you registered to vote absentee and requested your ballot?

YES

Great! Have you received your ballot yet?

NO

Go to FVAP.gov and fill out a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to register and request your ballot. You can also get one from your VAO. Send it in by August 1 (or your state’s deadline).

NO

If you haven’t received your state ballot in time to vote, use the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB) as a backup ballot. Get it at FVAP.gov.

Send it in like your regular ballot.

PRO TIP

If your regular ballot arrives, fill that out and send it in too. Don’t worry; only one ballot will be counted.

NO

If you know someone who wants to vote, share this with them!

YES

You’re on track. Have you filled out your ballot and sent it in?

NO

Send it in like your regular ballot.

YES

Great! Have you checked that your ballot arrived?

NO

Don’t miss your vote-by-date! Send in your ballot by October 13 if you’re overseas or October 27 if you’re stateside. If you don’t have access to Military Postal Service, send it by October 5.

YES

Wow, you’re one squared-away voter!

After you send your ballot, you can check if it was received by your election office. Get started at FVAP.gov.
Screening: Travelers returning from abroad clog airports across U.S.

FROM FRONT PAGE
rebooked flight, finally managing to catch a third after racing across the airport.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker tweeted at President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, suggest- ing that the customs process is under federal jurisdiction and the White House should address the crowds. His con- cerns were echoed on Twitter by his fellow Democrats, Illinois Sens. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth.

The Trump administration should have been ready, Pritzker ret- aced, with a plan to handle the rush of returning travelers.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Italian police assess US base compliance

By Kent Harris
Stars and Stripes

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — Carabinieri officers visited commissaries at Aviano and Vicenza last week to enforce a 1-meter “social distance” mandate between shoppers, one of the measures Italy has put in place to try to control the rapidly spreading coronavirus.

The unusual visit, which Aviano base leadership said was a reminder that Americans are expected to follow Italian guidelines to stem the spread of the virus, on base and off, came hours after Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte ordered bars, restaurants, beauty salons and most shops around the country to close as coronavirus deaths in Italy continued to rise.

The number of people in Italy who have tested positive for the virus, which can cause respiratory disease, jumped from more than 15,000 Thursday to 17,660 on Friday, data collected by the Italian health ministry. Of those, 1,266 have died and 1,328 were in intensive care.

The exchange is trying to find alternatives to base barber shops and beauty salons that host nations ordered closed, which happened in Italy, he said.

A number of stores have also instituted “social distancing” for customers in line.

At locations like Bahrain and Naples and Sigonella in Italy, where base schools have closed, the Navy Exchange school lunch program can still provide food to commands and military families at a moment’s notice, Bianchi said.

The exchange is trying to find alternative ways to balance demand for Wi-Fi on bases, Bianchi said.

“Under the new rules, only one person per household can go to the shops that are open, and anyone who needs to leave their home — to go to work or even just to walk the dog — must obtain and carry an official authorization form, allowing them to be outside,” he said.

At Vicenza, the carabinieri officers visited the exchange and the post office, as well as the commissary.

Red tape has been placed on the floor at 1-meter intervals by cash registers in the Aviano commissary and other places people line up, to give customers a visual reminder of the distance they’re supposed to leave between themselves and the next person in line.

Facilities that fail to follow the Italian regulations may be closed, Lt. Col. Matthew Lund, Aviano’s base staff judge advocate, warned at a town hall meeting after the lawmen’s unannounced visit Thursday.

“So I want to stress that,” he said. “One-meter social distance.”

Although most Italian retail outlets will be closed under the latest decree, base exchanges in Italy will be allowed to remain open because they sell pharmaceutical items, technology that could be used to aid work from home, and car care products.

Fifteen people were in quarantine and 44 people in home isolation at Aviano as of Friday after being exposed to others who might have the disease, said Lt. Col. Mark Dudley, commander of the 31st Aerospace Medicine Squadron.

No base personnel have tested positive, he said.

Just 15 people within the Vicenza military community have been tested for the virus, Lt. Col. Joe Matthews said Friday at U.S. Army Garrison Italy’s latest virtual town hall. No one there has tested positive either.

Only one U.S. service member in Europe, a sailor in Naples, has tested positive for the virus. He is staying at his home near the city’s airport. An American civilian employee at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany tested positive for the virus Thursday, becoming the second confirmed coronavirus case among the Defense Department community in Europe.

Nancy Montgomery contributed to this story from Vicenza.

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Navy Exchange says lodges can be used as quarantine sites

By Seth Robson
and Christian Lopez
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy Exchange has declared war on the coronavirus, procuring tens of thousands of masks and containers of hand sanitizer and preparing on-base hotels to host those who may be infected, according to a Friday statement by Navy Exchange Service Command.

“The Navy Lodge Program is prepared for any of its 39 facilities worldwide to be used as an official isolation or quarantine site,” NEX Service Command CEO Robert Bianchi said in the statement.

The exchange set up a crisis team March 2 to deal with issues caused by the virus.

“Navy Lodge Regional Directors developed a list of precautions and reminders displayed at all locations,” he said. “All Navy Lodges are fully stocked with the necessary cleaning supplies and staff have received additional training on the sanitization of common surfaces and types of chemicals to use.”

Last week, the exchange acquired for its stores an additional 24,000 masks and more than 70,000 units of hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes, Bianchi added.

If there are impacts on shipping, the exchange will work with ocean carriers and Military Surface Development and Distribution Command to try to keep products flowing to stores, he said.

Bianchi said the exchange employs procurement teams in Europe and Japan to hunt for additional supplies in those areas.

“We are diligently pursuing all available avenues for the products you are in need of at this time,” he said.

When suppliers have products available the exchange is one of the first to get them, he added.

Petty Officer 1st Class Cha-teece Chappelle, a gas turbine systems technician at Yokosuka, said items such as hand sanitizer are available at base stores, although there are purchase limits.

“There was one point initially where they had a corner item to sell out since everyone was purchasing [certain items] so rapidly,” she said.

Some exchanges impose purchase limits on certain products to meet increased demand, Bianchi said.

A number of stores have also instituted “social distancing” for customers in line.

At locations like Bahrain and Naples and Sigonella in Italy, where base schools have closed, the Navy Exchange school lunch program can still provide food to commands and military families at a moment’s notice, Bianchi said.

“We understand the use of Wi-Fi is very important to our patrons overseas who may be confined to their homes,” he said.

The exchange has shipped an extra 850 common access card readers, Bianchi said. The devices allow employees to log in to some of the government’s systems from home.

The exchange is also replenishing stores that it operates on warships at sea through distribution centers in Djibouti, Dubai, Italy and Spain, he added.

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Twitter: @CLopez_Stripes

CHRISTIAN LOPEZ/Stars and Stripes

Dzens of lodges on Navy bases worldwide are ready to be used as isolation or quarantine sites for those affected by the coronavirus, according to Navy Exchange Service Command.

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What’s Your Story?
Most Europe military schools close over COVID-19 concerns

By Jennifer H. Svan
Stars and Stripes

All but a handful of the Pentagon’s 66 schools across Europe will be closed to students starting next week as a precaution to help curb the spread of the coronavirus, school and military leaders announced Friday.

Department of Defense Education Activity schools in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain will close Monday, DODEA spokesman Stephen Smith said.

Teachers and school administrators should report to the schools Tuesday and continue to work, officials said.

DODEA schools in Italy and Bahrain had already closed over coronavirus concerns. Schools in Bahrain have been closed since Feb. 26, and digital learning plans specific to each grade and teacher have been put in place for students. On Saturday, officials extended the closure until March 24th, in line with Bahraini measures to reduce the spread of the virus, Smith said.

DOD’s 66 schools across Europe serve more than 24,000 students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. The closures affect more than 24,000 students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

No DODEA Europe students, teachers or other employees have tested positive for the virus, Smith said.

“The closures are not being driven by the body’s threat of climate change. The closures are being driven by the body’s threat of climate change,” Smith said.

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The closures in Germany were announced hours after regional governments around Germany, including in areas with U.S. bases, said that they were shutting down schools as coronavirus infections continue to rise around the country.

Jason Kloeckner, Kent Harris and Joshua Karsten contributed to this story.

Online learning plans will differ for each school, depending on needs and capabilities, Sanchez said. The expectation is that there will be at least two online live contacts with the teacher and students per class per week,” he said.

DOD is continuing to closely monitor the coronavirus situation with military leaders, health officials and host nation partners, Smith said. No firm date has been set for the schools to reopen, he said.

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Gloria Lepko, an engagements chief with the 2d Marine Division, said. “Knowing that your belongings are safe in the hands of a background-checked mover can be a huge relief.”

One of the men sentenced to jail last year for the violent attempted burglary of the home of an American family in Landstuhl, Germany, had a long criminal record. He and his accomplices found out through a moving company work-order. An American family had high-value goods in a safe in their home.

Many moving company workers in Germany are short-term hires. It’s unclear if they submit to background checks.

The changes in Germany will take effect May 15, the start of the busiest time for permanent changes of station.

One of the most significant changes is the requirement for movers to pass background checks before they are hired.

“Enforcing background checks on all service members will bring a peace of mind in the chaos of moving,” Sgt. Gloria Lepko, an engagements chief with the 2d Marine Division, said.

“Knowing that your belongings are safe in the hands of a background-checked mover can be a huge relief.”

The changes will affect more than 2,000 students, teachers and other employees.
Tests in Japan available for those who show symptoms

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — With coronavirus on the minds of U.S. service members and their families in Japan, a sniffle or a cough may raise sudden concern.

Tests for the disease are available at military hospitals, but patients must show symptoms — fever, cough, shortness of breath — before they are given one, according to military doctors who posted informational videos online or spoke at base public meetings recently.

“We don’t test everybody — we don’t test you if you have no symptoms,” preventive medicine physician Maj. Andrew Fisher said during a U.S. Forces Japan virtual townhall on coronavirus concerns March 2.

“This is a limited resource, so we test the people who it makes sense to test and there’s specific criteria that governs who qualifies to get tested based on who’s most at risk,” said Fisher, who serves as the public health emergency officer at Yokota Air Base.

Military hospitals in Japan may administer the tests but must send the samples for analysis to local Japanese health agencies, to Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta or Naval Medical Center San Diego, Fisher said.

Results may be returned in three to seven days, said Capt. Drew Bigby, commander of Naval Hospital Yokosuka, in a video posted Thursday to U.S. Naval Forces Japan’s Facebook page.

On Okinawa, the prefectural government reported three people tested positive for coronavirus of 136 people tested as of Thursday, according to its website.

A third of Okinawa’s children, 29.9%, live in poverty, a rate twice Japan’s national average, according to a study by the prefectural government and released in March 2019.

“This result is very concerning,” Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki said at the time, citing the report.

According to the study, Okinawa’s divorce rate is the highest in Japan since 1985; rates of teenage pregnancy are twice as high as the rest of the nation.

Aubrie Owens, a Marine spouse and a manager of Help Feed Oki — a sister organization to Help Oki — has been collecting food from the military community and donating it to the local food bank for over a year.

“Just last week, we donated over 1,130 pounds of food that was collected from the military community to the local food bank,” Owens said.

Ivy Molina, a Marine spouse, volunteered with Help Oki since last October. Molina and her family love Okinawa and they are on the second tour here, she said.

“I want to make a difference for the community,” she said.

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

Students in central Tokyo wear face masks to guard against the coronavirus Thursday.

This is a limited resource, so we test the people who it makes sense to test.

Maj. Andrew Fisher

BY AVA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

March, Help Oki contacted the local food bank, government welfare offices and other nonprofit organizations, Chris Nesbitt said.

“It’s my passion to help others, and I don’t feel like it’s work to me,” he said. “If you do what you love, it’s never work.”

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Help Oki volunteers Aubrie Owens, left, and Yoko Nesbitt prepare bento lunch boxes for needy Okinawans on Thursday.

OKINAWA CITY, Okinawa — Donations of bento boxes for local schoolchildren missing their daily lunch brightened an otherwise gloomy Thursday in Uruma City.

Since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe asked that schools across the country close during March to stem the spread of coronavirus, some children on the island prefecture are going without their only healthy meal of the day.

American and local volunteers stepped up to ease that need by collecting 126 Japanese box lunches, called bento, along with 10 cases of fruit drinks and 30 pounds of rice and distributing it at Grace Asia International Church.

“When I heard of the school closure, my immediate concern was those less fortunate children who rely on the free school lunch,” said Chris Nesbitt, director of Help Oki, on Thursday.

“For those kids, school lunch may be their only nutritious meal of the day.”

The delivery Thursday was just the latest. Last week, Help Oki made and delivered more than 190 bento, 220 pounds of rice and 90 beverages to children and single parents in Uruma City, Nesbitt said.

Help Oki, a volunteer group of military personnel, their families and locals, has been helping the less fortunate on the island since 2014. Chris Nesbitt, a retired Marine sergeant and New Jersey native, and his wife, Yoko Nesbitt, are the founders.

When schools closed in early March, Help Oki contacted the local food bank, government welfare offices and other nonprofit organizations, Chris Nesbitt said.

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Doctor says Trump tested negative for coronavirus

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has tested negative for the coronavirus, according to the president’s personal physician.

The White House released the test results Saturday night after Trump told reporters hours earlier that he had taken the coronavirus test, following days of resisting being screened despite the fact that he had been in recent contact with three people who tested positive for the virus.

Trump told reporters at a White House briefing Saturday that he had his temperature taken and it was “totally normal,” shortly before stepping into the room to discuss the government’s efforts to halt the spread of the virus. The president had multiple direct and indirect contacts with people who have since tested positive for the virus, including three people he spent time with a week ago at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

The Brazilian Embassy in Washington said late Friday that the country’s charge d’affaires, Nestor Forster, tested positive after sitting at Trump’s dinner table. So, too, have a top aide to Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who took a photo with Trump and attended a party with him, and another person who attended a campaign fundraiser with the president that Sunday, according to two Republican officials who spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss private health matters.

Trump, after days of insisting that he was not exhibiting symptoms, relented after being pressed by reporters about his resistance to testing when multiple lawmakers and countless citizens across the country who have had the same degree of exposure have not only tried to get tested, but also chosen to try to avoid potentially infecting others.

On Saturday, the White House announced that it is now conducting temperature checks on anyone who is in close contact with Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, including reporters who attended a White House briefing and anyone entering the Oval Office.

Pence also wrote a memo to White House staff Saturday reminding them to take precautions such as avoiding physical contact, washing hands frequently and staying home when sick.

“It’s imperative each one of us do our part to take the proper precautions to keep ourselves and our colleagues safe,” Pence wrote.

“As an employee aboard the White House Complex, we have an additional duty to protect the health of our Executive Branch and those working with us.”

US soldiers help clean city at center of S. Korea outbreak

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — American soldiers recently donned protective gear to help South Koreans disinfect a housing complex in Daegu in the first such joint operation since the coronavirus outbreak began in the southeastern city.

The 19th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and South Korea’s 2nd Operations Command, both headquartered in Daegu, spent just over an hour to clean the area on Friday, according to the 19th ESC’s public affairs office.

Soldiers wore hooded jumpsuits, goggles, face masks and blue plastic booties as they sprayed the cleaning agent on the street outside the housing complex.

The South Korean army had thoroughly disinfected the interior after the apartment building saw several people infected by the virus more than a week ago, but had not yet cleaned the outside.

Daegu and surrounding areas have suffered the majority of confirmed coronavirus cases in South Korea after a woman tested positive for the virus more than a week ago, but had not yet cleaned the outside.

DODEA schools in S. Korea will remain closed for another week

By Dave Ornauer

Stars and Stripes

URUMA, Okinawa — Students at Defense Department schools in South Korea face another week at home due to concerns over the coronavirus outbreak, officials said Friday.

Schools at Osan Air Base, Camp Humphreys and U.S. Army Garrison Daegu will remain closed through this week, according to a memo sent Friday afternoon by Jeff Arrington, district superintendent for Department of Defense Education Activity-Korea, to parents, students and school employees.

After meeting with U.S. Forces Korea officials last week, “a decision was made to delay the start of school to safeguard the health of students,” Arrington’s memo stated.

Teachers, however, will remain at work, Arrington wrote, “to provide ongoing learning experiences for all students.” Teachers in the Korea district have been providing online instruction since the schools closed Feb. 26.

The decision to keep schools closed was made “thoughtfully and deliberately, after conducting an analysis of the mitigation measures developed with the USFK medical community and others to create a safe zone in schools and to slow the possible spread of the virus,” the statement continued.

Arrington’s memo cleared up messaging earlier that day. The Eighth Army had tweeted around noon that schools would stay closed; a tweet sent 29 minutes later from Daegu garrison stated that decision was “pending.”

Arrington counseled patience and support “as we wait a bit longer to ensure we have all the mitigations in place. We understand and share everyone’s concerns and desires about schools reopening.”

DODEA schools in Japan have remained open. Japanese public schools, however, are closed in response to a plea from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

DODEA officials expect to announce Wednesday whether activities scheduled in April will proceed, namely the Far East Creative Expressions visual arts show and the Honor Music Festival, both in Japan, according to DODE-Pacific chief of staff Todd Schiltz.

Far East spring sports tournaments scheduled for May 22-24 at various sites remain a go “at this time,” according to DODEA-Pacific athletics coordinator Tom McKinney. No set date has been announced for when a final decision will be made.

By Aamer Madhani and Jill Colvin

Associated Press

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Trump told reporters at a White House briefing Saturday that he had his temperature taken and it was “totally normal,” shortly before stepping into the room to discuss the government’s efforts to halt the spread of the virus. The pandemic has now infected more than 2 million people in the U.S. and caused at least 50 deaths.

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Stars and Stripes/PAGE 10
Transgender man yearns to join military

By David Crary and Keith Srakocic
Associated Press

LISBON, Ohio — Nic Talbott keeps himself busy, working as a substitute teacher, studying for a master’s degree, helping with chores at his grandmother’s farm. He also finds time, almost daily, for rigorous workouts — to prepare himself for the day he and his brother, as active-duty service members, could be called to serve in the military.

That day, Talbott said, arrives after the Pentagon begins implementing a ban on the use of PFAS firefighting foams. When that happens, as soon as can be arranged, he said, he will go to the Pentagon and ask to be allowed to serve. He believes the Pentagon will grant him that request.

It is a decision he has wrestled with since before he was born, as an at-risk fetus, whose mother, Rhoda Dineen, had been given aPFAS-laced firefighting foam to drink hawked on the open market by retailers.

The Pentagon says the ban will begin on April 12, 2019, and will take effect in phases over the next 18 months. About 80% of service members will be affected by the ban by the end of 2020. It is a provision of the defense authorization bill passed by the U.S. Congress in 2019.

Talbott, 26, was slated to retire in 2016 when the Pentagon — with a green light from then-President Barack Obama — announced that transgender people already serving in the military would be able to do so openly. President Donald Trump, six months after replacing Obama, announced, with a tweet in July 2017 that he would reverse that policy and bar transgender individuals from serving in any capacity in the military.

Four lawsuits were filed in federal courts challenging Trump’s policy, one including Talbott as a plaintiff. The suits are pending, but the Supreme Court last year ruled that the ban could go into effect while the litigation continued. The ban was formally implemented on April 13, 2019.

Some transgender people who hoped to enlist have moved on to other pursuits, but Talbott refused to give up on a career aspiration that dates to his childhood.

“At this point, I am not looking for other options,” he said. “I know this is what I’m supposed to be doing, and I know there are thousands of other transgender people like me. We shouldn’t have to settle for a Plan B.”

Before the ban, Talbott was participating in an Army ROTC program. He says he’d be open to serving in either the Army or the Air Force, ideally as a military police officer or in a military intelligence unit.

Talbott lives at his grandmother’s hilltop farm in Lisbon, in an outbuilding near the main farmhouse. He flies a large American flag from his front porch’s fence. His family is close-knit. On Friday, his mother and his sister feted him and his brother, Rhoda Dineen, with cake and coffee ice cream on her 73rd birthday.

“2024 is ridiculous,” Rutherford said, “We have to do more.”

Former pilot says he was not warned of contaminated waters on base

Nic Talbott, left, hands a birthday cake to his grandmother, Rhoda Dineen, on Friday, with his mother, Tracy Carlton, center, at his grandmother’s home in Lisbon, Ohio. Talbott is a plaintiff in one of four lawsuits challenging a Trump administration policy barring transgender Americans from enlisting in the military.

The Florida Department of Health studied cases, and his daughter’s death. But for some in Congress, the military’s handling of Talbott’s lawsuit on Wednesday.

“I expect that cost will grow as we fur-

The Pentagon said the price tag to tackle the issue — containing and cleaning up chemicals — will be at least $3 billion, an increase in the estimated cost in September of a few months ago, to about $1 billion.

“By the White House, that said that transgender people “could impair military readiness. Others, including the clear lines that demarcate male and female standards and policies where they exist, and lead to disproportionate costs.”

Links: Former pilot says he was not warned of contaminated waters on base

Known as PFAS. The man-made chemicals, which have been used since the 1950s in products ranging from nonstick cookware to water- and stain-repellent fabrics, have been linked to an increase in cancer risks, birth defects and other health problems, according to the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

On Wednesday, Holmes told lawmakers in his years at Patrick AFB he was never warned that water in the area had been contaminated with PFAS, even as the Air Force’s own water sampling showed groundwater contained drastically more PFAS than in drinking water than the Environmental Protection Agency had determined is safe. Air Force officials, he testified, denied there was any problem which asked about uses of PFAS.

“What we’ve been told is: ‘There is no problem here,’” Holmes said. “The Air Force doesn’t think the stuff is bad, and the [Defense Department] has completely failed every service member, dependent and civilian person living on and around Patrick Air Force Base.”

After retiring from the military last year, Holmes told lawmakers, he ditched all of his service medals and ribbons and uniforms and everything else collected during 25 years of service in the Army and Air Force. He kept only his identification card naming him a retired service member, he testified.

Congress and the Pentagon have taken some steps toward cleaning up years of contamination and working toward eliminating the use of PFAS-laced firefighting foam. In 2016, the Pentagon banned the use of the foam except to fight real fires and it will eliminate the use of the problematic foams entirely by 2024, based on current law. It also has created a task force to study the issue, and identified some 400 contamination sites across the military and in the environmental mission.

The Pentagon is working in some locations with municipalities to treat local water supplies where it has found high levels of PFAS. However, communities around Patrick AFB are not among the places receiving Pentagon support, local officials said.

Wednesday.

“Eliminating the use of those products alongside firefighting foam, he said, could help lower the levels of those chemicals in the bloodstream of service members and their families who are “disproportionately affected by PFAS pollution.”

“Many of the highest PFAS detections in the nation have so far been found at DOD installations,” Faber said. “… Communities near those installations are also disproportionately affected by PFAS pollution.”

Harms told lawmakers that he was aware of at least 16 cases of rare breast cancers among the about 12,000 residents of Satellite Beach, Fla., the community just south of Patrick AFB where he has lived since 2013. He said he blamed the military and its use of PFAS for those cases, and his daughter’s death.

The Florida Department of Health studied some of those cases last year but it was unable to confirm the potential of a “cancer cluster” around Patrick AFB linked to PFAS, the agency announced in May, 2018.

But Rutherford, whose district in Florida is farther north around Jacksonville, said the issue should be studied further.

For now, Holmes demanded the Pentagon provide water treatment to communities around Patrick’s Air Force Base and warn service members and their families of the potential drinking water contamination.

“I will have to live the rest of my life knowing the decision to serve in the military and reside on an United States Air Force Base resulted in the death of my beautiful grandmother Dineen, and let that sink in for a minute. … I pray that no other service member will ever have to unknowingly sacrifice the life of their child by serving their country.”

Cickstein.corey@stripes.com
Twitter: @CDicksteinDC
The nation’s largest labor union has lined up behind Joe Biden’s presidential campaign, with the National Education Association on Saturday endorsing the former vice president for the Democratic nomination over his last remaining primary rival Bernie Sanders.

The NEA’s board of directors chose Biden following a recommendation from the organization’s political action committee board, following months of surveying the organization’s 3 million members and multiple presidential candidate forums held around the country.

NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, whose union tops 3 million members, called Biden a “tireless advocate for public education” and “the partner that students and educators need now in the White House.”

The union’s decision came with Biden on the cusp of stretching out an insurmountable delegate lead over Sanders. The two candidates meet Sunday for their first one-on-one debate, two days before four populous states — Arizona, Florida, Illinois and Ohio — hold primaries with a combined 577 delegates up for grabs.

In the four states that vote Tuesday, almost 760,000 voters live in households with at least one NEA member, according to the union. NEA officials said the union’s PAC would immediately push digital advertising into the four states on Biden’s behalf, while also communicating with NEA households.

Democratic presidential candidates in 2020 were mostly in-step with education unions, with Biden and the rest vowing to replace President Donald Trump’s education secretary, Betsy DeVos, with someone who’s had classroom experience, while vastly increasing federal spending on early childhood, primary and secondary education.

Biden’s proposals come with an estimated $850 billion price tag over 10 years. Among other ideas, he calls for universal access to pre-kindergarten programs for 3- and 4-year olds; tripling Title I spending for schools with higher concentration of students from low-income households; federal infrastructure spending for public school buildings; and covering the cost of schools’ compliance with federal requirements for teaching students with disabilities. Biden also opposes taxpayer money being routed to for-profit charter school enterprises.

President Donald Trump said Saturday he had the power to fire or demote Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, adding new fuel to his long-running animus toward the central bank’s leader at a moment when the economy was at risk of edging into recession.

Trump told reporters that he wasn’t considering firing Powell, but reiterated his frustration with the chairman. The comments were particularly striking because they came as the coronavirus pandemic shook the global economy.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average had its worst week since October 2008. In just a few weeks, U.S. stocks have lost all the gains made during 2019.

“I have the right to do that or the right to remove him as chairman,” Trump said Saturday at a news conference called to provide an update on the administration’s response to the coronavirus outbreak. “He has, so far, made a lot of bad decisions, in my opinion.”

No Fed chairman has ever been removed by a president. The law creating the Fed says its officials and those of other independent agencies can be “removed for cause” by a president. While that issue has never arisen in regard to a Fed official, the courts ruled decades ago that “for cause” meant more than a policy disagreement.

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BY FRANCES D’EMILIO
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican’s Holy Week ceremonies will go ahead but without public attendance as Italy tries to contain the coronavirus outbreak, the Holy See said Sunday.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said in a statement that “as far as Holy Week liturgical celebrations are concerned, I can specify that all are confirmed.”

But Bruni added: “As things stand, under study are the ways they would be carried out and who would participate while respecting the security measures put in place to avoid spread of the coronavirus.” He added that in any case, faithful will be able to follow the ceremonies on TV, radio and through online media.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday on April 5, culminating on Easter Sunday a week later, with tradition calling for an outdoor Mass in St. Peter’s Square on both Sundays. Tens of thousands of faithful usually turn out for the celebration.

Italy is under severe lockdown, with the public restricted from leaving their homes except to buy food, go to work or a few other urgent reasons, and when outside must stay at least one meter (about three feet) away from each other. The disease for most people causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some, it can cause more severe illness.

It is not clear if the Italian decree’s restrictions will be extended well into April. But fear of spreading the virus could also jeopardize the traditional Way of the Cross procession on Good Friday on April 10 at the Colosseum, even without the public.

In any case, virus fears and travel restrictions by many countries toward Italy have made tourism virtually vanish.

With St. Peter’s Square closed to the public, and one case of infection reported by the Vatican recently, Pope Francis on Sunday delivered his traditional weekly commentary and blessing from the Apostolic Library instead of from a window overlooking the vast square.

Francis praised priests for “creativity” in tending to their flocks, especially in the region of Lombardy, northern Italy, where thousands are hospitalized or in quarantine. He said their demonstrated there are “a thousand ways to be near” to the faithful, if not physically.

Some churches in Italy are being allowed to stay open for individual prayer, but all public Masses are forbidden during lockdown to discourage crowding.

Francis didn’t cite the Rev. Giuseppe Corbari, pastor of San Robbiano church in the town of Giussano, six miles from Milan, but he well could have.

Corbari printed all the selfies he received from faithful and attached them to the church pews, offering a vivid reminder of the powerful sense of community among Catholics.

Francis did single out for praise the Milan archbishop, who last week went atop the roof of the city’s iconic Duomo, or cathedral, to pray alone before a statue of the Madonna.
by Mike Sweeney
Special to Stars and Stripes

Horse racing is experiencing the most profound crisis in the long history of the sport. The HIA was introduced in the House by Rep. Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., and has strong bipartisan support, with 244 co-sponsors. Companion legislation was introduced into the Senate by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., and has 24 co-sponsors. The bill is moving, but Congress needs to speed up the process.

In the past, there has been disagreement about whether a federally sponsored anti-doping body was necessary, and I understand that no one wants a patchwork of 38 regulatory bodies. The HIA would be a forceful, comprehensive, and targeted approach to a problem that should be solved now.

T he horse-racing world was stunned last week by the arrest of 27 people on federal horse-doping charges. The indictments describe a “widespread, corrupt” scheme to give racehorses performance-enhancing and other banned drugs. These drugs can mask pre-existing injuries and directly lead to horse injuries and death.

Notes on the status of the case:

1. The United States has spent the preceding 40 years with only two long-standing bases in the region: the air base at Incirlik in Turkey and the naval base at Manama in Bahrain — and strategy has failed to materialize. Meanwhile, the expansive U.S. bases presence in the region remains a question mark after decades of trying to manage stability and security in the Middle East through military means alone.

30 years ago, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait prompted a massive deployment of U.S. forces in the region to help defend Saudi Arabia and ultimately liberate Kuwait. In the years since the first Gulf War, despite ebbs and flows in troop levels, U.S. forces never truly left the Middle East. Instead, America’s foot-print in the region — its busing presence — deepened.

Recent tensions with Iran, sparked by “maximum pressure,” have only resulted in a military build-up and the killing of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the Pentagon deployed 4,500 new troops to the region, mostly to Kuwait, bringing the total of U.S. forces in the region to more than 50,000.

As others have argued, an evaluation of U.S. busing in the Middle East is long overdue. Indeed, such an assessment should examine if America’s presence in the region is necessary.

Today, the United States operates from more than a dozen major military facilities in the Middle East, including the headquarters of the 5th Fleet at Manama, Bahrain, and air bases in countries such as Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. This presence includes five major bases in support of U.S. Army and Air Force deployments and is now home to more than 200,000 American personnel and other foreign country in the world, save Germany, Japan and South Korea.

Policies and programs in the Middle East might seem foreign policy blipshyness given the centrality of the region in geopolitics. But the relation of the region has diminished. Though it still remains an important factor in world politics, it seems that the region’s importance is due to increased U.S. domestic production and Europe’s (admittedly questionable) turn toward Russian energy sources. The Middle East accounts for just 4.2% of global GDP. The policy community in Washington has been slow to recognize this.

Ideally, force posture should derive from strategy, but given the reluctance for a truly fullscale debate on U.S. goals in the Middle East, the U.S. basing architecture could suffice as a forcing function to better articulate policy objectives in the region. A careful examination of the U.S. basing architecture is needed.

However, these indictments clearly show that a patchwork of 38 regulatory bodies doesn’t work and that the losers are horses and all those who love this grand sport.

It is time for the horse-racing industry to unite in support of a national anti-doping regulatory system. I invite my colleagues to join me in clearly asking Congress to pass the Horseracing Integrity Act.
As the coronavirus spread to over 40 states, and as the number of Americans infected increased, two campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination were hopscotching across the country, assembling armies carrying hundreds of people: the candidates, exhausted staffers and journalists covering the politicians’ every move. These ensembles often traveled to multiple states on a single day, from one crowded event to another, in an effort to win delegates, who will then gather at a national convention in just a few months.

What could possibly go wrong?

It's hard to imagine worse activity to undertake during an epidemic than a presidential campaign. Combating the virus demands social distancing, but a campaign demands social contact. All the more, the better. That ethos is changing fast, however: On Tuesday night, both former Vice President Joe Biden and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders called off primary-night campaign rallies “out of concern for public health and safety,” as the Sanders campaign put it. The Democratic Party moved its Sunday debate from Phoenix to Washington and planned to hold it without an audience, and both the Biden and Sanders camps have told staffers to work from home and ended door-to-door canvassing.

But after defiantly announcing a “Catholics for Trump” rally in Milwaukee, President Donald Trump’s campaign pulled the plug on it — and the president also canceled a trip to Nevada and Colorado.

If the virus continues its current trajectory, the candidates may find themselves confronting the dangers of a “no-touch” campaign in American history — one in which baby-kissing is unthinkable, “virtual” rallies replace raucous crowds and the conventions become only-for-TV events. Trump seems more likely to resist this path, out of either stubbornness or ignorance, but even if just the Democratic campaigns conduct the behavior, it would be a remarkable spectacle that could even affect which candidate wins in November.

Sanders, Biden and Trump are all in their 70s, so people rightly wondered whether they were at risk of catching the virus on their tours. Sanders put the “no-touch” campaign in the context of the “Union” this month, Sanders — who, despite getting trounced in Tuesday’s primaries, says he will continue his campaign — suggested that the nation would be “in the best of all possible worlds, maybe.” But at that point, he said he’d be running “as hard as we can.”

In fact, protecting the candidates is the relatively easy part. Presidential campaign staffs are quite adept at social distancing; they do it all the time when they want to keep their clients from the press, for example. They can use similar methods at public events. Here’s how the candidate enter through a side door, approach a podium from behind the stage, speak to a room full of 1,000 people, speak to 5,000 people, from a safe distance, and then leave to thundering applause without ever coming within a few feet of anyone.

It’s the crowds that are most at risk in this scenario, and not just from other audience members. Few understand the enormous number of people that campaigns — whether during a primary race or a general election — puts in motion every time the candidate travels.

First are the advance teams. Those crowds aren’t spontaneous, after all. An advance team that assembled a crowd and managed an event for a candidate in Seattle last week may be in Miami building the next crowd this week. Unlike the candidates, advance teams don’t have the option of not interacting with people. From spotting locations, working with local law enforcement to organizing volunteers working the event, it’s just not possible to build a crowd without interacting with a lot of people.

Then there are the journalists who wander into the audience and ask all those questions (“Why are you for Bernie?” “Why Trump?”), then get back on the campaign plane to ask similar questions, in a new crowd, in a new city.

In retrospect, it seems almost insane: Before Tuesday’s primaries, the Democratic campaigns and the press were hunkering among Missouri, Michigan and the state of Washington, which has seen the largest number of people testing positive for the coronavirus and the largest number of deaths in the United States. Then they were off to Arizona, Florida, Ohio and Illinois. It’s not just the travel itself. It’s the pace of it, the range, the close quarters on planes and in those rooms and arenas.

The recent cancellations are reassuring, and they suggest we’re about to enter a new world of campaigning. In the past few election cycles, campaigns have made use of “tele-town halls,” in which thousands of supporters can call in to a conference number and hear the candidate speak live to them. Such virtual town halls could replace rallies; Biden has announced his fundraising events will be virtual, too, for now.

The loss of door-to-door campaigning could be one of the bigger setbacks that the virus deals to the campaigns. Over the last decade, campaigns have seen a resurgence in engaged supporters volunteering to knock on doors — and voters seem more receptive to appeals from neighbors and fellow citizens than they do to TV ads, which are increasingly viewed as propaganda. What’s more, getting out the vote is the mainstay of every campaign’s field organization: Volunteers go to polling places, check off the names of those who have voted and then drive to the houses of those who haven’t — even offering a ride to the polls. Volunteers can still call voters — from their own homes — but they won’t be offering anyone a ride. (And the system breaks down if volunteers can’t check those lists at polling sites.) If the crisis continues, the campaigns will have to reinvent field organizing and get-out-the-vote operations, though it’s hard to envision how.

A “no-touch” campaign would inevitably be one that’s more driven by expensive advertising. And satellite interviews with local TV news programs, already a staple of campaigns, will become even more important, possibly shifting the balance of power somewhat from cable news to local stations in key states.

Such a campaign will hurt some candidates more than others. Sanders’ days as a candidate are likely numbered, but he has relied on crowd events to demonstrate the energy and passion his message generates; it’s hard to imagine a substitute in a world where large assemblies are taboo. Which also raises the question of how Trump’s campaign will respond, given that its signature has been large rallies. Can this man possibly conduct a reelection campaign sans adoring crowds wearing MAGA hats?

It’s hard to imagine a substitute in a world where large assemblies are taboo. Which also raises the question of how Trump’s campaign will respond, given that its signature has been large rallies. Can this man possibly conduct a reelection campaign sans adoring crowds wearing MAGA hats? He is likely to view the long-term abandonment of these events as an implicit admission that his handling of the crisis is not, as he likes to say, “perfect.” So might he — despite last week’s display of caution — conclude he’d prefer to resume the kind of campaigning he enjoys so much?

He can try. But if the coronavirus continues to spread, and if public health officials urge Americans to avoid crowds, even White House propaganda may not be enough to prevent Republicans from grasping reality. Trump may face the prospect of his supporters staying home and watching on TV as he speaks to smaller and smaller crowds — a potentially humiliating spectacle.

Democrats and Republicans might also have to scrap their national conventions as we know them. We’ve already seen several Republican elected officials who attended the Conservative Political Action Conference in late February choose to self-quarantine because of contact with an attendee who tested positive for the coronavirus. Some of those same officials also had contact with Trump before they isolated themselves. This worry and confusion arose from an event that’s tiny relative to a party convention.

For years, both party conventions have been little more than partisan TV shows; the coronavirus could offer an opportunity finally to admit this fact. There is no reason to have delegates travel during a health crisis to be props in a party telethon. The parties can produce one night of live speeches and videos, and the next night air the nominee’s acceptance speech and the unveiling (or, in the Republicans’ case, the re-unveiling) of the vice-presidential nominee. For a while, it looked as if a brokered Democratic convention might be a possibility. That’s not going to happen, so there’s no need to plan secure ways for state delegations to caucus and vote on multiple ballots without being in the same large room.

With luck, the coronavirus will abate by Election Day in November. If not, there will be no easy way to handle the possibility hundreds of thousands of voters who could be ill or quarantined. As a contingency, state legislatures should change laws for absentee ballots, making them far easier to cast. The virus doesn’t know red from blue, so this should be a bipartisan issue.

No one wants to see any of this occur. But the coronavirus is disrupting global supply chains, upending stock markets and spurring nations to effectively lock down their populations. It would be sheer hubris to think that, amid such chaos, the American presidential campaign is somehow immune.

Joe Trippi has worked for several Democratic presidential campaigns.
Doctors to train at new medical school building

LAS VEGAS — Las Vegas-area officials said a new medical building at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, will help train more doctors but more steps need to be taken to address a physician shortage.

Nevada has about 200 doctors for every 100,000 residents, which puts the state at 47th in the country.

At a joint meeting between the Las Vegas City Council and Clark County Commission, Las Vegas Director of Economic Development Bill Arent told officials that Nevada can’t rely on just trying to recruit more doctors from other states.

UNLV’s medical school, which opened in 2017, is helping to address that, and the creation of a new medical education building for the school is expected to expand the effort.

The medical education building for UNLV’s three-year-old medical school is still being designed, and four years of construction is expected start in February 2021, according to interim UNLV medical school dean John Filides.

Once the building opens, the school will be able to train more students, raising class sizes from 60 students to 90 or 120, said Maureen Schafer, who leads the Nevada Health and Vital Science Commission.

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Winona Ryder comes full circle
Celebrated ’80s actress making peace with career, state of Minnesota

By Neal Justin
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Squarespace’s Super Bowl commercial generated buzz in Minnesota than Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes did on the football field thanks to Winona Ryder’s whirlwind tour of the town she was named after.

But missing from that ad, as well as just about every story ever written about the star, is her much stronger connection to the state, a period in the mid-’90s she tried lying low in Minneapolis, far from the harsh glare of the national spotlight.

Was the escape plan a success?
“It was and it wasn’t,” said the 48-year-old actress during a recent promotional tour for her latest TV series, “The Plot Against America,” an adaptation of the Philip Roth novel that imagines what would have happened if another famous Minnesotan, Charles Lindbergh, had become president. “I think back on it, I think about all the things I had to pretend I was fine and that I didn’t really care, when actually I did. It’s interesting. I can talk about it now.”

To fully appreciate Ryder’s state of mind during that period, you need to journey back 25 years ago, when Ryder was her generation’s Lawrence.

Zoe Kazan, who was 5 when “Beetlejuice” came out, channeled her real-life awe of Ryder in playing her kid sibling in “Plot.”

“I think there’s a quality of hero worship that happens between younger sisters and older sisters, no matter their personalities or age difference,” said Kazan, whose credits include “The Big Sick,” “That’s so cool. That’s so useful for me, considering how much I admire Winona.”

Back in the early ’90s, movies like “Heathers” and “Edward Scissorhands” were catnip to teens hungry for fare edgier than John Hughes films. Alt rocker Mötley Crüe’s “Girls, Girls, Girls” was released, channeled her real-life romance, set the couple up for scrutiny.

The actress, fresh off her relationship with Dep, had met Soul Asylum’s Dave Pirner a 1993 taping of “MTV Unplugged.” By the end of the year, Ryder had played a political assassin in the band’s video for “Without a Trace” and decided to move into the red-hot rocker’s home in Minneapolis.

Soul Asylum, which had been an underdog band since forming in the early ’80s, had an unexpected hit in 1992 with “Runaway Train.” That mainstream success, along with the lead singer’s high-profile romance, set the couple up for scrutiny.

When the South By Southwest Film Festival was canceled one week before it was set to begin, it left filmmakers scrambling. The big question for so many — What happens next?

On March 13, the day the event was originally intended to start, the festival announced that it will move ahead with its juried awards. With 10 films each in the lineups for the narrative and documentary feature awards, as well as short film prizes and a handful of special awards, the winners will be announced March 24.

In a statement, South By Southwest Festival director of film Janet Pierson made her first public comments regarding the cancellation of this year’s festival.

In it, she said that after the event was canceled by the city of Austin, Texas, “The SXSW Film Fest immediately hunkered down to figure out what we could do to help and support the filmmakers whose work was affected, and who put trust and faith in SXSW for their launch. Many of them have spent years on the work they were bringing to SXSW.

“This was going to be a transformative event, and with the cancellation, the filmmakers were left stranded and scrambling,” Pierson’s statement continued. Regarding giving out the awards without the public festival, she said, “We know it’s no substitute for the live SXSW event with its unique and fantastic audience, but at least it’s some way to get attention for these wonderful films.”

The festival was set to open with the world premiere of Judd Apatow’s dramedy “The King of Staten Island,” starring Pete Davidson. The film was expected to be released by Universal in June, was also scheduled to play at the upcoming Tribeca Film Festival in April, which has also been canceled.

SXSW is a qualifying festival for the Film Independent Spirit Awards and the Academy Awards short film categories, and the festival confirmed that status remains in place for this year’s movies. All films selected for the festival may use the laurels of the festival on marketing materials.

Additionally, filmmakers may opt to have their films included in an online screening library being made available to press, buyers and the industry during the original dates of the festival, March 13-21.

There were more than 100 features, films and episodic projects scheduled to play at this year’s film festival. The series of events that constitute the larger South By Southwest program including music, technology and more, last year was attended by more than 47,000 people in Austin, including 73,000 for the film festival.

As soon as the festival was canceled, many filmmakers were left trying to figure out where their films might now have their world premieres or how to get in front of buyers and press.
**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

**ACROSS**
1. “You’ve got mail” ISP
2. Chest muscle
3. Prejudice
11. Detail, briefly
14. They give a hoot
15. — time (never)
16. Fish-fowl link
17. “I’m a klutz!”
18. Sacred song
20. Cranny
22. Granola
24. Laundry holder
28. “No cause for alarm”
30. Sorta
33. “That’s — ask”
34. Evening hrs.
36. Equipment
37. Trolley sound
39. Popular Rio beach
41. Snarl
43. Sashimi fish
44. African
46. Ear bone
50. Cellist Ma
53. “Norma —”
55. Stadium event
56. Sandwich cookie
57. Med. nation
58. Whirl
59. Calendar row
60. Clean air org.
61. Conclusion

**DOWN**
1. Now, in a memo
2. Makes a choice
3. Sultry Home
4. Zero, for review
5. Black, in verse
6. Ersatz chocolate
7. Barnes & Noble events
8. — Jima
9. Jungfrau, e.g.
10. Snake’s sound
11. It may be sold with a box of crayons
11. Chess piece
12. Sturdy tree
13. Spinning top
14. Leg joint
15. Dutch cheese
16. O’Hara estate
17. 28 Datum
19. Jazzy Fitzgerald
20. Arkin of “Argo”
21. Texter’s “More than I need to know”
22. Hot tub
23. Day — paint
24. “Caught ya!”
25. Haunting
26. Grate
27. Smoke an e-cig
28. Poker player’s declaration
29. Give temporarily
30. “That hurts!”
31. Tramcar contents
32. — haw! (rodeo cry)
33. Geologic period
34. Army
35. Trench art
36. Troops (Sgt.
37. Enemy
38. Field;
39. Battle
40. Desert
41. Hurricane
42. Storm
43. Tornado
44. Thunder
45. Lightning
46. Snowfall
47. Drought
48. Flood
49. Drought
50. Weather
51. Effect of weather
52. Cause of weather
53. Early rain
54. Late rain
55. Weather event
56. Weather servant
57. Weather map
58. Weather forecast
59. Weather channel
60. Weather reporter
61. Weather channel

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**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

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S F T A R S  A N D  S T R I P E S
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**CRYPTOQUIP**

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Q N K N P W G ’ R  Q N C  D
P N P N - V N J U L K
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**Saturday’s Cryptoquip:** HOW FAST DOES NEGLECT TURN A PRETTY URBAN AREA INTO A RUN-DOWN EYESORE? THE SPEED OF BLIGHT.

**Today’s Cryptoquip Clue:** Q equals D
**Pro baseball**

**Spring Training**

**AMERICAN LEAGUE**

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All scheduled games canceled

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**UFC**

**UFC holds full card in Brasilia in empty arena**

Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil — The UFC staged a full fight card Saturday night in Brazil’s capital, sticking to its plan to keep fighting in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Charles Oliveira stopped lightweight Kevin Lee with a guillotine choke in the third round of the main event in the UFC’s first show since many other sports organizations around the world postponed and canceled competition.

The world’s biggest mixed martial arts promotion held 12 bouts in Brasilia with only the fighters, their camps, the television production crew and a few dozen essential personnel inside Nilson Nelson Gymnasium.

“It was a bit weird not having any fans in the arena,” said Bea Macekli, a Swedish bantamweight who won a decision over Veronica Macedo in the opening bout. “But I was able to hear everything my coaches were saying, and it was good. Sometimes it is so loud out there. It was a crazy week. We don’t know if the fight was going to happen or not, but we stuck to the plan. It was really emotional.”

The UFC has not canceled any events in the wake of the pandemic, going against the plans of nearly all major sports leagues and organizations. UFC President Dana White has claimed the sport is “panicking” with its cancellations, and remained determined to stage four more shows over the next five weekends.

But White announced Saturday night that all four shows must take place at new, currently underdetermined venues — including UFC 249, the promotion’s next pay-per-view event headlined by lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov fighting top contender Tony Ferguson.

“We’re not stopping,” White said on ESPN, his promotional platform. “We’re just changing the way we’re putting on the fights. I’m in the fight business. I’ve been doing this for over 20 years, and this stuff happens to me every weekend — obviously not at this level.”

**We’re not stopping. We will keep finding a way to put on the fights.”**

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**Guam private school league halts all four-quarter season sports**

Stars and Stripes

Just a day after the island crowned a high school basketball champion, Guam’s private school league announced it was bringing preparations for the fourth-quarter season to a halt due to coronavirus concerns.

In a press release from league president Terry Debold, the Independent Intercholistic Athletic Association of Guam, in which Guam High School participates, announced it would “immediately cancel all play and all intercollegiate sports activities” through Saturday.

The announcement was made in apparent response to reports Sunday that three individuals had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Fourth-quarter IIAAG sports include boys volleyball, track and field, boys basketball and girls volleyball.

While it is a disappointing action, the IIAAG’s first and foremost priority is the safety and welfare of our members and those who share in interscholastic activities,” Debold said in the statement.

A special meeting of the league’s executive board of directors is scheduled for Tuesday to discuss and decide what further actions will be taken in response to the coronavirus situation.

“The immediate measures will help safeguard our members while we gather further information and general guidance” from government authorities, Debold said in the statement.

The announcement came a day after the finals of the Guam Basketball Confederation’s high school championship, which saw Father Duenas Memorial complete an unbeaten season on Guam and win its fourth tournament of the season.

Kyle Camacho scored 16 points and Father Duenas outscored Guam 24-2 in the third quarter to pull away for a 69-44 win Saturday at the University of Guam’s Calvo Field House.

Just reaching the finals was a major step for a Panthers team that won just five of its first 14 games, said Reggie Guerrero, in his first year of coaching the Panthers.

“We had a season of so many ups and downs,” he said. “Maybe that was the way we competed,” he said. “Second (isn’t) so bad. Our players improved so much and I’m so thankful for having the opportunity to coach them.”

The Panthers recovered from their slow start to reach the semifinals of the IIAAG playoffs, eventually losing to Harvest Christian in the third-place game.

Then, in an eight-team GBC playoff including Department of Education public-school teams, the Panthers upset Okkodo 80-71 in overtime in the quarterfinals, and avenged the loss to Harvest, winning 59-52 in the semifinals before succumbing to the Friars in the final.

Dillen Dela Cruz led the Panthers with 10 points and Travon Jacobs pitched in with 10.

The Friars had also won the island’s preseason tournament and the American School In Japan Kanto Classic in January, then said the IIAAG and GBC tournaments this month.

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March Madness
Following a flurry of conferences and individual teams calling off their basketball seasons Thursday, the NCAA followed suit. They scrapped all college winter and spring championships, the highlight of which is the men's basketball tournament — a three-week extravaganza that stands as the biggest event this side of the Super Bowl on the U.S. sports calendar. The tournament had been held every year since 1939 for men's teams. There has been an annual women's tournament since 1982.

NBA
NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said Thursday night that the league's hiatus because of the coronavirus pandemic will likely last at least a month, or roughly what would have been the remainder of an uninterrupted regular season.

"What we determined today is that this hiatus will be, most likely, at least 30 days," Silver said on TNT's "Inside the NBA" while making his first public comments since the league suspended play Wednesday after Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert tested positive for the coronavirus. A second Jazz player, Donovan Mitchell, said Thursday that he has also tested positive.

Silver did not say if the league intends the regular season to resume or if the NBA, should it return to action, would immediately go into postseason play. The 30-day minimum hiatus would mean no games until at least April 10.

Baseball
Major League Baseball scrapped spring training and postponed the start of its season, currently scheduled for March 26, for at least two weeks.

MLB had not had a mass postponement of openers since 1995, when the season was shortened from 162 games to 144 following a 7½-month players' strike that also wiped out the 1994 World Series.

The minor league season, which was to start April 9, also will be delayed along with qualifying in Arizona for this year’s Olympic baseball tournament and for next year's World Baseball Classic.

Boxing
Top Rank has canceled two shows headlined by its elite young talent scheduled for New York this week.

Former U.S. Olympian Shakur Stevenson was supposed to defend his featherweight title Saturday, and Ireland's Michael Conlan was to fight on St. Patrick’s Day.

Auto racing
NASCAR on Friday announced it would postpone its next two races, in Atlanta and Miami, after initially planning to hold the events without spectators.

IndyCar announced Friday that it would suspend its season through the end of April. The series also had planned to run this weekend in St. Petersburg, Fla., without fans in attendance before having a change of heart.

The first Formula One Grand Prix of the season, the Australian GP, was canceled. The Bahrain and Vietnam F1 races were postponed Friday. The Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai, scheduled for April 19, was postponed on Feb. 12. The Formula One season could start in the Netherlands, at the Zandvoort track outside Amsterdam, on May 3.

Hockey
NHl Commissioner Gary Bettman said Thursday the league would "pause" its season, effective immediately, because of the pandemic, although the league did not report any positive tests for coronavirus. Bettman said the hope is to resume play later and still award the Stanley Cup.

Bettman on Friday urged players to self-isolate while the league is on hiatus.

The Stanley Cup has been awarded every year since 1893 with two exceptions: 1919, when the final was canceled after five games because of the Spanish flu outbreak, and 2005, when the season was called off because of a lockout.

A handful of European hockey leagues have called off the remainder of their seasons.

Golf
Augusta National on Friday postponed the Masters, with no indication as to when it might be played. The Masters has finished in April every year since 1935 — the first tournament was in late March — except when it was canceled from 1943 to 1945 because of World War II.

The PGA Tour decided Thursday to scrap the rest of The Players Championship and shut down its other tournaments for the next three weeks. There was no immediate word whether The Players Championship — the premier tournament run by the PGA Tour, offering a $1 million purse — would be rescheduled.

The LPGA Tour postponed three tournaments, beginning next week, including its first major of the season.

Football
The XFL will be suspended for the rest of the 2020 season.

"The XFL is committed to playing a full season in 2021 and future years," the league said in a statement.

The NFL announced a number of changes and cancellations on its schedule of meetings, fan fest and scouting trips — all related to coronavirus.

Soccer
MLS is shutting down for 30 days and reportedly plans to reschedule postponed matches on the back end of the season.

The Premier League and the Champions League were suspended Friday, meaning all five of Europe's biggest national competitions are on hold.

Matches in England will be stopped until at least April 3 after five Premier League clubs said some players or staff were in self-isolation.

The National Women's Soccer League is scheduled to begin the season April 18. The league canceled all preseason matches.

Tennis
The ATP called off men's tournaments for the next six weeks; the WTA said its tournament in South Carolina, set for April 6-12, would not be held as scheduled, with decisions about the rest of the season to come in the next week.

As of now, the next men's or women's tennis tournament still on the schedule is a WTA event on clay at Stuttgart, Germany, beginning April 20.

The next Grand Slam event, the French Open, is still scheduled to be held in Paris beginning May 24.

Olympics
The IOC on Thursday went ahead with its ceremonial lighting of the Olympic flame. On Friday, though, the Greek Olympic committee suspended the rest of its torch relay because of the "unexpectedly large crowd" that gathered to watch. Also on Friday, President Donald Trump's suggestion to postpone the Tokyo Games for a year because of the spreading coronavirus was immediately shot down by Japan's Olympic minister.

Information from wire reports
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Iona hires Pitino
Hall of Famer was out of coaching in college since Louisville scandal

By the numbers

.739

Rick Pitino's college basketball career winning percentage, including stops at Hawaii, Boston University, Providence, Kentucky and Louisville.

Tom Brady is the most prominent player scheduled to become a free agent starting Wednesday.

Free agency still on for now

NY Giants all have at least $78 million to work with — others are close to bumping their heads on the $200-million salary ceiling. San Francisco, Kansas City, Jacksonville, New Orleans, Atlanta and Pittsburgh all have less than $15 million in wiggle room. Some of the big-name free agents won't be going anywhere. New Orleans, for instance, is expected to work out a new deal with quarterback Drew Brees before free agency begins, and Kansas City is expected to apply the franchise designation to defensive tackle Chris Jones. Denver has franchised safety Justin Simmons, and Jacksonville has done the same with pass rusher Yannick Ngakoue. There will be elite pass rushers to be had, however. Seattle's Jadeveon Clowney, a former No. 1 overall pick, figures to hit the open market, and the Los Angeles Rams will have to work some salary-cap magic to keep linebacker Cory Littleton and outside linebacker Dante Fowler.

There's a possibility the Patriots could lose coveted safety Devin McCourty. But again, this could all happen on a delayed schedule. The NFL on Friday banned all in-person visits with draft-eligible players. If they want to communicate with prospects, teams must now do so by phone or video conference. Then, there's the adjustment to the financial realities of a new CBA. So for now, though teams are positioned to make moves, teams will wait if they must.
NFL/COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Players approve labor deal

By Barry Wilner

Associated Press

NFL players have approved a new labor agreement with the league that features a 17-game regular season, higher salaries, increased roster sizes and larger pensions for current and former players.

The deal, which runs through the 2030 season, was accepted by the 32 team owners last month. The NFL Players Association’s membership spent the past week voting on the 439-page document after its executive board narrowly rejected it by a 6-5 vote, and the player representatives voted 17-14 in favor, with one abstention.

Clearly, there was some strong player opposition to this collective bargaining agreement, though. Many stars, including Aaron Rodgers, Russell Wilson, J.J. Watt and Todd Gurley, spoke out against it. The total vote, among the nearly 2,500 union members who participated, was 1,019-959.

Ratification required a simple majority, and results were announced Sunday.

“We are pleased that the players have voted to ratify the proposed new CBA, which will provide substantial benefits to all current and former players,” NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a statement.

The 2020 NFL business season begins Wednesday with free agency and trades — though a delay is possible given league restrictions on travel as a safeguard against the coronavirus. The nearly 2,500 union members who participated, was 1,019-959.

Virus dashes Dayton’s dream season

No. 3 Flyers had hoped for first Final Four appearance in 53 years

DAYTON, Ohio — The coronavirus outbreak has abruptly ended the University of Dayton’s men’s basketball team, and the city it uplifted, from a dream of a season.

The 29-2 Flyers, ranked No. 3 in the Associated Press poll, were rolling into tournament play on a 20-game winning streak that had lifted spirits in a city battered in the past year by a mass shooting and devastating tornadoes.

But the NCAA’s decision Thursday to cancel March Madness, one of many such cancellations decided this week as the virus spread, ended hopes for the small Roman Catholic school’s first Final Four appearance since 1967, when an upset Flyers team lost to Lew Alcindor-led UCLA in the championship game.

Flyers fans shook their heads Friday in the Oregon entertainment district, where the shooting occurred Aug. 4.

“I feel like they got robbed,” said Shawn Mathews, 21, who said he is a cousin of guard Trey Landers.

His father, Norman Mathews, 49, said they had been “looking forward to them going all the way. Wow.”

Canceling, though, was the right decision, with the virus spreading, he said.

“You don’t know what to expect,” the older Mathews said. “I guess we have to wait till next year.”

Landers, a Dayton native, lamented on Twitter: “I wish that all of this was just a dream I could wake up from. ... wish I could play one more game with my brothers.” He added a broken-heart emoji.

“All we can do is just be thankful for the time we had,” he added. “It was an honor to wear ‘Dayton’ across my chest, and it allowed me to create memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life.”

Coach Anthony Grant, who also played at Dayton, taped a thank-you message for “Flyer nation” Thursday night after returning to campus from the Atlantic 10 conference tournament in New York City without playing a game.

“Although we feel like there was more for us to try to accomplish over the course of the season, there’s nothing that can take away what these young men did out on the court throughout the entire season,” Grant said.

“History was made in a lot of different areas. Just the effort, the love that they showed for each other I think represents this university, this community, in an unbelievable fashion.”

Landers and Mikesell are seniors, and slam-dunking sensation Obi Toppin is likely NBA-bound, leaving Grant with big holes to fill and Dayton likely to begin next season as it did this one: unranked.

Mayor Nan Whaley, a UD alumn, said Friday it’s stunning that the Flyers’ season was ended “not by a loss, but by an international crisis.”

Dayton’s athletic director and basketball head coaches on Friday offered thoughts and prayers to virus victims, along with hopes that the cancellations will help slow its spread.

“This is bigger than basketball,” Grant said.

Both teams won their conferences, and the coaches said it was tough to see them lose what could be a once-in-a-lifetime chance for a national title.

“They were heartbroken,” women’s Coach Shauna Green said. “It broke my heart.”

The NCAA cancellation is also a setback for a struggling economy that annually hosts the tournament’s First Four opening games.

“We’re all going to take a hit,” said Gus Stathes, 35, who runs Barrel House bar with his wife.

The team, he said, had been “a sun ray bursting down from the storm” for Dayton.

Now that ray is gone.

“It’s a very Dayton scenario,” Stathes grumbled.

Workers remove chairs from media row inside the University of Dayton Arena on Friday, in Dayton, Ohio. The 29-2 Flyers were rolling into tournament play on a 20-game winning streak that had lifted spirits in an Ohio city battered in the past year by violent deaths and devastation.
Dream denied

Virus dashes Dayton’s magical season

A view inside the University of Dayton Arena on Friday in Dayton, Ohio. The coronavirus outbreak abruptly ended the Flyers’ dream season — and hopes for the small school’s first Final Four appearance in 53 years — when the NCAA canceled March Madness on Thursday.

Aaron Doster / AP

TO OUR READERS As the sports world pauses to join the rest of the world in fighting the coronavirus pandemic, you will see fewer sports stories in Stars and Stripes. We look forward to resuming our normal coverage when the leagues and governing bodies determine it is safe for athletes and fans to return to competition.